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I Remember My Lost Leg: The Story of Istahil

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Handicap International

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She passed away in 2001, leaving behind a legacy of courage and perseverance.

By Sally Terrell

The story of Istahil Ismail Ali is one of survival and resilience in the face of adversity. Born in 1985 in Burao, Somalia, Istahil experienced the trauma of war firsthand, witnessing the devastation of her home country. At the age of 11, she was tragically injured when she stepped on an anti-personnel mine near her home, suffering severe injuries all over her body. Her left leg was amputated, and she was hospitalised for three months in Burao Hospital. This incident marked the beginning of her long journey to recovery and rehabilitation.

Istahil’s journey towards recovery was not an easy one. She faced numerous challenges, including financial difficulties and limited access to medical care. However, she remained determined to overcome these obstacles. With the support of her family and Handicap International, she received an artificial leg at the Rehabilitation Centre for Handicapped People in Hargeisa, Somaliland. This was a turning point in her life, as it enabled her to resume her daily activities and pursue her studies.

In 1999, at the age of 14, Istahil returned to school, enrolling in the Istahil Ismail Ali Primary and Intermediate School named after her. She was one of the first students to return to school after the conflict, and her story inspired many others to follow in her footsteps. In 2001, she graduated from high school and continued her education at the Islamic University of the Horn of Africa in Somalia, where she received her degree in education.

Istahil’s story is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. Despite the challenges she faced, she never lost hope and continued to work towards a better future. Her achievements have been recognized at the national and international levels, and she continues to inspire others with her courage and determination.

In 2004, Istahil’s story was published in the book “I Remember My Lost Leg: The Story of Istahil”, and it was later translated into Somali and Arabic. The book was produced by Handicap International in collaboration with the Mine Industry Information Center and the Mine Action Information Center.

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By Dahil Mohammad Odwaa

I Remember My Lost Leg: The Story of Istahil