

THE MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT

WRITTEN BY

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THE MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT

INTRO

It all began back in 1964 when Emperor Haile Selassie I granted the American Community School 15- acres of land with a single stone placed to mark the location in the outskirts of town in Old Airport. Now, 55 years later, the same stone has a place of honor on the International Community School campus. Building something is one thing but maintaining it for over 55 years is another. Thanks to our maintenance department our campus looks better than ever. Over the 55-year period our school has expanded more and more each year, and the maintenance department has been there from the very beginning.

The maintenance department covers projects big and small over the main campus, two satellite campus locations and 68 faculty residences. Located on the westside of the campus, the maintenance department is one of the largest departments at ICS. It's filled with different skills, experience and perseverance. Their work ranges from carpentry to metal works and electrical works to plumbing for both the campuses and residences. This department also values the ICS way of "taking care of others" which is why they are always lending a hand to Mekdela Primary School which is one of the local public schools located near ICS.



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**WHAT I LOVE ABOUT OUR
TEAM IN THE MAINTENANCE
DEPARTMENT IS THEIR
MOTIVATION, THEIR KNOWLEDGE,
THEIR SKILL, POSITIVE ATTITUDE,
OPENNESS TO IDEAS AND
INTEREST TO GIVE THE BEST
SERVICE USING THEIR MAXIMUM
EFFORT AND ABILITY FOR THE
ICS COMMUNITY**

ADDISU GEBRE-SHIKUR

HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT



ICS has created a sense of belonging amongst its staff making them feel like ICS is their home. It has created a place where there is understanding, friendship, and mutual respect amongst the maintenance team. Once you are on the team, you are part of a life-long family.

Back in the early days the department was doing everything from cleaning to gardening, masonry to carpentry, metal works to painting and event set-ups. Due to the work load the department has expanded and uses outsourced staff to get the work done. As the campus continued to develop and more buildings were constructed, the maintenance department has had to remain flexible and innovative. Carefully, structuring the department has allowed ICS to make big investments in hiring qualified people and providing quality training, a safe work environment, quality equipment and raw materials.

“When I was in the maintenance department, we weren’t even 20 in number,” says Ato. Berhanu Sisay, he worked in the department for six years. He continues “We were doing everything except for security.” Ato. Berhanu has been a long-time member of the ICS family, starting as a young ball boy on the tennis courts. He then continued to move through various jobs, starting in the maintenance department. It’s been 22 years and counting since he joined ICS. He pursued his education while at ICS and now he works as an assistant in the admissions department. He says “no matter what department I am in right now, I will always be a part of the maintenance team. It’s where I grew up and where I found my wonderful friends.”

after graduating, returned to ICS. He first came to ICS 22 years ago starting as part-time employee. He now works in the maintenance department as a carpenter. “ICS has been a place for where we grow in our knowledge and skill” explains Addisu.

Today, the department has grown to 35 employees and 85 outsourced employees. To complete the large number of projects during long breaks, like the summer break, they hire an additional 50 outside daily workers.

STRUCTURE

The department has found a way to manage its many different roles and responsibilities. They have divided the department into different sections:

- Carpentry /Wood Work
- Electrical Work
- Metal work / Masonry
- Plumbing and Sanitary
- Event Setup

Each section has their own supervisors and they all have their own working space and their own tasks to be completed within a specified time frame.

CARPENTRY SECTION

The carpentry section is responsible for making furniture, assembling imported equipment/furniture installing structures and fixtures, molding, and building frameworks, including walls, and door frames.

Because of the talented carpentry department, the school has lowered the amount of furniture purchases. They have now started to make furniture for the personal use of the teachers and staff on their free time. The feedback and the trust from the ICS community has been a huge motivation and compliment for the department. It inspires them to grow more and allows them to see their own potential.

“For most of us in maintenance, our job is what we enjoy most,” Says Addisu. “We enjoy working hard and meeting our goals.”

METAL WORK SECTION

The Metal Work section does everything from welding and modifying to creating. They maintain, upgrade and create most of the metal framing, poles and supports on campus. “One of the things I learned at ICS is welding,” says Ephrem Mekuria a metal smith, “working at ICS has opened the whole team to acquire more knowledge and experience.”

ELECTRICAL SECTION

The Electrical Section manages all electric installations and repairs for each campus and residence. This includes lighting, electrical appliances, power outlets, wiring and anything related to electricity. They even monitor, maintain and manage all of our sound and PA systems and speakers. “We all work together to complete our projects on time” says Ato Miheretu the Electric Sound Section Coordinator. “We believe that one’s failure is the whole department’s failure, so we work hard to meet expectations set by ICS.”

PLUMBING SECTION

The Plumbing Section oversees all water works and drainage systems, on campus and in the residences.

ICS has its own water purification system. The purification equipment and process is monitored by the plumbing section. They regularly organize inspections to ensure that all equipment and systems are always operating at 100% efficiency to get the best results.

EVENT SET UP

The set-up for events used to be done by anyone who was free to do so, no matter what their profession. But now ICS has dedicated coordinator and an outsourced set-up team, better project management, equipment and planning. Because of the many events at ICS, this section is always busy running around preparing venues for each event.

After setting up for events, when the program is over, this same team also closes and cleans up after. Just as they did when setting up, they must now take back all the materials and equipment to storage and get the venue ready for the next event or ready for the start of the school day.

CLEANING & GARDENING

The cleaning as well as the gardening have also been outsourced to Fireworks and Bora Gardening respectively. These staff are hired by their respective companies, but are supervised by the maintenance department while on campus.

The outsourcing has enabled the department to be focused on being the best in their professions. They are not afraid of taking risk. Their department director Ato.Tadesse Woudneh says “I encourage them to take calculated risks because I know their potential and so that they know how much I believe in them.” The whole of the maintenance team feels a sense of ownership. They see ICS as their own. Because of that they are all in and full hearted while working.

COLLABORATION

The department is not just about getting more experience and knowledge from outside sources, it’s about collaborating and sharing their knowledge with one another.

Before being assigned their projects, the supervisors have a meeting with their team to get them on board with how they want to organize the projects and if they have any ideas about how to complete these projects on time and to the best of their abilities. “The gathering of ideas and giving value to ideas from the team creates a sense of ownership and belonging.” says Ato.Tadesse. That allows them to plan how they want to complete their tasks and what methods they are going to use, collaboratively.

Supervisors don’t sit back and watch the team toiling on the project assigned to them. They also work together with the rest of the team and check the quality of the work. “As a supervisor creating a smooth relationship with the team is important because it is crucial that we create an environment where the employees feel safe and comfortable communicating their suggestions and ideas with their supervisors.” It is all about ownership and collaboration, creating professional learning communities in the maintenance department.

In addition to subsidizing professional training outside of ICS, the maintenance department uses a unique training system, called ‘job rotation’. Once or twice a year, 4-6 members of each section go to a different section and spend a month with the new team. There is a huge amount of knowledge and expertise that is passed from employee to employee, enabling more skills to a larger group and a better understanding of how other teams work.

“NO MATTER WHAT DEPARTMENT I AM IN RIGHT NOW, I WILL ALWAYS BE A PART OF THE MAINTENANCE TEAM. IT’S WHERE I GREW UP AND WHERE I FOUND MY WONDERFUL FRIENDS”

OUR BEST WITH AFRICA AND OUR WORLD

One of the many things the maintenance department organizes is supporting Mekdela school. Mekdela school is a local public school consisting of low-income students. Because of their low financial means some of these children usually do not come to school because they don't have much to eat and learning on an empty stomach is one of the most difficult things you can imagine as a child. Together with many ICS staff members, the maintenance department helps by contributing financially to feed approximately 60 students, breakfast and lunch.

The maintenance department also supports Mekdela with facility improvement and maintenance projects, usually with donated materials from ICS or in partnership with the Parent Community Link/PCL. For example,

they have built a playground, a computer lab, furniture for the lab, and installed electrical systems.

They do not stop at Mekdela school. The maintenance department has facilitated other "best with Africa" support including:

- Supporting a small rural school outside of Woliso, building a playground, donating some tables and chairs and contributed their own money so the children can play in a safe and clean playground. "This is a moment that I will never forget at ICS. It was very rewarding to be able to help others." Says Ato.Tadesse.
- Donating a 2KV generator for a rural school to alleviate their acute power shortage problem.



SUMMARY

The maintenance department's understanding and mutual respect does not exist just within their team, but they also have this relationship with the rest of the ICS community. They are one of the departments that are so easy going understanding and of great help to everyone. Understanding the needs of the students, teachers and staff and meeting their needs and expectations is a huge task that the team works hard to accomplish.

The maintenance team completes over 950 projects on campus and at our faculty residences each year and gets ready for over 900 events! We don't really know how they get it all done, but they are an amazingly reliable, professional and experienced team!