

AHEAD's Second Study Launched

Ottawa (July 17, 2007) -- AHEAD has launched its second study, entitled *Enabling Diaspora Engagement in Africa: Resources, Mechanisms and Gaps (Case Study: Ethiopia)*.

The study asserts, "Africans in the diaspora have both the capacity and the will to take part meaningfully in the economic, social and political revival of the African continent", adding "...if the promise of the "diaspora option" is to translate into a significant and sustainable engagement of the African diaspora, with an appreciable impact on African development", gaps in current policies and practices need to be addressed.

The study – which was funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) – has the following objectives:

- ◆ To provide an overview of existing policies, programs and initiatives by African continental bodies regarding African diaspora engagement;
- ◆ To identify existing policies, programs and initiatives regarding diaspora engagement established in Ethiopia by the government, international organizations and the civil society;
- ◆ To identify existing policies, programs and initiatives regarding diaspora engagement established by Canadian government and non-governmental organizations, with a focus on those involving the African diaspora in Canada; and
- ◆ To identify gaps in policies and practices regarding diaspora engagement in Ethiopia and Canada.

Enabling Diaspora Engagement in Africa: Resources, Mechanisms and Gaps is a comprehensive study that covers issues pertaining to African governments, host countries, international organizations and diaspora communities.

- ◆ Welcoming the establishment of the Diaspora Division within the Africa Union, the study expresses the hope that this initiative will result in practical programs that will allow for the application of the African capital, knowledge and skills abroad to the development efforts of the continent.
- ◆ On Ethiopia, the study identifies a series of measures taken by the Government in order to facilitate diaspora engagement, including, among others, the opening of Diaspora Departments within two federal ministries, the creation of diaspora regional offices and community outreach and constituency building roles by Ethiopian missions.
- ◆ Observing that "for diaspora groups and individuals to take part effectively in home-country development activities, not only must factors related to their countries of origin be favourable, but the host countries' attitudes must also be supportive", the study makes a series of suggestions for consideration by the Government of Canada.

- ◆ It also points out the need for bilateral and multilateral donors to go beyond the promises made at conferences and provide the means that would enable the translation of their stated good will into concrete actions.
- ◆ On diaspora communities, the report states diaspora organizations need to increase their visibility so as to improve their standing in the mainstream international development scene as well as ensuring the relevance of their activities.

In conclusion, the study remarks, “the African continent can ill afford to overlook its resources in the diaspora as it seeks to turn its fortunes around; and, considering the dismal failure of traditional post-colonial development efforts in Africa, neither can international organizations and donor governments that purport to support African development”.

AHEAD wishes to express its sincere thanks to IDRC for its financial and technical support in making this project a success.

Our compliments to the researcher, Ms. Bathseba Belai, for producing an extraordinary study which provides practical means to translate the on-going dialogue on diaspora engagement into a possibility of real development engagement.