



FORUM INTERNATIONAL FOR  
ETHIOPIANS LIVING IN DIASPORA (FIELD)

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People to People and Lem Ethiopia  
with the Ethiopian Business, Civic and Government,  
Institutions and Organisations Diaspora

THE POTENTIAL WITHIN:  
IS THE ETHIOPIAN DIASPORA A RESPONSE TO THE NATION'S BRAIN DRAIN?

# FINAL Report

Part I

"Transforming brain drain  
into brain gain"

*Addis Abeba Hilton, January 14, 2005*

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Compiled by  
BT Costantinos, PhD,  
FIELD Ethiopia Secretariat

"Change means movement. Movement means friction.  
Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or  
change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict." Saul Alinsky  
*(From Noah Samara's keynote)*

## **CONTACTS**

**BT Costantinos, PhD**  
**Chief, Secretariat FIELD ETHIOPIA,**  
**Africa Avenue PO B 13309, Addis Abeba, Ethiopia.**  
**[costy@costantinos.org](mailto:costy@costantinos.org)**

**Enawgaw Mehari, M.D.**  
**Chief, Secretariat, FIELD North America,**  
**P2P. PO. Box 1209, Morehead Kentucky, 403 51,**  
**[emehari@yahoo.com](mailto:emehari@yahoo.com)**

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...and the following personalities - **key note speakers** Mr. Noah Samara, Ato Girma Waqué, Mr. Temesghen Hailu, Amb. David Shinn, Charles Kwenin, **Chairs of sessions** Dr. Dawit Zawde, Prof. Redda Tekle Haymanot, speakers and presenters: Azeb Tadesse, and Samrawit Ashenafi, Dr. Senait Ashenafi, Ms Wude Mihret, AHRI Dr Ayele Zawde, Dr Gutta Zenebe, Diana Matanovich, Dr Ambaye Kidane, Yilikal Adamu, Mekidim Ethiopia, Dr. Abraham Asnake. Dr. Tadesse Wouhib, Dr. Seifu Bahiru, CRDA, Dr. Dawit Woldaye, Prof David Clifford. Dr. Diane Langford, Dr. Abraham Assefa, Dr. Zenebe Melaku, Ms. Michelle Collins, Mr. Richard Phillip, Dr. Enawgaw Mahari, Dr. Rahel Hamanot, Dawn of Hope, Ato Tenagne, and the Staff of Lem and P2P



## Section II

# FIELD Communiqué

Addis Abeba, Jan 14, 2005

**L**em Ethiopia, People to People, and various other collaborating organisations have established an international forum for Ethiopians living in Diaspora on January 14, 2005 at the Hilton. Subsequent events will mark conferences on the social and economic challenges faced by poverty, HIV/AIDS and famine and opportunities for investment during the rest of the month at different venues. After carefully considering the presentations and discussions of the founding forum, **FIELD** has issued the following communiqué to be published in all sources that the Ethiopian Diaspora can access.

Whereas, since the early 1970s, Ethiopia has witnessed an effective reversal of development trends; failing to sustain any degree of development momentum and is moving into an ever deepening crisis of the human environment. Added to the economic and ecological problems, Ethiopia has been marred by protracted wars, ethnic strife and communal violence for the past many decades. This has meant severe and unheard of hardship for the people of Ethiopia. The overwhelming majority of our citizens are preoccupied by the need for sheer survival -- most eking out a daily existence at a very high price. The impact of crushing poverty and the extent of economic deprivation is simply too overwhelming to provide a fertile ground for nourishing a pluralist society.

Whereas, much of the Ethiopian Diaspora, which numbers over a million, is highly educated and technically advanced. Through creative programmes and linkages the Diaspora can assist to Ethiopia to come out of the misery it has been subjected to over the past many decades. Now therefore, we recommend that

**FIELD's vision be "as part of the global and national coalition for peace and human security and development, FIELD is inspired to mobilise the Diaspora to create an Ethiopia that is free of despotism and where every Ethiopian can enjoy the full benefits of the right to life in peace, harmony and meaningful livelihood security.**

**FIELD's mission be to restore Ethiopia's self-esteem – to change its image from that of a famine and poverty ridden global backwater to a nation capable of sustaining its citizens, with locally driven objectives and through the support of its citizens and the Diaspora.**

**FIELD's Strategic objectives zero on "building bridges between the Ethiopian Diaspora and Ethiopia to develop think tank centres, opportunities to the Ethiopian Diaspora to contribute to national development and prepare platforms within which Ethiopian Diaspora can invest in share companies such as real estates, privatised companies, investment bourses, financial institutions, and information technology.**

We are all united in the belief and determined in the necessity that not only should the Diaspora through their organisations such as Ethiopian Essentials, AHEAD, CLEA, etc. be seen working alongside their national compatriots, but should play a leading and vanguard role in coming to the help of their fellow Ethiopians. It is incumbent upon the Diaspora to mount diligent efforts to ameliorate the humiliating human tragedy. In a win-win game, the Diaspora will achieve its aspiration to be part of Ethiopia's development and harvest the fruits of their investment here in their motherland. Borne out of this vision, FIELD has indeed grown into the first voluntary agency of the Diaspora, which is Ethiopian in character, concept and constitution -- **Addis Abeba, January 14, 2005**

## FORUM INTERNATIONAL FOR ETHIOPIANS LIVING IN DIASPORA (FIELD)

Lem Ethiopia - People to People  
Addis Abeba Hilton, January 14, 2005

# REPORT

### Introduction

**L**em Ethiopia, People to People, and various other collaborating organisations have established an international forum for Ethiopians living in Diaspora on January 14, 2005 at the Hilton. Subsequent events will mark conferences on the social and economic challenges faced by poverty, HIV/AIDS and famine and opportunities for investment during the rest of the month at different venues. Technology and knowledge transfer can also be accomplished via small workshops to targeted professional audiences and creating diverse dialogues from various angles and discipline. Participants will be encouraged to sustain contacts and continue mutually beneficial relationships with partners.

*The Diaspora can assist in the  
Developing national think tanks that nurture  
Democratic and human Development  
values and develop entrepreneurial culture  
in Ethiopian society*

Much of the Ethiopian Diaspora, which numbers over a million, is highly educated and technically advanced. Through creative programmes and linkages the Diaspora can do for Ethiopia what the Indian Diaspora has managed to accomplish for the Indian economy. However, that can not be accomplished without creating organic relationship between Ethiopia and its Diaspora, which will be

epitomised by effective and productive links. Through a variety of activities the occasion has help us to create an opportunity to bring together various individuals with interest and research in Ethiopia. The forum has set a precedent for an annual event which will bring together friends of Ethiopia, as optimal venues for attracting investment, creating a sense of community and commitment and opportunities for exchange of knowledge and information.

The opening session was presided by HE President Girma Wolde Ghorgis. Dr Enawgaw welcomed HE the President and the participants of the conference and gave a brief overview of FIELD. This report is a compilation of the address by HE President Girma Wolde Ghorgis, a key note address by a renowned members of the Diaspora – Noah Samara and Girma **Waqué**, presentations and discussions that took place in the first half of the dialogue - **THE POTENTIAL WITHIN: IS THE ETHIOPIAN DIASPORA A RESPONSE TO THE NATION'S BRAIN DRAIN?** by Ambassadors Wubshet, Mr. **Temesghen Hailu**: President, AHEAD, **Charles Kwenin**, Director IOM, **Azeb Tadesse**, Deputy Director, African Studies, UCLA **Amb. David Shinn**, PhD, Professor, George Washington University, and **Samrawit Ashenafi**, MPH, CDC Fellow.

A second report will follow focussing on the afternoon session: Assessment of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia, The Critical Need for HIV/AIDS Prevention Research, Patterns of Neuro AIDS in Ethiopia and UCSD /AAU Brain Bank project AIDS Orphans and vulnerable children in Ethiopia.

## SECTION III

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### PRESENTATIONS AND KEY NOTE ADDRESSES

**H**E **President Girma Wolde Ghiorgis** said that the fact that this gathering is focussing on key challenges of HIV/AIDS and the defining the role of the Diaspora is evidence that we have moved to the dictum to ask what the Diaspora can do to the nation that nurtured and educated them and not what this impoverished nation can do for them. He is also encouraged to know that the organisers plan to make this a regular event happening at different times of the year focussed on well researched issues, such the HIV/AIDS forum today, bringing together friends of Ethiopia, as optimal venues for investment, creating a sense of community and commitment and opportunities for exchange of knowledge and information. He continued to identify various areas where the Diaspora can contribute to national development

- The Diaspora can help Ethiopia expedite its human development: The Diaspora can help us generate solutions for our persistent poverty ... to develop an integrated package of policy, technology and investment strategies together with appropriate decision-making tools, which are used together to fight poverty and promote sustainable livelihoods by building on local adaptive strategies.
- The Diaspora can promote dialogue that will bring stakeholders to forums that resolve potential areas of conflicting ideas in a non-adversarial manner. The Diaspora can engage in capacity building that aims at improving the effectiveness of institutions of governance and strengthening their ability to interact with the various branches of Government and society. The Diaspora can have immense contribution to strengthen the capacity of the communities, their representative institutions and intermediary organisations to participate, in a positive and constructive manner, in the decision making process.
- The Diaspora is well placed to develop investment and entrepreneurship with long term strategies for employment and growth. Small businesses constitute the bedrock of entrepreneurial development anywhere in the world. The Diaspora can assist in the developing national think tanks that nurture democratic and human development values and develop entrepreneurial culture in Ethiopian society. While the current dynamics of political change and opportunities for popular participation in governance in Ethiopia are unprecedented, a significant challenge, however, is to place these dynamics in a coherent perspective and within the context of basic principles of the market and good governance, and determine how, in the implementation of such principles, relevant experiences may be shared between nations and nationalities.

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**N**oah Samara started off by his moving statement “to be here and experience the embrace of culture – with its bonds of family, boundless hospitality and abiding humility – is to feel gratitude beyond the ambit of words to express. I know thousands and thousands of others in the Diaspora feel exactly as I do. And an act that makes you grateful is something that can be re-paid. In this case, the gratitude of the Diaspora can translate directly into a commitment to contribute knowledge, energy and capital to Ethiopia.

His eloquent address on transforming the BRAIN DRAIN TO BRAN GAIN zeroed on “the fact that the Diaspora offers an exceptional synergy: the problem-solving perspective that comes with distance and the intense commitment that comes with a sense of deep closeness and belonging. Oh yes, it also includes a lot of men and women with world-class competence in their respective fields. I could spend hours listing Ethiopians in Europe and the USA who have distinguished themselves in medicine, law, business, academia, athletics, and the arts. In addition to making a mark in their respective fields, many have made a lot of money and would be willing to invest a portion of it right here. The Diaspora holds so much potential for the future of this country. But this potential will only become a reality if we move forward in a spirit of partnership.

“As non-resident Ethiopians take up the obligation to improve their homeland, this nation and its government face the corresponding obligation to facilitate the Diaspora’s participation and support its success. In other words, to make this work well, the Diaspora needs to commit and the government needs to create a welcoming environment for that commitment. In practical terms, this means creating an environment that helps the Diaspora overcome any trepidations they may have about committing their resources. Today the Ethiopian government is not quick in handling standard bureaucratic matters, and the rule sets are not clear or always secure for private investment. That portion of the Diaspora from industrialised nations is accustomed to governmental processes that are transparent, rational and scrupulous.

People and capital are risk-averse. People and capital have a strong preference for migrating to locations where they will feel safe and respected. The Diaspora is no exception. For the Ethiopian government to institute such positive measures would be good news for the Diaspora and great news for its own citizens. It ultimately comes down to a fundamental question: Are we willing to change? Even when the transition is from worse to better, change is never easy. The U.S. radical activist Saul Alinsky grasped the inherent dynamics when he said, “Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict.” Refusing to change is also a choice. Maybe that would spare Ethiopia some abrasive conflicts, but it would condemn the country to continuing the terrible friction of disease, poverty, hunger and ignorance. Have the Diaspora and government of any nation ever joined in such a common purpose? Absolutely! Just look across the Arabian Sea and you will find a marvelous example. The Government of India has done a masterful job of forging bonds with its global Diaspora.

“Not so long ago, India was decrying a “brain drain.” Now it is rejoicing in a “brain gain.” Tens of thousands of Indians have recently returned to their home country. They are drawn by a thriving economy, a hospitable environment for business and investment, and they are overjoyed to be on home soil with their extended families. Behind this remarkable success story are a range of initiatives. But the most impressive is this: The government es-

**In recognition of this reservoir of good will and enormous potential, the government considers the Ethiopian Diaspora as one of the prime development partner and has taken series of measures for making the best use of its immense untapped resource for the nation building.**

established the Ministry of Indian Overseas Affairs, a department that exists to communicate with the Diaspora and facilitate its large-scale involvement. It is a Department of Government solely dedicated to help the Diaspora; a sort of one-stop shopping where a returnee goes to get licenses and other facilities that would have otherwise required him to stand on lines in many different government offices. An Indian living abroad could thus come on a short vacation and find a government ministry helping him spend or invest his money quickly. To promote greater investment, the Indian government is even taking the bold step of initiating dual citizenship. And as a result tens of thou-

sands of Indians in the Diaspora are returning home with billions of dollars. The Indian government gets it. Educated affluent Indians are returning to their home country and infusing it with capability and optimism. With vision and persistence, they made it happen.

“Can Ethiopia do it? Absolutely. *Will Ethiopia do it?* It depends on nothing other than political will. It is really as simple as saying "Let's do it. Let's get it done!" Imagine if twenty thousand Ethiopians from the USA – a mere four-percent of the Diaspora there – each decided to spend \$100,000 here, either investing in businesses or purchasing homes. It would yield two billion dollars of hard currency flowing into the economy and thousands of jobs. And each one of those dollars would come with the commitment of an educated, capable individual to Ethiopia’s future.

“Don’t tell me things in Ethiopia have to be as they have been. People don’t have to suffer from famines. They don’t have to endure constant hunger. They don’t have to be ignorant, impoverished and sick. And they don’t have to live without hope. Most of the problems faced by human beings can be solved by human beings. Indeed, many of man's problems are made by man. Ethiopia's problems are no exception. We can bring about

change for the people who need it most . . . it can be done faster if we first embrace the changes essential to forming a lasting partnership between Ethiopia and its global Diaspora. It is a ready-made solution -- to be sure, with some kinks in it. But there is nothing that cannot be ironed out in this relationship. The stakes are too high. There is a lot of work to be done to even outlast our generation, especially once this partnership becomes solid. This should be exciting for all parties: not only is there work to do for everyone, it is work that requires heavy lifting, . . . .work that will save lives while adding meaning to one's own life.

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**A**mbassador Wubshet sad that “the government considers the Ethiopian Diaspora as one of the prime development partner and has taken series of measures for making the best use of its immense untapped resource for the nation building. In this regard, forging national consensus and the role that Ethiopians in the Diaspora could play have been highlighted in the Foreign and National Security Policy and Strategy of the country. In recognising the role of the Ethiopian Diaspora with respect to its country of origin, the Ethiopian government has established the Ethiopian Expatriates Affairs General Directorate and Office of Coordinating Ethiopian Diaspora and Friends of Ethiopia within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Capacity Building respectively. And it has also assigned diplomats in all our Embassies for building a warm and constructive relationship between the Ethiopian Diaspora and its country of origin.

“Apart from such institutional measures, the government has also taken encouraging legislative measures. Among these, the promulgation of proclamation No.270/2002, which provides Foreign Nationals of Ethiopian origin with rights and privileges to be exercised in their country of origin, directive which allows Ethiopian Diaspora to open foreign currency account in local banks, tax and custom free privileges for returnees and issuance of urban land for the construction of residential buildings are some of the measures to be mentioned. Over the last couple of years, in part due to these measures, the participation of the Ethiopian Diaspora in the socio economic activities in Ethiopia has been steadily increasing. A number of individuals and organisations in the Ethiopian Diaspora have been making positive contributions in strengthening the capacity of our higher learning institutions, providing health related assistance in the area of delivering medical books and equipments, scholarships, creating linkages and direct transfer of knowledge through specialised training and also in the area of HIV-AIDS support.

“It is however clear that compared to the immense potential and capacity of Ethiopians in the Diaspora a lot remains to be done. One of the major impediments preventing wider participation of Ethiopians in the Diaspora is a misunderstanding on the need and purpose of such participation. It should be made clear that, the contribution to Poverty eradication efforts in the country could be made irrespective of different, at times opposing, perspectives on political or other issues. We should therefore be able to transcend these differences and develop consensus in order to pull our resources together to lift our country from abject poverty and backwardness. Hence, this conference provides a timely opportunity to reflect on ways in which Ethiopians at the Diaspora could answer the call for partnership to transfer knowledge, skill and capital to Ethiopia. “On my part, I would like to pledge the partnership of the government of Ethiopia in creating an enabling environment necessary to realise Diaspora dreams and aspirations for our country. You can count on the full support of the government.”

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**W**ith respect to the Ethiopian Diaspora, Mr. Kwenin, expressed his view that the Diaspora could play a greater role as part of the solution to the country’s problems if it is actually coupled with other innovative implementations. For instance, the Diaspora could contribute to replacing the skills lost to brain drain since they acquire skills, experience and financial wealth while abroad. He also stressed the importance of remittances from the Diaspora in enhancing national purchasing power as well as augmenting individual household incomes. He focused especially on the importance of putting in place viable schemes to progress remittances from household consumptions to investment.

He also pointed out there is a great role that could be played by IGOs, NGOs, government, the Diaspora and different stakeholders to facilitate the involvement of Diaspora for the development of Ethiopia. He explained that there are IOM programs designed just to do that like the MIDA (Migration for the Development of Africa) program and so on. Such initiatives, he goes on to explain present the Diaspora with flexible ways of participation such as short-term visit, one time mission, investment, permanent return and virtual teleconference.

He finalized by linking the issues of migration and development saying that :

- Partnership should be built between countries of origin, host countries, Diaspora associations, and local private sector initiatives.
- Governments of both sending and receiving countries formulate and implement migration policies that enable the Diaspora to improve their professional options while contributing to the development of their country of origin.
- Enhance knowledge and technological transfers to Ethiopia through technological innovations.
- Enforce incentives already put in place to returnees and investors
- Establish steering committee that guides, assists and directs the implementation of Diaspora mobilization and utilization initiatives as well as bringing together efforts being made by government, international organizations, the private sector, civil society organizations, NGOs and Diaspora associations.

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**A**mbassador **David Shinn** developed his two presentations – one along the same lines and the other on the HIV/AIDS crisis. He asserted that “Ethiopia has made impressive progress in confronting HIV/AIDS since its slow beginning dating back to the mid-1990s. There is still a long way to go and most of the battle lies ahead. But this is a good time to recognise the achievements that have been made by the government, churches, mosques, civil society, World Bank, Global Fund, international organisations, donor governments, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, domestic and international NGOs, private companies like Pfizer and foundations like Packard. Without this combined effort, the HIV/AIDS situation in Ethiopia today would be much worse than it is and many more Ethiopians would be HIV positive or dead. The Ethiopian government and all of the organisations and countries that played a role in raising the issue to a higher priority and supported programs to combat HIV/AIDS deserve credit.

“In mid-1998 UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation announced that the HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate for Ethiopia was 9.31 percent. In 2002 they revised this percentage downward to 6.4 percent or about two million adults. This does not mean there has been a decline in the HIV/AIDS rate in recent years. Rather, it indicates that the availability of more data and better analysis of that data suggest the earlier figure may have been too high. HIV/AIDS remains a growing problem, although increasing at a slower rate than during the 1990s. Because of Ethiopia’s high population, it remains one of the most impacted countries in the world after South Africa, India and possibly Nigeria. On the other hand, the UN estimates that half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have a higher adult prevalence rate than Ethiopia. This statistic should not encourage complacency, however, particularly when an estimated 1,000 Ethiopians continue to become infected each day. But it does suggest that Ethiopia has begun, belatedly, to take serious steps to slow down and eventually roll back the pandemic.

“One important element of the anti-HIV/AIDS program in Ethiopia has developed very late in the crisis: anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment. But ARV finally has become part of the effort. At the beginning of 2004 only about 2,000 Ethiopians were receiving ARV medication. This number increased to some 5,000 Ethiopians by mid-year, 60 percent of them men, and to 10,000 by the end of the year. The U.S. announced late in 2004 a \$43 million program to provide ARV drugs for up to 15,000 people by March 2005. The handling of Ethiopia’s HIV/AIDS crisis can be viewed as the proverbial bottle half full or bottle half empty. Because of Ethiopia’s inherent poverty, woe-

fully lacking health care delivery system, high population growth rate, late recognition of the problem and occasional misplaced priorities, many see a bottle half empty. As I reflect, however, on the situation over the past ten years, I see a bottle half full. The government now recognises the importance of the HIV/AIDS problem and has organised itself to combat it. International assistance is flowing to Ethiopia. Ten years ago I thought the HIV/AIDS situation in Ethiopia today would be much worse than it is”.

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**A**to Girma Waqué, CEO, Ethiopian Airlines, underlined two important imperatives for the Diaspora’s engagement in Ethiopia. One is professional contribution at all levels of society as he has done with Ethiopian Airlines and secondly through the massive remittances that would directly be ploughed into the national economy. Ato Girma asserted that the claim that human development and democratisation succeed when initiatives emanate from civil society rather than other organisational sectors i.e. the state or international sectors is indeed timely and apposite. The goal is to empower the individual with a sense of unique personal meaning; personal transformation and change. He also stressed that the Diaspora can help Ethiopia expedite its human development: a process of enlarging people’s choices; achieved by expanding human capabilities. The Diaspora can promote and educate solutions for our persistent poverty is to develop an integrated package of policy, technology and investment strategies together with appropriate decision-making tools, which are used together to fight poverty and promote sustainable livelihoods by building on local adaptive strategies.

The Diaspora can help in institution building, policy and programme development, promotion of dialogue, public enlightenment and cultural renaissance: The Diaspora can promote dialogue that will bring stakeholders to forums that resolve potential areas of conflicting ideas in a non-adversarial manner. This also aims at strengthening the national capacity to develop manage and deliver a national civic education programme focused on human development and dealing with poverty, HIV/AIDS ... and responses to them. The Diaspora can also engage in capacity building that aims at improving the effectiveness of parliament and strengthening the institution’s ability to interact with the various branches of Government and society. He supported HE the President’s statement that the Diaspora can have immense contribution to strengthen the capacity of the communities, their representative institutions and intermediary organisations to participate, in a positive and constructive manner, in the decision making process.

He also reiterated that the Diaspora is in the best position to develop investment and entrepreneurship with long term strategies for employment and growth. Small businesses constitute the bedrock of entrepreneurial development anywhere in the world. Therefore, the extent to which their development has been encouraged is an important measure of government support for private sector entrepreneurial development. In the context of the development of small businesses, the role of the informal sector is underlined. Besides its high responsiveness to market forces, other advantages are use of simple technology, high level of capacity utilisation, ease of entry and exit relative to the formal sector and use of more domestic raw materials and labour in comparison with large scale business. The Diaspora can help create institutions for sustainable mobilisation of resources for small scale entrepreneurs.

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**D**r **Enawgaw Mehari**, P2P President in his welcome address underlined that “our country, Ethiopia, is at crossroads and the challenges beckon for indigenous solutions. Most of us define development on the Internet from overseas. But we failed to give back to the people who helped us to be where we are and to have what we have. Talks about brain drain / brain gain can sometimes give massive migraine if not heart attack. The real brain drain is failure to give back.

The Ethiopian Diaspora must re-examine its responsibility and commitment to the people of Ethiopia to share Ethiopian identity and work to improve the standard of education, health care, eradicate famine and improve the quality of life without any political, religious or ethnic affiliation. Let us designate “Decade of home development” That way, any Ethiopian abroad who failed to give back to "home development" will be considered as missing Ethiopian. I also urge the government of Ethiopia to create a ministerial or at least commissioner position to facilitate and handle the Diaspora virtual institution. The remittance from the Diaspora had been noted to be more than the coffee export and tourism together.

Ethiopia needs its children to develop her, Ethiopia is rich naturally, only poor in management, may be because of three thousand years of experience in bureaucracy. Only her children can reverse the trend that is why Forum International Ethiopians Living in the Diaspora (FIELD) have been founded to provide platforms for Ethiopian to exchange their ideas and implement to action. You can volunteer, teach, open business, do research, and treat patient, support orphans etc just don't fail to give back... Ethiopia needs every one who can give back not just the scientists or the very top. Ethiopia does not deserve to go from bad to worse. We all have to bear responsibility to improve every village of Ethiopia. It is after all the cradle of man kind. Let's point our fingers to the challenges.

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**M**r. Temesgen Hailu, President, Association for Higher Education and Development (AHEAD) thanked Dr. Costantinos and organizers of this conference for inviting him and his colleagues here. He introduced AHEAD as having been “established in 1999 by a small group of volunteers who came together with two things (1) a vision and (2) a commitment. AHEAD was established to give us an opportunity to give back to our people for the education we have received in our country. As many of you are aware, we have all benefited from the education system of our country, but many of us never had the privilege to serve our people as we left the country for different reasons. So, we AHEAD are a small group of volunteers, which is entirely funded by donations.

“We have three on-going programmes. We send books and journals to medical faculties in Jimma, Gondar and Addis Ababa. We also run a bursary program in partnership with our partners - the Getachew Bolodia foundation. Under the bursary program, we supported a total of 72 medical students from Jimma, Gondar and Addis Ababa. Each student receives a bursary of 30 birr for three consecutive years. At the end of the third year the students start their internship and the bursary is discontinued. Each year, 18 new students join the bursary and another 18 complete the bursary. This year, we will be starting an equipment program. Under this program, we will be handing out a stethoscope to each of the 18 students when they complete the bursary program. Moreover, we have just established the Selamawit Hailu scholastic award in the name of my late sister whose death was the cause that gave rise to this vision. Under this award, we will be giving an award of 500 birr each to three students who complete the bursary programme.

“The purpose of my presentation is not only to introduce AHEAD to you but also to engage in a dialogue on how the Diaspora can contribute to development efforts in Ethiopia. I will therefore share the findings of a study that AHEAD recently completed. The research entitled semantics aside: the role of the African Diaspora in Africa's capacity building efforts (case study: Ethiopia).the research was funded by the international development research centre (IDRC). The study, semantics aside, is perhaps the first to be carried out by an African Diaspora group to the level we have done it. We used Ethiopia as a case study, but we are confident that the findings are relevant to the general issues that affect Africa. The other objective of my presentation is to ask for your views and ideas as to how we the Ethiopian Diaspora can work with our brother and sisters in Ethiopia.

As a representative of AHEAD, I would like to say that we believe that the Ethiopian Diaspora has a moral responsibility to contribute to the development efforts of our country. We are not funding agencies or non-governmental organization. We are Ethiopians and we are fulfilling an obligation for what this country has given us. It is, therefore, important for us *to* see how we can work with Ethiopian civil society, professional's institutions and government bodies in order to make a modest contribution to development efforts. May I mention that there are other Diaspora groups from Canada here and I am sure we would all be pleased to exchange views on

the best ways to work with partners here?

“On behalf of AHEAD, I would like to conclude by urging the Ethiopian government to take the lead in providing the programs that can attract and utilize Diaspora resources. We urge Ethiopian Diaspora groups everywhere to get their acts together. Reach out to your communities, mobilize groups, and channel material, intellectual and financial resources for development projects. We encourage the Ethiopian civil society to start working with Diaspora groups. It will not be easy and there will be challenges. But, we will work together. We will learn from our mistakes. We owe it to Ethiopia we owe it to the Ethiopian peasant who paid for our education we owe it to our people this is not a favour. It is not a hand out. It is not a charity. It is a moral responsibility.”

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**M**s **Samrawit Ashenafi** underpinned that the “ultimate goal of the Diaspora should be to learn to work together under one umbrella hand in hand, because every organization has the same goal; the construction of a productive and peaceful society for the next generation. We are influential and able. Only action is left. The improvements are costly but worthwhile. And sufficient opportunities exist. Though these suggestions and examples are not simple nor rapid, they are essential for our success”. Her suggestions from the Diaspora to encourage involvement focus on

1. Information on the laws, current economic opportunities, guidelines on how to move back, and general information to facilitate the move back
2. The key is to somehow steer the large foundations into focusing more on Ethiopian’s needs.
3. The skills and interests of the returnee with the needs and not to take positions that can easily be filled by a qualified person in Ethiopia.
4. Sharing of knowledge and experience via distance learning etc.
5. Examples of success stories where by the Diaspora can see their contributions whether technical or monetary will be a powerful way to harness the Diaspora’s potential and to impact the development of Ethiopia
6. A quantification of the impact of Brain Drain by industry etc...
7. A quantification of the potential knowledge/expertise of the Ethiopian Diaspora



#### Section IV

### VISION, MISSION, OBJECTIVES OF FIELD

Beginning in the early 1970s, Ethiopia has been experiencing a major ground swell of political changes. In May 1991, the military government of the Dergue, that is the principal cause for the Ethiopian Diaspora, was officially ended. The new order upheld the international covenants of human rights and dignity, legalised political parties, introduced drastic decentralisation measures, dismantled the state structure and had pledged to meet the most exacting standards of democratic governance; relaxing the fear of repression and allowing opposition groups to function fully. While the movement towards fundamental political change is remarkable, there are certain formidable challenges that made the transition to a stable, democratic and pluralist system of governance very difficult. The cultural, historical, political and socio-economic conditions of the country was not and is not simply too conducive to the emergence of a strong democratic state.

For this reason, by most standard measures of welfare, Ethiopia is among the least developed countries in Africa. Since the early 1970s, it has witnessed an effective reversal of development trends. The country has failed to sustain any degree of development momentum and is moving into an ever deepening human and economic crisis. While this economic crisis continues unabated, the nation is faced with mounting evidence of a more fundamental environmental problem. Added to the economic and ecological problems, Ethiopia has been marred by protracted civil wars, ethnic strife and communal violence for the past thirty years.

The continued deterioration of the nation has meant severe and unheard of hardship for the people of Ethiopia; at the height of which more than 14 million people were affected by famine in 2003. The overwhelming majority of our citizens are preoccupied by the need for sheer survival. Most are eking out a daily existence at a very high price. If one accepts the off-made assertion that democracy and prosperity moves in tandem, then it becomes very difficult to expect the democratic transition to be sustained in Ethiopia under the prevailing conditions. The impact of crushing poverty and the extent of economic deprivation is simply too overwhelming to provide a fertile ground for nourishing democracy and pluralism. In an effort to reverse the steady socio-economic decline and revitalise the economy, the Government adopted new policies aimed at moulding a more market oriented economy. While these measures were expected to mitigate the worst features of poverty and improve the living standards of the population, their initial effects however, have been to further depress the economic activity and aggravate the already difficult economic lot of the majority of the people. Hence the Diaspora is called upon to as one of the prime development partner and has taken series of measures for making the best use of its immense untapped resource for the nation building. In this regard, forging national consensus and the role that Ethiopians in the Diaspora could play have been highlighted in the Foreign and National Security Policy and Strategy of the country.

#### Statement of vision

**We are all united in the belief and determined that not only should the Diaspora be seen working alongside their international compatriots, but should play a leading and vanguard role in coming to the help of their fellow Ethiopians. It is incumbent upon the Diaspora to mount diligent efforts to ameliorate the humiliating human tragedy. Borne out of this vision, FIELD has indeed grown into the first voluntary agency, which is Ethiopian in spirit, concept and composition.**

## **VISION, MISSION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF FIELD**

### **Vision**

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**As part of the global and national coalition for peace and human security and development, FIELD is inspired to mobilise the Diaspora to create an Ethiopia that is free of despotism and where every Ethiopian can enjoy the full benefits of the right to life in peace, harmony and meaningful livelihood security**

### **Mission**

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FIELD's mission is to restore Ethiopia's self-esteem – to change its image from that of a famine and poverty ridden global backwater to a nation capable of sustaining its citizens, with locally driven objectives and through the support of its citizens and the Diaspora. The drivers of our vision are to underpin humanitarian and developmental actions that will promote the evolution of a community and nationally driven self-reliant and self-directed development. This vision underpins the urgent need to support citizens to pro actively participate in the mitigation and management of natural and man-made disasters.

### **Strategic Objectives**

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A major objective of FIELD is to build bridges between the Ethiopian Diaspora and Ethiopia to develop think tank centres, opportunities to the Ethiopian Diaspora to contribute to national development and prepare platforms within which Ethiopian Diaspora can invest in share companies such as real estates, privatised companies, investment bourses, financial institutions, and information technology. To this end FIELD in cooperation with many other organisations will develop,

- 1. a think tank centre for information management relating to the Ethiopian Diaspora. It will undertake a needs assessment of the skills required in Ethiopian and the skills available within the Ethiopian Diaspora in an effort to locate the contribution of the Ethiopian Diaspora more meaningfully.**
- 2. processes within which the Diaspora can improve Ethiopia image of conflict ridden society, hunger and poverty within the international community.**
- 3. and provide opportunities to the Ethiopian Diaspora to contribute to national development directly working with the Ethiopian business community, non governmental organisations and the government offices at all levels with priorities given to rural Ethiopia.**
- 4. the platform within which Ethiopian Diaspora can invest directly in Ethiopia; especially in small scale business.**
- 5. the platform within which Ethiopian Diaspora can invest in share companies that will be facilitated by FIELD and implemented by business organisations and firms in association with the Ethiopian Employers Federation and Society of Ethiopian Entrepreneurs.**

## Process to formulate a strategic plan for FIELD

FIELD's vision is to be a great global the Diaspora. The Diaspora, built with pride by all our people and the Diaspora that sets the standard for excellence... the Diaspora that brings value to the Ethiopian people and Diaspora and provides superior returns to stakeholders. Our vision is to be cannons of good vision; thinking outside the box - the big picture

FIELD's Values: We value people, members of the Diaspora, ethics, technology and environment, health and safety. We conduct our business to the highest ethical standards and in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations to develop or acquire and then rapidly apply appropriate technology to develop out nation.

### Analysing the Diaspora - Key Resources and Factors

**Internal Analysis:** Strength and weaknesses. The study of the (internal) strengths and weaknesses of the Diaspora is crucial in objective - formulation and hence in the strategic management process. Being aware of the Diaspora's abilities and handicaps is something that can not be done without if it is desired to set a goal for the Diaspora. An objective must necessarily be one that can possibly be achieved by the Diaspora, and therefore one cannot formulate an objective without knowing what the Diaspora can (and cannot) achieve. The analysis of the strength or the weakness of an the Diaspora can be made on the basis of data collected with regard to the Diaspora's key resources -human, financial or other. It is thus a primary step to collect data on every resources- human, financial or others. It is thus a primary step to collect data on key resources before one can start analysing strengths and weaknesses.

**External Analysis:** Parallel to internal analysis is the study of the environment in which the Diaspora is found. This is what is known as external or environmental analysis and is defined as "the process by which strategists monitor the environmental sectors to determine opportunities for and threats to their firms". The Diaspora cannot ignore the prevailing conditions of its environment, particularly when it is considering its future. Reference to the environment is inevitable in the strategic management process. By environmental analysis is meant the study of opportunities open for the Diaspora, and the possible threats which it can face. "Strategic Management requires searching for opportunities and threats and determining where they come from and which ones are coming." Why do we need to analyse and diagnose the environment? "Environmental analysis and diagnosis gives strategists time to anticipate opportunities and to plan to take optional responses to these opportunities. It also helps strategists develop an early warning system to prevent threats or develop strategies which can turn a threat to the Diaspora's advantage".

It is through environmental analysis that we can know what can be of use to our country from the Diaspora and what can be of use to the Diaspora. The need for environmental analysis is revealed more when considering what the consequences can be when it is not carried out. Without environmental analysis, the Diaspora would not know what to take advantage of and how to advance. At the same time, the Diaspora would not be able to avoid threats, or convert them into advantages, unless, through environmental analysis, threats are identified and the Diaspora is warned of them. Environmental analysis (socio-economic, technological, and governmental factors) is a systematic process and hence it saves time. On the contrary, the reactions of stakeholders to environmental challenges, without the employment of environmental analysis, would be too pressuring for the executives. Such pressure would result in the implementation of impetuous responses which would sooner or later harm the Diaspora. The study of the environment, in short, has two basic advantages. The threats posed by the environment, with respect to the present involvement of the Diaspora, are identified so that they can be averted or converted into advantages; and The opportunities available in the environment are singled out, so that it would be possible to modify the strategy of the Diaspora in such a way as to make use of the opportunities.

Mayor Arkebe Inaugurates the  
**African Diaspora Square**  
in Addis Abeba

By the powers vested on him by the City of Addis Abeba Mayor Arkebe has designated the square in 'Megenangna' at the main junction of the belt way as the **African Diaspora Square** in commemoration of Martin Luther King Day.

BT Costantinos, PhD

This is a welcome event as People to People, Lem Ethiopia, and various other collaborating organisations have established an international forum for Africans living in Diaspora on January 14, 2005 at the Hilton – **Forum International for Ethiopians Living in the Diaspora. (FIELD)** Subsequent events will mark conferences on the social and economic challenges faced by poverty, HIV/AIDS and famine and opportunities for investment during the rest of the month at different venues. Technology and knowledge transfer can also be accomplished via small workshops to targeted professional audiences and creating diverse dialogues from various angles and discipline.

Much of the African Diaspora is highly educated and technically advanced. Through creative programmes and linkages the Diaspora can do for Africa what the Indian Diaspora has managed to accomplish for the Indian economy.

The Diaspora can help Africa expedite the rights-based approach to its human development, institution building, policy and programme development, promotion of dialogue, public enlightenment and cultural renaissance, building democratic institutions, local governance and development management, developing and being entrepreneurs and developing national think tanks

One day we will all be able to found a communities of practice in which citizens, the Diaspora and the state can use as a forum for consensus building on key arenas of development. Because dialogue creates an irreversible momentum for sustained civil society development, it espouses this relentless tenacity for self-driven entrepreneurial development. It canvasses a strategy to reverse the depressing litany of human despair that will, left unchecked, continue on a scale that has yet to be contemplated. Indeed, various political, social, economic declarations aimed at addressing our institutional vulnerability have been made; mobilising the action required has, nevertheless, remained a daunting challenge.



*Arvis Kennedy, an African American present at the inauguration*

BT Costantinos, PhD  
Addis Abeba, January 16, 2005



FORUM INTERNATIONAL FOR  
ETHIOPIANS LIVING IN DIASPORA (FIELD)

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# AIDE MEMOIRE

## THE DIASPORA MUST ENGAGE CONSTRUCTIVELY IN ETHIOPIA'S TRANSFORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

International forum for Ethiopians living in Diaspora -- January 14, 2005:  
Conferences and awareness on the social and economic challenges faced by poverty,  
HIV/AIDS and famine and opportunities for investment

## WHY THE DIASPORA MUST ENGAGE CONSTRUCTIVELY IN ETHIOPIA'S TRANSFORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Ethiopian Diaspora is highly educated and technically advanced. Through creative programmes and linkages the Diaspora can do for Ethiopia what the Indian Diaspora has managed to accomplish for the Indian economy. However, that can not be accomplished without creating organic relationship between Ethiopia and its Diaspora which will be epitomised by effective and productive links. An all comprehensive avenue of accomplishing this would be to create a space for dialogue and organic networking that will create synergy. PEOPLE TO PEOPLE, LEM ETHIOPIA and various other collaborating organisations are organising an international forum for Ethiopians living in Diaspora -- January 14, 2005.

The event will mark conferences, sports events, tours to historic sites and awareness on the social and economic challenges faced by poverty, HIV/AIDS and famine and opportunities for investment. Through a variety of activities, both fee based and free, such as conferences, festivals, exhibition, and tournaments the occasion will help to create an opportunity to bring together various individuals with interest and research in Ethiopia. The forum will aim to set a precedent for an annual event which will bring together friends of Ethiopia, as optimal venues for attracting investment, creating a sense of community and commitment and opportunities for exchange of knowledge and information. Participants will be encouraged to sustain contacts and continue mutually beneficial relationships with their Ethiopia based partners

Economically, socially and politically there exist almost insurmountable obstacles to the flourishing of development and democratic governance in Ethiopia; however, other societies with identical features have managed to install and maintain democratic systems. Here in Ethiopia, a skilled and committed citizenry and leadership can mitigate conditions that are hostile to it. The Ethiopian Diaspora, more than half a million strong in the US alone, can crucially contribute to these developments. The arguments for citizen action and the Diaspora are consequently beyond eloquent truth that transcends partisan political rhetoric, often presented in tight formulaic terms and conditionalities. The immense polarisation of views on Ethiopia's development and democratisation notwithstanding, the Diaspora is obligated to contribute proactively to the discourse both on theory and development and democratic best-practice lessons. We have organised such a forum. The nation is in desperate need of help:

1. The World Bank states "The turn of the millennium finds Ethiopia as one of the most destitute of nations. **At US\$100, Ethiopia's per capita GDP is among the lowest in the world** - and only about a fifth of the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) average. Poverty is paramount and widespread and often linked to the degradation of the environment and natural resources. Recent national household surveys find **44 percent of people below**

the basic needs poverty line and indicate that improvements have been marginal. Overall income inequality in Ethiopia is relatively low, though there are notable urban/rural and Gini Coefficient interregional disparities”.

**Don't tell me things in Ethiopia have to be as they have been. People don't have to suffer from famines. They don't have to endure constant hunger. They don't have to be ignorant, impoverished and sick. And they don't have to live without hope. Most of the problems faced by human beings can be solved by human beings. Indeed, many of man's problems are made by man. Ethiopia's problems are no exception. We can bring about change for the people who need it most . . . it can be done faster if we first embrace the changes essential to forming a lasting partnership between Ethiopia and its global Diaspora. It is a ready-made solution -- to be sure, with some kinks in it. But there is nothing that cannot be ironed out in this relationship. The stakes are too high.**  
**Noah Samara**

2. Human development indices show that “The gross education enrolment ratio has improved in favour of rural areas and females. Yet the rapid expansion has come at the cost of fast deteriorating conditions at the classroom level. The shortage of health care workers is one of the largest shortages in the world, with health worker/population ratios three to four times lower than in neighbouring countries. The shortage is particularly severe at the lower levels of the health pyramid, and is exacerbated by high attrition and out-migration of skilled health personnel. Over 10 percent<sup>1</sup> of adults are HIV positive with our country ranking third in terms of absolute numbers infected and three millions orphans. The “the AIDS epidemic is costing Ethiopia as much as one percentage point of growth each year, and unless reversed, life expectancy, already falling, is projected to drop by 10 years by 2014 and environmental factors

such as exposure to waterborne diseases, indoor air pollution, and agro-industrial chemicals contribute to nearly 30 percent of the total burden of disease”.

3. The “private sector in Ethiopia faces major constraints. Private investments (domestic and foreign) in manufacturing, agriculture, agro-business and mining, constitute about 10 percent of the GDP (up from about 7 percent in 1994). As in other very poor countries, the private sector in Ethiopia is fragmented and dominated by the informal economy. With many sectors still dominated by the state, a recent World Bank survey of the Ethiopian private sector indicate that the sector is characterised by a number of major constraints including: high taxation, scarcity of human skills, limited access to land and to finance, government bureaucracy, weak infrastructure and uneven playing field. High lease rates and modalities of payment, lease tenure administration, and inefficient markets for leases are constraining private sector development”. Earning from export have also fallen while imports have sky-rocketed.

4. Natural resources have been depleted to an extent that the major famines that recur every other year are attributed to this denudation resulting from abuse, misuse and overuse. 66% of the size of our country's is suitable for agriculture. However, the actual size of land cultivated is estimated to be only 14.8 percent of the total.<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that overall the country loses 1.5-1.9 billion tons of soil annually due to wind and water erosion. Land is not for sale or indefinite ownership in Ethiopia. Rural land user rights are planned to provide for ‘indefinite use and carry inheritance’ rights, but prohibit sale or mortgage. The Government believes that a market in rural land would lead to fire sales of peasants' land, with massive immigration. “Overall agricultural productivity per person remains low even by African standards with the lowest fertilizer use. Environmental degradation and a shrinking resource base also contribute to limited agricultural production. In the highlands, 70 percent of the land is degraded to the point where livelihoods

RECENT FAMINES IN ETHIOPIA: A CHRONOLOGY	
1984-85	Rain failure, 8 million affected, over a million dead
1987-88	Rain failure and severe drought
1991-93	Over 5 million people affected by food shortage
1994	7.6 million people Many parts affected by drought
1995	Four million people are affected by food shortage
1998	Seven million affected
2002	11.3 Million people affected
April 2003	12 - 14 million people
2004	Projected 7 million affected

<sup>1</sup> NIC. 2002. The Next Wave of HIV/AIDS: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia, India, and China. Washington DC.

<sup>2</sup> FDRE, *State Of The Environment Report In Ethiopia*, Environmental Protection Agency, August 2003, Addis Abeba

are no longer sustainable. Ethiopia's water resources natural endowment is big and generous but it is barely used for development. The 2003 famine, that the Bank asserts is related to the collapse of food prices in the previous bumper crop year, had its negative effect compounded by the cumulative impact of the conflict, deterioration in international terms of trade, and the AIDS epidemic.

## II

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### **What can the Diaspora do to promote the Rights-based Development and Democratic Citizenship**

Human development and democratisation succeed when initiatives emanate from civil society rather than other organisational sectors i.e. the state or international sectors. Political interests in civil society must become formally organised to push through a democratic development agenda. The effectiveness of organisations in civil society at promoting democratic reforms and local conflict management depends on their autonomy, capacity, complexity, and coherence. Hence, in the current drive for democracy and development civil society and institutions within it are "foregrounded" as the arena, agents and instruments of the movement. Because the pressure for regime transformation will not come from above - the most likely and most effective initiative will come from civil society that yields the spontaneous interests, demands and institutional mechanisms for change".

From this perspective, the state has only a limited role to play. Its function will not be to manage society's democratic aspirations and activities, but to create the enabling conditions for their free play. Institutions and groups in civil society must be allowed to form and run themselves. Alternatively, the underdevelopment of civil society and the incapacities of institutions within it are seen as major barriers to democratisation. But the overall weakness of Ethiopian civil societies is often cited as a fundamental structural constraint on democratic transformation in Ethiopia. On account of this view, the state has assumed the task of nothing less than "cultivating civil society" itself through political education and mobilisation and other means. The Ethiopian Press that historically would have advocated for civic engagement and enlightenment has so far little bearing on human development. The concept of citizenship as massively influential political thought was driven with the advent of modernisation. The Rights of Man and the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity and their endeavour to found the modern nation state on the will of the people brought the modern construct of citizenship: civil rights, political rights and social rights. Much has happened via adult education that have played an important role in many democratic movements, connected more with social, political, cultural and personal development. The goal is to empower the individual with a sense of unique personal meaning; personal transformation and change.

1. The Diaspora can help Ethiopia expedite its human development: a process of enlarging people's choices; achieved by expanding human capabilities. The three essential capabilities for human development are for people to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable and to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living. If these basic capabilities are not achieved, many choices are simply not available and many opportunities remain inaccessible. But the realm of human development goes further: essential areas of choice, highly valued by people, range from political, economic and social opportunities for being creative and productive to enjoying self-respect, empowerment and a sense of belonging to a community. Income is certainly one of the main means of expanding choices and well-being. However, it is not the sum total of people's lives. Human development relates to current global concerns through human rights, collective well-being and individual rights, equity, and sustainability.
2. One important contribution of the Diaspora is to promote the rights-based approach to development empowers people to make wise decisions. It brings in legal tools and institutions as a means to secure freedom and human development. It adds the missing element of human rights - provide an enabling environment. It provides both vision of what development should strive to achieve (to secure freedom and dignity of the people every where), and the tools, rights principles and standards). The value of rights based approach lies particularly in the transformative potential of human rights to alleviate injustice, inequality and poverty. Human rights are moral norms, standards of accountability and weapons in struggle for social justice.

3. The Diaspora can promote and educate solutions for our persistent poverty is to develop an integrated package of policy, technology and investment strategies together with appropriate decision-making tools, which are used together to fight poverty and promote sustainable livelihoods by building on local adaptive strategies. While the approach has been developed independently, it nonetheless resonates with the spirit and practices of these earlier approaches. It also seeks to overcome their limitations while adding independent value. Its benefit arises from several features: the provision of an integrated framework, assessment of community assets, adaptive strategies, and livelihood activities, governance and policy questions and their inter-linkages are addressed in a cross-sectoral and holistic manner; and it uses an empowerment approach, seeking to improve productivity of people's own livelihood systems and create new opportunities in a sustainable manner. It addresses poverty alleviation through endogenously derived self-reliant strategies focused on private sector growth and social integration through good governance. Sustainability is premised on decision-making, which reflects a balance among economic efficiency, ecological integrity and human well being.

- **Institution building, policy and programme development, promotion of dialogue, public enlightenment and cultural renaissance:** The Diaspora can promote dialogue that will bring stakeholders to forums that resolve potential areas of conflicting ideas in a non-adversarial manner. This also aims at strengthening the national capacity to develop manage and deliver a national civic education programme focused on human development and dealing with poverty, HIV/AIDS ... and responses to them. The aim will be to develop a national civic education policy which clarifies the roles of official democratic institutions in civic education efforts as well as provides a conducive framework for the design, planning and delivery of an effective and independent gender-sensitive civic education programme - targeting various segments of the society, including schools, churches, civil society, the police, prisons, and the media.
- **Building democratic institutions: the Diaspora** can engage in capacity building that aims at improving the effectiveness of parliament and strengthening the institution's ability to interact with the various branches of Government and society. The policy framework and legislation pertaining to these capacities is considered adequate, hence the focus will be placed on other aspects of capacity building. As discussed earlier, the two most urgent tasks are to pursue democracy and reduce poverty. The lawmakers of the country have the vanguard role in developing constitutional, policy and legislative and administrative rules for poverty reduction and sustainable human development. These must include a Bill of Rights that will enable every Ethiopian to have a livelihood security that must be guaranteed by a democratic state. The strategic focus is to strengthen the capacity of the national and the state legislatures to fulfil their three constitutional roles—lawmaking, representation and oversight. Strengthen the internal structure and organisation of the legislatures and the role of political parties within them.
- **Local Governance and Development Management:** This aims at developing the software for strengthening governance at the state levels. The Diaspora can have immense contribution to strengthen the capacity of the communities, their representative institutions and intermediary organisations to participate, in a positive and constructive manner, in the decision making process.<sup>3</sup>
- **Developing and being entrepreneurs: the Diaspora** is in the best position to develop investment and entrepreneurship with long term strategies for employment and growth. Small businesses constitute the bedrock of entrepreneurial development anywhere in the world. Therefore, the extent to which their development has been encouraged is an important measure of government support for private sector entrepreneurial development. In the context of the development of small businesses, the role of the informal sector is underlined. Besides its high responsiveness to market forces, other advantages are use

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<sup>3</sup> Organisations and institutions at the local government level will be enhanced to enable local governments to analyse the constraints and opportunities they face in their day-to-day life; propose and plan activities relevant to local conditions, which address the problems, identified and be major partners in the implementation of the priority actions; and to play a key role in the monitoring and evaluation of all activities, so that appropriate refinements can be made to ensure they remain appropriate to local circumstances and to ensure their sustainability. It is also to ensure access to decentralised, local level services and goods from the private sector and facilitate the flow of information and resources and ensure strong linkages between national policies and strategies and local government level plans and action.

of simple technology, high level of capacity utilisation, ease of entry and exit relative to the formal sector and use of more domestic raw materials and labour in comparison with large scale business. The Diaspora can help create institutions for sustainable mobilisation of resources for small scale entrepreneurs.

- **Developing national think tanks: the Diaspora** can assist in the developing national think tanks that nurture democratic and human development values and develop entrepreneurial culture in Ethiopian society. While the current dynamics of political change and opportunities for popular participation in governance in Ethiopia are unprecedented, a significant challenge, however, is to place these dynamics in a coherent perspective and within the context of basic principles of the market and good governance, and determine how, in the implementation of such principles, relevant experiences may be shared between nations and nationalities. From a policy perspective, therefore, the think tank, will provide information which will enable civil society leaders, policy makers and stakeholders to identify the institutional gaps that inhibit entrepreneurship and democracy; identifying ways and means of helping foster institutions which currently do not exist; reorienting institutions which have been diverted to non-democratic ends; and building in-country capacity for democratic governance on the basis of African demand and with a minimum of outside expertise.
- My dream is that one day we will be able to found a communities of practice in which citizens, the Diaspora and the state can use as a forum for consensus building on key arenas of our nation's development. Because dialogue creates an irreversible momentum for sustained civil society development, it espouses this relentless tenacity for self-driven entrepreneurial development. It canvasses a strategy to reverse the depressing litany of human despair that will, left unchecked, continue on a scale that has yet to be contemplated. Indeed, various political, social, economic declarations aimed at addressing our institutional vulnerability have been made; mobilising the action required has, nevertheless, remained a daunting challenge.

BT Costantinos, PhD



International forum for Ethiopians living in Diaspora –  
Addis Ababa Hilton, January 14, 2005

Tentative programme

09:00 welcome and opening remarks

**Chair: BT Costantinos, PhD**

President, Lem Ethiopia (Welcome and introductions)

**Enawgaw Mehari, M.D,**

President, People to People Inc. (FIELD)

**Noah Samara**

President and CEO, Worldspace Inc (Keynote)

**Ato Girma Waqué,**

CEO, Ethiopian Airlines (Keynote)

*(A Diaspora who is making a difference back home)*

**HE Girma Wolde Giorgis,**

President, FDR Ethiopia (Opening)

**Theme I:**

**Global Diaspora: The Links That Bind and  
The New Global Economic Machines?**

**9:30-10:15 The Potential within: Is the Ethiopian Diaspora a Response to the Nation's Brain Drain?**

**Speakers:** **Amb. Wubshet Demisse**, Director General, MoFA  
**Temesghen Hailu**, President, AHEAD, Canada *(15 Minutes each)*

**Chair:** **Noah Samara** President and CEO, Worldspace

**Panellists:** **Charles Kwenin**, Director IOM, *(8 minutes)*  
**Azeb Tadesse**, Deputy Director, African Studies, UCLA *(8 minutes)*  
**Amb. David Shinn**, PhD, Professor, George Washington University  
**Samrawit Ashenafi**, MPH, CDC Fellow

10:15-11:00 Discussion

11:00-11:15 Coffee break

**Theme II:**

**The face of HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ethiopia**

**11:15-12:40 Assessment of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia,  
Panel on the HIV epidemic in Ethiopia: Can it be averted?**

**Chair:** **Dr. Dawit Zawde**, President & CEO, Africa Humanitarian Action

**Speaker** **Ato Nigatu Mereke**, Head, HAPCO (15 Minutes)

**Amb. David Shinn**, PhD, Adjunct Professor,

George Washington University, USA (12 Minutes)

**Discussants:** (Maximum 5 minutes each)

<b>Dawn of Hope,</b>	(Management of ARVs and Opportunistic infections in Ethiopia: key challenges)
<b>Dr. Tadesse Wouhib,</b>	Director CDC Ethiopia (2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation Surveillance in Ethiopia),
<b>Dr. Seifu Bahiru,</b>	medical director, Police Hospital (Challenges faced by physicians),
<b>Ato Kebede Asrat,</b>	Executive Director CRDA (the role of NGOs)

**12:40-14:00** Lunch - private

**14:00-15:00** **The Critical Need for HIV/AIDS Prevention Research,**

<b>Chair</b>	<b>Dr. Abye Tasse.</b>	AAU, Associate Vice President
<b>Speakers</b>	<b>Dr. Dawit Woldaye</b>	Head of Laboratory, ENARP (CD4/Viral load measurements in Ethiopian patients) – (10 minutes)
	<b>Prof David Clifford.</b>	Professor, Washington University Medical School, St Louis, (10 Minutes)
<b>Discussant:</b>		(Maximum 5 minutes each)
	<b>Dr. Yodit Abraham,</b>	Dean, Defence University Medical School,
	<b>Dr. Zufan Lakew,</b>	Dean Addis Abeba University Medical School
	<b>Dr. Abraham Assefa</b>	Senior researcher, AHRI
	<b>Dr. Konji Sabati,</b>	Director Pfizer Diflucan Programme

**15:00-15:15** **Q&A**

### **Theme III:**

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## **Neuro AIDS and OVC**

**15:15-15:45** **Patterns of Neuro AIDS in Ethiopia and neuropathology**

<b>Chair:</b>	<b>Prof. Redda Tekle Haymanot,</b>	Prof. of Neurology
<b>Speakers:</b>	<b>Dr. Zenebe Melaku,</b>	Head, Rheumatology and Immunology Unit, AAU Medical Faculty <b>Pattern of neuroAIDS in Ethiopia</b> (15 Minutes)
	<b>Dr. Dianne Langford,</b>	Asst. Prof. of Pathology (15 minutes)
	<b>Ms Wude Mihret</b>	AHRI

**Discussants:**

<b>Prof. David Clifford</b>	(Maximum 5 minutes each)
<b>Dr. Senait Ashenafi</b>	Head Pathology Dept. AAU Medical Faculty
<b>Dr. Ayele Zawde</b>	Police Hospital
<b>Dr. Gutta Zenebe</b>	HIV/AIDS Researcher

15:45-16:00 **Q&A**

16:00-16:15 **Coffee break**

**16:15-16:55** **AIDS Orphans and vulnerable children in Ethiopia**

**Speaker:** **Diana Matanovich** (HIV/AIDS Orphans: ) (15 minutes)

**Chair** **Ambaye Kidane,** Chair, People to People Canada

**Discussants:** (Maximum 5 minutes each)

**Dr. Yilikal Adamu,** P2P Country Representative, P2P  
Orphan programmes (5 minutes)

**Mekidim Ethiopia,** Social Support (5 minutes)

**UNICEF** OVC, (5 minutes)

**Dr. Abraham Asnake** Medical Director, Hayatt Hospital  
(Orphans)

**17:55-18:55** **Q&A followed by general discussion**

**18:55-19:00** **Closing**



## ANNEXURE

**Dr Enawgaw Mehari,**  
P2P President

**O**ur country, Ethiopia, is at crossroads and the challenges beckon for indigenous solutions. Most of us define development on the Internet from overseas. But we failed to give back to the people who helped us to be where we are and to have what we have. Talks about brain drain / brain gain can sometimes give massive migraine if not heart attack. The real brain drain is failure to give back.

The Ethiopian Diaspora must re-examine its responsibility and commitment to the people of Ethiopia to share Ethiopian identity and work to improve the standard of education, health care, eradicate famine and improve the quality of life without any political, religious or ethnic affiliation. Let us designate “Decade of home development” That way, any Ethiopian abroad who failed to give back to "home development" will be considered as missing Ethiopian. I also urge the government of Ethiopia to create a ministerial or at least commissioner position to facilitate and handle the Diaspora virtual institution. The remittance from the Diaspora had been noted to be more than the coffee export and tourism together.

Ethiopia needs its children to develop her, Ethiopia is rich naturally, only poor in management, may be because of three thousand years of experience in bureaucracy. Only her children can reverse the trend that is why Forum International Ethiopians Living in the Diaspora (FIELD) have been founded to provide platforms for Ethiopian to exchange their ideas and implement to action. You can volunteer, teach, open business, do research, and treat patient, support orphans etc just don't fail to give back... Ethiopia needs every one who can give back not just the scientists or the very top. Ethiopia does not deserve to go from bad to worse. We all have to bear responsibility to improve every village of Ethiopia. It is after all the cradle of man kind. Let's point our fingers to the challenges.



**SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT  
H.E. GIRMA WOLDE GIORGIS  
PRESIDENT,  
FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA**

Dear Ethiopians living in the Diaspora,  
The Diplomatic Corps and members of the international community,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking the various institutions in our Government that have been working to promote the role of the Ethiopian Diaspora in our national development. Spearheaded by our foreign service and our institutions in Government have been working relentlessly to promote the contribution of the Diaspora to Ethiopia's development. I am also delighted to know that various non-government initiatives are adding value to the national initiative. In this regard I would like to commend the leadership role played by Lem Ethiopia and People to People for this unprecedented gathering with an extraordinary clarity of objective focussed on harnessing the massive human potential and resources within our Diaspora.

The fact that this gathering is focussing on key challenges of HIV/AIDS and the defining the role of the Diaspora is evidence that we have moved to the dictum to ask what the Diaspora can do to the nation that nurtured and educated them and not what this impoverished nation can do for them. I am also encouraged to know that the organisers plan to make this a regular event happening at different times of the year focussed on well researched issues, such the HIV/AIDS forum today, bringing together friends of Ethiopia, as optimal venues for investment, creating a sense of community and commitment and opportunities for exchange of knowledge and information. I know that the Ethiopian Diaspora by and large is highly educated and technically advanced. The Ethiopian Diaspora, estimated at over a million, can crucially contribute to national development. As has been stated by the organisers "the arguments for the participation of the Diaspora are beyond eloquent truth that transcends partisan political rhetoric. The immense polarisation of views on Ethiopia's development and governance notwithstanding, the Diaspora is obligated to contribute proactively to the discourse both on theory and best-practice."

The fact remains that our nation needs your help. I do not have to recite the statistics of the challenges of poverty and under-development we face here. It is easy to highlight this by the magnitude of our national resources degradation and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Our natural resources have been depleted to an extent that the major famines that recur every other year are attributed to this denudation resulting from abuse, misuse, and overuse. Environmental degradation and a shrinking resource base also contribute to limited agricultural production. In the highlands, 70 percent of the land is degraded to the point where livelihoods are no longer sustainable. Overall agricultural productivity per person remains low. Ethiopia's water resources natural endowment is big and generous but we need your expertise and resources to develop it. It is a win-win situation for all.

**WHAT CAN THE DIASPORA DO TO CONTRIBUTE TO DEVELOPMENT**

1. **The Diaspora** can help Ethiopia expedite its human development: a process of enlarging people's choices achieved by expanding human capabilities. The three essential capabilities for human development are for people to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable and to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and the pursuit of happiness. If these basic capabilities are not achieved, many choices are simply not available and many opportunities remain inaccessible. But the realm of human development goes further: essential areas of choice, highly valued by people, range from political, economic and

social opportunities for being creative and productive to enjoying self-respect, empowerment and a sense of belonging to a community. Income is certainly one of the main means of expanding choices and well being. However, it is not the sum total of people's lives. Human development relates to our collective well being, individual rights, equity, and sustainability. It can help us generate solutions for our persistent poverty ... to develop an integrated package of **policy, technology and investment strategies** together with **appropriate decision-making tools**, which are used together to **fight poverty** and **promote sustainable livelihoods** by building on local adaptive strategies.

2. **The Diaspora** can promote dialogue that will bring stakeholders to forums that resolve potential areas of conflicting ideas in a non-adversarial manner. This also aims at strengthening the national capacity to develop manage and deliver a national civic education programme focused on human development and dealing with poverty, HIV/AIDS ... and responses to them. It can engage in capacity building that aims at improving the effectiveness of institutions of governance and strengthening their ability to interact with the various branches of Government and society. The policy framework and legislation pertaining to these capacities is considered adequate, hence the focus will be placed on other aspects of capacity building. It can have immense contribution to strengthen the capacity of the communities, their representative institutions and intermediary organisations to participate, in a positive and constructive manner, in the decision making process.
3. **The Diaspora** is well placed to develop investment and entrepreneurship with long term strategies for employment and growth. Small businesses constitute the bedrock of entrepreneurial development anywhere in the world. Therefore, the extent to which their development has been encouraged is an important measure of government support for private sector entrepreneurial development. In the context of the development of small businesses, the role of the informal sector is underlined. Besides its high responsiveness to market forces, other advantages are use of simple technology, high level of capacity utilisation, ease of entry and exit relative to the formal sector and use of more domestic raw materials and labour in comparison with large scale business. The Diaspora can help create institutions for sustainable mobilisation of resources for small-scale entrepreneurs.
4. **The Diaspora** can assist in the developing national think tanks that nurture democratic and human development values and develop entrepreneurial culture in Ethiopian society. While the current dynamics of political change and opportunities for popular participation in governance in Ethiopia are unprecedented, a significant challenge, however, is to place these dynamics in a coherent perspective and within the context of basic principles of the market and good governance, and determine how, in the implementation of such principles, relevant experiences may be shared between nations and nationalities. From a policy perspective, therefore, the think tank, will provide information which will enable civil society leaders, policy makers and stakeholders to identify the institutional gaps that inhibit entrepreneurship and democracy; identifying ways and means of helping foster institutions which currently do not exist; reorienting institutions which have been diverted to non-democratic ends; and building in-country capacity for democratic governance on the basis of African demand and with a minimum of outside expertise.

Finally, I wish to congratulate, once again, the organisers and would avail of this opportunity to reiterate our Government's support for facilitating the contribution of the Diaspora to national and community development and the critical development of human qualities.

I now pronounce the Forum Open.



## TURNING BRAIN DRAIN INTO BRAIN GAIN

Noah A. Samara

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Forum International for Ethiopians Living in Diaspora

### Keynote address

Addis Abeba Hilton, 14 January 2005

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Thank you for inviting me to speak at this forum as a member of the Ethiopian Diaspora. I have been asked – it is more like *I have been told* -- to be brief by the organisers -- who also happen to be my friends. You would think they believe I talk a lot. *Ke-abro adeggar atesedded becha saihon abreh sew feetem atekreb. Any way I will not take offense and I will be brief.*

Before I get into my actual remarks I wanted to share an observation: I read the thematic paper for the conference that explains why The Diaspora Must Engage Constructively In Ethiopia's Transformational Development. It is, honestly, a very well written paper that addresses many of the issues that the diaspora can constructively engage in Ethiopia's development. I understood the paper for the most part. But there was a phrase there I did not understand. It says and I quote: ... "while income inequality is relatively low, there are notable urban/rural and Gini Coefficient interregional disparities." Frankly, I don't know what Gini coefficients are; but I imagined development experts like Costi rubbing these coefficient lamps – you know, like Alladin's lamp -- and getting a genie to pop out and say "OoooKaaaayy...you got three wishes...."

We are here to find ways for the Diaspora to constructively engage in solving Ethiopia's real problems. But first, I ask you to consider a hypothetical problem: There is a man who lives on the top floor of a very tall building here in Addis. Every day he rides the elevator to the ground floor and leaves the building to go to work. But, on return, he can only travel half way up in the lift and has to walk the rest of the way . . . unless it's during the rainy months of June, July and August. Why? The answer is that the man is very short and can only reach halfway through the buttons. However, during rainy months, he has his umbrella, which he uses to press the button for the top floor. You would think this is an Ethiopian story – because *some* of us are short.

Actually, this puzzle is a classic example of lateral thinking. Lateral thinking suggests that you leave a vexing problem; go away from it – so to speak – and, when you come back to it, you will look at it with perspective and from a different angle. In contrast with customary approaches, lateral thinking disrupts an obvious sequence of thoughts for the sake of arriving at a solution from another angle. In other words, lateral thinking relies on perspective. Distance creates perspective. The poet Khalil Gibran said it best in his masterwork, *The Prophet*.

**"When you part from your friend, you should grieve not; for that which you love most in him may be clearer in his absence, as the mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain."**

After years of seeing Ethiopia from afar, members of the Diaspora have a perspective that is unquestionably different and sometimes clearer than their countrymen who have lived here continuously. This vision empowers expatriates to devise fresh and innovative solutions for old and new problems. There is an urgent need for solutions in public health, agriculture, education, and in establishing reliable infrastructures for transportation, water and power that are critical to national development. No question.

If distance – and the perspective it creates – is one gift from the Diaspora, then certainly their other great gift is closeness and the empathy it engenders. Whether you live in Addis Ababa or the Rocky Mountains, if you are

Ethiopian, the country and its culture are intimately woven into the fabric of who you are. Your sense of identity is wrought in the early years of life. As a child your identity is made up of your name, your family background, your country and religion. As you grow over time, a lot of things change. But you cannot erase your basic identity.

I have personally found memories of my early years more powerful than teenage and early adulthood memories. It is like a phenomenon in the world of art called *pentimento*. In art museums, you can sometimes see *how* the original outline of a painting becomes evident as the top layer of paint grows transparent with age. Many artists paint over a canvass and then paint a white paint over the painting and re-paint their idea or paint a new painting altogether over the old painting. When the painting on top ages, it becomes faint and transparent; it is as if time and the elements have "washed away" the intensity; and the original painting that was painted over begins to re-surface, albeit very faintly. The term for this is *pentimento*.

Our lives are filled with moments of *pentimento*, moments when our essential or original being radiates through layers of world-weary experience. I feel it every time I return to Addis and I pass a street, smell a particular aroma or hear a unique sound and a part of my past unlocks and becomes accessible to the moment as if I was back there in time and space. It is as if the most unlikely smell or sight would click an icon on an old file in my mind and brings it to the foreground.

To be here and experience the embrace of culture – with its bonds of family, boundless hospitality and abiding humility – is to feel gratitude beyond the ambit of words to express. I know thousands and thousands of others in the Diaspora feel exactly as I do. And an act that makes you grateful is something that can be re-paid. In this case, the gratitude of the Diaspora can translate directly into a commitment to contribute knowledge, energy and capital to Ethiopia.

And who better to do it? No one can care for your home better than you can. Even as we acknowledge the magnificent contributions that people from many lands have made to Ethiopia, those of us in the Diaspora can rightly claim to be uniquely qualified and motivated to serve our country. The Diaspora offers an exceptional synergy: the problem-solving perspective that comes with distance and the intense commitment that comes with a sense of deep closeness and belonging. Oh yes, it also includes a lot of men and women with world-class competence in their respective fields. I could spend hours listing Ethiopians in Europe and the USA who have distinguished themselves in medicine, law, business, academia, athletics, and the arts. In addition to making a mark in their respective fields, many have made a lot of money and would be willing to invest a portion of it right here. The Diaspora holds so much potential for the future of this country. But this potential will only become a reality if we move forward in a spirit of partnership.

As non-resident Ethiopians take up the obligation to improve their homeland, this nation and its government face the corresponding obligation to facilitate the Diaspora's participation and support its success. In other words, to make this work well, the Diaspora needs to commit and the government needs to create a welcoming environment for that commitment.

In practical terms, this means creating an environment that helps the Diaspora overcome any trepidations they may have about committing their resources. Today the Ethiopian government is not quick in handling standard bureaucratic matters, and the rule sets are not clear or always secure for private investment. That portion of the Diaspora from industrialised nations is accustomed to governmental processes that are transparent, rational and scrupulous.

People and capital are risk-averse. People and capital have a strong preference for migrating to locations where they will feel safe and respected. The Diaspora is no exception. For the Ethiopian government to institute such positive measures would be good news for the Diaspora and great news for its own citizens. It ultimately comes down to a fundamental question: Are we willing to change? Even when the transition is from worse to better, change is never easy. The U.S. radical activist Saul Alinsky grasped the inherent dynamics when he said, "Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict."

Refusing to change is also a choice. Maybe that would spare Ethiopia some abrasive conflicts, but it would condemn the country to continuing the terrible friction of disease, poverty, hunger and ignorance. Have the Diaspora and government of any nation ever joined in such a common purpose? Absolutely! Just look across the Arabian Sea and you will find a marvellous example. The Government of India has done a masterful job of forging bonds with its global Diaspora. Not so long ago, India was decrying a “brain drain.” Now it is rejoicing in a “brain gain.” Tens of thousands of Indians have recently returned to their home country. They are drawn by a thriving economy, a hospitable environment for business and investment, and they are overjoyed to be on home soil with their extended families.

Behind this remarkable success story are a range of initiatives. But the most impressive is this: The government established the Ministry of Indian Overseas Affairs, a department that exists to communicate with the Diaspora and facilitate its large-scale involvement. It is a Department of Government solely dedicated to help the Diaspora; a sort of one-stop shopping where a returnee goes to get licenses and other facilities that would have otherwise required him to stand on lines in many different government offices. An Indian living abroad could thus come on a short vacation and find a government ministry helping him spend or invest his money quickly. To promote greater investment, the Indian government is even taking the bold step of initiating dual citizenship. And as a result tens of thousands of Indians in the Diaspora are returning home with billions of dollars. The Indian government gets it. Educated affluent Indians are returning to their home country and infusing it with capability and optimism. With vision and persistence, they made it happen.

Can Ethiopia do it? Absolutely. *Will Ethiopia do it?* It depends on nothing other than political will. It is really as simple as saying "Let's do it. Let's get it done!" Imagine if twenty thousand Ethiopians from the USA – a mere four-percent of the Diaspora there – each decided to spend \$100,000 here, either investing in businesses or purchasing homes. It would yield two billion dollars of hard currency flowing into the economy and thousands of jobs. And each one of those dollars would come with the commitment of an educated, capable individual to Ethiopia's future.

Don't tell me things in Ethiopia have to be as they have been. People don't have to suffer from famines. They don't have to endure constant hunger. They don't have to be ignorant, impoverished and sick. And they don't have to live without hope. Most of the problems faced by human beings can be solved by human beings. Indeed, many of man's problems are made by man. Ethiopia's problems are no exception. We can bring about change for the people who need it most . . . it can be done faster if we first embrace the changes essential to forming a lasting partnership between Ethiopia and its global Diaspora. It is a ready-made solution -- to be sure, with some kinks in it. But there is nothing that cannot be ironed out in this relationship. The stakes are too high. There is a lot of work to be done to even outlast our generation, especially once this partnership becomes solid. This should be exciting for all parties: not only is there work to do for everyone, it is work that requires heavy lifting, . . . .work that will save lives while adding meaning to one's own life.

I do not know about you, but for me it certainly beats reliance on Gini Coefficients! Thank you.



**THE FIRST ANNUAL FORUM  
INTERNATIONAL FOR ETHIOPIANS LIVING IN THE DIASPORA  
(FIELD)**

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**THE ETHIOPIAN DIASPORA:  
A PARTNER FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**Amb. Wubishet Demissie  
January 14, 2005, Hilton Hotel, Addis Ababa**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend my thanks to the organisers of this Forum for inviting me to speak on the timely topic of the Ethiopian Diaspora and its possible relationship with its country of origin. I want to focus only on the broader perspective of the importance attached to the Ethiopian Diaspora towards nation building and the commitment shown by the Ethiopian government to facilitate its participation.

As we approach the third Ethiopian millennium, our country remains to face daunting challenges of severe food shortages, extreme backwardness, HIV/AIDS pandemic and other communicable diseases. Overcoming these challenges requires sound and realistic policies as well as concerted actions aimed at guarantying food security, the provision of basic necessities and infrastructure, arresting the alarming rate of HIV/AIDS infections, adequate care to people living with and to the growing number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Tackling these challenges inevitably imposes on us the enhancement of the capacity of both public and private institutions, the guaranteeing of an efficient civil service, fighting against corruption and mismanagement, and most important of all the strengthening of institutions is vital for good governance and rule of law.

*Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

At different times in our history, Ethiopians from all walks of life have had to leave the country for different reasons and establish their lives in different corners of the world. The Ethiopian Diaspora, as we all know, is large in size. Those who are residing in North America constitute a significant part of it. Their residency abroad has afforded them not only the opportunity to acquire most valuable knowledge and experience but have also allowed them to make significant contributions to their respective host societies. Whatever the reason for leaving their country, they remain part and parcel of the national human resources and are in a unique position to make important contributions to the development of our country. Hence, over the years the Ethiopian Diaspora has developed tremendous good will to make meaningful contributions in the development of its country using the experience and know-how as is most evident in its recent activities in Ethiopia.

In recognition of this reservoir of goodwill and enormous potential, the government considers the Ethiopian Diaspora as one of the prime development partner and has taken series of measures for making the best use of its immense untapped resource for the nation building. In this regard, forging national consensus and the role that Ethiopians in the Diaspora could play have been highlighted in the Foreign and National Security Policy and Strategy of the country. In recognising the role of the Ethiopian Diaspora with respect to its country of origin, the Ethiopian government has established the Ethiopian Expatriates Affairs General Directorate and Office of Coordinating Ethiopian Diaspora and Friends of Ethiopia within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Capacity Building respectively. And it has also assigned diplomats in all our Embassies for building a warm and constructive relationship between the Ethiopian Diaspora and its country of origin.

Apart from such institutional measures, the government has also taken encouraging legislative measures. Among these, the promulgation of proclamation No.270/2002, which provides Foreign Nationals of Ethiopian origin with rights and privileges to be exercised in their country of origin, directive which allows Ethiopian Diaspora to open foreign currency account in local banks, tax and custom free privileges for returnees and issuance of urban land for the construction of residential buildings are some of the measures to be mentioned.

Over the last couple of years, in part due to these measures, the participation of the Ethiopian Diaspora in the socio economic activities in Ethiopia has been steadily increasing. A number of individuals and organisations in the Ethiopian Diaspora have been making positive contributions in strengthening the capacity of our higher learning institutions, providing health related assistance in the area of delivering medical books and equipments, scholarships, creating linkages and direct transfer of knowledge through specialised training and also in the area of HIV-AIDS support.

It is however clear that compared to the immense potential and capacity of Ethiopians in the Diaspora a lot remains to be done. One of the major impediments preventing wider participation of Ethiopians in the Diaspora is a misunderstanding on the need and purpose of such participation. It should be made clear that, the contribution to Poverty eradication efforts in the country could be made irrespective of different, at times opposing, perspectives on political or other issues. We should therefore be able to transcend these differences and develop consensus in order to pull our resources together to lift our country from abject poverty and backwardness. Hence, this conference provides a timely opportunity to reflect on ways in which Ethiopians at the Diaspora could answer the call for partnership to transfer knowledge, skill and capital to Ethiopia.

*Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

On my part, I would like to pledge the partnership of the government of Ethiopia in creating an enabling environment necessary to realise Diaspora dreams and aspirations for our country. I am confident that Ethiopian professionals in North America and other parts of the world would make prominent contributions to the country, individually or through their associations in transferring new and tested concepts and systems, in promoting trade and investment and cultivating friendly constituency for Ethiopia. In all these activities you can count on the full support of the Ethiopian government. In closing, allow me once again to express my deep appreciation for the opportunity to address this conference and wish you successful deliberation on the topical issue of partnership for the development of our country.

I thank you



**THE FIRST ANNUAL FORUM  
INTERNATIONAL FOR ETHIOPIANS LIVING IN THE DIASPORA  
(FIELD)**

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**MIGRATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA**

Mr. Charles Kwenin,  
Head of Mission,  
International Organization for Migration

I thank Dr. Costantinos and organizers for providing this forum for all stakeholders to exchange ideas and expertise with respect to the Ethiopian Diaspora. I start my presentation by giving a brief over-view of IOM. IOM is the leading international migration organization committed to regulating and managing migration for the benefit of both sending and receiving countries.

With respect to the Ethiopian Diaspora, my view is that the Diaspora could play a greater role as part of the solution to the country's problems if it is actually coupled with other innovative implementations. For instance, he claimed that the Diaspora could contribute to replacing the skills lost to brain drain since they acquire skills, experience and financial wealth while abroad. I also stress the importance of remittances from the Diaspora in enhancing national purchasing power as well as augmenting individual household incomes. I especially underline the importance of putting in place viable schemes to progress remittances from household consumptions to investment.

There is a great role that could be played by IGOs, NGOs, government, the Diaspora and different stakeholders to facilitate the involvement of Diaspora for the development of Ethiopia. There are IOM programmes designed just to do that like the MIDA (Migration for the Development of Africa) programme and so on. Such initiatives, present the Diaspora with flexible ways of participation such as short-term visit, one time mission, investment, permanent return and virtual teleconference.

I finalise my contribution by linking the issues of migration and development:

- Partnership should be built between countries of origin, host countries, Diaspora associations, and local private sector initiatives.
- Governments of both sending and receiving countries formulate and implement migration policies that enable the Diaspora to improve their professional options while contributing to the development of their country of origin.
- Enhance knowledge and technological transfers to Ethiopia through technological innovations.
- Enforce incentives already put in place to returnees and investors
- Establish steering committee that guides, assists and directs the implementation of Diaspora mobilization and utilization initiatives as well as bringing together efforts being made by government, international organizations, the private sector, civil society organizations, NGOs and Diaspora associations.



## Assessing and Averting HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia

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By David H. Shinn

Adjunct Professor, Elliott School of International Affairs  
The George Washington University

It is an honour to address this distinguished group and take part in the launching of the Forum International for Ethiopians Living in the Diaspora, an organisation designed to create a productive relationship between Ethiopia and its large and talented Diaspora. This initial conference, which has a focus on HIV/AIDS, is the first of others to follow concerning challenges such as poverty, famine, investment opportunities and technology transfer. I commend People to People, Lem Ethiopia and other contributing organisations for taking this initiative.

2005 marks a useful personal milestone for me to consider the progress Ethiopia has made in confronting the HIV/AIDS crisis. Ten years earlier when I was serving in the State Department as the Director of East African Affairs, I learned that I might be assigned as ambassador to Ethiopia. Coincidentally, USAID had commenced a vigorous program to impress on US government personnel, especially those being assigned to the field, the threat of HIV/AIDS to economic and social development in Africa. Based on those briefings, I determined to make HIV/AIDS an important part of the American Embassy agenda in Addis Ababa. Following my arrival in Addis Ababa, initial efforts in 1996 to encourage the government of Ethiopia to accord more attention to HIV/AIDS were, frankly, disappointing. USAID and the embassy arranged professional briefings on the subject for high level officials and non-governmental organisations. Several NGOs pursued the crisis, but most elements of the government dealing with health issues were more concerned about problems such as malaria, admittedly an equally serious challenge. An exception to this situation was the Ethiopian Defence Force, which independently recognised the threat and had begun to take serious measures to counter the problem.

It was only in 1998 that Ethiopian authorities began to take HIV/AIDS with the seriousness that it required. Former President Negasso Gidada took the lead on behalf of the government, a role continued by President Girma Woldegiorgis. Abuna Paulos made HIV/AIDS an important part of the agenda of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. UNAIDS, the World Health Organisation and other UN agencies became more active. As funding became available, additional NGOs joined the battle. The Supreme Islamic Council and Protestant churches like Kale Hiwot, Mekane Yesus and the Mennonites added their strong support. By late in 1999 there was widespread realisation within and outside the Ethiopian government that much more must be done to slow down the pandemic. Ethiopia has made impressive progress in confronting HIV/AIDS since its slow beginning dating back to the mid-1990s. There is still a long way to go and most of the battle lies ahead. But this is a good time to recognise the achievements that have been made by the government, churches, mosques, civil society, World Bank, Global Fund, international organisations, donor governments, US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, domestic and international NGOs, private companies like Pfizer and foundations like Packard. Without this combined effort, the HIV/AIDS situation in Ethiopia today would be much worse than it is and many more Ethiopians would be HIV positive or dead. The Ethiopian government and all of the organisations and countries that played a role in raising the issue to a higher priority and supported programs to combat HIV/AIDS deserve credit. In mid-1998 UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation announced that the HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate for Ethiopia was 9.31 percent. In 2002 they revised this percentage downward to 6.4 percent or about two million adults. This does not

mean there has been a decline in the HIV/AIDS rate in recent years. Rather, it indicates that the availability of more data and better analysis of that data suggest the earlier figure may have been too high. HIV/AIDS remains a growing problem, although increasing at a slower rate than during the 1990s.

Because of Ethiopia's high population, it remains one of the most impacted countries in the world after South Africa, India and possibly Nigeria. On the other hand, the UN estimates that half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have a higher adult prevalence rate than Ethiopia. This statistic should not encourage complacency, however, particularly when an estimated 1,000 Ethiopians continue to become infected each day. But it does suggest that Ethiopia has begun, belatedly, to take serious steps to slow down and eventually roll back the pandemic. The collective effort over the past ten years to fight HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia has largely succeeded in spreading the word about the presence of the disease and the ways it can be avoided. The stigma of HIV/AIDS remains a serious obstacle but there has been progress here too. Organisations like Dawn of Hope, Mekdim and Save Your Generation deserve much of the credit for this. The screening of films like *Hidden Tears* and the establishment throughout Ethiopia of thousands of anti-AIDS clubs in schools and communities have also made a major contribution.

There are several areas, however, that desperately need more attention. One of the most significant restraints to additional progress in combating HIV/AIDS is the health care delivery system. Ethiopia's per capita government spending on health, just more than \$1 in 2001, was the lowest in Africa. It reportedly rose to about \$2 per capita by 2004. There is one doctor for every 34,000 Ethiopians and at least 40 percent of the population, primarily in rural areas, has no access to any modern healthcare. Until there is a major improvement and expansion of the health care system, it will be difficult to roll back the HIV/AIDS pandemic, not to mention other diseases. This will require both higher prioritisation of health care by the government of Ethiopia and larger financial commitments from the international partner community. There must also be increased attention given to the problem of the brain drain as it affects Ethiopian doctors and medical professionals. Increasingly, it is important to shift from a general HIV/AIDS information campaign to one that encourages behaviour change. As the stigma of HIV/AIDS continues to lessen, it should become easier to promote individual personal responsibility for behaviour change and community-based provisions for care of affected Ethiopians. Encouraging abstinence among unmarried persons and fidelity among those who are married should be part of this program, but most experts agree it must also include an important component that promotes the use of condoms. Any information campaign will be more effective if combined with family planning programs

A delegation sponsored by the American think tank, the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), visited Ethiopia last May in order to assess the U.S. approach to fighting HIV/AIDS in the country. It noted that most of the HIV positive persons in Ethiopia are female, a situation that is also common elsewhere. Consequently, the CSIS delegation focused on the need to improve access to basic health care for women and girls. In implementing the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), it recommended the expansion of efforts that prevent mother-to-child transmission. It also argued for programs that keep girls from AIDS-affected communities in schools, establishment of appropriate HIV/AIDS curricula in the schools with special attention to the dangers of gender inequality and gender-based violence and increased economic empowerment and skills training for women and girls affected by HIV/AIDS.

One important element of the anti-HIV/AIDS program in Ethiopia has developed very late in the crisis: anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment. But ARV finally has become part of the effort. At the beginning of 2004 only about 2,000 Ethiopians were receiving ARV medication. This number increased to some 5,000 Ethiopians by mid-year, 60 percent of them men, and to 10,000 by the end of the year. The U.S. announced late in 2004 a \$43 million program to provide ARV drugs for up to 15,000 people by March 2005. The government of Ethiopia plans to increase the ARV drug program to 210,000 persons over the next five years. This will require an expansion of the health care system and the ability of regional hospitals to deliver the drugs safely and appropriately to patients. Although Ethiopia was late to implement ARV treatment, the commitment now seems to be in place and significant resources are arriving to implement the program. The handling of Ethiopia's HIV/AIDS crisis can be viewed as the proverbial bottle half full or bottle half empty. Because of Ethiopia's inherent poverty, woefully lacking

health care delivery system, high population growth rate, late recognition of the problem and occasional misplaced priorities, many see a bottle half empty. As I reflect, however, on the situation over the past ten years, I see a bottle half full. The government now recognises the importance of the HIV/AIDS problem and has organised itself to combat it. International assistance is flowing to Ethiopia. Ten years ago I thought the HIV/AIDS situation in Ethiopia today would be much worse than it is.



## **The Potential within: the role of the Diaspora in capacity building efforts**

Temesgen Hailu  
President, Association for Higher Education and Development  
(AHEAD)

Mr. Chairman, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, friends:

I would like to thank Dr. Costantinos and organizers of this conference for inviting me and my colleagues here. First of all let me introduce you to the other AHEAD members who are present: Mrs Azieb Teferi, and Captain Haile Belai. I also bring you greetings from Canada, from other members of AHEAD who have, sent their best wishes for a successful conference.

AHEAD was established in 1999 by a small group of volunteers who came together with two things (1) a vision and (2) a commitment. AHEAD was established to give us an opportunity to give back to our people for the education we have received in our country. As many of you are aware, we have all benefited from the education system of our country, but many of us never had the privilege to serve our people as we left the country for different reasons. So, we AHEAD are a small group of volunteers, which is entirely funded by donations.

We have three on-going programmes. We send books and journals to medical faculties in Jimma, Gondar and Addis Ababa. We also run a bursary program in partnership with our partners - the Getachew Bolodia foundation. Under the bursary program, we supported a total of 72 medical students from Jimma, Gondar and Addis Ababa. Each student receives a bursary of 30 birr for three consecutive years. At the end of the third year the students start their internship and the bursary is discontinued. Each year, 18 new students join the bursary and another 18 complete the bursary. This year, we will be starting an equipment program. Under this program, we will be handing out a stethoscope to each of the 18 students when they complete the bursary program. Moreover, we have just established the Selamawit Hailu scholastic award in the name of my late sister whose death was the cause that gave rise to this vision. Under this award, we will be giving an award of 500 birr each to three students who complete the bursary programme.

The purpose of my presentation is not only to introduce AHEAD to you but also to engage in a dialogue on how the Diaspora can contribute to development efforts in Ethiopia. I will therefore share the findings of a study that AHEAD recently completed. The research entitled **semantics aside: the role of the African Diaspora in Africa's capacity building efforts** (case study: Ethiopia).the research was funded by the international development research centre (IDRC). The study, semantics aside, is perhaps the first to be carried out by an African Diaspora group to the level we have done it. We used Ethiopia as a case study, but we are confident that the findings are relevant to the general issues that affect Africa. The other objective of my presentation is to ask for your views and ideas as to how we the Ethiopian Diaspora can work with our brother\_ and sisters in Ethiopia.

As a representative of AHEAD, I would like to say that we believe that the Ethiopian Diaspora has a moral responsibility to contribute to the development efforts of our country. We are not funding agencies or non-governmental organization. We are Ethiopians and we are fulfilling an obligation for what this country has given us. It is, therefore, important for us *to* see how we can work with Ethiopian civil society, professional's institutions and government bodies in order to make a modest contribution to development efforts. May I mention that there are other Diaspora groups from Canada here and I am sure we would all be pleased to exchange views on

the best ways to work with partners here? Let me give you some highlights of our study.

- First of all, Africa has lost one-third of its human capital due to brain drain. An estimated 300,000 highly skilled professionals are found outside the continent, of those 30,000 have PhDs. there are more African scientists and engineers in the United States than there are in the whole continent. Yet, sub-Saharan African countries do not even meet the minimum health standards set by world health organization (who). Today, the problem of brain drain has reached such a proportion that the UN has recognized that it is one of the most serious threats to the economic development of sub-Sahara Africa. Some observers are actually saying that the continent is dying from brain drain and that if we do not address this problem, Africa will be empty of brains in 25 years.
- Let me now share the findings of semantics aside on Ethiopia. Ethiopia is the first in Africa for losing its human capital. Skilled professionals are leaving at an alarming rate. According to IOM figures, Ethiopia lost almost 75 per cent of skilled professionals within ten years. One third of Ethiopian medical doctors have left the country. This exodus of skill is affecting the academic, health and other institutions of the country. Ethiopia is spending millions of dollars on professional's expatriates in order to fill the gap left behind by professionals who are leaving the country. Ethiopian institutions are becoming dependent on foreign expertise. With the departure of professionals, who will prepare the next? Generation of Ethiopian professionals and leaders". It is, therefore, time that we looked at this issue together and sought solutions that work.
- The Ethiopian people, the Ethiopian government, Ethiopian civil society and Ethiopian institutions are the solution. They are who are at home and who know how best to deal with Ethiopian problems. But we, Ethiopians in the Diaspora would also like to give a hand. And this is exactly what our study was designed to do. The main question for our study was, therefore, is the Ethiopian Diaspora ready and willing to help. Let me now tell you what we found out: (1). focus groups in Montréal, Toronto and Ottawa answered this question unanimously in the affirmative. Yes. (2) They said we have a moral responsibility and we have to pay back our people. (3). they said we have intellectual, material and social capital that we have accumulated that we can contribute to the development of our country. (4) They told us in the focus group discussion that they remained disengaged for too long, and valuable time was wasted. It is now time that we put an end to this strategy and become more active and full participants in the development efforts of our country. (5) They said that unlike in the past, the environment in Ethiopia today is good for Diaspora engagement. We can work with civil societies and non-governmental organizations. (6) We also recognize that the Ethiopian government is receptive to the idea of Diaspora engagement and has even put in place incentive strategies to facilitate our return. (7) However, how can we help when we are outside the country? For those of us who are not ready yet to come back, what are the means to contribute to Ethiopia's development? (8) I will share the findings of the study on this.
- The Ethiopian Diaspora can contribute to Ethiopia's capacity building efforts through virtual participation. Virtual participation is defined as participation in nation building without physical relocation. So, the old approach of repatriation or physical relocation is irrelevant and outdated as we can make a contribution through virtual participation. How can we contribute through virtual participation? By using information and communication technology, we can facilitate knowledge sharing. This is already being done by countries like South Africa. We can use the internet to share information, tools and exchange knowledge.
- We can create knowledge networks among doctors, engineers, academics and others. This will enable us to share latest developments and achievements and engage in a dialogue on common developmental issues. There are already six Africa Diaspora groups that are doing this already. We can come on time-limited missions to transfer specific skills. One time, repeated, sequenced missions; to work with specific professional groups is ideal. This is already being done by Diaspora groups such as the Ethiopian North American health professionals association (ENHAPA). We can transfer technology. For example, software systems, tools and hardware can be sent to development projects. We can participate in development schemes where remittances can be used.
- For example, you all know that we send money to our parents and families. But, this money is used for basic

necessities such as food, clothing, and residential houses or to purchase oxen or small scale enterprises. If there were secured schemes that allow Diaspora groups to invest, it is possible that remittances can be used for such an investment. We may also contribute to some development projects such as what. We at AHEAD and p2p are doing. The question is what Ethiopians think about Ethiopian Diaspora engagement.

- The second part of the research was conducted in Ethiopia in order to find out whether Diaspora engagement was feasible. Professor Tetemke Mehari was the principal researcher on this and let me share the findings. (1) focus groups discussions in Jimma, Gondar and Addis Ababa responded that the engagement of the Ethiopian Diaspora was welcome, necessary and possible. (2) Skill transfer is very important but it should not be treated as a onetime activity. Education, as you all know, requires repeated and sustained effort. So, if there are skill transfer projects, we have been advised that they should not be treated as a one-time activity. (3) For example, the bursary program was recognized as very useful for individual students. (4) Transfer of technology; it was commented that transfer of technology is useful only if complemented by training, software and appropriate systems. This is to say that it is not enough to send hardware such as computers since by themselves these cannot be of much use. (5). medical supplies: according to the focus groups, medical supplies have actually the capacity to revive health centres. However, it is important that medical supplies are sent to the right place where they are needed and they can be used. (6) Book shipment: apparently there are major issues with regards to book shipment. Diaspora groups are spending a lot of time, energy and resources to get these books but not all books are making it to their destination and some end up sittings in warehouses. The Ethiopian research also raised some issues of principles, mutual respect, trust and accountability between Diaspora groups and their partners the Diaspora is not a solution to every problem. We need to identify where we are needed and what we can contribute relevant is important. We were advised to stay the course. If we commit to an initiative, we should not leave our partners half way. Small project fare better than big and glossy projects that do not deliver. So, we were told that effective small projects are better. Not necessarily effective. Small is beautiful. We were advised to coordinate our activates.
- So, in a nutshell this is our study - semantics aside. My question now is where we go from here. We need to start working strategically and coordinate our activities. First of all, Africa has to take the lead. Ethiopia has to take the lead. We need to identify, develop and implement projects that facilitate Diaspora engagement. We should tell donor countries, United Nations, African union that African Diaspora engagement cannot be done solely by volunteers and funded by donations. United Nations, NEPAD, African union, African governments, host countries must invest in programs and mechanisms to facilitate Diaspora engagement. We need to work together -IOM, NEPAD, civil societies, governments, must come together on a common vision. Most importantly, we, the African Diaspora, are one of the stakeholders. We must be recognized and brought to the table. However, the African Diaspora must also be prepared. We need to coordinate our activities, we must start communicating among ourselves and with our partners and we have to start working with partners on specific relevant projects.

On behalf of AHEAD, I would like to conclude by urging the Ethiopian government to take the lead in providing the programs that can attract and utilize Diaspora resources. We urge Ethiopian Diaspora groups everywhere to get their acts together. Reach out to your communities, mobilize groups, and channel material, intellectual and financial resources for development projects. We encourage the Ethiopian civil society to start working with Diaspora groups. It will not be easy and there will be challenges. But, we will work together. We will learn from our mistakes. We owe it to Ethiopia we owe it to the Ethiopian peasant who paid for our education we owe it to our people this is not a favor. It is not a hand out. It is not a charity. It is a moral responsibility.

Thank you.



## **Diaspora and young people**

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### **Encouraging Diaspora involvement and importance of the**

#### **Samrawit Ashenafi**

My Ethiopian colleagues in the Diaspora have entrusted me with their thoughts and ideas and I am honoured to be their voice on this panel. I know all of us want to help our beloved Ethiopia and we are overwhelmed when thinking of where to begin. It is a privilege to be here today among those few who have dared to find and be a part of the solution. I strongly believe that every small effort helps to build a better society. During this discussion, I would like to emphasize two points: first, the importance of the Diaspora and young people; second, how we can encourage the Diaspora to become more involved.

#### **Point I- Importance of the Diaspora and young people**

First, in case you are wondering why targeting efforts towards the young are essential. It is because 65% of the Ethiopian population is under the age of 30. They can serve as the backbone of the economy when educated, trained, and able to join the workforce. Based on this fact young people should be one of the targeted groups of our efforts. Second, since remittance has now become a major export-import part of the Ethiopian economy, we, the Diaspora, now find ourselves with both a strong & powerful voice to effect change as well as an obligation to engage in constructive deeds.

For example, among health professionals alone, proportionately Ethiopia is among the most severely affected African countries by the “Brain Drain.” Through the efforts of our disseminated but well-trained and talented expatriot, we can use our enormous capacity to address the educational, economical, and health needs of our brothers and sisters. Obviously this is a broad challenge: we must think not just in terms of relief efforts but also long term solutions. This includes a comprehensive change in how things are done across sectors-- the economy, health care, agriculture, and education.

All of these invaluable changes in the transformation of Ethiopia are possible, but they require that we the Diaspora organize ourselves and focus our efforts.

#### **Point II--Encouraging Diaspora involvement:**

Our weakness is not unreasonable expectations regarding the daunting challenges we face. Rather our strength is our optimism—a strong belief in our goal that will drive our efforts and bring us together even in the face of significant challenges. Changes will occur gradually--not overnight not even in months. However, we must pledge to make the necessary commitments to foster success and reap the long term profits from our investments. Our efforts will be focused at the grassroots level—encouraging a belief in common goals among all of our participants. Already, we have begun such efforts.

Some examples of our current projects include:

1. Adoption: Our sponsoring of children both individually and through organizations like the Ethiopian Student Association
2. Charity:

- a. Facilitating the pairing of sponsors with organizations/individuals who want to help.
- b. Fund raising on behalf of other charitable organization and their respective efforts—People to People and Grace for All.
3. Educational materials: Collecting books and distributing them.
4. Entrepreneurship: Returning back to Ethiopia and opening businesses. Example Bete Zata Clinics,

With so many domestic needs, an important question that should be raised is: which areas do we select to address? One approach that has been successful so far has been the emergence of “social entrepreneurs.” These are individuals and/or organizations that focus on specific yet common problems facing the country such as clean water, reliable sources of electricity, food, and the building of health care infrastructures creatively and efficiently. The significance of these short comings becomes increasing glaring as the population continues to grow while the limitations that the Government surely faces meeting the basic needs of the population. We have our own success stories represented here today at this Conference as well as throughout Ethiopia. I must share with you that the collection of minds and accomplishments here is inspiring. Looking at my esteemed colleagues on this panel as well as in the audience, I know that we will succeed. And although change begins with ideas, it ends in action so I encourage all of efforts.

Conclusion: The ultimate goal of the Diaspora should be to learn to work together under one umbrella hand in hand, because every organization has the same goal; the construction of a productive and peaceful society for the next generation. We are influential and able. Only action is left. The improvements are costly but worthwhile. And sufficient opportunities exist. Though these suggestions and examples are not simple nor rapid, they are essential for our success.

#### **Suggestions from the Diaspora to encourage involvement:**

1. Information on the laws, current economic opportunities, guidelines on how to move back, and general information to facilitate the move back
2. The key is to somehow steer the large foundations into focusing more on Ethiopian’s needs.
3. The skills and interests of the returnee with the needs and not to take positions that can easily be filled by a qualified person in Ethiopia.
4. Sharing of knowledge and experience via distance learning etc.
5. Examples of success stories where by the Diaspora can see their contributions whether technical or monetary will be a powerful way to harness the Diaspora’s potential and to impact the development of Ethiopia
6. A quantification of the impact of Brain Drain by industry etc...
7. A quantification of the potential knowledge/expertise of the Ethiopian Diaspora

List of participants (to be corrected)

1. Abeyot Nega
2. Abraham Aseffa
3. Abraham Asnake
4. Abraham Assefa
5. Abye Tasse
6. Almaz Terrefe
7. Amare Aregawi
8. Ambaye Kidane
9. Aregawi Hagos
10. Ashenafi Mekonnen
11. Ayehun Mesfin
12. Ayele Zawde
13. Ayenew Washelegne
14. Azeb Tadesse,
15. Berhanu Jemberu
16. Bertukan Ayele
17. BT Costantinos
18. Carrie Lee Chang
19. Charles Kwenin
20. David Clifford
21. David Shima
22. David Shinn,
23. Dawit Blyu
24. Dawit Dejene
25. Dawit Gebre Egziabher
26. Dawit Woldaye
27. Dawit Zawde
28. Dawn of Hope,
29. Dereje Zawdie
30. Diana Matanovich
31. Dianne Langford
32. Elias Haroon
33. Enawgaw Mehari
34. Endale-Demissie
35. Erango Kelbisow
36. Eromo Kalhi
37. Eyob Alemayehu
38. Fiesseha Abrha
39. Gebriel Tadesse
40. Getamesay Enusalem
41. Gezaee Aseffa
42. Girma Waqu 
43. Girma Wolde Giorgis  
HE (President)
44. Gutta Zenebe
45. Haileyesus Adamu
46. Hayat Ahmed
47. Henock Belete
48. Hirut Girma
49. Jemal Mohammed
50. Karin Rell
51. Kebede Asrat,
52. Kedir Aki
53. Kim Imes
54. Kinfe Abraha
55. Leulseged Girma
56. Mehari Tadesse
57. Mekidim Ethiopia,
58. Mekonnen Ashenafi
59. Meskerem Tebege
60. Michelle Collins
61. Mira Adem
62. Moges Worku
63. Mohamed Ali
64. Mulutega Ketema
65. Nabil Succar
66. Nigatu Mereke,
67. Noah Samara
68. Pathil Gillrs
69. Philipos Petros
70. Rahel Haimanot
71. Redda Tekle Haimanot
72. Rick Phillips
73. Samrawit Ashenafi,
74. Samuel Begashaw
75. Santiago Bussa
76. Seble Girma
77. Seifu Bahiru,
78. Senait Ashenafi
79. Shoa A.Girma
80. Sileshi Betelie
81. Steven Brown
82. Tadesse Wuhib
83. Teferi Melesse
84. Teferra Wegdereseegn
85. Temesgen Hailu
86. Teshome Akalehiwot
87. Thomas Dano
88. Tilahun Tadesse
89. Timkit Abraha
90. Tino Malone
91. Worknesh Ayele
92. Wossen Ayalew
93. Wubshet Demisse,
94. Wubshet mamo
95. Wude Mihret
96. Yegzeru Belete
97. Yeheayehu Zerihun
98. Yeneneh Ezra
99. Yeshiwass Bekele
100. Yilikal Adamu,
101. Yimegnushal
102. Yohannes Birhanu
103. Zenebe Melaku

**DRAFT**

**EXECUTIVES:**

**BT Costantinos, PhD**  
Chief, Secretariat Ethiopia

**Enawgaw Mehari, M.D.**  
Chief, Secretariat N. America

Program Director  
**Azeb Tadesse**

International Coordinator  
**Benyam Kebede**

**TRUSTEES:**

**Haile Gebre Selasse**  
The premier distance runner

**David Shinn, PhD**  
Former Ambassador, Ethiopia  
Washington, D.C.

**Noah A. Samara**  
Founder of WorldSpace Corp.

**Getachew Asressahagne, M.D**  
Chair, Washington ENAHPA  
Chapter

**Konji Sabati, M.D**  
International Medical Philanthropist  
& Diflucan program director for  
Pfizer

**FIELD Ethiopia**  
P.O. Box 13309, Addis Abeba, Ethiopia,  
Tel 251 (1) 512982 Fax 251 (1) 513851  
costy@costantinos.org

**FIELD US**  
People to People Inc. PO.Box 1209, More-  
head, Kentucky, 403 51,  
Phone 606-780-2372, fax 606-780-2376,  
[www.peoplepeople.org](http://www.peoplepeople.org)

# Press release

*People to People, Lem Ethiopia, and various other collaborating organisations are establishing an international forum for Ethiopians living in Diaspora on January 14, 2005 at the Hilton. Subsequent events will mark conferences on the social and economic challenges faced by poverty, HIV/AIDS and famine and opportunities for investment during the rest of the month at different venues. Technology and knowledge transfer can also be accomplished via small workshops to targeted professional audiences and creating diverse dialogues from various angles and discipline. Participants will be encouraged to sustain contacts and continue mutually beneficial relationships with partners.*

*The Ethiopian Diaspora, which numbers over half a million in the US alone, is highly educated and technically advanced. Through creative programmes and linkages the Diaspora can do for Ethiopia what the Indian Diaspora has managed to accomplish for the Indian economy. However, that can not be accomplished without creating organic relationship between Ethiopia and its Diaspora, which will be epitomised by effective and productive links.*

*Through a variety of activities the occasion will help to create an opportunity to bring together various individuals with interest and research in Ethiopia. The forum will aim to set a precedent for an annual event which will bring together friends of Ethiopia, as optimal venues for attracting investment, creating a sense of community and commitment and opportunities for exchange of knowledge and information. We invite you to participate in this event*

***The Potential within: Is the Ethiopian Diaspora a Response to the Nation's Brain Drain? January 14, 2004***

**FIELD Secretariat**