



# **Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia**

## **Diaspora Policy**

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## **Introduction**

The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has given the mandate and responsibility of ensuring the protection of rights and benefits of the Diaspora to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Accordingly, the Ministry has been engaged in a wide range of activities to ensure improved Diaspora participation and protect their rights and benefits in collaboration with various stakeholders.

In this regard, many among the Diaspora are registering concrete results by engaging in investment, trade and tourism in the country, in transfer of foreign currency, knowledge and technology, and image building. With this development in mind it has become imperative to prepare a Diaspora Policy that can efficiently respond to the need to ensure active Diaspora participation in political, economic and social activities of the country so that it benefits from its engagement and contributes to the well being of the country.

The Policy document, is, therefore prepared by making detailed research on previous directives and implementation of the activities pertaining to the Diaspora, and using the best experiences of other countries, different written materials on the subject, experience sharing forums, and suggestions by the Diaspora as inputs.

The Policy document is divided into three parts. Part one focuses on the definition, vision, mission, objectives and relevance of the policy and the review of the global status of Diaspora engagement. Part two deals with the basic principles of and major goals of the policy. Part three presents the strategies and implementing bodies of the policy.

## **Part one**

### **1. Review of Diaspora participation**

#### **1.1. Global status of Diaspora participation**

Mankind has been migrating since very ancient time from one place to another for various reasons. Historians define the human movement from East Africa to the rest of the world as the first migration. Many such migrations manifested in different ways have occurred since then. However, massive flux of people from places to places is a recent phenomenon.

Post cold war era, globalization has brought with it an accelerated circulation of capital, goods, information and with it an ever increased human migration. Modern, fast and reliable modes of transport and communication contribute much to this phenomenon. Nowadays 3% of the total world populations, that is, more than 200 million people live outside their birth place, and studies suggest that the figure will rise by 2.9% annually. Even though human migration can be caused by war and other related causes, the main factor has now become lack of job opportunities and low level development in developing countries and the presumed availability of conducive atmosphere and opportunities in the developed world.

Migration can be viewed differently from the angle of the source and the destination country. There is a tendency to consider migration as completely harmful as it drains educated man power of the source countries, while on the other hand it is believed that the Diaspora could contribute to the development of their home countries through remittance, knowledge and technology transfer, investment, etc.

However most people have agreed that citizen's contribution for their country, while they are outside of their home land, is limited compared to their contribution while living in their home country.

In a similar view, destination countries blame migration as a factor for limiting employment opportunities for their own citizens; though on the contrary indicate its advantage of filling the gap for the jobs that have employee shortages.

Recognizing the difficulty to stop the movement of people from place to place, an international consensus has been reached on the idea that both countries of origin and destination create a system to minimize the shortcomings of migration and work to capitalize the mutual benefit.

Hence, various studies indicate that, migration has its own contribution to bring about better economic development in developing countries through raising additional finance, creating knowledge and technology transfer and reducing poverty as well as filling employment gaps in destination countries if they are geared in a right policy direction.

As a result of this, the Diaspora affair is getting special attention on bilateral relations of different countries, and also on international cooperation forums. Hence, various countries are establishing institutional structures and designing policies for their Diaspora community to participate in knowledge and technology transfer, trade, investment and tourism promotions, raising foreign currency, image building, and serving as a bridge for the country as well as participating in charity works while they are living in destination countries or going back to their country of origin. Some countries which implemented such a system in advance are proved to be successful.

## 1.2. Survey on the participation of Ethiopian Diaspora

It has been long time since Ethiopians start to leave their home land and migrate to various countries due to political, economic and social reasons. Ethiopia has been also known as the destination country for Jew, Armenians, Arabs, Greeks, Turkish, etc. migrants. Documents indicate that during the emperor's time and following the expansion of modern education in the country, Ethiopians used to come back and serve their country after they completed their education in Europe and North America.

Following the overthrow of the emperor's administration by the dictatorial military regime, with the exception of a few, most Ethiopians who were abroad for their education remain in their respective countries. Emanating from the dictatorial behavior of the regime, educated people in the country and farmers who reside in the borderlines of neighboring countries lost their hope and were obliged to leave the country. Without considering citizens who left to other destinations, this made Ethiopia the top ten source of migration in North America.

After the demise of the *Dergue* regime and the coming in to power of the EPRDF government, citizens are continuing to travel to other countries to get higher education opportunities, get access to resident permits of various countries and are becoming beneficiaries of that country's opportunities.

It is estimated that not less than 2 million Ethiopian Diasporas are residing in countries of North America, Europe, the Middle East, Australia and Africa, of which people in North America and Europe have better income and educational status.

Members of the Diaspora community living in North America and Europe have recently started to support their families and country through investing their money in different sectors of the economy, transferring knowledge and technology, sending remittances etc, apart from building the country's image and standing for the causes of the country.

Most unskilled and some semi-skilled labors who traveled to the Middle East to exploit the opportunity created in the labor work sector are responding swiftly for the call of the country and the government. They are also contributing immensely by participating in different investment sectors and send remittances for their families. In general, even though the growing trend of illegal migration towards the Middle East creates a complicated situation in the effort to protect their rights, it is indicative that there is a possibility to create a condition to reap better benefits from the Diaspora by solving the problems through time.

South Africa, on the other hand, has become a new destination in Africa among educated and non-educated Ethiopians. Botswana and Equatorial Guinea can also be mentioned as destination countries especially for Ethiopian professionals. It is believed, therefore, that by creating conducive environment and strengthening the relationship with these citizens, there is a chance for the country and the people to harness a better benefit.

In addition to these, the number of new generations living around the world and adoptee who are traveling to western countries is huge. There is a possibility for the country to gain immeasurable benefits by twining these generation and adoptee with their culture, language and other social values.

In general, Ethiopia is among the countries whose people migrate in a very high rate. On the one hand, this indicates that measures have to be taken to minimize the brain drain. It also indicates that engaging the Diaspora residing in different parts of the world and creating conducive environment for them to participate in the country's development endeavor is pressing.

## **2. Relevance of the Ethiopian Diaspora Policy**

The initial point for the formulation of Diaspora policy is the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia foreign affairs and national security policy and strategy document. In this policy document stated that Ethiopians in the Diaspora could play an important role in carrying out research and investing at home. In addition they could win friends for Ethiopia and try to influence their country of residence to cooperate with our country. Cognizant of the key roles played by Ethiopian residing abroad, the government should take initiatives in creating the most conducive environment for them to play constructive role

Having a Diaspora Engagement Affairs Directorate General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and collaborative work at the Federal and Regional level; providing foreign nationals of Ethiopians origin with certain rights to be exercised in their country of origin proclamation; and allowing opening bank account in foreign currencies; to tackle the bottlenecks of Diaspora.

Even if the above measures have taken place, no policy has been promulgated to guide the Diaspora's affairs and few efforts are made to utilize their economic potential and skill in an organized way in their original country in a consistent way.



With a view to make the Diaspora fully aware of the peace, development and democracy endeavors of their country and the results so far registered, and in order to make them actively participate accordingly, therefore, it is essential to adopt a national Diaspora policy that would protect their rights abroad and to solve domestic bottlenecks confronting them.

### **3. Definition and General Objective of the Policy**

#### **3.1. Definition**

**Ethiopian Diaspora** means Ethiopians and Ethiopian origins that live outside Ethiopia.

**Ethiopian Diaspora Policy** means a document containing objectives, strategies and other activities aimed at informing the various services rendered to ensure participation of the Ethiopian Diaspora and their rights and benefits on one hand, and ensuring the utilization of Diaspora transfer of knowledge, finance, interactions and other contributions on the other hand.

#### **3.2. General objective of the Diaspora Policy**

To build up strong relationship between Diaspora with their origin country Ethiopia. Encouraging and facilitating conducive environment for participation of Diaspora on ongoing peace and democratization building process to benefit their county and to benefit from their engagement and to preserve their rights and interests abroad.

## **PART TWO**

### **4. Basic principles of the Policy**

This policy document has identified main issues relating to the Diaspora. It is believed that the partnership of the Ethiopian Diaspora with their country will be strengthened by implementing these activities. This partnership will be based on commonly shared national interests and uses the country's policy directions as the basis to make it more transparent.

#### **4.1. A Sector wide Approach**

To give effect to the Diaspora policy, Diaspora affairs shall be done collaboratively with many stakeholders.

#### **4.2. Effectiveness**

It should be underlined that the Diaspora Policy should support poverty eradication activities; the alpha and omega of our endeavors.

#### **4.3. Resources Utilization**

Assuring the execution of Diaspora Policy must be considered in the availability of our resource and capacity.

#### **4.4. Complementarity**

The Diaspora policy shall be implemented in an integrated way with national development policies, strategies and programs.

#### **4.5. Participatory**

The Diaspora Policy shall be implemented in participation of government, non- government and the Diaspora.

#### **4.6. Transparency**

The Diaspora Policy shall be followed its implementation with transparency approach.

#### **4.7. Partnership**

Partnership will be based on enhancing Diaspora participation and ensure to preserve their rights and interest abroad.

## **5. Major Goals of the policy**

### **5.1. Preserving the rights and interests of the Diaspora**

- 5.1.1.** Formulating a system of registration of members of Ethiopian Diaspora
- 5.1.2.** Informing the Diaspora on services delivered in Ethiopian missions abroad, and on up-to-date local information and policies.
- 5.1.3.** Issuing consular identity cards for those who have no resident permit abroad; in order to reach out to them in times of need and promote their participation in development activities.
- 5.1.4.** In cases of emergency and instability, effective follow up and support shall be offered.
- 5.1.5.** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs shall work conjointly to follow up agencies which are working on employment and labor affairs with the view to ensure the safety of the employees.
- 5.1.6.** Encouraging efforts to conclude labor agreements with the countries where there is a huge number of Ethiopian Diaspora.

### **5.2. Improving Diaspora Engagement in Investment, Trade and Tourism**

#### **5.2.1. Investment**

- 5.2.1.1.** Ethiopia's mission abroad will gather and document up-to-date information on investment and will do promotion focusing on the Diaspora.

- 5.2.1.2.** Any member of Ethiopian Diaspora residing abroad shall be promoted to participate directly or through collaborations with domestic investors on pertinent areas of investment appropriately identified.
- 5.2.1.3.** Federal, and regional investment offices and stakeholders would be encouraged to provide all round services at one place, support members of Diaspora that will come up with project proposals, and want to participate on various areas of investment.
- 5.2.1.4.** According to the country's law, Diaspora would be encouraged to invest in reserved industrial zones and participate directly on industries; and an information communication package.
- 5.2.1.5.** For Ethiopian Diaspora who would get the chance of collateral and credit services from their countries of residences and would like to participate on their home land in the area of investment, the government, according to the country's law, would give them the necessary support.
- 5.2.1.6.** Government would facilitate by preparing project proposals to encourage and involve the Diaspora individually or in collaborations to invest in their areas of focus and investment priorities.

5.2.1.7. A mechanism will be put in place where members of the Diaspora residing abroad could legalize their business in Ethiopian missions near to them and make register the same in Ethiopia.

## **5.2.2. Trade and Tourism**

5.2.2.1. Members of Ethiopian Diaspora would be encouraged to participate with their skills and knowledge in governmental institutions that expand trade.

5.2.2.2. The Ethiopian Diaspora shall be promoted to involve and share their experiences in import-export, tour organizations, market intelligence areas, brokerages and salesmanship activities.

5.2.2.3. The Diaspora would be encouraged to benefit themselves and their country's exporters by facilitating and looking for suitable market for major export commodities.

5.2.2.4. Special promotion, and credit services package shall be prepared for members of the Diaspora who wish to participate in identifying, producing and distributing commodities especially traditional handcraft products that could get market in countries where large number of Diaspora are found.

5.2.2.5. Members of the Diaspora and Ethiopians who will go abroad for short time training and education shall be encouraged to participate on tourism promotion.

5.2.2.6. Visiting package program shall be prepared to encourage foreign families who adopt Ethiopian children and youngsters to visit Ethiopian historical and natural tourist sites and promote our tourism resources.

### **5.3. Enhancing Knowledge and Technology Transfer**

5.3.1. Work opportunity shall be provided for the Diaspora based on their request to serve in governmental institutions, education and health sectors etc. with their profession and experiences in temporary or permanent basis in accordance with government regulations.

5.3.2. Members of Diaspora who are retired professionals would be given opportunities to serve in the country's higher educational institutions and technical and vocational colleges.

5.3.3. Incentives would be given for professionals who want to serve their country.

5.3.4. Professionals who have special (unique) skills and have interest to work on research and consultancy that the government gives special focus would be encouraged.

- 5.3.5. Working opportunity will be provided to exploit the potentials of Diaspora who are back home and are engaged in areas which need unique skill such as education, health, IT etc...
- 5.3.6. On job training programs in governmental and non governmental institutions for young Diaspora students attending their higher education overseas will be facilitated.
- 5.3.7. Youth Diaspora who volunteers to come back home and share their knowledge and skills would be encouraged.
- 5.3.8. A mechanism will be put in place where Ethiopian Diaspora in Middle East and neighboring countries could attend their higher education through distance learning; community schools shall be strengthened and expanded.
- 5.3.9. Donated materials obtained from the Diaspora in the process of knowledge and technology transfer shall be facilitated to enter the country without delay and serve their purpose.

#### **5.4. Encouraging Foreign Currency Inflows and Strengthening Diaspora Participation**

- 5.4.1. A mechanism that could build confidence on returnee Diasporas to come home with their entire capital and property would be crafted and implemented.
- 5.4.2. A rewarding system promoting the inflow of foreign currencies (for investment, or as remittance) through legal channels would be facilitated.

- 5.4.3. Strong relations with banks and other legal money-transfer service providers abroad would be established via all Ethiopian Missions abroad, and their reliable and speedy service provisions to Ethiopian Diasporas would be facilitated.
- 5.4.4. An arrangement that would allow Ethiopian Diasporas to pay in foreign currencies for birr loans they will borrow from domestic banks and for federal and regional bonds they will buy to run domestically operated development projects.

## **5.5. Promoting Cultural Values and Promoting Image Building**

- 5.5.1. Cultural centers would be established in foreign countries where many Ethiopian community associations exist to encourage Ethiopian Diasporas to develop skills and knowledge on their country's languages, cultures and history.
- 5.5.2. Diasporas would be mobilized and provided with the necessary support to build cultural centers and museums back home.
- 5.5.3. Support would be provided for Diasporas who plan to organize events such as Diaspora musical extravaganzas, sports, cultural events and other arts in destination countries.
- 5.5.4. A program to be named "Know Ethiopia Program-KEP", Ethiopian languages learning and cultural participation would be crafted to help youth Diasporas develop strong attachment towards their country.



## **5.6. Advancing Diaspora Participation in Good Governance and Democracy**

- 5.6.1.** The National Electoral Board will facilitate the participation of Ethiopians who live abroad in elections in accordance with the Election Law; and joint responses for problems related to election logistics would be identified and applied together with the Diaspora.
- 5.6.2.** Mechanisms would be facilitated to allow Ethiopians with permanent resident permit in other countries but living in Ethiopia to take part in elections in any nearest possible polls.
- 5.6.3.** Mechanisms would be put in place to the Diaspora participation in national policy research and formulation.

## **5.7. Encouraging Philanthropy and Development Associations**

- 5.7.1.** Diaspora goodwill donations free from any religious and political attachments would be mobilized and their proper utilization would be realized.
- 5.7.2.** Diaspora charities and their useful contributions would be motivated, and a system aimed at broadening their voluntary contributions would be primed.
- 5.7.3.** Motivational mechanisms such as tax incentives on imported equipments for Diaspora non-profit making activities would be strengthened further.

5.7.4. An effective resource mobilization mechanism would be commenced so that Diaspora charities' donations aimed at sustaining the country's development endeavor would rigorously be mobilized and their proper and speedy utilization would be guaranteed.

## **5.8. Broadening Diaspora Participation on Image Building**

5.8.1. Diaspora members would be encouraged to actively participate in world trade fairs and other international commercial and/or public events and promote their country's export items.

5.8.2. Diaspora communities would be motivated to be familiar with their country's development progresses and participate actively on efforts to protect Ethiopia's national interest including image building.

## **Part Three**

### **6. Strategies of the policy**

#### **6.1. Establishing reliable information collection and delivery system**

##### **6.1.1. Expanding information services**

**6.1.1.1.** An information data-base and website with valuable information to the Diaspora would be launched.

**6.1.1.2.** Information delivery mechanisms to the Diaspora both in hard and electronic media (Radio, TV, Website, etc...) would be established.

**6.1.1.3.** Diaspora conferences, symposiums, exhibitions and other related events would be organized both at home and abroad to promote inter-Diaspora and intra-Diaspora linkages and discussions.

**6.1.1.4.** Community Television and Radio stations would be proliferated in as many countries with many Ethiopian communities as possible; continuous programs would be produced and transmitted to them to enhance their understandings towards their country.

##### **6.1.2. Establishing Permanent Information Exchange Forum**

###### **6.1.2.1. Celebrating Diaspora Day**

**6.1.2.1.1.** The National Diaspora day would be celebrated at home; and there would be forums as significant numbers of Diaspora come home to celebrate cultural and religious holidays.

**6.1.2.1.2.** Regional level forums ensuring Diaspora participation will be facilitated; institutions engaged in delivering service in relation with Diaspora; business and professionals will be encouraged to have links with their counterparts at home.

**6.1.2.2. Forums Abroad with Diaspora (Outreach Program)**

**6.1.2.2.1.** The government's forums with Diaspora abroad, shall be in a planned and participatory approach involving stakeholders.

**6.1.2.2.2.** Necessary support would be given, to the Ethiopian Diaspora members residing in various continents, to strengthen their social relations as well as to prepare annual festivals.

**6.2. Recognizing Diaspora Participation**

**6.2.1.** A mechanism of rewarding Diaspora members and associations having better contributions to the process of peace, development and democratic system building would be introduced and would be given by both regional and federal government's top authorities.

**6.3. Encouraging Organized Participation**

**6.3.1. Strengthening existing associations and establishing new ones**

**6.3.1.1.** Establishing Diaspora associations (youth, women, profession, development, community etc.) are encouraged;

and strategies would be designed to strengthen the new ones that might be established.

**6.3.1.2.** The data, of associations established by Diaspora in the place where they are, would be handled in a proper way through appropriately informing the basics of national consensus; other new associations are encouraged, rightly identifying and giving them necessary support in their quest to help and contribute to their country in an organized way.

**6.3.1.3.** The relationship would be established among Diaspora community associations, foundations and human right associations with Ethiopian missions.

**6.3.1.4.** Mechanism would be set up for Diaspora professionals, students, women's etc. associations to use information network to introduce each other and to exchange best practices; to create international associations' network and to introduce with similar associations at home.

**6.3.1.5.** Support would be given to returnees to strengthen their participation in an organized manner and to help new returnees in different sectors.

### **6.3.2. Special Attention shall be Given to Organized Youth Diasporas' Participation**

**6.3.2.1.** Strong relationship would be established in person and through electronic media among youth organized in different ways abroad. Support would be given to new

youth and students associations; international associations' networks are encouraged.

**6.3.2.2.** In cooperation with youth Diaspora abroad, youth centered Ethiopian culture, literature, art and sport programs would be encouraged; and situation for youth to act in an organized way will be facilitated.

**6.3.2.3.** The opportunities in the country would be introduced at government or private higher education institutions where there is significant number of Ethiopians, and similar seminars for other youth professionals at work would take place.

**6.3.2.4.** Seminars and symposium to inform our national development strategies, courses that could enable youth Diaspora members to understand their country's culture and history would take place both in the country and abroad.

**6.3.2.5.** Efforts would be made to integrate with the activities of African youth Diaspora in harmony with the African Union program.

### **6.3.3. Support would be given to volunteer youth Diaspora**

## **6.4. Issuance of Identification Card:**

**6.4.1.** Ethiopian Origin Identification Card will be delivered by proclamation, regulation and directives so as to make it the main and permanent mechanism to ensure that Ethiopian origins promote and advance their relation and participation with their country of origin.

## **6.5. Assisting Diaspora Members**

- 6.5.1.** Providing services for returnees going back to their country to have the opportunity of bringing their personal effects in accordance with the law.
- 6.5.2.** Mechanism based on well research would be put in place for Diaspora individuals and organized associations to get housing in regions, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa city administrations through saving.
- 6.5.3.** To promote in countries where there are no Ethiopian missions and there is huge presence of Ethiopian Diaspora, the necessary services shall be delivered by facilitating mobile services delivery mechanism or appointing honorary consul would be done in coordination with the community associations.
- 6.5.4.** Encouraging the Ethiopian Diaspora to continue their support through community associations and promote them to support each other in places where grave problems exist. Preparing a study that can respond to the need to establish short period dwellings for those in need in collaboration with the community.
- 6.5.5.** Mechanisms will be put in place for Diaspora returnees to help find jobs in the country.
- 6.5.6.** Efforts would be made to the adopted Ethiopian children preserve their right and interest and connect to their home land.
- 6.5.7.** The government would be strengthening the participation of Diaspora international and regional forums.

## **7. Executive Bodies of the Policy**

- 7.1. The ministry of Foreign Affairs as mandated by proclamations would be responsible in ensuring the implementation of the Diaspora policy.
- 7.2. National Diaspora Council would be established representing various higher federal and regional officials and stakeholders.
- 7.3. Advisory council would be established comprising Ethiopian Diaspora participating in different fields in the country, and also in missions.
- 7.4. Regional Diaspora offices would direct and coordinate their Diaspora participation.
- 7.5. A common forum of regional Diaspora offices would be established under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so as to lead their activities in an integrated way, and this would be made to have continuity and accountability.
- 7.6. A mechanism to establish permanent meeting for organized associations related to Diaspora would be put in place to meet with the office and each other.
- 7.7. A mechanism to establish monitoring and evaluation among the Diaspora policy implementing offices put in place to the better follow up of the policy implementation.