



# Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

## Diaspora Policy

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**  
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## **Introduction**

The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has entrusted the mandate and responsibility of ensuring the protection of the rights and promoting benefits of the Ethiopian 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 promote 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 remittance 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 conducting detailed research on previous directives and implementation of the activities pertaining to the Diaspora, and using the best experiences of other countries, different literature 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**

The history of mankind demonstrates has been migrating since time immemorial all over the planet 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 continued since then. However, massive flux of people as we know it today is a recent worldwide phenomenon.

Post cold war era globalization has brought with it an accelerated circulation of capital, goods, information and with it an ever increasing human migration. Modern, fast and reliable modes of transport and communication have contributed to this phenomenon. Nowadays 3% of the total world population, that is, more than 200 million people lives 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.

On the other hand, destination countries blame immigration as a factor for limiting employment opportunities for their own citizens; though as a contradiction in terms indicate its advantage of filling the gap for the jobs that have employee shortages.

Recognizing the difficulty of stopping 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, the Diaspora affair is getting special attention in bilateral relations of different countries, and also in 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 the Ethiopian Diaspora**

It has been a long time since Ethiopians started to leave their home land and migrate to various countries due to political, economic and social reasons. Ethiopia has also been known as the destination country for Jews, 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 monarchy by the dictatorial military regime, with the exception of a few, most Ethiopians who were abroad for their education remained in their respective countries. Emanating from the dictatorial behavior of the regime, educated people in the country and farmers who reside near borders 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 sources of migration in North America.

After the demise of the *Dergue* regime and the coming in to power of the EPRDF, with the exception of Red Terror criminals who were wanted for their horrible deeds, other 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 Diaspora are residing in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Australia and Africa. It is understood

that Diaspora 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 manual labor work area are responding swiftly to the call of their country and the government. They are also contributing immensely by participating in different investment sectors and sending remittances to 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 gradually.

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 a conducive environment and strengthening the relationship with these citizens, there is a chance for the country and the people to obtain a better benefit.

In addition to these, the number of new generations living around the world and adoptees who are traveling to western countries is huge. There is a possibility for

the country to gain significant benefits by twining these generation and adoptees with their culture, language and other social values.

In general, Ethiopia is among the countries whose people migrate at 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 a conducive environment for them to participate in the country's development endeavor has become imperative.

## **2. Rationale and need for 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 it is 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

Encouraging steps have been taken by the government of the FDRE by establishing a Diaspora Engagement Affairs Directorate General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and collaborative work at the Federal and Regional level, issuing a proclamation to provide foreign nationals of Ethiopians origin with certain rights to be exercised in their country of origin and allowing opening of bank accounts in foreign currencies, to tackle the bottlenecks of Diaspora.

Although the above measures have taken place, no policy has been promulgated to guide the Diaspora's affairs and not much has been done to utilize their



economic potential and skill in an organized way in their country of origin in a consistent way.

Hence with a view to making the Diaspora fully aware of the peace, development and democratic endeavors of their country and the results so far registered, and in order to make them actively participate in their country's development, it has become necessary to adopt a national Diaspora policy to 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 foreign nationals of Ethiopian origins residing outside Ethiopia.

**Ethiopian Diaspora Policy** means a document containing objectives, strategies and other activities aimed at informing about 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 in the transfer of knowledge, finance, interactions and other contributions.

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

Building a strong relationship between Diaspora and their country of origin and 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 are the main objectives of the Policy.

## **PART TWO**

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

This policy document has identified the main issues relating to the Diaspora. It is believed that the partnership of the Ethiopian Diaspora with their country of origin 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 carried out 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 implementation of the Diaspora Policy must be considered within 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. Participation**

The Diaspora Policy shall be implemented with the participation of government, non- governmental organizations and the Diaspora.

#### **4.6. Transparency**

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

#### **4.7. Partnership**

Partnership will be based on enhancing Diaspora participation and ensuring the preservation of 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 the 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.
- 5.1.5. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Labor and Social Affairs will work jointly to follow up agencies which are working on employment and labor affairs with the view to ensuring 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 work focusing on the Diaspora.
- 5.2.1.2. Any member of Ethiopian Diaspora residing abroad will 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. In accordance with Ethiopian investment law and regulations, Diaspora would be encouraged to invest in reserved industrial zones and participate directly in industries, and in information communication package.
- 5.2.1.5. For Ethiopian Diaspora who would get the chance of collateral and credit services from their countries of residence and would like to participate in their home land in the area of investment, the government, in accordance with country's law, will give them the necessary support.
- 5.2.1.6. Government will facilitate by preparing project proposals to encourage and involve the Diaspora individually or in collaboration with others 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 may legalize their business in Ethiopian missions and register same in Ethiopia.

## **5.2.2. Trade and Tourism**

- 5.2.2.1.** Members of Ethiopian Diaspora will be encouraged to participate with their skills and knowledge in governmental institutions in the area of 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 will 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 can be marketed in countries where large number of Diaspora reside.
- 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 in tourism promotion.
- 5.2.2.6.** Package programs shall be prepared to encourage visiting foreign families who adopt Ethiopian children and

youngsters to visit Ethiopian historical and natural tourist sites and thereby promote our tourism resources.

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

- 5.3.1.** Employment opportunities will be provided for the Diaspora based on their request to serve in governmental institutions, education and health sectors etc. with their profession and experiences on a temporary or permanent basis in accordance with government regulations.
- 5.3.2.** Members of Diaspora who are retired professionals will be given opportunities to serve in the country's higher educational institutions and technical and vocational colleges.
- 5.3.3.** Incentives will be given for professionals who want to serve their country.
- 5.3.4.** Professionals who have special skills and indicate interest to work in research and consultancy that the government gives special focus on will be encouraged.
- 5.3.5.** Employment opportunities will be provided to better exploit the potentials of Diaspora who are back home and are engaged in areas which specialized require skills such as education, health, IT etc...
- 5.3.6.** On the 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 are encouraged.
- 5.3.8. A mechanism will be put in place where Ethiopian Diaspora in the Middle East and neighboring countries will 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 will build confidence in 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 will be facilitated.
- 5.4.3. Close relations with banks and other legal money-transfer service providers abroad will be established via all Ethiopian Missions abroad, and their reliable and speedy service provisions to Ethiopian Diaspora will be facilitated.
- 5.4.4. An arrangement that will allow Ethiopian Diaspora 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 will be established in foreign countries where many Ethiopian community associations exist to encourage Ethiopian Diaspora to develop skills and knowledge on their country's languages, cultures and history.
- 5.5.2.** Diasporas will be mobilized and provided with the necessary support to build cultural centers and museums back home.
- 5.5.3.** Support will be provided for Diasporas who plan to organize events such as Diaspora musical performances, sports, cultural events and other arts in destination countries.
- 5.5.4.** A program to be named "Know Ethiopia Program-KEP", learning Ethiopian languages and cultural participation would be designed to help youth Diaspora develop strong attachment towards their country of origin.

## **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 will be in place to allow Ethiopians with permanent resident permit in other countries but living in Ethiopia to take part in elections at any nearest possible polling station.
- 5.6.3.** Mechanisms will be in place for Diaspora participation in national policy research and formulation.



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

- 5.7.1. Diaspora goodwill donations free from any religious and political attachments will be mobilized and their proper utilization will be realized.
- 5.7.2. Diaspora charities and their contributions will be encouraged, and a system aimed at broadening their voluntary contributions will be established.
- 5.7.3. Tax incentives on imported equipments for Diaspora non-profit making activities will be strengthened.
- 5.7.4. An effective resource mobilization mechanism will be established so that Diaspora charities' donations aimed at supporting the country's development endeavor will be rigorously mobilized and their proper and speedy utilization will be guaranteed.

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

- 5.8.1. Diaspora members will 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 will be encouraged to be familiar with their country's development process and participate actively in 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 will be launched.
- 6.1.1.2. Information delivery mechanisms to the Diaspora both in hard and electronic (Radio, TV, Website, etc...) will be established.
- 6.1.1.3. Diaspora conferences, symposiums, exhibitions and other related events will 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 will be launched in as many countries as possible with many Ethiopian communities and continuous programs will be produced and transmitted to them to enhance their awareness towards their country of origin.

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

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

- 6.1.2.1.1. The National Diaspora day will be celebrated at home, and there would be fora on the occasion as significant numbers of Diaspora come home to celebrate cultural and religious holidays.
- 6.1.2.1.2. Regional level fora ensuring Diaspora participation will be facilitated, institutions

engaged in delivering service in relation to Diaspora and businesses and professionals will be encouraged to have links with their counterparts at home.

**6.1.2.2. Abroad Diaspora Fora (Outreach Program)**

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

**6.1.2.2.2.** Necessary support will be given, to the Ethiopian Diaspora 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 making better contributions to the process of peace, development and democracy building will be introduced and will be given by both regional and federal government's senior 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 in domicile, would be handled in a proper way through

appropriately informing the basics of national consensus; other new associations are encouraged, identifying and giving them necessary support in their quest to help and contribute to their country in an organized way.

**6.3.1.3.** Relationship will be established among Diaspora community associations, foundations and human right associations with Ethiopian missions.

**6.3.1.4.** Mechanism will 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 establish contact with similar associations at home.

**6.3.1.5.** Support will 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 Diaspora Participation**

**6.3.2.1.** Strong relationship will be established in person and through electronic media among youth organized in different ways abroad. Support will be given to new youth and students associations; international associations' networks are also encouraged.

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

**6.3.2.3.** The opportunities in the country will 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 will be organized.

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

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

### **6.3.3. Support will 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 foreigners of Ethiopian origin promote and advance their relation and participation with their country of origin.

## **6.5. Assistance to Diaspora**

**6.5.1.** Providing services for returnees going back to their country to have the opportunity of importing their personal effects in accordance with the law.

**6.5.2.** Research based mechanism would be put in place for Diaspora individuals and organized associations to get low cost housing in regions, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa city administrations.

**6.5.3.** To promote in countries where there are no Ethiopian missions and there is significant presence of Ethiopian Diaspora, the necessary services shall be delivered by facilitating mobile services delivery

mechanism or appointing honorary consuls 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 serious 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 will be made to enable adopted Ethiopian children protect their rights and interests and establish contact to their home land.
- 6.5.7. The government will be strengthening the participation of Diaspora international and regional fora.

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

- 7.1. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs as mandated by law will be responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Diaspora policy.
- 7.2. A National Diaspora Council will be established comprising various higher federal and regional officials and stakeholders.
- 7.3. An Advisory Council will be established comprising Ethiopian Diaspora active in different fields in the country, and in missions.
- 7.4. Regional Diaspora offices will direct and coordinate their Diaspora participation.
- 7.5. A common forum of regional Diaspora offices will be established under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so as to carry out their activities in an integrated way with continuity and accountability.

- 7.6. A mechanism to establish a permanent meeting for organized associations related to the Diaspora will be put in place to meet with each other.
- 7.7. A mechanism to establish monitoring and evaluation among the Diaspora policy implementing offices will be put in place for the better follow up of the policy implementation.