

### Investing to Build the Homeland

It is often said that the potential of the Diaspora in national economic and social development is immense. The Diaspora can make a difference at home by actively engaging themselves in various endeavors. They can effectively make use of their success abroad and their resources to contribute to the building of the country at the same time benefiting from it. But this demands awareness and commitment for its realization.

MoFA Newsletter has talked to Ato Tadesse G/Egzabher, member of the Diaspora in Sweden on issues relating to the Ethiopian Community.

Tadesse G/Egzabher has been living in Sweden for the last twenty years. He is married, with two Children. Tadesse works for Astra Zenica, an International pharmaceutical company.

Born in Adwa, Tigray, he attended his high school studies at Queen of Sheba. He then joined the College of Teacher's Training in 1981 where he studied biology. After graduation, he was assigned to teach at the Damot High School, Gojam, for one and half year.

During that time, Tadesse recalls that the oppressive Dergue regime was chasing him and he was forced to flee to the Sudan and he ended up in Sweden in 1983.



*Tadesse G/Egzabher*

**Newsletter:-** How did you find the community in Sweden by the time you got there?

**Tadesse:-** When I reached Sweden, there were not many Ethiopians as it was very difficult to go there. Only few managed to come to Sweden. Most of the people I met were Ethiopians of Eritrean origins by the time. Compared to other countries, we cannot say that there are now a lot of Ethiopians in Sweden: there are about 10,000 Ethiopians in that country.

## **Diaspora Forum**

*Newsletter:-* How do you describe the condition now of the Ethiopian Community in Sweden?

*Tadesse:-* They do not face any difficulty as there is a social welfare. Most of the Ethiopians are hard working and are very respected by the Swedish society.

*Newsletter:-* What does the relationship between the Ethiopian Embassy and the Ethiopian Diaspora look like?

*Tadesse:-* The relationship the Ethiopian Embassy has with the Ethiopian community is not as strong as it should be. But this is not because of the weakness of the Embassy or the diplomats. It is because of the Ethiopian community residing in Sweden. Especially after the May elections, there was a rough time for the Ethiopian Embassy and those who supported the government. A lot of people were acting wild, very emotional. But gradually things have started to settle down. These days, things have come to normal.

The Embassy does not have strong links with the majority of the Diaspora except some community members who have good relationship with the Embassy.

*Newsletter:-* Do these groups consult with the Embassy in a regular basis?

*Tadesse:-* I can not say that. But the Embassy tries a lot to reach the community. The culture of going to meetings prepared by the Embassy is not well developed. The Embassy makes use of the community media and does not need to have meetings with the Diaspora on a regular basis.

The community media was founded in 1994. We have Amharic Radio and TV, Tigrigna Radio and TV, and Afan Oromo TV programs. Radio Selam made the first transmission, then after, Selam TV was founded which I have run for more than ten years. Since then, I have been chairman of these media, program leader and newscaster.

## Diaspora Forum

The Tigrigna programs were started during the Ethio-Eritrean war while Afan Oromo programs were launched a year ago.

The programs include economic and political issues, entertainment and those issues of concern to the community.

*Newsletter:-* What is your assessment of these programs?

*Tadesse:-* The main objective of these media is to fill the information gap. We want to provide the public with the opportunity of knowing the other side of the story. And we have helped to bridge this gap successfully. This is quite obvious for all Ethiopians residing in Sweden.

Another objective is to change the image of Ethiopia viewed by others as merely a place of hunger and poverty.

It is undeniable that we are poor. We want to show, however, to the swed society that Ethiopia is a beautiful country and that the government is working hard to bring about sustainable development. Actually we are successful on that score too.

Some people in the Diaspora doubted at the start the purpose of the programs and had bias against what the government of Ethiopia has accomplished in a short period of time. But gradually they began to appreciate the achievements made, and a lot of people from Sweden have started investing in Ethiopia.

*Newsletter:-* How do you describe the changes taking place in Ethiopia?

*Tadesse:-* I watch closely the development that are going on in Ethiopia as I am engaged in the media. And I have been to Ethiopia many times. I see the change. I see it very clearly. Nobody can miss this except those who prefer not to see and not to understand what has been taking place.

I have been here ten months ago and now I see a lot of construction, big roads high rises. In the agricultural sector also one witnesses a huge improvement. Success is being registered everywhere.

## **Diaspora Forum**

Government's effort to ensure a multi-party political system is also commendable. The democratization process is gaining momentum.

It does not mean, however, that the situation is perfect. There are some shortcomings, but in general, things are going very well.

*Newsletter:-* Could you give us your view on the incentives the government offers to the Diaspora to invest in their country.

*Tadesse:-* The government is trying a lot to convince the Diaspora to invest in their homeland. I am a witness to that. Our media has been engaged in elaborating this issue for so many years.

By investing in their country, the Diaspora will help the nation and benefit themselves. Unfortunately, some of them are die hard in their political opinion to accept this genuine gesture.

*Newsletter:-* Do you have a message to the Ethiopian Diaspora?

*Tadesse:-* I think that we all have to be prepared to celebrate the Ethiopian Millennium. We should celebrate the Millennium by doing something that would be remembered by the coming generation.