

'Heart for Ethiopia'

Ethiopia now needs the active participation of the Diaspora in an effort to pursue a path of development and democracy. Ethiopians in the Diaspora with relatively better access to acquire knowledge, know-how and economic status can contribute a lot to a speedy development of the country.

Taking the above fact into account the Ethiopian government has been trying to create a conducive atmosphere for Ethiopians in the



Diaspora to come to their home country and engage in different activities. While doing so, they can benefit themselves and their compatriots.

It is true that there are a number of Ethiopians in the Diaspora who have already come and engaged in various activities. The number of Ethiopian Diaspora who are coming and planning to come to their home country for different purposes has also been increasing.

Doctor Kifle Tondo

In today's edition of Diaspora Forum we introduce you to Doctor Kifle Tondo, founder of a medical team named 'Heart for Ethiopia' which is based in Germany. Doctor Kifle's medical team is now in Ethiopia providing medical assistance for Ethiopian children who are suffering from cardiac disease. When we met Dr. Kifle, he received us with a big smile - he was extremely happy for, his patients who were undergoing cardiac operation are all safe and in good health condition. We congratulated him for his success and made a brief stay with him.

Newsletter: - When did you leave Ethiopia?

Dr. Kifle:- I left my country in 1982. By that time, there was severe human right abuse in Ethiopia perpetuated by the Dergue regime. Since I left Ethiopia I have been living in Germany. When I left Ethiopia, I couldn't imagine that I would be able to see my land of origin again. Now, things have been changed for the better and I am able to see my country.

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Newsletter:- When did you come back to Ethiopia for the first time?

Dr. Kifle:- I came back to Ethiopia for the first time in 1994. By then, my idea was to help educate my people, particularly in rural areas about protecting the environment. I started my campaign in Masha, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State. I remember when I came back to Ethiopia within 2 weeks I thought in 37 schools about environmental protection. During this time beyond teaching people my assistance on material basis was very low. However, many people were happy to accept and put in place my mission's idea and actually began to keep forests from damaging.

Newsletters:- Could you describe us about your team's current mission to Ethiopia?

Dr. Kifle:- Yes. Now in Ethiopia there is no cardiac surgery and there are many children who lost their life because of cardiac disease. Lack of knowledge about the disease has seriously affected many Ethiopians. Its treatment costs about 200 - 300 thousand birr. And it is very unlikely for most Ethiopians to afford this amount of money for the cardiac treatment. Taking this problem into account, our team, 'Heart for Ethiopia' which was founded in the year 2000 in Germany comes once in two years time and carry out a cardiac surgery for Ethiopian Children at Black Lion Hospital and our current mission to Ethiopia is part of this objective.

Newsletter:- Besides delivering a cardiac treatment, is there any other support your team provides to improve the cardiac treatment in Ethiopia?

Dr. Kifle:- Yes. Our team besides delivering a cardiac treatment, is trying to transfer the knowledge and technological know-how for Ethiopian medical professionals in this field of medicine. We also give a material support for Black Lion Hospital. In addition, we are now planning to train Ethiopian professionals in the field.

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Newsletter:- Did you get any support from the Ethiopian Embassy in Berlin in relation to your mission?

Dr. Kifle:- We have got support from the Ethiopian Embassy in Berlin. It has facilitated things for our mission to be successful. All Ethiopian Embassies should strengthen their ties to facilitate support for such kind of missions.

Newsletter:- How could you express your feeling concerning your current mission?

Dr. Kifle:- Yes. I am very happy to see a child is saved. I do have a big mental satisfaction in saving the life of children. There is nothing which gives you pleasure beyond this.