



# Diaspora engagement mapping ETHIOPIA

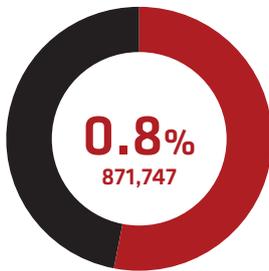
## Facts & figures

### Emigration

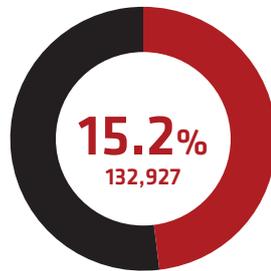
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 53.2%  
♀ 46.8%



♂ 48.4%  
♀ 51.6%



Remittances as a share of GDP: **0.5%**  
Remittances inflow (USD million): **411**



### Top countries of destination

United States	239,186
Saudi Arabia	160,192
Israel	78,258
Sudan	62,565
Canada	34,921



### Political rights



Dual citizenship<sup>1</sup>



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad<sup>2</sup>



Voting from abroad<sup>3</sup>



Terminology: Ethiopia refers to its diaspora using the term *diyaspōra* (Amharic ዲያስፖራ), which is an adoption of the English term.

1 Ethiopian Nationality Law of 1930. English version available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b52ac.html>

2 Alebachew, T. (2020). *Extending Voting Rights to the Ethiopian Diaspora: Towards Institutionalising Diaspora Political Participation in Ethiopia*, Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. Even though Ethiopians have the right to vote based on their citizenship, there are no formal institutions enabling voting from abroad, and diaspora members must be based in Ethiopia for at least 6 months to register and exercise their voting rights. According to Alebachew, "the requirement of residency, thus, automatically excludes Ethiopian citizens abroad from participating in elections in Ethiopia."

3 Ibid.

## Diaspora Policy (2015)



Ethiopia launched its first draft Diaspora Policy in 2011.<sup>4</sup> This was built on through a process of consultations, including with diaspora members.<sup>5</sup> The Diaspora Policy ratified in 2013 stated that the diaspora could play an important role in carrying out research and investment at home. In addition, it noted that diaspora members could win allies for Ethiopia and try to influence their country of residence to improve cooperation with Ethiopia.

The government launched the most recent version of its diaspora policy in 2015.<sup>6</sup> The emphasis on diaspora's role in advocacy for Ethiopia is not as present in this version. Its aim is to strengthen the relationship between Ethiopian citizens abroad and Ethiopians in Ethiopia to encourage national development, strengthen participation in the democratisation and peace building process for individual and national gains, create a conducive environment for joint development, and uphold their rights and interests abroad.<sup>7</sup> The policy confirms that the diaspora do not enjoy the same rights as full citizens with regard to political participation and voting, but it extends other entitlements to them in addition to the diaspora 'yellow card' ID scheme, such as access to local fares on public transport and local prices, and other benefits such as rights to purchase land or property.<sup>8</sup>

### Overview of policy and legislative framework



- 2002** ● **Proclamation No. 270/2002:** This proclamation provides for the issuance of a special identification card, the Yellow Card, for diaspora members of Ethiopian origin and their immediate family members.<sup>9</sup> The adoption of the proclamation in 2002 marked a major shift in the Ethiopian government's engagement in diaspora affairs; prior to this, Ethiopian diaspora members were subjected to prohibitive procedures that included, among others, meeting rigorous criteria to obtain visas and work permits, access to investment land and credit, and renewal of residence licenses.<sup>10</sup>
- 2002** ● **Investment Proclamation No. 280/2002:**<sup>11</sup> One of the first initiatives of the government was to make investment in Ethiopia more attractive to the diaspora. In 2002, the Investment Proclamation No. 280/2002 defined a Domestic Investor to be inclusive of foreign nationals who are Ethiopian by birth.<sup>12</sup> This allowed members of the diaspora to be treated as domestic investors, who have significantly different rights than foreign investors in Ethiopia, such as rights to own businesses and land/property.
- 2006** ● **Directive No. FXD/31/2006 - Foreign currency bank accounts directed at the diaspora:** The objective of this directive is to encourage investment from the diaspora and to "support the international foreign exchange reserve and ease the country's balance of payments problem."<sup>13</sup>
- 2015** ⇓ ● **2nd Growth and Transformation Plan:**<sup>14</sup> The government's national development plan seeks to increase diaspora investment to the country, especially at the regional levels. It also recognises the education and health sectors as core priority sectors that need to be further developed with diaspora contributions.
- 2020**

4 Available at: [https://chilot.me/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/diaspora\\_policy\\_draft-1.pdf](https://chilot.me/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/diaspora_policy_draft-1.pdf) (Amharic only)

5 See, for example, EthioTV diaspora policy debate from June 2013, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNsKAKHCg-gE&list=UL0nsJHcx5vpQG&index=594> (Amharic only)

6 Full text in Amharic: available at: [https://ethiopiangranddam.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/diaspora\\_policy\\_final-amharic.pdf](https://ethiopiangranddam.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/diaspora_policy_final-amharic.pdf)  
For the full text in English, please see: <http://aigaforum.com/documents/Diaspora-policy-final-English.pdf>

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 <https://www.ethioembassy.org.uk/consular-services/ethiopian-origin-id-cards/>

10 K K Berhanu (2019), The Political Economy of Diaspora Remittances in the Ethiopian Somali Region: DIIS Working Paper 2019:9 [https://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/2985083/DIIS\\_Working\\_Paper\\_2019\\_9\\_final.pdf](https://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/2985083/DIIS_Working_Paper_2019_9_final.pdf)

11 <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/et/et013en.pdf>

12 Available at: <https://chilot.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/consolidated-foreign-exchange-directives.pdf>

13 Available at: <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/et/et013en.pdf>

14 Available at: <https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/sites/default/files/downloads/policy-database/ETHIOPIA%29%20Growth%20and%20Transformation%20Plan%20II%2C%20Vol%20I.%20%20%282015%2C16-2019%2C20%29.pdf>



## Trends:

Since the 2000s, Ethiopia has had to develop a two-pronged approach to diaspora engagement: seeking to attract remittances, investment, and skills transfer from its diaspora in Europe and North America, on the one hand; whilst also ensuring the protection and reintegration of low-skilled labour migrants in the Middle East.

The government has established an impressive array of structures to facilitate diaspora engagement at the State and Federal levels between 2010 and 2020. These include diaspora officers in all of its major embassies and consulates in Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Australia; diaspora focal points in every ministry to help resolve issues relating to diaspora engagement; and state-level diaspora offices working to promote diaspora engagement at the Federal State level. Ethiopia has also invested in building the professional capacities of their consular and other staff working on diaspora engagement, with support from international partners such as AFFORD, ICMPD and IOM.

Combined with incentives for diaspora investment and return, these structures have aimed to engage and harness diaspora contributions from around the world, although arguably these schemes are targeted more at the diaspora based in Australia, Europe, North America, and Israel.

Diaspora investment flows to Ethiopia are difficult to track with accuracy. However, there have been some successes in this regard, even if uptake of large-scale investment products such as diaspora bonds has proved disappointing.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, the government has sought to support the Ethiopian diaspora in the Middle East, who are mostly migrant labourers. After an initial ban on Ethiopian migration to Gulf States in 2013, following large-scale deportations of undocumented Ethiopian migrants from Saudi Arabia, the government introduced the Ethiopian Overseas Employment Proclamation No.923/2016 which specifies that migrants may only travel to work in countries where Ethiopia has concluded a bilateral labour agreement, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan.<sup>16</sup> The government has also worked to advise and upskill Ethiopian emigrants, especially young women, in rural regions such as Tigray before departure via diaspora officers within State-level authorities.

<sup>15</sup> See AFFORD African Diaspora Direct investment Index

<sup>16</sup> <https://freedomfund.org/wp-content/uploads/Ethiopia-Hotspot-Annual-Report-2018.pdf>

## Obstacles



- **Lack of trust:** the Ethiopian Diaspora is not a cohesive group and is very politically divided. Many diaspora members may not want to support the current government and there is a legacy of mistrust on both sides. Ethnic and regional tensions feed into this lack of trust.
- **Limited awareness** among the diaspora of the Ethiopian government's diaspora engagement policies and programmes is a barrier that the government has sought to address through promotional activities and the creation of the Ethiopian Diaspora Agency.
- **Government bureaucracy:** Many diaspora members seek to avoid government bureaucracy. In some cases, diaspora actors have had their organisational and development activities restricted by government, especially if such activities are seen as political.<sup>17</sup>
- **Lack of support for the diaspora in countries of residence:** The Ethiopian diaspora often lacks visibility in their countries of residence compared to other diaspora communities, either due to their comparatively small diaspora population size (as is the case in European states) or due to the diaspora having a limited voice (as is the case in Gulf states where diaspora labour migrants have limited rights). Moreover, Ethiopia is a beneficiary of significant aid funding and this can make it hard for Ethiopian diaspora groups to compete for access to funding and investment capital, or to advocate for improved conditions.

## SPOTLIGHT: Effective practices



### Diaspora bonds

#### BONDS

Ethiopia launched bonds to support the construction of the Grand Renaissance High Dam on the Nile in 2008 and 2011. These were open to and marketed at the diaspora, although they were not as successful as hoped in raising investment capital.<sup>18</sup>

### Connecting Diaspora for Development (CD4D)<sup>19</sup> 2016-2019 / Entrepreneurship by Diaspora 4 Development (ED4D)<sup>20</sup> 2018 - ongoing

#### HUMAN CAPITAL

CD4D has supported the short-term return of high-skilled diaspora on assignments from the Netherlands to their countries of origin to promote skills transfer and diaspora enterprise. The first phase sent Ethiopian diaspora experts in agri-technology, enterprise and job creation, and fair-trade coffee imports.<sup>21</sup> The programme was implemented by IOM in collaboration with PUM (Programma Uitzending Managers – a network of Dutch senior experts and professionals). The related ED4D project aims to encourage Ethiopian diaspora in the Netherlands, or Dutch entrepreneurs in partnership with the diaspora, to engage themselves as entrepreneurs for the development of the private sector in their country of origin.<sup>22</sup>

17 Discussion Paper – Linking Policy and Practice in International Cooperation ECDPM. No. 168 December 2014. Diaspora Engagement in a Constricted Political Space the Case of Ethiopian Diaspora Organisations in the Netherlands

18 <https://africanarguments.org/2019/07/10/how-bonds-aimed-at-the-diaspora-can-raise-crucial-funds-for-africa/>

19 <https://www.iom.int/news/cd4d-conference-diaspora-action-hague-30-october-2018>

20 <https://www.connectingdiaspora.org/ed4d/countries/ethiopia/>

21 <https://www.connectingdiaspora.org/ethiopia/>

22 <https://www.connectingdiaspora.org/ed4d/about-ed4d/>



## Diaspora Engagement for City Development: Institutionalising the Concept of Migration and Development into Plans and Actions of Jigjiga City<sup>23</sup> 2019-2021

This project is working to help the Ethiopian Somali regional and local governments to mainstream diaspora engagement in policies, development plans and approaches to better leverage the important role the diaspora plays in local development. The project aims to produce a comprehensive profile of the Ethiopian Somali diaspora, strategies for engagement, and capacity building for local governments to implement these strategies.

CAPACITY  
BUILDING

## Ethiopian Diaspora Fellowship Leadership and Public Service Programme<sup>24</sup>

The Ethiopian Diaspora Fellowship (EDF) program is designed to promote leadership development, public service and creative storytelling. Through training, service in an organization in Ethiopia, peer-to-peer mentorship, and storytelling, fellows will have an opportunity to increase their own cultural identity and be a catalyst for growth and change in Ethiopia. Once in Ethiopia, fellows participate in peer-to-peer mentorship to increase cultural identity and promote a knowledge sharing opportunity. Fellows are also encouraged to document their experience thoroughly through different mediums, in order to define and redefine what it means for them to be an Ethiopian.

IDENTITY +  
HUMAN CAPITAL

<sup>23</sup><https://citiesalliance.org/diaspora-engagement-for-city-development-institutionalising-concept-migration-and-development-plans>

<sup>24</sup> <http://ethiopiandiasporafellowship.org/>

## Annex:

# List of Actors

## Diaspora related institutions



- **At regional level**

### **African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU CIDO) <https://au.int/en/cido>**

Ethiopia nominates a diaspora focal point to the African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU CIDO) Continental Meetings, which works to coordinate diaspora policy across AU MS.

### **East African Community <https://www.eac.int/>**

The mission of the Community is to widen and deepen economic, political, social and cultural integration in order to improve the quality of life of the people of East Africa through increased competitiveness, value added production, trade and investments.

### **Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) <https://igad.int/>**

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is an eight-country trade bloc in Africa. It includes governments from the Horn of Africa, Nile Valley and the African Great Lakes. Its headquarters are in Djibouti City.

- **National institutions**
  - At ministerial level

### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) <http://www.mfa.gov.et/>**

This ministry is responsible for Ethiopia's foreign relations and is the lead ministry for diaspora engagement.

### **Ministry of Civil Service <http://www.mocis.gov.et/>**

This ministry is responsible for the Ethiopian civil service, and oversees the Diaspora Coordination Office and its branches at the state level.<sup>25</sup> These offices have been central in promoting privileges established specifically for the diaspora and passing new legislation specific to the diaspora.<sup>26</sup>

- At sub-ministerial level

### **Diaspora Engagement Affairs Directorate**

There is a Diaspora Engagement Affairs Directorate-General under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates (MoFA) solely dealing with issues of diaspora engagement. Originally founded as the General Directorate for Ethiopian Expatriates in 2002, it became the Diaspora Engagement Affairs Directorate-General in 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Formerly known as the Ministry of Capacity Building. See Mulugeta bezabih Mekonnen (2018), *Transnational Migration-Development Nexus: The Engagement of Ethiopian Associations in Germany*, Lit Verlag.

<sup>26</sup> Katie Kuschminder and Melissa Siegel (2011), *Understanding Ethiopian diaspora engagement policy*, available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254405572\\_Understanding\\_Ethiopian\\_diaspora\\_engagement\\_policy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254405572_Understanding_Ethiopian_diaspora_engagement_policy)

## Ethiopian Diaspora Agency <https://www.ethiopiandiasporaagency.org/>

Created in 2018, the Ethiopian Diaspora Agency falls under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and works to engage, mobilise and facilitate Ethiopians and foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin in the development of their country. It was established as the point of contact/one-stop-shop for the diaspora. Thirteen embassies and consulates have diaspora units with dedicated staff.

## Federal and Regional Diaspora Affairs Coordination Offices

The Diaspora Coordination Office of the Ministry of the Interior oversees a network of 11 diaspora coordination offices at the nine regional states and two administrative cities of Ethiopia. These engage directly with their diaspora when they are in their home regions of Ethiopia.<sup>27</sup>

## Diaspora focal persons/desks

Diaspora focal persons/desks have been established in at least 15 relevant federal offices/ministries, including the Ministries of Health and Education.<sup>28</sup> They work to ensure diaspora engagement issues are dealt with appropriately across all areas of government and resolve problems encountered by the diaspora (for example, customs, or criminal justice issues).

## Diaspora Consultative Forum

This is a consultative forum led by MFA consisting of relevant institutional actors, which gathers every quarter to discuss the challenges and opportunities with regard to enhancing diaspora engagement.<sup>29</sup>

## Diaspora organisations in Europe



### Association of Ethiopians educated in Germany 1997 <https://aeege-ethiopia.org/>

#### Development activities

AEEG was established in 1997 by a group of Ethiopians who had returned home after studying in Germany. It has organised and conducted numerous workshops and training seminars over the years on timely and priority crosscutting issues, thereby facilitating knowledge transfer and cultural exchange and networking among members on the development agenda of Ethiopia.

### #Ethionextgen UK <https://www.ethionxtgen.com/>

#### Development activities

#EthioNxtGen is a UK Ethiopian Diaspora youth-lead initiative that aims to bridge the gap between young and professional Ethiopians in the UK with leaders, businesses and organisations in Ethiopia.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.connectingdiaspora.org/countries/ethiopia/>

<sup>28</sup> Personal communication, MFA 2019

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.connectingdiaspora.org/countries/ethiopia/>

Heart for Ethiopia Germany 2001 <http://www.heart-for-ethiopia.org/en/index.html>

 **Development activities**

Heart for Ethiopia was established by two Ethiopian doctors in Germany in 2001. Their team from the Braunschweig City Hospital in Germany performs medical missions to perform open-heart surgery on children and young adults in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

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April 2020



Implemented by



Funded by  
the European Union



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