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**Contribution of the Ethiopian Diaspora to
Peace-Building:
A Case Study of the Tigrai Development
Association**

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1. Introduction

Migration scholars believed that, traditionally, most immigrants tended to sever their ties to their countries of origin as they get assimilated into the countries of destination. Recent studies suggest, however, that transnational migrants tend to maintain ties with the countries of origin and contribute to conflict or peace-building and development activities. With this premise, DIASPEACE, a research project undertaken by a consortium of eight partner institutions, intends to generate evidence-based and policy-relevant knowledge on the impact of diaspora activities on conflict and peace-building by studying diaspora networks in Europe and their transnational activities in the Horn of Africa. The Forum for Social Studies (FSS), one of the partner institutions in the consortium, have produced the present report based on a qualitative study of the activities of Tigray Development Association (TDA), which originated as a diaspora organization but is now an Ethiopian-based NGO with strong diaspora links. This introductory section discusses the processes that led to the production of the report on the Ethiopian case study.

The research project involves different phases and activities. FSS has been actively participating in the project since the kick-off workshop held in Brussels, Belgium, on 5-6 May 2008. The workshop was designed to bring the DIASPEACE researchers together and deliberate on research objectives and methods, key research questions, literature review, work plan, and project management. During the kick-off meeting, FSS was represented by Kassahun Berhanu and Gebre Yntiso, who are responsible for the case study in Ethiopia, with Bahru Zewde as the team leader.

As per the DIASPEACE research program, the WP3 researchers in Ethiopia were expected to select one diaspora-associated organization/project for the Ethiopian case study. According to the original schedule, the specific organization/project was to be identified in November 2008 on the basis of the database of European diaspora organizations/networks to be developed by WP2 researchers in Europe. However, the identification process was delayed until January 2009 owing to the postponement of the delivery date of the data by the WP2 researchers. From a long list developed by the European partners, the FSS researchers first short-listed eight organizations based on two criteria: engagement in peace-related projects and the presence of partner organizations in Ethiopia. Of these eight organizations, TDA was selected for investigation because of its historical formation (it was established in 1989 by a section of the Ethiopian diaspora), its participation in post-conflict reconstruction in Tigray (a region that suffered from years of civil war), its dependence (at least partly) on diaspora remittance, and its transformation into a major development association over the years. Thus, the case study focuses on the contribution of this particular diaspora to peace-building and development - two closely intertwined processes.

In preparation for the field study, FSS hosted in January 2009 a workshop in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) for the WP3 working group. It was attended by seven researchers from four partner institutions. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the preliminary findings of the WP2 researchers, review WP2-WP3 cooperation, determine common research themes and methods, and review the individual research questions. After the meeting, the FSS research team engaged in the actual fieldwork, which involved the collection of primary and secondary data from TDA, the beneficiaries, and relevant individuals and institutions in Tigray Region and Addis Ababa.

A combination of data collection methods was employed, namely, interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and literature reviews. Informants were selected based on their depth of knowledge and participation in TDA activities. Apart from visiting the headquarters of the association in Mekelle (the capital of Tigray region), fieldwork was undertaken in three specific research sites (Mekelle, Wajerat and Selekklaka) to solicit data from the direct beneficiaries. Transcription and translation works followed the data collection process. Upon reviewing the transcribed and translated documents, the research team developed the structure of the report to be followed by the interpretation/analysis of data and the write up.

The report is organized into five major parts. The first section presents some perspectives on peace-building and development. After examining the link between the two, the study will give particular

focus to education and health, two prime areas of engagement of the case study presented. The section will conclude with an examination of the context under which NGOs have operated in Ethiopia, including the challenges that the new legislation adopted in February 2009 poses for them. The second section will outline the historical evolution of diaspora engagement in homeland affairs, drawing particular attention to the more intense interactions of the twentieth century and winding up with a look at the role of the Ethiopian diaspora in peace-building and conflict. The third section presents a global survey of the Tigray Development Association (TDA), which is the case selected for study. This is followed by a more detailed examination of TDA activities. The final section examines some critical issues relative to TDA operations, including local knowledge of the organization, popular participation in its operations and perceptions on TDA-TPLF relations.

2. Perspectives on Peace-building and Development

2.1. The Link between Peace-Building and Development

In 1992, Boutros Boutros Ghali, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, presented a report titled "An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping," in which the term "post-conflict peace-building" was introduced for the first time. In this document, post-conflict peace-building was defined as an action to identify and support structures that tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. The UN further refined the concept in a number of subsequent documents. It is obvious that the concept was first defined in terms of action to prevent the recurrence of violence. Peace-building has also been associated with actions carried out to prevent conflict.

Peace-building and development have long been treated as two different realities in theory and practice. But, researchers have increasingly challenged this conventional dichotomization by arguing that the two processes are interconnected and complementary. Amal Khoury (2006) noted that approaching peace-building and development in a compartmentalized or sequential manner – the dominant position in scholarship and practice – is unrealistic. The author further noted that post-conflict reconstruction needs to be a holistic, eclectic, and multi-leveled response integrated into a long-term vision. Jelena Smoljan (2003:233) quite convincingly articulated the inadequacies of the conventional approach and the growing recognition of the link between peace-building and development as follows:

The focus of the analysis is on the connection between peace-building and development. Competing views exist regarding the links between these two areas. The exclusivist approach considers them two distinct stages of a phased process, undertaken separately and under different conditions. The inclusivist approach, meanwhile, argues that they are mutually reinforcing and capable of operating simultaneously. This paper demonstrates that the inclusivist approach is gaining ground in the literature, and it contends that it is a more appropriate way of addressing the problems of post-conflict societies.

International organizations such as the World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO, and UNICEF, as well as national governments such as Norway and Canada promote the view that peace-building is inseparable from development. In its policy research report titled "Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy," the World Bank (2003:1) reported:

War retards development, but conversely, development retards war. This double causation gives rise to virtuous and vicious circles. Where development succeeds, countries become progressively safer from violent conflict, making subsequent development easier. Where development fails, countries are at high risk of becoming caught in a conflict trap in which war wrecks the economy and increases the risk of further war.

As will be explained further below, some UN organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF have underlined how certain development initiatives, such as education, contribute to peace-building.

Some governments have also taken bold positions regarding the link between peace-building and development. In its strategic framework document titled "Peace-building – A Development Perspective", the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004:10) remarked:

Peace is essential for development, and vice versa: development is essential for lasting and sustainable peace. Without peace we will not win the fight against poverty. Without peace the Millennium Development Goals will be optimistic but unrealistic promises. Violent conflict leads to and exacerbates poverty, and poverty is often a cause of violent conflict. Conflicts are a serious threat to development and their adverse consequences extend far beyond the geographical areas where they are being fought.

In sum, there is a growing recognition that responses to humanitarian emergencies and post-conflict reconstruction activities must go beyond relief to address the long-term welfare of distressed people. Hence, social and economic development is seen as an integral part of all peace-building efforts designed to attain lasting and sustainable peace. Social and economic development in this context relates to the process of repatriation and reintegration of refugees, internally displaced persons, and former combatants; reconstruction of infrastructure (e.g. roads, electricity, water, and telecommunication) to provide public functions and make people feel that peace indeed brings benefits; promotion of social development by improving education and healthcare with an emphasis on quality, accessibility and non-discriminatory entitlement; and economic development that involves stimulating private sector development, employment, trade, and investment.

From this, it is obvious that many of the elements of peace-building are the same as measures taken to promote development in peaceful situations/areas. It is equally important to note the fact that not all development works carried out in conflict areas or in post-war situations may qualify to be considered as peace-building as some projects may perpetuate existing conflicts or fuel new ones. This warrants the need to understand the context and intention of project undertakings. For the purpose of the present study, the relationship between peace-building and social development (education and health) is further discussed to provide analytical context for the activities of TDA in Ethiopia.

2.2. Peace-Building and Education

Many believe that education is a cornerstone of peace-building. International organizations and national governments are among the leading advocates of this view. UNESCO declared the year 2000 to be the Year of the Culture of Peace to sensitize children about the practical meaning and benefits of non-violence. The International Decade for the Culture of Peace runs between 2001 and 2010. Since the mid-1980s, UNICEF has supported what has come to be known as Education for Peace (understanding, reflecting, and teaching values), marking a departure from Peace Education (knowledge about peace). UNESCO (1998:4) stated:

Reflecting its fundamental purpose, to construct the defenses of peace in the minds of men and women, a culture of peace requires that education be the principal means of accomplishing this task. This includes not only formal education in schools, but also informal and non-formal education in the full range of social institutions, including the family and the media.

The fundamental argument is that inculcating the ideals of peace-building should start quite early in families, communities, and schools if a culture of peace, tolerance, and conflict resolution is to be built. According to Mary Biggs,¹ the Vice President of the Canadian Bureau for International Education, although education is no guarantee against hatred and war, it enlarges people's horizons and reduces stereotypes and prejudices. She noted:

Schools have the power to shape the attitudes and skills of young people toward peaceful human relations. Through teaching young children values of respect, tolerance, and empathy, and by

¹ <http://www.peace.ca/downloads/educ.doc>. Accessed on 30 July 2009.

equipping them with the necessary skills to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner, they are provided with the tools they need, now and in the future, to foster peaceful relations at home, at school and around the world. Education builds the foundations for good citizenship, respect for self and others, democratic values and tolerance of opinions. Educational research indicates that when young people are trained in civics, mediation, ethnic tolerance and conflict resolution, the likelihood that they will resort to violence later in life is diminished.

Some writers also explained the contribution of education-sector initiatives to rebuilding war-torn societies. Annette Isaac (2002) stated that reconstructing a society after conflict offers an opportunity to test new educational approaches and/or bring substantial reforms in the existing education system. The author further noted that innovative approaches of basic education and non-formal education could serve as an effective means of relieving war-related trauma. Adult education programs can provide parents and families with skills to help children recover from stressful and traumatic war memories.

2.3. Peace-Building and Health

It has also been claimed that health-sector initiatives have the potential to make a meaningful contribution to post-conflict peace-building (Glick 2008; Commonwealth of Australia 2004; MacQueen & Santa-Barbara 2000). The scenarios in which health projects could go beyond mere humanitarian relief and play key roles in promoting peace are multiple. Health can act as a bridge for peace, and health-sector reconstruction can assist in rebuilding the social contract thereby re-establishing the legitimacy of governments (Glick 2008). According to the Commonwealth of Australia (2004), "political violence has both human rights and health implications. Addressing the health needs of populations is an important first step to minimizing the effects of violence and promoting peace."²

MacQueen & Santa-Barbara (2000) noted that the transition towards peace in war-affected zones will often improve health care and the health status of populations. In this process, the health workers would have a role to play in expanding peace, and health would provide a critical element for long-term peace-building. MacQueen & Santa-Barbara (2000:293) noted:

War affects human health through the direct violence of bombs and bullets, the disruption of economic and social systems by which people use to address their health needs, the famine and epidemics that follow such disruptions and the diversion of economic resources to military ends rather than health needs. In recent years war has been framed as a public health problem. This highlights the role of health workers in preventing and mitigating destructiveness.

The report of the Commonwealth of Australia (2004) provided lengthy details about the link between health and peace-building. The report stresses that guided by ethics of preserving life and promoting health, health professionals are uniquely placed to act as monitors of human rights abuses. As leaders in their communities, they are also expected to promote reform and social justice across society as a whole, and engender trust in the settings where social cohesion has broken down. The report also underlines that good population health is essential for effective community action, including participation in post-conflict reconstruction. Health interventions may also offer a model for collaborations among a broad range of actors: public organizations, the private sector, and traditional services, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and the international community. According to the report, health initiatives would draw together families and communities, thereby creating a sense of social cohesion. It was also stated that a culturally-sensitive approach would harmonize traditional practices to modern medicine rather than undermining traditional healthcare.

²http://www.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/SPHCMWeb.nsf/resources/AUSCAN_Issue_Paper_I.pdf/%24file/AUSCAN_Issue_Paper_I.pdf+peace+building+health&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk

3. The Ethiopian Diaspora in Historical Perspective

3.1. Early Manifestations

Ethiopians generally have a reputation for insularity, preferring to stick it out at home rather than venture abroad for greener pastures or safer shores. In this respect, they represent a perfect antinomy to their neighbors, the Somali. In general popular perception, it is only in the wake of the 1974 revolution that Ethiopians began to migrate outside their country in large numbers. But this popular perception, like all such perceptions, is only half true since Ethiopians have a tradition of moving out and settling in significant numbers elsewhere even before that revolution.

The first such experience had a religious character about it, with Jerusalem and Rome representing the two major destinations. The migration of Ethiopian monks to the Holy Land culminated in their acquisition in the twelfth century of the Deir Sultan monastery adjacent to the Holy Sepulchre. The building of another Ethiopian church in the nineteenth century and other buildings by the royal family in the early twentieth century further contributed to the consolidation of the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem (Tigab 2001). Another Ethiopian religious and educational centre evolved in the Vatican, with the concentration of Ethiopian priests and monks there since the 15th century. Their increasing number and commitment attracted the attention of Pope Sixtus IV, who gave them the San Stefano church, located behind the basilica of St. Peter, in 1481. One of these priests, Abba Gorgoryos, was to attain lasting fame as the main source for the first major history of Ethiopia, titled *New History of Ethiopia*, by the German scholar, Hiob Ludolf. In the early twentieth century, the Ethiopian community also managed to get new land in the Vatican garden on which it managed to found what has come to be known as the Ethiopian College, which has served as residence for Ethiopian and Eritrean students doing postgraduate studies in philosophy and theology.³

But, these early migrations rarely arose out of situations of conflict. They were relocations that arose from the quest for religious redemption or in pursuit of knowledge. It was in the twentieth century that conflict, more specifically war and revolution, came to generate a mass exodus of Ethiopians abroad. Three major events stand out in this respect: the Italian invasion and occupation of Ethiopia, the 1974 revolution and the seizure of state power by the Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) in 1991. We shall examine below each of these three periods in some detail.

3.2. The Italian Occupation (1936-1941)

Following the defeat of Ethiopian forces and the entry of the Fascist troops in Addis Ababa on 5 May 1935, there was a large-scale flight of Ethiopians to other countries, both near and afar. Two days before the entry of the Italians, the vanquished emperor, Hayla-Sellase, accompanied by other members of his family and a few of his favored followers, fled the country and sought exile in England. Others followed soon after, their number swelling significantly after the nefarious "Grazziani Massacre" of February 1939. The major destinations were: the neighboring countries (British Somaliland, French Somaliland or Djibouti, Kenya and the Sudan); Jerusalem; and various European countries.

The Ethiopian community in Jerusalem saw an influx of refugees following the Italian Occupation. By April 1938, their number was reported to have grown to 318, of which twenty-three were members of the nobility. A number of these exiles came to be affiliated with two associations: the Ethiopian Youth Hope Association and the Ethiopian Exiles' Association. (Tamrat 1944 EC: 31-34). Another major destination of Ethiopian refugees was British Somaliland. When the British declared war on Mussolini and Hitler, the able-bodied refugees were organized into four companies to be part of an operation led by the French from Djibouti. As the Italians came to threaten British Somaliland itself, the refugees had to flee for their safety, eventually settling in Kenya, where they joined the refugees, numbering over 10,000, who had already settled there. When the British launched their two-pronged campaign (from the Sudan and Kenya) to liberate Ethiopia, the Ethiopian refugees in Kenya were organized into a force of ten companies and played an indispensable role in bringing about the collapse of the Fascist

³ <http://www.esai.org/myESAI/viewtopic-t-3222.html>

forces in southern Ethiopia by infiltrating behind enemy lines and gathering intelligence on its capabilities and the attitude of the local population (Zawde 2003: 69-92).

Sudan, which was also under British rule at the time, was yet another important destination of refugees. Indeed some of the most colorful members of the Ethiopian elite ended up here, including Takkala Walda-Hawaryat, Aman Mikael Andom, Deressa Amante, Yoftahe Neguse, Mared Mangasha, Abiy Abbaba, and Mangestu Neway. By virtue of the strong patriotic resistance in the adjoining provinces of Gojjam and Gondar, some of the refugees worked actively to undermine the Fascist occupation by infiltrating across the border and trying above all to coordinate the rather disparate exertions of the patriots (Heywat 1967 EC). Topping the list of those who worked actively to serve as a bridge between the exiles and the patriots were the Eritrean-born Lorenzo Ta'ezaz, Getahun Tasamma, Kabbada Tasamma, and Gabra-Masqal Habta-Maryam, leader of the movement for the union of Eritrea and Ethiopia after 1941 (Kabbada 1962 EC: 199). It is, therefore, not surprising that, when the British launched their main campaign of liberating Ethiopia from the Sudan under the code name of the Gideon Force, it was in the direction of these major centers of anti-Fascist resistance, particularly Gojjam.

Intervention of a more daring nature was represented by the exploits of Bashahwerad Habtawald and *Shaq*a Balehu Dagafu. The former was one of the first three Ethiopians educated in the United States in the 1920s. After the defeat of the Ethiopian forces in 1936, he accompanied the emperor into exile but then returned to Ethiopia. Implicated in the abortive plot to assassinate the Italian viceroy, Rodolfo Graziani, on 19 February 1939, he was caught in the Fascist backlash and appeared to have died under torture (Bahru 2002: 89-95). A similar fate awaited *Shaq*a Balehu, who also had returned from exile. Both were believed to have been sent back with instructions to catalyze the patriotic resistance to the Fascist occupation.⁴

After the restoration of Ethiopian independence in 1941, the Emperor made a point of relying on his exiled followers and servants to consolidate his position. This was made all the more imperative by the strong base that the patriots who had resisted the occupation for five years had managed to build. No other person typified the political ascendancy of the exile group more than the personality of Walda-Giyorgis Walda-Yohannes. He had served as the Emperor's private secretary during the period of exile. On their return, he rose to become the *de facto* prime minister (Bahru 2001: 203-205).

3.3. The 1974 Revolution

The 1974 revolution was the culmination of decades of opposition to imperial autocracy. It combined the plots and conspiracies of some members of the ruling establishment who were apprehensive of the pitfalls of the monarchic order, peasant discontent, ethno-nationalist rebellion and vociferous student opposition. With regard to the student opposition, much of the ideological inspiration could be said to have emanated from outside rather than from inside the country. The acrimonious ideological divisions of Ethiopian students abroad were to have fateful consequences in the course of the revolution, leading inexorably to the Red Terror and their mutual liquidation. That resulted in the consolidation of totalitarian dictatorship and the ascendancy of the ethno-nationalist movements.

The abortive coup d'état of 1960 led to the emergence of the first signs of political dissidence abroad. Two supporters of the coup continued their agitation against the imperial regime from outside the country. The first was Tafari Sharaw, Ethiopian ambassador in Sweden at the time of the coup. Following the failure of the coup attempt, he sought asylum in his host country and continued to oppose the regime, including giving support to the student groups based in Sweden who were beginning to call for revolutionary change. Another supporter of the coup, Getachaw Garadaw, first fled to Somalia but later moved on to Germany, from where he continued to harangue successive Ethiopian regimes. Yet another high official who defected while on duty was the Washington-based Ethiopian ambassador, Berhanu Denqe. He was to be the most prolific of the foreign dissidents against the imperial regime.

⁴ The full story of the abortive plot is narrated in fascinating detail in a forthcoming book: Ian Campbell, *The Plot to Kill Graziani: The Attempted Assassination of Mussolini's Viceroy*. Addis Ababa University Press; forthcoming.

But it was the foreign-based Ethiopian student unions that were to be the major platform for diaspora political opposition to the imperial regime. In some respect, it is not exactly accurate to characterize these students as being in the Diaspora. For some of them were there on short study trips and would eventually return home and join the civil service. Nevertheless, it remains true that the most committed or the ones who went furthest in opposing the regime found it difficult to return and thus inadvertently constituted the first nucleus of the Ethiopian Diaspora. The students were grouped into two regional unions: the Ethiopian Students Union in North America (ESUNA) and the Ethiopian Students Union in Europe (ESUE).⁵

There is general consensus that the year 1965 represents a landmark in the radicalization of the Ethiopian student movement. This was true for both the home-based and the foreign-based Ethiopian students. From then on, the student movement became ever more strident in its opposition, which could be said to have peaked in 1969. The unprecedented level of agitation culminated in the hijacking of an Ethiopian Airlines domestic aircraft to the Sudan by a group of seven students in the summer of 1969. The hijackers eventually ended up in Algeria and, led by Berhana Masqal Radda, formed a nucleus around which the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) was eventually to be set up at a congress in Berlin in April 1972.

Its rival, the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (more commonly known by its Amharic acronym, *Ma'ison*), was founded in Hamburg in 1968 by the leaders of ESUE (Andargachaw 2000: 13). Its leader, Hayle Fida, had tried to woo over the Algiers group to the side of his incipient organization. But the latter had ideas of their own about the future of the student movement and leftist politics. The disagreement of the two leaderships ended up splitting the thitherto monolithic ESUE into two camps. The Algiers group was assisted in building its own constituency by an influx of radical students to Europe and United States caused by the repressive measures that the government took in the wake of the widespread 1969 protests. The differences between the two groups, which were largely diasporic in nature, were transposed to Ethiopian soil after the outbreak of the revolution in 1974 and were to have lethal consequences both for themselves and the country at large.

As the leaders of EPRP and *Ma'ison* returned home to promote their rival political agendas, a new wave of emigration took place following the seizure of power by the Darg in September 1974 and, in particular, its bloody execution in November 1974 of some sixty members of the former ruling elite as well as dissidents within its own ranks. These new exiles consisted mainly of members of the ruling establishment who had managed to escape the detention that became the fate of almost all members of their class. The more politically active eventually formed in succession two political organizations that tried to challenge Darg rule: the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) and the Ethiopian People's Democratic Alliance (EPDA). The former managed to have even an armed presence in northwestern Ethiopia, thereby challenging both the Darg and the budding Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Members allegedly belonging to the latter were rounded up by the Darg in 1983 and accused of conspiring with CIA support to overthrow the revolutionary government (Spencer 1984: 379).

The liquidation of EPRP and *Ma'ison* through the Red Terror effectively signalled the end of multi-ethnic opposition to the Darg and the ascendancy of ethno-nationalist opposition. While that opposition was essentially characterized by rural armed struggle, it had an important diasporic component. In a way, the pattern for such armed opposition combining guerrilla warfare inside the country and agitprop in the diaspora was set by the Eritrean struggle. As the UN-sponsored federal arrangement became increasingly eroded in the 1950s through a combination of Unionist manipulation and Imperial autocracy, a number of Eritreans dissatisfied with or unable to operate under the prevalent trend migrated to neighboring states. It was these elements that set up the Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM), which was superseded by the Eritrean Liberation Front as of 1961. In subsequent decades, the mobilization of public support for the struggle, both among the Eritrean community as well as the

⁵ This section on the Ethiopian Student Movement is based on the extensive data that I have been gathering on the subject as part of my ongoing research project.

international public, was to be an important factor that contributed to the ultimate success of the struggle for independence.

In the rest of Ethiopia, the two major armed liberation movements were the TPLF and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), formed in 1975 and 1976, respectively. Both came to have a large pool of supporters in the diaspora. While the bulk of this diaspora was located in the United States, a sizable number was found in Europe as well. Such was the context within which the Tigray Development Association (TDA) had its genesis in Washington DC in 1989. This is not to say, however, that the Ethiopian Diaspora was always aligned with one or another of the ethno-nationalist movements or even that it was all politically motivated. A substantial proportion could hardly be said to have been politically engaged, opting for the fostering of cultural and social networks such as setting up Ethiopian Orthodox churches and gathering around the annual football tournaments, as well as running a wide range of media programs and community support initiatives (Lyons 2007: 536; Wheeler 2008: 18). Of those who were politically involved, a significant proportion rallied around what one can describe as pan-Ethiopian agenda rather than ethno-nationalist programs.⁶

3.4. The Post-1991 Scene

A recurring feature of Ethiopian diasporic formation is the reversal of group status following the change of regime. In the wake of the 1974 revolution, the student radicals who had effectively exiled themselves returned home to promote their revolutionary programs. Conversely, members of the ruling elite – or more exactly those who managed to escape execution or prolonged incarceration – were forced to seek asylum abroad, mostly in Europe and the United States. Before too long, as the revolution degenerated into civil war, both in the capital and in the areas of rural insurgency, they were joined by those fleeing the Red Terror and the devastating wars. With the change of regime in 1991, a sizable proportion of the Tigrayan Diaspora, including their main organization (the TDA) relocated to Ethiopia. Conversely, again, a large number of people who found it difficult or impossible to live under the new political dispensation were forced to seek refuge abroad. This new wave was largely composed of those with pan-Ethiopian sentiments but also came to include others who were either affiliated or suspected of being affiliated with ethno-nationalist organizations, whose honeymoon with the new rulers was to be rather brief. Such was the case with the OLF, which fell out with the EPRDF regime in the wake of the controversial 1992 elections. It was followed not so long after by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).

Diaspora political activism has increased in the past two decades and reached its peak during the 2005 elections. The prospect of peaceful democratic change promised by the pre-election debates raised wild expectations both at home and abroad. The dashing of that hope with the massive post-election repressions, while it subdued domestic protests, catalysed the diasporic opposition as few other events have succeeded in doing before or since. The political activism was kept at a high pitch throughout the two-year incarceration of the leaders of the main opposition party, Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD). It subsided only after divisions within the CUD leadership surfaced soon after their release from detention.

3.5. The Ethiopian Socio-Political Context, Policy Regime and Implications

Though voluntary associations with various forms and purposes have existed in Ethiopia for a long time (Pankhurst 1958), the coming on the scene of modern NGOs is a recent phenomenon. In traditional Ethiopian society, various social organizations in the form of religious entities, extended family systems, and mutual self-help groups undertook voluntary activities to address common problems affecting individual and group members (Kassahun 1994: 3; Kassahun 2002: 121; CRDA 1998: 4). These exist to this day, without undergoing substantial changes in their mode of operation and fields of engagement. In the mid-1970s, prior to the revolutionary upsurge, there were very few modern and formally organized NGOs in the country, and they were mainly engaged in limited social welfare and community

⁶ Wheeler is fond of referring to “Amharic” communities or groups. This, presumably, is meant to refer to the Amhara, for “Amharic” is a linguistic and not an ethnic category. More importantly, it echoes a common fallacy of equating pan-Ethiopian sentiments with Amhara identity.

development efforts to deal with pressing needs of vulnerable groups by providing relief aid, educational and health services, and vocational training (Kassahun 2002: 121).

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a veritable mushrooming of modern NGOs. The recurrent famines precipitated a massive influx of aid organizations from abroad and the coming on the scene of a few local counterparts. In view of the humanitarian crisis experienced during the period in question, the successive imperial and military regimes were forced to allow the intervention of foreign NGOs to deal with the threats of prevalent drought and food insecurity (Dessaiegn 2002: 106). In the face of the persistence of these ills and the attendant consequences, the NGOs continued their operations while at the same time gradually increasing their numerical size and diversifying their activities by effecting changes in the scope and essence of their mandates (from relief/rehabilitation to development). Following the May 1991 regime change, introduction of some liberalization measures led to the considerable growth of the numerical size of NGOs. It is at this point in time that TDA and other similar regional/ethnic-based development organizations obtained legal recognition.

The promulgation of the Civil Code (IEG 1960) in 1960 was the first instance when non-governmental organizations were mentioned in Ethiopian official policy and legal provisions made governing their formation, areas of engagement and mode of operation. These were further elaborated in a legal notice known as the "Internal Security Act" of 1966 and issued by the Ministry of Interior. Despite several developments that had come on the scene since then, the imperative of control remained the major concern of successive regimes in dealing with matters associated with non-state actors and their fields of engagement. Regulatory bodies overseeing NGO operations have changed over time: the Ministry of Interior under imperial rule, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission⁷ under the military regime and the EPRDF government until 1995, and subsequently the Ministry of Justice. Since the beginning of 2009, a unit under the Ministry of Justice known as the Charities and Societies Agency has taken charge of overseeing NGOs and other civil society organizations. The primacy accorded to the imperative of control and state scrutiny is demonstrated by the government's introduction of a directive known as *Guidelines for NGO Operations* in the mid-1990s, which was aimed at classifying "groups and provide guidance on the priority areas of NGO programming" (Clark 2000: 6).

In view of these developments, non-governmental organizations in Ethiopia have been overcautious lest they provoke the sensitivity of political regimes and incur deregistration. There is hardly any record of a proactive stance on the part of NGOs and other non-state actors with a view to demanding their rights for autonomous existence and freedom of operation. The farthest they had gone in this respect has been participation in consultative meetings on government policies and programs in whose formulation they were not meaningfully involved. In 1999, the formally registered NGOs in Ethiopia came up with what is known as the *NGO Code of Conduct* as an expression of a commitment to self-regulation (Clark 2000, Dessaiegn 2002: 109).

Some semblance of serious consideration of the Ethiopian Diaspora at the policy level was shown for the first time by the incumbent EPRDF regime with the creation of a directorate under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The directorate was charged with the task of facilitating diaspora participation in socio-economic activities in the country. Measures introduced in this regard include the initiation of a column known as the "Diaspora Forum" in the Ministry's regular newsletter. According to the *Indian Ocean Newsletter* (2003), the Ethiopian government also finances a radio program in Washington DC to convey its messages to the Ethiopian Diaspora.

The contemporary scene is dominated by a legislation (FDRE 2009) with significant implications for the NGO sector that was promulgated on 13 February 2009. It provides for the establishment of a regulatory body known as "The Charities and Societies Agency" and defines its objectives, powers and functions. The proclamation states that the establishment of the Agency is necessitated by the need to make charities and societies adhere to the law of the land in a transparent and accountable manner. Article 7 of the Proclamation provides for a governing board of seven members, of which two are to be nominated by the charities and societies. The Board is vested with a wide range of powers, including

⁷ This unit was subsequently renamed the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) and, more recently, the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency (DPPA).

licensing, registering, and supervising charities and societies, removing and replacing their officers, and suspending and canceling their licenses.

The new legislation is widely recognized as prohibitive with respect to NGOs and other civil society organizations that receive the bulk of their funding from external sources. These are barred from registering as Ethiopian charities or societies if they engage in areas like justice, democracy, conflict resolution, human rights, and gender and child rights. Given the incipient state of philanthropy in Ethiopia, the provision effectively inhibits NGOs from engaging in the aforementioned activities. Moreover, it is feared that, given the prevalent ethos of state control and scrutiny, the new legislation could culminate in the termination of several associations as a result of the broad discretionary powers that the new regulatory body enjoys.

3.6. The Role of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Peace-Building and Conflict

Literature pertaining to the genesis of Ethiopian Diaspora groups and their role in socio-economic and peace-building activities is both recent and scanty. The most notable works on the subject include the works of John Sorenson (1996), Terrence Lyons (2004, 2006 and 2008), A. M. Terrazas (2007), and Thomas Wheeler (2008). Citing different sources, Wheeler (2008: 17-18) provides the geographic distribution of the Ethiopian Diaspora along with their numerical size, ethnic composition, educational and social background, socio-cultural networks, and causes of departure from the country of origin since the 1970s. Based on the findings of empirical studies, Wheeler emphasizes that, in the majority of cases, the flight from Ethiopia is attributable to conflict and insecurity, which in turn contributed to the ascendance of ethno-nationalism as one of the major ideological underpinnings of diaspora engagement in politics. The role and influence of the Ethiopian Diaspora as an important constituency for those engaged in domestic politics – including the ones in government and the legal opposition – is clearly, albeit briefly, outlined in this study (*ibid.*: 29) and others (e.g. Lyons, 2006 & 2008). According to Levitt (1998: 926), in addition to making financial remittances, diasporas associate with their countries of origin in a wide variety of ways, including social remittances expressed in the flow of ideas, values, norms, behaviors, and social capital. As demonstrated by the events surrounding the May 2005 Elections, the Ethiopian Diaspora groups have shown their potential to be sources of ideas and strategies that contributed to the further polarization of the positions of the political protagonists of the time. By the same token, they can also shape and influence endeavors aimed at stabilizing abnormal situations through peace-building endeavors.

The North-South Center of the Council of Europe (2006) includes within the category of social remittances innovative ideas, valuable transnational networks, knowledge and skills, political outlooks and norms, and ethical values that are acquired by the diaspora in the host countries and transmitted to the lands of origin. In this connection, Wheeler (2008: 27-28) cites the case of the Ethiopian Extended Dialogue (EED) forum that was active between 1999 and 2003 and suggests that engaging a conflict-generated diaspora in a process of conflict resolution has the potential to alter the perception of their constituencies regarding conflict in the country of origin. By virtue of the comparative advantages that they enjoy as compared to their compatriots at home, diaspora political players exercise considerable influence on the disposition of parties operating within the legal milieu in the country of origin. This has been demonstrated on various occasions, notably in the critical role they played during the 2005 Elections (Lyons 2006: 26). On the basis of an analysis of the case of the Ethiopian Diaspora in North America, Lyons concluded that conflict-generated diasporas “relate to homeland politics and conflicts in specific ways and are an additional, often complicating, set of actors to processes of change in the homeland” (*ibid.*: 10). In a similar vein, Barth and Shain (2003: 461) argue that diasporas exert a disproportionate and “more direct influence through contributions to parties and candidates of their choice”.

Financial remittances constitute another important element in diaspora relations with places of origin. These remittances could be in the form of capital investments or transfers for family and individual assistance. However, it is not always easy to document such transfers since official statistics often tell less than half the story. Nor is it easy to disaggregate remittances captured by the official records regionally. The National Bank of Ethiopia has the following figures for the period 1992-2008.

Table 1: Private Remittances, 1992-2008 (in million USD)

Fiscal Year	Amount		Fiscal Year	Amount
1992/93	0.3		2001/02	93.4
1993/94	0.3		2002/03	140.6
1994/95	0.2		2003/04	211.1
1995/96	2.3		2004/05	350.8
1996/97	39.9		2005/06	354.9
1997/98	104.3		2006/07	632.6
1998/99	71.3		2007/08	800.3
1999/00	105.9		2008/09	723.2
2000/01	104.1			

Source: National Bank of Ethiopia

According to another source (*Capital* 2004), official financial remittances to Ethiopia between 1996 and 2000 made up 1.2% of GDP, reaching a sum of US \$ 1 billion in 2008 (Muluken 2008). It should be noted that these do not include the larger sums transferred through unofficial channels. Remitters opt for informal channels because these are allegedly cheaper and better-suited for transferring funds to remote areas and maintain anonymity at both the sending and receiving ends (Ratha 2004: 5; World Bank 2007; and Julca 2007). Mohan and Zack-Williams (2002: 211) argue that “both politically and economically, the diaspora has an important part to play in contemporary social processes”. According to the North-South Center of the Council of Europe (2006), migrant remittances defined as transfer of funds from members of the diaspora to relatives or friends in the country of origin are now recognized as the second largest source of global development finance, providing the highly needed foreign exchange to the home countries and supplementing the domestic incomes of millions of poor families in the world. In 2002, the flow of remittances to the developing countries stood at US \$ 72 billion, which is higher than the total official aid flows (Ratha 2003). This, albeit in a limited manner, applies to the situation in Ethiopia as well. Financial remittances enable beneficiaries to maintain established livelihood systems in the face of growing income and food poverty. On a broader level, diasporas were also instrumental in the efforts of aid organizations to find resources for providing their services to their constituencies. It is to be recalled that at the height of the civil war in Ethiopia in the 1970s and 1980s, in addition to the tapping of bilateral and multilateral assistance by the relief organizations created by the insurgent Eritrean and Tigrayan rebels, namely the Eritrean Relief Agency (ERA) and the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), respectively, diaspora funding of these organizations was significant (Young 1998: 42, Kassahun 2000).

In the following sections, the case of an Ethiopian Diaspora group that evolved at a critical stage in the political history of the country and subsequently boosted the developmental efforts in one of the regions of the country is presented. Based on the findings of this study, the instrumentality of financial and social remittances originating from this group and how these have impacted on the normalization/peace building endeavors of the major domestic political actor, namely the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), is highlighted.

4. The Tigray Development Association

4.1. Background and Genesis

The Tigray Region in northern Ethiopia, which is one of the earliest areas of concentrated human settlement in the country, has experienced a host of problems that have heavily impacted on people’s livelihood in several ways during the past several decades. Settled agricultural and related activities deemed essential for sustaining livelihoods have taken place in the region over the past several centuries. Around the end of the nineteenth century, the region suffered from a plethora of experiences characterized by recurrent drought-induced famines, weakening of established coping and adaptive mechanisms, and deterioration of ecological and environmental resource bases. These were compounded by persistent conflicts that took place both internally and

as a result of foreign invasions. These predicaments worsened in the second half of the twentieth century with the unfolding of the famine of the early 1970s, which claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and entailed massive displacement. It is acknowledged that the famine and its consequences formed the backdrop to the Ethiopian revolutionary upsurge of 1974, which culminated in the ousting of the *ancien regime* and the advent of a military dictatorship.

Expectations for a better future and substantial improvement of situations resulting from the regime change of the mid-70s were, however, short-lived. Mounting disillusionment arising from the coercive measures of the military regime vis-à-vis the legitimate aspirations of society led to widespread discontent in the country, including the Tigray Region. In 1975, an ethno-nationalist insurgent group known as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and advocating "the right of the people of Tigray to self-determination"⁸ was formed, and it succeeded in gradually rallying the support of the local population. Between the mid-70s and the end of the 1980s, Tigray became a battleground where different protagonists with diverse orientations and competing aspirations engaged in violent armed conflicts⁹ from which the TPLF emerged as a major protagonist that seriously challenged the incumbent military regime. In the process, the predicament of the people of Tigray was compounded by the 1984/5 famine, which brought about the flight of about a tenth of the Tigrayan population (Kassahun 2000: 73), who were forced to seek asylum in Sudanese refugee camps and elsewhere outside the country. Concurrently, the government forcibly relocated several thousand Tigrayans to state-sponsored resettlement sites in the southern and south-western parts of the country. TPLF's intensified insurgency moved to an advanced level and resulted in the liberation of the Tigray Region in 1989 and culminated in the regime change of May 1991 spearheaded by the Front.

The Tigray Development Association (TDA) was founded in Washington DC in August 1989, a few months after the liberation of Tigray, by members of the Tigrayan Diaspora, most of whom had fled Ethiopia during the height of the civil war (TDA 1999). It was officially established as a non-profit, non-political and charitable organization dedicated to the reconstruction of the war-ravaged infrastructure and the rehabilitation of the population displaced by the conflict and famine of the 1970s and 1980s. The initiative taken by the Tigrayan Diaspora in Washington DC was soon emulated by their compatriots living in different parts of the United States, Canada, Western Europe and the Middle East, resulting in the creation of associated branches of the organization. In this manner, TDA's geographic coverage and operations were broadened between 1989 and the immediate aftermath of the May 1991 regime change,

Initially, TDA's activities were limited to sending educational material and medical supplies to the newly liberated Tigray. TDA also organized symposia in Washington DC, and later in the regional capital (Mekelle), in which several supporters and sympathetic professionals actively participated (*ibid.*). Within about two years of its founding, dozens of TDA branches proliferated in the different parts of the western world and in Ethiopia. As a result, its membership grew from a few hundreds to tens of thousands and eventually reached hundreds of thousands. In 1992, TDA's first General Assembly decided to move its headquarters to Mekelle, the regional capital. Cognizant of the importance of Addis Ababa as the headquarters of several regional and international organizations like the OAU (later changed to the AU) and the UN/Economic Commission for Africa, TDA's Liaison Office was established in the Ethiopian capital. The Liaison Office is entrusted with the task of enhancing fund-raising efforts, facilitating membership services, and serving as a hub for promoting TDA-donor relations (TDA 1999: 29).

⁸ In its manifesto issued in 1976, The TPLF declared that it was fighting for the establishment of an independent republic. This stance was soon dropped due to lack of internal support for the proposed project

⁹ Following its founding in the mid-70s, the TPLF had to contend for space and constituency of support in the Tigray Region with other political forces of ethno-national and multiethnic composition and political orientation: the Tigray Liberation Front (TLF) represented the former category while the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) represented the latter. As a result, it entered into military confrontation with these groups in addition to its armed struggle against the military regime. Hence it was forced to engage in several fronts against its adversaries, emerging victorious and eventually succeeding in controlling the Ethiopian state and dominating the political scene in the post-1991 years.

4.2. Objectives, Mandate, Governance and Institutional Arrangements

At its inception, TDA mainly focused on mobilizing Tigrayan professionals in the diaspora to visit the Region and share their experience and technical and other skills as part of the effort aimed at saving lives and rehabilitating the war-ravaged regional economy and physical and social infrastructure (TDA 2009). Immediately after the end of the civil war in 1991, TDA moved its headquarters to Mekelle. This was justified by the organization's intention of mobilizing local resources by working closely with the local beneficiaries and other stakeholders. TDA's objectives have been refined and adjusted over the years in line with its growth, capacity development, and the pressing needs of its target groups. As stated in its various documents (TDA 1999 & 2009), the organization articulated its vision as one of striving to mobilize and carefully utilize available resources in a manner that can lead to the realization of "... an affluent Tigray ... free from poverty and backwardness...". In view of this, it has set down the following objectives:

- 1 Improving educational and health services and infrastructure;
- 2 Training the youth within the ranks of the poor and the needy sections of the population in marketable skills;
- 3 Enabling target groups and communities to secure sustainable livelihood free of poverty and want;
- 4 Facilitating ways and means of creating access to credit services and gainful employment opportunities for the poor and the needy in the Region;
- 5 Familiarizing target groups with new information, production techniques, and relevant and appropriate technology; and
- 6 Forging partnership with pertinent government bodies at grassroots, local/regional and national levels and networking with development and donor organizations that could support the attainment of the organization's objectives (TDA 1999).

The incumbent Board of Directors has recently laid down the following strategic objectives (TDA 2009):

- 1 Build the capacity of secondary schools and improve the quality of secondary education in the region;
- 2 Enhance the quality of technical and vocational education and training;
- 3 Expand and strengthen non-formal adult education;
- 4 Support the endeavors of the Youth and Sports Affairs Bureau of the Regional State;
- 5 Encourage and enhance the availability of gainful employment opportunities;
- 6 Assist efforts aimed at the development of tourism in the Region;
- 7 Initiate and promote good governance within the organization and beyond in order to achieve healthy developmental goals; and
- 8 Improve the quality of health services through the provision of medical equipment, chemicals and drugs obtained from partners and supporters outside the country.

The strategies designed for realizing these objectives included intensifying mobilization through vigorous enlisting of members and supporters both in the country and abroad; embarking on the identification of potential donors while maintaining links with the already existing ones; organizing special fundraising events; investing in the development of human power and other assets; identifying beneficiaries and target areas on the basis of prioritized needs; undertaking information exchange with regard to organizational programs and activities through the use of different media – radio broadcasts, quarterly newsletters, and brochures (TDA 1999 & 2009). During the early stages (1992-1995) of its operations in Ethiopia in general and Tigray in particular, the major preoccupation of TDA was social and physical infrastructural rehabilitation and development, focusing on education, health and skill training. At a later stage, other areas of TDA's intervention included involvement in agricultural and natural resources development, transportation, culture and sports, and conflict resolution (TDA 2009).

TDA is governed by bodies charged with the responsibility of policy making and management. Its organizational structure and institutional arrangements show clear division of tasks and a system of

institutional checks and balances. Accordingly, the General Assembly, composed of elected representatives of chapters and sub-chapters, is made the ultimate decision-making body. It meets biannually to deliberate and decide on general policy and strategic issues and to elect members of the Board of Directors. The composition of the latter is designed to reflect a balanced representation of the different chapters in the diaspora (mainly North America, Europe, Africa and the Middle East), Tigray, and other parts of Ethiopia. The Board, which is answerable to the General Assembly, appoints the Executive Director and other members of the Management Team entrusted with the task of running the day-to-day activities of the organization. The Board meets on a quarterly basis to approve strategic and operational plans and monitor their implementation.

The organization claims to have developed standard working documents in the form of personnel, financial, logistics, and procurement/purchasing manuals containing clear guidelines that are strictly observed by all concerned. TDA also claims to have smooth working relations with development agencies like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the British Department for International Development (DFID), the European Union (EU), the German-based Menschen für Menschen (MFM), the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the Ethiopian Social Rehabilitation and Development Fund (ESRDF), the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), UNICEF, and a foreign-based NGO known as Glimmer of Hope. These bodies have provided it with considerable financial, material and technical assistance (TDA 1999, 2008 and 2009). Individual and corporate membership is open to those who support its aims and objectives and are willing to extend their assistance for the realization of the stated goals.

4.3. Major Actors, Stakeholders, and Chapters/Branches

From the outset, TDA explicitly stated that it follows a participatory approach to ensure that the people of Tigray have a stake in each and every program component and project-based activity. It also clearly declared that its major involvement would be in rural rehabilitation and development aimed at reaching the Region's most disadvantaged and needy sections of society in the rural areas. TDA's mission statement underlines its determination to work as a viable development actor and its commitment to combating poverty. Adherence to the principles of transparency and accountability is cited as one of its core values (TDA 2009).

The major stakeholders that proactively participate in the organization's endeavors include founder-members and supporters in the diaspora, individual and corporate members and supporters within Tigray and the rest of the country, local and regional government agencies in the Tigray National/Regional State, bilateral and multilateral donor organizations, partner NGOs and, most importantly, the target communities that actively participate in various rehabilitation and development projects. TDA has established several branches and sub-branches both within the country and abroad. According to the update posted on the organization's website (4/16/2009), branches operate in all of the regional states and some selected urban centers in Ethiopia. It has several branch offices operating outside the country, notably in the United States, Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

5. TDA Activities

5.1. Overview

TDA was established as the Tigray region was coming out of years of civil war and recurrent drought and famine episodes. Thus, the original intention of the association was to make "resources available to the people of Tigray for their use in their struggle to overcome years of misguided government policies, natural disasters and war" (TDA 1999:26). Initially, TDA heavily depended on the rapidly growing contributions of its members in the diaspora. Araya Zerihun, the late Chairman of TDA, stated that the first General Assembly held in 1992 adopted a budget of 14.6 million Birr for the following year "expectantly counting on the goodwill of its enthusiastic members" (TDA 1999: 4).

The participants of the meeting, who came from different corners of the world representing TDA members, were given quotas to raise to add up to the total budget. However, when the headquarters of TDA was relocated to Mekelle in 1992, the association lacked funds to meet the daunting challenges it faced. Araya recounted:

The challenges were daunting and yet exciting when I first came to Mekelle to head the Tigray Development Association (TDA).... As the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) gradually gained control of the region [Tigray], TDA began limited rehabilitative activities, sending supplies from America.... The people's expectations and eagerness for reconstruction, rehabilitation and development were very high but the amount of money we had in the bank was only 250,000.00 *birr*.... in 1994 and 1995 when we conducted our telethons, it was extremely gratifying to witness a great outpouring of contributions coming from members and supporters across Ethiopia and elsewhere (TDA 1999:4).

The development and consolidation of TDA and the activities it undertakes in line with its stated goals and objectives could be categorized into three major phases: formation and consolidation (1989-1992), preoccupation with rehabilitation and reconstruction (1993-1995) and involvement in development activities in collaboration and partnership with other national and international NGOs, local/regional government agencies, and donor organizations.

As indicated earlier and as articulated in another program document (TDA 2007), the major initial undertakings and accomplishments of the organization were in the fields of education, health, and skill training. These were subsequently followed by agricultural and natural resource development, transportation, culture and sports, and conflict resolution. It is claimed that TDA's interventions in implementing its diverse program components covered all the administrative zones of the Region. The districts and lower administrative units were served on the basis of local priorities and needs as well as the capacity and the resources at the disposal of the organization (Source: Interview at TDA HQ, 2009).

Over the years, TDA has transformed itself from a charitable diaspora network in the US to a major development association currently operating in Ethiopia. However, the association maintained a strong connection with and continued to receive support from the Tigrayan Diaspora in different parts of the world. Beside its history as a refugee organization engaged in post-war reconstruction, it is this active link with the diaspora that makes the association relevant for the present study. The present study reveals that the Tigrayan Diaspora has been making different contributions through the TDA. These include supporting the post-war reconstruction and development; direct investment to the tune of Birr 1,590,926,187 until 2008; construction of private houses that contributed to the development of Mekelle town; and financial remittances to relatives that helped many families to improve their lives.

Table 2: TDA chapters in Europe and their Contributions

Name of Chapter	Year of Founding	No. of Members	Remittance in Birr	Project/Activity Areas of Diaspora Engagement
1 UK	1989	200	3,765,876	governance, skills, school
2 Germany	1989	300	3,295,013	school, medicine, equipment
3 Sweden	1989	150	1,486,824	school, library, water
4 Italy	1990	150	648,035	school, skills
5 Switzerland	1992	120	1,132,997	School
6 France	2008	70	660,000	
Total		990	10,988,745	

Source: TDA Headquarters, 2009

5.2. TDA Projects

Apart from the limited participation in the early rehabilitative activities, TDA did not launch its major and programmatic operations until the 1993 General Assembly. The association spent much of the formative stage (1989-1993) in attracting members needed to provide resources, organizing a series of symposia in Washington DC and Mekelle to identify the problems in Tigray that require immediate attention, mobilizing resources and devising strategies to use the growing resources. The 1993 General Assembly was held before the TDA staff had the time to develop intervention projects for the association. Therefore, the Assembly endorsed certain projects that the government offices recommended:

The TDA's small staff had little time to research data for the 1993 General Assembly, so it relied on various departments of government to provide data defining the current state of affairs. Together with the data came recommended solutions in the form of project proposals by these departments, later to become Bureaus of the State government...the General Assembly decided on certain projects and TDA entered into contracts with the regional Bureaus to provide funding for the government projects. These projects were to be implemented by the Bureaus, using their own work crews...or by contractors.... The stories of these government projects are basically the story of the experimental phase of TDA, with the exception of three unusual projects: construction and furnishing of 11 public libraries, improvement of two rural market roads, and the first construction-skills training (TDA 1999:33).

During the early stages of its operation, the organization was more active in massive rehabilitation works, socio-economic and infrastructure building, basic skills training, and the promotion of culture and sport.¹⁰ The period that TDA depicts as the experimental phase was helpful to the association in many respects. Since the government projects were scattered geographically and were meant to meet the basic demands of the people (e.g., schools and clinics), TDA had the opportunity to work throughout the region, build its support base, and identify intervention areas for the years to follow.

5.2.1 Education

When the civil war in Tigray ended in 1991 and rehabilitation work started soon after, it became apparent that the education sector was one of the areas with multiple challenges. These included rehabilitating the war-ravaged schools, building new schools in areas where they never existed, increasing the participation rate in primary schools (which was below the national average of 30%), and addressing such problems as lack of facilities, over-crowdedness, shortage of relevant teaching materials, and limited teaching aids (TDA 1999). The association, in consultation with the Regional Bureau of Education and the communities, played a significant role in responding to these challenges. The association pursued formal and non-formal programs and provided opportunities for primary and secondary level education. The results in the first 10 years of TDA operation were encouraging. A report prepared in the context of the 10th anniversary of the association indicates the achievements as follows:

In its effort to improve the rural communities' access to primary education, TDA has constructed and furnished 82 primary schools (about 12% of the total primary schools in the region). As a result, improved educational services are now accessible to about 33,600 children each year (44.6% of them girls). The majority of these children, aged 7 to 14 years, had never had access to education. Compared with 1991, the current regional primary education gross enrollment rate is estimated to have increased 22%, of which 7.2% is attributable to the construction of schools by TDA (TDA 1999:52).

¹⁰http://temp.tdaint.org/aboutus_t.html

According to data obtained from TDA headquarters in 2009, the association constructed a total of 121 primary schools, provided grant to 750 primary schools to implement school improvement plans, rehabilitated 16 war-affected primary schools, and conducted school feeding programs that benefited more than 32,000 children in 80 drought-affected schools. Certain measures were also taken to improve the quality of education in secondary schools. For instance, 14 schools were furnished with equipment, chemicals, and books. Tutorial programs for mathematics and English were introduced in 1993 in 14 high schools. Encouraged by the positive impact of the program in improving the academic performance of students, TDA expanded the tutoring program to include all upper primary (7th & 8th grades) and secondary schools, covering biology, chemistry, physics, geography, history. To date, more than 30,000 students are reported to have benefited from the program. TDA instituted a student award program to improve the academic performance of students through competition. Students achieving high scores in the national school leaving examination are awarded every year. Teachers' capacity building and supply of reference books were also among the strategies TDA pursued to improve education quality in secondary schools.

The Special Kelamino High School for gifted students was established in 1998 in Mekelle with the objective of improving the human resource base of the region and the country at large (TDA 1999). Moreover, by providing four-year high school scholarships to outstanding students to study at Kelamino, TDA intends to cultivate healthy academic competition in elementary schools. Data obtained from the school in 2009 reveal that between 1998 and 2009, a total of 904 students (638 male and 266 female) were accepted. The school record shows that most of the graduates performed above average on the national university entrance qualification examinations.

At the end of the civil war, libraries and reference books were practically non-existent in Tigray, and some 79% of the adult population was illiterate (TDA 1999: 59-60). TDA tried to address those challenges as well. In 1991, the association entered an agreement with the regional government to construct ten public libraries in the regional towns and rehabilitate one dilapidated building in Mekelle (*ibid.*: 59). The eleven libraries were built and furnished with high quality reference texts and other books, and an estimated 140,000 people have been using them since (*ibid.*). At the end of the 2007 budget year, these libraries and three additional libraries were being rehabilitated and furnished with computers, internet networks, and books on HIV/AIDS prevention and control. To address the illiteracy problem, TDA launched functional literacy programs to equip adults with basic literacy skills: reading, writing, numeric and oral skills. Moreover, a working knowledge of the fundamentals of agriculture, health, nutrition, family planning, and natural resource and environmental protection was also taught.

Initially, TDA revenues were disbursed by the association on projects deemed necessary by the General Assembly. In 2005, however, TDA introduced a project-centered fundraising scheme, which allows local and diaspora chapters to choose and execute certain projects in places of their choice. TDA remains responsible for verifying the relevance and feasibility of the proposed projects with the pertinent government institutions. The project-based fundraising approach was believed to have created huge interest and healthy competition among branches thanks to the sensitization work by the TDA leadership. The official website of the association reported how the TDA Director's trip to Europe helped to sell the idea to the diaspora:

Tigray Development Association's (TDA's) campaign in Europe in the name of Unity for Development led by Ambassador Tewolde Gebru, Executive Director of TDA, was very successful.... During his successful tour in March [2007] aimed at increasing members and [explaining the]...project centered approach, TDA chapters of Sweden, Switzerland, England, Rome, and Milan each pledged to carry out construction of secondary school additional blocks. Discussion and mobilization were held to avoid weaknesses and to strengthen chapter Switzerland. As a result a total of 16000 Swiss francs (over 100,000 birr) was pledged in a single fundraising event for the construction of additional block in the name of TDA chapter Switzerland. TDA Chapter Germany is the pioneer chapter to welcome the project centered approach of TDA.¹¹

¹¹ <http://temp.tdaint.org/Europe%20Tour1.html>. Accessed on 2 August 2009.

According to the 2008 annual report of TDA, 32 projects (14 primary schools, 11 high school additional blocks, and seven libraries) were completed or were operational. Some diaspora chapters sponsored the construction of thirteen of the fourteen primary schools and three of the eleven high school blocks.¹² Of the six European TDA chapters, five were engaged in school construction projects in accordance with the project-based approach. It is apparent that the Tigrayan diaspora in Europe participated directly or indirectly in many of the educational projects discussed thus far. By so doing, they contributed to the rebuilding of their war-torn home region. As stated earlier, inculcating the ideals of peace-building should start quite early in schools, among others, if a culture of peace, tolerance, and conflict resolution is to be developed. In this regard, the education-sector initiatives of TDA constitute peace-building efforts, which is inseparable from development.

Table 3: Educational projects of TDA (diaspora) chapters in Europe

Chapter		Type of Project	Location in Tigray			Status
			Zone	Wereda	Tabia	
1	Germany	Primary school Construction	North-western	Tahtay Adiabo	Mentebte b	completed
2	UK	High school block construction	South-eastern	Hintalo-Wajerat	Wajerat	completed
3	Sweden	High school block construction	North-western	Tselemti	Dima	
4	Italy	High school block construction	South	Alaje	Selewa (Della)	under construction
5	Switzerland	High school block construction	Western	Welkait	Maigaba	under construction

Source: Adapted from TDA reports

5.2.2 Health

In the aftermath of the civil war, health services were accessible to only 35% of the population of Tigray (TDA 1999). This figure grew to 50% in 1999 thanks to the efforts of TDA and the government. The efforts made by TDA in constructing 62 rural clinics, the health center in Seleklaka town believed to be serving over 100,000 people, and the hospital in Maichew town that improved access to referral services and secondary treatment for more than 900,000 people, were among the remarkable achievements of the first ten years of TDA's establishment. The 1999 TDA report reveals that the 62 rural clinics made health care available to more than 350,000 rural people, and an estimated 11% of the health services in the rural areas were given in establishments built by TDA. Apart from constructing health facilities, during the first ten years, TDA engaged in training 371 traditional birth attendants and community health agents to improve maternal and child healthcare; conducted research on acute respiratory infection and the provision of training to health workers in its diagnosis and treatment; provided training to high school dropouts

¹² A Glimmer of Hope (NGO), local chapters, and corporate members were responsible for the remaining 16 projects. There are other educational projects that TDA executed or continues to execute without direct diaspora engagement. These include the establishment of the Mekelle Institute of Technology (MIT); the construction of schools with funds from A Glimmer of Hope and the Embassy of Japan; the implementation of Basic Education System Overhaul Project (BESO I), Basic Education Strategic Objective Project (BESO II), and Community School Partnership Program (CSPP) activities with the assistance of USAID; the (Ambassador's) Girls Scholarship Program in three Woredas with the assistance of Academic for Educational Development to cover the basic expenses of some 84 girls from poor families.

(encompassing 6,000 youngsters) as peer educators in AIDS prevention; and distributed medical supplies and equipment shipped to Ethiopia by TDA branches in the diaspora (TDA 1999: 68-70).

Data obtained from TDA headquarters in 2009 reveal that since the turn of the 21st Century, TDA has expanded earlier accomplishments while launching certain new programs. The construction of more facilities raised the total number of health establishments from 64 in 1999 to over 70 in 2008. The number of TDA-trained traditional birth attendants and community health agents increased from 371 in 1999 to 992 in 2008. TDA has been providing support for orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) since 2005. The project started with 75 children and in 2008 there were 105 OVC getting such support. In the area of HIV/AIDS prevention and control, awareness raising programs were conducted with tens of thousands of school children (apart from school dropouts) to bring about behavioral changes. Moreover, anti-AIDS clubs were strengthened and support was given to people living with HIV/AIDS and volunteers who are engaged in the fight against the pandemic. Nine village water wells were also built and protected from contamination. TDA has been working with national and international organizations in executing its health projects.¹³

From interviews with TDA officials in 2009, it became evident that financial contributions from members and branches in Ethiopia and abroad were used for the implementation of many of the health projects, particularly those executed prior to 1999. Medicine and medical equipment worth millions of Birr were sent by the overseas TDA branches. These supplies were donated to different health institutions across the Tigray Region to improve the overall quality of health services (TDA 1999:70). TDA clearly stated that one of its objectives is: "To improve the service quality of health establishments through the provision of medical equipment, chemicals, and drugs primarily obtained from partners and supporters residing out of Ethiopia." On many occasions, the association recognized the valuable contributions the diaspora community has been making in terms of shipping medical supplies. On 17 January 2009, TDA recognized and thanked its German chapter as follows:

The German chapter of the TDA has donated 120 hospital beds with mattress including 80 hospital cupboards worth of Eth. Birr 3,480,000. The donated items will be distributed to four hospitals in Tigray Regional State. The TDA International office would like to send its gratitude for w/ro Alem Tesfay and Ato Aynalem G/medhin, the general secretary of TDA Germany, for their relentless effort to collect and send hospital equipment to the needy people of Tigray. It is important to recall that the German chapter has been very active in the last 15 years in soliciting medical support to Tigray.¹⁴

Most TDA chapters in Europe participated in health projects (through financial remittance) implemented by the association during the first ten years. For instance, in its 2007 financial statements and reports, the chapter in the UK (TDA-UK) indicated that it has been involved in various TDA activities, such as the construction of schools and *clinics*, the supply of water tankers, vocational and skills training, credit provision for women, and *training for traditional birth attendants*; and *co-ordination of the supply* of essential books, *hospital beds*, *medical equipments* and computers for schools.¹⁵ In recent years, the shipment of medical supplies to Tigray Regions seems to be the dominant area of diaspora engagement in the health sector. The participation of the diaspora in health-sector initiatives undoubtedly contributed to post-conflict peace-building efforts in the war-torn Tigray Region.

¹³ TDA runs community-based reproductive health and family planning programs in five woredas (Hintalo- Wajerat, Seharti Samre, Ahferom, Naeder Adet, and Woreile) in cooperation with CRDA and Pathfinder. Reproductive health activities include fistula identification and treatment, dealing with harmful traditions, adolescent and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS (awareness raising and condom distribution), and capacity building. The family planning activities include capacity building and provision of contraceptives (pills and injection) to all woredas. In the process of implementation, at the local level, TDA works with peer educators, community councilors (teachers, principals, etc.), community conversation facilitators, woreda level health experts, and woreda advisory committees consisting of a woreda administrator, a church leader, representatives of CBOs, a police officer, etc.

¹⁴ <http://www.tdaint.org/News/tabid/56/ctl/Details/mid/416/ItemID/65/Default.aspx>

¹⁵ http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/registeredcharities/ScannedAccounts/Ends15%255C0001018315_ac_20070930_e_c.pdf+TDA+uk+2007+report&cd=5&hl=en&ct=clnk

5.2.3 Skills Training

The third major intervention area of TDA was provision of skills training in selected fields. This program, designed to produce skilled workers for the reconstruction and recovery work in Tigray and to enable the trainees to become self-sufficient, is reported to have grown out of the following three concerns (TDA 1999:76):

- Tigray lacked skilled workers and entrepreneurs and its Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Recovery Program needed skilled workers if it were to be successful;
- There was a considerable pool of potential workers: landless rural households, returnees from settlement or refugee camps, former soldiers and fighters.... These had all suffered from the repeated shocks of drought and war, and were vulnerable and needed assistance to recover and cope with a post-war situation....
- Given the prevalence of soil erosion, land degradation, drought and overgrazing, an almost total dependence of Tigrayans on farming for a living was likely to perpetuate the reign of poverty and hunger unless sustained and vigorous interventions were introduced.

TDA established two training and demonstration centers to train the aforementioned groups of people in strategically selected fields, namely, basic construction, metal work, wood work, carpet making, improved bee keeping, roof tile technology, and general agricultural development and livestock production. Before its 10th anniversary in 1999, TDA trained a total of 3494 people and this number increased to 7000 in 2003, the year the training programs were terminated due to budgetary constraints. TDA claims that more than 80% of the trainees are employed, thereby helping to meet the high demand for skills in development projects. Moreover, 200 disabled veterans are trained in metal, wood, and textile production skills and they have become employees of the center.

One of the two training centers is in Seleklaka, a town located in Western Tigray. Here, training was given in basic construction skills and improved bee-keeping. According to the records of the center, a total of 1920 people were trained between 1997 and 2003: 1252 in bee keeping and 568 in basic construction.

5.2.4 Conflict resolution

In the late 1990s, the region of Tigray once again suffered due to the bloody war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The border conflict in 1998-99 caused deaths, property destruction, and population displacement. According to authorities, a total of 300,000 internally displaced persons (Tigrayan residents of border areas), 100,000 Ethiopian deportees from Eritrea, and more than 12,000 Eritrean refugees were on the Ethiopian side of the border seeking support. Many people displaced by the war were psychologically disturbed, materially impoverished, and socially disarticulated. According to an unpublished report by TDA-UK, "This war has caused great loss of life and property; conflict over meager resources among displaced and host communities; mistrust, hatred and lack of good neighborliness; trauma and psychological problems". TDA established what it called Conflict Resolution Project (lasting from 2002 to 2005) with the objective of healing trauma, mitigating psychosocial stress, enhancing people's conflict resolution skills, and creating mutual trust among the peoples living along the border.

TDA developed this project in collaboration with its UK chapter and secured funds from the Baring Foundation to support the war-affected people. The various support activities included awareness-raising workshops, training on conflict resolution and psychological counseling, TV and radio programs on conflict-related issues, establishment of a resource center, facilitation of conflict resolution activities by releasing grants, distribution of leaflets and posters, and conducting harmonization activities between the Eritrean refugees and the local people in the border areas (TDA-UK, not dated). According to informants, the training was given to community leaders, religious leaders, leaders of women and youth organizations, and other influential personalities capable of calming down their respective communities and providing psycho-social assistance. A

music band was also dispatched to send a message of peace and harmony to the displaced, deportees, and refugees. Regarding the impact of the project, the undated TDA-UK report noted:

As a result of our...intervention, the displaced people have been rehabilitated psychologically, most of the deportees are able to engage themselves either in self employment or in other employment sectors and people around the border have started smooth informal cross-border communications and trade exchange relations. Above all, people who participated in the conflict resolution trainings are trying to handle conflicts properly, to resolve them peacefully and assist others to behave similarly. The two external evaluations indicated that the project was successful.

Some 90% of the internally displaced persons are reported to have returned to their home villages, while some could not return because of the continued dispute over the territory and/or security concerns. Those who returned had to be rehabilitated, and the expenses included money for building their houses, demining the areas, and the development of infrastructure. Each deportee was given Birr 3000 for resettlement and reestablishment in different parts of Tigray. The 12,000 Eritrean refugees were also supported by this project. The money for physical rehabilitation came from the World Bank; the Ethiopian Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs was involved in executing the program. According to officials, the process of deportation of Ethiopians from Eritrea continued until 2009. The recent deportees were younger people, who were given a small amount of money for reestablishment.

5.2.5 Investment Promotion

Through its chapters and members, TDA played a significant role in attracting investment to Tigray. The association works closely with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which controls the regional government, with respect to diaspora mobilization because both organizations believe that the diaspora could make a significant contribution in peace-building, transfer of knowledge, and transfer of financial resources in the form of remittance or direct investment. Economic development that involves stimulating private sector development and investment is widely recognized to contribute to lasting and sustainable peace. The Tigray Regional Government claims to have created a favorable environment for private investment.¹⁶ Until March 2009, a total of 1569 investments with a total capital of more than Birr 13.5 billion have been licensed in eight different activities (see Table 4). Some 151 investments with a total capital of nearly Birr 1.6 billion (11.76 percent of the total) were made by the diaspora. Of the 151 diaspora investments, 36 came from Europe and their capital was Birr 200,281,382 (12.59 percent of the diaspora total).

Table 4: Diaspora investment in Tigray Region

Investment Type	All Investments		Investment by All Diaspora		Investment by Diaspora in Europe	
	No.	Capital in Birr	No.	Capital in Birr	No.	Capital in Birr
1 Industry	583	7,913,988,091	53	927,562,085.4	12	69,182,560.4
2 Agriculture	486	991,385,827.4	19	87,628,972	3	3,026,415
3 Construction	197	1,301,606,078	20	89,260,633	6	26,150,000
4 Hotel, Tourism	138	1,467,869,615	31	212,920,981.5	8	65,065,940
5 Social	135	608,825,683.4	18	104,627,073	7	36,856,467
6 Real Estate	20	356,813,003	10	168,926,442	0	0
7 Trade	9	54,930,147.1		0	0	0
8 Transport	1	833,000,000		0	0	0
Total	1569	13,528,418,445	151	1,590,926,187	36	200,281,382.4

Source: Investment Bureau of Tigray Region, 2009

¹⁶ In addition to incentives at the federal level (namely, exemptions from customs duty and income/profit tax), the regional government provides additional incentives, such as low and fixed land lease price, prolonged lease payment periods, the right to use lease right as collateral, the right to bequeath investment land to successors, etc.

TDA has been serving as an intermediary agent in bringing together the leadership of Tigray Region and the diaspora. Meetings between high level Tigraian officials and the Tigraian community in Europe were held on occasions of TDA anniversaries. For example, the TDA chapter in Germany organized what was called "TDA Europe Festival" on 15-16 August 2008, and the President of Tigray Region was the guest of honor. According to the TDA website,

The delegation led by H.E. Ato Tsegay Berhe, the president of Tigray Regional State, and TDA top officials successfully completed their mission in Europe. The participants of the festival discussed about 19 years of accomplishment and the vision of TDA for the next 30 years in the context of the development in Tigray and Ethiopia. The participants also discussed the current situation and future plan of the development of Tigray with Dr. Wolday Amha, the chairperson of TDA, and Ambassador Tewolde Gebru, executive director of TDA. The next day, 16 August 2008, the president of Tigray Regional State, H.E. Ato Tsegay Berhe addressed the big audience represented from almost all part of Europe.¹⁷

Sometimes, TDA and TPLF events are organized on the same day, in the same venue, and for the same audience. On 3 March 2007, the Tigray community in Stockholm, Sweden, had a TDA meeting coinciding with TPLF's 32nd anniversary. Ambassador Tewolde Gebru attended the double-purpose event in his capacity as Executive Director of TDA-International and member of the Central Committee of TPLF. A report by the organizers (TDA-Sweden Branch, Union of Tigrians in Europe Sweden Branch, and Union of Tigrian Women in Europe Sweden Branch) of the event states¹⁸:

Ambassador Tewolde dwelt during his speech on the numerous achievements of various communities and branches of TDA at home and abroad and gave ample evidences on the importance of participating in project forms.... He also praised the role the members of the community played in accomplishing earlier tasks and projects as well as contributions.... The meeting was then immediately followed by celebration of the 32nd anniversary of the birth of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Ambassador Tewolde as guest of honor held a speech by paying tribute to the memory of the fallen heroes in the fight against the fascist Derg and by emphasizing the necessity of upholding peace, democracy and development through the concerted efforts of all Ethiopians.

5.2.6 Other activities

In the aftermath of the civil war, TDA was also engaged in other post-conflict construction activities, although not on a large scale. According to reports on its website under facts and figures, these include road construction, water development, agriculture, natural resource and livestock production, irrigation dams, and culture and sports. TDA constructed two rural access roads covering 62 km (the Freweini-Hawzien and the Kaze-Tsegede roads) to facilitate market access, emergency food distribution, and transportation to remote villages. It also developed nine rural water wells, constructed 10 micro-dams to store water for irrigation, developed 13 forage and vegetable seed multiplication centers, established 52 tree nurseries, and distributed 36,000 kerosene stoves to reduce deforestation. In the area of culture and sports, it established Circus Tigray as well as football, cycling, and martial art clubs.

5.3. Funding

Currently, the funding sources of TDA include contributions from members (diaspora remittances included), grants/donations, property rental and sales, and different fundraising activities. Initially, however, the association relied mainly on contributions from its members and supporters. For example, more than 91 percent of TDA's annual budget for the year 1993/4 came from membership contribution. In 1994/5, income from members constituted 76.8 percent of the annual

¹⁷ <http://www.tdaint.org/News/tabid/56/ctl/Details/mid/416/ItemID/51/Default.aspx>. 2 August 2009.

¹⁸ see http://www.ethioobserver.net/Stokholm_32TPLF.htm.

revenue. This was the year during which the Tigrayan Diaspora in Europe made the highest contribution in one year: Birr 1,235,189.26 (7.64 percent of TDA's revenue for that year). The diaspora in Europe has remitted a total of Birr 10,988,745 since the establishment of the first three TDA chapters in 1989. It is important to note that some remittances came in cash and others in kind. The Tigrayan community in Europe continues to support TDA, though the amount of remittance has shown significant variation with a general trend of decline until 2005 (see Table 5 below). The association, however, tried to galvanize diaspora support in Europe by strengthening the existing chapters, establishing a new branch in France, organizing sensitization events to increase membership and mobilize resources, and introducing the project-based fundraising program discussed earlier.

With the objective of curbing the declining trend in membership mobilization, TDA has consolidated its chapters in North America (the major remittance bloc, followed by Europe) and established new contacts in Australia, Djibouti, Israel, Kenya, Riyadh, Uganda, and Yemen since the turn of the 21st Century. The consolidation and expansion efforts in Europe and elsewhere in the world seem to have gradually paid off, as evidenced by the increase in gross membership contribution.

TDA was aware of the fact that remittance alone cannot be expected to address the formidable and multidimensional challenges in post-conflict Tigray. Hence, it devised strategies to raise funds locally and globally. Locally, the association vigorously worked on recruiting new members and opening new branches in Ethiopia. Between 1994 and 2008, TDA collected Birr 63,409,650 from the local branches – an amount 4.7 times more than the amount obtained from the diaspora (Birr 13,485,746) in the same period. In the 15 years between 1994 and 2008, the fund mobilized from local members has constituted more than 20 percent of the association's revenue. From 1993/4 to 2003/4, local contributions came mainly from Tigray Region and Addis Ababa. The amount of contribution from the two regions, however, declined hitting its lowest record (Birr 772,690) in 2003/4. Perhaps alarmed by this downward spiral, TDA established several branches/sub-branches in different parts of Ethiopia and has successfully managed to reverse the local revenue decline since 2004/5.

TDA is known for developing and submitting project proposals to national and international funding agencies to sponsor certain activities. According to information obtained from the headquarters, some of the partners and supporters of the organization include USAID, EU, MfM, SIDA, CIDA, DANIDA, ESRDF, REST, Community Fund of UK, Banyan Tree Foundation, Baring Foundation of UK, UNICEF, PACT, GTZ, A Glimmer of Hope, CRDA, Comic Relief Society of Britain, Pathfinder-Ethiopia. The first big sum in the form of grant/donation (Birr 22,458,534) came in 1995/6. The phenomenal increases in TDA revenues from donations and other sources in the years that followed dwarfed the numeric (if not the strategic & symbolic) significance of membership contributions, especially the diaspora remittance. However, TDA has found it to be in its best interest to engage members both at home and abroad to maintain its legitimacy. The association has been using the capacity of the diaspora to develop project proposals, locate/contact donors, and attract investors. For example, TDA-UK, in collaboration with TDA-International (as the headquarters is called), developed a project for the promotion of conflict resolution skills and secured funds amounting to Birr 2,736,600 from the Baring Foundation. Besides building a school block in Tigray, TDA-UK collaborated with the head office in 2007/8 in another project aimed at securing funds from the Big Lottery Fund for a feasibility study on HIV/AIDS prevention and control. Based on the study, they developed an HIV/AIDS prevention/control project and submitted a proposal to the Fund for further support.

The other sources of income of TDA include house rental, machinery rental and sales, stock sales, sales of investment shares, revenue from leased land, income from dairy and horticulture, income from special lottery (tombola), trade fair income, and income from resource mobilization events, especially telethon, TDA's iconic fundraising strategy. TDA conducted telethons in 1994 and 1995; Araya Zerihun, its late Chairman, was the first to introduce fundraising through telethon events in Ethiopia. In October 2008, TDA organized its third telethon event in Addis Ababa. According to a TDA communiqué posted on its website on 10/6/2008, the third major fundraising telethon that was declared "successful and resounding" was conducted in the presence of the Ethiopian Head of

Table 5: TDA Revenues in Ethiopian Birr, 1994 - 2008

Year	Membership Contributions in Birr by TDA Branches					Other Sources ¹⁹ (Birr)	Total Revenue (Birr)	
	Ethiopia	Europe	North America	Other Countries ²⁰	Sub-Total			
1993/4	All branches that existed by then					13,509,174.8	1,323,908.6	14,833,083.4
1994/5	10,587,055.8 ²¹	1,235,189.26	102,474.2	485,056.3	12,409,775.0	3,741,382.95	16,151,158.5	
1995/6	1,482,867.9	66,844.66	18,433.8	260,070	1,828,216.4	33,690,869.4	35,519,095.8	
1996/7	27,710,655.3 ²²	145,853.03	957,271.5	1,013,634.1	29,827,413.9	11,944,216.7	41,771,630.6	
1997/8	3,899,722.5	397,248.96	23,896.6	195,434.1	4,516,302.2	27,243,980.1	31,760,282.3	
1998/9	2,922,044.4	193,365.55	NA	275,037.5	3,390,447.5	22,553,614.2	25,944,061.7	
1999/0	1,803,673.6	132,297.52	NA	304,243.9	2,240,215	6,623,105.9	8,863,320.9	
2000/1	2,344,355.9	562,283.15	61,703.4	55,498.3	3,023,840.8	13,311,336.9	16,335,177.7	
2001/2	3,073,059.3	NA	397,774.1	142,074.6	3,612,908	9,826,377	13,439,285	
2002/3	2,070,454.7	85,429.91	34,311.3	134,479.8	2,324,675.7	8,578,856.9	10,903,532.6	
2003/4	772,690.2	165,819.74	NA	326,493.6	1,265,003.5	17,057,780.5	18,322,784	
2004/5	1,000,086.7	17,991.37	83,733.6	50,650.1	1,152,461.8	9,359,385	10,511,846.8	
2005/6	1,213,602	112,214	422,276	559,859	2,307,951	14,214,537.2	14,453,323	
2006/7	2,500,241	192,331	2,328,245.1	115,991	5,136,808.1	20,872,948	26,009,756	
2007/8	2,029,140.6 ²³	389,492.47	847,505.9	593,236.9	3,859,376	16,501,369	20,360,744	
Total	63,409,650	3,696,361 ²⁴	5,277,626	4,511,759	90,404,570	216,843,668	305,179,082	
Percent	20.78	1.21	1.73	1.48	29	71		

not available

NA=

Source: TDA Headquarters

¹⁹ Other income sources of TDA include grants/donations, machinery rental and sales, house rental, fundraising events, trade fair, corporate membership fees, etc.

²⁰ Australia and some countries from Africa and the Middle East.

²¹ Birr 9,190,319.63 from Addis Ababa, Birr 762,364.53 from Tigray.

²² Birr 3,246,672.39 from Tigray, Birr 2,488,809 from Addis Ababa, and Birr 21,975,173.91 miscellaneous.

²³ Birr 1,111,636.91 from Tigray and 917,503.7 from Addis Ababa. The record does not show contributions from other branches in the country.

²⁴ The difference between this sum and amount indicated in Table 1 may be explained in two ways. In terms of time, Table 1 covers the period between 1989 and 2008, while Table 2 focuses on part of that period. Secondly, Table 1 covers remittance in cash and in kind, while Table 2 refers to financial transfer alone.

State as the guest of honor, high-ranking federal and regional government officials, high-profile business persons, several hundred members and sympathizers of TDA in both the civilian and military ranks, representatives of public and private profit-making enterprises, bilateral aid agencies, and representatives of TDA chapters from within the country and abroad. The central theme of the event was transforming 725 schools in Tigray from makeshift shelters to standard and relatively well-equipped and decent physical infrastructural setups. The organizers had expected to raise Ethiopian Birr 50 million on the occasion. However, the outcome far exceeded the target as a total of ETB 146 million was raised in the form of cash and material donations and pledges.

6. Critical Issues Related to TDA Operation

6.1. Local knowledge and perception about TDA and the Diaspora

Interviews conducted in Wejerat and Seleklaka reveal that different people have varied knowledge of TDA, the diaspora, and their respective roles. In the two sites, government officials, educated people (e.g., teachers, health workers, etc.), and enlightened leaders of community-based organizations knew well about TDA and the role of the diaspora in the reconstruction and development of Tigray. The enlightened people also clearly distinguished between TDA and the regional government as much as they expressed the strong bond between the two. On the other hand, the ordinary people and the moderately enlightened community leaders in Wejerat seemed to make hardly any distinction between the regional government and TDA, which was generally viewed as an agent of the former. It seemed that the regional government was given credit for what TDA claims to have accomplished. Nor did the informants in Wejerat clearly distinguish between Tigrayans in the diaspora and those living elsewhere in Ethiopia. However, they were aware of the fact that their fellow Tigrayans residing outside the region (be it inside Ethiopia or abroad) have been extending their helping hands since the end of the civil war.

The perception of all categories of informants towards TDA and the Tigrayans supporting their home region was very positive and appreciative. A high school teacher in Wejerat noted that TDA and the diaspora are highly respected development actors in Tigray. The local people seem to have an inflated view of the capacity of TDA and the Tigrayans living outside of Tigray. There was huge demand and expectation for more interventions (in education, health, and infrastructure) and disappointment with terminated projects. In a group discussion held at Wejerat, informants voiced their demand to furnish the recently built high school and a hospital, which they characterized as empty buildings without the minimum supplies. They also expressed their desire for a short-cut road (12 km) that would connect the town to the Mekelle-Addis Ababa highway. Interviews conducted in Seleklaka town reveal the high importance attached to the TDA skills training program, largely because it provided job opportunity. A female construction worker claimed that she would be earning between Birr 25 and 35 per day when there is a construction work. A beekeeper noted that the training in modern beekeeping made him a rich farmer in his community. Most informants in Seleklaka expressed disappointment at the closure of the training center.

6.2. Participation of local people in TDA projects

The participation of the local community in TDA-sponsored projects is a prime requirement that is strictly enforced by the association. According to TDA (1999:48), "It has always been one of TDA's fundamental principles that communities should have a say in all aspects of development which affect them, starting from project idea formulation to implementation and sustaining it, particularly when it is done in collaboration with TDA". Practically, however, many TDA projects (especially those sponsored by membership contributions) rarely passed through the conventional project cycle management phases. Regarding the construction of schools and clinics, for instance, TDA simply accepted project locations recommended by the relevant government bureaus. In this regard, TDA continues to implement government projects. It seems that the regional government did not undertake baseline surveys in all project areas where TDA has been operating. Authorities

indicated that project locations are normally recommended to TDA based on prior government plans to fill identified gaps and/or pressing community demand. It is equally important to note that projects funded by partners (donors) were implemented largely based on project identification exercises conducted by TDA. While TDA-sponsored projects were rarely evaluated, those funded by partners were rigorously monitored and evaluated.

Once the project area is determined, the local people would be contacted by the woreda administration and TDA representatives to participate in site selection, provide free labor contribution, and supply raw materials (e.g., stone and sand). Hintalo Wejerat is one of the woredas in which TDA recently completed a school construction. The small town of Wejerat (also Dehub) was selected for the construction of a high school (now called Isra Hade) based on community demand, according to officials. Initially, the community participated in choosing the school site, although the final determination was left to experts. Three parties were involved in the construction of the three-block high school that accepted the first batch of 9th grade students in the 2008/2009 academic year. TDA-UK, the Wejerat community and their supporters from within Ethiopia, and the Administration of Hintalo Wejerat Woreda built one block each. The residents reportedly provided free labor in earthwork and stone collection during the construction phase, although some people initially thought that the government should build the school as a matter of duty. The Wejerat Development Association, a local NGO, is reported to have raised over Birr 100,000 and is making further progress to build a fourth block.

6.3. Perceptions about TDA-TPLF relations

Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) is an ethnicity-based regional political party that administers Tigray Regional State. Moreover, it plays a dominant role in the national politics as evidenced by its grip on power since 1991. TDA was established by Tigrayans in the diaspora and moved to Ethiopia to engage in post-conflict reconstruction and development in Tigray Region. The two institutions have been working very closely, while officially maintaining their different status as governmental and non-governmental organizations. However, critical observers contend that the relationship between the TDA and TPLF is much more than the formal partnership between a political party and an NGO. Some of the views and misgivings seem to be shaped by hearsays and unconfirmed reports, while others are based on credible facts such as TDA's own reports.

One of the views is that TDA was established by the diaspora and operated overseas as an integral part of the overall movement for the liberation of Tigray. The proponents of this position point to the close working relations between the leadership of TPLF and TDA both before and after the 1991 government change in Ethiopia. Many members of TDA, including those in the leadership, are believed to be members and/or strong supporters of TPLF. It was argued that the double-membership phenomenon is indicative of the inseparability of the two institutions. An extreme variant of this view alleges that TDA is a proxy organization that works for TPLF, which directs the activities of the association and controls its investments. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a banned opposition party, describes TDA as one of the pro-TPLF organizations that contributes to the grand mission of TPLF to develop Tigray while letting the other regions deteriorate. In its online publication titled, 'EPRDF Replaces Public Enterprises with Political Party Businesses', OLF described the history and the current role of TDA as follows:

When Tigray was liberated from the control of the government in Addis Ababa in 1988, the TPLF was faced with the challenges of developing Tigray. To cope with this challenge, the Tigray Development Association (TDA) was created to mobilize resources from educated, wealthy, and pro-TPLF members of the Tigrayan Diaspora particularly in Europe and North America. Though it was assumed to be independent of the TPLF structurally, members of its Board of Directors are top TPLF political leaders. After the end of the war,...TDA experienced a rapid organizational growth.... [It increased its financial resources] through an intensification of fund-raising campaigns backed up by the political power of the TPLF. ²⁵

²⁵ EPRDF Replaces Public Enterprises with Political Party Businesses. *Oromia Speaks Vol. 10 Issue 1*. <http://www.oromoliberationfront.org/Publications/OSvol10Art1002.htm>. Accessed on 30 July 2009.

The response from TDA officials to such critics is unequivocal. The association is a non-political and non-partisan independent organization established by the diaspora who were not members of the TPLF. Informants indicated that leaders of TDA and TPLF have been collaborating since 1989 (both during and after the liberation struggle) because helping the people of Tigray has been their common concern. Although individual members of TDA have supported and/or joined TPLF and vice versa over the years, TDA is reported to have maintained its integrity as an independent development association with a track record of working with all friends of Tigray in Ethiopia and abroad. One senior member of TPLF stated, "had it not been for its non-partisan position, TDA would not have secured support from individuals and political organizations opposed to TPLF and the current government of Ethiopia". A top TDA official reported that the current Executive Director of TDA is the first TPLF member to assume leadership position in the association.

There exist other allegations that TDA has enjoyed preferential treatment from the Regional Government of Tigray and the federal government from the beginning. First, in the early 1990s, the regional government provided a partially constructed government building to serve as TDA headquarters. The question that is raised in this regard is whether the region has the jurisdiction to grant public resources to NGOs. Second, TDA's fund-raising and other events were broadcast live via national radio and television, federal resources that are inaccessible to ordinary NGOs. Third, TDA is the only national NGO to open several branches in different parts of Ethiopia and, on a single occasion, raise as much as Birr 146 million through a nationally-televised telethon. In this regard, the association is believed to be mobilizing members and resources in the shadow of TPLF's formidable political clout in Ethiopia.

7. Conclusion

This study has shown that Ethiopian migration abroad started well before the twentieth century, assuming the form of religious pilgrimage. However, diasporic impact on the homeland could be said to have begun only in the twentieth century, when such migrations began to have political dimensions. Three major landmarks that could be discerned in this regard relate to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1936, the 1974 revolution (in both its antecedents and repercussions), and the 1991 regime change. The 1974 revolution in particular had special pertinence to diaspora formation in two ways: first, exiled student radicals played a significant role in providing ideological direction to the revolutionary movement and second, the outbreak of the revolution and the bloody course that it soon led to a mass exodus of Ethiopians abroad, mainly to the United States and Europe. The regime change of 1991 had a similar effect of entailing the return of former exiles and the flight of new ones, depending on their political sympathies or antipathies.

It thus appears that political remittance has been the main thrust of diasporic impact on the homeland, be it in the ideological impact of the student movement abroad on the home front or the political oppositions first to military rule, and then to the post-1991 regime. But political remittance tells only half the story since financial remittance emerges as an important feature of diasporic impact on the homeland, particularly with the economic stresses in the last years of military rule (Table 1). This has assumed significant proportion in recent years and the birth of organizations such as TDA has amplified this aspect of diasporic intervention in homeland development. Social/cultural remittance, too, seems to have increased dramatically over the last two decades with the frequency of visits of diasporic Ethiopians. It would not be easy, however, to determine how much the changes in Ethiopian social and cultural life are due to the influence of diasporic Ethiopians and how much to other modern media of acculturation.

Since its establishment in the late 1980s, and particularly after relocating to Tigray in the early 1990s, TDA has played an important role in the rebuilding of establishments and livelihoods by reaching marginal areas with important services and facilities never provided before. Thus, the interventions of TDA in the (re)construction of schools, clinics, and roads fit well into the definitional ambit of peace-building. The provision of skills training to former refugees, ex-soldiers, and the resource-poor with the aim of reestablishing their lives and contributing to the recovery process has also

contributed to peace-building. In the context of rural communities, skills training represented a creative means to reduce pressure over land and avoid potential conflict over such scarce resources. Moreover, TDA's conflict resolution training program undertaken in 2002-2005 produced some tangible results with regard to awareness creation and sensitization on issues related to peace. Although Ethiopia and Eritrea are still at a standoff as regards their border dispute, their citizens in the border areas live in relative peace, and this state of affairs could partly be attributed to the program. The same program is reported to have prevented potential conflict among people (especially between hosts and IDPs) over meager resources such as grazing and farm land.

TDA has transformed itself in two ways over the years: first by shifting its drive from a purely charitable humanitarian assistance to a widely recognized development intervention; second, by transforming itself from a diaspora organization into one based in Tigray itself. This evolution has ensured the continued presence of the association in Tigray to consolidate previous achievements, reach out to new target groups and areas, and contribute to developmental efforts in the Region. This does not mean that the external branches of TDA have ceased to be an important component of TDA activities. On the contrary, TDA continues to attach great importance to its external constituency as signified by its recognition of the efficiency with which its European branches have been operating. The challenge that TDA faces is the size of Tigray with a population of 4.3 million. Hence all Tigrayans affected by the war could not benefit from the post-conflict reconstruction efforts since there is still need for more schools, clinics, and roads to serve those who lacked such opportunities for so long, including after the end of the war. In the light of this, what TDA has accomplished to date constitutes only a fraction of what is required to be undertaken in post-conflict reconstruction.

Whether TDA would be affected in an adverse manner as a result of the new legal dispensation remains to be seen. It is true that TDA has managed to build a relatively broad base by enlisting hundreds of thousands of corporate and individual members and sympathizers in the different parts of Tigray and the rest of Ethiopia. The organization's fund-raising efforts is further boosted by occasional events that resulted in generating considerable sums internally. According to 2004 figures, 35.6% of its revenue was reportedly generated from membership contributions whereas it still remains heavily dependent on foreign funding (estimated at around 45%), which impedes its re-registration as an "Ethiopian" charity, as per Art. 2 of the new legislation. Even the amount from membership contributions cited above was not entirely raised from internal sources, as the diaspora members continue to have a significant share in this. Registering as an "Ethiopian Resident" charity, the option open to NGOs that get more than 10% of their funding from external sources, may not have an adverse effect on the organization as TDA's engagement in the areas proscribed for "foreign" and "Ethiopian resident" organizations (in such fields as governance, conflict resolution, democracy, human rights, etc.), are not within its purview. Moreover, the organization's close links with the TPLF is likely to help it weather whatever temporary setbacks the new legislation might entail. It is worth noting that TDA's closeness to the locus of power is demonstrated in several ways such as the financial, material/infrastructural support it receives from state sources (see TDA 1999)²⁶. Moreover, government officials at all levels actively participate in its various fund-raising events and anniversary celebrations. Besides, the fact that TDA is currently managed by a leading member of the TPLF is not without some significance, either. Hence, one can conclude that it has a better chance of coping with the consequences of the new legal restrictions than other NGOs and similar organizations.

²⁶ The Tigray National/Regional Self-Government provided TDA with a sum of hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian Birr to be used as seed money in the early 1990s. Moreover, the present TDA headquarters is premised in a former public building granted to the organization as private property. The various sub-regional units of the regional government, including the municipalities under them, have also provided it with public land that it can use as deemed necessary and appropriate. It is also worthy of note that the current Chief Executive Officer of TDA is Ambassador Tewelde Gebru, a leading figure and a central committee member of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

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