

Reverse Brain Drain Model for Ethiopia: The Thailand Model (Draft)

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The Thailand-Model: Reverse Brain Drain Project

(http://rbd.nstda.or.th/html/about_rbd.html)

This activity is sanctioned by Thailand's National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA). NSTDA is analogous to Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission (ESTC). Therefore it is reasonable to encourage ESTC to begin the preliminary work of developing such reverse brain projects

The Thailand- Model: mission

- 1) .Identify and attract experienced high-level Thai professional living overseas to participate in mission-oriented projects, and promote development of core teams led by the respective Thai professionals.
- 2) Promote and facilitate the return of Thai professionals overseas to working government agencies or in the private sector.

The Thailand Model-Programs

- 1) Special Projects Program (Planning Grant , Project Initiation Grant , Small Project Grant)
- 2) RBD Distinguished Professor/Scholar Program and RBD/TGIST (Thailand Graduate Institute of Science and Technology, NSTDA) Fellowship Program
- 3) Permanent Return Program
- 4) Technology Transfer Short-Term Visit Program

The Structure of the Thailand -Model

- 1) Membership: There are two membership categories a) Professional b) Organization
- 2) Special projects: This is the critical component of the project . The special projects are designed to enhance and support NSTDA's focus areas. There are four major focus

NECTEC: (National Energy Creation(??) Technology)
Biotechnology
National Metal and Materials Technology Center
TGIST (Thailand Graduate Institute for Science and Technology)

The first three are the national focus areas, and every thing is geared towards achieving high level of excellence. The last structure is constitutes a virtual network of higher education institutions in the country as well as foreign universities that are engaged in collaborative research with the local universities. It has several components

Graduate Research and Education Consortium (GREC)
Center for Advanced Studies (CAS)
Schools of Engineering Practice (SEP)
School of Technology Management (STM)
Thailand Training Network (TTN)
Science and Technology Electronic Publishing Program (STEP)

Comment on T-Model: The major component of the "Reverse Brain Drain Project", is "the association for the reverse brain drain project". That means people understand it , the are willing and committed to participate.

Applying the Thailand-Model to Ethiopia

In order to apply this model, we need to do two things a) establish a bridge organization that works closely with the a government agency, most probably the Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission (ESTC).

Currently, there are several very small scale Diaspora initiatives that attempt to address the infrastructure and human resource needs. Particularly activities in providing teaching and learning materials , involvement in HIV/AIDS issues, and participation in major conferences and workshops.. It is also known that Ethiopian faculty members outside Ethiopian are collaborating with their counter parts in Ethiopia. Particularly in agriculture, social work, economics, engineering and other fields. An other good example is the collaboration of NC State with Mekele University to train mathematics teachers is the work of faculty members and students affiliated with NC State. The significant presence of Ethiopian graduate students at Temple University, Case Western and others are good examples of the works of Ethiopian students and faculty. Recently a handful of Ethiopian graduate students. For example they are becoming instrumental in graduate recruitment proposed a comprehensive student and faculty exchange program that will

involve several Norwegian Universities. to start PhD. and MS. Level physics programs. Until recently, the Ethiopian Scientific Society was active in providing awards to outstanding faculty and students at AAU. Since 2000 AAU-Network has been active in becoming a concept incubator and a gathering place for those interested in addressing critical research and education issues in Ethiopian higher learning institutions. A handful of proposals are put forth by the group. The list includes AAU-Lecture Hall, Ethiopian Academy of Sciences, Ethiopian Educational and Cultural Society, Global Education Network of Ethiopia, Ethiopian Foundation for Education and recently Dr. Tilahun proposed GNEST (Global Network of Ethiopians for Science and Technology) There are also a host of Ethiopian Professional Societies including the Ethiopian Chemical Society, Ethiopian Economic Association, Ethiopian Physical Society, and Ethiopian Association of Health Professionals that have members participating in AAU-Network. The most pressing issue at this time is to put together these weak strands of activities and come up with a strong organization that will work with the appropriate institution in Ethiopia. The Thailand-Model is an excellent starting point to develop the mechanism by which constructive engagement can take place. Reading from the documents posted on ESTC website one can see that the missions of ESTC and NSTDA are the same only different in scale and focus.

An organization such as GNEST will contribute if enabled to contribute to the national needs of Ethiopia. ESTC has six departments and four centers

The Six Departments

- 1) Agriculture and Environment Protection Department
- 2) Health
- 3) Industry
- 4) Patent,
- 5) Mines, Water and Energy
- 6) Science and Technology Popularization

The four centers are

- 1) The National Computer and Information Centre (NCIC)
- 2) The National Scientific Equipment Center (NSEC)
- 3) The Ethiopian Cleaner Production Centre (ECPC)
- 4) The National Radiation Protection Authority (NRPA)

It appears to me that a host of education and research niches exist for any one with BS+ education to contribute. Now the question remains if such organization exist, how is it

possible to fund it. The answer to this question is simple, as long as we know that this is a self supporting, membership and government subsidized organization.

Conclusion

The above point of view is prompted by the AAU-Network discussion threads : "Reverse Brain Drain Models and " African without Borders". The digest of the two threads is given below.

Thread: Reverse Brain Drain Models

Abebe paused the following basic questions

- 1) What must be done to reverse brain drain ?.
- 2) Are there models that we can use to address the issue on our own ?
- 3) What are the responsibilities of the government ?
- 4) What are the responsibilities of the "brain-drainees"?

Reverse Brain Drain Discussion Digest

Mesfin Genanaw Wrote

Clogging Ethiopia's Brain Drain

The so-called "brain drain" — an exodus of Ethiopia's educated professionals — began in the 1970s, when the nation was in the throes of social, political and economic change. The last three decades brought about endless miseries to our proud people and nation to the extent that the name Ethiopia has become a byword for famine, war, disease and poverty. Millions have become refugees, millions have been killed by war, and millions have been orphaned by HIV/Aids pandemic and other public health catastrophes. Ethiopia's prized physicians, professors, engineers, agricultural experts, and other professionals left their country in droves.

What are the causes of this exodus? Why have many of Ethiopia's best and brightest abandon their country and people? Or is it just the greediest? What should the nation do to lure back its talented émigrés? Keeping in mind the perils of trusting the observations of a one-person focus group, read on.

Core reasons of the brain drain

In the past, Ethiopians were not known for leaving their country for good. The godless communist rule of the former military regime and its reign of terror forced many to flee from their beloved country. As if the 17-year ordeal under Mengistu's rule was not enough, the new regime took power in 1991 only to exacerbate the nation's tribulations. Its divisive ethnic policy and its disdain for the intelligentsia drove many educated professionals to run off to the west and elsewhere in the world. Cases in point are the summary dismissal of 42 renowned professors from Addis Ababa University in 1994 and the brute force used to silence and kill dissenting university students in April 2001. Frustrated by the intransigence of the government to address public health problems, many physicians abandoned their dying people. Clearly, those who had seriously considered to return back home to help their people would not be encouraged to do so under such brute environment. If you allow me to use the American expression to put across core problems in one phrase, it is the regime's "stupid".

Other factors for the brain drain include: better economic opportunity in the west, formation of families in the country of residence, the pursuit for advanced education and experience, allurements to western democracy and freedom, fear of becoming misfits in the country of birth, etc. Most of the latter factors, however, are more attuned to clogging the reversal of the brain drain than being causes for the brain drain.

What must be done!

Brain drain is a global problem. India alone loses about 100 thousand professionals to the US every year. The harsh reality is that only a handful of countries have been successful in

luring their talented and wealthy émigrés back home. The multitude of problems our nation is currently facing makes the problem even more complex. The regime has to make genuine

change in its policies to stop the brain drain. The political and economic environment must be more conducive to its citizens. People should be free to express their thoughts without fear of persecution. People shouldn't be forced to carry ethnic identity. They should regain their Ethiopian identity. The divisive ethnic based politics should go into its grave. Land must be privatized to encourage agriculturists develop commercial farms wherever they choose, not where the government wants them to invest. The first attempt must be to devise all policy measures to keep the professionals and entrepreneurs in the

country. There is no point in asking those who have left to come back while the very policy of the regime is to repel those who are within.

Roles for the Alumni

We should do more than blaming the regimes for all the ills the country is facing. We need to involve ourselves in the economic, social and political problems our people are currently facing. We need to organize our communities to help the poor. Sponsor Aids orphans. Focus on activities that have lasting impacts than on the immediate problems. Help your alma mater in every way you can so that it survives the onslaughts on its very existence. Be voice to the voiceless many. To speak up for the good of our people and nation is not to become cheap politician. We are defending a noble cause. We're defending your own existence. We've to at least make some noise to bring about change or get the attention of the powers that be. Mute people do not bring change. Get education and knowledge, so that some day we turn the brain drain into brain gain. Take your own pick but be a part of something bigger than yourself to help a nation mangled by war, ethnic politics, disease and corruption. If we do nothing or stay mute, dictators will always come with their super-size egos, their entourage of sycophants, and their penchant for violence. And above everything else, pray to the almighty God that Ethiopia's endless miseries go away.

Dr. Abebe, briefly this is my take on this topic. Thanks for your efforts.

Warmest,

Mesfin

Genanaw

Sisay.Asefa wrote:

I see that the issue of "Brain Drain" is back. Let me share some personal perspectives in addition to what has already been noted. You all have good points. I will organize my comments into the following:

- I) Push and Pull factors,
- II) The U.S and the "Brain Drain,
- III) How "victims" may benefit from the so-called "Brain drain" or how to move from brain drain to brain gain.

I) Push and Pull factors":

It is true that both push and pull factors are relevant in determining "brain drain", but their relative strengths varies among countries and over time. Push factors include both economic (lack of opportunity, employment, poverty, etc.. at home) and political (fear of

political prosecution, lack of opportunity for lack of meaningful political participation, and personal security, etc..). Both are present in African states, but their relative strengths vary among states and over time depending the types of regimes. For example, for Ethiopia and Nigeria, the push factors were the greatest under the Mengistu and Abacha regimes respectively. For Ethiopia they reached their maximum during the period of the Derg's terror years, 1976-77. One can say that there were no push factors during the pre-derg years. In fact, one can count on one hand the number of Ethiopians who chose to remain abroad during pre-1974 period.

Not all African states are victims of "brain drain". If you are national of Botswana, you would have no desire to remain in the US following completing of your higher education. There are no push or pull factors that are strong enough for a Botswana national to migrate. The reason is obvious. It has to do with the fact this country has the most efficiently managed economies in Africa. More important, it has a political system that is accountable and responsive to the needs of its citizens. It has a truly democratic system of governance combined with one of highest per capita income in the region. For countries such as Japan and Sweden, there are neither push or pull factors that result in brain drain for the same reasons. There are countries where economic pull factors are more important than political. These include nations such as India, China, and Pakistan for example.

II) The United States and the "Brain Drain"

The single largest gainer of international brain drain is the United States. But, this is due no fault of the Country. Instead, it should be credited for providing opportunities under its relatively open economic and political system, for peoples of other cultures and countries. The fact that the U.S. can accommodate the international migration of labor better than any other industrial nation is also related to the historical formation of the U.S. itself. The U.S. is a nation state which is a product of "brain drain" and international migration of labor in general. The ancestors of today's Americans came in large numbers during last century in large numbers. Some of them were "pushed" by poverty and famine such as the large migration of the Irish by the "Great Irish Potato Famine". Others such as our African-American brothers and sisters were forced or pushed by slavery. The migration of labor and brain drain to the U.S. is continuing but it is really insignificant by historical standards. The fact that U.S. has benefited from this situation is obvious, and needs no further explanation. If you were to do a little research and figure out how many of Nobel Laureates are "Americans" or U.S. born one would find the number to be low. (It would be interesting to find such numbers for various disciplines for this year as the announcements are being made??.)

III) How to benefit from 'brain drain' or how to move from brain drain to brain gain.....

Brain drain is a result of individual responses to political and incentives (push and pull factors). Individuals make a migration decision by comparing expected benefits (economic & others..) to expected costs, including opportunity costs i.e. what they give up at home by migrating. As long as the expected benefits are greater than expected costs of migration, rational individuals will migrate. The trick then is to raise the costs of migration, not by forcing people not to leave home, but by providing better opportunities at home.

The following are some of the ways countries can benefit or (have benefited) from brain drain or move from brain drains to brain gain.

- 1). Encourage remittances from migrants (for example, the Cuban Economy significantly depends on Cuban exiles in the U.S., most of which live in Florida. More significant will be for a country to encourage investment from its natives in the Diaspora.
- 2) Participation of migrants in the economic development of their home country on individual and collective basis. (Indians and Pakistanis for example make significant contribution to their home economies this way..)
- 3) Using Information Technology (IT) and the Internet in the areas of distance education and research. There is a significant opportunity and talent that can be exploited by Ethiopia in this area. What is needed is good will and reduction or removal of political obstacles.
- 5) The DV- situation is generally does not involve "brain drain". It is migration of unskilled labor and their families. Whether it is beneficial for those involved depends on their age, motivation, and other personal characteristic. Generally, DV is beneficial for young individuals who are hard working, well motivated with average intelligence or more. It may not be good for older individuals (over 60 or so), unless they are involved in bringing young family members who may benefit from it.
- 6) Finally, for countries such as Ethiopia to reverse 'brain drain' they must make massive investment on their people in the following areas:

- a) A significant reduction in poverty through economic growth and employment creation,
- b) In the area of higher education and research, Ethiopia needs to compensate scarce professionals significantly to provide incentives for them. These involves raising current salary levels significantly, and more important providing adequate housing, schools, for those with young children. Some of our African neighbors such as Tanzania and Uganda who used to suffer from massive brain drain are reversing it significantly. The Universities of Dar es Salaam and Kampala have significantly raised compensation to their staff, and improved academic and research environment. As a result, academic and intellectual life is back to both universities. Ethiopia can do the same, if there is a will. The bottom line is that "brain drain" is realty in the global and information economy of today. Any one or nation cannot control it. Ethiopians can individually or collectively be useful to Ethiopia both from being home and from abroad.

Damtew wrote

As a member of a panel of experts that deliberates on brain drain issues, I felt obliged to say a little more on the current debate on brain drain issues. I really do not wish to indulge myself in the causes of brain drain but simply wish to peg it by stating that, the motivation of scholars to immigrate or their decisions to stay abroad is a product of a complex blend of economic, political, social, cultural, and personal matters. The impact and chemistry of each factor varies from country to country, from individual to individual, and fluctuates from time to time ? even to a single individual.

Many attempts have been made to regulate the flow of experts by national governments, NGOs and international organizations. Unfortunately most of these initiatives have either simply failed or had very little visible results. In light of mounting urge to migrate as well as continued failure of policies and initiatives to curtail the tide of flow, the policies, the paradigms, and the models of perceiving brain drain is changing. And "brain drain" remains now as a generic term for migration.

Is brain drain a serious problem? The answer is an overwhelming yes and particularly so in Africa and the Third World as a whole. What can be done to deal with it? What do countries do to tackle it? What success stories do we witness?

For the purpose of this discussion, I shall be brief. The current trend and model to deal with brain drain issues are to actively involve the immigrant community ? what is now

widely known as the Diaspora community ? (wherever they reside) as a development partner in building 'home' countries. The Diaspora community now commands a tremendous amount of tangible and 'virtual' resources.

By tangible I mean monetary and technical resources. Examples abound. The estimated three million Ghanaian Diaspora, 300,000 of whom professionals that reside outside the borders of the country send remittances that reach US\$300-400 million per year. This amount has become the third largest foreign exchange earner for the country exceeding receipts from the sale of timber and timber products. How are we doing, we Ethiopians? Over 400 million USD is sent as remittances to the country from more than one million Ethiopian Diaspora all over the world. For sure this figure is an underestimation of what gets to the country, as there are many ways in which money is transferred.

By virtual resources I mean the clout and the voice the Diaspora communities command in the country where they reside, in the offices they work, and the research endeavors they undertake that may have direct or indirect impact on the country. There is no need to say more here; but I just want to point the influence of the Jewish Diaspora in the US and all over the world. So the model to dealing the issue of brain drain has now shifted from barring "passengers" from their destination to one of actively tapping them in the host countries. Conscious of this, many African countries have organized major international conferences and promulgated proclamations to attract and engage their citizens (and their descendents) in nation building. I recall that the Ethiopian government has sometime back established a Directorate to handle such matters in the Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; I do however have very limited knowledge on the function of the office and what it has achieved so far; and I hope someone will enlighten us here.

It must be reiterated in general that national (home) governments must take a proactive, genuine, and committed effort to ensure that Diaspora communities play an important role in nation building. They have to make sure that they promulgate policies to encourage Diaspora communities to participate in all issues of national concern. Let me draw some possible examples. They can direct their universities to forge strong bond with organized scholarly communities abroad. They can facilitate and invite the scholarly community to participate in major national policy debates and discussions. They can actively engage with the Diaspora communities to attract funds from international organizations, NGOs and governments, and so on and so forth. This is what is happening in many countries where governments and the Diaspora maintain a healthy relationship.

That said, lack of government cooperation and support, while it could stifle Diaspora efforts, do not have all the powers to completely thwart Diaspora initiatives. There is a

space where the Diaspora can continue to cooperate and contribute with no or limited engagement of the Diaspora community with governments in home countries. In the absence of healthy ? not necessarily cordial ? relationship, the great resources to a nation would be lost. And in many countries this is unfortunately the cause.

For that matter, the model for current trend strongly suggests that while the (professional) Diaspora community organizations and the government needs to work closely, they (the Diaspora community) should not appear to be close to governments nor should they appear to collude with their oppositions. Some cases indicate that, newly elected governments (that were in opposition) felt that some professional Diaspora communities were close to the (outgoing) government and as a consequence curtailed their interaction and cooperation with them. [It should be cautioned here that Diaspora communities are not monolithic entities. They come in all forms and shapes. The concern and the point of discussion here are generally focused on professional and/or scholarly Diaspora communities. I am aware that even this qualification may not suffice as a disclaimer.]

The causes and effects of migration are diverse and complex. My discussion above is only confined to 'managing' the immigrant community and tapping their resources -- in a situation where big and potential migrants exist and migration is a major and common phenomenon of national life. Migration is a dynamic process: some countries that were complaining the loss of their intelligentsia a decade or so ago have managed to put in place appropriate and healthy policies to attract them back. It should be made clear that a country does not necessarily have to lose individuals by way of immigration to render them 'out of commission', i.e. relinquish them as immigrants or may I dare say brain drainees. We know all too well that many graduates in Africa and the Third World roam the streets unemployed or underemployed (what is termed brain hemorrhage) -- which is a subject of another major discussion.

So the bottom line for a country that is seriously afflicted by brain drain is to make sure that its Diaspora communities are actively engaged and significantly contribute to nation building. The contribution to nation building can be dramatically enhanced if the Diaspora communities are purposefully organized and mobilized to action. The role of leadership of the Diaspora communities and the government to mobilize them cannot be overemphasized. Needless to say, the task of engaging the Diaspora community is not that simple. It gets even more formidable in the absence of a healthy relationship between the Diaspora communities and their governments. In any event the movement and debate from brain drain to brain gain continues...

Dagneu wrote:

1) What must be done to reverse brain drain ?.

To reverse brain drain physical presence is not quite an obligation. It is not wise to suggest every Ethiopian have to return home, because it is almost impossible. According to me we don't have to wait the government's initiative to make Ethiopia to gain her intellectuals support and help. We have to start by ourselves, if possible will be better outside the governmental structure, but with the permit and knowledge of the government. This is to preserve the political freedom of individuals, but we need full support from the government (like the Thai's). And if we express our willing to participate (partial or fully) in the country's development programs, I am sure the government will accept us with open hands. For the beginning, We can:

- a) (like the Thai's) participate in the science and technology development in our respective subject in the researches, and government and private projects,
- b) invite junior investors (including rich Ethiopians) to invest in various economic sectors (this is important subject), we do not need to dream huge investment. "Let's try to make Ethiopia as the most Exporting country (within certain years), just in East Africa Region"
- c) participate as guest lecturers in all the Universities in Ethiopia and implement regular conference/seminars. Here, the young Ethiopian scientists will get a chance to publish their research work in the Proceedings of the conference/seminars, and also will share (may be) new scientific knowledge and experiences with the intellectuals (from abroad)

2) Are there models that we can use to address the issue on our own ?(I am assuming that the issue is directed at us)

The Reverse Brain Drain Project of Thailand by National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) can be an effective model that we can use, but we have to adjust to our social and political situations.

3) What are the responsibilities of the government ?

The government have to establish a section within the Ministry of Foreign Affair in co-operation with Science and Technology Development Authority, as well as the University/ies which its mission is to facilitate the necessity (academic and professional)

of the Ethiopian intellectuals abroad. And for those Ethiopians who want to return and work at governmental or private companies, this agency have to provide incentives, housing, and

other needs which compensate their life in the western countries/US.

Belai Fikre Mariam Habte-Jesus wrote:

Reverse Brain Drain in the Context of the Horn and Ethiopia in Particular

We need context for the brain-drain discussion. I read with interest the issue of brain drain and I would like to bring it home to the experience of the Horn and Ethiopia in particular. I believe context is critical for such important discussions and the context of the Ethiopian modern historiography is relevant here. The most important approach is to ask questions, why, how, when brain drain? What is the root cause of brain drain and how can it be reversed or converted into an asset for this and future generations?

Citizens and skilled personnel are the wealth of nations. Let us start with fundamentals that is people are the most important wealth of the nation. I will begin with some background and fundamental philosophical thinking to bring the whole issues in context. First and foremost, people, citizens and that too educated, experienced, wise members of the community are the critical mass and the wealth of any one particular nation. Any nation that wastes or drains this important resource does so at its own peril, regardless of the pretexts or assumed excuses given.

Skilled manpower is the key strategy for sustainable development. Skilled man or womanpower can utilize and convert natural resources to the foundation of the wealth of the nation. Secondly, it is important to realize that the natural resources, specifically, land, water and mineral resources and other man made properties are critical elements of that the special wealth of that community. Without skilled manpower, natural resources can not be made available to the benefit of the nation.

Competent management that is transparent and accountable. The most important and third component of this wealth of nations is the management of these critical components of the wealth that is people and natural resources. In the case of the Horn and especially Ethiopia, what happened to have impacted the three pillars of the triangles of wealth and sustainable development. Good governance has its foundation in utilizing a competent management and leadership that is transparent and accountable. Nothing is useful that is not transparent and accountable. The culture of secrecy and terror has to change.

Scanning the past and the future. Our crisis began in the early 70s during the last day of Emperor Haile Selassie's Empire of Greater Ethiopia. First, the most important wealth of the nation that is the people became vulnerable. starving. Focusing on events that took place over the past 30 years alone, in the early 1970s during the time of Emperor Haile Sellassie, there were some 200,000 people facing famine. These people by and large were

Tigreans and people of Wollo province. At the time, this was a new experience and became a very shocking experience that resulted in a series of inappropriate analysis of the situation. Some hooligans in effect massacred the leadership of two sets of Prime ministers, cabinet members and senior military and civil servants. Many, now look back and consider that was the beginning of terror and the beginning of gross human right violations which continues to be the cause of Diaspora, refugees which is now being addressed as "brain drain". Prior to 1974 massacre there was no brain drain to mention in the horn and Ethiopia in particular.

Searching for the real cause of draught in science (facts). Looking back, now almost 30 years later was the crime of these noble people who perished in the hands of the brutal military junta, not articulating why there was not enough rain or is it because they did not create rain? As we observe events that followed, draught, famine and civil war have been escalating since then. No one asked seriously what was the fundamental scientific reason for the loss of rain at the time and even today. Many now believe it is lack of land ownership and energy in the form of electricity in every home that is accelerating the wood and forest clearance that is in turn accentuating the draught and famine in return.

Electricity and tree planting are part of the solution. May be electricity to every household will reduce the forest clearance which in turn will protect the humidity, and water resources. Additionally, it will solve the energy crisis and give opportunities for small-scale cottage industries and bring Ethiopia to the 21st Century communication age. Tree planting with soil conservation and irrigation farming could contribute towards a long-term solution. Not massacring the leadership or potential leadership as was experienced in the early 1970s is the answer.

Competency based leadership tested with time and the field is necessary. The response of the mad, hooligan military junta led by the likes of sergeant legesse and captain Mengistu was to wipe any one who was more intelligent, wise and resourceful in the nation. For seventeen years they have been busy decimating the wise, intelligent, experienced and probably creative members of the community. Those who are referred to as brain drain by the previous commentators are people who managed against all odds to run away from their respective communities. Many movies and books can come out how these noble and creative people some of them as young as 10, 13, 16 walked through all corners of the borders of the Horn to be faced with famine, wild animals and snipers like the one we face here in the Metro Washington DC area.

The victims of terrorism are not the cause of brain drain. The majority ended in Western Europe, which accepted them as refugees or exiles. These noble, brave people some managed to go to school and others managed to work in their area of choice but many remained undertaking lowly and inappropriate jobs for their skills, competence and educational background. I know some are still trying to build their lives. The posttraumatic syndrome they suffer is enormous. Many have not seen their family members and more have lost them in the stupidity that ensued. Now, can any intelligent discussion expect these people who constitute almost the majority of the exile community as causes of brain drain.

Terrorist victims need to be rehabilitated by returning their properties back. Now the new leadership in the region, after confiscating their properties and almost counting them as non-citizens is expecting \$500 from each exile who wants to return and invest in his or her community to get an identity card. Can you imagine this? Then they are expected to go back home and rent the very homes they built and their parents built while the new leadership leaves in one and some two villas that do not belong to them. Just imagine the type of wealth drain and utmost injustice that these exile communities now referred as to Ethiopians with foreign passports feel. So who is draining whom? is the real question.

The exodus was to save ones lives and not for brain drain. Ten years later after the first crisis, in the 1984/5, there were 5 million people starving this time from all over the country. Civil War is raging and now all the neighboring countries of the region are involved in some form of terror to their people and their neighbors. More people ran for their lives and the majority of the current exile community referred to as the critical mass of (??) the brain drain left during this madness of the communist junta and terror in the all the horn countries. This trend has not yet been reversed and we are into the same game now.

The peasants and military junta all made the same mistakes. The peasants came into the city and did exactly what the military junta did. There comes another season of the early 1991/92, another exodus of all the peasants moved in to the cities with kailashkinovs and up rooted the whole citizenship of the cities and now for the first time, all city citizens left in masse to save their skins. Here, ethnicity, party alliance and all forms of terrorist activities were unleashed on the whole citizenship to run away for their lives. Now over the past 10 years, not only do we have the university professors, senior civil servants and business people, young people and the peasants themselves who managed to escape the snipers or hellish prisons started to evacuate their homes. Thank God for Diversity Visa

some managed to come in some form of human civility to the United States. So, I wonder if one calls these brain drain, or human resource drain all together.

The culture of terror needs to change. The old bandits now formed respective governments and went back to their old ways. Today, in the latter part of 2002, after 2 years of madness and civil war that cost over 100,000 lives and over \$3billion dollars almost a million a day, we have a new wave of refugees and emigrants. Now again, like the first time some 30 years ago, the most experienced and talented group are running for their lives.

Brain drain follows terrorism and civil unrest. So this issue of brain drain should be really referred to human resource genocide and human right violation rather than attempting to blame the very people who are running away from terror. I wonder if some of the writers on this topic could tell us or encourage people how they left their beloved homes, good job and peaceful neighborhoods and how did they survive here in the west before we try to make them feel guilty and increase their post traumatic experiences, when most are trying how to be part of the solution to this new wave of famine where over 14 million of 60 million people are facing serious starvation.

Erasing one's memories is allowing the same mistakes to be repeated. The challenge now is how to reconcile these glare inconsistencies of our select memories. Asking the fundamental question, of how to bring justice, competencies and transparencies to the Horn, first before we begin putting the blame on the wrong people of side of the argument.

Survival strategies need not be confused with brain- drain. In the end, people want to survive and not to decimate themselves. People like to be respected and honored in their homes, at work and their communities. People will do any thing to seek better lives. It is better to make our respective home communities attractive enough for others to move in with their resources and talents. Basic human right protection and good governance should precede brain drain reversal.

Safety, security and human rights precede brain drain reversal. We cannot expect to have the same people who denigrated our honor and humanity to come and ask us for our limited resources and livelihood to be yet exploited by the same ruthless people. All properties including housing, land, jobs and neighborhoods that have been confiscated by the military junta and not returned by the current regime should be returned to the people who owned them or to their rightful heirs. Then, people will invest their time and resources back to their community. The most critical issue is to create a safe, fair and

equitable system that puts every one in the eye of the law on equal footing. Safety precedes brain drain.

Terror breeds brain drain and good governance reverses it. My dear friends, it is not brain drain the problem it is terror and human genocide that is raging in the horn, which in turn creates hopelessness, insecurity and massive starvation or migration. Any leadership that does not recognize that people and talented, educated people are its most valuable resources will decimate all the peasants in to their grave. An agricultural policy that is bankrupt and does not create alternative employment will continue to depopulate the nation and relegate it to the expanding desert in the Sub Saharan Africa.

Good governance and accountability is the issue. So, the challenge is good governance, competent leadership and most of all humane society based on the age old culture, tradition of living together where diversity is strength and not a liability.

Asking the right question is a good beginning. So I ask the question, is it really brain drain or terrorism that is the main cause of the starvation, injustice, and massive exodus of our people.

Sem ena work, work yetale? I would appreciate a discussion based on context and clarity that puts all the factors in place and not a sterile discussion of push and pull, there is a lot at stake and much deeper reasons. May be we just did the "sem" part of our literature and we need to move to the "work" side soon. Here I am referring to the "Sem ena Work " anthology of our culture I request to bring the culture back and give us both context and content together for improved understanding of our real challenge continuous internal and external terrorism that is forcing our people in to massive exodus.

Abebe wrote:

At this time, I have documentation of news, models, activities and UN documents on the issue of reverse brain drain. I almost finished reading them. There are a few attractive ones. Among them are the Chile Science Institute group and the Thailand Reverse brain

drain projects I am learning that in order to perform a measurable development work, there needs to be a dedicated "mach maker" or a bridge organization that connects the expertise abroad with the immediate and future needs. This is a full time job. I see it clearly how such organization can be constructed and become a major intellectual force. It can also become self supporting consultant organization, with a potential to

attract high tech and high paying businesses into Ethiopia. AAU-Network will develop the conceptual framework of such organization. In fact this could be a component of a session in the upcoming "Conference on Ethiopian Higher Education" in DC July, 2003 (www.geocities.com/lmak27455/AAU-Conference/index.html) However I don't believe a proposal to establish such organization makes sense without engaging the government on this matter. What is the government doing on these issues? Is the government interested

Teshome Mahlet wrote:

\This is my first time responding to threads and I want to take this opportunity to say thank you for let me be a part of this interesting group discussion. I will admit that I didn't have much chance to fully follow the discussion about the "Reverse brain drain" model as much as I would have liked. So as I put my two cents in, it is possible that I might state the same fact that someone else already has and in that case, I want to apologize in advance for the redundancy. One thing that comes to my mind about this issue as a young professional is that in this day and age, we rarely make a decision about anything without considering the

question "what's in it for me". If we direct our focus on businesses in Ethiopia, we can start by looking into what the employee and employer relationships typically are. If for instance you look at the employer/employee relationships here in the US, the more talented you are the more perks and benefits (whether through pay or other like medical etc...) tend to be high, not to mention the security of your job. And this is not just for Americans, but also any other nationalities thanks to the H1-B visa program (which in this case it involves

investments of the company), as well as the infamous DV visa program. This is the type of competition Ethiopian employers face when it comes to the brain drain issue. Of course there is not going to be anything that can solve this overnight. But if you are talking about organizations, what comes to my mind is something that follows a certain model to the betterment of workers as a whole. An organization that promotes things ranging from introducing a program on employee motivation to employers, to pushing the government to help, fund or even make up some law on employee incentives targeted at private and/or governmental offices etc... And I guess one of the main questions also becomes in considering how much the government would be willing to participate in such programs, and if it is going to be feasible to have such organizations. How can the people in the Diaspora? I guess by keeping the flow of sharing ideas of everyone's experience in the world of profession, from wherever you may be, and take the positive aspects of all this to try and incorporate that into the process. Hope it all makes sense

Dear colleagues,

Addisu Wrote:

Having read well-thought out argument with regards to "Brain drain" please allow me to say few points before we go to another topic. I believe honestly that "Brain drain" is a very fancy word to describe to the reality of Ethiopia. It would be very misleading to treat our case as a brain drain. I very much doubt that there exists a brain drain in its real sense. This is not to underestimate the number of people leaving the country for good. I agree, broadly speaking the term "brain-drain" implies migration of badly "needed" skilled labor to build a county of origin. When we see Ethiopia's case the word "needed" does not exist. The system we have at home for the last 30 years wasn't looking for a skilled and independent thinking being. So the argument does not hold true that this "badly needed" skilled force is leaving the country attracted more by comfort of the West.

The truth is, knowledgeable and skilled citizens had been treated as "reactionaries" or "chauvinists" to be excluded. Even more the have been relentlessly persecuted and encouraged to leave the country.

So the right way to untapped this vast resource residing in the exile should start with understanding the root cause of the problem. Majority of graduates leave their country because they think that there is nothing left for them. People fear to express their professional opinion, fear to try to get involved to change or help their own community without coming in to collision with authorities. We all know every activity is measured against political objectives. These independent activities put individuals against the system, which had been worshiping ignorance. The price of trying to change the system is too high to take the risk. For example, Can any of you feel secured to visit your farmer relatives for few days hoping to work with them and change their way of living without raising suspicion in the local authorities "Geber Meheber"?

At the same time the world is coming closer and the temptation to live in a democratic and just society where hard work is rewarded is tempting.

The political and economic reality of our country is very clear for all us to read the writing on the wall. Almost all of us, except selected few, have no stake in our countries economic and political life. 14 million people cannot produce enough to keep them alive until next harvest or feel free to go to the next village to find temporary work.

Millions of Ethiopians only exist in the statistics book, when the government issue the number of people starving to ask donors for food aid. Apart from that we do not exist or count. We are neither missed nor wanted.

There is no chance for a graduate to work hard and have a stake in the national wealth creation, without getting involved in corruption. No matter one is born smart, he or she cannot aspire to have a say in the national political life or stand for office without having gun-tossing relatives.

Almost all graduates are out of the property ladder. They cannot have a nest to lay their eggs and settle. So the hope of migrating to somewhere, where they can build a nest and start life is very tempting. Thanks to our "revolutionaries" they have made our country totally inhospitable

Let me stop winging and complaining here to suggestions few things. As I suggested above the main cause of migration is the system. We need to have a system where every citizen would have a stake in the country to feel settled. A system of "laws" not a system gun-tossing individuals. A system where people work hard and keep what they earn. A system where people dream grand ideas and have the freedom to try them to bring them to reality.

I was there and I know how it feels not to have dreams. That is why people leave the country at list to keep their dream alive. So it is for these reasons that I say people fled from the system not from Ethiopia. That is why I say that there was no brain drain. So far I haven't met a genius who is head hunted by Giant Corporation to be lured to the West. Most of us the genius Ethiopians I know were chased away.

So lets encourage freethinking beings, who can turn ideas in to wealth. Lets encourage citizens to have land, properties and stake in the country so that they can invest to lay a better foundation for kids. Even those people who are controlling the political power and national wealth do not have faith in countries future. Most of them still hold their British and American passports and send their children abroad to apply for asylum than help them to have a stake in the country they supposed to lead. In no way I call this lack of confidence as "brain drain".

Thread: Africans without borders

- 1) Abebe wrote: I always maintain the position that there does not exist braindrain. What exists is brain mismanagement. Africa kills its intellectuals, Africa does not provide

the resources for its intellectuals to do what they do best. Africa throws away its intellectuals, and it believes in the solutions that come from its colonial masters. This is a sick mentality. We can not wait until Africa changes its ways. The African intellectual power must be developed and organized. I am personally determined to open channels for thousands of Africans to join graduate schools to learn science and technology. More PhD for Africans !! Again there is no brain drain. What we must do is train as many Ethiopians as possible at any location. Be it in Ethiopia or outside Ethiopia. Listen again, there is no such thing as brain drain. People right here builds South Africa the physics programs in China, India, Pakistan, Israel, in the states and in Europe. Why are we not talking about the brain drain about these countries ?. I always worry that there are some special people who are trained to create a sense of insecurity among Africans to distract us from what we want to be. So the language Brain Drain is coined to create this insecurity. In fact other insecurities are deeply ingrained, and any conversation about Africa is always about disease, poverty, misery, and death. I believe there are great things about Africa more than there are bad things.

- 2) Girmay wrote: You are wrong this time... who throw...who? Africa never throw its intellectuals rather gave an ever gain best chance for all the intellectuals abroad or at home, rather according to me the intellectuals throw Africa... just an example you saw Africa in the negative image "(disease, poverty, misery, and death)" however Africa, especially Ethiopia, have a Beauty side... its nature... which the whole world admits. According to you who have to solve all the existing problems, including the inconvenient reasons for why the intellectuals run away from their home country. As your objective in standing this group, I think is the "intellectuals"... because it will not be wise to wait for those politicians, who I believe are the cause of multidimensional problems of Africa. Actually this group have to stand in front in fighting against Brain Drain or Sucking Brain (whatever), I mean we have to encourage our intellectuals to build their own home country from inside. Because the contribution from inside is more effective for a dynamic educational, economic, political, even cultural (technology) change in our country rather than from abroad. Of course it is honorable job to produce more and more Ethiopian PhDs in US or Ethiopia. But we have to understand braindrain is just a term, but it is a reality in the case of Africa. You said "The physics programs in china, India, Pakistan, Israel, south Africa are built by people right here in the states and in Europe. Why are we not talking about the brain drain about these countries ?." My answer is: Because even if they are in US, they participate in the development programs of their respective countries actively and with enthusiasm. How can you stigmatize such people in the term "braindrain", because even if they are in US they still work for their country!!

- 3) Solomon dejene Wrote: The discussion on brain drain is taking the floor again since a few days. I see quite a number of points you mentioned as causes. But I believe that one thing is very important. All the mentioned points have some truth. I don't think that we have to absolutize one and say that THIS IS THE CAUSE. Of course there are minor and major causes. I believe all of us agree that something has to be done. And this network is trying to contribute something to it. It's obvious that in order to tackle a problem, you need to identify its root causes. There are push and pull factors. If we agree on that, we cannot talk that the one is more significant than the other without having to conduct at least one research. As intellectuals, we have to take care of our conclusions. If we are talking of our individual experiences, we may have seen that by some people the pull factor is higher than the pull factor and by others vice versa. But I don't think that we need to spend much time in discussing whether the pull or push factor is higher. Abebe has made a point when he said that every individual chooses on his own free will to do what he/she wants. Having confirmed that, I would also like to add that mobility is one of the 'needs' of people of the post modern era in spite of the fact that most of the countries in the south do not have access to post modern means. I want you to consider hereby the influence of media such as tv, films, radio, etc. Particularly in the cities, children go to the so-called video houses where they watch films without taking into account their age. Most of the films are commercial oriented and exaggerate the reality of the west, depicting it as a kind of fabulous heaven. These children are not in state to differentiate the reality from Hollywood world. So their dream would be determined by what they see. This point might be associated with a pull factor actually, but at the same time indicates a push factor that fails to provide them with the necessary info or to provide them good schooling. Finally, my suggestion is that on top of the attention given by this network to facilitate higher education, a lot has to be done to basic education too. Without a good elementary school, we cannot have a good high school. Without a good high school we will be unable to have a good college or university. Do we have something for the kids then????
- 4) Girma Hailu wrote: The issue of Brain Drain is multi dimensional and global in nature. I think we should not spend much of our energy because it has self vs. nation competition. To resolve such kind of issue, it requires basic research of the root causes, fundamental challenges and what should be done to address them at least theoretically. I don't think it is a question of Government only it also calls for personal commitment. The United Nations Development Program started a small program called Transfer of Knowledge through own Nationals (TOKTN). The main objective was to help nations strengthen their institutional capacity by providing them with professionals living abroad. The program did show some interest from the

professional's abroad and countries in Africa. The idea of TOKTN was to kick start the process and those governments will pick it and continue with it since the fund was for short term. Brain Drain requires a broad based and multifaceted approach to create a conducive environment so that she or he could stay where they deem appropriate except where there are good reasons to let them decide otherwise.

- 5) Capacity Building Consult wrote: The causes of brain (labor) drain are, as most of you put it, twofold: push and pull factors. I am inclined to give more weight to the push factors – governance, poverty, public attitude, etc. These are also within our capacity to overcome and minimize the brain (labor) drain. There is very little we can do about the pull factors ; e.g. better opportunities abroad. In our discussion reference was made to individual cases. I think it is important to listen to such cases and stories in order to fully understand the complexity of the problem. Responsible for this phenomenon are the youth, governments, and parents. The youth need the necessary skills to create opportunities both in-country and abroad (when the chance comes). Governments should improve governance so that society could have confidence in what they do. Parents need to change their attitude that their children could do better abroad only. Many well to do parents are spending thousands to send their children abroad without preparing them adequately for life in the country let alone abroad. As citizens we have a difficult task and most of the time we don't know where the solution is to come from. Those of us, who had opportunities, need to pull our resources (know how, material, financial) together and do something. Match the words with practice!