



Ethiopian immigrants are not strangers to the existing stereotype associated with their homeland. For many minds, Ethiopia is a country so dependent on foreign aid and one that may never pull itself out of poverty.

The genesis of that perception might be traced back to the mid nineteen-eighties where the horrible famine that ravaged the northern part of Ethiopia was brought into every household through the television screen- the Michael Buerk 1984 BBC documentary.

The response from the West was humbling. Bob Geldof and Bono are only two names among so many humanitarian artists and social activists who rallied behind the historic Feed the World fundraising campaign in 1985 and 1986. Every Christmas after that we are reminded of that incident through the tunes "Do They Know It's Christmas?" and "We are the World, We are the Children."

The vivid Pictures of malnourished Ethiopians, hundreds of adults and children, mere skin and bones, in a feeding center (if it was indeed a feeding center) too weak to shoo the flies from their sun-baked faces are still fresh in the minds of so many. A child suckling on a dead mother's breast- starved to a point of death; and the deafening melancholic wailing of mothers as they bury their dead children. Aren't these the images that pop up every time someone mentions the name Ethiopia? Over the years I heard some cold stereotypical jokes about that and I don't remember smiling. People must ask what went wrong in Ethiopia to cause such a horrific situation and if it could have been avoided- or whether it could happen again?

The cycle of poverty and the stigma associated with Ethiopia will not go away until the root problem is seriously addressed- particularly as the population grows at a rate of three percent annually. With 90,000,000 people and counting, according to the latest census, Ethiopia has already become the second most populated nation in Africa. In less than a decade that number will be well over a hundred million- in a land not bigger than the province of Ontario! That is worrisome.

Economic and food aid from developed nations to the underdeveloped ones, such as Ethiopia, deserve a thank you, a million times. Reaction to relieve hunger during draught and famine is a remarkable act of charity from one society to another. However, as great as the goodwill to feed the hungry at the time of drought is, it has been proven time and again that nations cannot pull themselves out of poverty and progress forward into economically and politically stable societies as long as they are dependent on handouts from others! Underdeveloped nations must be helped to become self sufficient- to produce their own food and feed themselves.

Ask us about our interest-free-microloan program for mothers whose children are already enrolled in our academy under the Panafric Children Rehabilitation and Formation Program (PIA-CRAF). It is a hand up, not a handout- and it works!