

For the past thirty-five years Ethiopia suffered an immeasurable level of brain-drain. From the time of the communist military junta (1974-1991) to the present (1991-2011), it has become the norm for thousands of Ethiopian brightest-and-best to leave their country that needs them most and migrate towards the West for a better life and political freedom.

Today the Ethiopian Diaspora is estimated at close to three million. The irony of all ironies is that it is the poor countries, such as Ethiopia, that subsidizes the professional deficit of developed nations with research scientists, technologists, and other professionals every year. One might find it incredible to hear a statement from a European parliament member (IPS agency report) that there are more Ethiopian medical doctors practicing in Chicago alone than in the entire country of Ethiopia. Unfortunately, the case is the same in every profession. As if that is not a brain-drain enough, thousands more are flocking to the USA, every year, through the so called Diversity Immigrant Visa (DV or Green Card lottery) – whose minimum requirement is a high school diploma. Coming to America is the dream of many Ethiopians. Therefore, winning the DV lottery means abruptly abandoning your responsibility, whatever position you hold in any sector. How can we reverse this never-ending brain-drain in Ethiopia? That is the question I have been asking myself for many years.

I am of the conviction that Ethiopians in Diaspora, with our exposure to different cultures and systems, are in a better position to see the problem in our country of origin more clearly than those in the land. It is also my conviction that we have a moral obligation to contribute towards the transformation of our country and to reverse the brain drain. The ultimate act could be to return to the homeland and work for change from within. No, I'm not naïve, I know it will cost us a lot! But what is the alternative other than the slow death of our nation. In my view, investment in quality of education and developing the agriculture sector are a rescue operation. These are two major areas we need to address from within. Panafric International Academy is a response to this call – to become a grassroots change agent.