

A Timely Message to All Irobs

From Asgedom Berhe, secretary general of Irob Development Association (IDA)

IDA's mission is to empower Irob people through education and socioeconomic development programs, and to help preserve its language, culture, and historical heritages. And IDA envisions of attaining a hunger-free and thriving environment that provides opportunities for all Irobs to reach their fullest potential in all aspects of life, all the time and every time. IDA operates exclusively for developmental purposes supporting educational and socio-economic development activities of Irob people. It is non-political and not-for-profit organization.

In addition to mobilizing Irobs across the globe, IDA works in partnership with the local government and other NGOs to improve quality of education and all aspects of socio economic conditions of Irob people. It is a catalyst organization that strives to bring the plights of Irob people to the attention of the applicable bodies; collaborate with local, regional, and national government as well as with other benefactors to assure such issues are addressed; and raise awareness among the Irob people so that they take the first initiative to be part of the solution.

IDA believes that the government, with its policy and efforts, is doing its best to address the multi-faceted issues Irob people are facing. And much more needs to be done to eradicate poverty out of Irob land and for Irob people to become self-sufficient. And that is why I believe, as citizens, it is the primary responsibility of each of us, regardless of educational and economical status, geographical locations, and or political views and preferences, to get united and play a pivotal role in helping IDA achieve its vision. This in mind, IDA continues to organize Irobs in countryside, in urban areas, and abroad bringing everyone under one umbrella. The more united; the stronger we get, and the higher and meaningful objectives we will achieve.

Today, Irob district is considered one of the poorest in the country and within the Tigray region. There are no meaningful opportunities for our youth. The district experiences the highest school dropouts and its young are migrating in mass to the most dangerous countries in the world, Middle East. On the way to their destination, many are tortured, young ladies are raped, some are murdered, and families are exploited to come up with ransom by the merciless human traffickers.

The data shows that 1,850 young women and men left the district to the Middle East in search of better life in the last few years. Out of these 1,216 have returned home empty handed with shattered dream. After all, immigrating to the middle east does not make one rich overnight. The irony is that even if the returnees continue to share their true horrific tortures they themselves have experienced during the journey, the exodus of our young continues. They are being manipulated and victimized by unsuspected human smugglers. It is high time we stop an end to this human tragedy.

Irob Youth Immigration Exodus data for the last 10 years

Gender	Left	Returned	%s
Male	1,312	924	70%
Female	538	292	54%
Total	1,850	1,216	66%
Male/Female Ratio	2.4	3.2	

As a community, we need to work together and get help from the government to stop the continuation of the exodus. Grassroots awareness is important so that our youth know the truth about the myths of "getting rich quick" scheme. Change of mindset is imperative for the youth to fully concentrate on education and become contributing members of the community. Most importantly, they need to see hope in their homeland; they need to believe that there are opportunities for them to be successful here at home and the returnees must find jobs or be self-employed. When they believe that they

can thrive in their homeland, our youth will be able to see the practical roadmap on how to become successful and productive members of the society.

So, dear brothers & sisters; fathers & mothers, the time has come for us to be realistic, and focus in helping our people. To help preserve our culture, each of us need to do our share. I believe our young will unleash their full potential when they have peace of mind, see hope, and acquire the necessary skillsets to help them succeed.

Currently, IDA is partnering with various stakeholders in support of the construction of the Special Technical & Vocational Education Training and Agro-Processing Industry Center (STVET-APIC) in the village of Kalaasa. The government and other partners will cover the lion's share of the cost, but as citizens we must play a pivotal role to assure its completion; it is important that we do our share. IDA has proposed to cover 10% of the total cost; we will achieve by mobilizing Irobs under IDA's leadership and using other fundraising channels. Diaspora Irobs in North America and Europe have started to take the first step to that regard. In less than a week, they have pledged almost \$30,000 US dollars to help fund the STVET-APIC project. And they are exploring various mechanisms to raise more. This is a great step to the right direction and I am very proud of them.

Please visit our website at www.irobdevelopment.org for details. You will find up-to-date and relevant information, such as detailed Project proposals, IDA's bylaws and its vision, detailed IDA processes and procedural manual, links to the Saho radio programs, and more.

I expect all branches in Ethiopia and other parts of the world to follow the footsteps of our brothers and sisters from aforementioned areas. As it is clearly spelled out in IDA's 2009/2017 budget plan, each of our branches are to raise funds and drive membership. I also would like to take this time to Thank IDA's committed partners and friends of Irobs who are providing moral and material support to ensure successful completion of STVET-APIC project. Realization of IDA's mission benefits not only the youth of Irob but the Tigray region and the country as a whole.

Today's young will be tomorrow's business leaders, doctors, engineers, farmers, entrepreneurs, and contributing citizens. Investing in them today, will assure they grow to be responsible citizens of tomorrow who will contribute to the wellbeing of the nation.

Dear Irobs, let us work hand in glove for our common goal of attaining a hunger-free and thriving environment that provides opportunity for all Irobs to reach their fullest potential in all aspects of life.

For those of you who want to wire your contribution directly to IDA's account in Ethiopia, here is the banking account information.

Name: Irob Development Association
Bank: Wegagen Bank - Adigrat, Tigray Ethiopia
Account No. 2502742/S01/2707.

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