

ABIDE



Alliance for Brain-Gain
and Innovative Development

2009 ANNUAL Report January 2010

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Alliance For Brain-Gain and Innovative Development (ABIDE)
(Former Hibret Lelimat Ma'ekel (HLM))
2009 Annual Report, Presented at Annual General Assembly
13 February 2010 at HESC Conference Hall

Introduction

This Annual Report covers the period 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009. The report is based on the work-plan and budget approved by the General Assembly (GA) at its December 2008 meeting.

As per its Strategic Planning Document ABIDE envisages the full mobilization and utilization of Diaspora's technical and intellectual resources and thereby contribute to the country's capacity building towards economic and socio-cultural transformation of the Ethiopian people. To this effect, since its establishment in 2006, the organization has continued to strengthen its partnership and network with institutions in the country and Ethiopian professionals in the Diaspora. By so doing, ABIDE is emerging as a bridge linking professionals and institutions in the country with willing and committed professionals in the Diaspora for institutionalized and incremental channeling of technical and professional resources into the country through synergistic and win-win partnership.

In 2009, ABIDE, continued to strengthen partnerships with key Sectoral Ministries, leading Institutions of Higher Learning and with related stakeholders. It has established and maintained contacts with professionals in the Diaspora who are willing to contribute to the country's development. Through these efforts, ABIDE is gaining recognition by institutions in the country, and professionals in the Diaspora as a promising and timely organization that can link and foster increased participation of professionals and friends of Ethiopia in the Diaspora for optimal *brain-gain*. This could be greatly enhanced by streamlining related policies, strategies and processes in the country. The tedious process for re-registration of ABIDE was also completed in time.

The year has again been another challenging year financially and organizationally due to the following main reasons.

- 1) The prolonged uncertainty and ambiguity associated with organization's re-registration that also led to donor indecision
- 2) The relocation of ABIDE's office into the AAU Akaki campus premise.
- 3) The inflation (global economic crisis) and associated price increase on most vital commodities.
- 4) Lack of financial resource for project implementation and institutional capacity strengthening including for basic staffing.

The above problems were further aggravated by the repeated power failure, especially during the first half of the year, that caused some stress on communication and workflow.

Activity One - Strengthening HLM's Operational Capacity *(This is a carryover from 2008)*

1. Renewal of HLM's License:

ABIDE had actively participated and contributed in the 2008 national debates on Charities and Societies Registration that were chaired by the Minister of Justice and by the Prime Minister respectively.

These debates were followed by wider consultations and eventually led to the passing of a new law, Proclamation Number 621/2009, to govern Charities and Societies in Ethiopia. Subsequently, the Managing Director having studied the implications of the various options for classification of Charities and Societies and related obligations and responsibilities and taking

into consideration the organization's objectives and the financial realities of the country, proposed to the Board the preferred option for HLM's classification. The Board at its 11th meeting held on 28 October 2009 further deliberated on the subject and endorsed the proposed classification while at the same time revised organization's constitution using the Agency format. The Board mandated the MD to finalize the re-registration process. However, the Agency required that the changes first be endorsed by the General Assembly. As a result, an extraordinary meeting of the General Assembly was held on 21 November 2009. In this meeting the GA examined the recommendations and approved the revised constitution and proposed re-registration of HLM as a "Resident Charity Organization". The GA also approved the re-branding of the organization from Hibret Lelimat Ma'ekel (HLM) to Alliance For Brain-Gain and Innovative Development (ABIDE).

Subsequently, ABIDE was registered by the Charities and Societies Agency, on 30 November 2009 with a registration number 1044 and is officially licensed to operate until 30 November 2012. The Board would like to acknowledge the extra ordinary work done by the Managing Director and the support provided from members of the Board and the General Assembly in the re-branding and re-registration process.

2. Staffing

There was no staff recruited and deployed during the year due to lack of funds. The 2009 plan to generate funds and employ core staff did not materialize.

Since its establishment the Managing Director (MD) has been the only person working full time with no salary paid. She undertook all tasks relating to the MoUs with the various institutions, developed and update database, engage in dialogue with Ethiopian professionals in the Diaspora as well as maintained networking and the day to day operations of the organization. It also became abundantly clear that having technical and support staff is a critical requirement to operate efficiently.

In this regard, there has been developments which may allow ABIDE to have at least volunteer staff in the coming year (2010). The MD was able to negotiate partnerships with VSO Ethiopia, VSO Canada and AHEAD. Accordingly it is expected that two volunteers will be seconded to work with ABIDE in 2010. A Diaspora volunteer, recruited through the VSO-Canada/AHEAD initiative, will join ABIDE on 1st February 2010 to work for a period of three months. This is a pilot project where the Government of Canada encourages Diaspora professionals to participate in the development of their country of origin. The second volunteer through the regular VSO programme is expected to join ABIDE on 1st April for a period of one to two years.

As has been the case in the previous years, ABIDE continues to enjoy the good will and technical support of volunteers. The organization would like to extend its appreciation to the many colleagues who contributed directly and indirectly to implementation of activities 2009. Special thanks go to Dr. Tamerate Retta for his continued and untiring support and for holding the fort when the Managing Director was out of the country. ABIDE also expresses its sincere thanks to Ato Tarekegne Bishaw for regularly collecting mail and ensuring timely payment of telephone and e-mail bills; Ms Sefanit Mesfin for editing support; MS Woubalem Taye and Ms Mebrat Woldetinsae for the many hours they put in during the development of the funding proposal on the "EC-UN Initiative on Migration and Development". Also Ms Woubalem Taye and Ato Mulugetta Gebru for providing oversight to the work of consultants in the development of funding proposal for submission to IOM and MOFA on "Diaspora Policy Impact Assessment"; Ato Abiy Demilew for initiating the work on communication strategy development, Ato Getachew Abebe for providing auditing services; and Ms Yemisirach Bezabih for checking the accounting books. Thanks also go to Prof. Berhanu Abegaz, our contact person in Botswana, for

his continued encouragement, moral and financial support, and for his support in preparing the 2008 GA minutes, his input during the re-branding process and for participating in the visit and discussions with Bahir Dar, Gondar and Mekelle University authorities. ABIDE also expresses its heartfelt appreciation to the Chairperson and members of the Board for the support and most valued guidance they continue to provide despite their intense and heavy work schedule.

3. Office Space, Equipment and Furniture

The office continues to enjoy its new location at B14-CA7, in the tranquil AAU Akaki Campus premises located 20 km from the Airport circle on the way to Bishoftu. The new direct telephone No. is 0114349420. ABIDE sincerely extends its thanks to the AAU and specifically to the President Prof. Andrias Eshete for providing us the office space to operate from. Besides its association with the AAU, ABIDE has also benefited from not paying rent and utilities. However increase in fuel price and the ever growing traffic jam on the Addis-Bishoftu road is making daily commuting to Akaki a major challenge

Due to lack of funds, no new equipment or furniture was procured during the year. However contact has been made with a number of organizations for computer and laptop donations. In addition to computers, tables, chairs and other basic equipments are urgently needed as ABIDE will deploy the two volunteers.

4 Day to day Operations: With guidance and oversight by the Board, the day to day running of ABIDE has been maintained at acceptable levels. Most of the work was done by the Managing Director.

- The MD of ABIDE has continued to work by commuting to and from its Akaki office. Frequent power-outages, the high cost of fuel and traffic congestion did not permit daily commuting to the Akaki office. Thus, on some days of the week, it was preferable for the Managing Director to operate from her home. Even then, annual expenditure on fuel and telephone were much higher than the previous years.
- The Board remained active during the year. Three meetings (against the four planned) were held in the year and provided the critically needed guidance, especially, during the re-registration process.
- An extra ordinary meeting of the General Assembly was held on 21 November 2009 to provide oversight and to finally endorse the re-registration and renaming of the organization from HLM to ABIDE. On several occasions, the Board exchanged ideas electronically, an arrangement that was very useful despite the difficulties in Internet connectivity that continues to be a problem.
- Development and submission of funding proposals to potential donors were among the priority tasks of ABIDE during the year. Five proposals were developed for submission to IOM, VSO, AAU, GFMD and Israel (the latter two were for support to participate in international conference and training). This subject will be discussed in detail under activity six.
- Networking and partnerships. Memoranda of Understanding have been negotiated and signed institutions of higher learning. We have been engaging potential partners and stakeholders that would advance the interest of ABIDE in negotiations, dialogue and extensive and sustained communication. This has resulted in partnerships with important national and international organizations.

Activity Two: Networking, Communication and Mobilization of Resources

There is an ever increasing demand generated by the expansion of various capacity building (e.g in the areas of higher education) and development programs in the country. There are also many skill gaps that exist in many public and private institutions and development sectors in the country. Ethiopia can greatly benefit from the rich pool of technical, intellectual, financial and other related recourses that exist among its nationals in the Diaspora and also within friends of Ethiopia. Neither can it afford to ignore the qualified professionals in the country who are not actively engaged in their respective areas of specialty. One has also to be mindful of the exorbitant cost implications of engaging expatriate professionals.

ABIDE attempts to address these issues by engaging in active, extensive and sustained advocacy, education and mobilization for the creation of enabling environment, and to mobilize consensus, support, partnership and resources. ABIDE intends to work more aggressively to establish and maintain stronger contacts and relationships with professional groups, development institutions, the academia, Embassies, the Donor community, development and financial organizations, the AU, Regional and International Organizations, Government, non-government and civil society organizations, the media, youth groups, the Diaspora community and friends of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian public at large to create a national movement to attract and optimally utilize Diaspora intellectual, technical and financial resources for building national capacity towards achieving the MDGs. It would also contribute to professional fulfillment and gratification of professionals in the Diaspora.

Key areas of activities include:

1. Networking:

1.1 Participation at the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

The Managing Director participated in the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Civil Society Session held in Athens, Greece, from 2-4 November 2009. The offer was made on a competitive basis where the organizers selected 50 NGOs out of 800 applicants. The application included written presentation on profile of ABIDE, achievements to date future plans and CV of MD. Expenses for international transport and full board expenses were covered by the organizers. Costs for visa and medical check-up were borne by ABIDE.

This is the third international meeting since the establishment of this Global Forum. The NGO meeting was a pre-session that was held before meeting of Government Representatives. Recommendations that came out of the deliberations from the NGO session were presented to Government Representatives at their meeting which was organized back to back.

ABIDE's participation at this Forum provided the opportunity for networking with many NGOs all over the continents working on migration issues. It also provided ABIDE the platform to share our work and experiences. Only few NGOs were engaged on Brain-Gain. ABIDE used the platform to underline the importance of addressing Brain-Drain/Brain-Gain as important migration and development concern especially for developing countries where educated and highly qualified professionals leave their country of origin negatively affecting development in these countries. At the forum, ABIDE's posters and brochures were on display with other NGO presentations.

1.2 Partnership with VSO-Ethiopia, VSO-Canada and AHEAD

Through a series of consultations, ABIDE has initiated partnership with VSO- Ethiopia, CSO-Canada and AHEAD. This four-party partnership is based on a pilot project initiated by the Government of Canada, which aims at encouraging Diaspora professionals residing in Canada to participate and contribute in their country of origin's development. Through this initiative ABIDE facilitated the identification of institutions with skill gaps where the Canadian Diaspora professionals could be placed for a period of three to six months. CVs of 16 Canadian Ethiopian was sent from VSO Canada to ABIDE. This list was sent to selected organizations. Four professionals were selected. These include, two nurses to HAPCO, one Medical Educationist to AAU Medical Faculty medical Education unit, and one IT-Communication person to work with ABIDE. This has been an excellent example of how organizations collaborate to facilitate engagement of professionals in the Diaspora to support in national capacity building. VSO Ethiopia took the responsibility for all administrative arrangements, an important partner in this initiative.

1.3 Memorandum of Understandings

Memorandum of Understanding has been negotiated and signed with the Ministry of Health, Mekelle University, Addis Abeba University, University of Gondar and Jimma University. While process is at its final stage with Bahir Dar University, St Mary's University College and P2P (a US based NGO working on Diaspora mobilization in the health sector).

1.4 Visit to Bahir Dar, Gondar and Mekelle Universities

Visit was made to Universities of Bahir Dar, Gondar and Mekelle from 28 December 2009 to 2 January 2010.

1.4.1 Bahir Dar University: A meeting was held with the President of the University Prof. Yeshimebrat Masresha the country's first female University President, where it was possible to establish contact between the two organizations and discuss the possibility of jointly signing an MoU to formalize the collaboration. Areas of critical human resource needs were identified by the President. Draft MoU was shared with Bahir Dar University for their review and action. This will be followed up with Dr. Fantahun Ayele, Vice President for Information & Strategic Communication.

At this meeting Prof. Berhanu Abegaz from Botswana University was also present where possible areas for collaboration (in the areas of postgraduate training and in Glass-blowing) between the two Universities was discussed.

1.4.2 University of Gondar: Discussions were held with the University officials highlighted the importance of the collaboration and the university expressed its critical areas of need in terms of qualified human resources. A draft MoU previously shared by ABIDE was discussed with the University President, Prof. Mengesha Admassu and Vice President, Dr. Dessalegne Mengesha, Vice President for Academic and research Affairs a final version was developed and jointly signed by Prof. Mengesha Admassu representing the University and Dr. Tewabech Bishaw representing ABIDE.

Prof. Berhanu Abegaz was also engaged in similar discussions as for Bahr Dar (see above). He also met with staff of the Department of Chemistry. Concrete

areas have been identified for action and follow-up including staff training and networking.

1.4.3 Mekelle University: The visit in Mekelle was more extensive as there was a long standing MoU between the two parties. Meetings were held with the Vice president of the University, and with Dr. Firedu Nega, Director, Corporate Communication and Marketing. In addition, discussions were also held with staff of Departments of Chemistry and ICT followed by visit to the laboratories respectively.

A major event in Mekelle was a public lecture that was delivered by Prof. Berhanu Abegaz, on “Quality and relevance of Higher Education from An African Perspective”. The public lecture was well attended by staff and students and much appreciated by the University authorities, staff and students.

1.5 Collaboration with TWAS – (Academy of Sciences for Developing Countries)

The MD attended the SIDA Regional meeting that was held at the ECA Conference from 1-4 September 2009. At this meeting the Executive Secretary of TWAS and President of the Network of African Academy of Sciences (NAAS), Prof. Mohammed Hassan made a presentation on Brain Drain and Development of Science in Africa. This created an opportunity for interaction with the Prof. Hassan that led to an informal agreement between Prof. Hassan and the MD for a joint publication on the “Impact of the Brain Drain on Science Development in Africa”. The first draft paper was developed by the MD and sent to Prof. Hassan who has acknowledge receipt and has promised to send his feed back for follow-up action.

1.6 Discussion for possible collaboration with ICMPD – (International Center for Migration Policy Development): Several meetings were held between ABIDE, Ministry of Capacity Building and ICMPD, to explore possibilities to engage friends of Ethiopia, professionals who are on their sabbatical leave. This is to strengthen capacity of local Universities through partnership and collaboration between expatriate professionals interested to collaborate with universities in the country during their sabbatical leave. This is a new initiative to attract Academicians and Scientists who would like to collaborate with Universities in the country in areas of research and teaching. The partnership could open up opportunities for long standing collaboration in research and teaching.

1.7 Contacting the African Union Commission: The African Union gives very high priority to its Diaspora to the extent that it has identified the African Diaspora as the “Sixth Region” with representation at the African Parliament in South Africa. In view of this and realizing the potential that collaboration with AU can bring major benefits to both organizations in the area of brain-gain, ABIDE, has sent an official exploratory letter to the Executive Secretary of the African Union Commission. The letter formally requests the Executive Secretary to give ABIDE an audience to brief on the work it is doing to facilitate Ethiopia’s brain gain where by the experience in Ethiopia could serve as Africa’s case study. Three main ideas have been raised in the letter: a) to include ABIDE in the EcoSoc NGO group b) to include ABIDE in the EU-AU consultation group on migration and for formal recognition of ABIDE as partner in areas of migration specifically on Diaspora and Brain-Gain. Follow-up is being made with the ES office.

2 **Media Communication:**

Print and Electronic Media: Through contact established with media personnel, feature articles were produced through interviews and written papers, that appeared on Addis Zemen Gazeta on September 20, 2009; Addis Horizon monthly journal October 2009 Issue, and in February 2009 on Teza, a one of journal that was published during the launch of the International Award Winning Film by the famous Ethiopian Cinematographer Prof. Haile Gerima. Radio interview was also held with Ethiopia TV and Sheger Radio.

Presentation in Conferences and Meetings: ABIDE made a poster presentation at the Ethiopian Public Health Association Annual Conference 26-30 October on where over 3000 professionals participated. Also brochures and poster were on display during the Global Forum on Migration and Development 2-4 November where several hundred NGO and other lead organizations on migration and development participated. A presentation was also made to Rotarians at their meeting in Hilton Hotel.

Work is in progress on a joint paper between TWAS and ABIDE for publication hopefully in reputable journal.

Advocacy Forum: The plan to establish “Forum for Africa’s Brain Gain” a regular media programme for information exchange, advocacy, networking and for mobilizing support and resources has not materialized yet.

The planned platform was to be used for a wider engagement of development partners, including local regional and international organizations, Embassies, Development Sectors, Bilateral Organizations the Diaspora and friends of Ethiopia’s representatives, Private Sector, NGOs, and CSOs to contribute and support desired policy and strategy considerations in regards to Africa’s Brain-Gain and Brain- Circulation. It was also expected to bring about change in mind set both in the Diaspora community and national partners to enhance the Diaspora participation and contribution and to provide a forum to for all concerned to discuss key national, regional and international issues affecting Diaspora’s participation in country’s development through Brain-Gain. The forum will use lessons learned to examine and address current problems associated with brain- gain. This activity will be seriously considered in 2010.

3. **Resource Mobilization**

Grand Fund Raising Events: The planned grand fund raising event was not mplemented due to lack of funds and the prolonged process for re-registration that hampered other activities.

Other Resource Mobilizations Activities: Generating major funds ABIDE has not been successful. However since getting funds is key, ABIDE will have to make focused efforts in 2010. The delay in the NGO proclamation, and the global recession have negatively contributed to generating funds for planned activities. Following activities were carried out include to mobilize funds

- ABIDE participated in the bid advertized in the news paper by IOM and MOFA on “Policy Impact Assessment on Issues related to the Diaspora”. Two consultants were selected out of a total of eight solicited CVs. A proposal was developed designating the MD as the principal investigator and the two consultants as the lead and co-investigators respectively. The proposal was developed and submitted on time. However our submission was not selected. Ms Woubalem Taye provided oversight and support in the

development of the proposal. The process was a learning experience that highlighted the importance of keeping roaster of researchers for readiness to participate in similar bids.

- Based on information from IOM, ABIDE submitted a proposal for participation at the GFMD NGO forum that was held in Athens from 2-4 November. Our application was accepted and all costs were covered except for medical check-up and fee for visa.
- Application was also submitted to The Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center and The Center for International Migration and Integration JDC-Hill, Jerusalem for funding to participate in a two weeks training on Migration and Development planned to take place in Israel from 9-23 November 2009. Our submission was not accepted as the organizers gave priority to those NGOs dealing with reintegration of migrants.
- ABIDE's request submitted to VSO Ethiopia and VSO Canada has yielded favorable response from the organizations respectively. Not only getting the VSOs, but ABIDE was also exempted from paying the maintenance fee for the volunteers which is about 2500 birr per month for the duration of the volunteers service 24 months. ABIDE is grateful to VSO Ethiopia for waiving this cost.
- A proposal was submitted by ABIDE to Addis Ababa University to cost share the joint action as expressed in the MoU. This was to streamline processes and to facilitate AAU's capacity building specifically in the Post graduate and PhD programmes through engaging Diaspora professionals. However the submission is still with the AAU and no formal response has been received.

Activity Three: Development and Maintenance of Database *(this is a carryover from 2008)*

To-date, Ethiopia does not have a comprehensive database on its Diaspora. Most of the information available is often anecdotal. Developing and maintaining complete and up-to-date information on Ethiopian professionals in the Diaspora and on friends of Ethiopia is a primary task of ABIDE. Further more databases on skill gaps and qualified human resource needs is another component of the Database that ABIDE is aspiring to develop and maintain. The goal of the organization to serve as information resource center and rendering this service to professionals and institutions in and out side the country is among the organization's lead priorities. The objectives of this task were to develop a reliable database and an efficient working system supported by ICT using web search, literature review, and information from relevant ministries and institutions and through personal contacts.

This activity was not implemented in full capacity; however the organization has so far compiled a database of over 150 highly qualified professionals in the Ethiopian Diaspora.

Activity Four: Documenting National and International Experiences and Lessons Learned *(This activity is a carry over from 2008).*

Ethiopia's experiences on engaging the Diaspora in the various sectors have not been systematically documented for recognition of achievements and for lessons learned to impact on

future planning. Also Ethiopia has not benefited from the experience of other countries who have made optimal use of intellectuals in the Diaspora and other resources for their country's development. In this regard,

During the National Symposium in August 2007, it was strongly recommended that a team composed of institutions such as MOFA, MOCB, National Bank, MOYS Prime Minister's Office, MOE, MOH, other relevant NGO's, private sector, CSO's and HLM to undertake a joint study tour to a country/countries with positive experiences in Diaspora engagement for capacity building and development. During the year ABIDE will also engage in documenting country's current status and past experiences in engaging Diaspora in brain gain including analysis of reports and recommendations from previous documents and study tours on this subject.

Also literature review and analysis of experiences of other selected countries with positive diaspora engagement experiences will be carried out. Findings from these studies will serve as a basis to initiate interactive discussions with stakeholders that could lead to identification of mechanisms and strategies to implement relevant recommendations to help in responsive policy and strategy formulation. Lessons learned will also enable ABIDE to sharpen its focus and select priority interventions.

Activity Five - Undertaking Situation Analysis *(This is a carry over from 2008).*

Situation, process and policy assessment and analyses of issues related to the Diaspora with specific reference to brain gain is fundamental and a core priority. This will establish the basis and help to have a better understanding of issues and priorities in relation to enhancing the Diaspora's participation for brain gain.

As per the approved work plan Undertaking Situation Analysis was a task that ABIDE committed itself to undertake since 2008. On the other hand the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also prioritized this activity. Based on these facts, the General assembly endorsed this task to be undertaken during in 2009. This was also with the understanding that funds will be available through the MOFA under the IOM/MOFA MIDEth initiative. However the Ministry was not able to generate required funding, and hence no implementation took place under this activity.

2009 ABIDE Expenditure in Eth. Birr and equivalent USD:**

Ser. No	Activities	Total required in Birr	In USD
1	HLM operational capacity building		
2	Advocacy and mobilization including resource mobilization		
3	Database development		
4	Documenting experiences and lessons learned		
5	Situation Analysis		
	Total		

** An estimated exchange rate of \$1.00USD = to Eth. Birr 10.00 is used for calculation