

ABIDE



Alliance for Brain-Gain
and Innovative Development

ABIDE Annual Report 1 January – 31 December 2013

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Annual Report: 1st January - 31st December 2013

1. Back Ground:

On first April 2013, the Ethiopian Societies and Charities Agency granted ABIDE an extension of its license for a period of three years. At the license extension, in addition to the memorandum of understanding (MOU) that it had signed with the various partner institutions, on a one on one basis, ABIDE was also required by the Societies and Charities Agency to produce a signed MOU and a Project Agreement with an umbrella counterpart Government Sectoral Ministry. Accordingly, a key action during the year was to complete an MOU and a three years (2014-2016) Project Agreement with the Federal Ministry of Education (FMOE) of the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia as its counterpart sectoral Ministry. The process to develop and sign the MOU and Project Agreement unexpectedly took a very long time and both these documents were finalized and signed between the two parties on 29 October and 25 December 2013 respectively.

Hence ABIDE's 2013 Annual Progress Report presented in the following pages will highlight on earlier identified priority activities than the project agreement.

2. Annual Progress Report

2.1 Board Meetings

ABIDE's Board met three times during the year to deliberate on critical issues as well as provide the necessary guidance and support to facilitate enhance project implementation.

First Board meeting May 31 2013.

At this meeting two agenda items were addressed (1) election of Board Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, and (2) Review and decision on ABIDE's proposed "New Direction".

Agenda 1: Prof. Zinabu Gebremariam, former Board Chairperson left his position due to his office move to Hawassa University, hence a new Chairperson was required. In view of her long standing service and consistent contributions as current Vice Chairperson of Board, Ms. Mebrat Woldetinsae, was unanimously elected as Board Chairperson. Also as a long standing and dedicated Board member Dr. Tesfaye Bulto was elected as Vice Chairperson of the Board.

Agenda 2: Assessing existing financial condition of the organization and based on difficulties experienced to mobilize financial resources to implement planned activities, there is consensus to relook at alternative approaches to ensure viability of ABIDE. At this meeting the Board discussed the two scenarios presented by the Managing Director. The first scenario (Plan A) based its assumption on availability of fund from the British Council through the CSSP call for proposal and the second scenario (Plan B) assumed no funding from this grant or other external source. The Board reviewed the submissions and while it agreed on 'Plan A', in the case of

‘Plan B’ however, the Board advised on discussing the proposed idea in greater detail in the presence of **all** Board members in its next meeting. The fact that the organization is experiencing serious financial constraint to strengthen its institutional and operational capacity to implement planned activities and the need to invigorate its membership registration drive have remained major concerns to the Board requiring urgent attention. Hence it was agreed to address these and related issues in its next meeting scheduled for 15 June 2013.

Second meeting – 15 June 2013

At this meeting the Board deliberated on exploring new direction and strategies for ABIDE as necessitated by diminishing donor interest to provide assistance and grants using conventional project proposal formats.

The Board brainstormed on three broad areas: ABIDE (1) Where are we now? (2) Where do we want to go? and (3) How do we want to go. In dealing with these questions specific emphasis was given to (a) Institutional capacity (b) Strategic shift of approach; and, (c) Sustainability

A draft prepared by a working team, Ms. Mebrat Woldetinsae, Chairperson of the Board and Ms. Wubalem Taye a Board member and Tewabech Bishaw Managing Director was used as background for the brain storming session facilitated by the Board Chairperson. (See Minutes of 15 June Board meeting). After detailed deliberation, the Board decided to narrow ABIDE’s priority and focus on Education, specifically on institutions of higher learning and the Health sectors and mandated the working team to come up with a draft on key strategic issues and strategic objectives using the Strategic Planning Document to share the draft with members ahead of time and the Board to finalize the proposed draft at the next meeting.

Third Meeting - 28 September 2013

At this meeting the Board discussed and finalized the revised Strategic Issues and Strategic Objectives and agreed to use this as the organization’s new direction and guiding document for its five years 2014- 2018 implementation plan. Also at this meeting the Board agreed on operational modalities using nodes for each of the Strategic issues. These nodes will be led by a Board member who will establish his/her task team and provide oversight in identifying key activities, required resources, implementation plan and monitoring indicators. This arrangement is agreed to help ABIDE in ensuing implementation of activities while encouraging Board members to actively guide the work of the organization while ensuring ownership.

The Six Priority Strategic Issues identified include:

1. Capacity building , knowledge and skill exchange and technology transfer
2. Database development and membership drive
3. Information, communication, networking and partnership building
4. Needs assessment and systems analysis
5. Monitoring, evaluation and operations research

Each of these strategic issues has a number of strategic objectives to guide implementation plan and monitoring. Each Board member will lead a node established for each of the strategic issues.

2. MOU and Project Agreement between the MOE and ABIDE

One of the major achievements of the year was establishing partnership with the Ministry of Education as expressed by the joint signing of the MOU and Project Agreement between the two parties.

The collaboration between the Ministry of Education and ABIDE will be guided by the MOU and project agreement. H.E. Dr. Kaba Urgessa, State Minister for Higher Education in the Ministry of Education and Dr. Tewabech Bishaw, Managing Director of ABIDE signed the agreements on behalf of the Ministry of Education and ABIDE respectively. As stated above these processes took longer than expected, and were finally signed in October for the MOU and December for the Project Agreement.

These documents will guide the collaboration for the next three years, January 2014 to December 2016 primarily focused on enhancing the engagement of professionals in the Diaspora and contribute to capacity building of Institutions of Higher Learning in Ethiopia.

3. Revising ABIDE's Strategic Plan Document

ABIDE's Strategic Planning Document approved by the General Assembly in March 2007 was revised. Specific sections revised were (1) "Broad Strategic Objectives", (2) "Major Strategic Gaps" and (3) "Strategic Issues". Some sections of the Strategic Planning Document have been maintained as is since most of the information contained in these chapters remained valid and remaining sections have been adjusted to meet requirements. These have been approved by the Board and it will be reviewed and endorsed by the General Assembly.

4. Mobilizing Resources, Knowledge & Skill Exchange & Technology Transfer

4.1 Resource mobilization

In the reporting period funding proposals were developed and submitted to European Union and the British Council.

4.1.1 A proposal submitted to the European Union was for a sum of USD198, 626.00. The main aim of the proposal was to strengthen capacity of five selected universities by mitigating the acute shortage of qualified and experienced academics, researchers and professionals through effective engagement of qualified and experienced professionals from the Diaspora. The proposal also envisaged to strengthen ABIDE's institutional and operational capacity to implement project activities and document and disseminate lessons learned.

4.1.2 The second proposal submitted to the British Council under its CSSP grant program was for a sum of USD 36,000 to support Diaspora networking and effective

engagement to strengthen capacity in three universities through alleviating shortage in priority HR and to strengthen the teaching and research capabilities through sustainable win-win partnerships.

4.1.3 Contacts were made with the local Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNICEF and Lucile and Packard Foundation offices to explore possibilities for funding.

Unfortunately **all the three attempts did not yield any funding** to support implementation of intended activities.

4.2 Knowledge Exchange and Technology Transfer

Knowledge Exchange experience in Jimma University and St. Mary University College: In August 2013, Dr. Badege Bishaw, a visiting Ethiopian Diaspora professional from Oregon State University was engaged with the Jimma University and St Mary University College in Addis Abeba. In consultation with the respective university leadership, a successful public lecture/seminar was organized for graduate students on the topic “Agroforestry and Food Security”.

In Jimma University the visit took three days where meetings were held with senior university leaders, staff and students as well as a tour of the university that is expanding at an alarming pace. Informal discussion was also held with community representatives. Staff, students and the visiting Diaspora professional were happy and gained from the high level scientific presentation and experience exchange. Cost of local transport, hotel accommodation and meals was covered by the University. The discussion opened an opportunity to explore further collaboration between Jimma and Oregon Universities.

The experience was also similar at St. Mary University College where the discussion with the university leadership culminated with a half day public lecture/seminar on the same topic. These experiences opened opportunities to explore possibilities for future collaboration between institutions and Ethiopian professionals in the country and abroad. These were excellent examples in knowledge exchange through short visits that encouraged both ABIDE and participating universities for similar future arrangements for knowledge exchange for capacity building.

In the process ABIDE's role as an important facilitating link between Diaspora professionals and universities in the country was reinforced. Web links connecting participating partners has been agreed. In addition, the President of St. Mary University College Prof. Wondwesen have pledged to provide office space for Board and other meetings including support in printing.

4.3 ABIDE operational/institutional capacity strengthening

The VSO volunteer Mr. Endashaw Temesgen returned back to Canada after 18 Months of service six months before completing his planned term of 24 months. Performance assessment of the volunteer was submitted to VSO country office in the end.

During the year, ABIDE engaged an intern from the US on a part-time basis to work for a period of six months from September 2013 to February 2014. She has been working on updating Database of Ethiopian Professionals in the Diaspora an important core task of the organization.

ABIDE's office has remained in Akaki Campus of the AAU. This arrangement has continued to pose problems in distance and traffic congestion and also in limiting accessibility to participating volunteers in the country and for visiting Diaspora professionals. It is also contributing to limiting ABIDE's visibility, an important factor to the organization.

5. Expanding database and membership drive

Expanding Database: As stated above a volunteer part time intern engaged in September has continued to work on database. Collecting and compiling information on Diaspora professionals has continued and will be strengthened. More work need to be done and upload information on ABIDE's website.

Expanding membership has remained a serious constraint for ABIDE. Urgent attention is needed to mobilize individuals as well as institutional membership to promote ownership, participation and mobilization of resources.

Operationalizing ABIDE's Website: The long standing technical problem related to the website www.abideethiopia.org has now been resolved. This is a very important tool for communication, information exchange, to upload information on needs and Diaspora resources for matching purposes. A website and IT person will be engaged on a part time basis to maintain and manage information. Hence the effective functioning of this facility by designating a competent person will be ABIDE's 2014 high priority work.

6. Information, Communication, Networking and Partnership

6.1 Information and Communication

Collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: ABIDE has continued its close working relationship with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As one of the key organizations that contributed to the development of the Ethiopian National Diaspora Policy, ABIDE was an active participant during the national launch of the policy by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At this meeting over 220 invited members of the Ethiopian Diaspora came from different parts of the world to celebrate the occasion. The MOFA organized a visit to the Renaissance Dam that was enjoyed by the visiting Diaspora where ABIDE also took part. Following the visit, series of joint Diaspora-FMOFA meetings were held where ABIDE also participated. The meeting created an excellent opportunity to share ABIDE's brochure with members of the Diaspora which was much appreciated. Through these events ABIDE has initiated contacts with a number of visiting Diaspora.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Health: ABIDE has continued to actively participate in the Ministry of Health's Steering Committee for Diaspora engagement. Within this committee a task team has been established chaired by the MOH where ABIDE is a member to guide the development of communication and promotional material for Diaspora mobilization along with the Twinning Center and VSO Ethiopia. The content of the communication material to be developed, print, electronic, audio and video has been done and the process to select a multimedia company to produce the required material is underway.

Media Use for Promotion and Awareness Raising: During the year, ABIDE has effectively used local and international media to promote

ABIDE and the role of knowledge Diaspora for capacity building. Both print and electronic media has been used including Sheger Radio 102.3, Fana Radio, FM 98, 97.1, ZAMI, Afro FM 105.1, ETV as well as local papers. These efforts have contributed to increased awareness and consensus building on matters related to Diaspora participation in knowledge exchange and technology transfer. Often ABIDE is now increasingly being associated with Knowledge Diaspora.

Collaboration with other sectors: Collaboration has continued with Ethiopian Diaspora Association (EDA), Voluntary Service Overseas – Ethiopia (VSO-E), International Organization on Migration (IOM) and Ministry of Science and Technology.

6.2 Networking and partnership building

Increasingly the potential to expand and develop collaborative relationships with academicians, researchers and professionals outside the country is growing substantially growing. There are already a number of Diaspora professionals who are involved in supporting institutions in the country. However due delays and constraints in maintaining sustained communication on both sides, most of these professionals see the need to partner with local organization like ABIDE who can interface between Diaspora professionals and host institutions and serve as a conduit as well as ensure easier and efficient communication and linkages. ABIDE's institutional arrangement makes it the best placed organization that can fill this critical gap. During the year, a number of visiting Diaspora professionals from the UK, Washington DC, Philadelphia, California, Michigan, Atlanta, and Minnesota have requested ABIDE to maintain link and play the urgently needed role.

Individual Experts: During the year closer relationships have been established with a number of highly qualified Ethiopian Professionals with varied expertise. These professionals are also highly committed and interested in the country's development. Some of them are working and supporting universities and other institutions in the country a contribution worth a huge sum of money. These experts have expressed strong interest to work with and through ABIDE in a sustained and efficient manner with ABIDE playing the crucial role of communication and link with local

institutions. ABIDE strongly feels that we should seize opportunities demonstrate proof of the support and facilitation that ABIDE can provide for minimal bruises and soft landing so to speak.

Ethiopian Physics Society in North America (EPS-NA): A few members of this society are already involved in supporting especially higher learning institutions in the country. With the strong link it has established with EPS-NA there is a potential to enhance existing practice and contribute to knowledge exchange and capacity building.

Ethiopians holding leadership positions in universities and organization abroad as key resource for stronger partnership: There are a number of Ethiopian professionals, academicians, researchers, and managers etc., who can play immense role in facilitating institutional and professional linkages. Informal discussions held with leading Ethiopian Professors in Howard University, University of New Mexico, University of North Carolina, Michigan and universities in the UK show existing the great potential where ABIDE can forge institutional partnerships and facilitate tapping into these potential resources. With strengthened capacity, ABIDE can and need to explore in this are more vigorously.

Reactivating partnership with P2P: Managing Director had an extended discussion with P2P Executive Committee members in trying to renew commitment from both sides and strengthen already existing partnership. Considering the important role that could be played by these organizations from within the country and abroad to heighten the effort on both sides ABIDE and P2P agreed to explore different modalities that would enrich impact of the collaboration for more concrete and lasting partnerships. Work is in progress and it is expected to show results in 2014.

Global Knowledge Exchange Network – UK: The process to formalize the partnership initiated between ABIDE and GKEN-UK is in progress. There has been an exchange of the first draft MOU expected to be finalized in 2014 for a stronger and lasting collaboration between the two organizations to achieve desired outcome.

Introducing ABIDE at Sankofa, Washington DC: A meeting was held to introduce ABIDE to a wider Diaspora professional group in the DC area in the US. This meeting was made possible through the kind support from Prof. Haile Gerima. Prof. Haile who is a long standing personal friend and ABIDE's strong advocate generously offered the Sankofa space free of cost and he also facilitated the meeting. Over fifty Ethiopian professionals and friends of Ethiopia attended the two and a half hours meeting with interest and enthusiasm. A short presentation was made by the Managing Director that stimulated discussion. Many of the participants were pleased to know that an organization like ABIDE with clear objectives exist in the country. Many participants expressed their interest to maintain link and work through ABIDE for systematic meaningful collaboration with institutions in the country. Close to thirty participants expressing their interest by signing a form that ABIDE circulated at the meeting. This information is being compiled for information and future action.

Meeting with the Ethiopian Ambassador in the US: A curtsey call was made to H.E Ambassador Girma Biru at the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington DC USA. The purpose of the meeting was to share information on status of ABIDE's work in relation to Diaspora mobilization and engagement for capacity building of institutions in the country. At the brief meeting, the Ambassador expressed his interest and informed on the work his office is doing regarding Diaspora participation. Potential areas for collaboration were identified including continuing advocacy, sharing information and support in resource mobilization. ABIDE made specific request to the Ambassador to share information on list of interested and willing Ethiopian Diaspora professionals and Friends of Ethiopia; and expressed its commitment to share with the Embassy information on skill gaps and expertise needed by the different institutions in the country. Both agreed to maintain contact and information sharing related to Diaspora mobilization and engagement.

7. Needs Assessment and Systems Analysis

ABIDE has maintained its contact with Presidents and leaderships of Bahir Dar University, Jimma University, University of Gondar, Mekelle

University , Addis Ababa University , Addis Ababa Science and Technology University, St. Mary and Africa Beza Colleges. Primary task will be to identify and determine skill gaps and human resource needs in these institutions. These needs will be the basis to mobilize and engage professionals in the Diaspora for need based capacity building. This is in line with the MOU and project agreement signed between Ministry of Education and ABIDE.

8. Monitoring evaluation and operations research

During the year a desk review of ABIDE's Strategic Planning Document March 2007 was done to assess progress of implementation. Finding indicated that progress made so far in various areas has been satisfactory and in the right track. Special note was ABIDE's contribution to the country's National Diaspora policy. However the review also identified the main shortfall especially in fund raising, resource and membership mobilization negatively impacting on progress of implementation. ABIDE's redirection of its approaches and modalities of action as stated above is expected to address this gap and enhance implementation.

9. Utilization of Resources

Detailed report on budget allocation and utilization including audited financial report will be included in this section.