

Eritrean Professionals for Capacity Building

On the 23rd June 2018, Eritrean professionals in the UK held a successful and thought-provoking forum for the 5th time.

The primary aim of the event was to explore the vast opportunities and create a platform for all the Eritrean professionals in Diaspora to play a very important and timely role in the development of human and economic capacity in Eritrea. There exists a substantial number of qualified Eritreans outside the country with indispensable qualification, competence and experience who can, in general, contribute to the overall development process of the country.

The event included a series of presentations followed by an interactive group networking session. The presentations focused on community capacity building through developing and strengthening the skills and establishing and creating a sustainable practical and formal links, in order to contribute and co-operate with institutions in Eritrea. These included presentations by Eng. Sium Yohannes, Eng. Dermot Byrne, Dr Tekeste Ghebray and Yacob Ghebretensae.



Mr Yohannes Fassil, a member of the Advisory Board, opened the forum by welcoming the participants and highlighting the primary aim of organising this forum, which is aimed at mobilising Eritrean professionals towards the establishment of long-standing, strong professional organisations. Building a strong professional organisation enables every Eritrean professional to replicate and transfer these untapped instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organisations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in the fast-changing world towards the development and building the nation.

Under the theme of “Can the Eritrean Diaspora Engineering experience enhance the infrastructure engineering design capability in Eritrea” the next presentation was given by Eng. Sium Yohannes, who is a Principal Engineer at CH2M Hill. Sium has a wide-reaching experience in the engineering sector having worked with a range of national and international organisations. He shared his long-term vision of developing and strengthening the Eritrean skills through some of the mind-boggling multi-Billion projects he has been involved. He stated that such valuable lessons learnt from these vast projects will enable us to adopt (i) relevant international best practices (ii) technological advancement in data storage and collection and (iii) strategies for delivering successful infrastructure projects.

Eng. Dermot Byrne who is the Chairman of Vita and former President of Engineers Ireland, presented on contributions and co-operation with the Eritrean Ministry of Energy and renewable energy. He started his presentation by providing some similarities between Eritrea and Republic of Ireland in terms of land mass, Diaspora and colonial history. Vita is a non-governmental development organisation enabling rural farm families to achieve sustainable livelihoods via integrated water, household energy and agriculture programmes. Vita has been operating in Eritrea for 18 years and projects currently being implemented in Eritrea include (i) providing clean water and eco-friendly stoves (Mogogo Adhanet), (ii) drip irrigation, (iii) Seed and Crop Development and (iv) Promoting Capacity Building and Scalability.

Dr Tekeste Ghebray, who is an independent Agriculture, food security and environment professional and a former IGAD General Secretary shared his experience of working in Eritrea including arranging a number of training seminars and workshops. He highlighted the importance of actively identifying and building relationships with potential scholars as well as nurturing and solidifying the relationship with existing partners.

Similarly, Yacob Ghebretensae who is a Data Scientist Intern, Health Information System Manager, Teacher and Author of 8 books spoke about his fantastic work and the valuable support he is providing in Eritrea. He had recently collected and sent three containers of educational equipment to Eritrea. Also, Yacob has single-handedly initiated a successful pilot project to transform the current health management information system using a software platform called DHIS 2. Supported by other Norwegian specialists, he continues to provide training and workshops for the different Eritrean Ministries to develop the skills needed.

Finally, the floor was given to the audience to express their questions and comments to the presenters. Dr Berhane Tewelde used this opportunity to highlight the importance of initiating this Eritrean professional networks in capacity building and also the need to stratify the different sectors to be able to formulate and engage the professionals within their preferred expertise and areas of interest. The Eritrean professionals organising in the UK aim to form associations based upon their professions and create replicas across the Eritrean Diaspora community to enhance and accelerate the nation-building process embarked on in Eritrea.

By Dr Metkel Yebiyo