



University for Peace



Youth Perspectives:  
Challenges to Peace Building and Development in the Ethiopian Community

Research study conducted

By

Young Diplomats

**Young Diplomats**  
[www.youngdiplomats.org](http://www.youngdiplomats.org)

**Name:** Alpha Abebe

**Educational background:** Bachelor of Arts- Major Political Science, Major Criminology  
- Final Year at the University of Toronto

**Interests:** Alpha has a passion for youth and a passion for education. She advocates for open opportunities for youth of all backgrounds and economic statuses, and hopes to pursue a career that will enable her to create such opportunities when none are in place. Learning excites her and she aims to pass this excitement on to other youth in her community.

**Perspectives:** Alpha became involved in this project because of her involvement with the Young Diplomats. More importantly however, she feels strongly about the underdeveloped research surrounding new immigrant populations, such as the Ethiopian community, especially with regards to the implications of their migrant and settlement experience. She discovered this literature gap in a research endeavor that she undertook through her criminology program where she found little to nothing written about the Ethiopian Diaspora. Considering an estimated population of 30,000+ in Toronto alone, she believes that knowledge of the needs and challenges faced by the Ethiopian community is integral not only to its community members, but also to the city as a whole. Alpha hopes to continue contributing to this literature as her academic career advances.

**Name:** Ruth Amanuel

**Education background:**

Hon Bachelor of Arts- Major Political Science, Minor Economics and Spanish

**Work:** Volunteer Coordinator, United Way of Toronto

**Interests:** International Issues-Child Rights and Organizational Capacity Building

**Perspectives:** Ruth was drawn to this project as she is interested in understanding how current challenges or opportunities facing Ethiopian youth in Canada hampers or fosters connection with their homeland. She was intrigued to hear from first or second generation what contributes to their cultural connection to Ethiopia

**Name:** Eman Jamie

**Educational background:** BA in Broadcast journalism at Ryerson University.

**Work experience.** Print and Visual Research Assistant at CTV

**Interests:** Eman is an active member at the Harari Heritage Centre where she volunteered her time to raise awareness about the scarcity of water in the Harar region of Ethiopia. She has also been a volunteer report for the local Ethiopian broadcast *ADMAS* for the past three years. She has also volunteered at the Evergreen Public Relations Office where hse played a vital role in editing and documenting data for the centre.

**Perspectives:** Eman is no stranger to the Ethiopian community and became interested in this peace building project with Young Diplomats due to her continued interest in community building projects.

**Name:** Eskender Mekonnen

**Education Background:** Anthropology, B.A. (McMaster), Int'l Relations and Development, Minor in Economics, Hon. B.A., (U. of Windsor) and M.A. Candidate (U. of Windsor)—Topic: HIV/AIDS policy in Ethiopia.

**Work :** Research Assistant to a Professor at U. of Windsor who is conducting major research on Int'l Health.

**Interests:** Research in the Social Sciences— as he recalls his challenges passing through the Canadian school system, Eskender strongly believes that he is able to assist current (immigrant) secondary school youths by sharing his experiences. He is also interested in examining how governments in developing countries respond to various public concerns/issues surrounding health. Additionally, he has a passion for international politics, particularly African (Horn) politics.

**Perspectives:** Eskender has had many opportunities to engage in research projects both here and internationally. In 2005 he gained a CIDA internship to conduct research in Ethiopia. He is also always interested in learning more about the Ethiopian diaspora which is demonstrated in his activeness in the Ethiopian community in Toronto. He feels that this particular project combines both of his passions: working with youth, and conducting research. As one of the founding members of the Young Diplomats (YD), he strongly believes in its mission and looks forward to the outcomes of the research as being a positive way to create programs for youth in the Greater Toronto Area.

**Name:** Maraki Fikre Merid

**Education background:** B.Sc. (Biochemistry from McGill University) and M.Sc. (Epidemiology from University of Toronto)

**Work experience:** Maraki is currently a senior health analyst at the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). She is involved in special health care projects at the national level that look into a variety of health care issues and policies in Canada. Her main expertise revolves around developing the methodology behind research projects, analysis and report writing. She has extensive research experience in previous employments where she developed and conducted various research projects under the department of Public health sciences of the University of Toronto as well as through volunteer and internship work here in Canada and elsewhere.

**Interests:** Her main interests can be summarized as being international health and Public Health Sciences. Her research interests usually focus on HIV/AIDS but also revolve around developmental issues and its impact on people from developing countries.

**Perspectives:** This project fits perfectly with Maraki's interests outlined above. She has always thought of the youth as being a key resource to tap into. She hopes to bring into this project some of her expertise in research and analysis as well as her endless enthusiasm for this type of work.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE</b> .....	2
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	5
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	7
<b>METHODS</b> .....	8
<i>RESPONDENTS</i> :.....	8
<i>SAMPLING DESIGN</i> :.....	8
<i>PROCEDURE</i> :.....	9
<i>QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN</i> :.....	9
<i>LIMITATIONS</i> :.....	10
<b>RESPONDENT PROFILE</b> .....	11
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	13
<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	13
<b>CHALLENGES TO PEACEBUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	14
<i>Poverty</i> :.....	14
<i>Employment</i> :.....	15
<i>Education</i> :.....	16
<i>Discrimination</i> :.....	16
<i>Culture Related Issues</i> :.....	16
<b>RESULTS</b> .....	17
<b>1. YOUTH CONNECTEDNESS TO THE ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY     IN TORONTO</b> .....	17
<i>Social and Familial Contacts</i> .....	18
<i>Ethnic Communities in Toronto</i> .....	20
<i>Participation in Ethiopian Community Groups and Events</i> .....	21
<i>Implications for Peacebuilding and Development</i> .....	25
<b>2. YOUTH CONNECTEDNESS TO ETHIOPIA</b> .....	27
<i>Assimilation into Canadian Society</i> .....	27
<i>Socialization into Ethiopian Culture</i> .....	28
<i>Knowledge of and Interest in Ethiopian Issues</i> .....	29
<i>Implications for Peacebuilding and Development</i> .....	30
<b>3. CHALLENGES TO PEACEBUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	31
<i>Why do you think you face these challenges?</i> .....	33
<i>Collective Challenges</i> .....	34
<b>4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACEBUILDING AND     DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	35
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	36
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	37

## Preface

Young Diplomats (YD) is a dynamic youth-led organization, which strives to be a resourceful and inspiring presence for the Ethiopian youth in the Greater Toronto Area. To that end, YD undertook a participatory research project entitled *Youth Perspectives: Challenges to Peacebuilding and Development in the Ethiopian Community*. The study assessed the needs of Ethiopian youth and the prospects of engaging them in peacebuilding and development efforts. Once the research is completed, YD intends to address one or more of the identified needs through the implementation of innovative programs and activities accessible to the youth in the Ethiopian community.

The following document provides an insight into the experiences of Ethiopian youth between the ages of 14 to 29 living in the Greater Toronto Area. The paper attempts to highlight challenges faced by the youth that hinder them from a successful integration into the Canadian society at large. Additionally, it uncovers opportunities that exist for grassroots level intervention to meet the group's needs. With the understanding that the concepts of peacebuilding and development are quite subjective and malleable to fit different ends, we have defined these terms in the way that they are relevant to this study.

The following definition, taken from a *Conflict Research Consortium* at the University of Colorado, suits the purpose and outcomes of this paper. The Consortium defines peacebuilding as “the process of restoring normal relations between people...[and that peacebuilding] requires the reconciliation of differences, apology and forgiveness of past harm, and the establishment of a cooperative relationship between groups, replacing the adversarial or competitive relationship that used to [and/or continues to] exist.”<sup>1</sup>

This definition is relevant to the case of the Ethiopian community in Toronto to the extent that it is composed of an entire generation that emigrated for the specific purpose of escaping conflict (this is discussed further in the literature review below). Historically, state

and social actors have capitalized on the diverse ethnic composition of Ethiopia to fuel power struggles, social movements and economic battles. Many who immigrated to Canada carried the resentment they had towards each other with them; created by the building tensions among different groups in Ethiopia. One part of this research looks into how much of this has been internalized by Ethiopian youth. Most of the research looks at the effects of social upheaval on broader social indicators of a healthy community. The term development, in this paper, is used to mean the empowerment of the youth in Toronto—socially, politically and economically, so that they can meaningfully contribute to the peacebuilding and development initiatives in Ethiopia.

Accordingly, this paper's intended audiences are Ethiopian parents, researchers, teachers, activists, immigration workers, policy makers, as well as youth groups within and outside the community:

- ❑ **Parents/Guardians**—this paper is a valuable tool for them, as it enables parents/guardians to understand challenges youth face; hence bridging the intergenerational gap by creating dialogue.
- ❑ **Researchers**—though this research is small in scope and preliminary in its depth, we strongly believe that it is invaluable because of its novelty and ability to identify issues that require further studies.
- ❑ **Teachers**—this document assists them in understanding challenges that are experienced uniquely by Ethiopian youth, improving interactions in classrooms.
- ❑ **Activists**—both at the community as well as at government level may benefit from this report if they so desire to lobby for proactive programs that deal with challenges confronted by Ethiopian youth.
- ❑ **Immigrant workers**—particularly those in the community would benefit greatly since the report highlights youth specific needs, which require youth-friendly approaches.

- ❑ **Policy makers**—where policy makers aim to implement meaningful legislation and social programming, this document gives them a reference as to the genuine needs of youth in the community.
- ❑ **Youth groups**—this paper is a useful resource to obtain, as it articulates a) specific issues that Ethiopian youth are facing; b) recommendations made by them in order to improve relations between themselves and their parents; c) changes that would help youth achieve their goals; and d) what inspires youth to dream. This is to place an emphasis on the fact that an effective youth group would gain great insights concerning what approaches to take with their group by understanding the challenges faced by the youth.

Though it is not necessary, your familiarity with Ethiopian history in the context of the country's regional and international roles would enhance your understanding of some of the themes that arise in this research. To that end, we feel that Richard Pankhurst's book entitled *The Ethiopians* (2001) would provide a quick, but not exhaustive, reference to the history of Ethiopia.

The questionnaires and focus groups developed for this research had specific research questions in mind. The following are the research objectives used at the preliminary stages as well as to inform the outputs and recommendations that complete this paper. The research aimed to:

- Explore the extent to which different social, political, economic, and cultural issues that Ethiopian youth face affect their ability or willingness to engage in peace building and development in the local community and in Ethiopia
- Explore the extent to which Ethiopian youth (second generation Ethiopians) have absorbed the social-political values of Canadian society and how this does or does not affect their engagement in peace and development issues in Ethiopia
- Gauge the overall level of political and civic engagement of Ethiopian youth in contrast to their parents
- Explore the extent to which the second generation Ethiopians (mainly youth) have internalized the political values and affiliations of their parents
- Assess the extent to which ethnic politics poses a challenge to peacebuilding and development in Ethiopia and within the Diaspora in Canada. Ask whether Ethio-Canadian youth have internalized this form of politics and whether it has led to conflict

- in the community.
- Discuss the strengths and limitations of engaging Ethio-Canadian youth in peace building processes.

The report begins with a brief literature review on the Ethiopian Diaspora in the Greater Toronto Area. It continues with a discussion on youth connectedness to the Ethiopian community in Toronto as well as to Ethiopia. Following this, the discussion is furthered to include other challenges to peacebuilding and development both in Toronto and Ethiopia, as articulated by the youth respondents. The final segment of the report uncovers opportunities for, as well as recommendations to, peacebuilding and development. Each of the four sections in the paper begin with Youth Perspectives, which are quotes taken directly from the discussions in our focus groups. This is a unique opportunity to understand the experiences of Ethiopian youth through their direct thoughts.

### Acknowledgements

*Young Diplomats* (YD) is grateful and feels honoured for being offered the opportunity to conduct this study. YD would like to express gratitude to the various institutions, organizations, and individuals without whom this study would not have been possible.

First and foremost, special thanks to the staff of University for Peace-Toronto, particularly Dr. Fayen d'Evie and Digafie Debalke (M.A.) for giving *Young Diplomats* the opportunity to voice Ethiopian youth experiences in the Greater Toronto Area and for their unwavering encouragement for YD's establishment as an organization. In the same breath, we express our deepest gratitude to the Gordon Foundation for its financial contributions, which made the research possible.

We would like to acknowledge and show our appreciation for our academic advisor Dickson Eyoh, PhD. (Associate Professor of Political Science and African Studies, University of Toronto), who provided us with academic guidance and constructive criticism.

We also would like to thank the following organizations for allowing us to use their facilities, recruit participants and promote the research. We are truly thankful and this study would not have been possible without their support:

Ethiopian Association in Toronto  
St. Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in Toronto  
Ethiopian Canadian Muslim Community Association  
Ethiopian Evangelical Church in Toronto  
Ethiopian Students Association-York University (ESAY)  
Harari Community Centre  
New Hibret Cooperative  
P2P Aid Organization  
Toronto Habesha News

We are also thankful to YD members who helped with the logistics of the research: designing and distributing flyers, helping with printing, advertising, as well as participating in the research.

Research Task Force – the team work you exhibited while conducting this study was remarkable. YD would like to acknowledge Alpha Abebe, Ruth Amanuel, Maraki Fikre Merid, Eman Jamie, and Eskender Mekonnen for their hard work. Also special thanks to Helena Shimeles (Executive Director, *Young Diplomats*) and Redeat Maru who offered their time and services without obligation.

To all the youth who participated in our questionnaire and focus group sessions, we hope this study reflects your voices to the fullest. In unity we have an enormous potential and you have re-ignited our passion and vision to create an organization that reflects you!

### Executive Summary

The principal objective of this participatory research project was to explore challenges faced by the Ethiopian youth and how they impede upon their full participation in the peacebuilding and development processes both locally and in Ethiopia.

The research utilized two forms of data gathering. The first method involved three focus groups involving 19 participants in total. The second method was the completion of questionnaires, with 157 youth participants; bringing the total pool of participants to 176. The sampling process was not random however, participants were recruited from a range of organizational and social networks.

The major sections of this paper are as follows:

1. *Youth Connectedness to the Ethiopian Community in Toronto*
2. *Youth Connectedness to Ethiopia*
3. *Challenges to Peace Building and Development*
4. *Opportunities for Peace Building and Development.*

The results of this study have shown that youth in the Ethiopian community in Toronto are facing a number of challenges that have affected their ability to succeed individually, as well as collectively as a community. Indicated in the literature and affirmed by the research, the prominent difficulties faced by the community can be compounded into the following categories: poverty; employment, education, discrimination, and culture-related issues.

Based on the needs articulated through this assessment, *Young Diplomats* has formulated the following recommendations for organizations and policy-makers who aim to promote peacebuilding and development through Ethiopian youth in Toronto.

### **Recommendation 1:**

- Clear support, funding and spaces to be provided to youth-led organizations in the Ethiopian community.

### **Recommendation 2:**

- Enhanced utilization of existing media sources, as well as support for the creation of new and innovative forms of communication through media.

### **Recommendation 3:**

- Implementation of a comprehensive mentorship program that will encompass social; academic and professional streams.

### **Recommendation 4:**

- Creation of accessible opportunities for youth to experience Ethiopia; such as work/study abroad programs; international courses; and internships

## **Methods**

### **Respondents:**

157 self-administered questionnaires and 3 focus groups with 19 participants in total were conducted between August-September 2006 among Ethiopian youths living in the GTA.

These youth were between the ages of 14 to 29. The total number of respondents was 176.

### **Sampling Design:**

Respondents for the questionnaires were recruited using 8 different avenues to ensure a diverse study population in terms of age groups, gender, ethnic and religious background.

Community events, faith-based organizations (mosques, churches), ethnic-based community centres, colleges/universities as well as specific residential areas and word of mouth were among the strategies used to administer the questionnaires. Snowball techniques were employed to recruit further participants through the social networks of some respondents.

Focus group participants were recruited through the above-mentioned channels and word of mouth. An attempt was made to ensure a good balance of the participants in terms

of gender, age, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and educational backgrounds, as well as length of stay in Canada in these focus groups as well.

Procedure:

In order to minimize non-response, questionnaires were filled out under the supervision of a member of the research group. Comfortable locations were set up in order to ensure that respondent did not feel hastened and were able to get clarifications on some of the questions. This also ensured that the respondents completed the questionnaires without the help of any other person.

- Non-response rates were low as all the questionnaires completed were usable and no respondents withdrew or refused to participate in the research study.
- The questionnaire on average lasted about an hour and respondents were compensated \$10 for their time and \$15 dollars if they participated in the focus groups, which lasted approximately 2 hours.
- A consent form was signed beforehand to ensure the respondents of the confidentiality of their responses and provided the opportunity to clarify the objective of the study. The respondents were also informed of their option to skip questions they were not comfortable answering and that they could withdraw from the questionnaire at any time. This same procedure was followed for the focus group sessions.

Questionnaire Design:

The questionnaire and focus group questions covered four broad areas:

- Youth connectedness to the Ethiopian community in Toronto
- Youth connectedness to Ethiopia
- Challenges to peacebuilding and development

- Opportunities for peacebuilding and development

The content of the questionnaire was designed based on the objectives of the study as well as some of the themes that arose out of the first focus group, which was largely exploratory in nature. The other two focus groups were opportunities to provide more in depth insight on these four areas.

### **Limitations**

The objective of this research study is to provide more of a descriptive and exploratory analysis of the role of Ethiopian youths in terms of peace building and development. The analyses are descriptive in nature and will serve as a starting basis for future in-depth analyses.

Since no prior research trying to identify issues related to this objective was available, the use of questionnaires and focus groups as study designs were found to be very appropriate, as they would help inform and enable more in-depth and focused studies in this area in the future.

Nevertheless, research studies conducted using questionnaire design and focus groups have certain inherent methodological limitations hence results should be interpreted with caution. Results from this research may not be representative of all Ethiopian youths living in Toronto because our sampling design was not random in nature. Most respondents were recruited through community events or faith-based organizations, thus, our pool of respondents will tend to be engaged in the Ethiopian community one way another. The fact that we were able to access these youths to participate in the study already meant that they were not completely disengaged from the community. This was a limitation because it meant we could not hear from the group of youth that needed the most engagement. Nevertheless,

efforts were made to go to locations where we would access individuals with diverse religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

A significant limitation to the research was time constraints and this had clear implications for every facet of the study. The research task force took the enormous challenge of completing a comprehensive study (recruiting, questionnaire building, analysis and report-writing) in less than two months during which 157 youth filled in depth questionnaires and 19 youth participated in three separate focus groups. Even though the initial focus group was used to identify relevant issues and themes to be developed in the questionnaires, there was not enough time to test the validity and reliability of all the questions formulated. Ideally a pre-test of the questionnaire would have been done in a small sample given the time.

Even so, our research task force was advantaged in that it consisted of Ethiopian youth themselves who come from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. The group already had an insight into some of the issues that were relevant to this research study. Those issues were further confirmed and developed through our initial focus group. The non-response rate for the questionnaires was zero. This is reflective of the fact that the issues raised in the questionnaires were relevant to the youth in the community and they were not sensitive in nature. Most of the comments provided by the respondents were encouraging and thanked the group for the opportunity to voice their opinions in the matters at hand.

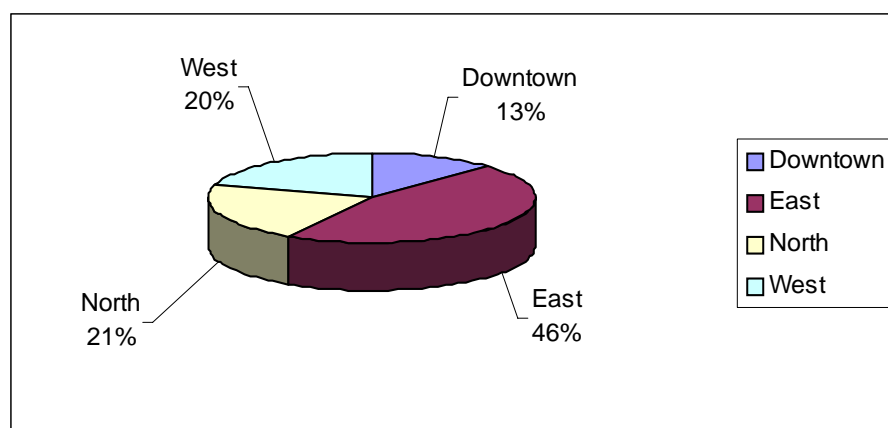
### **Respondent Profile**

The three focus groups were composed of 19 participants in total, with 7 males and 12 females. In order to ensure their comfort and confidentiality, focus group participants were not asked to divulge many personal details or descriptors. Based on our modes of recruitment however, we do know that the number of focus group participants that were

born in Canada versus overseas was split fairly equally, as was the number in high school versus post-secondary institutions or workforce.

The following highlights the demographic and other characteristics of the 157 respondents of the questionnaires.

- About half of our 157 respondents were female (56.1%).
- 51.0% were between the ages of 14 to 19 while 25.5% were between 20 and 24 and the rest 25 and over.
- 45.8% of our respondents were born in Canada. 17% of the remaining respondents not born in Canada were recent immigrants who have not been in Canada longer than 5 years while 37.3% are more seasoned immigrants to Canada.
- About half of our respondents had completed different levels of high school education with most of them (74.7%) having completed grade 9 to 12 of high school. The remaining 47.6% of the respondents had also completed different years in University or college with more than half having completed year 3 or 4 of university or college education. [Note: this is not meant to be reflective of wider educational patterns in the Ethiopian community]
- Of the total sample, 39.6% stated being currently employed. Of these, more than half or 53.6% were employed in full-time jobs (Full-time jobs were defined as jobs that required more than 30 hours per week).
- Most of our respondents live in the east side of the city (46.1%) while only 12.5% live downtown and an equal proportion of about one fifth live in the West and north end of the city.



## Literature Review

### **Background**

The waves of Ethiopian migration can be essentially mapped onto the timeline of tumultuous political events in Ethiopia beginning in the 1970s. “The first large out-migration of Ethiopians started when a military government, the *Derg*, deposed Emperor Haile-Selassie and the country adopted communism”.<sup>2</sup> This regime, led by Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam, ruled Ethiopia from 1974-1991,<sup>3</sup> a period that coincides with the first wave of Ethiopians coming into Canada. According to the 1996 Canadian Census, there are only 65 Ethiopians in Canada that arrived before 1976.<sup>4</sup> However, about 44.4 percent of the Ethiopians living in Canada by 1996 arrived between 1976 and 1985, many of which will have Canadian-born children by now.<sup>5</sup>

According to data from Canadian Immigration and Citizenship reports, 21,591 Ethiopian immigrants (excluding refugee claimants) arrived in Canada between 1974 and 1996, and the majority of these immigrants settled in Ontario. Among those who settled in Ontario, most reside in the greater Toronto area, where, according to the estimates by the Ethiopian Association in Toronto, the current Ethiopian population numbers 30,000.<sup>6</sup>

The years following the Derg government consisted of “political turmoil, civil war in Eritrea, and border conflicts with Somalia”.<sup>7</sup> The majority of first generation Ethiopian immigrants in Toronto seem to have emigrated for the specific purpose of escaping political turmoil, which indicates a particularity to this demographic of immigrants. The reasons for leaving ones native country, the amount of preparation and pending resources, and the expectations that one has of the host country are all significant factors in shaping ones immigrant experience. There is sufficient literature that supports what our questionnaires and focus groups discovered about the Ethiopian immigrant experience. As this research will demonstrate, this unsettled migration experience significantly impacted all facets of the community that has formed in Toronto.

The focus groups and questionnaires developed for this research sought to draw connections between the migration experiences of first generation Ethiopian immigrants and the challenges faced by the second-generation youth. The following section is an overview of the literature surrounding the general challenges to peacebuilding and development in the Ethiopian community in Toronto. The remainder of this paper will demonstrate how this literature intersects with the views espoused by the youth in the community. It will also expand on various opportunities for peacebuilding and development as articulated by Ethiopian youth.

### **Challenges to Peacebuilding and Development**

Upon settling in Canada, Ethiopians have found themselves facing a number of challenges that have affected their ability to succeed individually, as well as collectively as a community. There are five challenges that have shown to be the most taxing on the community as shown by the literature and supported by this research: poverty; employment; education; discrimination; and culture-related issues. These five challenges are interconnected but each has specific implications for how the community has formed and mobilized as a group.

#### Poverty:

In a recently published analysis of the 1996 Canadian Census, Ethiopians were named, among three other groups, as “the most severely disadvantaged in our community”.<sup>8</sup> The data showed that Ethiopians suffered extremely high levels of poverty with 70% of the children living in families whose income is below the “low income cut-off”. The causes of this poverty were seen to reflect high levels of documented unemployment and “a concentration of employment in lower skill jobs” even though they did not lack basic

education.<sup>9</sup> The proportion of university graduates were low<sup>10</sup>, however, this figure does not seem to account for higher education attained outside of Canada.

It should be noted that the Ethiopian population documented to have lived in Toronto during this census was only 7,005, a number considerably lower than the 30,000 that the Ethiopian Association in Toronto estimates to have in Toronto today and the 21,591 from the CIC reports. Among those community members who simply did not fill out the census, the census also likely missed the large portion of Ethiopian immigrants who were refugee claimants or not yet permanent residents. Nevertheless, its findings are not erroneous, for it was still likely able to pick up on broad social trends in the community. Its findings are also supported by other literature that shows similar financial constraints in the community.

#### Employment:

Ethiopians have an overall unemployment rate of 24.4%, more than twice the average in Toronto.<sup>11</sup> Further, “more than 80 percent of the Ethiopian women and 70 percent of Ethiopian men are in lower skill manual or non-manual occupations”.<sup>12</sup> The Ethiopian Association in Toronto conducted research regarding settlement service needs of Ethiopian newcomers in Toronto. In their questionnaire, the respondents expressed great difficulty in finding jobs within their first three years of arriving in Toronto. When asked to list their top ten difficulties and concerns in order of importance during the first few months of their arrival: finding a job; looking for a house to rent; and obtaining job search training ranked as the top three, respectively.<sup>13</sup> This difficulty finding employment demonstrates the lack of resources available to Ethiopian migrants upon arrival and also reflects the conditions that compelled them to leave Ethiopia in such a hasty and unorganized manner.

#### Education:

The general trend in immigrant education patterns is that young people in Toronto are getting more education than their parents. However, about one-fifth of Ethiopian youth are out of school and do not have a high school diploma.<sup>14</sup> Those analyzing the census data expressed particular concern for “the small number of groups with unusually large numbers of young people who are not in school and not high school graduates... (including) Ethiopians”.<sup>15</sup> The financial burdens faced by the community is also a stressor in this respect and is likely to be yet another barrier to the attainment of postsecondary education.

#### Discrimination:

Some challenges faced by the community are not easily solvable by upward economic mobility, but are reflective of broader social ailments. A study found that about 65 percent of their sample of Ethiopian immigrants experienced one or more forms of discrimination in Canada because of their racial or ethnic background.<sup>16</sup> Studies have been conducted on the extent to which Ethiopians identify as being ‘black’ and how they assess their racial minority status.<sup>17</sup> Part of the adjustment process that Ethiopians face upon migration has been found to include adjustment to a racial minority status; something very different from their experience in Ethiopia.<sup>18</sup> The youth in this research shared the same sentiments about growing up as ‘black’ youth in Toronto and it was cited among the most difficult challenges faced by the youth.

#### Culture Related Issues:

There are many positive aspects of Ethiopian culture that the youth in this research expressed pride for. There are, however, some culture-related issues that have shown to be detrimental to the integration of the community into Canadian society. Though language skills may be attributive to educational patterns in the community, language patterns can also reflect the extent to which a community is connected to Canadian society and have access to social and governmental services. According the Canadian Census, almost 95

percent of Torontonians who say that they are African or Black speak only English at home.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to this, less than 25 percent of Ethiopians speak only English at home.<sup>20</sup> Although the census data shows that many people who *can* speak English do not do so at home, “the language used in the home reflects the individuals’ cultures and trajectories of immigration of ethno-racial groups”.<sup>21</sup>

Language barriers and other cultural differences often account for the extent to which immigrants are willing to exploit social resources in their host country. However, despite the immediacy of their need, “immigrants use fewer services compared to Canadian born and immigrants that have come earlier... part of the service utilization problem may stem from a mismatch between what service providers feel they are offering and what potential clients perceive [to be] their needs and resources to meet those needs”.<sup>22</sup>

This insight can also be extended to the disjunction that occurs with governmental and community organizations and the youth population. There are often many organizations that offer services directed to youth, however, there is often a mismatch between what these organizations aim to provide to the youth and what the youth actually need. To take the example further, the cultural differences that exist between older generations and youth can create an additional barrier, with youth less willing to take advantage of these resources and services. This is a theme that was echoed in our questionnaires and focus groups and has led us to advocate for more youth-led organizations in our recommendation section.

## Results

### 1. Youth Connectedness to the Ethiopian Community in Toronto

#### **YOUTH PERSPECTIVES:**

*“If you were to tell me that Ethiopian youth were doing something, I would not necessarily go to it even as someone who is pro-unity, pro-community—because let’s just say there is a negative image associated with Ethiopians.”*

*“I want recognition as an Ethiopian, African youth—recognition as an individual. I want the people around me to know what I have done; that I am not part of the percentage.”*

In our analysis of youth connectedness to the Ethiopian community, there is one significant qualification that needs to be made. As discussed in our limitations section, most of the youth that participated in this study were connected to the community to some degree by virtue of our ability to access them. To this extent, we were not able to articulate reasons why some Ethiopian youth are completely disconnected from the community. However, there was still some variation that existed within our sample and interesting points of analysis that demonstrate the levels and degree of youth engagement in the community. By looking at the youth’s social and familial contacts; membership to ethnic communities; and levels of participation in community groups and events, this section demonstrates the different ways in which youth are connected to the Ethiopian community—from its most basic form to its chief manifestation.

#### Social and Familial Contacts

A direct indication of connectedness to the community is whether or not the respondents had their parents living in Toronto. The information gathered on the youth in this questionnaire is not meant to reflect patterns of social and familial contacts in the Ethiopian community. Rather, it is meant to provide a context with which one can understand the responses given by the youth in this study.

82.1% of the youth in our questionnaires had their parents living in Toronto, and almost all of them lived with their parents. Though most of the youth who were born in Canada lived with their parents, only 53.8% of those youth who were classified as recent immigrants (arriving in Canada within 5 years) had their parents living in Toronto. From our focus groups we know that most youth who did not live with their parents were living with extended family. 96% of the youth reported to have some extended family members in Toronto however; the low numbers of youth who had over ten family members living in Toronto (19.7%) is reflective of how recent the Ethiopian community to Canada.

Considering that our research was youth-focused, it was important for us to uncover the social networks in the community that youth had access to and how these networks affected (or did not affect) the engagement of youth in the community. Peer social networks, rather than familial networks, proved to be the most deterministic factor in the engagement of youth in community activities. That is, youth who had more Ethiopian friends were more active in the Ethiopian community and attended more community events.

92.3% of our questionnaire respondents reported to have some Ethiopian friends. Only 11.5% of these respondents said they had less than 5 Ethiopian friends. All other respondents said they had more Ethiopian friends; with some giving numbers as high as 50. The questionnaires tried to assess the level of influence of these peers by asking the youth: “how many of your *close* friends are Ethiopian?” When given the options few; half; most; and all, 1/3 of these youth said that *most* of their close friends were Ethiopian and 1/3 said that *few* were. Of those youth who said that they did not have any Ethiopian friends, most said that this was because there were no Ethiopian youth where they lived or in schools they attend.

There is a dearth of literature or data available to quantify the concentration of Ethiopians living in specific neighbourhoods in Toronto. Our questionnaires, however,

supported our common knowledge that there are certain identifiable neighbourhoods in Toronto that house a concentrated number of Ethiopians. 42.5% of the youth respondents said that they had Ethiopian neighbours and of this number, 23% said that *half, most or all* of their neighbours were Ethiopian. This is a high number considering the relatively small number of Ethiopians in proportion to the total population of Toronto. From our questionnaires, those youth who lived downtown had the highest number of Ethiopian neighbours.

### Ethnic Communities in Toronto

To the extent that ethnic communities are still part of the composition of the Ethiopian community in Toronto, this research was also interested in looking at how connected youth were to their specific ethnic communities. Though umbrella organizations exist for the Ethiopian community in Toronto, we know that there are also many smaller organizations that serve to promote the specific cultural, linguistic, spiritual and economic needs of members of their ethnic community.

When asked to rank how connected they were to their ethnic community on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest), about half of the total sample scored their level of connectedness between 1-5, but of this group over half scored 1. The other half of the sample scored their connectedness between 6-10. The questionnaires asked youth how many of their Ethiopian friends were of the same ethnic group as them. 24.1% of those who had Ethiopian friends said that they did not even know which ethnic groups their friends belong to. More than ½ of this groups also said that they did *not* have a strong connection to their ethnic community.

45.4% of those youth who had Ethiopian friends said that *all, most or half* of their friends were of the same ethnic group. Though 88.5% of this group said that their parents had strong connections with their ethnic community, ½ of them said that they had a strong

connection themselves. Finally, of those youth who said that they had Ethiopian friends but that *none* were from the same ethnic group, 100% said that they did *not* have any connection to their ethnic community. This data demonstrates that some youth are connected to the Ethiopian community by virtue of their connectedness to their ethnic communities. Peer groups seemed to be the best predictor of high levels of connectedness to ethnic communities however, many of these contacts may have been created through the social networks of the parents.

### Participation in Ethiopian Community Groups and Events

Though personal and social networks are the most direct form of connection to the Ethiopian community, the most relevant, for our purposes, is the level of participation in Ethiopian community groups and events. By assessing the level of engagement of youth in their community, we are able determine clear challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding and development. *Young Diplomats* works with the understanding that any meaningful engagement of the Diaspora with peacebuilding and development initiatives in Ethiopia can only come about at a community level. A strong and cohesive community is one that successfully engages their youth and includes them in all levels of decision-making and implementation.

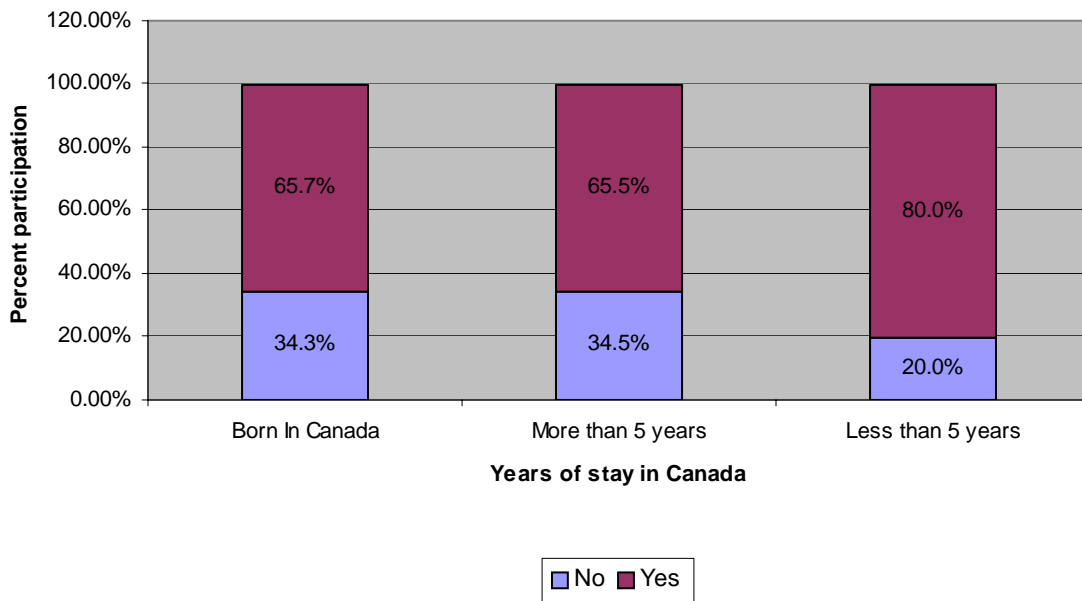
68.2% of the youth in our questionnaires participated in some kind of community group or event. A number of questions in the questionnaires were aimed at understanding which youth participated (who); what groups and activities they participated in (what); the level of engagement youth displayed through this participation (how); the reasons for their participation (why); and the reasons for not participating (why not).

#### **Who Participates?**

- Of those youth who reported to participate in any Ethiopian community groups or events:

- Recent immigrants (arrived to Canada within 5 years) tended to participate more than youth born in Canada (80% vs. 65.7%)
- Those who declared having 1 or more Ethiopian friends had a higher rate of participation than those without any (69.7% vs. 45.5%)
- There was no correlation between those youth who had their parents living in Toronto and their level of participation. That is, those youth who had their parents living in Toronto did not necessarily participate more in community groups or events, or visa versa.

**Rate of participation in Ethiopian Community groups or events by years of stay in Canada**



### What Do Youth Participate In?

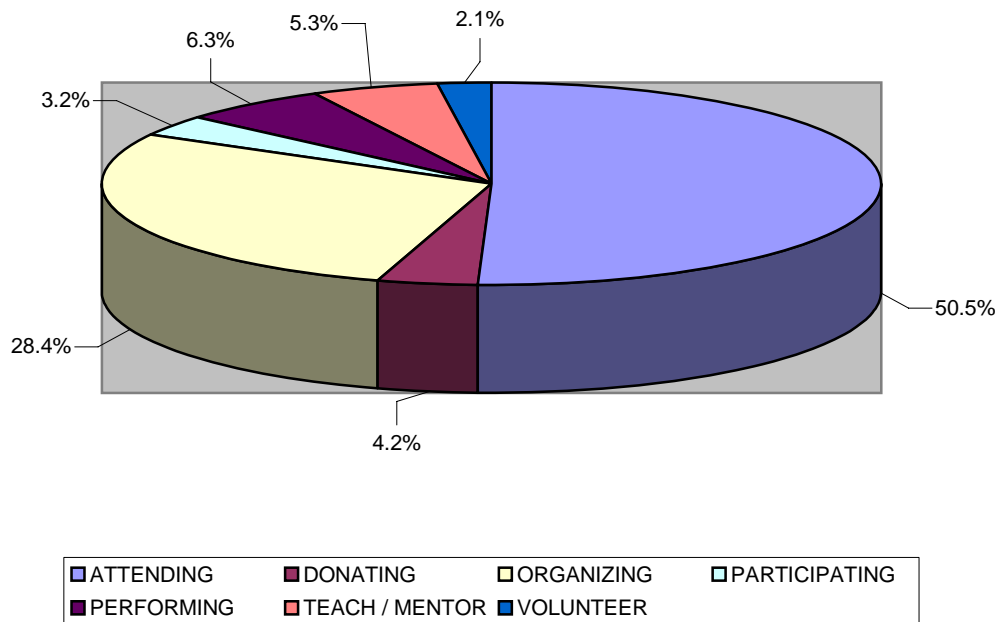
- Both the questionnaires and focus group results showed that the youth were participating through faith-based groups/events, cultural activities, and recreational activities

- When we combined those who participated in church groups, mosques, faith-based associations and cultural groups that engaged in religious activities –we found that 1/3 of all youth participation in Ethiopian community groups or events was through faith based organizations.
- ¼ of youth participation was through events run by youth-led organizations.

### How Are Youth Participating?

- The level of engagement of youth through their participation was assessed by asking youth *how* they participated. 28.4% of the youth who reported to participate in any Ethiopian community groups or events did so through *organizing* them. This is seen to be the highest level of engagement.
- The other forms of engagement that youth reported included attending, donating, participating, volunteering, teaching/mentoring, performing.
- However, 50.5% of this group participated solely through attendance. This is seen to be the lowest level of engagement.

**Type and level of engagement in community**



### Why Are Youth Participating?

- After youth were asked detailed questions about their participation in community groups and events, the questionnaires and focus groups asked them what they gained out of their involvement to assess the level of self-fulfillment gained through these activities. Some of the most typical responses to this question included:
  - Meeting people
  - Cultural awareness
  - Gaining a sense of pride in their culture
  - Making friends
  - Learning languages

- The questionnaires and focus groups were also interested in whether or not youth felt their engagement in the community had any external effects. When asked whether or not the Ethiopian community gained anything out of their involvement:
  - 57.6% said that the community *did* benefit from their involvement however, 39.4% said that they *did not know* whether or not the community benefited.

### Why Aren't Youth Participating?

- Those youth who reported that that they did *not* participate in any Ethiopian community groups or events were asked to give reasons for this.
- Of the 31.8% that did not participate in any groups or events
  - More than 1/3 said that it was because of a lack of time
  - 1/4 said that it was because they did not know about the events or groups
  - About 1/5 said that it was because they did not have any interest
- The focus groups allowed us to get more detailed answers to this question and also allowed those who *did* participate in the community to voice their frustrations and concerns.
  - Some youth said that their parents discouraged them from participating in the Ethiopian community. Negative attitudes expressed by older generations makes youth feel that their attempts and initiatives in the community will not make a difference. These sentiments were expressed by the parents because the frustration of failed attempts at engaging in the community and through their bad experiences.
  - Many youth felt that the community did not have sufficient activities for the youth to participate in. Where they existed, they were seen to lack the ability

to attract youth and in some cases were not youth friendly. Some said that politically focused groups were the easiest way to deter youth participation.

- This is supported by the questionnaire results that asked youth to score their interest in Ethiopian politics on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest). 39% scored their interest between 1-2 and 6% scored 9-10.
- Youth voiced concerns that the staff of most community organizations were members of the older generation and had nothing in common with them.

### Implications for Peacebuilding and Development

Through this analysis of youth connectedness to the Ethiopian community in Toronto, we understand that peers have an overwhelming influence over how youth act and what they choose to act in. Those youth who declared having 1 or more Ethiopian friends had a higher participation rate than those without any (69.7% vs. 45.5%). Therefore, organizations and individuals who aim to engage youth in peacebuilding and development initiatives should capitalize on peer networks as an opportunity to promote events and engage youth in different community groups.

The questionnaires also showed that other than faith-based groups and events, most youth who participated did so through youth-led organizations. This was further supported by the focus group discussions where youth said that they were discouraged by organizations/events that were not youth friendly or run by youth. Youth are engaged by people who can relate to their experiences as young people and the challenges they face as a result.

There was no clear indication, through the questionnaire analysis, that those youth who lived in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of Ethiopians participated in more events or groups. However, through this and further research into neighbourhood

compositions in Toronto, certain areas can be targeted to promote community programming initiatives. Groups can take advantage of cultural resources (such as Ethiopian stores), word of mouth, and opportunities for information dissemination (i.e. flyers, posters) in these neighbourhoods when looking to engage the Ethiopian community building initiatives.

The fact that almost half (45.4%) of our sample reported that *half, most or all* of their friends were of the same ethnic group as themselves, and that this corresponded with their level of connectedness to that ethnic community may have various implications for peacebuilding and development in the Ethiopian community. This might simply be reflective of the comfort people, including youth, feel in interacting with others that share the same language, culture, traditions, history and/or religion as they do. The salient question is how do these segmented communities work together to build peace in the Ethiopian community as a whole.

Though some questions were aimed at getting youth perspectives on this, at this point, little is available in the literature to fully understand how these divisions have or have not contributed to a strong Ethiopian Diaspora community. Further research is needed to unearth this so as to inform our approach to building peace in the community. Which channel is more effective in engaging youth in the Ethiopian community: ethnic community groups or umbrella organizations? Is it possible to have both a strong ethnic identity as well as an Ethiopian identity? Are ethnic identities and ethnic community groups necessarily detrimental to the resolution of conflict in the community? These are all questions that remain at the end of this research and ones that deserve further academic attention.

## 2. Youth Connectedness to Ethiopia

### **YOUTH PERSPECTIVES:**

Do we have an obligation to help back home?

*“Yes! That’s your identity. I am responsible for as many Ethiopians as I can help. We are fortunate—if we are already on a career path we have to share our knowledge, knowledge-transfer.”*

The extension of Ethiopian ethnic communities and identities is one way in which youth have displayed a connection to the land, cultures and traditions of Ethiopia. This research was interested in discovering other modes of connection to Ethiopia and how these could be used in peacebuilding and development initiatives aimed abroad. The questionnaires and focus groups asked questions that examined the levels of assimilation into Canadian society; socialization into Ethiopian culture; and knowledge and interest in Ethiopian politics and social issues.

### Assimilation into Canadian Society

One form of assimilation is the extent to which one personally identifies with the host culture. Youth were asked to describe ways in which they felt Canadian culture was different from Ethiopian culture. Many respondents took this opportunity to show pride for what they saw as the rich history and traditions of Ethiopian culture. It was also clear that many youth saw ‘culture’ as meaning something ethnic and foreign, as many responded with comments like ‘Canada has no culture’. The question that followed however, asked the youth which culture they identified with more, Canadian or Ethiopian. 27% of the sample identified only as Canadian. These respondents were composed of both youth born in Canada and born abroad (with Canadian-born numbers slightly higher).

The questionnaires also asked questions about Canadian civic engagement both to assess the level of assimilation into Canadian society, as well as to compare youth’s interest in civic and political issues of both Canada and Ethiopia. When asked to rate their interest in

Canadian politics on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest), 35% of the youth scored 1-2 where as 6% scored 9-10. The youth were also asked if they had ever voted in a Canadian election – at any level (if they were of the voting age), and 27.9% said that they did. This is an unusually high number considering national levels of youth voting patterns. Once again, this is not meant to be reflective of general trends of voting among Ethiopian youth in Toronto, and may simply be a product of the composition of respondents. Considering their low level of interest in Canadian politics, it was surprising that 73.9% of the respondents were able to name at least one Canadian political party.

### Socialization into Ethiopian Culture

To the extent that many of our respondents were either Canadian-born or seasoned immigrants, adoption of Ethiopian culture was likely to be a result of parental socialization. The term ‘Ethiopian culture’, in this context, was used to understand how much youth adopted Ethiopian languages; followed Ethiopian media; were interested in Ethiopian politics; desired to work or study in Ethiopia; and demonstrated knowledge about Ethiopian issues and events.

When asked which culture they identified with more (Canadian or Ethiopian), the majority (65.8%) of the respondents said that they identified as Ethiopian. Though they were asked to choose only *one* option, a small number of youth (6.3%) chose both options; expressing that they identified with Ethiopian and Canadian culture equally. It is a fair inference to make that had that option been available to all respondents, more youth would have chosen both options. However, the constraint of having to choose *one* meant that youth were forced to make a self-assessment and choose which culture they identified with more, even if it was by a small margin.

88.2% of the respondents said that they spoke 1 or more Ethiopian languages but the percentage for those who were born in Canada was lower. It was an oversight on our part not

to include an option separate from *speak*, that said *understand*. Some youth actually wrote in the word “understand” to express the fact that though they could not speak any Ethiopian languages, they could comprehend and understand them. Based on this, we feel that the number of respondents who said that they could speak 1 or more Ethiopian languages may have been lower had the *understand* option been available to them.

### Knowledge of and Interest in Ethiopian Issues

Though language could be a barrier to accessing some forms of Ethiopian media, there are many other ways in which youth are able to follow-up on Ethiopian issues that are available to them in English. When asked whether or not they followed-up on Ethiopian news, 53.6% of the youth said *yes* in their questionnaire responses. The percentage of youth who followed up on Ethiopian news in the Canadian-born sample was less than this and the percentage from those in the Ethiopian-born sample was higher than this. When asked to describe what their main sources of information were for Ethiopian news, more than half of the youth cited their parents as the primary source, followed by the Internet. As mentioned earlier, when asked to rate their level of interest in Ethiopian politics, 39.1% of the youth scored 1-2 and 6% scored 9-10 when asked to rate their level of interest on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest).

Youth were asked whether or not they had ever travelled to Ethiopia (besides being born there). 59.7% of the respondents said that they had travelled to Ethiopia at least once, most of them within the last 10 years. Youth were also asked: *if you had the opportunity to study in Ethiopia—now or in the future—would you take it?* More youth who had travelled to Ethiopia responded *yes* to this question, demonstrating a higher desire to contribute to or experience Ethiopia in more depth.

Though most of the youth who were raised or born in Canada felt that the Ethiopian Diaspora had a responsibility to change conditions in Ethiopia, many demonstrated a low

level of connection to the issues by the dearth of their suggestions as to how they could help. When asked to list ways in which they could help, many of these youth gave general descriptions such as “assist in any way we can”, or “donate money to Ethiopia”. However, our focus groups and questionnaires demonstrated that the recent immigrants (those who came within 5 yrs) as well as those who had recently travelled to Ethiopia were able to give concrete examples as to how to engage the community. This group was better able to connect with the issues occurring in Ethiopia and were more engaged in discussions relating to these issues. This group gave concrete courses of action such as investment in education, the creation of more jobs and funding of social programs.

#### Implications for Peacebuilding and Development

The youth apathy to politics demonstrated through this research can pose a challenge to peacebuilding and development initiatives. That youth have shown to be very disinterested in Canadian politics suggests that they are less likely to mobilize as a group and use political channels, such as parliamentary representatives, to lobby for the issues they care about, including problems in Ethiopia.

Most youth who had any knowledge of Ethiopian politics attained it directly from their parents. Our data showed that more than half of the youth had the same political views as their parents, and the youth reported that many of these parents were highly interested or engaged in Ethiopian politics. If these parents adopt a highly divisive and politicized attitude towards Ethiopian issues, this can pose a challenge by either deterring youth from involvement in peacebuilding initiatives or creating irreconcilable political identities in these youth.

The Internet was cited as the second most utilized source of information for attaining Ethiopian news. This presents an opportunity for groups to use this communicative channel

to engage youth in what are essentially distant issues. This also exposes youth to alternate and nuanced views on Ethiopian issues and allows them to form their own informed opinions.

The fact that these youth lived in Canada but still identified strongly with their Ethiopian identity is an opportunity to further engage them in community initiatives both here and abroad. Further, regardless of where they were born, or whether or not they have traveled to Ethiopia, Ethiopian youth demonstrated an overwhelming sense of responsibility to help the conditions in Ethiopia. This high level of interest is a well-defined opportunity for groups and organizations to use this demographic within the community in initiatives aimed abroad.

The youth felt that Ethiopian politics was a disruptive influence on relations among Ethiopians in the Diaspora. Youth apathy in Ethiopian politics then, can also be seen as an opportunity to engage youth in other issues and forms of social organization that are less conflict-ridden.

Our sample showed that those who had lived in or traveled to Ethiopia had a higher desire to work or study in Ethiopia if given the opportunity. This same group had concrete and insightful ideas as to how they could make a difference in Ethiopian social, political and economic spheres. First-hand experiences provide an awareness of the issues in Ethiopia and intensify the desire to personally engage with these issues, despite the physical disconnect. Providing youth with more opportunities and support for travel to Ethiopia is the most effective and exciting opportunity to inform and engage the Diaspora in peacebuilding initiatives in Ethiopia.

### 3. Challenges to Peacebuilding and Development

#### **YOUTH PERSPECTIVES:**

*“People in our community are often competitive. In my parents’ experience, they found that they tried to help other people and they shunned them. That’s been their personal experiences. The sense that I am not going to share my knowledge with you; where you see Indians and Chinese sticking together. Even though it seems like they are sticking to themselves—that is what their strength is, their cohesion; sticking together and helping each other out.”*

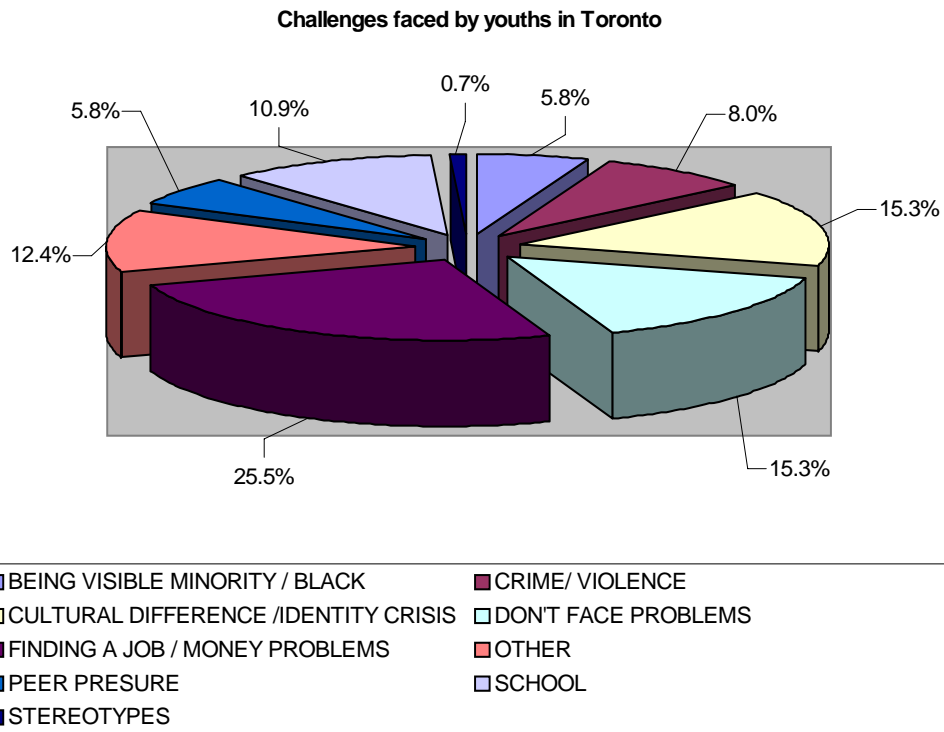
Part of the analysis of youth connectedness to the Ethiopian community in Toronto and to Ethiopia unearthed some of the challenges to peacebuilding and development.

However, many of these challenges were framed within these contexts. To the extent that individual Ethiopians are what make up the Ethiopian community, the personal challenges faced by the youth should still be understood as challenges to the community. Effectively addressing these individual challenges at a community level is the highest form of peacebuilding and development as it creates a mechanism of sustainability and capacity building for the community at large.

Before youth were asked to articulate what they saw as community challenges, they were asked to describe some of the biggest problems and challenges they faced in their lives living in Toronto. It is important to note that they were not asked to describe their challenges as *Ethiopian*, or even as *youth*, but simply the challenges they faced day-to-day.

15.3% of the respondents said that they did not face any problems or challenges at all.

26.2% of the Canadian-born sample said that they did not have any problems, compared to only 6.6% of those born outside of Canada who had the same response. The following were the main responses that were given by those who said they faced any challenges living in Toronto. Another important note here is that this question was posed as an open-ended question; the youth were not given pre-selected options.



Why do you think you face these challenges?

Our focus groups allowed for us to explore how these youth viewed their challenges and why they felt they faced them. Coming to Canada as youth was seen to have its own cultural shock, especially for those youth who came separated from their parents. Close knit family ties are broken and these youth have to fend for themselves in a foreign land. They face a lot of stress trying to financially support themselves, while trying to meet the expectation of being a model of success for the remaining relatives back home. Some who experience these harsh realities are embarrassed to tell the type of work they do to their family back home in Ethiopia.

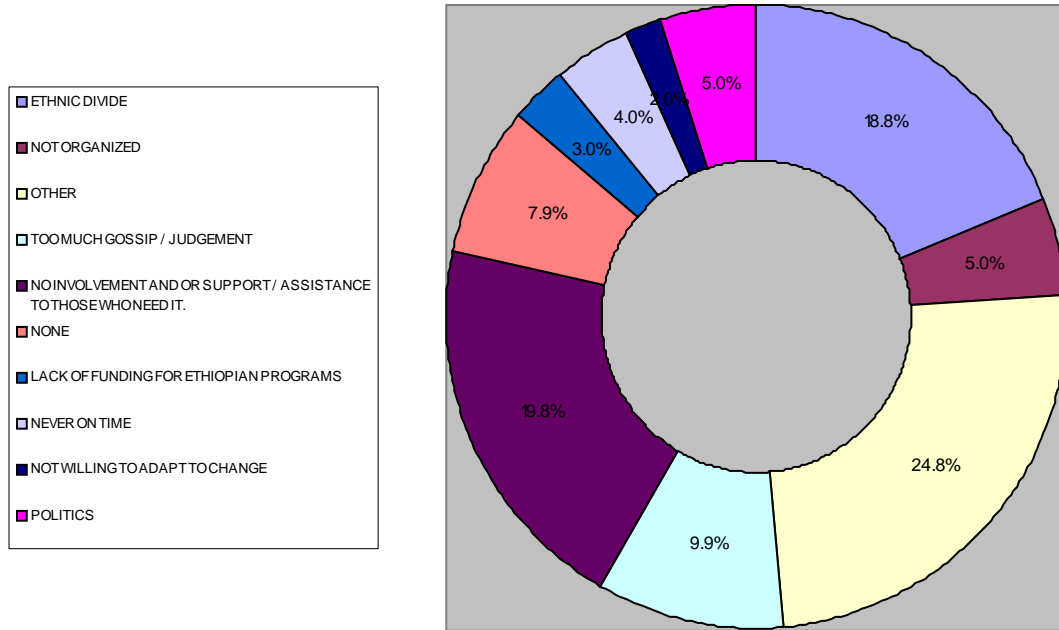
The youth who cited cultural differences as a challenge described things such as culture shock; racial-identity crisis; and not fitting into Canadian society as contributing to this difference. Youth who migrated to Canada had a hard time internalizing ready-made labels such as ‘African’, ‘black’ or ‘minority, which they were confronted with for the first

time. Some felt that they were lumped into a group that did not recognize their history or uniqueness as Ethiopians. Other youth felt constraints when trying to 'fit in' to what they saw as *black culture* by purchasing black cultural commodities or satisfying performative expectations. Even if youth did not identify with their minority status, there was a feeling that simply being black posed a challenge to the integration of the community into Canadian society. Other new immigrant communities may face less challenges because they are not visibly a minority and may experience more ease in fitting in.

### Collective Challenges

Though the youth were able to articulate the challenges they faced individually, they faced more difficulty in placing these challenges into a community context. 45% of the youth said that they did not feel or did not know if other Ethiopian youth living in Toronto faced the same challenges as they did. However, when the youth were asked to name the major problems faced by Ethiopians in Toronto, they stated the same challenges as they faced individually. Even when they cited similar challenges, youth were unable or unwilling to accredit the challenges they faced individually, to their status as Ethiopian immigrants in Toronto. This is further supported by the fact that, when asked, most youth respondents did not feel they needed the help of the Ethiopian community in solving their problems. It is also interesting to note the same response was given when asked if the youth felt they needed the help of the Canadian government.

### Negative aspects of Ethiopian community in Toronto



#### 4. Opportunities for Peacebuilding and Development

##### YOUTH PERSPECTIVES:

*“I am going to be positive and say that the Ethiopian community has potential but it is going to take a lot of time, effort, and dedication from individuals and groups. Your background does not matter—if you were from back home or from here. We all have to come together to unite to work on the issues that we have, or recognize that we have these issues.”*

*“You have to realize that Ethiopians came recently—twenty to twenty five years ago. They have been working hard. The first community that came as our founding board—the cushion for our generation to build that community.”*

Youth respondents were able to clearly articulate opportunities for peacebuilding and development because they saw a stark need for such initiatives in the community. Youth felt that the Ethiopian community lacked elements that made other immigrant communities

successful such as group cohesion; strength in numbers; strong businesses; and high levels of education. The top three immigrant communities that were identified as ‘successful immigrant groups’ by the youth were the Chinese, Indian, and Jewish communities, respectively.

Though the youth were conscious that the Ethiopian community could not be evaluated based on the successes of these larger and more established immigrant communities, they still felt a need to build capacity in these areas where they lagged behind. When asked to list opportunities to better the Ethiopian community, more than half of the youth responded—promoting unity, better education, and the creation of more jobs, which were the same elements they valued in successful immigrant communities.

Youth also saw opportunities to build peace in the community by implementing programs that prevent youth from engaging in deviant and violent activities. For instance, a soccer player emphasized that besides school and work, practices took up most of his time; hence he did not have time for such “destructive activities”. Some of the youth cited crime and violence as a challenge that directly affected them and many youth felt that there was a need for more youth-focused programs to address this challenge. Those youth who admitted to engaging in deviant/criminal activity, or knew other youth who did, said that they did because of a lack of direction. They felt that they needed other people, preferably peers, who could provide positive representations of themselves and act as role models to them. It was encouraging to see that even youth who were not contributing to peace in the community could provide articulate insight as to why this was the case.

## Conclusion

This paper assessed youth perspectives to challenges to peacebuilding and development in the Ethiopian community. This was done by analyzing the level of connectedness youth demonstrated to the Ethiopian community in Toronto. The research found that peer networks were the most influential connection to the community and could be used to further engage youth in community groups and events. It also found that some youth were identifying strongly with their specific ethnic communities in Toronto but it was unclear, from this research, what the implications of this was to peacebuilding and development in the community. Youth engaged highly through faith-based groups in the Ethiopian community but also participated through youth-led organizations and events.

The level of connection youth had to Ethiopia was important to assess in order to gauge how they could be used in peacebuilding and development initiatives aimed abroad. Both Canadian-born and immigrant youth were fairly integrated and/or assimilated into Canadian society however, most still identified more with their Ethiopian identity. Interest in Ethiopian issues was fairly high, except with regards to Ethiopian politics. The knowledge of relevant issues in Ethiopia demonstrated by the youth however, varied depending on whether or not they were born in or had been to Ethiopia.

Youth were able to identify the challenges that needed to be addressed in Ethiopia but were also asked to speak of their own personal challenges. Many of the challenges expressed by the youth mirrored the literature and data available on the Ethiopian community in Toronto (please see literature review) but the youth saw these more as individual rather than community challenges. When asked to articulate the challenges faced by other Ethiopians living in Toronto, most examples were similar to those given in response to their individual challenges.

Finally, youth were able to construct and articulate opportunities for peacebuilding and development in the Ethiopian community in light of the challenges the community already faced. They were able to describe what made an immigrant community ‘successful’, even giving specific examples, but unanimously felt that the Ethiopian community in Toronto was not one of those examples. Youth felt that there were opportunities for peacebuilding and development in the community through programs that promoted unity, education and aided in employment. Youth also felt that they needed programs that provided positive role models for youth in order to keep them away from deviant and criminal activity.

### **Recommendations**

*Young Diplomats* took on this research initiative in part because we felt that the challenges faced by Ethiopian youth in Toronto were not being adequately addressed. Though there are various examples of successful youth initiatives in the Ethiopian community, these groups are under-supported, under-funded and under-staffed. It is encouraging to note that 17.5% of the youth respondents who said that they participated in Ethiopian community events, did so through organizing –a demonstration of the leadership potential within our community.

The recommendations that follow this report are aimed at providing channels for these youth to display and strengthen these leadership skills in order to secure a sustainable method of building peace in the community. All initiatives aimed at empowering youth are beneficial in and of themselves, but they are also inherently sustainable, as they build the capacity of the next adult generation to address future challenges in their community. This list of recommendations presented by *Young Diplomats* is not meant to be exhaustive or representative of all needed services for youth in the Ethiopian community. Rather, they are

initiatives that are pragmatic, measurable, and are of immediate need in the community as articulated by the youth in our report.

**Recommendation 1:**

The youth in this report have expressed frustration with the lack of youth-friendly organizations and events available to them in Toronto. Therefore, we recommend clear support, funding and spaces to be provided to youth-led organizations in the Ethiopian community in order to facilitate these activities. This will address several of the issues articulated in this report including support for social networks; promoting unity; and promoting awareness of other social issues and initiatives.

**Recommendation 2:**

The youth identified the Internet as one of their primary sources of information about issues related to Ethiopia. They also were aware of existing community-based media channels but felt they needed to be more youth-oriented. In light of this, we recommend the enhanced utilization of existing media sources, as well as support for the creation of new and innovative forms of communication through media.

**Recommendation 3:**

Through questionnaires and focus groups, youth have repeatedly stated that they lacked positive role models in all aspects of their life. As a result, the youth resorted to non-constructive activities; ill-informed about educational opportunities; had difficulty identifying resources in the community; and suffered economic constraints. Therefore we recommend the implementation of a comprehensive mentorship program that would encompass social; academic and professional streams.

**Recommendation 4:**

Youth in our study unanimously felt a sense of responsibility to contribute to the betterment of Ethiopia; but were largely unaware of ways in which to do this. Our analysis showed that those youth who had personal experiences in Ethiopia were more informed, articulate and passionate about issues in Ethiopia.

Creating a stronger cultural link between the Diaspora and Ethiopia can encourage youth to be informed and participate in peacebuilding and development efforts in Ethiopia.

Therefore, we recommend the creation of accessible opportunities (i.e. work/study abroad programs; international courses; internships) where youth have the chance to both contribute their skills to Ethiopia, as well as learn new skills and insights.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA.
- <sup>2</sup> Noh, Samuel; et al. (2004)
- <sup>3</sup> *What Happened in History: Timeline Ethiopia*. [Online]
- <sup>4</sup> Ornstein (2000), pg. 22
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 26
- <sup>6</sup> Noh, Samuel; et al. (2004)
- <sup>7</sup> *What Happened in History: Timeline Ethiopia*. [Online]
- <sup>8</sup> Ornstein (2000), pg. 21
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>11</sup> Ornstein (2000), pg. 53
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 79
- <sup>13</sup> Beyene, Wosen Y. (2000), pg. IV
- <sup>14</sup> Ornstein (2000), pg. 53
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 60
- <sup>16</sup> Noh, Samuel; et al. (2004)
- <sup>17</sup> Cheboud (2001), Kibour (2001)
- <sup>18</sup> Kibour (2001), pg 48
- <sup>19</sup> Ornstein (2000), pg. 33
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 28
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 32
- <sup>22</sup> Beyene, Wosen Y. (2000), pg. I

---

## Bibliography

Beyene, Wosen Y. (2000) *Settlement Service Needs for Ethiopian Newcomers in Toronto*. Citizen and Immigration Canada, Ethiopian Association in Toronto.

Cheboud, Elias A. (2001) *A Heuristic Study on Successful Ethiopian Refugees in British Columbia: Identity and the Role of Community*. Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences, 2001, 62, 4, Oct. 2001

*International Online Training Program on Intractable Conflict*. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA. [Online]: <http://conflict.colorado.edu>

Kibour, Yeshashwork (2001) *Ethiopian Immigrants' Racial Identity Attitudes and Depression Symptomatology: An Exploratory Study*. Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 47-58, February 2001

Noh, Samuel; Hyman, Ilene; and Fenta, Haile. (2004) *Determinants of Depression Among Ethiopian Immigrants and Refugees in Toronto*. Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease. Vol 192(5), May 2004, pp. 363-372

Ornstein, Michael. (2000) *Ethno-Racial Inequality in the City of Toronto: An Analysis of the 1996 Census*. City of Toronto, Department of Community and Neighborhood Services

*What Happened in History: Timeline Ethiopia*. [Online]: <http://timelines.ws>