

15 | ITEC Programme Experience: India and Ethiopia

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In the early years of the 21st century, the relationship between India and Ethiopia attained unprecedented heights. The Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, called it the golden age of Ethio-India relations. During this period India's engagement with Ethiopia acquired new diversity and depth, which resembled the beginning of a new engagement. The high respect that Ethiopians have for Indian teachers and professors both of whom came in hundreds at different periods of Ethiopia's development, have left an indelible mark in the development of this relationship.

The teachers who came from India travelled to remote parts of Ethiopia in 1940s and 1950s. They were the early pioneers. In 2000-2010, nearly 500 Indian professors came to teach in Ethiopian universities. The Pan-African E-Network Project, whose pilot programme was implemented in Ethiopia, saw a resounding success in the tele-education component where an MBA programme was run by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) at the Addis Ababa University. This was

expanded by Ethiopia with their own linkages with IITs Delhi and Kanpur to bring courses to nine of their universities using the technology of the E-Network Project.

At the same time Ethiopia was the recipient of some of the largest lines of credit India offered for developing their rural electrification and sugar industries. The commitment of the Government of India to support the economic development of Ethiopia saw a surge in Indian investment, which rose to US\$4.5bn by March 2010. Interestingly most of this came from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from India that foresaw great opportunity in Ethiopia.

Interestingly, one of the threads, which run through the education segment, as also the loans scheme and the investment priorities, is the capacity-building effort which goes into all areas of Indian cooperation with Ethiopia, and other African states. The Indian private sector which is involved in implementing official Indian and privately funded projects and the teaching programmes have all contributed to the development of local skills, generation of employment and transfer of technology which are unique examples of the manner in which India's engagement with Africa, in general, and Ethiopia, in particular, has developed.

Capacity building is the hallmark of the Indian Technical Cooperation (ITEC) programme. This programme was approved through a Cabinet decision and introduced on September 15, 1964; today it covers 158 countries in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Pacific islands states. The budget for these training programmes is approximately US\$11.5mn per annum and the overall exposure of the ITEC programme in Africa is over US\$1bn.

The ITEC programme has five broad components, viz, training of nominees of partner countries in India; deputation of Indian experts; study tours; small projects and support for disaster relief. The ITEC programme today includes 232

courses held in 42 institutions, which receive 5,500 trainees from 158 countries. The ITEC has become such a powerful brand that in most countries the training positions offered under ITEC are quickly filled up. At the India Africa Forum Summit in April 2008, ITEC positions for Africa were expanded from 1100 to 1600. At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) of 2010 held in Uganda, a further increase of 250 seats for Commonwealth countries was announced; many of the beneficiaries are in Africa.

The ITEC programme for Ethiopia was initiated in 1969 and it has been found useful by the Government of Ethiopia. They have received experts, and sent candidates for training in India; they have also received supplies of equipment under this programme. Up to 2006, Ethiopia had 25 training positions allocated to it; this was doubled in 2007 following the first ever visit of the Indian External Affairs Minister to Ethiopia in July 2007 and the India Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) in April 2008. Most of the training positions have been utilised in some recent years. The total number of Ethiopians trained in India under the ITEC is nearly 700.

In order to further enhance India-Ethiopia relations, an imaginative use of the ITEC programme was undertaken in Ethiopia. This resulted from initiatives taken by the Indian Embassy, strong support from the Technical Cooperation (TC) Division in the Ministry of External Affairs. These covered the Designers' Training Programme, the Solar Engineers' Training Programme and the Regional Programme. The overall aim was to add variety to the engagement and cover areas and sectors outside direct government control. The innovation introduced by TC Division was to devolve selection, allowing Indian envoys to directly nominate candidates for the ITEC programme, subject to allocated quotas, on the basis of their own assessment.

The Design Initiative: Ethiopia is well known for cotton fabric and traditional design. The Embassy saw a growing opportunity for engaging young fashion designers and exposing them to the dynamic growth of this sector in India. The Pearl Fashion Academy had taken up with the Ministry of Trade and Industry in Ethiopia a project to develop a design institute. At the Embassy's initiative, a design programme was launched in partnership with the Pearl Fashion Academy of India; others involved were DKT Ethiopia, a social marketing organisation; Femseda, an institution of the Ministry of Trade and Industry and a private cultural consultant.

Under this programme, 50 Ethiopian designers were chosen through a public announcement which led to much excitement in Addis Ababa. The Pearl Fashion Academy sent trainers sponsored by Ethiopian Airlines who ran nearly five weeks of classes at Femseda and at the end of the programme – which became a constant source of media attention – a contest was held to demonstrate what the trainees had learnt. At the Republic Day reception in January 2008, a special exhibition of all the designers' work was undertaken and the results were tabulated, based on the marks given by the jury and every guest at the reception that visited the exhibition. The identified winners were supported by the ITEC to undertake a 15-day study tour of India to visit fashion academies, and interact with modern and traditional fashion designers. All of them returned as highly impressed votaries of India's growth in the fashion industry. Several commercial opportunities emerged for the trainees of the programme and a large number of families became friends of India.

The Solar Engineers' Programme: In 2005, the presidents of four of the nine Ethiopian regions visited Tilonia in Rajasthan and went to its famous Barefoot College. Despite an unaccustomed experience of coping with vegetarian food

during six weeks they spent there, they remember the visit fondly, as also the Tilonia Declaration which they signed. As a result of that visit, the Barefoot College trained 34 rural people from Ethiopian villages from the remote regions of Afar, Somali, Gambella and Beneshungul-Gumuz. These 34 people came from 17 villages and were trained for six months to become solar engineers. The training was sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ethiopia, which also provided the equipment. On their return, most of these people became effective agents of change at the grassroots and brought a solar lantern and light to every hut in their villages. I have seen lives change and suddenly the work days became bigger; night schools and women's cooperatives were opened. These villages were not on the map of the massive power expansion plans in Ethiopia and, therefore, the Barefoot Solar Engineers' Programme was very effective indeed.

When this was reported this to the Ministry, it was an effective Joint Secretary, Head of the Technical Cooperation Division, who also knew about the Barefoot College, with whom we teamed up. Based on the Ethiopian experience we successfully introduced training at the Barefoot College under the ITEC Programme. Now twice each year, nearly 35 women attend six-month long programmes at the Barefoot College and the programme has evolved into training middle-aged women who are inclined to remain committed to their villages and not go away to cities for employment.

In many African countries this is bringing about a gentle social change as in some societies, for instance, in Djibouti, where women never left the village by themselves. The fact that the ITEC programme could be flexible and imaginative and take on a new non-traditional programme, allowed us to reach out at the grassroots level with African countries. This programme was nominated for the BBC's World Challenge

and later when equipment supplies in some countries became problematic, the Aid to Africa budget in MEA was used to support this successful programme.

Taking Initiatives to the Interior: In many African countries, the problem lies that there is a centralised Ministry to take care of the offers of ITEC training programmes. Usually it is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Education; the dissemination of information to other ministries is slow, if it takes place at all. As a result, the utilisation of ITEC training slots either lacks diversity, or falls short of targets. Most ambassadors make considerable effort to go beyond these constraints; thanks to a relaxation in procedures by TC Division, they are now able to use the programmes in a more effective fashion.

In Ethiopia, we used this flexibility to reach out to the regional or provincial states. On every visit to a regional state, I usually took a business delegation and professors from Addis Ababa, or those teaching at the local universities. This composite delegation always received wide attention and we took every occasion to offer few ITEC training positions to the regional presidents for the use of their officials. As they were government officials, we were not seen to be breaching any rules, and yet we managed to reach a totally new segment of beneficiaries, many of who did not even frequently travel to Addis Ababa.

In most cases, the first nominations were of the regional ministers (called bureau heads) and they became an important part of our ITEC outreach in the years ahead. Subsequently, a greater utilisation of relevant courses for developing the skills of various officials in the regional government came forth and many regional presidents told us that India was the first country to directly address capacity building requirements of regional governments in Ethiopia. This was seen as a fulsome

contribution to the development of their federal structure.

For developing countries the ITEC programme is a real manifestation of South-South cooperation. Initially the impact of the ITEC programme was limited but substantive nevertheless as it provided good opportunities for training in India; as a wider engagement with India has been pursued by Ethiopia as a matter of policy they have found the diversified offerings of the ITEC programme to be valuable for their development process. Ethiopia had been using its own funding and international funding to send people to India for varied training programmes including for PhD programmes and to the IITs. This approach of having India as a model for their development process led the Ethiopians to use the ITEC programme to fulsome effect.