

Dear Mike,

The collaborative E<sup>2</sup>, Engineers to Engineers, initiative I outlined at the last meeting relies on partnership between AAES/ASCE, African/Ethiopian Association of Civil Engineers (EACE) and Syracuse University. I was provided funds and a semester sabbatical leave to explore alternative ways of engaging in effective infrastructure development in Sub Sahara Africa. I acquired a special visa allowed for foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin to be able to travel freely and to help with some projects. US naturalized engineers have a distinct vantage point to facilitate technology transfer and capacity building in developing countries. Direct linkage between our engineering societies and counterparts in developing countries promotes peer to peer educational and professional connections more or less bypassing political intermediaries. Such connections will hopefully remain continuous through changes in government and even manageable turmoil.

Average citizens in developing countries suffer through corruption, limited resources (human and capital), incompetence, adverse effects of climate change, and lack of transparency and good governance. Diplomatic norms and perceived rights of sovereignty prevent donor nations and lending agencies from direct engagement in affairs of developing countries. As a dual punish / reward policy, donor nations have begun to qualify developing countries for financial assistance by some measure of good governance. Thus, for example, citizens in countries that so far do not qualify to receive assistance from the US Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) suffer from the coupled impact of poor governance and aid denial. Such an approach, while understandable, may in some cases make bad situations worst for the poor and disadvantaged to the point of creating failed states and even more unmanageable problems.

The proliferation of Non Governmental Aid Organizations (NGOs) in developing countries is in part to improve efficiency and transparency in getting emergency assistance to populations in critical need. Outside delivery of relief aid, NGOs focus on food security, combating infectious diseases and meeting basic needs such as clean water among many others. NGOs too vary in efficiency, level of commitment and undesirable visibility. Some countries allow NGOs to establish a presence selectively while some others appear to be very liberal and carefree. Regardless, predominantly western NGOs have so far stayed clear from mostly large infrastructure development assistance and can not be counted upon to cover this area of critical need.

Recent trends indicate foreign companies pre-empt local firms in bidding on large capital projects. Some locals attribute the trend to size, efficiency and possible subsidy or access to capital the foreign companies enjoy through their government. Other countries offer development aid by sponsoring major projects that employ their engineering firms and construction companies to build major infrastructures in developing countries. Some of the unintended consequences of such practices have been marginalization of local engineering firms and more migration of professionals to other countries. This trend needs to be reversed if SSA countries are to acquire viable capacity for sustainable

development in the long term. Even as foreign companies build major infrastructures, engineers in responsible agencies of the developing countries have to be empowered to effectively engage with the designers and constructors.

E<sup>2</sup> is not a connection to perform design, construction or maintenance of infrastructure by outsiders. The function of E<sup>2</sup> is simply catalysis to enable and empower engineers with limited resources and access to information to be better able to educate, plan, build and maintain critical infrastructures. In visiting different campuses in Ethiopia and Tanzania, it was obvious there was critical shortage of manpower and teaching materials. Courses were taught by inexperienced instructors and text books were old and few. Internet access was slow and limited. Impressive arrays of modern donated or purchased equipment at some campuses appeared to have been under utilized or unused. To demonstrate a way for overcoming these shortcomings, a system administrator in Syracuse set up a mock Blackboard account for an instructor and five students and I demonstrated the web based use for instructional delivery to IT staff in Ethiopia. Deployment of such IT infrastructures will be transforming like the availability of cell phones in developing countries. The IT infrastructure will also be valuable for e-communication in the E<sup>2</sup> collaboration on projects. I continue to be involved with projects I became engaged while I was in Ethiopia.

I have attached a revised copy of my presentation in Washington with supplementary comments. If we get a 1 percent rider on WB/IMF projects to facilitate design, specification, procurement, construction and supervision; we potentially can improve efficiency and transparency to result in savings of several multiples. The Millennium Challenge Corporation may find our engagement to be the added reach necessary to extend assistance to countries that otherwise are not yet eligible to receive development funding. The Office of the Science and Technology Advisor to the Secretary of State and USAID may be receptive to help with the E<sup>2</sup> initiative. Outside sources such as foundations may also be alternative sources. AAES/ASCE in collaboration with Syracuse University may also be able to start the initiative as we explore alternative sources.

To inform and consult potential E<sup>2</sup> partners in Ethiopia, I communicated the attached message to the Deputy General Director, Ethiopian Roads Authority and Editor in Chief, Ethiopian Association of Civil Engineers. He has replied back indicating his enthusiastic support. I have received travel support from my dean to establish a better understanding of logistics and terms of reference to proceed in drafting a memorandum of understanding. As I travel through Washington, we can plan to meet on my way to Ethiopia. I anticipate we may travel together for the follow up visit along with possibly one or two others. Based on my discussions in Ethiopia, we will consider adjusting our conceptual plan to fit the preferred circumstances on the other side. Also, we will find out from our counterparts as to what parts and how we / they may need to acquire political approval, as necessary. Arguably, there is no country in the world, other than the US, with comparable diverse asset of successful and empowered naturalized citizens to help implement such a new development paradigm for Sub Sahara Africa.

Please let me know if you have comments, suggestions or require more information. I will be in touch about alternative dates I can be in Washington as my travel plans take shape.

Sincerely,  
Dawit