



University of Westminster

Department of Social Sciences, Humanities and Languages

BA Development Studies and International Relations

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11518453 Meala Tesfamichael

**Diaspora's Contribution to the Developmental Process of the Homeland: the Case Study
of the Eritrean Community in Switzerland**

Key words: Migration-Diaspora-Transnationalism-Remittances

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Abstract

During the post-colonial era, many countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), had to face war and conflict, genocide, political instability and economic disasters. The consequences are reflected by an important and increasing amount of migration not only to neighbouring countries but also from the so-called 'Global South' to the 'Global North'. There are many controversies on the impact of migration on destination and source countries in the era of globalisation, while some focuses on negative aspects, there are others who have assess the benefits to the host and especially home country. This, however, has not received much attention among social scientists. Indeed, most studies around migration focus on the impact on destination countries rather than the home country. The homeland is often forgotten on how immigration has certain effects which could be positive and also negative. The role of migrant communities is increasingly connected and thanks to the ease to communicate and travel, transnational networks are facilitated. Their contribution to the developmental process has to be taken into consideration especially in respect to nation-building and reconstruction. The role of the Diaspora is often minimized due to the mainstream and popularity of international institutions or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). There are very few researches on diaspora specifically the Eritrean community in Switzerland; this paper is an attempt to contribute to the body of knowledge which already exists on migrant community. Situated at the Horn of Africa, Eritrea and its people belong to the newest African country. Its long history of invasions and colonisation, wars and finally independence are essential in understanding the current role the Eritrean Diaspora, which, as a transnational actor participates in the political and social life and contributes to the economy of their home country.

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1. Introduction

Migration is a phenomenon discussed more often in the age of globalisation. Undeniably, the latter brought the economical, social, political shrinkage from different parts of the world due to new technology to communicate and ease to travel. However, migration has always existed but it has become a global issue by the media and politicians. In fact, it is frequently forgotten how migrants as diasporic community could contribute to the poverty alleviation and developmental process of their homeland. The notion of diaspora is complex and important in understanding the relations of migrants within their communities and the country of origin. Indeed, throughout history, diasporas were seen as forced displaced people and, consequently, defined as victims. However, the role of diasporas is significantly recognized as actor of development due to the feeling of belonging which shapes their behaviour in exile and the willingness to participate in the political, economical and social development of the home country. The role of the Eritrean diaspora is complex to understand concerning the involvement in the development of the homeland. In fact, the historical context is the primary reason in its present involvement and gives reason to this diasporic unity. Indeed, the state of Eritrea is aware of the diaspora major role for its reconstruction, its financial support during conflict and its social and economical contribution. It is an interesting subject which is still un-researched at global scale. The aim is to understand the combination of globalisation and national identity combined with development. Claiming that globalisation has caused transnational ties between diaspora throughout the world and linkage with the homeland will be challenged in regards to the Eritrean community in Switzerland. This specific case is a small part of the transnational trends among Eritreans which existed far beyond the process of globalisation. Therefore, history can shape the present behaviour of migrant communities and it would be interesting to analyse the Eritrean community from the first generation and the youth in their notion of the homeland and if the involvement of the elders is resented towards the younger generation in keeping the national roots 'alive'.

It is, therefore, important to look at the literature regarding the concept of migration in the global era and its linkage with development through the explanations of different approaches: Neo-Classical Theory, Historical-Structural Approach and Migration Systems Theory. The understanding of migration approaches and its impact on development will, thus, introduce the concept of diaspora as an effect of the migratory movement and the increasing awareness of its role will be enhanced in the second chapter. The latter will look at scholars' explanation of diasporas and globalisation, the typologies of diaspora and the relations with the homeland.

In order to understand the case study of the Eritrean community living in Switzerland and its contribution to the developmental process of the homeland; the principle of transnationalism will be emphasised by looking at different explanations brought out in literature concerning the developmental impact, the source country and transnational communities. Then, the role of remittances resulting from migration, diasporic ties and developmental contribution through finance will be assessed. Following the research of different literatures available on migration, diaspora and transnationalism; it is important to look at the method of research in gathering data through a triangular methodology by using interviews and statistical data. The case study of the Eritrean diaspora in Switzerland will be analysed in accordance to the information collected in the literature review combined with the interviews. Therefore, the analysis will, firstly, look at the historical context of Eritrea, followed by its migration trend since the thirty years of war, the Eritrean diaspora in Switzerland as part of the transnational network and its contribution to the developmental process and national reconstruction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Migration

The study of migration is the least studied in the era of globalisation. The latter emphasises on markets' interconnectedness, free flows of capital, technology and communication. Even though migration has become the mainstream of Western politicians since the 1990s, the focus has mostly been on the impact of migrants, mainly from LDCs, on host countries and perceived as a threat. With an increasing number of people migrating, it has considerable impact on the host countries and prominently on sending countries. In order to understand the concept of migration, different theories brought by scholars in the field of development will be reviewed. Therefore, this chapter will look at, the link between migration and globalisation, as well as the concept of the so-called 'migration-development nexus'. It will further look at the reasons why people migrate in the first place, followed by different theories on migration: the Neo-Classical Economic Theory, the Historical-Structural Approach, and the Migration Systems Theory.

2.1.1 Migration & Globalisation

Migration is "at its historical zenith" with 190 million people living outside their home country (Lahav & Messina 2006). It has become a "global phenomenon" as Castles and Miller (1998) outlined. Nonetheless, the literature on migration clearly illustrates that the phenomenon is not new but has always existed like the Irish who migrated to the US or Italians who went to Switzerland in order to work in railways construction in the 20th century (Cohen 1997:162). Since the 1980s, destination patterns shifted which "affected the character of international migration" (Cohen 1997:156)¹.

The perspective is international: large-scale movements of people arise from the accelerating process of global integration. [...] Global cultural interchange, facilitated by improved transport and the proliferation of print and electronic media, also leads to migration. (Castles and Miller 1998:4)

¹ Many studies and political attentions around this topic brought an understanding on how to tackle this trend especially even though this mobility is "an integral and essential feature of globalisation" (Naerssen et al. 2007:2). Besides, the term migration defines the movement of people from one place to another which could be internally such as rural-urban migration, to neighbouring countries or richer places. To strengthen this statement, the economical, political, social interconnectedness and new technology to communicate combined with the ease to travel from one place to another have, subsequently, facilitated and influenced the movement of people. Globalisation has influence the migration trend and due to unequal share of wealth, rising conflicts within countries rather than inter-state wars at the time of the Cold War, people are seeking better places to live in. In fact, migrants are increasingly using the opportunity of globalisation, mainly communication, travelling and they are becoming part of development process for many source countries as it would be discuss further in the case study.

Much of the attention in relation to migration has been of negative nature, especially after the 9/11 events where more and more restrictive policies started to be implemented. Kennedy (2000) witnessed the “series of moral panics and political backlashes across EU countries such as Austria, France and the UK but also in the USA and Australia” (Kennedy 2000:84)². As Bauer (2003) outlines that tight immigration controls limit the crucial freedom of movement and put an obstacle to LDCs’ development. They also expose a central inconsistency in neoliberal globalization. In general one can observe that the topic of migration is rich on literature, which however focuses mainly on economic aspects and outcomes which are the most visible parts of globalisation. Furthermore, the contribution of migration on development, growth and prosperity is subject of many controversies. Nonetheless, there is a lack of information concerning the causes and impact of migration to SSA, specifically to Eritrea. Therefore, it shows the uneven sources of information and arguably, a reflection of the global unevenness between the higher amounts of literature concerning the burden of migration than its developmental impacts.

2.1.3 Migration-Development Nexus & Approaches

The nexus between migration and development has become a familiar refrain in the global debates about migration (Williams 2006).

For decades, migration and development have been examined as two separate entities in the political and economical spheres. In the destination country, the main concern was about controlling the increasing flow of people trying to enter the country and simultaneously international development institutions focused on projects in origin countries (Van Hear 2003). Recent studies also demonstrate that the change in perceptions of migration and development have gone in conjunction with changing viewpoint in development approach. The latter is linked to economic progress of the late 18th century to a notion of development including social factors such as health care and education. The relationship between the two is increasingly recognised among academics; supposedly due to the significant expansion in remittances to LDCs³. The awareness of migration impact towards LDCs is increasingly recognized in migration studies with an increasing demand for high-skilled labour in the ‘West’, the main focus shifted towards the effect of brain drain⁴ which constitutes a

² Migration and especially international migration is seen as a burden or a threat carried out by media and politicians in receiving countries. The Swiss party Union Christian Democratic launched an anti-migration campaign in 2007 in order to implement stricter laws and regulations on migration, asylum seekers and refugees rights which was accepted through popular votes.

³ - Role of migrant communities abroad that can have a positive effect on development: migrants do not return but help their country of origin otherwise (remittances, information, knowledge transfer, exchange) (Nyberg-Sorensen et al. 2002a: .11)

⁴ Brain drain concerns the emigration of high-skilled individuals mainly from LDCs to richer countries

noteworthy loss of human skill in source countries (Naerssen et al. 2007:3). Recently, there is an emerging interest towards the effect of brain gain, the role of return migrants and the role of Diasporas as development agents in their origin countries (Caincross 2002 cited in Griswold 2003:180). However, the so-called ‘migration-development nexus’ is a new concept which needs further research from a broader range of case studies especially regarding the positive outcomes explained above (Naerssen et al. 2007: 4). Therefore, there are “strong interrelations between development and migration” which are important to consider (Heilman 2006:231)⁵. Williams (2006) explained that there is an emerging consensus that if migration is properly managed by both countries of origin and destination, it can have a positive developmental impact. However, there is a clear lack of sources in respect to other aspects such as social and cultural development. In fact, the concept of development is understood as synonymous with economic growth; production of goods and services and increasingly being redefined as human development.

Furthermore, migratory movements have been studied and analysed for decades through different approaches. For instance, Neo-Classical Migration theory was, firstly, explained in the 19th century by Ravenstein (1885, 1889), focusing on the economical perceptions of migration (cited in Castles & Miller 2003:22). In other words, neo-classical economic approach develops the idea of pull and push factors⁶. As Chiswick (2000) highlighted:

People will migrate if the expected rate of return from higher wages in the destination country is greater than the costs incurred through migrating (Cited in Castles & Miller 2003:23).

This approach focuses on the economic aspect of migration (Borjas 1989:461)⁷. Hence, the difference in wages affects workers in their decision to move to a higher-wage country.⁸ Borjas (1989) stressed that the mere existence of economic disparities should be sufficient to generate migrant flows and, in the long run, should help to equalise wages and conditions in

⁵ Moreover, migration can contribute to the improvement of the living standard of relatives or even the economy of the country by sending money back home. It should be channelled and managed in a manner that maximizes its positive impact, particularly in the economic sphere.

⁶ Hence, the push factors explained the causes of migration due to low living standards, the lack of economic opportunities and also political repression. On the other hand, pull factors are mainly due to the demand for labour, the availability of land, good economic environment and political freedoms in receiving place.

⁷ Neo-classical approach of migration emphasises on the positive effects of migrating as it would bring a new equilibrium between capital and labour, resulting from its frame within the modernization theory of development and underdevelopment. ⁷ i.e. the lost of high skilled labor from origin countries The causes of migration have been described through different focuses i.e. the balanced-growth approach and its optimistic creation of equilibrium between capital and labour since they expected that overpopulation, unemployment and poverty would be reduced (Naerssen et al. 2007:5).

⁸ “As a result of this movement, the supply of labor decreases and wages rise in the capital-poor country, while the supply of labor increases and wages fall in the North.

underdeveloped and developed places (Borjas 1989 cited in Castles & Miller 2003). Nevertheless, this approach is criticized as being ‘ahistorical’ and individualistic in explaining migration and “reductionist due to its only economic focus” (Munck, R. 2009: 1230). By being simplistic and neglecting the historical reasons of people movements and neglecting the analysis of the state’s role⁹. Subsequently, further theories were brought out in explaining the complex nature of migration and its developmental impact. Therefore, much literature in countering the Neo-Classical theory emerged, such as the Historical-Structural Approach introduced in the 1970s. Indeed, the former is an approach supported by proponents of dependency theory e.g. Frank (1967)¹⁰. It focuses on the macro-level in understanding the movement of people from one place to another¹¹. Hence, believers of this approach perceive international migration as reinforcing the unequal resources distribution causing the “brain drain” which aggravates underdevelopment. In contrast with the Neo-Classical theory, this approach is more pessimistic regarding migration. Thus, instead of having a new equilibrium the tendency is towards the loss of skilled labor affecting the productivity and leading to skill shortages.¹² Indeed, brain drain is defined as the “cross-border migration of highly skilled persons out of developing countries” (Williams 2006). Indeed, Castles and Miller (2003) outlined that migration, is as a way of mobilizing cheap labour for capital. Another criticism in the literature is the effect of migration through remittances affecting source countries negatively by leading to “consumptive purposes and to price inflation and dependency on external incomes sources” (Russell 1993 cited in Naerssen et al. 2007:6)¹³. The Historical-Structural Approach perceives migration as de-developing sources countries due to unequal political and economic relations. Nevertheless, this approach was not without criticisms. Similar to neoclassical theory; it seems to be one-sided in understanding migration as center-periphery relation without taking into account the individual and group motivation to migrate caused by environmental disasters, wars and conflicts. Therefore, neoclassical approach neglects the historical context and perceives migration as a positive factor for the source country. The historical-structural approach focuses only on macro level and the negative impact of migration on power relation between poor and rich countries. Moreover, the studies

⁹ This model “cannot explain why a certain group of migrants goes to one country rather than another, for example why most Algerians have migrated to France and not Germany, while the opposite applies to Turks” (Cohen 1997:24).

¹⁰ which understand the relations between people, states and regions as centre-periphery models in contrast with the modernization approach of neo-classical theory.

¹¹ Dependency is perceived through unequal share of wealth, exchange of resources and also human capital. In other terms, historical-structural theory broadens its explanation from a socio-economic influence. The Global North, expropriation, and exploitation of the Global South see the world system as uneven with the accumulation of wealth

¹² It is important to note that often migrants in receiving countries do not use their skills in the country of destination (Naerssen et al. 2007:6).

¹³ The concept of remittances will be further discussed in the following chapter. In other words, historical-structural approach perceives migration as de-developing sources countries due to unequal relations politically and economically. By the exploitation of developing countries by the richer where people migrate and leaving the source country with a loss of “young, healthy, and skilled people” (Naerssen et al. 2007: 6).

regarding Neo-Classical and Historical-Structural theories did not evaluate some aspects of migration. However, Migration Systems Theory tends to be more interdisciplinary¹⁴ in explaining migration and became the “new mainstream of migration theory” (Castles & Miller 2003:27). This approach considers the historical and economical effects from previous concepts and contextualises them regarding “the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries based on colonisation, political influence, trade, investment or cultural ties” (Castles & Miller 2003:26)¹⁵. Besides, it evaluates both micro and macro effects of migration¹⁶. By associating the impact of globalization with external forces, this approach, as pointed out by Fawcett and Arnold (1987) influenced all aspects of the society. Consequently, ‘globalisation from below’¹⁷ emerged in order to keep linkages with source countries and as vital resources of “social capital” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992 cited in Castles & Miller 2003: 28). Actually, migration is facilitated once the movement is established (Stahl 1993 cited in Castles & Miller 2003: 28). Family ties and migration networks are significant within this theory as decisions are taken by the family and community rather than the individual (Hugo 1994 cited in Castles & Miller 2003:28)¹⁸. For instance, a survey conducted in 1970 showed that 90% of those who gained legal residence in the United States did so “through family and employer connections” (Portes & Bach 1985 in Castles & Miller 2003:27). Henceforth, migrants’ networks help settling new migrants through linkages with the homeland or ties in the destination countries i.e. associations. The migration systems theory is the first step in understanding migration through transnational networks from a micro- and macro- levels. Most sources found focused on the economic causes and impact of migration. Indeed, scholars often look at development in terms of economic growth and thus neglect other important factors¹⁹. In the international system, migration is often seen as a burden and a cause of underdevelopment²⁰. Nonetheless, it is evident that the movement of people is influenced by a more complex and broader variety of factors such as education, family reunification, war or persecution when they decide to migrate to another country.

¹⁴“State to state relations and comparisons mass culture connections and family and social networks” (Fawcett and Arnold 1987:456-457 cited in Castles 2006:26)

¹⁵ For instance, the migratory movement of Mexicans to the United States was due to the Southwest expanded territory of the United States in the 19th century. Movement from Dominican Republic to the United States and initiated by the U.S. military occupation in the 1960s. Colonisation of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan by the UK brought massive flow of migrants to the UK (Castles & Miller 2003:26).

¹⁶ Macro structure helps the understanding of migration process at global level, the economic situation of the global trade which influences the flow of migration from period of crisis to prosperity. Hence, people tend to migrate more easily in period of growth with employment opportunities mainly in the Global North. The former looks at global level of causing migration due to the influence of globalisation and the economical part is one aspect, the political context is also important.

¹⁷ Social networks created by migrants which consequently ease migration process. In other terms, informal relationships, relatives and communities ties influence migration process by mutual aid and

¹⁸ This principle can be interpreted as chain migration (Price 1963:108-110 cited in Castles & Miller 2003.: 28).

¹⁹ The focus on GDP growth rather than HDI (Human Development Index).

²⁰ In fact, the uneven share of wealth and peace in the capitalist world feeds migration (Munck 2008:1228).

No single cause is ever sufficient to explain why people decide to leave their country and settle in another (Lahav & Messina 2006)

The study of migration clearly shows that academics explored existing theories on migratory movement and agree that there is no single explanation of migration but a set of different approaches which emerged in recent years (Massey et al. 1998). The controversies have continued but the consequences undoubtedly been felt in host and source countries and the economical causes to migrate as Griswold (2003) outlined. This is in the light of the movement of people which becomes increasingly complex as Skeldon (1997) argued (cited in Naerssen et al. 2007:1)²¹. However, most information concentrates on South to North migration perceived as a key issue internationally. As a result, there is still a gap in the literature on migration and development. The apparent linkages have not been efficiently examined among scholars and further researches would be needed in order to find out how both notions are interlinked with each other. There are numerous reasons in explaining the causes of migration e.g. coerced migrants, political refugees or voluntarily migrants (Naerssen et al. 2007: 3).

²¹ Indeed, international migration goes in many directions from South to South, between East and West, from South to North and so on.

2.2 Diaspora

The positive correlation between migration and development has attracted more attention since the late 1990s, not only because of the rapid increase of global remittances but also due to the proliferation of transnational networks and communities. The growth of the so-called “Diasporas” play an increasing role in many LDCs. Understanding their motivation and developmental impact needs further attention and will be discussed in the chapter. Therefore, it is important to look at the notion of ‘Diaspora’, followed by an analysis of different types of diasporas. Equally important in this context is the concept of ‘identity’ and the relations between migrants and their homeland which will be outlined further on.

2.2.1 Notion of Diaspora & Globalisation

The role of migrant communities also known as ‘Diasporas’, is increasingly studied in the global era. The literature about diaspora focuses mainly on its origin; Mohan (2002) stressed that it originated from the Ancient Greeks while other scholars such as Akyeampong (2000) highlighted that it derived from the Jewish dispersal. Safran (1991) defined diasporas in the contemporary era as “alien residents, expellees, refugees, and expatriates immigrants, ethnic and racial minorities (cited in Akyeampong 2000:184). For a broad overview it is useful to look at Cohen’s work (1997)²² and the nine points regarding diasporas’ role (Cohen 1997 cited in Mohan 2002:81-82). He referred to a displacement which is often traumatic, the search for employment and the collective memory and myth about the homeland²³ (Cohen 1997 cited in Mohan 2002: 81-82). Henceforth, it is also argued that Diaspora is well known as a whole ethnic group living abroad (Naerssen et al. 2007: 4). Safran (1991) outlined that diaspora tend to idealise the homeland and are willing to return (cited in Mohan 2002:82). Nevertheless, the latter is generalizing their will as there are many diasporas who are settled down for generations in “permanent exile” (Mohan 2002:83). Diasporas are often spread in different regions or countries and keep certain connections between them, described as, ‘transnational network’²⁴. The study of diaspora is still not emphasised in the field of development, however, some diasporic studies emerged e.g. the African Diaspora Institute (FADSI)²⁵ (Akyeampong 2000:183). Since the end of the Cold War, the amount of journals and

²² See Cohen, R. (1997). *Global Diasporas: an Introduction*.

²³ They are willing to keep the original soil safe and prosperous. Some other important aspects of Diaspora concern the ethnic group affiliations, subsequently, a feeling of commitment and solidarity towards the group. “The experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering or desiring another place” (Clifford cited in Akyeampong 2000:184).

²⁴ The latter would be further explained in the chapter of transnationalism. The link between those communities often refers to the common imagination of the homeland

²⁵ at Howard University created in 1979 (Akyeampong 2000:183)

documentations regarding diaspora increased²⁶. Indeed, there is a rise of concern about migrant communities as they are “more integrated in the cosmopolitan era, their power and importance are enhanced” (Cohen 1997:176). Regarding African diasporas, they became significant financially and politically for the homeland²⁷. However, diasporas’ role needs further recognition as an effect of migration. Diasporas have taken a different dimension in the era of globalisation as Adepoju (2000) highlighted, increasing researches on the topic shows that diasporas “maintain an active interest and linkage”²⁸. Most literature sees the significant diasporas’ role as “facilitators of projects for international assistance” (Adepoju 2000).

2.2.2 Types of Diaspora & Conceptualizing Identity

Globalisation created or simplified the relationship between relatives, sojourners and country of origin. Hence, it gave “opportunities for Diasporas to emerge, to survive and to thrive” (Cohen 1997: 160)²⁹. Therefore, Cohen outlined five types of diasporas: “victim diasporas, trade diasporas, labour diasporas, imperial diasporas and cultural diasporas” (Cohen 1997: 178). In the context of this research, the main focus will be on victim and cultural diasporas. Accordingly, Cohen (1997) defines victim diasporas as being forced to displace due to wars or ethnic cleansing³⁰. Nonetheless, the typology of victim diasporas was the first researched during the Cold War³¹. Cultural diasporas can easily be linked to victim diaspora. Indeed, those forced to relocate share similar identity. Therefore, it would automatically bring this cultural identity linkage outside the homeland. As Cohen (1997) highlighted; these communities are unified in the destination country by aiming to keep and build their identity (cited in Mohan 2002:84). Therefore, it seems inaccurate to separate these types of diasporas as cultural linkages are usually important in keeping ties with the communities. The question of identity or belonging is still remarkable among members of diasporas especially from LDCs willing to keep the ‘roots’ from the homeland and the feeling of “being different” in the destination countries. The concept of identity within the study of diaspora is one important aspect which shaped diasporas. As Cohen (1997) underlined, the idea of a shared origin and

²⁶ Akyeampong (2000) refers to for instance the journal of Diaspora and Exchange (p.184)

²⁷ In fact, globalisation has helped extending the gap between rich and poor or between the Global South and Global North. Consequently, the creation of dependency relations affects mostly Sub-Saharan African countries depending on international institutions i.e. the International Monetary Fund (IMF) but regarding the micro-level, civil societies depend on diaspora’s help (Akyeampong 2000:186). Due to technological improvement and the ease to communicate in the global era, diasporas are profiting from globalisation by keeping the connection with the original country (Akyeampong 2000:213).

²⁸ Indeed, throughout the creation of associations, organisations of events, business groups, political groups and so on

²⁹ Actually, with the growing global cities and the ease to travel are factors which facilitate diasporas connections.

³⁰ The examples of the Africans through slavery or the Palestinians are evident of Cohen typology of victim diasporas (Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002: 216). many diasporic movements have been caused by forced dislocation and it is still occurring in the era of globalisation with the rise of internal conflict or military interventions such as NATO in Ex-Yugoslavia or in Afghanistan.

³¹ In the contemporary era, most of studies focus on voluntary movements due to increasing economic migration.

birthplace is a common feature of diasporas. Henceforth, it legitimises the diasporic movement with the “myth of common origin acts to ‘root’ a diasporic consciousness” (Skinner 1993 cited in Cohen 1997:184)³². Because of this sense of solidarity, diasporas feel the need to support their ‘home’ mainly politically and economically (Mohan 2002:88). Therefore, once migrants relocate to a different place; they are ‘carrying’ their roots and trying to keep them alive in host countries.

Diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots ‘elsewhere’ (Brash 1996 cited in Mohan 2002:88).

2.2.3 Diaspora & the Homeland

Diaspora and the feeling of belonging is a significant feature of the community. Diasporas are usually active concerning the well-being of the community but also of the homeland and willing to return (Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002:218). However, the sense of common identities can change due to the influence from the host country as well as the feeling of non-affiliation by the young generation. Therefore, diaspora and the image of the homeland are also imagined and constructed as the essentialist/anti-essentialist believers explained (Mohan 2002:99)³³. Accordingly, migrant communities are often willing to help the homeland and often consider it as their duty. The idealised perception of the home country is the tool for diasporic unity in order to support the homeland’s development. Indeed, diasporas are usually mobile and have the advantage of learning from both resident and origin countries. They often use their skills as languages to be active in the diaspora. Hence, scholars are aware of the advantages diasporas have taken by being multilingual for instance (Cohen 1997:176). Accordingly, the latter explanation is one effect of global connections and networking between diasporas consequently creating a transnational relation. Globalisation helps the work of diaspora in the community and the homeland. Therefore, the term diaspora can be associated with development in three ways: firstly, the creation of social ties³⁴ among members of the diaspora, helping each other for a sustaining existence. Secondly, migrants within diasporas can use their social networks across the world in order to gain economic

³² as Mohan (2002) underlines; migrants communities have a sense of cohesion and solidarity towards each other, which, consequently brings trust within the community and a will to work together whether at local levels or through transnational ties which would be further discussed later.

³³ These theories explain the issue of imagining the homeland in certain ways. The former defines the migrant communities who perceive the home country as unchanged, static and homogenous (Mohan 2002: 101). The anti-essentialists believers such as Gilroy (1993a) pointed out the principle of ‘travelling culture’ and that identity is remade in time and space therefore it is constructed in the imagination (1993a cited in Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002:218). On the other hand, essentialist approach explains the principle of the will to return to the idealized homeland which diasporas perceive it as they left it.

³⁴ By helping new arrivals to adapt in the country of destination in terms of employment or language has the aim to keep the migrant communities united in order to contribute to the developmental process of the homeland (Adepoju 2000).

opportunities (Mohan 2002:107)³⁵. Undoubtedly, the study of diasporas needs to be extended to larger types of migrant communities from different parts of the world. There are also studies of the African-American diaspora in the United States which is debatable and hardly possible to link with other diasporas from SSA countries. The feeling of belonging to the home country does not apply to this particular diaspora due to their past history of slavery. In addition, one could criticize Mohan's and Zack-Williams' perception³⁶ of 'the' African diaspora, a view which is too simplistic as it generalises a very diverse continent. The historical backgrounds of diasporas differ and this needs to be recognized in diasporic studies. The feeling of maintaining their roots is based on a double consciousness of settling down in a new country while at the same time staying associated with another.

³⁵ It is also important to bear in mind the aim of diaspora is to bring awareness of the need to be active in regards to the homeland and to provide to its development. As a result, many African diasporas are active politically in their source countries or through associations and cultural events.

³⁶ Mohan, G. & Zack-Williams, B., A. (2002). Globalisation from Below: Conceptualising the Role of the African Diasporas in Africa's Development. *Review of African Political Economy*.

2.3 Transnationalism

In the era of globalisation, diasporas are often seen as a transnational connection due to the facility to travel and to communicate. Hence, transnationalism is an important approach to assess in order to understand the case study which will be analysed later in the research. Accordingly, this chapter will, first, look at literature on transnationalism and development, the homeland and transnational communities and the study of remittances from micro- and macro- levels, as a result of transnationalism will be outlined in more details.

2.3 Transnationalism & Developmental Impact

Transnationalism is a consequence of migration and globalisation³⁷ and there are relevant studies regarding the emergence of transnationalism among Diasporas - as outlined by Al-Ali, Black and Koser (2001). The latter focused on emerging communities with a comparative research between the Bosnian and Eritrean Diasporas. The study of transnationalism in SSA countries, and more specifically Eritrea, has hardly been researched. However, the article *Transnationalism in Question* by Fitzgerald and Waldinger (2004) gives a broad knowledge of the connection between places of origin and destination (Fitzgerald & Waldinger 2004: 1178). Indeed, transnationalism refers to, as Bash (1994) outlined, migrants' economic, political and social relations across international boundaries³⁸. The term transnationalism is used by scholars to discuss the relations within migrant communities or transnational communities instead of diasporas³⁹. According to Glick-Schiller (1992) transnationalism is defined as a connection between receiving and sending countries (cited in Fitzgerald & Waldinger 2004:1180). Undeniably, diasporas are creating this transnational trend by connecting relatives and being part of the economic and political life of the homeland.

As paradoxical as it might appear, the building and consolidation of nation-states are all commonly quoted factors linked with transnational relations and practices (Al-Ali et al. 2001:585). In other words, host countries are becoming like:

Aircraft carriers on which the ethnic/cultural airplanes of many nations land and take root but not completely and not necessarily forever (Kennedy 2006:85).

³⁷ Due to new technology to communicate, sharing ideas and also the feeling of being affiliated to a specific group, in this case nationalistic-social ties.

³⁸ It is also argued that migrants keep ties with their own 'people' as a result of exclusion from destination and origin countries and therefore, the need to be affiliated with those from the same origin countries become important (Bash et al 1994 cited in Al-Ali 2001:594). Nevertheless this definition is subject to discussion concerning social exclusion. Indeed, many migrant communities are involved in transnational activities and at the same time completely integrated in the country of residence and have dual citizenship.

³⁹ Often referring to forced displaced people as explained in the previous chapter.

Hence, Portes (1999) mentioned that migrant communities create transnational activities which require regular commitment (cited in Castles & Miller 2003: 29). Therefore, transnational activities can take an important part of the participants' life and interests⁴⁰. Undoubtedly, these participations from transnational communities strengthen the importance to keep their national identities alive as Basch (1994) stressed. Besides, there are different modes of transnationalism which do not only concerned migrants as individuals but, as Portes (1999) explained, with the difference between 'transnationalism from below' and 'transnationalism from above'⁴¹. The former will be the primary focus of this research which needs to be studied further. It emphasises on:

A people-led process that exploits the economic and political opportunities presented by globalisation and challenges the centralising tendencies of nationalism on the one hand, and transnationalism on the other (Al-Ali et al. 2001: 578-579).

Therefore, Portes (1999) argued that transnational communities are keener to take advantage of globalisation as they are often centralised into global cities, and accordingly, bring the ability to communicate and travel more easily (cited in Castles & Miller 2003: 30)⁴².

2.3.1 The Homeland & Transnational Communities

Transnational relations among migrants can also be enforced by the country of origin's influence⁴³. Especially the historical context matters as it shapes the diasporic behaviour in whether or not creating a transnational community⁴⁴. Governments welcome more easily projects held by diasporas than foreign organisations (Kennedy 2000:89). Besides, transnational communities contribute to a sustainable form of development as they know what is needed in the origin country (Honey et al. 1998 Cited in Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002: 227). Moreover, transnational migrants would feel as "persons with two homelands" (Glick-Schiller & Faouron 1990 cited in Fitzgerald & Waldinger 2004: 1184). Indeed, states have witnessed the impact of diasporas and the willingness to keep these ties is significant and

⁴⁰ Communities such as the Somalis who participated in the construction of Dargesei University in Somaliland (Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002). Also the Eritrean diaspora would be taken as example later in the analysis and it would show how members of the community are conducting their lives and hobbies to transnational activities with the aim of helping the homeland and other members of the diaspora.

⁴¹ Transnationalism from above: concerns the participation by powerful institutions e.g. states, Transnational Companies (TNCs) or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

⁴² Henceforth, this type of transnationalism defines the work of groups who identify themselves as having a common identity and shared value and will towards the home country and as a result, bring transnational activities to keep the grass-roots of their homeland abroad

⁴³ Governments consider the positive impacts diasporas bring to the country and in order to keep the transnational connections with the homeland; different policies are put in place e.g. dual citizenship, the right to vote, access to media from abroad or contribution to economical aspect by implementing policies facilitating the building of houses or businesses for the diaspora.

⁴⁴ It is argued that "the social connections between receiving and sending countries; "transmigrants" denoted the people who forged and kept those tie alive" (Glick-Schiller et al. cited in Waldinger & Fitzgerald 2004: 1180).

understandable especially in terms of nation-building (Kong 1999 cited in A-Ali et al.2001:579)⁴⁵. Transnationalism gives the ability to adapt in different places for migrant communities and to keep their transnational network⁴⁶. Arguably, this transnational trend can contribute to the developmental support of the homeland through transnational activities which can have political implications as migrants can use their remittances to lobby, financial investments and cultural events (Al-Ali et al. 2001:581). Accordingly, the money sent back home by migrants could be considerable according to certain countries. Hence, different policies will be implemented and reinforce the feeling of nationhood and motivate transnational communities' activities. This is specifically reflected in earlier states or newly independent states in supporting development (Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002:226).

2.3.2 The role of Remittances

The existing literature on remittances has long been neglected by scholars in development studies. However, in recent years, there has been a rise of research regarding migrant communities sending money back home. Indeed, the interests in literature are due to the increasing amount sends by migrants to the homeland. Academics have focused on the impact of remittances in terms of development and they have brought out the question whether the money sent back home can resolve the issue of poverty in LDCs. Hence, the response varies among scholars and therefore, it is important to evaluate the different explanations available concerning the role of remittances as a tool for development.

Transnational migration is not just a cultural and political process but it also acts as a central agent of economic globalisation in its own right (Kennedy 2000:94).

The above sentence explains why most LDCs welcome transnational communities' involvement - especially in economical terms. The latter is the money sent back home by individual migrants or through migrant associations as defined by Gupta, Patillo and Wagh (2009). Adams and Page (2005) outlined that globalisation has been instrumental for migrants as well as transnational communities in contributing economically to the homeland.⁴⁷ In fact, remittances have become the second largest source of financial support to LDCs (Solimano

⁴⁵ Portes (1997) highlighted their characteristics; "by an increasing number of people who lead dual lives. Members are at least bilingual, move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political, and cultural interests that require a simultaneous presence in both" (Portes 1997 cited in Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002:225).

⁴⁶ Transnational activities require motivation and capabilities by the migrant communities in the host countries and to keep the common aim at the centre of their transnational networks.

⁴⁷ With the increasing flow of economic migration in the era of globalisation, remittances are one of those effects of the economic liberalisation, decrease travel costs and the steady devaluation of the US dollars currency which becomes more affordable for migrants to send money back home (Anon 2008).

2004:177)⁴⁸. Most research on remittances focuses on Latin America. Research carried out by Barham and Boucher (1998) in a community in Nicaragua is an illustrative case. However, a survey conducted by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), showed that around 85% of households receive money from remittances and 40% in terms of goods (Anon. 2007:5)⁴⁹. There are several reasons in explaining why migrant communities send money back home. Several motivations have been recognised by scholars such as Stark (1991), Brown (1997) and Smith (2003). They have estimated four main reasons to remit: altruistic motive, self-interest motive, implicit family contracts as loan repayment and co-insurance (cited in Solimano 2004:185).⁵⁰ Tewolde (2005) also stressed that micro level is more stable in investing and helping the home country in terms of education or health care for example (Tewolde 2005:21)⁵¹. Sander (2003) also outlines that, in Burkina Faso, international remittances reduced poverty of rural households by around 7% and of urban households by about 3%. At the macro level, it will have an effect on local businesses, consequently; “help to lift the community and in some case the national economy” (Tewolde 2005:21)⁵². Remittances can be perceived as donations especially concerning community remittances e.g. HTAs⁵³. Most of the research on LDCs criticised the lack of formal data and incomplete sources for determining the real amount of money sent back by migrants especially to SSA. Indeed, Adams (2005) mentioned that international remittances do not take into account the money sent through unofficial systems, which undervalues the amount of remittances recorded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Adams & Page 2005: 1646-1647). Besides, the World Bank (WB) suggests that the amount of remittances towards LDCs was \$164 billion in 2004-5 and \$308 billion registered in 2008 (Ratha 2009 cited in Kennedy

⁴⁸ Currently, it is registered that the three main receiving states are India, Mexico and the Philippines and originated in majority from the United States, Saudi Arabia and Germany (Solimano 2004:178). In Nigeria, for instance, remittances are the second largest source of foreign incomes after oil revenue (Anon. 2007:4). The rise of banks and international monetary transfer operators e.g. Western Union, remitting has been facilitated in the last two decades (Anon 2008). Hence, foreign aid such as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Official Development Assistance (ODA) are being surpassed by the flow of remittances (Sander 2003).

⁴⁹ Remittances is brought by migrants themselves for 47%, 26% sent through friend or colleagues, 7% through post office plus, remittances are used mainly for consumption spending e.g. food and groceries (93%), transportation and fuel (44%), utilities (31%) and medical expenses (30%) (Anon. 2007:5).

⁵⁰ Altruistic motive concern the willingness of migrants to improve the living standard of the relatives in the homeland and it is argued that this kind of remittances has the tendency to decrease over time due to the attachment weakening or the return of the migrant with money (Solimano 2004:185). The self-interest motive is increasing in many countries with the rise of investment from migrants to their homeland by buying house which is cheaper than in the country of residence. The loan repayment mainly concerns the migrants who were helped to migrate by the family or the payment of studies abroad which in exchange the migrant would repay his dues through remittances. The co-insurance can be linked to the theory of migration systems discussed earlier in the chapter regarding migration. Indeed, this type of motivation to remit is a strategy to diversify the risk by migrating and remitting in order to support family needs and insuring revenue (Solimano 2004:185).

⁵¹ Besides, at micro-level, remittances are more valuable than at macro level in a sense that the amount of money sent back home go towards individuals, relatives or communities straightaway in contrast with FDI and ODA. As a result, it would bring an increase in household consumption or investment in human capital (Anon 2008).

⁵² Remittances could also be a source of foreign exchange to the national economy by bringing foreign currency to the homeland and also seen as a more sustainable development in a sense that it does not require any loan repayment and indebtedness as remittances is a kind of ‘donations’. It is also argued that regarding poor household in Egypt, it decreases by 9.8% when the household income takes into account international remittances (Adams 1991 cited in Adams & Page 2005: 1646). In addition, remittances constitute a significant part of the incomes and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of developing countries such as Albania, and Morocco (Kennedy 2000:92).

⁵³ They are community-based associations which raise funds to finance projects such as building clinics or schools (Solimano 2004:187).

2000: 92). Nonetheless, according to Freund and Spatafora (2005), the percentage of undeclared remittances rose from 45% up to 65% of formal flows (Cited in Gupta et al. 2009: 105). Therefore, most information about African remittances is narrowed to few countries such as Ghana, Senegal and Uganda (Gupta et al. 2009: 104)⁵⁴. In Sudan, Sander (2003) highlighted that informal remittances amounted to 85% of the total of remittances. The developmental impact of remittances is, indeed, recognised by the international community, scholars and politicians from sources countries and receiving countries. However, believers of historical structural theory argued that remittance lead to dependency⁵⁵. Ratha (2009) and Mutume (2005) also argued that the decline of remittances during crisis will affect dramatically receivers. Furthermore, migrants see remittances as a financial burden (Naerssen et al. 2007: 11). There is also a lack of research regarding the creation of inequalities between those who receive remittances and others⁵⁶. Indeed, Stark (1991) stresses that the positive impact of remittances:

Depends on the recipients' positions in the village income distribution scale, the share of remittances in the village incomes and distribution of the remittances themselves (cited in Solimano 2004:190).⁵⁷

Most of the literature on transnationalism seems to privilege the diasporas' involvement through remittances. Hence, in the integrated world, migrant communities maintain national ties especially migrants from newly independent countries or those in unstable situation. As Bernal (2004) outlined the principle of nationalism and globalisation. Remittances have been studied in the last decades by scholars as a fundamental impact of migration. The money sent back home has positive effects in alleviating poverty, but it also raises the notion of dependency. It would also be interesting to look at transnational communities as a continuous trend or as an imagined one. The Eritrean diaspora is, therefore, an interesting case study in which the theories of migration, transnationalism and the presence of remittances which is

⁵⁴ Therefore, the small amount of US\$4 billion to Sub-Saharan Africa in contrast with a total US\$ 80 billion to developing countries registered in 2002 is debatable (Sander 2003).

⁵⁵ The problem is that if a migrant lose his profession or any other issues occur which impacts the financial status or in a period of recession as the world is witnessing since last year, the pouvoir d'achat decreases consequently, migrants would send less money back home and also the issue of the high cost in sending money through monetary operators which subsequently has a negative impact on the family in the homeland for instance. Indeed, it does not only concern state to state relations but also individuals or communities by relying financially from external sources (Adepoju 2000). "Formal financial services is viewed as a significant impediment to financial deepening" (Guldee et al. 2006 cited in: Gupta et al. 2009: 110).

⁵⁶ By an increase in household investments in education, entrepreneurship and health, the impact is more visible in rural areas, home to most migrants. There is a contrast between poverty as causing migration and migrant remittances alleviating it. Indeed, the economic benefits to the homeland can also have unwanted effects such as brain drain and maintaining poor or failed political structures.

⁵⁷ "In Tanzania, migration is associated with the rapid expansion of information technologies and has led to cross-border migration of skilled workers, service providers and professionals" (Anon. 2007:5).

often not acknowledged in diasporic studies would be critically used in this specific case study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Source of data

The case study of the Eritrean diaspora living in Switzerland is the basis for the research but due to the small amount of materials available; the triangular methods of gathering data will be used. Emphasising on qualitative method in gathering data gives the opportunity to find result through interviews and including quantitative method i.e. graphs and statistics, will permit to back up the interviews' arguments. Interpretivism and Constructivism will be the main epistemologies. Indeed, Interpretivism focuses on a more human approach of researching and there are no boundaries between the researcher and researched (Jupp & Sapsford 1996: 63). The principle of Interpretivism⁵⁸ is less structured and it would be interesting to use this method regarding the Eritrean community by giving the possibility to interpret the information given and to construct a theory. Besides, Constructivism⁵⁹ is linked to Interpretivism as it gives the opportunity to forge an interpretation of the reality. The source of information is a combination of both primary and secondary sources. In other words, primary sources are interviews and secondary sources through textbooks, journal articles and official websites from the IMF, WHO, WB and also Eritrean diaspora's websites. The first generation of Eritrean migrants were the primary focus of the research due to their broader knowledge regarding the homeland as well as destination country. After having conducted interviews of an average of one hour and a half each, it was important to look at the younger generation and also those who migrated recently. Consequently, the analysis based on interviews will help to understand the current theories of migration, diaspora, transnationalism and remittances.

3.2 Ethical and Practical Issues

The use of Interpretivism and Constructivism epistemologies in this research emphasised on the respect of ethics and values. Contacts with human beings from a specific community with its specific culture and history have to be considered. The probable issues would be due to the different political affiliations within the community, not to find enough people available or to participate and if the researched does not feel comfortable to discuss freely which could influence the outcomes. The major challenge was the objectivity about the topic during the

⁵⁸ It is a 'bottom-up method of research with a human attachment, it is more ethnographic approach which promotes social contacts by interacting with people through interview or the use of diaries to "illuminate social meanings and shared culture" (Jupp & Sapsford 1996:61)

⁵⁹ This theory which is associated with Jean Piaget (1896-1980), supports the idea that the researcher learns by their own experiences and takes into account subjectivity and objectivity of the researcher (Cooper 2001:725). Indeed, this method shows that the perception of reality is accepted and it allows the construction of knowledge according to "experienced relationships and interactions" (Cooper 2001:726).

research. It is also important to be aware of the possible disappointment from interviews e.g. not enough necessary information or to overlap in time-taking. The latter is, thus, one practical issue found during the process of finding participants and time management. Moreover, by going back to Switzerland to conduct those interviews; it was important to use the time available efficiently. After having recorded the interviews, the main task was the translation part from Tigrinya to English or French to English. It was challenging but at the same time interesting and brought new personal skills. The method of research from an interpretivist and constructivist approach was useful and necessary concerning the analysis of the impact of the Eritrean diaspora on the homeland and by backing up the arguments through quantitative method to strengthen interviews' results.

4. Analysis

After looking at different literatures on migration, diaspora and transnationalism, this section will focus on the case study of the Eritrean community in Switzerland. Firstly, a brief historical background of Eritrea will be discussed. Secondly, the migration trends of Eritreans will be stressed by looking at different sources mainly from interviews, followed by their transnational networks with other members of the diaspora at global scale. The importance of remittances will also be enhanced and finally, the analysis will turn to the impact on the younger generations living in Switzerland and their vision on Eritrea.

4.1 Eritrea: A Historical Introduction

One of the smallest and newest countries in the horn of Africa, Eritrea⁶⁰ has a population of over four million inhabitants from nine ethnic groups mixed between Christians and Muslims. It has a long history of invasions with the Ottoman Empire in 1557, followed by the Egyptians in 1865 and the Italian colonisation in 1889. However, with the end of World War II, Italy lost authority on its colonies and Eritrea was under the British protectorate in 1941. Meanwhile, other African countries were gaining their independence; the case of Eritrea was discussed at the UN Assembly⁶¹ without any contribution by Eritreans or representatives even though the majority of the population was for independence.⁶² Accordingly, the UN General Assembly, dominated by the U.S., decided to federate Eritrea to Ethiopia in 1952⁶³. The resolution gave Eritrea certain autonomy⁶⁴ but, slowly, the Ethiopian government failed to respect the UN's resolution by oppressing Eritreans, not allowing the use of the language Tigrinya⁶⁵ on the educational level and in written books. The freedom of speech, press and assembly was also suppressed. Finally, in 1962, the Eritrean Federal Assembly was overthrown⁶⁶ and the resistance became predominant. Therefore, an armed struggle already started to grow and in September 1961, the guerilla started to act under the name of the

⁶⁰ See map 1 on appendix

⁶¹ With the participation of the United States, United Kingdom, France, Italy

⁶² The great powers and Ethiopia which interests where favoured in exchange of future profits. The United States willing to implement a military base called Kagnaw on the Eritrean territory. Indeed, Britain acted more as a continuing coloniser rather than as temporary administrators of a territory. They were not there to prepare Eritrea for self determination, but to serve the purposes of the Allied Powers (Machida 1987:22).

⁶³ The UN Resolution 390A in 1950 and implemented in 1952.

⁶⁴ Its own constitution and assembly with thirty-four Christians and thirty-four Moslems Eritrean representatives.

⁶⁵ It was a basic part of their intention to try and create a new Ethiopian race and even in Ethiopia, similar cultural repression was practised against ethnic minorities (Dines 1988 in Cliffe & Davidson 1988:153)

⁶⁶ Haile Selassie was the Emperor of Ethiopia until the coup d'Etat by Mengistu in 1975. It is important to note that historically, the process of decolonization in Africa, the "regime of Haile Selassie was frequently revered as a leading force in African affairs. This situation has led to an extreme isolation of the Eritrean struggle and this in turn to misunderstanding as to its nature and its legitimacy" (Leonard 1988 in Cliffe & Davidson 1988:105). In and the government of Haile Selassie proclaimed Eritrea as the fourteenth Ethiopian province fact, he declared in 1955 that: "there are no internal or external affairs as the office of His Imperial Majesty's representative is concerned, and there shall be none in the future. The affairs of Eritrea concern Ethiopia as a whole and the Emperor" (Cited in Tsegai 1988:74).

Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) led by those in exile in Khartoum and Cairo (Machida 1987:76). Nonetheless, the ELF was not bringing a unified struggle and promoted ethnic and mainly religious divisions among the population, with repressive results⁶⁷. In 1970, the creation of the Eritrean Popular Front of Liberation (EPLF) gave more power to the guerilla by bringing both groups together⁶⁸. The armed struggle was the longest in African history which ended in 1991 and independence was proclaimed in May 1993⁶⁹. Eritrea started its national reconstruction and the implementation of the national currency Nakfa, in 1997,⁷⁰ which was perceived as the continuity of a prosperous economic growth. However, in May 1998, a border conflict with Ethiopia started again in the region of Badme and is on cease-fire agreement since 2000, creating a situation of 'no war now peace' (Healy 2007:5). Eritrea is also facing the UN Security Council's decision of implementing sanctions as a consequence of allegations of supporting terrorist groups in Somalia, which is a question of debate. Reactions by the diaspora have been significant and throughout the research this subject has been outlined by most of the interviewees. Therefore, knowledge of Eritrea's history helps one to understand the Diaspora's role in promoting unity and involvement to the developmental process which is challenged by globalisation.

4.2 Migration of Eritreans

Migration is a global phenomenon in which Eritreans were and are essential actors, an interesting feature which was highlighted in the interviews conducted. Indeed, during the discussions with Eritreans living in Switzerland regarding their reasons to migrate, the challenges they had to face until settling down in Switzerland were also outlined. Indeed, the reasons to migrate among Eritreans cannot be explained in economical terms only. The main motivation to migrate before independence was based on the search for peaceful places, even though since the border conflict, economic reasons are often stressed. This goes in line with Griswold's (2003) statement that the search for better life is part of the reasons for people to migrate. However, as Skeldon (1997) argued, the interviews have also shown that there is no single cause in explaining migration. The long armed struggle, for instance, has been witnessed through its migration flow with the first migrants going to Italy during colonisation

⁶⁷ The ELF lacked a proper ideological and political aims and was led by Eritreans living abroad which did not seem to answer the need of the people's resistance (Tseggai 1998 In: Cliffe & Davidson 1988:76).

⁶⁸ The Ethiopian army was supported by the U.S. in arms and logistics followed by the Soviet and Cuba under Colonel Mengistu's Dergue from 1975.

⁶⁹ The referendum which Eritreans voted by more than 98% for independence and its diaspora was also invited to participate. As Tseggai wrote in 1987: "The EPLF is ever stronger and Eritreans, inside and outside, are more united than ever in their demand for independence and freedom" (Cited in Cliffe & Davidson 1988: 83)

⁷⁰ The national monetary currency named Nakfa, comes from the city Nakfa which has historical meaning as it was never captured by the Ethiopian army during the war.

followed by those oppressed under the Ethiopian domination. The first flow of refugees was registered in 1967 in Sudan, with 27,000 Eritreans refugees⁷¹ (Dines 1988: 155). However, at that time, the flow of refugees was mainly to EPLF's controlled 'liberated zones'⁷². In the late 1980s, while the number of Eritrean refugees reached 300,000 in Sudanese refugee camps, it had attained almost a million globally (Larkin 1981 in EPLF 1981:38).⁷³ Many others, who tried to run away, have been caught by Ethiopian authorities and killed and those who went abroad were automatically considered to be against the regime (Dines 1988:157). Medhin highlighted the method to communicate with her relatives during the war:

They could receive our letters but it could be dangerous for them, so we learned how to write in a hidden way and throughout the EPLF without giving them information about our activities in fighting against the war through our associations.

Eritrean migrants to neighbouring countries such as Sudan and Djibouti were often refused asylum and even those who fled to the Middle East could do so only with a working permit. Medhin for instance went to Barhain with a working permit but once her permit expired after two years she had to return, which was however too perilous. Therefore, she decided to migrate to Switzerland in 1977 and said:

It was not a matter of choice, if I could choose I would have gone back to Eritrea. But at that time you just take what you have. We cannot use the word 'choice', I didn't choose, I just wanted to be somewhere safe.

It was more difficult for people of military age to obtain a passport as Mehari explained during the fourth interview:

I had an Ethiopian passport but its validity was only for one year so I had to go back and to make sure I had to give 50,000 birr⁷⁴ as deposit or someone had to be my

⁷¹ As a consequence of the attack on villages in Eritrea by the Ethiopian army Eritreans fled to Sudan in the Province of Kassala. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, most of Eritreans migrating to Sudan were from the Western regions of Gash Barka (Dines 1988:155).

⁷² The city of Keren, where its population doubled to 100,000 (Dines 1988:155). In the EPLF's control zones, people organised themselves such as in August and September 1981, "a mobile unit of the EPLF's Department of Public Health has rendered free medical treatment and health services to over 1400 people in Barka and Seraye provinces" (EPLF 1981:30). "The EPLF is continuously expanding its public health system throughout the liberated zone" (EPLF 1981:30).

⁷³ Due to the following Soviet-led offensive of 1978, the flow of migration increased dramatically to Sudan and other Middle Eastern countries, to Europe and North America. During the regime of Mengistu the situation of Eritrean refugees who fled from Ethiopia or Eritrea to Djibouti were refused across the border and even killed when reaching the border especially between 1982 and 1983, with over 300 people expelled (Dines 1988:157). In September 1985, 17 people were shot after being put across the border by Djiboutian guards, in spite of the fact that they sought refuge in the country. One group, refused from Djibouti in 1981, were paraded through the streets and the public told to spit on them as spies. In September 1985, a further 17 people were shot after being put across the border by Djiboutian guards, in spite of the fact that they were refugees in Djibouti. Other refused were imprisoned in Dire Dawa and Jimma for long periods of time. In July 1986, Djibouti declared that the reason for the refugees' presence in the country was no longer valid and they had to return to 'Ethiopia' (Dines 1988 :157).

⁷⁴ Birr is the Ethiopian currency.

*guarantor to make sure I will come back. Otherwise my guarantor, who was someone from my football team, would be at risk of imprisonment*⁷⁵.

This brief historical context of migration during the period of war shows the primary reason of migration among Eritreans. According to Cohen's (1997) typology, Eritrean migrants are therefore considered as "victim diasporas", as the causes of migration among Eritreans is more perceived as a forced migration. However, it is different with the new generation of migrants like for example Daniel, who migrated in 2002 to Switzerland. The economic push factors combined with the situation of 'no war no peace', are explaining the new migration trend of Eritreans since 1998. In addition, it is estimated that one-quarter of the Eritrean population⁷⁶ is now living abroad. (Kifle 2007:1)⁷⁶. The interviews show that most Eritreans involved in the development of Eritrea immigrated in the 1970s-1980s, firstly to neighbouring countries, like for example Idriss who, due to conflict, fled with his parents and siblings to Port Sudan, then Kuwait and finally Switzerland. This is similar for Mehari who lived in Israel for ten years before going to Switzerland. The reason why Switzerland was the final destination differed from one story to another⁷⁷. In fact, it confirms the focus of scholars and politicians that migration to the North is not accurate because migration takes place primarily within LDCs. Indeed, main receiving countries of Eritrean migrants are actually Sudan, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia⁷⁸. The focus on migration's burden was resented by Eritreans when demanding political asylum. Indeed, Medhin's application was denied in 1977, she had to appeal and waited three years until she acquired a permit to stay. Idriss had similar difficulties when he arrived in Switzerland; he wished to continue studying but had to wait for a permit before being enrolled. His demand was also refused because Eritrea was considered as a 'safe' country. Western harsh policies on migration are particular felt in Switzerland. In fact, Medhin explained that because Eritrea was not recognized as a country, Eritreans were categorized as 'stateless' migrants;

The Swiss government created a regulation where we had to put a deposit of 3000 Swiss francs each, as a guarantee and in order to let us travel within Europe.

However, most of interviewees appreciate their lives in Switzerland,

⁷⁵ Under the Dergue's declaration in April 1983 it became officially a criminal offence to be abroad without authorization (Dines 1988:143). Relatives of those immigrants are responsible towards the kebele if the migrant does not return to Eritrea

⁷⁶ See table 1 in the appendix of the top 10 countries of Eritreans migration registered in 2005.

⁷⁷ See appendix of the interviews' samples

⁷⁸ See appendix of general information on Eritrea

We have to admit, compared to other European countries like the UK or Italy, Switzerland⁷⁹ is like a pearl.

Besides, most Eritrean participants were university students such as Idriss and Mehari, but as immigrants they could not work in the field of their studies. As Mutume (2005) argued: “Immigrants in industrial nations also face discrimination through policies in the public and private sector that make it difficult for them to earn decent wages”. Hence, the concept of ‘brain drain’ as bringing equilibrium according to believers of neo-classical approach is too optimistic and despite does not contribute to the economic growth of the homeland and in exile. Therefore, the historical-structural theory seems to be more accurate in regards to Eritreans, where most first generation migrants had qualifications which were, however, not recognised in Switzerland. As Medhin, an aid-nurse in Geneva, stressed:

This kind of job is for those who did not study as I did.

As Williams (2006) outlines, migration has a negative impact on the homeland due to the loss of skilled labour and the loss of young, healthy and skilled people. The migration systems theory is more applicable concerning the Eritrean diaspora as their reasons to migrate are a combination of both historical and economical causes. Additionally, the micro level with social networks as ‘globalisation from below’ refers to Eritreans with the importance of mutual aid to new arrivals, as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) explained. As Munck (2009) highlighted, the uneven share of wealth and peace in the world “feeds” migration. To strengthen this statement, table 1 shows that the amount of Eritrea’s skilled emigrants from the tertiary education is 45.8% and 38% in respect to nurses trained in Eritrea during the period from 1990 to 2001⁸⁰ - which is high for a country in its developmental process.

4.3 Eritrean Diaspora in Switzerland: Part of the Transnational Trend

The migration in the shrinking world is a correlation of the global integration which, consequently, remittances generate an income, therefore, development. Eritrea participates in this global tendency through its migration. The importance of the impact of its diaspora in bringing development is a matter of debate and it is important to analyse whether or not, globalisation is positive in terms of development or is it the outcome of underdevelopment and unevenness? Or it may be a combination of both, underdevelopment and development. Indeed, the argument claiming that development does not only concern economic growth but

⁷⁹ Switzerland is the top 6th remittances sending country, see table 2 in the appendix

⁸⁰ See table 1 in the appendix

other factors will be discussed in respect to the impact of the Eritrean diaspora's participation in the social development of the homeland, through transnational networks and remittances. The concept of the "migration-development nexus" will be analysed according to the case of Eritrea in poverty alleviation and by looking at different aspects of development. Eritrea witnessed the significant impact of its diaspora in terms of investment. Even though globalisation has undeniably forged and facilitated the role of Eritrean migrants, it is important to note that the role of the Eritrean diaspora has existed far beyond. Thus, the process of globalisation as well as the motivation of migrants in terms of support needs further discussion. The primary interesting point of the interviews was the commitment and importance of identity among Eritreans in Switzerland. As Mohan (2002) explained, the concept of identity, the importance of solidarity and the myth of the homeland are reflected among the Eritrean community in Switzerland. Hence, it can be argued that the relations between migrants were already strong at the time of war. According to Safran (1998), there is an idealisation of the homeland by diasporas due to their collective memory. The feeling of belonging has enhanced the transnational aspect of the Eritrean community gradually since the 1970s. Certainly, Portes (1999) and Al-Ali (2001) prove how migrants' commitment is maintained by regularly meeting each other and create activities to keep national roots alive. As Al-Ali (2001) highlighted, while migrant communities were increasingly integrating in the destination country, this process was also "accompanied by increasing links with their home country". Hence, most Eritrean in Switzerland and other countries in Europe and North America obtained the nationality of the host country. Conversely, it did not hinder their commitment towards Eritrea. Through associations and activities, they were engaged in the war struggle, and since independence to the national reconstruction such as Mehari who taught Tigrinya to children in Israel. Besides, the outcomes of interviews of the first generation of migrants show that they all have been involved in the community to improve the homeland's situation. Medhin, who was one of the first Eritrean immigrants in Switzerland, highlighted how she was committed in helping her relatives and the guerilla back home:

We had to support our families and the guerilla, it was a moral question.

Actually, many associations were created by the community, like for example the Eritrean workers association in Switzerland or women's and student's associations, all created in 1978. The case of those in Switzerland was not an isolated case. Indeed, Eritrean associations in Switzerland are part of the transnational network. To strengthen this statement, Idriss said:

I have always been a member of associations, already in Kuwait. I have always promoted unity and the importance to work as a team. I was a member of the Eritrean youth committee and even here, in Switzerland, I participate as a member of the Eritrean community.

Likewise, Eritreans in the diaspora started the movement for Eritrean Independence which started in 1975 in Germany. Transnational networks among Eritreans were growing and increasingly influencing the homeland through congresses conducted once a year in Bologna⁸¹, Italy with Eritreans from the diaspora debating the situation in the homeland through seminars and cultural events. Therefore, the Eritrean diaspora was already active before the actual phase of globalisation. However, the little amount of research about this community shows a lack of awareness on how the diaspora can have a significant impact politically, economically and as provider of humanitarian relief. Through their associations, Eritreans were able to organise themselves and to get involved with the guerilla by their own methods.

4.4 Social Development & National Reconstruction through Remittances

One interesting fact regarding the Eritrean diaspora's contribution to development is the main focus on social development – such as women empowerment, the building of schools and the improvement of health care – as well as on the need to reconstruct the homeland before anything else. As the data from the World Health Organisation (WHO)⁸² shows, mortality rates in Eritrea are below the average of the African continent with respectively an average of children under 5 at 80 per 1000 live births, 165 per 1000 in 2004. In addition, life expectancy is higher in Eritrea than the average in Africa - with respectively 58 and 48 years. The diaspora contributes to this improvement through remittances where Eritrea is among the top 15 SSA recipient countries, as figure 2⁸³ clearly illustrates. According to figures released by the IMF, remittances were 30.1% part of the GDP in 2002 (IMF 2003). As Solimano (2004) stressed, remittances are the second most important source of external finance in LDCs. Indeed, as table 4⁸⁴ shows, the amount of remittances to LDCs, has increased more rapidly than aid flows since 1995. As Boucher, Barham (1998) and Tewolde (2005) outlined;

⁸¹ In August 1981, for the 5th annual congresses of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) and the National Union of Eritrean Students (NUES), over 1700 Eritreans attended. Members of the Central Committee of the EPLF, the Central Councils of the NUES, NUEW, and the board of the Eritrean Relief Association in the Middle East, Africa, and North America attended the congresses also. (EPFL 1981:10).

⁸² See table 5 in the appendix

⁸³ See figure 2, where Eritrea is placed at 7th top recipient country of remittances in SSA just after Cote d'Ivoire and before Mali.

⁸⁴ See table 4 in the appendix: remittances since 1995 until 2000 surpassed aid flows as long-term resource flows to Developing countries with a total of US\$450.0 billion of remittances between 1991-2000 and US\$ 385.9 billion of aid flows.

remittances are sources of household income and “lift the community and [...] the national economy. [...] contribute greatly to development of human and social capital” (Tewolde 2005:25). Nevertheless, remittances are not a phenomenon of globalisation concerning the Eritrean diaspora but have facilitated their transnational activities. Indeed, the affirmation by Adams and Page (2005) that remittances are one of those effects of the economic liberalisation and decreasing travel costs is debatable. To strengthen this statement, throughout the interviews, all participants outlined that 20% of their annual salaries was sent to the ‘liberated zones’ from the 1970s to the late 1980s. It was a significant amount and Medhin explained:

Nobody forced us and it is normal to help those in the homeland as no one was doing so. We were sharing our food in order to save money and we were focusing on ending the war so we were meeting and organising ourselves by regulating the amount of money to send to the front.

The remittances sent during the war were the predominant source of income. Indeed, the Eritrean diaspora was in advance in its transnational activities. In fact, the Eritreans questioned, all assumed that their financial contribution has an impact on the reconstruction of the country, the building of hospitals or schools in all areas and the reconstruction of roads, as Idriss answered:

Where I am from, the lowlands, before there were no schools or clinics or even roads. But now, you can find everything and the government implemented the principle that children in Asmara and in Sahel have to have equal treatment. In my region, the school was only up to the 6th or 7th grade, then you had to go far away to continue studying; but now, there are three different schools.

To give few examples, the diaspora in Switzerland was actively participating in the humanitarian association, Suke, a Swiss Support Committee for Eritrea⁸⁵. Medhin was an active member and started participating during the Christmas campaign in 1978:

Sometimes I was standing alone with my leaflets trying to get peoples’ attention on what was happening in Eritrea.

Moreover, Mehari mentioned the fact that:

⁸⁵ SUKE was created in 1977. The aims are to realise developmental projects in Eritrea with the principal objective of improving and sustaining living conditions without distinction of religious or ethnic group affiliations.

Eritreans in Switzerland and other European countries collected money in order to send three trucks into the liberated zones via Port Sudan full of medical equipment, second-hand radiology machine and even shoes for the combatants”.

One important association, the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), has branches worldwide where the diaspora is concentrated. During the war it provided help to women in liberated zones and female combatants e.g. the project of sending a machine for hygienic protection was successfully attained in 1981. Besides, Medhin was active in the association as president, then secretary and also treasury. NUEW contributed to the increase of girls enrolled in secondary school from 17% in 1995 to 35.3% in 2002 (NUEW 2010). Recently, the Swiss branch⁸⁶ invested in the creation of a centre for women and their children in the region of Tesseney. As Ghenet said:

We plan to build a training centre for women in Tesseney. It is like a place to learn skills in order to find a job. It is also a place for social education, on the problem of genital mutilation for example. This project costs around 400,000 Swiss francs and we have already collected 50,000 Swiss francs.

Another important association was the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA), created in 1976 by a group of Eritrean refugees in the UK. Since then, its activities are still significant in the development of Eritrea under the name Eritrean Relief Rehabilitation Agency (ERRA)⁸⁷. It is important to note that the Eritrean diaspora in Switzerland and elsewhere also participates in the 2% net yearly salary sent through official methods to the Eritrean government. Remittances are seen as a means to provide for the living of relatives which confirm Tewolde's findings from the household consumer survey that three quarter of respondents received remittances from abroad and around 89% had relatives in the diaspora (Tewolde 2005:26-27). The case of the Eritrean diaspora validates the affirmation by Kennedy (2000) that transnational migration is not just a cultural and political process but one which acts as central agent of economic globalisation in its own right. The Eritrean diaspora is a particular case, due to its significant involvement in the homeland influenced by a government which is aware of the economic and social advantages. Hence, all interviewees explained that the 2%

⁸⁶ The project by NUEW was implemented at transnational level: each diasporic communities responsible for a specific region.

⁸⁷ It was located in Khartoum, Sudan until the independence of Eritrea. It was the only organisation able to provide relief and rehabilitation programmes to the Eritrean population living in the liberated areas under the control of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. There was an international network of ERA offices located in Europe, Canada and the US, Australia and the Middle East. The international offices raised moral and material support for the struggle in Eritrea. See pictures of ERRA projects in appendix. http://www.era-uk.org/about_us.htm

was put in place when Eritrea gained independence, with the primary aim to rebuild the country. As Medhin said:

At independence it was easier to send money through Citibank. It was a question of moral as we left Eritrea and then when we went back in 1992, everything was ruined, the country was completely destroyed, everything, everything, roads destroyed, no medicines, no schools especially when you come back from Switzerland it is hard to believe so it is normal that we contribute by our methods.

However, the 2% was only one aspect of the diaspora's contribution after independence. Small projects, such as helping victim combatants in re-integration and demobilization, started already in 1991. Moreover, transnational networks among Eritreans were particularly resented when the border conflict with Ethiopia started in 1998. As a matter of fact, huge amounts of money were sent at global level by the diaspora to the government and also to relatives and displaced people. As Mehari explained,

Again all the ancient combatants and youth went back to the front and we, in the diaspora, we were all contributing in sending even more money from around 500 to 5000 Swiss francs each, it depended on each person. We were also demonstrating to denounce the war. We couldn't accept this to happen after independence, so it is normal to help even more, financially and morally.

Bernal (2004) outlined that in June 1998, in Copenhagen, the Eritrean diaspora fundraised \$1000 per household - in Riyadh, this equaled a one-month salary; In Edmonton (Canada) \$26,000 were raised during one meeting and Saint Louis (United States), in July 1998, donated \$55,000 in only two hours (Bernal 2004:3). The homeland was aware of the huge help from its diaspora and settled a bank account where the diaspora could donate and it was "beyond anybody's imagination" (Beyene 1998 cited in Bernal 2004:3). Eritreans in Switzerland have also been assisting martyr's families since 2004. The transnational project was put in place in diasporas living in Europe, North America, Australia and the Middle East. The aim was to help those who live in Eritrea and lost members of their families and could not afford a decent life. The diaspora's willingness was significant and organised by quota for each country⁸⁸ i.e. in Switzerland, 300 families⁸⁹ needed to find donors on the long run. Daniel, who came to Switzerland, in 2002, commented:

⁸⁸ In April 2010, the diaspora living in Australia collected \$45,000 between the members for the fund of martyr's families.

It is nothing, here, in Switzerland, [...] when you go out one day; you spend the triple of what you can give for a month, so why not using the money for someone who needs it more than I do.

Undoubtedly, the Eritrean community uses globalisation in maintaining national identities and contributing in all aspects of Eritrea's development. Moreover, it is also important to note that the diaspora was also involved in the referendum for independence, with over 80,000 Eritreans voting from abroad, and in the draft of the constitution (Al-Ali et al. 2001: 583). Actually, the principle of globalisation regarding the diminishing role of the state is the contrary regarding Eritrea. It is an interesting phenomenon of migration which reflects the Eritrean Diaspora and it is clear that historical background matters in order to understand transnationalism (Duara 1998; Mintz 1998 cited in Al-Ali et al. 2001:579).

While globalisation is thought to render borders meaningless, transnationalism to render nationhood passé, and the internet to have ushered in an new era of openness and connectivity, the activities of the Eritrean Diaspora and the Eritrean State point to the ways that nations not only continue to matter, but how nations can be constructed and strengthened through transnational flows and the technologies of globalisation (Bernal 2004:3).

The state can have an important influence on its diaspora by, for instance, allowing the dual citizenship, creating a bond system to buy a house and by organizing festivals during summer. There are also problems highlighted by proponents of the historical-structural migration theory: remittances are both, the cause of underdevelopment and instrument for development in the home country. In respect to this approach, and as mentioned in some the interviews, remittances lead to dependency from below. Remittances from Eritreans abroad as financial aid form a significant portion of Eritrea's income and are vulnerable to any fluctuation. Consequently, the dependency syndrome is reflected onto the homeland. Indeed, the interviewees mentioned how it is difficult to send money to their relatives, especially in the period of recession and that relatives in Eritrea do not necessarily understand where the money comes from. Is often "easy coming, easy going", as Idriss said. In fact, Eritrean communities perceived financial help as a duty and it can be hard to sustain the same amount of money in a regular basis. This was especially evident when Medhin said,

⁸⁹ The principle is to send money to a person, could be for instance an orphan or a widow, amounting of US\$1 a day.

We have four children; all studying so we cannot send as much money as we could before. But some solutions were put in place by some migrants who bought a number of cows or opened a small shop in the village for their relatives [...] we had to make them more independent somehow.

Indeed, the claim by Akyeampong (2000) that most SSA countries are (at the macro-level) dependent on international institutions such as the IMF but also (at the micro-level) on the civil society and the diaspora - is reflected among the Eritrean society. Additionally, figure 1 by Sander (2003) regarding remittances' distribution in Africa shows that SSA countries are the least recipients. This might be due to the lack of official records of remittances and as Adams and Page (2005) explained, the unofficial systems of sending money devalues the amount of remittances and under-estimates its impact. Regarding remittances in Eritrea, there is also a lack of data when it comes to the money sent to relatives through friends, by unofficial money transfers or during visits back home. The average money sent depends on the sender's capacity, but according to the interviews around 500 Swiss francs are sent monthly. Idriss explained that he sends "around US\$1000 during Ramadan or Eid" and Daniel sends between 1500-2000 Swiss francs a year. Nonetheless, the impact of war and subsequently economic downturn nourishes Eritrean migration flows. Even though there are difficulties among the diaspora to contribute financially, all interviewees among the older generation perceived remittances and transnational activities as commitment and duty to the national reconstruction. However, keeping the transnational linkages and activities requires certain discipline, regulation and continuity, especially among the young generations born and raised abroad. It was, thus, important to complete the research among them to evaluate if the willingness and contribution of the elders are reflected also by the new generation. Hence, the youngsters have the dual challenge of balancing a 'double identity'. The outcome of the interviews confirms that they are integrated into the country they grew up but at the same time aware of their origin. Clearly, the contribution of the elders has influenced the younger generation, as some of the people interviewed mentioned. Mehari, for instance, said that in Switzerland, language were taught to children on a weekly basis and musical events are organized which consequently created a network among the youth. This trend is also significant in other countries where the Eritrean diaspora is spread out. Besides, during the interviews, they all outlined the importance of knowing the origin and the history and of visiting Eritrea in order to keep contact with relatives. For example, Senai who was born in Switzerland explained:

Most parents 'force' us in a good way to learn about our country in Tigrinya classes, during long holidays in Eritrea etc. which gave us the opportunity to see where we are from.

Internet has facilitated this trend, as Yodith, who has Eritrean friends from Sweden, UK and the US outlined. Therefore maintaining the roots as an important part of identity was expressed in the interviews. This is not surprising, when one looks at the number of youth associations in Europe, like for example the Eritrean Youth in the UK, the Eritrean Youth Association in Switzerland or the Youth People for Democracy and Justice (YPFDJ)⁹⁰. The importance of identity was also discussed with Yordanos who was also born in the diaspora;

Eritrean culture and history have so strongly influenced what I am now that I would certainly see myself belonging to the Eritrean identity than any other one. And I believe the motivations of the older generation to keep the national roots of their children are more than justified. The new generations, being born in the Diaspora, not only live far away from their national roots, but are as well confronted every day to assimilate to a completely different culture, mentality and way of living.

Further, Semhare mentions the importance of continuing what the parents did in the past:

Our parents integrated in the Swiss society but at the same time they wanted us to have the knowledge of our origins. For me, their missions were accomplished and now it is our turn to keep what they have constructed.

Moreover, concerning the question on the contribution of the youth in the reconstruction of the homeland, and if they had done any research on Eritrea or willing to work there; most of the interviewees responded positively as Senai during its studies in economics or Yodith did a project about the question of identity among Eritreans. Senait has also the willingness to accomplish short missions as nurse and to continue fundraising and meeting other Eritreans as the parents are doing. They seem to be aware of their cultural heritage due to the transnational linkage with the homeland but also within the diaspora as a whole. It is interesting to see how globalisation has facilitated the promotion of the national identity among Eritreans which is in contrast with the principle of the cosmopolitan world. Indeed, national roots are still predominant among Eritreans and it would be interesting to see how the younger generation will maintain national ties alive in this global order. The younger generation will certainly

⁹⁰ a governmental-led association which has branch at global level and every year organize a one week conference for the youth where seminars, musical events and history are presented to youth coming from everywhere.

face more difficulties, as they were raised outside the country of origin and thus do not feel completely affiliated to Eritrea. The case study of the Eritrean community living in Switzerland is not a single case but part of the transnational network among Eritreans. Conceptualising identity in the global era is clearly facilitated, but, as seen earlier, the Eritrean diaspora shows that interconnection between transnational communities existed long before the “era of globalisation”. Indeed, contributing to the homeland depends heavily on the historical context. Hence, 30 years of war and 17 years of independence have to be contextualized in this kind of nationalism, which can be seen as a contradiction to current global trends where the state’s role is diminishing. However, the developmental process is important and therefore, the ‘economic power’ of the diaspora is recognized by the homeland, which paradoxically promotes at the same time ‘self-reliance’. The amount of remittances before and after independence is significant, but research on this community needs to be studied further. Economical support through the official 2% remittances but also the unrecorded to relatives are, without a doubt, leading to social improvement in terms of education and health care (Kifle 2007:2). Nevertheless, the influence of globalisation and cultural shrinkage will be the main challenge among the new generation, whose mobilization and contribution to the development of the “homeland” might differ from the previous one.

5. Conclusion

The history of Eritrea is a complex and unknown one and therefore, the amount of sources on the newest African country lack some important research in understanding the current situation and the importance of its diaspora in the national reconstruction. Indeed, the long armed struggle which was a movement from the people was long neglected by the media during the Cold War. Therefore, the popular support from those in exile was predominant and important in providing financial, political, social and moral support. Indeed, the Eritrean diaspora started to migrate massively in the 1970s mainly to neighbouring countries and then to Europe, North America, Australia and the Middle East. Rapidly, Eritrean migrants started to meet each other and contributing in helping their relatives and the guerilla through the creation of associations and events. The diaspora living in Switzerland is only one part of the global network between Eritreans. Indeed, the transnational relations among Eritreans were already strong at the time of war and show a 'globalisation from below' with one common reason; the feeling of belonging to the Eritrean identity. Therefore, the integration of Eritrean migrants at global scale was translated through remittances mainly, which were significant during the war with 20% of salary sent per year and thereafter, at independence regulated at 2%. Remittances have provided in support during the war and in the process of development since independence with, for instance, the fund to martyr's families or the improvement of health care and education are translated in statistics from the WHO for example. Therefore, the role of diaspora in bringing development is significant in Eritrea and it is important to see development not only synonym to economic growth. Hence, the development process in Eritrea started from 'zero' in 1993 with the aim of providing basic needs for all and gradually developing through education, health care, and economics and politics in the future. The outcome of migration can be positive for the homeland but it is important to bear in mind that the context of Eritrean migration was due to underdevelopment and oppression and as a result created a diasporic movement. Therefore the linkage between development and migration has to be carefully looked. Hence, migrants contribute to development but they originate from underdevelopment. It is a complex cycle where underdevelopment, unevenness and oppression become source of development through migration and its subsequent transnational ties. Nonetheless, the Eritrean government is aware of the potential of its diaspora in national building and therefore numerous policies privileging or facilitating their activities have been put in place. Hence, promoting self-reliance from outside forces is a matter of debate when looking at the 'globalisation from below' which is significant in Eritrea even though

globalisation from above is restricted. Moreover, the dependency syndrome is also created through the massive financial input from remittances. Nevertheless, being dependent on diaspora can be advantageous rather than depending on international institutions especially during the process of nation-building. Thus, the diasporic consciousness depends on the migrant communities' commitment and therefore, the new generation of Eritreans who are born outside the country would have to decide whether or not affiliation to the Eritrean identity will be strong enough in continuing what the first generation did. Hence, the outcomes of interviews seem to show an awareness of the concept of identity for both the elder and younger generations even though it can be at different levels and more difficult to the youth confronted to the globalisation forces of cosmopolitanism and global integration. The movement of people which started mainly in 1970s is challenged in the global era and the promotion of development through social improvement has been the focus of Eritrean diaspora according to the interviews. The long term impact will be interesting to analyse but it would take time before seeing real improvement in all aspect of development. However, the current situation where the UN Security Council will implement sanctions would probably hinder the contribution of the diaspora and 'backward' the Eritrean civil society. This is the reason why, the transnational network of Eritreans has been witnessing in recent months with the demonstration held on the 22nd of February 2010 in Australia, Geneva, Washington and San Francisco. The massive mobilization of the diaspora shows the still importance of belonging to the Eritrean identity by the diaspora. It would therefore be interesting to discuss further the case of Eritrean diaspora as an example of globalisation from below and advance as it started while before the actual phase of globalisation.

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6. Appendix

Map of Eritrea

URL link: http://maps.grida.no/library/files/eritrea_topographic_map_001.jpg



Table 1. Source: Ratha, D. & Xu, Z. (2005). [Online]. Migration and Remittances Factbook. *World Bank*.

Link URL: www.worldbank.org/prospects/migrationandremittances

Eritrea

Sub-Saharan Africa		Low income	
Population (millions, 2006)	5	Surface area (1,000 sq. km, 2006)	118
Population growth (avg. annual %, 1997–2006)	3.7	GNI (\$ billions, 2006)	1
Population density (people per sq. km, 2006)	45	GNI per capita, Atlas method (\$, 2006)	200
Labor force (millions, 2006)	2	GDP growth (avg. annual %, 2002–2006)	1.6
Urban population (% of pop., 2006)	19.8	Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line (% of pop., 2004)	..
Age dependency ratio	0.89		

Emigration, 2005

- Stock of emigrants: 848,815
- Stock of emigrants as percentage of population: 19.3%
- Top 10 destination countries: Sudan, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, United States, Italy, United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Sweden, Australia.

Skilled Emigration, 2000

- Emigration rate of tertiary educated: 45.8%
- Emigration of physicians:
 - a) 12 or 8.6% of physicians trained in the country (*Source: Docquier and Bhargava 2006*)
 - b) 98 or 36.2% of physicians trained in the country (*Source: Clemens and Pettersson 2006*)
- Emigration of Nurses: 497 or 38.0% of nurses trained in the country

Table 2. Remittance Sending Countries Globally Top 15 annualised Average 1990-2001

Source: Maimbo, & Sander, C. (2003). *Migrant Labor Remittances in Africa: Reducing Obstacles to Developmental Contributions*.

URL Link: <http://pdfcast.org/pdf/capturing-a-market-share-migrant-remittance-transfers-commercialisation-of-microfinance-in-africa>

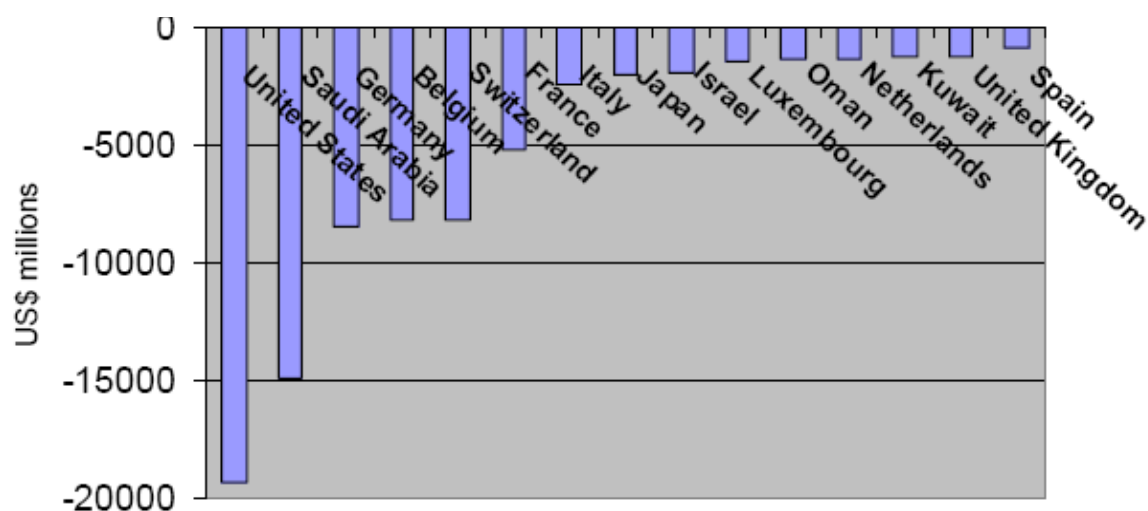


Table 3. Remittance flows to Developing Countries 2006-2008 (\$ billion)

Source: Ratha, D. et al. (2008). *Outlook for Remittances Flows 2008-2010 : Growth expected to moderate significantly but flows to remain resilient*.

Link URL: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1110315015165/MD_Brief8.pdf

	2006	2007	2008e
(US\$ billion)			
Developing countries	229	265	283
<i>(as share of GDP, %)*</i>	<i>(2.1)</i>	<i>(2.0)</i>	<i>(1.8)</i>
East Asia and Pacific	53	58	62
Europe and Central Asia	39	51	54
Latin America and Caribbean	57	61	61
Middle-East and North Africa	27	32	35
South Asia	40	44	51
Sub-Saharan Africa	13	19	20
Growth rate (%)			
Developing countries	18%	16%*	7%
East Asia and Pacific	13%	10%	7%
Europe and Central Asia	23%	31%	5%
Latin America and Caribbean	18%	6%	0%
Middle-East and North Africa	10%	20%	8%
South Asia	20%	11%	16%
Sub-Saharan Africa	35%	42%*	6%

Figure 1. Remittances to Developing Countries

Source: Maimbo, & Sander, C. (2003). Migrant Labor Remittances in Africa: Reducing Obstacles to Developmental Contributions. Page 6

URL Link: <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/wps/wp64.pdf>

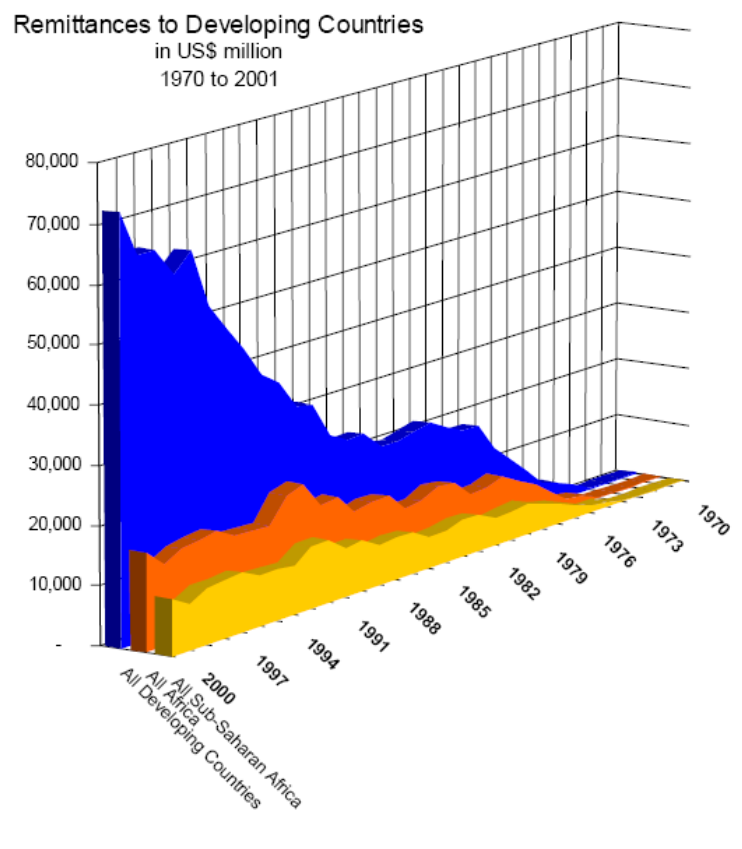


Figure 2. Remittances Receipts to Sub-Saharan Africa ‘Top 15 Recipient Countries’

Source: Maimbo, & Sander, C. (2003). Migrant Labor Remittances in Africa: Reducing Obstacles to Developmental Contributions. Page 8

URL Link: <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/wps/wp64.pdf>

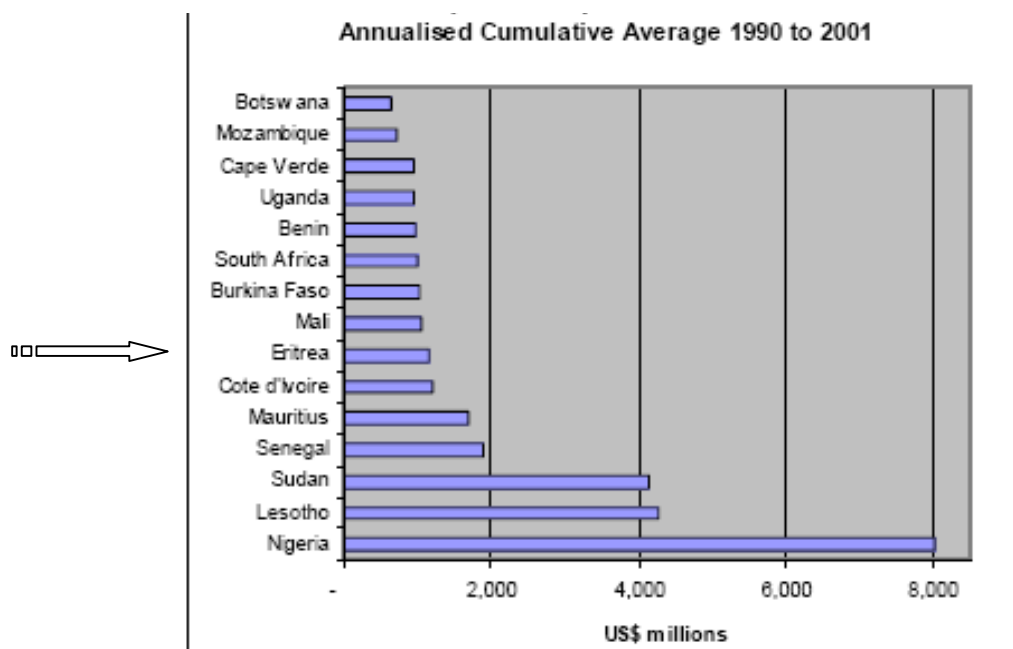


Table 4. Long term resource flows to Developing Countries 1991-2000
Source: Remittances: IMF, various years; all other flows: World Bank 2001; year 2001 is World Bank estimate.

URL Link: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1110315015165/MigrationDevelopmentBriefingNov2006.pdf>

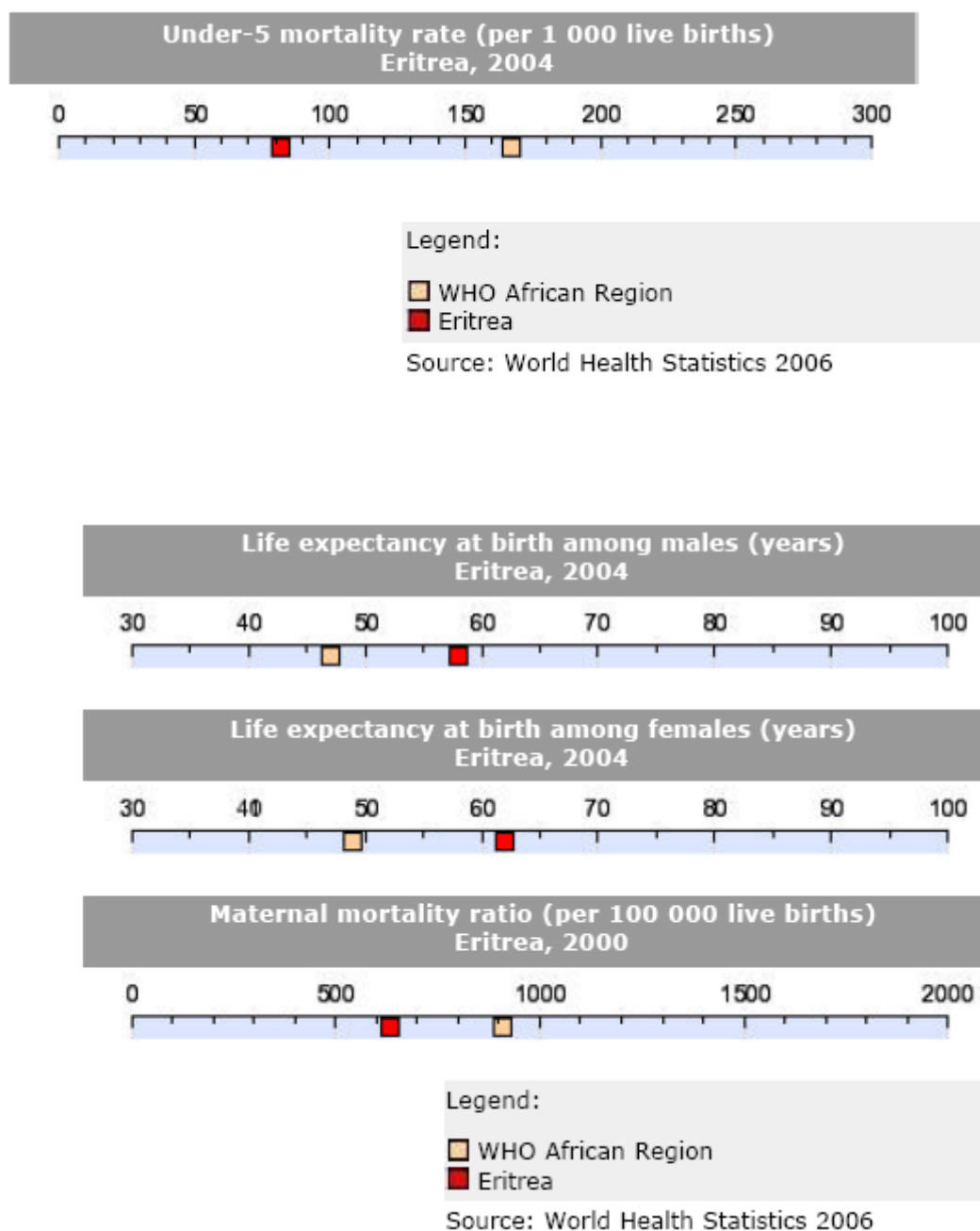
(current US\$ billions and per cent)^a

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	1991-1999 total
Remittances	33.1 (21%)	37.2 (19%)	38.9 (15%)	44.1 (16%)	50.6 (16%)	54.9 (15%)	65.0 (16%)	60.9 (15%)	65.3 (20%)	-	450.0 (17%)
Aid flows	49.5 (32 %)	46.4 (24%)	41.7 (16%)	48.1 (18%)	46.2 (15%)	39.7 (11%)	35.6 (9%)	38.4 (10%)	40.3 (12%)	41.6 (12%)	385.9 (14%)
Other official flows	11.4 (7%)	10.1 (5%)	11.9 (5%)	-0.1 (0%)	8.9 (3%)	-7.8 (-2%)	7.2 (2%)	16.2 (4%)	5 (2%)	-3 (-1%)	62.8 (2%)
FDI	35.7 (23%)	47.1 (24%)	66.6 (26%)	90 (34%)	107 (34%)	131.5 (36%)	172.6 (42%)	176.8 (45%)	185.4 (56%)	178 (49%)	1,012.7 (38%)
Other private flows	26.3 (17%)	52.2 (27%)	100.2 (39%)	85.6 (32%)	99.1 (32%)	147.8 (40%)	127.2 (31%)	103.5 (26%)	33.8 (10%)	79.2 (22%)	775.7 (29%)
Total	156.0 (100%)	193.0 (100%)	259.3 (100%)	267.7 (100%)	311.8 (100%)	366.1 (100%)	407.6 (100%)	395.8 (100%)	329.8 (100%)	361.1 (82%)	2,687.1 (100%)

Table 5. World Health Organisation

Source : WHO. (2006).[Online]. Mortality Country Fact Sheet : Eritrea.

URL Link: http://www.who.int/whosis/mort/profiles/mort_afro_eri_eritrea.pdf



Samples of Interviews

Interview n°1 *translated from Tigrinya to English*

- Thank you for accepting my invitation for an interview, could you introduce yourself, talk about your own experience a little bit, when did you migrate from Eritrea and how did you end up in Switzerland?

To begin with, Thank you for meeting you for this interview, my name is Idriss and I am 49 years old at this time. I am Eritrean, I was born in Nakfa.

In 1975, I left Nakfa to Sudan, I stayed there one year, and I was around 14 years old because at this time there was the war of the Ethiopian Derg in Eritrea. So my family and me, left to Port Sudan. There were no opportunities to study there. Then I got a scholarship from the EPLF to study in Kuwait in 1978. For 2 years I studied Arabic language and continued in my field as a technical Chemist water treatment that I finished. I then started working for 1 year in one water treatment power station as a chemist. In 1990 Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait and at that time, I have chosen to run away by car from Kuwait due to the war. I went to Bagdad; there was no other solution because Kuwait was under Saddam Hussein. So I stayed 2 months then to Istanbul, Turkey by car also.

I was working; I had 2 cars in Bagdad that I sold one to afford the travel.

- It was a long way

I had the will to continue my study. I wanted to go to London but I didn't get any visa. The only visa I had was to Switzerland so I went there and asked for Asylum seeker.

- How did u get a visa to Switzerland?

It was not a visa to Switzerland, it was a transit one but I decided to stay here stay there. I actually came by airlines. Why I have chosen Switzerland, there were three main reasons: I already visited the country in 1986 when I was still studying in Kuwait. During summer and I really liked it.

- Why?

I had a friend here, he explained to me the Swiss system that it was a peaceful country and neutral politically, didn't have history of colonialism and I was just looking for a peaceful place to stay. I then asked for asylum seeker. And I didn't find a visa in London, those who were studying with me in Kuwait went to London, they did their masters and even PHD. London was a question of Studying because it was in English which I was speaking the language so it would have been easier. I am talking too much?

- Did anyone help you when u entered the country? Did you meet the Eritrean community? Do you have any family members in the Diaspora?

In Saudi Arabia I have a brother; he helped me when I was in Bagdad to go away from there. When I arrived in Switzerland, it was the Swiss government that took care of me. I first arrived at Zurich, I slept at the Airport then they transferred me to Geneva in a center for asylum seekers. I stayed there one month; I did an interview and stayed in Geneva. I was living in a Hotel for 1 year.

- At that time, the image you had of Geneva was it the same as before coming?

Oh no it has changed, I couldn't find a school and I asked the Swiss government and they told me that without any legal papers I couldn't study at all. But then, I knew a woman who was married to a Swiss man, his friend was a professor at the university so then I could start studying at the University in Science.

- So you found by contact ?

Yes but the problem once the professor left, because I didn't have legal paper yet I was not allowed to go into laboratories etc because I was not insured. And they told me, if you want to go back to your country, your country is free but here you didn't come for studying.

- Oh, they told you this? But when was it?

It was in 1993. So you can go to your country and work there. Here there are no opportunities for you to work. This is when I started not to like the country. Because it was the ministry of Kuwait who were paying the scholarship so I told them I just wanted help to study then to go back from where I from. They made me feel bad and I started to have a negative image. I wanted to get out of the country but I didn't have any papers to get out, no money either and the weather I was thinking that it is cold and Geneva is surrounded by mountains which I don't really like.

- So how did you do to 'survive'?

They were helping me during 2 years but after 1993, I started working at the Hospital as temporary worker with Manpower. Then the Swiss government told me to live the country because Eritrea was now free once I had a working contract. So there were 2 points : 1st they told that I couldn't study because I don't have any permit then secondly, when I finally found a job they told me you have no rights to work and that I had to leave the country. Therefore, in my eyes, Switzerland cut my chances to study and to work and this is why I didn't like this country.

- Do you think that it is still the same now, for those arrived recently for Eritreans or even for any other migrants?

No which is bad now, in a period of 6 months for those who just arrived from Eritrea, they give them a permit to stay. It is mainly a political interests because you know when we, Eritreans, when the Ethiopian government was killing us; the Swiss government was expulsing many of us. So it shows that the Swiss government is taking a political actions or positions. Indeed, here in Switzerland every Swiss national man has to do the military service

so by accepting those Eritreans that ran away from doing the military service is against their own rules. So what Switzerland says and does is different.

-So you didn't get any help from the other Eritreans at the beginning?

No I found by myself and the surprising thing is that the woman who didn't allow me to continue study she then helped me to find a job. I thanked her but I said that she wouldn't have to help me to get a job if she would have helped at the first place about studying which would have helped my country in a better way. I had the idea to save money, get papers and then to move out from Switzerland but I then got married so my plans changed afterwards. Thus, my projects changed and after more than 4 years far from what I studied so I was thinking to keep in the business field to help my home country and since I was 15, I always been involved with the EPLF, because the EPLF was helping with my scholarship etc. Even when I was in Kuwait, during summer I was going back to Eritrea and stayed with the guerilla camp in Sahel.

- How did you go back there?

Kuwait to Sudan and then by car to Eritrea, easy. I was always in contact with Eritrea and I continued to be a member of EPLF here in Switzerland. In 1995 I got married with an Ethiopian woman. Even though she was Ethiopian, love is love you cannot control.

Laugh...

-So you didn't have problem about the fact she was Ethiopian.

Oh no never. In 1996, my son was born but then we divorced 10 years later. This is my short history.

From Sudan to Kuwait and here, I always keep contact with my family in Nakfa, Port Sudan and Jeddah (one brother). My older brother he finished studying in Bagdad but then went back to the Eritrean guerilla and has been killed during the war. I visit them once a year or every 2 years it depends but I go to Eritrea every year. So those in Eritrea I see them more often than those in Sudan. I call them once a week as well. I do help them too.

- So do you visit them sometimes?

Yes I do as much as I can.

- Why is it so important to keep contact with your family members in Diaspora or in Eritrea? How come is still the same? How do you keep contact?

Yes I do keep contact mainly by phone or I try to visit them once a year or every 2 years. In our culture, Family is the most important, the relationship between the families is the most important and for me to live good I need my family to live good too. If my family is well then I can be fine. This is something that is going to generation. It is something sacred in our lives. An Eritrean believes on his country and his family. This is something very important that every Eritrean as a tradition is passing from generation to generation.

- How do you help them? Financially? And how many times a year and amount? Is more for those in the Diaspora or in Eritrea?

Until I arrived in Switzerland it was my brother in Jeddah who was helping us because he had a good job. But then, when I started working in Switzerland and my father died now and now I am responsible to my older sister and my mother in Eritrea. Those in Sudan, 2 sisters they have their family but I still send them money twice a year or when they need like around 1000 dollars during Ramadan or Eid... For those in Sudan is not every month it depends of the situation but those in Eritrea, Nakfa is about 250CHF per month.

- How do you send the money?

I calculate for a year when I go to Eritrea or if my mother goes to Sudan, I send the money there for her and also by the official way.

- Always officially?

Yeah because I am one of those who promote to send via the government so I have to.

- So with this money, is it for necessity means or could they save from this money? A house?

No it is for everyday lives but now in Nakfa my brother from Jeddah and me have built up a house for my mother and my sister and the money is a lot for them when you exchange the currency.

- Is it hard for you, is it a kind of burden especially nowadays with the inflation etc?

I appreciate to send to my mother and sister in Nakfa but for those in Port Sudan, when they called me because now they go to university and it doesn't seem to be enough for them. I don't do much for them this is how they see. It is hard with the period of crisis especially

- Do you think that they understand how hard it is to send money?

NO they don't, they see it as easy money. When you send to them 1000 dollars it is spent for superficial things- Easy come easy going- but am planning, calculating when I sent. I don't take my son to restaurant for example. They don't work for it and they don't get tired this is why they don't understand

- So are you very careful in your everyday life?

Yeah I have to go through my program everything, planning to take my son on holidays and now I just got married so I have to plan financially.

- Concerning the 2% remittances net salary per annum, do you contribute? When did you start?

I started since I got the help from the Swiss government before working and I continue now. I see it as my duty. Because if I help my family, I have to make sure that Eritrea is there. The

government doesn't force me, everybody do what they want but its will. For those who shed their bloods; this is the minimum that I can do when my brothers and sisters are still under the burning sun protecting our lands on the front night days and nights. This is the minimum that I can do for my country. It is a will and it is my pleasure.

- For what is the money used for? Military? Health care? Education?

The 2% of remittances, we can't talk a lot about it but to give information, it can be for transportation, education or health care. For instance, where I am from, the lowlands, before there were no schools or clinics or even roads. But now, you can find everything. Because the government was saying, the children in Asmara and those in Sahel they have to have the equal treatment. For those who do not believe they can buy their tickets and go have a look, this is one important aspect that is it impossible to deny especially health care access and education. For instance, I'm from Nakfa as I told you, when I was there, the school was until 6th or 7th grades but now, there are 3 different schools.

-So the 2% contribute to the social aspect mainly?

Yes it does.

- To go back to the theme of Diaspora, how much do contribute, are you part of Eritrean association, president or something?

Yes, I don't know if it's a matter of chance but I always been member of committee even at the University in Kuwait. I always like unity and working as a team. I was member of the youth committee of Eritrean, I always had the will. Even here in Switzerland I participate as member of the committee and now for 4 years I'm president of the association 'higdef'.

- How many members are involved?

There are almost 10'000 Eritreans in Switzerland.

- Oh really, 10'000?

Yes, when counting the children and the new arrivals. Look from 1997 until 2009, 8'219 Eritrean arrived so if you count with the 2'000 that we were.

- What about the youth? The new arrivals ?

Because there are new and secondly there are young. So now we have created the youth Eritrean organization in Switzerland. Our aim is to bring the youth who just arrive from the homeland to be together with those who were born here who came very young like you. To erase the gap between the youth because you are different in a sense the way you grew up. Those who just came have to be treated the same and taken together, to help them to integrate in the society and be part of the Eritrean community. So we have different committee, the women's associations, and the youth etc. all together, to bring the youth together as one and bring a revolution and keep contact with their country of origin. Of course, there are those who try to work against it but it is the way it is.

- And what about the activities, events for New Year's Eve, independence day? Your committee is organizing them; can you talk about it a bit more?

Exactly, Eritreans have to know their culture, tradition, language to get to know their roots especially the youth and then it would help to understand and to be able to grow up stable and to be integrated. So we are doing different cultural events, for instance, women's day, martyr's day, Independence Day, 1st of September even for Easter or Eid etc. So for us we want to promote our unity Muslims and Christians, and all ethnic together as one unity from diversity. Our diversity is our pride that put it at a positive way this is our first goal and our beauty. One structure, one people and we did. WE are the people of WE CAN

Laugh...

- Are there any projects that you did with the society like the Women's association in Tesseney?

The women's association we also part of it about the Tesseney project or any other. If I can mention about the women's association; it is very important because for us women as mother and as part of Eritreans, they brought us here, they participate in the war and for us, and the women are equal to man. They brought equality through the war...they died together; they were even on the front line. What is worrying us, is that it does not pass through the next generation like yours u know. I am not saying that I want u to cook like your mum but by your system, the fact that the generation has better education because could be able to study here in Switzerland and we wish the youth to use their skills for the development of the country. Generation to generation not to forget our homeland and to contribute and u have the advantage to know 2 cultures. We don't want from generation to generation to live in Eritrea but Eritrea to live in you. We started the Mekete conference since the war border. The decision for instance by the UN as shameful and us the diaspora has to mobilize as it is against us.

- So about the sanctions, what was the reaction of the Diaspora?

For instance, in Switzerland, us, we are with our people. The UN 50 years ago was already against us. They brought lies to bring sanctions and we going to stand against it, its fabrication. Once we have the recommendation we going to speak to the community.

- What about the young generation? What are you expecting from them?

Very good question; our aims is to keep what the parents have constructed and to continue with the younger generation. Who organize you could do something in Eritrea as voluntary work and that's what makes us happy to know the youth are involved or keep contact. For instance, some young people went to speak to the UN as part of the Eritreans two weeks ago who were in the war. And, for instance, the YPDJ which regroups youth in Diaspora and Eritrean in a conference once a year.

- Diaspora and the development of the homeland, how does it contribute?

It does contribute; the government gives the opportunity for diaspora to get involved. But the problem of no war no peace situation at the border, all our efforts have been frozen, all the young forces are at the front line so its frozen. So the diaspora is helping from their abilities. And the government has been able to build up roads from the investment of the Diaspora. Hence, Eritrean which is 18 years old is helped by those in exile and there are no other countries where diaspora is so involved.

- The people outside have to continue to help the development of the homeland, right?

Yes exactly, I have the hope.

Interview n°2

- Thank you for participating to my research, could you introduce yourself?

Yes, my name is Medhin, I am 57 years old today, I was born in Eritrea and I grew in a farmer family in a village at 80km from Asmara, Adi Genu am a daughter of farmers.

- When did you arrive in Switzerland?

I arrived in 1977.

- Did you come from different transits or directly before arriving here?

I didn't come directly from Asmara; I went first with a fake working permit to Bahrain. I stayed there 2 years working as a nanny for children of the royal family. I was travelling with them with their passports even though it was not a real one but at the end recognized.

- How old were you?

I was 19 and I came to Switzerland because Bahrain does not accept refugees so at the end of my fake permit I had to go back to Eritrea which was in the middle of the war. However I had a visa which was still available only to Switzerland so I was obliged to go there because if I asked for asylum seeker in another country they wouldn't accept because they would see that I already had a visa for Switzerland. There was a stamp already so that's why I decided to stay here.

- Was it your choice or you would have preferred somewhere else?

I didn't have any other choice, In Eritrea.

Laugh..

But at that time, you just take what you have, there was no choice. We cannot use the word "choice". We couldn't choose, I didn't choose we just wanted to be somewhere safe.

- What was the reason why u left Eritrea?

Because of the war and it was difficult to go there. I was a student in High school in Asmara and I was not allowed to get out of the city so the only way to get out was to take the flight. Because I knew many girls were taken to prison. At that time, young people were easily questioning why the uncle was strangled or this one taken to prison. Why so much suffering or why this village was burned out by the Haile Selassie military. So of course the youth was demonstrating. We had the mahber shoate. We had to be careful, not to meet in big groups and if someone was arrested the young had to leave and join the guerrilla. Some of them even from rich families, in case to get prepared; they were walking around without shoes on stones, to feel the pain. If the CID, this is how we used to call the Ethiopian soldiers, called them the ears. We had to be careful.

- How did u get out from the country?

By networking I got a passport, I took the plane from Asmara to Jeddah, Jeddah Darhan, and Darhan Bahrain. With Ethiopian Airlines and then Gulf Air.

- So you had an Ethiopian passport?

Yes I did.

- What did you do with this passport?

Oh I think I threw it away when I arrive in Switzerland. I asked for asylum seekers and once they gave me the B permit I might have thrown it anyways I am not even sure if it was a real one.

- When you arrived in Switzerland, how were you welcomed? By the Swiss government or other Eritreans?

No there was no one to welcome me or to help me. I was alone. As I knew that I wouldn't be able to go back home, I saved money from my 2 years work half to my parents and half for me. So I took French class straightaway, I didn't even know I had to ask for asylum seeker.

- Where did u stay?

I was in a hotel, the now *armée du salut* which before was Hotel Union.

- So you came by airplane from Bahrain?

Well, not exactly, I came from London.

- Oh really, how come?

By airplane I didn't come directly from Bahrain to Switzerland, because I had one aunt in London and I stayed there one week. It's due to the Bahrain passport and Ethiopian on the other which I had visas from the time I was travelling with the family.

- So there was no one you knew in Switzerland?

Yes, I started French lessons but it was too expensive so I started working in the Nigerian Mission for 3 months as nanny. Then I asked for Asylum seeker in April 1977 and it was refused to me. So I had to take lawyer etc to appeal and I had the permit B in 1980.

- Oh 1980, and what did you do until then?

I was living with the nunes; I found it was a room, place for girls. I was doing everything in there, cooking, cleaning etc. But also taking care of kids, because they had a nursery as well where I had to speak mostly in English as they were children of diplomats.

- So then you had your B permit?

Yes I did, I was always working but once I got my permit I changed the job. I was aid nurse with the nuns for almost 2 years. Then in July 1980 I started working at the hospital as aid nurse.

- Did you need any diploma or something to work there?

Yes. I tried. As we were Eritreans and not recognized because the country was not existing but Ethiopia yes. So the Swiss government created this regulation where we had to put a deposit of 3000CHF, which let us travelling in Europe for instance.

- But how did u afford to pay it?

Oh we were working, saving and we negotiated to pay little every month. We didn't have choice at least we could be able to move. To find aid nurse, nanny, Here in Switzerland, it is for those who didn't finish their studies. But Me I finished the only problem; I didn't do the last exam of metric to recognize my diploma at Ethiopian level because I had to leave. I showed them my certificates so they asked to participate to the course of first aid by passing an exam. But I didn't go to French classes, I tried before but I couldn't because I had to pay. So when I did the exam, I only had 1.8 out of 6 for my grade in French, (laugh) but the rest was very good! then they told me to take intensive course for 6 months to then pass the exam. But the problem was how? I had to work to send money back home, I didn't have any savings, had to continue my engagement about the situation in Eritrea.

For us, at that time, we had the mentality that until our families were not going well, education was not necessary until the situation was not better. U know many Eritreans who went to study in Russia or anywhere, they were going back direct to the guerrilla they went all the way via Sudan. So for us, at this period, schools weren't the most important, we had to support our families and the guerrilla. It was a question of moral

- So how did u keep contact with your relatives back home?

We could communicate by phone mostly and sometimes by letters but we had to be careful.

- Yeah, you couldn't write everything you wanted?

Yes they could still received but it could be dangerous for them, so we learned how to write in a hidden way and throughout the EPLF especially when my mother was ill or my brother. We were not saying how we were living etc. And they were some older ladies who migrated earlier at the time of the Italians who married Arabs or Europeans. They kept their Ethiopian passports and they were able to go to Asmara and we were giving them money to give to our families, we called them our 'mama'. They were hiding the money or putting on their names. Well we did so many things to hide but I don't need to go further. But this is how we sent money back for a long time even sometimes we were sending at once for a year long.

When I arrived in Switzerland, we were only 8 young men, me and another girl and 5 mamas so we had our system as we were not so many.

- So how much contact did you have with your relatives at that time? Monthly or?

Oh yeah monthly I Was trying to call them at least once a month and we were calculing the money to send every month on how they could survive with the amount we sent, I was getting around 1200 CHF at that time and we were sending 20% of our salary to the front. Nobody forced us but it was obvious for us and normal to help those in the homeland.

- It was a lot.

Yes, we were even eating together to save money.

- So when did you start sending 20% of what u were earning?

So in 1977, May I met the Eritreans. Firstly by an Eritrean lady in a market place, well she is originally from Ethiopia. She came to me and said oh you are my daughter. During summer were meeting more often but even between us We were a bit scared at the beginning, these men for instance, they were from children of rich families.

So at the end of 1977, I participated with the SUKE Christmas campaign which was a Swiss based organization. I was surprised that a Swiss man knew about our situation and that was the first time I had hope that someone cared about our situation. Because you know, when we arrived the Swiss authorities told us, don't talk about your issues, Swiss people don't like, they will send u back to Ethiopia even any ordinary people were saying "don't say your political asylum seeker" so u just wait and u see in Newspapers nobody were talking about the Eritreans. So we lost confidence and we were scared. But then, after this campaign we started to get more organized and at the beginning we were sending money which was not 20% but then us, we were meeting all the time, we started to organize and to bring the diaspora initiative with the 20% to regularize and we were just focusing on ending the war. Even no one wanted to get married in Exile, we couldn't accept to have a life as refugees when our homeland is in war and not to have children refugees. What is that? We couldn't accept that. So we were sending 20% until end of 1980s. But then the EPLF told us that we had to be careful about the amount, that we had to live normally so then it was less money but still sending all the time because life was getting hard in Switzerland. AS we were discussing every year in a congress with member of the EPLF in Bologna so we rectified it.

- So if we go back, why is it so important to keep contact with those in the homeland or in the Diaspora?

It is a question of equilibrium. I can't imagine living without thinking of them, It's not that I don't like living in Switzerland but in order to like it here, If I don't have contact I couldn't live well, ill-at ease. If my families were telling me that they were fine, the situation was ok. I would have the envy to live, to go to restaurant. If I don't find anything in the post or no one answered the calls, I was feeling ill. I was just going to work and my colleagues knew straightaway if I was unhappy even still now and I wouldn't be 100% there, I have my family, my children but when I know that something bad is happening back home I am unhappy and I can't think about anything else. And I was single for almost 10 years, my colleagues or my Eritrean friends that we were meeting every weekend would know it.

- So the family in Eritrea, so you help them financially now and which method, how often since the independence?

Well straight after the independence, there was the creation of an office which facilitated us to send money back home or even Citibank. But then we were going often and take money from our friends in Switzerland to their families for instance. Everybody was helping each other. We had to, It was a question of moral as we lived together to see Asmara as we left it and then all ruined...the country was completely destroyed, everything everything... when we went back at independence, nothing, roads destroyed, no medicines no schools. It was hard especially if we go from Switzerland We have to admit. Yeah if you compare with other countries in Europe like Great Britain or Italy, Switzerland is like a pearl so it was a shock when we went back and u see that Asmara there is no even enough water and we had to help, the feeling was so strong and send money to our relatives to survive and improve their daily lives was just normal for us.

- So sending money back home was normal

Yes of course. You know at the time of Mengistu, especially when Massawa was taken by the EPLF, people didn't even have food to eat or some of them there were not allowed to go out, the oppression. So we even see people taking piece of woods and burning it and try to make coffee with it because there were not allowed to go out and bring woods for the cooking. U can imagine, there was nothing, nothing in 1991. Mais brule avec du mais and 2 3 graines de café ils buvaient ca. Il faut le quotidien, oui pour survivre

- So it was a question of survival, so with the money send, with the years, did it help to invest or save money?

Yes some people, in order not to have to send money all the time and not being dependent on them. There were buying them like numbers of cows or having a small poulailleur or a small shop in the village. Because for the diaspora we had to think of our families back that we couldn't help all the time especially that we started having family, we had to pay for the travelling and sending them money, so we had to make them more independent somehow like us we are 4 children plus the parents so imagine already for 6. And we had so many handicapped due to the war and the lack of access to health care. At the time of Haile Selassie there were vaccinations etc but then nothing with mengistu for 17 years, the repression they were forcing us to buy like oil expired, sugar which was black because expired which was left at the red sea and some people were eating that and many other things even polio etc. So us in the diaspora we contributed to improve the situation even at independence.

- So do you send money via the 2%?

Oh yes, we started it through different projects first For example, with the return of refugees from the liberated zones.

Oh no already before, because the 2% started in 1992 but in 1991 already we started small projects straightway or like for the help of blind people, martyrs' families. We decided in 1993 that by counting from 1992, the diaspora should contribute to the 2%. It was for the

reconstruction and nation-building of the country. Because you know, some people were sending a lot, some nothing it was irregular. So at least it was regulated and we didn't want to do only small projects but to be recognized officially and being more in a long term development of the country and stayed in the history. From 1992 we started

- So are you still contributing?

Yes I will continue.

- Why, is it like an obligation or ?

Yes for us, as Eritrean we see it a devoir, because the war killed more than 68'000 eritreans and the destruction was enormous and no even one country helped us. So if we have Eritrea now is thanks to those who died those who became handicapped. There are not here anymore, they didn't have any salary nothing. So for those who paid their lives, this is how we perceived it, for Eritrea to be recognized so now we have to accomplish their will. It is not because they just told us to do but it is for us too, our equilibrium, for our kids who were born outside who had dual citizenship or just Swiss national to know their roots where they are from and not be lost. They have roots far away but that they can help them to construct themselves. That's what I think.

- For what is the 2% is used for in Eritrea?

For the reconstruction, roads, infrastructure, hospitals, administrations, schools. A lot has been done. Like in my region, they were not even one barrage to control the water flooding and now 150! We had many small lakes now. Before, I had to walk 10km to go school my whole primary school until junior high school but now, but now the children in my village; the school is just behind my family house where I was born and even the clinic it is like 200 meters away.

- Now, within the Diaspora, are active in associations etc?

It is not just now, I am one of those who created the association in Switzerland, in 1978. At the beginning it was association des travailleurs erythréens en Suisse. But it already started earlier but it was a different name, Eritrean in Europe for liberation. They were not very active but then now, we started only with 10 people between the student and workers and then in June, we created as well the women's association. This group was able to create the association and to make it official in 1978 as Union nationale des femmes Erythréennes branche en Suisse, des travailleurs branche en Suisse because they were one branch in different country in Europe 12 countries actually. Every 3 months we were meeting up, between the responsible. I was president, then treasury or secretary. Meanwhile I was also board member of Suke the humanitarian association which I am still member and contribute 200CHF per month still even though I am not active like before.

- What kind of activities did you do?

First it was for us, to have the equilibrium in the community

- So to keep the community unified?

Yes, it was not against other but be unified and to simply feel well. And our associations apart from the 2%, we take projects especially in period of crisis. Or like for instance, the martyr's day which is on the 20th of June. We started a project which became big but was not obligatory, it is sending \$1 per day per person to family of martyrs for 2 years.

- It is \$1 per day or month?

Yeah \$1 per day for 2 years you can help one person, then change or you keep helping the same person.

- When did this project start?

After the border war, in 2002.

- Are there any projects with the Women's associations?

Yeah, but there is a membership fee but for instance during the war, we bought a machine to create modes for women which is still working well for the women combatants. Then we also participate for the radio 'Dimsti Hafash', meaning voice of the people, we help to create it apart from the 20%. There were also the 'Sheda', the shoes for the combatants because they didn't have anything to buy themselves shoes. And now, since independence and currently as Eritrean women in Switzerland we have the project of a training centre for women in Tesseney. It is like a place to learn a job, or social education awareness about genital mutilation. This project cost around 400'000 CHF.

- Does the Swiss government help for this project?

Yes, but we already saved 50% and it is on the name of the women association with help from the government as being an association.

- Concerning the young generation, what are you expecting from them regarding Eritrea and the community in Switzerland?

I hope that my children and their friends will continue our activities for a better future for our families back home and to contribute to the development of Eritrea which is still new and it needs the people to get involved. We really wish that the young Eritreans will maintain the cultural heritage and they will teach their original language to their children aswell.

- Concerning the sanctions we just have heard about a few days ago, what was your reaction?

I was very angry. Once more the United States and the UN show how they really want the Eritrean people to be oppressed as it was before. They never helped us and now with the sanctions, it is just a way to go to war through silent means because at the end of the day, we can see in the history of politics, sanctions had tragic impact on the people. Look just at Iraq in the 1990s and what about now? We, Eritreans, are going to mobilize to make people aware of the unjust decisions and not even proven.

Interview n°3

- Selamat, thank you for this interview today, could you tell me a bit you, your age, where were you born, when did arrive in Switzerland, how did you get here, any other destination first, the reason to migrate and why did you stay in Switzerland?

First, my name is Mehari, born in Damba in 1952 a village in the region of Asmara. I went to school in Prince Mekonen and I finished my high school in 1972 then I passed the metrics examination and I went to Addis Abeba to continue my studies at University Level where I stayed for a year and a half in science major in mathematics and minor in chemistry. Then, due to the regime of Mengistu which arrived in 1974, after his military coup. Then it was decided that all youth had to go to the forest, do the military or work in farms but us we were students so then they send military troops inside the university campus and they started killing students so we had to run away and I went back to Eritrea in April 1974. But then, In Asmara, I was playing football but unfortunately, the war was going on because the guerilla was at the door of Asmara, EPLF and ELF. So surrounding Asmara, so then they were a lot of youth arrested or killed, many young people ran away from Asmara to other parts or to join the guerrilla whether ELF or EPLF. Then people were waiting for independence and in 1975, In Asmara I was member of the young association of EPLF while studying. We were hiding to held meeting, to give leaflets, information.

In 1975, after playing game I took a shower and I got a cold, I had to stay one month in hospital and my family didn't even know where I was, they thought whether I joined the guerilla or I was killed. But then some players went to meet my parents. Then my grandmother died at the same time and then they met me at the hospital and they didn't want to tell me. Anyways concerning the situation, because you know every night almost 10-20 young people were disappearing. This is why people were deciding to join their brothers and sisters at the guerilla.

After 1974, people were divided between ELF and EPLF and there were conference about it like negotiation that I went to follow. The EPFL were giving a kind of education about the situation in Eritrea but also everywhere, why this and that country was given independence in Africa and why not us etc. They were making us understand and learn about history, politics.

But before that, in 1940s during the British we had division with those promoting Eritrea for Eritreans with Aboy Woldemariam and Islam or Andinet. AT this time, Aboy woldemariam was wanted by the pro Ethiopia but one European living in Ethiopia who warned him that they were going to kill him so Woldemariam and few others ran away to Egypt. They started in the diaspora to bring awareness about Eritreans. But anyways, in 1952, people were expecting independence but the UN decided differently even to divide Eritrea between Sudan and Ethiopia. They didn't have alternative so Eritrea became a federation of Ethiopia. So we had our flag the blue one and a parliament. And slowly, they started to oppress the Eritrean people and not to respect the UN decision of being autonomous. First, by prohibiting the language Tigrinya or any books burnt in our languages then they started to violate our rights and finally in 1962, they came with military to the parliament to take it away. The Ethiopian army was saying at that time "Imbiale Kara" and "Ishi Ale- Bira nestio" in Amharic. It was

their slogans so in other words, those who refuse to leave, we use knife and those who accept we have biers. Then the Eritrean flag given by the UN was putting down. People were discouraged. There was demonstration by the workers and the youth association all these period from 1952. They were strong because there were around 200 industries from the Italian and many were taken away by the British. IT was to make Eritrea as economically not viable therefore had to be part of Ethiopia. So then the UN has not say anything and the armed struggle started in 1961. In 1975 they almost liberated all Eritrea, Keren, Mendefera, Barentu, Tessseney, Adi quala.

- Ah the main cities were liberated.

The first city to be liberated was 1976 until independence, they have tried but it was our “degen” in Sahel. Yes a part from Massawa. But in 1977, with the help of Russia, the Ethiopian Army came with a strong military offensive so in 1978, the guerrilla had to retreat and leave the cities that ere liberated. Because they couldn’t afford to lose more lives so they retreated in Sahel in November. In 1981, those who were with the ELF became one party with the EPLF. It was impossible to be divided; they have to be altogether to be stronger.

- What about the diaspora? What were the people abroad doing?

At that time, in the diaspora, 1970, they started to influence the guerilla. Even those like Woldemariam earlier but mainly after, the people in the diaspora they were unified and strong.

- Where were you at that time?

In 1970s I was still a student in Asmara as I told you earlier.

In 1981, those who studied outside Eritrea were coming back to help Eritreans. In 1974, the diaspora started the movement NAE, Eritrea for independence which started in Koln, Germany.

- What does NAE stand for?

“Eritrean Natzenet ab Europa”: Eritrean Movement for Independence and in 1975 they did the first congress in Bologna to organize the association the secretary, treasury etc... and there were the same in America, the NASA. They were helping financially and materially to Eritrea, like medical equipment and to bring awareness to humanitarian organizations. Also doing political propaganda writings which started in Italy then in London and also in US to let the diaspora and others know about how the situation was. The 1st congress where member of diaspora participate with EPLF in 1978.

- Where was it held?

In Sahel and then 1989 there was the 2nd congress where those with the ELF who were working on their own, they got together with the EPLF and they called it “Sagem”.

So me, in 1975 because I was ill, I was not able to play again so I went back to Addis Abeba,

- Oh you went back?

Yes it was the only way to go out, so then when I arrived there I had a visa which the football coach and other in the team helped me to get one. So I received a visa to Israel and a passport.

- Was it a real passport?

Yes from Ethiopia, but the validity was only for one year so I had to come back and to make sure I had to give 50000 birr as deposit or someone had to be guarantee that I will come back, or they sell your home.

- So how did you do?

The one in charge of telecommunication helped me and was my guarantor.

- But wasn't it a risk for your guarantor?

Yes it was but with the political situation, it was impossible for the Ethiopian army to control everything to check if we are back or not. They were focusing mostly on the guerrilla, where the combatants were.

- When did you go out?

I went out in April 1976, I went to Greece first and because I didn't have a greek visa, it was only transit, they didn't allow me to go out.

- And what kind of transport did u take?

Airplane, Ethiopian Airlines but then I arrived in Israel with the reason to explain the historical place of Jerusalem as the religious place. My visa was only for 3 months and I couldn't go out to Europe with it because you need a permanent resident which they refuse in Israel. I did one month of visit of the historical places then I started to meet other Eritreans who were living there.

- How did you know?

Oh I knew that members of the EPLF in the diaspora were living there and I even met one of my classmate from 10th grade in Asmara. Everybody thought that he went to join the guerrilla but he found a job on a ship so he left to Israel. He helped me to understand the system there and to meet other Eritreans and because I just arrived during conference, I was explaining the situation back home and I renewed my membership under the EPLF in Israel of the Eritrean workers Association under the umbrella of the Eritrean workers association in Europe. In 1977, people in the diaspora were optimistic about the situation in Eritrea, everybody thought that we were close to independence as we were contributing to sending money back as 20% of our salary.

- How did you send money?

Through the office of EPLF in Rome and then, I went to the Bologna congress in 1975 where every Eritreans in the Diaspora participated, there were sport, cultural events and even political leaders from the guerrilla explaining to the diaspora how the situation was, how it was going etc..

I went to Switzerland in November 1987 as I was married for a year with my wife living already in Switzerland and the engagement was in 1985.

- And how was it in Israel? How long did you stay?

I stayed there 10 years. The problem was the question of permit as you may know they don't accept refugees. First, I learned Hebrew for 6 months and then I found a job in a hotel in Elat, for 2 days I was doing cleaning but then when they checked my CV they changed my position to Receptionist. At that time I had no visa but the management they gave me a work permit but to travel I needed a passport and the passport, through contact I took out the Ethiopian passport which I had to pay.

- So is it the way you were able to go to Bologna?

Yes and I could go back to Israel with my work permit and anyways I didn't want to have the Israeli passport because then I would have to do the military service etc. Anyways, afterwards, I started to take courses in catering and gastronomy and in a year and 3 months, I was taking lessons between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and the lecturers were from the Hebrew University. It was precisely, hotel management, administration; I did some internship in maintenance, bar restaurant etc. And once I did my certificate, I became assistant director in food and beverage.

Meanwhile, I was member in the association as chair person, secretary and treasury as well. I was helping the new Eritreans to find jobs or languages and even to the children born in Israel we were teaching them Tigrinya. We were like 250 Eritreans active in the association and many went back.

Then when I arrived in Switzerland I continued with the workers association and the Eritrean Swiss Association started in 1983. There was also the creation of SUKE the humanitarian organization held by Swiss actors which was doing different campaign, giving leaflets. So this relief associations were very active and for instance; Eritreans living in Switzerland collected funds to send 3 big camions via Port Sudan with medical equipment, second hand radiology machine, a machine/oven for baking bread or the shoes for the combatants for example.

- Very active, when was it exactly?

It was mainly between 1980-1990 and even for women, all the diaspora contributed in sending a machine for modes for women in the front. Another important about the diaspora, its aims was to be unified because of the armed struggle; discipline was seen as the key for stability within the community, helping each other, learning about politics or geographical aspect, about the cold war what is socialism and imperialism. We wanted the diaspora to be

educated and to know about history, politics and economics of the world at that time. So we were meeting each other once a week to discuss all these aspects.

Then, in Bologna, 10000 of Eritreans were meeting every year for 7 days. There singers from Eritrea coming, seminars and the question of Eritreans that have to have education was very important etc. and we were helped by the Bologna commune, workers union to provide tents, a hall.

- So about your family in Eritrea, did you have contact with them at that time and how?

It was mainly by letters once a month or if by phone twice a month and letters just once every 2 months it was safer by phone and because I was sending money to them, because it was expensive for them. When I was in Israel, within Asmara there were some people in charge of giving to relatives or also to older women that could go to Eritrea more easily. And sometimes, some were coming just to visit for religious reasons so I was giving them for the whole year to give to my family back home.

- Oh so it means that you were trusting them?

Oh yes yes.

- Were there any problems?

Oh just once but it was fine afterwards.

- At independence, how did you have contact with your family?

Until 1990, until Massawa was liberated then we all knew that independence was coming soon, so all Eritreans were getting prepared and everyone was helping, intellectually, financially, physically not just under the EPLF. It was a strong campaign.

Then in 1991, 24 May, Eritrea was finally liberated. So then the contact with relatives was much easier as we were going to visit them every year, the first time was in 1992. We were happy to see our relatives but everything was in ruined when we went there but then when the combatants came back, there were already reconstructing the country.

The contact by phone and letters still continue and to help was much easier even to send money as we were taken with us.

- Which methods did you use to send them money and how much?

We had a lot of relatives and we had to help them, so we were leaving them money for a year, at least we were trying like \$500 or per year like \$1500 and around \$100 monthly sent and when it was needed through the Bank UBS, I was doing a transfer to the account of EPLF office in Rome.

- Is it easy to send money, is it hard to afford it and do you think those back home they understand it?

Yes we have to make them understand that they cannot be dependent financially only on us in the diaspora and not to spend the money unnecessary and to try to work.

- And do they invest or save from this money sent?

Yes some of them buy a home or it is bought from the relatives in diaspora and it becomes their home or opening a small shop. But important, in 1993, there was an official referendum held by the UN and the European commission to ask what the Eritrean people wanted whether independence or be part with Ethiopia. So even those in the Diaspora had to vote and it was obvious that after 30 years of war, the massive vote showed at more than 90% the will for independence and Eritrea was recognized as an independent state. Then also, when the draft constitution was done, the diaspora was asked to show to each community members and to give feedback, remarks and critiques about it in 1997. It was like courses to discuss the articles to improve and agree with it. But with the start of the war in 1998 just had stopped the process.

- What about the 2% contribution from the diaspora?

It started in 1992 and there were also projects such as creating the Eritrean TV channel (ERiTV) or to help the victims of war, the forestation of the country so more generally the rehabilitation of the country like roads. So the 2% was contributing in all aspect of national-rebuilding and you can see it from your eyes the use of the 2% remittances.

- Since when are you contributing?

Since the beginning, it is actually 2% of your net salary per year, so it is according to everyone capacity. Then suddenly, in 1998 the war started in Badme with Ethiopia even though it was going well the situation between the 2, in May the 7th 1998. So again all the soldiers and ex-combatants went back to the conflict. And us, in the diaspora, we were all contributing sending even more money, doing demonstrations to denounce the war from minimum 500CHF to 5000CHF. People could not accept that after having independence to get back to war so money was not the issue it was seen as normal to help even more financially and morally. And now, with the question of the sanctions, which are completely lies we don't know where do they find that we support terrorism and so on. And now diaspora does not accept that, it would harm the people and the diaspora is standing against it.

- Regarding the associations in Switzerland, what is your role?

The main association is the Eritrean community in Switzerland with the main places in Geneva, Lausanne, Bern and Zurich. It is about bringing the Eritrean together socially, culturally in order not to lose its languages, its origin, to pass to the children the knowledge of the language and to be able to communicate when they go to Eritrea and to help when member of the community is facing any problems. There is also the women's association and the youth one.

- And what about the Martyrs' family?

It is for those that they do not have anyone to help them because they lost someone during the war. It is like having a family and to help financially. It was a project asked to the diaspora on how they could help. So those in America one quota was given, those in Australia the same, and the same with Europe. For instance, here in Switzerland the quota given was around 300 people that needed help. It is voluntary and every person \$1 per day is given for 2 years and they are also helped by the government but it is more like a support and to become like their families, their brothers or sisters, or mothers or fathers and to visit them or calling them or sending letters to make sure they are fine. And the money it is sent through the ministry of social welfare by first passing by the embassy. Some people are supporting one or 2 or even 3 families.

And you, do you contribute to it?

Yes my wife and me we helped 2 women since 2004 and when we will have the chance we will go to meet them.

-Where do they live?

They are living in the region of Senafe.

- Why the diaspora and how does it contribute to the development of the homeland? How important is the diaspora?

1st there is the 2% remittances that still continue to contribute to Eritrea through official direction and it is in medeb meb'at. And secondly, the remittances to relatives, building houses, going back to visit which is a big tourism, like 25'000 to 40'000 Eritreans from the diaspora go every year so it does contribute to the economy but it depends, it can vary from year to another year especially with the economic crisis, the diaspora could not afford to travel as much as they could.

- What expectation does the diaspora has about the young generation?

The young generation has to study or work in order to empower themselves and to use their skill to help by their own method to the homeland, this is very important for Eritrean parents. To know its country of origin, to take over the old generations to continue in helping in the developmental process of the country this has already started.

- About the sanctions, we mentioned earlier quickly but what do you think about it and how did the diaspora react?

Something that they were no justifications, it was something to put the country down and its people by the UNSC. So us outside, we have to mobilize and show what the truth is to the world.

Interviews from the younger generation:

Interview n°1

-Thank you for participating, I appreciated that you take your time to participate even though you are busy!

Oh you are welcome.

- Can you please start by introduce yourself, your name, age?

My name is Daniel, I was born in Asmara, Eritrea and grew up there until 15 years old. Then I moved to Sudan where my brother in US helped me financially, then to Italy and then because I didn't like the life in Italy for 6 months and I knew some people in Switzerland so I came to Switzerland, they put me in Basel in a camp for asylum seeker then I was moved to Geneva after 2 weeks, because I was under 18 and it took me like 1 year and a half since I left Eritrea. I started school but I wasn't able to continue so I started working. While I was working, I also became member of the Eritrean association. After 4 years, end 2006 the Swiss government gave me a permit to stay in Switzerland so then I started working in cleaning then I started in barber shop and I like it.

- Do you have contact with your relatives back home?

I have contact with my parents back home and we have contact by phone. I sent them money from time to time also.

- Ok, so is it hard for you to send money back home and at the same time, provide for your living in Switzerland? Do they understand it back home?

There, yeah they don't but you know they are my family, I save money and instead of spending my money unnecessarily, I send it to them. And Because I like my country, I also contribute to the 2% remittances.

- And regarding the contact you have with your family back home, how often do you have contact?

With my brother, he's a student in computer science in 2nd year so with him it is easier to keep contact online or be emails but with my mother it is always by phone.

- So all your family is in Eritrea mostly than in the Diaspora?

Yes they are almost all there.

- So how do you send them money? Which method do you use?

The money, I usually give to people that I know who travel there or through the embassy mainly I give to people. I usually send around 1500-2000 CHF per year and then they just change it there.

- And what about the association, which one are you member of and since when?

I am member of the youth one and the general one as the Eritrean community in Switzerland. I am not an active member in a sense that I don't have a specific role but I am there to help when they did for events or any information.

- Why?

My generation of Eritrean, we need to know our language, what is our country and to understand the difficulty there and the good things. Me I know everything about Eritrea so those who grew up here, when they go back or listen to the eldest, it will bring them awareness and the will to help to contribute to development and it is important in order to keep our country of origin otherwise we could lose it, it is still a new country.

- Therefore, with those who grew up here, do you see any difficulty to understand eachother? To integrate?

There are many things, sport for instance is a way to bring relationship between the youth in the diaspora or events like musical events. This is the way to get to know eachother and to meet up with the community. It is true that we grew up differently and of course is the fact to be Eritrean that bring us together.

- Those in the diaspora how do you think they can contribute to the development of the homeland?

The most important is if we are studying and working, we develop eachother first and then one day to work in helping the country it is already a hope and to speak up for Eritrea as a recognized country and show the real Eritrea. If we are all going well, even the image that we could give about Eritreans would be positive. So by just even paying the 2% or to help the martyr's families which I fully participate since I am working I send \$30 every month, which is 1chf per day, when u go out once u spend much more so it is nothing for us, instead of spending to go out I prefer to help.

- Ah when did you start to contribute to the martyr families?

It has been a year and for the 2% since I'm working.

- So have you heard about the sanctions that the UNSC want to impose on Eritrea, what was your reaction?

I am not very into politics but all Eritreans are not happy about it, it is our families which will suffer. Everybody is concerned; Eritreans do not like their country to be touch.

- So what should the diaspora do?

They should be united together and speak up for Eritrea and to keep what the older generation did to help the development to the new generation by our methods.

Interview n°2

- Hello, thank you for participating at this quick interview, can you please tell me your name, age and what you do you do, where were you born?

My name is Yordanos, I was born in Geneva, I am 23 and I am currently a student in Politics.

- How many times did you go to Eritrea?

Well, I think I went there around 6 times.

- Do you feel like you belong to Eritrean identity or to the one you live in? Why?

Even tough, I was not born in Eritrea and I actually never lived there, the Eritrean culture and history have so strongly influenced what I am now that I would certainly see myself belonging to the Eritrean identity than any other one.

- And are you active in associations?

I do participate in Eritrean associations and activities like organising parties or attending conferences.

- Do you keep social contacts with other Eritreans in Europe and elsewhere? Why?

The same associations act on a global scale. By participating to some of the events and conferences, it has been easy to meet other Eritreans living in Europe or elsewhere. Since then, I do keep contact with some of them.

- Would you like to be part of the development of Eritrea? Why?

I would love to help in the development of Eritrea because of my interest in this cause and because of the feeling that it is also our Responsibility to be part of this process.

- How important is it for you to know about your country of origin in terms of culture, language, history, politics and economics?

It is extremely fundamental for me to know about my culture and social, political current situation.

- How do you perceive the motivation of the older generation to keep the national roots to their children?

I believe motivations of the older generation to keep the national roots to their children are more than justified. The new generations being born in the Diaspora not only live far away from their national roots, but as well are confronted every day to assimilate to a completely different culture, mentality and way of living.

- What was your reaction regarding the sanctions that the UN Security Council imposes on Eritrea? Did you participate somehow of the demonstration (Geneva, petition)?

My reaction to the Sanctions imposed on Eritrea was of complete anger, disappointment and disillusion. I took part to many meeting in regard of those Sanctions before and after their imposition and to the demonstration in Geneva.

- What do you think the youth could do to improve the situation in Eritrea? Have you ever thought of working there (temporary or for some time), doing projects etc?

One way for the youth to contribute could be by going back to Eritrea and bring their skills. This could be done by participating to projects or creating new ones that somehow could help in any way the life of Eritreans living in the country.

- Have you done any research or projects about Eritrea in your educational process (University, High school levels)? Why?

Actually, I have never been able throughout my studies to come across any research or projects which would even mention Eritrea. It is really a shame, but I guess this happens because there is not much which has been told about Eritrea; the country, its history, its politics, economic reforms and current situation.

- Hi, thank you for coming here today to talk about your visions on Eritrea as a young lady in the diaspora. Can you please introduce yourself?

Hello, you are welcome. Well my name is Semhare, I am 22 and I am studying psychology. I was born in Switzerland.

- And have you ever been to Eritrea?

Oh yes, I did... Maybe 7 times.

- Do you feel like you belong to Eritrean identity or to the one you live in? Why?

I believe that I belong more to an Eritrean identity, although I have to say that as a person born and raised abroad, it's difficult to say that my whole identity is merely concerned with Eritrea: obviously where I was born and raised has shaped the person that I am, hence my identity. It's a bit more complex than saying Eritrean or Switzerland for instance: is a bit of both, but I would say mostly is Eritrean.

- Okey, thank you and are you active in any associations?

Actually not at the moment maybe later.

- But Ddo you keep social contacts with other Eritreans in Europe and elsewhere? For which reason?

Yes I do, I think among young Eritrean in the Diaspora there is a special "bond", as in we are all leaving a very similar reality: we are all Eritreans but we are all (or most of us) born and raised in other western countries. We all experience the same kind of "conflict" between two different cultures, traditions, way of thinking...and I think that, in some ways, it make us fell as we belong to large "group", that we are not alone in this. I think these are some of the reasons why I like to keep the contacts with Eritreans of other countries.

- Would you like to be part of the development of Eritrea? Why?

Yes, of course!! I think we all, as Eritreans, have the duty to contribute to our country's development. We have been lucky as we are having opportunities and resources that our brothers and sisters back home don't have, and I think this is the least we can do for our country, to use what we have learned for Eritrea.

- How important is it for you to know about your country of origin in terms of culture, language, history, politics and economics?

I must say that I think that it is very important, nevertheless I also have to admit that me personally, at the moment I'm not doing any extra effort to know more about Eritrea in all her aspects. But I am definitely aiming at enhance my knowledge about Eritrea.

- How do you perceive the motivation of the older generation to keep the national roots to their children?

I think that it is a good thing that our parents are teaching us about our roots; actually I think that they should be stricter on this, in a sense that they should actually explain to us the traditions, the culture, the LANGUAGE!! Some parents talk to their children in the local language (Italian, German etc) not understanding that they are not helping them; plus some of them don't actually TEACH YOU about the traditions, I mean you can see some of it at home, but then again other things are completely left out.

- What was your reaction regarding the sanctions that the UN Security Council imposes on Eritrea? Did you participate somehow of the demonstration (Geneva, petition)?

Initially I didn't really know about what the sanctions meant for Eritrea, but when I understood the implications and how unfair and illegal the whole thing was, I was obviously upset. I couldn't participate to the demonstration but I did sign the petition and forwarded to other people.

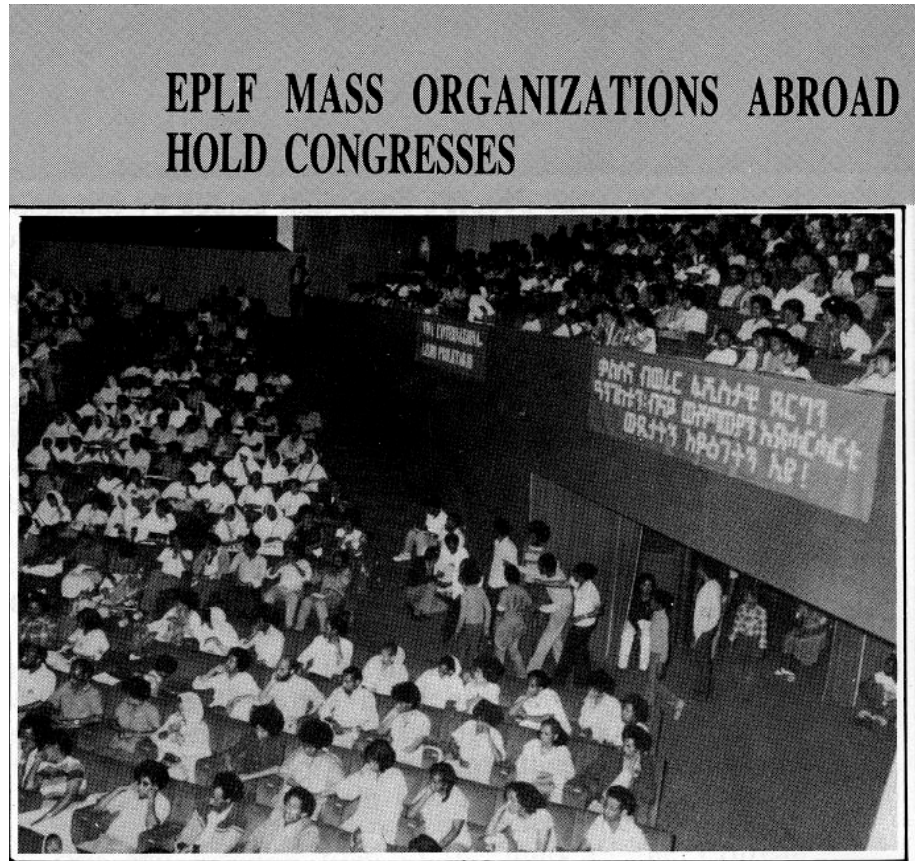
- What do you think the youth could do to improve the situation in Eritrea? Have you ever thought of working there (temporary or for some time), doing projects etc?

Yes I have thought of working or having work experience in Eritrea; actually I was meant to go this summer to do some volunteering and work experience, but personal reasons I had to change my plan and I'm not going anymore this summer. But definitely I want to make my future visits to Eritrea more constructive, for me and for Eritrea.

- Have you done any research or projects about Eritrea in your educational process (University, High school levels)? Why?

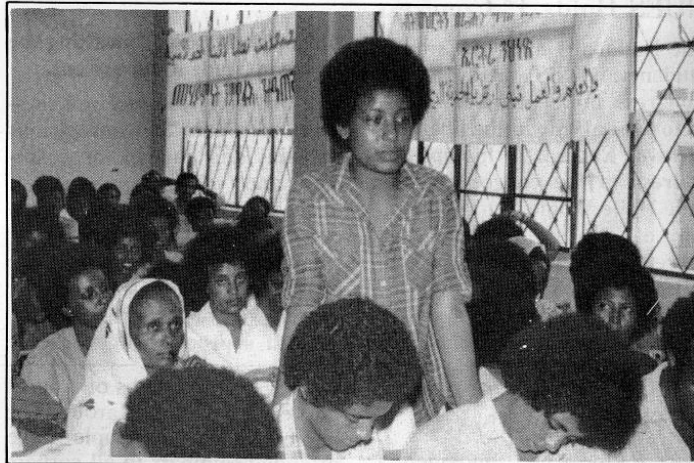
No I haven't because it wasn't related to what I was studying.

A photography from the EPLF *Liberation Newspaper* (1981) volume 1, N°5 August-September 1981, shows a conference held in Bologna by the Eritrean diaspora and a conference by NUEW held in Sudan is represented on the second picture.



MIDDLE EAST

The National Union of Eritrean Workers (NUEW), the National Union of Eritrean Students (NUES) and the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEWmn) in the Middle East held their respective annual congresses on July 19 — 20, 1981, in Khartoum, Sudan. Hundreds of representatives from the various branch organizations throughout the Middle East and East Africa, members of the Political Bureau and the Central Committee of the EPLF, members of the Central Councils of the NUEW, NUES and NUEWmn as well as other



The Khartoum Congress in session.

invited guests attended the congresses.

In general, the

congresses dealt with a number of important international, national, regional and organizational issues.

Libération-11