

Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund Expands Board with Addition of Four New Members

New EDTF Board Members Bring a Wealth of Knowledge and Experience to the Fund, from Aviation and Finance to Construction, Advocacy and NGOs

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The [Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund](#)

(EDTF), a pioneering, diaspora-driven organization that is drawing together populations of Ethiopians who have made their homes all over the world, announces today the addition of four members to its Board, who, like the Ethiopian diaspora itself, represent a vast array of knowledge and experience, bringing new voices and perspectives to the Board as it seeks to drive global EDTF awareness and expansion further forward, most particularly in the United States.



The new board members we are introducing today truly represent the best and brightest of Ethiopia, as reflected and acknowledged across the world."

Ms. Lulite Ejigu, EDTF Board Chair

Since its founding in 2018, the EDTF has focused on empowering Ethiopian communities through strategic investments in education, healthcare, technology and agriculture, and the Fund is riding a new wave of attention and success following its Great Rift Valley Innovation Summit 2025, held earlier this year in Addis Ababa.

By mobilizing resources, forging global partnerships and investing in innovation, the EDTF is positioning itself as a key force in Ethiopia's development — and a bridge connecting U.S. investors with high-growth opportunities in Africa. These four new board additions will help drive the EDTF's goals into wholly new geographies, populations and sectors.

"The EDTF's footprint and impact is growing quickly, yet with strategic, thoughtful intention," said EDTF Board Chair Lulite Ejigu. "The new board members we are introducing today truly represent the best and brightest of Ethiopia, as reflected and acknowledged across the world. These four remarkable figures stand ready to project the EDTF, and indeed, Ethiopia itself, into the future via their counsel, their connections and their generosity of time and spirit. We are deeply privileged to call them our own."



The new board members are:

Captain Solomon Gizaw

Capt. Gizaw is no stranger to expansive, effective work on behalf of the Ethiopian diaspora. Having worked as the President of the Ethiopian Diaspora Association Network to promote and strengthen unity and collaborative diaspora actions and projects, Mr. Gizaw has simultaneously set a model for the nurturing of strong relationships between diaspora members globally and local communities in Ethiopia. An accomplished aviator with nearly four decades of flying experience, Capt. Gizaw is also a sought-after expert in aviation management and flight instruction. He is the founder and managing director of the Abyssinian Flight Services and Aviation Academy.

Ms. Teemt Berhanu

Ms. Berhanu is a World Bank project coordinator with extensive experience as a political analyst and researcher focused on sub-Saharan Africa. Berhanu has also accomplished great things with several leading international aid agencies and community-based organizations. She has previously worked on peace-building interventions and livelihood enhancement projects in Ethiopia and several surrounding countries, and has worked with the World Bank's Fragility, Conflict and Violence unit in support of Ethiopia. Additionally, Berhanu has deep export sector business experience focused on agricultural sales from Ethiopia and Kenya to the Middle East and Central America.

Mr. Messay Gessesse

Mr. Gessesse is a Washington, DC-based certified public accountant who is the co-managing partner of the firm FM Financial Services and owns Tribeca Builds, a company that oversees financial planning, budgeting and resource allocation for varieties of notable construction projects. He previously held high-level financial management positions with Marriott International and served as Chief Financial Officer for Automated Precision Inc., which designs, develops and manufactures advanced laser measurement and calibration products in the U.S., Europe and Asia.

Mrs. Belaynesh Hailemariam

Mrs. "Bella" Hailemariam is founder and director of BE Smart Finance, a financial services firm specializing in respected guidance to the non-profit and corporate worlds alike. She has more than two decades of experience in top-level financial and corporate services and is noted for her range of knowledge in corporate governance, risk management, compliance and IT administration. Bella also boasts significant non-profit and charitable organization experience. She serves as finance trustee for Livelihoods Solutions International, an international

development charity, and has worked as director of finance and corporate services for the UK's Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, whose central mission is to empower women to start, grow and sustain successful businesses.

"All of these new additions to the EDTF Board are already helping us get a running start for the 2026 Great Rift Valley Innovation Summit, which will demonstrate our own growing reach and impact," Ms. Ejigu said. "As we join forces with Teemt, Messay, Solomon and Bella, the excitement for what we can achieve together into next year's summit is palpable, most especially amongst those who are working right at this very moment to draw the summit program and attendees together."

"We'll have more announcements coming in a very short time about what we'll have in store for our next gathering in Addis Ababa," Ms. Ejigu continued. "For now, I can say confidently, for myself and the entirety of the Board, new and established members alike: We can't wait for you to join us!"

ABOUT THE ETHIOPIAN DIASPORA TRUST FUND

The Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund (EDTF) was founded to mobilize the global Diaspora community to support sustainable development projects in Ethiopia, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or politics. Donations are tax-deductible, and all decisions are made by the EDTF Board to help facilitate and empower the global diaspora's impact in the lives of communities in need.

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