

How We Got Started

The blind and visually-impaired Ethiopians living abroad have always been concerned about the situation of the blind and visually-impaired in their country of origin . They find the limited educational opportunity, unemployment, little or no access to quality health services, violation of human dignity and abject poverty very worrying. However, there hasn't been an on-going and effective strategy on the part of the blind and visually-impaired living abroad to address these issues, except for some isolated generous assistance by individuals and/or groups to their fellow countrymen and women in a spontaneous and unco-ordinated manner.

The breakthrough came with the personal commitment of prime minister Abiy Ahmed to the development needs of the blind. This was demonstrated in his visit to the U.S.A. in July and to Europe in October 2018 where he made a passionate appeal to the Diaspora to financially contribute to a trust fund to be used to support the education and rehabilitation of people with disabilities in general and the blind in particular.

This appeal by the Prime Minister was received by the blind and visually-impaired living abroad with both embarrassment and excitement. The cause for the embarrassment was the fact that never before did the blind and visually-impaired make serious effort to reach out to their fellow blind and visually-impaired in their country of origin in a co-ordinated and organized manner. The excitement came with the honour and opportunity of responding to the challenge by being part and parcel of this noble cause which Dr. Abiy Ahmed so kindly and wisely spearheaded.

After a series of brainstorming meetings by the blind and visually-impaired from the U.S., Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, they came together to play their part to support the prime minister's initiative . Accordingly, A co-ordinating committee was set up to work on two issues, namely, how the issues of the blind can be properly addressed in the overall objectives, operation and functioning of the trust fund as well as creation of a not-for-profit organization under which the blind in Diaspora can realize their strategic development goals of supporting their compatriots.

With the co-ordinating committee engaged in the tasks required, and the larger gathering of the blind and visually-impaired Ethiopians around the world closely following its activities and providing the necessary guidelines over the next few

months, GIBE has now reached the stage of of acquiring legal entity in the State of Virginia.