



SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2020
Time: 10:00 AM TO 12:00 PM
Address: Harmony Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Dear Member of the Media:

We invite you to join us for a press conference, sponsored by the “**I’m Human Movement**,” to inform the public of the role we intend to play in response to the current COVID-19 crisis; most specifically, on the possible impact on the people of Ethiopia. This is a call for action from all Ethiopians, to all Ethiopians and for all Ethiopians.

Here is our Mission Statement:

“I’m Human” and I’m ready to help serve, protect and save the lives of others in Ethiopia and beyond.

Background:

The “**I’m Human Movement**” is an outgrowth of the **Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE)**. The commitment to help protect, improve and advance the lives and well being of all Ethiopians is not new; but instead, has been the focus of the work of the SMNE for the last 16 years. In carrying out our mission, we have gone to many different countries to help Ethiopians in danger or in great need. We have advocated for the rights of Ethiopians within Ethiopia and addressed numerous issues of concern over the years.

Now, the COVID-19 coronavirus presents another threat of great magnitude to the same people we have been serving in the past. Although the nature of the crisis is different; this virus is attacking humans and could potentially have a devastating effect on their lives. Therefore, we must respond to it as human beings, caring for the wellbeing of others and seeking to engage others to join with us in this effort. Since this threat is unique, we must respond in ways that best address its new nature.

The emphasis will be on mobilizing members of Ethiopian society at the horizontal level as to the need for proactive work now. We call on Ethiopians to rise up to this challenge, working together in a social covenant, an agreement between ourselves and the people, to contribute as best we are able, to address the real needs among our people. This is different from the role of the government who will also respond in many other important ways; but hopefully, resulting in all working together for a better outcome.

Rationale:

The COVID-19 crisis has expanded within the last months and weeks to include cases in nearly every country of the world, including our own. Advance planning and preparation is critical if we want to better reduce its impact on the people of Ethiopia. We cannot depend on others to address our needs or to prepare for best responses; we must do it. This also means we should not delay taking action until it is too late to be effective; instead, we should be proactive.

We Ethiopians may discover we are most capable of helping to serve, protect and save the lives of our own people. We are human beings with gifts, among which are creativity, ingenuity, diligence, analysis, resources and compassion. We have talents, skills, experiences and knowledge that could be put to the task of developing an organic, Ethiopian response, an Ethiopian action plan, by Ethiopians and for Ethiopians. Ethiopians know our country best and can draw on our own resources, overcoming any “begging” or “victim” mentality that keeps us bystanders and from moving forward in our own development as a society. The world is in the middle of crisis so we can learn from how others are dealing with it and by collaborating when it makes sense; however, we must take the initiative to deal with this threat to our people and nation.

Goal: *Engage, Assess, Strategize, Collaborate, Mobilize and Produce a relief to the people of Ethiopia through the use of human and material resources and efforts.*

Our goal is to serve the needs of the people during the COVID-19 crisis by organizing a COVID-19 Response Team, able to operate as a human resource center, which could provide a means to engage different players and stakeholders from different sectors of society to strategize, collaborate and mobilize an action plan to better meet the needs of people, organizations, and sectors of society.

This might include 1) raising awareness, 2) fact-sharing, 3) tracking and tracing, 4) determining assets, needs, networks and supply chains, 4) providing training; and, 5) accessing resources related to healthcare, food, water, sanitation or economic relief. It would also serve as a hub for those willing and able to contribute their skills, funds and supplies for the overall goal of saving lives during this time, making sure no one is forgotten who is in need.

We envision a structure where individuals and groups from different sectors, and with different experiences, knowledge and expertise, could help contribute in specific ways towards the goal of helping people through this crisis. This structure could also be duplicated in other regions, cities and villages as people are made available and as awareness of certain needs and effective responses are made known.

Each different sector or sub-sector, such as 1) healthcare, 2) civil society, including religious groups, NGO's, elders, women, youth, etc. 3) the business community, 4) academia, 5) transportation, 6) civil servants, like police and security; and very importantly, 7) the media, will be in the best position to know their capabilities and to best determine what roles and resources are needed to address their areas of need.

Will you join us to learn more about this new effort for Ethiopians to better prepare for the COVID -19 crisis in Ethiopia? We would welcome your participation.

Sincerely yours,

Obang Metho
Executive Director
Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia
“I'm Human Movement”