

Wave of Eritrean Public Engagement guiding principles and strategies

1. Introduction

The public engagement form is a group of concerned Eritreans world-wide; trying to seek different approach to solve our national political crisis using “**bottom up approach**” that involve each and every citizen in diaspora.

Take note that public engagement it is not only has technically or theoretical sound importance, but also it has strategic importance. That will able can bring common consensus, understanding of each other, inclusive and will bring sustainable solution through the fully public participation and ownership; that can achieve and mobilize public or mass that benefit our nation and end our continued suffering.

Group of Eritreans world-wide are advocating the importance of public Engagement on the voice of Eritrea since last year 2015 talking on this topic. These people who are participating in the public engagement form with the voice of Eritrea; does not necessary mean that have unique talent; skill or knowledge that can give us magic solution to every problem. But we believe “**at this critical time dedicated service to the community is as equal as worship**”. During this time of when the biggest need at critical moment to put our resource, energy, knowledge and effort to save our national crises.

As we know currently every citizen has lost its inalienable natural right of God given. Inalienable rights includes freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion and conscience, freedom of assembly and the right to equal protection before law. It is important to ask why these basic rights are missing in Eritrea, just due to lack of unity among the citizens and also lack of talking each other and understanding the cause of divisions which drive us to take individual solution rather than common solution.

Disunity among coalition members within a democratic movement even resulted in a loss of trust and confidence in the movement’s ability to achieve political reforms. Mistrust among each other contributed to atomization of society, which in turn, promotes a sense of hopelessness and defeatism; such disunity consume portions of individual’s time and loyalty.

These days the disunity among Eritrean citizens makes difficult to achieve a common objectives or solve critical issues. Moreover, the dangerous sentiments of citizens to be abstain from taking responsibility (cooperating) each other gives a room for further suffering. Therefore, it is natural to see a continuous massive torture and arresting of innocent people. The most frustrating issue is that situation where every time majority of silence out weighted number over time.

2. What is public engagement

Public engagement is an on-going process involving communication and interaction between citizens. Public engagement facilitates information exchange, discussion, debate, and decision making. Through this process, all parties become better informed about the range of views on getting better informed solution to our national problem and further proposing functional, sustainable solution to our national crises; this bottom up approach involved citizen makes us to have sound decision process and create effective process. Effective public engagement will result in decisions that are more sensitive and responsive to public concern and values. While many benefit of citizens' engagement will also reaped overtime, the process is that not to quick fix, rather it is an investment that avoid wide range of risks and costs, which that can benefit overweight.

Public engagement includes a range of methods reflecting the degree of which those involved are able to influence, share or control the decision making. This simply providing information to exchanging information and ideas to work together collaboratively, effective public engagement requires that process fit the purpose, that benefit everybody.

3. Description of public engagement

1. Public engagement will accommodate everyone; it is inclusive, which does not undermine contribution of each and every citizen. From this platform every Eritrean become beneficiary
2. Public engagement is none-violent strategy and accommodative, that untied us to one direction as citizens in one voice, without any political interest. That attempt to set objectives and strategy realistically within the context of our historical background situations that guide our political, economic and cultural realities
3. Public engagement will enable us learn lessen from each other, understand each other, reconcile each other, respect each other, and create trusted credible institution that respect rule of law, that able maintain peace, prosperity and inclusiveness
4. Public engagement form will coordinate resource, energy, knowledge, skill, expert, talent and effort to our national salvation; without external interference or influence, that not being copied strategy/model from somewhere. This

public engagement form designed within the context of our reality owned by Eritrean citizens.

5. This Public engagement believes genuine engagement requires major shifts in the culture and operations. It demands of public servants to develop new skills as enablers, negotiators and collaborators. It demands also citizens an orientation to a willingness to actively engage, and encourage to exploit citizens their capabilities, their ability participate and deliberate well, as the process of democracy every Eritrean its role and responsibility in public engagement should be assured as individual responsible citizen
6. We do consider and understand, specific group of Eritrean marginalised concern and demands should be addressed through individual submission in the public engagement form, those grass concerns and injustices need to be addressed as priority, such as women right, minority marginalised issues...etc.
7. Public engagement theoretically seems simple, but practically might be difficult and complicated to implement, for example, we are living in diaspora as a refugee with diverse interest and diversified need; therefore this might not be simple, to organize ourselves and engage practically. However, public engagement is the only options that can assure to bring required change. It has been proven worked somewhere else before, for example, Mandela, Martin Luther, and lately Tahirir square in Egypt, we can make it with our context.
8. Public engagement will able to create a focused intervention strategy, which fit and works to our current status of the nation. Therefore, we need different approach so solve our critical problem, that is socially and culturally appropriate, self-determined, and institutionally feasible. Furthermore, it needs to be with normative principles of public orientation that includes full participation of public to dialog to get turnaround strategy. As a result we are calling public to engage, to reconcile ourselves within our internal identity

4. Importance of Public engagement

This group of concerned people expecting genuine commitment in providing open and transparent public engagement, and demonstrate link between engagement, practical and feasible solution to our problem.

Effective public engagement that we expect:

- **Facilitate sharing information, perspectives and ideas**
 - So far with the voice of Eritrea, different knowledgeable interactive discussions are on going to facilitate and provide the citizens with accurate and timely information and knowledge. That provides insight on situations, conditions, concerns, value and priority. End result expecting citizen to organize themselves around their area/cities, to move up to the global form.

- **Facilitate, manage and insure public ownership for national democratic reform**
 - So far our conflict resolution mechanism is cruel and violate, furthermore idea difference never tolerated or entertained ; therefore, this public engagement will improve this situation
 - Our nation incomplete distraction; and at the situation that can be defined worst political turmoil; which require only public participation. Therefore, public engagement is bottom up approach with grassroots mass wave, can able to change the political landscape of our nation
 - Creativity and human ingenuity, at large rule of law never being respected. We fail to create/built trusted and credible system; as a result personality becomes bigger than institutions and nations. Therefore, through public engagement we will able create holistic understanding for our cultural political and economic realities; then we can able to create effective system that accommodate/inclusive.
- **Build cooperative and coordinate other similar initiatives:**
 - Increase awareness of wide-ranges of perspectives on the topic, and will able to -coordinated other similar initiatives, that provide an opportunity for sustainable solution to our problem
 - Public engagement will help us to develop a positive foundation for restoring our unity and value
- **Help reach in optimistic, realistic way, resolve issues and narrow differences**
 - Public engagement will gather wide range of options for solving problems and improve way of handling
 - Clarify or narrow dawn differences; and respect idea/opinion differences
 - Identify critical and urgent priorities at Global public engagement
 - Generate better quality decisions through creative collaboration; and learn lessen from our history
 - Public engagement has strategic importance to secure the continuity of our nation
 - Therefore, development concept of workable public engagement, is going to :
 - Provide better opportunities by promoting functional institutional and guide public to take ownership and own agenda
 - Provide appropriate services and reforming institutional structure.
 - Capacitating people, when number of talented, knowledgeable and expert participate, in the process

- Public engagement will help us to create common understanding, create social cohesion and support each other as society.
- At present the crisis in Eritrea are multitude that includes: political, social, cultural, economic, energy, water and other crisis; therefore, disparate society require disparate solution.
- Due to lack of public dialog among our people; rather than managing our political reality through public dialog, people tend to adapt /accept as given and live with; if our situation had been in elsewhere; people could have revolt against it.

5. Description to make public engagement meaningful and functional

Effective public engagement needs to be meaningful and functional; the exercise is being undertaken public need to have faith and trust. Therefore, region/city gathering platform or in other word, each and every citizen require to take responsibility to play his/her role in the process of bottom up approach grass movement; as a result, minimally we are expecting hoping, to design their own:

- **Clear purpose:** participants must be clear on the role they will have in the engagement process
- **Early involvement:** each city or region need to be engaged early on in the process
- **Identification of public and stakeholders:** at the global platform representative should have responsibility to identify important organizations (national and international), individual public figure and other interested group that can assist the process
- **Information management:** the global representatives will have responsibility to categorize information dissemination

6. Description of tentative action plan

- **Stage 1:** Advocacy and awareness
 - Broadcast consistently message with different panellists on the topic
 - Publicises on the social media to increase awareness
 - Collect feedback from public on the social media or using questionnaire
- **Stage 2:** Identify voluntaries to mobilise around their respective area/cities; and elect their representatives for the Global public engagement to mobilization of Eritrean in Diaspora;
 - In every city empower Eritrean community to talk about the issue and collect idea and plan forward

- Encourage public figure to participate, such as church, mosque and others
- Development of effective and authentic public engagement, with the following guiding principles
 - Inclusive
 - Transparent
 - Accountable
 - With good communication strategies
 - Deploy resources and responsiveness'
- **Stage 3:** Mobilise resources (human and financial
- **Stage 4:** Scientific research
- **Stage 5:** Impact assessment (probably we require scholars to play their role to have public engagement);
- **Stage 6:** Conduct Global workshop and develop action plan to be executed