

 **New Book. Walking Between Worlds: Letters to the Next Generation
of the Ethiopian Diaspora**
By Aynalem Adugna, PhD, Research Scientist, State of California

An Academic and Global Positioning Brief for Addis Ababa University

I. Foundations of the Work

Walking Between Worlds is anchored in lived experiences and a trajectory that spans rural Ethiopia, provincial towns, and global academic and policy environments. It traces a journey from early childhood adversity to intellectual and professional achievements, offering a narrative that is both personal and representative of broader diaspora experiences. The work is structured through a distinctive pedagogical device—“fireside interludes”—which function as intergenerational letters directed toward diaspora youth navigating identity, belonging, and responsibility.

The book integrates narrative with applied disciplines, particularly demography, public health, and policy analysis, demonstrating how lived experience can inform evidence-based decision-making. It places the Ethiopian and East African diaspora at the center of inquiry, a subject that remains underdeveloped in global scholarship. Family, especially intergenerational relationships, serves as a recurring analytical and emotional anchor.

The work is explicitly forward-looking. It is not merely retrospective but prescriptive, aimed at equipping younger generations with the intellectual, moral, and practical tools needed to navigate complex transnational identities while maintaining a grounded sense of purpose and service.

II. Scholarly Contributions Across Disciplines at AAU

The manuscript makes substantive contributions across multiple disciplines that are already embedded within Addis Ababa University’s academic structure. In demography and population studies, it transforms abstract statistical processes into human-centered narratives, allowing students to understand migration, fertility, and diaspora formation through lived experience. In public health, it links early childhood adversity, education, and social conditions to long-term health and well-being, aligning closely with social determinants frameworks.

From a sociological perspective, the book examines family systems, resilience, and intergenerational mobility. It provides rich material for social work and community development programs by illustrating how structural inequalities interact with individual

agency. Anthropologically, the work preserves cultural memory while encouraging critical reflection, presenting identity as both inherited and actively constructed.

In political science and peace studies, the manuscript engages contemporary Ethiopian challenges, including conflict, polarization, and diaspora fragmentation, while advocating for nonviolent, evidence-based engagement. Psychological insights are embedded throughout, particularly in discussions of trauma, resilience, and personal development. Finally, the geographic dimension—movement across regions and continents—positions the work within migration studies and human geography, bridging spatial analysis with narrative depth.

III. Intellectual Distinction and Pedagogical Value

A defining feature of *Walking Between Worlds* is its intellectual originality. Both reviewers independently emphasize that the work stands apart from conventional memoirs and scholarly texts. Its hybrid form—combining narrative, analysis, and direct address—creates a new genre of diaspora writing that is both academically rigorous and widely accessible.

The “fireside interludes” elevate the book’s pedagogical value. These sections function as structured reflections that distill complex life lessons into actionable guidance. As such, the book can be readily integrated into curricula across disciplines, serving as required or supplementary reading at both undergraduate and graduate levels. It is particularly well-suited for courses in sociology, public health, migration studies, African studies, and development studies.

Beyond formal education, the manuscript operates as a mentorship tool. It provides diaspora youth with a framework for navigating higher education, career pathways, and civic engagement while maintaining meaningful connections to their cultural heritage. This dual academic and practical utility significantly enhances its long-term relevance and adoption potential.

IV. Strategic Opportunity: Positioning AAU as a Global Publisher

The publication of this work presents a strategic opportunity for Addis Ababa University Press to strengthen its global presence. By positioning the book as a flagship diaspora text, AAU can extend its influence beyond national boundaries and establish itself as a leading publisher of African-centered scholarship with global relevance.

International promotion should focus on academic institutions in North America, Europe, and Australia, where there is growing demand for interdisciplinary materials on migration, identity, and global health. Coordinated book talks, conference presentations,

and guest lectures can significantly enhance visibility. Engagement with diaspora communities—through cultural organizations, faith institutions, and student associations—will further amplify reach.

A targeted digital strategy is equally important. This includes leveraging podcasts, webinars, and social media platforms to disseminate key themes and excerpts. Positioning the author as a public intellectual who bridges Ethiopia and the diaspora will strengthen both the book’s profile and AAU’s institutional reputation.

V. Global Distribution and Publishing Partnerships

To ensure accessibility and scalability, AAU should adopt a hybrid distribution model that combines traditional publishing with modern print-on-demand technologies. Strategic partnerships with diaspora publishers can facilitate localized printing and reduce logistical barriers in key markets such as the United States and Europe.

Print-on-demand systems allow for continuous availability without the need for large upfront inventory, making the model both cost-effective and responsive to demand. Integration with major online retail platforms will further enhance discoverability and global reach. Ensuring availability through widely used e-commerce channels is essential for reaching diaspora audiences who rely on digital purchasing options. These strategies collectively position the book not only as an academic text but also as a globally accessible resource for a broad audience of readers, scholars, and practitioners.

VI. Conclusion: A Book, A Platform, A Strategy

Walking Between Worlds is more than a memoir; it is a multidimensional contribution that operates simultaneously as scholarship, pedagogy, and public engagement. It aligns closely with Addis Ababa University’s mission to advance knowledge, foster critical thinking, and contribute to national and global development. The strong endorsement from reviewers underscores its originality, intellectual depth, and broad relevance.

At this historic moment, when Addis Ababa University has been entrusted with full institutional autonomy—becoming the first university in Ethiopia to operate as a self-governing entity—this publication takes on added strategic significance. Autonomy creates unprecedented academic freedom in teaching and research, but it also introduces a parallel responsibility: mobilizing sustainable financial resources to support institutional excellence.

In this context, *Walking Between Worlds* can serve as a catalytic instrument for resource mobilization in several concrete ways. First, the book is uniquely positioned to engage the Ethiopian diaspora—one of the most globally dispersed, professionally accomplished,

and financially capable communities connected to the country. By design, the book speaks directly to this audience, particularly the second generation, while also resonating with the first generation. This creates a rare alignment between intellectual content and a ready-made global constituency capable of supporting Addis Ababa University's mission.

Second, my explicit commitment to donate all proceeds from the book—both from the initial 500 copies I financed and any future domestic or international editions—establishes a powerful model of mission-driven publishing. Notably, I have already covered 100 percent of the production costs for the first print run through Jajaw Publishers in Addis Ababa, assuming full financial commitment with no expectation of personal returns. This transforms the book from a commercial product into a philanthropic vehicle, where every unit sold contributes directly to institutional development.

Third, Addis Ababa University can strategically position the book as part of a broader “knowledge-for-impact” fundraising initiative. This could include bundling the book with donor campaigns, alumni engagement programs, and international speaking tours. For example, diaspora-based events in cities such as Washington, DC, London, Toronto, and Melbourne could combine book discussions with targeted fundraising appeals for specific university priorities—such as scholarships, research centers, digital infrastructure, or library modernization.

Fourth, partnerships with international publishers and print-on-demand platforms can significantly scale revenue generation. By ensuring global availability through major distribution channels, the book can generate a steady stream of modest but cumulative income. When combined with its symbolic value—as a work that bridges Ethiopia and its diaspora—this revenue model can evolve into a sustainable funding mechanism that extends far beyond a single publication cycle.

Finally, the narrative itself reinforces a culture of giving. The story of perseverance, education, and service embodied in the book provides a compelling moral argument for reinvestment in Ethiopia's premier academic institution. It invites readers not only to reflect but to act—to translate inspiration into tangible support for the next generation of students, scholars, and leaders.

In this sense, *Walking Between Worlds* is not only a book, but also a platform and a strategy: a means through which Addis Ababa University can connect intellectual production with global engagement and financial sustainability, advancing its new mandate as a self-reliant and globally competitive institution.