Ger'alta Institute for Policy Studies and Training

Ger'alta Institute for Policy Studies and Training

Three-year Strategic Plan

(September 2023- August 2026)

Mekelle

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I. Introduction

The Gere'alta Institute for Policy Studies and Training (GI-PST) is a non-profit and independent organization that aims to promote policies and programs across several sectors. It seeks to tackle widespread issues crucial to Tigray's urgent recovery, rehabilitation, long-term social and economic growth, good governance, democratization, and political stability. To this end, GI-PST has developed a strategic plan and road map to carry out its mission and mandate effectively.

The fundamental emphasis of the three-year strategic plan is three-pronged:

1. Contribute towards the rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts of Tigray.
2. Support the democratic political culture and institutions and factors that facilitate the expansion of the political space.
3. Promote the improvement of governance capacity within the Tigray state and establish the foundation for a merit-based and professionally oriented state.

A. Visions Statement

GI-PST aspires to be a preeminent think tank specializing in public policy, leadership development, and public opinion education.

B. Mission Statement

GI-PST will collect, analyze, formulate, and disseminate valid, reliable, timely, and useful information on public policy, public education, peace and security, and state and national development. The organization also aims to enhance the ability of leaders to make informed decisions based on knowledge and to establish a democratic culture and institutions in Tigray.

C. Value Statement

GI-PST values innovation, professionalism, and partnership with stakeholders.

II. Situational Analysis

Tigray is in a region characterized by volatile geopolitical dynamics that undergo frequent and significant changes. There is a pressing necessity to address the escalating societal demands for an all-encompassing collaborative and consensual political system. Furthermore, it is imperative to enhance leadership capacity across all domains, with a particular emphasis on strengthening the ability of government officials to anticipate political and social developments and proactively address potential crises before their manifestation. Evaluating the effectiveness of existing policies and practices is imperative to mitigate the reoccurrence of past problems and foster innovative ideas.

As a think tank organization, GI-PST would collect, examine, devise, and disseminate unbiased, reliable, pragmatic, and timely ideas to the various stakeholders to shape the trajectory of Tigray's governance and its relations with the rest of the country and the region. The primary Goals of the GI-PST initiative will encompass bridging the existing knowledge gap, formulating progressive and pragmatic policy alternatives for deliberation, and fostering the necessary leadership skills to implement said policies effectively.

GI-PST will engage in a variety of projects that have the potential to impact both the governmental and non-governmental process and public opinion. Hence, it will engage a wide range of important stakeholders, including governmental entities at the local, regional, and global levels, establishments in the business sector, and non-governmental and civic organizations. All engagements will be conducted to ensure stakeholders' active participation, ownership, and valuable contributions, regardless of their social, political, or economic affiliations.

A.   The national political context

Tigray has a rich history of resistance against colonial forces. Throughout the historical trajectory of Ethiopia, it has always played a central role in defending the nation against external forces of occupation. Tigray has also been a significant hub for internal opposition and defiance against oppressive policies. In this regard, the Tigray-led resistance movement against the military dictatorship was pivotal in bringing down the communist military rule and the subsequent political events after 1991.

During the tenure of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), Ethiopia had made significant advancements, positioning itself as a nation with favorable prospects within the African continent. Ethiopia also emerged as a rapidly rising economy on the global stage, characterized by significant growth rates. Moreover, it also solidified its position as a major force for stability in the Horn region, promoting and maintaining peace and security. It is worth noting that Ethiopia was one of the leading countries in its contributions to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Nevertheless, the post-1991 progress was not fated to endure.

B. Current Realities of Tigray

The new leadership team of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy, garnered significant support from both the Ethiopian populace and the international community. His reform and peace declarations followed the prevailing zeitgeist and the collective desires of the Ethiopian public. However, aspirations began to diminish as the nation became increasingly embroiled in political upheaval and vicious wars.

The war on Tigray and the political unrest in other regions have had a detrimental impact on the constitutional order and posed a significant threat to the nation's unity. The war has resulted in the country's isolation and a decline in its global reputation. Crimes against humanity and war crimes have been reported in the Tigray region, as documented by international humanitarian organizations and the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia. The war on Tigray has taken on both regional and global significance. The conflict saw the active participation of several foreign nations, most notably Eritrea and Somalia. It is reasonable, therefore, to infer that Ethiopia's political landscape will continue to be entangled in regional and international factors.

The local and regional factors and interests that drove the war on Tigray are still at play. Hence, examining and resolving the consequences of the current domestic political process is paramount. It is also imperative to establish novel democratic methodologies for political administration and conflict prevention and implement systems that safeguard human rights and promote gender equality. The healing process would no doubt will be long, painful and laborious. It is however important to make use of the opportunity created by the Pretoria agreement and use it as a basis for a sustainable peace, rehabilitation and socio political reconstruction.

The reason d'etre of GI-PST and its establishment framework is expected to contribute to the understanding and analysis of contemporary and future challenges and develop effective strategies to tackle them. GI-PST will also through policy research and training strive to support the political system in shaping its policies and actions to promote regional peace and stability. Moreover, the institute will strive to enhance the development of leaders from the stakeholders mentioned above by providing them with training opportunities in contemporary management and leadership concepts and frameworks. This will enable them to address Tigray's emerging difficulties better and positively contribute to the peace and democracy agenda at the national and regional levels.

GI-PST will also strive to foster a platform to promote dialogues, nurture a political culture open to ideas, and foster an environment characterized by openness, inclusivity, and a willingness to embrace diverse viewpoints. GI-PST is aware of the possible challenges in fulfilling its mission. Nevertheless, mitigating variables in the region give us hope for the better future of Tigray.

C. Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) Analysis and Risk Mitigating Strategies

1. Strength

- The leadership team of the secretariat has sufficient leadership experience and the required commitment to undertake their responsibility.
- The Institute is led by board members with excellent records in their respective fields and in their commitment to accomplish their mandate.
- The Institute has a three-year strategic plan and road map of implementation and has undertaken a critical 'stakeholders' analysis that will be a basis for preparing projects and programs.

2. Weakness

- The various goals the Institute envisages to implement require expertise in diverse fields and competencies. It may not be able to get such experts in Tigray.
- The Institute is established without having secured needed financial resources and will be constrained to effectively accomplish the research, conference, and training plans it has put in place.
- The Institute's leadership has limited experience running a Think Tank like Gere'alta Institute. They will require a fast learning curve to manage the Institute effectively.

3. Opportunity

- A clamor for change and reform of the existing order characterizes the prevailing ethos in Tigray.
- The forces of change exert more significant influence than those who struggle to maintain the status quo.
- The recently formed Tigray Interim Administration does not adhere to a single-party system.
- Significant support for the mission and goals of GI-PST has been offered by several leaders of government as well as non-government institutions.
- The current legal system in Tigray provides sufficient space to independent non-government institutions.

4. Threat

- The political culture in Ethiopia is not fully conducive for independent institutions like Gere'alta Institute.
- Potential local funders are not accustomed to supporting research institutions.
- The process and time it takes to secure international funding may affect the implementation of crucial projects.

5. Risk Mitigating Strategies

- Efforts will be made to partner with regional and global organizations that support our vision and goals to offset the challenges of mobilizing resources at home.
- The Institute will use international experts in training and research.
- The Institute will identify and use various income generating activities.
- Engagement with stakeholders will be carefully considered and monitored, ensuring the Institute's independence and preventing undue or unwarranted influences.
- To initiate its operation as soon as feasible, efforts will be made to secure "Institutional Capacity Grants" from diverse sources.

III. Focus Areas and goals

The focus areas of the three-year plan are multifaceted. Besides research and training works on areas that contribute towards enhancing the governance capacity of the Tigray state and deepening democratic political culture, the Institute will deal with issues surrounding regional peace and security. Tigray also has important political, economic, socio-psychological, and institutional rehabilitation and reconstruction works at hand. GI-PST aspires to play its part in these endeavors.

Moreover, GI-PST will also engage in efforts that will help inform the policymaking process and influence public opinion. To this end, in cooperation with various stakeholders and partners, it will develop, publish, and disseminate policy briefing papers. While there may be additional focus areas in the future, at least for now, the ten thematic areas identified as focus areas and their justification are listed below.

1. Preparatory Works and Launching of GI-PST

Before commencing its duties, the Institute must complete internal activities, such as establishing its leadership team and finalizing its in-house operations. The GI-PST must identify and actively engage relevant stakeholders to successfully launch its goals and

aims, including clearly understanding their needs and desires. To commence the execution of its designated responsibilities, the organization has to secure adequate human and financial resources, including establishing an office and hiring a specified minimum number of specialists and support staff.

2. Governance and Democratization

Like in any other part of the country, the Tigray regional state lacks not only strong democratic institutions and culture but also a professional, merit-based, and depersonalized governance structure essential for its effective functioning. Establishing a merit-based state and deepening a democratic political system may not be inherently incompatible, but they must be sequenced. If well-coordinated, they have the potential to reinforce one another.

Furthermore, it is essential to note that the issue of governance and leadership extends beyond politics. The absence of enlightened and institutional forms of leadership is pervasive throughout several sectors of society, encompassing the private sector, civil society, media, and opposition political parties. GI-PST will play its part in addressing the aforementioned challenges.

3. Media and Communication

The advent of democracy has brought about a transformation in the dynamic between those who hold political power and those who are subject to it. The democratic ideals of openness, freedom of expression, and the ability to access information have significantly reshaped contemporary political order.

In the context of a democratic society, engaging in communication with the public holds significance not just as a fundamental entitlement but also as a means of fostering political stability and nurturing the connection between those in power and the citizenry. GI-PST will support the process of opening the media environment and capacity building efforts.

4. Psychosocial Healing

Untold and numerous egregious offenses have been perpetrated amidst the war on Tigray. Numerous esteemed institutions and prominent figures contend that acts of genocide have been committed in Tigray. These offenses are classified as major international crimes and have enduring societal, cultural, and political ramifications unless they are consistently addressed.

The atrocities were deliberately orchestrated to erode the Tigray community's trust and individual sense of self, potentially inflicting lasting psychological and social wounds. If left unattended, future generations of Tigray are likely to endure the repercussions of

the distressing war, making social stability and well-being unattainable. Furthermore, achieving peaceful coexistence with neighbouring people will remain formidable unless the leaders responsible for the horrendous crimes establish a mutually accepted plan for reconciliation, healing, and accountability. The Institute will play its part in the healing and reconciliation efforts.

5. Geopolitics of the Horn

The Horn of Africa is known for its diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. The social and political interdependence between the peoples and the states in the Horn of Africa is a persistent and on-going phenomenon. Therefore, this focus area is justified because of its relevance and potency to transform this interdependence into a constructive force that promotes cooperation, leading to peace and stability in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea region.

6. On development and reconstruction

The war on Tigray had economic and socio-cultural dimensions. ' 'Tigray's economic and social infrastructure was systematically destroyed. The ecological environment is seriously affected, unemployment has skyrocketed, and work ethic is compromised. In this regard, the reconstruction of Tigray requires not only an enormous amount of resources but also research and training to make priorities right and ensure projects are efficient and sustainable. The Institute will play its part in Tigray's rehabilitation and reconstruction endeavours.

7. On Human Rights and Gender Issues

A significant infringement upon human rights marked the war on Tigray. The demographic group consisting of women and children experienced the most significant impact. It is imperative to comprehensively examine and address the complete ramifications of human rights abuses. Moreover, there is an urgent need to establish legal, institutional, and societal frameworks that ensure and safeguard human rights. It is also imperative to engage in the dissemination of public education about the safeguarding of human rights.

8. Harnessing Diaspora's Capacity

The global Tigray diaspora is estimated to exceed one million individuals. The potential of their influence on democratizing Tigray's politics, supporting economic development, and their ability to introduce innovations and best practices is significant. The meaningful engagement of the Tigray diaspora is important for realizing the aspirations of the Tigray people. It is essential to channel the immense potential of the Tigray diaspora towards the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Tigray.

9. On Quality of Education

The trajectory of Tigray's future is contingent upon the calibre of its educational system. Realizing the developmental, governance, security, and justice Goals of the Tigray people necessitates establishing an educational system characterized by exceptional quality.

The combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war exacerbated the educational situation in Tigray. Educational institutions have remained non-operational for three years, severely deteriorating the region's educational infrastructure. A comprehensive intervention is necessary to enhance and ultimately revolutionize education in Tigray.

10. Publication and Promotion

The GI-PST will establish a regular magazine focused on contemporary politics, security, and development matters. These publications have the potential to provide information and exert influence on public policy and public opinion. Additionally, it could serve as a medium through which professionals from diverse disciplines can disseminate their specialized knowledge to educate policymakers and the general population.

Publications, websites, radio and television programs, and social media platforms will be utilized to distribute the many outputs of GI-PST and raise awareness and influence public policy.

11. Resource Mobilisation and Self-Sufficiency

GI-PST will primarily rely on donors' financial contributions during its early phase, supplemented with stakeholder consultancy and training engagements. Over time, it is expected that the organization will gradually become more autonomous, generating income from consultancies and training-related arrangements, with a gradual increase in the proportion of member contributions and income from services rendered. The attainment of financial sufficiency will enable GI-PST to handle a more significant number of duties and provide it with a broader range of flexibility in its operations.

iv.   Proposed Goals, Expected Contributions, and Tasks to be Performed

1.   Preparatory Works and Launching of GI-PST
Goal
Finalize in-house operational procedures, including establishing its leadership team, identifying and analyzing stakeholders to define its goals and purposes, and mobilizing critical human and financial resources for its initial operations.
Expected Contributions To
Preparation and readiness for securing critical human and financial resources, ensuring the timely official launching of GI-PST.
Tasks to be Performed • Conduct needs assessment and facilitate the engagement of stakeholders. • Formulate and implement a comprehensive strategic plan spanning three years. • Effectively introduce and promote the Institution to a broad audience. • Establish a functional office space, secure the necessary resources for renting a suitable premise, hire qualified specialists and support workers, and address critical focus areas. • Mobilize local financial and logistical support while also establishing communication with external sources. • Engage Board members to facilitate the promotion and mobilization of resources for the GI-PST.

2.   Governance and Democratisation
Goal
Contribute towards establishing a meritocratic state that effectively upholds good governance principles and actively contributes to the political democratization in the region of Tigray, with potential implications extending beyond its borders.
Expected Contributions To • Implementation and adherence to standards of a meritocratic system are observed throughout all levels of leadership, ranging from the highest echelons to the district level. • Ensure that systems and legislation promoting transparency and accountability are established, and tangible modifications are implemented across all hierarchical tiers. • Establishment of systems, programs and mechanisms that ensure Tigray's political space is open. • Tacit information about governance and leadership is produced, retained, distributed, and employed at all levels.

- Improve leadership skills, policies and procedures.
- Tangible improvements in leadership skills and capabilities are established.

Tasks to be Performed
- Engage critical stakeholders in the governance and democratization sphere and use their experience and ideas for the purpose.

- Utilise both national and International expertise in research and training.

  - **Conduct Research On:**
    - The challenges of good governance and leadership in Tigray and strategies for addressing them.
    - Generating, storing, disseminating, and utilizing indigenous knowledge in governance and leadership.
    - Principles of meritocratic state and its application in Tigray context.
    - Understanding the impact of orruption and its impact on democratization, institution building, and development in the context of Tigray.
    - Strategies for deepening democratic system and culture in Tigray
    - Leadership and the war on Tigray- Lessons learned.
- **Conduct Panel / Conferences On:**
  - Past, present, and future political leadership in Tigray.
  - Challenges of good governance and leadership in Tigray and strategies for addressing them.
  - Generating, storing, disseminating, and utilizing existing knowledge in governance and leadership.
  - Strategies for deepening democratic system and culture in Tigray
  - Strategies on enhancing professional standards and strengthening the legal system that are essential in building a modern meritocratic state.
- **Conduct Training on:**

  - The leadership and good governance- Theoretical
  - Building a meritocratic state in Tigray
  - Laws, systems, and strategies for deepening democracy in Tigray
  - Elite consensus and state building.

3.   Media and Communication

Goal
Contribute to the opening up of the media environment in Tigray and enhancement of capacity in the media and communication sphere.

Expected Contributions To
• Establishing an open, free, responsible, and accountable media environment.
• Improvement of journalistic skills and the assurance of freedom to engage in the profession.
• Active participation of all media outlets focused on Tigray and their involvement in the media and communication initiatives of the GI-PST.
• Fostering active participation of key stakeholders, including government officials, political figures, civic leaders, private sector representatives, and the general public in opening up the media.

Tasks to be Performed
Conduct Research On:
• On constraints on the effective and efficient media and communication work in Tigray
• Best practices on media and communication applicable to Tigray
Conduct Panel/Conferences on-
• On constraints to effective media and communication work in Tigray
• Best practices on media and communication applicable to Tigray
Conduct Training On:
• On skills and obligations of a journalist
• Leadership, media, and communication

4.   **Psychosocial Healing**
Goal   Contribute to addressing the psychosocial negative impacts of the war and support the healing process.
Expected Contributions To   • Restoration of the self-confidence and the improvement of the psychological and social well-being of people.   • Collaboration with all relevant stakeholders within the psychosocial support community towards agreed goals.   • Engagement with both domestic and expatriate professionals.

Tasks to be Performed
 	
 • **Conduct research on:**
 	
      • The impact of the war on the psychosocial health of the Tigray people and the mechanism of addressing them
      • The psychosocial health of victims of sexual violence and other victims and mechanisms of addressing them.
      • Generating, storing, disseminating, and utilizing existing knowledge in psychosocial support.
 • **Panel / Conference**
      • The impact of the war on the psychosocial health of the Tigray people and the mechanism of addressing them.
      • The psychosocial health of victims of sexual violence and other affected sections of the society and mechanisms of addressing them.
      • On reconciliation and accountability with neighboring people
 	
 • **Conduct Training On:**
      • Skills and strategies of coping with the trauma caused by the war using various channels including TV, Radio and other social media platforms.
      • Psychosocial training for sexual violence victims and all affected sections of the society.

5. Geopolitics of the Horn
Goal   Understanding the regional trends and provide support towards managing them in such a way that it serves regional peace and cooperation
Expected Contributions To   The effective management of regional politics and strengthening of peace and weakening of forces of instability.

Tasks to be Performed
 • **Conduct research and hold Panel / Conference on**
      • The state of Ethiopia and the future of Tigray
      • The state of Eritrea and its impact on Tigray
      • Interests in the Horn and the Red Sea and its strategic meaning to Tigray, what to do about it

6. On Development and Reconstruction
  Goal   Contribute towards assuring that the immediate rehabilitation and reconstruction works are done in such a way that they help the long-term development interests of Tigray
Expected Contributions To   Making development priorities right and projects done efficiently and sustainably.
 Tasks to be Performed   **Conduct research and hold Panel / Conference on:**   • On the challenges and opportunities of sustainable development in Tigray   • On the best strategies of rehabilitating , reconstructing and restructuring Tigray's economy   • Strategies for rectifying the environmental impact of the war

7. On Human Rights and Gender Issues
Goal Creation of sufficient public awareness and the necessary legal provisions to ensure human rights and gender equality.
Expected Contributions To • Improvement of human rights. • Tacit knowledge generation in human rights protection and gender equality is stored, disseminated, and used at all levels.

Tasks to be Performed
• **Conduct research on-**
  • On the state of human rights and gender equality in Tigray.
  • Strategies on ensuring human rights and gender equality in Tigray.
  • The implications of war atrocities on the Irob and the Kunama people
  • Generating, storing, disseminating, and utilizing existing knowledge in human rights protection and gender equality.
• **Conduct panel / Conference on-**
  • On the state of human rights and gender equality in Tigray.
  • Strategies for ensuring human rights and gender equality in Tigray.
  • The implications of war atrocities on the Irob and the Kunama people
• **Conduct training on:**
  o On the state of human rights and gender equality in Tigray.
  o Strategies for ensuring human rights and gender equality in Tigray.

8. Harnessing Diaspora's Capacity
Goal Assistance towards the maximum engagement of the Tigray diaspora in the development endeavors of their region.
Expected Contributions To Effective and efficient engagement of the Tigray diaspora to contribute towards development and democratization process.
Tasks to be Performed   **Conduct research on-**   - Research on best practices of diaspora engagement.   - Research on the legal and institutional reforms needed to engage the diaspora meaningfully.   **Conduct Panel / Conference on-**   - On best practices of diaspora engagement.   - On legal and institutional reforms are needed to engage the diaspora meaningfully.   **Conduct training on:**   - On diaspora engagement with the concerned government and non-government officials. In coordination with the concerned stakeholders, identify the gap diaspora Tigreans could meaningfully fill.   - Coordinate with diaspora associations and other actors in implementing the plan.

9. On Quality of Education

Goal

Enhance the quality of education in Tigray to the level it could contribute to the overall modernization of Tigray.

Expected Contributions To

The introduction of systems and policies that help develop Tigray's quality of education.

Tasks to be Performed

- **Conduct research on-**
  - Research on the current standing of education in Tigray
  - Research on a phased approach to improve the quality of education in Tigray
- **Conduct Panel / Conference on-**
  - On the current standing of education in Tigray
  - On the phased approach to improve the quality of education in Tigray
- **Conduct training on-**
  - On the current standing of education in Tigray
  - On the phased approach to improve the quality of education in Tigray.
  - Coordinate with all stakeholders in the education sector
  - Involve local, national, and international experts in the sector

10. Publication, Media and Promotion

Goal

Influencing the policymaking and implementation processes as well as public opinion through a variety of media platforms.

Expected Contributions To

Facilitation of effective public policymaking and implementation informed by research.

Tasks to be Performed

- Publish weekly newsletters on Tigray and the region at large
- Publish quarterly periodicals focusing on major national and regional developments
- Using websites and social media platforms to disseminate timely information and analysis
- Use weekly Television and Radio programs for public education on a variety of issues related to the Goals of the GI-PST.
- Coordinate with Tigray TV on how, what, and when to start the weekly TV and Radio program

11. Resource Mobilisation and Self-Sufficiency
Goal Generate short and long-term financial and human resources, ensuring the sustainability and effective and efficient operations of GI-PIT
Expected Contributions To Development of strategies for generating short and long-term financial and human resources to ensure the sustainability of effective and efficient operations of GI-PIT.

Tasks to be Performed
• Start consultancy services to governmental and non-governmental entities
• Generate income from fees collected from the training provided by the GI-PST
    • Generate revenue from research projects GI-PST products.
    • Identify possible local and external financial and other supports.
    • Raise funds by providing consultancy services.
    • Undertake joint research, training, and conferences where the partner organization mobilizes the necessary resources.