

Confucius Institute: A vehicle of Cultural Exchange



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The final Chinese song competition of students of Confucius Institute, Chinese School of Language and Culture in Eritrea, was held on December 23. Haddas Ertra's journalist Yosief Hailemariam attended the event and wrote an article that appeared on Tuesday's edition of the newspaper. I was so attracted by the theme and contents of Yosief's article, I have decided to share its contents with readers of Eritrea Profile. In this article I have included a translation of Yosief's article and my thoughts. Confucius Institute runs programs and activities that primarily target children and the youth to familiarize them with Chinese language and culture. One of the regular and popular activities is the Chinese song contest.

The final competition, which was held at the grounds of Asmara University, was attended by officials from the Commission of Culture and Sports, Mr. Dai Demao, Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, students of the Institute and their parents, and Chinese medical team, Mr. Demao applauded the collaboration of the people and government of Eritrea in realizing the objectives of the Confucius Institute as a vehicle of cultural exchange and friendship between China and Eritrea. The Chinese song competition was done in two categories. The first group consisted of ten contestants who sang Chinese songs solo. The second group had 38 contestants who sang in groups. The themes of the songs in the competition include love, nationalism and nature. The contest was refereed by Chinese judges who have expertise in the field, and winners were given awards and certificates. Chinese song competition helps students to identify their talents and show their skills. With training and follow-up, they could become professional singers and musicians.

Everyone may be born with some talent, but it remains hidden unless a platform of some sort is available for it to flourish. In the absence of some enabling ground, immense potentials can vanish without benefitting anyone. In this sense, the Chinese School of Language and Culture can be said to have created a convenient environment for young students to identify their potential and work for its development. As part of the experience of cultural exchange between Eritrea and China. In the past, the Chinese who live in Eritrea organized events where they dressed in Eritrean cultural attire and repeated Eritrean songs. And the Confucius School of Language and Culture often participates at events to celebrate Eritrean national holidays such as Independence Day. The Chinese song competition has demonstrated superb organizational competence of its organizers.



Members of the audience were impressed by the organization of the event, and the children were particularly awestricken by the performance. The presence of several parents with their children added colour and importance to the event. The presence of parents at such events gives additional encouragement to the students, particularly the children. The importance of parents' support for their children's success was highlighted by the students who won awards and their parents. Delina Sivil, a tenth grade student, has learned at the Chinese School of Language and Culture for many years and has good command of Chinese language and Chinese dancing. She stood first at this year's competition and, upon receiving her award, said, "I was preparing for months without sacrificing my regular schooling.

The support of my family holds the biggest share in my victory." Her individual effort and commitment, coupled with the support and encouragement of her

family, have made Delina successful in different areas. Her excellence is not limited to Chinese language and culture. She plays Badminton and is champion of Central Region for 2023. Sifora Sivil, Delina's big sister, is a fifth year student who is now in stage seven at the Chinese school. Because of her competence in Chinese language and culture, she has been assigned to be a tutor of Chinese song and dance at the school. In the last year's Chinese language competition, Sifora stood first and was given an opportunity to visit China. Like her sister, she said her family's support was the reason for her achievements.



“Since we have a lot in common with the Chinese, the program must be continued with great vigor,” Sifora said. She advised students to join the school so that they could identify and develop their talents. Melat Berhane and Ayda Berhane, twin sisters who are in seventh grade, and Natran Mengis, fifth grader, performed in group and won. They were the youngest in the group completion and thanked their parents for their efforts in helping them balance the time and energy needed for their academic studies, on the one hand, and Chinese language and culture, on the other. Since its establishment in 2013, Confucius Institute in Asmara has proved to be a viable vehicle of cultural exchange between Eritrea and China. As a school of language and culture, it offers programs that benefit children and the youth. It serves as an important platform to help students identify and develop talents. It is, therefore, advisable for young students to enrol in the school and for parents to encourage their sons and daughters to join the school.

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