Opportunities and Challenges of Diaspora Engagement
–
Lessons Learned from Diaspora Support Programmes

Copenhagen, November 20, 2015

The conference will be conducted by Danish Refugee Council in collaboration with the DiaGram network of organisations supporting diaspora development engagement, and is funded by Danida. Its objective is to link practice, academia and policy by sharing and discussing knowledge and expertise on diaspora engagement, gained through research and practical experience among a wider international group of policy makers, researchers and practitioners, thus qualifying the overall debate on diaspora engagement in the development of their countries of origin.

Through key note speeches and expert panels and discussions, the conference seeks to shed light on the following questions:

Why diaspora engagement? The policy maker perspective.
Elaborating on strategies & visions for supporting diaspora engagement, from the view point of donors/policy makers in countries of residence.

Diaspora engagement – What is needed to ensure diasporas’ role as agents of change?
Examining diaspora engagement as well as influencing factors in country of origin and destination.

In the public eye - perceptions of diaspora engagement in country of origin and residence.
How to raise the visibility and profile of diaspora engagement in countries of both country of origin and destination? How to ensure a more conducive policy environment?

How to assess impact and sustainability of diaspora-led initiatives?
Are current methodological frameworks suited for the purpose?

DiaGram is a network of organisations that support diaspora development engagement. Its members all manage projects or programmes specifically designed to facilitate diaspora-led development initiatives. DiaGram seeks to link policy with practice and research with experience, ensuring the relevance and performance of programmes and policies promoting diaspora in development.

Currently, DiaGram’s members are: Comic Relief (UK); Danish Refugee Council (DK); Development Fund (NO); Forum Syd (SE); GIZ (GE).

Read more at http://drc.dk/relief-work/diaspora-programme/diagram
Conference opening:
Kristian Jensen, Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs (TBC).
Andreas Kamm, Secretary General, Danish Refugee Council (confirmed).

Key Note Speaker:
Chukwu-Emeka Chikezie, Director of Up!-Africa Limited and Founder of AFFORD UK (confirmed).

Closing remarks:
Gibril Faal, Director of GK Partners, Chairman of AFFORD (confirmed).

PANEL 1

Why diaspora engagement? The policy maker perspective.

The panel will present and allow for discussions of the currently dominant policy discourses regarding diaspora engagement in development. Why do host governments engage in the support of diaspora engagement in countries of origin? Which lines of thinking within the field of migration and development are currently dominant on the international policy scene?

Panellists will be representing policy makers and major donors, in order to get a clearer view on the rationale and strategies behind donor and government engagement in the support of diaspora-led development initiatives.

Panellists:
Martin Bille Herman, State Secretary for Development Policy, Danida (confirmed).
Ambassador Eva Åkerman Börje, Director, Department for Migration and Asylum Policy Ministry of Justice, Sweden (confirmed).
Mike Battock, Inclusive Societies Department, DFID (confirmed).
Eva Svoboda, Research Fellow, ODI (confirmed).

Moderator:
Giulia Sinatti, Lecturer, VU University of Amsterdam (confirmed).
PANEL 2

Diaspora engagement – What is needed to ensure diasporas' role as agents of change?

How do migrants and diasporas contribute to poverty reduction? The diaspora has always been playing a role in the socio-political development of their country of origin. How are diasporas' social and economic remittances, their transferring knowledge, experiences, techniques as well as their global networks linked to the development in country of origin? How is diaspora engagement shaped in country of residence, and how does it impact on the development of countries of origin?

Panellists:
Kristof Tamas, Director, The Migration Studies Delegation, Delmi (confirmed).
Asli Kulane, MD, MSc, PhD (confirmed).
Mr. Abdi Abdullah Hersi, Head of Somaliland Diaspora Agency (confirmed).
Kathleen Newland, Senior Fellow and Co-Founder of the Migration Policy Institute, Founding Director of the International diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA) (confirmed).

Moderator:
Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, Research coordinator, senior researcher, Danish Institute for International Studies (confirmed).

PANEL 3

In the public eye - perceptions of diaspora engagement in country of origin and residence.

Are diasporas seen as welcomed supporters, or are they distorting the local economy? What role do they play when transferring new ideas and attitudes? Are they uninvited external meddlers, or a potential positive influence on improved governance?

In country of residence: are diaspora-led initiatives ‘pet projects’, often small, fragmented and operating in isolation, or do we recognize the real value of their contribution? What is the current discussion on the value added of diaspora in development?

Lastly, how to ensure a more conducive policy environment that use the diaspora engagement better and raises the visibility and profile of diaspora in both country of origin and destination? What wrong perceptions must be tackled?

Panellists:
Ms Shukri Ismael, Minister of Rural Development and Environment, Somaliland (confirmed).
Marta Bivand Erdal, Senior Researcher, Peace Research Institute, Oslo (confirmed).
Dr. Erick Tambo, Associate Academic Officer, United Nations University (confirmed).
Moderator:
Kari Helene Partapuoli, Director of Development Fund Norway (confirmed).

PANEL 4

How to assess impact and sustainability of diaspora-led initiatives?

There have been a number of diaspora initiatives and programmes funded by donors over the past 10 years, including by DFID, SIDA, Norad, USAID, and Danida. There is increasing interest in exploring what these programmes have achieved in terms of changes in the lives of poor people in the countries with which diaspora are affiliated, and also in terms of stronger and more sustainable diaspora sectors, networks and organisations. Have diaspora initiatives benefitted from the support they have been given by donors? Are the donor programmes that support diaspora initiatives leading to changes in the lives of people and pro-poor development? How should diaspora support programmes measure these changes? Do we have the right tools to measure the outcomes that diaspora initiatives are trying to achieve? How do we ensure that supporting diaspora initiatives is value for money?

Panellists:
Valeria Saggiomo, Lecturer in International Cooperation for Development and independent consultant for international NGOs (confirmed).
Nana Boakye-Adjei, an Associate Director at Developing Markets Associates (confirmed).
Laura Hammond, Senior Lecturer in Development Studies at School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (confirmed).

Moderator:
Ade Daramy, Editor of the Promota Africa Magazine, founder and member of the Sierra Leone Diaspora Network and the Sierra Leone - UK Diaspora Ebola Response (confirmed).