

November 2025



THE NORDIC-AFRICA DIASPORA

ROUNDTABLE REPORT

DRC DANISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL

 **The Nordic-Africa**
Diaspora Collective Initiative

1. Background and Context

The **Nordic–African Diaspora Roundtable 2025** was convened in recognition of the evolving and increasingly strategic role that African diaspora communities, or people of African descent, in the Nordic region play across humanitarian response, development cooperation, and economic engagement with the African continent. This initiative responds to a convergence of global and regional shifts, including protracted humanitarian crises, evolving migration dynamics, and the limitations of traditional models of aid, that call for more inclusive, co-creative, and systemic partnership approaches.

The Roundtable was developed through a collaboration between the **Diaspora Programme of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)** and the **Nordic–Africa Diaspora Collective Initiative** to establish a space for dialogue, collaboration, and collective action among Nordic-based African diaspora actors and key institutional stakeholders. This marked an important step in moving diaspora engagement beyond fragmented and informal remittance-centered or ad hoc initiatives toward strategic integration within Nordic development, policy, and economic ecosystems.

Although diaspora engagement is increasingly recognized in global policy discourse, it has often lacked formal mechanisms for coordination, recognition, and influence. At the same time, Denmark’s renewed engagement with Africa, articulated through its “*Africa’s Century*” strategy, emphasizes not only development cooperation but also trade, investment, education exchange, technology cooperation and people-to-people ties as central pillars of its partnership with African countries.

Within this wider policy context, the Roundtable emerged as a platform in the Nordic region, bringing together African diaspora leaders, professional networks, community actors, researchers, private sector representatives, and institutional stakeholders from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. The Roundtable aimed to explore how diaspora expertise, capital, networks, and lived experience can be more deliberately mobilized to strengthen humanitarian responses, reframe development partnerships, and advance inclusive economic opportunities between the two regions.

While demographic statistics show that Africans comprise a minority share of overall populations in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway, their transnational networks, professional expertise and economic linkages have demonstrable impact in home countries. African diaspora communities, including refugees, whether displaced by necessity or migrating by choice, maintain strong ties to their countries of origin.

In recent years, Africa has received well over \$90 billion in annual remittances from its global diaspora, more than any foreign direct investment and official development assistance combined. Beyond these financial transfers, African diaspora communities also contribute critical skills, professional expertise, institutional knowledge, and innovative ideas, which enhance human capital, strengthen local systems, and support sustainable development outcomes across the continent.

Despite their contributions, diaspora engagement remains insufficiently embedded within formal Nordic foreign policy and funding mechanisms. The Roundtable sought to create space where these contributions could be strengthened, coordinated, and translated into collective action that aligns with broader Nordic strategic priorities and global partnership frameworks.



2. Structure and Flow of the Roundtable

The Nordic–African Diaspora Roundtable 2025 was designed as a purposeful, **4-hour hybrid** convening that balanced plenary presentations, moderated thematic dialogue, and collective reflection. The aim was to promote equitable participation, cross-sectoral exchange, and actionable insight.

On **19 November 2025**, approximately 50 participants were welcomed to the inaugural Roundtable, focusing on shifting the narrative from traditional aid to co-creation, investment, and system-building, and identifying practical pathways for deeper, strategic cooperation.

Arrival and Welcome

Participants joined both in person and virtually, with time allocated for informal networking, introductions, and rapport building. This initial segment was critical in establishing an open, collaborative atmosphere, enabling participants from diverse Nordic contexts and professional backgrounds to connect, share priorities, and orient around common goals.

Opening Remarks

The Roundtable commenced with opening remarks that set the strategic tone for the day:

- **Adrien Bory**, Head of the Danish Refugee Council’s Diaspora Programme and DEMAC, underscored the growing importance of structured diaspora engagement within humanitarian, development, and policy systems, moving beyond peripheral recognition toward sustained partnership and influence.
- This was followed by a welcome from the co-facilitators, **Golda Fania Kamara and Aisha Tambajang**, who articulated the objectives of the Roundtable, explained the session flow, and shared the expected outcomes, including enhanced coordination, shared commitments, and next steps for follow-up collaboration.

2.1 Context-Setting Perspectives

To ground the Roundtable dialogue in both evidence and lived experience, three speakers offered short but substantive inputs representing research, practice, and private-sector livelihood perspectives:

- **Nauja Kleist**, Senior Researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), provided a research-based framing of diaspora engagement. She highlighted that while African diaspora involvement in humanitarian and development efforts has long been operationally significant, it remains inconsistently institutionalised and insufficiently recognised in formal decision-making structures. Nauja emphasised the need to move beyond symbolic inclusion toward meaningful participation across governance and accountability mechanisms.
- **Suban Mohamood**, Co-founder of the Norwegian-Somali Doctors Association, brought a practitioner perspective rooted in humanitarian health service delivery. Drawing on her experience, she reflected on how diaspora-led initiatives often operate with high levels of trust, cultural legitimacy, and responsiveness to community needs. Suban stressed the imperative of bridging emergency response with long-term capacity-building and systemic strengthening.
- **Charles Kinga**, Project Lead of the Nordic-Africa Startup Summit (TechBBQ), spoke to the economic inclusion and entrepreneurship dimension. He highlighted the role diaspora entrepreneurs play in connecting African markets with Nordic capital, innovation ecosystems, and networks of opportunity within the startup ecosystem between Nordics and Africa.

Taken together, these inputs provided an interdisciplinary framing that bridged research insights, frontline practice, and entrepreneurial realities. By situating diaspora engagement at the intersection of policy, humanitarian response, and economic innovation, the Roundtable established a holistic conceptual foundation for the thematic discussions that followed.

2.2 Thematic Roundtable Discussions

Participants then engaged in moderated discussions across three thematic areas, alongside an additional virtual session:



Moderated by Ahmed Dharabaxo (DRC)



Moderated by Aisha Tambajang



Moderated by Maritt Jensen



Moderated by Hibo Abdi Youssef

3. Thematic Area Discussions

Denmark's renewed engagement with the African continent, articulated through its Africa strategy, "*Partnerships of Equals*," provides an important policy backdrop to the Nordic–African Diaspora Roundtable. This strategy marks a shift from traditional donor–recipient paradigms to partnerships grounded in mutual interests, trade, investment, climate adaptation, and diplomacy. As Denmark's Ministers for Foreign Affairs and for Development Cooperation have emphasized, the approach is premised on equal partnerships and shared ownership of development outcomes.

3.1 Humanitarian Response, Refugees, and African–Nordic Cooperation

Discussions under this theme focused on the widening gap between the scale and duration of displacement crises and the short-term nature of prevailing humanitarian responses. Participants emphasized that humanitarian systems are increasingly strained by protracted displacement, funding constraints, and political sensitivities surrounding migration.



Participants highlighted that African diaspora actors in the Nordic countries bring critical assets to humanitarian response, including lived experience of displacement, trusted community relationships, and deep understanding of migration drivers and coping strategies. Despite this, diaspora engagement remains largely informal and disconnected from formal coordination mechanisms.

Diaspora-led initiatives were widely recognized for providing early response, mediation, translation, and psychosocial support at community level. However, these efforts are rarely consulted during needs assessments or program design and are seldom resourced or scaled through institutional partnerships, representing a significant missed opportunity.

There was strong consensus that humanitarian assistance alone cannot address long-term displacement. Participants stressed the need for durable solutions that link humanitarian response to education, livelihoods, skills development, and social inclusion. Experiences of refugee integration and social cohesion in Nordic countries were identified as underutilized sources of learning.

3.2 Reframing Development Partnerships Between Africa and the Nordics

This discussion centered on the future of Africa–Nordic cooperation in a context of declining traditional aid on a global scale. Participants agreed that existing development models are under strain and must evolve toward partnership-based, system-oriented approaches.

Participants strongly challenged the narrow framing of diaspora engagement around remittances, emphasizing that diaspora capital is financial, intellectual, relational, and political. Diaspora actors were seen not as donors, but as long-term partners and system builders.

Nordic financial and institutional mechanisms, including innovation funds, impact investment platforms, foundations, and private-sector partnerships, were identified as underutilized pathways for Africa-focused diaspora engagement. Access barriers, lack of visibility, and absence of formal engagement channels were recurring themes. These strategic directions signal a shift from transactional engagement to sustained partnership models that align with both Nordic foreign policies and global calls for locally led development and inclusive multilateralism.

Trust, governance, and accountability were repeatedly cited as determining factors influencing diaspora willingness to engage at scale. Alignment with national and regional development priorities was viewed as essential for legitimacy and impact.



3.3 Economic Inclusion, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation Across the Nordics and Africa

The African diaspora population in the Nordic region is growing alongside broader patterns of migration. Discussions emphasized economic inclusion and entrepreneurship of Nordic Africans as critical levers for addressing unemployment, inequality, and structural vulnerability across Africa.

Diaspora networks were recognized for their role in connecting African markets with Nordic expertise, technology, and capital, particularly for SMEs, women-led businesses, and youth innovators. However, access to finance, regulatory complexity, and weak cross-border coordination continue to limit scale. Participants expressed strong interest in moving beyond isolated projects toward portfolio-based and ecosystem approaches that support enterprises across different stages of growth, enable peer learning, and reduce risk.

Economic engagement was consistently linked to governance conditions, including regulatory clarity, ease of doing business, and institutional trust.

3.4 Collective Reflection and Closing

Following the breakout discussions, participants reconvened for a plenary panel moderated by Golda, bringing together all thematic session moderators as panelists. This structured synthesis served to elevate key insights, while distilling recurring systemic barriers and opportunities for collective action.

Institutional perspectives were also foregrounded during this session, including a video message from the Honourable Chernor Bah, Minister of Information and Civic Education of Sierra Leone, underscoring the value of diaspora engagement in national development and governance processes.

The formal proceedings concluded with closing remarks that reiterated the Roundtable's core message: that structured, strategic diaspora engagement is essential for building equitable partnerships between the Nordic region and Africa. The event transitioned into a networking session, offering further opportunity for the incubation of collaborative initiatives.

4. Recommendations: From Dialogue to Collective Action

Nordic Africa strategies share a common commitment to equal partnerships and inclusive cooperation with African states, but there is limited systematic integration of diaspora actors as co-designers and implementers of policy. This has been identified as a strategic gap, noting that stronger alignment between Nordic foreign policies and diaspora networks could enhance collective impact and Africa's voice in global governance forums.

In closing, speakers reiterated the importance of sustaining the momentum generated by the Roundtable, advocating for concrete follow-up mechanisms, expanded institutional partnerships, and a clear roadmap for implementing shared priorities.

Collectively, participants of the Roundtable emphasized the need to:

- **Integrate African diaspora actors formally into humanitarian, development, and economic systems** through structured participation in needs assessments, programme design, financing decisions, and implementation processes.
- **Establish coordinated Nordic-based diaspora platforms** to reduce fragmentation, enable collective prioritization, and serve as credible interfaces with institutions, governments, and private-sector partners.
- **Develop structured, transparent, and accountable financing mechanisms** that move beyond remittances to investment-oriented models aligned with long-term development objectives.
- **Leverage Nordic financial, innovation, and private-sector ecosystems** to support diaspora-led, locally grounded initiatives in priority sectors such as green energy, digitalization, health, and inclusive entrepreneurship.
- **Strengthen governance, trust, and accountability frameworks** as prerequisites for sustained diaspora engagement and long-term partnerships.
- **Institutionalize the Nordic–African Diaspora Roundtable** as a recurring, action-oriented platform with clear follow-up mechanisms, pilot initiatives, and working groups to translate dialogue into measurable outcomes.

November 2025

The Nordic Africa Diaspora Initiative

A community of Nordic-African diaspora who designed a strategic platform to recognize and amplify the role of African diaspora communities in the Nordics as co-creators of humanitarian response, sustainable development, and inclusive economic growth.

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Danish Refugee Council

DRC is Denmark's largest NGO. We are a leading international NGO - one of the few with a specific expertise in forced displacement. In 32 countries across the world our 6,000 employees work to protect, advocate and build sustainable futures for refugees and other displacement-affected people and communities.

DRC recognizes diaspora as crucial transnational civil society actors. DRC has since 2010 engaged directly with different diaspora actors to facilitate and strengthen their constructive engagement in countries of origin, transit and residence.

You can find more information at www.drc.ngo/diaspora & www.DEMAC.rog

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