

**DRU** DANISH  
REFUGEE  
COUNCIL  
DIASPORA  
PROGRAMME

WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE



MINISTRY OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
OF DENMARK  
*Danida*

ANNUAL GRAND MEETING REPORT

---

**DIASPORA PROGRAMME**  
**ANNUAL GRAND MEETING**  
**FOR AFGHAN AND SOMALI DIASPORA IN DENMARK**

COPENHAGEN 27.10.2018

All photos by Jamil Ghafuri

# OVERVIEW OF THE ANNUAL GRAND MEETING

Danish Refugee Council's Diaspora Programme aims to facilitate, support and enhance the role of diasporas as agents of humanitarian assistance and development in their country of origin. Via Diaspora Project Support (DiPS), the Diaspora Programme provides direct support to diaspora organisations. DiPS is a Danida-funded project that offers financial and technical support to diaspora-led projects implemented in Somalia and Afghanistan and building evidence-based knowledge of the value of diaspora engagement in countries of origin. In addition to funding for diaspora-led relief, rehabilitation and development projects, DiPS offers trainings to improve the diaspora organisations' capacity on subjects such as developing and managing projects, and regularly consults its elected diaspora Advisory Boards on issues related to programming, strategy and advocacy as well as the assessment of incoming project applications.

In line with our mandate, the Diaspora Programme organised the "Annual Grand Meeting" on October 27, 2018 at Korsgadehallen in Copenhagen. Hosted by DRC with support from Danida, the Annual Grand Meeting is a platform to meet and exchange ideas for representatives from the Afghan and Somali diaspora in Denmark. In addition to presentations by organisations that have received support from DiPS and other interventions, elections were held for the Afghan and Somali Advisory Boards.

Focusing on the theme "Then and Now", the Annual Grand Meeting brought together a panel of individuals from various institutions that have followed and influenced the Diaspora Programme since its inception. Some in changing capacities but all individuals that have played a significant role in shaping what the Programme is today.

Since its inception in 2010, the Diaspora Programme has grown substantially. Starting as a pilot project comprising essentially the DiPS grant mechanism and a learning component, it now boasts a set-up of 11 persons that engages in research, coordination globally on humanitarian coordination, offering capacity development for diaspora on a wide range of topics and engages extensively in international networking for advocacy and knowledge gathering on diaspora engagement.

On this backdrop, the timing of this year's Annual Grand Meeting seems opportune to reflect on where we came from, where we are today – and perhaps more importantly: *where we want to go.*

## THE AUDIENCE

The Annual Grand Meeting saw 150 representatives of the Somali and Afghan diaspora in Denmark present while +500 voted from all over Denmark.

The audience included groups familiar with the concept of diaspora engagement and the international aid system, and other groups not exposed to the formal international aid system but highly familiar with diaspora support mechanisms to countries of origin.



## DIASPORA PROGRAMME ADVISORY BOARDS

There are two Advisory Boards (AB) to the Diaspora Programme; one for Afghanistan and one for Somalia. Each board consists of seven members. AB members are elected for a period of one calendar year (1 January to 31 December) and can be re-elected. Elections for the boards take place at the Annual Grand Meeting every year, which is typically in October or November.

The mandate of the Advisory Boards is categorised in relation to the Diaspora Programme and in relation to the Diaspora Project Support (DiPS).

In relation to the Diaspora Programme; the AB provides input and advice on overall issues relating to the Diaspora Programme and ensures transparency towards the Danish diaspora regarding programme-related matters. In relation to DiPS, the AB discusses and provides recommendations for adjustment of granting criteria and guidelines plus reviewing and providing recommendations on project proposals submitted to DiPS for funding, in accordance with DiPS application and administrative guidelines.

At the Annual Grand Meeting, we said goodbye and a big thank you to the outgoing 2018 Advisory boards. After presenting a recap of their work, which included providing input on projects submitted for funding, the Secretary General presented them with certificates and thanked them for their service.



## ADVISORY BOARDS 2019

The following were elected:

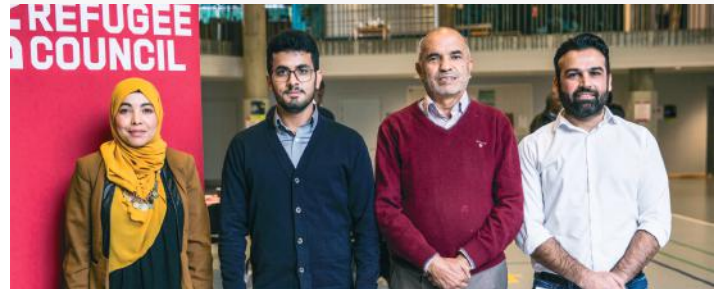
### SOMALIA

1. Ayaanle Abdislaam H Jama
2. Abdiwahab Jama
3. Adar Mohamed Hassan
4. Abdirizak Ahmed Farah
5. Deeka Saidb
6. Muna Mohamed Ibrahim
7. Abdinasir Jama Mohamed



### AFGHANISTAN

1. Esmatullah Walli
2. Sayed Abaseen Sadat
3. Sohrab Habib Jan
4. Naseem Popal
5. Anisa Hosai Zadran
6. Shoukat Naeimi
7. Omar Neek Mohammad



## THE PANEL

The panel was titled “Hand in Hand with the Diaspora-Then and Now” and was moderated by DRC’s Policy Advisor, **Helena Lassen**.

The panelists were:

**Christian Friis Bach** Secretary General Danish Refugee Council

**Abdulkadir M. Ga’al** Former Somali Advisory Board member

**Anisa Hosai** Current Afghan Advisory board member

**Thomas Thomsen** Chief Advisor, Danish Ministry of Foreign affairs

**Anders Knudsen** Diaspora Programme, Danish Refugee Council

With a special appearance by **Agi Csonka**, Chairperson Danish Refugee Council.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PANEL

The panel focused on the evolution of the Diaspora Programme with an emphasis of what the future of the Programme may hold.



### Christian Friis Bach

- Recognised the growth of the Diaspora Programme. He noted that since the launch of the Programme, it has evolved and gained respect and attention in Europe for its reputation of improving conditions in home countries and strengthening capacity.
- The Secretary General highlighted the importance of the diaspora raising their voices at the World Humanitarian Summit, with help from the Diaspora Programme and DRC’s international network, and influencing the follow up processes including in relations to the global compact on refugees and the localisation agenda.
- He commended the diaspora for influencing country-level government diaspora strategy in Afghanistan and the 2018-2019 centrality of protection strategy in Somalia.
- He delivered a message of appreciation of the volunteer efforts among diaspora and acknowledged their impressive volunteer efforts.
- He reiterated his wish to strengthen the Diaspora Programme and inspire more countries to join and strengthen the interaction between the Diaspora Programme and the international integration work of the Danish Refugee Council. He acknowledged the need for more funding and the need to look for new funding opportunities.

**Abdulkadir M. Ga'al**

- He expressed excitement at how the Diaspora Programme has grown as he has been involved from the beginning; first as a beneficiary of the programme and later as a Somali Advisory Board member.
- He explained that the Diaspora Programme via its small grants mechanism (DiPS) provides easily accessible funds compared to other funds available, and this is essential for the diaspora.
- He appreciated the openness of the Diaspora Programme and termed it as a place that's always open for new ideas.
- He highlighted the support that the Programme gives the diaspora during the application for funding process in the form of capacity building courses terming it significant.
- He went on to propose that the Diaspora Programme could expand the scope of its activities by introducing two projects: a business project that gives the diaspora an opportunity to start businesses in Somalia and a project that would involve sending Somali health professionals back home to train the local staff, as there is a huge need for medical professionals in Somalia.

**Anisa Hosai**

- She highlighted the fact that many diaspora have great ideas to help but they are often not sure how to approach the issues.
- She mentioned that one of the many challenges facing Afghanistan relates to security and this impedes development.
- She recognized the efficiency of diasporas getting involved in development projects in their home countries as they have both the knowledge and access to areas that INGOs may not have.
- She commended the Diaspora Programme for having the Advisory Boards and supporting the work of the diaspora.

**Thomas Thomsen**

- He explained that he was in the team that started the Diaspora Programme and it came about because of interests from both the Afghan and Somali diaspora. These groups wanted to get engaged in their country of origin by carrying out projects and activities that would improve the quality of life back home.
- He noted that the Diaspora Programme continues to strengthen the connection between the diaspora and communities in their home country, and these connections and networks lead to shared knowledge, resources and information across boundaries which leads to all sides being stronger, less fragmented and more resilient.
- Speaking on behalf of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thomas highlighted the need for diaspora to link up to local communities and households not only during acute crisis but also as part of long term development processes.
- He stated that the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to focus on working with local people and structures to help them solve their own problems. He spoke of funding not being the most important thing in this process, rather, the experience

gained over the last eight years. This can be utilized in building new partnerships with other organisations in Denmark that might give the diaspora access to bigger funding opportunities.

- He asked the Diaspora Programme to investigate developing the cooperation between the private sector in Denmark and the local private sector in Somalia and Afghanistan and engage in a business to business (B2B) relationships.
- Thomas explained that the idea of the Advisory Boards came about because they wanted the diaspora to have ownership of the Diaspora Programme, and the fact that the Diaspora Programme has supported 45 projects with 10 currently being implemented, not to mention the extended networks across Europe, shows that this partnership is here to stay.

#### Anders Knudsen

- He explained that the Diaspora Programme started off when DRC Somalia applied for EU funding in 2003 and supported the rehabilitation of two schools and a water well. This project sparked more interest from the Somalis, so DiPS was created to support projects in Somalia and Afghanistan.
- He explained that DiPS had three criteria in place; that the projects had to fulfill an existing need and draw on the professional skills that the diaspora had gained in Denmark. Second there needed to be an own contribution from the diaspora which was 15% of the grant received, and third that the diaspora organisation needed to partner with a local organisation in the country of the project.
- He explained that the own contribution was included to factor in the diaspora remittances and own resources and the requirement that the diaspora be attached to a local organisation has helped enhance the community involvement.
- He applauded the commitment of the diaspora and termed their passion to help their communities back home commendable.
- He explained that the Diaspora Programme kept the proposal requirements simple as they wanted to link it to simple structures and not necessarily project writing skills. This was to make it as open and accessible to as many people as possible and to make it easy for the diaspora to come up with the ideas themselves.
- He highlighted the fact that the Diaspora Programme has created a strong platform for diaspora engagement and applauded the strong commitment from the diaspora as evidenced by the quality of the projects.



#### AGI CSONKA, CHAIRPERSON DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

- The chairperson expressed delight at being able to participate at the Diaspora Programme's Annual Grand Meeting as she is a diaspora herself.
- She told the story of her parents fleeing from Hungary in 1956 during the rebellion against the Soviet Union and growing up as a refugee child in Denmark.
- Having recently been elected as the chairperson of the Danish Refugee Council, Agi vowed to continue to volunteer and urged the diaspora to do the same.
- She highlighted the importance of bringing about positive stories in the public in Denmark considering the sometimes-hostile discourse on refugees and migrants and urged the Diaspora Programme to use its potential in this regard.



# THE MARKETPLACE

At the Annual Grand Meeting we had different projects and organisations presented. For 2 hours, diaspora organisations set up different stands where the attendees could visit and chat more about their projects. This year we had ten organisations at the marketplace.

## 1. Diaspora Programme: **Volunteer support: Get volunteer support**

Contact person: **Lise Hauge** (Consultant, DRC volunteer department/Diaspora Programme)

Description: Diaspora organisations applying for a project or implementing a project via the Diaspora Project Support (DiPS) can be matched with a volunteer. The volunteer can support with matters concerning project work, whether it is related to writing a project proposal, administrative tasks, language or other challenges.



## 2. Diaspora Programme: **Apply for a project: The Diaspora Project Support (DiPS)**

Contact person: **Annette Smedemark** (DRC Diaspora Programme)

Description: Learn more about the Diaspora Project Support (DiPS) and how to apply for funding for a project in Somalia or Afghanistan.



## 3. Diaspora Programme: **E-learning and mentoring**

Contact person: **Beatrice Mauconduit** (DRC Diaspora Programme)

Description (e-learning): DEMAC has developed a free online training platform to provide diaspora responders with information, tools and guidance for enhancing their humanitarian response. Get a sneak peek. <http://www.demac.org/sharing-knowledge/e-learning-resources>

Description (mentoring): The Mentoring programme is to provide learning opportunities to local organisations in selected countries and diaspora organisations through matching them with mentors from the diaspora. <http://www.demac.org/mentoring>



## 4. Diaspora Programme: **Afghan mapping**

Contact person:  
**Adrien Bory** (DRC Diaspora Programme)

Description: Mapping of Afghan diaspora organisations in five different EU countries done by Maastrich University and commissioned by DRC Diaspora Programme.

## 5. New DIIS report: **"Mellem bistand og selvhjælp"**

Contact person: **Nauja Kleist** (Senior researcher, DIIS)

Description: New DIIS report published about diaspora engagement in humanitarian and development work.

<https://www.diis.dk/publikationer/danmark-brug-ambitioes-fleksibel-diasporapolitik>

## 6. Danish Refugee Council: **National collections**

Contact person: **Camilla Paarup** (Projektleder, DRC Kommunikation & Indsamling)

Description: November 4th was DRC's big annual collection. We had a stand asking the diaspora to sign up and help collect money. This was a big success!

We also had the current project holders as part of the marketplace where the audience interacted with them about their experience applying for funding and the challenges of implementing a project via the DiPS grant.

## DIASPORA PROJECT HOLDERS

### 1. Diaspora organisation: **COSFO**

Children of Somalia aims to give children in Somalia the education they deserve through establishment of schools and providing access to basic health checkup by constructing health clinics.



### 2. Diaspora organisation: **Somalisk Sundhedsforening**

Somalisk Sundhedsforening is a nationwide association that has more than 150 Danish-educated health professionals as members. Many of the members are doctors, psychologists, healthcare practitioners, dentists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. They aim to educate Somalis on health matters.

### 3. Diaspora organisation: **From Street To School**

From Street to School is a diaspora organisation that works for better conditions for street children in Afghanistan.



### 4. Diaspora Organisation: **AYAD-Afghan Youth Association in Denmark**

The Afghan Youth Association in Denmark (AYAD) is a nationwide organisation for young Afghans living in Denmark. The purpose of the organization is to promote and strengthen voluntary work and provide emergency assistance in Afghanistan.

### 5. Diaspora Organisation: **Donate and Educate foundation**

Donate and Educate Foundation supports girls and boys in Afghanistan to go to school and get an education as well as implementing capacity building projects for women.



## **CONTACT**

Diaspora Programme  
Danish Refugee Council  
Borgergade 10, 3  
1300 Copenhagen, Denmark

T: +45 33735006  
M: diaspora@drc.ngo

[www.drc.ngo/diaspora](http://www.drc.ngo/diaspora)

 **DANISH  
REFUGEE  
COUNCIL**  
DIASPORA  
PROGRAMME