



**Notes of diaspora donor/policy-maker dialogue on  
blurring distinctions between UK/domestic and  
international arenas**

**On Wednesday 26 May 2004 at City Parochial  
Foundation, London**

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## 1 One-minute summary

***Awareness exists of ways in which diasporas link UK and overseas and recognition of the need to bridge gaps exists***

***For some funders the need is to be creative and flexible about how they interpret their mandates, whether they have a UK, London or international remit (and to communicate this creativity and flexibility)***

***Some funders and policy-makers need to embrace new ways of working that better reflect today's complexities and realities in terms of how issues affect the people they are aiming to support***

***Funders and policy-makers should collaborate more to tackle social challenges that blur traditional sectoral, departmental or geographical boundaries but to do this they need to be clear about why, what they are seeking to achieve, etc, and also remain within their legal limits, geographically and sectorally***

***Policy-makers with both domestic and international remits are appreciating the two-way linkages between diasporas and their home regions; however, some need more convincing on the positive role of diasporas here in international development***

***Diaspora communities need to be more proactive in putting ideas on funders' agendas for them to take up (and they need to identify the fora where they can engage with funders)***

***Diaspora communities need to conduct their own purposeful action research into more effective use of remittances, more cost/tax efficient means of transferring financial resources, how events back home impact upon them, how their activities here impact upon people back home, and how communities can enhance their capacity to deal with combined issues that affect them here and there***

## 2 Introduction

- At the request of the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) City Parochial Foundation hosted a meeting that brought together diaspora groups with both UK and international development concerns and funders/policy-makers with remits that covered the UK domestic and/or international development arenas.

## **Notes of diaspora donor/policy-maker dialogue on blurring distinctions between UK/domestic and international arenas**

- The meeting's premise was that from the perspective of diaspora communities seeking to respond both to the pressures of adapting and living here in the UK and to the needs of kith and kin in the developing world (in the country of origin or neighbouring refugee camps) the funding and policy worlds felt increasingly disjointed, incoherent and disabling making the overall UK environment one that was not conducive to effective community organizing or to welfare and social inclusion/cohesion here or international development in the global south.
- The meeting's purpose was to bring together people with different institutional and personal perspectives to tease out what the different experiences of this phenomenon are and what might be done to improve the situation.
- The notes that follow attempt to capture the richness and range of topics discussed. No single point can be attributed to any or all of the participants either to themselves as individuals or their organizations.
- The term African diaspora generally refers to people of African origin or heritage – whether of recent origin through emigration or distant origin through, say, the Atlantic Slave Trade – living away from Africa who have some “memory” of Africa as home or point of original departure. Thus the African diaspora generally includes people of African-Caribbean origin living in the UK, African Brazilians, African Americans, etc as well as Nigerians, Tanzanians, etc living abroad. AFFORD takes an inclusive approach to an understanding of the African diaspora although we recognise that African nationals (and those with dual citizenship or whose (grand)parents emigrated from an African country) are most likely to form the bulk of the constituency that engages in this process of dialogue.

### **3 Linkages**

What sorts of linkages exist between places in the global south (especially Africa) and the UK via people, ie the African diaspora? These work both ways with dynamic inter-linkages in evidence.

#### **3.1 Two-way**

- London → Africa eg
  - Training for Sudanese refugees who will return after the conflict benefits post-conflict Sudan in the longer term as well as socially excluded people here in the short term
  - Knowledge of successes here create demands and pressure from Africa for projects to be replicated, but this means trying to leverage success with projects in the UK where relationships have been established with UK domestic funders with a new set of international funders
- Africa → London eg
  - At least one community member with relatives in a conflict zone (eg Sudan) is bereaved every two weeks
  - Boundaries are blurred (ie bereavement or incident does not have to happen here to cause major distress to someone here)
  - Crises involving violent conflict in Africa can have an impact on individuals (and communities) here thus undermining people's ability to cater to needs of immediate family here (potentially creating a spiral of knock-on effects)
  - Diaspora individuals, families, communities may in effect socially exclude themselves in response to financial and emotional pressures from home

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- Groups and organizations here working with diaspora communities must respond as needs arise and are thus on call 24 hours a day/7 days a week, even though they are contracted to work from “9 to 5”
- Approaches, methodologies, learning developed in global south – eg participatory approaches – could benefit UK (and vice versa).

### **3.2 Poverty**

- Diaspora groups are often among poorest, excluded in UK and communities in Africa ditto (especially where there is conflict that might have fuelled the UK’s refugee population in the first place) – this undermines communities’ capacity to effect change.

### **3.3 Recognition of linkages itself is a positive step**

The fact that such a discussion about these linkages is taking place at all is a positive indication of growing awareness and potential for change.

## **4 Issues and implications**

The discussion examined a number of interrelated issues and implications flowing from these linkages between diasporas addressing issues here in the UK and in regions of origin.

### **4.1 Diaspora focus not migrants per se**

- First generation of migrants may have direct, tangible links with the region of origin
- Third, fourth generations do not have the same direct links, however, their emotional ties are also significant and should not be overlooked eg:
  - British-Caribbean professionals sending remittances
  - Young British-Asian professionals seeking tax effective means of giving to their regions of heritage
  - We are now seeing a trend towards less romantic views of Africa, people are seeking to critically understand the complexities

### **4.2 Citizenship is one theme that links here and there**

- In their everyday lives, many people don’t make the distinction between what happens here and what happens there (such a distinction is not a valid, lived or relevant experience for them).

### **4.3 Integration**

- Home Office (HO) policy is shifting – towards recognition of a two-way process of integration
  - Emphasis is more on enabling diverse groups to live together
  - HO’s annual integration conference is an attempt to get government departments to take more of a joined-up approach to integration – HO formulates policy but other government departments implement integration policies
    - To date refugee communities haven’t participated but this year will be different (HO has facilitated their input)
- Discourse around integration is still felt to be exclusionary, at least at times talk seems to be “about us” not “with us”
- Principle that underpins integration policy should be freedom of choice for the individual
  - Allegiance to more than one place – multiple belongings

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- Choice over whether to retain language ties and pass these on to children
- Integration here should not be at expense of linkages with “home”
- Strong ties to “home” should not be at expense of integration here
- Acknowledge diversity of approaches
- Importance of community-led approaches – HO may be trying to “fix” things that communities themselves could resolve if left to get on with it.

### ***4.4 Collaborative working among funders***

- Overcoming institutional barriers
  - Many organizations were created when distinctions between “here and there” appeared more stark eg a funder set up at a time when no diaspora groups were actively seeking grants for international development work would be configured to provide grants to mainstream international NGOs
  - Compartmentalized approaches hamper organizational learning
  - Challenge is to find new ways of working eg work with diaspora groups in different ways than with other groups (in ways that play to diaspora groups’ typical strengths, constraints and concerns)
- Overcoming egos: can individuals, departments, organizations put aside narrow self-interest to work together towards shared, common objectives (that are also for the public good)?
- What common interests would encourage funders to pool resources and power?
- Funders feel more comfortable with clarity around the projects they fund, the idea of the call to support or adopt “holistic approaches” can feel vague and amorphous – what does it mean in practice?

### ***4.5 Responsibilities of diaspora groups as change-makers***

- Generate ideas to inform and influence funders
  - Funders are not always risk-averse or hostile to change or new ideas.

### ***4.6 Role of diaspora groups in supporting development***

- DFID has publicly recognized diaspora groups’ role given their comparative advantages of the linkages with home countries, but difficulties exist in translating these ideas into concrete actions – policy makers are less accepting – they worry about diasporas’ negative roles (on home regions) or their limitations of understanding or capacity
- Diasporas are not always representative of what happens back home
- Concerns over focus on hometown or narrow agenda – what about wider community, region, country?
  - Although it is important to appreciate that just because people congregate at the hometown or school level to mobilize efforts and resources for development, this can be seen as the basis for the start of a constructive conversation with diaspora groups around wider development agendas and concerns
  - Ethnic and religious identities are controversial bases upon which many Africans (in Africa and the diaspora) organize themselves but such identities, in spite of sensitivities, remain salient and relevant to large numbers of Africans, so perhaps the challenge is to find meaningful ways of engaging with them, while seeing this as a dynamic process
- If migration is more available to richer segments of society what is the impact of diaspora’s engagement on poorest and on poverty?

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- Important to bear in mind role of extended families in redistributing wealth (eg many diaspora individuals and communities will be supporting poorer family and community members as a matter of obligation)
- Also ways in which remittance economies function eg multiplier effects of remittances are not well understood
- Diasporas should demonstrate a broad interest in development
- Diaspora groups don't always have all the answers
- Tensions sometimes exist between home and diaspora communities
- Recognize diversity among and between diaspora communities/groups eg not all bothered by “here and there” issues and some content to work within existing structures – no simplistic one-size-fits-all approaches are appropriate.

### **4.7 European dimension**

- Absence of coherent framework for addressing migration/integration at the EU level.

### **4.8 Cost of remitting monies home**

- Total costs of remitting some \$80bn in remittances globally exceed DFID's budget
- Are there more tax effective ways of remitting monies?
- What new forms of philanthropy are implied by diaspora's engagement in development?
  - Communities could save money by collectively setting up trusts
- DFID and World Bank organized conference on remittances in October 2003
- Focus within G8 now is on reducing cost of remittances
  - But informal money transfer agents tend to be the cheapest, most user-friendly and most accessible to diaspora and home communities alike
- Until recently missing link has been diaspora's involvement in these debates
- Important to recognize that non-migrants (ie settled diasporas) also remit monies “home” (therefore remittances may be substantially underreported)
- Crucial to understand why people remit monies, understanding of this context may have important implications for who engages in development (eg black housing associations could invest in social housing in developing countries)
- Who is setting the agenda on remittances?
  - Muslim communities worry about US Treasury's sudden interests in the issue driven primarily by security concerns
- Communities need to be more actively involved in research – define and set agendas
- Remittances likely to go underground if research feels to communities like snooping.

### **4.9 Failures of existing development approaches**

- These have failed, states have failed, communities are taking matters into their own hands; they are able to do things that were not possible 15 or 20 years ago
- Community-to-community approaches to social problems (“here and there”) enjoy more legitimacy today than; exclusive reliance on state-led efforts is no longer appropriate.

## **5 Concrete ideas**

Discussants identified a number of concrete, practical steps that different parties (funders, policy-makers, diaspora groups and support networks in the main) could take to address some of the implications that emerged from the phenomena of diaspora linkages between “here and there”.

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### ***5.1 Funder forum***

- Could funders establish a funder forum to facilitate the joint funding of bids?
- Funders often encourage grantees to collaborate, so should they (funders) taste their own medicine and also collaborate more?
- The forum could undertake joint funding strategies
  - Eg a network of funders led by Community Fund has authored a social inclusion strategy for the southeast of England
- Funders could divide up roles between themselves to avoid duplication
  - One to lead on monitoring (makes more effective use of resources, limits pressures on grant recipients that lack capacity to service multiple funder demands)
- Funders could collaborate around common interests eg issue-based
  - What are we trying to achieve?
  - Who are the most vulnerable?
  - What should we do?
- Funders to pay more attention to learning emanating from funded projects – evidence of linkages will emerge
  - Downside is labour intensity and cost to funders of maintaining grants, eg CPF does undertake more field visits on the basis of a belief that such investment of time and labour pays off in the long run.

### ***5.2 Diaspora and development***

- Diasporas themselves need to do more to highlight their positive developmental roles.
- Focus could include ways that extended family systems serve to redistribute wealth and alleviate poverty, ways that remittances generate wider benefits in receiving countries, role of identity in development, etc.

### ***5.3 Build capacity of diaspora groups to respond to pressures and challenges here and there***

- On the basis of an understanding of these inter-linkages, funders and policy-makers could place more emphasis on capacity building for diaspora groups to respond to dual “here and there” pressures.

### ***5.4 Research***

- Diaspora communities and organizations need to undertake credible research to help increase an understanding of the two-way impact of events in global south on communities here and vice versa.

### ***5.5 Creative approaches to interpreting benefits to London – look for ways to impact London’s sustainability and building cohesion within and between communities***

- Leverage diaspora-home linkages as basis for citizenship/education for young people around international development/environment for benefit of London
  - British Council project linking young people in East London and Cape Town to become anti-racist ambassadors is an example of this approach
- Encourage young people here to vote – diaspora and home communities can be powerful advocates of importance of using the vote effectively and responsibly

## **Notes of diaspora donor/policy-maker dialogue on blurring distinctions between UK/domestic and international arenas**

- Diaspora groups need to be as creative as possible in interpreting funding criteria in ways that address the issues and constraints that they face and funders need to send signals that they are sympathetic to and supportive of this creativity.

### **5.6 Autumn meeting of funders to pitch ideas (not grant applications)**

- Funders meet periodically to discuss issues of mutual concern. They typically invite guest speakers to address them around key issues (but not to pitch directly for grants). The autumn meeting could be an opportunity to place the issues discussed here on funders' agenda for further discussion.

### **5.7 African Diaspora & Development Day 3 July 2003**

- This annual event is organized by *africa21*, a consortium of nine African organizations to focus on ways of enhancing the African diaspora's contributions to development. This year's theme is **"Transforming the local everywhere: Africa here, there, Africa everywhere"**. One workshop will focus specifically on funding policy related issues and provides an opportunity to continue this discussion. The day itself is packed full of activities, including keynote address, panel discussions, workshops, an award ceremony for African organizations, cultural activities, exhibitions, and an African marketplace. This year's event will take place at the City Hall and will likely attract in excess of 300 people. All participants are welcome to attend.

## **6 Participants**

Alan Annie, Researcher, Research Section, Home Office

Samuel Ayul, Case Officer, Diaspora Sudanese Community Association

Jim Baker, Executive Director, CfD (Connections for Development)

Maggie Baxter, Executive Director, Womankind/Chair of Trustees, City Parochial Foundation

Chukwu-Emeka Chikezie, Executive Director, African Foundation for Development (AFFORD)

Sioned Churchill, Field Officer, City Parochial Foundation

Mike Day, Senior International Grants Officer, Community Fund

Sarah Dixon, Senior Grants Officer, Henry Smith's Charity

Jean Foster, Migration Team, DFID (Department for International Development)

Richard Graham, Head of International Grants, Comic Relief

Gilly Green, Head of UK Grants, Comic Relief

Seyoum Hameso, Steering Committee Member, African Diaspora Voices for Africa's Development (ADVAD)

Mubin Haq, Field Officer, City Parochial Foundation

Sara Llewellyn, Bridge House Trust

Bharat Mehta, Clerk, City Parochial Foundation

Fred Opolot, Chair Iteso Welfare Association/member African Diaspora Voices for Africa's Development (ADVAD)

Elahe Panahi, Trustee, City Parochial Foundation

Berni Sesay, Network Outreach Officer, African Foundation for Development (AFFORD)

Carolyne Tah, Head of Community Relations & Integration, Research Section, Home Office

Bala Thakrar, Project Officer for Ethnic Minorities Fund, Charities Aid Foundation

Josephine Yanga, Diaspora Sudanese Community Association



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## **7 Acknowledgements**

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## **8 Further details**

For further details and follow-up please contact either Berni Sesay or Chukwu-Emeka Chikezie at AFFORD on 020 7587 3900 or via email at [berni@afford-uk.org](mailto:berni@afford-uk.org) or [chukwu-emeka@afford-uk.org](mailto:chukwu-emeka@afford-uk.org) or visit [www.afford-uk.org](http://www.afford-uk.org).