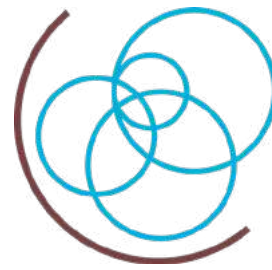


Diaspora Action Australia Submission 2020



diaspora
action
australia

PEACE. DEVELOPMENT.
HUMAN RIGHTS.



SENATE INQUIRY INTO ISSUES FACING DIASPORA COMMUNITIES IN AUSTRALIA

Executive Summary

ABOUT DIASPORA ACTION AUSTRALIA

Diaspora Action Australia (DAA) is a not-for-profit organisation supporting diaspora organisations, communities and groups in Australia to achieve their priorities in Australia and overseas.

DAA was established to provide focused and independent support to diaspora communities across Australia as they work to improve the lives of their communities in Australia and overseas. Founded in 2008 through a partnership with Oxfam, DAA plays a unique role in Australia, supporting the development, humanitarian, peace building and human rights work of diaspora communities from across the globe.

As the only peak national organisation for diaspora, DAA supports diaspora initiatives by providing resources, information and training, facilitating dialogue and shared learning, building networks and by amplifying diaspora voices at local, national and international levels. Since its beginning in 2009 DAA's programs have reached over 1,700 people and provided training and mentoring to more than 200 organisations.

DAA has relied on the generous contributions of our volunteers to plan and deliver community capacity building activities.

DAA has worked with its diaspora community partners to develop this submission for the Senate Inquiry, supporting their full participation in this important process.

ABOUT DIASPORA

DAA has adopted the definition of diaspora established through the DFAT Foreign Policy White Paper – *people who have left their countries of origin but maintain identity and ties with those countries and with their counterparts around the world*.

Diaspora communities play a significant and critical role in international development, humanitarian response and peacebuilding. Diaspora combine their unique knowledge of culture, country and history to develop sustainable strategies that have a lasting impact for communities. They are working in crisis zones long before international aid arrives and remain there long after it ends, often reaching areas that are inaccessible or deemed “unsafe” by international aid agencies. Diaspora perception of risk and security in countries of origin is different compared to relief agencies, external to the context, and it is more likely to have a higher tolerance and strategies to access more isolated or at-risk areas, particularly in conflict-affected settings. The different perception and response to risk are due to deep understanding and approach to the context.

Diaspora communities are considered transnational actors that operate across borders with a strong sense of civic responsibility, personal engagement and need-based interventions with regional or localised focus. Diaspora communities tend to understand accountability based on social networks and trust. However, diaspora communities should not be thought of as a monolithic entity, they are political actors and have vested interests in their country of origin practices and development (Diaspora Learning Network 2018).

Diaspora peacebuilding efforts and contributions to aid, development and trade are becoming increasingly valued globally by the international community. However, very little has been done in Australia to enhance and coordinate diaspora humanitarian efforts, or to harness their great potential to contribute to Australia's foreign policy, diplomatic relations and economic growth.

Diaspora are people *who have left their countries of origin but maintain identity and ties with those countries and with their counterparts around the world*. The strong ties with their country of origin or their counterparts around the world, and the transnationality of their networks sets them apart from “international migrants”, identified as people who change their country of usual residence, *irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status* (UN Refugees and Migrants 2020). Many diaspora are actively engaged in supporting their co-nationals through humanitarian aid, response to natural and human-induced crises, peacebuilding, development, and economic development through trade, investment, skills, and technology transfers.

The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper acknowledges the strengths of diaspora communities and express its commitment “*to working with diaspora communities to promote Australia's image and reputation, to encourage trade and investment and, where appropriate, to support our development assistance program*”. Nonetheless, a strategic direction deems necessary to pursue the Policy White Paper mid and long-term foreign policy aspirations.

Australia's international engagement is built on shared values of political, economic, and religious freedom, liberal democracy, the rule of law, racial and gender equality, and mutual respect. Supporting these values internationally, investing in the stability and resilience of developing countries and advocating for human rights is the foundation of Australia's success. An internationally stronger and more influential position will also serve Australia's national interest (DFAT 2017). A key mechanism to successfully achieve international engagement includes harnessing the assets of the many diverse diaspora communities residing in Australia.

Geopolitical dynamics are constantly changing, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, and now more than ever there is a need to call upon all Australia's resources and strengths to face the uncertain times ahead of us. Harnessing diaspora's strengths will enable Australia to navigate a fast-changing future while stepping up on the global stage.

Diaspora are quiet achievers but their contribution to their communities of origin is impactful. They have been working at grassroots levels for a long time.

DAA welcomes this Senate inquiry into issues facing diaspora, and the unprecedented opportunity for diaspora communities to draw attention to their impacts, voice their concerns, issues, ambitions, and scope opportunities.

The findings, proposals and recommendations in this submission come from a combination of focused community consultations, engagement with active diaspora members to develop case studies and community profiles, and DAA's operational experience over the past 12 years.

DAA has undertaken extensive nation-wide consultation. Our sector partners such as Settlement Services International, RDI Network and the Settlement Council of Australia supported our community engagement campaign through their communication platforms.

Consultations were held with 16 diaspora organisations who work in the country of origin by providing aid, disaster relief, human rights advocacy, education, and by facilitating business, trade, and diplomatic relations. Others support the community in Australia, through human rights and anti-discrimination advocacy, counselling, and social services for women and vulnerable community members. Amongst participants, there were people involved with more than one diaspora organisation in a volunteering capacity. In some cases, people were employed in social services to provide support and assistance to their own community and volunteer outside of their work within the community.

We also consulted extensively with the academic members of the Diaspora Learning Network, particularly regarding the policy analysis and proposal development. Participants were representatives of the following countries: Afghanistan, China, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kenya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, South Sudan, Vietnam.

Additionally, to develop organisations’ case studies, DAA engaged with the following diaspora organisations:

- Akademos Society Inc
- Australian Afghan Development Organisation (AADO)
- Australian Zimbabwe Business Council (AZBC)
- Oromia Support Group of Australia (OSGA)
- Syrian Orthodox Women Association (SOWA).

These organisations provide an overall in-kind contribution of over A\$365,000p.a. reaching hundreds of thousands of people. Organisations such as Akademos Society, AADO and AZBC contribute over A\$ 480,000p.a. to their country of origin, through their programs, work, and networking activities. AZBC activities impact 8,000 people, while 9,500 people have directly accessed AADO’s programs. OSGA Human Rights advocacy supports not only Oromo, but also other ethnic groups in the Horn of Africa region.

Community profiles were developed with the assistance of different representatives from the Chinese, Hazara, Oromo, South Sudanese, and Tamil (Sri Lanka) communities.

This submission explores the issues facing diaspora communities’ efforts to deliver peace building, human rights, humanitarian aid, and development from Australia to their country of origin and to their counterparts around the world. It proposes ways to enhance diaspora potential to jointly further our common international development objectives.

In that regards, first, there is a need to create an enabling policy environment, that would foster engagement and communication between diaspora and government while defining new partnerships which are geared towards development cooperation. Second, to ensure continuity and sustainability of diaspora action, there is a need to re-think existing financial investment into the sector in terms of direct support to diaspora-led initiatives. Diaspora humanitarianism predominantly relies on volunteering and donations which puts pressure on communities, while jeopardising the longevity and sustainability of initiatives. The scarce funding to diaspora support organisations, such as DAA, also makes it difficult to upskill, build capacity and strengthen the capabilities of diaspora to play their best role.

The submission is articulated in 2 parts:

PART 1: Issues and barriers:

- a.** Diaspora: The untapped resource of Australian International Cooperation – This section examines *TOR 1: Support offered to diaspora community associations and similar organisations, including government grants and other funding*
- b.** The settlement journey - This section examines *TOR 2: Safety concerns among diaspora communities, and means for strengthening the protection and resilience of vulnerable groups*
- c.** Beyond financial investment – This section examines *TOR 3: Barriers to the full participation of diaspora communities in Australia’s democratic and social institutions, and mechanisms for addressing these barriers*

PART 2: Solutions and opportunities

- a.** Achieving the aspirations of the White Paper – This section examines *TOR 3: barriers to the full participation of diaspora communities in Australia’s democratic and social institutions, and mechanisms for addressing these barriers*
- b.** Diaspora Policy – This section examines *TOR 4: opportunities to strengthen communication and partnerships between government and diaspora communities in Australia*

Community profiles are included as an Appendix to build a deeper understanding of diaspora communities in Australia with regards to their migration history, socio-economic profile, and specific challenges and opportunities.

DAA’s submission is endorsed by:

Afghan Australia Development Organisation

Australian Zimbabwe Business Council

Filipino Community Council of Australia (FILCCA)

Older Women’s Network (NSW)

Refugee Council of Australia

Settlement Services International

South Sudanese Community Association of Victoria

Springvale Monash Legal Service

DAA wishes to endorse the following submissions to the Inquiry:

South Sudanese Community Association of Victoria

Springvale Monash Legal Service – we particularly acknowledge SMLS for their detailed coverage of the legal and discrimination issues facing diaspora community members in Australia

Refugee Council of Australia – we particularly acknowledge RCOA for their detailed coverage of the challenges associated with participation in democratic processes, as well as community concerns regarding foreign interference.

Dr Wesa Chau – we particularly acknowledge Dr Chau for her detailed coverage of the issues facing Chinese diaspora community members in Australia.



KEY INVESTMENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

What has been lacking since the White Paper was released in 2017 is practical action to fulfil government’s commitment to diaspora as aid partners. The key issues and challenges faced by diaspora can be summarised under two main categories: scarce and inadequate funding to diaspora organisations and lack of practical support.

Funding issues and challenges:

- 1. **Scarce and inadequate funding schemes** to diaspora organisations and communities to deliver projects and programs. Diaspora-led humanitarianism is sustained by community member donations and volunteerism which places a great burden and stress on communities, particularly now during the pandemic. There is also minimal financial support from philanthropies and the private sector. State and local government funding is for locally based activities only and cannot support overseas projects.
- 2. **Australian aid budget while it recognises the role of civil society and investing in cooperation, has no provision specific to diaspora organisation.** Further, the aid budget has met a declining trajectory over the past six years.
- 3. **Declining aid to Africa.** Australian humanitarian aid to Africa is limited to few countries, ignoring the need for a more decisive action to support the struggle of many diaspora communities that have relentlessly advocated for human rights and peace in their country of origin.
- 4. **Scarce funding to provide practical support to diaspora communities and organisations.** Diaspora organisations are born out of need. To strengthen organisational governance, skills, capabilities and ensure the independence, sustainability and longevity, members need mentoring, training and long-term support. As the only organisation in Australia focused on supporting diaspora capability, impact and development DAA does not receive any government funding.

KEY CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

The settlement journey is a core part of the diaspora experience. Each step of the way, people are met with challenges and barriers that can increase issues related to safety and security. Settlement is an ongoing process and ensuring people’s safety and wellbeing serves to build a stronger and cohesive Australia society. The key contextual challenges diaspora face in Australia are:

- 1. **Visas:** The complexity and expense of visa applications, as well as the lengthy processing periods, were highlighted as issues across communities. There were also particular concerns raised relating to systemic barriers facing people seeking asylum in Australia. The Hazara community profile highlights some of the impact that the complex and long visas process have on their community in Australia.
- 2. **Settlement** challenges associated to learning about Australia and how to navigate the system which affect people’s ability to access the job market, securing affordable, appropriate and sustainable housing and participating in civil society. During the critical initial three to five years diaspora seek support from both funded settlement services and their own community. Priority is given to the initial settlement needs, such as housing, employment, English language acquisition, education, and health. Concerns were raised within all consultations about the lack of multilingual services available in these core areas, as well as the absence of settlement support for those groups not entitled to settlement support such as spouses. The Syriac community profile highlights how community members actively support newly arrived people, by helping to translate and understanding how “the system” works.
- 3. **Isolation, barriers to participation and safety concerns:** experienced by community members that predates the COVID-19 restrictions, which have functioned as a trigger to heighten existing problems. Diaspora have quickly grasped the potential negative impacts of COVID-19 restrictions. Well established diaspora organisations expanded their focus to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. A good example is offered by OSGA case studies included in this submission.
- 4. **Intergenerational issues** were raised by all communities. The settlement journey places an enormous strain on family relationships, owing to the changing family dynamics in the new country. Young people are also cast into very challenging social circumstances, where they are striving to fit in with their new peers and adapting to life far away from the wider community support network of their home country.

KEY PRACTICAL SUPPORT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Practical support issues and challenges:

- 1. **Limited access to governance support and upskilling** – Not only existing funding schemes lack a capacity and capability-building element, as highlighted in the key investment issues section, but there are also no separate funding streams dedicated to building solid governance structures.
- 2. **Limited availability of diaspora focused long-term mentoring and upskill programmes.** Diaspora communities are aware of the need to learn new skills in order to deliver their projects. These include skills such as project management, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy, public speaking and grant writing and fundraising (to appeal to a wider audience).
- 3. **Complex and unsupported accreditation processes** – For small volunteer-run organisations, accreditation processes are too complex, difficult to comprehend and too time-consuming. In addition, the lack of clear information about such processes and the scarce support to navigate through the system, directly and indirectly hinders diaspora’s ability to deliver aid and development.
- 4. **AusAID incorporation to DFAT** took away the support needed by humanitarian focused diaspora organisations, shifting the focus on economic development and trade.
- 5. **Diaspora communities have no dedicated space in DFAT** – there is no “diaspora desk”. The absence of a dedicated space means that communication between diaspora groups and government is disrupted every time DFAT staff is reshuffled with a consequent need for diaspora groups to restart their conversation with a newly appointed officer.
- 6. **Disruption in cross country diplomatic action** directly impacts diaspora humanitarianism and development.

KEY CRITERIA FOR THE AUSTRALIAN DIASPORA POLICY

The key criteria that a diaspora policy should satisfy are:

- 1. Offer a clear definition of diaspora and provide a statement of intent for diaspora engagement
- 2. Outline key steps to develop meaningful engagement and inclusion of diaspora. This would include KPIs to monitor diaspora engagement and suggest ways to engage and include diaspora in the design and decision-making process and the key interlocutors and stakeholders.
- 3. Draw on evidence-based practice to articulate an enabling environment for diaspora humanitarianism.
- 4. Support and facilitate a cooperation model. The New Partnership Model outlined under the “Achieving the aspiration of the White Paper” section of this submission, offers a realistic and actionable solution to pilot a new cooperation model between government and diaspora organisations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a dynamic diaspora policy to establish an enabling environment for cooperation

There is a critical need to develop an effective diaspora policy which outlines key steps for developing meaningful engagement and inclusion of diaspora. This would include KPIs to monitor the level and impact of diaspora engagement and suggest ways to engage and include diaspora in design and decision-making processes. Importantly, establishing a diaspora policy would provide clarity, certainty and confidence to diaspora communities in working with the Australian Government.

2. Establish a targeted funding pathway for diaspora led development programs

Tailored funding opportunities for diaspora led development are necessary to enable and sustain their unique approaches. An effective diaspora funding pathway would provide streamlined access to substantial funding over a minimum 12-month term. Eligibility would be based on assessment of program merit, development needs and impact.

3. Invest in diaspora potential by funding the DAA proposed model of support for a minimum of two years

DAA’s significant contribution to diaspora support and development, along with our established relationships of trust with diaspora communities, provides the optimum opportunity for Government investment. Funding the DAA proposed model of support outlined in this submission would meet the needs of diaspora and Government by providing structured programs, networks and channels for effective cooperation. A minimum two-year funding arrangement is necessary to provide certainty to DAA and our diaspora partners and enable the development and evaluation of a longer-term strategy.

4. Invest in research to document, and better measure the impact of, diaspora led development and humanitarianism

DAA has developed a ground-breaking partnership with APMC, University of Melbourne, Monash University, International Organisation for Migration, Centre for Humanitarian Leadership (Deakin University), Settlement Services International and Refugee Council of Australia to work with diaspora communities to better understand the mechanisms and impact of diaspora humanitarianism and develop this critical evidence base. The partnership is supported by UNHCR, Red Cross, Oxfam, DFAT, Oxford University and Cambridge University as Advisory Group Members. The research project is yet to receive funding to proceed.

5. Develop genuine and sustainable partnerships with diaspora communities for international development, diplomacy and policy

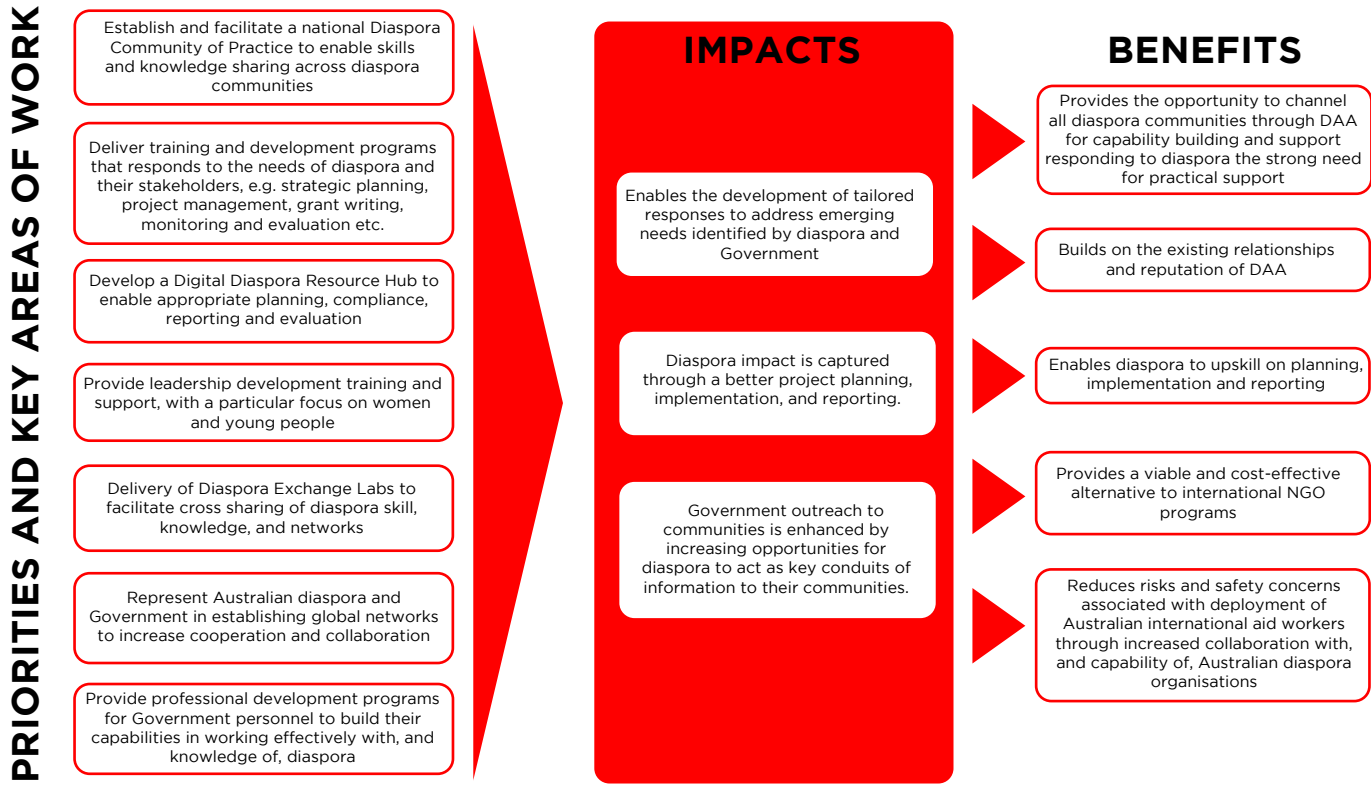
Diaspora communities in Australia are ideally placed to contribute to Australia’s international development program, diplomacy and policy objectives. Investing in these relationships and demonstrating an openness to longer term partnerships would provide significant benefits to Federal Government. Supporting the leadership capabilities of diaspora community members to increase their ability to engage in peacebuilding processes, aid and development would provide new opportunities. Young people and women have proven to be particularly effective in peacebuilding processes in the past.

6. Develop a Diaspora Liaison role within DFAT to streamline engagement with diaspora communities

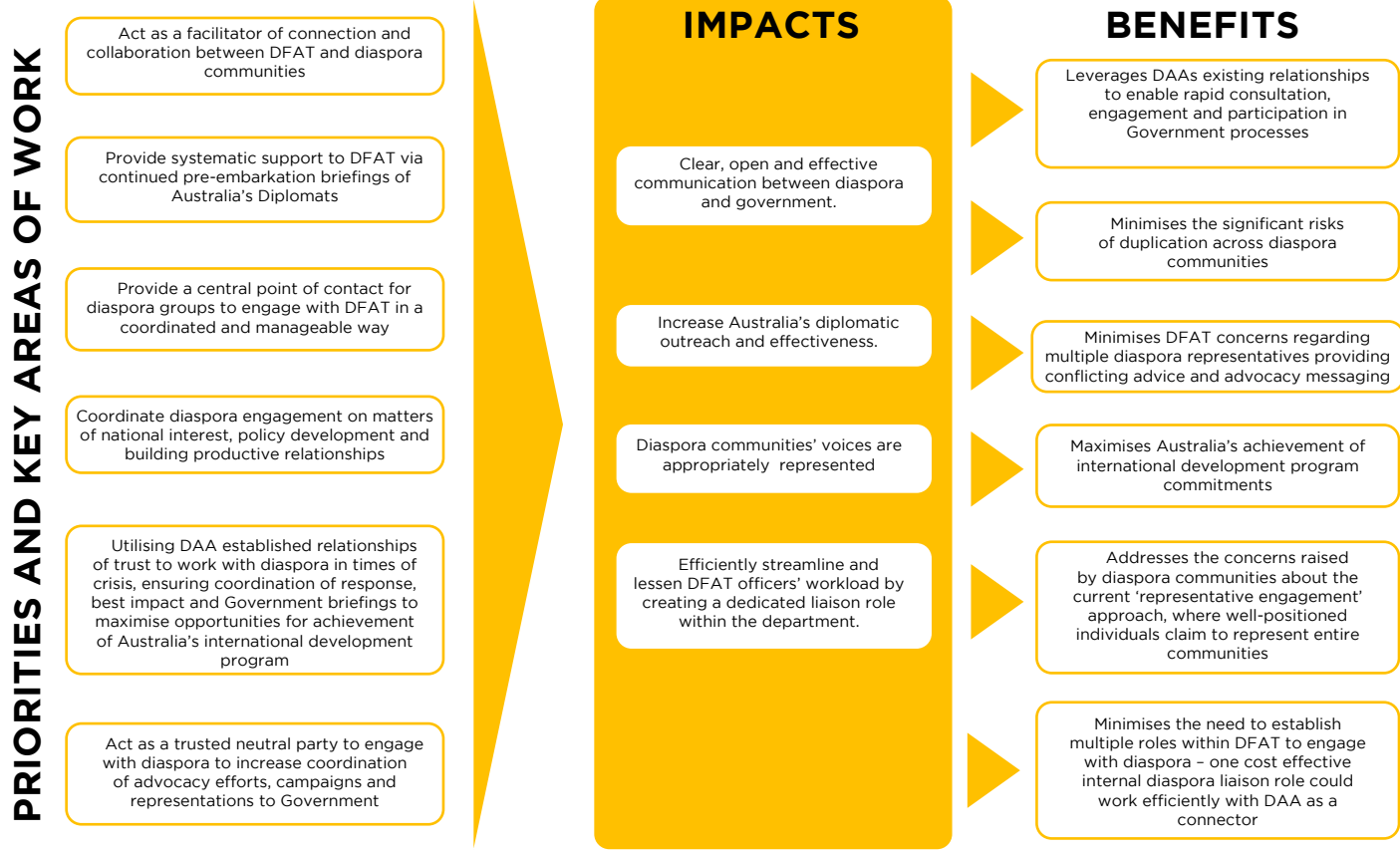
The Australian Government should establish a Diaspora Liaison role within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to oversee, coordinate and support departmental engagement with diaspora communities across its range of functions.

DAA Proposed Strategic Framework

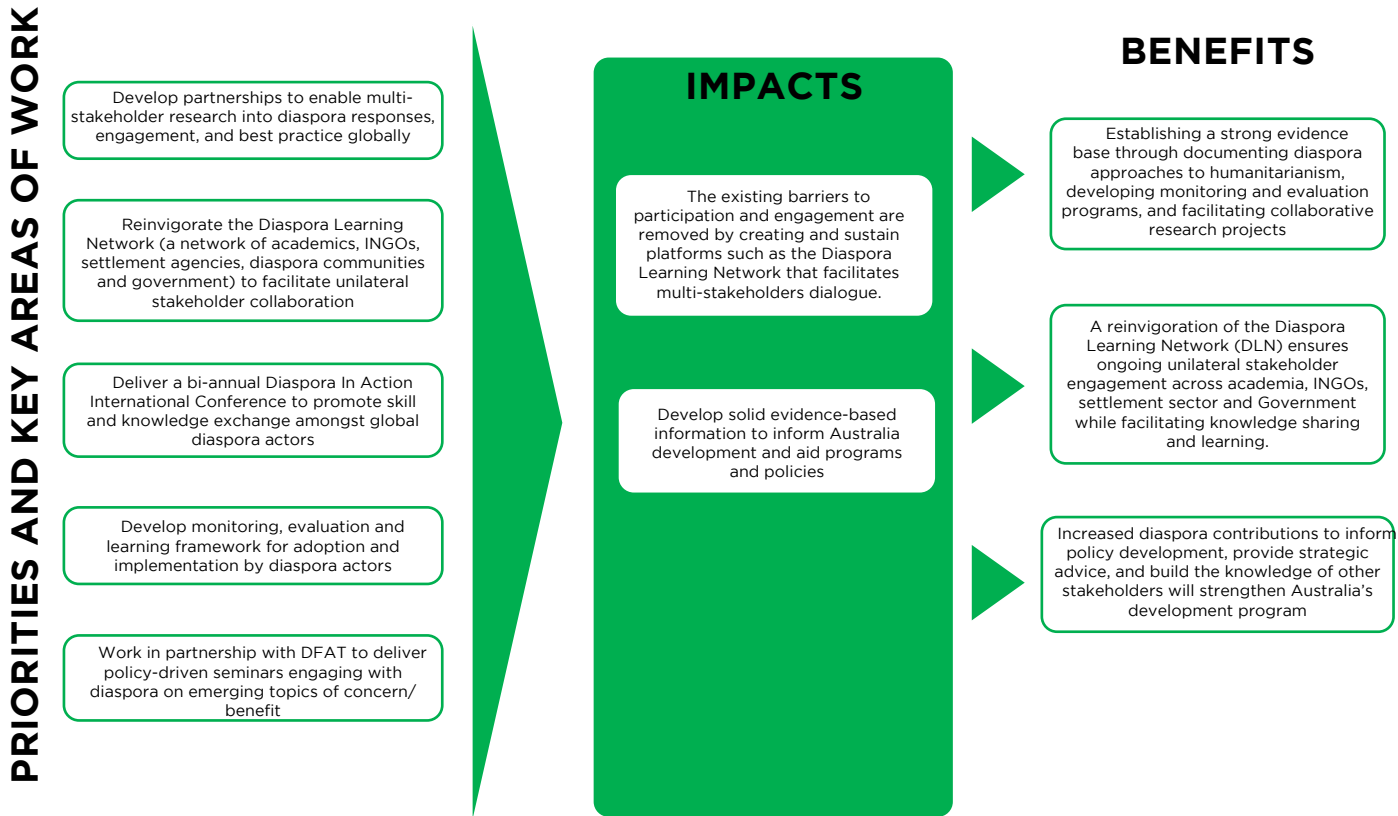
BUILDING CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY



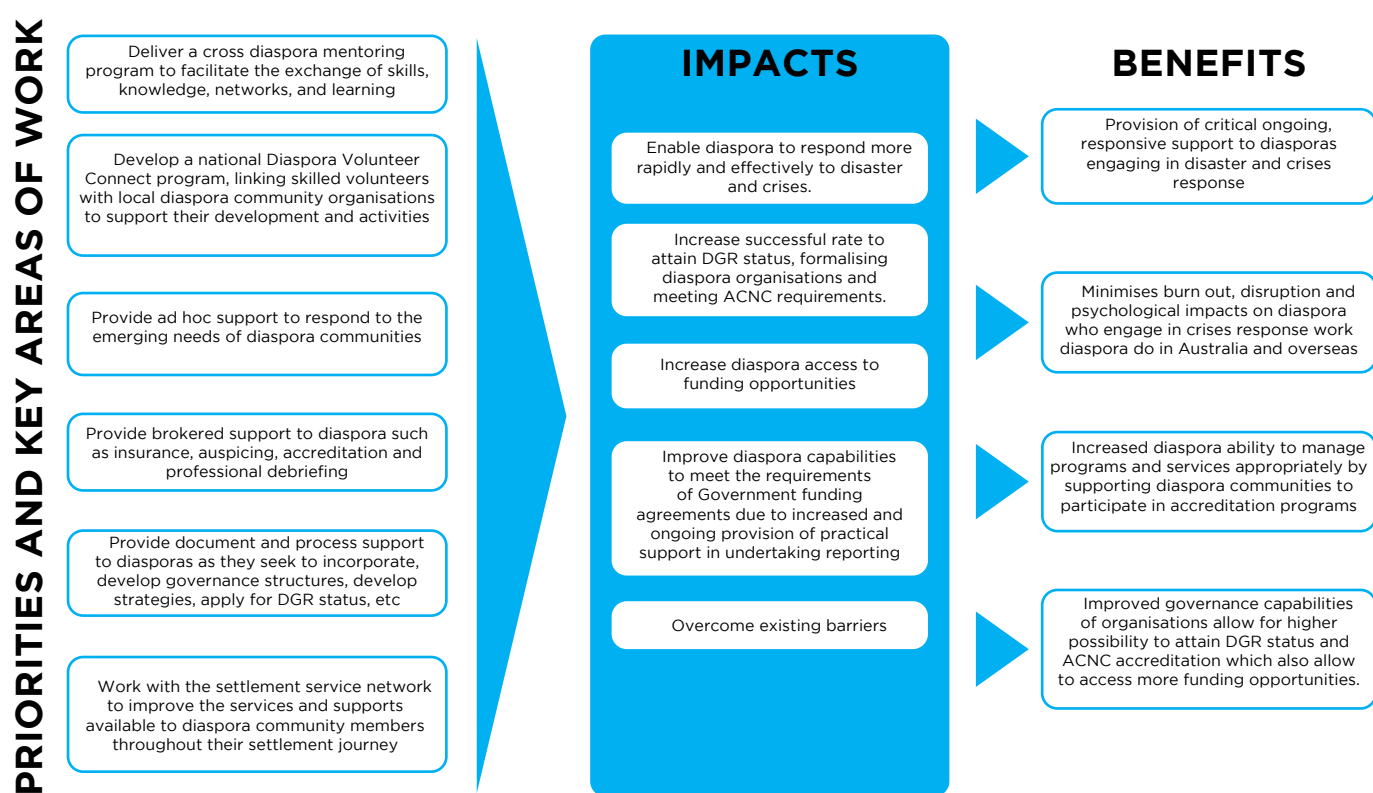
CONNECTING & COORDINATING



BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE



PRACTICAL SUPPORT



PART 1

Issues and barriers

Diaspora: The untapped resource of Australian International Cooperation

The Foreign Policy White Paper (White Paper) recognises diaspora communities as one of Australia's development partners. It identifies the diaspora diplomatic role to assist Australia to deepen ties with other countries, facilitate trade and investment and influence how Australia is perceived overseas. The Foreign Policy (White Paper) also acknowledges the value of diaspora's networks and knowledge to help improve Australia's understanding of development and humanitarian issues in other countries.

Also, the White Paper marks Australia's clear commitment to work with diaspora communities. However, there are few interventions from the decision making process to practically achieve Foreign aid and development towards the fulfilment of diaspora as aid partners. Two of the direct consequences of the policy vacuum seems to be inadequate and the current policy development framework requires an adjustment according to diaspora's needs. Lastly, the existing funding schemes and programs are unsuitable to systematically build diaspora capability and capacity.

This section addresses *TOR 1: Support offered to diaspora community associations and similar organisations, including government grants and other funding* by examining current diaspora issues and barriers with regards to financial investment offered to diaspora communities. Financial investment is first presented through a brief review of the Australian aid budget and then from the perspective of diaspora communities.

AUSTRALIA INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BUDGET

Australia's commitment to invest *"in the stability and resilience of developing countries"* (DFAT 2017) which would in return improve national security and prosperity has been on a declining trajectory on the international development program agenda over the past six years.

ACFID's Budget Analysis has highlighted how Government's commitment to "step up" in the Pacific is happening at the expense of other regions and countries, impacting diaspora communities whose country of origin are no longer a priority to the Australia International Development agenda. Moreover, DFAT restricted travel zones often exclude countries where diasporas are already working from existing funding schemes.

Diaspora communities and organisations are missing from the ever-shrinking foreign aid, development, and humanitarian budget. The opening of the Friendship Grants Scheme in 2018 as one of the key support schemes to civil society organisations filled communities with expectations that soon fell through, due to the scheme's eligibility criteria and accessibility. The application process was too difficult and onerous for most diaspora organisations that are predominately small and run by volunteers, thus resulting in only a handful of diaspora organisation being awarded financial support through the scheme.

Consultations and a review of the foreign aid budget have highlighted two main aspects with regards to the investment to diaspora-led initiatives. These are:

1. Scarce funding to diaspora organisations and communities to deliver projects and programs. Diaspora-led humanitarianism is sustained by community member donations and volunteerism which places a great burden and stress on communities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when employment may be limited and opportunities for fundraising through community gatherings are not possible. There is also minimal financial support from philanthropies and the private sector. State and local government funding is for locally-based activities only and cannot support overseas projects.
2. Inadequate funding to provide practical support to diaspora communities and organisations. Diaspora organisations are born out of need. To strengthen organisational governance, skills, capabilities and ensure the independence, sustainability and longevity, members need mentoring, training and long-term support. As the only organisation in Australia focused on supporting diaspora capability, impact and development DAA does not receive government funding.

Cooperation and Civil Society in the Aid Program

While Australia investment in the NGO Cooperation Program is welcomed, it is not appropriately designed for the diaspora sector. For instance, African aid is limited to crises yet there is a growing African population in Australia and economic opportunities to be had. Diaspora communities are part of civil society, yet their operating mechanisms, mobilisation, the links and networks that they build and rely on are different from other civil society actors. Thus, they require a diaspora focused funding stream that should be moulded on diaspora uniqueness.

The Friendship Grants Scheme that targets small Australian NGOs is not accessible to the vast majority of diaspora communities due to its onerous application process, the restricted geographical focus and the rigorous eligibility criteria.

Diaspora establish their networks on trust which takes time to build. Diaspora-led programs have a long life to ensure ongoing and sustainable impacts. Thus, funding modalities for diaspora communities too should have a long-term vision, allowing for capacity and capability building along with project development and implementation. Co-design funding streams for diaspora would maximise accessibility and availability, while achieving better value for money in delivering Australian aid and humanitarian assistance.

Humanitarian Aid

ACFID Humanitarian Reference Group submission to the International Development Policy calls for the need for a more ambitious budget trajectory for humanitarian aid and development expenditure (ACFID - HRG 2020).

The humanitarian funding has an allocated budget to civil society, which includes local NGOs and Civil Society Organisations, as well as humanitarian assistance to selected crises in the Middle East and Africa. Nonetheless, Australia's humanitarian funding does not have dedicated budget for its greatest resource and asset to the humanitarian agenda: diaspora communities. Diaspora have been actively and successfully delivering humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, and human rights advocacy for a long time (DAA 2019).

Diaspora are uniquely placed to contribute to the humanitarian agenda, they can work from within the community against “entrenched mind-sets” that keep alive division or conflict. Their context-specific knowledge and the bridge-building ability enables them to reach those most in needs. They can raise the alarm before a crisis strikes and are quicker to respond.

A great example is South Sudan. The aid budget has allocated humanitarian assistance to South Sudan, yet none of the South Sudanese communities and organisations that we have consulted across Australia have spoken of Federal funding to assist them delivering their projects.

South Sudanese diaspora in Australia have fundraised to build schools, clinics, maternal wards, delivered medical equipment (from hospital beds, to medical supplies and reusable sanitary supplies for women), scholarship programs for girls and children, support small farming projects for people in refugee camps (to address food shortages) and much more. Projects and aid are driven by the moral obligation to help their community overseas. Nonetheless the financial burden and stress on the Australian-based community are very high. Similar arguments can be made for other communities with ongoing crises in their country of origin such as the Afghan and Burmese communities.

A recommendation in budget restructuring can be made to allocate protracted crises and strengthening humanitarian action to support and work in partnership with diaspora communities, which allows efficiency in the current resources, and determines a longer-term impact to alleviate some of the stress and burden on the Australia-based communities.

Aid to Africa

Africa is a diverse continent that has a lot to offer in terms of economic and trade opportunities. Australia international development is committed to “advancing human rights globally”, yet humanitarian aid to Africa is limited to a few countries, setting aside the need to support diaspora communities that have relentlessly advocated for human rights and peace in their country of origin.

The White Paper states Australia commitment to “work with countries to advance and protect human rights through development assistance and humanitarian support” (DFAT 2017). However, Australian aid to Africa changed from 2010/2011 to 2020, shifting from a commitment to be responsive to humanitarian crises in Africa to considerable cuts in the budget, moving Australian Foreign aid focus predominantly to the Indo-Pacific region. It is time for Australia to uphold its commitment and collaborate with the African diaspora.

In *Looking West: Australia's Strategic approach to aid in Africa 2011-2015*, the Australian Government outlined its proposed strategy for the aid programme in Africa. From the document it transpires Australia's commitment to be responsive to humanitarian crises in Africa, including countries such as Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan (AusAID 2010). Aid to Africa was to be delivered mainly in partnership with multilateral and regional organisations and bilateral donors, as well as non-government and community-based organisations, thus recognising the pivotal role played by human resource capacity towards Africa's long-term development and the fulfilment of the MDGs.

Alongside the development of the strategic approach to aid in Africa, the Australian Government implemented the Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES) programme. AACES was initiated at a time when the government was seeking to demonstrate the value of Australian engagement in Africa. This five-year programme (2011-2016) was implemented across eleven countries focusing on community-based intervention that predominantly aimed to achieve change for women, youth, children and people living with disabilities.

Like the *Australia's Strategic approach to aid to Africa* (2010), AACES favoured a partnership approach to aid between the Australian government, NGOs and their in-Africa partner organisations. Moreover, in 2011 at a meeting held to explore the second component of the AACES¹, the inclusion of the African diaspora emerged as a great need to move the programme forward. It was believed that diaspora engagement would have expanded the knowledge, expertise and Australian contacts for the programme. The suggested ways forward indicated, included funding allocated within the AACES program for policy engagement with the diaspora. However, from 2013 onwards budget reduction to Foreign aid affected Africa's support. While Australia, has a clear strategic focus and interest in the Pacific region, there is a need for sustained diplomatic engagement, aid, and potential trade opportunities in the African region.

¹Twenty-seven organisations and agencies attended the meeting, including DAA, few diaspora representatives, ANGOS and INGOs as well as government representatives.

Case Study

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN SOUTH SUDAN & AUSTRALIA

Mamaland (Hope for Future Foundation) is a Melbourne-based organisation of South Sudanese Australian women focused on awareness raising, women's health, education, early childhood programs and the protection and support of homeless children in South Sudan. It also aims to empower women through education to play greater roles in decision-making processes and to become important actors in the development of the South Sudanese nation.

Mamaland was formed after several of the women returned to South Sudan shortly after independence to visit family and friends. They witnessed the effects of civil war that left South Sudan with the highest maternal mortality rate worldwide, where one in seven women die from pregnancy related causes (UNDP). Many of Mamaland's members were personally affected by deaths of relatives in childbirth. When they returned to Australia in 2012, they established Mamaland and now have 13 members and four volunteers.

With many of Mamaland's members being first generation South Sudanese, their connections to the country remains strong, both in their linkage to kin, family and friends and also through their knowledge and understanding of South Sudanese society and the conflict:

"It's hard to explain, but it's really touching when you see your fellow friends and children are suffering and you have got everything which can keep you going that your friend doesn't have ... it really inspired me to be able to give to whoever doesn't have." (E)

Mamaland has sought out the involvement and support of a younger generation of South Sudanese Australian women who have grown up in Australia. Their knowledge and understanding has developed through media exposure, family and through visits back to the country:

"When I went to South Sudan and I got to witness everything first hand, that was when I really developed the knowledge of how serious the situation was and how much they needed our help and seeing the kids out there, some of them were more driven to get an education than I am here." (S).

ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Mamaland's most substantial activities to date have been the delivery of a container of hospital and educational supplies to Juba. They are now working to establish a women's health and education facility. Their other work is focused on South Sudanese community initiatives in Melbourne¹. Recent key achievements include the following.

CONTAINER DELIVERY TO JUBA

In 2013, Mamaland sent a shipping container of hospital and educational supplies to South Sudan. This delivery furnished the entire maternity ward in the Juba Teaching Hospital with 28 hospital beds and other medical items. It also provided education materials for schools, clothing for the community, sporting equipment, white goods, televisions, 10 computers and six sewing machines: computer classes for women are already being offered through the Catholic Church in Juba, and sewing classes are due to start in late 2014.

This was a major first project and achievement for Mamaland. They had strong support from the local community in Australia who donated the goods and/or money to buy them, and had assistance from over 20 volunteers. Mamaland's partnership with Rotary Australia's 'Rotary Donations in Kind' program facilitated the donations process.

Despite logistical challenges and delays within Africa, the container project was highly successful and made a significant impact in South Sudan. Prior to the delivery, pregnant women were typically sharing hospital beds, sometimes needing to bring their own mattresses from home. Others were sleeping on the hospital floor after giving birth. As the hospital had previously only 73 beds, the additional 28 beds provided by Mamaland increased the number of beds by 30 percent.

The story of the arrival of the container was featured on South Sudanese national television for over a week. The response from hospital staff was overwhelmingly positive. One of the members recalls:

"It was so surprising for them [the hospital director and staff], they thought that no one would think of doing something like this. It was the first time this kind of thing had happened there." (L)

The container project has been influential in inspiring and motivating other diaspora communities to undertake similar projects. A container has since been sent from a group in Canada, which was also reported by the South Sudanese television news.

Mamaland has also been influential as a women's change organization within South Sudan, where women in the community were inspired by the group's efforts. They assisted with the container delivery and the distribution of goods, and also spoke on national television about the container. Men in South Sudan were reportedly surprised by the efforts of a women-led organization because men would more typically undertake this kind of work.

MAMALAND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE FOUNDATION

HEALTH AND EDUCATION CENTRE IN JUBA

Mamaland's main project is a plan to establish a health and education centre for women that would provide antenatal health care and support, with nurses and health professionals undertaking homebased check-ups. Other facilities would include a childcare centre, kindergarten and early childhood programs where children could be cared for while mothers have the opportunity to focus on developing their education in areas of health, literacy and English-language programs.

Land for the health and education centre in Juba has been identified. With backing from the church and the community, Mamaland has applied for a land grant, which is expected to be confirmed in late 2014. Once this process is complete, they will progress with the development of the centre.

BUILDING PROFILE AND PARTNERSHIPS

In Australia, Mamaland has established partnerships with a range of community, health and church institutions². In South Sudan they have connections with the Department of Health, Women Desk, the Catholic Church and the Juba Teaching Hospital, in addition to their wider community links and personal contacts.

The media exposure on South Sudanese national television for the container project has also contributed to raising Mamaland's public profile, both nationally and internationally. The group subsequently received an invitation to speak at the annual South Sudanese Equatoria Community Conference in the US.

FUNDRAISING

Part of the organisation's activities has involved fundraising initiatives within the Australian community. They have established 'Street traders', an ongoing weekly community fundraising enterprise selling food and beverages at local soccer games. In addition, they hold community fundraisers that are primarily directed towards financing the health and education centre in Juba.

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Mamaland's core strengths centre on the existence of a very close-knit and cohesive group of members whose values are based on trust, respect and friendship. They share an in-depth understanding of the conflict, the complex political and tribal issues, along with an awareness of the kinds of conditions and challenges being endured by civilians. Many of Mamaland's members retain strong connections and ties to family and friends.

There is strong leadership within the organisation with allocated roles and responsibilities. Beyond the key group members, they also have a support network of volunteers and the local community, and particularly from the younger South Sudanese generation.

Despite early doubt and scepticism on the part of male South Sudanese elders in the Australian community, Mamaland is now highly regarded and its members feel they have gained respect and a strong sense of pride from men in their community. An important outcome for Mamaland is their success in challenging traditional gender roles in the South Sudanese community.

Lack of resourcing is a significant challenge and poses risks to the sustainability of the organisation. The group has no paid staff and lacks a dedicated office. With many members balancing their volunteering at Mamaland with family and work commitments, they are constrained by limited time to devote to the organisation.

They would additionally benefit from having access to a storage facility for potential future shipping container projects to send further aid and relief items to South Sudan.

The group seeks to develop further skills in the areas of organizational development, grant writing, financial management, project management, leadership, public speaking, English language proficiency and computer skills.

As a result of relationships built with the Juba Teaching hospital during the container delivery, Mamaland now has opportunities to work with the South Sudan Department of Health, in the development of their maternal-health initiatives. Partnering with existing child centres within South Sudan and other community organisations in the country present further possibilities and opportunities.

The risks for Mamaland include a lack of support, both in Australia and South Sudan and insufficient funding. In South Sudan the lack of security, the uncertainty and unpredictability of civil war and tribal conflict pose further risks.

THE FUTURE

Mamaland is focused on the construction of the health and education centre. There are further plans to establish a shelter and education centre for street children. A similar initiative was begun by the Catholic Women Desk group in Juba³, with whom Mamaland has a strong connection, but the work stopped due to a lack of funding. Obtaining greater funding in support of their projects in South Sudan is vital for Mamaland and an integral part of having their vision realised.

While Juba was selected as the site of Mamaland's work for its central location and access to resources, infrastructure and professional staff, they aim to extend their activities into other areas of South Sudan, once they have greater capacity and have successfully met current goals.

Contact:

<https://www.facebook.com/mamalandforfuture/>

DAA wishes to thank Mamaland for kindly agreeing to include the case study into the DAA's submission to the Senate Inquiry. This case study was produced by Diaspora Action Australia with the support of Oxfam Australia. More information can be found here <http://diasporaaction.org.au/publications/>

¹ Mamaland is currently planning to address the issue of isolation and loneliness affecting South Sudanese elders in the Dandenong community area in Melbourne's south eastern suburbs.

² These include: the Rotary Club, Greater Dandenong City Council, Diaspora Action Australia, Warrigal Hospital, Monash Health, St Vincent De Paul, Wellspring and the Catholic Church.

³ Women Desk is a South Sudanese women-led charity and humanitarian organisation, operating through the Catholic Archdiocese of Juba. Their work extends to adult education, hospital, orphanage and prison visits in support of women and children.

AZBC AT A GLANCE



The Australia Zimbabwe Business Council (AZBC) is a national business chamber that represents the business interests of individuals and companies in Australia. In particular, it engages directly with over 40,000 Zimbabwean living and working in Australia with business and economic interests in Australia and Zimbabwe. Since its inception in 2014, the AZBC has successfully fostered relationship with both the Zimbabwe and Australian governments through their respective embassies, their business communities, industry peak bodies and other business chambers. Additionally, the AZBC has successfully engaged with the Zimbabwean diaspora in Australia in order to increase participation in formal trade and investment with Zimbabwe.

REGISTRATION

Registered with ACNC and Incorporated 604355464

YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

2014

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Board of 3 Directors appointed annually
Elected by-members and main governing body
National Advisory Board appointed by Board of Directors
Chief Executive Officer appointed by Board of Directors
National Executive Team and State Directors appointed by CEO and ratified by Board of Directors
Members of the Council.

MEMBERSHIP

Volunteers: 10 (full-time)
Active members: 2,000
Supporters: more than approximately 25,000

ETHNIC COMPOSITION

English, Shona and Ndebele

VISION

To promote bi-lateral economic, cultural and social investments between Australia and Zimbabwe.

MISSION

To successfully integrate Zimbabwean and African diaspora communities with Australia at all levels of socio-economic interest.

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

In Australia, all states, in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Botswana and Zambia. With expression of interest from other African countries.

PRIMARY PURPOSE

Business: primarily business, but with growing social and cultural merging interests.

Overreach into community networks such as African Business Councils, Multicultural Ethnic Associations, as well as mental health organisations.

IMPACT

AZBC operates at 3 levels to reach approximately 8,000 members.

1. International level: UN bodies, Zimbabwe gov't depts etc.
2. National level – DFAT visit and updates.
3. Local level – reaching out to local MPs and keep them updated with most recent news and information, religious groups, community.

ORGANISATIONAL INVESTMENT

Approximately A\$250,000

- NETWORK COMMUNICATION: Gathering information, Revising, collating, formatting, and disseminating information, Sending emails to networking groups or stakeholders or higher bodies,
- BUSINESS ACTIVITIES: organising events, trade fairs, conferences,
- BENEVOLENT ACTIVITIES: assisting with repatriation of deceased community members,

SOURCE(S) AND TYPE OF FUNDING

AZBC funding comes from members, sponsors and donations. However, limited fundraising does not allow it to function as efficaciously as it would and could to achieve its objectives.

AZBC does/does not receive any funding from outside sources, e.g. government, NGOs, private sector or philanthropic organisations.

CONTACT

Email: info@azbc.org.au

Case Study

AUSTRALIAN ZIMBABWE BUSINESS COUNCIL

The preparation of this case study and community profile involved both a desk-based compilation and review of relevant statistics and documents, and community consultations. The desk-based element was conducted by Evans Mukonza, Tendai Chikweche and Sam Sebzo.

Results have been incorporated into the community profile and the Australian Zimbabwe Business Council (AZBC) case study. The Zimbabwe community profile and AZBC case study are developed from multiple sources: migration census data, Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2016; conferences and trades events as well as community sources. The case study highlights the business and trade opportunities that engaging with the African diaspora can bring to Australia.



CHARACTERISING THE ZIMBABWEAN DIASPORA COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA

It is imperative to understand the categorisation of the Zimbabwean diaspora in Australia because this goes a long way in shaping its profile and articulating how the Business Council leverages its understanding of this profile in order to participate and facilitate broad community engagement.

The Zimbabwean diaspora in Australia is pre-dominantly made up of professional migrants in various professions chief of which are:

- Healthcare
- Artisans
- IT and Engineering
- Accounting and Finance

However, there is also a section of non-economic migrants who migrated as political refugees and have since transformed into economic migrants.

The segment is spread across different generations but importantly, the group maintains close links and family ties (emotional attachment) with their home country. Zimbabweans see themselves potentially making a key contribution to the development of their country through various ways: primarily empowering their familial networks back home to become self-sustainable in order to minimise their 'burden' of network's sustenance; or of actively investing in multi-faceted ventures that may also form the basis for their reverse migration in later years.

A key trend that is evident in this segment is the long-term investment in establishing systems and structures for long term generational residency in Australia. The initial focus is on establishing and consolidating community structures and cohesion to prioritise Australia as the primary area of domicile. In other words, there is limited attraction of reverse-migration to Zimbabwe in the working years to the pre-retirement period. Hence, the AZBC's has principally shifted focus to networking and facilitating this Australia-centric single-mindedness of developing Zimbabwean community driven initiatives which:

- contribute to the community-building a defined identify within the Australian context;
- that seeks to promote and maximise integration into the Australian economy and society;
- establish networks with other diaspora communities undergoing similar processes of retaining country of origin identity and Australian identity in Australia.

PHASES OF MIGRATION

Given the two core sections of the Zimbabwean diaspora of economic migrants and the political refugees, the AZBC maps phases of migration around these two groups. This has implications on the nature of community activities members from these two groups participate in

(1) Early Entry Trades Economic Phase: late 1990:- VIC

This cohort comprised economic skills transfer migrants who had worked at Australian-owned Zimbabwean mines – such as BHP Platinum and Rio Tinto that had been closed. These migrants were privy to the opportunities that were available in Australia based on their experience working for Australian companies. This made their assimilation into the Australian workspace much easier, given their orientation working for Australian companies in Zimbabwe

(2) Healthcare Migration Phase: 2000-2004:

Similar to the 1990s cohort, the 2000-2004 cohort of early skills transfer trade was also driven by economic incentives. Driven by global healthcare migration which was taking place in countries such as Australia and the UK, a significant number of healthcare personnel migrants started coming to Australia and establishing various community clusters .

(3) Political Asylum Phase: 2005+

Similar to the 1990s cohort, the 2000-2004 cohort of early skills transfer trade was also driven by economic incentives. Driven by global healthcare migration which was taking place in countries such as Australia and the UK, a significant number of healthcare personnel migrants started coming to Australia and establishing various community clusters .

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

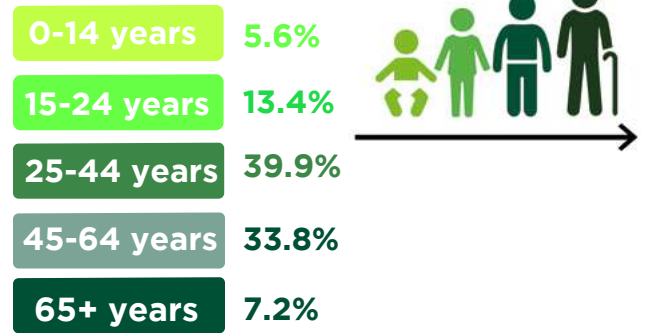
Ancestry

Most Zimbabwe-born in Australia are of English or Scottish backgrounds. However, there are a number of other people of indigenous Shona and Ndebele ethnicities within the diaspora.

The 2016 Australian Census recorded **34,787** Zimbabwean-born people in Australia, an increase of 15 percent from the 2011 Census.

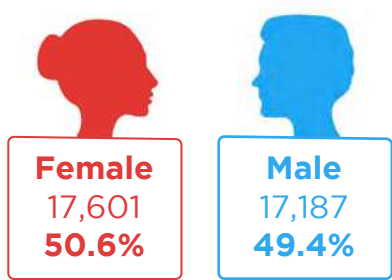
State-wise, Western Australia had the largest number **11,649** followed by Queensland **8,881**, New South Wales **6,495** and Victoria **4,694**.

Structure by age



The median age of the Zimbabwe-born in 2016 was 41 years compared to 44 years for all overseas-born and 38 years for the total Australian population.

Gender structure



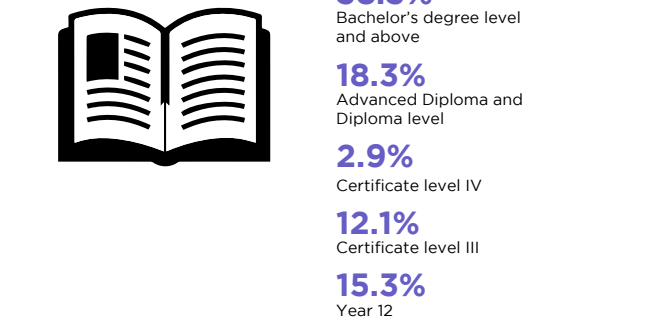
Language

The two main languages Zimbabwe-born speak at home in Australia are English **21,895**, Shona **9,626** and Ndebele **1,223**. At home, **98.4%** speak English very well, with **0.5%** speak English not well, or not at all.

Religion

As per the 2016 Census data, the major religious affiliations were Anglican **5,726**, Catholic **5,689** and Christian, nfd **4,298**. the **14.7%** of Zimbabwe-born who stated 'no religion' was lower than that of the total Australian population **29.6%** and **3.7%** did not state a religion.

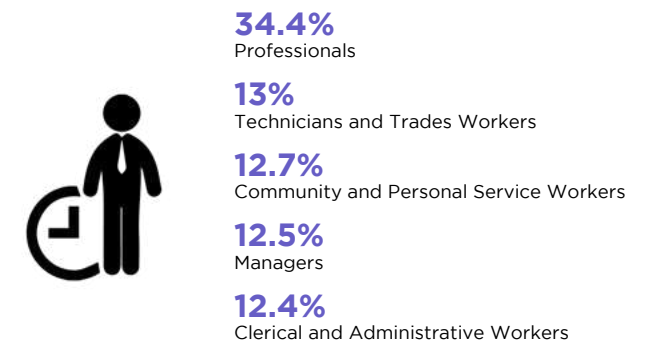
Education Level



Almost 78 percent of the Zimbabwe-born aged 15 years and over had some form of higher non-school qualification compared to 60 percent of the Australian population. Of the Zimbabwe-born aged 15 years and over, almost 10 percent had no qualifications and were still attending an educational institution.

Professional Activities

Participation in the labour force of Zimbabwe-born aged 15 years and over stands at 82 percent with 6.7 percent being unemployed. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 64.6 percent and 6.9 percent respectively.



Data Source: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/files/2016-cis-zimbabwe.PDF>
Commonwealth of Australia, 2018. Department of Home Affairs, Zimbabwe-born Community Information Summary, Australian Bureau of Statistics
Census of Population and Housing.

CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES



THE AZBC’S APPROACH: AN AGENDA FOR ENHANCED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Figure 1: Framework for Enhanced Engagement of Diaspora Communities by Business Councils

Preamble

A significant gap that currently exists in the engagement and support services offered by business councils to diaspora communities is the lack of a supporting framework that can enhance continuity, collaboration and sustainability of interventions undertaken. The AZBC has developed a framework that can be used as basis for improving this engagement through support from various stakeholders of which the various arms of the government are key. The basic premise of the framework is to look for opportunities to optimise engagement activities, minimise duplication and ensure a clear impact assessment of these interventions is undertaken. Each component is explained below.

(1) Clustering Support Systems

There is a proliferation of various services and initiatives that are undertaken by various stakeholders which often results in a lot of initiatives targeted at the diaspora communities, but which are not nuanced to the needs of these communities. As a business council, we are in an advantageous position to design more directed support systems targeting the Zimbabwean community to set up thematically driven support initiatives which the AZBC can also help to monitor and assess. The Council understands the nuances and challenges faced by the Zimbabwean community and is better placed to articulate effective ways to implement any supporting community services.

(2) Structured Directed Face to Face engagement

To support the clusters support systems, this initiative can be more effective if support to enhance more face to face engagement through various mechanisms such as convenings, week-end workshops and roadshows would be an effective way of engaging these communities. For example, roadshows at their social networks such as religious events(churches) or sporting events of the Zimbabwean community can be a focal area of our strategy.

(3) Collaboration & Networking

A key weakness with current initiatives is the lack of collaboration in designing and implementing intervention initiatives. As a business council we are in a good position to enhance collaboration and networking among the different Zimbabwean community groups through the various face to face engagement activities outlined above. This is important for maximising resources, avoiding duplication but expanding scope of ideas that can emerge from the collaboration and networking activities. We already have a foundation set for networking based on our experience on dealings with various networking events that we have showcased .

(4) Longitudinal Scoping

Over the years the business council has undertaken various activities that target engagement of Zimbabwean communities but there has been lack of continuity and longitudinally tracking the impact of these initiatives on groups that we work with. With support to set up cluster support systems, we can retain and maintain a better record and register on intervention initiatives that we undertake over a period of time, thereby enabling us to observe and identify any changes that might be taking place in the communities. We would be able to do this given our embedded relationship within these communities, but we need more support to establish Community Champions or Ambassadors who can be role models and be responsible for the implementation of the support programs that we put in place.

(5) Monitoring and Control

Assessment and impact of interventions is a key area that we would focus on as business council if we get support to implement this framework. Monitoring relates to continuity of assessing the programs in line with the objectives we would have set with a focus on measuring impact of these interventions. This requires local resources human capital within these communities. They would also be responsible for controlling the implementation of the programs that would have been set out.

BEYOND THE TRADE AND BUSINESS AGENDA

Over the years the AZBC has been involved in a variety of community projects that essentially cover the council’s objectives of providing opportunities for supporting the Zimbabwean community, beyond just the business-oriented objectives.

The Council has effectively used its outreach in business-oriented activities to reach out to community groups such as religious groups where it has played a role in consolidating these groups’ activities and messaging on promoting a Zimbabwean identity and integration focus. It is important to note the vital role played by religious groups as the first port-of-call of any community projects because they are the foundation of the collective organization of the Zimbabwean community in Australia. Thus, the Council’s community outreach projects work hand-in-hand with these groups because they are the custodians of the Zimbabwean community network.

Given the collective important role these religious groups play, the Council also extends its business-oriented activities such business-matching and mentoring via these groups. Besides religious fellowship, members use these religious groups to engage in a variety of activities including entrepreneurship.

The Council leverages its established networks with various service providers to assist community members in times of need. For example, the Council works with these community groups with benevolent interventions, such as helping with repatriations advisory services when communities experience loss of life.

Profile of Community Group Partners

Religious Groups and Network Groups

- Zimbabwe Catholic Church (ZACCS)
- FIF Ministries (ZAOGA)
- Zimbabwe Methodist Church (Hwisiri)
- Zimbabwe United Methodist Church (UMC)
- Zimbabwe Anglican Church (Anglican)
- Zimbabwe Family Covenant (FCC)

Other Community Initiatives/Partners

- Community Entrepreneurship Mentoring
- Community Entrepreneurship Matching
- Empathy/compassionate initiatives



“Wish the Australian government could embrace innovative edge. As David says, take a percentage of funds and send it in a very different way. Come up with a more effective model. Encourage Australian government to create innovative edge – more partnerships [with diaspora groups]. Negate future conflicts that may be coming our way that we’re not aware of.”

[DLN Seminar participant, 2018]

DIASPORA PERSPECTIVE ON FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESSIBILITY

“[Our] vision was to respond to the challenges and go where mainstream aid agencies would not go.”
(Conference participant, Diasporas In Action 2018)

Consultations have continually emphasised the need for investment in the diaspora sector in the form of direct investment to organisations as well as the provision of practical support. Communities’ discourse around the need for appropriate funding, accessible to diaspora communities, must be contextualised and understood based on diaspora’s mobilisation, modalities, and linkages.

Diaspora action is predominantly supported by community and members’ volunteering and donations, with marginal funding from philanthropies, private sector and state and local government funding.

- **Volunteering** – Diaspora’s community support is expected to be done in a volunteering capacity by NGOs and other agencies. To an extent, community have also come to accept such model. Whilst diaspora mobilisation is prompted by a strong sense of responsibility and duty towards their community overseas, volunteering alone cannot guarantee organisations’ continuity and sustainability. If communities had ongoing funding, they could employ nominal staff and work more systematically to coordinate and render services appropriately and at the same time build data which could assist DFAT etc. address community concerns.
- **Members donations** – It is common for diaspora organisations to have a system of paid membership. Membership can be used to pay organisational running costs, such as hiring a room for a meeting or incorporation fees, or to fund the organisation’s activities.] In harsh times such as COVID-19, where jobs are declining and face-to-face meetings are not feasible, membership funding tends to evaporate. Relying solely on this source of income inhibits assistance to those in need of care and attention.
- **Community fundraising** – Fundraising is a typical way to raise larger amount of money to cover projects’ implementation costs, such as building a school or sending medical supplies. Fundraising often targets the community of reference and occasionally is directed to the broader Australian community and other influential people or institutions. For example, Akademos Society raise donations through online fundraising. On average, the organisation receives \$6,500 from board and executive membership fees and individual donors who donate monthly and raise between \$10,000 to \$15,000 during the annual fundraising campaign (refer to Akademos case study for more details).

- **Donations outside the community** – Donations from people and/or institutions outside the community are not unusual, but organisations predominantly rely on diaspora members’ existing network. Donations can be monetary or goods, such as hospital beds, textbooks for primary and secondary school etc. However, these are few and far between because of bureaucratic hurdles and time consuming as most volunteers are also working full-time.
- **Philanthropy & Private sector grants** – Grant opportunities from philanthropies and the private sector are accessible to the more established organisation who have enough grant writing and reporting skills. Smaller and less established organisation have more difficulties in accessing these types of grants. Further, not all diaspora organisations have tax-deductible status, which it is often an eligibility criterion for many/most of these funding opportunities.
- **Local government** –Consultations have highlighted how funding at local and state level is predominantly for one-off multicultural events, or celebrations such as Harmony Day. There is nominal or minimal support to the core and organisational needs as well as for community organisations that work on settlement issues, domestic violence, and other community services. Additionally, local government funding is limited in their geographical scope, which is not suitable for communities that live across multiple areas and/or operate overseas.

Consultations have indicated that the current federal funding schemes create systemic barriers for diaspora communities.

- **Limited funding spread across multiple portfolios** – There are small resource allocations in various portfolios, and it is difficult for diaspora communities to identify what is available when, from whom and for what purpose.
- **Funding Ownership** – The current funding system is characterised by a top-down approach driven by individual government departments’ objectives. Spreading limited funding across multiple portfolios and tie them to objectives driven solely by the government department’s agenda, creates a funding mechanism that is ill-matched to diaspora-led aid and development, which is fluid and shaped by communities’ most pressing needs (Diaspora Learning Network 2018). Diaspora organisations can deliver on government’s objectives; however, they do not work in silos, they operate across borders, nationally and internationally and cannot be framed the same way as “traditional” international development actors. A “one size fits all” approach does not work with diaspora. The fluid nature of diaspora is their greatest strength when delivering projects, however it works against them when approaching rigid funding schemes.
- **Lack of long-term vision** – None of the people consulted felt that funding schemes at any level have a long-term vision and support community organisation capacity and capability building. To ensure project sustainability and longevity, diaspora organisations build strong ties with the local community and spend time working with them. Funding schemes should be multi-year and expand programmes based on most pressing needs.

- **Application process and eligibility criteria** – Grants application processes are too complex and onerous for most diaspora communities that lack the time, experience, or skills to invest in applying for grants. Diaspora organisation are led by volunteers, people who have regular jobs, school, families and find the form-filling cumbersome. The Friendship Grant Scheme is good example. While the funding to small NGOs are welcomed, the eligibility and accessibility criteria, made it difficult for diaspora organisation to access the scheme. As a result, on over 40 organisations awarded on round ¹, only few were diaspora organisations.
- **Minimal or no organisational and core funding** – Diaspora organisations are built out of necessity to address pressing issues, but they can also collapse after a while because they are not financed, resourced, and supported appropriately. The current volunteer-base model is not fit to ensure organisational longevity and contiguity.
- **No resources for capacity and capability building** – There are no resources allocated to support the growth and upskill of diaspora organisations' members. The current funding streams focus on project delivery and disregard diaspora's constant need to upskill and train. Diasporas also evolve over time. Elements such as core funding, capacity and capability support are paramount to diaspora organisations' ability to become sustainable and to grow their operation. In the twelve years of activity, diaspora communities have approached DAA asking for help regarding:
 - governance,
 - strategic planning,
 - project planning,
 - monitor and evaluation,
 - grant writing,
 - advocacy,
 - public speaking,
 - communication,
 - leadership training etc.

Currently, there is no funding allocated to support independent NGOs such as DAA to deliver services specifically to diaspora organisation, nor is there much provided directly by government agencies. Yet, diaspora recognise this is a relevant gap in the funding and service provision that hampers their ability to render assistance to community members when needed urgently, as during the coronavirus COVID-19.

KEY INVESTMENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

What has been lacking since the White Paper was released in 2017 is practical action to fulfil government's commitment to diaspora as aid partners. The key issues and challenges faced by diaspora can be summarised under two main categories: scarce and inadequate funding to diaspora organisations and lack of practical support.

Funding issues and challenges:

1. **Scarce and inadequate funding schemes** to diaspora organisations and communities to deliver projects and programs. Diaspora-led humanitarianism is sustained by community member donations and volunteerism which places a great burden and stress on communities, particularly now during the pandemic. There is also minimal financial support from philanthropies and the private sector. State and local government funding is for locally based activities only and cannot support overseas projects.
2. **Australian aid budget while it recognises the role of civil society and investing in cooperation, has no provision specific to diaspora organisation.** Further, the aid budget has met a declining trajectory over the past six years.
3. **Declining aid to Africa.** Australian humanitarian aid to Africa is limited to few countries, ignoring the need for a more decisive action to support the struggle of many diaspora communities that have relentlessly advocated for human rights and peace in their country of origin.
4. **Scarce funding to provide practical support to diaspora communities and organisations.** Diaspora organisations are born out of need. To strengthen organisational governance, skills, capabilities and ensure the independence, sustainability and longevity, members need mentoring, training and long-term support. As the only organisation in Australia focused on supporting diaspora capability, impact and development DAA does not receive any government funding.

The existing limited funding schemes are ill-matched to diaspora action, and it generates:

- **Burden on diaspora organisations and the community that supports them.** In the absence of appropriate funding diaspora communities and organisations will continue to be the main contributor of diaspora humanitarianism which creates a heavy financial burden on community members leading in turn to their economic well-being and health stress. The COVID-19 crisis has further exacerbated the stress, not only for the Australian-based diaspora but also overseas. Diaspora in Australia may face financial difficulties (e.g. reduced working hours or job loss) caused by the COVID-19 situation, which reduces their ability to donate at the time when there is much need for help globally. Seeing the situation worsening in countries of origin coupled with the increasingly more limited ability to help, causes great stress to many communities' members.
- **Limitations to the scope of diaspora-led activities.** Diaspora projects encompass multiple fields of work and have a long-term vision, e.g. diaspora can deliver development and peace-building together, but funding that is a year-long and restricted to specific objectives does not allow for the complexity of concurrent or overlapping issues.
- **Organisational fragility.** Without adequate and structured support organisations cannot address issues related to their capacity growth and their ability to exist as entities.
- **Negative impacts on communities overseas.** A diaspora organisation that ceases its activity often means that there is a community overseas that will no longer receive aid. Diaspora go where INGOs and other agencies do not go, stay for longer and provide community-to-community aid. This leaves a gaping hole in aid initiatives.

The current investment and funding lack a co-designed methodology and meaningful engagement with diaspora. There is no community ownership over funding objectives nor there is a provision for much-needed community growth and empowerment. This is despite awareness about funding mechanisms in other parts of the world such as the Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination (DEMAC), an initiative aimed to improve diaspora emergency response capacity and coordination with the humanitarian system funded by ECHO and implemented by Danish Refugee Council, AFFORD-UK, and the Berghof Foundation².

Understanding the context: Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia

This section examines *TOR 2: Safety concerns among diaspora communities, and means for strengthening the protection and resilience of vulnerable groups* by summarising issues raised throughout the consultations related to visas, settlement, including the hardship that stems from lack of access to economic opportunities and isolation issues, and intergenerational problems, common among communities that maintain strong ties with their cultural background.

The settlement journey is an important part of the diaspora context. Whether diaspora community members have migrated to Australia pressured by economic reasons, or been forced from their homeland as refugees to escape war, persecution or natural disaster the challenges associated with settling in a new country were highlighted consistently throughout the consultation process.

Key contextual challenges are presented here to provide important context for understanding, and supporting, diaspora communities. DAA has also provided more detailed information to the Settlement Council of Australia for inclusion in their submission to the Senate Inquiry into Temporary Migration.

KEY CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

The settlement journey is a core part of the diaspora experience. Each step of the way, people are met with challenges and barriers that can increase issues related to safety and security. Settlement is an ongoing process and ensuring people's safety and wellbeing serves to build a stronger and cohesive Australia society. The key contextual challenges diaspora face in Australia are:

1. **Visas:** The complexity and expense of visa applications, as well as the lengthy processing periods, were highlighted as issues across communities. There were also particular concerns raised relating to systemic barriers facing people seeking asylum in Australia. The Hazara community profile highlights some of the impact that the complex and long visas process have on their community in Australia.
2. **Settlement** challenges associated to learning about Australia and how to navigate the system which affect people's ability to access the job market, securing affordable, appropriate and sustainable housing and participating in civil society. During the critical initial three to five years diaspora seek support from both funded settlement services and their own community. Priority is given to the initial settlement needs, such as housing, employment, English language acquisition, education, and health. Concerns were raised within all consultations about the lack of multilingual services available in these core areas, as well as the absence of settlement support for those groups not entitled to settlement support such as spouses. The Syriac community profile highlights how community members actively support newly arrived people, by helping to translate and understanding how "the system" works.
3. **Isolation, barriers to participation and safety concerns:** experienced by community members that predates the COVID-19 restrictions, which have functioned as a trigger to heighten existing problems. Diaspora have quickly grasped the potential negative impacts of COVID-19 restrictions. Well established diaspora organisations expanded their focus to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. A good example is offered by OSGA case studies included in this submission.
4. **Intergenerational issues** were raised by all communities. The settlement journey places an enormous strain on family relationships, owing to the changing family dynamics in the new country. Young people are also cast into very challenging social circumstances, where they are striving to fit in with their new peers and adapting to life far away from the wider community support network of their home country.

² <https://www.drc.ngo/relief-work/diaspora-programme/what-we-do/demac>

SYRIAC COMMUNITY & SOWA



“Simplifying the complex, Syrian Aramean or Syrian/Syriac Aramaic refers to a group of indigenous people of the old Syria.”

THE SYRIACS (ALSO CALLED SYRIAN(C)-ARAMEAN) PEOPLE

Understanding Syrian Aramean community requires discovering the history of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch and all the East (SOCAE) that goes back to the early apostolic days, a member of the Oriental Orthodox Family (Issa & Issa 2009), from the Land of Mesopotamia ‘the cradle of Western Civilization, her sacred language (Aramaic/Syriac), her Holy See (established in Antioch in the year 37 by St Peter, and due to uncertainties in the region moved to different places and now in Damascus, Syria), her martyrs throughout the centuries starting with the early antiquities until these current days (e.g. SAYFO 1915 between 500-700,000 individuals, and destruction of her monasteries and churches, also the uprooting of her people from their homeland), and her present status (diaspora).

Indeed, when looking at SOCAE there is a vital need to look at the Church, her Aramean/Syriac people and their homeland, which brings forth a story of wonderful, delightful, magnificent, innovative, and creative people, yet mistreated, oppressed, harassed, maltreated, persecuted, displaced, evacuated, relocated, and uprooted from their homeland. Thus, the following paragraphs will carry within their lines the story of the Church looking in the story of the people and their homeland Mesopotamia.

Mesopotamia was located between the land of Persia to the East, the Mediterranean Sea to the West, Armenia, Greece, and Asia Minor to the North, and Arabia to the south – this whole land was known the land of the people of ARAM or Aramean People. Indeed, some of these tribes were named either the people of Babel, the people of Ashur, the people of Adom, but all the people were referred to as the people of ‘Aram’ or ‘Aramean People’ (Manna 1900). History tells us that the Aramean People (who later and following Christianity were named Syrians/Syriacs to differentiate the pagans from Christians) are the indigenous people of Syria and Mesopotamia (the land between the two rivers), the cradle of Western civilization.

The Arameans spoke Aramaic. There is no doubt that Aramaic was the language of the Jews during the Apostolic Age as well as during several centuries prior to this period and extending as far back as 500 B.C. The Jews even wrote some of their Holy Scriptures in Aramaic or in Aramaic characters. The Dead Sea Scrolls which were discovered in 1947 by His Eminence Mar Athanasius Y. Samuel, then Archbishop of Jerusalem, confirm this fact. This language, therefore, was used as the liturgical language in this Church.

The dialect of the Arameans (Aramaic) became the common language of that area. Still later, just before and after the beginning of the Christian era, Aramaic underwent a particularly rich evolution. This evolved new form of Aramaic known as “Syriac”, the language of the amalgamated or unified Syrian People (Issa 1995). SOCAE language (ARAMAIC) spread to the neighbouring peoples and became the lingua franca of the region. After converting to Christianity, the East and West-Aramean People adopted the term “Syrian” “Soraye” which simply means ‘Christian’ which became both a lingual and a group designation (Issa 2014).

Despite the common language, culture, heritage and history, and due to the diverse events in the region, such as, disagreement on dogma, colonialization, and the arrival of Missionaries to the region mainly from Rome, the Aramean People, the “Syrian” “Suryoye” “Soraye” suffered and various groups were established from the One Apostolic Orthodox Church (e.g. Syriacs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Maronites, etc...). But the historically correct name for these groups is Aramean (Manna 1900.a). Even the land of Mesopotamia is known as the land of Aramean People (Manna 1900.a)

Since the end of the Aramean kingdom of Osrhoene (Current Urfah in Turkey to the Northern of Aleppo), the Aramean People have been without any state of their own. They have been constantly victimized through different religious massacres discrimination, ethnic cleansing, and persecutions, either at the hands of rulers, at the hand of different empires, regimes or missionaries and other churches for hundreds of years, so that they have become a minority in their own land and area (Issa 2014).

Indeed, the people of Mesopotamia from where the people of SOCAE originate suffered immensely at the hands of several empires, including the Ottoman Empire, named after Osman, its first ruler, who in the early 1300s expanded it from a tiny part of northwest Turkey to a slightly less tiny part. This empire ruled for 500 years, which is longer than the entire history of Roman Empire, ruling over the Middle East, North Africa, and South Eastern Europe for centuries. It was probably the last great non-European empire until it began declining in the mid-1800s, collapsed after World War I, and had its former territory in the Middle East divided up by Western Europe. The war changes the region out of recognition, ending the Ottoman centuries and bringing into existence the modern territories of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine (now including Israel), Jordan and Iraq (Rabo 2014).

The atrocities by the Ottoman Empire were excessive, and destructive, described and recorded by Issa et al. (2017), including the issues that have been most prevalent in the Republican [Turkish] past and nowadays:

- The persecution and expulsion of the Ottoman Greeks, as well as deportation;
- The destruction of the Ottoman Armenians and Syriac [Syriac, Chaldeans, and Assyrian].

As a result of these atrocities, the majority of the surviving SOCEA people fled the region and are now scattered in diaspora migrating to the USA, Canada, and Australia, amongst other countries.

This persecution did not stop with the end of the Ottoman Empire – in the contemporary and recent history we have noticed the ongoing persecution, destruction of monasteries and churches, also the uprooting of people from their homeland in areas such as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, which had resulted in a new wave of migration from the motherland.



In countries where Syriac Orthodox diaspora established themselves, often their experience of integration includes reflection about religious minorities and the unsettled question of whether religious, cultural, or even civilizational difference constitutes the salient category of belonging and alterity in Australian identity-politics. Such uncertainty over the salience of categories and the meaning of difference shapes Syriac Orthodox efforts to procure recognition as an indigenous ethnoreligious minority. Not only the experience of diaspora in the West, but twentieth century encounters with secular nation-states throughout the Middle East have convinced Syriac Orthodox Christians that such recognition is necessary for them to survive as a self-consciously imagined community in secular modernity. But survival depends upon more than just political and legal recognition. Political longings cannot be disentangled from existential longings (Taylor 1994). The self in the self-other relation of recognition is constituted by that relationship and like for many others, for Syriac Orthodox Christians this recognition within its specificity within the Australian society, is a vital human need.

For Syriac people in the Diaspora, building a collective memory is vital to creating cohesion between dispersed groups and maintaining a sense of individual belonging. Fixing on a place of origin, possibly transformed into a goal of pilgrimage, helps to structure the community and to preserve identity links. Other elements contribute to it, among which the evocation of the past of persecutions and massacres, which feeds an “ethics of sacrifice”.

Attachment to the “language of origin” is also a central element of what defines Syriac identity; reason why it is crucial to make significant efforts to maintain language learning in countries of exile like Australia.

Towards the end of the 1960s, migration of Syriac Christians accelerated. It started with the war between the Turkish state and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) which caught Syriac Christians in the middle. Already before the war broke out in full in the 1980s, some had settled as labour migrants to Europe, easing the way for others to follow as asylum seekers when the situation in Tur ‘Abdin became increasingly dangerous.

By the early 1990s, the Syriac population of eastern Anatolia had shrunk to a couple of thousand people who feared Kurdish oppression as much as Turkish restrictions on their religious and cultural life. The communities in Europe and Australia received further Syriac Orthodox from the Jazeera- (Hasaka Province) region. While socio-economic motives played a role, some came as asylum seekers. The civil war in Lebanon (1975–1990) provided the impetus for yet another group of Syriac migrant. Though part the revolutionary violence was specifically targeted at Christians, the upheaval provided another impetus for migration. Their numbers in the diaspora were augmented by Iraqi and Iranian Syriac – Aramean who fled the consequences of the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s.

In the final stages of this war, Iraq’s brutal suppression of Kurdish political opposition also targeted Syriacs/Aramean and other Christians in the region (Chaldean, Assyrian) villages in North Iraq, whereas the occupation of Kuwait in 1990, the American military intervention of 1991, and the ensuing economic boycott made living conditions in Baghdad increasingly difficult. All of this encouraged Christians to leave the country.

Soon after the US-led invasion of 2003, Iraq spiralled into a bloody civil strife during which Christians were among the express targets of the violence. Many more Christians fled the country, or, if that was not possible, sought refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan that remained relatively stable. In 2014 and 2015, the rise of ISIS (Daesh) many more Syriac Christians from their homes in Mosul and the Nineveh plains, in the Jazeera region and in Homs and its environs. All the citizens of the village of Bartleh, in Northern Iraq, were uprooted overnight and had to walk long distances to reach a safe place. For places like Mosul and Homs, this meant the end of long and stable periods of Christian presence, for the Jazeera region it meant the uprooting of Christians whose parents and grandparents had found refuge there after the horrors of the Sayfo1915 (Genocide). No Syriac Christian has able to return to Mosul since 2015. Though, some of the community returned to Bartleh, but the resurgence of ISIS, the Kurdish, and the Turkish make them fear for their lives from more than one side.

The immediate result of all these migratory movements was the relative strengthening of Syriac communities outside the Middle East, and thus the increased weight of the diaspora vis-à-vis the remaining communities in the Middle East. While both nationalists and clerical leaders encouraged their flocks to remain in the region, many people chose what they thought would be best for their children, moving to countries (Murre-van den Berg 2019).

In Australia, although as recorded by the Melbourne Museum “Syrians Born in Victoria was first counted in the 1891 censuses 142”, first Syrian Aramean immigrants arrived and settled before 1968, while others followed in form of various waves of migration. The most notable of these waves resulted from the Lebanese Civil War (1975 to 1990), and the aftermath of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. More followed after the 2014 ISIS invasion of Northern Iraq, and the Syrian war where the Australian Government opened the immigration to some 12,000, amongst whom there were people from Syriac Orthodox Church who settled in Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, and Queensland.

Syrian-Aramean community is as diverse as any other group in Australia and is made up of Arameans migrants and refugees from Mesopotamia that, following the Sykes-Picot agreement (1916), was partitioned into: Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and Turkey. In addition, several of the Syriac Orthodox Church members from India have also migrated to Australia starting 2000, with a common language and relevant cultural features. Proud of their culture, these refugees and migrants have integrated and greatly contributed to the Australian society and way of life (Abdo-Attia 2016).

Syriac community in Australia, both from the Middle East and India amounts to about 12,000 people (Abdo-Attia 2016). A figure that have increased following the migration from Syria and Iraq, also the ongoing arrival of skilled workers from India.

Finally, it is important to state here that the SOCAE people are always grateful to the governments and countries who have opened their arms to welcome them as citizens, and they are always urged by their spiritual leaders to be active members in their new countries.

SOWA AT A GLANCE

NAME

Syrian Orthodox Women Association (SOWA)

REGISTRATION

Incorporated Association. CAV: A0051892V

YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

30th June 2008 (although the Association had been active for many years before this date, this is the day when it was formally registered with Consumer Affairs Victoria).

MEMBERSHIP

Contributing members- 100

Participating members- around 1,000 (distributed in various councils, among others: Greater Dandenong, Casey, Frankston City Council, Moreland, Brimbank, Hume, Darebin, and Whittlesea. We also have a small community in Geelong.

Structure: SOWA has an Executive Committee. Although in the past it used to meet in St Aphrem Syrian Orthodox Church, located in Reservoir (Victoria), due to the fluxes of Syriac refugees' arrivals in the past three years, mostly in the South (Casey and Dandenong) and Frankston, Hume and Whittlesea, the Committee meets in church halls in those areas to be closer and better attend the needs of these new arrivals.

Often, the Committee meets in the private homes of the members.

No staff. All work relies on a committed Committee and regularly active volunteers.

ETHNIC COMPOSITION

Arameans from the land of Mesopotamia, now migrants & refugees from today's Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and other Middle Eastern countries. No specific data available.

ORGANISATION VISION AND MISSION

Vision: SOWA's vision is to achieve excellence in delivery of services to its members, leading to their full participation in the Australian society through:

- Information and educational programs
- Leadership & parenting programs
- Assistance to all Syriac Communities in breaking down barriers and building their capacity to engage within the wider Australian Multicultural community.

Mission: The Syrian Orthodox Women's Association (SOWA) is a non-political body dedicated to serving the welfare needs of members from Syriac speaking backgrounds in Victoria. SOWA is a space where women migrants and refugees from Syriac speaking backgrounds to support each other, thus, aiding in the settlement process in Australia.

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Victoria

PRIMARY PURPOSE

A broad range of social, linguistic & cultural, historical, educational, community support, religious activities. SOWA also support, in a smaller scale, training of women for Income Generating Activities (IGA).

IMPACT

Since its establishment, SOWA has worked with migrants & refugees from Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and other Middle Eastern countries, to enhance their opportunities for social engagement and participation in various events within the community.

For the past 6-7 years, the focus of the Association are the newly arrived refugees, from Syria, Iraq mostly, but also Lebanon and Turkey. We accompany senior people (men and women), women and mothers, as well as young people, in their journey to integration in Australia.

SOURCE(S) AND TYPE OF FUNDING

Most funding comes from SOWA's fundraising campaigns and direct commitment of its members.

Approx. total budget received in grants: Between 2008 and 2020, SOWA has received less than 10,000AUD.

Sources:

- Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) -between 2,000-3,000 AUD to organize the Fest-
- Department of Health and Human Services Victoria (around 5,000+700.00 AUD received for settlement services to Senior members and family of the community).



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BUILDING COMMUNITY HARMONY: SOWA'S WORK

GOVERNANCE

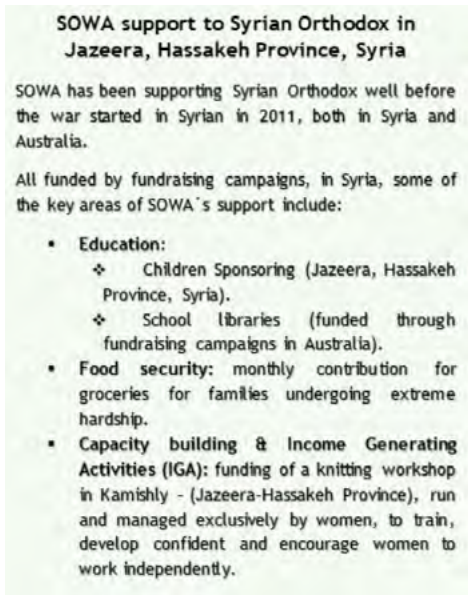
SOWA's Executive Committee meetings: In Dandenong and Endeavor Hills, SOWA Executive Committee requested on many occasions to have access to a room in one of the Community Centres to meet. This was not an option unless SOWA paid, but the organization has no source of income other than member and community contributions. Due to this limitation, often the Executive Committee and any other ad hoc group meets in the private homes of its members.

ACTIVITIES

SOWA is in first place, an Association that responds proactively, as well as reactively to the needs of the community. For the past 6-7 years, most of SOWA's work has been in support of the newly arrived refugees (2013-2020), mostly from Syria and Iraq, but also from Lebanon and Turkey. Every 3-4 weeks SOWA organizes a social evening for the Seniors and social evening for women (main purpose: to get them out of isolation and accompany them in the process of developing a sense of belonging and engagement with/within the Australian context -what the country offers, their obligations & rights- while maintaining our identity).

The concept of "harmony" is at the centre of SOWA's mission. For that reason, the Association always tries to involve other communities and cultural institutions in its social activities (e.g. SOWA invited mayors, Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, MRC-Settlement & Family Services, the Victorian Council of Churches or senior management from the Arab Bank, to its Festivals in 2010 and 2018).

SOWA works around a plan of permanent activities conducted at different moments around the year targeting different groups within the community (e.g. Christmas, Easter, etc.), and timely activities organized on regular basis depending on the needs and opportunities offered in different seasons (e.g. Monthly Evening Family Gathering, Excursions, Monthly kids activities, and BBQ on a nice weekend).



COVID-19 Community response

Although unlike other communities in Australia, we do not have information available in our language -Syriac, as the language is not as yet considered an official language¹ by the Australian Government. However, the Archbishop, in co-operation with the committees continues to provide relevant information, and we are in communication with our members, inform them about the changing circumstances, what they need to do. We also use Facebook to pass on messages.

Covid-19 is having an important impact on remittances to our families in home countries. Whilst money senders' services have been a system utilized in the past, it remains expensive and priority was given to relatives and friends traveling to home country and neighbouring states. The great impact of the virus on traveling makes this option currently impossible.

At a time when COVID-19 is taking its toll on many countries, U.S. Sanctions on Syria, and the US 'Caesar Act' sanctions applied from 1st of July 2020 made it impossible to help our relatives and community members! On 21st August 2020, H.H. Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, the Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church, appealed to the United Nations² to address immediately the humanitarian crises faced by the Syriacs/Arameans in the Northern and Eastern parts of Syria where water is being used as weapon.

Limited Funding and other types of support

A subject of debate within SOWA is around the question of whether asking or not for support. A resilient community that over the years has self-supported its community members brings at times the perception among some of the members that the community work is their responsibility. Others, acknowledging that, consider that is the right of SOWA, as a recognized community entity, to ask for existing institutional support.

One way or another, SOWA has received little or not available funding (e.g. on one occasion SOWA applied for a 20k grant and received around 2,000AUD) since its first started working for the community. It is important to understand that a good proportion of the membership of SOWA are newly arrived refugees with little or no income so relying on membership fees for the sustainability of the Association's activities is not an option.

Whilst SOWA's contribution to Syrian (Aramean) people make an impact on their lives, many remain unsupported, without any visibility of their situation in the Australian society. SOWA's support is valuable, particularly at ensuring their safety, but it proves to be a heavy and lengthy financial burden on the community, bearing the responsibility to assist while uncertain immigration processes take place.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT-COLLABORATE WITH THE COMMUNITY VIA SOWA

- Recognizing and valuing this Community equally and at the same level as other diaspora communities in Victoria and Australia.
- Ensure that institutional support provided to newly arrived community members is offered in the appropriate language for everyone (e.g. case workers of Syrian (Aramean) speaking).
- Ensure that institutions providing support to newly arrived refugees/migrants include in their staff, at least a member of the community to ensure cultural adequacy (trust: often newly arrived persons, particularly those who have fled violence and conflict, initially struggle to trust community outsiders).
- Turn SOWA into a Government ally for the purpose of:
 - supporting newly arrived refugees to seek employment.
 - directing newly arrived refugees to mental health services that will support them in healing from trauma.
 - To include SOWA's women and youth members in the training and courses such as leadership, media, Interpreting & translating services, etc.

The Syriac community and SOWA case study was developed with the generous contribution of Adibeh Abdo-Attia.

Adibeh Abdo-Attia, author & publisher, has over 40 years working as an advocate for CALD communities and human rights defender, as well as contributing to the development and achievements of the Australian Tax Office, the Australian Electoral Commission and as a Producer/Broadcaster for 3ZZZ Show and 3CR. Adibeh sits on numerous committees and has been instrumental in the establishment of Jewish Christian Muslim Association, Victorian Council of Churches and The Centre of Dialogue. She won a Syrian Ambassador award for her work within the Arabic & Syriac (Aramaic) community and was the recipient of the ATO Harmony Hero Award. She has published books to a multilingual audience (Syriac Aramaic, Arabic & English), has been a speaker at several conferences and frequently writes articles for numerous Arabic websites and magazines.

¹<https://www.respect.gov.au/resources/cald-materials/>
<https://www.business.gov.au/About-us/Other-languages>
² ENS25/20 of 21st August 2020 signed by HH Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, the Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church, copy of the letter can be viewed here https://www.facebook.com/MorignatiusAphremII/photos/pb.55842500880187-2207520000_3113162698781475/?type=3&theater

Beyond Financial Investment

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION AND MECHANISMS TO ADDRESS THESE BARRIERS

Diaspora organisation can build strong structures and capabilities if they are properly supported and accompanied on their journey, thus enhancing their role as Australia aid partners working to fulfil common development goals. Supporting a diaspora organisation to develop a solid governance structure, allow for its members to upskill and become independent means to work with and for diaspora over a long continual period of time.

Good examples of that are the Oromia Support Group Australia (OSGA) and the National refugee-led advisory and advocacy group (NRAAG). OSGA has a strong focus on human rights advocacy. Their constant strives to improve and learn so that their advocacy can be more effective and help Oromo people has led them to reach a consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council.

NRAAG, is a refugee-led entity that envisions creating spaces, platforms and strong voices led by former refugees, people from refugee-like backgrounds and people seeking asylum in key decision-making tables, policy, public & media discourses (NRAAG 2020). The initiative stemmed from the need to have a refugee-led organisation, that claims refugees' own space and voice. People involved have a dual interest to make an impact both here and back home.

The practical support, e.g. mentoring, networking, capacity building etc., presented in this section is paramount to diaspora's ability to access funding opportunities, grow and develop their organisations and deliver long-term sustainable humanitarian aid and development. The following paragraphs discuss diaspora's existing challenges and presents how DAA has been providing community engagement for the past 12 years. This section examines *TOR 3: Barriers to the full participation of diaspora communities in Australia's democratic and social institutions, and mechanisms for addressing these barriers*.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Consultations have reiterated the recurrent issues regarding the lack of non-financial support, which spans from the need for easier access and communication with federal government departments and information sharing to diplomatic efforts and capacity building support. The issues identified are:

- 1. Limited access to governance support and upskilling –**
Not only existing funding schemes lack a capacity and capability-building element, as highlighted in the previous section, but there are also no separate funding streams dedicated to building solid governance structures. Diaspora often go to great lengths to provide aid and development in Australia and overseas, while solely relying on community members' commitment and desire to help. However, such a model is unsustainable, unless it is accompanied by ongoing governance support, that is not solely limited to board and administrative functions, but one that also looks at strategic planning and documentation.

- 2. Limited availability of diaspora-focused long-term mentoring and upskill programmes.**

Diaspora communities are aware of the need to learn new skills in order to deliver their projects. These include skills such as project management, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy, public speaking and grant writing and fundraising (to appeal to a wider audience). The mentoring support currently available tends to be a one-off workshop or a few session series. However, none of these initiatives are designed based on the specific and contextual needs of one community and they do not provide long-term support. The absence of ongoing mentoring and training hinders community capacity to grow, to access more resource, and to become sustainable and independent. For example, limited grant writing skills, reduces the ability to successfully apply and secure possible funding. Insufficient monitoring and evaluation skills reduce diaspora's ability to develop evidence-base data needed to advocate for their work and to respond to donors' requirements.

3. **Complex and unsupported accreditation processes** – diaspora organisations seeking to expand their reach and growth apply to become registered not-for-profit with Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), have a deductible gift recipient (DGR) status, and can seek to become accredited with DFAT to expand their overseas operation. For small volunteer-run organisations, these accreditation processes are too complex, difficult to comprehend and too time-consuming. In addition, the lack of clear information about such processes and the scarce support to navigate through the system, directly and indirectly hinders diaspora's ability to deliver aid and development.
4. **AusAID incorporation to DFAT** took away the support needed by humanitarian focused diaspora organisations, shifting the focus on economic development and trade. Consequently, there is a lack of interest in small scale organisation whose work is overshadowed by larger INGOs.
5. **Diaspora communities have no dedicated space in DFAT** – there is no “diaspora desk”. The absence of a dedicated space means that communication between diaspora groups and government is disrupted every time DFAT staff is reshuffled with a consequent need for diaspora groups to restart their conversation with a newly appointed officer.

6. **Disruption in cross country diplomatic action** directly impacts diaspora humanitarianism and development. Consultations across various communities have highlighted the importance of a diaspora-informed diplomatic action for economic, cultural, and humanitarian reasons.
7. **Lack of action on Human Rights issues.** Participants have indicated the need for Australia to exercise its influence at international level upholding Australia commitments on security and safety, thus aiding diaspora human rights advocates.

The need for capacity building is deeply felt among all communities, but there is no clear allocation of funding to support the growth of diaspora organisations either through government departments or by supporting independent service providers and NGOs.

Among the organisations that provide mentoring and support to community organisations, DAA is the only organisation in Australia and the near region that purposely focuses on diaspora. DAA has not received any government funding since October 2018.



Case Study

AKADEMOS SOCIETY INC.



REGISTRATION

Incorporated Association in the state of Victoria

YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

2013

MEMBERSHIP

Akademos Society has seven members and three volunteers. Of the seven members, five are board members and two are executive/staff members. Additionally, Akademos has ten regular donors who provide financial contribution on a monthly basis. Other donors contribute to specific fundraising campaigns.

ETHNIC COMPOSITION

All members and volunteers of Akademos Society are ethnic Hazaras.

ORGANISATION VISION AND MISSION

Akademos Society's objective is providing financial and academic assistance to disadvantaged young students in the community in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Akademos provides scholarships and grants to young students facing financial challenges in the pursuit of their academic goals.

While our programs are open to every Afghan, our geographic focus is in Hazara-dominated locations and as such our beneficiaries have all been Hazaras.

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Akademos has members and supporters from across Australia who provide operational and financial support to enable the organisation to sustain its programs. Akademos runs educational support programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan where we partner with local organisations for the delivery and management of our programs.

PRIMARY PURPOSE

Akademos solely focuses on empowerment of youth and children through education and our programs are underpinned by this principle. Our focus is narrow and heavily skewed towards programs that enhance educational opportunities for those who are financially and socially disadvantaged. This includes provision of scholarship and grants to students to attend primary and secondary schools and colleges. Our program also assists disadvantaged students through provision of supplementary learning opportunities.

IMPACT

Direct Impact – Since our inception, Akademos has, cumulatively, provided scholarships to 77 students to complete their secondary education. Support is given based on merit and circumstances, for a period of two years (duration of the college) after a student is selected for the scholarship program. Additionally, Akademos has been providing financial support to 8 children (former child labourers) to continue their primary school education since 2017.

Akademos' three supplementary learning classes provide support to more than 60 students and four teachers.

Indirect Impact – The people indirectly impacted by our activities would be parents and siblings of the students benefiting from our programs and could range between 150-250 depending on the size of the families.

ORGANISATIONAL INVESTMENT

Over the last seven years, Akademos has approximately raised and disbursed more than \$53,000 in the form of direct financial support to disadvantaged students. The breakdown per program (as reflected in our published annual financial reports) is as follows:

Akademos Scholarship: \$39,679
Kids Off Streets and Supplementary Learning Classes: \$12,617
Akademos Grants: \$1,038

VOLUNTEERING

It is difficult to quantify and put a monetary value to the Akademos' volunteering work. Akademos' entire operations are run by volunteers. Our board members, executive officers and partner organisations and individuals do not charge a fee for their service. On average, we spent approximately three hours in a week on works relating to operations of Akademos. This could, if measured, estimated to a contribution of up to \$50,000 per year by all executive member combined in the form of working capital provided to Akademos.

SOURCE(S) AND TYPE OF FUNDING

The type of support that Akademos receives ranges from one-off and regular donations directly made to Akademos by community members and supporters. Akademos also receives contributions from community and private organisations in the form of donations and in-kind support. Akademos board members and executive also pay membership fees.

Our total income for financial year 2018-19 was \$25,666, raised from a range of donors.

Our donors range from individual community members to people invested in educational causes. They also include community businesses and organisations. We also raise donations through online fundraising. On average, we receive \$3,000 annually in board and executive membership fees and approximately \$3,500 annually from a list of individual donors who donate on a monthly basis. Akademos receives between \$10,000 to \$15,000 in one-off donations from individuals, businesses and community organisations during our annual fundraising campaign.

EMPOWERING THE YOUTH THROUGH EDUCATION

Why did you start the organisation? What prompt you to engage and help people in your country of origin?

Members of Akademos Society have in many ways benefited from accessing quality education, and as a result, have been able to contribute back to the society and embarked on their own professional journeys. We thus fully understand and acknowledge the positive impacts of having educated and literate population. We believe, educating the youth is one of the most effective ways of providing a sustainable and prosperous future for the community. Having said this, we are acutely aware of the worsening state of the education in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the fact that it is increasingly becoming inaccessible for many young people due to decades of conflict, economic insecurity and institutional discrimination which further limits access to educational opportunities to members of our community. This awareness and our own personal experiences are the driving factors behind establishment of Akademos Society with the mission to make educational opportunities accessible to as many as we can. To this end, we provide scholarship, grants, and run supplementary learning classes.

What were the main obstacles and enablers to start the organization?

A motivated and resourceful team with good on the ground networks and partners has been one of the most valuable assets of Akademos. We have been able to utilise our skills and leveraged our networks to improve organisational efficiency and financial sustainability of the organisation. One of the more pressing obstacles that has prevented Akademos from realising its full potential pertains to insufficiency of the current legislative framework to enable our work. The current system is heavily skewed towards enabling and providing a basis for organisations who either only operate in Australia or are large organisations operating in the international development sector. It is a one size fit for all and that is where an organization like Akademos falls through the cracks. For example, the process to register as a charity or get accreditation from DFAT is tedious and complex which places additional resource pressure on small and wholly volunteer run organizations such as ours which has limited resources.

What challenges and barriers do you currently experience when starting new projects? Have these changed overtimes or remain the same?

Lack of funding avenues and grants program for diaspora organisations such as ours to spend on programs overseas, particularly funds/grants provided by DFAT for which only large organisations with DFAT accreditation qualify, limits our capacity to expand our funding sources, and consequently start new projects. As stated above, the process to register for charity and to apply for other relevant accreditation is tedious and resource-consuming and the lack of such accreditations has limited our ability to broaden our reach through various online platforms. For example, Facebook does not consider registration as an incorporated association adequate to allow us to use fundraising and other marketing tools available on the platform. Furthermore, there are very limited capacity development, training opportunities and resources for newly established organisations for matters relating to governance, financial management and grants application and reporting.

How does the home country political, economic, and social situation influence the community in Australia and vice versa?

The worsening of the state of the education in our home country for various reasons, is encouraging the diaspora here to step in and fill the vacuum. It also strengthens our connection, provides a sense of community and promotes a culture of giving.

Have you been supported in any ways by the Australian Government?

There exists no Government platforms and mechanisms through which organisations such as ours could access Government support. Qualification for Government mandated grants for international development work requires accreditation which are currently beyond our capacity.

Who else has supported your organisation and in what capacity?

Several community organisations and organisations working in the community and refugee sector have supported us by endorsing our work publicly and providing us platforms to share and communicate our work with large audiences.

How do you think that the Australian Government benefits (or could benefit) from collaborating with your organisation? What would be potential opportunities for both in collaborating?

Australian government would greatly benefit by enabling organisations such as ours to undertake international development work. This can be done through making the establishment and operation of diaspora organisations simpler and by providing us access to existing grants or creating separate categories within AusAid/DFAT grants program for organisations run by diaspora communities which are small in size. Australia is a middle power and has a stake in Afghanistan and other countries in the region. It would benefit from uplifting population of those countries from poverty and towards prosperity and peace through provision of education to its new generation. Akademos is a grassroots organisation, wholly run by volunteers both in Australia and overseas. We have better a understanding of the country in which we run programs and therefore our program delivery models are more suitable and cost effective in delivering results.

CONTACT

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DIASPORA ACTION AUSTRALIA MODEL

Diaspora Action Australia work is driven by a rights-based approach, gender equality and impartiality. DAA community development work is led by the recognition of the wealth of knowledge and experience within communities, respecting their independence, and supporting their empowerment. DAA works in solidarity with diaspora partners, who maintain leadership of their projects for the long-term benefit of whole communities. Such an approach is underpinned by mutual trust, established with community members, and an equally balanced long-lasting relationship.

Support to diaspora communities is provided through four main areas of work:

1. Ad hoc ongoing mentoring and support – for individual diaspora groups,
2. Networking and relationship building – directly impacts involved groups, enhancing their voices and reach,
3. Advocacy and coordination – benefit the sector broadly,
4. Research development – for the sector broadly and offers linkages to academia and international partners.

- 1. Ad hoc ongoing mentoring and support** – Diaspora communities and organisation approach DAA with various requests, e.g. creating an organisation strategic plan, how to do an advocacy or a communication strategy. Through ongoing conversation with communities, DAA develops mentoring to address the specific needs while identifying other possible gaps that need support.

Mentoring can be delivered with a lab-approach, whereby representatives of established and successful diaspora organisations can join and share their experience, knowledge, and skills. This serves two purposes: knowledge transfer and upskill, and networking.

- 2. Networking and relationship building** – DAA has promoted and facilitated networking opportunities across communities, for experience and knowledge transfer, and with other stakeholders via events and dialogues, such as seminars and conferences. DAA has also acted as a mediator for relationship building within communities (peacebuilding dialogues) and between diaspora and newly appointed Ambassadors and High Commissioners prior to their embarkation.

- 3. Advocacy and coordination** – DAA advocates with and for diaspora communities. DAA advocacy has taken various forms such as:

- I. Events and multi-stakeholder dialogue, where DAA created the platform for diaspora to raise their voices. Seven-hundred people have attended DAA's events and were representatives of different sectors.
- II. Encouraged and facilitated government and NGOs' direct engagement with diaspora.
- III. Supported diaspora to run their own advocacy campaign.

- 4. Research** – As it stands, diaspora communities are too busy to deliver and too underfunded to prioritise or invest in meaningful research that can provide a much-needed evidence-base data. To an extent, DAA has filled in some of the gaps and provided a research platform. However, limited funding availability has been a considerable barrier to its work. Research would:

- I. Provide better understanding of the diaspora sector, useful to plan and implement meaningful partnership to deliver aid, peacebuilding, human right and development while avoiding duplication.
- II. Identify diaspora needs and gaps could serve to improve existing services.

- 5. Diaspora Learning Network (DLN)** – The DLN started as a collaboration between DAA and other stakeholders in order to further a cross-sector dialogue and facilitate knowledge transfer. The Network pursues two main goals:

Goal 1: To promote learning and open dialogue between diaspora communities and organisations and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), research institutions, private sector and government actors in delivering on development, peace building, human rights promotion and humanitarian response.

Goal 2. Promote and facilitate collaboration between diaspora communities and organisations and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), research institutions, private sector and government actors in delivering on development, peace building, human rights promotion and humanitarian response.

Since its initiation in 2016, the DLN has successfully delivered 2 international conferences and 3 seminars on diaspora peacebuilding, humanitarian aid and development. Aside from initial minimal funding from DFAT, the DLN has been relying on the volunteering efforts of its reference group.

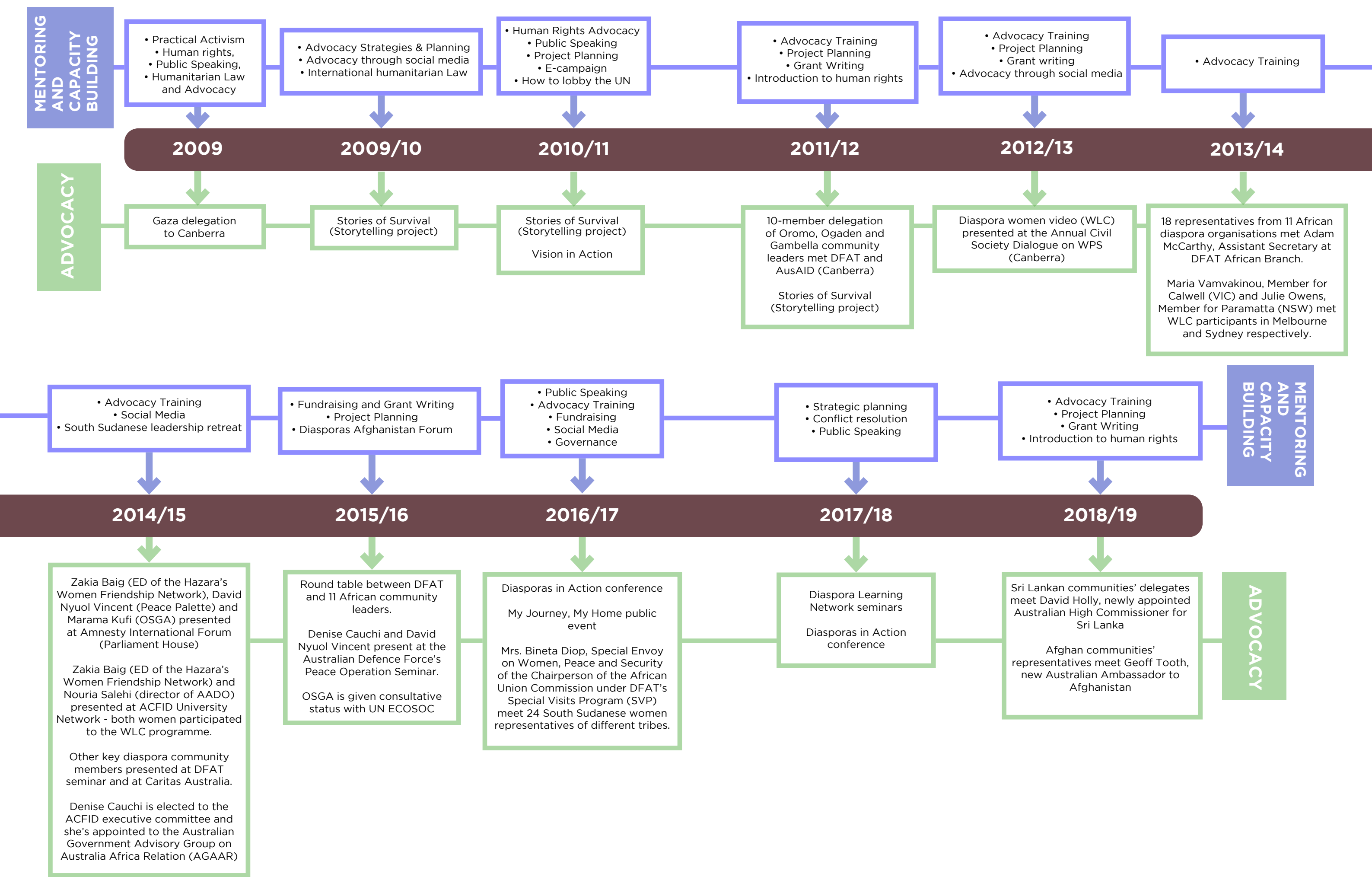
The lack of resourcing to organisations such as DAA, has taken away a valuable resource and a knowledge holder from diaspora communities.

KEY PRACTICAL SUPPORT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Practical support issues and challenges:

- 1. Limited access to governance support and upskilling** – Not only existing funding schemes lack a capacity and capability-building element, as highlighted in the key investment issues section, but there are also no separate funding streams dedicated to building solid governance structures.
- 2. Limited availability of diaspora focused long-term mentoring and upskill programmes.** Diaspora communities are aware of the need to learn new skills in order to deliver their projects. These include skills such as project management, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy, public speaking and grant writing and fundraising (to appeal to a wider audience).
- 3. Complex and unsupported accreditation processes** – For small volunteer-run organisations, accreditation processes are too complex, difficult to comprehend and too time-consuming. In addition, the lack of clear information about such processes and the scarce support to navigate through the system, directly and indirectly hinders diaspora's ability to deliver aid and development.
- 4. AusAID incorporation to DFAT** took away the support needed by humanitarian focused diaspora organisations, shifting the focus on economic development and trade.
- 5. Diaspora communities have no dedicated space in DFAT** – there is no "diaspora desk". The absence of a dedicated space means that communication between diaspora groups and government is disrupted every time DFAT staff is reshuffled with a consequent need for diaspora groups to restart their conversation with a newly appointed officer.
- 6. Disruption in cross country diplomatic action** directly impacts diaspora humanitarianism and development.

Strengthening Diaspora Communities: DAA's mentoring and support over the last 12 years



Solutions and opportunities

Achieving the aspirations of the White Paper

The White Paper expresses Australia's determination to advocate for liberal institutions, universal values and human rights, believing that by supporting and advocating internationally for these values it can also advance Australia national interests. In this respect, Australia's values align with diaspora communities who strive to help their own kin and countries by providing humanitarian aid and development. Partnering with diaspora is a cost-effective and innovative way for Australia to mark its international presence.

ACFID called for the need to move away from "aid" development to embrace a "development cooperation" program in its submission to the International Development Policy review (ACFID 2020). A critical element to successfully shift towards a "development cooperation" is that Australia develop a genuine and sustainable partnerships with its diaspora communities for international development, diplomacy, and policy. To advance Australia international and national interests, government should look at investing to enhancing existing partnerships while testing new models and directly resource diaspora communities through appropriately designed and accessible funding streams.

Cooperation and partnerships already exist between diaspora groups and between DAA and diaspora groups. Investing to further these relationships is a cost-effective strategy to bridge the existing gaps with government as highlighted earlier in this paper. In parallel, testing new partnership models will enable diasporas' role as Australia aid partners while assisting DFAT developing a deeper understanding of diasporas' countries of origin, their dynamic enhancing aid outreach and effectiveness.

The following paragraphs expand on and proposes:

1. Direct investment to diaspora initiatives,
2. Proposes a new partnership model on the strength of a pilot project submitted to DFAT by DAA, Bridging Lanka and Australia Afghan Development Organisation (AADO),
3. Financial investment to support diaspora communities. Starting from the work done-to-date by DAA and its community partners, this section highlights the key priorities, benefit and impact that a structured, long-term investment into diaspora practical support can achieve.

This section examines *TOR 3: barriers to the full participation of diaspora communities in Australia's democratic and social institutions, and mechanisms for addressing these barriers* and *TOR 4: opportunities to strengthen communication and partnerships between government and diaspora communities in Australia*.

INVESTING IN DIASPORA INITIATIVES

Investing in diaspora led development projects acknowledges their legitimacy as international actors while providing opportunities for ongoing knowledge transference with Government.

An effective diaspora funding pathway would provide streamlined access to substantial funding over a minimum 12-month term. Eligibility would be based on assessment of program merit, development needs and impact. Current limitations associated with travel bans should not exclude diaspora led NGOs with in-country staff, and a demonstrated capacity for remote program management.

Flexible partnership funding opportunities are necessary to enable the unique approaches of diaspora communities in international development. Investment in diaspora development is cost-effective, impactful, sustainable and mutually beneficial.

NEW PARTNERSHIP MODEL

DAA and its community partners have been advocating for a development cooperation model for a long time. This would establish an equally beneficial and mutually respectful partnership that can advance Australian international development objectives while fulfilling diaspora needs and expectations. New partnership models will require an enabling and inclusive policy that is moulded on diaspora modalities and mobilisation.

Moving towards a partnership approach also provides ongoing opportunities to transfer knowledge, engage diaspora in relevant planning and policy development, and create lasting connections between the Australian Federal government and governments globally.

DAA worked with Bridging Lanka and AADO to develop a partnership informed development proposal at the request of the former Minister for International Development, Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, in 2018. Diaspora organisations in Australia such as Bridging Lanka and AADO have been delivering successful, low risk, low cost and impactful community-led programs overseas for many years. Their work is driven by a deep commitment to improving the quality of life, and opportunities available, for their communities back home. Much of their success is attributed to their extensive cultural knowledge and first-hand experience of their home country. Equally critical to the success of their work is a sustained presence in country, maintaining relationships of trust and responding to emerging needs.

The proposal reflected our ongoing commitment to assisting DFAT to better understand what works best in countries where diaspora communities come from, to minimise repeated mistakes and ensure the efficient delivery of aid programs overseas. We also sought to show the value of agile, flexible and relevant programming through diaspora-led efforts through a unique cross-cultural partnership approach.

The proposal was designed to provide an opportunity to pilot and evaluate an enhanced partnership approach to diaspora humanitarianism. DFAT relationships with funded diaspora communities would be recast, moving towards a partnership approach where risk is shared and collaboratively managed to ensure high quality, high impact humanitarian programs reach those who need them most at a time when many large aid providers withdraw.

Whilst we acknowledge the Department's concerns for the safety of diaspora organisations and their members working in countries deemed unsafe for travel, we must also acknowledge the realities and unique opportunities of diaspora led aid programs. It is clear that the concept of risk is a relative one. Diaspora community organisations in Australia have a unique approach to determining the level of risk in their home countries. Diasporas can make a real time risk assessment undertaken within an ongoing context of direct relationships, localised communities and the recognition of the value of their community-led humanitarian programs. Their risk management strategies are far reaching and developed within a unique, ongoing and tailored environmental scanning approach.

“We are an investment to the nation not a liability”

[Consultation participant, 2020].

Case Study



AFGHAN AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION

REGISTRATION

Registered with the ACNC

Member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and signatory to its Code of Conduct to which we adhere

Registered with the ATO for Deductible Gift Recipient status

YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

2002

MEMBERSHIP

Committee members: 6 people

Members: 12

Volunteers: 6

ETHNIC COMPOSITION

Our members are our supporters in the Australian community, including the Afghan diaspora.

ORGANISATION VISION AND MISSION

AADO is a voluntary, non-profit, non-government member organisation. Its primary purpose is to implement projects that assist in the reconstruction and sustainable development of communities within Afghanistan. Within Australia AADO seeks to support the Afghan community.

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Afghanistan, in Kabul city and in provinces across Afghanistan where AADO is invited into a partnership with local Governors and the Ministry of Education.

PRIMARY PURPOSE

Education, training, and livelihoods. AADO provides education and training in Afghanistan for those with minimal opportunities, in particularly women, to foster sustainable livelihoods and professional skills development.

IMPACT

Direct impact: A total of 9,500 people have participated in AADO's education and training programs, and have directly benefitted livelihoods and professional skills

Indirect impact: Through its humanitarian work, and its train-the-trainer approach, many hundreds of thousands of Afghans and their families have benefited from ADDO's education and training.

We have worked in Afghanistan since 2002, helping create opportunities for people to achieve their own priorities: gain basic education, develop professional skills and earn an income, providing for their families and contributing to their communities.

Village women tell us that the training we have provided in basic literacy, health and sewing or food production has made a great contribution to their families' wellbeing and to their community, and they themselves feel a sense of optimism.

They report their status in their family and community is boosted and they are more involved in decision-making. Some have become role models for others who missed out on education.

Our flagship science teacher education delivered high standard qualifications for almost 5,000 science teachers across many provinces in Afghanistan, more than 50% of them women. After 176 hours of training, upon graduation, these Master Science Teachers return to their high schools and resource and train their colleagues. This results in better teaching, higher school results and increased potential for university entry and professional employment for young people.

Close to 100 teenagers recruited from the streets of Kabul into a 12-month carpentry apprenticeship have secure a livelihood for themselves and their families and are contributing to nation building.

AADO's programs have very high rates of participation and retention. We have a track record of high outcome, low cost programs and close to 100% of our income is spent directly on projects. Small amounts of money go a long way in Afghanistan.

Our efforts are successful because we understand the context of our work, have deeply connected networks and trusted local staff who respect the people with whom we work, and we only work where we have a relationship and invitation, and where we have a good fit of know-how with demonstrated need.

ORGANISATIONAL INVESTMENT

1st July 2018 - 30June 2019

REVENUE

Donations and gifts: \$163,609

Bequest: \$111.000

TOTAL REVENUE \$274,609

EXPENDITURE

International Programs: \$180,671

Fundraising Costs: \$4,780

Accountability& Administration: \$11,587

TOTAL EXPENSES \$197,038

Other income/(expense) (\$1,244)

SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) \$76,327

SOURCE(S) AND TYPE OF FUNDING

AADO's longstanding development programs have been funded by a range of philanthropic trusts, complemented by donations from supporters and the Afghan-Australian diaspora. These are all underpinned by the significant in-kind contribution of a voluntary and hands-on committee of management and numerous volunteers.

Longstanding financial partnerships with the Cabrini Mission and Planet Wheeler Foundation are noteworthy. Others include Portland House Foundation, D&K Foundation, Jenkins Family Trust and a significant bequest from the Estate of Bernadette Gleeson.

Our long association with The Wheeler Foundation began in 2008 with support for our literacy programs for village women. From 2010, the Wheeler Foundation began funding Science teacher training and, when AADO developed this into a more impactful train-the-trainer program in 2012, the Foundation stepped up to make a very significant financial contribution over a further seven years.

In terms of the official Australian aid program, over nearly 20 years of implementing programs in Afghanistan, AADO has not received DFAT funding beyond a small number of small grants from the Direct Action Program (DAP) for project materials from the Australian Embassy in Kabul.

WOMEN, YOUTH & SCIENCE -
REBUILDING FOR THE FUTURE: THE CASE OF AADO

Teacher training in the science field is particularly important for Afghanistan, given its current and future development priorities including engineering for infrastructure and water supply, as well as science for agricultural development and health service delivery. Women teachers have the greatest need for re-training as they were altogether banned from teaching during the Taliban decade. They also play an important role in encouraging the participation of girls in post-compulsory education.

Afghan Australia Development Organisation's Master Science Teacher Training program was designed as a direct response to the poor performance of students in senior secondary levels and failure of young Afghans to successfully transition to senior secondary or tertiary education.

Since 2012, over 4,000 in-service secondary science and mathematics teachers have been trained in theoretical and practical curriculum and modern pedagogy. Participants are selected by school principals on the basis of demonstrated leadership qualities. Around 60% are women. They complete the program and return to their schools as Master Science Teachers.

A train-the-trainer approach helps multiply the reach of Afghan Australia Development Organisation's (AADO) training programs to the surrounding education community, supporting school success and university entrance for Afghanistan's young people.

Graduates, known as Master Science Teachers, in turn deliver training to teachers in their own and neighbouring schools. The practical benefits of AADO's training reaches many additional teachers including new graduates and teachers re-entering the profession who have the support of Master Teachers on hand to develop confidence and stronger teaching skills in the classroom. As a result, hundreds of thousands of senior secondary students have indirectly benefited from AADO's innovative program.

The demand for this training remains high and teachers are committed to making the most of this opportunity as demonstrated by consistent 100% participation and graduation rates. The Afghanistan Ministry of Education fully endorses AADO's training program and encourages financial support to sustain this important initiative.

'Over the years, DAA has helped build the capacity of AADO where it counts - in conceptual thinking and joint advocacy for recognition and valuing of diaspora-led overseas aid NGOs in Government and its departments. Through DAA, AADO finds its 'tribe' amongst diaspora NGO's, learning from each other, and sharing our almost 20 years of AADO's experience of working in overseas development.

For a voluntary-led NGO like AADO, it's critical to have that 'go to' place that always values adds when we're in need of a sounding board, resources or networks. DAA is that place.' (Sarina Greco, President, AADO)

CONTACT

Email: info@aado.org.au

Website: <https://www.aado.org.au/>



SUPPORTING DIASPORA: DAA PROPOSED STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

DAA and its diaspora partners strongly encourage the Australian Federal government to invest in developing a partnership with DAA to unlock the potential of diaspora communities in Australia. DAA is ideally placed to act as the key conduit between diaspora and Government by providing:

- Capability and capacity building,
- Connection and coordination
- Australian evidence base data and research by working with the gamut of stakeholders
- Practical support.

The proposed support model responds to the needs and concerns of diaspora communities while supporting the successful achievement of Australian Government ambitions expressed in the DFAT White Paper and through its international commitments.

Global best practice examples demonstrate the tangible benefits to Governments when they invest in ongoing collaboration with diaspora. These benefits are seen in diplomacy, trade, tourism, international development, civil society, and social cohesion.

Establishing productive relationships with diaspora that are built on trust, transparency and equal partnership takes time, commitment, and consistency. DAAs neutrality has also played a significant, and highly valued, role in enabling meaningful and productive partnerships between diaspora and other stakeholders. While it is impossible to simply transfer these relationships to other parties, we believe the proposed model represents a mutually beneficial approach that builds on DAAs existing relationships, expertise and goodwill.

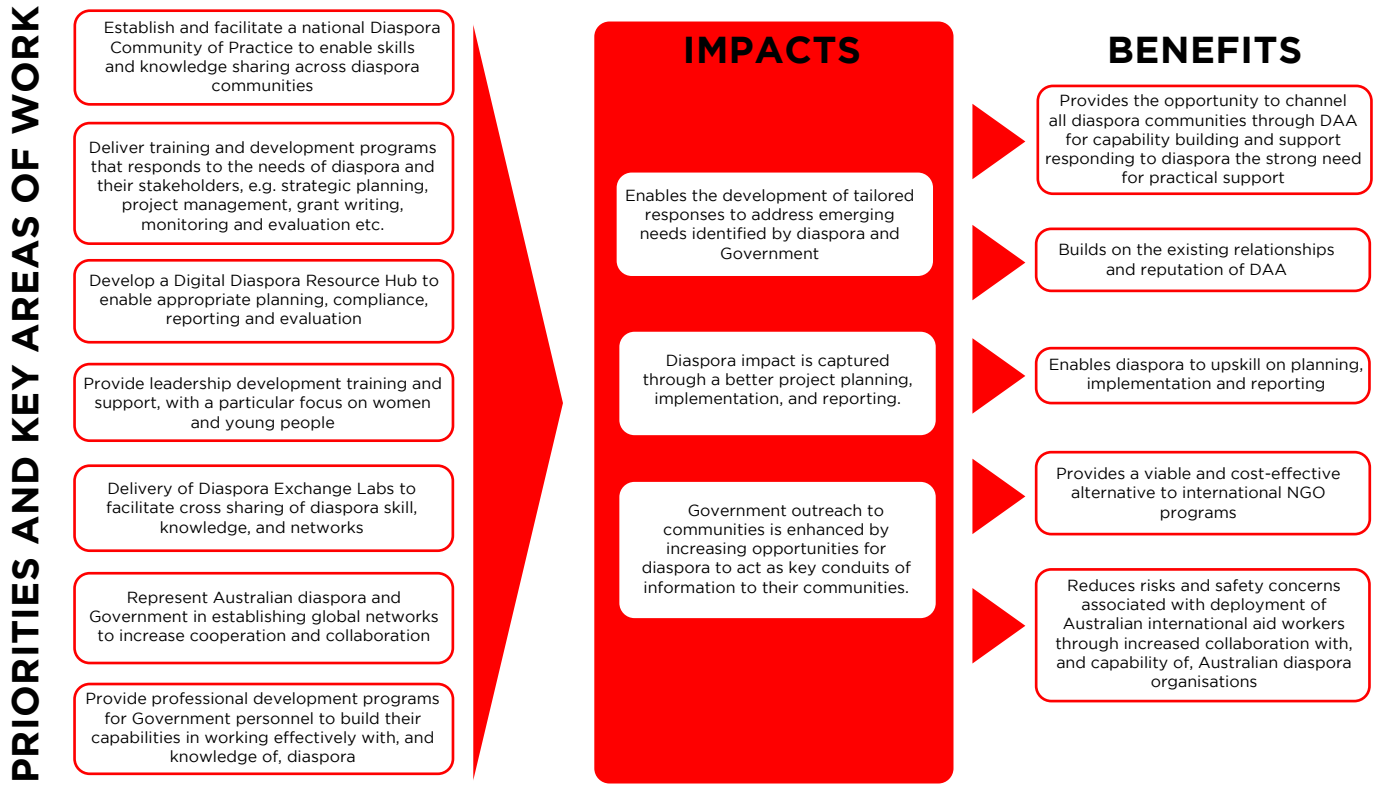
There is a strong recognition of the unique role DAA has played in this space for the past 12 years, matched by an equal desire for our role to be appropriately resourced and secured. Our capacity to provide support has been limited only by inadequate, and unreliable, financial support for our work. There has not been any government investment in DAAs work to support diaspora since 2018, creating ongoing uncertainty about DAAs future. Prior to 2018, the financial support provided by DFAT was sporadic and confined to small scale, short-term projects.

We trust our proposal will be given the Committee's full consideration as a cost effective, implementable solution to addressing the issues faced by diaspora communities in Australia, while strengthening opportunities for the Australian Government to deliver on shared objectives.

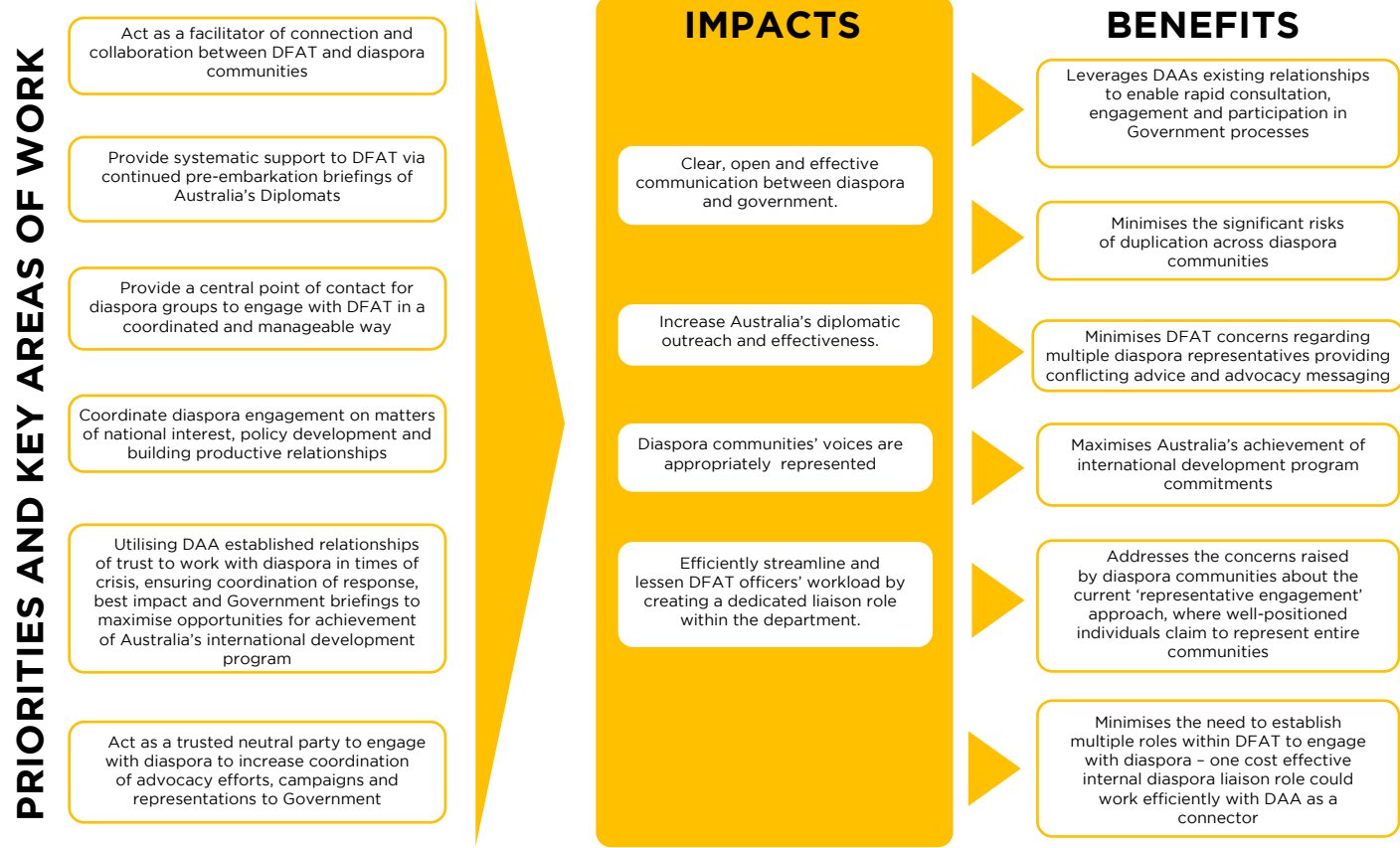


DAA Proposed Strategic Framework

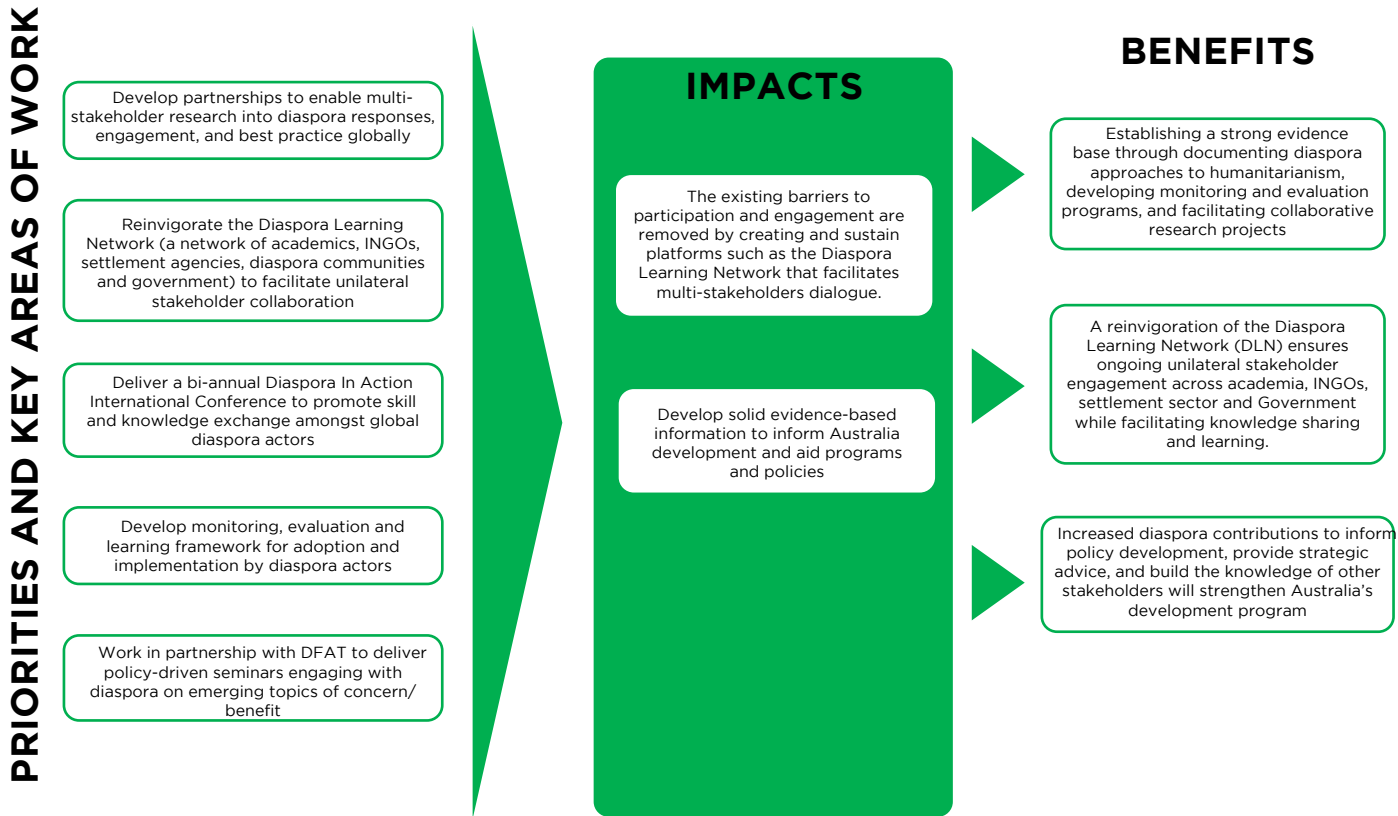
BUILDING CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY



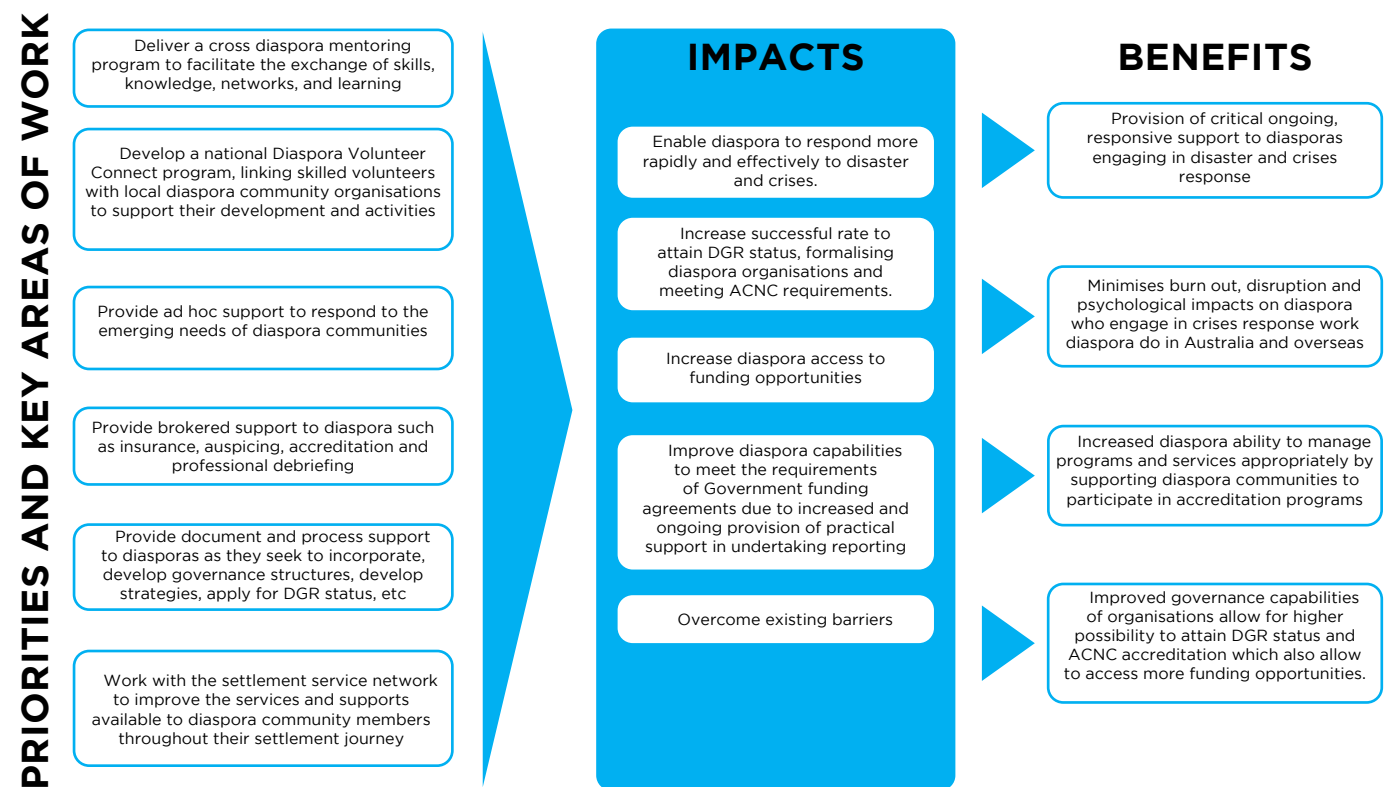
CONNECTING & COORDINATING



BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE



PRACTICAL SUPPORT





Diaspora Policy

“Well-engaged and empowered diasporas are an important resource for resolving crises and aiding recovery, and diaspora members are often among the very first responders to humanitarian crises” William Lacy Swing, former Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The full potential of diaspora cannot be realised unless there is an enabling policy environment that also fosters inclusion and participation. While policies for engagement with civil society and with refugees exist, there is no policy that focuses solely on diaspora. Diaspora can be permanently based in Australia or be second-generation. They often have acquired Australian citizenship, but they also retain strong ties with their country of origin and cultural background. Therefore, engagement with diaspora has unique nuances and characteristics that should be captured in a federal policy.

Comprehensive diaspora policy would enable a cooperation-driven environment where diaspora retain the ownership of their initiative while aiding Australia to fulfil its objectives. As IOM has stated, the role of policy is to help maximise diaspora contributions to the benefit of migrants, home and host countries. Many countries of origin have developed diaspora policies to encourage diaspora to stay engaged in their countries of origin and host societies. They may also have focal points within relevant Ministries and mechanisms to support diaspora achieve aspirations to provide financial and social remittances. The fact that a major country of destination such as Australia has no requisite diaspora policy is an imbalance that is felt by diaspora community members.

This section examines TOR 4: opportunities to strengthen communication and partnerships between government and diaspora communities in Australia and it argues the value of engaging with diaspora to strengthen diplomacy, it highlights current community representations issues, and discusses the role and rationale for a diaspora policy.

WHY ENGAGE WITH DIASPORA

Meaningful engagement is built on trust and ongoing mutually beneficial relationship, as opposed to one-sided relationship. Diaspora communities appreciate the opportunity to provide information, feedback and be consulted on relevant issues including through this Inquiry. However, in a spirit of reciprocity there should also be follow up, be it in terms of services improvement, information sharing, capabilities development, policy change, diplomatic action, notifying community members of the outcomes of the consultation process or indeed financial compensation for the time and knowledge that they provide. The absence of an overarching policy framework to guide relationship building is a missed opportunity. As a result, engagement is perceived by communities as a compliance requirement, or convenience, in an unequal relationship.

In DAA's experience, short term engagement cannot produce long term impacts and certainly does not lead to positive, sustainable outcomes. The 2018 Diasporas In Action conference -sponsored by DFAT- raised communities' expectations in terms of establishing and nurturing a meaningful engagement with diaspora, an interest to provide resources to the sector, and an opportunity to inform policy changes. However, DAA has not received any funding since 2018, and there has been little to no interest or action to follow up on Conference outcomes, making it impossible to move forward and work together on achieving expectations. Working in a spirit of partnership would certainly offer the greatest chance to facilitate strong and lasting diaspora engagement; this would only require a reasonably modest investment in coordination – a role that DAA can and does play, and financial support for diaspora communities.

One of the greatest strengths that meaningful engagement can harness, is diaspora's ability to build transnational social networks, family structures and local communities to deliver aid and development whilst providing them the unique position to facilitate or enable other agencies to deliver aid and development.

Strengthening diplomacy

Diasporas can be facilitators and catalysers to understand the political, social and cultural dynamics of their respective countries of origin. Their acknowledgement in the White Paper as “partners” has yet to give the same value of consultation, input and engagement as other agencies and segments of civil society. Government focus on big INGOs undermines, overlooks and reduces the support to smaller and less visible organisations. This is not in line with the current global commitment to localisation that includes efforts to see 25% of aid funding reach local organisations.

The Foreign Affairs White Paper recognise the role that diaspora can play to positively influencing how Australia is perceived internationally. Diaspora are stakeholders in their country of origin of which they are also a valuable knowledge-holders in terms of the social, political and economic dynamics and mechanism. They are well placed to brief Australia diplomats and officials. They can broker engagement with businesses and trades from their country of origin. Many diaspora communities are leading successful business councils facilitating trade agreements and networking. Yet, there is scant engagement and interest from the Australian government side.

In terms of diplomacy, community consultations have highlighted how government seldom engages with diaspora despite the richness and diversity of their overseas networks. There are also barriers to engage with government departments and there is no clarity about “who is the best person to talk to”. When diaspora are concerned, the lack of a “diaspora liaison” or a focal point, makes it difficult for communities to access information and get a clear understanding of government agenda on human rights, humanitarian aid, development, business and trade.

At DFAT's request, DAA has brokered a number of meetings between community members and newly appointed Ambassadors and High commissioners prior to their embarkation. The meetings were mutually beneficial, and diplomats have visited the projects implemented by Australian-based diaspora communities. However, such meetings have been possible thanks to the initiative of staff members in the Melbourne DFAT office. There is no institutionalised procedure for diplomats that involves the need to consult with diaspora communities. These opportunities have been highly valued by the diplomats involved.



OROMIA SUPPORT GROUP AUSTRALIA INC.



REGISTRATION

Registered charity with ACNC and Incorporated not-for-profit

YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

2001

MEMBERSHIP

Volunteers: 10

Active members: 200

Supporters: more than 3000

ETHNIC COMPOSITION

Oromo

ORGANISATION VISION AND MISSION

Vision: To seek peace and stability in the Horn of Africa

Mission: OSGA Mission Statement: Oromia Support Group in Australia (OSGA) Promotes Human Rights awareness amongst the Oromo nation and other oppressed people in Ethiopia and advocates against abuses and violations, based on the United Nations International Law of Human Rights.

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

OSGA advocates for refugees and asylum seekers' Human Rights in Australia, Ethiopia, and other neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti and at international level at the UN Economic and Social Council, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (annual consultation submission only).

PRIMARY PURPOSE

Defend and promote human rights.

IMPACT

As OSGA's purpose is to advocate for human rights, it is not easy to measure OSGA's impact. Thousands of people can be directly and indirectly impacted. The advocacy work OSGA doing is not only benefiting the Oromo people, but it also benefits and supports other people in the Horn of African region. People who are in similar situation as the Oromo people are included in our advocacy work. For example: Sidama, Gambella, Ogaden, Amhara region's human rights violations are included in OSGA's regular reports. For instance, OSGA had close collaboration and work partnership with Beni-Shangul, Sidama, Gambella and Ogaden communities.

OSGA advocacy operates at 3 levels:

1. International level – through the UN Economic and Social Council, United Nations High Commission for Refugees and by collaborating with other Human Rights advocates.

2. National level – Sending copy of the OSGA report to DFAT and schedule a time to meet and discuss with DFAT (East African Desk) in the past, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 etc...

3. Local level – reaching out to local MPs and keep them updated with most recent news and information.

ORGANISATIONAL INVESTMENT

OSGA core members volunteer in-kind contribution is estimated, on average, around \$3,100 a month. This is for ongoing activities, such as:

- Gather information,
- Revising, collating, formatting, and disseminating information
- Sending email to networking groups or stakeholders or higher bodies.

The estimate refers to ongoing activities and it does not include:

- Travelling to attend conference and events,
- Time to organise rallies and events,
- Fundraising activities.

SOURCE(S) AND TYPE OF FUNDING

OSGA funding comes from community donation, so has limited fundraising (our fund is from our community members; they donate from the little money they earn).

OSGA does not receive any funding from outside sources, e.g. government, NGOs, private sector or philanthropies.

CONTACT

Email: info@osgaaustralia.com

ABOUT OSGA



“We didn’t know where to start – how to write a letter, raise our issues”

OSGA started from zero. Initially, it lacked capacity, skills and knowledge. As time moved on, the challenges and barriers to set up a project and run a campaign changed. The higher the demand, the more knowledge is needed to advocate for the Oromo's cause.

“For us is important to articulate our message effectively based on our audience”

Approaching community members is different than talking with DFAT or at international level. At the same time, we feel that we need to get skilled people, we need to expand our team and skill pool based on the issues we face – i.e. website development, fundraising.

Over the years, OSGA has been supported by organisations such as DAA and the Refugee Council of Australia, with capability building, skills development, and networking. Federal government and the African desk at DFAT have been responsive and considerate whenever we approached them seeking information or to schedule meetings.

War, conflict, and human right abuses in the hands of authorities in the country of origin pushed OSGA to continue its activities. Over the years, the Ethiopian government language has changed: the new government regime led by Abiy Ahmed gave hope to the Oromo people they gave hope for a couple of years, but now the war is back on, so people are scared. When the government armed forces and authorities put people in prison, they have always been harsh and brutal, but now when people are arrested, no one knows where they are. After the Hachalu Hundessa killing in early July, internet was closed off for weeks, thus blocking communications with people on the ground.

There is a big rally in US Canada and Europe – these rallies are about the political crisis in Oromia as well as the conflict arising between the Oromo and the Amharas. The disappearances of hundreds of political opposition leaders (Oromo Liberation Front and the Congress Federation of Oromia), the killing of Hachalu Hundessa, and the killings of thousands of Oromo civilians.

“Basic issues are still not solved”

In 2020, atrocities in Wallega and Guji zones have gathered pace, since those in 2019 described by Amnesty International in its 29 May report (Amnesty International 2020). Arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial killings of youngsters, farmers, and professionals, with complete impunity for perpetrators have now spread across Oromia region and increased exponentially.

The kidnapping and refolement of 14-15 Oromo refugees from Djibouti on 29 June, indicates that, once again, the Ethiopian security apparatus is actively seeking Oromo outside Ethiopia – which has not occurred since 2016.

The large-scale killings of supporters and families of supporters of the OLF, the detention of tens of thousands including senior politicians who have no relationship to the OLF and the abduction and detention of Oromo refugees in Djibouti all demonstrate the worst pogrom on Oromo since 1992/3.

We see ourselves as a connector between the community and the Australian and international government bodies. The government can easily reach the community by establishing connections and networking with us. The more the government connects with us, the more it connects with our community in Australia and our country of origin and help us prevent Human Rights abuses.

For that, we seek the support for organisations such as DAA that can function as a coordinator and information repository for diaspora communities. We think the African desk has been responsive, however staff turnover is a challenge for us. Every time a person moves on in their role, we find ourselves starting from scratch again, but the society we live in, our problems continue.

“The society we live in, our problems continue. They don’t stop and start, we need continuity”.

A diaspora-focused organisation would ensure the continuity we seek while easing communication and information sharing with government bodies.

A good example is our response to the health emergency. An intermediate organisation would have the knowledge and understanding of our capacity, structure and outreach and it would be well placed to help us coordinate with government efforts to respond to the current health crisis, strengthening the effectiveness of our response.

“Human rights have no boundaries. Even, sometimes we act like health service advocates. All inclusive.”

OSGA has a good connection with the community and we have many professionals among our community that are willing to help. After few meetings and consultations, we organised a task force made of 27 community members volunteers to support the Oromo people during the Covid-19 crisis. The volunteers are made of health practitioners, nurses, teachers, social workers, pastors etc. We divided our work in 3 categories:

Community information sessions run on a weekly basis. Topics are:

- Personal health and safety information – we run regular online community meeting to ensure people are aware of what to do.
- Government regulation and avoiding risks – we ensure people are aware and understand government restriction and how the current measure help to mitigate the risk of infection.
- Spiritual and mutual support – How can the community work together to overcome these difficult times and supporting one another.

Children engagement and family wellbeing – we discuss:

- How best to support children learning while schools are closed,
- Support for parents

Material aid and outreach in case of unexpected death, crisis, or loss.

“This work was made possible because of our knowledge of the Oromo community in Australia”.

DIASPORA REPRESENTATION

Diaspora channel their voices through community representatives who can be elected leaders, recognised leaders or active community members. In order to meaningfully engage with communities, there is a need to understand the dynamics and challenges of community representation and leadership.

Consultations have brought forward issues regarding communities' representation in terms of political representation in the Australian government at all levels, and with regard to community leadership.

Political representation is seen as a way for communities to amplify their voice “where it counts”, including their issues and proposals directly into the decision-making process. Having a strong voice within the community can help foster a collective community voice at a higher level, as well as bringing people together.

A recent study from the Human Rights Commission on the cultural diversity represented in the senior leadership of Australian organisations and institutions, shows that there is a significant underrepresentation of people with non-European and Indigenous background. Out of the 2490 senior leaders background examined, only 5% have a non-European and Indigenous background. The study shows how cultural diversity is particularly low within the senior leadership of Australian government departments and Australian universities (Australian Human Rights Commission 2018).

Community leaders, on the other hand, are influential people who can play an active role within their own community, but they are not elected and may not be representatives of everyone. Yet these are the people called upon whenever there is a need to gather information on the community. These leaders are not always representative of the broader community or may not be informed about issues facing the most vulnerable groups within their community.

Economically vulnerable diaspora community members are more focused on surviving their day-to-day life rather than engaging in civil society. Leaders, on the other hand, are often people with influence and power within the community, but they are not necessarily representative of specific issues. Additionally, where communities are divided, talking with only a handful of leaders will not help to understand community dynamics and issues.

Consulted community members have indicated how the government engagement and understanding of the issues facing the most vulnerable communities' members reflected on government agencies' messages are ineffective, because they do not speak to their audience.

A clear understanding of people's concerns and problems will develop a message that can reach people who are suffering. Similarly, there is a need to use the appropriate tools to reach community members that are vulnerable and isolated.

A meaningful a systemic engagement involves working with a diversified group of people from the community perspective, not just the same leaders. This approach will involve the vulnerable segment of the community and will allow for the employment of community members that can function as cultural mediators.

DIASPORA POLICY ROLE AND RATIONALE

Diaspora local knowledge and unique networks are recognised by the Foreign Policy White Paper as a way to help DFAT to understand humanitarian issues in other countries while positively influencing how Australia is perceived internationally. A wider definition is possible recognising the social capital that comes from people-to-people links whilst at the same time valuing the bridging and bonding capital that is present within diaspora networks. The assets of diaspora have been recognised in many other sites, as has been noted in this submission, and can be of immense benefit to DFAT locally as well at Embassies etc. Harnessing the unique value of diasporas is impossible to achieve without a systematic and comprehensive diaspora policy. Such a policy is urgently required in order to:

- Set the parameters for diaspora engagement with government
- Clearly identify priority areas of strategic interest
- Offer guidelines for coordination and ongoing consultation

The current policy vacuum limits engagement with diaspora to ad hoc arrangements often based on the initiative of a few individuals within government who either have a knowledge or a personal interest to work with diaspora. Government initiatives that are driven by individuals often leads to small and focused projects that are often not coordinated, have a short-term vision and are less likely to utilise diaspora potential to advance Australia's objectives.

The overall impact of diaspora is not being realised and thus the value of diaspora potential is being channelled outside of government. DFAT also has a role to play in leading a whole of government approach on diaspora engagement and development.

It has been iterated at numerous occasions, including the Diasporas in Action conferences, consultations and dialogues that Australia foreign affairs, refugees and migration policies are missing diaspora's input into the decision-making process. There are many arguments in favour of involving people with lived experiences in the decision-making process of policies that will impact them such as refocus policies on human impacts that also incorporates political parameters (Diaspora Learning Network 2018), introduce new and innovative ways to deliver aid and development supporting Australia commitment to fulfil SDGs.

Policy development can be informed through engagement with diaspora. Lessons can be taken from other portfolios including migration and settlement. For instance, the Department of Home Affairs runs an annual consultation with community groups on the size and composition of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. The Australian Multicultural Council is another model of a reference framework that could be adopted to develop a Diaspora Council which can be informed by peak bodies such as Diaspora Action Australia.

KEY CRITERIA FOR THE AUSTRALIAN DIASPORA POLICY

The key criteria that a diaspora policy should satisfy are:

1. Offer a clear definition of diaspora and provide a statement of intent for diaspora engagement
2. Outline key steps to develop meaningful engagement and inclusion of diaspora. This would include KPIs to monitor diaspora engagement and suggest ways to engage and include diaspora in the design and decision-making process and the key interlocutors and stakeholders.
3. Draw on evidence-based practice to articulate an enabling environment for diaspora humanitarianism.
4. Support and facilitate a cooperation model. The New Partnership Model outlined under the “Achieving the aspiration of the White Paper” section of this submission, offers a realistic and actionable solution to pilot a new cooperation model between government and diaspora organisations.

Diaspora Learning Network

In 2018, the Diaspora Learning Network facilitated 3 seminars to foster multi-stakeholders dialogue and develop policy recommendations for DFAT based on the session discussion and outcomes. The seminars were attended by 54 people, representatives of diaspora, academia, NGOs, government, and private sector. Seminars focused on:

- Peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives employed by diaspora communities to effect change in their countries of origin and discussed how best to enhance support for diaspora capacity and engagement in peacebuilding.
- Understanding the different dimensions of diaspora engagement including both financial and social remittances and the unique ways in which diaspora responses can help to alleviate need during times of disaster and other crises.
- Exploring the role of diaspora in Economic Development by looking beyond the typical focus remittances and place emphasis on trade, investment, skill and technology transfers.

Full reports and policy brief are available at <http://diasporaaction.org.au/diaspora-learning-network/>

Diaspora Peacebuilding & Reconciliation

Policy frameworks that can enhance diaspora engagement to meet the SDGs

Government actors can best focus on recognising diaspora actors as important actors to engage with and support. Support can be given through enabling diaspora organisations to access funding mechanisms, enabling networking and platforms, monitoring general progress and creating the necessary policy framework to facilitate greater participation.

- Recognition of the role and contribution of diaspora in peacebuilding as part of Australia's own foreign policy objectives for peace and security.
- Diaspora peacebuilding work can be viewed within the current development paradigm especially in relation to Australia's ability to meet the SDGs.
- Goal 16 recognises the long reaching consequences of conflict for development outcomes. Include diaspora peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives as an important part of Australia's contributions to SDG Goal 16.
- Working with diasporas is also a keyway of realising the focus on multi-stakeholder collaboration that is the direction of Goal 17 of the SDGs.
- Develop policy frameworks that provide basis for ongoing, rather than ad-hoc engagement with diaspora as part of foreign affairs engagement.
- Consultations with a range of diaspora members are important, both on an organizational and on a project level, and can be best achieved by having systematic consultation processes that reflect and respect community structures for consultation as well as engage organisations that support diaspora groups such as Refugee Council and Diaspora Action Australia.

- Consult with diaspora groups as part of international affairs such as understanding, connecting and consulting with communities as part of country desk and in-country briefing and analysis, especially conflict analysis.
- Supporting and encouraging local actors and initiatives that have outward positive influences as part of DFAT's interests (and national interests).
- Improve strategies to ensure greater diversity in organisations working in the field of development cooperation and peacebuilding.

Make funding streams available and accessible

- Policies and practices in the humanitarian and development cooperation are related to peacebuilding in a number of ways. Develop an approach to discovering these relations and coordinate relevant areas of policy and practice, while dedicating a part to diaspora-led initiatives.
- Support diaspora organisations to engage with relevant DFAT governmental sections that relate to support of peace processes;
- Develop the appropriate funding streams within existing humanitarian, aid and development allocations to make allocation to diaspora actors working on peacebuilding projects and programmes.
- Consider ways to reduce the barriers that diaspora organisations currently face in the process of accessing funds and applying for grants. Such as making information more readily available and providing customised support to organizations; and consider allocating a certain percentage of funding is allocate for diaspora organisations.
- Create guidelines to identify available funding streams

Diaspora market shapers and business builders furthering the SDGs

Summary from the seminar

The strengths of the diaspora community in business and trade include their ability to act as a bridge between Australian businesses and businesses in their country of origin by acting as an intermediary,. They also have strong cultural and language knowledge, a nuanced understanding of the political and social environments, business context and therefore have greater ability to provide business and risk analyses that reflect the nature of the country.

There are differences in the level of economic development diaspora communities can participate in depending on the countries the diaspora came from. It was discussed how diaspora communities with more established business networks may be able to 'mentor' other diaspora communities to develop businesses and networks or offer peer-based learning.

There are various ways in which diaspora communities can engage between Australia and their country of origin. Some of them were discussed during the seminar, including:

- Engagement through the business councils – diaspora business councils can provide business support to Australian businesses.

- Business exchange – business exchanges can help Australian businesses to understand the business environment in other countries
- Education – international students who have studied in Australia are resources for Australian businesses. Additionally, study tours may be facilitated by diaspora communities for Australians to better understand their country of origin.
- Skills transfer – some diaspora communities move back to their country to origin when political situations stabilised and transfer skills back to their country of origin
- Investment – diaspora communities can provide investment advice to Australian businesses, including business and risk analysis with contextual understanding.
- Volunteering – the opportunities to engage young people from diaspora communities to volunteer in their country of origin. Their cultural understanding can be utilized in that experience.
- Cultural exchange – diaspora communities can facilitate cultural exchanges that are relevant and build capacity.

Diaspora response in times of disaster and other crises

What are the barriers or challenges to effective diasporas responses in times of disaster/crisis?

- A number of challenges included miscommunication at many levels (e.g. between younger and older members of the community, different expectations about capacity of diaspora to help etc) volunteer capacity and burnout, language barriers, time differences and logistics as well as differing inter-generational capacities and working with community gate-keepers in countries of origin.
- Diasporas reported parallel action and/or working in isolation when not involved in existing structures which means they can miss out on gaining access to the right information. They sought representation, improved communications and government support at host and origin level.
- Bureaucratic expectations across countries impeded effective responses including funding, restrictions on money transfers, physical security and issues when sending humanitarian supplies
- At a structural level, there may be a lack of community unity, in countries of origin, host and neighbouring countries which can be linked to trauma. Some communities require assistance with planning, prioritising issues and stakeholder engagement.
- There is no platform for mapping diaspora action

What does or could help enable diaspora responses in times of disaster/crisis?

Diasporas discussed the need for:

- Enhanced coordination, both with other diasporas and NGOs, and other actors working in the same locations as well as with relevant governments and government departments.
- Infrastructure support and training in the areas of social media, reporting, policies etc
- Representation in origin countries, registration in host countries, and mechanisms for sharing good practices.
- Access to information is an ongoing need that would enhance the links diasporas have with local institutions and other networks.

How can there be better collaboration and coordination between diaspora communities and other international humanitarian organisations during a disaster?

A number of policy recommendations were made at the seminar:

1. Training should be provided to help diasporas especially with reporting and other skills gaps as identified by diasporas themselves. This could also be in the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and templates or 'guidance packs'.
2. A diaspora platform needs to be resourced and initiated as an urgent priority in order to map diasporas, their skills, and liaise with diasporas in times of disasters and other crises; advocate at government and Ministerial levels for the needs of diasporas as well as be a conduit for public outreach. This platform– which could be part of Diaspora Action Australia - requires adequate funding and staffing to be sustainable and ongoing.
3. There is clearly a need to expand diaspora networks across Australia, reaching new communities and those from refugee and other migrant backgrounds such as Pacific Islander communities. A skills mapping/matching exercise would be able to calculate the size and relative strength of specific diaspora communities.
4. The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper presents a unique opportunity for diasporas to play a more active role in Australia's Foreign Policy. This could be achieved through the development of an implementation roadmap identified in the Foreign Policy White paper and Ministerial-level advocacy.
5. Government assistance and support at host and origin level is critical to the success of diaspora action in times of crisis and other disasters. In particular:
 - a. Australian Embassies and High Commissions can play an important role in offering advice to diasporas, encouraging collaboration and providing funding where appropriate. This function can be more systematic and fostered by DFAT with oversight by peak bodies such as ACFID in order to raise awareness of the impact of the work of diasporas.
 - b. Diasporas may require recognition from host governments and their work could be strengthened if there are spaces for dialogue with governments and key institutions.
 - c. Australian government support is required to ensure that the work and contribution of diasporas is recognised in formal coordination channels, such as UN coordination mechanisms, workplans and funding conferences.
6. International NGOs and donors should consider providing micro-loans to diasporas as an adjunct to their funding. This could come with skills training on reporting, information campaigns and advocacy. To this end existing models of diaspora coordination such as the European based Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination (DEMAC) should be explored.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a dynamic diaspora policy to establish an enabling environment for cooperation

There is a critical need to develop an effective diaspora policy which outlines key steps for developing meaningful engagement and inclusion of diaspora. This would include KPIs to monitor the level and impact of diaspora engagement and suggest ways to engage and include diaspora in design and decision-making processes. Importantly, establishing a diaspora policy would provide clarity, certainty and confidence to diaspora communities in working with the Australian Government.

2. Establish a targeted funding pathway for diaspora led development programs

Tailored funding opportunities for diaspora led development are necessary to enable and sustain their unique approaches. An effective diaspora funding pathway would provide streamlined access to substantial funding over a minimum 12-month term. Eligibility would be based on assessment of program merit, development needs and impact.

3. Invest in diaspora potential by funding the DAA proposed model of support for a minimum of two years

DAA's significant contribution to diaspora support and development, along with our established relationships of trust with diaspora communities, provides the optimum opportunity for Government investment. Funding the DAA proposed model of support outlined in this submission would meet the needs of diaspora and Government by providing structured programs, networks and channels for effective cooperation. A minimum two-year funding arrangement is necessary to provide certainty to DAA and our diaspora partners and enable the development and evaluation of a longer-term strategy.

4. Invest in research to document, and better measure the impact of, diaspora led development and humanitarianism

DAA has developed a ground-breaking partnership with ACOM, University of Melbourne, Monash University, International Organisation for Migration, Centre for Humanitarian Leadership (Deakin University), Settlement Services International and Refugee Council of Australia to work with diaspora communities to better understand the mechanisms and impact of diaspora humanitarianism and develop this critical evidence base. The partnership is supported by UNHCR, Red Cross, Oxfam, DFAT, Oxford University and Cambridge University as Advisory Group Members. The research project is yet to receive funding to proceed.

5. Develop genuine and sustainable partnerships with diaspora communities for international development, diplomacy and policy

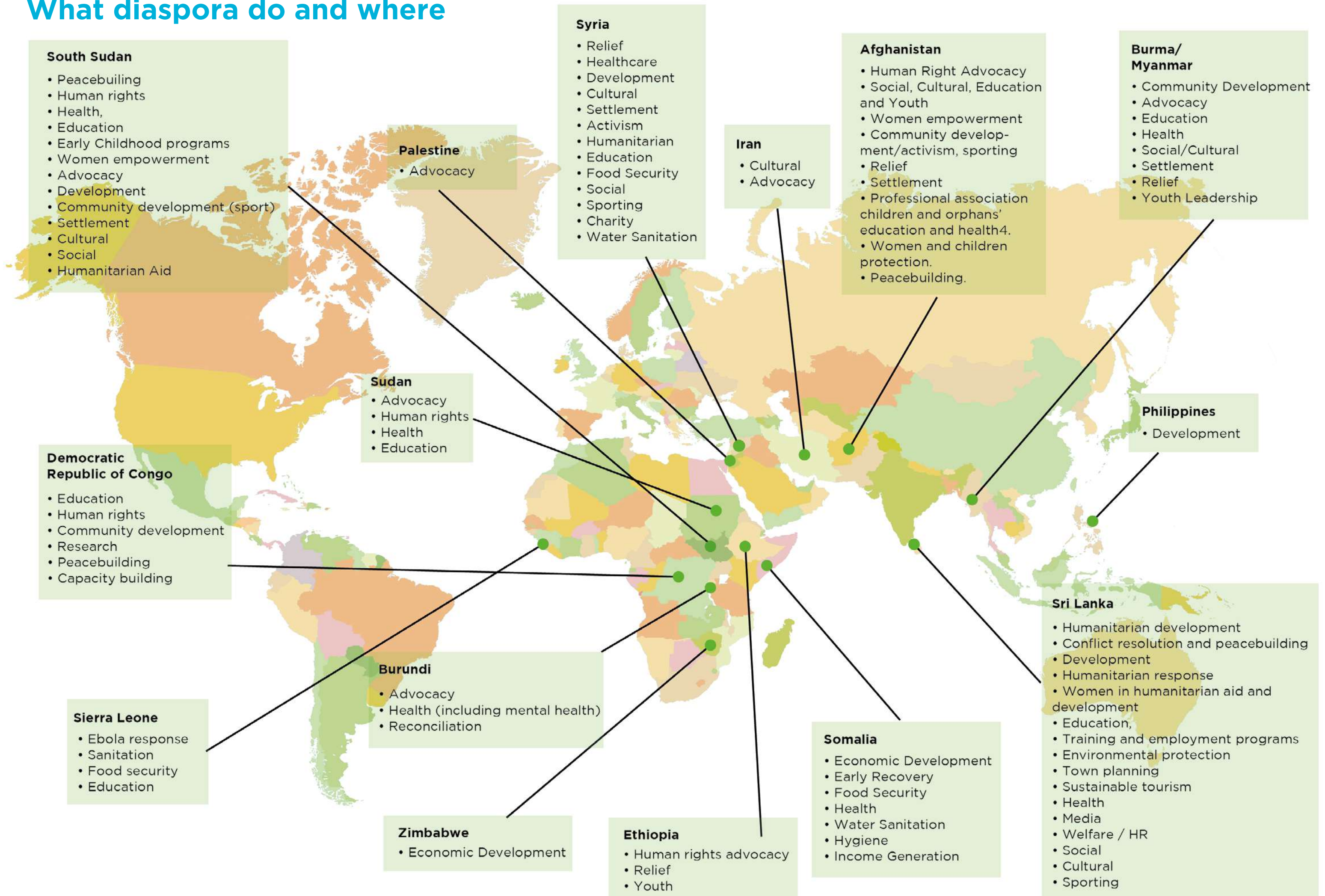
Diaspora communities in Australia are ideally placed to contribute to Australia's international development program, diplomacy and policy objectives. Investing in these relationships and demonstrating an openness to longer term partnerships would provide significant benefits to Federal Government. Supporting the leadership capabilities of diaspora community members to increase their ability to engage in peacebuilding processes, aid and development would provide new opportunities. Young people and women have proven to be particularly effective in peacebuilding processes in the past.

6. Develop a Diaspora Liaison role within DFAT to streamline engagement with diaspora communities

The Australian Government should establish a Diaspora Liaison role within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to oversee, coordinate and support departmental engagement with diaspora communities across its range of functions.



What diaspora do and where



Diaspora communities in Australia

The decision to include community profiles was guided by the need to highlight the complexity, diversity and richness that characterise each community while highlighting context-specific issues and priorities. The choice of communities was dictated by community members' interest and availability. Each profile has been developed with the assistance of community members.

The description of each community begins with a summary of the community, its historical context, and patterns of migration to Australian. The profile is complemented by an analysis of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of each community in Australia and, where data was available, a description of the degree of coordination, with emphasis on migrant organisations. Finally, an overview of communities' challenges, opportunities, and priorities is included.

METHODOLOGY

The preparation of community profiles involved both a desk-based compilation and review of relevant statistics and documents, and community consultations. The desk-based element was conducted by reviewing Census data, DFAT and Home Affairs country and communities' briefs and other relevant literature indicated by community members.

Developing diaspora's demographic and socio-economic profile using census data proved to be a challenging task. Existing data sources are not always mindful of communities' complexity. So far, diaspora categorisation has been based on ethnicity or migration (Chau & Fitzgerald 2018).

Ethnicity categorisation focuses on shared identity and cultural background. However, people who share the same background or belong to the same community can be living in multiple countries, e.g. the Chinese community.

Migration-based categorisation, on the other hand, focuses on the country of origin. However, by doing so, it is difficult to capture second-generation Australians or people born in another host countries and those of mixed ethnic heritage.

Moreover, census ancestral data may not be accurate since at the 2016 census, each person was allowed two responses, therefore there can be more responses than total persons. Community members consulted to develop the profiles have also reported that, at the time of entry to Australia, people may not provide details about their ethnicity or that such details are not always recorded correctly.

Census data is used throughout the profile to validate and give a sense of the size of the community in Australia. When possible other sources, such as community generated data was used. For example, the Oromo community data enabled us to draw a more accurate picture of the Oromo in Australia. Conversely, for a community such as the Syriac, where demographic data is lacking, the profile draws on the richness and long history of their culture and language (the Syriac community profile is included earlier in in this submission).

The community consultation element slightly varied based on people's availability and engagement preferences. For example, the South Sudanese community profile benefit from the input of two community leaders who are representatives of community organisations, one of which has up to 8,000 members across Australia, while consultations for the Syriac community profile relied on semi-structured interviews with an active community member.

The communities that have been profiled for this submission are:

1. Chinese,
2. Hazara,
3. Sri Lankan Tamil,
4. Oromo,
5. South Sudanese

Additionally, community profiles are available withing the Syriac community & SOWA and AZBC case studies.

CHINA



HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

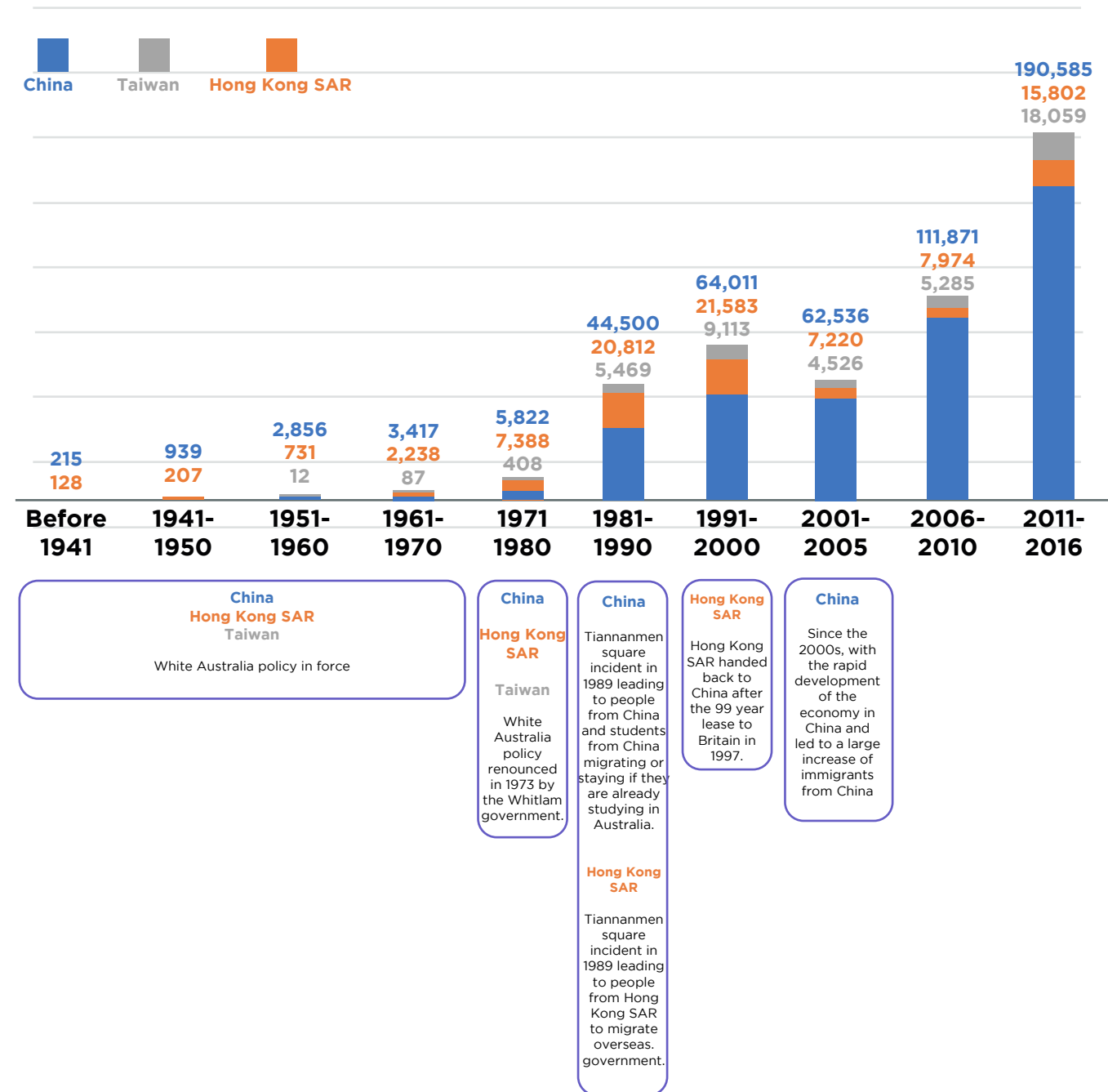
The Chinese community living in Australia is the largest ethnic community living in Australia with 1.2 million people of Chinese ancestry according to the last census. The Chinese community is incredibly diverse with people who are born in Australia, to those who have migrated from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore and other Southeast Asian countries.

The Chinese diaspora community is a diverse community and the history of Chinese diaspora in Australia dates back to the 1800s and has been part of the fabric of Australia for more than 200 years. The first group of Chinese arrived in Australia to meet labour shortages in the 1820s and since then the numbers of Chinese migrants increased significantly during the gold rush era from 1850 and reached over 38,000 in 1881. However, when the Federation of Australia was formed in 1901, the first law enacted was the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 (commonly known as the White Australia Policy), people that are of non-European ethnic origins especially Asians (primarily Chinese) and Pacific Islanders were forbid from immigrating to *Australia*. This policy impacted on the numbers of Chinese people in Australia dramatically with the Australian Bureau of Statistics data showed that from 1881 to 1921, the number of Chinese residents in Australia fell by more than half from over 38,000 in 1881 to just over 17,000 in 1921 (ABS 2012). These immigration restrictions were gradually lifted in the 1960s and fully abolished in 1973 by the Whitlam Labor government and established a policy of multiculturalism in Australia.

Since the introduction of the policy of multiculturalism and the numbers of Chinese migration increased. In 1975, Australia saw the next wave of ethnic Chinese immigrants who were primarily Indo-Chinese refugees fleeing from the war. Between the 1960s and 1980s Chinese-Australian communities grew through immigration from different parts of the world including Cambodia, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan. In wake of the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, Australia granted permanent residency to a large cohort of Chinese students in Australia. From that time there has been a steady flow of immigrants from mainland China.

In the last 10 years, there has been a large increase in the number of immigrants from mainland China. In 2006, the number of Australian people born in mainland China was 206,240, this number more than doubled reaching 509,563 by 2016. In 2016, people who reported to have Chinese ancestry was 1.21 million according to the Australian census.

Migration to Australia



ANCESTRIES^(a) OF PEOPLE WITH SELECTED BIRTHPLACES - 2001¹

Birthplace	'000 ^(b)	Leading ancestries ^(c)
Vietnam	154.8	Vietnamese (72%), Chinese (28%)
Philippines	103.9	Filipino (93%), Spanish (7%), Chinese (4%), Australian (2%)
Malaysia	78.9	Chinese (72%), Malay (11%), English (6%), Australian (5%), Irish (2%)
Indonesia	47.2	Chinese (50%), Indonesian (42%), Dutch (10%), Australian (2%), English (2%)
Singapore	33.5	Chinese (65%), English (12%), Indian (9%), Australian (6%), Malay (4%), Irish (3%)
East Timor	9.4	Chinese (61%), Timorese (40%), Portuguese (10%)

(a) Accounting for at least 2% of the birthplace group.

(b) Includes people whose ancestries were not stated, not codable or inadequately described.

(c) People whose ancestries were not stated, not codable or inadequately described were excluded prior to the calculation of percentages.

¹ ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417aeca25706c00834efa/af5129cb50e07099ca2570eb0082e462?OpenDocument>

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

The demographic and socio-economic data used to develop the Chinese community profile in Australia was drawn predominately from the Census data.

There are two key sets of data used in this section. The birthplace data, which excludes second and future generations and ancestry data which includes second and future generations. The reason why both sets of data is used is due to the lack of comprehensive ancestry data that also break down further into gender, age, education, religion.

In order to capture a comprehensive picture of the numbers Chinese people born in Australia, the ancestry data is used in this section. In the 2016 Census, 1.2 million people were reported to be of Chinese ancestry.

Geographical Distribution

The 2016 Census showed that New South Wales is the sate with the largest number of Chinese people, followed by Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Northern Territory.

Language

The official language in China is mandarin, however there are many dialects in the Chinese language. The main language after mandarin is Cantonese and are predominately spoken by people from Hong Kong SAR and those from the Guangdong province in China. The main language for those from Taiwan is mandarin.

There are two main written scripts in Chinese, the traditional and the simplified. The traditional writing is primarily used by people born in Taiwan and Hong Kong SAR and the simplified writing is primarily used by people born in China.

Religion

The majority of Chinese people living in Australia have no religion (born in **Hong Kong SAR 52.3%**, **China 73.4%**, **Taiwan 56.0%**).

Other religions practiced by the Chinese community include:

- Buddhism
- Christian
- Catholic
- Baptist
- Uniting Church

Structure by age

CHINA

0-14 years 20,475

15-24 years 111,578

25-34 years 138,943

35-44 years 68,822

45-54 years 69,551

55-64 years 53,344

65+ years 46,844

TAIWAN

0-14 years 1,887

15-24 years 5,969

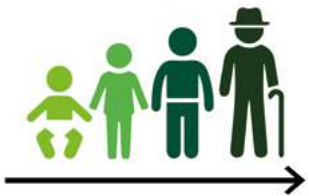
25-34 years 22,574

35-44 years 8,497

45-54 years 3,603

55-64 years 3,904

65+ years 2,379



HONG KONG SAR

0-14 years 4,106

15-24 years 13,274

25-34 years 18,597

35-44 years 13,236

45-54 years 11,902

55-64 years 16,407

65+ years 9,363

Year	Number of Chinese ²	Source of information	Situations
1881	38,533	The Chinese in Australia, ABS ³	Gold rush
1901	29,627		Australia's federation, White Australia Policy
1921	17,157		
2001	556,338	Profile ID - by ancestry ⁴ . Note that the question on ancestry was not asked in 1991 and 1996 and prior to that, the accuracy was not high from the 1986 Census.	
2006	669,306		
2011	866,001		
2016	1,214,438		

Gender⁶ structure

The birthplace data is used in this section.

Female	Male
CHINA 285,409	CHINA 224,148
HONG KONG SAR 45,243	HONG KONG SAR 41,645
TAIWAN 27,525	TAIWAN 19,293

Legal Status⁷

Australian Citizen	Non Australian Citizen
China 36.3%	China 62.8%
Hong Kong SAR 75.3%	Hong Kong SAR 23.3%
Taiwan 46.9%	Taiwan 51.9%

Education Level

China	
Year 12	27.3%
Certificate III or IV	3.2%
Advance diploma and Diploma	8.6%
Bachelor degree and above	43.4%
Hong Kong SAR	
Year 12	21.2%
Certificate III or IV	4.7%
Advance diploma and Diploma	9.4%
Bachelor degree and above	45.8%
Taiwan	
Year 12	28.2%
Certificate III or IV	3.4%
Advance diploma and Diploma	8%
Bachelor degree and above	46.7%

Professional Activities



China

Work full-time

55%

Work part-time

28.9%

Unemployed

11.8%

Not in the labour force

47%

Hong Kong SAR

Work full-time

60.7%

Work part-time

28.4%

Unemployed

7.4%

Not in the labour force

34.9%

Taiwan

Work full-time

50.9%

Work part-time

37.1%

Unemployed

8%

Not in the labour force

31.6%

Data on number of business owners of Chinese background. The types of occupation for Chinese people include:

- Labourers
- Professionals
- Community and Personal Service workers
- Managers
- Clerical and Administrative Workers
- Technicians and Trade workers
- Sales Workers

It is estimated that in 2011, the number small business owned or operated (with employees) by people born in China was **18,980** or **63.7%** of all business owned by those born in China.

Sole trader account for **32%** and medium and big business account for **2%** (Liu, X. 2016).

DEGREE AND TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

Given the diversity of Chinese people in Australia, there are also a diversity of organisations from senior citizen groups (activity based and may be funded by local councils or auspiced by other community organisations), interest groups (women, youth, art, culture), professional and business groups, location-based groups and more.

Whilst there are some understanding of the types of Chinese community organisations, there is no serious attempts at scientifically categorise the types of community organisations that exist within the Chinese community.

CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES

As the tension between Australia and China continue to rise, it also places undue pressure on the Chinese community living in Australia. The Chinese Australian community are informed and sensitive to the current Australia-China relationship with people supporting all sides of the arguments and this is due to the large diversity of people of Chinese background living in Australia. However, it should be noted that the large majority of Chinese-Australians have no interest in the geo-political debate, however, the discussions is impacting on the community and sparked racism and discrimination towards the Chinese community. In some anecdotal reports, members of the Chinese community have barriers when seeking security clearance when working in the public service. Whilst it is understandable given the heighten tension and therefore it requires an increase in diligence when dealing with requests, however the irony is that this is also the time Australia need the cultural knowledge from Chinese Australians to help Australia find the best path to both protect Australia's national interest and maintain good working relationship with a rising power in the world.

WeChat is a social media platform that is used by many Chinese people for social connection, business, and source of information. Whilst there are discussions about people using the platform to influence Chinese living in Australia and therefore it is important for the Australian government to find ways to remove fake news or uninformed information on platforms such as WeChat, however it is imperative for the Australian government to understand the role of WeChat plays in social connection amongst the Chinese Australian community and small businesses using WeChat as the main platform for their retail (similar to Facebook).

In the past, there is a lack of understanding by the Australian Government on the Chinese community. There is an opportunity for the government to genuinely understand the community and better provide resources to ensure the community are provided with official and credible sources of information.

²Ancestry data, which includes second and future generations

³ABS data <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/1301.0Feature%20Article21925?open=document&tabname=Summary&prodno=1301.0&issue=1925&num=8view=4>

⁴<https://profile.id.com.au/australia/ancestry?WebID=10>

^{5&7}ABS, https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/6105_036

HAZARA

INTRODUCTION

Hazara people are an ethno-social group native to Afghanistan. It is believed that most Hazara lineage can be traced to Turkic-Mongolian tribes of Central Asia including Genghis Khan, albeit there are Hazaras scholars who trace it back to the Indo-European Kushansor Tokharians who built the Buddhas of Bamiyan in central Afghanistan in the third or fourth century (MacKenzie & Guntari 2015).The vast majority of Hazara follow Shi'a Islam, contrary to other Afghan ethnic groups who are Sunni Muslim. In 2004, Afghanistan constitutions recognised 14 ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Baloch, Turkmen, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Gujar, Brahui, Qizilbash, Aimaq, and Pashai.

Hazara people homeland is Hazarajat (*land of the Hazara*), a geographically isolated central region of Afghanistan, consisting of the provinces of Bamiyan and Daykundi and parts of other provinces including Ghazni, Ghor, Uruzgan and Wardak. Hazarajat is a mountain region highly vulnerable to droughts and floods (DFAT 2019). The region is dependent on agriculture for economic opportunities; however, its infrastructure is under developed restricting the movement of people and goods. Albeit Hazara people constitute more than 70 per cent of Hazarajat population, country-wise they are considered a minority (DFAT 2019), representing an estimated 10% of the total population¹ which itself has been an issue of major contention i.e. a US Embassy report in June 2020 prompted reactions by the Hazara people including the Afghan Vice President².

Hazara are hardworking, hospitable, and resilient people, famous for their music and poetry, orally transmitted through generations. Hazaras place great value on educational achievement for their children, including girls. DFAT country information report highlights how Hazara girls living in Hazarajat are more likely to participate in sport, community life and the workforce, compared to girls and women from other ethnic groups living in different regions (DFAT 2019). Having said that, the report also indicates that, despite the significant improvement of women rights across the country since the end of the Taliban regime, women's place in society remains controversial and Hazara women, particularly outside of Hazarajat, face gender-based and societal discrimination (DFAT 2019). In the 1880s, Hazara's social structure comprised landed nobility, peasants and artisans. However, persecution and violence, as well as the systematic social, economic, and political discrimination against Hazara, caused by their different religious belief, distinctive ethnic origins, as well as the separate economic and political roots, resulted in a progressive loss of their social standing in modern Afghanistan (Ref World 2020). Albeit, Hazara's situation has improved since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the resurgence of religious-motivated internal conflicts against Shi'a Muslim threaten Hazara people's safety and security, often forcing them to flee the country.

¹ DFAT – Accurate statistical data of ethnicity in Afghanistan are not available due to the sensitivity of the subject.
² Twitter, <https://bit.ly/3iqT151>

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

Hazara forced migration and flight, both within Afghanistan and to other countries, is tied to the long-lasting discrimination and persecution that has endangered Hazaras' safety and security while, at the same time, restricting economic opportunities. In 2019-2020, the Hazara community in Afghanistan was persistently attacked by ISIS and Taliban, including a brutal attack of a maternity ward in May 2020 killing health staff, pregnant mothers and babies (Maley 2020).

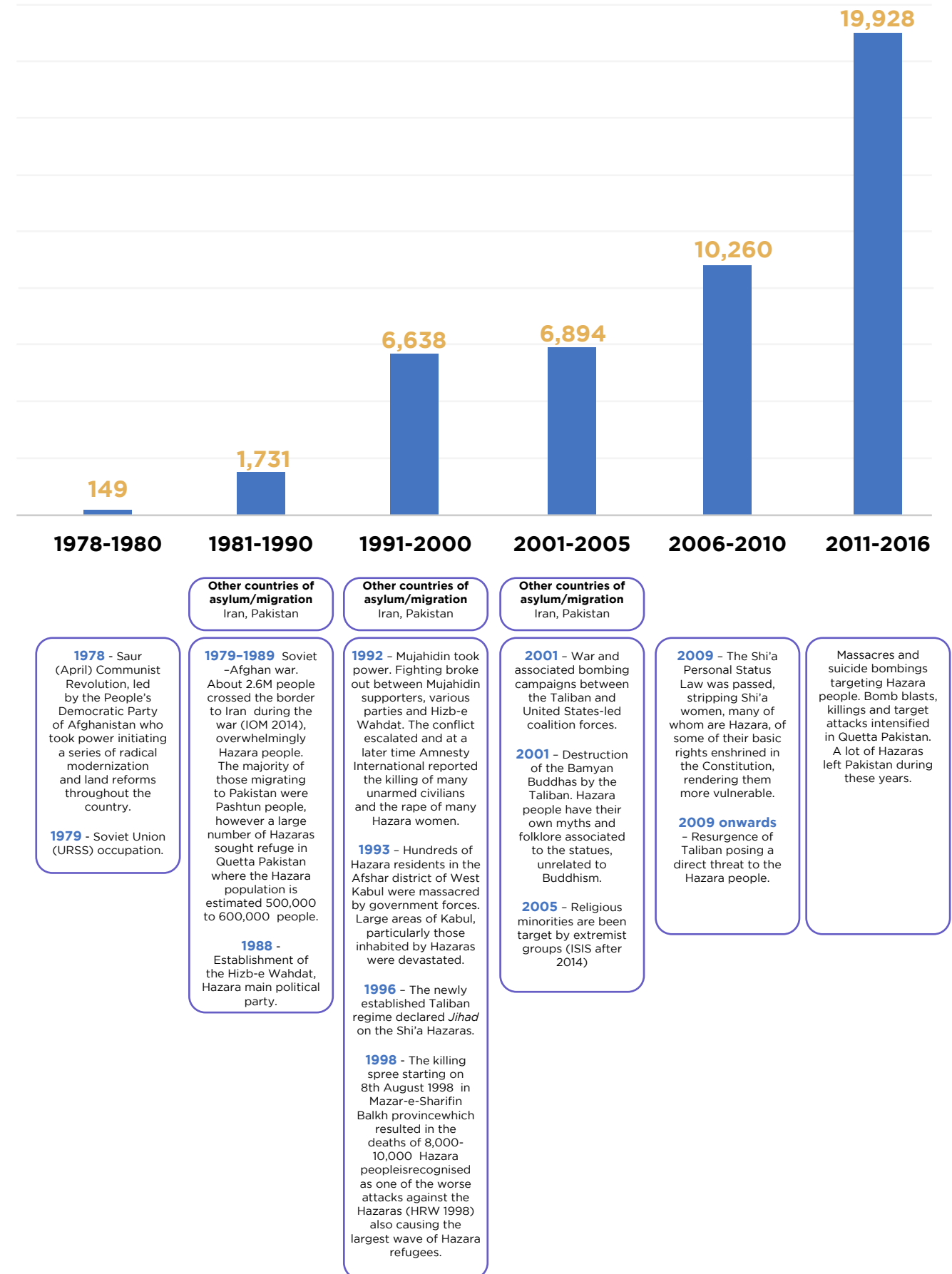
According to UNHCR, Afghan people are the third largest refugee group in the world, after Syrian and Venezuelan, with 2.7M people seeking international protection worldwide (UNHCR 2020). The countries that host the largest number of Afghan refugees are Iran and Pakistan where, Hazara refugees still face persecution by Sunni extremists because of their religious beliefs. Hazara's are Shi'a Muslim, while Pakistan is predominantly Sunni Muslim country.

Whilst due to lack of reliable sources and data it is difficult to draw a clear picture of Hazara people migration to Australia, it is possible to get a sense of their history through the Afghan-born people in Australia. Migration from Afghanistan to Australia started in the 19th century with the cameleers. Between 1901 and 1970, the White Australia migration policy prevented any further migration. In the late 70s, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, forced migration started to grow as a consequence of the continuous state of conflict and unrest in Afghanistan. Whilst census and migration data refer to Afghan people, a large percentage of Afghan refugees are Hazara people (Monsutti 2004). According to the Cultural Atlas (Evason 2016), Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, commonly are:

- Ethnic Hazara fleeing persecution in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries of refuge such as Pakistan,
- Intellectuals, journalists or activists,
- Individuals who assisted the Australian mission in Afghanistan and were at risk of harm (e.g. interpreters),
- Women and children who arrived under the Program 'Women at Risk' humanitarian visa.

Demographic data pertaining individual ethnic groups is minimal, difficult to obtain and not always reliable.

Migration to Australia

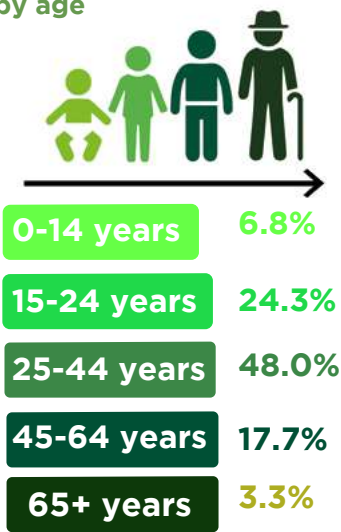


DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

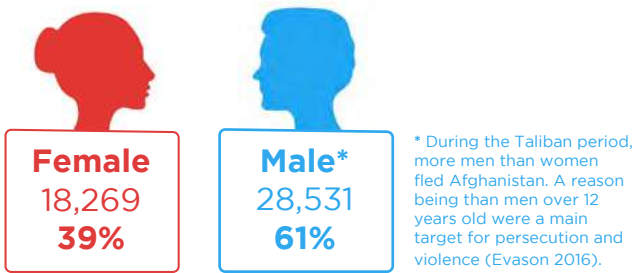
According to the 2016 Census, there is a total of **46,799** Afghan-born people in Australia, **21.9%** of whom are of Hazara ancestry. However, this data may be incomplete because the same Census data also indicates that **33.9%** of the Afghan-born people speak Hazaragi, which is only spoken by the Hazara people. Hazara in Australia are likely to identify their language as either Dari (with Hazaragi as dialect of Dari) or Hazaragi. However, Hazaragi is only recognised in Australia as independent language. In Afghanistan the language of Hazara people is considered a dialect of Dari (or Persian).

The fact that there were **33.9%** Hazaragi speakers in Australia indicates that the actual percentage of Hazara among the Afghan-born population in Australia is much higher than the **21.9%** with Hazara ancestry reported in the 2016 Census. On the other hand, while Iran never granted citizenship to Afghan refugees (including Hazara), those that fled to Pakistan were granted Pakistani citizenship. Of the 61,913 Pakistan-born people living in Australia, **4.1%** are of Afghan ancestry and **4.6%** speak Hazaragi.

Structure by age



Gender structure



Language

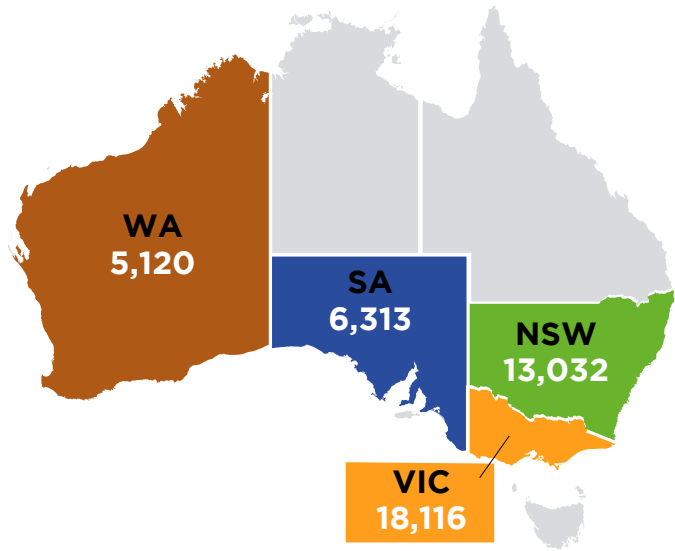
Hazara people speak Dari and Hazaragi, historically both considered dialects of Persian. However, Dari has been the official language of Afghanistan in the past few decades, while Hazaragi is still considered a dialect of Dari. Australia is the only country that has recognised Hazaragi as a language, mainly as a result of community advocacy and the recognition of Hazara people's human rights, experience of persecution because of their identity, language and ethnicity⁴.

Data Source: ABS (2016 Census) https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/7201_036

⁴ National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), 2005
⁵ Australian Migration Statistics (Department of Home Affairs) — released November 2019.

Geographical Distribution

Number of Afghan-born people in Australia as 2016 Census showed:



Legal Status



50.2% of Afghan-born are Australian citizens
7,939 Afghan people were granted Offshore Humanitarian visas in the period from 2014-2019⁵

Education Level



21.6% of the Afghan-born population over the age of 15, completed Year 12
8.2% completed a Certificate III or IV
5.6% had completed an Advanced Diploma or Diploma

DFAT sources reported that a considerably higher percentage of Hazara children receive formal education relative to the children of other Afghan ethnicities. Hazara children are generally encouraged to consider further education options where family circumstances allow (DFAT 2019).

Professional Activities



33.3% Technicians and Trades Workers
16.7% Labourers
10.8% Machinery Operators and Drivers

CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES

IN AUSTRALIA

VISA AND SAFETY CONCERNS

The ongoing political and civil unrest in Afghanistan as well as the ongoing discrimination and persecution of Hazara people in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, causes the community in Australia ongoing anxiety and a fear of the future. Additionally, humanitarian protection and family reunion visa processes are long and difficult. People that arrive by boat are kept in detention for a prolonged period of time in environments that are detrimental to people mental health.

The uncertainty around the safety and security of family members overseas, the prolonged and strenuous visas process which prevents them to fully resettle fully or sponsor their families from overseas, despite being recognised as refugees, causes:

Less (or long delayed) chances to fully establish in Australia, for instance, buying a property, investing in long term ventures. Employers may be hesitant in employing them because of their visa types and the uncertainty of how long the person may be around etc.

Damages to physical and mental health. Those who have had personal experiences of violence and now live in Australia do not necessarily seek emotional/mental health help for fear of criticism by their families/community, taboo and lack of culturally appropriate mental health services.

Those who have arrived via boat and are applying for Australian citizenship are waiting two to three years to hear a response from the department on their citizenship applications. The system is punishing them for coming to Australia via boat.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Community sources reported that the gaps in younger Hazaras education creates a situation where the students almost always play 'catch-ups' on their literacy and language skills. Schools are not always prepared, particularly state schools possibly because of funding and financial resources, to effectively fill those gaps in the students' education gaps. The gap is carried through the schooling career until universities or colleges, for those who reach it.

The recognition of work rights is an issue for many Hazara people. A lot of skilled Hazara tradesman and labourers come to Australia from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran and because of lack of language proficiency end up working for people for cash, or at much lower rates than the legal rates, exposing themselves to a range of issues, such as:

- no insurance and protection in cases of injury at work inability to claim underpaid rates and more.

IN AFGHANISTAN

CHALLENGES

- Safety and security in Afghanistan and other refugee host countries such as Iran and Pakistan. Resurgence of conflict and attacks targeting Hazara people.
- Humanitarian aid provided by NGOs and other agencies does not reach remote areas and/or may not reach the most vulnerable populations.
- Flow of money and remittance

PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY

There is a general distrust of authorities, particularly towards those in political power given previous experiences with authorities in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"Personally for me if there were any attempts made by DFAT to politically show concern over the ongoing attacks on Hazaras in Afghanistan and Pakistan, this would have a great impact on the psychology of the Hazaras who feel so abandoned by their own and the world leaders" (Hazara community member).

Having said that, the Hazara community in Australia is increasingly participating in social economic and political process, however there are various challenges that serves as barriers such as lower community education capacity issues.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Hazara are community oriented and resilient people. The more established community members are providing support to newly arrived people either on individual level or through community organisations. If adequately supported, they can be a great resource and asset to migration agencies.
- Hazara people are genuinely interested in working toward improving the lives of those around them in partnership with local, state, and federal government bodies. The opportunity to engage with the community in a meaningful manner is always there.
- Hazara refugees have resulted mostly successfully and have experienced incredible social mobility in a short period of time (e.g. less than two decades). Hazara dominantly work in construction and trades as reported by the last Census and they have benefited from the construction boom. As an increasing number of Hazara refugee arrivals from 2010s are becoming Australian Citizens and voters in Australia.

PRIORITIES

- One of the most urgent issues facing Hazara men who are out of detention and have a bridging visa or a Safe Haven visa, to be able to go through the visa process quickly so they can begin to resettle and reunite with their families.
- Early culturally and linguistically appropriate interventions to assist these students to catch up and stay connected to their education reduce dropout rates.
- Build on the trust and support that the Hazara people have towards Australia. The Hazara community has actively taken part in the Bushfire Appeal providing cash donations and by volunteering (SSI 2020).

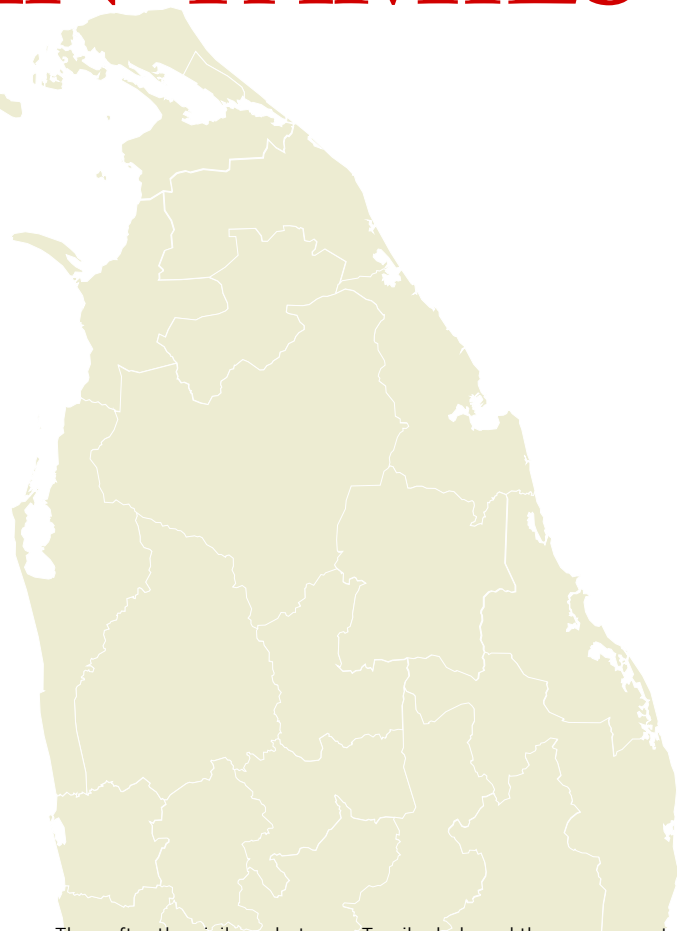
OPPORTUNITIES

- Hazara people can support diplomats to liaise with the community overseas. The Hazaras in Afghanistan have been leading in education, gender equality and democratic freedom aligning with Australia's mission.
- Australia's aid and foreign missions have an opportunity by working with the Hazara diaspora in Australia to target issues that are considered asylum seeker push factors such as the human security issues and the lack of economic opportunities in central Hazarajat provinces.
- It is believed that the Hazara community remittance to the poverty-stricken central provinces of Afghanistan, and to the refugee communities of Pakistan and Iran, is a significant amount.

PRIORITIES

- The Government can invest and facilitate the flow of remittances.

SRI LANKAN TAMILS



INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka, formerly Ceylon, has a population of 21 million (DFAT 2019). Tamils are the second largest ethnic group in Sri Lanka with 15.3% of the population. The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka can be dated back to the colonial period. Academic literature on this issue highlights that Sinhalese' grievances against Tamils mounted upon the perception that Tamils were favoured under British rule, particularly in the area of education and public employment (Amarasingam 2015; DeVotta 2005; Vimalarajah & Cheran 2010). On the other hand, lands in which Tamils were concentrated in the island faced economic negligence from British rulers since the economic interests of the British were largely placed on the plantation sector (Weiss 2012). The outcome, however, was the viewpoint that Tamils were preferred by the British and, therefore, benefitted disproportionately. This viewpoint was utilised to justify the actions of Sinhala politicians in rectifying given disparities in employment and education between Tamils and Sinhalese in the post-independence era (DeVotta 2005). Ethnic outbidding was used as a mechanism by Sinhalese political elites to acquire and retain the political power in the post-independent Sri Lanka.

In 1956, Prime Minster S.W.R.D Bandaranaike introduced the Official Language Act through the parliament of Ceylon, declaring Sinhala as the sole official language. The post-independent weak economy intensified the tendency for discriminatory politics (Nithyanadam 2010). Rulers employed ethno-based solutions as options to overcome the difficulties. As a result, Tamils were gradually deprived of their rights to access public services, and they ended up experiencing socioeconomic disadvantages as an ethnic minority. The constitution in 1972 guaranteed Buddhism a foremost place in the country and reaffirmed Sinhala as the official language of Sri Lanka (Amarasingam 2015). District quota system for university admission was introduced in 1974 which systematically reduced the percentage of Tamil students entering the universities (DeVotta 2005). Such measures intensified the unrest between Sinhala and Tamil communities. In 1976, the leading Tamil political party, Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), called for a separate state 'Tamil Eelam' for Tamils in its Vaddukoddai Resolution. Tamil youth, on the other hand, who lost their faith in state-politics and non-violent protests, formed number of Tamil militant groups to fight for the rights of Tamils (Nithyanadam 2010). The country experienced anti-Tamil riot in 1983, following the riots in 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, which was marked in history as the 'worst ever anti-Tamil violence'.

Thousands of Tamils consequently fled the island and thereby formed the Tamil diaspora that would fund the burgeoning Tamil separatist movement, while thousands of others fled to the Northern Province and joined the rebels fighting for separatism. (DeVotta 2005, p.154)

Thereafter the civil war between Tamil rebels and the government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) was intensified. Among the Tamil militant groups, Liberation of Tigers in Tamil Eelam (LTTE) claimed itself as the sole representative of Tamils and launched a war against the Sri Lankan government. After a certain number of attempts for peace-talks between GoSL and LTTE failed without making progress, the post-9/11 context turned to be the favour of GoSL (Faist 2007). President Mahinda Rajapaksa was determined to utilise this situation to harness international support for the fight against LTTE. The 30-years long civil war came to a brutal end in May of 2009. The question arises at this point whether the end of civil war marks the end of long-lasting ethnic outbidding and the ethnic conflict in the island or not. The shift back to 'nationalist-populist state centred economic policies' in post-war Sri Lanka was noticed (Athukorala and Jayasuriya 2013, Jayasuriya 2019). The multi-ethnic and multi-confessional coexistence in the island is further threatened by the majoritarian ideology which is Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist ideology (Devotta 2018).

Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora can be counted over one million (Institute of Policy Studies Sri Lanka 2013; Orjuela 2008; Vimalarajah et. al 2011). The size of the diaspora is more likely to be one-fourth of the total Sri Lankan Tamils. The largely conflict-induced nature of this diaspora consequently gave the community a self-identification and portrayal as 'victim diaspora'. The so-called 'victim diaspora' has been widely criticised as 'peace wrecker' for its long-distance nationalism and its role in funding LTTE (Fair 2007; Cohen 2008; International Crisis Group 2010; Vimalarajah & Cheran 2010; Vimalarajah et. al 2011). Nonetheless, Tamil diaspora had been effective in addressing unmet needs in the conflict zones of Sri Lanka (Cheran 2003). Cease-fire Agreement (CFA) between LTTE and GoSL in 2002 opened the gates for Tamils abroad to visit their ancestral lands, families and friends. It provided them with the opportunities to strengthen their ties with their counterparts in Sri Lanka and to engage in relief, reconstruction and development. Persistence of such initiatives wasn't guaranteed since the internal climate dramatically changed in the next few years. Tamil diaspora activism in the final months of civil war marked the history.

Tamil diaspora groups and organisations in Canada, Europe and Australia continue to support their homeland and people with post-war relief, recovery, rehabilitation and development besides their political activism. Some of the Tamil diaspora organisations move beyond their political differences to put a united front for common causes. Some of them celebrate and promote the Tamil language, which is one of the oldest classical languages in use, and the cultural heritage in their countries of residence.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

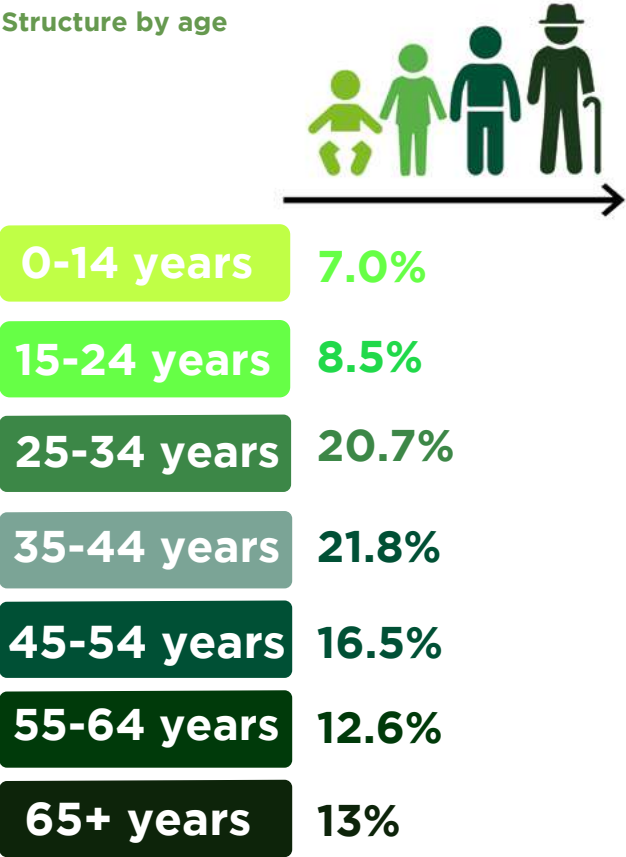
The first international migration wave occurred right after the independence in 1948, mostly consisted of professionals and students mainly from the upper class and upper caste backgrounds (Van Hear et al. 2004). People with English proficiency migrated during this time (Orjuela 2008). The first wave cannot be labelled as 'forced' migration or 'victim' experience. The strength of literacy, English competency, affordability, and established attachments abroad might have been among the main reasons for Tamils to migrate at that time. The second migration wave occurred after the election in 1956. It consisted of those who were in search of higher education and employment opportunities. The civil war between Tamil militants and the government intensified after 1980s causing the next waves of Tamil migration, mostly in the form of asylum after the riot in 1983, increasingly from the lower class and rural backgrounds (Orjuela 2008; Van Hear et al. 2004).

According to the Department of Home Affairs (2016), the first Sri Lankan immigrants to Australia were recruited to work in the cane plantation in the late 19th century. Many Tamils and Burghers migrated to Australia after the introduction of the Sinhala Only Act in 1956. The changes in Australia's immigration policies in the late 1960s and early 1970s paved a path for further Tamil migration to Australia. While there were many who fled the war and reached Australia as humanitarian entrants, after the ethnic genocide in 1983 and 2009, there was also a significant number of Tamils migrating under skilled and family migration programs. It is also important to note the Australian government relentless campaign against asylum seekers from Sri Lanka in the post-war context despite the reporting on human rights violations and ongoing ethnic outbidding in Sri Lanka (Fernandes 2019).

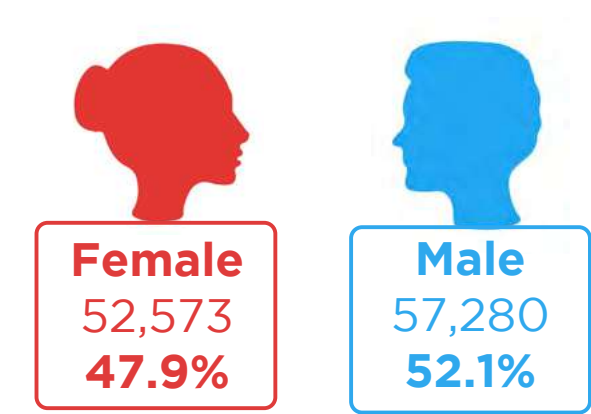
DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

The 2016 Australian census data for Sri Lankan Tamils do not accurately capture Tamils with Sri Lankan or Ceylon origin. There are different arguments in support and against nationality-based identification and ethnicity-based identification. Australian Tamil Congress (2016) highlights some of the practical issues with census questions on country of birth, language spoken at home and ancestry. Please note some people prefer to identify themselves as Tamils with Tamil ancestry or Tamils from Ceylon rather than using 'Sri Lankan' identity due to the conflict history. Muslims of Sri Lankan origin who speak Tamil and Indian Tamils from Sri Lanka pose further challenges with 'Tamil' and 'Sri Lankan Tamil' identifications. The census data used for this community profile is thus not 100% representative of Tamils from Sri Lanka or Ceylon. The following snippets from the community information summary by the Department of Home Affairs (2016) rather depict the nuances of Sri Lankan born population in Australia.

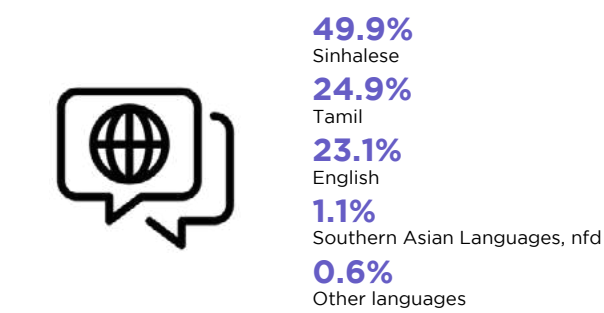
Structure by age



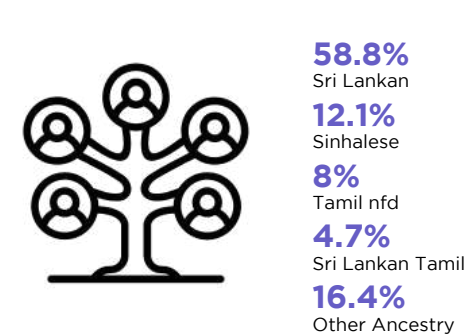
Gender structure



Language



Ancestry response



According to Ancestry Multi Response (ANCP) in Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016), there were **7127** Sri Lankan Tamils, **7128** Indian Tamils and **7131** Tamil not further defined (nfd).

The following table shows the number of people who responded to the question on language spoken at home other than English with Tamil:

People who speak Tamil at home				
	Male	Female	Total	Families
Australia	38,975	34,184	73,159	28,138
NSW	15,746	13,937	29,683	11,417
VIC	13,797	11,865	25,662	9,870
WA	3,607	3,285	6,892	2,651
QLD	2,951	2,564	5,515	2,121
SA	1,452	1,250	2,702	1,039
ACT	975	906	1,881	723
NT	285	233	518	199
TAS	158	148	306	118

Religion

40.8% Buddhism	4.2% Anglican
20.7% Catholic	3.8% No religion, so described
18.8% Hinduism	9.9% Other religion

Legal Status



60.3% of Sri Lanka born are Australian citizens

Education Level



41.6% of the Sri Lanka born population reported having completed a Bachelor degree or above,
8.3% Year 12 as their highest level of educational attainment,
7.7% Certificate III or IV
14.8% Advanced Diploma or Diploma.

Professional Activities



31.4% Professionals
14.6% Clerical and Administrative Workers
12.4% Labourer
10.6% Managers
9.5% Technicians and Trades Workers

Data Source: ABS (2016 Census) https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/7201_036

⁴ National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreter (NAATI), 2005
⁵ Australian Migration Statistics(Department of Home Affairs) — released November 2019.

DEGREE AND TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

Tamil community organisations comprise of Tamils of Sri Lankan, Indian, Malaysian and Singaporean origins. There is a plethora of Tamil community organisations, informal groups and networks in Australia. Some of them are formed on the basis of country of origin and others are formed on the basis of Tamil ethnic identity. Since the diasporic identity as a group identity changes through time and space, the profile, purpose, vision, and functions of these organisations evolve from their birth as well. The trajectory of Victorian Tamil Association can be highlighted for such evolvement. The organisation changed its name to reflect the social ethos of respective periods – from Ceylon Tamil Association in 1978 to Eelam Tamil Association in 2007, and now by the name of Victorian Tamil Association, it serves Tamils of all origins in Victoria. Therefore, the characteristics of Tamil diaspora organisations are somewhat fluid.

Tamil community organisations mainly focus on the communities in Australia, counterparts in their country origin or both. Australian-focused organisations function to promote community connections, language and cultural heritage. These organisations also operate as supporting social agencies for socially and economically disadvantaged members of Tamil diaspora in Australia. For example, some of these organisations provide refugee students and their families with financial support.

The second type of organisations supports their homeland and the local Tamil counterparts in post-war development, humanitarian assistance and political resolution. Sri Lankan Tamil ethnic identity plays an important role for these organisations to drive their operations in post-war Sri Lanka. Homeland-focused organisations largely implement education-oriented programs besides economic enablement, information technology, health and life skill development.

Some of the homeland-focused organisations are actively involved in activism against human rights violations that took place in the last phase of civil war, campaigning for transnational justice for war crimes and shedding light on the ongoing struggle for self-determination.

The third type of organisations, which operational focus is on Tamil community in Australia as well as the local counterparts in Sri Lanka, delivers actions in both Australia and Sri Lanka. Sometimes these organisations play as a focal point to maintain the ties between the diaspora and homeland as well as the Tamil diaspora across countries. Village associations and alumni associations are great examples for the third category.

In addition to the main categories discussed above, there are faith-based, professional and senior citizen organisations.

Tamil diaspora-led development and humanitarian actions can be divided into structured and unstructured contributions. Structured contributions have the following characteristics:

1. Prioritising the local needs
2. Contextual appropriateness
3. Intimate connections
4. Domain knowledge
5. Flexibility in decision making

Unstructured contributions have the following characteristics:

1. Trust issues
2. Duplication of activities
3. Lack of transparency and accountability
4. Ineffective in terms of impact and sustainability

CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES

Six Tamil community organisational leaders were consulted to identify challenges, opportunities and priorities for Tamil diaspora communities and organisations in Australia.

CHALLENGES

‘Tamil’ identification in the census was noted as problematic. Leaders suggested a united ‘Tamil Australian’ identity for organisations working with Tamil communities in Australia. The lack of networking between Tamil diaspora organisations produces duplication of activities, misunderstanding in the community and ineffective use of resources. Male dominance in the leadership positions was also spotted during the consultation.

Funding is one of the key challenges for community organisations. Covid-19 poses additional challenges as it has a huge impact on the individual capacity of community members and thereby organisational capacity for supporting development projects in Sri Lanka as well as disadvantaged members of the Tamil diaspora in Australia, for example, Tamil refugees who struggle with employment exploitation and lack of financial support in this difficult time. Leaders acknowledged the willingness to help while indicating the need for additional resources from the government and capacity development for community volunteers. One of the members of the reference group suggested that government funding calls should be both activity-focused and vision-focused.

Connection with councils, state governments and the federal government was identified as an opportunity. However, these connections are limited to immigration, education and multicultural affairs. There is no systematic approach to community consultation.

OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES

‘Tamil Australian’ profiling is a key priority. Leaders suggested that organisations can overcome their nationality-based labels, such as Sri Lankan Tamils, for common causes. Tamil diaspora in Australia is a vibrant community. Celebrating and promoting Tamil as one of the oldest languages and the Tamil cultural heritage are very important to the Tamil diaspora.

Leaders emphasised the need for a dedicated government unit to govern diaspora affairs and promote meaningful collaborations. This could also lead to better management of diaspora-led development and humanitarian projects. DFAT can focus on areas of need based on its country evaluation of Sri Lanka and engage with Tamil diaspora community organisations that are willing to collaborate. Other opportunities and priorities are listed below:

- Improved networking between Tamil community organisations in Australia
- Sharing lessons between various diaspora communities in Australia
- Mental health awareness:
 - o The information translated in Tamil and delivered in a culturally appropriate way
 - o Training for Tamil community volunteers
- Better connection with councils, state governments and federal government
- Capacity development for Tamil community organisations
- Additional resources for Tamil community organisations that are engaged with socially and economically disadvantaged members of the community (especially during Covid-19).

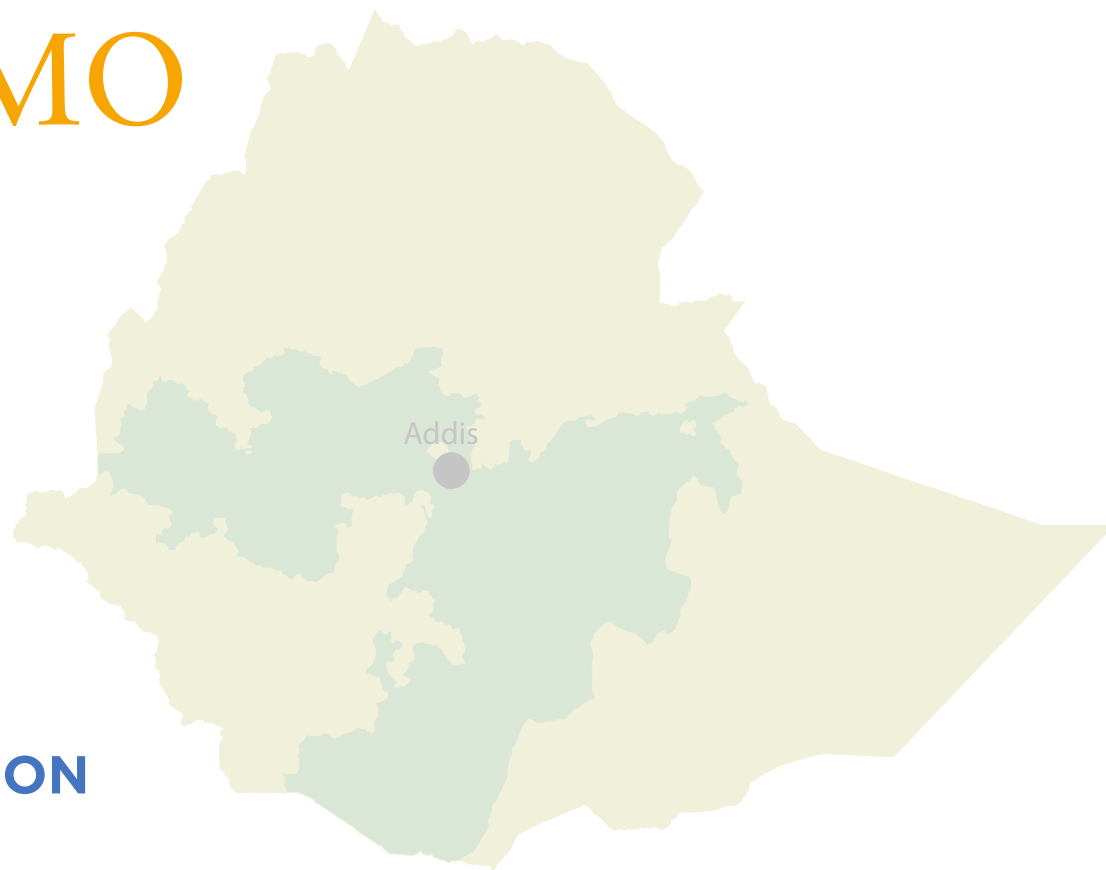
List of Community Organisations

The following organisations mainly consist of Sri Lankan Tamils. Nonetheless, Tamil community leaders advised that most of these organisations work with and for Tamil Australians regardless of their country of origin and they are moving towards a united Tamil front in Australia. The list is not inclusive of senior citizen associations, village associations and school alumni associations due to their abundance.

- Australian Tamil Congress
- Australian Medical Aid Foundation
- Australian Society of Graduate Tamils
- Australian Tamil Literary and Arts Society
- Bharathi Academy
- Casey Tamil Manram
- Ceylon Students Education Fund
- Jaffna University Graduates Association-Victoria Inc.
- Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation (Australia) Ltd.
- Tamil Coordinating Committee
- Tamil Engineering Foundation
- Tamil Educational Cultural and Charitable Association
- Tamil Women’s Inter-cultural Organisations Whittlesea Inc.
- Tamil Community Empowerment Council Australia
- Tamil Refugee Council
- Victorian Tamil Association
- Victorian Tamil Cultural Association



OROMO



INTRODUCTION

The Oromo people represent the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia (34.9%) (CIA 2020). Their homeland is the Oromia regional state, which spreads from South Sudan and Gambela region in the west, to the Somali region in the East and Kenya to the South, making Oromia the largest region in Ethiopia.

For over a century the Oromo people have been oppressed and marginalised by the Ethiopian central government. Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Africa. It is the only African country to have adopted Christianity long before other Europeans were exposed to it. Aside from a brief Italian occupation from 1936-41, the country was ruled as a dynasty by a series of monarchs until 1974 when Emperor Haile SELASSIE was deposed by a military junta, the Derg, who established a socialist state. Under the new regime, Oromo discontent led a student organisation to start the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which evolved, over time, into an armed resistance and political advocacy group dedicated to the promotion of Oromo self-determination.

The regime lasted for almost 20 years and in 1991 the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took power.

Even after a constitution was adopted (1994), and Ethiopia's first multiparty elections were held (1995), intimidation and persecution of Oromo people continued.

The border war with Eritrea in the late 1990s added further tension in the region. After the peace agreement in 2000, Ethiopia troops continued to be stationed in previously contested areas. It was not until 2018, when Oromo prime minister Abiy Ahmed Ali was appointed, that Ethiopia accepted the border ruling of 2000.

Abiy's election represented a new ray of hope for the Oromo people in Ethiopia and overseas. However, arbitrary arrest of journalists and other critics of the government, prolonged detention and unfair trials have not stopped.

For this reason, the Oromo diaspora is actively advocating for peace, an end of human rights abuse and freedoms guaranteed in Ethiopian's constitution

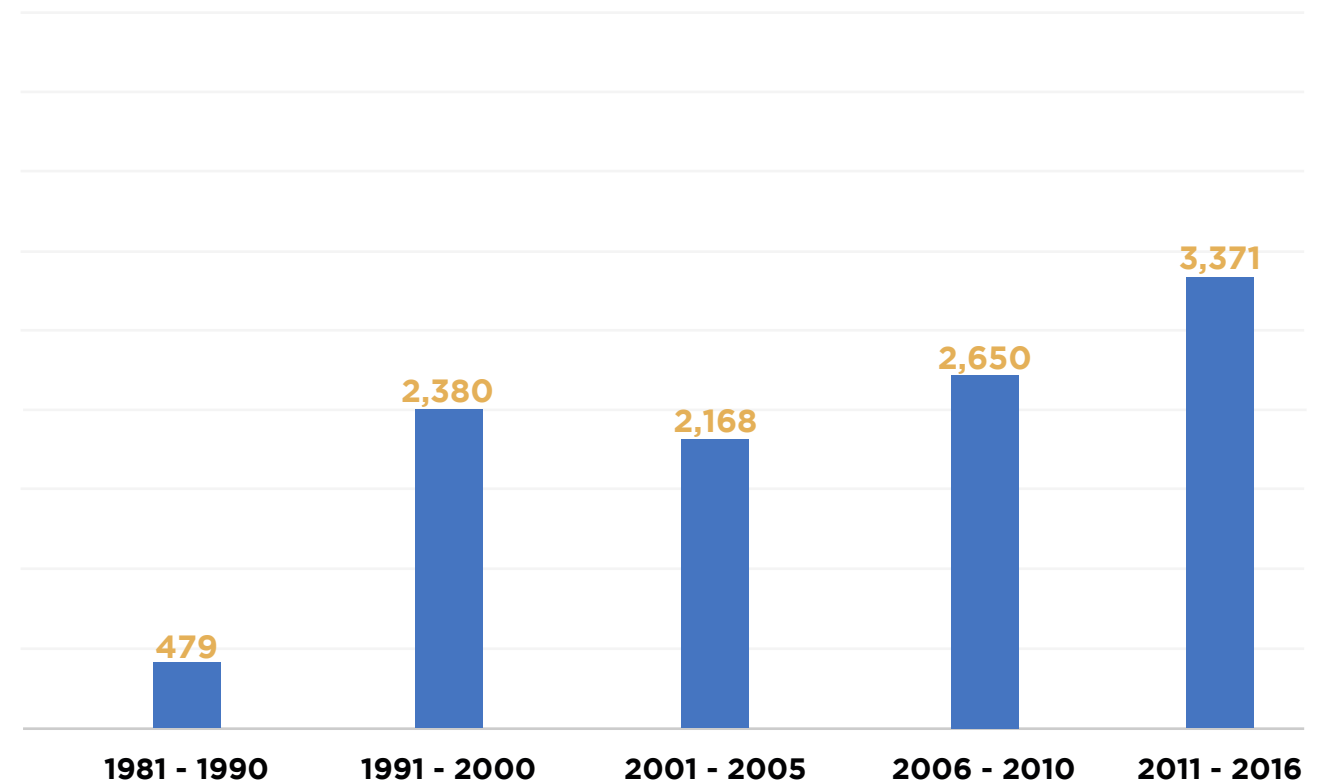
HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

Oromo people's migration to Australia is linked to the human rights abuses and persecution endured in Ethiopia.

Migration from Oromia to Australia spiked in the mid-90s due to the eruption of conflict between Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) lead regime.

The second big wave of immigration occurred after 2005, again connected to continuing human rights abuse and internal conflict. The Oromo immigration has grown steadily as the people's safety and security continued to threaten their livelihood in Ethiopia.

Migration to Australia



Countries of migration
USA, Canada

Countries of migration
Australia, including, USA, Canada, Various European countries, such as Norway, Denmark, UK, Netherland.

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Australia, including, USA, Canada, Various European countries, such as Norway, Denmark, UK, Netherland

Countries of migration
Since 2005, majority of Oromo people migrated to Australia, while migration to USA, Canada, various European countries, such as Norway, Denmark, UK, and Netherland relatively dropped.

1982 -Ethiopian-Somali border civil war and war within Ethiopia - mostly political unrest - killings of opposition parties) under the military regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam that was in power. Due to war in every corner of the country, especially, the Oromia region, many Oromo people fled the country to neighbouring countries, such as Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti and Egypt.

1995 - Conflict erupted between Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) lead regime.

2000- Human right violations intensified

2005 - Human right violations continued to occur. Since 2005 the number of victims of Human Rights abuses dramatically increased. Thousands of killings and disappearances happened. Brutality increased. People were forced to flee the country.



DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

The demographic and socio-economic profile of the Oromo community in Australia is drawn from census data and community sources (community management, organisation membership, events attendance). Census data refers to Ethiopian-born people and it does not distinguish between different ethnic groups. Community sources, on the other hand, provide an estimate of the Oromo living in Australia, regardless of country of birth. The two Oromo main umbrella organisations (Australian Oromo Community in Victoria Inc. and Oromo Community in Melbourne Inc. – OCM) estimated Oromo living in Australia through their branches in each state – including children, youth, and adults – based on ethnicity. The same way information gathered from other states as well and it refers to 2019.

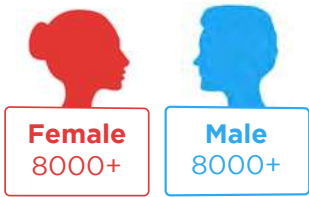
The Census data is used here to give some authenticity and a sense of the demographic characteristics of the Ethiopian-born population in Australia. Albeit there is a disparity between the two data sets, community sources are constantly being updated and they are likely to be more closely descriptive of the demographic and socioeconomic profile of the Oromo.

The last Census recorded **11,792** Ethiopia-born people in Australia, **1,050** of whom are of Oromo ancestry. Australians that reported Ethiopian ancestry were **13,715** (Department of Home Affairs 2018) while community sources approximate the Oromo community in Australia to be more than **15,000**.

Structure by age

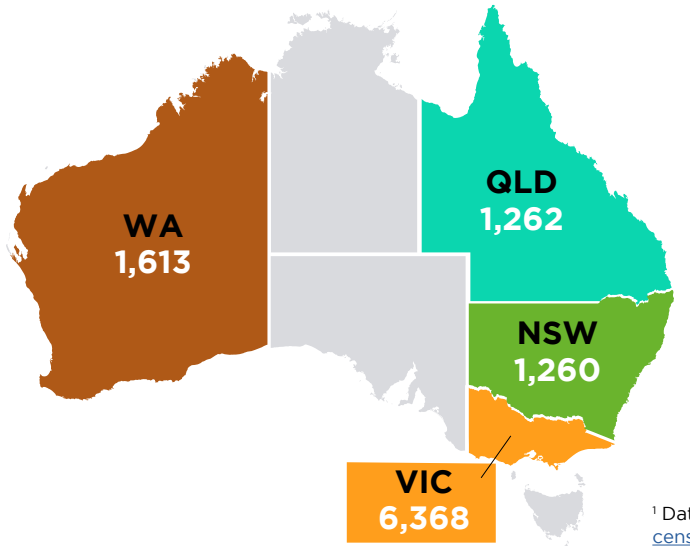


Gender structure



Geographical Distribution

Community sources indicated that Victoria is the state with the largest number of Oromo people, followed by Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, ACT, South Australia, and Northern Territory. Within each state, community members tend to concentrate predominantly around the urban areas.



Language

Afaan Oromo

Religion

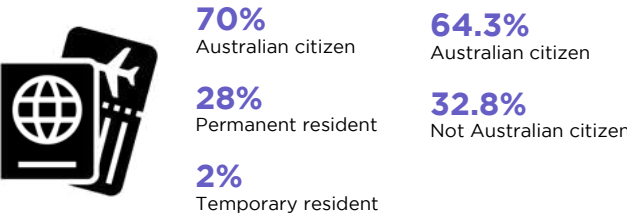
Oromo major religion affiliations are:

- Christianity – Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant (Pentecostal)
- Islam
- Waqefanna: Traditional religion (Ancient monotheistic religion based on spirituality not doctrine)

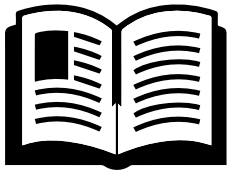
Reasons to stay in Australia

Safety and security. It is safe to assume that the vast majority of Oromo people in Australia came as refugees. The existing persecution and human rights abuses endured by Oromo people in Ethiopia prevents them to return.

Legal Status



Education Level



60% (Incomplete schooling) more than 9,000 (dropped of school because of conflict, displacement, political unrest (in many regions the detention of teachers and parents etc))

25% (Primary) More than 4,000

10% (Secondary) More than 2,000

5% (University) About 1000

The 2016 census reported that, of the Ethiopia-born living in Australia, 38.1% were attending an educational institution. There were 4.7% in primary school, 8.9% in secondary school and 14.7% in a tertiary or technical institution.

As per 2016 Census, 21.1% of Ethiopia-born people reported having completed Year 12 as their highest level of educational attainment, 16.2% had completed a Certificate III or IV and 11.5% had completed an Advanced Diploma or Diploma.

Professional Activities



20% (3,000+) Work Full-Time

50% (8,000+) Work Part-Time

30% (5,000+) Unemployed

Community sources reported that the majority of Oromo work in the health industry. Other types of occupation are:

- Business owners, such as cafes, grocery shops, variety shops,
- Contactor trades and manual labour
- Factory workers
- Farmers

¹ Data Source: ABS (Census 2016) https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/9207_036

DEGREE AND TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

For the Oromo people in Australia, their identity as Oromo constitutes the strongest bond. Community members gather to celebrate calendar events that are meaningful to the Oromo people regardless of their faith, gender, and place of residence.

In Victoria, under the umbrella of the two main Oromo organisations (Australian Oromo Community in Victoria Inc. and Oromo Community in Melbourne Inc. – OCM), community members congregate and associate in smaller groups (usually incorporated associations) focusing on specific activities, e.g. Women's groups, sport, youth groups.



CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES

Oromo have several ongoing and continuous ties with their home country, particularly through news update and on-going developments, running small businesses and variety shops importing cultural foods, such as coffee and spices as well cultural clothes and artwork and artifacts to Australia.

Connection is kept alive via online channels, such as media outlets, social media, and telephone. Sometimes few people are able to travel for family visit.

Like other diaspora communities, the Oromo regularly send money to individuals or family members for medical treatment, food, children education. It is very rare that the Oromo send items, as it is expensive. The constant requests for support are worrying and stressful, for the Oromo in Australia, and not easy to ignore or avoid.

"It's like the blood circulating in the body, sometimes you get a cut, and we need to keep the blood moving."



The strong bond with the Oromia region also implies that Oromo people are informed and sensitive to the current situation in Ethiopia. The political instability that have characterised Ethiopian politics over the last few decades is a reason for concern to Oromo people in Australia, particularly for those who still have families in Ethiopia.

Political instability, in the case of Ethiopia, is manifested through the centralised control of power that can, and has done so in the past, overrule the Constitution. These concerns are shared by community members of all age insofar as Oromo youth, with no lived experience, are actively advocating for human rights in Ethiopia and share the burden of the older generation. As long as the human rights abuses continue, neither old nor young people can be free.

Through their main organisations, Oromo people advocate for Human Rights and seek the support of international body to put pressure on the Ethiopian government to stop with the abuses and move towards a true democratisation of the country.



OROMIA SUPPORT GROUP AUSTRALIA

Members of the Oromo community in Australia started Oromia Support Group of Australia (OSGA) to advocate for Human Rights in Ethiopia because the community felt that they had no representation and no voice. The OSGA case study explores the struggle and unyielding desire for peace of the Oromo people in Australia, summarising OSGA journey starting from zero to becoming a Human Rights advocate at the international level. The organisation is well connected with its community and has a solid and well organised structure.

In the face of Covid-19 challenges and increased health risks, OSGA promptly responded to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the Oromo people by creating a task force to share information and support vulnerable community members.

"Human rights have no boundaries. Even, sometimes we act like health service advocates. All inclusive."





INTRODUCTION

The Republic of South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan in 2011. South Sudan is a country with one of the richest agricultural land in Africa, supporting 10-20 million head of cattle. The country has one of the world's largest wetlands, the Sudd, a vast swamp area formed by the White Nile in the north central region of South Sudan. During the rainy season, the wetlands can reach 15% of the country's total area (CIA 2020.a).

South Sudan is also abundant in natural resources, such as gold, silver, zinc, limestone, iron ore, copper, and oil. The government of South Sudan is heavily relying on oil for its budget revenue, thus making the country one of the most oil-dependent countries in the world. Despite its natural resources, the several decades of conflict with Sudan have crippled the development of South Sudan. Poverty and food security are a major issue that have bedevilled the population of South Sudan for many decades long before the independence. This situation is compounded with poor and underdeveloped infrastructure. Albeit there is a growing presence of China in the development of the infrastructure and energy sector in the country, only 2% of the roads are paved, electricity is still mostly produced by diesel generators. Indoor plumbing and potable water are also scarce. Approximately 90% of consumable goods, capital, and services are imported from neighbouring countries, mainly Uganda, Kenya, and Sudan.

South Sudan has a population of 10,561,244 million people CIA (2020.a). Demographically it is one of the youngest populations in the world, with an average age of 18 years old. The social landscape is extraordinarily complex and diverse. South Sudan is the home of over 60 different ethnic groups, which can be grouped into six main clusters defined by a host of ethnic, historical, and linguistic factors. These groups are Nilotic (native to the White Nile region), Central Sudanic, Nilo (Hamid, Bari-speaking), Zande and Anyuak people. The Nilotic people are the biggest ethnic group in South Sudan – Dinka and Nuer both belong to the Nilotic ethnic group.

Understanding the complexity and diversity of the South Sudanese social landscape is essential to comprehend the cultural background, traditions, and dynamics between different groups in South Sudan and within the diaspora. The population of South Sudan, despite ethnic diversity, has always treated each other with respect and bounded together during the South's liberation war. However, the civil war that started after the secession of the South from Sudan carries an ethnic undertone in the political struggle and in various regions across the country. People's attachment to their own ethnic background and views on South Sudan ethnic divisions varies from time to time and is based on personal experience and political affiliation.

This community profile is making an attempt to understand why South Sudanese people became in 2019 the 4th largest group of refugees in the world with 2.2M people fleeing the country (UNHCR 2020)while showing diaspora's relentless effort to build a peaceful country.

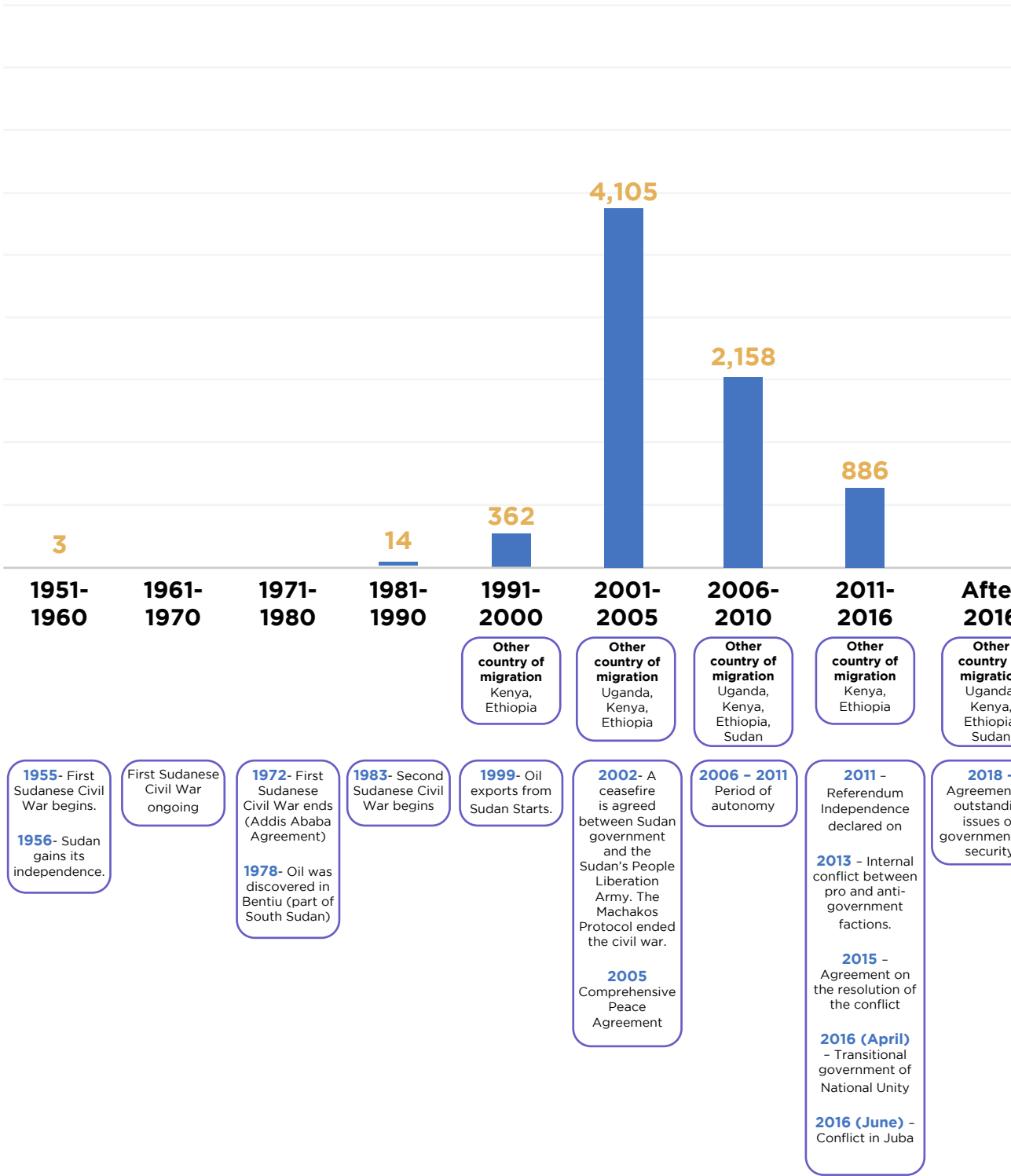
HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

South Sudan gained independence after decades of war. There are generations of South Sudanese who have scarcely experienced peace. To understand today's South Sudan, it is useful to trace back its history from colonial time. In 1870 the colony of Equatoria (comprising of what is most of today's South Sudan) was established by Samuel Baker in the name of the Ottoman Khedive of Egypt who claimed the territory. In 1899, after the Mahdist War, Equatoria was made a state under the Anglo-Egyptian condominium. During the following decades, Christian missionaries converted a large part of the population and facilitated the spread of English, while North Sudan was predominantly Muslim and Arabic speaking.

Until 1947, Equatoria was ruled separately from what is today's Sudan (North Sudan). The unification of the two colonies was part of the British plan to prepare the region for independence. However, in 1956 when Sudan became an independent republic, southerners' expectations' to fully participate in the political system were denied. The unrest escalated into two wars (1955-1972 and 1983-2005) during which it is estimated that 2.5M civilians died due to starvation and drought.

Across the world, South Sudan's independence in 2011 sparked the hopes and expectations of the South Sudanese diaspora. It was an exciting moment. Many people either decided to return to South Sudan to contribute building the country or decided to organise themselves in the host country to support the development of South Sudan. The resurgence of new internal conflict in 2013 and the continued state of unrest, has greatly impacted South Sudanese who saw their hope remaining unfulfilled.

Migration to Australia

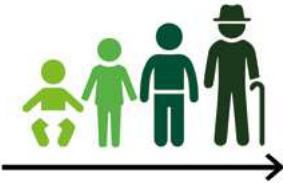
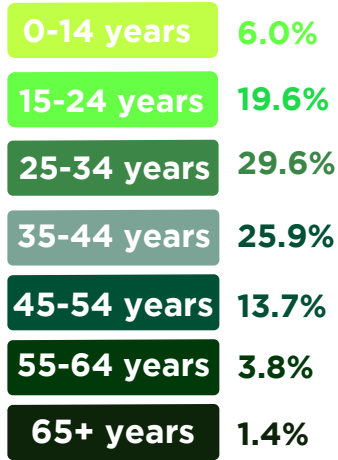


¹ DFAT – Accurate statistical data of ethnicity in Afghanistan are not available due to the sensitivity of the subject.
² Twitter, <https://bit.ly/3iqTL51>

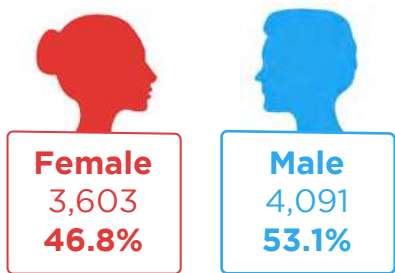
DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

According to the 2016 Census there are **7,699** South Sudan-born in Australia'. Out of the **300** different ancestries reported by Australians in the last Census, **10,755** responses were towards South Sudanese ancestry.

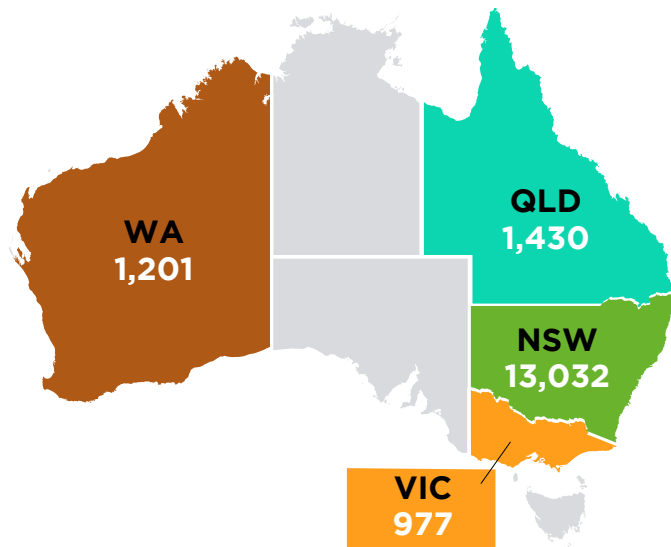
Structure by age



Gender structure



Geographical Distribution



Language

At the time of the Census, the main languages spoken at home by South Sudan-born people in Australia were Dinka (3,901), Arabic (1,565) and Nuer (565).

Of the 7,333 South Sudan-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 84.4% spoke English very well or well, and 14.0% spoke English not well or not at all.

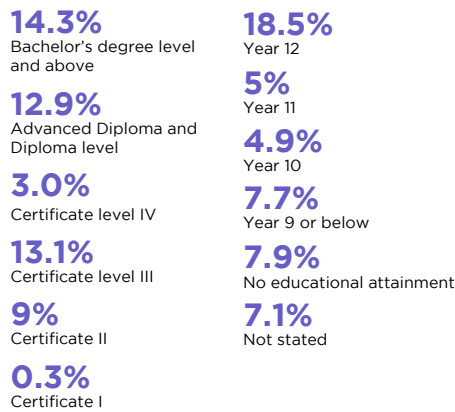
Legal Status



The 2016 Census shows:

75.1% of people born in South Sudan are Australian citizens.

Education Level*



*The Census data refers to South Sudan-born people only and does not consider second generation South Sudanese.

Professional Activities



CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES

The South Sudanese diaspora is active supporting its members in Australia and overseas, particularly given how dire the humanitarian crisis is in South Sudan. Agriculture in South Sudan is mostly substance farming, and it is also subject to floods in the White Nile region and droughts in other parts of the country. In 2017, famine was declared in parts of South Sudan (UN News 2017). Food insecurity and the prolonged conflict are forcing millions of people to leave seeking refuge in neighbouring countries like Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya.

Many of the Australia South Sudanese diaspora have lived experiences of the conflict and share strong cultural ties with the people still living in South Sudan or other host countries. Family bonds run deep between South Sudanese and extend to the whole clan. However, the heavy burden placed on diaspora in Australia is also the cause of financial and physical distress. As the situation worsens in South Sudan, the request for help increases along with diaspora's concerns for the safety and security of their family members.

HOW SOUTH SUDANESE DIASPORA HELP²

Family to family

Families in Australia cannot look the other way when their family members in South Sudan live in such dire situation.

Financial support is provided to ensure that people have food and shelter. Many helps with children schooling, often in other countries such as Uganda and Kenya.

Community to Community

Community to community help relies on members donations and fundraising. There is very little financial support from government or other agencies.

- Education initiatives**
These types of initiatives can include building schools as well as scholarship programmes. Scholarships are predominately directed at orphan children (majority girls) who are, in some cases, assisted from young age all the way through to college-level.
- Healthcare initiatives**
Common healthcare initiatives are about building clinics (particularly in rural areas) and refurbishing hospital wards (mostly in Juba). Diaspora are aware of the need for sanitation and to assist with women and children's health (particularly maternity wards). There is a group in Australia that is planning to build two pharmacies, one in Juba the other in Wau, to sell medications at low cost supplied by diaspora.
- Women independence and empowerment**
There is a recognised need among diaspora, both female and males, to support women, particularly widows and single women, considered one of the most vulnerable groups. Women empowerment projects focus on developing women financial independence, for example supporting them to start up small food or tailoring businesses or home farming. For these types of projects diaspora usually provide the initial funding and equipment, e.g. sewing machine.

Women education initiatives are a way to foster their independence and employability.
- Response to natural disaster**
Diaspora from the Jonglei region commonly fundraise to support projects to build dikes and other infrastructure that can help managing and containing recurrent floods.
- Aid to disabled people**
These initiatives seem to be limited to acquiring wheelchair for non-ambulant disabled in South Sudan and those living in camps.
- Acquisition of vehicles and transport for remote areas, where there was none.**
- Burials**
After the Bor massacre in the 90s, Australian diaspora raised funds to bury people. UNHCR stepped in and took care of the burial. The raised funds were then sent to families.

The South Sudanese diaspora in Australia has to deal with their day-to-day issues, financial commitments, e.g. house mortgage, rent, schooling, day-to-day living etc and many also face difficulties adjusting to life in Australia. South Sudanese youth also suffer mental anguish due to negative images portrayed by Australian media. They also suffer from reconciling self-identity conflicts. The impact can be seen in the hardship many well educated South Sudanese youth face when seeking employment.

However, the South Sudanese community greatly contributes to the betterment of Australian society. The South Sudanese Community Association in Victoria Inc. submission to this inquiry, highlights some of the community contribution and raises the communities' key concerns with regards to the community in Australia.

There are few clinics and hospitals in South Sudan, diaspora help with medical costs when a family member needs a medical procedure. Often the extended family fundraise with members in other countries, such as the US and other countries so the person can go to Sudan or another country to get treated.

There are also other initiatives that are not solely reliant on fundraising. Such is the case of sending supplies, where communities raise funds to pay for the shipment costs, while goods are donations from the South Sudanese diaspora or the broader Australian communities. These are:

- Clothing, commonly sent to South Sudan by diaspora throughout the world, particularly USA based,
- Schooling resources – reading material, textbooks, computers, stationary – also sent to children in camps,
- Sewing machines to help women and their children,
- Reusable sanitary items for girls to stay at school (women-led initiatives),
- Medical supplies. There is a group in Queensland that sends regular medical supplies. Others have approached an Australian hospital asking to donate second-hand equipment (beds, microscopes etc),
- Supplied people in camps with food and other essentials such mosquito screens.
- Started small farming project in Uganda to help South Sudanese facing food shortage in camps.
- Online mentoring via social media for young people, especially in terms of work ethic and expectations. Diaspora young people have transferred significant knowledge, work ethic and professional standard setting. This type of initiative is seldom recognised.

Covid 19 Impact

Lock down measures implemented to respond to Covid19 pandemic have affected diaspora's action by:

- Halting fundraising activities. Most community fundraising is done at events attended by 200 to 300 people. The ban on assembly has put a halt on any of such activities.
- Decreasing job security. Some of the diaspora members have lost their jobs after the lock down while others, such as those employed in hospitality, have not been paid since mid-March. The reduced or loss of income impacts people's capacity to support families here and in South Sudan or to donate for projects.

Data Source: Home Affairs, <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/files/2016-cis-south-sudan.PDF>

ABS (Census 2016) https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/4111_036

²The information in this section is taken from a recent study DAA has conducted in collaboration with IOM South Sudan where 41 community leaders and active community members from across Australia have been interviewed.

HOW AUSTRALIA CAN HELP SOUTH SUDAN

“With peace, development can happen.”

In 2017 and 2018, DAA worked with DFAT and South Sudanese across the country on peacebuilding. While the initiative was welcomed it did not have a long-term vision, which led to unfulfilled community expectations. Developing a long-term peacebuilding and reconciliation process in Australia can bring together the community in Australia, coordinate efforts and find ways to aid Australia humanitarian programme in South Sudan.

Also, Australia being one of the few countries with a significant number of South Sudanese immigrants, Australia can capitalise on its success in multicultural policy and racial cohesion, to maintain peace and social cohesion amongst South Sudanese in Australia, and positively influence the culture of political and ethnic tolerance in South Sudan. Australia can do this either through by persuasion by directly engaging with the government of South Sudan, or by punitive measures – barring South Sudanese government officials who are implicated in committing human rights violations and corruption from entering Australia, and seizing any assets they have acquired in Australia.

About Peacebuilding

In 2017, DAA facilitated the South Sudan Peacebuilding Dialogue, an initiative which aimed to provide a space for South Sudanese peacebuilders in Australia to discuss and share ideas and experiences of building trust and unity within the community that can contribute to peace in South Sudan. This was to be achieved through two roundtable discussions that share information and perspectives about possible strategies for diaspora-led initiatives and collaboration. The roundtables aimed to include the main ethnic groups in the South Sudanese community in Australia, as well as include at least 25% women. The initiative was funded by DFAT with with in-kind contribution of the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA).

“This South Sudanese Roundtable is a great start to build peace among South Sudanese communities in Australia and back home”. – Brisbane participant

Fifty-three South Sudanese peacebuilders and community members gathered at the Peacebuilding Dialogues in Brisbane (18 November 2017) and Melbourne (25 November 2017) to share ideas and experiences of building trust and unity within the community that can contribute to peace in South Sudan. At both events, the atmosphere was optimistic, and participants came to the table with an open mind.

The two dialogues consisted of facilitated discussions around the following three main themes: Network building and information sharing of peacebuilding initiatives, building trust and unity within the community, and positive messaging for peace. They also discussed the meaning and definition of peace and additional themes that emerged during the session in Melbourne, which also included a small-group discussion on the current political context in South Sudan and explored possible ways forward in the peace process.

“We need this roundtable to take place every three months to make people understand the meaning of peace”

While there were challenges to deliver the project associated to the tight timeframe, participants' feedback was overwhelmingly positive, especially in Melbourne. The discussions were seen as fruitful and happened in a respectful and constructive manner. Participants in both locations expressed that they would like to see a follow up in a similar style, and to maintain regular communication and information sharing between peacebuilders from different ethnic background and the community at large. Unfortunately, there was no further investment in the initiative.

The South Sudan Peacebuilding Dialogue report is available on DAA website

<http://diasporaaction.org.au/south-sudan-peacebuilding-dialogue>

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Akados Society (Akados Society Case Study)

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Juma Piri Piri, on behalf of FECAA (South Sudanese community profile)

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DAA wish to thank all the people that have kindly given their time to participate in the consultations and made themselves available to advise and support this submission.



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