



Diasporas in Action

Working together for peace, development
and humanitarian response

Conference Outcomes

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Cover Photo: (L-R) Chethana Mudunna, Yangdi Yan, Vanessa Skellern

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Diaspora Learning Network is proud to share the key learning, challenges and opportunities that emerged from the second *Diasporas in Action: Working together for peace, development and humanitarian response* conference. Over the two-day conference, speakers, moderators and participants shared their knowledge, expertise and experiences on the ways in which diaspora communities support peace and reconciliation, humanitarian action and development goals. Discussions were framed by four themes: mobilisation, methods and modalities, linkages, and future thinking.

Diaspora communities are significant players in peacebuilding and reconciliation, development and humanitarian responses, contributing in various ways through the transference of skills, knowledge and resources. These actions have both intended and unintended impacts. Strategies used by diaspora communities to influence outcomes in their country of origin or host countries reflect complex intersections of nationality, ethnicity, religious or political affiliations, gender, professional networks, and trajectories of displacement.

This report presents conference outcomes and follow-up actions to further develop strategies to improve collaborations and partnerships between diaspora communities, donors, governments, international organisations, affected communities and other stakeholders, with the overall goal of improved responses.

The 2018 *Diasporas in Action* conference was convened by the Diaspora Learning Network – an initiative of Diaspora Action Australia driven and supported by University of Melbourne (School of Social and Political Sciences), Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), Research Development Impact Network (RDI Network), Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) and Oxfam Australia, and supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

What did we learn?

Valuable learnings emerged from the two-day discussions across the different thematic streams, reaffirming the fluid nature of diaspora-led initiatives that cut across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding responses. Key learnings are:

- Diaspora communities are not monolithic entities. It is important to acknowledge differences between and within communities, their complexities and distinct characteristics, and to avoid generalisation.
- Arts, literature and music are powerful ways to mobilise, reduce marginalisation and nurture collective identities.
- Diaspora communities and organisations are distinct in that they can bring skills and know-how where others struggle thanks to their contextual understanding of local political and humanitarian situations as well as their access to local communities.
- Diaspora communities are less constrained by donor funding priorities and requirements, and can respond quickly and flexibly to identified needs and as priorities change.
- Diaspora communities build transnational social networks based on trust that are cultivated over time through their connection with local communities.
- Social media platforms are a tool used by diaspora communities to establish global networks and to share information in real time.

What are the challenges?

A number of key challenges were identified as potential barriers to diaspora communities' action and networking:

- Diaspora identities can be mistakenly assimilated with national identities, disregarding other ways in which groups self-identify, e.g. religious, linguistic, regional etc.
- Humanitarian aid and development are often delivered in silos, following agreed criteria and standards which can be rigid and less compatible with the flexibility and fluidity of diaspora communities and organisations.
- There is a risk of work being duplicated by different actors due to lack of coordination and/or awareness about what projects diaspora communities are actively delivering and where.
- Diaspora communities and organisations are seldom involved as major stakeholder in policy- and decision-making processes.
- Existing funding models favour larger and well-established NGOs, leaving smaller diaspora organisations unable to compete to access direct funding.
- Political instability and conflict in countries of origin can impact diaspora communities on multiple levels, by disrupting existing networks, forcing internal displacement, spreading misinformation through social media and other channels, and creating or exacerbating tensions.

What are the opportunities?

A number of key opportunities were identified as possible ways to facilitate and promote collaborative action between diaspora communities and other actors:

- Diaspora communities and organisations need to be considered equal partners in the pursuit of development and humanitarian goals, whose complexity and distinctiveness should be recognised as a strength that brings added value to humanitarian and development responses.
- Diasporic social networks have the potential to identify new and innovative ways for people to be effective change-makers within their own communities, paving the way for a future generation to move diaspora communities forward.
- Diaspora-led humanitarianism can strengthen international refugee protection, diversify ideas and practices of helping, and challenge public discourse, policies, and practices in Australia and overseas.
- There is a need for stronger collaboration and collective action in all areas: planning, decision-making, delivering aid, advocating, peace-building and raising funds.



Apajok Biar
South Sudan Voices of Salvation

BACKGROUND

Building on Diasporas in Action 2016

In 2016, the Diaspora Learning Network (DLN) convened the first Australian *Diasporas in Action: Working together for peace, development and humanitarian response* conference. This engaging two-day gathering raised awareness about why diaspora communities are engaged in peacebuilding, humanitarian and development work and the distinct role diaspora play. Drawing on the issues debated and discussed over the conference, the DLN set out to initiate some of the follow-up actions by establishing itself as an ongoing network and by developing policy recommendations.



Jeevika Vivekanathan
Centre for Humanitarian Leadership

Submissions and seminars

In 2017, the DLN made a formal submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs Foreign Policy White Paper consultation process that included a series of recommendations based on the conference discussions and outcomes.

In the first half of 2018, the DLN convened three seminars on:

- Diaspora peacebuilding and reconciliation,
- Diaspora responses in times of disaster and other crises,
- Diaspora market shapers and business builders furthering the sustainable development goals.

The seminars provided a space for multi-stakeholder dialogue highlighting diaspora initiatives and *modus operandi* based on the recognition of diaspora communities' contribution to humanitarian aid and development as well as their untapped potential to further and strengthen their contribution to different sectors.

Sharing experience was very important. Discussion between individuals, groups and the participant as a whole were very important. [Seminar Participant]

The seminar discussions, emerging themes and issues were outlined in three policy relevant papers. Discussion outputs were further consolidated into policy recommendations and submitted to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Policy papers and briefs are available on the Diaspora Action Australia website and conference website¹.

¹ <http://www.diasporasinaction.org.au/resources/>

DIASPORA LEARNING NETWORK

The Diaspora Learning Network actively promotes ongoing learning and multi-sector dialogue on the role of diasporas in peace, development, humanitarian action and human rights, and it serves as a key facilitator for cross-sector collaborations between diaspora communities and organisations and other sectors.

Our goals are:

- 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, peacebuilding, human rights promotion and humanitarian response.

- 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, peacebuilding, human rights promotion and humanitarian response.

To this end, the DLN invite representatives from diaspora communities, academics, institutions, non-governmental organisations – Australian and international – government to join the network and become a member¹.

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¹ <http://diasporaaction.org.au/diaspora-learning-network/>



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Megan Anderson

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

“To get lasting peace, you need to have lasting acceptance, resilience and listening power”. (Megan Anderson)

Diaspora communities possess a body of knowledge that DFAT could access more effectively to assist implementation of peace, safety, security and development in countries of origin--particularly those identified in the Foreign Affairs White Paper as significant to Australia’s national interests. Megan Anderson, Assistant Secretary NGO & Volunteers Branch (DFAT), emphasised the importance of safety and security not just in Australia but in the countries of origin of the many diaspora groups who live here, acknowledging the need to look for new solutions to global challenges.

In the face of some of such challenges, diaspora knowledge can be used to achieve safety and security. For example, in the case of threat of pandemics, diaspora communities can have knowledge of disease outbreaks before official confirmation, enabling a more rapid response. Moreover, due to advances in communication technology, events happening anywhere in the world can be communicated in real time. Diaspora communities’ influence can also occur in real time;

The Australian Government would benefit from diaspora community perspectives to learn and have opportunities to build better, stronger policies and to have more influence internationally.

International Perspectives panel:
(L-R) Fadi Al-Dairi, Mingo Heiduk, Cindy Horst



INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Cindy Horst

Peace Research Institute Oslo

“What I want to show is that if we are more aware of diaspora contributions, it does two things [...] it shows that the context in which NGOs and government operate actually to a very large extent is influenced by diaspora actions and, secondly [...], diasporas can provide us with new lens, new ways of thinking about development and humanitarian action.” (Cindy Horst)

The transnational nature of diaspora communities challenges the current way of thinking about citizenship, humanitarian aid and development and invites us to reconsider some of the known definitions.

We are accustomed to considering citizenship as a single identity belonging to one place or country. However, through diasporas we can understand that citizenship is more complex, and it needs to be redefined to include multiple identities. We cannot talk about “diasporas” as a single group; we should acknowledge the complexity and diversity that characterise diaspora communities.

Similarly, humanitarian aid and development have traditionally been provided in two ways, internationally and locally (within national borders). Diaspora communities, on the other hand, operate across borders, acting both nationally and internationally, and for that, they are considered an “invisible actor”, despite their contribution to aid and development.

As transnational actors, diaspora communities are distinct from international actors in regard to their strong senses of civic responsibility, personal engagement and for their need-based intervention with regional or localised focus. Moreover, contrary to international agencies, diaspora communities tend to understand accountability based on social networks and trust. They often operate as volunteers, which makes them more fluid, but it can also

create more unstable structures.

Challenges

The challenges Cindy identified are mainly imbued in the current way humanitarianism and development are understood and on the assumptions that have underlined aid and development. These are:

- The concepts of impartiality and neutrality, which are important for international and national agencies, but do not apply to diasporas. Diasporas are stakeholders in their country of origin and have a vested interest in these governments’ outputs.
- Racialised perception about who engages in development and aid and who benefits from them.

“Excludes both the possibility that ‘they’ can help or that ‘we’ can suffer” (Cindy Horst).

- The bureaucracy that separates humanitarian aid and development.

Call for change

To effectively engage with diaspora communities, it is important to recognise the differences between diasporas and other actors as well as the political nature of diaspora communities.

“International humanitarian actors are used to understand refugees as objects of their activities rather than powerful and effective actors.” (Cindy Horst)

Diaspora communities have a different way of doing aid. Failure to recognise that will inevitably lead to replication of efforts and the creation of parallel structures.

Fadi Al-Dairi

Hand in Hand for Aid and Development (HIHFAD)

“Soon after the conflict in Syria began, [...] we thought, we must do something, diaspora cannot just sit and watch”. (Fadi Al-Dairi)

Fadi shared the story of the organisation that he co-founded, Hand in Hand for Syria, from its inception to transformation to Hand in Hand for Aid and Development (HIHFAD), one of the major humanitarian and development actors in Syria with more than 600 staff and far-reaching activities.

At the outset of the Syrian conflict, Fadi and his co-founder felt the need to help and provide support. Hand in Hand for Syria's growth and expansion were driven by the constantly changing needs and circumstances in Syria. From the beginning, given the great need for accountability, the organisation moved away from the volunteer model in favour of employing paid staff within the organisation.

The initial activities focused on providing medical support and relief to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. However, the escalating conflict called for more specialised aid. It also raised the need to reach out to communities in remote areas that could not avail themselves of HIHFAD services. The needs of the local population were not limited to medical assistance but also included shelter, food security and sanitation needs.

HIHFAD progressively developed activities and programmes that would address identified needs. The organisation today has a holistic approach that covers:

- Healthcare - which includes building medical facilities, support existing hospitals and establishing rehabilitation centres;
- Training local people to either become or provide support to medical personnel in order to relieve local doctors and nurses' pressure;
- Shelter - The assistance is not limited to the supply of tents, but it also includes housing rehabilitation.

“At some point UNHCR said ‘you have more tents than us!’” (Fadi Al-Dairi)

- Food security and livelihood.
- WASH programme - war is polluting the water and damages existing infrastructures
- Protection - All projects have a protection component that allows to focus on civilians' protection on the field.

HIHFAD has developed a monitoring and evaluation for learning and accountability (MEAL) framework that it uses to evaluate the effectiveness of its programmes as well to plan future activities.

You cannot deliver aid alone

From the early stages, it became apparent that HIHFAD could not deliver aid alone and that coordinating with other actors through various networks was a way to avoid duplication and be more effective. Actors which HIHFAD coordinate or partner with include UN agencies and other international agencies, local actors and NGOs.

Challenges on the ground

The conflict in Syria is still ongoing, making the operational environment risky. HIHFAD facilities and personnel have been targeted. Medical facilities are now being built underground and their coordinates are shared with actors on the ground.



Mingo Heiduk

Diaspora Programme, Danish Refugee Council

“Aid is about the receiver, not the provider.”
(Mingo Heiduk)

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is a leading humanitarian organisation working in more than 40 countries that focuses on displacement after man-made disaster. The DRC Diaspora Programme facilitates, supports and enhances the role of diaspora communities as effective agents of humanitarian assistance and development by working *for* and *with* diaspora groups to support the development of their skills and knowledge to achieve their own objectives.

The work of DRC’s Diaspora Programme includes responses to displacement, reconstruction and development, and humanitarian assistance in emergencies. The programme has a strong focus on capacity enhancement based on a pragmatic approach, which includes project planning, financial management and operational training. The programme includes a range of activities and a broad approach to networking, facilitating connections between diaspora organisations and other actors.

The Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination (DEMAC) Project is an initiative of DRC, AFFORD-UK, and the Berghof Foundation¹. Started in 2015,
¹ <http://www.demac.org/>



DEMAC seeks to facilitate and improve the coordination between traditional and other humanitarian actors, particularly diaspora organisations. While the role and value of diaspora communities’ engagement in development has been more clearly established and understood by development actors, diaspora engagement in response to humanitarian emergencies is less well-defined and poses a range of challenges and possibilities.

Why work with diaspora organisations?

- There is a move towards localisation of humanitarian aid and development and, although individuals in diaspora communities cannot always be considered “locals,” they are an extended part of civil society.
- Pragmatism should inform our decision to work with diaspora organisations.

“We have 133.8 million people officially in need of humanitarian assistance and only 97.4 million will be getting aid, so there is an obvious need for having all ‘hands on deck’ [...] we look for complementarity not competition.” (Mingo Heiduk)

- Traditional humanitarian aid and development actors have a tendency to work in silos, whereas diaspora communities are able to work flexibly and operate across different sectors to respond to identified priorities and needs in a particular context.
- Diaspora communities possess contextual knowledge that makes them ideal partners to advise on project planning.
- Diaspora organisations provide aid in areas where other organisations cannot go and they are able to stay longer than other organisations that are restricted by project funding and competing priorities.
- Diaspora communities are uniquely placed to be first responders and advocates in times of crisis, often raising the alarm before an emergency is officially declared and the international community has been able to mobilise.

“[Our] vision was to respond to the challenges and go where mainstream aid agencies would not go.” (Hadi Zaher – Akademos Society)

What are the issues?

- Diasporas and international actors may agree on the same humanitarian goals but disagree on the best course of action.
- Donors want diversified actors on the ground; however, they are moving away from small grants to many organisations in favour of giving big grants to fewer large organisations.
- Donors demand accountability and transparency. Many donors feel that small organisations do not have enough resources to develop and implement appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. DRC has helped alleviate this concern by establishing an intermediary monitoring system that provides donors with an assurance of accountability.
- The political nature of diaspora communities, especially those affected by conflict, can be a concern to external actors. However, it is important to realise that having political interests does not negate communities' abilities to also provide aid.

Recommendations

- Diasporas should be considered equal partners.
- Recommendations for diaspora communities and organisations: join forces where possible, identify common ground, advocate and understand the system to be able to work and adapt to it (when and where relevant), be pragmatic.
- Recommendations for international actors: facilitate diversity, "*walk the talk*" (make commitments and realities converge, move funding mechanisms in direction of inclusivity and local action), acknowledge the contributions of those around you and work with them.



Panel on Modalities of Engagement:
(L-R) Hadi Zaher, Bassy Adam Elhafiz, Sarina Greco, Suresh Pokarel,
w Louise Olliff

THEMATIC SUMMARIES

The conference explored the work of diaspora communities in peacebuilding, development and humanitarian aid through four thematic streams:

1. Methods and modalities
2. Mobilisation
3. Linkages
4. Future thinking

The following section summarises the discussion on each of these themes, highlighting key learnings, issues and challenges, as well as possible actions and opportunities.

METHODS AND MODALITIES

Diaspora communities utilise methods and modalities such as remittances, developing and utilising political influence and operating through personal contacts and family structures, to contribute to peacebuilding, development and humanitarian responses. Diaspora communities' *modus operandi* may differ from other actors; nonetheless, they can be agents of change.

Key learnings

- Diaspora communities' responses to emergencies and crises are shaped and developed by local needs and can take many forms, such as sending remittances, advocating and raising awareness, mobilising civil society and other actors who may have an interest, or funding and implementing educational programs, medical assistance, and peer support.

"At first, we did not think that there was much we could do [...] as students. The most basic thing that we were thinking we could do was to help other students. [...] Once you provide the essential tools for educating students, you prevent sustained economic disadvantage" (Hadi Zaher - Akademos Society)

- Diaspora communities' activities and initiatives are needs-based. Diaspora organisations are not as constricted by donors' pre-established funding priorities and requirements.

- Members of diaspora communities can bring distinctive and complementary skills and know-how to situations where other actors struggle. Diaspora organisations can facilitate or enable other organisations to deliver aid due to their contextual understanding of local political and humanitarian situations and their access to local communities.
- Diaspora communities are able to draw on transnational social networks, family structures and local communities.
- Diaspora communities build networks and connections not just within their local communities but also with other actors, such as humanitarian and development agencies, academics and universities and other professionals, to deliver aid more effectively.

What are the challenges?

- Diaspora communities do not fit easily into current aid programs or systems.

"We do satisfy development principles but often in different ways and we have a long track record of compliance with contemporary standards right across the board, so it's not that we're not in the same place as big NGOs, but we don't fit easily in current aid systems [...] Don't make us fit in what's already there [...] We need to be understood in our own right!" (Sarina Greco - Afghan Australian Development Organisation)

- Larger NGOs and segments of local communities sometimes question and distrust diaspora organisations' accountability and motives for action.
- Diaspora communities are often not involved in decision-making or coordination processes, which can undermine their legitimacy and create further divisions.
- The context in which many diaspora communities operate is characterised by political instability and/or conflict, causing population displacement or communities' isolation.
- While crises or emergency situations can unify diaspora communities, it can also generate internal differences, tensions and conflict.

Call for action

- Support is needed from the international community. Governments and NGOs should engage more with diaspora organisations in regard to diplomatic, humanitarian and aid interventions.
- Diaspora communities should be the centre of testing assumptions. The fluid nature of diaspora organisations' work should be seen as a strength, and different engagement and funding models should be designed to take advantage of that characteristic.
- Diaspora communities should realise their capacity and strengths; in peaceful and stable governments, diaspora should work with permanent institutions rather than assuming authority. If the government system and institutions fail, all fail. The focus should be on supporting rather than challenging the system.

“We have diaspora communities have established here to respond to the Australia Nepalese when there is some sort of crisis situation, can we think of similar mechanism as a permanent mechanism so that we continuously engage back with the country, so that we will be able to navigate through when there is a situation” (Suresh Pokarel – Nepali Jana Samparka Samiti).



Modalities of engagement panel:
(L-R) Ursula Amelia de Almeida, Joseph Yunis

MOBILISATION

Diaspora mobilisation is impacted and influenced by different factors, such as a community's collective identity, its origin country context, its national and transnational structures for engagement, and the enabling/inhibiting factors in the places where the community resides and maintains connections.

Key learnings

- Diaspora communities see themselves as part of local communities in their countries of origin. The marginalisation of particular communities (ethnic, religious, regional, etc.) in host countries fosters a sense of responsibility within diaspora communities to promote and preserve what is distinct about their people.

"It is human nature when you see something evil to try to stop it and do your part. As individuals, we are not cut off from these communities. We have family there and that is motivation." (Elhafiz Adam (Bassy) - Warefur International Organisation).

"As an educated individual in society we have an obligation to give back to the community through either knowledge or by advocacy programmes, trying to tell the world what's happening". (Joseph Yunis - Sudanese Australian Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organisation)

- Poetry, literature, art and music can be used to spread a strong message to prevent marginalisation and facilitate integration in host countries. Young people utilise various methods, such as social media, art, and writing, to tackle racism, discrimination and tensions within communities in Australia.
- Situations of emergency and crisis can unify communities that would otherwise be divided and initiate collaborative activities.

- Various channels can bring together leaders from different diaspora communities. For example, the Global Refugee Youth Advisory Council, created by UNHCR, gives young leaders from around the world, including Australia, the opportunity to provide their input and influence the agenda.
- Leaders within diaspora communities are highly motivated and can bring people together. They work hard to build connections and networks.

What are the challenges?

- Political instability can lead to organised and exploitative conflict that displaces people, exploits and disperses resources and controls media communication.
- Lack of online presence in some rural areas prevents news and calls for action from reaching some local communities.
- Local communities can mistrust contributions from a diaspora group when it is not formally organised.
- Diaspora identities can be wrongly equated with national identities, disregarding other, more important ways in which groups of people self-identify (e.g. religious, regional, linguistic), which may or may not overlap with national identity and which may link people or communities across borders.



LINKAGES

Diaspora communities have channels to link with existing peacebuilding mechanisms, humanitarian and development actors or to lobbying to influence policies/interactions between countries of residence and origin.

Key learnings

- Diaspora groups use their networks with local communities to identify primary target groups and beneficiaries.

“We have established networks within the community [...] We know people who know people there, and vice versa” (Hadi Zaher - Akademos Society)

- Diaspora uses their networks to achieve what other actors can find challenging. They rely on the trust built through their connection established over time with local communities.
- Social media has facilitated the global connectivity for some diaspora communities, creating transnational networks. Social media is also used to sustain connections with remote areas and facilitate information exchange in real time.

“Communication is always been a big issue, but you know, social media is so amazing and something like Messenger has revolutionised the way we have been able to communicate with each other and instead of individual emails going, to have Messenger group were we can all say something and someone else can respond really has been amazing and been able to then connect with some of our project partners who are really in incredibly remote areas and to be in real time able to get photos from them, there has been lots of flooding at the moment, lots of photos of the flooding and how it has been affecting some of our projects in real time has been quite amazing.” (Kathy Thompson - The Hope Project)

- Diaspora can establish financial networks sustained by trust that can bypass restrictions imposed on the more traditional remittances channels.
- There is evidence of diaspora organisations that are composed of individuals from different diaspora communities. This model helps to bridge differences between local communities in host countries by modelling integration, as well as building strong interconnected communities in countries of origin.



Linkages and the power of collective identities panel:
(L-R) Pacifique Ndayisaba, Protais Hakazimana



Linkages and the power of collective identities panel:
(L-R) Ekhu Dwell, Jeevika Vivekananthan, Dr Santino Atem Deng

What are the challenges?

- Social media can be used to disseminate misinformation, distract from information about emerging crises and to propagate hate speech by creating negative feedback loops. The inappropriate use of social media can create fractures within communities and undermine the trust upon which networks are built.

“Whenever there is a big story in the media, look for the story they’re trying to distract you from.” (Sarah Williams – Footprint Enterprises Inc.)

- Conflict in countries of origin can lead to more limited local sphere and concentration on family and friends, deepening divisions and distance within and between kinship networks, breaking down trust, mutual support, communication and possibilities for collective action.
- Diaspora communities face major challenges in countries of settlement. The Australian context of structural racism and poor media exposure is a factor.
- Some people within diaspora communities do not want to be part of an organisation; they want to be part of a friendship network. This sentiment is prompted by a distrust of those who have left during war time.
- Cultural differences such as different leadership and communication styles can generate misunderstanding and challenge common practices.

Call for action

- Diaspora communities need to improve and make better use of their existing networks.

“If we can work together, we can maximise our power as diasporas [...] We all have similar issues, they just present in different contexts.” (Juma Piri Piri – Federation of Ecuatoria Community Association in Australia)

- Diaspora and other actors need to recognise and acknowledge that leadership styles differ across cultures. Finding a common ground will strengthen networks and create new opportunities.

FUTURE THINKING

What are the opportunities, risks and pitfalls for future constructive engagement and cooperation between diaspora communities and other actors?

What are the opportunities?

- The role and benefits of diaspora engagement in development has been more readily accepted and facilitated compared with the humanitarian sector. Diaspora communities are significant but invisible humanitarian actors, responding in different ways during crises.
- Sharing and learning is a two-way process. Local communities have something to learn but also something to teach. Diaspora communities are well-placed to bring together diverse communities to identify new and innovative ways to effectively pave the way for a future generation to move forward and overcome the current power imbalance in the sector between the recipients and distributors of aid.

Dr Melika Yassin Sheikh-Eldin
Ames Australia



- Bringing diaspora organisations into policy discussions allows for a greater focus on human impacts of policy rather than the political parameters. Energy for real change comes from people who are motivated by their own experiences and personal connections with those who are still suffering.

“Those who have the greatest interest in change are those who are most personally connected.” (Paul Power – Refugee Council of Australia)

- There are some opportunities for diaspora groups to be their own advocates at national and international levels to influence the agenda on migration and refugee policy, humanitarian aid and development. UNHCR consultations with NGOs constitute an opportunity for diaspora organisations in Australia to raise issues on the international stage and make international agencies accountable for their actions.
- The Global Compact for Migration (GCM) is the first global instrument to coordinate migration governance and look at how migration is guided by common principles and approaches. It is a comprehensive document with a strong human rights perspective and is gender sensitive. The GCM is a potential tool for advocacy. It recognises diaspora communities and their role by committing to *“create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development.”* (Objective 19)¹.

What are the challenges and barriers?

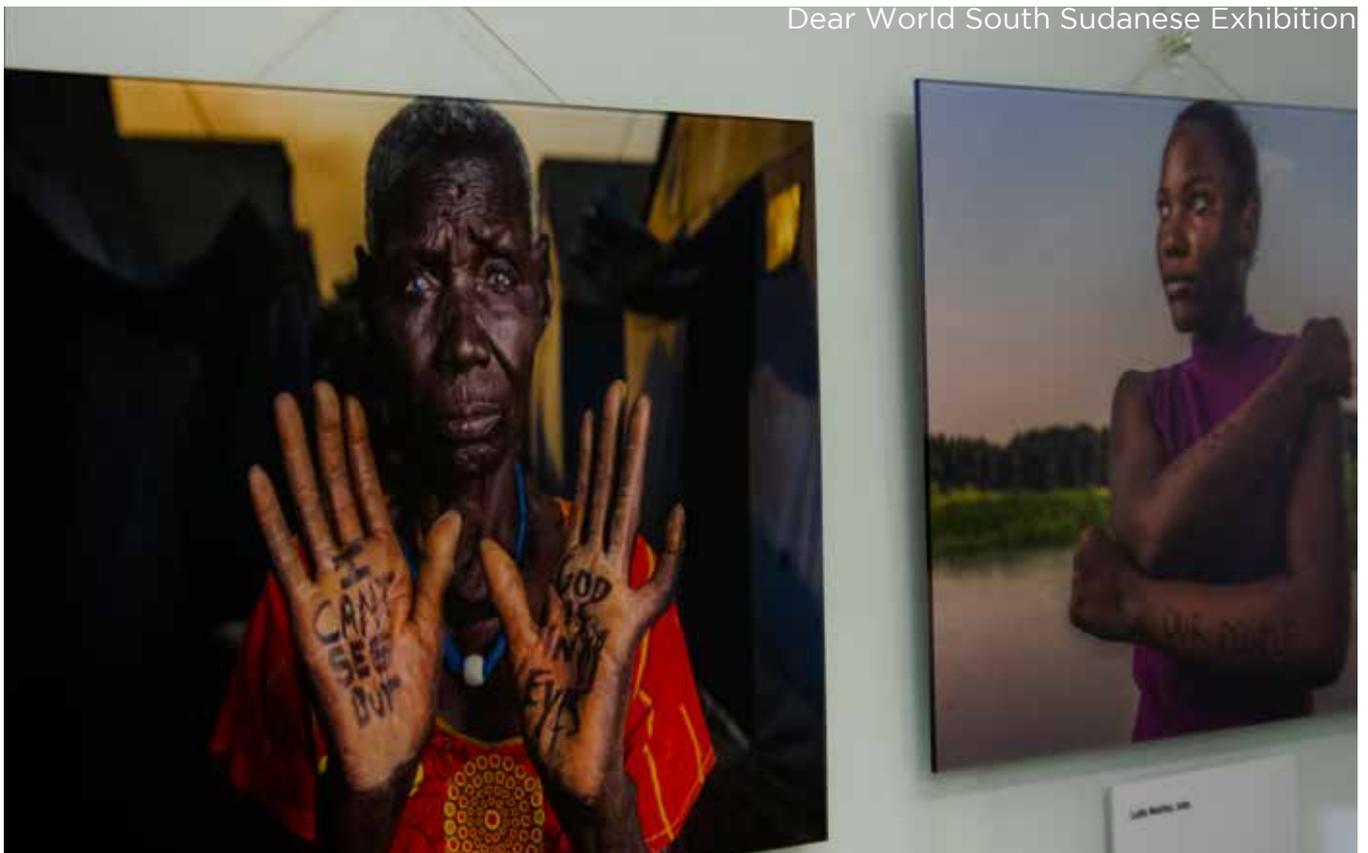
- The refugee policy debate in Australia is heavily dominated by people with no personal experience of the issues, and refugees are regularly excluded from the policy discussion. Refugees and migrants have been passive recipients of policy decisions made on “their” behalf.

“It’s really time to cut the patronising talk about capacity building and actually just give people an opportunity and a platform.” (Paul Power – Refugee Council of Australia)

¹ <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact>

Call for action

- The Global Compact for Migration is a non-binding document; therefore, each signatory state can decide how to implement it. Australia needs to be aware of the GCM and its benefits.
 - Women and girls represent more than 50% of the refugee population, yet there is not adequate representation of them. Although documents such as the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants¹ make commitments with regards to gender representation and gender-based action, there is still much more that needs to be done.
 - Measuring the impact of diaspora engagement can be challenging, particularly for governments that are bound by regulations and a need to demonstrate value for money.
- ¹ <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/declaration>
- Bridge the gap between diaspora communities and other actors by using communication technology to build an open network with relevant information of where diaspora groups are active and what sort of projects they are implementing.
 - Train advocacy groups to lobby for women and girls considering the intersectionality that a young person as a woman may be facing.
 - Strengthen and include gender considerations in the four pillars of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.
 - Advocate for Australia to adopt the Global Compact for Migration, disseminate its potential and foster diaspora-led initiatives as a component of implementation.



FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

	Proposed Action	Stakeholder
1	<p>Australian Government to explore flexible funding models with DAA to facilitate and support diaspora communities' engagement in development and humanitarian response, based on the Danish Refugee Council's Diaspora Programme model.</p> <p>The funding model ought to satisfy three main criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure long-term planning to ensure meaningful, reliable and continuous engagement with diaspora communities. 2. Enable equitable partnerships between government, DAA and diaspora communities to be established. 3. Guarantee DAA flexibility to respond to government and diaspora communities' changing needs and requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DFAT
2	<p>Create effective pathways to actively include diaspora communities in policy discussion.</p> <p>Diaspora communities are to be included and considered an equal and complementary partners. Opportunities that are limited to one-off consultations will not create change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DFAT • INGOs • DAA • DLN
3	<p>Develop a database of diaspora communities and organisations based in Australia to be shared with relevant stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DLN • DAA • Diaspora
4	<p>Create opportunities to support engagement and collaboration between diaspora communities and organisations and other stakeholders to avoid duplication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INGOs • ANGOs • Diaspora • DAA & DLN
5	<p>Calling for further work and commitment by the Australian Government and other interested stakeholders to ensure the Diaspora Learning Network sustainability and ongoing activity to foster and promote cross-sector collaboration and knowledge on diaspora engagement in peacebuilding, development and humanitarian responses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAA • DLN • All interested stakeholders
6	<p>Advocate for Australia to adopt the Global Compact for Migration, disseminate its potential and foster diaspora-led initiatives as a component of implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAA • DLN • Diaspora • All interested stakeholders

“To attend a conference like this one, it’s my first time. When I’m there, in Uganda, it’s like I’m stressed, the problem is big, big...It’s like you’re not open to see that there are other communities who are facing the same problems, so to hear about that, oufff OK, you’re not alone!”

*“[It was] Interesting to hear from a range of diaspora groups, to understand that they face similar challenges, but all are unique”.
Conference participant.*

“Mingo and Cindy’s presentations [were] the highlights for me as they critically reflected on diaspora identities, their potentials and pragmatism around working with traditional international communities in aid and development”.

[The diaspora space is important] because it gives a room for those [who are] voiceless, like [...] the Nuba Mountains [community in] South Australia, to raise issues [that are] very important”.

South Sudan Voice - Dialogue Theatre Performance



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#DiasporasInAction #diaspora #DLN2018

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