



**Plus People Ltd**  
Consulting, Training,  
Development for the  
Not-for-profit sector

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***THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN ON DIASPORA COMMUNITY  
ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR WORK IN THE UK AND THE HOME COMMUNITY***

**at The Wilson Room – Portcullis House – Westminster 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010 pm**

**Organised by:  
Connections for Development and the League of British Muslims**

*The event was hosted by Lee Scott - MP for Ilford North*



*This event was facilitated by Plus People Consultants*



## Event report

### ***The impact of the economic downturn on Diaspora Community Organisations and their work in the UK and the home community.***

#### **The context for the event.**

Connections for Development secured funding from CapacityBuilders Modernisation Fund to look at increasing collaborative and partnership working among Diaspora organisations and those working with Diaspora Communities.

Connections for Development were aware that the downturn in the economy was likely to be having a particular impact on the Diaspora Communities and that there was no existing forum for these issues to be explored.

The Haiti earthquake highlighted specific issues in relation to emergency relief, international development and the current role of NGOs and lack of connections with Diaspora Communities in the UK.

#### **The aims of the event were**

The event aimed to provide a platform for organisations working with a wide range of Diaspora communities to come together, share experiences, identify the key issues and to provide the opportunity to identify areas for increased collaborative working.

#### **The event focussed on specific themes:**

- The downturn and Diaspora communities in the UK and the organisations supporting them.- sharing experiences across communities
- The downturn and Diaspora communities and organisations in their role in development of home communities
- The capacity-building support that Diaspora Communities can provide to home communities - sharing experiences across communities
- Exploring the relationship of Diaspora communities and organisations with International Development Organisations and agencies and how the Diaspora communities can assist, advise and contribute to International Development; both in sustainable development and emergency relief.

#### **Event organisation**

The event was arranged at relatively short notice as the window between confirmation of funding and the financial year end was small and it was recognised that for the event to be held at the House of Commons, it would have to take place before the Easter recess. We are very grateful to Lee Scott MP for Ilford North and his staff for hosting the event and securing Shadow



Ministerial involvement. The event was facilitated by Nic Hinrichsen of Plus People Consulting. Notice of the event was posted on the CfD website and targeted e-mail shots were sent to a wide cross-section of Diaspora organisations and International development organisations. Expression of interest/registration was undertaken via an on-line booking form, with indication of workshop preferences. The event attracted 22 participants from across the Diaspora spectrum.

### Event programme

The event programme had to be revised to accommodate existing Shadow-Ministerial commitments and parliamentary business. The workshops offered reflected the expressions of interest.

The revised programme:

**Arrivals and welcome** from Bashir Chaudhry – League of British Muslims and Connections for Development

**Outline of the aims of the event** and structure.

**Facilitated workshops** on:

- The impact of the economic downturn on Diaspora community organisations and their work in the UK and The Home Community.  
*Facilitator - Carl Oxford*
  - The impact on Diaspora communities in the UK and the organisations supporting them (sharing experiences)
  - The impact on Diaspora communities and organisations in their role in development of home communities
  - capacity-building support that Diaspora communities can provide to home communities



- Exploring the relationship of Diaspora communities and organisations with International Development Organisations and agencies. How the Diaspora communities can assist, advise and contribute to International Development in relation to sustainable development.

*Facilitator - Nana Ama Amamoo*



- Exploring the relationship of Diaspora communities and organisations with International Development Organisations and agencies. How the Diaspora communities can assist, advise and contribute in emergency relief.

*Facilitator - Bob Deen-Kamara*



## Summary feedback from the workshops and emerging issues

**Address from Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP** – the Shadow Minister for International Development followed by questions and discussion

## Emerging issues and ways forward

### Refreshments in House of Commons.

#### Issues identified:

**The key themes emerging from the workshops were:**

**In relation to:** The impact on Diaspora communities in the UK and the organisations supporting them:-

#### **Political**

- Additional barriers (to wider VCS groups) in accessing funding
- Lack of political will to support this agenda, the Diaspora groups and the work they do
- Press and wider media scare-mongering –(the migrant/immigration agenda fuels a negative feeding frenzy for the news media)
- All groups are becoming more insular as funds decrease, and competition increases

#### **Economic**

- Groups are experiencing problems accessing funding and employment
- Financial climate reducing the levels of much needed support from private sector donors and sponsorship (declining corporate social responsibility budgets)

#### **Social**

- Fear and uncertainty of the future
- Increasing levels of disillusionment among young people
- Increasing levels of violent crime in the communities
- All groups becoming more insular
- Reducing levels of self-esteem and increasing feelings of ‘shame’ among individuals because (loss of employment/income) they lack the ability to look after their families
- Affect on mental health within the communities

#### **Technological**

- Limited resources to access expert (consultancy) help
- Lack of capacity-building
- Lack of educational and training opportunities (particularly for young people)



**In relation to** the impact on Diaspora communities and organisations in their role in development of home communities.

- Need more capacity-building to help develop more community and school linking partnerships here and overseas
- Less remittances going home
- Less chances of people from Diaspora communities returning home because they have not been able to build sufficient savings/capital
- Fear of returning to home countries, even for holidays, in case they have no job on their return to the UK. This will, consequently, have a negative effect on stress levels (absent families) and inward investment within the home countries
- Increasing levels of mental illness missing home, family concerns, cultural aliens
- Community and schools linking happening more because of an increasing 'shared futures' spirit. However, less money means less opportunities to make overseas visits

**In relation to** the capacity-building support that Diaspora communities can provide to home communities, there is particular scope for linking expertise to the Community and schools and in Community health and education (sharing and learning) good practice.

**In relation to** how the Diaspora communities can assist, advise and contribute to International Development in relation to sustainable development the following observations were made about the current state of play

- No contact between Diaspora organisations and International Development agencies.
  - ***This is a potential role that CfD could fulfil.***
- Diaspora organisations have skills, information and cultural links that are not being utilised.
- Diaspora organisations have direct links and communication with grassroots organisations and local communities and can gather and provide intelligence for meaningful planning and effective implementation. NGOs need more communication with Diaspora organisations to understand real local priorities and find sustainable solutions required by local people. Diaspora organisations could also have a key role in validating and evaluating work that has taken place
  - ***There is potential for CfD to play an active role increasing communication and dialogue***
- Diaspora organisations are not fully aware of what the big agencies are doing (and why).
- Big agencies spend big money on major projects, but not making the long-term changes in the lives of local people
- Large Aid Agencies match the bureaucratic expectations of Governments and donors
- Funding priorities out of balance – greatest funding is for intangible large scale, issue-based such as 'human rights' rather than tangible, 'on-the-ground' real change.



**In respect of** the emergency relief and relationship with aid agencies the following key observations were made.

- Aid organisations should be encouraged to develop more and closer relationships with small charity organisations on the ground and provide them with adequate training and resources, to enable them to be able to manage and assist others in times of crisis, and support and facilitate them in dealing with the bureaucracy.
- Aid organisations should assist local people to take control and ownership of the problems and listen to their views to determine what is long-term benefit in their communities
- There should be a greater focus on skills sharing, ownership and collective vision on humanitarian support
- The group appreciate the efforts of western countries in responding to emergency crisis in Diaspora countries, but the lessons learnt in terms of delay in responding to emergency situation, should not only to be shared with other countries, but also with local and Diaspora organisations.



### **Address from Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP**

*The Shadow Minister for International Development*

#### **Key themes and issues:**

Copies of the Conservative Agenda for International Development – One World Conservatism - were circulated. It was noted that the UK currently spends £6bn on International Development which is set to rise to £12bn in 5 years time, and in addition to this there is a high volume of remittances sent from Diaspora communities in the UK back to home nations. There is a need for greater evaluation of the effectiveness of current programmes to ensure we achieve the results that we want, and in this context, trade was identified as the way forward, that the right capitalism can produce the right pathways. There was both a particular role and opportunity for Diaspora organisations in the UK to facilitate production and distribution of tradable goods and services, thereby creating jobs and wealth in both the home country and within the Diaspora Communities in the UK. There is a need for the EU to be more open and available to developing countries with less trade barriers.



There was a shared recognition that remittances alone can also create a dependency culture. The provision of in-country training, with local ownership was highlighted as an effective way for the Diasporas to help themselves, and this could be well informed by listening to the Diaspora communities here in the UK. This could also lead to opportunities for raising additional funds, as the development of training in-country would have high credibility.



The need for greater knowledge, consultation and engagement with Diaspora Communities was recognised. The recent earthquake in Haiti highlighted the fact that the number of Haitians living in the UK and particularly in London was not appreciated, and therefore neither their needs were catered for, or their knowledge fully harnessed. There was a commitment to including Diaspora Communities in dialogue with DfID in relation to country assistance programmes and seeking to expand this dialogue with NGOs, and the offer of a potential future meeting with government officials.



### **Key issues emerging and ways forward**

- A general concern that sending of remittances can create or contribute to a dependency culture
- Are International NGOs willing to engage with CfD member organisations with skills and long experience in teaching, agricultural research, agricultural production and crop protection, farm management and sustainable development? How can this be initiated?
- A desire for the British Government to review current arrangements with Connections for Development to seek to provide adequate resources to engage and support Diaspora Organisations across the United Kingdom
- Specific funding to support organisational development between Diaspora organisations and their counterparts in their areas of origin, over a 3-5 year period, to ensure sustainability.
- How INGOs can work more effectively with Diaspora organisations to forge sustainable partnerships that are related towards International development ie campaign, activism, joint events, media, youth engagement, fundraising for emergencies and wider community/public engagement.
- Creating opportunities for Diaspora community individuals to undertake placements in their own country of origin or country of choice. Assist volunteers to contribute in development effort of the developing country.
- Diaspora groups helping to obtain funds for grassroots projects for addressing poverty and oppression of the marginalised home communities.
- Increasing access to DfID and European resources.
- How to break the glass ceiling to achieve greater Diaspora representation in International Development in UK and locality.
- Need for continuing work to address Diaspora issues on migration, mental health and social care within the EU.
- How we can engage/engage with young people from Diaspora communities in the UK.

### **A continuing and future role for Connections for Development**

- Representing the interests of Diaspora Communities in the UK policy agenda, both internally and in relation to International development
- Securing regular dialogue with Government and the International Development and Aid NGOs
- Initiating and supporting contact between Diaspora organisations and International Development agencies and Government Departments.
- Addressing the ongoing need for CFD to maintain strategic partnerships with grass roots BME Organisations both in the United Kingdom and overseas
- Advocating for local priorities to be considered in the prioritisation of funding
- Facilitating dialogue between Diaspora organisations – through events and seminars
- Identifying and mapping Diaspora communities in the UK, so they can be consulted.



## Event evaluation and feedback

Number of attendees = 21

Evaluation forms received =11

	excellent	good	Average	poor	Very poor
Booking arrangements	10			1	
Event organisation	11				
Venue	11				
Topics	11				

Wish to be informed of future events = 11

### Comments from attendees

*"excellent event- very well planned and delivered"*

*"A very good idea to organise this event with politicians on the run-up to an election"*

*"Covered all bases"*



*"good outcome from the presentations. Good networking and information sharing"*

*"well run and organised workshops- very productive"*

*"interesting and innovative event, with plenty of opportunity for discussion"*

*"good event – look forward to implementation of information from the workshops"*

*"A good beginning but let us have as many as we can throughout the year"*



Appendix  
List of Participants

Faisal Hassan	African & Caribbean Diversity
Pepi O'Neill	BUILD
Guy N Tibazonkiza	CFP CENTRE FOR PROGRESS
Mohamed Omer	Connections for Development (CfD)
Raj Rajendran	Croydon Council
Priya Krishnamoorthy	IFAW UK
Miguel Mercado	Latin American House
Bashir Chaudhry	League of British Muslims
Zeenat Jeewa	Myanmar-Burma Relief & Welfare Association
Grenville Ignatius	Myanmar-Burma Relief & Welfare Association
Dr Sheeba Harma	Oxfam GB
Nic Hinrichsen	Plus People
Bob Deen-Kamara	Save Sierra Leone
Mohamed Iman	Somali Diaspora Culture And Sports Association
Carl Taj Prempeh-Dyer VII	Somali Diaspora Culture And Sports Association
Suhas Khale	South Asia Forum UK
Nana Ama Amamoo	The African Families Foundation
Dr. Eshetu Wondimagegne	The Norfolk African Community Association (NACA).
Christine Mushibwe	UK One World Linking Association
Karl Oxford	USCDL
Lee Scott MP	MP for Ilford North
Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP	–Shadow Minister for International Development

