



**Connections for Development**

# Intercultural Dialogue and Migration

## Migrants: actors and vectors of intercultural Dialogue

Lisbon (Portugal)

The Council of Europe: White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue of  
CfD's Perspectives

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## **List of Acronyms**

AFFORD	The African Foundation for Development
CfD	Connections for Development
CoE	Council of Europe
DEA	Development Education Association
DGIII	Directorate General of Social Cohesion
DGIV	Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage; Youth and Sport
FORIM	Forum of Migrants Solidarity Organisations
ID	International Development
KLF	Kids League Foundation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Minorities of Europe
NACA	The Norfolk African Community Association
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
SASA	Showing Another Side to Africa

## **1.0 Background**

This consultation was organised by the Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage; Youth and Sport (DGIV); the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre); the Directorate General of Social Cohesion (DGIII) of the Council of Europe; the Portuguese High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities (ACIME); and the Forum of Migrants Solidarity Organisations (FORIM).

The focus of this meeting was on the following issues:

- Intercultural Dialogue and Migration;
- Cultural diversity;
- Migrants as actors and vectors of intercultural dialogue; and
- Gathering responses from all relevant stakeholders, including migrants/Diaspora umbrella organisations or networks in Europe to the ‘White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue’ of the Council of Europe.

## **2.0 Introduction**

Connections for Development (CfD) participated in this consultation at the invitation of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe (CoE) and all the organisers previously mentioned. The conference brought together a score of European-based organisations working with the Diaspora<sup>1</sup>, experts, and media representatives in dialogue with representatives from the European Commission, the CoE Secretariat, DGIII and DGIV.

In the course of preparing the “White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue” the CoE circulated a questionnaire to capture views on the ‘role of intercultural dialogue’ with regards to migrants and persons of immigrant background. This questionnaire specifically targeted non-governmental organisations (NGOs) representing, working with or supporting the interests of immigrants/Diaspora. Thus, CfD prepared a brief response to relevant consultation questions (tackling only those relevant to us) in preparation for the Lisbon meeting on 21-22 May 2007.

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<sup>1</sup> See full list of participating organisations in Annex 1

This document serves two purposes: One, it highlights some of the issues raised at the consultation meeting in Lisbon (May 2007). Two, it summarises CfD's contribution to the consultation process in keeping with the questionnaire circulated prior to this meeting by the CoE on the role of migrants in intercultural dialogue. To this end, this report is an informative piece in anticipation of a comprehensive conference report from the CoE.

### **3.0 A Summary of the Lisbon Conference Proceedings**

This conference covered three themes<sup>2</sup> as summarised below.

#### **3.1 Diversity, migration and intercultural dialogue: state affairs, challenges and responses from migrants' associations'.**

Under this theme, discussions were based on participants' responses to the questionnaire (sent previously to them). A summary of the responses suggested that:

- Dialogue and social integration should build hope for a multi-cultural society through diversity;
- The role of immigrants should be central in this debate and host communities must reinforce the sense of belonging among migrants;
- Inter-cultural dialogue should embrace the principles of multiple-belonging as opposed to forcing new communities to choose, often at their own expenses;
- The rights and responsibilities of migrants for building stronger communities should be reinforced;
- The realities of migration and its impact on development should be examined and clearly articulated; and
- The emergence of plural identity and multiculturalism in Europe should be embraced.

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<sup>2</sup> Themes are presented in this paper as they appeared on the programme.

### **3.2 Intercultural Dialogue on Migration (CDMG) and Political Framework, Perspectives of the European Committee on Migration**

The purpose of this was to determine what frameworks, programmes and initiatives from the EU, participants saw as crucial in securing people right to live with their diversity within the context of shared values with the wider community.

Hence, all discussions centred on: “What should be done to promote equal opportunities and rights?” These are some of the suggestions taken into account:

- There should be a broader vision of social cohesion from government bodies such as the CoE;
- Respect for human dignity and differences;
- The need to promote good practice by recognising diversity and challenging the negative images of migration and development to strengthen the social, political and economic roles of immigrants;
- Introduce policies that promote both integration and reintegration of migrants; and
- Policy debates or policy-making must be participatory and involve those who are affected by such decisions.

### **3.3 Policies of Integration in Multicultural Societies: Challenges and Perspectives**

This session emphasised the relationship between mechanisms for integration history, the social protection system, and the cultural specificities of interested countries. Participants’ attempted to address the challenges of current policies of integration; the advantages and limitations of positive discrimination policies; and what should be done to facilitate interaction, mutual recognition and fairness in multicultural societies. The following were proposed:

- Integration policies must challenge the stigma and stereotypes that come with cultural integration;
- Policies should appreciate that the world has come to a stage where national identities do not matter as much anymore because there is a new

wave of transnationalism. Moreover, the practices of co-development cannot be attached to national identity as it embraces the 'here and there' or the 'double presence' factor; and

- Governments should begin to listen to immigrants during policy-debates to reduce the tendency of policy prescription.

#### **4.0 Perspectives from CfD**

The conference covered all the issues previously addressed by the White Paper. Some of the proposals/suggestions were described as temporary requirements for the intercultural dialogue to be successful. Including that, Intercultural dialogue involves choices, interactions, collaborative working and presupposes a dual process of communication. This consultation also brought forward the need to recognise the two components of intercultural dialogue i.e. a management process and the need to strengthen that procedure. Most especially this platform sought to recognise the role played by the media as central to the process of intercultural dialogue.

CfD's perspectives cover only those questions deemed relevant to us. These are addressed according to the original questionnaire numbering as shown in subsequent paragraphs.

#### **4.1 The Overall Policy Vision on Cultural Diversity in Democratic Societies**

**Q.5.** It is thought that, the global context of cultural diversity in Europe should embrace:

- The need to harness the wealth and strengths nurtured through managing diversity;
- In the global context, Europe could gain from celebrating the differences of the various minority groups and focusing on their common areas of interests;
- The need to listen to Diaspora voices and consult with them at all levels of policy making; and

- Modern democratic societies must develop policies that appreciate culture as: (a) dynamic, (b) affects and it's affected by the prevailing economic, social and political situation in a given context, and (c) culture is constructed by society and as such, society widens, broadens or changes for better or for worse.

## **4.2 The Concept of Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue**

**Q.6.** In CfD's perspective, the following conditions should be fulfilled before intercultural dialogue that involves immigrants can be successful:

- Accept that immigrants are different and come with different cultural backgrounds;
- Recognise that dialogue is a dual process and all stakeholders, i.e. host and immigrant communities, policy-makers, international communities, governments etc must be part of the process;
- There should be responsible and accurate media representation of migrants; and
- More recognition of the roles of immigrants in both home and host country development.

**Q.7** CfD places particular emphasis on several aspects of intercultural dialogue on the basis that the organisation mostly speaks for and represents members' interests and areas of intervention. Thus the organisation views the following aspects as crucial elements of intercultural dialogue:

- Non-formal education;
- Gender equality and women financial autonomy;
- Protection of human rights;
- Inter-religious dialogue;
- Health and social development issues;
- Media and mass education; and
- Participatory community learning etc.

The aspects of intercultural dialogue outlined above reflect the diversity of the CfD membership and their areas of interests in international development (ID). CfD members respond to identified needs within the communities they support both in the UK and abroad.

**Q.8.** Even though CfD has not recently published reports that capture specific elements of intercultural dialogue, some of our members have conducted work that grasps these areas of debate. For example, *Fatima Women's Network*<sup>3</sup>, *The League of British Muslims (UK)*<sup>4</sup>, *the Norfolk African Community Association (NACA)*<sup>5</sup> and the *Development Education Association (DEA)*<sup>6</sup> and several other members.

#### **4.3 Promoting Cultural Diversity, Intercultural Dialogue and Social Cohesion at International, National and Local Level.**

**Q.9.** Although CfD does not presently run specific programmes that directly promote intercultural dialogue between immigrant communities and the wider society; it has in the past ran related programmes in collaboration with member organisations like *Minorities of Europe (MoE)*<sup>7</sup>. This programme involved young people from migrant backgrounds in a 'swapping cultures' event built around the notion of introducing young people to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on the one hand, and on the other, for them to share with their parents, school communities and possibly teachers the fact development involves everybody.

In 2006, the 'Think Local Act Global' regional conferences by CfD were aimed at facilitating dialogue across society. CfD produced a DVD<sup>8</sup> that captured the experiences of member organisations in promoting international development, including their challenges and successes. These conferences brought faith groups, different UK minority communities, and NGOs together.

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<sup>3</sup> A report on women and enterprise- this can be obtained on request from Fatima Women's Network: [www.fatima-network.com](http://www.fatima-network.com)

<sup>4</sup> A report on: 'Fear of Stigmatisation, Combating Drug Use Amongst Muslim Communities in London –Redbridge: An Action Research Project' This report will be launched on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2007 at the House of Commons by the Rt. Hon. Ruth Kelly, Sect. of State for Local Governments and Communities. Contact: [leagueofbm@btconnect.com](mailto:leagueofbm@btconnect.com)

<sup>5</sup> Holds monthly cultural gatherings to bring together diverse sections of Diaspora communities in Norfolk and interest host communities to share cultural views through 'food festivals.'

<sup>6</sup> The DEA works with several BME groups on issues pertaining education and north-south perspectives.

<sup>7</sup> This report is available from the CfD website: [www.cfdnetwork.co.uk](http://www.cfdnetwork.co.uk) or from the MoE website: [www.moe.online.com](http://www.moe.online.com)

<sup>8</sup> See [www.cfdnetwork.co.uk](http://www.cfdnetwork.co.uk) to view the DVD.

To-date, some CfD members like the *African Foundation for Development* (AFFORD) and *Showing Another Side of Africa* (SASA) are involved in programmes that promote cultural dialogue. Their programmes challenge the poor and negative images of Africa and specifically images of development on the continent. This is their way of fighting stereotypes. AFFORD has involved young people in producing films that tackle the media representation of Africa to give young people a voice and some idea/experience of Africa through the eyes of young Africans in the Diaspora.

**Q. 10.** Whatever measures of promoting intercultural dialogue, must appreciate the diversity within migrant communities. From our experience of working with different Diaspora NGOs, individuals, businesses and faith groups (from our 400 growing membership) we appreciate that migrant/Diaspora communities are heterogeneous. This diversity enriches new communities, because of the new skills, knowledge, networks, and approaches that migrants introduce into host communities on the basis of their heterogeneity. Therefore measures to create dialogue and cohesion within Diaspora communities should focus on:

- Awareness raising;
- The commonalities and areas of interests; e.g. at CfD all our members share common interests in International Development (ID) and those are the areas we focus on;
- Dialogue and policy coherence;
- Citizenship and global education at all levels; and
- Better media representation of migrants.

**Q.11.** To ensure media coverage of immigrant communities reflect cultural diversity in a more even-handed way:

- The media should realise that they owe society a duty of care, and must practice responsible reporting and coverage of immigrant communities;

- They should research at community levels where possible and enable all such communities to share a sense of ownership over what is being reported; and
- Abstain from the almost always-negative portrayal of immigrants because they too contribute adequately in their host economies.

#### **4.5 Examples of Good Practice**

**Q.15.** CfD will be able (as well as through our membership) to provide the CoE with examples of good practice in relation to the following areas from a cross-section of some members' organisations. *Appendix 1* gives some examples of good practice from our members, but they are not exhaustive; they are simply highlights of the scope of activities from the CfD network. More information can be found from our website at [www.cfdnetwork.co.uk](http://www.cfdnetwork.co.uk) (where all members are listed) or by contacting those organisations directly.

#### **5.0 Conclusion**

From CfD's experience, we have learned that measures that seek to promote intercultural dialogue, should not only appreciate the diversity within migrant communities, but also understand the similarities of needs of migrant communities. CfD places particular emphasis on several aspects of intercultural dialogue because we mostly speak for our members, promote their interests and areas of intervention usually inform our views. In our view, the following aspects are crucial: Gender equality, Human rights protection; Inter-religious dialogue, Media and mass education; and Participatory community learning etc. The outlined aspects of intercultural dialogue reflect the diversity of the CfD membership and their areas of interests in international development. CfD members respond to identified needs within the communities they support both in the UK and abroad.

## Appendix 1 Examples of Good Practice: CfD and some of its members

Topic	Some Example of Good Practices <sup>9</sup>
<b>Education</b>	<p><b><u>The African Foundation for Development (AFFORD)</u></b>: Delivers a very popular eight-week course 'Africans Without Borders - Development from a Distance?' in partnership with Birkbeck College, University of London. The aims of the course are to highlight the role of African Diaspora organisations in influencing development practice in ways that advance the interests of Africa. As well as to critically examine and debate the contribution of the African Diaspora to Africa's development. <i>See <a href="http://www.afford-uk.org">www.afford-uk.org</a> for more information.</i></p> <p><b><u>Gharweg - Advice Training &amp; Careers Centre</u></b>: Provides services to promote access to quality continuing vocational training and life-long learning for mainly African refugees, asylum seekers and disadvantaged and unemployed people from other migrant communities. Other programmes include schools cooperation and targeting young people and especially those who are isolated and disadvantaged (between 8 and 19 years old living in the UK). <i>See <a href="http://www.gharweg.org.uk">www.gharweg.org.uk</a> for more information.</i></p> <p><b><u>Conserve Africa Foundation</u></b>: It is interested in preservation, conservation and protection of the environment. Its mission and focus is to develop projects related to sustainable development in Africa. Aims to promote the conservation of the environment through environment EE and other training programmes. <i>See <a href="http://www.conserveafrica.org.uk">www.conserveafrica.org.uk</a> for more information.</i></p> <p><b><u>Norfolk African Community Association (NACA)</u></b>: Nurturing social cohesion amid the disparate African Diasporas in Norfolk to alleviate the feelings or effects of separation, social exclusion or racism etc. NACA is also interested in sustainable development, the promotion and sustenance of the African heritage among its Diasporas in Norfolk. The organisation also works closely with host communities to achieve its goals. Visit: <a href="http://www.norfolkblackhistorymonth.org.uk/naca.html">http://www.norfolkblackhistorymonth.org.uk/naca.html</a> for further information.</p>
<b>Youth</b>	<p><b><u>Minorities of European (MoE)</u></b>: This is a 'Pan European Inter-minority network' that aims to champion and promote the “cooperation, solidarity and exchange between different minority communities and young people in Europe.” Founded in 1995: “...as a result of the Council of Europe's campaign against racism, anti-semitism, xenophobia and intolerance across the continent of Europe,” MoE now promotes a shared vision of “inter-minority-inter-minority and inter-minority-inter-majority relationship. They use the same vision in a bid to tackle inequality, xenophobia, racism, cultural disintegration and seclusion suffered by young people from minority communities. Some of MoE programme areas include; community cohesion, international development, inter-faith activities and youth in action projects. <i>See <a href="http://www.moe-online.com">www.moe-online.com</a> for more examples.</i></p>

<sup>9</sup> Our focus in this exercise was only to signpost the areas in which some of our members are involved. Source for these are the respective organisations websites.

Topic	Some Example of Good Practices <sup>10</sup>
<b>Sports</b>	<b><u>Kids League Foundation (KLF):</u></b> KLF uses sport and sports related activities to bring diverse communities together to promote health, education and life skills among young people. KLF works with individuals and organisations in the UK, Africa and elsewhere. They work to create youth leaders and ambassadors, for global citizenship. Currently, the KLF is engaged in the war torn Northern Ugandan districts of Gulu and Kitgum. It works with internally displaced children and former abductees (children forcefully removed from their schools and homes by the rebel forces).
<b>Culture</b>	<b><u>NACA:</u></b> To encourage understanding of the diverse cultures and traditions NACA established the Norfolk International Cultural Integration project. Organising monthly cross-cultural events leading to greater cohesion among the disparate communities. ( <i>See above</i> ).
<b>Gender Equality</b>	<b><u>Fatima's Women's Network:</u></b> Committed to introducing positive change in the lives of women, especially women from diverse disadvantaged minority communities in the UK. They provide training and employment services support, encourage inter-racial and inter-faith harmony in learning and working environments. See <a href="http://www.fatima-network.com">www.fatima-network.com</a> .
<b>Inter-religious Dialogue</b>	<b><u>The League of British Muslims:</u></b> Holds regular inter-Faith Forums between the Jewish, Christian and Muslim & Sikh Faiths. Range of services for all communities and residents. Offer advice on housing, law, education, training, benefits, immigration and nationality. It provides English, Arabic and Urdu language services . They are dealing with issues drugs, alcohol misuse within Asian and Jewish communities both in the UK and in their home countries. They provide advocacy and after school services across communities and faiths. The League has been a successful initiative in building tolerance, social cohesion, peace and harmony among the faiths. Contact: <a href="mailto:leagueofbm@btconnect.com">leagueofbm@btconnect.com</a> for more information.
<b>Awareness-raising and public relations</b>	<b><u>Connections for Development (CfD):</u></b> Through Consultations with members to inform (and to solicit ideas for possible policy influence) about certain issues such as the EU-Africa relations, migration and development, remittances, sustainable development, Diaspora and volunteering for international development etc. CfD engages the UK BME Diaspora in policy consultations and a number of serious debates that impact on their lives. CfD has also piloted a course in International Development Awareness and designed a course on Organisational Development with support from VSO. These have been successful instruments of awareness raising and public relations. In 2006, CfD commissioned a survey on Public Awareness of the Millennium Goals (MDGs) the task was undertaken by the African Community Development Foundation (ACDF) at street levels in the UK. The result of that was the nomination of ACDF by the first MDG City in the world (Kisumu-Kenya) to be their Ambassador.

<sup>10</sup> Our focus in this exercise was only to signpost the areas in which some of our members are involved. Source for these are the respective organisations websites.