

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

18.06.21 | ONLINE

MIGRANT ORGANISATIONS AND IRISH DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS:

*Addressing challenges and
opportunities for synergistic
cooperation*

CONTRIBUTORS

- Barnaba Dorda (Forum Polonia): Polish diaspora organisations in Ireland: good practices and venues for enhanced cooperation with other civic stakeholders.
- Mbemba Jabbi (Africa Centre): Africa Centre Ireland's Development Engagement: Partnerships Beyond Traditional.
- Suzanne Keating (Dóchas): Re-imagining the narrative of international development – a role for better partnerships.
- Dr Caroline Munyi (AkiDwA): Rapporteur: discussed how change and participation can take place.

There were 22 participants engaged with the discussion on the day: 21% from diaspora organisations, 47% from other NGO, 26% from academia and 5% from government sector.

OVERVIEW

Both Irish charities engaged abroad and diaspora organisations in Ireland are committed, albeit via different means, to contribute to the development of the countries in the Global South while advocating against racism and discrimination. There are however unexplored prospects for synergistic linkages and cooperation between Irish and migrants' civil society organisations.

To address the challenges and identify the opportunities for joining forces to address issues of common interests both in Ireland and internationally, this webinar convened by the DSAI Civil Society Study Group created a forum for representatives of the Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations Dóchas, the largest migrant community in Ireland's cooperative platform Forum Polonia, and Africa Centre to discuss issues of common interest.

The invited speakers from civil society and an academic rapporteur, Dr Caroline Munyi (AkiDwA), debated how they view the current working relations between Irish and immigrant organisations and the possibilities for future common undertakings.

They were asked to address the following questions:

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- Which factors determine the importance and urgency for greater collaboration between Irish charities and migrant organisations to challenge the public perception about international development and promote more inclusive society?
- What is the role of diaspora organisations in the realisation of inclusive development both in their native countries and in Irish society? What are the challenges preventing them from engaging in closer cooperation with other, Irish and migrants', civil society stakeholders?
- What opportunities do they see for common initiatives that could impact the lives of vulnerable communities and individuals in the Global South and in Ireland, especially in our current pandemic times?

HIGHLIGHTS

Forum Polonia's representative identified the following possible fields of cooperation:

- Labour market challenges
- Discrimination and racism
- Good cause initiatives and cultural projects

Africa Centre's representative's presentation was very well structured and informative. Among his many excellent observations, the most important reflecting on 'Opportunities Diaspora Organisations Have for Common Initiatives to Impact the Lives of Vulnerable Communities and Individuals in the Global South and in Ireland, Especially in our Current Pandemic Times?':

Countries of Origin

- Better Understanding of the Culture and Language
- Knows How the System Works
- Have Contacts
- Trust and Benefits

In Ireland

- Diaspora Knows What Their Communities go Through from Personal Experiences
- Highly Educated and Mostly in the Fields of Development
- Multi-Lingual

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Way Forward

- Joint Activities between Diaspora organisations and Charities if it is Thematic and Country Specific
- Employment for Diaspora members, especially in Country Programmes
- Partnership on Research Projects
- Serve on Board and on Advisory Committees of Diaspora Organisations

Dóchas' representative highlighted the observation that different stakeholders – Irish charities, migrants' NGOs, diasporas – have dissimilar agendas and multi-stakeholder meetings often end up in people talking “past each other”. She championed the idea of low-key-led development and recognised the role diasporas should have in this process. The fact that Covid brought to the public opinion the knowledge that NGO staff are front-line workers was also recognised.

RESOURCES

- Barnaba Dorda's presentation.
- Mbemba Jabbi's presentation.
- Watchback: Event recording.