



Metropolis Conference in The Hague, October 4-8, 2010

Report of the ADPC Workshop: Building development partnerships between Diaspora organizations and sub-national development institutions

On October 5, 2010, the African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC), in cooperation with Cordaid, organized a workshop on: 'Building development partnerships between Diaspora organizations and sub-national development institutions'. The main purpose of the workshop was to explore ways to promote viable development partnerships between diaspora organizations and sub-national development institutions (municipalities, local governments, NGOs and private sector) both in the host and home countries. The workshop was well- attended by representatives from diaspora organizations both in the Netherlands and abroad, mainstream donor agencies, the private sector, NGO's, municipalities and local government institutions and academia.

In addition, the workshop facilitated the participation of sufficient numbers of diaspora representatives in the 15th International Metropolis Conference, organized for the first time by the city of The Hague. This was an important step, because diaspora participation in previous Metropolis Conferences had been very disappointing. The local authorities of the city of The Hague were determined redress this obvious shortcoming of past meetings. They also wanted to ensure that the critical voices of the diaspora were clearly heard during the conference. This was particularly important since the theme of the conference was 'Justice and Migration', an issue which has become a daily reality for members of the diaspora. Eliciting diaspora perspectives on this topic is essential for an effective and serious debate.

The participants in the workshop were enthusiastic about the topic for discussion as they considered it to be an area which, thus far, has largely been overlooked, despite its critical significance. Examining the subject from different perspectives, they deliberated the options of fostering practical cooperation between diaspora organizations and sub-national development institutions. Participants in the workshop also exchanged diverse experiences and shared catalysts of best practices between diaspora organizations and sub-national development institutions. In addition, they identified key challenges, existing constraints and acute research gaps for building development partnerships between diaspora and sub-national actors both in the host and home countries. It became clear during the discussion that the subject of the workshop is an area of which we still know very little, in terms of both policy considerations and practical operations. In this regard, the workshop was a 'pioneering exercise'. The event was both relevant and timely as it attempted to showcase examples and catalysts of partnerships for diaspora organisations and sub-national development institutions both in the host and home countries from which policymaking lessons can be learned.

In particular, the discussion highlighted the challenges that put a stop to diaspora development practitioners operating in isolation, as has been the case in the past for too many of them. For example, the recent global economic crisis has produced long-lasting consequences that have deeply affected the flow of diaspora remittances to their respective homelands. The crisis has also had an impact on the sustainability of community-oriented projects that diaspora development practitioners have been implementing in their countries of origin. This new development, therefore, compels the diaspora to enter into development partnerships with sub-national development actors. This can be promoted by raising awareness of the greater development benefits that are reaped from strategic collaboration through workshops and expert meetings, which bring together the diaspora and sub-

national development actors. Such meetings would enable them to establish viable networks, to learn from each other's development related activities, to exchange valuable information and share best practices and positive experiences. It will also facilitate strategic alliances and initiate joint development projects that could contribute more to poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in the homelands.

Diaspora development practitioners and sub-national development actors can make a difference if they join forces in the struggle to reduce poverty and boost domestic economies in the homelands. In other words, collaboration could substantially improve the impact of their work. The advantage of joining forces is that each development sector brings its unique strengths and added value to the projects, leading to increased reach, capacity, efficiency and impact of the projects on development in the local communities. Such cooperation ensures that the diaspora gains access to professional expertise, practical experience, influential networks and resources from the mainstream sector. With sufficient facilitation, it will also substantially upscale the development activities undertaken by the diaspora.

In a nutshell, participants in the workshop concluded that the potential for collaboration between the diaspora and sub-national development actors, as outlined above, still receives inadequate attention in terms of policy and research, despite its critical importance in the boosting of development in the homelands. It was recommended that the ADPC should undertake an evidence-based research that would enable us to better understand how to foster effective development partnerships between diaspora organizations and sub-national development institutions both in host and home countries. Such an evidence-based research can help policymakers formulate appropriate policy proposals, which can be translated into feasible strategic interventions and realisable actions.