Helpdesk Research Report: Donor Initiatives to Engage with the South Sudanese Diaspora

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**Query:** Please provide information on initiatives (either underway or in development) by other donors (particularly the US and UK if possible) to engage with their South Sudanese diasporas to inform the development of their own assistance programs to South Sudan or to tap into diaspora expertise and capacity to support development in South Sudan. If minimal information is available on the South Sudanese diaspora, please provide the same criteria of information on engagement with Somali or other African diasporas from post-conflict states.

**Purpose:** To inform AusAID’s thinking on how the Australian Government can engage with the large South Sudanese diaspora in Australia to (a) develop our assistance program to South Sudan going forward, and/or (b) support members of the diaspora to contribute to community-level development and statebuilding in South Sudan.

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Contents

1. Overview
2. Initiatives to engage with South Sudanese diaspora
3. Initiatives to engage Somali diaspora
4. Initiatives to engage other African diasporas in post-conflict states
5. References
6. Additional information

1. Overview

This report provides details of donor programmes designed to engage with the South Sudanese diaspora with the goal of supporting their development efforts in the country. It also provides details of similar programmes with the Somali diaspora and diaspora from other post-conflict states in Africa.

A small number of initiatives are currently being undertaken with the South Sudanese diaspora. Three programmes focus on facilitating the return of skilled diaspora to their homeland to work in the public sector or to provide training. Another donor-funded programme involves consulting diaspora groups when designing development programmes. A number of completed or defunct programmes were also identified, all of which focused on skills transfer.
A more extensive range of donor initiatives have been undertaken to engage the Somali diaspora, most of which have focused on skills transfer. The most extensive and well-known of these, the UNDP – QUESTS-MIDA programme facilitates the return of skilled diaspora to central government. Other initiatives have provided funding to diaspora groups and supported the coordination of their activities, promoted the participation of women in ongoing peace and state-building processes, and supported the return of skilled diaspora into the health sector.

The greater number of initiatives to support the Somali diaspora is partly due to the fact the Somali diaspora is several times larger than the South Sudanese diaspora. Most statistics relating to the Sudanese diaspora do not disaggregate between North and South but OECD statistics from 2000 and 2001 show that the largest groups of Sudanese diaspora are found in the US (20,350), the UK (10,671), Canada (7,490), Australia (4,662) and the Netherlands (4,042). The Somali diaspora is conservatively estimated at between 1 million and 1.5 million (Hammond et al 2011, p.26). Large populations are found in the UK (95-250,000), the US (c.150,000) Canada (70-100,000) and Kenya (c.100,000) (ibid., p.27).

A number of more wide-ranging initiatives that focused on diasporas in more than one country have been supported by donors. As with the South Sudanese and Somali initiatives these programmes focused mainly on skills transfer and providing grants and capacity-building support to diaspora organisations. Popular areas of support included assisting networking activities of diaspora groups and facilitating their involvement in the policy-making process. Rwanda has been a key site for diaspora engagement in Africa.

Most initiatives detailed in this report managed to successfully train or facilitate the return of a number of individuals from the diaspora, or were effective in supporting the activities of diaspora organisations. Few of the programmes examined, however, provided much evidence of a wider impact. Horst’s (2010) wide-ranging study, which is based on donor initiatives from a variety of countries, generates a number of important lessons and recommendations for future programming, many of which are echoed in Hammond et al’s (2011) study of Somali diaspora:

- Adopt long-term strategic approaches to diaspora participation.
- Support voluntary efforts through an integrated approach. Of the many initiatives to facilitate the participation of (largely) voluntary diaspora organisations in development cooperation and peacebuilding, those that have an integrated approach that combines capacity-building and organisational support with funding schemes seem to have the best results.
- Sustain diaspora participation in all phases of cooperation.
- Donor engagement should ensure that it does not disrupt diaspora ownership.
- Address fragmentation and politicization. The fact that conflict-induced diasporas are often characterized by fragmentation and politicization is not surprising. Focusing on professional competences or finding other ways of creating de-politicized spaces is one way of doing this, as exemplified in the IOM’s MIDA projects in Finland.
- Focus on providing or protecting an enabling environment for diaspora community development work.

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1 These data include both foreign-born citizens and nationals. Full data available here: [http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/18/23/34792376.xls](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/18/23/34792376.xls). Many South Sudanese live in bordering countries, including Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo (RNW 2009), but there are no data available on this group, which is sometimes known as the ‘near diaspora’.
- **Invest in temporary return programmes for professionals.** Temporary and circular return programmes represent excellent ways of allowing diaspora members to contribute their expertise to the betterment of their countries of origin.
- **Support professional participation through recruitment policies.** Donors and UN agencies can enhance diaspora engagement by recruiting more from the diaspora.
- **Support business investments.** Financial and technical support is seen to be crucial in order to lift the level and success of business activities currently taking place.
- **Provide support to diaspora businesses to learn from ‘venture philanthropy’ and corporate social responsibility approaches** used by Western and Islamic businesses.
- **Provide guidance on how to establish endowments for educational institutions.** Endowments are a critically important source of sustainable funding for certain types of non-profits, mainly those with a “non-perishable” mission like educational institutions.
- **Support government to create and staff diaspora investment centres or liaison offices** that could inform the diaspora about investment opportunities and development needs, thereby increasing the level of investments from the diaspora.
- **Provide a social service fund to provide matching grants to private schools and clinics.** The fund could provide grants to organisations which successfully attract diaspora support, but would be disbursed to the local organisation (rather than to the diaspora associations).
- **Support bottom-up umbrella organisations.** Umbrella organisations should be created first and foremost because of the shared interests of the member organisations involved, not because of the needs of external actors. Therefore, bottom-up rather than top-down approaches are preferable.

### 2. Initiatives to engage the South Sudanese diaspora

**Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOTKEN)** ([http://www.sd.undp.org/press%20TOKTEN.htm](http://www.sd.undp.org/press%20TOKTEN.htm)). TOTKEN is a development initiative introduced by UNDP in 1977 as a means to counter the exodus of professionals from developing countries. The programme ‘allows skilled professionals from developing countries to return home for a period ranging from one week to three months to contribute their skills and services to the country’s development’ (no p.n.). The TOTKEN initiative in Sudan has a ‘demand-driven approach with a strong focus on development of institutional capacity. So far, as part of the TOTKEN, organisations such as the National Population Council, the Sudan University of Science and Technology, the Ministries of Interior, Finance and National Economy, Agriculture and Forestry, the Sudan National AIDS Programme (SNAP) and Ahfad University of Women have benefited from specialist knowledge transferred by the Sudanese professionals living abroad’ (no p.n.).

**Skills for Southern Sudan** ([http://www.skills-southsudan.org/](http://www.skills-southsudan.org/)) is an organisation that was established in the UK in 1995 but is now based in Juba. The organisation provides training to individuals, ‘in order to develop and build the capacity of government institutions – at a national, state and local level – and civil society organisations’. Skills for Southern Sudan has been funded through the DFID/Comic Relief ‘Common Ground Initiative’ (see section 4 below). It has also received funding from UNIFEM and a range of private foundations. In 2007-8, Skills for Southern Sudan provided training for 503 civil servants from ten states, 231 civil servants from the Government of Southern Sudan, 404 members of community based organisations, 376 members of state legislative assemblies, 207 Committee Chairs and their staff, 38 Speakers and Deputy Speakers, 58 people in record management, 190 people in computer training, and 10 local community consultants.
**USAID’s Diaspora Network Alliance** ([http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACM860.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACM860.pdf)) is a public-private initiative which ‘enables partnerships between USAID, private sector, other donor organisations and Diasporas built on knowledge generation, engagement, and operational work with the purpose of promoting economic and social growth in the countries of origin’. The programme undertakes activities to enhance the development potential of remittances in a number of countries, including South Sudan. In South Sudan, USAID has assisted opportunities for members of the diaspora to return home to volunteer in short and long-term public service.

**Dutch government consultation.** The Dutch government has a long-established tradition of consulting diaspora associations. Mechanisms for consultation were set up in 1997 and have been used more recently by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Recently, the Division for Sub-Saharan Africa consulted migrants from Sudan and Somalia ‘in an effort to develop a constructive approach to peace processes in those countries that includes dialogue with the diaspora’ (Horst 2010, p.51).

**Completed or Defunct Programmes**

**Return and Reintegration of Qualified Sudanese (RQS) Programme (South Sudan)** ([http://www.iom.int/rqs/index.html](http://www.iom.int/rqs/index.html)) is a Danish-funded programme implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) ‘to meet critical gaps in knowledge and skills by identifying educated, trained, and experienced Sudanese living outside of Sudan who are committed to returning to Sudan to contribute to the country’s development and prosperity’. RQS does not pay the salaries of resettled workers, but provides a reintegration package, which can include transport and shipment of goods to Sudan for the candidate and immediate family. The programme’s website states that it is currently on hold until further notice.

More than 200 Sudanese have been successfully placed as teachers, health workers, technicians, finance personnel, agriculturists, information staff and local government staff. Teachers are the biggest group followed by health personnel and vocational workers. About a third of all successful candidates are women. RQS has given priority to those who have expertise and experience in the fields of: health, infrastructure, education, agriculture, finance, management or business development, and are interested in returning to long-term employment in South Sudan. Most recruits have been placed in the Southern states of Western and Eastern Equatoria, followed by Western Bahr El Ghazal, Central Equatoria, and Unity State.

**The Diaspora Skills Transfer Programme for Southern Sudan** ([http://www.aed.org/Projects/sudanese_diaspora.cfm](http://www.aed.org/Projects/sudanese_diaspora.cfm)). This AED (Academy for Educational Development)-implemented, USAID-funded programme ran from 2005 to 2007 and ‘addressed critical shortages in assistance in areas of health and education. The program enabled skilled, experienced, and educated Sudanese from Southern Sudan, living outside the region (in North America, Europe, Africa, and elsewhere) to return on a volunteer basis to assist with developing human skills and institutional capacities in health and education sectors’ (AED 2009, p.14).

**The Sudanese North American Diaspora Database** ([http://www.nasircommunityassociation.net/DataBassDiaspora.htm](http://www.nasircommunityassociation.net/DataBassDiaspora.htm)) was a website funded by USAID that sought to ‘identify Sudanese in the North American Diaspora interested in participating in skills transfer programs through short/long term assignments with projects and programs to build capacity and contribute to the development of Southern Sudan’. The website is no longer operational.
3. Initiatives to engage the Somali diaspora

UNDP – QUESTS-MIDA programme (http://www.quests-mida.org/). QUESTS-MIDA is a joint initiative between United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Somalia and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Launched in 2009, it supports the development of institutions of government by facilitating the transfer of skills, knowledge and experience from qualified Somali expatriates in the diaspora through short-term, capacity-building assignments in key public institutions in Somalia. It is a small programme that only focuses on the transfer of skills to the ‘core of government’ (Horst 2010, p.48). The IOM manages a database of skilled applicants.

Since its initiation, the project has sought to overcome some of the weaknesses of the previous QUESTS phase (2004–08) in relation to ‘the transparency of recruitment processes, the attractiveness of remuneration packages for selected experts, and the breadth of the outreach strategy. As a result, the response from the Somali diaspora has been encouraging, and an enhanced sense of trust between the diaspora and the implementing agencies now exists’ (Horst 2010, p. 44). Expressions of interest have been received from Somali nationals in more than 100 countries and more than 300 applications were submitted for the first 18 positions. The project’s website has received over 70,000 visits in 12 months. The programme has had some success in placing people within the civil administrations in Somaliland, Puntland and the Transitional Federal Government (Horst 2010, Hammond et al 2011). One problem with the programme is a lack of support for participants once they take up positions (Horst 2010, Hammond et al 2011). Many diaspora expressed an interest in participating in this kind of programme if it could incorporate workers from the health and education sectors (ibid.).

Gender and Peace in Somalia: Implementation of Resolution 1325. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs engaged directly with the Somali diaspora in 2006 to support dialogue between women of the Somali diaspora in Italy, women’s organisations in Somalia, representatives from Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government and international stakeholders. These women organised themselves into an umbrella association – the Associazione Diaspora e Pace (ADEP). ADEP was formally established in 2008 with the aim of promoting the participation of women in ongoing peace and state-building processes in Somalia, as well as in the Somali elections, which were originally announced for November 2009.

According to Horst (2010, p.23) ‘ADEP failed to involve other members of the Somali community in Italy, and this gave rise to criticism within parts of the Somali community, which felt excluded by the MFA’s initiative. Without intending to do so, the MFA was responsible for creating a hierarchy among the leaders of the diaspora’s women’s groups – leading to the exclusion of other actors, who felt less involved and eventually left the initiative’. This case highlights the important issue of internal divisions within the diaspora, which permeate groups such as women’s organisations that are assumed to have an affinity with one another. Horst (2010, p.22) concludes that ‘[d]espite this, the project…undoubtedly had the positive effect of bringing attention both to the situation in Somalia and to the potential involvement of Somali women in transnational political processes’.

Strengthening the health sector in Somaliland and Puntland through the engagement of Somali diaspora health professionals from Finland. The IOM’s Helsinki office coordinated a one-year pilot project within the MIDA health programme, launched in 2008 and funded by Finland’s Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA). During the programme, 22 short-term secondments of Somali health professionals from Finland to local health institutions in Somaliland and Puntland were made. Horst (2010) notes that one problem with the project was fragmentation and politicisation arising from
regional affiliations and differences in political visions of participating individuals and organisations. This challenge was overcome, however, through the creation of ‘depoliticised spaces’ and ‘through a focus on common causes: health needs in the country and the humanitarian pledge of health professionals’ (Horst 2010, p.23). Another feature that underpinned the project’s success was that the selection criteria were clear – they were based on professional requirements and expertise.

The Finnish Somalia Network was established in 2004 by Somali and native-Finnish NGOs/CSOs working on development in Somalia. The network aims to improve cooperation and coordination among associations working in Somalia, and facilitate the production and exchange of information on issues relating to the country. It arranges training courses and seminars on issues that include project management, reporting, auditing and fundraising. It has received funding from Finland’s Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) since 2005 and is regarded as a tool with which the MFA can provide capacity-building for and assist in empowering Somali associations. MFA recently refused to fund the network for a further three years. The network has been difficult to coordinate because of differences among member organisations. It has succeeded in bringing together Somali organisations from different regions of Somalia and has successfully enhanced the capacity of member associations. The network has also helped to increase trust between Somali associations and the MFA, as well as between Somali associations themselves. (Horst 2010, p.32).

The DRC Diaspora Fund (http://www.drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA_PDF/Diaspora/The%20Diaspora%20Fund%20in%20a%20nutshell%2017th%20Nov.pdf). This programme, implemented by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and funded by DANIDA, provides diaspora groups in Denmark with funding to contribute to rehabilitation and/or development in their home country. The pilot phase of the project was conducted in Somalia and Afghanistan. After the pilot phase is complete, DRC will consider expanding the programme to other regions (expert comments).

As well as providing funding for a project in the home country, the DRC Fund also provided organisational support to the diaspora organisations to apply for funding and to monitor the project. Approved projects in Somalia included support for a community-owned radio station, a clean water project, a model farm for training and a school construction project. A full list of approved projects can be found here: http://www.drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA_PDF/Diaspora/list%20of%20approved%20projects.pdf

Completed Programmes

The Diaspora Partnership Programme (DPP) was developed by CARE Nederland and the Somali diaspora organisation NedSom and ran from 2006 to 2008. The programme was funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and aimed to contribute to the establishment of a peaceful and secure society in Somalia through the involvement of members of the Dutch-Somali diaspora in the reconstruction of their country. It sought to achieve this aim by strengthening the capacity of local partners (government, private sector, NGO and CSOs), and linking them to suitably qualified individuals from the Somali diaspora who returned temporarily to Somaliland and Puntland. The project was successful in increasing the involvement of the diaspora in development. CARE Nederland’s relationship with Somali diaspora organisations also improved as a result of the project. 30% of the project’s participants were still living and working in Somaliland or Puntland after the project’s completion. The project showed that collaboration between a traditional NGO and a diaspora organisation, despite challenges, was possible if the two organisations were sufficiently
flexible. The partnership with CARE provided NedSom with a unique opportunity to access large-scale funding resources (Horst 2010, p.48).

Safe Births Project ([http://www.gtz.de/en/dokumente/gtz2010-en-somalia-birth.pdf](http://www.gtz.de/en/dokumente/gtz2010-en-somalia-birth.pdf)). This project was initiated as part of GTZ’s ‘Migration and Development’ pilot programme (see next section). GTZ supported the German-based Somali diaspora organisation ‘Stop Mutilation’ to provide medical care for women in Somalia. The companies Vattenfall and Henkel built a maternity and children’s hospital in Puntland, Somalia, in 2006. With GTZ support, “Stop Mutilation” expanded the facility to include a pharmacy, a laboratory, a reservoir tank for fresh water and a wastewater collecting tank. The Somali non-governmental organisation Dandor coordinated the construction work in Somalia. The tense security situation on the ground, difficulties in transporting the materials and low-skilled staff turned the project into something of an adventure. However, “Stop Mutilation” and the local partners refused to give up and were able to complete the project successfully, thanks to their sound knowledge of local circumstances’ (GIZ website).

4. Initiatives to engage other African diasporas in post-conflict states

The DFID Diaspora Volunteering Programme ([http://www.vso.org.uk/volunteer/diaspora-volunteering/](http://www.vso.org.uk/volunteer/diaspora-volunteering/)) is implemented by Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), a British charity. It works through over 20 diaspora organisations and ‘provides funding to help skilled professionals from the UK’s diaspora communities volunteer to work in their countries or continents of heritage and for the volunteers to make a meaningful contribution to a development project’. The programme currently operates in a number of post-conflict states including Rwanda.

The DFID/Comic Relief Common Ground Initiative ([http://www.comicrelief.com/sites/all/assets/documents/resources/Common-Ground-Initiative-Strategy.pdf](http://www.comicrelief.com/sites/all/assets/documents/resources/Common-Ground-Initiative-Strategy.pdf)) was established in 2009 to increase access to grants for small and diaspora-led organisations in the UK that are working to create sustainable changes to some of the poorest and most disadvantaged communities in Africa. The £20 million fund also aims to strengthen the capacity of small and Diaspora organisations in the UK. Projects have been funded in the fields of health, education and enterprise.

The Unit for Migration and Development was established in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) in 2006 by the German Ministry for Intergenerational Affairs, Family, Women and Integration (MGFFI) to foster and accompany networking and empowerment processes among African diaspora and migrant organisations working on development-related issues by providing assistance, training seminars and exchange forums. Conferences provided an opportunity for different organisations to explore areas of potential cooperation. The programme resulted in a regional African networking association. Another success was the inclusion of African representatives in the newly elected integration councils in ten cities in early 2010. Challenges have included fluctuations in the memberships of several organisations, rivalries between voluntary and professional workers, and differences in motivations and objectives – ‘for example, seeking to increase the visibility of African migrants in Germany vs. collaborating in development cooperation’ (Horst 2010, p.35).

Migration and Development Project. This project was established by GIZ (then GTZ) in 2007 in order to test and devise innovative migration and development policies. The programme targeted diaspora groups in Germany and provided them with the opportunity to implement projects in their countries of origin in collaboration with GTZ. GTZ provided funding to the organisations and collected experiences of cooperation to aid the development of long-term strategies and mechanisms for


inclusion. Several of the projects funded were implemented in post-conflict states including a vocational training programme in Rwanda. The pilot project was evaluated in 2010. The evaluation found that the programme ‘had a positive impact on migrant organisations themselves by creating new incentives, improving capacities and providing stimulating positive examples to other organizations. Among the challenges and needs are further training and professionalization seminars for migrant organizations and an ongoing exchange regarding mutual perspectives on and approaches to development. In terms of financial capacities, it was noted that some organizations lacked the necessary resources to make a successful application’ (Horst 2010, p.30).

Nimble Hands, Rwanda (http://www.gtz.de/en/dokumente/gtz2010-en-ruanda-tailor.pdf) is a project funded by the Migration and Development Programme. GTZ funded the migrant organisation ‘Ruandische Diaspora in Deutschland’ to promote seamstresses in Musanze in cooperation with a local partner. ‘The aim of the association is to help women start up their own business and offer them the opportunity to practise their skills in the association’s rooms. The association started in 2005 with just three sewing machines, a table and 11 pupils. With support from GTZ, these facilities have improved considerably. Today, 30 sewing machines are available for the trainees’ use. The association has been converted into a cooperative entitled COOPTC/ABAFATANIJE. In the past three years, 46 pupils have earned a certificate of completion’.

The African Diaspora Health Initiative (2008) and the African Remittances Institute (2010) are two programmatic efforts led by the African Union, which are designed to mobilize the human and financial resources of the diaspora for Africa’s development (Horst 2010, p.11). Both initiatives are in their early stages. As of 2009, the Africa Diaspora Health Initiative had not facilitated the secondment of any diaspora health professionals.²

Africa-EU Partnership Programme (http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/doc_jaes_action_plan_2011_13_en.pdf#page=6). The recent 2011-13 Action Plan for the joint EU-Africa Strategy proposed the establishment of a ‘Diaspora Outreach Initiative’. The partners will ‘establish an Africa–EU Diaspora cooperation framework, with the objective of engaging the Diaspora in the development of Africa and to build capacity and transfer skills, knowledge and technologies from the Diaspora to the African continent’ (p. 63). ‘Priority actions that will be developed are: (1) Mapping of African Diaspora organisations in the EU, (2) Programmes addressing specific sectoral needs, such as a Diaspora Health Network, (3) AU regional network on African diasporas in Europe’ (p.64).

5. References

http://www.aed.org/Regions/Resources/upload/AEDWorldPoster_Africa.pdf

http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/11710/1/Cash_and_Compassion_Draft_for_comments.pdf


6. Additional information

Experts consulted:

Ann Kangas, Social Development Direct
Cindy Horst, PRIO
Stephanie Riak Akuei, Independent Consultant
Mariza Rogers, USAID
Maja Halleen Graae, Danish Refugee Council
Jaffar Jama, IOM

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