SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
THINKING OF THE WORLD

ENGAGING
DIASPORA
in development
Tapping Our Trans-Local Potential for Change

**Report on Dialogue 5:**

*Diasporic Contributions to Development: Opportunities and Lessons Learned*

September 14, 2011

SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre For Dialogue, 580 West Hastings Street

## 1. Background to the Dialogue

Since January 2011, SFU has hosted four public dialogues and a workshop series— each exploring the many unique ways diaspora from the global south, settled in Canada, are leading initiatives to create change in their communities of attachment. The dialogues have brought forward stories of people taking innovative leadership to reduce poverty, build infrastructure, improve health and education, respond to human insecurity, and build peace.

The project has forged important networks, personal connections and learning, and a view that development is about creating the space for choice and needs to address uneven income distribution; the huge disparities between rich and poor; and to focus on governance as well as health, education and other poverty reduction strategies.

The project has also made it possible for diaspora, working often in isolation, to find like-minded individuals who are passionate about helping others. This final public dialogue aimed to identify ways in which diaspora contribute to development, and explore what is required to enable them to have greater impact including personal capacity development, public policy mechanisms, and institutional support.

## 2. Purpose of the September 14 Dialogue

On September 14, 180 people gathered at SFU's Wosk Centre for Dialogue on traditional Coast Salish territory for the fifth and final dialogue in the Engaging Diaspora in Development series to contemplate the learnings and ideas generated from a year-long public engagement project that included focus groups, workshops, and public dialogues on various aspects of development by diaspora.

As co-director of the project, Shaheen Nanji, in her opening remarks, reflected on the meaning of diaspora saying that, "members of the diaspora are reflexive agents of change, whose diasporic attachment is defined through a capacity to empathize, borne of common experience (rather than pre-defined by ethnicity or culture). As an example, many of the so-called Indian Diaspora in Canada are also equally —and some more so —attached to East Africa or Fiji, demonstrating that people's sense of being diaspora, like identity, is layered and context specific."

The September dialogue offered an opportunity to reflect on the series of public dialogues and workshops that have taken place since January 2011 where the power and potential of diaspora in development work in the global south was profiled and investigated, as were ways to better support these efforts. The series of dialogues to date have demonstrated the capacity, passion, and resourcefulness of members of the diaspora who are engaged in creating a better world as well as the extent to which it exists, and the tremendous potential it creates for Canada and beyond.

### 3. Format and Structure of the Dialogue

The final dialogue for the Engaging Diasporas in Development Project consisted of two parts: a "World Café" in which participants circulated through the room to take part in multiple informal discussions of selected topics; and a "plenary dialogue" which saw the 180 participants congregate in a single group. The session began with small-group dialogues in the Concourse level over dinner and concluded in the Asia Pacific Hall at SFU's Wosk Centre for Dialogue.





Project co-director Dr. Joanna Ashworth provided an overview of the program and introduced two of the special guests/resource people present: Yvette Macabuag of CUSO-VSO and John Monahan, executive director of the Mosaic Institute. Joanna offered a few tips for good dialogue, including: speak personally (rather than generally); share the air time (and thus allow all voices to be heard); listen deeply, without pre-judgment; and focus on what matters, that is, stay focused on the purpose of the dialogue and the questions as a starting point.

The small-group, dialogue-based exercise consisted of a number of simultaneous dialogues taking place at banquet tables throughout the room. Participants were invited to share their thoughts on a series of questions while designated volunteers moderated the conversations and note-takers recorded participant contributions. After a period of 20 minutes, the participants were invited to move to a new table and resume discussing a new set of questions with a different cohort.

The discussions in both the small-group and plenary sessions focused on broad questions that drew out the knowledge that had accumulated over the course of previous, more issue-specific dialogues. The result was an invigorated dialogue that illuminated fundamental questions regarding the actual and potential contributions of diaspora to development, the impediments facing such contributions at various levels, and the strategies and actions required to overcome those impediments.

## 4. Organizing Questions

This report articulates the key ideas and themes that emerged from the dialogue, which focused on the following questions:

1. What is the diaspora contribution to development?

2. What will enable diaspora (individually or organizationally) to contribute more effectively to development (be as specific as possible about what mechanisms are needed)?

3. What image or metaphor comes to mind that represents the diaspora contribution to development?

*"Development cannot continue in the way it's been happening. In order to improve, we need to engage the diaspora—their voices, their understanding, but also the inclusion of other Canadians."* **– Dialogue Participant**

## 5. Emerging Themes

During the discussion of the first question, points of agreement emerged around the role of diaspora in funding special or under-emphasized interests and the multi-directional transferring and sharing of resources and skills. In addition, there was some consensus that diaspora can promote better activism within communities. It was also widely acknowledged that the desire to contribute to one's place of attachment is natural and that developing one's self and one's community here in Canada is necessary in order to gain the knowledge and capacity to better resolve issues in that place of attachment. At the same time, several participants agreed that finding freedom and success in Canada could carry with it feelings of guilt and begs the question: "Why couldn't this happen back home?"

### *5.1 What is the diaspora contribution to development?*

There were many ideas and examples shared about the diaspora contribution to development. These included: resource mobilization, research and development, providing help for new immigrants, remittances. It was also noted that development work also contributes to innovation in social enterprise/non-profit organizations in Canada.

*Main areas of agreement*

- There is a freedom that comes with moving to Canada that many didn't have before. There is also guilt among some members of the diaspora in succeeding in a new country and questions of why this could not have happened back home.
- Wanting to contribute to your homeland is natural. We need to develop ourselves and our communities so that we gather knowledge of the issues—the more we know, the better we can resolve issues. (We need clarity around the issues).
- Cultural understanding of both here and there.
- Environmental movement.
- Diaspora can fund special and/or ignored interests.
- Sharing skills and resources goes both ways.
- Promote better communication infrastructure to better promote activism within communities.

*Unique Perspectives*

- Contribution is small, non-existent. Diaspora has a small voice.
- Diaspora community may be politically and socially different from the home community and may not represent ideas from home.
- Diaspora can be a hindrance. Sometimes, when people leave the country of their birth they do so with a bitter taste in their mouths (feel dispossessed). They arrive in Canada and that bitterness can spill over in to negativity in how they present themselves.
- The government of Canada knows the solutions. The culture of Canada is to talk about the issues. Therefore, the word "diaspora" can be seen as "political alienation" of the diaspora community.
- There is no diaspora. It's all individual people.
- We lack the equipment of discourse.
- Western education is not necessarily the "best" education.
- Canada recruits well, but utilizes poorly.
- All countries are being developed by diaspora.
- Corruption is problematic—rigorous monitoring is needed.
- Political interference of some diaspora can be negative—people who are "stuck" in a certain time period but their home country has moved on.

### *5.2 What will enable diaspora to contribute more effectively to development?*

This question drew out some very specific recommendations touching on a range of issues. Prime areas of focus included creating policy at various levels of government, organizing within and between diaspora groups, and developing various tools and capacities that enable contributions to development— most notably in the area of communication.

Recommendations regarding government policy included increased communication between the Government of Canada and local-level partners overseas. It was suggested that the government should establish a policy of matching donations (to diaspora-led development organizations) and that diaspora need "more alternatives to CIDA." It was also suggested

that diaspora can reorganize the way they contribute to development and help shape policy and funding for local governments in their regions of attachment.

On the issue of organizations within and between diaspora it was noted "solidarity is key." Diasporas must help each other feel confident and supported. Mixing cultural groups, it was further suggested, can allow for cross-cultural learning, sharing and can challenge established perspectives. Another contributor noted that this would require getting past religious friction, which sometimes exists between diaspora organizations. A collaborative approach to diaspora organization could also address the overlap and unnecessary competition that exists between organizations and projects. One participant argued that projects and programs should not be "spread so thin."

*Specific Recommendations to Support Diaspora Development Efforts*

- Organize the way diaspora contributes—they can shape policy and funding for local governments and home nations.
- Better communication tools—online and web access.
- Repatriation of knowledge from country of residence to country of birth.
- Take ownership of the word "diaspora." If we don't make the issues visible, who will?
- Local and overseas partner organizations.
- Reduce overlap (eliminate unnecessary competition).
- Develop an entrepreneurial attitude towards development.
- Avoid a mob mentality within the diaspora; enable them to contribute for the common good.
- Enable communications training to improve skills to get their stories out.
- Don't spread projects/programs so thin.
- More communication between Canadian government and overseas partners at the local level.
- More alternatives to CIDA.
- Get past religious friction between diaspora organizations.
- Pool resources.
- Solidarity is key—helping each other feel confident and supported.
- Mix cultural groups to allow for cross learning and sharing—"this allows us to challenge our perspective."

## 5.3 What are some specific mechanisms that would help?

The suggested mechanisms included organizations, programs and policies to strengthen and facilitate diaspora capacities. Proposed organizations included an accreditation board to address the widely cited problem of non-recognition of credentials attained in non-western countries. It was also suggested that a database of diaspora organizations be established as well as a venue for "critical questioning." A number of programs were proposed including the establishment of "diaspora development bonds" and scholarships that are independent of corporate interests. Participants highlighted the need for programs to help develop fundraising skills as well as other kinds of help for new immigrants (i.e. bridge programs).

Finally, one participant suggested that diaspora should organize their remittances so as to support a particular organization.

Policy recommendations included integrating ethno-cultural research across government departments in addition to bringing more diaspora into positions within the Government of Canada. Further efforts were recommended to encourage diaspora participation, noting that just having the connection to a country is insufficient; skill and desire are also required. Additional suggestions included improving cultural sensitivity and putting increased emphasis on measuring outcomes.

Several tools and strategies were proposed as means of enhancing the capacity of diaspora to contribute to development. These included taking ownership of the word "diaspora" and making issues visible ("If we don't then who will?"). It was also suggested that diaspora should adopt an entrepreneurial attitude towards development. Several ideas came forward with regard to developing better tools for communication. These included online and web access, enabling communication training to improve skills and "help get their stories out," and facilitating the repatriation of knowledge from the country of residence to the region of attachment.

*Specific Mechanisms to Support Diaspora Development Efforts*

- Government-matched donations (to small-scale, diaspora-driven development projects).
- Creation of an accreditation board.
- Other kinds of help for new immigrants (bridge programs).
- Scholarships that are not tied to corporate interests (i.e. drug companies funding HIV projects).
- Developing incentives to encourage diaspora participation (just having a connection to a country doesn't mean you have the necessary skills and/or desire to help).
- Venues for critical questioning.
- Integrating ethno-cultural research across government departments.
- More focus on measuring outcomes.
- Cultural sensitivity and common languages.
- Organize remittances so that they go to a particular organization.
- Bring more diaspora into government positions in Canada.
- Diaspora Development Bond.
- Database of diaspora organizations.
- Fundraising skills.

## *5.4 What does the project research indicate?*

Associate Professor James Busumtwi-Sam, one of the project's academic advisors, provided an overview of the project's research report. The research focuses on three core issues:

1) the relationship between diaspora and immigrants/migrants and between diaspora and civil society,

2) the nature and scope of diaspora contributions to development (beyond remittances), and

3) the challenges to and strategies for enhancing engagement.

James highlighted key issues including the importance of diaspora contributions occurring in the areas of economic development, poverty reduction, social development, and political development, in addition to the more widely recognized issue of remittances. Further, he noted the importance of Canadian-based diaspora contributions to Canadian development and what he characterized as a "looping effect."

Among the key challenges he outlined were the broader structural components of Canadian society, which can serve to either enable or constrain the agency of diaspora (and Canadians more generally). These include issues related to the politics of citizenship, multiculturalism, and problems surrounding credentials and employment. The attitudes and perceptions of the wider Canadian public, he pointed out, also present a potential challenge as well as an opportunity. Within the diaspora itself, issues of fragmentation, limited resources, the small scale of projects, and tension between the private and public aspects of activities present additional challenges. When pursuing strategies to mitigate these and other challenges, James cautioned it is important to bear in mind the potential for harm. Safeguards must be put in place to address accountability, representativeness, transparency and sustainability.

*Response to the Research*

The exploration of these questions centred primarily on two topics: 1) the need for members of the diaspora to succeed in Canada in order to contribute to development elsewhere, and: 2) the underdeveloped role of diaspora in development policy and practice at the level of the Government of Canada. Additional issues raised included potential changes to Canadian immigration policy with regard to coherence with credential recognition and labour policy and the importance of solidarity and "global citizenship."

*Succeeding in Canada in order to Contribute to Development*

The importance of diaspora achieving success in Canada emerged as a major issue for discussion. One participant lamented the vast gap between the relative ease with which immigrants and refugees to Canada receive work permits and the great difficulty they often have in finding work. He noted the preference of Canadian employers to hire people with

"Canadian experience" and the trap that requirement creates for new Canadians. He recommended the creation of a body that recruits outside of Canada's borders to deal with problems surrounding the recognition of credentials and skills. Another participant gave an impassioned plea for everyone to recognize his or her capacity to contribute. She declared a need to involve everyone in development, referring to the specific talents each individual could bring to the table. The question of support was of particular importance to her. She outlined the difficulties in getting funding and support for development efforts, relating that many funding agencies will not support a project that does not already have support (a kind of funding trap). She suggested that the diaspora can play a role in finding small community based organizations and bringing them to the funding agencies and universities, to better understand and support what they do.

With regard diaspora in Canada, she said, many immigrants cannot get work or training without "landed" status. "Back home you might have been lecturing in a university," she said, "but here, it is as if you never went to school." She asked: "How many times are new immigrants going to cry? Who is going to hear that cry? Can the diaspora pull us together?" Immigrants live in fear, she said, because they don't know where they will be tomorrow. She wondered aloud if the diaspora can work to alleviate that fear. Everyone, she said, can do something, but most don't know that they are contributors.

Another participant commented on the untapped potential of immigrants: "For years I have heard many voices saying 'the government doesn't recognize us, our skills, or that this is our home.' I ask my country, Canada: Can you hear me? When will you honour what I know?" These questions cut to the heart of the discussion and to the underlying concern held by many of the participants that the structures and the will to "tap our trans-local potential for change" are not yet fully in place.

*The Untapped Role of Diaspora in Development at the Government Policy Level*

There is a need for diaspora to dialogue with development agencies "so we understand them and they understand us." It was noted that the diaspora are not the only people involved in development and that by focusing on diasporas we should not suggest that non-diasporas can or should "wash their hands of it." However, diaspora involvement is important for ensuring that development work is effective and not appropriated. One participant argued diaspora need to be involved in the institutions that are shaping development policies and must hold decision-making influence where money and power are involved.

It was noted by another participant that there were no representatives from CIDA in the room and that many in the diaspora feel that their voices are not heard by the government; he suggested that the diaspora *is* Canada and therefore the diaspora *is* the government. By saying that the government doesn't listen to the diaspora, what was really being said was that "those who represent you disregard you." Solutions to this disconnect need to be explored.

### 5.5 What are the messages to the Canadian public, universities, government and the diaspora?

A number of speakers responded to this question with messages covering multiple issues and directed to multiple audiences. Their messages are paraphrased below.

An undergraduate student referred to an "us and them" dichotomy that recurred throughout the evening's dialogue and cautioned that if the conversation maintains this separation, the Government of Canada will remain in a conflict of interest and will fail to act. He suggested that as a diaspora, or even as a people, we must ask ourselves: What brought us here? How much does the society in which we live contribute to the conditions (including injustice and deprivation) that motivate people to participate in the project?, He advised the assembled, as advocates and practitioners of development, to recognize that the Canadian government will necessarily prioritize Canadian interests and to be cautious in adopting the positions advised by experts. Finally, he identified a self-esteem problem that faces many immigrants as one of the biggest challenges. He declared a need for dialogue between members of the diaspora as a means to remedy this, as the lack of self-esteem is what keeps the diaspora from doing more. "It is time," he said, "for us to really start doing this and talking to each other."

One participant offered a strong critique of the prevailing development paradigm, saying that the lack of knowledge and understanding of history presents the major limiting factor to good development policy. He reminded participants that 20% of the world's population consumes 80% of its resources and that for developing countries the three overriding issues are debt, trade, and privatization.

Another participant commented on the challenges to the diaspora saying, "We know we have problems here. We know we have problems 'back there.' It is up to us to get together." He suggested that funding agencies don't see immigrants as partners, only as recipients. He also suggested that the Canadian public must to be educated about development issues. He characterized the Canadian public as "so generous" but regretted that they do not know the reality of what is happening in other parts of the world.

### 6. Special Guests

John Monahan, executive director of the Mosaic Institute, highlighted the role Mosaic plays in bridging the information gap the government faces when trying to follow through on its "good intentions" regarding engagement with diaspora. He called attention to a report, produced by Mosaic in a partnership with the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, which focused explicitly on the ways in which diaspora engage with development in Canada and around the world. He also cited the specific example of Canada's annual $180 million contribution to Sudan, and Mosaic's role in helping overcome the government's initial inability to locate and engage with the Sudanese community in Canada. He proposed the possibility of creating an umbrella organization for diaspora groups that, given the Canadian approach to immigration and integration, could help diaspora organizations link together, without reproducing the top-down structures for which similar organizations in other countries are criticized. He characterized Mosaic's role as building relationships between government agencies and communities, and noted that the expertise exists in diaspora communities and it is because of this that Mosaic's work can be successful.

Yvette Macabuag of CUSO-VSO provided an overview of CUSO-VSO's organization and operations over the past decade. She highlighted that the organization recognized it had to become more inclusive and internally representative of diaspora in order to strengthen the goal of having all Canadians involved in development. She noted that this same realization had taken place at CIDA, the primary supporter of CUSO-VSO's diaspora projects. She emphasized the relative novelty of the term "diaspora" in the development conversation and the process necessary to incorporate the concerns that accompany that term into CUSO-VSO, CIDA, and other development institutions.

*"It is time for us [the diaspora] to really start doing this and talking to each other."*
**–Dialogue Participant**

*"[The] diaspora [need ]to dialogue with development agencies so we understand them and they understand us. –* **Dialogue Participant**

### 7. Suggestions for Action and Change Emerging from the Dialogue

What emerged from the World Café sessions, and what was reinforced in the plenary dialogue that followed, was an overwhelming desire to see the creation of a government-funded umbrella organization to oversee and support collaboration between diaspora groups. It was considered that such a coordinating body would go a long way in doing away with the unnecessary competition for resources that plague many groups. Participants delivered a strong message that newcomers to Canada demand a means of having their foreign-attained professional credentials recognized in Canada. As such, it was recommended that an accreditation body be set up to ensure due diligence in the evaluation and recognition of foreign credentials.

Finally, there was an outpouring of support for networking events such as the September 14 dialogue where individuals and groups can come together and feel the solidarity necessary to secure the future success of work carried out by the diaspora.

Feedback from participants reinforced the view that partnership, cooperation and inclusion of diasporas in government departments, policies and programs are essential—that advocacy is needed to "put pressure on agencies to make a change," that there is "a need to stop making the dialogue based on us (diaspora) and them (e.g. government)" and that the "diaspora contributions need to extend into Canadian policy."

*Diaspora is not the question; diaspora is the answer.*
**– John Monahan, Mosaic Institute**



John Monahan raised the question: "How can Canada's contribution be made more effective?" He suggests that it is by "tapping all Canadians, including those who have international experience, that public interest is served."



Yvette Macabuag noted that diaspora is not an all-encompassing term and that when forging new relationships that reality must be kept in mind. Each partnership, she said, is unique. The present challenge, from her perspective, was identifying the work that can be done to support efforts and address the challenges brought forward through the course of the dialogue.

*The key point is about agency; it can only flourish if it is supported by social structures.* – **James Busumtwi-Sam**

Associate Professor James Busumtwi-Sam provided a summary of the evening's key ideas. He highlighted the striking fact that many of the diaspora are not waiting for government to act. At the same time, there is a clear sense of frustration related to the feeling that diasporas can only contribute to development elsewhere once they have achieved some success here in Canada. "The key point," he said, "is about agency. It can only flourish if it is supported by social structures." Discussions revealed that the lack of recognition of foreign degrees and qualifications represents the single greatest systemic impediment to diaspora agency. In addition, the mistrust and fear evident in many members of the diaspora present a major challenge to be overcome. Yet another important issue is that of being inclusive in development efforts. This applies not only to diaspora, but also to Canadians in general. A key challenge lies in getting information out to the broader public and informing them of what diaspora are doing. Canadians, he said, must be made aware of the initiatives that are already underway.

*List Of Specific Actions and Recommendations*

There were many ideas that participants took away from the dialogue experience. These are highlighted in Appendix 4. In terms of next steps for the project, and the tremendous momentum that it has generated among diaspora in the Vancouver region, there are many possibilities.

As convenors of the dialogues and careful listeners to the voices of diaspora, the following is a strong recommendation for action.

SFU should take the lead in establishing a Centre for the Engagement and Study of Diaspora. Such a centre would play an important role in supporting:

- networking
- capacity-building: critical reflection and knowledge exchange on development approaches
- action research
- coordination of diaspora-driven initiatives
- access to seed funding and fiscal sustainability strategies
- public awareness campaign on value and import of diaspora contributions
- a database of stories, experiences of diaspora-driven initiatives
- coordination/collaboration with other institutes, universities, and NGO's with a focus on diaspora
- the establishment and management of a credit or social venture fund in cooperation with CIDA to fund small-scale, diaspora-driven projects.

In answer to the question regarding what image or metaphor best represents the diaspora contribution to development, graphic illustrator, Avril Orloff created a wonderful mural of the evening's dialogue captured many. This mural is found in Appendix 2. The most

frequently noted image was that of a bridge that represents a two-way connection between the Global North and Global South. The structure of this bridge was not specified, but it can be assumed that ensuring that its form and span are sound will enable the traffic to flow in both directions.

The Project Advisory Committee has been instrumental in keeping the project focused and relevant:

Shams Alibhai, BC Council for International Cooperation

Robert Anderson, SFU

James Busumtwi-Sam, SFU

Rosa Candia, CUSO-VSO

Nadia Chaney, Poet, Artist, SFU Graduate Student

Kina Chenard, SFU

Hanna Cho, Museum of Vancouver

Alexander Dawson, SFU

June Francis, SFU

Meharoona Ghani, BC Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism

John Harriss, SFU

Amos Kambere, Umoja Operation Compassion Society

Joe Knockaert, formerly head of CIDA Pacific Regional Office

Derryl MacLean, SFU

Randall Martin, BC Council for International Cooperation

Umeeda Umedaly Switlo, CUSO- VSO



*- Photos: Greg Ehlers*

*Appendix 1 – Agenda/Program*



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## Dialogue Program
### Diaspora Contributions to Development: Opportunities and Lessons Learned

Wednesday, September 14, 2011  5:30 - 9:00 PM
SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, 580 West Hastings Street

Photo Credit: VanLanka

**Project Co-Directors**

**Joanna Ashworth**
Centre for Sustainable Community
Development, SFU

**Shaheen Nanji**
SFU International Development

**Dialogue Planning Committee:**

**James Busumtwi-Sam**
Department of Political Science, SFU

**Alexander Dawson**
Department of History, SFU

**John Harriss**
School for International Studies, SFU

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**Nareena Switlo**
CUSO-VSO

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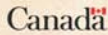CUSO Intern: **Charlotte Fontaine**

### Dialogue Purpose

Since January 2011, SFU has hosted four public dialogues and a workshop series -- each exploring the many unique ways diaspora from the Global South are leading initiatives to create change in their communities of attachment.

We have heard stories of people taking innovative leadership to reduce poverty, build infrastructure, improve health and education, respond to human insecurity and build peace. We have learned about a broad range of projects aimed at providing choice and opportunity, from local fundraising for student scholarships to developing business opportunities for local entrepreneurs -- and about people acting as cultural, economic, and social bridges between north and south. We have seen how the experiences of disaspora engaged in development activities are having a "looping effect" on their lives in Canada when diaspora bring their skills in development to the local scene where they live and work.

This dialogue will identify the ways in which diaspora contribute to development, and explore what is required to enable greater impact, e.g., capacity development, collaborative opportunities, public policy mechanisms, and organizational change.

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## Program

### 5:30 PM: OPEN RECEPTION

*Yoro Noukoussi Duo – Percussion and Strings*

### 6:00 PM: WELCOME

*Shaheen Nanji,* Project Co-Director
*Joanna Ashworth,* Project Co-Director

### 6:15 PM: SMALL GROUP DIALOGUE/WORLD CAFÉ (TWO ROUNDS)

Round One:
1.    Introductions: name and organization
2.    What is the diaspora contribution to development?
3.    What will enable diaspora (individually or organizationally) to contribute more effectively to development?

Round Two:
1.    Introductions: name and organization
2.    What will enable diaspora to contribute more effectively to development?
3.    What image or metaphor comes to mind that represents the diaspora contribution to development?

### 7:30 PM: OPEN DIALOGUE  (Asia Pacific Hall)

Engaging Diaspora in Development -- Video Premier
*James Busumtwi-Sam,* Project Academic Advisor -- Research Findings

### OPEN DIALOGUE

1.    What do diaspora need to contribute more effectively to development?
2.    What is your message to the diaspora, international NGOs, universities, funders, the Canadian public, and the Government of Canada?

### Special Guest Respondents:

*John Monahan,* The Mosaic Institute (Collaborative Public Policy)
*Yvette Macabuag,* CUS0-VSO, Ottawa (Organizational Policy)

### 8:45 PM: SUMMARY REMARKS AND NEXT STEPS

*James Busumtwi-Sam,* Project Academic Adviser

*Shaheen Nanji & Joanna Ashworth,* Co-Directors
"Book of Stories" Project
Opportunities for learning exchange

### 9:00 PM: ADJOURN

Reception to follow in Atrium

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## SPEAKERS

**JOANNA ASHWORTH, EdD** is Associate Director for the Bolivia Community Economic Development project and advises community organizations throughout BC on multicultural dialogue planning. She is a senior research associate at the Centre for Sustainable Community Development. Joanna is also co-director of the Engaging Diaspora in Development: Tapping our Trans-local Potential for Change project.

**JAMES BUSUMTWI-SAM, Ph.D.** is Associate Professor specializing in International Relations and Comparative Development in the Department of Political Science at SFU. His primary interests include International Organization, the Political Economy of Development and Security, and International Relations theory. His regional specialization is African politics and development. He has published on international organizations and regional security, the political economy of macroeconomic policy reform and financial liberalization in developing countries, and international financial institutions.

**YVETTE MACABUAG** has worked with CUSO-VSO for 7 years. Her work has focused on working with volunteers and supporting the development of placements within VSO in HIV and AIDs, Health and Participation and Governance Programming. More recently, Yvette has been working as part of the Diaspora programming team at CUSO-VSO supporting the development and implementation of the Diaspora program. Key activities include programming initiatives in Guyana, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Rwanda, working closely with country program offices in the development of programs, with North American Diaspora organizations and with Diaspora community volunteers. Yvette also brings a lens of inclusiveness into the work of CUSO-VSO to ensure that the perspectives and experience of the diaspora community volunteers is at the forefront of program development and volunteer management.

**JOHN MONAHAN** is Executive Director of the Mosaic Institute, a "think and do" tank that harnesses the creativity, connections and resources of Canada's ethnocultural communities to advance Canadian solutions to intractable conflicts overseas - starting right here at home. Founded in 2007, the Mosaic Institute has already made important contributions nationally in the areas of inter-community dialogue, the integration of diaspora communities into the Canadian foreign policy mainstream, and the promotion of global citizenship.

**SHAHEEN NANJI** is Director of International Development and Faculty Engagement at SFU. She co-directs Engaging Diaspora in Development: Tapping our Trans-local Potential for Change and oversees CIDA projects in China and Kenya. Shaheen is working on a Master of Arts in International Studies, with a focus on diasporic influences on development. Born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya, Shaheen moved to Vancouver in 1989 and has firsthand understanding of the ways diaspora communities seek to give back to their birth nations.

## ARTIST
**ARVIL ORLOFF** is a graphic facilitator who draws out people's best thinking - literally! She comes to meetings like this, listens hard, and translates what she hears into compelling murals that combine pictures with words to create a visual record of the session, in real time. The finished drawing stands as a vivid representation of the group's ideas, stories and spirit, and reveals the Big Picture - both figuratively and literally.

## MUSICIAN
**YORO NOUKOUSSI**, a multi-instrumentalist, singer songwriter and sound engineer was born in North Benin, Africa to the Chief of the Wama People. He learned the art of storytelling and drumming from his family, and co-founded the "Les Princes du Sahel" Band. In Switzerland, Yoro studied and peformed Jazz. In Canada, as a performer and studio musician, Yoro has mastered the rhythms of the talking drum (donga), congas (kokomba) and djembe and offers independent classes and workshops. He is a graduate of the Sound Engineer program of the Colombia Academy of Digital and Analog Recording Arts in Vancouver.

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*Appendix 2 - Mural*

*Appendix 3 Dialogue Quotation Cards*



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By focusing on the role of diaspora we must be careful not to transfer responsibility for development and poverty alleviation away from humanity as a whole and the rich world in particular and on to the shoulders of the diaspora.

Professor Alexander Dawson, Simon Fraser University



Education is key, and I want to emphasize that we need to look at it from the perspective of the developing world... You get your diaspora connecting to their local village and this impact expands and helps to develop the whole nation.

Amos Kambere, Umoja Operation Compassion



Members of the diaspora are capable of collaborating with people in their regions of origin without government assistance. Hawala is an informal but famously effective system of remittance transmission in Somalia.

Hawa Mire, Point Youth Media



It is well-known that individuals, as part of diaspora, are making important contributions and working to overcome many challenges. In spite of divisions and fragmentations among the diaspora … there are many ways that diaspora engage in conflict transformation and peace building.

Associate Professor James Busumtwi-Sam, Simon Fraser University



Businesses don't just create jobs, they create dignity: people who work for a living have greater self-esteem and a stronger sense of self-worth. The diaspora are in a particularly strong position to promote business development in developing countries.

Professor June Francis, Simon Fraser University



I wanted to start a program that would connect my life here with the work I do there. My goal is to raise awareness in Vancouver, in Canada, in North America, which are all privileged places, about the situation that is happening in Africa.

James Kamau, Youth Initiative Canada



I have learned that the power of change is based on the power of numbers. I cannot make change alone, but with my friends and others we can make change.

Jean de Dieu Tuyisenge, EduAfrica



As well as being Kenyan, members of that diaspora in Vancouver are also part of an African community and, at the same time, no less Canadian than any other citizen of this country.

Dr. Peter Njenga, The Dr. Njenga Foundation for Sustainable HIV/AIDS



Diaspora have an important contribution to make in facilitating peace building processes. You can't make peace with your enemy without your enemy.

Reena Lazar, Executive Director of Peace it Together

*Appendix 4 Comments from the September 14 Dialogue*

**What are the most important ideas that you are taking away with you tonight?**

"Spaces of dialogue— engagement"

"The concept that diaspora need to have opportunity to contribute to the Canadian community/economy and that we need to fuse the gap between diaspora and non-diaspora."

"That everyone needs to be involved in development. That the 'others' (where development is intended) are not the recipients but the partners."

"Within development we need a collaboration between both the diasporic communities and Canadian citizens. To move forward and put pressure on agencies to make a change."

"Amazing things are happening, but underground. Support, networking, resources are most important in moving forward."

"The pain and the passion that immigrants to Canada have. The struggles they face here in Canada trying to make a life and a difference where they are from and where they are now."

"That there is a lot of desire and capability to improve the harnessing of the diaspora, but I still feel like I'm lacking concrete examples of how this is being done successfully. Or does a successful model/example not exist?"

"That there is a danger of diaspora becoming another means of creating 'us' vs. 'them'. Many spoke of development needing both diaspora and Canadians, as the government does not hear the diaspora. If diaspora is having an attachment to a place of origin, what attachment is there to the host country? How to overcome fear and mistrust?"

"Diaspora need to be re-structured, re-appropriate the diaspora debate, take it out of the development sector led framework. The speaker from Great Lakes summed up the issues for diaspora members who are immigrants often in limbo, scared of state intelligence exercises… she analyzed it perfectly."

"The networking. That there is a need to 'open-access' diaspora-related info out of where it is siloed in various government agencies… that much does exist, just not necessarily with CIDA (There is a significant 'open government' movement that could be significant as an ally to begin). I don't think diaspora is the question, I think diaspora is the answer."

"That we all can act as fids in recognizing diaspora and the potential that exists."

"A relationship needs to exist between the government and diaspora. The Canadian people are largely uninformed about the diaspora and their needs/desires/goals."

"To get involved and start a dialogue with others in the field."

"A need to stop making the dialogue based upon an us (diaspora) versus them (e.g. government), and recognizing the need to have the diaspora becoming represented within [the government]. That being said, focus needs to be directed on the barriers (e.g. education credentials recognized) inhibiting people from reaching positions of power and responsibility."

"Diaspora is doing a lot, but many diaspora members feel frustrated."

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"How we can organize diasporas via government? (This is a question I ended up asking!)"

"That we need to work together / be more visible with our issues."

"The need to address challenges of connecting between members of different diasporic groups—the need for a connecting infrastructure— and the need to support diaspora to overcome challenges of integration."

"Building community/support important to recognize issues to make it visible to public."

"That I'm not alone. Diasporic communities need a voice, a platform!"

"That there is hope, people with initiative and new vision working together to engage/change the global community."

"Home is what you make it. Belonging by diaspora being responsible for development doesn't mean those in power or with money should wash their hands clean. Diaspora need to be in positions of power to influence and make change."

"Connecting to peoples and places to find opportunities to bridge complementary needs and resources within communities. Stakeholders: take seriously the potential of social media (blogging, video-blogging, and translations) to hear voices and respond."

"The reception was beautiful, the event was very well organized, the speakers gave informative contributions, and the facility was excellent. But to be honest, I didn't find today's discussion to be as fruitful as I had hoped. For some, this was a venting session. The moderator should have steered the discussion to be more productive and constructive. That is a very hard role, which is why perhaps a professional moderator should be employed."

"1. I am a diaspora of Mother Earth working with grandparents and grandchildren for global justice, global peace, and global humanity. 2. Organize and have tea party for diaspora of Mother Earth."

"We (diaspora) are growing in number and opportunities."

"I am not alone and also could contribute for the development."

"To engage with others, NGOs, government of Canada, and universities to effect change with partners in the Global South."

"Building reciprocal mutual trust and benefit for humanity as a whole, Building sustainable self-sufficient communities. Cut down the political self-interest and corruption and provide for strong governance boundaries with accountability and reporting."

"Pas d'information."

"Diaspora needs to be well integrated in order to become efficient in their involvement in development. Diaspora should be consulted (or interested) to projects to be developed in their countries of origin."

"You (diaspora) vs. we (government). Diaspora is feeling lack of confidence, value, recognition, etc. Importance of language, communication and connection among government, society, agencies, diaspora, etc. Diasporic representation in development organizations is a minority."

**Engaging Diaspora In Development: Tapping Our Trans-Local Potential For Change**
Report On Dialogue 5: Diasporic Contributions to Development

"We as Canadians must effect change to have professionals (who are immigrants) acknowledged in Canada."

"Diaspora is very inclusive."

"The importance of creating and sustaining (on all levels): community, education, and communication."

"We are the force."

"Diasporic engagement and scaling up through linkages—scaling up! Diasporic contributions need to extend into Canadian policy."

"Effectiveness and networking of diasporas in foreign investment."

"Diaspora is a fairly new concept that many are unaware of. The actual impact of the diaspora movement of all cultures and societies."

"Lot to think about. I have come to this dialogue already feeling uncomfortable about the directions that international development is taking. Engaging the diaspora in this work is important, yet complicated."

"I learnt there were organizations to help the diasporas."

"Use diaspora locally in Vancouver, develop relationships, identify priorities and opportunities."

"Many, but above all, awareness and inspiration. Also, I hadn't realized that the sense of being excluded from development was so prevalent."

"The importance of sustainability in development and how diaspora can bring a sustainable perspective because they understand root causes/problems. The importance of partnerships between diaspora. Diaspora have knowledge that is valuable in development for their country of origin… but working together they can be stronger, pool their resources, work in synergy, and be more effective."

"How can we change mistrust and fear? How can we change this situation of credentials?"