



MOBILIZING THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

Reflections on the Digital Diaspora Initiative

Presentation by Laketch Dirasse, President, ACTTP Inc. at the Migration and Development Series Seminar on "Diasporas and development in conflict-affected countries," organized by UNITAR, IOM, UNFPA and McArthur Foundation. New York, 6 November 2007

FOCUS OF PRESENTATION

Background on the Digital Diaspora Initiative:

- Why, What, Who, How, When and Where
- Achievements

Key Lessons and recommendations:

- What worked
- What did not work



BACKGROUND ON THE DIGITAL DIASPORA INITIATIVE (DDI)

WHY the Diaspora

- Many successful Africans in the Diaspora committed to contribute to development
- Many Diaspora entrepreneurs have successfully invested in their countries
- Africa's **Brain Drain** potentially a **Brain Gain** in a globalized and increasingly interconnected world



WHAT IS THE DDI

DDI was started in January 2002 by UNIFEM that:

- recognized importance of ICT, innovative uses of new technologies, partnerships and constituencies
- successfully mobilized African Diaspora CEOs of IT companies
- convened a Global Advisory Committee (GAC) comprised of the Diaspora CEOs, representatives of the private sector and UN agencies
- adopted an innovative and catalytic approach to increase options and opportunities for women's economic and political empowerment



DDI OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Objectives

- Mobilize and harness the IT and business expertise and financial resources of Africans in the Diaspora to promote women's economic security and rights
- Provide possibilities for African IT entrepreneurs in the Diaspora to benefit from new markets while participating in socially responsible economic development in Africa
- Expand options and opportunities offered by ICT for securing better livelihoods for African women

Strategies:

- Advocacy to leverage political and financial support
- Building capacity and leadership of women's organizations
- Forging new synergies and partnerships
- Piloting innovative approaches
- Building an operational knowledge base



ACHIEVEMENTS

Advocacy and Networking

- Facilitated participation of GAC member and women experts in Africa regional WSIS meeting
- Supported formation of WSIS Gender Caucus and facilitated its growth from a regional to a global caucus
- Supported formation of an E-Discussion Group of the Caucus that enhanced women's networking around the WSIS process

Capacity building

- Horn of Africa Women's Knowledge Network (HAWKNET) forged in partnership with Info-Dev
- Multi-purpose empowerment centre set up in Somalia. Women empowered through IT and other relevant training
- Zimbabwe women benefit from the Women into the New Network of Entrepreneurial Reinforcement (WINNER) project

Mainstreaming

- Gender mainstreamed in Rwanda IT policy and Technical Advisor attached to the Ministry of Gender
- Gender mainstreamed in Africa regional and the global WSIS processes



ACHIEVEMENTS

Piloting

- Comprehensive programme proposal developed for piloting in eight countries
- First pilot implemented in Rwanda in partnership with UNDP and KIST and funded by government of Japan. Rwandese Diaspora experts provided technology transfer services

Forging Strategic Partnerships

- MOU signed with ITU, UNDP , UN ICTTF
- Partnered UN ICTTF, Digital Partners and GRUPO CERFE in setting up and launching the Digital Diaspora Network Africa (DDNA) with chapters in North America and Europe
- Collaborated with UNDP, UNOSAA, UN ICTTF, UNFIP and government of Uganda for the Africa launch of the initiative in May 2003 in Kampala
- Catalyzed and forged synergetic partnership with NEPAD, 8 African governments (represented at Ministerial level), GAC members, WSIS Gender Caucus, DDNA, private sector and civil society groups at Kampala meeting
- Partnered the Nordic Group of Donors in managing a fund to support and strengthen the WSIS Gender Caucus



KEY LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT WORKED and could be up-scaled and replicated

- Recognizing African Diaspora as important resource (willingness to invest in Africa and share knowledge and skills)
- Mobilizing the African Diaspora (DDNA a committed group that merely requires UN's facilitation)
- Forging strategic partnerships and expanding constituency of support to propel development (e.g. GAC, donor partnerships, etc.)
- Policy advocacy and pilot project activities (success potential in an enabling policy context such as Rwanda)
- Facilitating multi-stakeholder groups (e.g. Gender Caucus and their advocacy, networking and coalition building activities)

WHAT DID NOT WORK – missed opportunities

- Settling for output level success: sustainability of the initiative required longer-term organizational commitment and investment of staff time
- Not convening periodic GAC meetings: continued Diaspora engagement and resource mobilization efforts compromised
- Abandoning promising efforts: Kampala Action Plan not implemented

