



**Diaspora for International Development
Conference by Wezesha Ltd**

21st May 2014

By Sithandile Dlamini

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CONFERENCE BACKGROUND

The objective of the conference was to create a platform for the Africa diaspora so as to sensitise, engage, raise awareness and hold discussion on international development issues which is in line with Wezesha objectives. In this conference Wezesha also hoped to start a discussion on setting a strong Africa diaspora platform in Ireland.

We hope to recall through this forum the wide range of competences, skills and qualifications that members of diaspora have as development workers, entrepreneurs, investors, technical experts, policy advocates and philanthropists.

While emphasising on the unique transnational role of diaspora as catalysts and connectors between countries of origin and destination and for better development outcomes, acknowledging Diaspora as new partners for global development remains critically important.

Indeed diaspora communities are important catalysts when it comes to exploring new development strategy due to their expertise of the local environment, culture and resources required.

The conference focused on three keys areas:

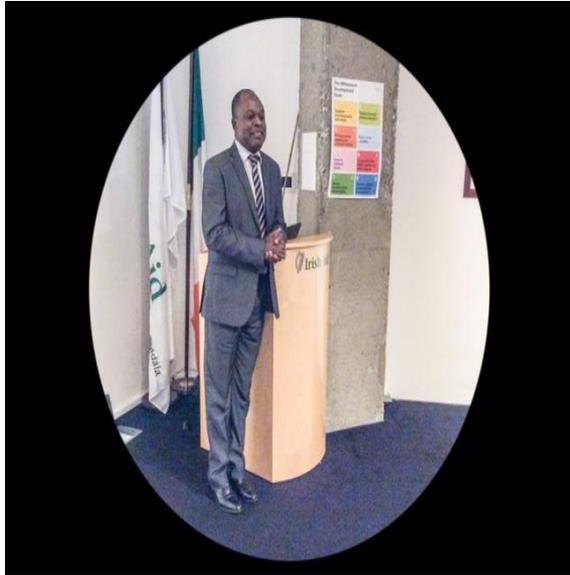
- Post 2015 Millennium Development Goals
- Combating gender based violence and recurring conflict in Africa
- The Diaspora: Developing the Africa diaspora platform in Ireland



Salome Mbugua, Minister Joe Costello and Egide Dhala

Welcome and Introduction (by Egide Dhala & Salome Mbugua)

Introducing the Conference, **Egide Dhala** gave an overview of Wezesha history, goals, current projects and challenges.



"Diaspora is a vital instrument of making world connection and addressing development issues. In over a decade, Ireland has accommodated roughly 500.000 immigrants of which over 10% is made of people from Africa. This is a considerable amount of African diaspora living in Ireland. It is for this reason that we have to look at how we can make a difference in Africa, the role we as African diaspora can play in the development of our mother continent".

Wezesha (Swahili for 'empower') is an Irish based not for profit, non-governmental organisation founded and managed by members of the African Diaspora from Ireland to support women and children affected or likely to be affected by conflict and violence in Africa.

Egide Dhala and Salome Mbugua came up with the initiative in 2007 as human rights activists in Ireland wishing to extend acquired skills and expertise to their mother continent. In 2010 Wezesha was then established and in 2012 was registered as a company limited by guarantee in Ireland and governed by a voluntary board of directors.

Mission

Wezesha mission is to support and to promote human rights for women and children in Africa in order to achieve an equal and just society. Wezesha works through an empowerment approach versus a charity model, thus aiming to support African women and children so that they live in peace and dignity, are healthy and have access to resources.

The main **objective** of Wezesha is to engage in promotion of health, advancement of education and relief of poverty for women and children living in Africa continent through link and partnership with locally based organisations.

Wezesha main objective comprises 3 particular objectives reached through the mobilisation and facilitation of an international network of the African diaspora. These are:

- To mobilise supports for programmes by Wezesha and its partners in Africa
- To raise awareness of the plight of African women and children living in situations of conflict and violence
- To advocate for the elimination of all forms of violence directed against women and children and end poverty in Africa.

Values

Wezesha work is guided by the following values and principle:

Solidarity, human rights, personal dignity, empowerment, partnership, equality and justice.

Programmes

Currently Wezesha has two pilot program countries in Africa: DR Congo and Kenya. Wezesha promoted the establishment of its key partners in these two countries, i.e. Wezesha D.R Congo (2013) and Okuda Kenya (2010).

Actions

- 2 field visits in Kenya & 2 field visits in DR Congo
- Okuda Kenya (250 members): - Micro-finance programme since 2012, 25 women participants. - Flying toilets project in Majengo - group income generating project
- DR Congo (400 members): Exploration visit - support to Fistula women - Support to orphanages group, mobilisation and capacity building - convention on GBV - Multipurpose centre.

Challenges

The organisation operates with limited resources. Directors have been the main supporters of the organisation development. A strong advocacy strategy needs to be put in place in order to advance further the profile of the organisation.

Organisation Supporters and partners

Since its inception, Wezesha has linked and works collaboratively with varied stakeholders, namely: Okuda Kenya, Wezesha DR Congo, International Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya, St Joseph Fistula clinic (DR Congo), Caritas DR Congo, Ministry of Health DR Congo and Gender Consortium Ireland.

Organisation Structure

As mentioned above, Wezesha is a registered company limited by guarantee. The Organisation is governed by a board of directors and has an appointed Patron. The work of Wezesha operates through the support of interns, volunteers and donors.

Salome Mbugua



"One of Wezesha Key Objectives is to mobilise and facilitate an international network of African diaspora, of which the Africa diaspora in Ireland is part of. We hope to establish a strong platform of African diaspora in Ireland, before the end of the year".

Key points from Salome:

It is important that as the African diaspora in Ireland we get involved with the development of our own continent because we understand better the pertaining issues in our countries of origin. Majority of us indeed continue to maintain links through remittances and provision of technical support and expertise gained while residing abroad. Wezesha has been involved with Wales for Africa since 2010 and it has been noted that the diaspora in the UK is well supported and is much advanced than in Ireland. Wezesha has also been in contact with International Centre for migration based in Brussels and through them we were able to participate in a round table meeting that took place in Frankfurt in June 2013, "**Diaspora & Development Roundtable**", to prepare input for the 2013 UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in New York.

- Diaspora is now a key feature to be discussed in relation to international development. Wezesha aims to sensitise, engage, raise awareness and hold discussion on international development. Our contribution as members of Africa diaspora is paramount. We therefore need to start reflecting on how we can move forward as Africa Diaspora and how we can start engaging seriously on the area of international development.
- Need to take into account the competencies, skills, implication that members of diaspora have, to consider the fact that we are actors for development. We have developed entrepreneurship through gained skills over the time in Ireland and we need now to benefit our mother continent with this asset through sustainable and meaningful investment.
- Over the years, as diaspora, we have gained a lot of skills and expertise indeed. As African diaspora we are urged to give back, the same way we send remittances to our countries of origin, resources and skills that we have acquired in the host countries. One of the reasons for having the conference today is to call on people from Africa origin to provide any skill that they have obtained in volunteering in the mother continent.

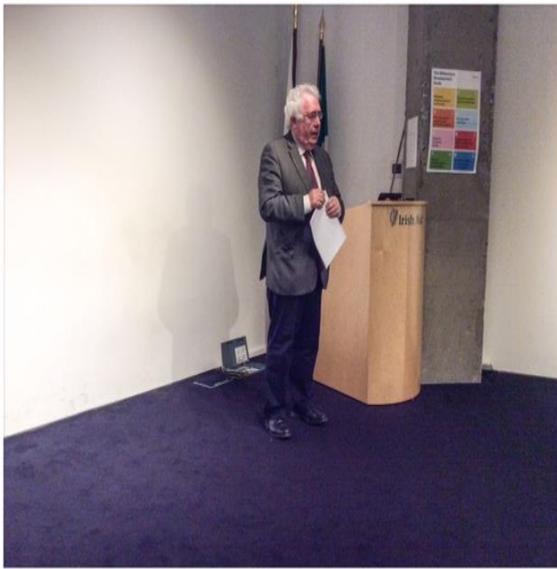
- The purpose of conference, I would emphasise, is to mobilize, engage and link with international network of Africa Diaspora in general but most precisely with the Africa diaspora in Ireland.
- In Ireland, this week has been dedicated to the celebration of Africa. As many African communities look to mark Africa Day on 25th May, we would like to join the Irish Aid- Department of Foreign Affairs- as they are organising the big flag ship at Farmleigh in Phoenix Park, we support their efforts by hosting this conference here today. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Minister Costello and his department for the support provided in Africa for many years and also for supporting the celebration of Africa day here in Ireland.
- It is important for people in Africa to take control of their own lives and they should be empowered to do so. Wezesha uses the empowerment model in order to ensure sustainable development. As members of Africa Diaspora we have the opportunity to provide technical support, most of us are well equipped to do so. Africa diaspora have a unique role – we can help with better development outcomes. The diaspora role in development has to be recognised and acknowledged since we are important partners in development.
- For the conference today, in order to sensitise you on international development issue, we have chosen the Millennium Development Goals as the starting point. Eight topics goals were agreed by 189 countries in 2000, these 8 goals are treated as the current framework for international development. Most of the countries around the World have now been reviewing achievement/progress set as target by 2015. Our first speaker will give us an overview of the eight goals and we will then discuss three of these goals (Extreme Poverty, Gender Equality/Women Empowerment and Global

partnership) in details. These three goals are the most relevant to the mission of Wezesha.

- Gender based violence and recurring conflict will be presented by Rosin from Christian Aid, this being as a key major area of Wezesha work. Wezesha has been linking up with international NGOs from Ireland working overseas on gender issues. Our organisation has also made connection with the Irish Gender Consortium in order to progress discussion on the recurrent gender based violence in the African continent.
- Finally we would like to start the discussion on the establishment of the Africa diaspora platform in Ireland of which Martin Russell's from Diaspora matters has kindly agreed to facilitate. We hope to cover these entire agenda item today.

Mr. Joe Costello TD, Minister for Trade and Development

Mr. Joe Costello TD is a Labour Party representative and Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with responsibility for Trade and Development.



“Principles underlining Wezesha are very much in line with what my department does and I fully support them and the empowerment of people versus the charity model. It is time to look at the diaspora as strength tool, on how members of the diaspora communities can contribute both here in Ireland and abroad. Lesson from the Irish diaspora indicates that it is a powerful concept for development.”

Key Point from Minister Joe Costello

- It's important to recognize strengths of the African diaspora in Ireland.
- The Irish diaspora is a powerful force; we called on the Irish diaspora to help and they did (they came to Ireland and provided ideas; they are an enormous benefit to Ireland).
- African diaspora here should play a major role in our overseas development and should no longer be neglected; they are people with ideas, culture, heritage, and strong links to the countries they came from.
- Interested in looking at African diaspora not only in the area of business but also in terms of volunteering. The idea that Africans themselves go back to

their own countries to help is being promoted by my department because they know the country and what needs to be done. A new volunteering initiative is harnessing people who have taken early retirement in Ireland – they have skills and should be recruited to help in other countries that need it

- Availing these skills for African countries alongside with African Diaspora initiatives would certainly play a major role on development programs.
- Also interested in entrepreneurial side; not by aid alone can people survive. There is a need to build an economy and harness entrepreneurial skills of the diaspora.
- We are starting to look at development – working with the Diaspora. The first meeting was held last month with the African Diaspora but in the area of business. The Africa Ireland Economic Forum is held each October where we meet with the ambassadors of Africa here and in the UK. There was a very large one last year – 200 Irish companies came and half of all African countries were represented. We must engage with the private sector because they are important in development. We've always regarded aid as no conditions tied to it but we're moving from aid to trade.
- We want to bring private sector in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The goal for next 15 years is the elimination of poverty. Ireland and South Africa are key players in this UN initiative. At the end of 2014, we will look at goals and plans and consider what will happen over the next 15 years. Critical issues that need to be addressed in the post-2015 Agenda are gender issues, good governance and poverty. We will need to highlight the role of the diaspora in this. New focus is on fragile States.

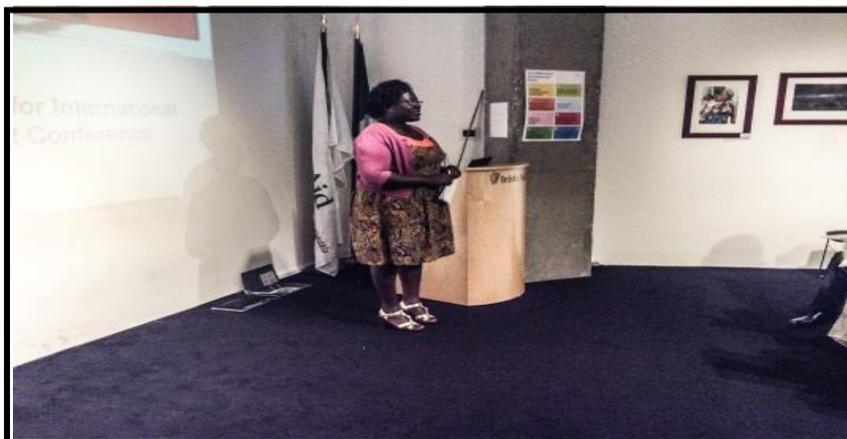


Conference participants listening to the minister

Short Q&A with Minister:

Q: Can we (African diaspora in Ireland) be involved in setting goals for the post-2015 Agenda?

Minister's response: The Agenda will be decided at the country level among countries but the minister is willing to meet with the diaspora to discuss ideas and bring those notions into the final process at the UN.



Neltah Chadamoyo chairperson for the conference

Nchedo Obi: Freelance and International Development Consultancy

Overview of Post 2015 Millennium Development Goals

In September 2000, world leaders agreed on a set of goals for the international community, to bring about a world in which sustaining development and eliminating poverty would have the highest priority. There are Eight Millennium Development Goals. All 189 United Nations member states at the time committed to help achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Each goal has a specific target and date for achieving those targets.

- 1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
 - 2) Achieve universal primary education
 - 3) Promote gender equality and empower women
 - 4) Reduce child mortality
 - 5) Improve maternal health
 - 6) Combat HIV/ AIDS, malaria and other diseases
 - 7) Ensure environmental sustainability
 - 8) Develop a Global Partnership for Development
- Generally Progress towards the eight goals has been uneven but some countries have achieved most of the goals
 - Women are doing well in Africa in terms of government positions for example in Rwanda, there are many women in parliament and women now occupies managerial role in companies but in some contexts women are not doing well, equality between men and women in decision making from local to national level remains imbalanced. Women still remains prime carers to their children and elderly.
 - Each of the eight goals influences the other. Huge progress has been noted in some goals than others.

- Goal for 2015 should consider migration and development and should definitely diaspora as partners.



Participants in discussion at the conference

Developing a platform for Diaspora by Dr Martin Russell, Associate - Diaspora Matters (www.diasporamatters.com)



The nature and scale of interest from internal diaspora communities of African origin and affinity in Ireland in engaging with their homeland has never been higher.

Dr Martin Russell is an associate at Diaspora Matters. He was previously an IRCHSS Postgraduate Scholar at the UCD Clinton Institute. He has researched and written on a range of diaspora topics such as diaspora capital, networks, philanthropy and media. He served as Senior Research Assistant on the Global Diaspora Strategies Toolkit. He has advised several governments and organisations on developing diaspora engagement policies and projects.

Key Points from Dr Russell's presentation were:

- The best situation is for governments to create the conditions conducive for the numerous diaspora organisations to exist, to facilitate collaboration and co-operation, to provide access and help speed promising ideas, work in partnership with organisations such as Wezesha. Therefore government is best served in the role of a facilitator, rather than implementer.
- Ireland should try to educate policy makers and practitioners about **the value** of looking at internal diaspora. Key diaspora members need to engage in small groups with specific project over a limited period of time.

- Lessons from other countries around the world indicate strong institutions in host country and country of origin and the government to work together in partnerships is the key to diaspora organisation.
- A refreshing legacy of Wezesha's conference this year was the clear vibrancy and desire in wanting to learn more on how to gain a footprint in such dialogues. While government facilitation of such work can only arrive later, the work of Wezesha and respective partners in building and shaping a diaspora platform in Ireland is promising.
- The basic nature of diaspora engagement is quite unique in that it is non-competitive. This opens up some important avenues for the development of diaspora platforms. It is in this spirit of non-competitiveness that Wezesha and others can network, can learn from other groups, ask for help and strengthen their roadmap to strengthen their individual and collaborative voice on development from their adopted homeland.

Roisin Gallagher: GBV and Recurring Conflict

Any act of gender-based violence results in, or likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

United Nations Decemder on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993.



Róisín Gallagher is a gender advisor with Christian Aid and has 11 years' experience working in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. She has given various talks notably at the World Social Forum in Pakistan, European Commission in Brussels, The importance of Gender/ Age Analysis in Sexual Abuse and Exploitation investigations 'and Peace Support Operations.

The session started with the Screening of the film *The Value of Women in the Congo* (Directed by Dearbhla Glynn) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zw2pzTf7Nx8>

Roisin then gave a presentation on GBV and recurring conflict. This covered the definition and different forms of gender based violence, as well as the impact of gender based violence on women and children in conflict zones.

- It is estimated that 1 in every 3 women in the world has experienced physical, emotional or sexual violence in an intimate relationship.
- Gender based violence has negative impacts on productivity, income and involvement in community and family.

- Promotion of gender equality is paramount for combating gender base violence. Laws and policies that protect women from gender base violent should be at the centre of policy maker.
- Engaging men is crucial.

WORKSHOP REPORTS

Workshop 1: Eradicate extreme Poverty

Facilitated by Kutta Daudi

Target:

- Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day.
- Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people.
- Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Summary and key Recommendations

- 1) The charity model of helping Africa does not work. Empowerment model is better because people empowered to depend on themselves. Need to support with education and technology so people can do things themselves.
- 2) Highlight issues both in Ireland and Europe such as exploitation, trade imbalances, corruption, civil society, environment and technology in our countries of origin.

- 3) Get organised as diaspora, through one voice to plan, manage and lead the African diaspora in Ireland.
- 4) Contribute on government policy on African diaspora as development partners
- 5) Engage with Irish NGOs as development actors and collaborators on sustainable initiatives and projects.
- 6) Important to ask people what they need and want rather than imposing projects from the outside.
- 7) Important for African diaspora to appreciate where they come from and for Africans to support each other. The diaspora needs to work together in order to prevent having projects that may help one community while hurting another – we need to stop working independently. This means overcoming tribal and other differences. Government has bigger voice so African and Irish governments can bring people together.
- 8) African diaspora needs to be politically active and be active in decision making at home and abroad.

Workshop 2: Goal 3. Promote Gender equality and empower Women

Facilitated by Carol Munyi

Target

- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015

Summary and key Recommendations

- 1) There is a disconnection between women in government and the actual power that they have on the ground. Some countries have a quota so they may be well-represented in government but women in reality have little power to make laws, decision etc.
- 2) If women are empowered, then we are close to solving other Millennium goals.
- 3) Diaspora can contribute by raising awareness back in countries of origin on the tools already in existence and in particular on Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and to use international law to lobby for the less privileged. This means taking action at the grassroots level and encouraging education for women as well as economic, social, and individual empowerment.



*Workshop discussion
on gender equality*

Workshop 3: Goal 8. Develop a Global partnership for Development

Facilitated by Winifred Akinyemi

Target:

- Address the special needs of the least developed countries, landlocked countries and Small Island developing states.
- Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system.
- Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term.
- In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.
- In co-operation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

Summary and key Recommendations

- 1) The Aid model makes people dependent compared to the empowerment model.
- 2) We need a two-way exchange so that inclusion is enacted and everyone has a voice.
- 3) Problems facing African countries: corruption, lack of transparency, bad governance, unjust trade laws and subsidies, lack of capacity.
- 4) Skill building is crucial so that people can work.
- 5) Active citizenship: we need to hold the government accountable. We can educate people back home on what they can expect from their government.
- 6) Recognising and engaging the diaspora is key in achieving millennium goal and overall to the international development agenda.

- 7) More support is needed from DFA particularly in the development of the Africa diaspora forum in Ireland

For further information on Development Millennium Goals, see www.irishaid.ie



Consoler of Uganda Sylvia Gavinga in workshop discussions

The Way Forward



Salome Mbugua and Egide Dhala

- The purpose of this seminar was to help participants understand international development agenda better and articulate how they can be engaged. Wezesha has started with the mapping of Africa diaspora groups that are supporting international work back home. Our plan is to have a follow up meeting in July. Africa is our home, our continent and we should be concerned with what's going on there. Wezesha is keen to work with and in partnership with all the groups that contribute to the development of Africa.
- As a follow up to this conference today, Wezesha will hold a meeting with a smaller group of African diaspora to discuss more on setting up diaspora platform and to input into Wezesha strategic planning process.
- Wezesha is currently undertaking a mapping exercise on groups of Africa diaspora in Ireland that are working in Africa. Outcome of this together with conference report will be disseminated to all those that are Wezesha emailing list.

Appendix 1

Attendees

1. Amaka Chydo	2. Martin Russell
3. Anne Burke	4. Miriam Belty anewo
5. Brenda Gahan	6. Mubarak Habid
7. Bryan Feeney	8. Mutale Kampune
9. Caroline Munyi	10. Nchedo Obi
11. Catherine Mahoro	12. Kutta Daudi
13. Charles Wami	14. Rose Chilufya
15. David Krunde	16. Rose Masinga
17. Egide Dhala	18. Róisín Gallagher
19. Hilary Bizi	20. Sampson Ajeigbe
21. Jean Baptiste	22. Shay Cannedy
23. Julian Bloomer	24. Siobán O'Brien Green
25. Juliet Amamure	26. Sithandile Dlamini
27. Jules Buckley	28. Sylvia Gavinga
29. Joe Costello	30. Susan Nikoom
31. Justine Nithale	32. Prince Sarumi
33. Jean Noel Musueni	34. Yemisi Makanjuola
35. Jean Bosco Gatete	36. Winfred Akinyemi
37. Neltah Chadamoyo	38. Emer Costello

Appendix 2

Diaspora for International Development Programme

Date: 21st May 2014

Venue: Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre, 27 – 31 Upper O’Connell Street, Dublin 1.

Agenda

200-230: Registration

230-245: Welcome and introduction by the Directors of Wezesha Egide Dhala and Salome Mbugua,

245-300: Opening by Minister Joe Costello

300-3.30: Overview on Post 2015 Millennium Development Goals by Nchedo Obi

3.30-5.00: Workshops & feedback

- ❖ Eradicate extreme Poverty by Kutta Daudi
- ❖ Promote Gender equality and empower Women by Carol Munyi
- ❖ Develop a Global partnership for Development by Winfred Akinyemi

5.00-5.15: Coffee Break

5.15-6.00: GBV and recurring conflict by Roisin Gallagher

6.00-7.00: Developing Africa diaspora platform and open discussion by Dr. Martin Russell

7.00-7.30: Way forward by Salome Mbugua & Egide Dhala

7.45: END

