

DIASPORAS IN DEVELOPMENT

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Session Title: Case Study: Creating Powerful Diaspora Networks

Presenter:

- Jo Addy, Director of Business Development, African Diaspora Network
- Dr. Magalie Emile-Backer, Vice President & Co-Founder, Haiti Renewal Alliance
- Aram S. Hamparian, Executive Director, Armenian National Committee of America
- **Moderator:** Nicholas Bassey, Division Chief, Frontier Partnerships, Center for Transformational Partnerships, USAID

Session Summary:

Diaspora organizers participated in a “how-to” session focused on how the founders of diaspora groups organized, set a vision, confirmed partners, and networked to create dynamic organizations. The session highlighted the strategies used to build advisory boards, make necessary political connections, and secure relationships with the philanthropic community.

Key Themes:

- **Theme 1:** Funding strategies: Different methods for engaging donors
- **Theme 2:** Building a network: Start small and make people feel comfortable to participate
- **Theme 3:** Engaging youth members

Best Practices/Recommendations/Suggestions:

Funding strategies:

- African Diaspora Network: Use a pay-as-you-model to ensure you stay fiscally sound, currently engaging active people and organizations for larger gifts to underwrite the organization or an event. Exploring a membership model. Consider members of the diaspora to include those who came to the U.S. hundreds of years ago and now, and also engage friends who are not members of the diaspora but are supportive of the work.
- Armenian National Committee of America: Receives small amounts from many people. It was difficult at first, but they now have a strong community and small

gifts sometimes turn into large ones. Overall, people have to care, understand that giving will affect change, and believe it will make a difference.

- Haiti Renewal Alliance: Hold an annual Business Investment Expo and Conference, which relies on sponsorship. At the expo, there is an HRA Investor Tank, which mirrors the TV show Shark Tank. The Investor Tank has resulted in up to \$500,000 in funding, but that value has not translated into funding for the organization.
- Building a network:
 - Armenian National Committee of America: Make people feel comfortable to engage, especially those from places with low trust, where they don't believe an organization will work in their interest or do what they say. Focus on what you agree on. Never take the bait and rise above it all.
 - Haiti Renewal Alliance: Be consistent. Since some diaspora leaders are using their personal time, money, and other resources; it can be difficult to sustain the work.
 - African Diaspora Network: Start with a small group at the beginning and consider partnering with a similar organization that already exists.
- Engaging youth members:
 - Armenian National Committee of America: Focus on the positive aspects of engaging, such as building a personal network), as the negative (e.g. a feeling of obligation) cannot be sustained. Diasporas also inherit a lot of social institutions, which can be off-putting for youth, but it is easier than ever for them connect via social networks.
 - Haiti Renewal Alliance: A lot of the different committees consist of young people, who really drive the work and are great at building networks.

Discussion Topics/Audience Questions:

How do you vet potential partners?

- Haiti Renewal Alliance: Work closely with the US Chamber of Commerce, which is able to assume a certain amount of initial vetting to build off of. However, also look at who the government is engaging with or who are the local organizations already doing this work.
- African Development Network: Since in the early stages, everything is word-of-mouth. Working on building a diverse membership--in terms of nationality, but also age, background, skills--so have the right knowledge and connections in the room.
- Does the US government work with diasporas within the U.S. that have connections to a developing country? The idea would be to create an ecosystem here and there.
- While USAID does engage people and organizations within the U.S., the Agency is focused on ending poverty in developing countries.
- The U.S. government brings much more to the table than funding. In particular, the government is crucial at leveraging diverse groups, who may have more expertise, interest, or funding for a given issue.

- It is helpful to make the connection between your personal work or interests and what you are trying to achieve. Working within medicine allowed me to grow a unique network, which has been applicable to the local community needs. However, the needs at the local community level should first be identified and drive everything else.