

# DIASPORAS IN DEVELOPMENT

**Session Title:** Supporting Livelihoods in Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations

**Presenter:**

- Dr. Zaher Sahloul, Senior Advisor and Past President, Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)
- Albert DeCady, Chair and CEO of Green Investments Group LLC, member of Haiti Renewal Alliance (HRA)
- Joy Spencer, Outreach Strategy Specialist, The Sierra Leone Diaspora Investment and Trade Study, World Bank
- Abdirashid S. Ahmed, East African Community Specialist, Neighborhood and Community Relations, City of Minneapolis
- Mohamed Malouche, Board Chairman, TAYP (Tunisian American Young Professionals), Senior Manager at Deloitte Consulting LLP
- Mirkka Henttöten, Program Manager for Labor Mobility and Human Development, IOM Somalia
- **Moderator:** Luca Dall'Oglio, Chief of Mission, IOM Washington DC,

**Session Summary:**

The roundtable ‘Supporting Livelihoods in Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations’ focused on the role diasporas have played and can still play to support reconstruction and stimulate livelihoods for affected communities in crisis and post-crisis settings, in order to build their resilience and promote recovery--particularly in light of the increased focus from the international community on Diaspora as key actors in these settings.

Speakers from Syria, Haiti, Sierra Leone, Tunisia and Somalia brought to the table their experiences and presented how in different crisis or post-crisis contexts diasporans collaborated with other actors to contribute to humanitarian response and longer-term interventions. Speakers described the challenges faced by their countries and communities and the ways in which diasporans contributed to addressing them, as well as areas for possible improvement.

Speakers and audience members discussed how skills transfer, technical assistance, and volunteerism in conflict zones, research and investment promotion in post-crisis contexts, remittances and capacity building for institutions in countries of origin, are some of the ways diasporans can effectively engage to support countries and communities of origin in the delicate process of post-crisis livelihood reconstruction. They also analyzed how migrants’ integration in countries of residence can affect the process of diaspora’s effective engagement in countries of origin. Each speaker brought a unique viewpoint on the issue and the audience contributed actively to the discussion.

### **Key Themes:**

- **Theme 1:** Diaspora's support in crises through technical assistance, technological means and innovations, fundraising and volunteerism.
- **Theme 2:** Link between migrants' integration in the country of residence and the nature and impact of diaspora's involvement in countries of origin.
- **Theme 3:** Role that each stakeholder (diaspora, international organizations, governments, etc.) can play in crisis and post-crisis settings, and how the response can be better coordinated.

### **Best Practices/Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- Communities are often not ready to deal with crises; diasporas, in cooperation with other international and local actors, can play a role in fostering crisis preparedness.
- New technologies can support diaspora's work in crises, as the case of remote health care in Syria shows. There is an increased need for investment in technological innovations to better reach populations in crisis situations.
- The Haitian case, both during the 2010 Earthquake and the recent Hurricane Matthew, shows how diaspora groups are among the first to mobilize, through remittances and direct assistance; a better understanding of how funds are used and how short term response links to more sustainable programs is needed to improve future interventions.
- Diaspora groups could work in synergy with other actors to find ways to institutionalize and facilitate the overall process of skills transfer and technical assistance in crisis and post-crisis situations.
- The Tunisian American Young Professionals' work is an example of how diasporas in countries of residence can promote investments and education, foster exports and exchanges, and also advocate on behalf of their country of origin. The 4 Es that can guide this model are: Education, Entrepreneurship, Export, and Exchanges.
- Within a post-crisis context, like Sierra Leone post-Ebola, there is high potential for diaspora's engagement and investment; recent studies show diaspora's interest in moving from remittances to more robust investment models and interest in social impact investments. There is need for key connectors to link diasporas with local communities (for example through online trade portals).
- Since the process of migrants' integration in countries of residence impacts the way diaspora engages in countries of origin, it is relevant to ensure community cohesion, create networks and lobby on behalf of countries of origin.
- Countries of origin need to create pull incentives for refugees and migrants to invest in and return to their country.
- Creating and using online trade portals to identify key diaspora members to connect them and provide training is useful.
- Diaspora's young entrepreneurs throughout the United States can be messengers with local chambers of commerce, universities, investors, etc.
- The case of the MIDA Program in Somalia shows the role that diaspora plays in capacity building of local institutions and technical assistance in sectors like education and health; more can be done to strengthen this role.

### **New Commitments & Follow-up Action Items:**

- Work toward a clearer understanding of what different actors can specifically contribute in crisis and post-crisis settings and how they can improve their coordination.
- Review cases like Haiti and others to better understand how short term humanitarian assistance can support longer term communities in strengthening livelihoods.
- Build on the momentum of relatively stable post-crisis contexts to foster diaspora's role in social investments and technical assistance.

**Discussion Topics/Audience Questions:**

- How can we support communities' resilience in fragile States?
  - In order to build resilience for the communities you need to make sure they have enough infrastructure to sustain them.
  - Remove any impediment in the transfer of wealth and skills.
  - Connect to international organization to work together from a wider perspective.
- How can the World Bank Institutions begin to harness the great amount of enthusiasm from Sierra Leone?
  - Through the use of an online portal to identify key diaspora members to connect them and provide training.