

The philosophy and culture of aid

A submission made by Diasporic Development

Diasporic Development's vision and mission

Diasporic Development aims to see black professionals leading change and being represented at all levels within the third sector.

For too long the third sector has excluded, whether wilfully or not, the knowledge, lived experiences, and values of many of the people it is trying to serve. Diasporic Development seeks to create a community of black professionals progressing at all levels.

We create a safe space for black people who want to be connectors, influencers, and change makers.

We provide networking, employment opportunities and professional development.

We hold the sector accountable for its failings to attract and retain diverse talent.

Diasporic Development is for us, by us.

Introduction

1. Diasporic Development wholeheartedly believes that the International Development Select Committee should consider the role diaspora communities play in shaping international development policy in the UK. For too long, their role in forming the bridge between the UK and the countries they have close ties to has been restricted to the monetary value of remittances. However, with discussions about the future of the international development landscape following seismic shifts in the UK's approach following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the merger of DFID and the FCO, and the impending cut of the 0.7% aid target, we believe this is the time for the entire sector to really embrace the power of the diaspora.
2. We welcome the conversations about challenging racism in the sector and the concerted effort many organisations are making to shift power from the Global North to partners working in the Global South. However, if the sector is to really embrace the notion of equitable partnerships and anti-racism, it is integral that development organisations not only hire people from ethnic minority backgrounds into positions from entry level to leadership level but also fund diaspora-led organisations and initiatives that are often working with hard-to-reach groups that are most in need of support.¹ This not only aligns with the values the sector claims to hold dear but recognises and values the knowledge and insight those from diaspora communities often bring to their work, things that cannot be taught in a course or gained during short volunteering trips, or even through professional experience.

¹ Flores & Malik, What Development means to diaspora communities, 2015, <https://www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource-documents/what-development-means-to-diaspora-communities-1115.pdf>

Racism and Representation in the sector

3. For a sector that purports to embrace internationalism, global mindedness and humanity in its fullness, it is striking that the sector has failed to embrace racial diversity amongst its workforce. Instead we have an elitist and majority-white sector replicating the structural barriers and inequalities we see across institutions in this country.
4. The development sector is often reflected in the language, donor requirements and images that are often associated with the Global South, and Africa in particular. Following years of ebb and flow, the conversations about removing the “white saviour complex” and calling out racism in global development gained a fresh urgency following the global Black Lives Matter protests that took place in the wake of the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in summer 2020. We welcome the significant effort some organisations have made in the last year to put policies in place to tackle racism and inequality in their work, however much more needs to be done. The conversation needs to explicitly go beyond diversity and inclusion, but rather active anti-racism work which centres equity. The sector will need to take a coordinated approach to tackling racism, or risk some organisations leaving the rest of the pack behind which will only undermine the sector as a whole.

Lack of racial diversity

5. One area that is integral to tackling the racism that is endemic to international development organisations is the hiring and retention of employees from ethnic minorities. Diasporic Development focuses on the employment and progression of Black graduates and professionals specifically because of the numerous barriers they face in the labour market and trying to “break into the sector”.
6. Black graduates within the UK are three times more likely to be unemployed after six months of graduating from university than their white peers.² The international development sector is no exception, and Diasporic Development recognises that within the sector, there is disproportionately low participation of Black professionals at all levels of the career ladder. Black graduates face a number of barriers to entering into and progressing within the sector, due to both systemic and structural racial inequality. These barriers are both overt – such as limited or no career opportunities because of racial prejudices – as well covert such as creating an unwelcome and non-inclusive environment, which discourages Black graduates to apply.

Barriers include:

- Unconscious and conscious bias both during the hiring process. A study by experts based at the Centre for Social Investigation at Nuffield College, University

² Gal-Dem, It’s Time for Black Universities in the UK, 2020, <https://gal-dem.com/its-time-for-black-universities-in-the-uk/>

of Oxford, found that Black and other ethnic minority applicants had to send 60% more applications to receive a response than white applicants of British origin. The figures were even higher for those of Nigerian origin at 80%.³

- Bias, microaggressions and racial discrimination within the office setting – half of Black Britons say they are as likely to encounter racism in the workplace as they are to have experience it on the street, according to a survey by YouGov. ⁴
- The “old boys network” nature of international development, in which many professionals have managed to enter the sector both through their connections and through having access to sufficient family income to engage in volunteering projects and unpaid internship opportunities. Many entry level jobs require the applicant to have demonstrated a number of years of relevant work experience which can be difficult to obtain without connections and/or sufficient income.
- A lack of amplification of Black voices. Currently, only 9% of charity employees identify as ethnic minorities.⁵
- A lack of Black role models at senior levels. According to the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), only 6% of charity chief executives are non-white.⁶

Recommendations

7. First and foremost, Diasporic Development calls on all international development charities and NGOs to have a Diversity, Inclusion and Equity commitment. Within these commitments they should outline the work the organisation is doing to tackle structural racism in all areas of its work and working environment. This will include their recruitment practices and grievance procedures.
8. We also call for all organisations to publish data on the ethnicity of their entire team (according to seniority and location) and Board of Trustees, and to publish the ethnicity pay gap in their organisations. Although there is data at a charity-wide level, there is a dearth of accessible data for international development charities. Bond has been proactive in convening people of colour in the sector to address racism and we would encourage members to entrust them with the responsibility of the coordination of this data collection.
9. Whilst other ethnic minorities also face barriers in entering the international development sector, Diasporic Development recognises the Black professionals face unique challenges that are not shared by other ethnic minorities. Where appropriate and in line with the work of individual organisations, Diasporic Development

³ The Guardian, Minority ethnic Britons face 'shocking' job discrimination, 2019,

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/17/minority-ethnic-britons-face-shocking-job-discrimination?CMP=fb_gu&fbclid=IwAR2fCJvVlf6vqpRoglgbnhgcWsm6WxOao_z26EmRNv2NADL_xStwBNSf3mM

⁴ Financial Times, Half of black Britons experience workplace racism, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/b2d9ebef-2d45-4d81-a907-0a38fa7d2610>

⁵ Mohideen, What are the barriers to increased racial diversity within the third sector?, 2020, ACEVO, <https://www.acevo.org.uk/2020/01/what-are-the-barriers-to-increased-racial-diversity-within-the-third-sector/>

⁶ <https://www.acevo.org.uk/2020/01/what-are-the-barriers-to-increased-racial-diversity-within-the-third-sector/>

recommends organisations introduce specific initiatives to support Black professionals, these include:

- Career outreach programmes: Many international development organisations interact with schools and universities to raise awareness about their work but not as a form of careers advice. We believe that highlighting the range of roles within the sector in an aspirational manner would widen the pool of people interested in global development from an early age, including Black students who might have only seen people who look like them reflected as beneficiaries of development assistance.
- Bespoke entry-level schemes recruiting Black graduates and apprentices: Most members of the Diasporic Development community are recent Black graduates that are struggling to gain paid entry-level positions in international development for the reasons outlined above. Diasporic Development has recently piloted a programme with Development Pathways to create an opportunity for a recent Black graduate to enter the sector.
- Support to existing Black employees: Far too often Black employees have had their progress stymied for various reasons. The sector is notorious for not providing enough formal support for career progression within its ranks. We call on all organisations to develop clear action plans and options on offer to Black employees to receive professional development. This can include mentoring, coaching, the provision of training, secondments and many others. We recognise the options available to employees will depend on the size of an organisation but a clear commitment and action plan should be outlined in an organisation's diversity, inclusion and equity approach. This form of Positive Action to improve diversity from junior positions to the boardroom would be an effective approach to improving diversity.

In Partnership with the Black Diaspora

10. However, we do not believe that the recruitment of the Black diaspora is only necessary because the sector ought to reflect racial diversity in its ranks.
11. We vehemently argue that professionals from the Black diaspora bring with them a wealth of knowledge, understanding and relationships linked to many of the countries organisations operate in that cannot be studied, observed during trips or acquired easily. Diasporic Development as a community have witnessed the quiet ways in which multiple generations of family and friends have carried out their sense of duty to those back "*home*" and we represent a demographic that straddles two worlds, effortlessly juggling multiple identities and many of us trying to continue these traditions of supporting our communities back home in a myriad of ways.
12. That is why we believe that a consideration of the philosophy and culture of aid should include forming equitable partnerships with diaspora-led organisations in the UK. We call for equitable relationships to be formed with Black diaspora communities, which would include investing and partnering in Black diaspora communities, who can utilise monetary and non-monetary resources to transform and shift the dial in aid. In this submission, Diasporic Development will refer specifically to African diaspora-led initiatives that we are aware of but we recognise that there are many impactful Black Caribbean organisations.

13. From newer diaspora-led Initiatives such as Kwanda⁷, a UK based fundraising platform dedicated to African & Caribbean communities. and Shabaka, a consulting and research organisation focused on diasporas' humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery⁸ to more established actors such as African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) and Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development (FORWARD) who work closely with young Africans, we know that there are significant number of Africans between 18-60 who are actively involved in development, and yet they are often ignored and overlooked when discussing the development landscape in the UK. These organisations are often filling the gaps and tackling the issues that larger or specialised organisations are unable or unwilling to do, reaching oft-overlooked people in personalised and sensitive ways.
14. For too long, UK aid has been framed in terms of effectiveness for UK taxpayers and yet very little research or ongoing support has been given to taxpayers that not only have a vested interest in development but also pay a "double tax" by sending remittances to families and communities abroad (that surpasses aid), potentially doing charity work in these countries and paying into the aid budget via taxes. Instead they are treated like a niche group, with the transformative potential dismissed and barely considered in these discussions.
15. The most notable exception to this trend is the Common Ground Initiative⁹, a Comic Relief and Department for International Development (DFID) project funding African diaspora-led organisations and initiatives in the UK with their development work. The evaluation of the project's success is still being assessed but one thing is clear, despite two of the biggest donors in the UK seeing the importance of working collaboration with the African diaspora, this did not inform wider discussions of UK aid and how it is done.

⁷ Kwanda, <https://kwanda.co/>

⁸ Shabaka, <https://shabaka.org/about-shabaka/>

⁹ Comic Relief, <https://www.comicrelief.com/news/comic-relief-announce-new-delivery-partners-common-ground-initiative/>