

Diaspora Influencing Case Study: AFFORD

Case Study on the work of the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) in shaping discussions and debates around the contribution and potential of the African diaspora and in bringing these to the attention of mainstream development.

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1994 to 2012

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Chukwu-Emeka Chikezie, Founder and Former Chief Executive, AFFORD

Organisational Profile

'Before it was actually formed in 1994, the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) was an idea germinating in the minds of many people. The puzzling paradox for many UK-based Africans concerned with the continent's development issues is this: at a time when there is increasing alarm about Africa's fate why are the majority of the Africans resident in the UK marginalised from mainstream development work and debates?'

Survey of African Organisations in London: An Agenda for AFFORD's Action (1998)

In 1994, there was a strong focus on capacity building in international development, with significant focus on Africa. There was a contrast between this approach to Africa's development and UK-based African diaspora organisations, who were making their own contributions but seemed to be doing so not only on the quiet, but also without an understanding of how their contributions linked in with mainstream development. AFFORD wanted to draw attention to and raise awareness of the contribution and potential of the African diaspora, and for the first 10 years of AFFORD's work, this was the key focus and entry point for AFFORD's discussion.

Key targets were:

- The African diaspora
- Mainstream development policymakers / bilateral development agencies / donors
- The mainstream NGOs working in development in Africa

The African diaspora's contributions were seen as fragmented, and there was a clear need to connect them, and to build their capacity. AFFORD identified its mission from the very early days to 'expand and enhance the contributions that Africans in the diaspora make to Africa's development'.

Over the years, a number of activities were developed to act on this mission. It must be understood that while advocacy was an underlying element of AFFORD's work, it was not always developed into key advocacy projects. As a result while AFFORD's work may have contributed significantly to key achievements within the UK international policy arena, and elsewhere, it is unable to make sole claim for these achievements, or to reflect accurately its contribution in relation to others.. Consequently, this case study has been developed as a timeline with key milestones, showing how AFFORD's journey of raising awareness of the diaspora's contributions took shape over time. This is broken up roughly into three phases: 1994 to 2000, 2001 to 2004 and 2005 to 2012.

Organisational capacity

AFFORD started off with two founders in 1994 Chukwu-Emeka Chikezie and Nicholas Atampugre who became the board of trustees together with a handful of other committed founder members. There were no paid staff until 1997, following which one could say that there was a steady growth of AFFORD's staff capacity until the mid 2000s where it has stayed more or less constant.

1. 1994 to 2000

Having established its main aim and mission AFFORD carried out a combination of activities in the first 6 years or so. Most importantly in the early days, there was a survey to map out and understand the types of diaspora organisations that existed and the contribution they were making, and several other surveys which gave credibility to AFFORD's aim of raising awareness about the diaspora's significant contribution to development. The surveys also provided an agenda for action. In the early years funding was received from Trust for London (TFL) and Comic Relief, among others, to carry out research and surveys on the African diaspora's contribution to development. Activities also included engagement with mainstream development organisations.

1998 to 2000 *Research to produce evidence as basis for AFFORD's mission*

The production of surveys, reports and research papers marked the early days of AFFORD and helped cement its claim about the significant contribution of the African diaspora. Some of these were

- a. *Survey of African Organisations in London: An agenda for AFFORD's action*, (AFFORD, 1998 http://www.afford-uk.org/documents/DownloadArea/african_org_london.pdf)
- b. *Dialogue for Development: Bringing the Mainstream to Africa*, (AFFORD, 1999)
- c. *Diaspora and development: Contributions by African organisations in the UK to Africa's development*, (Dr Carolyne Ndofo-Tah, 2000 http://www.afford-uk.org/documents/DownloadArea/ukbacso_contributions.pdf)
- d. *Globalisation and development: A diaspora dimension*, (AFFORD, submission to DFID White Paper, 2000)
- e. *An evaluation of AFFORD's work: 1998 – 2001* (Dr Carolyne Ndofo-Tah, Ese Fekah, 2001/3)

1998 *Engagement with mainstream development NGOs*

AFFORD held a joint workshop with BOND on 'Dialogue for Development: Bringing the Mainstream to Africa', which resulted in a report of the same name in 1999. The purpose of the workshop and the resulting report was 'to set the scene for a discussion to take place between representatives of UK-based African organisations working for Africa's development and mainstream international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and donors also working for Africa's development.'

1998 *AFFORD evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on International Development*

In 1997 the British government published its White Paper on International Development, *Eliminating World Poverty: A Challenge for the 21st Century*. This White Paper committed the British government to "build on the skills and talents of migrants and other members of ethnic minorities within the UK to promote the development of their countries of origin". In 1998 AFFORD submitted evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on International Development welcoming this aspect of the government's policy during its hearings into the new White Paper.

2000 Response to 1997 DFID White Paper on International Development

A significant milestone for AFFORD's work, which demonstrates more vividly their activities targeted at advocating for recognition, by the mainstream, of the diaspora's significant contribution and potential, was AFFORD's response to DFID's White Paper on Globalisation and Development. DFID's 1997 White Paper made passing reference to working with minority ethnic communities. AFFORD seized this opportunity to engage with DFID by making a submission to the White Paper in 2000 in *Globalisation and development: A diaspora dimension*, (AFFORD, 2000). AFFORD not only made it a point to put the issue of the diaspora on the mainstream agenda but had gone one step further to engage key international UK policy makers.

2000 onwards Development of diaspora networks within which AFFORD's mission was driven

In 2000 AFFORD established africa21, a consortium of five UK-based African development organisations, to enable networking and pooling of resources, and to drive forward the mission of enhancing and expanding the African diaspora's contribution to development. africa21 consisted of five organisations:

- ABANTU for Development
- AFFORD
- Akina Mama wa Africa
- Black International Construction Organisation (BICO)
- Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA)

The remits of africa21 members ranged from capacity building training for African community-based organisations, to African women development issues (UK and Africa), to development and the built environment, and to rural development, research and support to pastoral communities in the horn of Africa. africa21 members identified a need to legitimise, recognise and support the efforts of UK-based African diaspora groups in contributing to development in Africa. To this end activities carried out by africa21 included

- Target Africa 2015, which became known as TA2015, held as a day's event on an annual basis. The first such event was held in 2000 as a pilot. It had the following aims which were very much tied in with raising awareness of the diaspora's contribution.

'TA2015 Day ... was an attempt to raise development awareness - first among African communities promoting development in their regions of origin - that the work they do is part of the overall UK development effort and contributes to the 2015 International Development Targets (IDT) [which eventually became Millenium Development Goals MDGs] about which few people (African or otherwise) knew much.

Also we sought to draw the attention of non-African development organisations and individuals to the presence, commitment, scale and potential of development activity among African diaspora groups in the UK. Second, TA2015 Day was an attempt to promote networking among different African organisations and to build bridges between the African diaspora and the mainstream.'

Target Africa 2015: Development Awareness, Networking and Lifelong Learning among African Organisations in London. Event Report, September 2000.

- africa21 commissioned a study on the work of the African diaspora to determine their understanding of the 2015 goals (which became known as the Millennium Development Goals). This study confirmed that there were commonalities between the work of the African diaspora and mainstream development, as they were making contributions in areas such as poverty reduction, health, education, etc, but were

not using mainstream development language and therefore did not realise that their contributions were strongly linked to mainstream development.

'These diaspora groups conducted their work totally oblivious to the IDT 2015 around which many mainstream agencies such as the Department for International Development (DFID) now organise their work. And yet, an assessment of the types of projects these diaspora groups engage in shows that they have considerable sympathy for the international targets and indeed that they share common ground with their mainstream counterparts, even though few linkages exist between the two sets of actors.'

Diaspora and development: Contributions by African organisations in the UK to Africa's development, (Dr Carolyne Ndofor-Tah, 2000)

Impact

The work carried out over this initial phase made an impact on AFFORD's work and the development of knowledge around the African diaspora's contribution to development. Most of the impact of these early years were seen in the next phases of its work from 2001:

- AFFORD began to understand how the African diaspora make contributions – especially highlighting remittances and skills transfer at a time when no-one else was talking about it. Conceptually these included development of ideas (evidence of which can be seen in the next phase) such as:
 - a. the forms of capital the African diaspora have to deploy in Africa - intellectual, financial, social and political capital (See *Diplomats and diaspora dialogue for development: Proposal to create channels of communication between representatives of African governments in the UK and African communities in the UK* (AFFORD, 2003)), and
 - b. Ideas about 'brain circulation' rather than brain drain as well as the three 'Rs' – retention, retrieval and return'. (As presented by Chukwu-Emeka Chikezie to the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA): Workshop on migration and development in Southern Africa in 2004 in Tanzania, in 'Mobilising Africa's diaspora for development: A Challenge for African Government')

These ideas were very important in beginning to shift thinking around these issues.

Summary

One can see, from this selection of activities, that in a conventional sense AFFORD's early days focused on shifting the (UK) international policy agenda to ensure that mainstream development took account of the African diaspora as agents of development as well as the household names of international development NGOs. AFFORD was also involved, through parallel efforts by its CEO, in engaging African stakeholders through advocacy work in Africa with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

Key features that seemed to underpin AFFORD's work at this stage include:

- Consistency in messages
- Building evidence and knowledge through:

- a. engagement with the African diaspora;
- b. research;
- c. building diaspora networks
- Engaging key international development (policy) actors, including UK and African stakeholders, and mainstream development agencies.

2. 2001 to 2004

AFFORD received financial and other support during these years from Community Fund (now Big Lottery), Comic Relief and City Parochial. Between 2001 and 2004, AFFORD's staff capacity and financial income increased significantly from an average of one staff to six. Over this time, AFFORD also had an inflow of volunteers at various different times. AFFORD re-strategised all its work into several thematic and strategic priorities, developing a number of themes to support its mission of expanding and enhancing the contributions that Africans in the diaspora make to Africa's development (see diagram on page 6).

Advocacy was mainstreamed within each priority area, especially around influencing 'African development agenda' and 'shifting balance of power to Africa'.

"My work as Information Officer was that a large part was about communicating the diaspora perspectives, policies, and approaches to development." *Onyekachi Wambu*

Some specific projects during these years such as the London Advocacy Campaign (LAC), while they focussed on advocacy, was more about addressing advocacy as a tool for influencing and change and building the capacity of the diaspora in London to do so, than it was about advocating for one specific change.

The key point to this approach is that "AFFORD saw itself primarily as a facilitator of the developmental efforts of the African diaspora and thus focused on creating the enabling environment within which the diaspora could operate." *Chukwu-Emeka Chikezie*

Activities during this phase included:

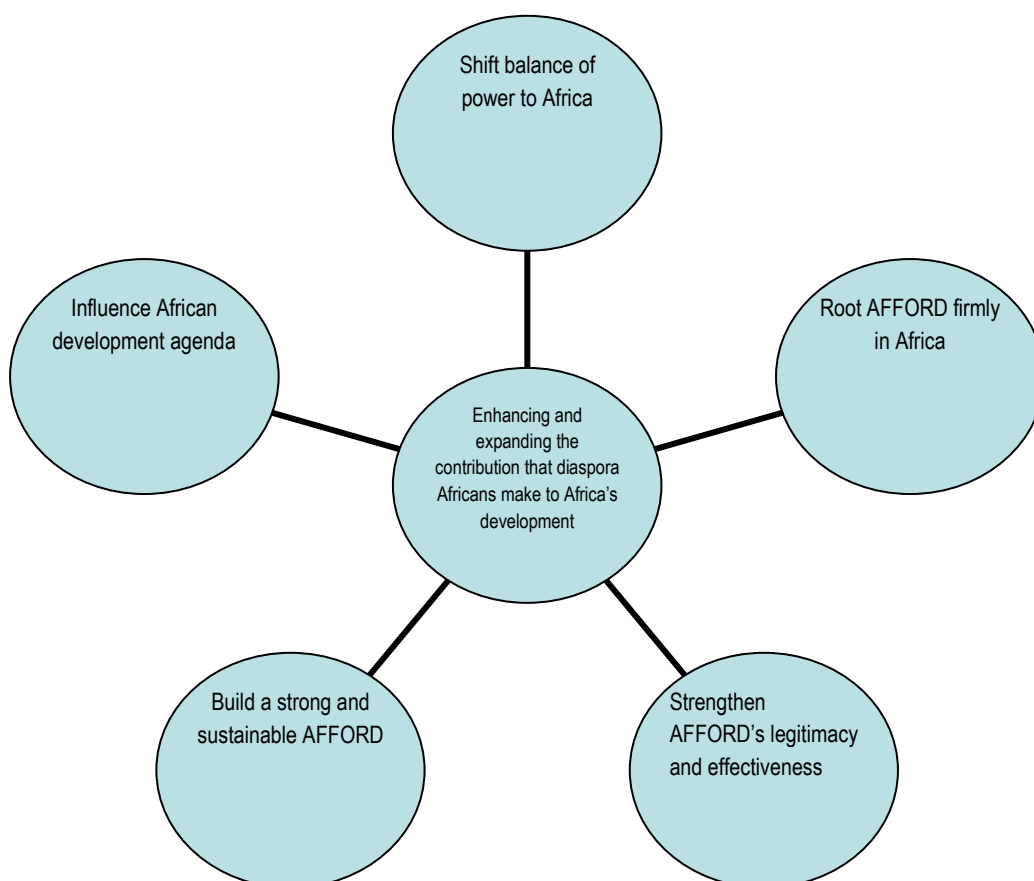
2001 to 2004 Research

Numerous research work and reports were produced by AFFORD or supported through AFFORD's work within this phase. A few examples listed below were:

- a. *Diplomats and diaspora dialogue for development: Proposal to create channels of communication between representatives of African governments in the UK and African communities in the UK* (AFFORD, 2003)
- b. *What can the African Diaspora do to challenge distorted media perceptions about Africa?* (AFFORD, 2003)
- c. *Shaping Africa's Future: Do young Africans in the Diaspora share the dreams of NEPAD/AU?* (AFFORD 2003)
- d. *Report of the "Hello Africa" action research national dissemination workshop organised by the Social Enterprise Development (SEND) Foundation of West Africa with the support of the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD), (Akunu Dake, Heritage Development, Ghana 2004)*

- e. *'One nation, one people, one destiny?' The Ghanaian diaspora's contribution to national development using diverse channels: Report prepared as part of the Hello Africa: Shifting power, tackling poverty by connecting Africa and the African diaspora (Samuel Zan, SEND, 2004)*
- f. *Maximising the benefits of migration and development: AFFORD's comments to the International Development Committee's Inquiry on Migration and Development. (AFFORD, 2004)*

AFFORD's key strategic priorities



2001 London Advocacy Campaign (LAC)

LAC's main aim was to harness advocacy capacity within the diaspora. AFFORD's research and engagement over the early years had positioned the diaspora as transnational global actors. With this knowledge, AFFORD wanted to develop an understanding around how the African diaspora, as transnational global actors, could bridge (or were bridging) the challenges they faced in their environment in London and their contributions to Africa. The understanding was that the environment within which the African diaspora found themselves, had a direct impact on their contributions to Africa and therefore by addressing challenges they faced in London, their contributions to Africa could be strengthened positively.

2001 to 2004 *Hello Africa - Shifting power, tackling poverty by connecting Africa and the African diaspora*

This was a project which commissioned a researcher to examine how the diaspora could work with, and make a direct economic impact on the ground in, Africa. The action research focussed on Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. This fell within one of the key strategic priorities of 'shifting the balance of power to Africa'.

2001 to 2004 *Africans Without Borders: Development from a Distance?*

The project on Africans Without Borders: Development from a Distance? was aimed at examining and debating the contribution of Africans abroad to development in Africa. It was targeted at the African diaspora, refugee networks and other interested individuals and was delivered within a more formal and academic setting. A successful pilot delivered in 2001 gave it the impetus it needed to be developed as a course and run from 2001 to 2004 by AFFORD at Birkbeck College, following which it received accreditation and was then taken over fully by Birkbeck College.

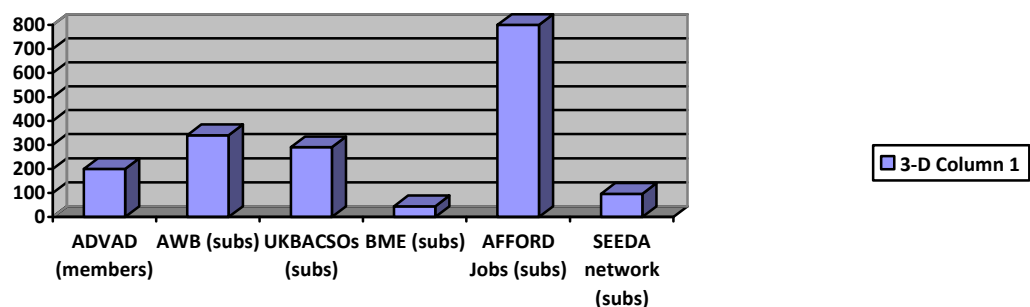
2002 to 2003 *Aiding and Abetting - Global Image, Local Damage?*

This project addressed images of Africa's development and the impact of this on the public's understanding of Africa, including the diaspora itself. The aim of the project was to give an understanding to the complexities that surround the generation of development-related media images, and to offer practical ideas for enabling the African diaspora to play a significant role in providing alternative perspectives of Africa, drawing upon their at-the-time largely unrecognized roles as agents of change (development) in Africa. Outputs included bringing together African organisations and artists to use imaginative and creative ways to tell their own stories, which ended with a public exhibition and a CD-ROM as well as a much quoted report reviewing media images of Africa.

2002 onwards *Development of diaspora networks*

Building diaspora networks and establishing African Diaspora Voices for Africa's Development (ADVAD) , including several other virtual networks such as Africans Without Borders (AWB), UK-based African Civil Society Organisations (UKBACSOs), Black members working in development (BME), AFFORD Jobs and SEEDA – Supporting Entrepreneurs and Enterprises in Africa - network (which was introduced in the next phase). It can be argued that these networks contributed significantly to affirming AFFORD's belief in the diaspora's potential and significant contribution in Africa's development, and increased the diaspora's awareness of its role, in the sense that it drew in the diaspora community in the UK from all walks of life, and in the particular case of AWB, it drew a significant number of diaspora in the USA, and Africans on the African continent. Discussions reinforced the diaspora's contribution, removed the sense of isolation that many diaspora groups experienced, shared learning and experiences, and raised awareness among the diaspora themselves.

AFFORD networks at their peak – approximate number of members and subscribers



2003 *Extending diaspora engagement to young diaspora Africans*

The key activity for this was a piece of research focusing on the vision of young Africans in the diaspora and comparing this to the vision of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a programme of the African Union (AU). Crucial to the success of this project was the engagement of young Africans who were involved in the whole conception and execution of the project itself, including the final dissemination of key findings at Africa Diaspora and Development Day (AD3) in 2003.

Equally important, in relation to how advocacy was mainstreamed in AFFORD's work was the fact that the methodology of the research included interviews with key officials in NEPAD and the AU, conversations of which focused on raising awareness of the African diaspora and their contribution to Africa's development. The project went on to invite and engage further key NEPAD officials to AD3 at which key findings of the research were presented.

This project facilitated the active involvement of a generation of early to mid-twenties individuals who found a professional and vocational footing on the African development scene. This is seen through in particular AFFORD's programme Opportunity Africa and later SEEDA.

2003 onwards *African Diaspora and Development Day (AD3)*

African Diaspora and Development Day (AD3) began as a day-long conference, held annually, where AFFORD's ethos was to look ahead and come up with concrete solutions that could be translated into projects and activities. Up until 2005, AD3 was celebrated as a major event bringing together the diaspora sector, and other stakeholders. Following 2005, significant funding for AD3 dried up, and diaspora meetings of this nature were on the increase. As a result, from 2006, AD3 began to focus solely on AFFORD's own agenda and specifically on job creation and entrepreneurship. It has been delivered on a smaller scale, on a tight budget, and has been used as a way of engaging stakeholders around the developments of AFFORD's work. A large number of AFFORD's projects and activities from 2003 were the outcomes of discussions at AD3, making a huge impact on AFFORD's work. Below are a few examples of projects generated through discussions at AD3 events.

Impact of AD3

- AD3 2003: AFFORD's work with young Africans came out of the first AD3 in 2003, when the findings of the first major survey of young Africans were disseminated. Opportunity Africa was a programme that engaged young Africans around their employability issues.
- AD3 2003 – 2006: AD3 also generated ideas about how to mobilise young Africans. This would later bear fruit when the first people to show interest in the volunteering initiative Supporting Entrepreneurs and Enterprise Development in Africa (SEEDA) in 2006 were recruited at AD3.
- AD3 2003: Through discussions at this AD3, the initiative Africa Words and Pictures was born. This was a programme of screenings of African films followed by discussions, intended to engage young diasporan Africans around discussions on Africa outside of their usual sources of information such as the media or family, which were often negatively biased.
- AD3 2005 – 2006: For two years AFFORD brought members of African civil society to AD3 to interact with their peers in the UK. As an activity it was important in improving understanding and perspectives of Africa's development and the strength of diaspora contributions. It was important that the diaspora did not come up with its own solutions in isolation just as it was important for the African civil society to understand their frustrations. Some of these participants later volunteered in AFFORD programmes such as SEEDA.

2004 Opportunity Africa

Opportunity Africa aimed to enhance the skills base and job preparedness of young Africans living in London, making it easier for them to move into full-time employment in the African/international development sector. Activities included careers advice, placement in jobs in Africa and other development organisations in Africa.

'Over 100 young UK based young Africans participated in the opportunity Africa programme, receiving valuable one-on-one careers advice from Francis Williams, an expert Human Resources manager. Internships, volunteer and placement opportunities were secured for some of these young people in companies/organisations that fit within their chosen job sectors. We secured internships with various organisations in Africa, including the Student Youth Travel Organisation (Ghana), the United Nations (Senegal) and the World Bank (Angola), amongst others. This route will enable them to gain the necessary work experience required by most employers. Opportunity Africa Alumni have gone to work for the Commonwealth Foundation, the Royal Commonwealth Society, AfricaRecruit, CAPPs, Afruca, Gaia Foundation, Southwark Council, Action Against Hunger in London etc.'

http://www.afford-uk.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=50&Itemid=69

2004 AFFORD responds to International Development Committee Enquiry on Migration and Development

In 2004, AFFORD wrote and submitted a memo in response to the International Development Committee Enquiry on Migration and Development in the document 'Maximising the benefits of migration and development: AFFORD's comments to the International Development Committee's Inquiry on Migration and Development' (AFFORD, 2004).

2004 Dissemination, UN Commission on Migration and Development

AFFORD was asked to help with the dissemination of results from the 2004/2005 UN Commission on Migration and Development. Through this AFFORD became increasingly involved with the Global Forum on Migration and Development. Together with its earlier response to the International Development Committee Enquiry on Migration and Development (previous paragraph) one can see how AFFORD was engaging at a more international (and higher) level.

Impact

- This phase of AFFORD's work generated more evidence in theory and in practice, some of which formed the basis for new funding such as the precursor to AFFORD's youth work 'Opportunity Africa'. The precursor was a piece of work aimed at reviewing how mainstream international development organisations, through their recruitment policies, failed to value the strengths that a diverse workforce, such as ethnic minority actors, including the diaspora, brought to the table.
- By 2004, AFFORD's pioneering work began to see the development and emergence of several diaspora organisations. Some of this was as a result of building the capacity of the African diaspora through projects such as the Africans Without Borders (AWB) course at Birkbeck which gave participants a key understanding of the diaspora, LAC which harnessed advocacy capacity within the diaspora in London, training on resource mobilisation which was delivered with social justice campaigners Fahamu, etc.

- Recognition of the diaspora as key agents of diaspora development, through AFFORD, grew as a result of several catalysts including increased engagement with the diaspora community, the World Bank confirmation of remittances as a key contributor to Africa's development, and others. For example,

'On March 11 2003, Sally Keeble MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at DFID visited AFFORD's offices to brief a range of African-led organisations and individuals actively supporting Africa's development on the purpose of the Strategic Grants Agreement (SGA) between DFID and Connections for Development (CfD), an organisation established to serve as a network of UK Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities working on international development. Over the three-year duration of the SGA, DFID committed to fund its work to the tune of around £250,000 a year.

For AFFORD, this was the culmination of seven years' efforts to encourage DFID to move from the bald [sic] commitment in the 1997 White Paper to work with migrants and ethnic minority communities to support development in their regions of origin, to actually putting some meat on the bones. CfD represents an exciting opportunity for cross-fertilisation of ideas and experience between different and diverse BME communities in the UK around their respective approaches and interest in development."

http://www.afford-uk.org/documents/annual_report_2003.pdf

By using AFFORD's office as the platform to engage the African diaspora and inform them on this strategic grant, it can be argued that the diaspora's role as a key agent and partners in Africa's development had been recognised.

- In addition, towards the end of this period, a number of researchers approached AFFORD to gain its view on diaspora and development. In 2004, DFID commissioned research carried out by the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS). The report by COMPAS strongly supported proposals made earlier by AFFORD on diaspora and development. In the report, it not only quoted AFFORD's work but made several references to its earlier research work, as well as evidence deduced from AFFORD's projects such as its submission to the White Paper. For examples see Annex A.

Summary

This phase saw a continuity of AFFORD's work in putting diaspora contributions to Africa's development on the agenda. In comparison to the first four years, this phase built the capacity of diaspora organisations and individuals and virtual and physical networks were established which generated discussions on diaspora development by the diaspora and non-diaspora community.

Advocacy was an underlying and integral part of AFFORD's work, in the sense that it sought to raise awareness of the African diaspora's contribution to international development and to influence mainstream and international policy. As a diaspora organisation itself, by doing so AFFORD strengthened its advocacy around the significant contribution of the African diaspora to Africa's development. For example, between 1995 and 2003 one of AFFORD's major 'campaigns' was based on the assertion that the diaspora made significant contributions through remittances. The World Bank's report on diaspora remittances to Africa for the first time in 2003/2004 not only confirmed this assertion, but backed up and strengthened AFFORD's mission, and put even more firmly on the agenda the key role of the diaspora as agents of development. It can be argued that the World Bank report, coupled with AFFORD's prior assertion and campaign, (but not exclusively) helped increase the African diaspora's international and national significance.

Several projects and activities were piloted during this phase, and while knowledge about the diaspora's contribution to development and challenges they faced as transnational global actors grew, AFFORD was unable to find the resources needed to take these to another level by the end of this phase. According to Chukwu-Emeka Chikezie (co-founder and former Chief Executive of AFFORD), AFFORD's limitations to demonstrate

impact of their work within this phase perhaps hindered any possibilities of securing significant funding to drive forward successful and worthwhile pilots and projects. Regardless, this phase of AFFORD's work, informed the direction of the next.

3. 2005 to 2012

In 2004, AFFORD began to look at how it positioned itself. Having spent the first 10 years raising awareness about diaspora contributions to development, developing research and projects to help it understand better the role of the diaspora, AFFORD turned its attention to the question of the impact of diaspora development in Africa. While it was clear that the African diaspora were making significant contributions to Africa's development, the impact of this in Africa was less clear. It began to question what impact was being made in Africa as a result of diaspora contributions; how could diaspora development make more of a direct impact in Africa; how important were diaspora contributions to development in Africa if one was unable to demonstrate economic impact. In addition to challenges faced in linking economic impact in Africa to diaspora development, there were other factors that made these discussions and questions even more relevant and important. A few of these were:

- The Hello Africa project. This was a precursor to all of AFFORD's work in Africa. Lessons from this project were learnt on partnership with Africa, on the fundamental needs of people in Africa and this included job creation;
- An emerging and different landscape of diaspora organisations in the UK; and
- Experiences of diaspora individuals on their visits to Africa.

Following several discussions, considerations, and evidence-based information, AFFORD began to explore other ways of harnessing diaspora contributions to make an economic impact in Africa. One of these discussions was on job creation in Africa through entrepreneurship, which has to a large part characterised AFFORD's work over this phase. Several new projects were introduced within AFFORD - a selected few are listed below.

Activities directly linked to job creation and enterprise development during this phase included:

2005 *Feasibility study on job creation and entrepreneurship in Africa*

AFFORD's focus on job creation was backed up with a feasibility study in 2005 funded by VSO (Voluntary Services Overseas). The study was carried out in Ghana and in Sierra Leone to determine how to develop a programme supporting job creation and entrepreneurship in Africa through diaspora volunteering.

2006 *Helping Africans Influence London (HAIL)*

AFFORD continued with projects focused specifically on advocacy. While the focus remained on the diaspora's contribution to African development, it concentrated on economic and developmental impact of migration by looking at the entrepreneurial and financial role of diaspora Africans. The successor to London Advocacy Campaign (LAC) was Helping Africans Influence London (HAIL). AFFORD sought to bring Africans in the diaspora together with policy-makers, funders and the private sector to exchange ideas and explore practical ways to maximise the benefits of international migration for Africa and the UK. HAIL focused particularly on supporting those businesses engaged in transnational food businesses. Food is a core component of London's African business sector and integral to most African diaspora communities.

April 2006 - Harnessing the benefits of Migration – Neighbourhood Renewal in Our Global Village.

'This event was held in response to the December 2005 UN sponsored Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) report, which called governments and policy-makers to recognize and reinforce 'the economic and developmental impact' of migration on home and hosts countries. The event enabled us to identify some of the key issues of concern to African diaspora participants, including transnational food businesses, remittances, and allowed dialogue with key policymakers such as DFID, the Home Office, Southwark and Council.

AFFORD worked with and consulted other diaspora groups before presenting a submission to United Nations High Level Dialogue on International Migration in September 2006. In December 2006 as part of the Mayor's 10 year London Food Strategy (LFS), AFFORD in partnership with London Food Link, facilitated African food businesses to make a formal submission.'

http://www.afford-uk.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=47&Itemid=66#

2006 International Migration and Development

In 2006, AFFORD was involved in the UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

2006 to 2012 AFFORD in Sierra Leone

Supporting Entrepreneurs and Enterprise Development in Africa (SEEDA). In 2006, SEEDA was established. It was aimed at harnessing the resources of the African diaspora - skills, know-how and finance - to support small and medium-sized businesses in Africa. Within the first two years of the programme, 70 diaspora Resource Persons (RPs) invested over £120,000 worth of their time and money, engaging with 800-plus businesses in Africa, assisting them with book-keeping, business planning, marketing, and even with opening bank accounts and securing capital. A large part of this work was funded through VSO Diaspora Volunteering Programme.

Business development services for micro, small and medium sized enterprises in Sierra Leone. By 2007/2008 AFFORD had raised money from Comic Relief to establish a pilot permanent Business Support Centre in Freetown. Accompanying the business centre, AFFORD also established AFFORD Sierra Leone (SL) as an autonomous body in 2008, with the aim that local Sierra Leoneans would drive this enterprise and jobs agenda, through training, business support and advocacy.

'The African Foundation for Development in Sierra Leone (AFFORD-SL) seeks to facilitate the creation, protection and maintenance of jobs through practical support of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).

The organisation relies on support from the African Diaspora who partner with Sierra Leoneans on the ground to provide investment and input on business training through the deployment of Business Coaches and Advisors.'

<http://www.affordsl.com/about/>

A year later AFFORD's business support presence had been extended to five regional towns through funds provided by DFID Sierra Leone. AFFORD SL has trained over 30 business coaches to support businesses, and

has deepened advocacy around supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This was done by engaging with government to remove red tape and create an enabling environment, engaging with banks and micro-finance institutions to ease access to capital, and running the national annual 'Dragon's Den' style 'Business Bomba' to find the best small business in the country, which also promotes the importance of SMEs to the economy. The 'Business Bomba' competition is covered on radio and television, with the Sierra Leone President giving out a \$20,000 award to the winner in a ceremony.

2008 to 2010 *Score4Africa*

A key piece of work was AFFORD's SCORE4africa project – an initiative to engage and advocate for Africa's development with the football world. It involved recognising, through an awards ceremony, the immense contribution some players were making to African development in the areas of health, education, social cohesion, business, youth development etc. It also involved:

- Getting other high net worth individuals among African and non African players to do more in supporting development in Africa, and
- Getting the Football Association (FA), Premier League and others to contribute more to Africa, especially given that players of African origin, both in the diaspora and on the continent, represent more than 30% of the Premier League.

“Our pioneering initiative has led to other award ceremonies now taking place seeking to encourage sport and development”. - Onyekachi Wambu

2008 onwards *Re-Made*

AFFORD and IntEnt (International Enterprise), a Dutch organisation with an office in Ghana, formed a partnership to manage the Re-Made programme. This was an EU co-funded project aimed at those who are ready to start a business or a branch of their business in Ghana. Entrepreneurs were provided with a business advisor, with training sessions, support to develop their business plans and support with a market research trip to Ghana. It also provided participants with access to ministers and other decision makers in Ghana. The pilot initiative was completed in December 2011 and the evaluation of this work is now underway and will be published once completed.

2011 *European-wide African Diaspora Platform for Development (EADPD)*

This is a partnership of five organisations in Europe including AFFORD. The ultimate goal of this pilot project is to be an inclusive interactive and informative space reflecting the interconnectivity at the heart of migration and development issues.

Impact

AFFORD in Sierra Leone 2006 - 2012

AFFORD have made huge investments in Sierra Leone:

- Mobilised over 130 diasporans to support SMEs.
- Over 800 businesses have been supported with bookkeeping, access to finance, marketing, and lobbying to provide an enabling business environment, etc.
- Set up network of business support centres, plus over 30 business coaches

trained in Sierra Leone.

- AFFORD-SL attracted further \$500,000 to run the successful Business Bomba

Over the next 4 years AFFORD will invest an additional £1 million in upgrading AFFORD Business Centre (ABC) to become a one-stop facility with legal, accounting support and provide business incubation.

- This phase of AFFORD's work has generated more evidence on how the African diaspora can create economic impact in Africa. Lessons learnt from programmes like SEEDA and Re-Made, and the interest and participation shown in these programmes by the diaspora have not only helped solidify the diaspora's significant contribution to economic development but also their role in creating programmes that directly address and utilise the understanding of the diaspora's challenges and potential to ensure that diaspora uptake is high.
- As a result of developing knowledge of diaspora development, Chukwu-Emeka Chikezie, founder and former CEO of AFFORD, carried out consulting work for DFID in this area – an indication of how within the framework of diaspora work and advocacy, individuals are as important as organisations.
- This creativity is evidenced in the generation of other ideas by the diaspora aimed at making an economic impact in Africa. One such significant example is RemitAid, which was founded by Gibril Faal in 2005. Gibril is Chair of AFFORD and RemitAid is perhaps a typical example of a diaspora-led advocacy project that is complex in the way diaspora individuals, organisations and intellectual capital come together to make things happen.

RemitAid™ is a programme advocating Remittance Tax Relief (RTR) for International Development. It seeks to mitigate the imperfections of Diaspora and migrant remittances and to facilitate the channelling of more of these financial flows towards productive and regenerative ventures in developing countries. This would mean the provision of a community tax relief on remittances that are spent on activities that support the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), charitable objectives or other sustainable development projects and programmes.

<http://www.remitaid.org/>

- Following the initial engagements with the AU through NEPAD, the AU developed its own migration policy framework, and described the diaspora as the 6th region of Africa. While AFFORD cannot claim direct responsibility for these developments, it can argue that it played a significant role in shaping discussions of the African diaspora, in the UK and internationally.
- Other recent developments which all point to the diaspora's creativity in developing and thinking around development projects that can make economic impact include
 - RemitPlus which has the overall goal of improving livelihoods in Africa by using remittances and migrant capital to promote rural and enterprise development through improvements in the performance of new and existing businesses (<http://www.remitplus.org/>)
 - Diaspora bonds, which are being seen as increasingly popular financing tool by African governments to raise money to finance particular infrastructure and development projects. The diaspora sent \$25 billion as remittances to Africa in 2010 according to the World Bank. There

is scope for increasing Diaspora investment in strategic sectors of the economy and in privatisation through sovereign and corporate bonds.

The Ethiopian government launched their Millennium Bond, to finance the building of a dam. It was heavily undersubscribed. Following a review they will now launch another bond for \$4.8 billion to finance the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

Meanwhile, Nigeria and Kenya are also launching their own bonds.

AFFORD, in the context of Africa-UK (the advocacy project of Comic Relief's Common Ground Initiative (CGI), are working with a diaspora group to engage an African High Commission in the UK to explore the kinds of bonds that the diaspora might be willing to buy and to explore the concerns and challenges that would prevent them subscribing.

Summary

There are many more examples of other projects initiated by AFFORD within this phase including more recent developments over the last three years or so but perhaps these are too recent to comment on. In addition, the selected activities above should hopefully give an understanding of how AFFORD's work has developed over the last phase. Its work has been more directly targeted at enterprise development in Africa and overall in making an economic impact. Even its advocacy programme HAIL was targeted at the African diaspora businesses in London.

The communication material (see 'we say, they say' below) that promotes the general programme also seeks to shape the broader agenda as to how Africa is seen, and promoting the most effective strategies for reducing poverty.



It is important to note that as before, lessons learnt by AFFORD within this phase continue to shape discussions and debates and the generation of new ideas such as RemitAid, RemitPlus and Diaspora Bonds.

Just as significantly, AFFORD has continued to be involved in raising awareness of the diaspora's contribution among the diaspora themselves and within mainstream development. It has done this through its own work in Africa such as SEEDA and support for SMEs in Sierra Leone and Re-Made which relied heavily on pulling together resources and skills of the UK diaspora to deliver, therefore creating a loose network of diaspora individuals with shared experiences of supporting Africa's development through skills transfer.

Continued and increasing strategic funding and involvement by mainstream development institutions (DFID, VSO, Comic Relief, etc) in supporting diaspora development work in Africa over the last eight years or so is perhaps another indication of the recognition of the diaspora as key agents of development.

AFFORD's involvement in international forums on migration and development, and its key role as one of five partners in the Europe-Africa Platform funded by the EU is another indication of the recognition of the African diaspora as key agents of development.

Challenges

In raising awareness among mainstream development and policymakers and among the African diaspora about the significance of diaspora contributions to Africa, and the potential of the diaspora as key agents of development, AFFORD faced several challenges as an organisation and in the development of its activities. Five key challenges are identified below:

- *Legitimacy.* In its early days, AFFORD's legitimacy as a diaspora development organisation making claims about the African diaspora's significant contribution to development was questioned. The diaspora's own legitimacy as key agents of development was also questioned. While AFFORD spoke on behalf of the African diaspora, it never considered itself as an umbrella body or wanted to become one, so in dealing with this challenge, AFFORD constantly backed up its affirmations with evidence and it is perhaps not surprising that research and projects that tested assumptions about the diaspora played a significant role in AFFORD's activities. What is perhaps AFFORD's first research, published in 1998 - *Survey of African Organisations in London: An agenda for AFFORD's action* – became the initial basis and justification on which AFFORD spoke on behalf of the diaspora and worked towards addressing its needs.
- *Limitations in demonstrating impact.* In raising awareness about diaspora development contributions, AFFORD developed and implemented several projects and activities through its strategic priorities as seen through the timeline. Despite the creativity and development of projects, it faced limitations to demonstrate impact of its work sufficiently to secure funding to build on specific programmes. This was particularly evident at the end of the second phase of its work when many projects came to an end with very little opportunity of securing funding to expand on them. Nevertheless, it added to AFFORD's repositioning and focus on harnessing diaspora contributions for the interests of Africa; it narrowed its focus to addressing the specific needs of Africans as evidenced in their research, focusing on projects that could make an economic impact in Africa, and in this case, job creation and entrepreneurship.
- *Lack of funding for AFFORD's work in Africa.* When AFFORD turned its attention to job creation and entrepreneurship and turned its focus directly to Africa, it faced some key challenges in securing funding for this work. This was for a combination of reasons. The first was that AFFORD wanted to be an organisation delivering in Africa – having previously contributed all its efforts to UK-based diaspora development organisations, there seemed to be some scepticism from mainstream funders about its ability to deliver in Africa. Secondly, prior to 2005 there was very little appetite for funding work that seemed to fall within the private sector – traditionally, most mainstream development work was seen as strictly non-profit and there was no room for anything that did not quite fit in.

Strong relationships with funders like Comic Relief and VSO played a key role in dealing with this challenge and facilitating success in securing funding. AFFORD's track record of delivering gave both Comic Relief and VSO the confidence to fund two pilot projects to facilitate AFFORD's presence in Africa, starting in Sierra Leone. In the case of VSO, AFFORD also signed up to volunteering as a way of facilitating business development among SMEs in Sierra Leone – this would have been attractive to VSO as its ethos is based on the use of volunteering for development. In brief, AFFORD dealt with this challenge by continuing to engage with mainstream funders, exploring other funding avenues and opening up to new types of funders including corporate bodies.

- *Overreliance on organisations like AFFORD and AfricaRecruit / lack of adequate capacity within the diaspora development sector to lead on new ideas.* One of the key challenges for AFFORD has been the fact that many individuals and organisations in the diaspora sector look up to it to organise and take ideas forward. While this may be seen as a demonstration of AFFORD's capabilities, development of expertise and knowledge of diaspora development continue to lie with a handful of organisations and individuals. The other challenge with this overreliance is that these organisations have huge capacity issues themselves. In the last three or four years, AFFORD's work has been delivered by two staff members, several consultants and several more volunteers. AFFORD has made attempts at addressing this in a number of ways including through the establishment of diaspora networks that were representative of a range of diaspora organisations. Two significant ones were ADVAD and CfD, neither of which achieved their goals. This continues to be a key challenge in AFFORD's work.
- For AFFORD, and the diaspora at large, the challenge of scalability remains an issue: in one sense, the diaspora can be seen as one set of vulnerable people sending money to another set of vulnerable people in Africa. The question remains - *how does one scale up diaspora efforts to benefit them so that in turn, they can make more of an impact to Africa's development?*

Next Steps

The last phase of AFFORD's work saw it move towards programmes that make a direct economic impact in Africa. Its work in Sierra Leone has expanded with the establishment of AFFORD SL.

Over the next four years AFFORD will invest an additional £1 million in developing AFFORD Business Centre (ABC) to become a one stop facility with legal, accounting support and provide business incubation for high growth SMEs. It is also anticipated that it will become a key point for information and advocacy about the SME sector in Sierra Leone.

Over the next two years it will continue to build a diaspora platform in Europe with four other European counterparts, as part of a 3 year EU-funded Africa-Europe Platform within the EADPD project. By doing so AFFORD will share and raise more awareness about diaspora development contributions on a Europe-wide level. It will begin to look at a more coordinated strategy of harnessing diaspora contributions at a Europe-wide level for the interests of Africa's development. Working at a Europe-wide level has its own set of challenges. In addition to the challenge of seeking funding for the next level of this pilot project, challenges around partnership working will need to be risk managed.

While AFFORD's work is currently largely focused on harnessing diaspora contributions for social enterprise and private sector development in Africa, it continues to engage on these issues with mainstream development and policy makers, and the African diaspora. By engaging at a Europe-wide level AFFORD hopes to collaborate with European counterparts and to influence Africa-related policy at EU level.

Policy scale achievement

Cooperation/change in discourse: It can be argued that AFFORD's activities and achievements influenced a change in discourse within the international development sector – both within diaspora and mainstream development. This is seen in the increasing involvement of key international development organisations and policy makers such as DFID, VSO and Comic Relief in providing more strategic support to diaspora development work, as well as in the increasing involvement and importance of diaspora development at a global level, as seen in AFFORD's involvement with the UN's Global Forum on Migration and Development, and more recently its involvement at a European level.

Conclusion

AFFORD's journey, as documented here, provides a general but credible understanding of how advocacy has been mainstreamed over the years into its strategic priorities and activities, and consequently has made a significant contribution in shaping discussions around diaspora and development.

In brief, AFFORD started from a place where there was disengagement between diaspora and development and the mainstream development agenda. AFFORD shaped discussions and debates around this disengagement by focussing on raising awareness of the diaspora's contribution to development among the African diaspora, among mainstream development NGOs, development policymakers, bilateral and multilateral development agencies and donors and developed this agenda by regularly reviewing, reflecting and learning. This has developed into a recognition of AFFORD, and consequently the African diaspora, as key agents of development.

AFFORD played a significant role in the development of this recognition and continues to frame the thinking on diaspora and development today.

The contribution of UK-based diasporas to development and poverty reduction: A report by the ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford for the Department for International Development, (April 2004, Nicholas Van Hear, Frank Pieke and Steven Vertovec)

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In addition to these general policies, the findings of the report strongly support the following proposals made earlier by the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD):

- Acknowledge that the diaspora, as investors in, welfare providers to, and knowledge communities about developing regions merit as serious an engagement as the private sector with DfID and other government departments with a development brief.
- Drawing UK-based diaspora groups into the formulation of Country Strategy or Assistance Plans, Poverty Reduction Strategy Planning, and other instruments of UK development policy.
- Making greater efforts to bridge the UK's two parallel development and relief efforts, one mainstream-led (DfID plus UK-based NGOs engaged in development and relief) and the other diaspora-led. DfID might consider creating incentives such as a partnership fund (akin to its Civil Society Challenge Fund) to encourage 'mainstream' development and diaspora groups to engage constructively with each other.
- The formation of a dedicated unit within DfID (along the lines of the Private Sector Unit) to engage with UK-based diaspora groups, and to assess the different strength, weaknesses and potential of different groups (and of sections within particular diaspora groups).

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AFFORD have identified a further way in which the human resources of the diaspora may be mobilised to support initiatives in Somalia and elsewhere – known as 'retrieval' (AFFORD 2004), this involves the flexible exploitation of diaspora networks and know-how.

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In its submission in response to the UK government's White Paper on Globalisation and Development in 2000, AFFORD (2000) usefully identified a number of different diaspora actors and the different ways in which they could influence the homeland. Among the kinds of *actors* identified by AFFORD were individuals, hometown associations, ethnic associations, alumni associations, religious associations, professional associations, development NGOs, investment/business groups, political groups, national development groups, welfare/refugee groups, supplementary schools, and virtual organisations.

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We therefore support the criticisms made by AFFORD in their response to the 2000 White Paper on Globalisation and Development.