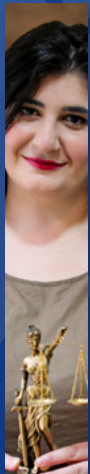




Connecting
Diaspora for
Development



Diaspora in Action

Twenty Success Stories from
Diaspora Experts

Diaspora in Action

Twenty Success Stories from Diaspora Experts

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Introduction

On the first of January 2022, the Netherlands had a population of 17.6 million people. The Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics considers 4.6 million of these people first or second-generation migrants. Moreover, around 1.7 million of the total Dutch population was born outside of Europe. The number of these diaspora will, no doubt, only increase. Despite their place in Dutch society, they often remain emotionally, culturally, economically, and politically connected to their countries of origin.

Diaspora carry unique knowledge and skills, due to their personal connection to countries of origin, and their ability to build bridges between societies. They are humanitarian actors in crisis situations, entrepreneurs in business, trade, and innovation, international experts, as well as excellent agents for human and economic development. Diaspora are moreover often motivated to share their expertise with their community.

Connecting Diaspora for Development (CD4D) places diaspora at the centre of all actions by using their potential in short-term knowledge transfer assignments. It builds on nearly 20 years of experience during which IOM the Netherlands has implemented



its diaspora engagement programme, supporting more than 1,500 diaspora expert assignments in almost 20 countries. Each of these experts brought their own networks, building and maintaining sustainable connections between people and institutions, culminating in exchanges and collaborations that continue to this day. CD4D is a demand-driven programme in which interventions are developed in close collaboration with ministries, embassies, and host institutions. In this way, IOM aims to highlight and maximize the positive relationship between migration and development on a global scale.

Let's be clear: sustainable and meaningful impact cannot be made without the continuous engagement efforts of the diaspora. To give a voice and a face to the diaspora contributions, the CD4D Ambassador "Diaspora Making the Difference" campaign

was launched as part of the CD4D programme. This campaign raises awareness among a wider public audience about the important role that diaspora can play in the development of their country of origin. Ten experienced diaspora experts joined forces because they all share one thing in common: they are charismatic members of the diaspora who are dedicated to contributing to their country of origin, and willing to share their stories via different channels.

This booklet highlights some success stories as captured through the campaign and adds other inspiring successes of the CD4D programme throughout the years. They include testimonials about assignments, exchange visits, diaspora initiatives beyond the project, and memories shared by our CD4D Ambassadors and participants. All are equally inspiring and interesting.

I wish you an enjoyable read!

Antonio Polosa
Chief of Mission IOM the Netherlands



Acknowledgements

IOM the Netherlands would like to thank the governments of the target countries, for your enduring support and feedback, enabling us to do the best we can. Thanks also to our network of partners, that helped us monitor, evaluate, implement, and strike synergies.

And of course, to our participants, the diaspora experts, without whom the work would not have been possible. While CD4D creates the enabling environment for diaspora engagement, the impact itself cannot be made without the continuous efforts of the diaspora. We cannot emphasize this enough.

We would like to especially thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for making our work possible.

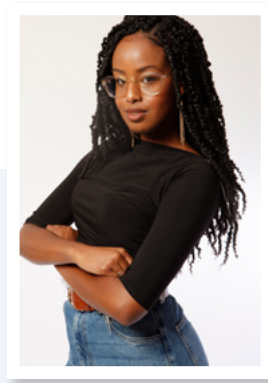
Samira Yusuf

Unlocking the Potential of the Young Somali Diaspora



Expertise: *Policy Advisor*

Country of Origin: *Somalia*



Expertise and passion come at all ages, as proven by Samira Yusuf, a young member of the Somali diaspora. Although she was born and raised in the Netherlands, she feels a strong connection to Somalia. She sees endless opportunities in her country of origin, especially for diaspora engagement.

“Diaspora engagement plays a crucial role in Africa, particularly in Somalia, as it holds the key to unlocking sustainable development. By actively involving diaspora members in trade, investments, research, and innovation, and tapping into their valuable expertise, Somalia can open doors to a world of possibilities. I have witnessed the tangible impact of diaspora engagement first-hand while walking the streets of Mogadishu. The city has seen the establishment of new restaurants, hotels, cafes, hospitals, and various other developments thanks to the

contributions of the diaspora. Their presence and efforts have brought about positive changes that are visible and beneficial to the community.”

For her CD4D assignment, Samira supported capacity building processes at the diaspora department of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This included developing the department’s five-year strategy, writing project proposals, engaging with donors, and contributing to the preparation of the National Diaspora Policy. Working collaboratively with diaspora members, Samira assisted in bridging the gap between their needs and the department’s objectives. Within the scope of her assignment, she

tackled challenges and implemented projects to boost trade, attract investment, and promote research and innovation. The skills and knowledge she gained in the Netherlands proved to be very valuable in the Somali context.

Samira is happy to have contributed positively to her country of origin through her CD4D experience. “This experience not only strengthened my bond with Somalia but also solidified my belief in the tremendous potential of diaspora engagement. It was a transformative experience that I highly recommend for my fellow Somali diaspora family to experience if there is a next phase of CD4D. By leveraging the collective wisdom and talents of our diaspora community, we can unlock opportunities that will transform our homeland for the better.” ■



“By leveraging the collective wisdom and talents of our diaspora community, we can unlock opportunities that will transform our homeland for the better”

Clement Adu Twum

CD4D Ambassador in the Spotlight



Expertise: *IT*

Country of Origin: *Ghana*

“After moving to the Netherlands at the age of fifteen, I pursued a career as an IT consultant. Through the CD4D programme, I had the opportunity to return to Ghana periodically and provide guidance to various hospitals. Initially, I advised the Tamale Teaching Hospital to enhance its IT infrastructure, and I subsequently extended my support to other hospitals.

These assignments triggered a chain reaction, resulting in the Tamale Teaching Hospital becoming a renowned educational institution for aspiring IT professionals throughout the country. The IT model

I implemented there has also been adopted by other hospitals in Ghana, contributing to the overall advancement of healthcare IT.

Even after the CD4D programme, I continue to play a monitoring role in the projects I initiated. I assist hospitals in upgrading, updating, and managing their IT systems. Additionally, I have facilitated the provision of IT network equipment to local hospitals. Maintaining a strong relationship with the host institution in my country of origin has been a source of fulfilment for me, extending beyond the scope of the CD4D assignment.” ■



“Maintaining a strong relationship with the host institution in my country of origin has been a source of fulfilment for me”



Sara Saeedi

Promoting Female Leadership in Iraq



Expertise: *Mechanical Engineering*
Country of Origin: *Iraq*

Sara Saeedi is a diaspora expert from Iraq with great ambition. Although she currently lives and works as a mechanical engineer in the United Kingdom, she still feels strongly connected to her country of origin. Her positive experience working and living in the UK has made her realize how important it is to transfer her knowledge and expertise to Iraq. “I am a strong advocate for change, not only within my industry but worldwide. I have always believed in the impact that individuals can make. Joining the CD4D programme as a women empowerment consultant was an opportunity to contribute to positive change by empowering women in my country of origin.”

The objective of Sara’s assignment was to share her success story and encourage women to pursue a path of education, knowledge, and a career to achieve their goals. Sara talked with other women about the post-war challenges that women must

overcome to make a positive impact in Iraqi society. She also compared Iraqi and British experiences by sharing stories from European and British war history. Because of Sara’s deep-rooted connection to Iraq and her experience living in Europe, she was able to bridge these societies and share motivating stories about female leadership.

After her assignment, Sara kept motivating and empowering other women, both within and beyond the CD4D context. “I continue to work very hard to be able to represent my country in the best possible way, thereby making sure that I play a positive role in raising awareness about a sustainable future. I have a wonderful ongoing relationship with the participants from the CD4D assignment and they know I am always available for support and guidance.”

Sara concludes: “I was thrilled to be part of the CD4D programme as a women empowerment consultant. It was a great

opportunity to make a positive impact on my country. As a women empowerment advocate who takes every chance to lead positive change, my passion for enhancing the situation of women in Iraq was my motive to continue to collaborate with organizations that share my goals.” ■

“Joining the CD4D programme was an opportunity to contribute to positive change by empowering women in my country of origin”



CD4D Ambassador in the Spotlight



Expertise: *Entrepreneurship, Development and Diversity Consultant*
Country of Origin: *Sierra Leone*

Abubakarr Bangura builds bridges between the Netherlands and his country of origin, Sierra Leone. He lives in the Netherlands but feels at home in both countries and cultures.

“During my CD4D assignments, I developed educational programmes about entrepreneurship, which are currently being used by various colleges in Sierra Leone.

After my assignments, I developed an educational programme for the tailoring sector



because this really caught my interest. The tailoring sector is one of the largest job-producing sectors in Africa. If you look at Sierra Leone, the industry is still extremely fragmented. I wanted to make a change and support this industry.

I decided to set up a workshop for ten students and I became a member of the tailoring platform in Sierra Leone. All members have their own shops. I support them with education about entrepreneurship, microcredit facilities and I select tailors for whom I bring things to the Netherlands to sell. I am using this platform to provide jobs in Sierra Leone on the one hand and sell Sierra Leonean products here on the other. There is a lot to do but I am very happy that the skills and knowledge transfer that I conducted during the CD4D programme are now being applied to the tailoring sector.” ■



“During my CD4D assignments, I developed educational programmes about entrepreneurship”

Salem Agboyinu

Virtual Knowledge Transfer: Insights of a Diaspora Expert



Expertise: *Plant Science and Horticulture*

Country of Origin: *Nigeria*

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CD4D introduced the opportunity to engage in virtual knowledge transfer assignments. Nigerian diaspora expert Salem Agboyinu proves that virtual interaction does not impede knowledge transfer. In fact, her passion and knowledge practically jump off the screen!

Salem Agboyinu is a plant scientist and horticulturist whose goal is to make a positive impact on global food systems. "I studied plant sciences and majored in horticulture at the Federal University of Agriculture in Abeokuta, Nigeria. Then, I obtained a master's degree at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. I found out about the CD4D programme through conversations with a colleague. I think it is impressive that IOM provides a platform for the diaspora to be involved in the development of our home countries. I saw the assignment as an opportunity to make an actual impact in a country I deeply care about."

Salem conducted a virtual CD4D assignment. "We have had informative sessions about tomato seed breeding. All the challenges that come with virtual interactions, as anticipated, proved to be no deterrent to knowledge exchange. The participating breeders of Tarka Sarwuan University in Makurdi showed great interest and enthusiasm in the programme.

We discussed general challenges the breeders faced and specific ones to tomato breeding. Together, we designed a breeding programme towards the release of a new tomato variety that is resistant to sclerotia – a common tomato disease in the region. We also explored bioinformatic tools useful for breeding and data analysis using modern software. We all had a common interest which united us: the sustainable development of the agriculture sector of the nation."

Salem also highlights the importance of considering cultural differences in

development work. "Sustainable development entails the interaction of many factors. While we are exchanging technical knowledge, there are cultural factors that may or may not facilitate the process."

Diaspora engagement can provide a solution to bridging these cultural factors. "Involving the diaspora encourages smoother knowledge transfer as there is prior knowledge of the home culture. Several times during the training sessions, we spoke languages other than conventional English. This made the interaction more organic and efficient. We also talked about socio-economic subjects in the country and how it affects food production." Diaspora members' deeper cultural understanding of countries of origin can thus encourage more efficient knowledge exchange, even when the interaction takes place virtually. ■



"We all had a common interest which united us: the sustainable development of the agriculture sector of the nation"

Nasir Ali

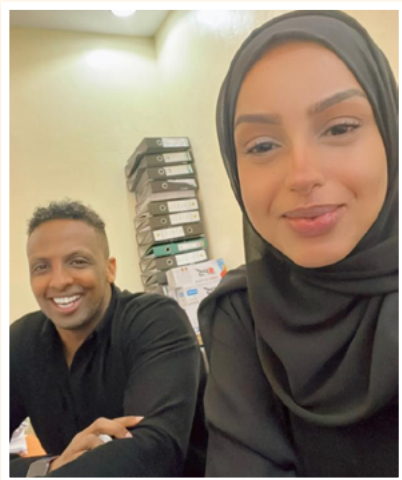
CD4D Ambassador in the Spotlight



Expertise: *Marketing*

Country of origin: *Somalia, Somaliland Region*

Nasir was born in Somaliland but grew up in the Netherlands. He never really thought about returning to his country of origin until he joined the CD4D programme five years ago. This programme opened a new world for him, changing his life both personally and professionally.



"CD4D helped me reconnect with my roots and blend the two cultures. It was a give-and-take experience. I shared my knowledge and skills, and in return, I learned so much more. My time in Somaliland has been a big part of my growth.

Five years ago, I joined CD4D without knowing where it would lead to. Since then, I have made connections, discovered business opportunities, and taken on more CD4D assignments. I have researched the fishery sector, written development plans, and taught ministry staff about topics such as policymaking, marketing, and research.

I am thankful for what CD4D has brought me, and I support similar projects that value the input of diaspora communities. Sharing knowledge this way can create a lasting impact. It is also important to share these experiences publicly, which is what I have



"CD4D helped me reconnect with my roots and blend the two cultures"

been doing as a CD4D Ambassador. I am eager to continue helping my homeland, both within and beyond the CD4D programme." ■

Institutional Linkages: Knowledge Transfer between a Nigerian Hospital and a Dutch Foundation



Expertise: *Tuberculosis and Health*

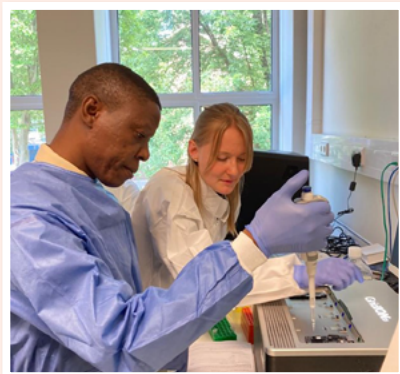
Countries Involved: *the Netherlands and Nigeria*



Besides promoting knowledge transfer through individual diaspora expert assignments, the CD4D programme also supports institutional linkages. A nine-month capacity building collaboration was initiated by the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital (OAUTH) in Nigeria and the KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation in the Netherlands, led by Nigerian diaspora member Dr. Mustapha Gidado.

The organizations observed high health risks and room for improvement when it comes to tuberculosis treatment and care in Nigeria. Therefore, the organizations decided to join forces and exchange knowledge and expertise. The intervention consisted of regular virtual knowledge exchange sessions, followed by a two-week exchange visit.

In June 2022, IOM and KNCV welcomed a delegation of five staff members from the OAUTH in the Netherlands. Over the course of the two weeks, the delegation met with the Minister Plenipotentiary of the Nigerian Embassy in the Hague, the Chief of Mission of IOM the Netherlands, and a representative of the Ministry of



Foreign Affairs. Field trips to the tuberculosis treatment centre Beatrixoord in Haren and the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment in Bilthoven were also on the agenda. “The organizations are very well-structured. It is very good to see that there is a lot of social support for tuberculosis patients in the Netherlands”, said one participant of the delegation. Together with other organizations, the delegation found ways to improve tuberculosis care in Nigeria. “Tuberculosis care in the Netherlands is patient-centred, personalized, and multi-disciplinary. We take these

lessons home to Nigeria.” After long days of fruitful knowledge exchange, the delegation explored the canals of Amsterdam and tried the local Dutch cuisine: bitterballen.

Together, KNCV and OAUTH hope to contribute to a world free of tuberculosis by exchanging knowledge and methods on how to fight the spread of the disease. The exchange visit fostered stronger connections between the two institutions, which plan to continue working together in the future. ■

Jela Keyany

CD4D Ambassador in the Spotlight



Expertise: *International Law*
Country of Origin: *Iraq, Kurdistan Region*

“I came to the Netherlands as an eight-year-old refugee. My personal history makes me the professional I am today: a lawyer and humanist with experience in investigating war crimes, communicating with marginalized groups, and war documentation.

Through CD4D, I supported an investigation commission to identify evidence to prosecute war crimes. I built a bridge between the Kurdish and European prosecutors to enable them to prosecute war criminals. I feel useful and appreciated in what I do. Whether I look at it from a Dutch

or Kurdish perspective does not matter: the ultimate goal is to punish war crimes and defend human rights. Are those not universal values that we should all pursue?”

As a Dutch national with a Kurdish background, Jela is in a unique position because she speaks different languages and has strong affinities with different cultures. She is able to build connections between societies to benefit her work. Both within and beyond CD4D, Jela demonstrates the value of diaspora engagement through her work in international law. ■



“My personal history makes me the professional I am today: a lawyer and humanist”

Mohamed 'Midnimo' Bashir Osman

CD4D: A Catalysor for Personal and Professional Growth



Expertise: *Entrepreneur and Media Expert*

Country of Origin: *Somalia*

Many diaspora experts are driven to the extent that they also embark on other projects and initiatives complementary to the work of CD4D. Mohamed 'Midnimo' Bashir Osman is one of them. Midnimo is a member of the Somali diaspora who sees potential in Somalia and wants to support the development of his country of origin. Having gained invaluable experience abroad, Midnimo returned to Somalia to transfer this knowledge. Over the years, Midnimo has participated in various CD4D assignments, has launched his own business in Mogadishu, and is chairman of the esteemed Guriga Oranje "Orange House", a notable diaspora organization for the Dutch-Somali community, based in Mogadishu.

"My participation in CD4D was driven by a strong desire to make a difference in my country towards a fair and equitable society. My passion for learning more about

governance and the legal system has led me to join the Ministry of Justice during my first CD4D assignment. My passion for the rule of law and experience further encouraged me to pursue a law degree. Later, during my second CD4D assignment, I worked as a media and communications advisor for the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. I had the privilege to implement media strategies, draft announcements, releases, and advisories, and provide media training to permanent staff."

Midnimo's strong connection to Somalia and his positive experience with CD4D have encouraged him to embark on other ventures to contribute to his country of origin. For example, seven years ago Midnimo launched the country's first-ever creative advertising agency. At the time of the launch, the advertising industry in Somalia was in its early stages. However, a few years after the creation of the company,



"The diaspora can serve to promote mutual understanding and foster partnerships between people"

more and more requests from local companies were coming in. As a result, the value of advertising was increasingly recognized. Midnimo is proud to have witnessed such a positive change first-hand.

Moreover, Midnimo has founded the Guriga Oranje "Orange House", a non-profit organization run by Dutch-Somali diaspora residing in Somalia. "Our primary goal is to promote the diaspora's significant contribution to Somalia's stability. We facilitate knowledge transfer, trade and investment, policy development, and information access to achieve this. Our unwavering focus is on creating opportunities for skill and job creation, particularly for unemployed Somali

youth and women. I think the role of the diaspora is important. They can serve to promote mutual understanding and foster partnerships between people. I feel incredibly fortunate to have had the chance to utilize my skills and knowledge to make a lasting positive impact on my country of origin."

Midnimo's success stories highlight what can happen when the diaspora can put their passion, connectedness, and ideas into practice. CD4D is only one way in which the diaspora engages in activities in countries of origin and is for many a first stepping stone to achieving many great things after their assignment. ■

Niloufar Rahim

CD4D Ambassador in the Spotlight



Expertise: *Health*

Country of Origin: *Afghanistan*

“Ever since I have been in the Netherlands, I wanted to mean something to the country to which my heart remains connected. In my profession as a doctor, I dedicate myself wholeheartedly to society. I really enjoy doing that.

Thanks to CD4D, me and other doctors of KEIHAN Foundation – an Afghan diaspora organization of which I am a board member – were able to train hundreds of medical students from Kabul Medical University and Paktiya University to prepare them for work in hospitals and future professional careers. I believe that, as a diaspora member, I can contribute more easily to development because of my close affinity with the Afghan culture and language.

The training focused on knowledge transfer and practical experience. In order to act adequately and efficiently as a doctor,

you need a lot of practical training, which is not common in Afghanistan. We used a train-the-trainer system so that the local institutions could continue carrying out the programme.

I have been very blessed to experience many valuable moments during the implementation of CD4D in Afghanistan. One of my favorite experiences is the many discussions about daily life struggles and women’s rights with students, understanding and learning about their perspectives, and being in awe of their perseverance and strength to face challenges. Moreover, it made me very happy to see the students flourish during the training. Having a positive impact on their professional career, albeit very small, has been of immeasurable value to me. I will carry their strength, appreciation and happiness with me for the rest of my life as a source of inspiration.” ■



“Ever since I have been in the Netherlands, I wanted to mean something to the country to which my heart remains connected”

Ayalew Kassahun

CD4D Ambassador in the Spotlight



Expertise: *Research and Agriculture*

Country of Origin: *Ethiopia*

“Since my CD4D assignment in 2019, I have been engaged in many different voluntary activities. I started a follow-up initiative to create job opportunities by developing locally embedded university courses.

In some African universities, educational programmes are copied from other countries. If you copy a curriculum from India or from the Netherlands, you are basically teaching students to become employees in India or the Netherlands because the curriculum was not developed for their own



country. That is why we are showing a new way to develop an educational programme that is embedded in the local context. What you teach should have meaning in local circumstances – universities should train students so that at least 90 percent of them will have jobs. Because of CD4D, we have this follow-up initiative.” ■



“After CD4D, I started a follow-up initiative to create job opportunities”

Folake Idowu-Adebayo

Agricultural Innovation in Nigeria Women Making a Sustainable Impact



Expertise: *Food Quality and Design*

Country of Origin: *Nigeria*

Folake is a lecturer at Wageningen University – specializing in food quality and design – and a member of the Nigerian diaspora. She has been living in the Netherlands since 2017. As a woman working in the agriculture sector, she is a good example of someone who is challenging traditional gender roles. Folake has made a positive impact by inspiring students in the Netherlands and contributing to capacity building in Nigerian institutions. Folake completed three CD4D assignments at host institutions in Nigeria. During the assignments, she identified knowledge gaps among staff members in host institutions, introduced work plans, and organized training sessions.

“I made valuable contributions to the capacity building of staff at the host institution NIHORT. Personally, I found this very rewarding because their activities aim at conducting training in vocational skills for



farmers, agri-food processors, and other agri-allied groups. With their newly gained knowledge, they can improve the lives of the population. I am fortunate to be able to have shared my knowledge through CD4D.”

Her position as a member of the Nigerian diaspora makes Folake a valuable agent of development. “Because I grew up in Nigeria, I speak the local languages. This makes it easier to introduce and clarify innovations. And that is exactly what the trainees and the host institutions want.” Moreover, she hopes



that the impact she has made in Nigeria will last beyond her CD4D assignments. “It is an investment for the long-term. The staff I trained will develop into mentors themselves. Through CD4D, IOM gives host institutions a chance to invest in their future and to encourage new generations.”

Folake is a great example of how migration can be used for the benefit of a more sustainable future. Moreover, Folake is a role model for the diaspora community and the Nigerian and Dutch public. ■

*“Through CD4D,
IOM gives host
institutions a chance
to invest in their future
and to encourage
new generations”*

Zuhur Mohamed

CD4D Ambassador in the Spotlight



Expertise: *Finance and Strategy*

Country of Origin: *Somalia, Somaliland Region*

“Since 2017 I have been fortunate enough to take part in the CD4D programme and successfully completed several assignments. Starting at the Ministry of Justice, I worked as a financial advisor and was responsible for modernizing the financial accounting systems. I stayed as an advisor for three years, assisting departments such as finance, planning, and statistics. My last assignment for CD4D was at the Ministry of Interior, where I assisted in the creation of their five-year strategic plan in accordance with their national development plan.

Moreover, in 2021 I was honoured to go to Madrid to attend a high-level thematic meeting on migration and development. We spoke about the impact of diaspora and the impact of the CD4D programme in particular. The capacity in countries of origin has really improved with the help of the diaspora in the Netherlands. Attending this meeting allowed me to show what valuable contributions the diaspora can make on a higher level.



Being part of the diaspora community and an ambassador for CD4D I have come to realize the importance of our roles in development. Where previous generations of the diaspora saw great significance in financial assistance, my generation witnessed the impact of knowledge transfer. Hopefully, the next generations of diaspora will find more opportunities in the future as they come together and connect for development. ■



“Hopefully, the next generations of diaspora will find more opportunities in the future as they come together and connect for development”

Institutional Linkages: Climate Change and Agricultural Innovation



Expertise: Agriculture

Countries Involved: the Netherlands and Iraq, Kurdistan Region

In July 2022, IOM the Netherlands welcomed a delegation from the Sulaymaniyah Governorate of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Sulaymaniyah economically depends on agricultural activities and has a dry climate. As a result of global warming, the government and farmers must think about saving water and preparing the region for an even dryer future. Members of the delegation work at the Ministry of Agriculture and are in the perfect position to decide on the future of agricultural activities in Sulaymaniyah.

On the other hand, Wageningen University & Research (WUR) aims to explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life. WUR specializes in food, natural resources, living environment, society, and well-being, and is therefore the perfect partner to transfer knowledge about agricultural innovation.

IOM the Netherlands organized an exchange visit in cooperation with these partners to encourage knowledge transfer about agricultural innovations. Through a series of online meetings between WUR staff members and the delegation before the exchange visit, WUR created a two-week course to address the issues faced by farmers in Sulaymaniyah.



As part of the exchange visit, the delegation went on excursions to WUR's business unit Greenhouse Horticulture in Bleiswijk and the 'farm of the future' in Lelystad. Here, they discussed efficient ways to grow tomatoes without using soil as well as methods to save and recycle water. The experts also shared tips and tricks on how to grow a kilo of tomatoes with just ten litres of water! At the 'farm of the future', the delegation learned about innovative experiments with agroforestry and strip cropping. The aim of these experiments is to restore and make use of biodiversity, maintain and improve soil quality, minimize the use of chemicals, and mitigate the risks of extreme weather events. What trees and crop rotation can do!

WUR and the delegation from Sulaymaniyah did not stop sharing knowledge once the exchange visit had come to an end. On the contrary, the delegation started working on a pilot project following the visit to implement the newly gained knowledge from the Netherlands. ■

Curious about
the result?
Read Farzan's
story on p. 42



Seleshi Getahun Yalew

CD4D Ambassador in the Spotlight



Expertise: *Researcher on Land and Water Resources Management*

Country of Origin: *Ethiopia*

“My first CD4D assignment was in collaboration with local universities in Ethiopia. I focused on water hyacinth removal because the spread of this invasive floating plant has created difficulties for a large number of people. I also focused on capacity building of local universities.

Later on, during the COVID-19 pandemic, some universities experienced difficult times and education was often disrupted. During that time, four colleagues and I from Europe supported universities with the setup of e-learning platforms to secure online education. Educational tools we use in the Netherlands and other EU countries were useful for universities in Ethiopia. The online learning tool we set up through such efforts

is now being actively used by local universities. In this way, the partnerships established during CD4D assignments are still being followed up on.

Interestingly, the collaboration between Bahir Dar University which hosted me during my CD4D assignment back in 2018-2019, and my institute in the Netherlands resulted in the acquisition of a research project grant of 1.5 million euros from the Water and Development Partnership Programme (WDPP)! Together with other local and international partner institutions, they will further investigate the solutions to deal with the water hyacinth on Lake Tana. CD4D fosters collaborations that create real impact on the ground.” ■



“CD4D fosters collaborations that create real impact on the ground”

Umulkheir Ahmed

From Intern to First Female Director



Expertise: *Engineering, Architecture and Urban Planning*

Country of Origin: *Somalia, Somaliland Region*

In addition to knowledge transfer by members of the diaspora, CD4D also piloted an internship programme in the Somaliland region of Somalia. The interns are from Somaliland and are mentored by diaspora experts to gain experience at a host institution. Very often, the collaboration between a diaspora expert and local interns resulted in a job for the intern at the host institution. In this way, 80 percent of the interns found employment after the internship! Umulkheir Ahmed is one of the CD4D interns who participated in the programme.

Umulkheir is 27 years old and from Somaliland. She was approached by the Ministry of Water Resources Development in Somaliland to become an intern. “They thought I would be perfect for the programme.” At the Ministry, she worked in the

field of engineering, architecture, and urban planning. Umulkheir worked together with CD4D diaspora experts and the Minister himself.

The internship allowed her to gain experience in communications and maintain internal and external relations. Indeed, she seemed perfect for the job: she is spontaneous and a good communicator. Moreover, she is a quick learner. “What I liked about the programme is that it really increased my knowledge. Before I did not know how to write emails, or what the different departments in the host institution were, but now I know everything.”

In the future, she hopes to continue working at the Ministry. “I want to become the first female director of the organization”, she says. ■



“I want to become the first female director of the organization”

CD4D Ambassador in the Spotlight



Expertise: *Life Coach and Reiki Teacher*
Country of Origin: *Iraq, Kurdistan Region*

Soza Gaffaf is a CD4D Ambassador and has conducted various assignments in the education sector in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

“CD4D enables me to contribute to the well-being of future generations. I did this by founding the ‘Happy Child, Happy Society’ project, in which I use pedagogical and psychological methods to help children, teachers, and parents to experience inner peace and happiness.

Many children in Iraq are suffering from violence and have a lot of fear and aggression. During my CD4D assignments, I made sure that each school now has someone who can train other teachers in my methodology so that my supervision is no longer needed. I am still involved every now and then, but the government now has ownership of the project. Children's resilience is decisive for the reconstruction of a war-torn nation.



I am hopeful and filled with joy for having been able to make an effective contribution.”

In 2022, the Ministry of Education asked Soza to support the upscaling of the project. Soza went to the KRI to distribute course materials and provide guidance to schools on the



methods. She tailored new materials to the local context, thereby actively involving parents and teachers in the process.

Soza keeps developing new ways to support children, parents, and teachers in the KRI. As proof of the success of Happy Child, Happy Society, she receives videos of her materials being used in classes every week! ■

“CD4D enables me to contribute to the well-being of future generations”

Samira Hussein

Challenging the Status Quo in Somaliland



Expertise: *Law*

Country of Origin: *Somalia, Somaliland Region*

Samira Hussein is a diaspora expert specialized in law. Within the framework of CD4D, Samira conducted an assignment in Somaliland, her country of origin, to provide legal advice to the Ministry of Justice. During the assignment, she worked on alternative dispute resolution policy, provided recommendations regarding reporting youth criminality, and supported the development of a national framework for prison inspections and the monitoring thereof. Moreover, she was able to challenge the status quo at the host institution by sharing her views on some traditional perceptions.

Samira was inspired by her father to contribute to development in Somaliland. "When I lived in the United Kingdom, my father went back to Somaliland because he saw that there was a need for doctors. That is when he started his practice to rebuild the country. I came to Somaliland with a similar motivation; I wanted to use my

knowledge to serve the country. In addition, my personal goal was to work on my communication in Somali at a professional level. Moreover, I found it interesting to work on cases that are ethically more difficult. This experience definitely contributed to that."

The assignment in Somaliland was a success. Samira contributed to the positive outcome of projects and challenged the status quo. "I noticed that various people in top positions have some old-fashioned ideas about how certain cases should be addressed. Through engaging in conversation with them, they changed their minds or at least listened." Despite the overall success of her assignment, she also sees room for further improvements with regard to gender equality. "I noticed that there were no women in key positions. This is not something which can be changed overnight, but I will keep fighting for gender equality." Samira's story illustrates the impact of new ideas and perspectives held by diaspora communities.



On a more personal level, the assignment at the Ministry of Justice was also a positive experience for Samira. "I was welcomed warmly by the people of Somaliland, and I was able to contribute while working on my personal goals." Samira's experiences show that diaspora engagement for the purpose of development is a win-win situation; as a member of the Somali diaspora, Samira enjoyed the connection to Somaliland, while the host institution benefitted from her knowledge and ideas. ■

"I wanted to use my knowledge to serve the country"

Stanley Mbelu

CD4D Ambassador in the Spotlight



Expertise: *Legal and Business Regulatory Compliance Expert*
Country of Origin: *Nigeria*

Diaspora organizations based in the Netherlands play a key role in connecting CD4D opportunities to diaspora professionals. They know the community and its variety of knowledge and expertise. Therefore, diaspora organizations are valuable partners in promoting the programme among diaspora communities in the Netherlands and identifying motivated professionals. Stanley Mbelu has been the chairperson of the Nigerians in Diaspora Organization Europe – The Netherlands (NIDOE-NL), during most of the programme.

“As an Ambassador for the CD4D programme, I take pride in my work. My role involves connecting and facilitating collaboration between professionals from the Netherlands and Nigeria to enhance economic cooperation.



I strongly believe that businesses have a significant impact on development. That is why I am committed to connecting Dutch businesses with Nigerian businesses and professionals. Together, we can enhance the skills of the workforce, increase economic output, and improve the overall quality of life.

During my time as a CD4D Ambassador, I have played an active role in sharing knowledge and developing skills, resulting in a positive impact on the programme's success." ■



*“As a CD4D Ambassador,
I take pride in my work”*

Farzan Najmeddin

Piloting Sustainable Innovation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq



Expertise: Agriculture and Private Sector Development Consultant
Country of Origin: Iraq, Kurdistan Region

The impact of CD4D becomes more and more visible. Diaspora experts stay connected to organizations in their countries of origin in various ways. Among them is Farzan Najmeddin. He established long-term relations with professionals and farmers in Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Farzan supports a pilot project to prepare the agriculture sector for the drastic consequences of climate change. The project is a result of the exchange visit in July 2022 with Wageningen University & Research (WUR), during which Farzan was involved in the preparations. In the meantime, the pilot project itself has also resulted in new collaborations and initiatives.

“For as long as I can remember, I have been passionate about entrepreneurship and leadership development. I was raised in the Netherlands and have roots in the KRI, so I wanted to bridge knowledge gaps between these regions since I was a child. I founded an organization to do so together with a group of Dutch people with Kurdish roots: The Middle-Green. We initiated projects



in the field of sustainability and innovation in the agriculture sector in the KRI. We always try to foster collaboration between different parties, from local ministries and embassies, to universities, municipalities, the private sector, NGOs and entrepreneurs. We want to create a sustainable and measurable impact, so we work together with as many people as possible.”

Farzan believes that the diaspora is able to develop long-term professional relations based on trust and collaboration. He experienced these benefits firsthand. The exchange visit between the Governorate of Sulaymaniyah and the WUR in the summer of 2022 led to a pilot project to prepare the agriculture sector for climate

change. For this project, Farzan visited a local exemplary farmer to include in Wageningen University’s Global Network of Lighthouse Farmers. The project in turn sparked the creation of yet another initiative by the Ministry of Agriculture as the Ministry decided to create a national “Soil Information System” to boost the agriculture sector. The snowball effect resulting from the exchange visit has created new partnerships and initiatives across countries and Farzan managed to support the organizations involved along the way. ■



“I founded an organization to bridge the knowledge gaps between the Netherlands and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq”

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