



Diaspora Women in Action (DWiA)

Conference Report

Berlin, 3 May 2025



**Diaspora Women
in Action**

Executive Summary

The "**Diaspora Women in Action**" conference brought together 28 women from diverse diaspora communities in Germany under the motto: "*Networking. Empowering. Shaping.*" The event offered a platform for dialogue, strategic thinking, and collaborative action among diaspora women leaders, practitioners, and emerging voices. The participants included members of the diaspora from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

The conference scope included a survey titled "*Mapping the Landscape of Diaspora Organizations in Germany*," conducted several weeks before the event. The survey explored the experiences, challenges, and strategies of diaspora women in Germany. Apart from validating the survey results, the conference aimed to provide key messages for action related to supporting diaspora women in Germany.

As a community-led movement, the conference emphasized ownership, lived experiences, and collective empowerment among the diverse women representing their diaspora organizations and communities. At the same time, they showcased innovation, resilience, and transformative potential.

Key Recommendations for Policy Makers and Institutions

Through the thematic workshops, spotlight discussion and plenary sessions, participants highlighted systemic challenges diaspora women face in organizing, funding, and engaging in political and social processes in Germany. More specifically, the conference coined the following recommendations targeted at German government institutions and parliament:

1. Strengthen Political Representation and Dialogue with diaspora women

- Establish formal consultation structures with diaspora women organizations at municipal, state, and federal levels.
- Include diaspora women in the design and review of integration curricula (e.g., language and orientation courses).
- Foster two-way communication between policymakers and diaspora communities.

2. Ensure Equitable and Sustainable Funding Access for diaspora actions

- Simplify access to public funding for small, grassroots initiatives through multilingual and culturally aware funding platforms.
- Establish targeted funding programs for women-led diaspora organizations, including core funding and infrastructure support.
- Offer capacity-building workshops on fundraising and financial management in accessible languages.

3. Promote Inclusive and Intercultural Competence in Institutions

- Engage the diaspora community in expanding intercultural training in schools, public institutions, and workplaces, focusing on bias awareness and structural racism.
- Recognize and integrate cultural knowledge and values from diaspora communities as assets.
- Encourage co-creation of integration strategies that emphasize integration over assimilation.

4. Foster Networking and Visibility of Diaspora Women

- Support the development of a nationwide digital platform to connect diaspora women, share opportunities, and coordinate initiatives.
- Invest in mentorship programs and strategic alliances across sectors (politics, media, education).
- Create public spaces and forums to showcase diaspora women's contributions to society.

5. Support Research and Data Collection on diaspora women initiatives

- Increase the scope of funding towards research on women-led and women-concerned diaspora organizations to inform policy and practice.
- Work with diaspora women in validating official statistics and studies to ensure evidence-based policymaking.

Diaspora Women in Action (DWiA) Conference

Full Report

Berlin, May 3rd, 2025

Location: TITANIC Hotel Berlin, Chausseestraße 30, 10115 Berlin

Time: 12:00 PM – 5:30 PM

Motto: Networking. Empowering. Shaping.

1. Introduction

The Diaspora Women in Action (DWiA) Conference brought together diverse women leaders, activists, and community organizers from diaspora backgrounds to engage in dialogue, build alliances, and formulate actionable strategies. With a focus on networking, empowerment, and political shaping, the conference served as a platform for reflection, collaboration, and collective visioning.

2. Opening Session

Facilitator: Paddy Siyanga Knudsen, Global Ubuntu Diaspora Alliance (GUDA)

The conference opened with a welcoming address by Paddy Siyanga Knudsen, who introduced the DWiA committee and outlined the goals of the gathering. Participants were invited to connect personally through a "speed networking" activity, emphasizing the creation of new relationships.

Key themes expressed by attendees during the objectives tour-de-table included: *Empowerment, empathy, motivation, collaboration, education, inspiration, sisterhood, fun, and bridge-building.*

The conference was framed to look beyond a meeting of diaspora women: it is a movement of action by diaspora women. Participants were encouraged to think towards scaling up diaspora engagement and visibility in broader society, underlining that the space created is powerful and self-owned.

DWiA Committee Introduction

DWiA was established as a women-focused working group that represents the diverse diaspora communities in Germany. Its main objectives are to better understand the landscape of diaspora organizations, consolidate the needs of these communities, elevate the role of diaspora women, and amplify their voices to ensure they have a stronger and more visible presence in decision-making processes.

Committee members are

- Edith Otiende-Lawani (Giving Africa a New Face e.V.)
- Eleanor Hagen (African Women for Empowerment e.V.)
- Mouna Messadi (Deutsch-Tunesischer Verein für Familien und Kultur e.V.)
- Tasneem Balasinorwala (PowerSouth)
- Stefanie Then (ZAN e.V.)
- Ingrid Schild Estrada (ccberlin e.V.)

3. Scene Setting Presentation

Speaker: Dr. Nora Regab

Title: Potentials and Challenges of Diaspora Women Organizations – Insights from Current Studies

Dr. Nora Regab provided an evidence-based overview of the current landscape of diaspora women organizations in Germany. Her presentation drew on the results of a recent DWiA-led survey, conducted in collaboration with GIZ, which aimed to map and understand the structures, challenges, and opportunities facing these organizations. She also relied on previous research and work in the diaspora engagement space.

Background and Objectives

The survey sought to:

- Understand the organizational characteristics and governance structures of diaspora organizations (DOs), with a specific lens on gender.
- Identify key challenges and areas of strength.
- Provide a baseline for evidence-based dialogue with policymakers and donors.

Methodology

- **Language:** Bilingual (German and English).

- **Distribution:** Sent to over 400 organizations using a mix of convenience and snowball sampling.
- **Valid responses:** 45 completed surveys, all verified to be diaspora-led.

Key Findings

1. Organizational Governance and Leadership

- Equal representation of women-led and mixed-gender organizations
- Women-led organizations show greater inclusion of non-binary and gender-diverse individuals.
- Leadership teams tend to be small, with a heavy workload resting on a few individuals.

2. Membership and Activities

- Most organizations are small, volunteer-run, and locally embedded.
- Women-led groups focus more on community empowerment, gender rights, and Germany-based advocacy.
- Mixed-gender groups often have a broader, transnational agenda.

3. Financial Capacity

- Financial precarity is widespread.
- Although women-led organizations access more formal funding sources (e.g., foundations), they do not report greater stability due to short-term project-based funding models.

4. Challenges

- Structural underfunding and limited capacity.
- Discrimination and systemic barriers.
- Limited youth engagement and leadership pipeline.

Discussion Highlights

Participants questioned how to improve youth inclusion, measure influence in home vs. host countries, and secure long-term funding. There was consensus on the need for:

- A stronger political voice.
- More visibility for diaspora women's work.
- Continued data collection to support advocacy.

The participants agreed that the survey should be viewed as a "CT scan," which could benefit from a future "MRI." This CT scan represents an initial diagnosis intended to stimulate action and guide further research, helping to shape the continued development of the movement's scope of work.

4. Lunch Break & Networking

5. Parallel Workshops

Workshop 1: Fundraising and Financial Management for Diaspora Organizations

Facilitated by Stefanie Then (ZAN e.V.)

This workshop explored the pressing issue of financial sustainability within diaspora women organizations. Participants shared experiences of bureaucratic hurdles, language barriers, and a lack of accessible information as recurring obstacles to securing funding. A common sentiment was the need for centralized resources—particularly multilingual guides and transparent funding databases. The group called for improved access to consultation services, greater infrastructure support, and strategic representation in public institutions. Participants emphasized that organizations must not only seek out funding but also assert their right to be present where decisions are made. A recurring theme was the empowerment of youth and encouraging persistence in navigating official systems. The group also called for flexible funding models to support emerging, small and informal diaspora groups that are left out of the current funding models.

Workshop 2: Strategic Networking and Lobbying

Facilitated by Rania Kinfu (EDWA - Ethiopian Diaspora Women Association)

This workshop focused on how diaspora women can effectively build networks and advocate for their causes. Participants discussed both formal and informal networks, recognizing that while many women have strong personal connections, access to institutional or business networks remains limited. Language barriers and lack of mentorship were noted as key challenges. The group emphasized the importance of learning how lobbying works in Germany—understanding the system, knowing what to ask for, and presenting ideas in a way that resonates with policymakers. The group also made parallel references to other countries in Europe and elsewhere to understand how to demystify lobbying strategies that could be adapted for the German context. The session encouraged participants to see themselves as voices for

others, advocating not only for their own organizations but for broader diaspora interests. In terms of targets, the participants recognized the potential for lobbying at both local and national levels, taking into account the distinct power structures in Germany. Particular emphasis was placed on leveraging the local level, given the diaspora's proximity to municipalities and other local institutions. Strategic collaboration and long-term relationship-building were highlighted as essential to successful lobbying.

Workshop 3: Intercultural Competence and Collaboration

Facilitated by Eleanor Hagen (African Women for Empowerment e.V.)

In this workshop, participants explored how personal cultural backgrounds shape communication, cooperation, and perceptions of others. The session began with a reflective exercise where attendees shared elements they loved about their cultures—ranging from communal values and family connections to ways of showing respect. The group examined individual biases, both conscious and unconscious, and how these affect interactions in multicultural settings. Key concepts included ethnocentrism, emotional triggers, and the importance of open dialogue. The group agreed that true integration requires mutual understanding, not assimilation, and called for a more empathetic and representative approach within institutions including schools and workplaces. They also emphasized that the improvement of integration needs to be mutual as Germany itself needs more migrants and must actively foster inclusive environments. Participants concluded that intercultural competence should be a foundational skill for both diaspora communities and host societies, particularly in education and governance.

6. Recommendations of Action

A number of rapporteurs shared the highlights of the workshops which shaped this section. The rapporteurs included Grace and Jainaba Lamin from Simama e.V; Magdalene Limunga Iheukumere from G&T German African Cooperation gGmbH as well as Linda Wambura-Guarino from Global Ubuntu Diaspora Alliance (GUDA). These recommendations reflect the voices, priorities, and practical insights shared by participants during the workshops and the survey.

1. Establish a Sustainable Diaspora Women Platform

- Create a central umbrella structure for diaspora women organizations in Germany.
- Ensure this platform is inclusive, representative, and fosters long-term collaboration.
- Secure core funding and institutional support to maintain continuity.

2. Strengthen Networking and Collaboration

- Ensure continuous exchange and avoid fragmentation by providing a shared space for dialogue and cooperation.
- Promote peer exchange and cross-organizational support structures.
- Encourage collaboration instead of competition among diaspora organizations.
- Promote joint projects and collective visibility.

3. Promote Knowledge Sharing and Collective Learning

- Build on existing experiences and best practices from diverse diaspora initiatives.
- Encourage peer learning between established organizations and emerging ones.
- Use joint events to surface invisible work already being done by many women.

4. Increase Visibility and Political Engagement

- Consolidate diaspora women's perspectives to influence decision-making processes.
- Organize policy dialogues and meetings with parliamentarians to present collective demands.
- Identify common political entry points, such as roundtables with policymakers or advisory roles.
- Support diaspora women to engage with local and national politics as changemakers.
- Translate shared concerns into clear messages for political stakeholders.

5. Build Bridges Between Generations

- Strengthen intergenerational learning and leadership by involving young people early.
 - Create platforms for dialogue between elders and youth in diaspora communities.
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6. Value Informal Knowledge and Experience

- Recognize and integrate the informal expertise of women (especially grassroots actors).
 - Avoid hierarchies that undervalue lived experience.
 - Expand to stress the institutional responsibility in applying intercultural competence training, not just among diaspora groups
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7. Improve Access to Equitable and Sustainable Funding

- Simplify application processes for public funding, especially for small and grassroots diaspora initiatives.
 - Provide funding platforms and guidelines in multiple languages and tailored to diverse cultural contexts.
 - Offer training in fundraising, budgeting, and financial management in accessible formats and languages.
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8. Support Research and Evidence-Based Policymaking

- Invest in ongoing data collection and analysis on diaspora women's initiatives to inform public policy.
- Ensure that diaspora women are involved in validating and interpreting official statistics.
- Support follow-up studies to expand on the initial survey, such as qualitative research or mapping impact.

7. Panel Discussion: Success Factors and Future Strategies

Moderator: Paddy Siyanga Knudsen

Panelists: Tasneem Balasinorwala (Power South; DWiA), Ingrid Schild (ccberlin e.V.), Jacklyne Kuhn (Kenyan Women in Germany e.V.), Nyima Jadama (r0g_agency)

The panel discussion, moderated by Paddy Siyanga Knudsen, focused on the success factors and future strategies for diaspora women organizations. It featured insights from a diverse group of panelists, including Tasneem Balasinorwa, Ingrid Schild, Jacklyne Kuhn, and Nyima Jadama, who are all actively working within the diaspora space.

Nyima, a journalist and advocate for marginalized women, shared her journey of starting over in Germany, where she now hosts her own talkshow. She emphasized her commitment to empowering women through media and offering internships and

fellowships, in the Gambia, to build media competence, especially for women in Gambia. Her work focuses on helping women speak up and use media as a tool for transformational change.

Jacklyne highlighted the strength of the Kenyan women's network in Germany, emphasizing its steady growth and the sustainable impact it has created. She described how women form the backbone of their communities, empowering and nurturing youth through various initiatives, including workgroups focused on domestic violence, mental health, and youth empowerment. She believes in a leadership model where the leader guides from behind, fostering collective growth and capacity building.

Tasneem reflected on her experiences in international NGOs where she saw and experienced how difficult it was to speak up, be heard and included in decision-making. She emphasized the importance of diaspora networks in allowing individuals to bring their own experiences and ideas to the forefront, contributing to the development of more inclusive and empowering spaces for women.

Ingrid, using her experience working in communities in Berlin and Latin America, encouraged everyone to join the movement, stressing that it is about collective action, not just a specific committee. She called for unity, particularly in challenging times, and emphasized the need to move forward together, despite any competition or challenges that may arise.

Highlights:

- Building grassroots leadership and regional representation.
- Leading "from behind" to build collective ownership.
- The importance of media visibility and narrative control in the space of migration governance and development.
- Sharing resources and knowledge to reduce competition and strengthen unity.

7. Closing Remarks & Next Steps

The final session of the conference focused on the way forward for the Diaspora Women in Action (DWIA) network and emphasized collective ownership, inclusivity, and continued momentum.

Key Points:

- Tasneem Balasinorwa encouraged participants to continue sharing stories and finding entry points into political spaces. She emphasized that there are two immediate steps on behalf of the DWiA: following up on the survey and

sharing plans of a possible meeting to engage parliamentarians with clear, unified messages. Although progress may be gradual, she expressed strong confidence that women's voices will gain visibility and impact.

- A small amount of funding is available to support the development of a platform to coordinate and grow the initiative.
- Eleanor urged participants to actively contribute ideas and visions via email and not to hesitate to engage.
- Ingrid reminded everyone that the movement is not led by a closed committee, but is open to all women—registered or not—who wish to contribute their projects or join. She also emphasised on leveraging connections made.

How to Get Involved:

- Continue to engage with the group via email and whatsapp with ideas to work together.
- Reflect further on the survey results and the report from the conference, where we have collected the different ideas coming from the meeting. Share your thoughts with us
- Invite other women who may want to join the whatsapp group for the moment till we have a platform.

This closing session emphasized collaboration, transparency, and long-term strategic growth driven by the collective energy of diaspora women.

The Diaspora Women in Action (DWIA) Berlin Workshop report is a compilation of discussions from the following Movement members (in alphabetical order)



African Women for Empowerment
(AWE) e.V.



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eberlin.org



EmpowerHer
Women In International
Development



J&T German African Cooperation gGmbH



OASA e.V. Organisation von Akademiker*innen und Studierenden der Afrikanischen Diaspora e.V.

