

# AFRICA CENTRE



## ANNUAL REPORT 2013



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## Wordle Interpretation of 2013 Report



<b>Content</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgement</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Chairperson’s Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Community participation (facilitate a network to encourage collaboration among Africans at home and at European level</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3.1 Community Participation</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3.2 Regional Networks</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.3 Referrals and Networking</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3.4 Other Developments</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Create a platform for the participation of African young people in Ireland</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Development Education discourse, policy and practice in Ireland and at European level</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Communication ( Website, Facebook and Twitter</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Challenges and the way forward</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Staff, Intern/Volunteers and Board</b>	<b>11</b>

## **1. Acknowledgement**

Our activities in 2013 would not have been possible without the support of our funders and we would like to thank Irish Aid, European Commission, Trócaire, Concern Worldwide, Dublin City Council, AFFORD and all those who have provided us with financial support during the year.

We also sincerely thank our dedicated volunteers for this past year, without whom, the centre would not have survived as we didn't have paid staff for most of the year.

Finally, we want to thank our Board members for their invaluable contributions to the work of the organisation during the past year.

## Chairperson Introduction

The year 2013 saw some improvements for the Africa Centre compared to 2012 when we were financially constrained and depended on volunteers for all our activities. At the start of 2013, the meeting of the Africa Forum under the auspices and leadership of Africa Centre engendered some energy within the African community and led to the formation of the provisional Africa Council. A subsequent Africa Forum was held in 2014 as a result of which we now have 21 member council.

Africa Centre plan going forward is to better engage our members and the African communities in activities that will inspire and improve the quality of life of the African community in Ireland as set out in the aims and mission of the organisation. After this AGM, a New Year will begin for the Africa Centre. I therefore take this opportunity to welcome new members of the Board of Directors. They come on the board with much experience working as leaders and or professionals in the community.

A major activity underway is strategic planning process through which we want to gather as much data from the African communities, our partners in the public and private sectors and funders as would help us shape programmes and activities that will address the needs of the African communities in Ireland. The intention for this strategic plan and the years that lie ahead is to engage all sectors of the African communities to share their needs and desires as these relate to the welfare and other priorities in Ireland...

In the coming months, we expect a great deal of input leading to positive results from the strategic discussions headed by the new Board and we encourage and welcome all those who have good ideas and clear ways to achieve these ideas to join forces with Africa Centre during this period so that together we can all help to contribute to achieving a better served African community here in Ireland. As a result we will not be only expecting a good strategy on how to work effectively with the African community here in Ireland but also facilitate how the African community can also contribute to the development of Africa which is our place of origin.

The year 2015 is the European year for development and, as Africans and friends of Africans in Ireland; it is our responsibility to engage in discussions with our development partners in both the private and public sectors. We have to think broadly on our role as citizens and residents of Ireland during the year of discussions on development as we cannot separate the benefits of migration from those of development.

Let me close by acknowledging the very key support of Lamin Bojang in the last two years in taking over the very important role of keeping our books and making sure that the accounts of the organization were properly kept. He has done Trojan work in this respect and sacrificed greatly. I honestly do not know how the organization would have survived without his input in this respect. On all our behalves I wholeheartedly thank Mr. Bojang.

I also want to say a big thank you to Mbemba Jabbi, Director who has worked tirelessly at a time when the Centre could not afford to adequately pay him for all the times he was giving to serving the organization. Without his time and the sacrifices he has made, the Centre would not be here today.

Finally, many thanks to Dublin Central Mission for kindly accommodating us here and especially at a time when we were in grave financial difficulties.

We look forward to better times for the Africa Centre.

Yours Sincerely,



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Sahr Yambasu  
Chairperson  
Africa Centre

## Community participation (facilitate a network to encourage a culture of collaboration among Africans at home and at European level)

### 3.1 Community Participation

As the population of African people and people of African descent living in Ireland stands at over 66,000, African communities have increasingly realised they need to organise themselves in a more structured way. As a result it was agreed that developing an Africa Council will give Africans structured opportunities to react to negative messages about Africa in Ireland. Africans now need to make their contributions to Ireland very clear, in relation to Ireland itself, in relation to trade relations and in relation to financial aid to African communities on the African continent. It was this conviction that gave birth to the 2013 Africa Forum and led to the election of the Africa Council.



Early 2013, a number of groups came together to initiate the Forum led by the Africa Centre. This was the first step towards setting up the full Council. The forum was attended by 102 people coming from many parts of Ireland. Two key note speakers at the forum were Joe Costello, TD and former minister of state for Development and Trade and Gibril Fall, a renowned African academic and experts on Diaspora issues.

Minister Joe Costello and Gibril Fall

In Minister Joe Costello's speech, he emphasized that "We (Ireland) needs to look at the African population growth in terms of what Ireland has gained and what that population can contribute here in Ireland. We are currently organising the Irish 'Gathering' a year-long series of events which is targeting the 17 million Irish emigrants in the USA and encouraging them to come back to Ireland. So, the Irish are very open to the notion of Diaspora and how this has been a rich part of Irish culture and this is the same for Africans who bring the richness of their cultures, dance, music and so on to Ireland. As the Minister for Trade & Development I am anxious to pursue the particular contribution of the Diaspora. **Nil neart go cur le chelie** – There is no strength until people get together".

Minister Costello had three messages for the Africans at the forum. The first is that Africans do form a key part of Irish society and these needs to be recognised. Second, he noted that there is much to learn from Africa in terms of economic growth. Third, he acknowledged that Africans in Ireland can play a key role in developing Irish people's understanding and knowledge about Africa.

In conclusion, he looked at how Irish Aid, African societies in Ireland, and business communities can contribute and engage critically and ethically. He believed that it was therefore very important that this work continues and that it was important for us to plan and plot a way forward with both African and Irish communities.

On his part, Gibril Faal noted that for the Irish Africans, there is no 'single voice'. What we need is a coherent voice, which expresses the views of different people. Governments and organisations should allow for plurality.



He gave an example of AFFORD (African Foundation for Development), stating that they work from the philosophy of not being partners of problems, but merchants of solutions. What Africans should be offering in Ireland should be solutions, not constantly bemoaning our problems. There ARE problems and this is OUR work; we should carry the burden graciously. Complain inside closed doors. But in public put out positive messages. Partners we want to work with are interested in additionality not negativity. Negative displays of problems drags down everyone.

At the forum 48 people were nominated to form a Task Group to establish the African Council. Mr Gibril Faal announced the selection of 20 people and emphasised that their role was to be a Task Group which would set up a more representative Council. Their prime role would be to organise priorities, consultations, develop a representative framework, with a target of one year to develop the shape of a representative Africa Council.

The meeting was asked to formally endorse the Task Group. There followed some lively discussion prior to the endorsement with the following issues raised: which groups the nominees represented, the lack of gender balance on the Group, the Dublin geographical base of the group, and the method of selection. Following the discussion Mbemba Jabbi Director of the Africa Centre proposed that the group be elected as a Task Group and Beni Karuga from Cultural Links seconded the proposal.

During the year seven meetings were carried out by the council and on average seven members attended the meetings which was below half of the total number of the initial council members. There were some members who never attended any meetings and were suspended after failing to attend three consecutive meeting without sending their apologies.

First meeting was centred on drawing terms of reference of the council, co-option of young people to the group and putting in place working groups to operate during the year.

In the second meeting members agreed on the formation of working groups on Integration, Africa in the media, Diaspora role in development and youth (derived from discussion groups at the 2013 Africa Forum).

Subsequent meetings were centred on looking at ways we can map out the African community in Ireland categorizing them into skills sets, gender, nationality, and regional presence.

Two of the last meetings were centred on the election of the next Africa Council, the criteria, how candidates can apply and the election process itself.

The Council organised the 2014 Africa Forum, which selected a 21member council including the Director of Africa Centre as the chairperson of the council.

### **3.2 Regional Networks**



Members of the Kilkenny Community

Africa Centre continued its work with Kilkenny African Community (KAC) and organised the Africa Day and celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the Organisation of the African Unity now the African Union. On the day over 200 people attended the event and a lecture was presented by Ernest Bishop a Sierra Leonean/Irish living in Galway on the theme “role of the African Diaspora to the development of Africa”.

### **3.3 Referrals and Networking**

Africa Centre continued providing information and referrals to members of the African communities and interested persons looking for information on services in Ireland, about Africans or country specific issues.

We continued our membership of European Network against Racism (ENAR), Africa Europe Platform (AEP) at the European level and at home. We are members of Dochas (the umbrella body of Irish Development NGOs) and Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) of development educators. We continue to network with African led organisations in Europe; for example African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) in the UK, which supported Africa Centre organized our Africa Forum in 2013 and assisted us financially during the year.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> February Africa Centre attended the World Alliance of Cities Against Poverty Forum which was co hosted by Dublin City Council and UNDP in partnership with UN Women and UNITAR and in association with the Irish EU Presidency. For the Africa Centre the event was a networking avenue, but also to learn what African representatives from cities across the continent are doing to combat poverty as more and more people are now resettling in cities from the rural communities.

During the year we attended meetings organised by AkiDwA, Dublin City Council, Irish Aid, Trocaire, ARN (Anti Racism Network Ireland), Immigrant Council of Ireland, ENAR (European Network Against Racism) Brussels, Oxfam, Debt and Development Coalition and South African Embassy.

### **3.4 Other developments**

Africa Centre moved office from 18 Stephen's Lane, Dublin 1 to 9C Abbey Street Lower, Dublin. This move has reconnected Africa Centre with members of the African communities and people who used to visit the Centre as we were not known at the address where we used to be. The move has not only reconnected the Centre to its previous visitors and beneficiaries, but also saved cost on rent and administration.

#### **Create a platform for the participation of African young people in Ireland**

The Intercultural Youth Society (IYS) received a few interns during the year, who have been organising meetings with young people to organize activities for the group and recruit more members. The group drafted a membership leaflet/flyer and agreed to organise activities in 2014.

#### **Development Education discourse, policy and practice in Ireland and at European level**

Our development education activities 2013 have been on finalising activities for the 3 year European Commission (EC) funding with our partners in Belfast and Slovenia which ended 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013. The final report was submitted to the EC on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

The EC project was evaluated by Boyle and Associates and they found that, the 3 year programme appeared to have had substantial impacts. In particular it made major changes and developments in Codes of Conduct relating to the use of Images and Messages for fundraising and other purposes within the NGDO sector in each of the three states. It made major inroads into challenging the use of stereotypical images and messages in text books throughout the Slovenian formal Education system. It gave African communities a space to voice, both for themselves and host communities, their concerns on the impacts of the continued use of colonial and negative images.



Overall the programme work appeared to have begun a substantial process, using an African, human rights and ‘abuse’ lens, to change the perceptions and approaches to the use of images and messages both in the NGDO and media sectors. Alongside this, it created space for African peoples to voice, both for themselves and host communities, the lived impact of the use of such negative images.

Recommendations from the project highlighted some things need to be changed from programme point but it has also covered areas for the funders to consider. Those recommendations are:

**For the Africa Centre:**

- In developing cross country partnerships, cognisance needs to be taken of the structural and organisational capacity of partners to develop from a volunteer led organisation to one delivering EU level programmes. Lead partners need to assess the stage of development of each partner and be confident of the capacity to deliver large scale programmes.
- In developing projects focused on the needs and interest of minority group, include major components which engage the host community, be that local authorities, local communities or academic institutions. Cross community projects are likely to result in longer-term integration and sustainability.
- In designing future programmes, lead agencies need to take cognisance of the immediate needs of African people living in host communities. If these are primarily focused on income generation, any DE initiative will need to build in this component.
- There is a strong case to be made for the development of Codes of Conduct relating to the use of images and messages in the NGDO sector across the EU as a whole, through CONCORD or other such umbrella organisations.

**For the funders:**

- For minority led organisations, European Commission funders might consider in a more structured way how it might facilitate the accessing of matched funding particularly from national partners such as Departments of Education and Foreign Affairs.
- Funders should consider decreasing the percentage level required for matched funding for smaller organisations as they face more financial challenges compared to larger organisations.
- Continue to support projects engaged in the challenging of negative images and stereotyping as the learning from this project indicates that taking this focus is a strong tool in the fight against racism in Europe.
- A project influencing attitudinal changes takes time for impact to become visible. There should be a mechanism to extend the time period of projects such as this one, as it can take considerably more time than three years to see the impact of change in attitude related perceptions.

Africa Centre carried out development education outreach activity with Marino Institute of Education on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2013 with teacher students using Africa Also Smile materials on discussions on interculturalism, images and messages and African culture. This event was attended by 15 students and also generated income for the centre.

Africa Centre and Kilkenny African Community joined forces to celebrate Africa Day in Kilkenny. As part of the event, there was a lecture on Diaspora and development which was reported under community participation.

## **6. Communication ( Website, Facebook and Twitter accounts**

Africa Centre website this year has been updated with new features. The website can be viewed at [www.africacentre.ie](http://www.africacentre.ie) . As at 31<sup>st</sup> December the website has over 20,000 visitors and this can be seen on the website.

Our Facebook and Twitter accounts have generated interest in the work of the centre and we use the networks to highlight our work and invite people to our events. Our Facebook account (<https://www.facebook.com/africacentredublin>) has over 4000 friends. Our twitter account can be view at [https://twitter.com/Africa\\_Centre](https://twitter.com/Africa_Centre) .

## **7. Challenges and the way forward**

In 2013 the Africa Centre has strived even with financial constrains to reconnect with the African community by organising the Africa Forum with our partners and having the first Africa Council in Ireland. Even though the centre experienced financial constrains at the start of the year we were able to regain the Irish Aid funding which we lost in 2012 and also Concern and Trocaire came to our aid given us unrestricted funding to employ a Director at the end of the year.

### **Challenges:**

- The reduction in funding has continued to be an issue militating against employing more staff for the Centre and we weren't able to plan any major fundraising event during the year.
- The regional networks as planned weren't successful as meetings were delayed in Galway and this can also be attributed to lack of resources to facilitate follow ups and communicate with the African groups there effectively.
- The Africa Centre Board has done their utmost efforts to get the Centre back. We experienced decline in the number of Board members and some of the skills sets were absent for the Board to convey any working group meeting during the year.

### **Way forward:**

- A funding mechanism has to be drawn from the draft fundraising plan done by Lamin Bojang (Treasurer) to come up with activities in the year to generate unrestricted funds for the Centre. And as part of the plan, the Board needs to commits to work with the Director in submitting funding application to funders.
- Africa Centre needs to map out funding sources and target them for activities and recruit staff to implement these activities in line with the needs of the African communities.

### **The programme of action for the new Board:**

- Agree a timeframe for a strategic consultation to draw a three year plan for the Centre, outlining activities and ways to fund them with allocating staff responsible to the plans.
- Set up working groups and select convenors/chairs of each working group based on the interest and skills of the person responsible.
- Strengthening the governance of the organisation, redefining the role of the staff, Board members, update policies and draw new ones that are not in place.

## **8. Staff, Intern/Volunteers and Board members 2013**

### **Staff Members**

Mr. Mbemba Jabbi	Programme Officer, Development Education, Redundant 15 <sup>th</sup> April 2013 and Re-employed as Director 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2013
Ms. Rebecca O'Halloran	Programme Assistant, Development Education, Redundant 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2013

### **Volunteers/Interns**

Ms. Sebit Iwa	Community Participation Project Officer
Hafsa Belayachi	Community participation
Jill Kirwan	Membership and Fundraising Officer
Alexander Brotman	Media and Communication Officer
Claudia Gentile	Community Participation/Youth
Elizabeth Salako	Community Outreach Officer

### **Board Members**

Sahr Yambasu
Lamin Bojang
David Nyaluke – Resigned 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2013
Richard Njoku – Resigned 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2013
Ian Callagy – Resigned 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2013
Nchedo Obi-Igweilo – Elected 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2013 and resigned 14 <sup>th</sup> July 2014
Miereill Ndikumagenge – Resigned 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2013
Adisa Salawu – Elected 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2013
Farai Jeyacheya – Elected 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2013
Juliet Amamure - Co-opted 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2013
Joseph Nyirenda - Co-opted 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2013



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**Irish Aid**  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha



Dublin City Council  
Comhairle Cathrach Bhaile Átha Cliath

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