



REPORT

**CROSS BORDER COOPERATION
BETWEEN
THE AFRICA CENTRE
AND THE
AFRO CARRIBIEAN SUPPORT ORGANISATION
(ACSONI)**

**FUNDED BY
COOPERATION IRELAND**



Background

The above project is a cross border cooperation initiative, funded by **Cooperation Ireland**. This project involved the **Africa Centre** in Dublin, and the **Afro-Community Support Organisation in Northern Ireland**, (ACSONI), from Belfast. The project was in two parts, the first being a trip from ACSONI members to Dublin and the second part being a reciprocal visit from the Africa Centre to Belfast. The first visit took place from Friday 23rd May to Sunday 26th May, in Dublin.



ACSONI upon their arrival in Dublin

This visit coincided with the Africa Day celebrations in Ireland and it was an opportunity for our brothers, sisters and colleagues from Belfast to see first hand the kind of activities the Africa Centre was engaged in, as well as the manner in which the Centre carried out its activities. It was also an opportunity to see how integration of Africans and other immigrants had developed in Ireland as well as experience first hand and be a part of activities celebrating an immigrant continent. It also provided an opportunity for our colleagues from Belfast to see how the Irish and African communities interacted with each other and also how the different other immigrant communities engaged with one another. ACSONI was represented by eight members, two ladies and six gentlemen.

The group arrived in the evening of Friday, 23rd May, 2008 and were hosted at the offices of the Africa Centre for initial welcome and ice breaker with soft drinks.

This was followed by a dinner/reception at an African restaurant in the Dublin city area. Later that evening, ACSONI was taken round the city of Dublin to see what night life was like, among the immigrant community in Dublin.



A taste of nightlife in Dublin



Ann Marie White facilitating the seminar



Participants at the seminar

On Saturday, 24th May, a seminar was held to evaluate the activities of both Africa Centre and ACSONI. The seminar facilitated by Annemarie White from White Facilitation and it was attended by 18 people from both organisations altogether. Each organization was able to celebrate success and at the same time look at the reasons for failure in some of their activities. For example, it was observed from the monthly activities of ACSONI in Northern Ireland, that the Africa Centre had not reached out well to most Africans or African communities in Dublin or nationwide in Ireland. On the other hand, ACSONI realized from the Africa Centre that it has not been known by non Afro communities because of its inability to organize grand festival like Africa Day or the Annual lecture. After the seminar, the group attended a food fair taking place as part of the Africa Day celebrations, where they were treated to a wide variety of African cuisine.



Africa Centre/ACSONI group at the food fair

Later that evening, our guests from Belfast were treated to live African music at its best when they participated in a concert organised by the Africa Centre as part of the Africa Day Celebrations. This concert featured a live performance of well renowned African musician Kanda Bongo Man. It was an evening to remember as ACSONI observed the final aspects of the process involved in organising such an activity. There was a total of about two thousand people at the concert and there was a very good mix of nationalities present as well as members from the Irish government and the Diplomatic Community in Ireland.



Participants at the Concert



Joe Ricketts from ACSONI at the Concert

On Sunday, 25th May, The group participated in an African Day family outing hosted by Irish Aid, in which the Africa Centre was a part of the organising committee. This event was held on the grounds of the Dublin Castle. This activity brought together almost ten thousand people from all walks of life. There were a host of activities which included, live band performances from both African and Irish musicians and another live performance by Kanda Bongo Man. Other attractions included a football tournament, games for children, a food fair and an art exhibition.

Our guests from Belfast departed later that evening after attending the family day.



Africa Day celebration in Dublin Castle



Kanda Bongo Man (L) in Concert in Dublin Castle

CONCLUSION

This project was a success and the conclusions drawn were that there is the need to expand this level of cooperation between the two organisations. In addition, there is room for both organisations to strengthen their relationship, learn from each other and possibly organise joint events in the future.

The Africa Centre wishes to express their sincere gratitude to Cooperation Ireland for funding this project.