

SESSION 1 ENGAGING DIASPORAS : POLICIES AND BEST PRACTICES

“Ghanacoop as a best practice for Ghanaian diasporas engagement”

Speakers :

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PART 1 : Ghanaian migration flows in Italy and local and human development

1.1. Ghanaian migration flows in Italy and associative trend

Today Ghanaian migrants in Italy are 23,000. In 2000 there were 3.164 migrants only in Emilia-Romagna Region and now, 3,480 migrants live in the Province of Modena and 3080 in the Province of Reggio Emilia. Gender priority is significant, since 56,5% of migrants are men and 43,5% are women.

The Ghanaian migration cause can be looked into from the late Sixties and early Seventies when most Ghanaians migrating to Europe and America did so with the main aim of going for further studies, until the beginning of the year Eighty when economic hardship compelled most of Ghanaians to flee their home land in search of greener pastures. In the case of Italy, the Ghanaian migration cause dates back from 1982 with large concentrations in the northern regions and in particular in Emilia-Romagna Region due to the grate economic opportunity coupled with social and humanitarian importance together with a warm hospitality of the local people towards migrants.

Ghanaian migrants always express their need to help their country of origin, from the family level to wider project involving an entire community. There have already been involved through informal channels in initiatives for local development projects; these initiatives could be improved and could have a higher impact through the involvement of public bodies at local/regional/national level and financial institutions belonging both to sending and recipient countries.

1.2. Background and mission of Ghanacoop social cooperative

The project Ghanacoop was created with a **reciprocity** purpose, aiming at involving Ghanaian migrants as active agents of their own economic and social development within the community in which they live and that of their origin.(Ghana).

Ghanacoop is the the first social cooperative promoting the competences of Ghanaian migrants residing in the Province of Modena.

It works in many areas of activity :

- Trade, importing fruits and agri-food from the country of origin and guaranteeing the TransFair certification;
- Agri-food production, managing its agric firm called “Migrants for Ghan-Africa” localized in the village of Gomoa Simbrofo, near Accra (Ghana);
- Tertiary sector, advising Ghanaian migrants on working opportunities and local market demands;

- Sensitization within local territory, promoting Ghanaian and sub- saharian culture and identity in Italy;
- Social/charity sector, promoting solidarity actions and helping the poor Ghanaian communities.

1.3. Stakeholders network

Ghanacoop was constituted with 18 associates and among these are 15 Ghanaian citizens and 3 legal entities:

- Ghana Nationals Association, which represents all the Ghanaian migrants residing in the Province of Modena (around 400 people);
- Arcadia social cooperative, who studied and realized the process of start- up of Ghanacoop and takes part, with it, in the Oltrelab Cooperative Group;
- Emil Banca, which is a cooperative credit institution situated in Bologna (Italy).

Ghanacoop is also partner of COGNAI, the National Council of the Ghanaian associations in Italy, representing about 40,000 Ghanaian migrants.

Thomas McCarthy is both the president of Ghanacoop and of the Ghana National Association of Modena and Province.

Ghanacoop has many institutional, private and local stakeholders, who usually support the planning and the organization of activities :

- IOM – International Organization for Migrations
- Italian Embassy in Ghana (Ambassador Dr. Fabrizio De Agostini)
- Emilia Romagna Region
- Province of Modena
- Municipalities of Modena, Castelfranco, Formigine, Carpi, San Cesario, Nonantola (Italy)
- Confcooperative Modena Association
- Cisl Modena Association
- Oscar Romero Consortium, in Reggio Emilia (Italy)

Technical partners of Ghanacoop in agri-food trading activity are :

- EmiliaFrutta cooperative in Modena, offering technical and commercial assistance;
- Fairtrade TransFair Italia, for transFair validation and certification;
- El Tamiso cooperative in Padova (Italy), for advising in organic agriculture and natural food.

PART 2 : Ghanacoop as a best practice for Ghanaian diaspora engagement

Ghanacoop acts as a best practice in the field of “migration for development” for many reasons.

First of all, it stimulates the acquisition, transfer and circulation of knowledge and skills within Ghanaian migrants (brain circulation) as a mean to fight illegal migration and to foster legal migration.

Then, it promotes bottom-up participatory processes and negotiation of interests within Ghanaian community as citizens of a new social context.

Finally, it assures the status of “community-enterprise” and the diversification of partners and references (corporate and no-corporate activities), giving logistical bases and support to new enterprises in Italy and in Ghana.

In particular, Ghanacoop implements many modalities for contributing to Ghana's development.

It is engaged in remittances and social investments valorization, through a *project of creation* a co-funding scheme as a result of the financial and economic cooperation between a Italian bank (Emil Banca as a cooperative credit institution) and Ghanaian counterpart (APEX bank).

Then Ghanacoop aims to create trade opportunities, especially within the TradeFair network, through the partnership with Ghanital cooperative in Accra and with Oltrelab Cooperative Group in Italy for transferring technical and economic expertise.

Finally it enhances also non-financial contributions, in order to improve the cohesion and identity within the Ghanaian Associations in Italy and to sensitize the Italian territory and institutions : COGNAI's role in educational activities are actually targeting the second generation of Ghanaian migrants.