



**DIASPEACE** *News*

***Participation of Diasporas in Peacebuilding and Development:  
Opportunities for Synergy?  
Helsinki, 28 February 2011***

**Päivi Pirkkalainen**  
University of Jyväskylä  
[paivi.m.pirkkalainen@jyu.fi](mailto:paivi.m.pirkkalainen@jyu.fi)

**DIASPEACE- project** in collaboration with the **Finnish Somalia-Network** organised the event on 28 February 2011 to launch **the Handbook for Practitioners and Policymakers** titled **“Participation of Diasporas in Peacebuilding and Development?”** Around 40 participants, consisting of the diaspora members mainly of Somali origin, researchers and representatives of Finnish development NGOs and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) attended the launch and took part in the lively discussion.



**Dr. Liisa Laakso, University of Helsinki**

After the welcoming words of the DIASPEACE project leader Professor Liisa Laakso, three of the Handbook authors, Dr. Cindy Horst (PRIO), Dr. Giulia Sinatti (ADPC) and Ms. Päivi Pirkkalainen (JYU) presented the content of the book in detail.



**Dr. Cindy Horst, PRIO, Ms. Päivi Pirkkalainen, Univ. of Jyväskylä and Dr. Giulia Sinatti, ADPC**

The Handbook, published by PRIO, is based on extensive field research in Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway. It focuses on interactions between governments, NGOs and diaspora in development and peace building activities and is meant for practitioners and policy makers in that area. The rationale behind publishing such a handbook was a clear need for experience sharing in this emerging area and the lack of research based evidence on the diaspora engagement with European actors. The Handbook documents, compares and draws lessons from different European countries on initiatives of European actors to engage diaspora in peace and development work.

After the presentation the Handbook was commented by a representative of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland Mr. Matti Lahtinen and the chairperson of the Finnish Somalia-Network Mr. Abdirizak Mohamed. Mr. Lahtinen shared experiences of the Finnish Foreign Ministry to engage with the diaspora, in particular Somalis in Finland and confirmed that there has certainly been a need for research based evidence on how diasporas' have engaged in the development and peace building in different countries. Mr. Mohamed reflected some of the experiences of cooperation within the framework of the Finnish Somalia-Network, which is an umbrella body for NGOs working in Somalia.



**Mr. Abdirizak Mohamed, Finnish Somalia-Network and Mr. Matti Lahtinen, MFA**

At the end of the event the panel debate was arranged and the floor was opened to questions from the audience. In the discussion several key questions of the diaspora engagement with the European actors in development and peace building came up. Issues such as the fragmentation of the diasporas, possibilities for development work in conflict areas, the question of professionalization of diaspora organizations vis-à-vis the voluntary nature of their work came up and resulted in the lively discussion and experience sharing.



**The floor was opened for questions from the audience.**

The organizers wish to thank all participants of the event and are looking forward to continuity of discussions!

The handbook is available online free of charge in the following address:  
<http://www.prio.no/Research-and-Publications/Publication/?oid=61886751>