



**(Draft)**

## **“Encouraging Employment for Development in East Africa”**

**A Debate**

**Grimond Room, Portcullis House, Westminster**

**Tuesday 18 October, 5.00pm**

### **Background**

The East African diaspora in the UK has a vital role to play, and indeed is already playing, in supporting development in their countries of origin, not least through commercial agriculture and the export of agricultural products from East Africa to the UK.

At the same time it is clear that there is a problem of unemployment in many African countries, not least amongst young men – a problem that is shared globally.

BUILD (Building Understanding through International Links for Development) undertook a series of meetings with African diaspora groups across the UK in 2012-13 to discuss the potential of building on the partnerships that they have with their countries of origin to involve the wider communities here in the UK whether schools, hospitals, local authorities, faith based organisations etc. These meetings were held in Edinburgh, Sheffield, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, London, Cardiff and Bristol.

Arising from those meetings came the strong plea from the diaspora groups with whom BUILD engaged that they were facing increasing prejudice and difficulties in their communities here and that their voice was largely unheard amongst policy makers in the UK despite the contribution that they were making to UK society.

A part of that contribution has been the positive links that the diaspora have brought to the UK not least through commercial ties with their countries and communities of origin.

## **The Meeting in Westminster**

In discussions held between Jeremy Lefroy MP, a member of the Select Committee on International Development and Director of Equity for Africa and Dr Nick Maurice, Founder Trustee of BUILD it was agreed that a meeting could usefully be held in Portcullis House to discuss how, recognising the enormous potential for business development, employment and wealth creation, in particular in the field of agricultural development and the export of agricultural products from East Africa to Europe and the UK, that potential could best be unleashed.

It is clear that there is already a lot happening at Parliamentary level through e.g. the International Development Select Committee, the APPG on Diaspora, Development and Migration, and the country specific APPGs relating to East Africa (e.g. Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda). Members of the Select Committee and the APPGs will clearly have important contributions to make.

The High Commissions of these countries should be involved and given that the countries to which we are referring all belong to the Commonwealth, it would be important that representation at such a meeting should include representatives of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation..

In addition, at civil society level there is a lot of activity taking place through diaspora organisations such as AFFORD (African Foundation for Development) and SACOMA as well as INGOs working in this field e.g. Oxfam and Christian Aid.

Further research is required to identify which other key players should be included.

## **Outcome**

It is to be hoped that arising from this meeting some form of coalition might arise that is committed to taking practical steps, clearly involving the Governments of the countries involved, whereby employment and job opportunities are increased and wealth is created not least through the export of goods in particular agricultural products to Europe.