

Post-Event Report: Dialogue Hosted by the Head of the Dutch Network – Arab West Foundation / Anna Lindh

Date: 7 February 2025

Venue: Humanity Hub

Time: 15:00 – 17:00

On 7 February 2025, the Head of the Dutch Network of the Arab West Foundation / Anna Lindh successfully hosted a dialogue session at Humanity Hub. The event brought together 11 participants, including a special guest (joining online), a keynote speaker, and members of the Anna Lindh Network in the Netherlands.

The session provided a platform for insightful discussions, fostering meaningful exchanges on key topics relevant to the network's mission and objectives. The engagement of participants contributed to a productive and enriching dialogue, reinforcing the commitment to collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the network.

Topic: Sub-Saharan Refugees in North Africa Victims, not Criminals by Rekaya Hafi - Miracle for Humanity

The speaker highlights the severe humanitarian crisis faced by Sub-Saharan African migrants traveling through North Africa in their attempt to reach Europe. The discussion is structured around the causes of migration, the dangers in transit, and potential solutions.

Key Points:

Migration Causes

- **Extreme Poverty & Unemployment:** Many young Africans have no economic opportunities in their home countries
- **Colonial Legacy & Foreign Exploitation:** Western companies extract Africa's natural resources but do not share the benefits.
- **Corruption & Political Mismanagement:** Governments fail to provide basic needs, and leaders often steal resources.
- **Climate Change:** Environmental disasters such as droughts and desertification displace communities.

Dangers in Transit:

- **High Death Rates in the Sahara Desert:** More migrants die crossing the desert than in the Mediterranean, yet these deaths are underreported.
- **Violence & Exploitation:** Over 80% of Sub-Saharan migrant's report experiences of robbery, sexual assault, and imprisonment.
- **Detention & Abuse in North Africa:** Many migrants are detained, tortured, or even sold as slaves in Libya and other transit countries.
- **Poor Living Conditions:** Migrants face extreme poverty, forced labor, and overcrowded housing.

European and North African Role:

- **Criminalization of Migrants:** North African governments detain and deport migrants instead of offering protection.
- **EU's Border Control Policies:** The European Union funds North African governments to block migration, often through violent methods.

Solutions

Short-Term Solutions:

- Legal protections for migrants in North Africa.
- Closing detention centers and allowing humanitarian aid.
- Ending EU funding for violent anti-migration policies.

Long-Term Solutions:

- Fair economic policies that support African development.
- Fighting corruption and supporting democratic governance.
- Climate change mitigation efforts.
- Media branding Changing public perception to see migrants as humans, not criminals

Call to Action

- Governments, international organizations, and civil society must act now to prevent further loss of life.
- The European Union should focus on saving lives instead of militarizing borders.

The participants engaged in a multifaceted discussion on Africa's potential, the challenges it faces, and the necessary steps for collaborative action, both within Africa and with the global community. **Overall, the word transformation emerged in the discussion, "To replace transaction to transformation".**

Key Discussion Points & Call to Action

I. Migration, Development, and Global Responsibility

- Europe seeks to stop African migration but fails to support African development.
- Media highlights Mediterranean deaths but ignores higher mortality in the Sahara.
- Migrants' expectations of Europe are often unrealistic, fueled by social media and mainstream media.
- Corruption and exploitation by both European and African leaders worsen the crisis.
- The core issue is protecting vulnerable people, not just managing migration.

2. Africa's Challenges and Opportunities

- Rapid population growth and climate change pose risks but also opportunities.
- Africa's vast natural resources and youthful population are key to global stability.
- Genuine, equitable partnerships—not colonial-era transactions—are essential for sustainable development.

3. Building True Partnerships Between Africa and the West

- Europe excels in management, while Africa has resources and human capital.
- Migration can be reduced through local investments in industries, education, and governance.
- Africa needs agency in shaping its future, not just external aid or intervention.

4. Strengthening Civil Society & NGOs

- **Grassroots empowerment:** Lasting change starts at the local level.
- **Building networks:** Small NGOs should collaborate to amplify their impact.
- **Funding & capacity building:** Resources must reach those on the ground, not just large organizations.
- **Policy influence:** Civil society should push for systemic reforms, not just humanitarian aid.
- **Inclusive leadership:** All voices—including migrants and affected communities—must be part of decision-making.

5. Addressing Historical & Structural Barriers

- Colonial exploitation and ongoing corruption hinder Africa's progress.
- Governance reforms and reduced foreign interference are key to stability.
- Economic exploitation (illegal fishing, resource mismanagement) must be tackled through policy and advocacy.

6. Media & Narrative Shift

- The media distorts Africa's reality, reinforcing negative stereotypes.
- Firsthand migrant testimonies should be documented to humanize the crisis.
- A documentary capturing real refugee stories and challenges should reshape public perception.

Immediate Steps

- **Develop a strategic document** outlining migration challenges, testimonies, and solutions.
- Expand collaboration with **100–200 organizations** for global impact.
- Engage **European institutions** in water management and resource solutions.

Advocate for policy reforms on migration, visas, and integration.

Long-Term Goals

- Strengthen **grassroots networks** and amplify civil society's influence.
- Bridge fragmented humanitarian efforts into a **unified movement**.
- Shift from **emergency aid to sustainable development strategies**.
- Leverage **Dutch expertise (Wave makers)** to solve environmental challenges (e.g., water scarcity).
- A documentary capturing **real refugee stories** and challenges should reshape public perception.
- To focus on the human behind the problem, and to collaborate for psychosocial support.
- At the source solutions to support migrants to challenge their dream of 'Promised Land'.

Conclusion

This discussion calls for urgent, coordinated action beyond talk. By leveraging Africa's potential, empowering civil society, and uniting grassroots movements with policy-level advocacy, we can drive meaningful change. **The priority is saving lives, amplifying real migrant voices, and implementing structural reforms to build a future based on empowerment, not exploitation.**