

## MEET MIRIAM DEMBO

Miriam will be joining us on the 11th of May from 14:30-15:00 in our informal dialogue session: *In conversation with... diaspora youth academics as mobility ambassadors and knowledge bridges.*

With 11 years of experience in international research and analysis, translation and healthcare leadership, Miriam has a multidisciplinary set of skills resulting from an academic background in International Relations and Cultural Diplomacy and experience in the Public and Global Health Sector. Presently, she is a researcher in Cultural Policy, Relations and Diplomacy at Goldsmiths University, in London. Miriam is also a board member of the [Cabo Verdean Association UK](#), where she supports the Association's development and capacity building and investigates academic ways to support its engagement with the current government and the country.



**Hi Miriam. We are delighted to have you at the second edition of the Future Forum. Could you tell us more about the academic network you are part of?**

The Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) is a consortium of researchers and policymakers from national and international universities, institutes, and organisations. The GRFDT works as an academic and policy think tank by engaging national and international experts from various areas linked to migration, culture, and transnationalism. In collaboration with IOM iDiaspora, ADEPT and CISAN, GRFDT delivered a 6-month course called "Migration Governance and Diaspora Engagement". The programme contributed to a better understanding of the role of diasporas in development and best practices in migration and diaspora engagement. Besides providing a theoretical framework for diaspora engagement, this academic network created a space for experts and students to interact, create knowledge and transfer skills at the global level.

An example of how this collaboration took place was during the group assessment required to obtain the certification from the course. Under expert guidance, the group developed an investigation paper on diaspora engagement titled "Diasporas as Non-State Actors in Public and Cultural Diplomacy". Working alongside coursemates located in different regions of the world was rewarding. We could not only share experiences but also see how diaspora engagement policies are developed in a variety of contexts and realities. Furthermore, it highlighted how important these academic networks are in offering conversations and networking opportunities among members while simultaneously creating a framework for working groups to evolve.

**What was your main takeaway from the course?**

Overall, the course reinforced what diaspora engagement is about: Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17). The knowledge acquired in this course, and thanks to GRFDT as an academic network, gave a new sense to my previous experiences in the field of diaspora engagement. It helped my ongoing academic research within Cultural and Public Diplomacy and allowed me to broaden my perspective with other networking experiences, such as my participation in the Global Diaspora Week, by the Global Confederation Diaspora. Ultimately, it has given me the tools to advance my projects within this field and enriched my capacity to promote diaspora engagement policies in my home country.

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### How does the international mobility of young diaspora academics influence ideas transfer between countries of heritage and residence?

The international mobility of young diaspora academics can help shape an ecosystem that supplies the needs of the modern knowledge economy by making valued contributions to global knowledge and innovation. In my experience, however, most African Diaspora academics are contributing to the human capital of their host countries at the loss of Africa's higher education system. Therefore, it is urgent to transform this brain drain into brain gain, where human and social capital may and should be leveraged to promote positive outcomes for home and host countries. On the one hand, the relevant academic networks must invest in promoting their networks to encourage the participation of academics, which very often are not aware of the existence of such networks, despite having the motivation and potential to contribute.

### At EUDiF, we often talk about the diaspora-development ecosystem. What role can governments play in enhancing the contributions of the academic diaspora?

It is equally critical to recognise the role of governments and policymakers in fostering greater innovation in African academic diaspora interaction. Policymakers must understand and address the major roadblocks to diaspora participation in development. While many countries have existing policies on diaspora, very few have policies on academic diaspora specifically. National governments must implement programmes to engage and draw on the intellectual resources and networks of the academic diaspora to help institutions strengthen their research, teaching, and mentoring capacities and co-design curricula.

The inclusion of diaspora academics can rejuvenate the home country's higher education systems, maximise the potential for partnerships, and help establish a network that includes highly skilled diaspora academics and the domestic production ecosystem. Hence, governments must harness diaspora academics, so they can not only contribute with their research but also use their expertise to improve government policy.

### Thank you so much for joining us, Miriam. Before we finish, could you share a bit more about the initiatives you are working on right now?

After finalising my research on the role of diasporas as cultural ambassadors featuring a case study of the Cabo Verdean diaspora in London, I joined the Directors Board of the [Cape Verdean Association UK](#). The Association has been liaising with the Cabo Verdean government and seeking to establish a public/private partnership to support diaspora engagement and the organisation's activities supporting the Cabo Verdean diaspora in the UK.

Recently, I published an [article](#) in a Cabo Verdean newspaper, where I shared proposals on harnessing diasporas' potential to accomplish foreign policy goals. The knowledge acquired during the GRFDT course has undoubtedly reinforced the crucial need for collaborative diplomacy to unite diasporas as non-state actors for development and governments.