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FROM

DIASPORA
INVESTMENT
DESK, GIPC

THE
**DIA
SP**
RA

SPOTLIGHT

ISSUE 11

Heard about Ahaspora?

Meet

**CHRISTABEL
DADZIE**

DID

Kindly introduce yourself and what you do.

CD

I am an international development professional who founded the Ahaspora Young Professionals Network (Ahaspora) with the aim of promoting Brain Gain by providing a support system for Ghanaians and Africans returning home, as well as providing an avenue for giving back in 2011. As a returnee who first relocated back home (to Ghana) in 2010, Christabel found that there was a gap in terms of an appreciation by the diaspora on progress made at home, and therefore saw the importance of forming the organization as a way to bridge home and abroad, by leveraging each group's human capital and potential.

Over the years, Ahaspora's programming has span the public and private sector, including workshops on topics such as tourism, real estate and accessing capital, as well as being a key stakeholder contributor to the Ghana Diaspora Engagement Policy, Ghana STEM Policy and Ghana Entrepreneurship policy.

CD

A highlight of Ahaspora's engagement was during its 10th anniversary celebration when the organization hosted the first ever Ghana Action Forum (GAF) in March 2022.

DID

When did you start your business?

CD

I have professional expertise in international development, with extensive experience working on economic development across Africa, Latin America and South Asia, I have also led projects in education, gender, agriculture, social protection and youth employment with various international development organizations including the United Nations entities and for the USAID. Currently I am a Senior Social Protection Specialist at the World Bank, managing the Ghana and The Gambia portfolios to promote social inclusion and end extreme poverty.



Christabel
Dadzie

DID

How long have you been working for?

CD

I have led and managed the Ahaspora team for 12 years but have worked for 17 years as a professional in international relations and project management roles.

DID

What was your motivation for starting this job?

CD

I had left my home country for 10 years to go to school leading to a Masters degree in International Affairs from Columbia University, and working within the public policy and international development space. In 2010, my New Year's resolution was to move home to Ghana by end of the year. By mid-year, I had found a job with an international NGO, packed up and was headed back home to Ghana.

CD

The return started with a rosy phase (naturally) which did not last too long. I found myself spending a lot of time with other returnees (given many young people had involuntarily moved back home due to the U.S. financial crises at the time). I began to document my experience through Facebook "Notes" and realized there were many others who had similar experiences. Our shared frustrations, challenges, and successes led me to hosting a lunch with 12 returnees where I shared the idea of building a structured support system for young Ghanaian professionals to encourage us to stay home and give back. Ahaspora was born on April 16, 2011 with the goal of dealing with a major challenge "being a foreigner in your own home".



CD

The motivation was that if a support system was established that created a critical mass of young, locally and globally exposed individuals, we would be able to adequately contribute towards Ghana, and Africa's development. The support system would aid in providing information to make the transition experience smoother, while galvanizing members to give back to society. As I will always acknowledge, Ahaspora really has kept me home. It's given me purpose to stay even in the most difficult times, with my highlights being hearing people express that they have stayed because they met an Ahasporan at Happy Hour who helped them get a job, etc.

DID

What sector of Ghana's economy does your work focus on?

CD

Ahaspora focuses on diaspora engagement, returnee transition and giving back. The work of Ahaspora spans public and private sector engagement, entrepreneurship development and scale up, youth development and mentoring.

DID

What services or products do you offer?

CD

We have a growing listserv which is transitioning to a mobile App that provides a virtual community where members can ask questions to aid the transition process – questions range between asking about job opportunities



What informed your decision to work/invest in Ghana?

DID

Upon returning home, I realized an immense opportunity in supporting the returnee transition of Ghanaian professionals to improve Brain Gain (after decades of losing our talent to the West) by sharing our stories, and providing variety of support to encourage many more to come home to contribute to our country's policies, private sector and economic development.

CD

What notable successes have you chalked since you started this job?

DID

A number of successes have been chalked since the inception of Ahaspora:
- Growing a community that offers support to Ghanaian Diasporans, returnees and like-minded professionals from 12 members at inception in 2011 to over 3000 members, many of whose professional and personal transition has been supported.

CD

CD

and upcoming conferences, to questions about transitioning home or finding storage boxes in Accra! Our virtual community has proven useful to many members, helping them secure jobs, employees, homes, professional and personal partners, among others. The community is particularly highly rated among Ghanaians in the Diaspora who are thinking about moving home. Ahaspora also hosts in-person activities including thought-leadership conferences and workshops, social networking, and community give back activities such as educational projects, marathons and fundraising for orphans, as well as our flagship 'big-sister, big-brother' type mentoring program for senior high school students.





Christabel
Dadzie

CD

- Creating a mentoring program for high school students across Ghana which has now provided professional and career mentoring for over 1000 young people since 2013. An initiative that has led to other renowned organizations seeking out the mentoring and coaching expertise of Ahaspora including Ashesi University, Yale Young African Scholars program, and the German Institute of Global Area Studies (GIGA).

- Forging official partnerships with organizations and institutions that support the Diaspora engagement process including the Office of Diaspora Affairs at the Presidency, British High Commission, United States Embassy in Ghana, European Union Cooperation in Ghana, Ghana Investment and Promotional Centre (GIPC), Ghana Tourism Agency, Beyond the Return, Ghana Tourism Development Company, Fidelity Bank, Expresspay, European Union Green Project, and Enterprise.

CD

- Through these partnerships, Ahaspora has led the organization of a major thought-leadership conference (The Ghana Action Forum 1), reviewed major national policies, including the Diaspora Engagement Policy, and continues to be the 'go-to' organization when it comes to understanding diaspora issues in general and returnee issues, in particular.

DID

What were the challenges you encountered while navigating Ghana's business ecosystem and how did you overcome them?

CD

Accessing funding opportunities for sustainability is a major challenge. As a non for-profit organization, Ahaspora has limited financial resources. Being in the space where Ahaspora serves as a 'connector' a lot of the time, members are connected to major investments, but the organization itself has found identifying funding to support these connections, a challenge.

THE DIA SP RA

SPOTLIGHT

GIPG
GHANA
INVESTMENT
PROMOTION
CENTRE

Ghana
On the go!

Christabel
Dadzie



CD Ahaspora continues to make efforts are raising funds, while also identifying income generating activities through membership contributions, as well as financial grants towards specific projects has kept the doors open. Continuous building of partnerships will eventually ease this burden over time. Navigating the organization registration and reporting system is still not an entirely smooth process (especially the reporting).

CD These investments are not always quantifiable but the benefits are far reaching across decades. This is why we are also committed to investing in youth development, to ensure that we 'change mindsets to channel our future'.

DID **What are the positive outcomes so far of investing in Ghana?**

CD Being able to contribute towards Ghana's development, leveraging its human capital from abroad and home, is a major investment that has been spearheaded by Ahaspora. This is at the heart of all programming and has defined the organization's relevance.

DID **Kindly send a word of encouragement to other diasporas looking to return home or invest in the limitless opportunities the country presents.**

CD Without hesitation, I encourage everyone to make coming 'back' home an option. But, this decision has to be one that is engrained in a 'self purpose', in a reason that will ensure that you will stay when things become difficult. A lot of effort has been put into truly making Ghana 'Open for Business' and there are many opportunities to thrive, to be a 'first' in an industry or initiative.



CD

We have many stories of Ghanaians who have returned and are thriving - the season is definitely ripe and those who take the big plunge, are openminded, and work at it, will surely do well. Most importantly, given back to your country of birth gives you a source of pride and fulfilment that is beyond quantification, so I challenge everyone to take the chance. When doing so, ensure you build the right network, like Ahaspora, which will ensure that you have a support system that will carry you through the difficult times, and celebrate your successes. The key, in my opinion, is to come home! But if coming home is not an option, ensure that your heart and soul are felt through your intentional contribution to the country and Continent. Together, we can!

Christabel Dadzie on SOCIAL MEDIA

@ahaspora @ahaspora

Christabel E. Dadzie

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Grow in
Grow with **Ghana**

diasporaspotlight
 diasporainvestmentdesk



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GET
TOUGH