

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN LATINA AMERICA AND THE DIASPORA:

BRAINSTORMING STRATEGIES FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN THE REGION AND ITS DIASPORA AROUND THE WORLD

AUG 20TH-1PM EST

WEBINAR SUMMARY

CHANGE
MAKERS
UNIDOS



ASHOKA

DIASPORA
NETWORKS



IOM
UN MIGRATION

iDIASPORA
CONNECT LEARN CONTRIBUTE

WEBINAR SUMMARY

The Webinar, organized to brainstorm strategies for cooperation between social entrepreneurs in Latam and its diaspora, began with a small introduction given by the partners and organizers, Ashoka and IOM. Following this, the director of Ashoka's Diaspora Networks initiative, **Asier Ansorena** gave a brief introduction to Ashoka and the organization's role in the development of social entrepreneurship. Demonstrating how the selection of nearly 4000 Ashoka Fellows (social entrepreneurs) has allowed Ashoka to become the world's largest network of social entrepreneurs. Ashoka has been embarked on building and Everyone a ChangeMaker movement for years, thus Asier described the different strategies by which the organization aims to identify and work with changemakers around the world. Ashoka's Diaspora Networks initiative looks for leaders within diaspora communities that have the characteristics of a changemaker, in order to co-create an impactful initiatives and provide opportunities for the creativity, empathy and entrepreneurial spirit of diasporas to thrive through the Everyone a Changemaker movement.

Social entrepreneurs find and develop innovative solutions to existing problems in society. This has a particular connection with the diaspora experience and identity, which enables these communities to be potential changemakers both in their countries of origin and residence.

Shortly after, the Regional Specialist in Labor Mobility and Human Development at IOM, **Roberto Cancel** presented the iDiaspora platform, www.idiaspora.org. Roberto defined iDiaspora as a digital space driven by the community, facilitated by IOM, and owned by the diaspora members themselves. iDiaspora functions as a tool that connects diaspora communities. It offers diaspora communities a collaborative space to: share ideas, resources, and inspiration. As of today, there are over 430 registered members this which also includes around 123 organizations, companies, and government offices. The online platform connects communities from all over the world, except Oceania. This along with IOM's previous experience in diaspora mobilization has led the organization to develop a strategy based on three pillars: enable, engage, and empower.

Afterwards, **Maria Merola**, Ashoka Director in Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay, presented the Changemakers Unidos campaign. Maria, described the campaign as a collective effort to support Latin American social entrepreneurs that are developing solutions to the challenges introduced by COVID19. Changemakers Unidos has selected 20 Ashoka Fellows who are tackling the COVID19 crisis in Latin America, and developing solutions that create opportunities to engage more people in re-imagining the future of Latin America.

Salomón Raydan concluded the first part of the session with a brief explanation about his own experiences as a member of the Venezuelan diaspora community living in Colombia and an Ashoka Fellow. Like many other Venezuelan diaspora members, Salomón faced various challenges after the devaluation of the Venezuelan currency and the rise of the political crisis. Such challenges led Salomón to realize that the banking and credit system is extremely flawed, and poses particular access challenges on indigenous people. Henceforth, Salomón developed an innovative solution to this problem and established an alternative banking and credit system. Salomón is a great example of how diaspora members can develop solutions to urgent and structural problems in society.

THE SECOND HALF of the webinar consisted of Breakout Rooms to encourage the exchange of ideas and create connections between participants. To facilitate this conversation, several questions were presented that could also encourage the participants to continue their conversation after the Webinar. This serves as a guide to what IOM and Ashoka's next steps should be in their diaspora mobilization strategy. Below is a summary of the documented answers that the groups' presented to the following questions:

- **WHAT SHOULD BE THE ROLE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN DIASPORA IN THE CHANGEMAKERS UNIDOS CAMPAIGN? WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A PART OF THE CHANGEMAKERS UNIDOS COMMUNITY? WHAT WOULD BE THE BEST WAY TO PARTICIPATE?**

The Latin American diaspora showcases the strength of its entrepreneurs, which contribute to their country of residence as well as their country of origin, through the sending of remittances and by establishing new businesses with other allies thus creating great impact. Additionally, Latin American diaspora members have rich experiences on the ways various systems function. Thus, this knowledge should be leveraged to create positive change in Latin America and even guide public policy. Many participants explained that if they would become part of the Changemakers Unidos community, they would aim on promoting social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial business models, and the benefits that such models bring along. Overall, participants expressed interest in organizing networks to create connections between social entrepreneurs and key actors of the diaspora who could provide technical and administrative support. Some participants also highlighted the importance of giving space to people who are not necessarily considered "innovative."

- **HOW COULD WE CREATE A SPACE/NETWORK/ COMMUNITY OF DIASPORA MEMBERS INTERESTED IN THE CHANGEMAKING MOVEMENT? WHAT GOALS AND VALUES SHOULD THAT NETWORK/COMMUNITY HAVE? WHAT COULD THEIR ACTIVITIES BE?**

It is important to note that in order to create a community of diaspora members, they themselves should be at the frontline promoting their own stories. It is necessary to identify people and groups that have established interesting projects that need support. Support can be provided in the form of training, interacting, and meetings. Such support methods should focus on reducing racism and xenophobia, and maintain safe, respectful, harmonious spaces. Furthermore, some participants believe that the movement should also influence governmental spheres (encourage new laws, support programs for entrepreneurs, etc...). The values that diaspora networks/communities must possess are the following: transparency, solidarity, unity, respect, good governance and management of projects, democracy, equal opportunities and treatment. Last but not least, Entrepreneurs must be agents of change and social transformation, becoming multipliers of both, taking advantage of new technologies (online gatherings) to amplify their base.

- **DO YOU IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS A CHANGEMAKER? WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE AN AMBASSADOR OF THE CHANGEMAKING MOVEMENT? WHAT COULD WE FROM ASHOKA AND IOM DO TO EMPOWER YOU IN YOUR ROLE AS A CHANGEMAKER?**

Firstly, economic resources are needed in order to promote social transformations and encourage social entrepreneurship. Secondly, Ashoka and IOM can organize events which allow diaspora members to share their experiences. Several participants identify as changemakers and wish to become ambassadors of the changemaking movement. For this to happen, Ashoka and IOM should provide information, trainings, resources and connections. This will allow diaspora communities to reach their potential and contribute positively to their countries of origin. Such contributions include social transformation, democracy, and equal opportunities without any type of discrimination.

CONCLUSION:

As an introductory event, the webinar confirmed that there is interest among diaspora members to contribute and participate within the social entrepreneurship ecosystem. The participants shared several concrete propositions to facilitate collaborations focused on the exchange of contacts, knowledge, and good practices to develop a network of impactful social entrepreneurs. Overall, themes of transparency, democracy, and equality were recurrent. This highlights the importance of open, inclusive, and participatory processes that should be taken into consideration when developing the next steps for the integration of diaspora members within the social entrepreneurship ecosystem.