



26 November 2013

III Wielkopolska Forum for Development Cooperation

Venue: Wielkopolska Solidarity Economy Centre (WSEC), Sw. Wincentego 6, Poznań

Theme: *“International Network for Innovative Social Entrepreneurship (INISE)¹. Meeting of Wielkopolska-based organizations working with Africa”.*

Notes by Ewa Sadowska, INISE

1. Welcoming remarks. I greeted the gathering and especially the representative of the African Diaspora in the UK – Mr Godwin Bateren, representatives and the office of Filip Kaczmarek led by Ms Elżbieta Malik as well as the management staff of the Poznan High School no 8 led by Mr Henryk Józefowski, Polish Gentry Association represented by Jerzy Mańkowski and Barka Network representatives. I explained the idea behind the meeting which is to meet one another and unite efforts in building bridges between Wielkopolska and Africa by triggering community projects and exchange rooted in social economy and mutual help.

The meeting took place in Wielkopolska Solidarity Economy Centre as this is an education institution for our communities and regions also relevant to African Diaspora communities.

2. The floor was given to Piotr Szymanski, member of the Board of the Barka Foundation. Piotr welcomed the gathering at the Wielkopolska Solidarity Economy Centre (WSEC) and spoke about the history of Zawady district and Sw. Wincentego Street where the WSEC is based. He focused on the history of the Sw. Wincentego Street where in 1928 a homeless shelter was built by Cyryl Ratajski, the then president of Poznan. The shelter was built to accommodate dozens of homeless people and beggars who lived on the streets of Poznan. In those days, Poznan prepared for the big opening of the first edition of the Common National Exhibition and entrepreneurs and delegations from across Poland visited Poznan for the exhibition. President Ratajski had an idea to build, next to the homeless shelter, a centre for educating single mothers and a nursery. The advent of the Second World War hampered President's plans. During the Soviet occupation of Poland, the homeless shelter in Sw. Wincentego Street was converted into a hospital.

¹ www.inise.org



The plans of President Ratajski were only realized with the community-based activities of the Barka Foundation which established projects in Sw. Wincentego Street in 1996. There was a site full of warehouses and barracks next to the former homeless shelter. These warehouses belonged to Elektromet company which closed its operations and in 1996 the site was given on lease to the Barka Foundation. This is where Barka Foundation's administration was created and first workshops for the unemployed participants were started. This was a beginning for the Social Integration Centre which at first operated in the barracks. In 2001 however, with the help of the Danish entrepreneurs and the Velux Company, a proper premises for the Social Integration Centre was built next to the warehouses. Every day over a hundred unemployed participants come to the Centre to learn vocation. In 2013 two new buildings were constructed by Barka Foundation on this site for the purpose education of staff of social work and administration. The construction took place with the financial support of the European Union and the Velux Foundation.

Also in 2013, the President of Poznan Ryszard Grobelny agreed to give the Barka Foundation a lease of the former homeless shelter building for a ten-year period.

All the buildings are included in the compound of Wielkopolska Solidarity Economy Centre which provides education and formation training for local authorities, political and economic leaders, staff of social work and interested citizens in the field of social market economy and active methods of support to the weakest groups in society.

3. Introduction of participants: I asked meeting participants to introduce themselves. Guests took 3 - 5 minutes each to explain their background and their links with Africa and idea of development cooperation.

There was a civil society delegation from Warsaw interested to establish a social integration centre and stressed their interest in community building projects patterned after the Barka community model for mutuality and reciprocity. Elżbieta Malik the Office of Filip Kaczmarek explained the rationale behind the Wielkopolska Forum of Development Cooperation which has been initiated by Filip Kaczmarek, MEP for the third time in Poznan, the capital of Wielkopolska. Elżbieta stressed that African issues are close the heart of Filip Kaczmarek and that he is keen to continue his involvement. She informed that the MEP is currently on a formal visit to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The management staff of the High School no 8 including Mr Henryk Józefowski, introduced the project in Kisumu. Godwin Bateren, representative of North West Forum for African Communities and Harambee Uganda & Harambee UK talked about his African background and long-term relationship with Poland and Barka. Jerzy Mańkowski spoke of his 22-year period spent in Africa which was both of a great professional and personal significance.

Barka leaders who run Communities of Barka Network in the countryside and operate social enterprises, shared the story of their lives and covering the path from exclusion to



integration. Barka staff spoke about the Government-commissioned projects and discussed the process of Barka inspiring the creation local partnerships in Poland's communities and sub-regions. The partnerships include representatives of all community groups such as local authorities, business and civil society which pull their heads together to create support structures for the local unemployed and needy individuals and families. The support structures are mainly Social Integration Centers for vocational education and social cooperatives which benefit the community.

Some participants emphasized that Europe had taken advantage of Africa and that it is now a commitment for Europeans to assist "older brothers Africans" in rebuilding their communities.

4. INISE – International Network for Innovative Social Entrepreneurship.

I explained the process of establishing INISE. It was the Diaspora community in Europe that first contacted Barka Foundation. In February 2011 first African Diaspora group from Merseyside, UK arrived at the Barka Centre in Chudopczyce village led by Godwin Bateren and Andy Churchill. Then the project Steps to Success was established and regular study groups came to visit Barka Poland. There were over 20 study visits of African Diaspora communities (excluding the visits with Leonardo Da Vinci Mobility programme). INISE was established in May 2013 as 'aisbl association' registered in Brussels based on the Belgian law. I listed the fifteen INISE founding members including African organizations based in Europe and Africa as well as Barka organizations from across Europe. The philosophical foundations of INISE are rooted in REX 302 document on social economy in Africa by Luca Jahier of European Economic and Social Committee, President of Group III in The European Parliament. I briefly discussed the project proposal on social enterprise creation in East Africa submitted by Phillip Kaczmarek, MEP in which the ideas of INISE had been included. On behalf of INISE group I conveyed our gratitude to Mr Kaczmarek for his continuing involvement and support.

5. The floor was given to Godwin Bateren who introduced his journey towards innovative partnerships and finding Poland as an important part of his path. Godwin spoke about philosophical foundations of the most important concepts of African culture and tradition, namely: **Harambee** (*coming together to pull together for mutual benefit*), **Bulungi Bwansi** (*together for community benefit*), **Kamuingi Koyaga Ndiri**, (*heads joined together to share the carrying of the load*) and **Ubuntu** (*African worldview that encapsulates the mutual inter-dependency of humanity*). Godwin discussed how the Poland's history and culture and Barka-triggered innovative local partnerships were relevant to Africa and its communities. Godwin also said that one of the significant moments in his life of realization of **Kamuingi Koyaga Ndiri** (Heads joined together to share the carrying of the load), took place on the 8th of



August 2011 in Barka Centre in Chudopczyce village when a group of Africans and a group of Poles led by Tomasz Sadowski, Barka Foundation chairman, joined together to plant a seed of INISE. This is how “Equal project of Europe with Africa” was born. The African concept linked with Polish and yet universal concept of solidarity and social market economy and the experience of Barka’s 25 years work in rebuilding human capital, made a complete whole which would be shared with African brothers.

6. Discussion was initiated. Jerzy Mańkowski thanked everybody for a valuable interaction and said that Godwin’s presentation was the “missing piece in the puzzle” and that it is important for INISE members to be reminded of those philosophical foundations of its birth. Elzbieta Malik spoke about the importance of community .

7. The floor was given to Mr Jozefowski and his staff who delivered a power point presentation with pictures on the project of building a school in Kisumu, Kenya. The project embraced 12.000 EURO and was granted to the High School no 8 in Poznan by the Poland’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work with Kenyan counterparts in Kisumu on building a school in the community. The Kisumu community of parents, teachers and students became very involved in the project and took ownership of it by building an entire school with own capacity. The grant of 12.000 Euro was transferred to them by the High School no 8. Visits to the site and building trustful relationships between the two schools were important part of the project.

8. Lunch was served at the Bistro of the Centre.

9. The group left for the Chudopczytce organic farm of Barka Foundation.

The field trip was of significance as the guests took part in meetings with leaders of the community and listened to their stories. The farm of Chudopczyce operated by Barka Foundation used to be a state-owned farm of 460 hectares of land. In 1996 Barka Foundation took possession of it and the place became a community of people who people who became lost in the new reality of Poland’s transformation and enterprise centre creating working places and job opportunities. The farm is self sustainable. The group learned about the organic farm, land cultivation and animal breeding. The group learnt that in the community there were 70 people living off the work of their hands, attending social integration centre workshops and rebuilding their lives.

To summarize, the day was an intense learning experience which brought the participants closer together and closer to African culture and tradition. I hope it will bear fruit in creating initiatives and projects to build innovative partnerships for change.

We are grateful to all who took part in the meeting for your invaluable contributions