

AFRICAN DIASPORA AND THE PROBLEMS OF POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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Abstract

One of the most salient features of contemporary globalization is the increase in migration around the world, and one consequence of this phenomenon which is already evident, is the emergence of a large Diaspora from Africa in the affluent countries of the West. However, despite the huge number of African Diaspora in Western host countries, they have rarely been the object of serious study and consequently very little is known about them, hence, the significance of this study. The study seeks to gain a clearer understanding of the significance and role of the large number of Africans in Diaspora. The main focus of this study is on the impact of the African Diaspora on development in their homelands. It focuses also on issues such as motives for migration, the social contacts the Diaspora maintain with their countries of origin, and the general effects of migration to countries of origin. In concrete terms, this study aims to examine the role played by African Diaspora in the economic, social, and political development of their respective homelands. The study recognizes the potential of the huge number of Africans with Western nationalities and their strategic position as a bridge between Africa and other parts of the world. Their strategic position is an asset which can provide mutual benefits to both partners. Yet in the contemporary development debates on Africa, this important role that African Diaspora can play has been largely ignored. Given the abject poverty in much of Africa, this study is significantly and urgently needed. Now, more than ever, it is vital to improve our understanding of the African Diaspora and their contribution to the reduction of poverty and facilitation of development in Africa. More importantly, there should be a growing realization among African Diaspora that they have a responsibility to help their home continent since the official development aid over the years has achieved little. Africa regresses while the rest of the world progresses. This painful realization should be of growing concern among African Diaspora who believe that they are in a better position to positively influence the overall development in Africa at present because of their sizeable presence in the economic and political power centers in the West. The findings of the study also identify areas in which research and policy intervention is necessary.

Keywords: Africa, Diaspora, Migration, Poverty, Development, Remittance

Introduction

The issue of poverty in post-colonial Africa caused increasing global concern and represents a major policy problem. This is in spite of the fact that Africa has all it takes, in terms of human and material resources, to become one of the strongest and leading economies of the world. It is a common knowledge that African labour and products (raw materials) build the American industrial complex and stimulated European economy. As Akani (2007, p.21) rightly observed, Africa made epochal contributions to knowledge and civilization which formed the bedrock for successive human advancements but is, regrettably, still wobbling and wallowing in stinking poverty. In fact, Akani noted that in all departments and definitions, Africa is poor, adrift, rural and cannot compete with its counterparts in terms of human development index and human security. Putting the matter in a more proper perspective, Nimbofa asserts that “Africa presents a paradox. The continent is rich in natural resources but majority of the people wallow in disgraceful misery index. It is heart-wrenching for a country reputed to be the cradle of civilization” (2009, p.13).

The anatomy of Africa’s problem shows that poverty is at the continent’s underdevelopment conundrum. Issues of poor governance, weak institutions, frail physical infrastructures, inadequate social safety nets, short-life expectancy, ethno-religious conflicts etc, plaguing Africa, are not only tied to poverty but are symptomatic of a poor political and economic structure. According to Omotala (2011, p.34), Africa’s doldrums stem largely from failure of successive governments in most countries over the years, to boldly address the issue of poverty which has stymied development. The Commission for Africa established by former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, described African poverty and stagnation as the greatest tragedy of the present civilization (Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.62). Imisim quoted a member of the Commission, Fola Adeola, as commenting that “the continent is the only single regional bloc in the world that is not participating in the rapidly expanding global economy of a time there has never been greater wealth in history of mankind” (Imisim, 2005, p.21). Even former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, once declared that the problem of the Africans in the 21st century is the problem of poverty, underdevelopment, and marginalization (Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.62).

In 2006, 34 of the nations on the United Nations list of least developed countries are in Africa. Many nations in Africa are also saddled with debt burden. Clean water and sewage treatment systems are rare in most parts of Africa leading to diseases of various forms. Infant mortality is high, while life expectancy and education are all low in Africa (Wikipedia, retrieved on June 30, 2019). The direct consequence of this misery index in Africa is low standard of living and low quality of life.

Therefore, given this background analysis, the study examines whether or not the African Diaspora provides a platform, through varied interventionist programs, for mitigating the escalating poverty levels and leveraging development in Africa. This paper also explores area of

interaction and engagement between the African Diaspora and homeland institution in poverty reduction strategy. African Diaspora, no doubt, constitutes an integral part of African population, to that extent, the popular axiom that “poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity anywhere” becomes imperative. The paper is organized in seven sections including this introduction. Section two focuses on conceptual clarification while section three highlights the impacts of the Diaspora. Section four dwells on the theoretical perspective. Section five discusses various possible interventionist programs/impacts of African Diaspora. Section six contains our recommendations while the final section draws a conclusion.

Conceptual Perspective

African Diaspora: A Diaspora is a community of people living outside their country of origin (Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.62). Today, African migrants are part of a large-scale, worldwide Diaspora or transnational community which is becoming one of the major global forces shaping the direction and trends in the 21st century.

African Diaspora is defined and understood from varied standpoints due, mainly, to its nature, dimensions and changing configuration. While some persons interpret African Diaspora to be a homogenous group, others see it as being heterogeneous on the basis of mode of African emigration to different parts of the world at different times (Oucho, 2008). African Diaspora refers to the communities in Europe, America, Asia, the Middle East, and various parts of the globe that are of African descent. In other words, African Diaspora involves all forms of dispersal of people, whose lineage are traceable to indigenous communities in Africa, who are out of the continent ranging from forced to voluntary migration for social, economic, and political reasons (Nimibofa, 2009, p.13).

According to Nweke and Nyewusira (2014, p.62), the African Union (AU) defined African Diaspora as the geographic dispersal of people whose ancestors, within historical memory, originally came from Africa, but who are currently domiciled, or claim residence or citizenship, outside the continent of Africa (Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.62). Indeed, the AU frames the definition of who is a Diaspora Africa very much in terms of contribution from them towards the development of Africa. Accordingly, AU states that the African Diaspora consists of people of African origin living outside the continent irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent. Although the number is hard to determine, people of African ancestry, referred to as “African Diaspora” have large populations in the USA, Canada, Europe, South America, Asia, Australia, etc. According to Harris (1982):

The African Diaspora concept subsumes the following: the global dispersion (voluntary and involuntary) of Africans throughout history; the emergence of a cultural identity abroad based on origin and social condition and the psychological or physical return to the homeland, Africa (in Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.63).

Thus, viewed, the African Diaspora assumes the character of a dynamic, continuous, and complex phenomenon stretching across time, geography, class and gender. In this study, the term “African Diaspora” is used to denote people whose ancestry or lineage are traceable to indigenous communities in Africa but are residing temporary or permanently outside the continent from time immemorial to the present era.

Poverty Alleviation: Definition of poverty can be most elusive given its complexity and niche at different levels in society. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1998, p.16, cited in Clemens & Pettersson, 2008, pp.43-44) provides six definitions in terms of human, income, extreme, overall, relative, and absolute poverties. Human poverty denotes the lack of essential human capabilities, such as being literate or adequately nourished. Income poverty means the lack of minimally adequate income or expenditure. Extreme poverty is indigent or destitution, usually specified as the inability to satisfy even minimum food needs. Overall poverty refers to a less severe level of poverty, usually defined as the inability to satisfy essential non-food as well as food needs, the former varying considerably across countries.

Relative poverty is poverty defined by standards that change across countries or over time – in terms of means per capital income – and often used loosely to mean overall poverty. Absolute poverty is defined by a fixed standard, for instance, the international dollar per day poverty line, which permits comparison of poverty across different countries. Of the six definitions of poverty, extreme poverty seems to be the odd one. For the sake of this work, we define poverty generally as the measure of deprivation in economic provision. Poverty is the outcome of mismanagement of human resources. The above definitions of poverty confirm that all Africans suffer from one or so aspect of poverty.

Poverty alleviation, therefore, involves measures taken to combat poverty and promote development, and it is achieved through the adoption of different development plans and initiatives (Oshewolo, 2011, p.217). But Ogboghodo (1992, p.38) contends that a viable strategy for poverty alleviation is more likely to be adopted in countries where the poor are part of political and economic decision-making. Sadly, the political economy of most African states does not in the least approximate any arrangement in which the poor participate in decision-making. From this view point, poverty is likely to continue unabated in Africa irrespective of the number of poverty alleviation programs introduced by government. We take poverty alleviation in this study to mean deliberate governmental and non-governmental political, social and economic interventions that address the structural bases of poverty through a clear understanding of the causes and pathways of poverty with a view to leveraging better conditions of living for

the masses. Such interventions more or less represent an exit strategy from poverty trap. Poverty alleviation programs may have different structures and outlooks, but it maintains the central objective of reducing poverty and making life meaningful for the masses.

Impacts of the Diaspora: the Two Sides of the Coin

“To this day we continue to lose the best among ourselves because the lights in the developed world shine brighter” – Nelson Mandela. The literature on the impact of emigration and therefore of the Diaspora has often focused on the effect of brain drain. The general belief is that brain drain is detrimental to the countries of origin (Nyewusira, 2009, p.30). Thus, emigration of skilled workers represents a considerable shortfall for growth in countries of origin. This loss occurs through the fact that increasing international mobility induces high-skilled workers of poor countries to bargain for higher wages, and low-skilled workers respond by adjusting their wage requirements. Persuaded of the negative effects of the brain drain, some studies propose to tax the incomes of migrants abroad in order to limit the burden on the sending countries (Bhagwati, 1976, in Sudari, 2005, p.72). Sudari builds a theoretical model of brain drain and shows that brain drain increases education and income levels in the host country and reduces same in the sending countries. It is found that brain drain jeopardizes the economic growth of the country of origin by reducing the rate of growth of effective human capital that remains in the economy. In sum, a model of the consequences of brain drain (in the indigenous growth framework) finds that brain drain raises inequality at the global level, with developing countries becoming poor for the benefit of the richer ones.

While this model emphasizes the negative effect of brain drain, several recent studies highlights some benefits from brain drain (Sudari, 2005). The main channels are the incentive to invest in education that the prospect of future emigration entails, resulting remittances that provide an alternative way to finance investment, benefits that home country can acquire from human capital of returning migrants, and the transfer of knowledge and institutional norms through the Diaspora. However, most of the theoretical contributions in this model indicate that brain drain can have a positive impact only under certain conditions. For example, for Sudari (2005, p.2296) this effect operates in the context of uncertainty about the success of emigration.

Against the prevailing tendency to justify economic migration as a necessary feature of development, however, we argue that Africa should ensure that the conditions that forced people out of the continent must be frontally tackled so that trained professionals are retained to contribute their own quotas to the development of the country. As I noted elsewhere, ‘forced migration’ is a reaction to certain push and pull factors. Okeke (2008) poignantly elucidated the push factors as follows:

Low and eroding wages and salaries, poor and unsatisfactory living conditions, lack of good transportation system, inadequate housing and accommodation, under-utilization of qualified personnel, unsatisfactory working conditions, low and discouraging prospects of professional development, lack of research fund and research facilities including staff support, continuous decline in the quality of educational system including an unstable academic calendar which is often disrupted as a result of strike actions by staff unions, violent student demonstrations, cult activities and general break down of law and order reinforced by political instability, discrimination in appointments and promotions which result in frustrations among qualified and skilled personnel; and the vexed issue of bad governance and corruption (p.50).

The above factors generally create an incommensurate working environment for skilled professionals who have no option but to look elsewhere for more conducive conditions.

On the contrary, the pull factors include the following: higher remuneration and standard of living, more favorable working conditions including job and career opportunities, professional development, substantial and readily available research fund, advanced technology, availability of experienced staff, political stability that encourages a modern educational system coupled with the prestige of advanced training and emphasis on meritocracy, transparency, hard work and intellectual freedom (Okeke, 2008, p.52).

There is ample evidence that the migration (emigrants) is positively associated with the unemployment rate in Nigeria (Docquier & Marfouk, 2004, p.326). The high rate of unemployment is likely to push significant number of the inhabitants to migrate to other countries in search of job opportunities.

The movement of unskilled labor to other parts of the world has adverse effects on families and national economies. Emigration denuded families of heads of households who wielded all controls on family socio-economic welfare, young able-bodied males who could help in the development of rural areas, including providing farm labor. These consequences precipitated poverty at the household and community levels, which culminated in under-development at the national level. Indeed, recruitment of young unskilled labor from Africa curtailed *educational ambitions* of the African youth, thereby denying the continent opportunity to improve human resource development.

Denial of education leads to unemployment, poverty and migration. This is a vicious circle which can be broken only by spreading awareness about literacy to the poor. In spite of right to education being a fundamental right of every child, it is denied to a very large section of the silent majority of the African population due to various factors that contribute in this regard.

Education helps people find employment in a more easier and effective way than any other means, resulting in reduction of poverty and thus reduction of involuntary migration.

Over several decades, international migration was not given sufficient attention by the various African Governments. The governments and Diaspora association should start making efforts to look at the arguments for and against international migration. The aim should be to promote the good effects of migration while finding ways to eliminate or reduce the negative consequences on the country's socio-economic development. This, according to Darkwah and Nahanga (2004, p.323), is the purpose for the establishment of the Nigerian in Diaspora Organisation (NIDO) in 2001, for instance. It aimed among others to encourage Nigerians abroad to contribute and play vital role in national development. More efforts should be made by the various African governments and other stakeholders to help reduce cross-border migration to address the exit of both skilled labor force and to stop human trafficking in all form.

All efforts to address the problem of migration in Africa might be futile if the reasons for migration are not well addressed. Underdevelopment is a symptom and a cause of migration in many developing countries across the globe. For any country to drastically discourage her citizens from moving out of the country, it should first and foremost, solve the problems that make people migrate. This could be done by proportionately translating the country's economic growth to developmental projects, such as providing infrastructural facilities, ensuring security of lives and properties, providing better jobs and equal chances to the youth, promoting gender equality and reducing high population growth rates through family planning or other acceptable birth control measures. Until these issues are addressed, Africans are likely to continue to migrate in large numbers to other countries for better opportunities and living conditions.

Our contention is that poverty causes migration to ensure a minimal standard of survival and that migration, in some instances, causes poverty among migrants and their sending countries. Poor countries all over the world generally produce generation of migrants for relatively richer counterparts. Poverty which is a result of lack of unemployment opportunities constitutes the most important reason for emigration. The sending country, as we have shown is ordinarily on the losing end. As these opportunities dwindle in the countries of immigration, a number of ills bedevil the labor supplying countries such as loses of valuable revenues; worsening of domestic unemployment; aggravation of rural poverty; destabilizing of social fabric; and intensification of rural-urban migration (Gopalkrishna & Oloruntoba, 2011, p.14). Thus the condition still aggravates poverty and causes further emigration, possibly clandestine and fake refugees/asylum seekers. Hence, migration becomes a cause of poverty and a hindrance to development.

Unless and until we change the adopted pattern of development in all spheres of national life, and make all development human-centric, migration cannot be stopped and the prevailing pathetic conditions of our nation continue to be present in different forms.

Nevertheless, the fact that in the main, Nigeria is the loser both in material and human terms notwithstanding, we recognize the fact that it is possible to establish a positive link between African Diaspora and development. For instance, as already noted, many migrants might benefit economically from migration. African Diaspora may promote enterprise and political developments. It can increase household income, reduce poverty at the family level, and contribute to human capital building. Remittances can reduce the depth and severity of poverty of a nation and increase financial flow to the national economy. Since significance presence of Africans in other parts of the world cannot be denied, then, this study examines whether or not the African Diaspora provides a platform (through varied interventionist programs) for mitigating the escalating poverty levels and leveraging development in Africa.

Theoretical Perspective: the Group Theory

The group theory is adopted as a framework for analysis. The theory presupposes that society is a mosaic of numerous groups living in interaction with each other. It is built around the proposition that men and women with shared interests can organize, interact and seek goals which influence or redirect public policies. Group theory has a basic assumption that public policy or decisions result from intergroup struggles for power and policy direction (Johari, 2011, p.31; Allen & Gilbert, 2011, p.27). Arthur Bentley is widely acknowledged to be the exponent of group approach to the understanding of governmental process in his classic book, *The Process of Government: A Study of Social Pressure* (Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.63).

To most group theorists, a group must be associate with activity which is what gives it both its form and relevance, and that explains why group behavior is at the center of political or governmental process (Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.64). These groups may be cultural associations, political parties, interest groups, pressure groups, ethnic nationalities, etc, identified with one form of activity orientation or another. The result is that each of these groups, according to Bernard Brown (1962, in Johari, 2011, p.310) tends to associate itself with a distinctive interpretation of politics or ideology. The group theory, therefore, show a great deal of interest in the internal organization and process of various groups and discusses questions relating to their strategies, resources, internal cohesion, skill and competence at maneuvering and access to decision makers. The state in this circumstance exists as an impartial arbiter to regulate group conflict such that government policy is basically a compromise among various groups.

In the words of Johari (2011, p.301 cited in Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.64), the groups make claims on the government and the government in turn, acts as the adjuster or balancer of the interests of the social groups. The group theorists also see the several social groups as playing stabilizing role. As Jahari (2011, p.312, cited in Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.64) again puts it, the competing groups that make up society are seen as participating in an unconscious balancing process. Therefore, group theory contends that governmental policies in the main, emanate from the conflict, competition, and consensus among groups. This is why Nwachukwu (2008, p.210) emphasizes that for one to understand the operation and dynamics of the political system, the

process of governance and the formulation of policies, one must study the activities of groups in that system.

In applying group theory to guide this paper, we are emboldened by the fact that in this era of globalization, which is a reality of the new age, poverty and its effects in Africa remains a threat to the prosperity of African Diaspora. In other words, African Diaspora cannot be insulated from the poverty ravaging Africa. To that extent, African Diaspora, as a group with certain background, interests and attitude can apply collective action to influence or redirect government policies on poverty alleviation. What is of importance to us here is not the structural composition of African Diaspora as a group but its activities and mode of exerting influence at the different stages of public policy making, particularly in the area of poverty alleviation and overall development of Africa. This sort of intervention of African Diaspora amounts to participating in (unconscious) balancing process, to use the words of Johari (2011).

Impacts of African Diaspora

To consider the impact made by African Diaspora in improving living conditions of the poor masses of Africa, the analysis will be executed under two themes, which in no way exhaustive.

Financial Remittances

Financial remittances are transfer of money and goods by migrants or migrant groups back to their countries of origin or citizenship (Oucho, 2008). It is a major plank of Diaspora-driving development activities in the homelands. The Africa Diaspora has become a vital source of foreign exchange for Africa to the extent that it has been designated as the sixth development zone by the African Union. According to Bodomo (2014), figures from IMF indicate that remittances increase from 15 billion US dollars in 1998 to about 20 billion US dollars in 2003. Bodomo also wrote that figures of remittances posted by Solome Lemme indicated that African Diaspora sent home about 40 billion US dollar yearly between 2007 and 2011 amounting to over 200 billion US dollars. He concludes that these figures from remittances are far more than the development aid funds granted the continent by international doors. Similarly, the account of Dr. Akin Awofolaju, a Director on Nigeria in Diaspora (NID) Board, shows that financial remittance to Nigeria between 2013 and 2014 is over 35 billion US dollars.

In much of sub-Saharan Africa where investment opportunities are limited, financial remittances can lift households out of poverty in which majority of households are entrapped. Remittances can provide families in Africa with additional income, some of which may end up in consumption and others in investments. Oucho (2008, notes that financial remittances reduce infant mortality, increase access to water, boost growth by financing investment, provides better nutrition and access to health and education. Mohamoud, while writing on correlation between financial remittances and poverty reduction stated that:

Financial remittances provide lifeline for many of Africa's poor. At the micro-level, remittances have become a much needed and reliable source of stable income to many marginalized families, extended families and local community groups. During natural disaster, for example, increased contribution from African Diaspora effectively provides a form of insurance which helps families and communities cope during crises. As such, remittances from the African Diaspora not only help provide relief to the poor but also, increasingly, serve to guarantee economic stability in many poor countries in Africa (in Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.64).

Advantages of financial remittances when utilized appropriately are numerous; first, remittances go directly to the targets: family members, local communities, paying school fees, building houses, health matters etc. some of the remittances are also invested in business that create jobs and generate wealth in what Turatsinze (2010) termed "back home investment." Such investments are usually channeled to agriculture, food processing, transportation, communication and energy, and the profits reinvested in Africa. Through this process, African Diaspora stimulates economies of its home lands and contributes effectively to the eradication of poverty in Africa (Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.64). There are also advantages of remittances funds over foreign aid. The former, unlike the later, are devoid of conditionalities for the most part. As a matter of fact, foreign aids funds are normally used as a neo-colonial tool to influence the political and socio-economic decision-making processes of recipient countries in Africa by donor countries and agencies. Rather than alleviate poverty, foreign aid funds can exacerbate poverty in Africa through neo-liberal policies like that of Structural Adjustment Programmes. Therefore, rather than depend on foreign aid funds, financial remittances have proven to be more viable option in poverty reduction and speeding up of African development when utilized appropriately.

Social Remittances

According to the North-South Center of the Council of Europe (2006, in Oucho, 2008, p.4), social remittances are defined as "ideas, practices, mind sets, worldviews, values and attitudes, norms of behavior and social capital (knowledge, experience and expertise) that the Diaspora mediate and either consciously or unconsciously transfers from hosts to home countries." Africa as a continent suffered from the loss of millions of highly skilled and educated professionals from the days of Atlantic slave trade to the present era of brain-drain. These professionals, who now constitute the nucleus of African Diaspora, obtain these social remittances through expertise in work places, socialization and acculturation in host countries, and transmit same to Africa through the process of globalization (Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.65). African Diaspora

should, therefore, undertake all possible means to transform the African brain-drain to a brain-gain by participating in the development of their respective home countries in Africa.

Ordinarily, social remittances enhance good governance, freedom, basic civic rights, democracy, rule of law, etc, in Africa. In this regard, Mohamoud (2003, p.21, cited in Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.65) submits that African Diaspora promotes and demands democratic and well-functioning public institutions that are accountable to the people, transparent, and respect the freedom of expression and protest. These demands for radical political change profoundly reshape economic policies along the lines of poverty reduction and development initiatives. The purposes of the social remittances revolve around are to instill ethical consciousness and civic responsibility that will enhance the socio-economic advancement of Africans. These goals are pursued through programs, policies, strategies and advocacy issues targeted at job creation and poverty reduction mechanism in rural communities.

Part of social remittances that African Diaspora should transfer back to the continent is variety of activities which contributes to the development of the continent (Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.65). There is no doubt that African Diaspora possesses huge intellectual, business and financial resources that are earnestly needed in the continent. As a matter of fact, African Diaspora constitutes a network of human agencies through which new political ideas, intellectual capital and technological renaissance is transmitted back to a continent reputed to be as the cradle of civilization. As Mohamoud (2003, p.20) puts it, “the African Diaspora is actively forgoing new trends of transnational social networks and linkages.” In terms of development challenges in Africa, African Diaspora should campaign and press for debt relief, trade concessions, the opening of markets for products from Africa and enhanced aid budgets in the social sector and the informal economy that cater for the poor.

As Nweke and Nyewusira (2014, p.66) noted, African Diaspora is in the vanguards of influencing the policy decision of developed nations towards Africa. The reality, however, is that African Diaspora intervention, in the form of social remittances, is constrained by poor governance, lack of personal freedom, basic civic rights, attenuated democracy and rule of law, volatile political environment, unwillingness of governing elite to collaborate with skilled and professional Diaspora for development initiatives and absence of policies that specifically target Diaspora participation in governance (The North-South Center, 2009 in Nweke & Nyewusira, 2014, p.66). Indeed, the rate of policy and institutional failure and the attendant development deadlock in Africa is reflective of a closed governance system that excludes in the main, African Diaspora’s intellectual, business and financial resources.

Recommendations and the Challenge of Apposite Response

Africa has generally become an epicenter of various crises comprising economic, social, and political dimensions over the years. Her post colonial experiences have been marked by truncated development and frustrated hope. The failure of governance manifests in poor socio-

economic performance, causing suffering and unfulfilled expectations as well as facilitated insurgency, conflicts and political instability. The reality of bribery and corruption as acceptable values in most African countries further aggravated the development challenges. These conditions have led to the massive migration of African citizens including trained professionals like doctors, nurses, engineers and academics to developed countries around the world, a phenomenon conceptualized in this paper as push factors of migration. Contrary to the prevailing notion that the migration of skilled professionals is advantageous for the sending countries in terms of brain gain, brain circulation and remittances, Africa nations as sending countries lose more as they are deprived of the expertise and services of these migrants, which is critically important for their development. This paper, therefore, recommends that the continent should re-orient her development strategies towards ensuring that the conditions that necessitated the migration of her citizens from all walks of life are mitigated such that when people migrate, it will be done only on a voluntary basis. Also, in view of the current reality that substantial numbers of Africans now work as professionals outside the continent, deliberate efforts should be made by various African governments to creatively engage this Diaspora population towards achieving the much needed development goals. The following advantageous areas, which in no way can outweigh the disadvantages of migration of African professionals, should be noted and implemented.

African Diaspora and Private Business in Africa: Both individuals and groups within the African Diaspora should promote overseas business enterprise with their African homelands. They should undertake this activity by setting their own enterprises in their respective countries or by collaborating with local businessmen. They should enter collaboration with the business and enterprises of their host countries with the intention of setting up joint ventures in Africa. In this way, they will be playing a mediatory or intermediating role by linking host country companies with companies in their homelands. In doing so, they help facilitate the transfer of finance and technical know-how from host countries to local enterprises. This is of utmost importance because, with the shrinking or collapse of the formal national economies in many African countries, most Africans now engage in small-scale informal trade for their livelihood. Informal trade is now, according Mohamoud (2003) the biggest market economy in Africa currently generating more than 60% of domestic wealth.

This study, therefore, recommends action in helping to facilitate the promotion of small-scale business in Africa through the Diaspora as small informal businesses have now become the essential means of survival for a large section of African society. We also recommend action in appreciating the potential role that African Diaspora plays in promoting African exports overseas since many small and medium enterprises in Africa cannot afford to travel abroad in order to promote their products, find distributors and establish contacts with export marketing partners.

African Diaspora and Development Projects: African Diaspora should promote private (self-help) development projects in Africa. They should have the feeling that they are strategically placed to undertake such development activities in their respective countries of origin. Three

developments can serve as reasons for this. First: the increasing number of Africans coming from the small village or town or linked through religious association, clan ties and other forms of associational networks into the Western world. Second: the acculturation process undergone by many of the African Diaspora in their host countries. Third: the collapse of the national social services in many countries in Africa as a result of which, many ordinary people both in the urban and in the rural areas have been left with little or no any social provision.

African Diaspora remitted finance should not all be use for consumption but also to support the creation of schools, health centers and community projects at village and district levels. These small-scale community-oriented projects will contribute considerably to the alleviation of poverty among individuals and other institutions through job creation and the provision of basic public goods and service delivery.

Remittances and Poverty Reduction: Financial remittances can provide a lifeline for many of Africa's poor. Remittances from the African Diaspora can not only help provide relief for the poor but also, increasingly, serve to guarantee economic stability in many poor countries in Africa. Yet it still remains an under-appreciated flow of funds. Even in the millennium development discussions on halving the number of poor people in the world by 2015, the contribution of the Diaspora to the reduction of poverty in developing countries has yet to be recognized.

The study recommends that stakeholders in Africa's development recognize the potential impact of African Diaspora remittances on economic development, savings mobilization and productive investments in Africa. African economies could benefit greatly from remittances if such resources were channeled through an appropriate infrastructure generating savings and investments. This recommendation calls upon the African Diaspora and other parties to initiate the establishment of Diaspora banks in their host countries and their sending African countries, and thus to create a banking network that generate savings for investment in Africa. The government of host countries should assist the African Diaspora to devise a regulatory system that makes the transfer of remittances easy, inexpensive, tax reducible and conducive to investment in Africa. Current Diaspora money transfer agencies, (many of them informal or semi-formal), should be integrated in the new system and should not be hindered or liquidated. African governments should also provide a structure for (especially rural) investment of remittances. Africa lacks a rural banking system. The post office network could be used as a feasible structure for establishing rural branches of the Diaspora bank or fund.

Conclusion

The study assessed the strategic position of African Diaspora in addressing the seemingly intractable problem of poverty in Africa. It is generally believed that the African Diaspora is in position to positively influence the overall development in Africa considering its sizable presence in the economic and political power centers in the West. The African Diaspora

interventions that hinge on poverty alleviation could range from promoting good governance practices, financial remittances, direct investments, voluntary development projects, boosting local economy to entrepreneurship and capacity building. The milestones achieved in these areas as well as the constraints and challenges faced by organizations, foundations and business enterprises established by African Diaspora in the continent are examined. The study adopted group theory as framework for analysis. This theory is built around the position that men and women with shared interests can organize, interact and seek goals which influence or redirect public policies. It argued that since Africans in Diaspora have formed potent networks in cities where they lived in Asia, America, Europe and elsewhere around the globe, such economic and political powers can be effectively leveraged to address the poverty conundrum in Africa.

The paper moves beyond conceptualizations of Diaspora as transnational aid workers and promotes an understanding of the African Diaspora's involvement as a form of right-based civic participation. The research found that the African Diaspora can share unique insights to improve the quality of policy, but that representative body is needed in government. The study further revealed that the Diaspora's dual relationship with home and host countries offers an opportunity for policy-makers to explore mutual benefits for both Western and the African continents. If these recommendations are not met, Africa, already battling the consequences of brain drain, will continue to be at the losing end.

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