Report from the ADPC Training Workshop

Second Capacity Building Training Workshop for Policymakers Serving in the Newly-Formed Diaspora Ministries in Africa

Accra, 25-29 April 2011
Introduction

From 25 to 29 April 2011, the African Diaspora Policy Centre organised the second capacity building training workshop for African policymakers serving in the newly-formed diaspora-oriented institutions on the continent. The training workshop was held at the Alisa Hotel in Accra.

Twelve government officials representing different countries and regions on the continent participated in this second round of training. The countries they represented are: Benin, Burundi, Mali, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe. In addition, two government officials from Nigeria participated in the training workshop on the initiative of their government and with the objective of training more policymakers in the field of migration and development.

ADPC established this training workshop in 2009 as a pilot project. It was the first of its kind to tackle these issues in respect of Africa. The training was primarily developed in response to capacity deficits affecting the performance of the emerging diaspora ministries and other institutions tasked with overseeing diaspora and development related matters in many countries in Africa. The main purpose of the training workshop is to strengthen the policymaking capacity of the diaspora-oriented policymakers by providing them with the essential knowledge, skills and tools to develop feasible policies aimed at maximising the contribution of the diaspora to the development of their respective home countries.

The content of the training course is tailored to the specific needs of policymakers dealing with diaspora issues in their respective countries, both in the home and host countries. The courses are organised to ensure that trainers gain access to up-to-date information in the field. This will enable them to make better informed policy choices and more appropriate decisions in their practical interventions.

More importantly, the training workshop serves as an informal platform for networking among governments, something that is currently not possible due to the lack of a mechanism to facilitate such a process. The workshop was a unique platform, which stimulated participants not only to establish viable contacts, but also to freely exchange valuable information and share best practices and positive experiences on engaging the diaspora for the development of their respective countries. Indeed, there were a number of best practices in terms of both policies and programmes that the African countries were able to share during the training workshop, something that the participants appreciated greatly. For instance, latecomers to this process, such as Benin, Burundi and Sierra Leone, were able to learn from the experiences and good practices of Mali, one of the forerunners in this field. Mali is exceptional as the government regards Malians in the diaspora as the ‘ninth region of Mali’.¹ This is the result of sustained dialogue and effective engagement over twenty years between the Malian government and the diaspora, which have culminated in the establishment of the High Council for Malians Abroad (HCME).²

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Ultimately, the participants in the training workshop appreciated the exposure it gave them to the creative methods adopted by the government of Mali since the country returned to democratic rule in 1991, in order to gradually integrate its diaspora into the development agenda of the homeland.

**Description of the training course**

The training course was developed in response to capacity deficits affecting the performance of emerging diaspora ministries in many African countries. In recent years there has been a significant change in many African governments’ perception of their overseas diaspora. Diasporas are increasingly seen as positive actors who can contribute substantially to the development of their homelands; not only in terms of financial transfers (remittances), but also in terms of knowledge transfer and building capacity of individuals, organisations and institutions. The growing awareness of this potential has led an increasing number of African countries to initiate diaspora-friendly policies and set up specific institutions or ministries for that purpose. For instance, there are now more than 30 African countries that have established diaspora-oriented institutions and ministries in order to address diaspora issues more professionally. However, these newly-formed diaspora-oriented institutions often lack the capacity to develop well-informed and effective Migration and Development policies. This lack of capacity is threefold: (1) lack of relevant knowledge and information tailored to their specific policymaking needs; (2) limited exposure to best practices and lessons learned from the experiences of other countries both in Africa and beyond; and (3) lack of technical capabilities to develop a national Migration and Development Strategy Paper (MDSP) that can be translated into feasible strategic interventions and realisable actions. This training is developed for government officials serving in the newly-formed diaspora ministries and other institutions tasked with overseeing diaspora and development related matters.
Content of the training course

The content of the training course is designed in a manner that is tailored to the specific policymaking needs of the African government officials dealing with diaspora and diaspora issues in their respective countries. The courses are organised to ensure that trainers gain access to up-to-date information in the field that will enable them to make better informed policy choices and make more appropriate decisions in their practical interventions. It is organised to enhance the knowledge and policy-capacity insights of African officials dealing with diaspora and development-related issues in a tangible manner.

The key issues covered by the training course include an introduction to the existing literature and policy discussions in the field. It also includes an overview of the nature and patterns of the diaspora organisations and associations, as well as the modus operandi of their vast transnational networks (criss-crossing countries and continents) linking the process of globalisation to the local conditions of their respective countries of origin. Moreover, the training provides an account of the development-related activities in which diaspora groups and organisations are involved and the areas where their intervention can be more effective regarding homeland development. Furthermore, the training course deals with issues related to innovative mobilisation strategies that homeland governments should adopt in order to entice and connect the diaspora for the homeland development. Another important aspect addressed by the training course is the lessons that can be learned from good practices in terms of engaging diaspora in the homeland development both in Africa and beyond. Finally, the training course equips the trainees with the technical capabilities to develop a diaspora-oriented national policy strategy, which would facilitate the integration of diaspora-driven development into the overall national development agenda.

Key components of the training course

The key components of the training course are:

- Overview of the migration and development discourse;
- Best practices: cases in Africa and beyond;
- Capacity building for policy development.

Methodology

The training workshop is designed with an interactive and face-to-face format. It is also designed to stimulate participatory learning, which encourages participants to openly exchange information, knowledge and share good practices both in policy and programme related operations. In this context, Chatham House rules are adopted in order to facilitate a free flow of ideas, which is conducive to a dynamic exchange of ideas and experiences. This worked very well for the participants and the result was lively debates stimulated by the participants, experts and facilitators.
**Organisation of the workshop**

ADPC organised this second capacity building training workshop in cooperation with the AU Diaspora African Forum (DAF) and the Migration Policy and Advocacy Network (MPAN). Both partners are located in Accra. They provided logistical support, expert advice and moderation services to the training workshop. The collaboration between ADPC and our partners in Accra was successful. Therefore, ADPC is very pleased to continue working with them on further activities in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa. Furthermore, MPAN and DAF are the only NGOs in West Africa established to promote the contribution of the diaspora for the development of the continent. In this regard, ADPC shares a common objective with both organisations and that makes our collaboration with them more fruitful and productive.

![Image of workshop participants](image)

**The training workshop has achieved the following results:**

Participants in the training course:

- Obtained new knowledge and up-to-date information tailored to their specific policymaking needs;
- Gained knowledge about best practices from each other and from the experiences of other countries in Africa and elsewhere;
- Acquired innovative strategies geared to mobilising the diaspora for the homeland development;
- Developed technical capabilities to design a national Migration and Development Strategy Paper (MDSP), which can be translated into feasible strategic interventions and realisable actions;
- Gained policy and practical insights on how diaspora-driven development can be integrated into the overall national development agenda; notably, through programmes such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
**Broadening the topic of the capacity building programme**

During this second training workshop, participants proposed to broaden the topic of the capacity building programme. In addition to the capacity building training, participants have identified other critical areas that require urgent interventions to further increase their policy insights and practical operations in the field. The additional interventions proposed would ensure a cumulative effect in terms of boosting their capability to design effective policy instruments, which would facilitate the integration of diaspora-driven development into the overall national development agenda in their respective countries. The areas they identified are: an African Consultative Forum on Migration and Development (ACFMD); an online course; direct technical assistance; strengthening the capacity of regional consultative processes; and evidence-based best practices case studies.

1. **African Consultative Forum on Migration and Development (ACFMD).** This forum would facilitate the exchange of good practices (policies and programmes) on a more regular basis among policymakers in Africa dealing with diaspora and development related issues. The forum will also facilitate peer consultation among policymakers. It was proposed that the ACFMD be held twice a year, rotating from one country to another.

2. **Online courses.** The government participants in the training workshop proposed to launch an online training course, which would enable them to continue learning and to gain access to up-to-date information in the field as they lack access to the most recent knowledge generated on the subject. Moreover, continued access to up-to-date information in the field will enable them to make better informed policy choices and appropriate decisions in their practical interventions. Furthermore, providing online courses is a cost effective way of increasing the participation of diaspora-oriented policymakers in many countries in Africa.

3. **Direct Technical Assistance.** The government participants indicated that they require direct technical assistance in the form of consultancy, coaching and mentoring. They also need capacity building for diverse groups of policymakers within each country so that more diaspora-oriented officials are trained in each country, rather than one or two individuals. Furthermore, the direct technical assistance should focus both on supporting the development of effective diaspora-oriented policy and for the implementation of diaspora-oriented programmes on the ground. Ultimately, the government participants were of the view that direct and concentrated technical assistance would enable them to acquire the capability to develop a national Migration and Development Strategy Paper (MDSP), which can be translated into feasible strategic interventions and realisable actions.

4. **Strengthening the capacity of regional consultative processes.** The government participants requested that the capacity of the regional bodies such as IGAD in East Africa and ECOWAS in West Africa be strengthened regarding the management of migration within the continent. This is important as developing effective regional policy approaches to migration movements can foster alliances and strategic partnerships among countries in the field of migration and development.
5. Evidence-based Best Practices case studies. The participants indicated the importance of documenting those best practices, both in terms of policies and programmes, that African countries have already initiated and which showcase catalysts of positive exceptions that should be widely shared.

Impact

The positive impact of the training workshop on the participants can be evaluated using five critical points: raising awareness; access to new knowledge; change in attitudes; acquiring new valuable contacts/networks; and modified behaviour. These points are briefly described below.

Firstly, the training workshop proved to be an effective instrument as it raised the awareness of participants of the need to engage in regular conversations with their diaspora abroad. Initiating regular consultations between the diaspora and homeland governments can facilitate the development of reliable channels of communication. Ultimately, this will foster the systematic integration of diaspora-driven development into the domestic development agenda. One practical way to facilitate a direct engagement with the diaspora is to organise annual ‘home coming summits’, ‘welcome back home’ or ‘home is the best’ gatherings. There are still few countries in Africa that have established reliable channels of communication to facilitate a constructive dialogue between the diaspora and the homeland governments. Yet, the creation of such channels of communication would make possible the direct input of the diaspora into the formulation of sound diaspora and development related policy in their respective countries of origin.

Secondly, the training workshop helped the participants to gain access to experiences elsewhere, including concepts such as the ‘Life Cycle of Migrants’, which provides a good

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3 While the government of Benin adopts the ‘welcome back home’ slogan, the government of Uganda prefers the ‘home is the best’ slogan to organise its diaspora, with the aim of exposing them to the existing opportunities in the country.
starting point for comprehensive Migration and Development policies in countries of origin.\footnote{For more information, see the ADPC training programme on \url{www.diaspora-centre.org}}

The training presented participants with valuable lessons from the Philippines and Mexico, which provided excellent examples of countries already active in almost every phase of the life cycle of migrants. Taking care of migrants from the outset establishes bonds of trust with migrant communities; it also facilitates data collection on migration flows and directs remittances into formal channels.

Thirdly, the training workshop provided the participants with innovative insights and attitude changes into collecting diaspora data along sector lines (i.e. health and education), rather than compiling a general inventory that would be of little practical use. The objective is to collect data for specific diaspora groups that can be targeted for specific interventions. For example, the countries must first identify the sectors that are in need of skilled personnel and then undertake a mapping exercise aimed at compiling and mobilising professionals within the diaspora for an already defined purpose. This kind of data collection, linked to specific sectors, is more valuable than general mapping exercises, which are costly and unfortunately have become the mantra among many homeland governments, as well as various international bodies working in this field.

Fourthly, the training workshop stimulated the participants to think strategically and from the outset establish a workable plan with short-, medium- and long-term goals. They should also formulate appropriate policy proposals (as everything starts with policy plans) that can be translated into feasible strategic interventions and realisable actions within a realistic timeframe. Such policies should focus on easy and doable actions that are less expensive (instead of bigger and costly ventures) in order to demonstrate quick and tangible results to the potential diaspora that they would like to connect to the development of their respective countries. For example, organising an annual policy fair in which all the ministries in the country display their areas of work and programmes, as the government of Ghana does, was suggested as a model to be replicated by other countries. The workshop has also increased the awareness among participants of the importance of networking among themselves and sharing best
practices and viable experiences via a new online discussion platform that will be moderated by ADPC.

Finally, the training workshop helped to modify behavioural changes among the participants both in policy and practice in terms of responding to the desires and expectations of the diaspora. For instance, participants became aware of the importance of creating a diaspora-friendly environment in their respective countries, something that is a precondition for engaging the diaspora in the overall development of the homelands. Having a friendly diaspora policy will, in turn, motivate the diaspora to contribute more to the development of their countries of origin. It is also an important step since, generally, diaspora are of the view that positive rapprochement from the governments of their respective countries of origin often encourage them to relate to the situation back home in new, different and, most importantly, constructive ways.

In short, participants were of the view that the training workshop inspired them to improve their national policies regarding the engagement of the diaspora in the domestic development. They also expressed that the training course provided them with a number of policy tools that they can take with them to their respective countries and that can be translated into feasible strategic interventions and realisable actions. Furthermore, the participants clearly stated their willingness to share the knowledge, ideas and skills gained through this training workshop with their colleagues. Finally, according to the participants, the results of the training workshop were concrete, implementable and all directed towards better engaging the diaspora in development.

**Follow up plans**

This ADPC pilot project ended in May 2011. The project successfully helped to produce new knowledge tailored to the policymaking needs of the diaspora representatives dealing with diaspora and development related issues. ADPC has also succeeded in providing capacity building training to 24 diaspora-oriented government officials from 12 countries representing different regions in Africa. The countries they represented are: Benin, Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe. In short, the project has contributed to strengthening the policymaking capacity of a significant number of African government diaspora-oriented policymakers by providing them with the essential knowledge, skills and tools to develop feasible policies aimed at maximising the contribution of the diaspora to the development of their respective home countries.

Nevertheless, limited resources meant that we were only able to train two policymakers from each country, despite the growing demand for this kind of training. Indeed, since the project started, ADPC has been inundated with requests from diverse African governments to participate in the training workshop. This is a predictable response given that there are currently more than 30 African countries with diaspora-oriented institutions and ministries, all of which were established to deal more professionally with diaspora-led development related issues. However, a prevailing capacity deficit is hampering the performance of these embryonic institutions responsible for engaging diaspora for homeland development. It also prevents policymakers serving in such institutions from making well-informed policy choices and
appropriate decisions in the field of migration and development. Finally, the lack of sufficient capacity hinders the development of feasible strategic interventions and realisable actions that can help maximise the contribution of the diaspora to the development of the continent. Thus, these glaring capacity deficits among diaspora-oriented policymakers in Africa justify the continuation of the capacity building initiative.

In other words, ADPC will continue the work of this pilot capacity building project within the framework of the EU-Africa Diaspora Outreach Initiative until 2013, and perhaps even beyond this date, depending on the availability of resources. ADPC remains committed to strengthening the capacities of policymakers serving in the newly-formed diaspora-oriented ministries in Africa. We understand that without significant policymaking capability, the newly-formed diaspora institutions in Africa will not benefit adequately from the development potential of their diaspora overseas. Certainly, this is an aspect which has not received sufficient policy attention in the development cooperation discussions between the host and home countries. It is our conviction that enhanced policymaking capability of diaspora-oriented policymakers will enable them to engage the diaspora in the overall development of their countries of origin in a sustainable and large-scale manner.
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