

## **E-Policy Brief Nr. 9:**

# **Diaspora Engagement: Missions to Angola, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Morocco & Senegal**

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**Africa-Europe Platform**



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## Introduction

This is the ninth and last edition of a series of e-Policy Briefs published by the Africa-Europe Platform (AEP), a European-wide network of African diaspora development organisations. The main purpose of these e-Policy Briefs is to enhance knowledge among diaspora organisations on key migration and development (M&D) policy issues as well as to raise policymakers' awareness on the views of African diaspora organisations in this regard.

In this edition, attention will be paid to the missions to pilot countries. This important activity of the AEP project directly involved relevant stakeholders and counterparts from Africa. In October and November the five delegations each consisting of one AEP project officer and two diaspora delegates with roots in the respective pilot country travelled to Angola, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Morocco, and Senegal<sup>1</sup>. AEP Mission Delegates were selected on the basis of their roles and expertise.

The missions were funded by the European Commission and co-funded by the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MinBuZa).

The overall aim of these missions was to contribute to improving strategic alliances and mutual understanding between African

diaspora organisations in Europe and stakeholders in the five pilot countries.

The specific objectives of these missions were to:

- Test and validate the desirability of an Africa-Europe Platform;
- Collect the views and expectations of all stakeholders, and gather suggestions on the basis of a pre-established questionnaire on development cooperation;
- Organise meetings to establish and improve strategic alliances between diaspora organisations in Europe, local authorities, and non-state actors in the 'pilot countries';
- Facilitate mutual understanding of priorities and constraints;
- To share good practices in diaspora development among the African diaspora in Europe and in the pilot countries, and to test criteria for, and validity of, good practices in diaspora development;
- Obtain formal endorsement for the platform from the AEP pilot countries

This e-policy brief reports the main findings and recommendations based on four of the five missions, namely Angola, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Morocco.

<sup>1</sup> The findings from the mission to Senegal are not incorporated in this e-policy brief, as the report came out when this brief was already written.





## 2. Diaspora Engagement

Since the turn of the millennium a growing voice has emerged within development circles about the positive contributions that diasporas can bring to the development of their countries of origin. This acknowledgement was firstly made in the World Bank Global Financial Report (2003)<sup>2</sup>. It shows the great amount of remittances that diasporas send to their countries of origin.

The following developments also underlined the importance of diaspora engagement:

1. Establishment of a Global Commission on International Migration (2003 – 2005)<sup>3</sup>.
2. The UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development events<sup>4</sup>.
3. A series of annual Global Forums on Migration and Development since 2007<sup>5</sup>.

The great enthusiasm for remittances as an alternative to classical development cooperation became tempered as awareness grew that socialising what are essentially individual and private resources can be very complex. 'Diaspora engagement' therefore emerged as the new 'success formula'. This idea identifies diasporas and their organisations as appropriate partners that are collective and civically engaged. The missions found several issues to be important in

shaping and supporting diaspora engagement and participation in the respective countries<sup>6</sup>.

'Diaspora engagement' reflects the philosophy behind the so-called 'human development approach'. This approach has its roots in the thoughts of Amartya Sen. The human development approach sees development as a goal that can only be achieved with the direct involvement of the people concerned. In line with this idea, 'diaspora engagement' puts forward a human-centred and participatory understanding of development. Thus it makes diasporas and their organisations strategic actors in development processes thanks to their engagement in both countries of origin and residence<sup>7</sup>.

To even go further, diaspora organisations are seen as having the ability to promote transnational actions that are funded by the bridges the diasporas have built across the different locations. Diasporas have the potential to act as brokers of change. They can bring in innovative ideas from the outside, which might be better accepted in local communities because they are introduced by diaspora members<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>2</sup><http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTDECPROSPECTS/EXTGDF/0,,contentMDK:22382918~pagePK:558722~piPK:544373~theSitePK:544370,00.html>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.gcim.org/>

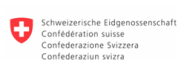
<sup>4</sup><http://www.un.org/en/ga/68/meetings/migration/>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.gfmd.org/en/>

<sup>6</sup> [http://issuu.com/devissues/docs/devissues\\_14\\_1\\_2012-web](http://issuu.com/devissues/docs/devissues_14_1_2012-web)

<sup>7</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/origins/>

<sup>8</sup>[http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/HLD2013/documents/Diaspora\\_Development\\_RT\\_Recommendations.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/HLD2013/documents/Diaspora_Development_RT_Recommendations.pdf)





### 3. Stimulating Diaspora Engagement: Findings from the missions

Through analysing the outcomes of four of the five missions, similarities can be found in the issues that are addressed when promoting and supporting diaspora engagement in countries of origin<sup>9</sup>.

#### 3.1 Create high level of commitment

Firstly, in all four missions it has been found that a **commitment to supporting diaspora engagement** from the government of the countries of origin is essential. The **Ethiopian** government, for example, has developed several structures to facilitate diaspora support for development. These include schemes at the federal and local levels, which run across different ministries and service sectors. On the other hand, European governments and development agencies active in Ethiopia often do not have mechanisms and programmes for enabling this.

In **Cameroon** it was mentioned that a focal point should be established in order to formalise diaspora engagement.

In **Angola**, the government does not have any structures or special funding programmes focusing on diaspora-related issues in place. Several recommendations to improve the government's outreach to its diaspora have been formulated on the basis of the mission:

- The government programme to repatriate its citizens from neighbouring countries is not attractive enough to motivate its diaspora to return home. If the government needs to tap into the intellectual remittances of its diaspora, it should undertake a different approach focusing on returned human resources.
- Government officials in ministries related to diaspora as well as diplomatic and consular services activities should be given capacity-building training on how to develop diaspora-friendly policies and how to undertake meaningful engagement with the diaspora.
- The government should also fund capacity-building programmes for civil society organisations in order to create awareness and to develop a middle class which is still lacking in Angola.
- Through inclusive programs, the government should incorporate civil society actors as potential partners in its post-war reconstruction efforts. This could attract the diaspora who is ready to be involved.
- Angola has a strong emerging economy based on petroleum. To stimulate diaspora engagement in this area the government should create a conducive atmosphere for diaspora-owned private initiatives and businesses to re-locate to Angola.
- The government can also provide incentives for its qualified diaspora members who are willing to return to work on a temporary basis.

**Morocco** seems to be more advanced in this area than the other pilot countries.

<sup>9</sup> Analysis is done on the basis of reports from the missions and presentations given during the 3rd Expert Meeting in Brussels 13-14 November 2013.





For example, many organisations and institutions in Morocco are further ahead in their efforts to harness diaspora financial resources and establishing a civil society network for Moroccans in the diaspora. However, the mission delegation reported that more coherence between the different organisations and institutions is required. A participatory approach should be promoted for cooperation between government, the civil society and the diaspora. The challenge therefore remains how to achieve better results and greater coherence. However, relevant institutions are already up and running, such as the *Ministry of Moroccans Living Abroad* (MRE).

### 3.2 Improve information and communication

A second issue that has been addressed during the missions is the necessity of improving **information and communication flows**. In **Cameroon**, it was agreed that diaspora organisations and Cameroonian agencies should organise themselves to, for example, respond to calls for European projects. This will be done through the establishment of a framework for collaboration on concrete actions. These collaborative actions and alignments are likely to improve knowledge and communication between the relevant actors.

For the case of **Ethiopia**, as aforementioned, structures and schemes to support diaspora involvement are

available. However, a strong disconnection exists between what support is available and what its diaspora are aware of. Awareness of possibilities of support within the Ethiopian diaspora in the North (United States, Canada and Europe) is very poor. This can be related to the large number of different schemes available, but also because of insufficient communication of these to the diaspora. The same counts for good work being carried out by local civil society Regional Development Associations, and opportunities for the diaspora to contribute to these: this is not widely known in the diaspora.

In the case of **Angola**, it was suggested that the government should open up for a dialogue with its diaspora. Communication is surely an entry point for improvement, but on the other hand there is also a shortage of information and knowledge. Looking at the situation in Angola, it was recommended that research should be carried out to map the Angolan diaspora in Western Europe (mostly in Portugal), Brazil, Canada and the USA. Besides diaspora members residing in the North, there are also many Angolan diasporas members in neighbouring countries (Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Namibia, and Zambia) who live there due to uncertainty at home. These should be mapped as well.

In **Morocco** good and clear communication is obviously also essential, but due to the numerous institutions and organisations active around diaspora and development perhaps even more







important. It was found that, for example, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) need the diaspora, but that the diaspora often holds on to an old image of Morocco, including the perception of a prevalence of forced marriages. The diaspora has to be informed about the progress that has taken place and what the important topics at the moment are. It is important that the diaspora and its added value to the country are formally recognised and that formal partnerships are established. This will improve clarity and good communication.

An example of non-alignment which could be attributed to poor communication or unfamiliarity is the fact that diaspora organisations often do not cooperate sufficiently with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on the ground but rather create their own NGOs in Morocco to implement their development projects.

### 3.3 Build trust, good image and credibility

The lack of information and communication is also exacerbated by significant problems of **trust, image, and credibility**. These issues can hamper diaspora engagement. Some diaspora members may have been away from their country of origin for a long time (and therefore possibly lack accurate and up-to-date information about the situation in the country as mentioned in the example of forced marriages in Morocco). Furthermore, they may oppose the current government and its policies or they may be suspicious of them. This may

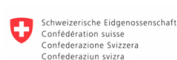
be the case in **Ethiopia** and **Angola**. Also the mission to **Cameroon** reported that the diaspora should be seen as actors in development and not merely as political actors.

### 3.4 Diaspora: financial, social & human capital

Another finding from the missions shows that diaspora engagement focuses mainly on diaspora as providers of **financial capital** whilst the further spectrum of possibilities for engaging the diaspora in development is rather disregarded. In the example of **Angola**, the diaspora could strengthen post-war reconstruction activities, stimulate business development, return as high-skilled temporary workers, and add valuable human resources to the country in general.

In **Morocco** the resources of the diaspora could be better harnessed, especially in the fields of health, science and technology, commerce and enterprise and women and girls. In addition, Morocco would need a transfer of skills from their diaspora as well as good practices in good governance (public affairs, citizenship and public policy).

From the mission to **Cameroon** it became clear that diaspora good practices can be found in many areas, such as the computerisation of hospitals and construct water supply systems. These actions require financial resources, but also knowledge and skills.





Also in **Ethiopia** diaspora engagement mainly focuses on encouraging and tapping forms of diaspora financial capital, especially in terms of investments and business. This is unarguably of importance for Ethiopia's development; however, there could also be missed opportunities from privileging financial over other forms of diaspora capital, particularly skills and knowledge transfer and voluntarism.

### 3.5 Support diaspora skills and brain gain

Connected with the afore mentioned issue, **a lack of coordination in skills and knowledge transfer** exists in most of the pilot countries. This is probably the case because attention is less paid to human capital, but more to financial capital. In Ethiopia, several structures exist to support diaspora skills and knowledge transfer in the country between the Ethiopian government and European programmes. However these seem poorly coordinated and limited in scale. Moreover, they lack a sufficiently systematic and institutional approach.

In the case of **Morocco**, at least one representative of a university there, considers that the diaspora has important social capital and stresses that access to this resource should be supported. A better exchange of expertise should be encouraged, such as mobilising students and academics abroad to create excellence.

