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DIASPORAS AND DEVELOPMENT: BRIDGING BETWEEN SOCIETIES AND STATES

Background Paper

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, the engagement of diasporas in issues conventionally seen as relating to development, such as poverty reduction, economic growth, trade or post-crisis recovery has generated an increasing interest among a variety of stakeholders. This interest has been reiterated in international debates and discussions such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), the United Nations High-level Dialogue in 2006 and will continue to be discussed in 2013. The engagement of people in transactions that occur within transnational spaces, and their affinities and links with the countries of origin and destination are increasingly recognized. Governments are seeking for avenues to increase their collaboration with diaspora communities in realizing their own aspirations and assisting them to maximize their potential. This potential is not only related to financial remittances, but consists in a wide variety of resources that can be mobilized through transnational networks.

There is no widely accepted universal definition of “diaspora” and in fact the term is used to signify many different phenomena.¹ A working definition of diasporas proposed by IOM and MPI in a recent handbook is:

“Emigrants and their descendants, who live outside the country of their birth or ancestry, either on a temporary or permanent basis, yet still maintain affective and material ties to their countries of origin”.²

¹ International Organization for Migration/Migration Policy Institute, *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries* (2012).

² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

This paper aims to give an overview of the various contributions that diaspora communities make both to their countries of origin and the countries where they reside, and to suggest some areas for maximizing the impact of diaspora engagement. Diaspora communities engage in development processes in multiple ways, very often through their own initiative, and it is therefore important to explore the strategies that may facilitate diaspora participation in both countries of origin and the countries where they live. To do so, we suggest an approach based on three pillars: **Engage, Enable and Empower** as the framework for identifying the policy and programmatic options that aim to increase the possibilities offered to diaspora communities to participate to development processes.

THE IMPORTANCE AND POTENTIAL OF DIASPORAS IN TERMS OF RESOURCES

Diaspora members are migrants, ex-migrants or migrants' descendants, and they are also inhabitants, often workers, who contribute to the society in which they live. From this point of view, the resources that they can mobilize are similar to the resources that anyone can mobilize, except for the fact that they can be mobilized in a way that links, directly or indirectly, two or more countries. These resources, or "capitals", are **human, social, economic and cultural**. Policies and programmes aiming to engage, enable and empower diasporas share the objective of better harnessing these resources.

Human capital: Even though this expression could encompass a wide range of aspects, here it is understood in the sense of human resources. Diaspora members may be workers, who contribute to the economy and competitiveness of the country where they live and who may also engage in development processes in their country of origin. Both lower and highly skilled workers have an important role within the socioeconomic fabric of the country where they reside. Similarly, when they return, even temporarily, to their countries of origin, they bring with them the experience they have acquired abroad. The specificity of diasporas' human capital, is that, at least potentially, it circulates: skills circulation and knowledge transfer are forms of diaspora engagement that benefit global development.

Social capital is commonly understood as the set of resources embedded in the (actual or potential) social networks that diaspora communities maintain. These social networks are not limited to links with the country of origin, or to links between diaspora members within the country where they live, but can extend to the global scale through members of the same diaspora who are scattered in several countries. Social networks are based on relationships with families, friends, colleagues or associations. Social media are increasingly playing a major role in sustaining and extending these networks. Social networks are crucial to identify further opportunities to facilitate the engagement of diasporas in development, as they constitute the foundation for their commitment.

The economic capital of diasporas lies in the opportunities that diaspora communities can bring in terms of investment. Remittances, as private funds, are an important feature of diasporas' economic contribution to the well-being of their families or members of their communities in their countries of origin, but this contribution is not limited to the transfer of financial capital. Indeed, trade between both countries of origin and destination, operated by diasporas, is now widespread. Diaspora members, who invest in their country of origin, setting up small and medium-sized enterprises or through foreign direct investment, have a prominent role in poverty reduction and economic dynamism.

The cultural capital of diasporas is related to the globalization of ideas, knowledge and, to some extent, social models. While establishing themselves in a country, transnational societies bring with them a rich cultural background, which, while representing the visible features of their identity, also provides them

with the means for their integration and acceptance into their new society. Cuisine, arts and festivities are among the elements that allow exchanges and mutual recognition and release the potential benefits of more diverse societies. The cultural capital of diasporas is also central in activities such as transnational trade, or the establishment of social networks and the integration of newcomers. Transnationalism is per se a neutral feature, characterized by a wide range of activities through which people effectively evolve, simultaneously, in two or more societies. Indeed, it has the potential to positively affect the relationship between the country destination and the country of origin, through enhancing cultural relations as well as mutual understanding. Diaspora members can also play a role in the democratic processes, especially when granted the right to vote, both in their country of origin or in the country of residence.

DIASPORAS AND SOCIETIES

Moving from one country and establishing elsewhere is a process that implies transforming the relationship that exists with the society of origin, and also establishing a life within the society of residence. In this sense, diaspora members are actually transnational: their social networks, their feelings, their families and sometimes their cultures and citizenship are shared between distinct societies.

This transnational nature implies that diaspora members are actual or potential bridges between countries, through their multiple networks, identities, as well as their shared sense of belonging. Networks, identities and belonging are of course complex and interrelated aspects that define one's personal history, rather than that of a group. In this sense, when describing diasporas as transnational communities, the term community has to be understood as representing a shared origin, real or imagined, by each member of a given diaspora. This shared origin can therefore represent the common denominator that potentially links the members of a diaspora. Along these lines, this origin may relate to a country, as well as to a region within a country, to an ethnic group, and so on. Similarly, the term community does not necessarily imply that networks have actually been established by diaspora members, but rather the possibility of the emergence of such networks and their potential. In addition, identity should not be seen as a fixed property; as it is constantly constructed through social interaction. This is a feature which characterizes diasporas, which determines their potential role as "bridges" between societies, and which defines the possibilities that diaspora engagement has to offer to both societies of origin and residence.

Finally, this account would not be complete without pointing out the fact that the idea of diaspora is also intimately linked with the idea of (perceived) "difference". Indeed, diasporas may be labelled (or may label themselves) as such because their origin can be perceived as different from the origin of the "natives". This parameter shapes, in turn, ideas about inclusion, exclusion and assimilation and contributes to the construction of one's identity. This perceived difference can give birth to social dynamics affecting the relationship between "natives" and diasporas, as well as between different diasporas. These relationships vary from conflict to cooperation, and therefore the way in which transnationalism manifests.

Knowing diaspora societies to facilitate their engagement

The resources of diaspora communities are varied and represent a great potential for both countries of origin and destination, but knowledge about diasporas is still limited, making the facilitation of their engagement in development processes more difficult. The IOM/MPI Handbook on Diaspora Engagement³ stresses the importance of “knowing your diaspora” as a fundamental requirement. Research on diasporas is crucial in achieving the following interrelated objectives:

1. Generate more reliable data: appropriate data-collection contributes to assessing the situation of a diaspora in a given country, for instance through mapping exercises. Demographic and socioeconomic data provide precious insight into the magnitude and the profiles of diaspora members, and help constructing indicators related to integration. These data are of strategic importance for both countries of origin and destination in designing policies related to aspects that range from labour-market analyses and forecasts, to immigration, to trade, and so on.
2. Understand the motivations and modalities of diasporas engagement in development: this knowledge is important in order to evaluate not only the willingness of diaspora members to engage in development, but also the modalities in which such engagement is envisaged and/or actually undertaken. It is thus crucial to ascertain the existence of diaspora-driven initiatives, to understand the linkages between diasporas and their countries of origin, as well as the expectations and needs of diasporas prior to engagement.
3. Design effective communication channels: as diasporas are not organized entities, but, rather, groups of individuals who are not necessarily related to each other, outreach strategies are crucial to establish or maintain communication and should be designed according to the existence and nature of diaspora groups or associations, diaspora media or other structures that federate diasporas. It is therefore important to understand how and where diasporas are structured in order to design effective outreach strategies.

Data are increasingly being collected by governments, academia, international organizations and civil society. Increased partnerships among various stakeholders are likely to lead to more and better knowledge and, in turn, to the design of more effective engagement strategies.

DIASPORA COMMUNITIES AND STATES: CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The impacts of diaspora engagement in development processes are largely shaped by the contexts and the prevailing conditions in the countries of residence and origin. The integration of diaspora and migrants into the societies in which they participate is critical towards ensuring that the necessary conditions exist for them to be able to share their human, social and cultural capital, as well as to foster economic growth by bridging their countries of residence and origin. Their intercultural position ensures that they are uniquely placed to adapt to, become part of and contribute to multiple communities. This, in turn, may lead to greater social cohesion and further social and economic integration so that the benefits of migration can truly be maximized.

³ International Organization for Migration/Migration Policy Institute, *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policy-makers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries* (2012).

Diaspora and citizenship

Transnationalism is related to identity and belonging, and these may evolve through the generations. The sense of belonging, as well as identity, is shaped by components that are subjective (thoughts, memories, feelings) as well as objective (administrative, socioeconomic). This means that first-generation migrants are not likely to live transnationalism in the same way as their children who were born in their country of residence or their grandchildren. Experience of the country of origin for second- or third-generation diaspora members may even be inexistent, and they may also have lost the use of their elders' language and possibly their citizenship. However, as shown by the efforts undertaken by some countries, such as India (that includes Non-Resident Indians, as well as Persons of Indian Origin in its policy framework) and China (that makes large use of media to reach out to youth of Chinese origin⁴), to keep contact with them, even though the relationship between second- and third-generation migrants and their country of origin is more complex than for their elders, this relationship exists. From the point of view of diaspora engagement, the promotion of transnationalism for the benefit of diaspora members, as well as of the country of origin and residence, is linked with policies that facilitate integration and contact with the home country. Creating an enabling environment is also an investment towards the future, especially considering that facilitating the social mobility of migrant children, through education and social protection, also means potentially increasing the stock of skilled labour and talent.

In this framework, multiple citizenship can be discussed as a factor enabling diaspora engagement and facilitating the persistence of transnationalism. Indeed, many States recognize that persons can maintain links to more than one State without major inter-State conflicts.⁵ Several home countries grant dual or multiple citizenship in order to facilitate diasporas' contributions, and, as a matter of fact, countries which allow for dual citizenship receive more remittances than those which do not.⁶ Dual citizenship allows consolidating the link with the country of origin, both administratively and symbolically, thus strengthening transnational ties. This practice can therefore be seen as the institutionalization of transnationalism in a globalized world.

The right to vote, together with the possibility to vote from outside the country, is a major feature related to double citizenship, in the sense that it allows diaspora members to extend their involvement in both countries of origin and destination and actually be part of their political life. Ensuring the right to vote also means recognizing diasporas' potential and confirming their belonging, which, in turn, is a stimulus towards engagement.

Diaspora and social protection: an investment towards the future

For migrants in the diaspora to be able to live long, healthy, and productive lives and to contribute to sustainable development, social and financial costs of migration and exposure to unfair or exploitative treatment need to be reduced. Social protection measures for migrants need to be consistently applied throughout the migration cycle to mitigate potential negative impacts and ensure maximization of positive leverage effects of migration on both the personal development of migrants, and the development of their societies of origin and destination. Protecting the physical and mental health and

⁴ Hirji, F., "The Next Generation: Diaspora, Youth and Identity Construction", *Diasporas, Migration and Identities* (June 2009).

⁵ Ionescu, D., *Engaging Diasporas as Development Partners for Home and Destination Countries: Challenges for Policymakers*, IOM Migration Research Series, N. 26 (2006).

⁶ Ebeke, C., "Does the dual-citizenship recognition determine the level and the utilization of international remittances? Cross-Country Evidence", *CEDRI, Etudes et Documents*, E 2011.02 (2011).

well-being of migrants is crucial in this regard: health is a migrant's main asset and the leading factor for determining whether the migration experience for the migrants, their families, and the countries of origin and destination will be positive or negative. Granting social protection and access to health promotion and care to migrants thus means a sound investment in the future and a determinant factor in enabling diaspora engagement.

Migrants are often more vulnerable to social marginalization due to, among others, cultural, gender and language barriers and anti-migrant sentiments, which are exacerbated in times of economic downturn. This is reflected in policies across all sectors: migrants are frequently not covered by social protection measures such as sick leave, unemployment benefits, health insurance, and mandatory leave days, and often encounter multiple barriers to accessing basic services such as education and health promotion and care. This hinders integration both in the host country and in that of potential return, as well as effective participation in the country of origin. The high costs of legally securing employment abroad and migrating push many migrants into irregular and hazardous forms of migration, which in turn increase vulnerability and diminish the effective possibilities of maximizing the positive contributions of diasporas.

To reduce the vulnerability of migrants, and to ensure their social inclusion, are key conditions towards creating an enabling environment for diaspora engagement. More and more countries are taking steps towards opening up more safe regular migration channels that guarantee the respect of migrants' human and labour rights through bilateral agreements or regional processes. At the national level, countries of origin and destination greatly benefit from ensuring the respect of the social rights of migrants and their families, including the right to decent working conditions, access to social security systems, the right to health, adequate housing, clean water, sanitation, and the right to education for children of migrants.⁷ The regional level creates important opportunities for collaboration among States to facilitate legal migration channels and provide basic services and social protection for people moving within the region, such as cross-border pension or health insurance schemes. Migrants moving within the European Union, for instance, enjoy a high standard of portability of health-care benefits and pensions; and similar multilateral schemes have been introduced for the Caribbean Community, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), and recently for several Ibero-American countries.⁸ Although these efforts have their limitations, they recognize the important contribution of migrants to development and provide them with the necessary conditions towards being actual stakeholders in the migration–development nexus.

Key areas towards creating an enabling environment

Governments have an important role to play in the creation of appropriate conditions that will enhance the well-being and integration of migrants and members of diaspora communities and thus enable them fully contribute to the countries they reside in and originate from. Governments of countries hosting diaspora communities play an important role in combating xenophobia in their societies and enacting effective integration policies. These policies should promote social inclusion and address marginalization

⁷ International Organization for Migration, *Social Protection for Migrants*, Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance, Tenth Session, 15–16 May 2012, SCPF/78, IOM (2012).

⁸ Avato, J., Koettl, J., Sabato-Wheeler, R., *Definitions, Good Practices and Global Estimates on the Status of Social Protection for International Migrants*; in *Social Protection and Labour*, The World Bank, Discussion Paper No. 0909 (2009). Available from: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOCIALPROTECTION/Resources/SP-Discussion-papers/Labor-Market-DP/0909.pdf>. In 2007, 19 Latin American and Caribbean countries, as well as Andorra, Portugal and Spain, signed the multilateral Ibero-American Social Security Convention, which entered into force in 2011 after being ratified by seven countries (see: http://www.seg-social.es/Internet_6/Masinformacion/Internacional/ConvMultIber/VigorMultIber/index.htm).

through information and awareness campaigns, and include active measures targeting newly arrived communities to ensure that they are able to adapt quickly to their environment and face minimal barriers in the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and capital. Pre-departure and post-arrival orientation programmes, as well as the setting of Migrant Resource Centres are among the activities that have proven to increase migrants' integration in their host countries.

The strengthening of political and institutional frameworks that reduce the social and financial costs of migration, such as those promoting ethical labour recruitment to protect job-seekers from abuse and exploitation, and social protection measures referenced above, are necessary preconditions to ensuring human development. A sound migration management framework in both countries of destination and origin (and between them – through bilateral agreements) can contribute to reducing the vulnerability of migrants, including promoting legal avenues for labour migration and combating smuggling, trafficking and labour exploitation.

Diaspora groups and associations play an important role enabling migrants' participation in public life. Recognizing that these groups are important interlocutors, some governments have actively promoted dialogue, and sought to strengthen partnerships and work with diaspora associations at the national and local level. Diaspora associations can also play an important role in channelling resources back to countries of origin in a way that maximizes the socioeconomic impact of these resources. However, these groups are often underfunded and could benefit from having their organizational capacities strengthened to enable them to become effective advocates on behalf of the communities that they represent.

In countries of origin, institutional policies that mainstream migration into national development policies explicitly recognize that overseas diaspora communities and migrants are potential contributors to development through the unique experience, assets and resources that they possess. Considering migration an integral part of development can contribute to the development of institutional frameworks and legislation that promote and facilitate the transfer of these resources from country of settlement to country of origin. Planning at the local level can ensure that strategies are developed and connections are strengthened with overseas communities that ensure the effective mobilization of resources into local development initiatives.

EMPOWERING DIASPORAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The participation of diasporas in development is determined by a complex set of factors, including, of course, their willingness to engage, but also the possibilities that exist towards this aim. The existence of enabling environments both in the country of origin and destination is a key factor, and diasporas greatly benefit from actions aiming at empowering them in this process. The contributions of diasporas to development are diverse, however, we would like to highlight two broad categories here: social and economic.

Social remittances

Contributions made by individual diaspora members to their countries of origin are substantial and may take the form of actual or virtual return on a long-term or temporary basis to work in public institutions, civil society organizations, set up businesses or deliver services that are key to the development of their countries of origin. Members of these communities also bring enhanced cultural and trade links that strengthen the relationships between the multiple countries towards which they have sense of

belonging or duty. Diasporas are increasingly perceived as assets in the countries where they reside, not only by governments but by the private, technical and academic sectors, bringing with them a wealth of resources and knowledge.

The general aim of temporary return programmes is to utilize the knowledge and expertise of skilled diaspora members to support identified sectors where skills shortages have been identified or new sets of skills are required. These diaspora members are often termed qualified nationals and they have largely targeted particular sectors in countries of origin where their skills are not readily available and there is an identified need to build the capacity of local human resources.

Transfer of skills, in order to be effective, has to overcome some obstacles, such as the fact that there may be a mismatch between the skills available among diaspora and the local needs in their countries of origin. Indeed, the sectors where diasporas can make a meaningful contribution have to be clearly identified in order to promote demand-driven programmes. Another obstacle that may arise lies in the fact that diasporas' skills may not be readily transferrable to the contexts of work in origin countries owing to lack of equipment or good quality facilities. Therefore, the promotion of conducive environments is a key factor in maximizing the impact of skills and knowledge transfers.

The health sector constitutes a case in which transfer of skills and knowledge has a great importance, as many low- and medium-income countries experience a significant loss of skilled health professionals who migrate to high income countries. Countries of destination and origin increasingly strive to harness the development potential of their health professionals in the diaspora. Diaspora health professionals can contribute to the development of their home countries in multiple ways: for instance by providing trainings to and sharing newly gained knowledge and expertise with friends and colleagues. Diaspora health professionals can also provide needed cultural mediation vis-à-vis migrants with the same background, by establishing migrant-friendly health services⁹ in their new countries of residence.

Social remittances also take the shape of transfers of social practices and ideas acquired abroad. One area of interest in this framework is certainly the emergence of a gender focus on diaspora, which relates to the increasing acknowledgement of the feminization of migration. In areas such as the empowerment of women, the recognition of the gender dimension of diaspora is certainly an asset, as it creates a route towards the circulation of values related to, among others, governance, human rights and gender equity.

Another contribution that is worth mentioning in the field of social remittances is related to youth in the diaspora, both first-generation migrants and children of migrants who were born abroad. The use of communication technologies represents a powerful tool in the constitution of diaspora identities and in the formulation of shared goals or aspirations, as well as in the consolidation of diaspora networks. More and more, websites and social media are used by diaspora members, among which young generations are active players, to get connected, to share experiences and points of view, thus showing how networking is dynamic and bringing new potentialities into diaspora participation.

⁹ Migrant sensitive health systems ensure that health services are delivered to migrants in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way, enhance the capacity of the health and relevant non-health workforce to address the health issues associated with migration, and deliver migrant inclusive services in a comprehensive, coordinated, and financially sustainable fashion. See: *Health of migrants: the way forward – Report of a global consultation*, Madrid, Spain, 3–5 March 2010, WHO/IOM, 2010.

Economic dimensions of diaspora

Although workers' remittances have received utmost attention, financial transfers between diasporas' countries of destination and home countries can take several forms. Among these, we can cite trade and investment (foreign direct investment, start-up investment, purchase of real estate), humanitarian support and diaspora bonds. Despite embedding a great potential to contribute to development, diasporas' financial transfers are only one of the contributions diasporas can make.

In several developing countries, remittances constitute a significant share of GDP,¹⁰ injected into national economies. According to the World Bank,¹¹ remittances to developing countries are estimated to have reached USD 372 billion in 2011, an increase of 12 per cent over the previous year, while global remittance flows, including those to high-income countries, were an estimated USD 501 billion in 2011. Remittances can help to reduce poverty by providing families in countries of origin with additional income that can be used for consumer goods and for investments in education and health. Remittances are also used to finance community projects, such as hospitals or schools, or are invested in business ventures. Increased financial resources can also lead to the reduction of child labour and help households to be better prepared for adverse environmental shocks such as droughts, earthquakes and cyclones. One study found that "on average, a 10 per cent increase in the share of international remittances in a country's GDP will lead to a 1.6 per cent decline in the share of people living in poverty."¹² The main problem facing the link between remittances and development lies in the transaction costs, which remain high, making it difficult to capitalize on remittances for development. In 2011, the global average cost for sending USD 200 was at 9.30 per cent.¹³ Some remittances corridors are particularly expensive, and all the top five most expensive corridors are located in Africa (for instance South Africa–Zambia – USD 45.87 to send USD 200).

Diaspora trade and investment in countries characterized by weak institutions, lower incomes or facing political risks can play an important role. While other investors may be discouraged by such unfavourable conditions, diaspora investors' cultural capital, knowledge and transnational networks may actually enable them to make fruitful investments,¹⁴ but also to engage in trade activities directly related to migration, such as "nostalgic trade". Diaspora investment, as an economic endeavour, is driven by profit, although some elements of altruism may shape the decision-making process. This brings advantages to the home country, in terms of competitiveness and economic growth, as well as experience. Brinkerhoff¹⁵ cites the following example: "In India's IT industry, diasporans played a significant role not only as direct investors (providing approximately 16 per cent of foreign direct investment to the sector) but as brokers of investment relationships, leading to the much-lauded

¹⁰ The top recipients of officially recorded remittances in 2011 were India (USD 64 billion), China (USD 62 billion), Mexico (USD 24 billion), and the Philippines (USD 23 billion). Other large recipients included Bangladesh, Egypt, Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan and Viet Nam. However, as a share of GDP, remittances are largest in smaller and lower income countries: top recipients include Tajikistan (31%), Lesotho (29%), Samoa (23%), Kyrgyzstan (21%), and Nepal and Tonga (20% each).

¹¹ <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20648762~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html>.

¹² Adams and Page in *International Migration and the Millennium Development Goals, Selected Papers of UNFPA Expert Group Meeting* (2005). www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2005/migration_report_2005.pdf.

¹³ World Bank, *Remittance Prices Worldwide*. Issue n.3, November 2011, the World Bank (2011) (www.remittanceprices.worldbank.org).

¹⁴ Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, "Creating an Enabling Environment for Diasporas' Participation in Homeland Development", *International Migration*, vol. 50/1, pp. 75–95 (2012).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

success of India's IT industry. Part of this success is attributed to the Indian diaspora's role in proposing and promoting necessary changes to the legal framework in order to improve the investment climate."

Some countries have also created financial instruments, such as diaspora bonds, to capitalize on the financial resources of diasporas, either to enhance development or to respond to crises. India and Israel are two examples. Building on both market considerations and on its diaspora's strong attachment to the homeland, Israel, since 1951 and India since 1991, have raised about USD 40 billion. People have bought bonds to participate in the development of their home countries, and often make "patriotic discounts", asking for smaller interest rates. In some cases, but this is relatively rare, bonds are not claimed when they come to maturity. Diaspora bonds, as a strategy to engage diasporas in development, are most likely to be successful when there is a good opinion about the government among the members of the diaspora and when there is a situation of stability in the country of origin. Diaspora bonds are not likely to be effective in contexts where there are perceived or actual high risks for investment; one example is the case of Ethiopia's Millennium Bond.¹⁶ It has also been argued that the sense of attachment that first-generation diasporas may prove towards the homeland may weaken overtime. However, it is likely that the granting of dual citizenship to second- and third-generation diaspora members helps maintaining their ties to the country of origin.

South–South diaspora and development

Traditionally, diasporas are considered as South–North migrants. However, when considering South–South migration, transnational communities are also present and represent a great potential towards development.

Indeed, as mentioned by the forthcoming *World Migration Report 2013*, South–South migration is likely to be at least as important as South–North migration. It is often intraregional, thus creating regional mobility dynamics, remittance flows, investments, and so on, be they formal or informal. From the point of view of development, it is difficult to estimate how much South–South diasporas contribute directly their economic or social potential. However, South–South migration is strictly related to development, as it concerns people whose mobility is dictated by the need to find better opportunities and often occurs in a circular way, especially among countries sharing similar development conditions. Moreover, transnational networks are not only limited to contacts between a country of origin and a country of destination, but they extend among diasporas scattered in several countries and connect diasporas in the north and in the south.¹⁷

South–south migration draws the attention of governments and international organizations, giving birth to regional dynamics such as Regional Consultative Processes, which, in turn, promote safe migration. Mainstreaming migration into the development plans within regional entities such as economic communities, associations of States, etc., is indeed fundamental towards creating an enabling environment within developing countries, aiming at maximizing the development and co-development impact of South–South diasporas.

¹⁶ Now Ethiopia is proposing a new bond, to finance the building of the Grand Renaissance Dam, and there are new attractive modalities, including awareness raising campaigns, transfer fees covered by the state, transferability of the bond, and minimum investment as low as USD 50.

¹⁷ Bhat, C. and K. Narayan, "Indian Diaspora, Globalization and Transnational Networks: The South African Context". *Journal of Social Science* 25: 13–23 (2010).

DIASPORAS AND CRISIS

Migration and crisis situations, from conflicts to natural disasters, can be intimately interlinked. Migrants can find themselves stranded in crisis situations, unable to leave their host country, become internally displaced persons, be moved to a border area, or return or be evacuated to their country of origin.¹⁸ Crisis situations also generate migration, with people leaving affected countries to find shelter in other countries, a situation that can eventually lead to the creation of diasporic communities or to the extension of existing diasporas.

Crisis situations and the vulnerabilities that they induce also generate emotional reactions among diaspora members, who are often willing to assist their affected fellow nationals. This has been verified in several occasions through the observation of remittance flows to countries affected by a disaster, which grew after natural disasters.¹⁹ However, the contributions that diasporas can provide are not only monetary and can be decisive during transition and recovery.

Countries that have been affected by civil war, armed conflict, natural disasters or other crises are faced with the difficult task of rebuilding physical and social infrastructures essential to reinstating stability to their societies. In this process and depending on the particular circumstances and context, diaspora members have been playing a significant role in efforts to rebuild and strengthen government and civil society institutions and reinvigorate and support economic activity in their countries of origin.

Although physically separated from conflicts in their home countries, diaspora members often retain their links with and concern for their countries of origin. They may be strongly engaged in supporting families and communities at home before, during and after conflicts, for example by sending remittances to support families or assist in the development of infrastructure. The value added from the leveraging of such ties in support of post-conflict rebuilding processes has become recognized by the international community, governments and civil society alike. Their knowledge of the language, culture and other particularities of the area can be of invaluable assistance and support in the context of international reconstruction efforts.

By engaging diasporas as partners in discussions and action, encouraging the flow and exchange of ideas, resources and know-how between home and host countries and pursuing the objective of creating sustainable economic activities, diaspora engagement projects promote dialogue between different partners, demonstrate the commitment of the diaspora to effectively contribute to the development efforts of their home country as well as to support the socioeconomic conditions necessary to provide valuable impetus to the post-conflict recovery process.

Towards enhancing the role of diasporas in crisis and post-crisis situations

Actions and policies aiming in engaging diaspora members in post-crisis situations or during crisis rely on conditions that are very similar to these needed in diaspora engagement for development.

Indeed, diaspora members who are willing to participate to the reconstruction of their country of origin greatly benefit from structures aiming at empowering them or providing them the necessary conditions towards that goal.

¹⁸ International Organization for Migration, "Protecting Migrants during times of crisis: immediate responses and sustainable strategies", International Dialogue on Migration 2012, Managing Migration in Crisis Situations (2012).

¹⁹ <http://blogs.worldbank.org/peoplemove/pakistani-migrants-can-help-in-reconstruction>.

In this framework, the design of disaster risk management plans greatly benefits from taking into account diaspora participation or potential participation. This implies the design of mapping and outreach strategies as well as of structures allowing effective engagement in response of a crisis. Diaspora members have indeed a valuable role in post-crisis situations, and they can greatly participate in the transition from emergency to development, in various sectors including – but not limited to – governance, human rights or the rule of law.

The role of diaspora members as peacebuilders and within the democratic process is an asset in encouraging dialogue and interaction between various communities within and outside the country of origin. Out-of-country voting allows those residing abroad to become active participants in the electoral process and thus to be represented in the civil and political life at home, even if they are unable or unwilling to return. This mechanism encourages external population groups to maintain links with their home communities and enables them to participate in the creation of an environment to which they may return safely and resume productive socioeconomic lives.

Return of qualified nationals (RQN) projects are an illustration of the effectiveness of empowering diasporas to engage in affected countries. These RQN programmes have taken on a specific application in post-crisis and recovery situations to assist governments and civil societies weakened or lost through the depletion of professional skills as a result of conflict.

These programmes have also placed a focus on gender, by promoting the engagement of skilled women.

CONCLUSIONS

The resources of diaspora populations that flow across borders are immensely varied and range from skills, knowledge and ideas to cultural capital, to financial capital to trade. Viewed as development stakeholders, diaspora communities are distinctive in that they possess a personal attachment to both their countries of origin with whom they remain engaged, as well as to the countries in which they live. Often, they belong to transnational networks that act as bridges facilitating the flow of resources and strengthening the cultural, political and economic links between these countries.

Increasingly, stakeholders from different horizons seek to maximize the positive impact of transnational societies in their countries of origin and destination. Many approaches have been tested and these proved their effectiveness at different degrees. It is indeed very difficult to design a global approach, due to the diversity of diasporas, of countries of origin and of host countries, and of the relationship that exists among these. However, it is possible to suggest general conditions for framing effective policy options. These can probably be best summarized in three words: engaging, enabling and empowering diasporas.

Engaging transnational communities in development necessarily relies on a sound knowledge of diasporas, diaspora associations and organizations, their socioeconomic characteristics, their willingness to participate in development initiatives, and the most effective outreach strategies. Knowledge about diasporas is not sufficient to foster collaboration; the foundation of effective engagement strategies is trust-building. Instilling trust and gaining the confidence of diaspora communities involves the development of policy incentives that recognize the needs and aspirations of diaspora members, as well as targeted and appropriate outreach strategies. Questions that arise in this framework concern thus the ways to increase the quantity and quality of data on migration in general and on diasporas in particular, taking into account cross-cutting issues such as gender and age.

The engagement of diasporas also requires an **enabling** development environment. Diaspora members will develop linkages and transfer resources back and forth between their countries of origin and destination spontaneously regardless of whether or not policy frameworks are in place that facilitate such transfers, and sometimes even *in spite of* the constraints they face. However, the degree to which diaspora can contribute is directly related to the ability of members of these communities to develop their full potential and acquire the necessary skills and resources to serve as architects of economic and social progress. Policies directed towards creating an enabling environment are related to integration, social protection, citizenship, right of vote, but also to return and to the possibilities to build partnerships between countries of origin and destination.

Lastly, in order to facilitate the transfer of skills and knowledge, diaspora members who wish to engage in development greatly benefit from programmes aiming at **empowering** them. These programmes facilitate the conditions that allow diaspora communities and individuals to strengthen their links and utilize the resources generated through human mobility to empower themselves, to decide about their own priorities and to contribute to their own well-being. Programmes aiming to transfer, temporarily or permanently, skills and knowledge highly contribute to the empowerment of migrants in the diaspora and to strengthen their role of actors into development dynamics.