AFRICAN DIASPORA AND REMITTANCE FLOWS: LEVERAGING POVERTY?

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INTRODUCTION

Everywhere in both the developed and developing worlds discussions on the involvement of the diaspora on homeland development dominate the public discourse even though it rarely features in national policies. In the true African tradition of being enthusiastic in concepts and frameworks, the African Union and its individual member states have embraced the notion that remittances from the African diaspora contribute immensely to homeland development. Without making definitive moves to develop their own datasets, the African Union and its individual member states rely exclusively on statistics from credible sources such as the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which have kept vital data on immigrants, their economic attributes and their links to home countries. More seems to be known about the sources than the destinations of the diaspora's involvement in homeland development and their remittances, a shortcoming which calls for interrogation of whether remittances leverage or entrench poverty, or whether their impact remains an unknown quantum in the development process in Africa.

Much has changed about the interpretation of African emigration and intra-African international migration. Although fewer African emigrate elsewhere than move within the continent, emigration has gained more grounding in research, international discourse and policy circles, with African countries on the receiving end of concerns in the developed North. In the 1960s and 1970s, the thesis underlining African emigration, especially of professionals and the best educated was outrageous deprivation of human resources very much needed by the newly independent countries. Concurrently, unskilled labour migration – "circular migration" in East Africa (Elkan, 1967, in Oucho, 1990), dubbed "circulation of labour" in present day Zambia and Zimbabwe Mitchell, 1985, in Oucho, 1990, 111) or "circulatory migration" (Garbett, 1975, in Oucho, 1990:111) – took place but was seemed more localised. From the 1980s, African international migration has been viewed as an important resource for development in African countries in terms of the Diaspora and remittances. Yet, there is no unanimity on evidence and conclusions drawn from the existing previous literature, and more work is still required on the Diaspora-migration-development linkages. With the emergence of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in the 1990s and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) form 2000, a growth interest has focused on the linkages between Diaspora (as a distinctive aspect of migration), remittances and poverty reduction in Africa. In Prothero's (1985:41) prophetic statement, migration in Africa is rarely a permanent phenomenon. African international migration has become an important form of circulation currently interpreted in terms of either circulation or transnationalism. The two terms underline the inevitability of diaspora's involvement in, and the flow of remittances to, African countries, mediated by international events and local factors.

There have been three main strands of conceptualising the international migration-development nexus (Sørensen, 2006:89). The first strand is "combating the root causes of migration" by reducing migration and refugee flows by generating local development, preventing and resolving conflicts and retaining refugees in neighbouring or first countries of asylum. Second is Martin's (2004) paradoxical concept of "migration hump" whereby economic policies can reduce migration in the long term, but increase in the short term. Finally is the "transnational" approach which views internal, regional and international migration as a basic dimension of development, underlining migration as an essential condition for socio-economic development. These approaches suggest that analysts of the role of Diaspora and remittances on development in general and poverty reduction in particular tend to address issues either within their disciplinary pursuits or based on anecdotal evidence given either sporadic or complete lack of empirical evidence in Africa. The African region is convene a conference in migration, development and poverty reduction studies as the Asian region organised in March 2005 on which an informative publication has been based. The work contains detailed papers on internal migration-development-poverty linkages in five countries (China, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Vietnam). It also presents thematic issues such as migration and gender, generally in Asia and using Sri Lanka as a case study; migration, health and social protection; a case study of HIV/AIDS in south and North-East Asia; and helping migration to improve livelihoods in China ((IOM, 20005). Such an approach was adopted sporadically in Africa by students of migration working on internal migration and rural development in Nigeria (Adepoju, 1976) in Malawi (Chilivumbo, 1985) and in Kenya (Oucho, 1996). With the donor community marginalising migration work, this research paradigm simply ground to a halt and should now resurge with renewed interest in migration and development.

This chapter seeks to examine whether or not the African Diaspora and their remittances do leverage development in African countries. Given the diversity of the African region, the chapter presents selected evidence of both the remittance flows and tries to examine their impact in the recipient households, communities and home countries. A closer reading of the literature on the African Diaspora and migrant remittance flows suggests that the two resources dominate journal articles from the perspective of their sources but say little on their impact at the receiving end. Not surprisingly, the verdict of such literature is shaky and fails to underpin the impact of the two resources in African settings. In trying to unravel the impact of Diaspora and remittances on poverty alleviation, the chapter defines and explains the diversity of the African Diaspora; proceeds to consider the sources, volume and value of migrant and diaspora's remittances; attempts to unpack the unknown quantum, namely the contribution of the Diaspora in homeland development as well as the utilisation of the remittances sent, with particular focus on poverty alleviation; and, finally, analyses whether the Diaspora and their remittances leverage poverty reduction in African countries. The chapter concludes that the current fragmentary evidence of the impact of Diaspora and remittances on poverty reduction in African countries precludes a conclusive verdict and that the subject requires more empirical evidence particularly in the recipient countries.

THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

Conceptual Issues

Definitions and characterisation of the African Diaspora

Definitions and characterisation of Diaspora differ by disciplines and by the expectations of the Diaspora on the one hand, and the identified homeland on the other. Safran (1991, cited in North-South Institute, 2006: 9) identifies four main characteristics of a Diaspora as dispersal to two or more locations related to an original territory; collective mythology of homeland shared by the group and transmitted through generations to come; idealisation of return to the homeland; and ongoing relationship with the homeland. These characteristics relate to different significant Diasporas that have dominated the Diaspora discourse, such as the Jewish, Irish, Chinese and Indian Diaspora.

The African Diaspora has been defined through different epochs underlining varying standpoints. It is not only often misunderstood, but is also too complex to interpret without exploring its nature, dimensions and changing configuration. Indeed, the notion that the African Diaspora is homogeneous is both simplistic and unrealistic given both temporal and spatial dimensions of African emigration to the rest of the world. To the Old World of Asia went a large slave traffic which analysts have been unable to account for successfully and to the New World was a much larger traffic of slaves who settled Latin America and the Caribbean, currently the largest African diaspora but with more remote links to Africa than the Diaspora in the United States. Then a new wave of the African diaspora came with independence. As Africa looked to the developed North for educational opportunities of its citizens to attain high qualifications and skilled training necessary for the continent's development in the wake of colonialism, huge numbers of Africans remained overseas, some of them remaining to form yet another category of diaspora. Another category consists of those who relocated overseas as workers, refugees and asylum seekers of winners of the US green card and similar opportunities. The first-generation immigrants' children and grandchildren augmented the numbers as younger generations of Africans migrated overseas for education, work and security from repressive African regimes that have left in their wake untold political and economic crises.

The African disapora is therefore a heterogeneous group of people of African descent spanning much of Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. There are people of African descent who constitute diasporas of African countries which they identify with, others who are of the Caribbean diaspora with no links whatsoever with the African continent and still others who are transnational, being footloose given the trappings of globalisation which have invalidated formerly restrictive geographical boundaries. African migrants are part of the diaspora who may be temporary in the countries of destination, may join the existing daspora to stay permanently or may be transnational whenever they engage in circular migration. In this chapter, the term d*iaspora* is used generically to denote people of African descent residing outside Africa or in countries other than their own within Africa as citizens and permanent or temporary residents engaging in circulation as well as transantional lifestyles. Different categories of the diaspora play roles by committing their skills and knowledge to homeland development and by sending remittances which stimulate development as well as influence poverty reduction.

Remittances

Simply defined, remittances are transfers of money, goods and diverse traits by migrants or migrant groups back to their countries of origin or citizenship. Although the notion of remittances conjures only monetary aspect, remittances embrace monetary and non-monetary flows, including social remittances. The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe (2006) defines diaspora's *social remittances* as ideas, practices, mind-sets, world views, values and attitudes, norms of behaviour and social capital (knowledge, experience and expertise) that the diasporas mediate and either consciously or unconsciously transfer from host to home communities. African diaspora interviewed stated that they obtained social remittances from different sources: through professional expertise in work places in the host countries; through values, norms and work ethics; through their socialisation and acculturation in host countries; and by constructing vast transnational networks across countries and continents, linking the process of globalisation to 'glocalisation' in their countries of origin. But as Chimhowu et al. (2003, cited in Oucho, 2008) caution:

Remittances alone are unlikely to lift people out of poverty; rather it is their interplay with other economic, social and cultural factors which determine the scale and type of impact remittances can have on poverty reduction.

Although the mainstream literature is limited to North-South remittances, there is a lot of South-South remittances given a substantial South-South migration, much of it intra-regional. Ratha and Shaw (2007: 6) estimate that South-South remittances range from 9 to 30 per cent and could be higher if informal channels are taken into account, and found that the costs of South-South remittances is higher than that of North-South remittances

Heterogeneity of the African Diaspora

An important point to bear in mind is how particular groups became diasporas in their present countries of residence. Two contrasting cases – the Scottish Diaspora and the Irish Diaspora are instructive for Africa (Oucho, 2008: 64). On the one hand, the Diaspora are not all keen on contributing to the Scottish economy mainly because they are professionals who left Scotland voluntarily and do not see their country as suitable for investment. The Irish Diaspora, on other hand, who were poor and unskilled, were pushed into exile by the English, take pride in their new-found ability to liberate Ireland economically (Economist, October 20, 2001, cited in Oucho, 2008: 65). The two examples are instructive to Africa because there have been instances where two categories of British emigrants have similarities with African diasporas who behave in a similar manner and instances where the diasporas desire to return to or help their homelands, only to be rebuffed by their countries of origin or their counterparts who stayed behind.

This chapter focuses provides significant perspectives, reinforced by selected African case studies to provide evidence of its diaspora's involvement in homeland development and to explore the inflow and utilisation of remittances for poverty reduction. Generally, the African diaspora is understood in many circles to be anyone from the African continent who resides outside the continent, the duration of residence notwithstanding. Yet, this notion is simplistic, and perhaps grossly myopic. Generations of the African Diaspora can be identified. First, the vast majority of the African Diaspora consists of descendants of the slave trade in which huge numbers of Africans were trafficked several centuries ago. They are stable citizens of the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, some of whom maintain only remote emotional links with Africa. Second, those from Caribbean who subsequently migrated to reside in Europe are the Caribbean, not the African diaspora, though at times they cherish their African descent, particularly during cultural festivals. The African Union (AU) cannot and should not claim them as residents of Africa's sixth sub-region as they have had little to do with their ancestral origins. Third, within the African continent are intra-African migrants who have taken either permanent residence or citizenship in other African countries, becoming diasporas of their respective countries of origin. Finally, Africans holding dual citizenship, although a minority, might owe their allegiance more to their second countries rather than to their countries of birth or original citizenship.

Spatial distribution of the African diaspora depicts important changes of those from SSA sub-regions (Table 1). Migrants from Western and Eastern Africa have a similar pattern of movement to European countries, with the foremost metropolitan powers –

the United Kingdom and France – receiving most of them. Indeed, the United Kingdom stands out as the premier European country of destination. The vast majority of Central African immigrants go France, followed by Portugal, yet another evidence of ties with former colonial powers.

Table 1 Distribution of the African Diaspora in the major European countries of residence by sub-Saharan African sub-region and selected Northern African countries of origin and

SSA sub-region[1]	European country of destination						
Western	UK 209,447	France 162,897	Germany 102,405	Italy 79,810	Norway 68,957	Denmark 50,093	Sweden 20,278
Eastern	UK 202,665	France 104,922	Germany 34,534	Italy 34,532	Norway 29,120	Denmark 23,135	Sweden 20,703
Central	France 125,255	Portugal 36,450	Belgium 32,061	Germany 31,978	Spain 12,213	Switzerland 10,088	Netherlands 3,087
Southern	UK 100,293	Germany 16,504	Ireland 5,548	France 3,082	Netherland s 2,987	Portugal 2,067	Switzerland 1.430
Northern[2]							
Morocco (2004)	France 1,113,176	Spain 423,933	Net'lands 300,332	Italy 298,949	Belgium 293,097	Germany 102,000	UK 35,000
Algeria ((2003)	France 1,101,235	Spain 45,791	Belgium 19,095	Germany 17,641	UK 14,152	Italy 13,000	Scandinavia 10,000
Tunisia (2001-03)	France 493,028	Italy 101,042	Germany 53,925	Belgium 17,084	Other 16,719	Netherlands 7,058	Switzerland 6,909

Sources: [1]World Bank (2007), table 4.
[2]H. de Haas (2008), tables 2-4, pp.159-160.

Three Maghreb countries underline the significance of Northern Africa in the European migration system (Table 1). The European Mediterranean countries – France, Spain, Italy and Belgium – stand out as by far the most important immigration countries for Northern Africans. Not surprisingly, the European and African Mediterranean belt has witnessed a flurry of activities in migration management in recent years.

It is difficult to know the exact size of the African Diaspora though the OECD countries have good data by immigrants' citizenship and/or country of birth. Estimates vary widely. For example, the American *Christian Monitor* of February 26, 2002 estimated that 15 million Nigerians (more than 1 in 10 Nigerians) lived outside Nigeria (Nworah, 2008). With the appointment of a Special Assistant to the President on Nigerians in Diaspora and sponsoring of the Nigerians in the Diaspora Organisation (NIDO), the Federal Government of Nigeria has given impetus to the Nigerians in Diaspora to participate more effectively in homeland development. However, sustainability of such dramatic developments in the absence of law enforcement and policy support has been African countries' greatest failure.

REMITTANCES FLOWS TO AFRICA

Destinations, Volume and Value

Highlights of the destinations, volume and value of remittances to Africa provide informative insights (Table 2).

Table 2 Inflow and value of remittances to Africa by sub-region and country

Sub-region and Country	Remittances		Sub-region and Country	Remittances	
	US$ million	% of GDP		US$ million	% of GDP
Eastern Africa	**5,929**		**Western Africa**	**10,399**	
Burundi	164	22.8	Benin	263	5.5
Comoros	85	21.1	Burkina Faso	507	8.2
Eritrea	411	37.9	Cape Verde	391	34.2
Ethiopia	591	4.4	Cote d'Ivoire	282	1.6
Kenya	796	3.8	Gambia	87	17.0
Madagascar	316	5.7	Ghana	851	6.6
Malawi	102	4.6	Guinea	286	8.6
Mauritius	356	5.5	Liberia	163	25.8
Mozambique	565	7.4	Mali	739	12.5
Rwanda	149	6.0	Mauritania	103	3.9
Somalia	790	-	Niger	205	5.8
Uganda	642	6.9	Nigeria	5,397	4.7
UR Tanzania	313	2.4	Senegal	687	7.5
Zambia	201	1.8	Sierra Leone	168	11.6
Zimbabwe	361	7.2	Togo	142	6.4
Central Africa	**2,690**		**Northern Africa**	**17,614**	
Angola	969	2.2	Algeria	5,399	4.7
Cameroon	267	1.5	Egypt	3,637	3.4
CA Republic	73	4.9	Libya	134	0.3
Chad	137	2.1	Morocco	6,116	10.7
DR Congo	636	7.4	Tunisia	769	5.1
Eq. Guinea	77	0.9	**Southern Africa**	**1,979**	
Gabon	60	0.5	Lesotho	355	24.1
			South Africa	1,489	0.6
			Swaziland	89	3.4

Source: Rural Poverty Portal (http://www.ifad.org/events/remittances/maps/africa.htm), accessed on 10/10/2008.

With a huge Diaspora in Europe and the rich Gulf States, Northern Africa receives a substantial amount of remittances, with Egypt and Morocco always ranking among the world's top ten recipients. The *IMF Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook 2001* ranked Egypt and Morocco fourth and eighth respectively among the top ten in 1994, Egypt alone ranked eighth in 1997 and the two countries followed each other as seventh and eighth respectively in 2000 (Ramamurthy, 2006:73). In sub-Saharan Africa, Western Africa receives nearly double the remittances to the entire block, with

Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal, in descending order, dominating the pack. Eastern Africa is topped by Kenya, followed by Somalia (despite having no recognised government in place since 1991), Uganda and Ethiopia. Apart from Kenya, the rest are countries that have had political problems which left conflict in their wake, the last two attracting remittances as an important resource for national construction. Central African countries of Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) lead the pack in receiving remittances. Finally, in Southern Africa, South Africa is by far the main recipient, with Lesotho second – a well-known remittance- and deferred payment-dependent economy.

Unfortunately, African countries have never had successful means of tracking the Diaspora remittances flowing to them despite citing remittances as their current source of pride and a potential resource for investment that far exceeds overseas development assistance (ODA) or foreign aid on which these countries have relied for more than four decades. Knowledge of the impact of migration on the countries of origin is still fragmentary for three main reasons: the general paucity of good-quality data; weak methodological foundations; and poor analytical quality of much prior research (Taylor, 1999, cited in de Haas, 2006:567); and reliance on micro-studies (especially in Latin America and in particular Mexico) to the neglect of the major suppliers of European-bound labour migration from the South and east of the Mediterranean (Massey, et al., 1998, cited in de Haas, 2006: 567). A recent positive development is the emergence of several websites, among them www.sendmoneyhome.org, Remittance Tax Relief for International Development (Remit Aid) Africa Recruit, Livelihoods Connect and *Migrant Remittances*, which document remittances made to different countries of the world. Apart from these sources, which are by no means flawless, the World Bank has been a reliable source of data on remittances among other worker's transfers.

While remittances to Africa amounted to US$5.9 billion in 1990, it reached US$ 14 billion by 2003, which was a mere 15 per cent of all remittance flows to the developing world. The leading recipient countries have been Algeria, Morocco and Egypt in Northern Africa. In sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria, with remittances exceeding US$1.3 million, is by far the largest recipient, accounting for 30-60 per cent of the region's receipts. The World Bank noted that remittances represented 194 per cent of the value of Eritrea's exports and 19 per cent of GDP and for 80 per cent of Botswana's deficit (Mutume, 2005), the latter – itself a major destination county – and, therefore, an important source of remittances.

Yet remittance flows are both volatile and unpredictable, depending on political and economic conditions of both their sources and destinations. Two examples illustrate these conditions: remittances to Burkina Faso declined radically since the late nineties following political disturbances and economic crisis in Cote d'Ivoire where most Burkinabe's had migrated and settled permanently for decades; conversely, remittances to Zimbabwe have increased over the years, albeit through unofficial sources, as Zimbabwe experienced a similar fate (Mutume, 2005). Instability of remittance flows implies that it would be imprudent for recipient countries to lay their faith on remittances as a resource for development, not least for offsetting their budgetary deficits.

ON THE ROLES OF THE DIASPORA AND REMITTANCES

Most governments and people in Africa have a very narrow view of the role of the Diaspora. Ionescu's (2006) typology says it all. Ionescu (2006: 27-30) proposes a typology of Diaspora as business networks, chambers of commerce, professional networks, scientific networks, skills capacity, community initiatives, migration and development associations, gender and development, umbrella organisations, Diaspora networking, co-development initiatives and finances. Therefore, any analysis of the Diaspora needs to underpin the particular type being analysed, something that this chapter makes no pretences to address.

Although previous research has shown that the roles of the diaspora and remittances are recognised at household, community and national levels, it has fallen short in distinguishing between perceived and actual impacts at the respective levels. At issue are several questions that seek answers on how best remittances constitute a resource for development. Two pertinent questions (SØrensen, 2006: 96) are:

- How can governments best estimate the actual flows of financial as well as social remittances?
- How can governments and international development organisations assist organised groups, such as Hometown Associations (HTAs) and home villages to make the most effective use of collective remittances for development without impeding local initiatives?

These questions need to engage the attention of African governments whose growing faith in financial remittances (and seldom on social remittances) neglects tapping the migrant remittances as well as those of Home Town Associations (HTAs). The rhetoric of African countries hardly reflects their policies toward the Diaspora remittances and the involvement of HTAs in homeland development.

Adams and Page (2003) note that remittances, as a share of a country's GDP, have a negative and significant impact on all three measures of poverty – head count, poverty gap and squared poverty gap. They conclude that international migration has a strong, statistically important impact on poverty reduction in the developing world; that international remittances have a negative and statistically significant effect on all three measures of poverty; that the impact of both international migration and remittances on poverty seems to vary by each developing region; and that more and better data are required on poor people who send remittances through informal, unofficial channels. These research questions are still crying for answers in Africa as sporadic, and more often anecdotal evidence, constrains any meaningful generalisation.

As resources, both Diaspora and remittances, take the form of individuals' initiatives and pooled efforts through "home improvement unions" and "hometown associations" by migrant groups or diaspora associations in the countries of destination. It has been noted that "diaspora organisations can act as important intermediaries between traditional development actors and between diasporas and local communities — for example, identifying needs and priorities of local communities and communicating those to donor organisations, NGOs and diaspora members to solicit funding and expertise" (Brinkerhoff, 2006: 9). Empirical research has provided ample evidence of unskilled migrants remitting more of their income more regularly than their skilled counterparts compare the opportunity cost of investing in the destination countries and remitting funds back home. In this respect, unskilled, lower income migrants are better poised to combat poverty and sustain survival of households left in their countries of origin. Moreover, a large volume of literature reports that there is a tendency for the poorer, lower calibre migrants to embrace the extended family system which, among other things, combats poverty, than the higher calibre, better resourced and individualistic migrants who are less inclined to send remittances back home for poverty reduction among the recipients.

The finding of the Commission on Private Sector Development of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) notes that diasporas support the entrepreneurs in their homelands with remittances, informal financing of small businesses and business advice and mentorship (Commission, 2004:30, cited in Brinkehoff, 2006: 9). This is because diasporas may be much more effective than other foreign investors given the diasporas' better knowledge of the economy than investors have, and because they can combine knowledge with skills as well as networks developed abroad to yield synergistic (sic!) advantages (Brinkerhoff, 2006: 9). African diasporas are best placed to understand the implications of their participation in and sending remittances for development in conflict-ridden African countries which foreign investors might be more sceptical about.

Participation of the African diaspora in homeland development can take place in different forms. The World Bank (2007) sees three modes of engagement with the African diaspora: permanent return to the home country; short-and long-term placements due to family, children's education, mortgages, career advancement and so on; and virtual "return" of talents and skills. The last two seem more plausible than the first as younger generations of Africans in the developed North tend to sever links with their homelands. Previous efforts to return African brain drain in the North have had dismal outcomes. Both the Return of Qualified African Nationals (RQAN) sponsored by the European Union and implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the UNDP's Transfer of Knowledge and Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) performed below expectations. It was one of the programmes implemented without prior research. When the IOM (2000) evaluated RQAN, it was not surprising that it lacked African governments' "ownership" despite the governments' appreciation and welcoming of its benefits. Nonetheless, a study of the impact of RQAN in a sample of African countries (among them Ghana, Cape Verde, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe) suggest clearly positive outcomes of returnees' utilisation of skills in both management and technical fields; contribution to financial growth of organisations through income generation and cost-saving measures; and making better performance of organisations (ACTS, 2000). Against the lukewarm efficacy of RQAN, the IOM initiated the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA), which embraces both placements and periodic physical and virtual returns. The IOM's (2007) initiation of MIDA – among other things to evolve collaborative ventures with the countries of both destination and origin, Diaspora organisations, local authorities and the private sector – has not gone far either.

These apparent failures of involving the African diaspora in homeland development imply that the diaspora do not seem to have made significant contributions to poverty reduction in African countries. The World Bank (2007) expects to increase Diaspora activities in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), targeting in particular poverty reduction, access to education and health care. Yet it is only recently that this the World Bank announced the call for commissioned surveys on migration and development in selected African countries after failing to include sub-Saharan Africa in its recent on international migration, economic development and policy (Özden and Schiff, 2007). This is a step in the right direction, providing hope for more focused assessment of the African diaspora's involvement in their home countries' development. A conference convened by the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague with the support of Oxfam-NOVIB in 2006 on remittances and poverty reduction in Africa is a step in the right direction, one whose proceedings should of necessity find a place in the AU frameworks and national development programmes. In addition, organisations such as the Diaspora Openhouse in Washington, D.C., the Development Marketplace for African Diaspora in Europe and Africa Recruit and many more national and sub-national Diaspora organisations have such vital agenda that should attract African diasporas to sharpen their poverty-reduction undertakings in Africa. Potentially, these associations hold the key to poverty reduction in Africa but lack appropriate approaches to that end. Le Goff (2008) examines how remittances contribute to poverty reduction (the first of the MDGs) as a stabilising force in 65 countries, arguing that: as co-insurance, remittances constitute an answer to the shocks of revenue which occur in migrants' countries of origin, pushing the people affected in poverty traps; that by using the "poverty gap", remittances have a negative effect on the depth of poverty; that remittances can promote growth in countries where the financial system is less developed; that the effect of remittances on growth would be more improved if the political situation is bad; and that remittances can play an essential role by allowing households living in developing countries to diversify their income sources. From econometric models run, the study concludes that remittances play appositive and effective role in reducing poverty headcount and the poverty gap in the migrants' countries of origin, they influence poverty reduction in the migrant's countries of origin with macroeconomic instability and they become necessary where households in these countries have incomes that are subject to frequent and important fluctuations (p. 22). The mixed hypotheses and empirical results of the study suggest both positive and negative impacts of remittances on poverty reduction, and require empirical research, especially in Africa, to corroborate or refute them.

DIASPORA AND REMITTANCES IN POVERTY REDUCTION IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

The Diaspora Involvement in Homeland Development

While the role of diaspora is easily noticeable at macro and meso levels of society, that of remittances cuts across the whole spectrum of societal development. The influence of remittances on poverty reduction is indeterminate because the literature portrays both positive and negative impacts, and in certain cases, indifferent outcomes. Part of the problem lies in the observed silence of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) on migration and implications of the latter, such as the participation of the diaspora and the injection of remittances in homeland development. The countries where remittances have had a positive impact include Cape Verde, Senegal and Lesotho. Currently, virtually all African countries with large diasporas perceive their contribution and their remittances as crucial for homeland development, even without adducing as reliable evidence as exists in Latin America, for instance (Neil, 2003; Orozco and Fedewa, 2006) .

Most previous studies have found that remittances end up in conspicuous consumption rather than in investment. But there is a blurred distinction between consumption and investment when remittances meet household survival strategies, the cost of education of the next generation of household members and increased agricultural productivity. The general conclusion from previous studies of Asian migrants in the Arab world posits that the diaspora use their wealth wisely, with remittances more than counterbalancing costs (Gunatilleke, 1986, cited in Skeldon, 2002:78). In much of sub-Saharan Africa where investment opportunities hardly exist, remittances no doubt lift households outside the poverty den in which majority of households are entrapped. As elsewhere in the developing world, remittances reduce poverty by providing families in the countries of origin with additional income, surpluses of which end in consumption as well as investments in education and health (IOM, 2006: 22). Two important characteristics of remittances are worth underscoring: (a) they are largely unaffected by political or financial crises, tending to increase in times of hardship and (b) they are equally spread among developing countries than are other financial flows (Ratha, 2003, in IOM, 2006: 23). A notable shortcoming, however, is the dearth of empirical studies providing strong evidence that contrasts remitters' with recipients' perceptions of and responses to the diaspora's contribution of remittances to homeland development.

A curious quote by John Kenneth Galbraith (Skeldon, 2002, citing Harris, 2002:119) underlines the relationship between migration and poverty:

> Migration is the oldest action against poverty. It selects those who most want help. It is good for the country to which they go; it helps to break the equilibrium of poverty in the country from which they come. What is the perversity in the human soul that causes people to resist so obvious a good?

This reciprocity between migration and poverty □ in this chapter diaspora and their remittances on the one hand and poverty on the other – while well received in many circles, is hardly subjected to thorough analysis hence the preponderance of anecdotal evidence. In the words of a Salvadoran sociologist, "migration and remittances are the true economic adjustment programmes of the poor in our country" (Carlo Guillermo Ramos, in Portes, 2008). The expression "our country" can be substituted with "African countries" to underscore the faith these countries currently have on their nationals' emigration and remittances. As (Skeldon, 2002: 80) argues, the main challenge for policymakers "is to facilitate the types of movement that are most likely to lead to an alleviation of poverty while protecting migrants from abuse and exploitation". The tendency for SSA countries to be preoccupied with their diasporas and their remittances as resources for development might be simplistic without sound policy prescriptions. Indeed, the sudden interest of SSA countries in the two resources replicates reliance on foreign aid and foreign direct investment (FDI) even when the countries fail to put them to good use, yielding positive outcomes or returns.

Emphasis on monetary remittances

Although this sub-section concentrates on financial remittances that the bulk of previous research and data do underline, it also recognises the importance of social remittances, on which much of the literature is silent. Anthropological and migration research as well as household surveys underscore the importance of remittances at micro level where they contribute to improved standards of living, better health and education and both human and financial assets formation (Sander and Maimbo, 2003: 16).

At the community level, pooled remittances by “hometown associations” or “home improvement associations” have reached different SSA countries with sizeable numbers of immigrants overseas. One example is Kayes area in Mali which benefits from about 40 immigrant associations whose pooled remittances supported 146 projects with a budget of euros 3 million. The African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) (quoting Libercier and Scneider, 1996, in Sander and Maimbo, 2003: 18) estimated that over 60 per cent of the infrastructure in the Kayes villages had been sponsored by the Diaspora resident in France.

Institutions working on economic development often focus on the use of remittances from a variety of perspectives. The Institute for Development Studies states that the institutions can integrate remittances into a country’s economy; employ the macroeconomic behaviour of remittances to influence responses to productive forces (for instance, in investment and trade); and ascertain the impact of remittances on national economic growth. In the policy arena, the institutions have the capacity to influence reduction of remittance transaction costs to about 10 per cent and to help in the development of financial democracy (id21.Insights, 2006). It has been noted that remittances may reduce infant mortality by improving housing conditions or access to public services such as water; that remittances boost growth in the countries with less developed financial systems because they provide an alternative way to finance investment, acting as a substitute for the domestic financial system; and that households receiving remittances tend to have better nutrition and access to health and educational services compared to those not receiving remittances (http://www.ime.gob.mx/investgac.ones/remesa8.pdf).

Another African study asserts that remittances augment recipient households’ resources, smooth consumption, provide working capital and have multiplier effects through increased household spending. However, it cautions that the relationship between remittances and poverty is not unidirectional as poverty and the concomitant lack of economic opportunities motivate emigration and remittance inflows (Gupta et al., 2007). The roles of remittances mentioned go a long way toward poverty reduction. Further, the study indicates that a rise of 10 per cent in remittance-to-GDP ratio is associated with a fall of little more than $1 a day or $1.6 per head count. However, More (2005) argues that remittances, being gifts without a counter-flow, are the best means of targeting the MDGs, in particular poverty reduction. This argument implies the neglect of remittances in the MDGs. The UN Millennium project entitle “Investing in Development: A Practical Way to Achieve the MDGs” mentions remittances in passing as a possible positive effect of migration, emphasizing the need for comprehensive approaches to migration management in the context of poverty reduction. Yet migration is by no means appropriate strategy to achieve the MDGs as its impact depends on the political, social, legal and economic environments in which the migration takes place and resources as well as behaviour of individual migrants (IOM, 2006: 20). A United Nations Economic Commission for Africa study on international migration and the achievement of MDGs notes that “in spite of significant transfers, most African countries are still struggling with how to effectively harness the social capital by Diaspora networks for… national and regional growth through migrant initiated business investments, transfer of knowledge and skills as well as the exploitation of migrant ethnic markets and enterprises" (ECA 2006:2). It cautions, for example that "it is pointless for an African household to receive remittances to pay for school and health care costs when there are no teachers and nurses" (p. 13), lost by African countries as brain drain.

The place of social remittances
Much of the literature and research on remittances to Africa has dwelt on financial remittances, leaving social remittances crying for research. Yet many African countries receive social remittances without recognising them as such. Peggy Levitt (1996) identifies three types of social remittances. First, there are "normative structures" consisting of ideas, values and beliefs as well as norms for behaviour, notions about family responsibility, principles of neighbourliness and community participation and aspirations for social mobility. The second type consists of "systems of practice" which are actions by normative structures relating to how individuals delegate household tasks, religious rituals that they engage in; it includes how much individuals in this category participate in political and civic groups through organisational structures which recruit and socialise new members, goal setting and strategising and establishment of leadership roles and formation of inter-agency ties. Finally, the two categories can become "social capital" with social remittance exchanges occurring when migrants return to live in or visit their communities of origin; when non-migrants visit their migrant relations in the countries of destination; or through exchanges of letters, videos, cassettes, emails and telephone calls. Often, social and political leaders harness the status they acquire in the country of destination to advance their cause in their homeland.
(http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wesdocs/getdocument-asapx?docnum=56717).

Useful insights of a survey of social remittances of the African diasporas in the Netherlands and Portugal are instructive for African countries (North-South Centre, 2006). In Portugal, Cape Verdian, Guinea Bissau and Senegal Diaspora constitute social capital for collective action for wellbeing but with varying approaches to realise their ambitions (North-South Centre, 2006: 14).

Pathways by which the African diasporas transfer social remittances vary a great deal. The North-South Centre (2006:17-20) study found that the pathways include return, either permanently or temporarily for holidays and family visits; social affiliations whenever in contact with key political and social figures in the home countries; facilitation of transnational networks to mediate and smooth the connection of overseas and African businesses; and influencing the political climate by infusing democratic political habits, sometimes acting as pressure groups. Unfortunately, African diasporas transmit social remittances to their home countries irregularly and unsystematically as these remittances do not go well with African governments. Indeed, a number of challenges confront social remittances in African countries. The North-South Centre (2006: 23-4) found these to be: poor governance and the lack of an enabling environment, such as personal freedom, basic civic rights, democracy and the rule of law which are often violated; unwillingness of the governing elite in most countries to seek the assistance of skilled and professional Diaspora for national development initiatives; and the lack of national strategies and policies that specifically target Diaspora interests to participate in homeland development. Even a direct policy approach such as dual citizenship – already formalised in Eritrea and Ghana, for instance – seems too tall an order for African countries to adopt.

Migration-remittances-poverty relationship

The impact of migration and, by inference Diaspora and remittances, on poverty is complex and difficult to disentangle given the reciprocal relationship between the two. Skeldon's (2002, cited in IOM, 2006:21) thesis is that migration can be either the cause or the effect of poverty. On the one hand, poverty and vulnerability provide incentives to migrate and on the other reduce the ability to move due to high transfer costs involved. Those engaged in international migration are not the poorest of the poor as they must of necessity have some resources to facilitate their movement (House of Commons International Development Committee, 2003, cited in IOM, 2006: 21); when they migrate, the are unlikely to move very far (Zolberg, et al., 2002:260, cited in IOM, 2006: 21).

Interesting issues emerge from Anyanwu and Erhijakpor's (n.d.) analysis of international migration and poverty at community and household levels in Africa. The authors' findings at the community level provide some useful insights. First, remittances stimulate formation of small-scale enterprises thereby promoting community development. In different parts of rural Africa, recipient communities are economically vibrant relative to communities that never receive any migrants. Second, remittances ease credit constraints by providing working capital for the recipients who consequently engage in entrepreneurial activities. New entrepreneurial activities have emerged in communities receiving remittances., Finally, remittances made through migrant associations may result in the creation of new social assets and services and community physical infrastructure, such as schools, health centres, roads and other community projects (Ghosh, 2006; SØrensen and Pedersen, 2002, cited in Anyanwu and Erhijakpor). On the negative side, the authors argue that remittances tend to increase income inequality. At the household level, the authors found that international remittances increase family incomes, thus raising consumption and/or savings; they transfer purchasing power from relatively richer to relatively poorer family members; they reduce poverty, smooth consumption, affect labour supply, provide working capital and have multiplier effects through increased households spending; and they facilitate investment in human capital in terms of education, health and better nutrition (Lopez-Cordova, 2004; Hilderbrant and McKenzie, 2005; and Adams, Cuecuecha, 2008, cited in Anyanwu and Wrhijakpor). These findings corroborate previous findings on the subject and require further investigation at community and household levels in different African countries.

An important point needs to be made on subtle differences between high-income and low-income emigrants. The tendency is for low occupational workers with low incomes to leave their families in their countries of origin and send remittances to them and for those in higher occupations to take their families with them to the countries of destination thereby having little obligation to remit back home. However, with increasing real estate and other opportunities in the countries of origin, large numbers of the Diaspora, notably the higher-status, have been sending remittances for investment purposes. Of crucial importance are political, economic and social conditions in the countries of origin, which can either attract or repel remittances. For poverty reduction, remittances play a bigger role at the micro (household) level where consumption and survival strategies matter than at the macro level where they are linked to national and international economic uncertainties and where the measure of poverty is markedly different. In Africa, remittances are largely optional, with a few cases where they are mandatory. For example, following the country's independence from Ethiopia in 1993, emigrant Eritreans have been sending mandatory remittances to their country, known as a "healing tax", which represents 2 percent of their income" (Van Hear2003:2); Sudan initiated the "Nil Value Custom Policy" on imported goods; and Egypt adopted the "Own Exchange Import system (OIES) which permits importation of importers can provide the necessary foreign exchange on their own, that is, outside the official foreign exchange pools (El-Sakka, n.d.) Indeed, Bosnia and Eritrea provide good examples of the extent to which these transnational exile communities can be mobilised to contribute to reconstruction without returning (Black et al., 2000), implying that the call for return is probably over-stated.

Selected African Case Studies

Four African case studies represent different types of Diaspora and remittances to the countries of origin. Morocco represents the Northern African emigration to Europe and the nature and extent of Moroccan Diaspora in homeland development through remittances and other means. Ghana is a classical case of successive generations of Diaspora found in different parts of the world but with an exemplary commitment to Ghanaian development. Somalia, comprising a failed State by that name from which Somaliland (a self-proclaimed, internationally unrecognised State) exemplify how refugee Diaspora has sustained its motherland despite lack of an operational government. Finally, Zimbabwe represents a case where a decade-long repression and an unbearable economic crisis have forced Zimbabweans out of the country to live elsewhere in Southern Africa and Europe for survival, and from which their remittances have sustained relatives and friends left behind. Only selected studies are cited and the highlights of some case studies provided to give readers a lead to what they could study in greater depth.

- Morocco

In de Haas' (2005) view, recent research on Moroccan migration and development has painted an optimistic picture after the pessimistic studies (which saw migration as the cause of underdevelopment) in the 1970s. His study of international migrant households in the Todgha valley oasis in Morocco suggests a strong and significant association between migration participation and household income, with the main dividing line noticeable between households with and without access to international remittances (de Haas, 2006: 569). But the tendency for Morocco to exclude emigrants from the civil service for their lifetime, curtailing deployment of their knowledge and skills upon return, minimises their potential to invest and return (de Haas, 2005:1273). This phenomenon exists in many more African countries, fuelling the myth of African emigrants, considered brain gain and potential investors as well in homeland development. In countering the "migration pessimists", the "new economics of labour migration" (NELM) school underline both negative effects of migration from the developing world by placing the behaviour of individual migrants within the wider societal context and considering the household , not the individual, as the most appropriate decision-making unit (Taylor, 1999, cited in de Haas (2006: 566). The study found a strong and significant association between migration participation and household income and observed distinct differences between households with and households without access to international remittances (de Haas, 2006: 569); between non-migrant and internal migrant households as well as between current indirect and returned international households (p.571). The study concludes with a cautionary remark: that while migration may contribute positively to social and economic development in the origins of migration, the impact is “potential” rather than predetermined because, among other things, migration impacts are highly context-sensitive (p. 579).

- Ghana

As the first sub-Saharan African mainland state to become independent in 1957, Ghana was conceived by the founders of the nation to become model independent African State. Unfortunately, successive military overthrows of government forced Ghanaians to flee the country and to live virtually everywhere in the world (Van Hear, 2003); added to this was continued economic decay from the 1970s through the 1990s. By the mid-1990s, it seemed that regardless of Ghana’s economic recovery, emigration streams were growing, particularly because basic patterns and contacts had been established (Peil, 1995:358). Once emigration begins and contacts flourish, it becomes difficult to stem the tide, which can only increase. Literature on the Ghanaian Diaspora and remittances is too copious to cite in this piece of work.

Research on Ghanaian migrants has revealed diverse perspectives: the impact of elite return migrants to the country and to its neighbour, Cote d’Ivoire (Asiedu, 2003; Ammassari, 2004), economic impact of the Netherlands-based Ghanaian Diaspora on Ghana’s rural development (Kabki, et al. (2004) and the impact of Ghanaian remittances on the country’s poverty and inequality (Adams, et al., 2008).

From the data analysed and evidence provided, the last study concludes that the size of poverty reduction depends on the type of remittances being received; that, generally, international remittances have a greater impact on reducing poverty than internal migrants; and that both internal and international remittances have a negative impact on inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient (Adams et al, 2008:23). This conclusion refutes previous findings that tend to underscore the positive impacts of remittances in and to the country. In Ghana, Schoorl et al. (2000, cited in Sander and Maimbo, 2003:17) found in 1999-2000 that 70 per cent of remittances sent were used for recurrent expenditure (school fees, health care and so on) and less than 30 per cent were invested in assets land, cattle and construction); in Mali, Martin et al. (2002 in Sander and Maimbo, 2003: 17) noted that 80-90 per cent of remittances in the mid-1990s went into consumption.

Importance attached to remittances is shown by the systematic collection on remittances by the Bank of Ghana, one of the few national banks in Africa to do so. (Higazi, 2005: 4), remittances increasing from US $6 million in 1996 to US $44 million in 2002 (p.5). While some studies report that Netherlands-based Ghanaians’ send a substantial proportion of remittances by informal means (Mazzacato et al., 2004, cited in Higazi, 2005), including hand-carrying of cash (Africarecruit, 2003; Blackwell and Seddon, 2004, in *ibid*) others refute this, citing the dominance of formal means of transmitting remittances (Anarfi et al. 2003, cited in *ibid*); migrants often prefer informal means such as Ghanaian-owned shops or small businesses in their countries of residence to banks or money transfer organisations such as Western

Union and Money Gram (Higazi, 2005). A survey of Ghanaians who had returned to their country in August 2000-January 2001 reports the bulk of remittances going for family or household economic strategy (Tiemoko, 2003, cited in Hizagi, 2005), which must include poverty reduction.

The Ghanaian Diaspora belongs to two types of Diaspora associations: Ghanaian (particularly Pentecostal) churches and ethnic associations (Akyeampong, 200:208, cited in Higazi, 2005). The latter often send back to Ghana either money or commodities such as clothes and school books and in the poor region of Brong Ahafo, they have supported district assemblies (Akologo, 2004, cited in *ibid*).

Finally, a recent study by Adam et al. (2008) which explores the impact of remittances on poverty and inequality in Ghana captures both internal and international dimensions of migration, using the 2005/06 Ghana Living Standards Survey GLSS 5). It targets transfers received in money, food and non-food goods from either internal or international sources. Applying a series of econometric model, the study found that households receiving internal remittances (that is from Ghana) have the lowest mean per capita expenditure and have the highest observed poverty on average of all the household groups; that households receiving international remittances from external sources) have the highest mean per capita expenditure and the lowest observed poverty on average of all the household groups; that international remittances have a greater impact on poverty reduction; and that both internal and international remittances have a negative impact on income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient. The study concludes that poverty reduction depends on the type of remittances being received, which leads us to caution that it is important to ascertain the kind of poverty being targeted.

- Somalia and Somaliland

Somalis are among refugees who live in virtually all world regions where their Diaspora remains in strong contact with not only Somalis back home but also others in Diaspora. In the 1990, Somalis were recorded in more than 60 countries (Van Hear, 2003: 1). Its Diaspora has attracted considerable research on migration-development nexus in Somalia, (Gundel, 2002), migrant transfers as a development tool in Somaliland (Hansen, 2004) as well as Somalia (Lindley, 2006) and the importance of overseas connections in the livelihoods of Somali refugees in Kenya (Horst, 2002). Somalis have gone through cycles of warfare with their neighbours and among themselves along clan lines, invalidating the notion that they are a homogeneous group. The Somali Diaspora is a consequence of traditional mobile livelihood patterns, colonialism, labour migration and the humanitarian disasters of the late 1980 through the early 1990s. Averse to a life in exiled silence, the Somali have maintained strong contact, currently reinforced by new technology (IRIN, 2000, cited in SØrensen, 2006: 94). Two significant Diaspora groups sustain development activities in Somaliland and Somalia: (i) the Somaliland Forum, which through internet-based discussions became an association for the development of the homeland’s human resources and (ii) Somali peace and equality activists in which women (daughters, nieces and sisters), through sending remittances, support large numbers of families in Somalia/Somaliland SØrensen, 2006: 94). These are significant sustenance mechanisms in Somali which ceased to be a State since 1991 and Somaliland which exists despite being slighted by the rest of the world.

Remittances to Somalia can be explained in two main phases. The first crop of emigrants to the Gulf states in the 1970s sent remittances through the *franco-valuta* system , in which foreign exchange was transferred to traders who would import commodities for Somali markets and then give the cash to the migrants' families; it was banned in 1982 as undermining the Somali regime's patron-client mechanisms (Marchal, 1996:5, cited in Gundel, 2003:246). Second, remittances have recently been sent through private companies known as *xawilaad* (Horst, 2002). The Somali word *xawil*, derived from Arabic, means "transfer", usually of money or responsibilities. Thus, *xawilaad* is an informal system of value transfer that operates in almost every part of the world, Horst et al, 2002, cited in Horst, 2002), operated by Somalis both for sending remittances and for business transactions by three companies: Al Barakat, Dahabshil and Amal, which rely on electronic technology to facilitate business as well as deepen Somali transnational relations (Horst, 2002). Primarily, the remittances act as an invaluable cushion for the social safety net, the Dadaab refugees receiving child-to-parent remittances from Europe, Australia, Canada and the United States. In Dadaab refugees camps in Kenya where Somali Diaspora is on the one hand a force to assist in the peace process as well as rebuilding their homeland and the other a destabilising force continuing to finance the warring parties in the homeland (Horst, 2002). Remittances have changed the socio-economic environment both positively and negatively, the latter including expenses incurred in tracing the recipients, insecurity of the directed at recipients as the *Shifta* (shady character or notorious criminal) hover around terrorising them and creation of a dependency syndrome. Nonetheless, *xawilaad* maintains survival and improves private accumulation among Somalis whose situation would have been worse without it and other forms of remittances.

Amounts of Somali remittances range from US $140 million in one study in one study to US $800 million in another, though, as Horst (2002) cautions, what matters is not the amount remitted but the effects of remittances on the lives of the recipients.

In Somaliland, the Diaspora has been engaged in opening small-scale businesses (restaurants, beauty salons, transport companies, supermarkets and kiosks) through the savings they had made abroad; the Diaspora los invests in land and housing (SØrensen, 2006: 91). In two separate studies Hansen (2003) and King (2003) consider the Diaspora transfers an important tool in Somaliland's development. While one-third of monthly remittances received in Hargeisa goes to investment in the construction industry and other businesses, two-thirds supports the livelihood of about one-quarter of households (King, 2003: 27).

One of the most positive developments has been spontaneous and self-organised return of Somalilanders in recent years. By 2002, several research and higher education institutions were headed and staffed by returnees and, with funds raised in the Diaspora, a large number founded and became teachers in primary and secondary schools. It is believed that some Somalilanders may become "revolving returnees" who, after presumed "permanent" return, might still go back to Europe or North America due to a variety of reasons ─ inability to renew their contracts within the "development industry", having failed in their business efforts or inability to convince their families in the wider Diaspora overseas to join them (Hansen, 2003; Ambroso, 2002, cited in SØrenson, 2006: 93).

The commitment of Somali and Somaliland Diasporas to their homeland is provides a lesson to the rest of Africa. Among other things, it underlines hyper-nationalism that emerges after a prolonged conflict, which provides both challenges and opportunities for the diasporas to remain mindful of their nations and relatives as well as friends back home.

- Zimbabwe

After attaining independence in 1980, Zimbabwe grew into an economic powerhouse before plunging into a basket case over the last decade, forcing Zimbabweans of all walks of life to flee to all parts of the world. A survey carried out in Zimbabwe in 2001 Found that Zimbabweans were generally not well-travelled and those who had travelled had ended up in other Southern African countries (Tevera and Crush, 2003: 28-9). But that was a lull before a storm. When the economic crunch began to bite, Zimbabweans went everywhere, very much like Ghanaians. It is important to note that unlike Somalis/Somalilanders and Ghanaians, Zimbabweans emigrated largely because of an economic crisis of unprecedented proportions. The Association of Zimbabweans Based Abroad (AZBA) has become a galvanising force for all Zimbabweans of all walks of wife, enjoined in unity in reaction to terrible events back home. Today, Zimbabweans remaining in the country would never survive without the Diaspora remittances, monetary and non-monetary. It must be relatively easy for the Zimbabwean Diaspora to remit extremely small amounts of money for pitiable exchange rates with an inflation rate never ever recorded in ay country's history. Not surprisingly, 28 per cent of Zimbabweans make remittances to support family and friends and about one fifth to support family and friends, the bulk of remittances made through family/friends going to the country. From the United Kingdom and South Africa, most Zimbabweans send non-monetary gifts, with food items dominating (IOM, 2006: 178, 182). In Zimbabwe, survival counts more than all other needs hence the importance of food items in remittance inflows to the country.

In the two countries, Zimbabweans participate most heavily in informal social activities and less than half (48 per cent) participated in an activity or activities with Zimbabwe-based people or organisations. Zimbabweans in Diaspora in different countries also hold internet discussion groups, engage in political activities, send monetary as well non-monetary remittances to each other and engage in business associations (IOM (2006: 185-6). Bloch's ((2005) survey of Zimbabweans in the United Kingdom and South Africa underlines the potential importance of Diaspora in Zimbabwe's development. Thus, Zimbabweans have increasingly become ambivalent or transnational.

Two studies underline the significance of remittances to households in Zimbabwe. Bracking and Sachikonye (2006) portray a detailed picture of remittances, poverty reduction and the informalisation of household wellbeing in Zimbabwe. The distribution of remitters suggests that about 25 per cent of them are based in the UK and about 23 per cent in South Africa, the UK hosting about 31 per cent of Zimbabweans, compared to 34 per cent in Southern Africa (South Africa, Botswana and Namibia). Interestingly, children-to-parents remittances dominate, followed by inter-sibling remittances (p. 21), evidence of the younger generations having emigrated as their older relatives continue to stay in an ever deteriorating economy. The authors' categorisation of remittances – into productive, consumptionist, speculative, survivalist/exit, exit and performative/culture (sic!) – is perhaps the moss exhaustive and realistic treatment of remittances to a country where only remittances sustain households.

Return of the Diaspora: Myth or Reality?

Return migration of their skilled and professional nationals in the diaspora is one option on which African countries pin their hopes and one tried by UNDP and the IONM without much success. In this age of IT technology, virtual return is gaining even more interest than physical return. Yet, as Skeldon (2005: 15, cited in Oucho, 2008 62) wonders, there has to be something for skilled migrants to return to. Building on the work of Bovernkerk (1974), King (2000: 80, both cited in (IOM, 2001: 18), defines return migration a "process whereby people return to their country or place of origin after a significant period in another country or region". Cerase (1974, cited in IOM, 2001: 22) took the debate astep further by identifying four trpes of return the *return of failure* by migrants who failed to overcome the "traumatic hock" in the new abode or were unable to adjust to the new environment; the *return of conservatism* by migrants who migrate to pursue a specific objective and thus save a significant portion of their income to realise their plans back home; the *return of motivation* by migrants who stay in the host society long enough to start referring to its value system, but who eventually return home; and the *return of retirement* by migrants who have terminated their working lives and go back home to retire. This characterisation of return possibilities is never clear to African governments, not least the households and communities that benefit from diaspora support, including remittances.

Consideration of several return schemes point to why they have failed in Africa (Oucho, 2008). First, conditions that sparked emigration of professionals and highly trained Africans have deteriorated rather than improved in their countries of origin. Returning doctors and nurses find dilapidated health programmes with obsolete or irreparable equipment; teachers return to schools with poor learning environments or grossly lacking basic facilities; university lectures are confronted with unbearably large classes, lack of equipment and poor research facilities, including lack of research funds; and returning migrants with capital and entrepreneurial skills cannot afford to invest in a risky economic environment ravaged by crime, corruption and bad governance. Second, the public service (represented by national governments), which is supposed to benefit from return migrants, merely sign (and hardly adhere to the provisions of their) agreements with the IOM or other parties. Finally, even those returning home find a most shocking homecoming where relatives await gifts from them rather than collaborate with them in whatever initiatives they offer (Oucho, 2008: 225) More reasons could be stated but for lack of space.

Ethiopia is one country whose diaspora has been keen on return, especially virtual return. But it is doubtful if Ethiopians who underscore the need for virtual return would do so to a country with strict controls on the usage of the internet and mobile phones. Even countries with better IT facilities rarely maintain them well enough for sustained usage. Take, for example Ethiopians who underscore the need for virtual return to a country with exceptionally controlled internet and mobiles. There have been physical returns by Nigerians and Ghanaians in diaspora but how sustainable these will be is open to question. On returning, the diaspora would mot easily work with their professional or business colleagues who did not emigrate. But there have been stories of lost trust between the two parties and efforts by those who stayed behind to refuse re-entry of their diaspora colleagues.

CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

Previous research on the African diaspora and remittance flows to Africa has generated inconclusive findings. It has concentrated on the sources of the two resources and neglected their destinations where they are expected to make a difference. Future research will have to address this shortcoming, emulating the research undertaken by the Southern African Migration Project on migration, remittances and development in that- sub-region (Pendleton et al., 2006) and in Latin American communities.

For African countries to harness diasporas and remittances in their development process, they should formulate policies in which they involve the diaspora, improve the investment environment and be constantly responsive to changes positively affecting utilisation of the two resources. Policy frameworks and programmes targeting the diaspora and remittances could benefit from those already elaborated in Latin America where the two resources have made significant contributions.

African countries should incorporate the contribution of their diaspora and remittances in national development planning and programmes. This could be done through African countries' sustained engagement with the diaspora in multiple facets of development.

It should be remembered that there exits ambiguity in analysing the impact of migration and poverty on each other. Waddington and Sabates-Wheeler (2003) remind us that poverty may induce people to migrate to improve their livelihoods and that migrants may in turn become further impoverished and more vulnerable. More importantly, future research should encompass social remittances to African countries which so far the research community, policy makers and national planners have neglected.

This chapter ends on a note which the author has propagated over the last two decades: that Africa needs a series of African Migration Surveys (AMS) in the mould of the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) which have been running since the 1980s. If the African Union AU) is serious on implementing its migration and development frameworks and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is prepared to serve their member states better on migration and development interrelations, they should prevail on national statistics offices to launch MDS.

Finally, both internal and international migration and their inherent consequences should be factored in the PRSPs and the MDGs as well the numerous national specific-terminal year "visions" thereby making them an integral part of mitigating and eventually eradicating poverty from the African scene. NEPAD is now as good as dead but its conceptualisation of utilisation of African resources including the return of the diaspora offer much promise in the future.

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