Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development

A HANDBOOK FOR POLICYMAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS IN HOME AND HOST COUNTRIES

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Chapter 8: From "Return of Talent" to "Brain Circulation" to "Virtual Return": Evolving Ideas on the Transfer of Human Capital

In today's world, a country's competitiveness in the global economy, its productivity, and economic growth depend on a workforce whose skills and knowledge are constantly upgraded. But many countries do not have educational systems capable of meeting this challenge and many others see their most highly skilled workers emigrate to modern innovation hubs where practitioners, engineers, scientists, and inventors come together and work both collaboratively and competitively. Indeed, many countries are isolated not only from global flows of trade and capital but from the knowledge and technology that make these possible.

Recently, however, concepts such as "brain gain," "brain bank," "brain trust," and "brain circulation"[263] have gained currency, signaling a growing interest in finding ways to use the skills and experience of the diaspora to fill knowledge and skills gaps in their countries of origin. Backed by forward-thinking policies, these concepts are helping to attract skilled emigrants and their descendants to endeavors in their countries of origin — where they deploy their professional skills as teachers, mentors, research directors, or simply practitioners who perform services in return visits.

Transferring Human Capital: A Menu of Viable Options

1. Engage diasporas as practitioners to fill resource and knowledge gaps
   - Ask diasporas to volunteer their time and expertise
   - Offer material and nonmaterial incentives in exchange for services
   - Administer "return" programs in partnership with private actors

2. Engage diasporas as partners
   - Support collaborative research between diasporas and local actors
   - Connect communities across national borders through twinning arrangements

3. Engage diasporas as members and leaders of scientific and technical networks.

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1 Programs and Policy Trends

Ideas on the best means to transfer human capital have evolved through time. They generally fall into three broad categories. Governments have engaged members of diasporas as:

⮕ Practitioners who fill critical resource and knowledge gaps directly via permanent, temporary, or even virtual return of migrants.

⮕ Partners who support local individuals in a long-term exchange of resources and knowledge.

⮕ Members of scientific, technical, and business networks with whom potential research, business, and investment opportunities in the origin country can be developed.

A. Engage Diasporas as Practitioners

Many of the earliest programs to engage diasporas attracted members back to their countries of origin as practitioners who would directly fill critical resource and knowledge gaps via permanent, temporary, and even "virtual" return.

1. Ask Diasporas to Volunteer their Time and Expertise

Some programs appeal to the altruism of the diaspora and provide few, if any, incentives. Dominica, for instance, asked members of its

diaspora to help set up Dominica State College, a tertiary education institution. US-based Dominicans who held management positions at US universities were tapped to develop the university's curriculum, build its structure, and orchestrate its launch.[264] All offered their services free of charge.

Similarly, in 2007, the Canadian University Service Overseas and Voluntary Service Overseas Canada (CUSO-VSO) started a volunteer program to engage the Guyanese diaspora in Canada. The program is designed to build on the work of the Canada-Guyana Teacher Education Project (CGTEP), an association of retired teachers of Guyanese origin.[265] Since the 1980s, CGTEP has been organizing teachers of Guyanese origin residing in Canada for summer volunteer work in rural areas of Guyana to train teachers and expand educational opportunities.

Eritrea encourages diaspora members to come back and provide medical services ranging from developing medical schools to providing treatment and conducting surgery. According to Hanna Simon of the Department of Eritreans Abroad, returnees typically have already worked for several years in Eritrea. They return, usually in groups in the case of doctors, and stay for several years. Eritrea works closely with the Eritrean Mission in Germany and, with the help of diaspora associations in the United States and Cuba, recently opened a medical school.[266]

2. Offer Material and Nonmaterial Incentives in Exchange for Services

While countries of origin can harness the power of volunteers, most "return-of-talent" initiatives, however, include both material and nonmaterial incentives. Governments typically identify successful individuals and then try to persuade them to return to conduct research or establish their own firms by offering to cover their moving costs, top up their salary, subsidize their mortgage if they purchase a new house, provide start-up funds or subsequent capital infusions for their businesses, and the like.[267] The approach is not new. The Taiwan Province of China pioneered this approach as early as the 1960s (see Box 1).

161

CHAPTER 8: FROM "RETURN OF TALENT" TO "BRAIN CIRCULATION" TO "VIRTUAL RETURN": EVOLVING IDEAS ON THE TRANSFER OF HUMAN CAPITAL

Box 1: Engaging the Taiwanese Diaspora

Since 1960, Taiwan Province of China has recruited scholars in the diaspora by providing them various incentives such as a travel subsidy (which can cover airfare and related allowances to returning scholars and their dependents) and job placement assistance. Such incentives are offered through its National Youth Commission (NYC), a cabinet-level government office.

The efforts intensified over time, and by the 1980s the authorities were offering significant incentives to persuade experienced diaspora members to start second careers in Taiwan Province of China. These included salaries on par with those abroad, subsidies for housing and children's education, and a working environment with state-of-the-art facilities, instruments, and equipment.

In 1980 the Taiwanese authorities also opened the Hsinchu Science-Based Industrial Park, whose goal was to replicate the dense concentration of creative expertise found in California's Silicon Valley, where many experts of Taiwanese origin work. The authorities provided a planned infrastructure for companies, including incentives such as subsidized Western-style housing, schools, and commercial services. More important, Taiwan Province of China offered venture capital funding to innovative diaspora-owned businesses. The complex has been extremely successful. An attractive destination for both foreign and diaspora-owned high-tech companies, by 2000, Hsinchu employed 102,000 people and generated $28 billion in sales. US-based Taiwanese owned 113 of the park's 289 companies that year; 70 maintained companies in Silicon Valley as well. Returnees were highly educated, with nearly 500 of them holding PhDs.

Sources: Kevin O'Neil, "Brain Drain and Gain: The Case of Taiwan," *Migration Information Source*, September 2003, www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=155; AnnaLee Saxenian, *The New Argonauts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); AnnaLee and Jinn-Yuh Hsu, "The Silicon Valley- Hsinchu Connection: Technical Communities and Industrial Upgrading," *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 10 (4); Shirley L. Chang, "Causes of Brain Drain and Solutions: The Taiwan Experience," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 27 (1): 27-43.

Others followed suit. In China, a service center for returnees was set up in 1989, providing allocations for housing, duty-free purchases of computers and automobiles, and offers of return airfare for self-financed students.[268] Since the 1990s a number of science parks, special development zones, and high-tech complexes have been established in China's capital city, Beijing, as well as in most Chinese provincial cities.

Between 1994 and 1998, Jamaica implemented the Return of Talent Programme, which offers an array of generous financial incentives to lure returnees. These include a one-time reentry subsidy, a monthly salary subsidy, one-way airfare for the candidate and his or her immediate family, up to 50 percent of the cost of shipping of household goods, two years of medical and accident insurance, and even provision of the instruments and literature needed for the candidate's work.[269]

Likewise, in Uruguay, the Sectoral Commission of Scientific Research (CSIC) was founded in 1990 at the University of the Republic. Specific initiatives included a program for hiring scientists that gave preference to returnees, as well as an economic support program to facilitate returnees' adjustment to the university environment.[270]

Following the end of dictatorship in Argentina in 1983, the government spearheaded measures to encourage the return of exiles and build links with expatriates who could help in the country's development efforts. In addition to this general policy, the National Council of Scientific and Technological Research (CONICET) implemented specific return-related efforts for the diaspora such as subsidizing airfare as well as the moving and setup costs of returnees and their immediate families.[271]

Other origin countries, such as Croatia and Thailand, have also recognized the importance of offering attractive benefits to lure back their diasporas. According to Alessia Pozzi, although Croatia has what she considered a "good scientific community," it is not on par with those in Germany and other developed countries in Europe.[272] Croatia is therefore offering attractive financial instruments to encourage local research institutions to upgrade their facilities. Likewise, the Thai government is aware that its current incentive package under the Reverse Brain Drain program is not competitive enough for many prospective participants. According to Noppawan Tanpipat, the government is working to improve the program in order to recruit the talent the country needs.[273]

3. Find the Best Mix of Incentives

How do countries come up with the best mix of incentives — that is, a package that can attract the targeted diaspora without incurring the resentment of local actors? As the International Organization for Migration (IOM) inspector general put it in the context of the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) program, "migrants are to a certain extent already privileged and … should not be the beneficiaries, but rather the investors."[274] Most practitioners now believe that paying diaspora members three to four times as much as locals is unfair.[275] From the very beginning of the MIDA Great Lakes program (2009–12), for instance, experts have undertaken assignments on a voluntary basis and receive a subsistence allowance to cover their daily expenses.[276]

As Box 2 shows, it is important to devise an incentive package that is appropriate to the local situation. What works in one place will not work in another. In some locations, members of the diaspora may be "viewed as having fled from a difficult regime or hard economic conditions to live an easy life." Thus, as University of Sussex migration expert Ronald Skeldon puts it, those who stayed behind may not necessarily welcome them back "with open arms."

➔ Box 2: When Are Incentives Appropriate?

When China started courting its diasporas in the early part of the 1990s, observers noted that the country created a great deal of bad blood between returnees, called the "returning sea turtles faction," and those who never left, or the "land turtles faction." In 2006 David Zweig wrote, "The decision of units to favor 'outsiders' who have studied overseas over long-term members of their unit who have not been abroad has been criticized as 'giving up a son to get a son-in-law'.

Luo Keren, Fei Guo, and Huang Ping also noted this problem in China, arguing that the special treatment returnees enjoyed, while a useful way to entice them back home, also created tensions between returnees and their local counterparts.

In-depth interviews conducted by Dovelyn Agunias with scholars in China suggest, however, that locals have changed their view of returnees of late.

Henry Wang, president of the largest government-sponsored Chinese returnee organization, and Biao Xiang and Hongxing Cai, both academic researchers, have found that tensions eased for various reasons. For one, the quality of returnees has improved in recent years. Local researchers see the diaspora members less as competitors and more as partners who can bring financial resources and knowledge to the table. The distinction between land and sea turtles is also beginning to blur as local talent can now leave China more easily to attend international conferences, seminars, and short-term exchange programs. Finally, more returnees are deciding to stay in China, especially in the business sector. As can be expected, these new arrivals are more receptive to diasporas than those who never left.

The aggressive and competitive packages discussed in length later (See Box 4) that the Chinese government currently provides must therefore be seen in the context of a rapidly changing China. Other countries may choose to take a different route. Croatia, for instance, found that tensions between local and diaspora scientists are limited if parallel programs exist that help local scientists compete for national and international funding. Interestingly, an increasing number of local Croatian scientists are finding that collaborating with well-respected diaspora members has increased their chances of getting additional funding, especially from private sources.

Further, governments must ensure, at the very least, that returnees are qualified for their jobs and do not displace local workers or existing businesses.

Sources: Interviews of Henry Wang, Biao Xiang, and Hongxing Cai by Dovelyn Agunias, cited in Agunias, "Engaging the Mauritian Diaspora: Lessons from the International Community" in *Skills and Technology Absorption in Mauritius*, ed., Giuseppi Iarossi (Washington, DC: The World Bank, forthcoming); Luo Keren, Fei Guo, and Huang Ping, "China: Government Policies and Emerging Trends of Reversal of the Brain Drain" in *Return Migration in the Asia Pacific*, eds. Robyn Iredale, Fei Guo, and Santi Rozario (Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA : Edward Elgar Publishing, 2003).

Governments must be ready to tap into the financial and technical resources of the private sector, other governments, and international organizations to effectively and aggressively share the cost of engagement. For instance, MIDA Great Lakes found that collaboration between universities in host and home countries minimizes returnees' integration problems.

4. Administer "Return" Programs in Partnership with Private Actors

Instead of starting from scratch, some governments have chosen to partner with international organizations and build on existing programs with proven capacity for human capital transfer.

Initially, governments sought to foster the permanent return of the diaspora. But in recent years they have reevaluated this approach. Instead of focusing on the resettlement of migrants in their countries of origin as a measure of success, governments now recognize that diasporas can directly fill human resource and knowledge gaps when they return temporarily or even virtually. Three such projects administered by IOM are described below.

Return of Qualified Afghans (RQA). Following the ouster of the Taliban government in 2001, the Afghan Islamic Transitional Administration (later the Administration of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan) paved the way for Afghans abroad to return to their homeland. IOM, in cooperation with the new government, helped facilitate the return of educated and highly skilled Afghans from around the world. The goal was to identify Afghan nationals living abroad with relevant qualifications and backgrounds and facilitate their employment in different sectors of the Afghan economy.[277]

With cofunding from the European Commission (EC), the Return of Qualified Afghans from the European Union (EU) Countries Program (EU-RQA) began in March 2003 and lasted for 28 months. Eligible participants had to be residents of a European member state and meet predetermined educational and professional criteria. Although participants were allowed to stay in Afghanistan permanently, RQA was designed primarily to facilitate a voluntary, temporary return lasting between six months and a year.

The EU-RQA program offered an assistance package to cover participants' expenses and basic needs and to attract a strong pool of talent. Participants employed in both the public and private sectors received a round-trip ticket from their EU host country to Afghanistan, a one-time settlement allowance of €600 (or equivalent in dollars), and a monthly salary of €300. Women received an additional €50 per month as an extra inducement.

Participants establishing their own businesses received a plane ticket, settlement allowance, and up to €5,000 toward the purchase of equipment or supplies.[278] IOM's role was to facilitate the process with the help of both Afghan and European governments.

An external evaluation commissioned at program's end reported promising results. Field evaluation revealed that almost all participants were given important positions due to their high qualifications. Many headed departments, some supervised technical processes, and others were assigned critical managerial and administrative duties such as procurement or accounting. Beneficiaries employed in private firms were usually exposed to many aspects of the company rather than a single department or suboffice.[279]

Most participants were well matched to their position and possessed the needed skills, which were typically acquired at previous jobs. They introduced new skills, techniques, methods, and technologies to the workplace and were observed to have "brought professionalism and exactitude" to tasks such as accounting and recordkeeping.[280]

Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA). Similar to RQA, the MIDA program aims to mobilize the skills and financial resources of African diasporas to support development projects at home. Described as a capacity-building program, MIDA is focused on facilitating temporary movement and does not entail the permanent return of migrants.[281]

MIDA supports the short-term, longer-term, or virtual return of expatriate skills to key sectors. The project has more developmental potential built into its design than earlier iterations of the return of qualified nationals (RQN) programs. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, for instance, MIDA is being incorporated into the national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) or their equivalent.[282]

Although MIDA has a generic strategy, IOM designs specific MIDA projects according to the country, region, and/or sector of activity. In each country, a multisectoral MIDA steering committee is set up with the aim of fostering greater coordination and policy coherence within governments. The networks of participants strengthen interactions between origin and destination countries, which in turn stimulate additional return visits as well as development projects involving the diaspora and/or the productive use of remittances.[283]

MIDA operates in 11 African countries — Benin, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda. Evaluations of three of these projects revealed cautiously optimistic results.

➲ The MIDA Great Lakes Program, funded by the Belgian Development Cooperation, supports capacity building in health care, education, and rural development by finding experts from the Great Lakes diaspora in Europe to fill skills shortages in these countries. The program in its various phases has supported local partner institutions; distance learning using new information technologies (such as an e-learning course in medicine at the University of Lubumbashi); safe, effective, and low-cost remittance channels; and investments in the region. In less than three years, more than 250 Congolese, Rwandan, and Burundian expatriates have taken part in this program.[284] Currently in Phase 4, the program has adopted a multi-annual project approach based on a call for proposals for capacity-building projects developed with the help of diaspora experts; these are implemented on the basis of their expert missions – in the fields of health, education, and rural development. Twenty-four such multiannual projects were ongoing at this writing in the three participating countries.[285]

➲ The MIDA Ghana Health Project targets migrants from Europe (mainly the United Kingdom and Netherlands) to strengthen hospitals and other public and private health sector institutions. Often presented as a concrete example of migration and development implementation in ministerial and EU discussions and policy documents, MIDA Ghana facilitates the temporary return of health professionals from the diaspora. An evaluation of the program suggests that, though small, the project has broadened collaboration among individuals and institutions in Ghana and migrants' destination countries. Unlike other MIDA programs, MIDA Ghana also facilitates short-term training in Europe of Ghana-based health professionals.[286]

➲ MIDA Italy was a pilot project supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Implemented between 2003 and 2004, the project tested the level of interest among sub-Saharan African immigrants to engage in socioeconomic development in their countries of origin. Ethiopia and Ghana were selected for the implementation of its pilot activities. MIDA Italy registered 200 migrant associations, created a website for and a national database of Ethiopian

migrants interested in participating in development activities, and assessed more than 150 small and medium enterprise (SME) project proposals from African migrant organizations.[287]

Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) — Netherlands. IOM provides qualified migrants in the Netherlands the opportunity to help with the reconstruction of their countries of origin. This involves the temporary outsourcing of migrants to their country of origin to execute work for which there is no local expertise. In the framework of this project, temporary placements have been realized in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Georgia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan.

Migrants in the Netherlands who want to help with the reconstruction of their countries of origin can sign up with IOM for a paid temporary placement varying from a few weeks to three months. Host institutions with job openings in the countries concerned can also sign up with IOM, which will help them find qualified candidates. Besides facilitating the physical return of workers to their country of origin, IOM also arranges virtual return assignments, in which participants work via Internet or videoconferencing. As of this writing, TRQN has facilitated around 300 temporary return assignments to six countries.[288]

➡ Box 3: IOM: 50 Years of the Return of Talent Program

IOM has been implementing return-of-talent programs in Latin America for nearly 50 years, and in Africa and Asia for nearly 30.

In the 1960s, Latin American governments realized that significant numbers of their professionals and skilled workers were migrating to developed countries and felt the need to attract qualified migrants to return and help to respond to the prevailing development challenges. In 1964, IOM, then called the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), launched the Selective Migration Programme (SELMIG), which involved the movement of professionals, technicians, and migrant workers of European nationality to Latin America.

IOM continued facilitating the return of migrants to Latin America into the 1970s with the RQN program. The absence of language barriers and the very low integration and cultural adaptation efforts needed made expatriate experts a superior alternative, given the high cost of settling experts of European origin in Latin America. In other words, the permanent return of expatriate experts was seen as a more effective approach to countering brain drain, compared to shorter deployment of foreign experts.

The return-of-talent approach was expanded in the 1980s to include Africa and Asia and has continued to the present day. Programs identify suitable candidates for predetermined key posts in the public and private sectors in the country of origin, whose profiles then have to be screened and accepted by their employers. The professions involved are wide-ranging and include medicine, engineering, sciences, education, economics, and computer science.

Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM), *The MIDA Experience and Beyond*.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN). This program facilitates short-term volunteer consultancies, typically ranging from three weeks to six months. Launched in 1977 in Turkey with a focus on scientists, technology experts, and managers of Turkish origin residing abroad, TOKTEN has since expanded to at least 50 other developing countries.[289] TOKTEN allows professionals with at least a master's degree or equivalent and a significant amount of professional work experience to return to their countries for a short period of time to impart skills acquired while abroad. Typically, TOKTEN consultants engage in tasks international consultants might otherwise perform. In lieu of professional fees, TOKTEN consultants collect daily allowances, are reimbursed for travel expenses, and receive medical insurance.

TOKTEN is especially active in the West Bank and Gaza. Since 1994 the program has placed more than 400 Palestinian expatriate professionals in senior advisory and planning positions in leading Palestinian institutions, including key Palestinian Authority ministries, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and private-sector institutions. Moreover, about 18 percent of TOKTEN consultants have decided to return to the Occupied Palestinian Territory permanently.

As Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analyst Aaron Terrazas notes in a review of TOKTEN, it is "arguably the oldest formal program aimed at facilitating diaspora volunteerism" and initially had four principal objectives:[290]

- To lower the cost of technical advice;
- To allow developing countries to gain access to consultants with desirable linguistic or cultural competencies;
- To seed potential return of skilled expatriates or their long-term engagement with their country of origin;
- To depoliticize development-oriented volunteer work, as the aegis of UNDP allows political autonomy.

UNDP offices in participating countries administer the program with support from the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program and the governments of participating countries, as well as third-party donors and, in some cases, the private sector.

Returning Experts Programme. The Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM), a joint operation of Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the International Placement

Services (ZAV) of the German Federal Employment Agency (BA), is the human resources placement organization for the German Agency for Development Cooperation. CIM began the Integrated Experts Programme more than 25 years ago, linking partner-country organizations that needed qualified employees with highly qualified experts from Germany and other EU countries.

CIM has evolved to recognize the diaspora as a valuable resource. Its Returning Experts Programme supports individuals from developing, emergent, and transition countries who live and work in Germany or have completed their education or training there to return to their home country to use their skills and knowledge. CIM provides advisory and placement services as well as financial support for positions important to development policy.

The Returning Experts Programme enables diaspora experts to be as effective as possible by applying their knowledge, experiences, and contacts in the right places. Its goals are to promote international migration as a positive factor in development and to encourage the transfer of knowledge through the professional integration of returning experts. It also aims to establish returning experts as bridge-builders for international economic and development cooperation.[291]

Since 2004 the Returning Experts Programme has assisted more than 10,000 persons with career planning, return to their home countries, and the search for appropriate positions there. Financial support can be offered to experts returning to the following countries in partnership with CIM: Afghanistan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Mongolia, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, and Viet Nam, as well as the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[292]

B. Engaging Diasporas as Partners

More recent initiatives acknowledge that members of diasporas are helpful not only as practitioners who can fill human resource and knowledge gaps in their home countries but as sources of knowledge, influence, and job prospects regardless of whether they actually return. Some countries have chosen to build partnerships between actors at home and the diaspora by initiating a new wave of programs that go beyond the return-of-talent model and aim to establish a more sustainable two-way exchange of resources and knowledge.

1. Collaborative Research between Diasporas and Local Actors

Partnership projects typically target individuals and involve collaborative research.

Program of Introducing Discipline-Based Talent to Universities. One of China's recent initiatives, more commonly known as the 111 Project, allows for top scholars in the diaspora to team up with domestic researchers working in one of the 126 innovation bases located throughout China (see Box 4).[293]

➡ Box 4: The 111 Project: Attracting the Best and the Brightest

In an effort to attract the best and brightest among its diaspora, the Chinese government has stepped up funding of its ambitious diaspora programs. For the 111 Project, for instance, China allocated RMB 600 million ($88 million) or about RMB 1.8 million ($265,000) to each designated "innovation base" every year for five years. This grant could only be used to directly finance the innovation bases' recruitment-related efforts, such as the payment of stipends to diaspora scholars during their short-term stay in China, airfare costs, and other benefits. On top of the 111 Project funding, innovation bases get additional support from the federal government to finance actual collaborative activities and provide for and upgrade facilities and equipment as needed.

This substantial and long-term funding allows each innovation base to recruit from the diaspora's cream of the crop, including Nobel Prize winners and other well-known and highly respected scientists and academics working in top universities and companies worldwide. Hongxing Cai, a Chinese scholar based in Australia, who is currently studying the 111 Project, found that at the beginning of the program, many innovation bases "didn't know how to use the money." As Cai noted in an interview, for many innovation bases, the funding was so generous that it felt like it "came from the heavens" and was "simply out of their imagination."

Source: Interview of Hongxing Cai by Dovelyn Agunias, cited in Agunias, "Engaging the Mauritian Diaspora: Lessons from the International Community."

Unity through Knowledge Fund (UKF). Another recent project focusing on strengthening collaborative research is Croatia's Unity through Knowledge Fund (UKF). Established in 2007 by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MSES), and with substantial funding from the World Bank, UKF provides grants of up to €200,000 to projects involving individuals in the scientific and professional communities in Croatia and abroad.[294]

Thailand's Reverse Brain Drain Project. This project was established within the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) in 1997 with the goal of using the intelligence and connections

of Thai professionals living overseas to help in Thailand's development, particularly in the science and technology sectors.

Within this project, the Reverse Brain Drain Network has the objective of disseminating and exchanging information about Thailand's needs to NSTDA's alliance and networks both inside and outside Thailand. A Special Projects Program allows a diaspora member to team up with a Thai counterpart, propose a joint project, and receive funding. The project has to: (1) be pioneering and innovative; (2) have the potential to help Thailand improve its competitiveness; (3) lead to usable outcome or products; and (4) use the knowledge and expertise of Thai professionals overseas and their professional colleagues.

The Reverse Brain Drain Project also supports short-term visits of overseas Thai professionals to conduct lectures and workshops in Thailand on topics of special interest. The Thai counterparts (universities and government agencies) who have connections with overseas Thai professionals and want to organize the workshops can also send a request for partial funding.

2. Connect Communities across National Borders through Twinning Arrangements

Communities can also be connected via organized contacts between municipalities across national borders, a practice called municipal twinning. Communities benefit, ideally in equal terms, from the partnership, which is based on common or complementary interests and goals. Local governments in origin and destination countries assume the leading roles.

Far from being new, municipal twinning has been around since World War II and can be found in many municipalities, especially within Western Europe. What is novel is the interest on the part of communities with substantial immigrant populations in twinning with municipalities that are large and/or recent sources of immigrants.

Municipal Twinning in the Netherlands. Recent years have seen a number of Dutch municipalities establishing relations with local governments in countries such as Turkey, Suriname, and Morocco, all of which are major sources of migrants to the Netherlands. Twinning with these so-called diaspora countries is relatively new, with most ties established only after 1999. At present, there are 39 diaspora-focused

municipal twinning initiatives in the Netherlands, and more are in the works.[295]

Central to most city-to-city partnerships are projects focusing on strengthening local governance, especially with regard to waste management and education. An analysis by Edith van Ewijk and Isa Baud found that 11 of the 39 ties in the Netherlands focus on waste management.[296] For instance, the municipality of Zeist advises its partner municipality in Berkane, Morocco, on how to improve waste management. Interestingly, many municipalities work through public-private partnerships involving private companies.

To stimulate economic development, a number of municipalities link their chambers of commerce and/or specific industries to those of another city. For instance, Rotterdam established economic partnerships with Nador, Morocco, and Istanbul, Turkey, and tapped into the Rotterdam Development Corporation (Ontwikkelingsbedrijf Rotterdam) and the chamber of commerce to support economic development in both partner municipalities.[297]

In an evaluation of these initiatives, van Ewijk and Baud identified four main types of projects: those that: (1) strengthen local governance in such fields as service delivery, public administration, and citizen participation; (2) stimulate economic development; (3) promote transnational linkages and mobility; and (4) promote the integration of migrants in Dutch society.[298]

Van Ewijk and Baud's study found that involving migrants as policy officers can positively influence cooperation because they provide local knowledge and context and facilitate communication — critical contributions given that most of the exchanges include both tacit knowledge as well as contextual or embedded knowledge. The authors observed that migrants generally have "a strong commitment to contribute to development in their country of origin."[299]

Partnership Together. A similar initiative is Partnership Together (P2G) (formally Partnership 2000, P2K), a program run by the Jewish Agency for Israel that twins diaspora Jewish communities abroad with 27 regions throughout Israel.[300]

The platform connects some 550 communities around the world in 45 partnerships and has an annual budget of $25 million. More than 300,000 participants from Israel and the overseas communities take part

in roughly 500 programs each year. Described as a local endeavor with national impact, the platform aims to share ideas, strengths, challenges, and models of success and empower both communities to generate change. Through a joint committee process between the partnered communities, more than 10,000 volunteers each year work together to examine issues and responses and to determine projects and budgets. The individual partnership regions focus their efforts mainly on education and economic development.[301]

C. Diasporas as Members of Scientific and Technical Networks

Some countries support the creation of scientific, technical, and business networks composed of local experts and the diaspora. A number of countries rely on virtual connections through web-based media. Eritrea, for instance, has been engaging the diaspora through its various websites, while Germany maintains an alumni portal. Virtual exchanges with skilled diasporas are also supported by the Philippines, Uruguay (via its consular posts), Bulgaria, Colombia, Burundi, Estonia, Hungary, Switzerland, and Ecuador.[302] Still other countries combine Internet-based networks with opportunities for face-to-face encounters.

Ideally, these networks offer opportunities for leading diaspora and local experts, engineers, academics, government officials, and other professionals to meet one another and discuss research, business, and investment opportunities in their homeland.

Colombia's Red Caldas. One of the pioneers of this approach was Colombia's Red Caldas, which was established in 1991 by the Colombian Institute for the Development of Science and Technology (better known by its Spanish abbreviation, Colciencias), a government body. As Kristof Tamas notes in his review of diaspora networks, Red Caldas was "one of the first initiatives to link the members of a scientific diaspora with scientific and technological projects in their country of origin." During its lifetime, the network had many accomplishments, including the set-up and implementation of public policies and the development of human resources in science and technology. Its conferences, scholarships, and projects helped to mobilize researchers and fostered communication among them, and even encouraged researchers to return to Colombia. Tamas further notes that many members of Red Caldas were involved in economic and cultural development activities that benefited Colombia.[303]

Having dual scientific leaders in collaborative research projects — in Colombia and in partner countries — was key to the program's

success. These leaders were instrumental in capacity building, enabling the exchange of researchers, and training graduate students. They could also link research outcomes to development needs, although industrial development and production were not generally within the mandate of the network.[304]

After gaining momentum in its first few years, however, the program lost steam in the 1990s and ceased operations by 2000. As Box 5 below highlights, keeping networks active maybe more difficult than creating them in the first place.

Box 5: The Challenges in Keeping Networks

Many members abandoned Red Caldas for more specialized research networks. This is a common problem among diaspora networks: they are often too heterogeneous. Scientists and technology developers are often too caught up with their own institution's or employers' work schedules to have extra time to network with partners in distant countries.[305] Therefore, organizers must work to keep these networks professionally relevant to their members and offer rewards for continued involvement.

South Africa, like Colombia, has attempted to establish its own diaspora networks and failed. South Africa tried twice: first in 1998 through the South African Network of Skills Abroad (SANSA) and again in 2003 through the South African Diaspora Network (SADN). Both networks atrophied due to lack of funding and sustained interest among members.

SANSA aimed to connect expatriates with local experts and projects. It was maintained by the National Research Foundation, the government's national agency responsible for promoting and supporting basic and applied research as well as innovation. The network was built on a database containing information on the location, qualifications, and other characteristics of highly qualified South Africans living abroad. Participants took part in the network by receiving South African graduate students in laboratories or training programs, participating in training or research with South African counterparts, facilitating business contacts, or initiating research and commercial projects. There were other initiatives focused on specific sectors such as health and law, as well as databases of diaspora members maintained by particular countries, including Nigeria, Benin, and Burkina Faso, as well as South Africa.[306]

SADN linked approximately 40 well-established business leaders living in the greater London area with South Africa–based business people looking for assistance, guidance, and support in expanding their businesses to the overseas market. The members of the diaspora who participated in the network were connected with the South African Business Club in London and the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business.

Sources: Kristof Tamas, Diaspora Relations and Return, Unpublished Manuscript submitted to International Organization for Migration, 2007; Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias, *Remittances and Development: Trends, Impacts, and Policy Options: A Review of the Literature* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2006).

RedEsColombia. Most recently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia with support from IOM, created another networking platform called RedEsColomba. The goal of the website is to increase interactions among members of the diaspora and encourage new ideas for development. Increasing social capital, RedEsColombia argues, will

lead to greater development. The Colombian government considers the website to be one of its most successful initiatives to date.[307]

The website can be navigated by thematic areas: the Knowledge Network promotes networks between scholars (scientists and researchers, students, and teachers) and academic institutions (universities, research institutes); the Trade Network builds contacts and facilitates knowledge exchange for the benefit of Colombians engaged in commercial endeavors; the Cultural Network opens channels of communication, exchange, socialization, and cooperation among artists and others active in Colombian cultural activities; and the Community Network creates new venues for the inclusion and civic participation of vulnerable social groups and associations of Colombians inside and outside the country.

"Who Is Who in BiH" Diaspora Project. The Department for Diaspora of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees started this directory project in 2006 with the aim of establishing contact with professionally successful members of the diaspora. The first edition was published in 2009 and contained entire biographies of 142 PhD holders and researchers of Bosnian origin. The second edition of *Who Is Who in BiH Diaspora: PhD Holders and Researchers* was published in 2010 and contained information on 242 diaspora members. These publications fostered cooperation between the local academic and professional community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and those members of the diaspora highlighted in the publication.

The Department for Diaspora received positive feedback from diaspora members who participated in the project and sent their information. Because the staff of the Diaspora Department reached out to the diaspora members online and as part of their regular duties, the project cost only about €2,500, the price of printing the publications. Compilation of the database is ongoing.[308]

The Philippines Brain Gain Network (BGN). This network of talented professionals and organizations in the Philippines and abroad focuses on increasing the competitiveness of the Philippine economy. Funded by Narra Venture Capital, the private organization encourages cooperation between highly skilled expatriate Filipino professionals and students and Philippine-based professionals, students, and corporations.

BGN currently holds information on 2,240 members in its database, most of whom are based in the United States and Singapore. Members can access profiles of people in the database and use the search engine to

look for a professional within a specific skill set, educational background, or industry.[309]

The goal of the project is to provide a convenient platform for the diaspora to network and start new companies in the Philippines, provide consultancy services for Filipino organizations, or form foreign-based companies to do business in the Philippines. BGN also partners with headhunter organizations to help members of the diaspora find jobs in business, academic, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations in the Philippines; potential employers are given access to the database as well.

2 Challenges and Lessons Learned

A. Adopt a Demand-Driven Approach

Many programs start with an unclear understanding of what the beneficiary country needs. This lack of clarity creates problems and greatly undermines the programs' impact and, ultimately, their sustainability. For instance, evaluators of the discontinued RQN program in Africa reported a "lack of in-depth analysis of the special characteristics and needs of the country to match programme objectives with those of national objectives, and assessment of priority sectors and specific requirements of human resources."[310] This was confirmed by an evaluation of the third phase of the RQN program in Africa commissioned by the European Union, which revealed that the program was not sufficiently linked to sectors prioritized in origin countries' development plans, was too resource-intensive compared to the low number of actual returns (that is, the cost per returnee was too high), lacked country ownership and cooperation with other agencies and donors,[311] and did not achieve long-term retention levels. In addition, the program was largely driven by the skills that diaspora participants had to offer rather than the skills the participating countries needed, which made it difficult to ascertain whether these African qualified nationals would have returned in any case.[312]

Implementation of programs can be delayed when participants do not have clear roles when they begin their jobs in government institutions. In the case of EU-RQA, the Afghan return program, evaluators noted that "institutions were unprepared to received or utilize an EU-RQA as an employee." Although all government agencies had to develop job descriptions, evaluators found the "job descriptions were ignored, not respected or lost by the employer or employee."[313] Similarly, in the case of

the TRQN program sponsored by the Netherlands, there is a concern that too few institutions or organizations in Ethiopia have been selected to receive participants, which decreases the "chances that the right people are placed in the right spot."[314]

An unclear understanding of the specific needs at home makes programs more vulnerable to abuse by dishonest and corrupt actors. For instance, there are cases where diaspora members who are primarily looking to minimize their vacation costs have arranged to take part in a diaspora program. As the evaluator of TOKTEN–Sri Lanka noted in his report, for example:

> *The demand for the consultancy is generated by the consultant himself while the receiving organization merely accommodates his visit. In essence the consultant creates the consultancy and the expressed demand for it, identifying himself and often developing his own TOR (terms of reference) in collusion with his "contact" in the receiving agency.[315]*

Similarly, in IOM's RQA, evaluators highlighted that in some cases, "a beneficiary in Europe would register for the program" knowing that the "acquaintance working in the ministry" would conduct the hiring. The converse can also happen, where a "functionary at the ministry would hear about the program, advise his relative in the EU to register with the program, and then request that IOM sponsor his friend or relative to work at the same ministry."[316] It can be argued that this kind of informal matching between individuals in the local economy and the diaspora is a cost-effective way to bring in the needed skills in the shortest amount of time possible, but programs must guard against manipulation by unscrupulous actors.

A clear focus on the origin country's demand is necessary for attracting the right partners in the diaspora. Commenting on Mexico's experience with creating its diaspora talent network, Carlos González Gutiérrez, former director of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME), found, for instance, that it can be challenging for members of the talent network to identify specific areas for collaboration. According to Gutiérrez, the country of origin should actively "define and generate ideas, take initiative and originate the transaction with the diaspora, not the other way around. It is up for the country of origin to say 'yes, this is good' or 'yes, this is great, but unfortunately we can't work on that right now'."[317]

B. Map the Pool of Potential Participants at the Outset

Mapping networks, interests, expectations, and available resources among expatriate communities is an important first step in developing viable projects. Through sending out surveys and questionnaires and creating databases — all of which can be done online — it is possible to obtain detailed community profiles covering skills, qualifications, experience, social and demographic information, employment patterns, location, and length of stay in the host country. Such data can then be analyzed and matched against identified needs.[318]

During the MIDA Italy project, conducted between 2006 and 2007, the Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI, an Italian research institute) set out to ascertain the tools best suited to identify the skills, expertise, and resources present among the African diaspora community in Italy, and determined that focus group discussions and thematic interviews would be most effective.[319] The focus groups, in particular, allowed the researchers to take stock of the migrants' points of view, priorities, and expectations. As part of the second phase of the TRQN project, a similar mapping exercise was conducted for migrant groups in the Netherlands originating from Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan. In some projects, mapping exercises have been conducted as part of a project, rather than as preparation for a project.

It is during the resource-mapping stage that the suitability of potential target groups can be assessed. For instance, a survey of African expatriates residing in Italy, conducted in 2005, established that Nigerians constituted one of the largest African diaspora groups.[320] Despite this large presence, the preliminary analysis conducted between 2006 and 2007 revealed that most of them seemed to be victims of trafficking and, hence, it was appropriate to give priority to protection and support activities rather than migration and development initiatives.[321] This was an important outcome of the pre-assessment phase and allowed migration and development activities to focus on the Ghanaian and Senegalese communities. Both quantitatively and qualitatively, these two groups offered the necessary presence, as well as organizational, financial, and entrepreneurial resources and skills. Moreover, their numerous associations provided sociocultural support and, in particular, fostered transnational links with the host community at both the local and national levels.[322]

C. Offer Adequate Incentives to Attract the Targeted Diaspora Population

Programs that offer what the diaspora perceives as inadequate incentives may be unable to attract the skills and resources necessary to operate effectively. In Jamaica, for instance, the relatively low level of remuneration offered within the public sector made it difficult for employers to attract and retain competent and qualified personnel in high-level positions.[323] Indeed, the experience gained during the implementation of RQNs in many countries in Africa confirms that without adequate incentives, well-established diaspora members, especially those with children born in the destination country, are less like to return permanently or even temporarily to contribute to the development of their country of origin.[324]

Programs also must attend to other personal needs, such as housing, schooling for children, transportation, and health insurance. One of the biggest problems diaspora members face, regardless of the duration of return, is finding affordable and appropriate accommodation. An evaluation of the EU-RQA program concluded that although the "salary offered as part of the assistance package was not a deciding factor or obstacle to participation in the program, the availability of affordable housing was a substantial problem for beneficiaries."[325] Diaspora members contemplating a longer-term stay in Afghanistan were also concerned about problems of access to high-quality schools for their children.[326] Aside from rent, other expenses included transportation, communication (such as mobile phone credit to call home), and food. The EU-RQA participants felt that the cost of housing made living on a €300 monthly stipend very precarious. Suggestions were made that the program incorporate a housing subsidy or that IOM help arrange for cheap housing through bulk deals with local agents.[327] Health care is another issue, especially in postconflict destinations. In the EU-RQA program, evaluators found that "because death or illness in Afghanistan could leave the family in Europe without a primary earner, some participants thought that the lack of basic insurance for program participants constituted unreasonable risk for some potential candidates."[328]

Additional benefits that improve the workplace, such as updated and adequate facilities and equipment, are also critical to successful implementation of diaspora programs. Capital infrastructure (such as advanced science and engineering colleges and state-of-the-art research labs) that promotes professional growth and offers a dynamic and transformative environment is an important factor in the decision

to engage back home. For example, the general lack of resources at many host institutions and organizations hampered the effectiveness of TOKTEN volunteers. In Rwanda, in particular, evaluators noted that "many complained of lack of computer facilities and Internet access," which made it difficult for the diaspora to do their work.[329] Program managers typically find that diaspora members, having lived and worked in countries where resources and facilities are more abundant, may find it hard to adjust to an antiquated working environment in time to accomplish the program's goals. Indeed, many diaspora members who felt they were not very effective in transferring knowledge, technology, and experience to others blame the inadequate or inappropriate tools, equipment, and research facilities that they encountered during their stint in the country of origin. Frustrations over the workplace have also kept many participants from taking part in the program again or from encouraging colleagues to join future programs.[330]

For Tamara Keating,[331] Head of Unit at IOM, it is critical to have a thorough needs assessment and description of the necessary equipment for each mission. IOM´s MIDA Great Lakes program has tried to overcome this problem by opting for a project approach with structured systematic implementation planning, including delivery of equipment as part of the overall knowledge transfer. However, similar problems can still arise when equipment is not ordered and/or delivered in time.

D. Educate Diasporas about the Local Context in their Country of Origin

Despite the cultural and linguistic affinities of experts from the diaspora and migrant communities, it is important to note that many emigrants may have lost track of the current local context. The longer migrants have been out of the country, the more difficult it will be for them to readjust to the local context. This is especially true when the level of development in the country of origin varies greatly from that in the country of residence.

Lack of infrastructure, different working and living conditions, and levels of (in)security can also influence the success of short-term returns of qualified nationals.[332] For these reasons, the MIDA Ghana Health Project follows the good practice of offering preparatory courses and orientation sessions to participants. Furthermore, diaspora professionals can assist by informing other diaspora members of the prevailing situation.[333]

E. Create Special Bodies or Posts to Facilitate Implementation

Apart from their symbolic value, special bodies and posts have practical value in day-to-day operations of diaspora projects. The RQN program in Jamaica, for example, had a steering committee to "insure the smooth running of the program, mainly with regard to the selection and recruitment criteria of the candidates and the level of reintegration support." The committee was also advised on operational problems encountered in project execution so it could lend support in resolving them.[334] Ethiopia has a support group consisting mostly of representatives of government ministries and other establishments at the federal level.[335] Mexico's talent network has designated a National Point of Contact to serve as a liaison with some sectors.[336] To further appeal to participants, programs may also consider hiring local staff who speak the language of the target population. In the case of EU-RQA, the program hired an employee of Afghan origin who, an evaluation later found, made it easier for candidates to understand the program and application process.[337]

Coordinators or focal points working in target institutions in the beneficiary countries and nationals engaged in project management can also help to strengthen country ownership. Without a focal point in the beneficiary institution, there is an increased risk that the activities are not carried out and supported, as well as a lack of potential for buy-in and ownership of the results. In its fifth phase, IOM´s MIDA Great Lakes program asked all applicants to identify focal points in the beneficiary institutions for the duration of each project.[338] Although potentially critical, however, policymakers need to make sure that they are situated in a way that solves problems and does not exacerbate them. For instance, MIDA's Ghana Health Project formed a task force consisting of representatives from government agencies, professional organizations, and the Dutch embassy to provide direction. Evaluators, however, found that "the task force is 'stretched thin and overbooked,' [which] added additional strain on human resources and created unnecessary bureaucracy and time, as demonstrated by [the] difficulty in convening meetings."[339] As Keating notes, "The challenge is to keep these focal points motivated from a distance, and to ensure a smooth handover when they leave to new positions, as is often the case."[340]

F. Establish an Appropriate Time Frame for Investment

Perhaps the greatest challenge in program implementation is the brevity of most assignments and, indeed, of programs themselves. Many government initiatives on diasporas tend to be short-lived and are

dependent on support from the central government, which can vary from one regime to another, and from donors. Since the technical know-how that is critical for handling programs is typically acquired through years of trial and error, it is important for governments to provide adequate time for their diaspora programs to develop. Most of the programs highlighted in this handbook run on two-year cycles, which program managers found to be exceedingly short. Given the average duration of stay for short-term engagement — less than two months — and the variety of tasks that volunteers were assigned in most cases, little time was left to develop professional bonds with and transfer more knowledge and skills to their counterparts in host institutions. Indeed, a survey of China's 111 Project found that 70 percent of domestic scholars needed more time to work with diaspora scholars.[341] Evaluators of programs in Ghana, Afghanistan, and Rwanda expressed similar concerns. For the EU-RQA program, in particular, "former beneficiaries and their supervisors and colleagues think that 6–12 months is an insufficient period to effect meaningful changes on the efficiency of a company or institutional department."[342]

The duration of assignments should depend on a thorough analysis of activities involved in each assignment. It is clear that some activities, especially those that involve a great deal of practical expertise, would require more time than others. Special terms for some longer assignments (three to six months), depending on the nature of activities to be undertaken, should be considered. Repeated return visits and follow-up virtual contacts are other viable options.

G. Ensure Meaningful Participation of Key Stakeholders

Diaspora initiatives almost always benefit from the solid commitment of all actors. This was not the case in the pilot phase of the MIDA Italy project; despite its success in meeting many of its goals, it was clear the IOM and the Italian government did most of the work.[343] As IOM noted in its evaluation of the program: "There was no concrete commitment from the Governments or private sectors of the countries of origin to support pilot project implementation and play a pivotal role in integrating MIDA Italy into national policies for using the diasporas' skills and resources. Ownership of MIDA Italy did not rest with the African countries, as also recommended, but with the Italian Government."[344]

Ownership is critical because, without it, the sustainability of a program is threatened. The website created by IOM to raise interest among the Ethiopian diaspora to invest in its country of origin was not made with the active cooperation of the Ethiopian government. Its sustainability,

therefore, was not guaranteed.[345] The MIDA Great Lakes program suffered from a similar lack of ownership. The three countries selected — Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — provided far less support than the diasporas' countries of residence (in this case Belgium and Italy) and the donors.[346]

The active engagement of governments is an essential condition of the success of diaspora programs. One of the most valuable lessons learned from past and present MIDA projects is that cooperation among all relevant stakeholders is of the utmost importance. Close collaboration among the respective ministries and other actors in the targeted sector(s) has proven to be of enormous benefit. For example, the MIDA Ghana Health Project could not have been realized without the help of partners in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Germany, on the one hand, and Ghanaian experts on the other. In the MIDA Great Lakes Program, IOM has a memorandum of understanding with relevant ministries in all three partner governments, on the basis of which the governments make ministerial officials available on a full-time basis. These officials are not IOM staff but work in the ministries.[347]

The failure of talent networks such as Red Caldas, SANSA, and SADN has been attributed to overcentralization of the networks. The governments' overarching control of the network activities seems to have alienated some members and raised suspicions among others.

H. Invest in an Effective, Multipronged Outreach Strategy

Websites and word of mouth are two of the most effective tools for advertising projects. In the EU-RQA program, Internet searches as well as informal social networks and community organizations were the most commonly cited sources of information about the Afghan return program. Many community leaders were directly contacted by IOM and took it upon themselves to tell colleagues and relatives about the program.[348]

It is important to go beyond traditional migrant organizations to reach young people and, in some cases, women. In the EU-RQA program, for instance, younger beneficiaries often stated that the Afghan community organizations were divisive, as some were allied with certain political beliefs and factions. Afghans under the age of 40 living in Europe also had less contact with community organizations than their elders. Attracting the younger generation and women to diaspora programs is critical to their success.[349] Targeted publicity can help to reach the widest possible audience and achieve the important objective of attaining a higher level of female registration.[350]

Outreach and promotional campaigns should be conducted in both origin and destination countries. This was a significant lesson learned during Phase I of the MIDA Great Lakes program, which started in 2001. Some diaspora experts encountered mistrust and even jealousy on the part of local staff during Phase I. However, during the second phase, which started three years later, the general knowledge about and public perception of the program was better, and therefore the acceptance of the diaspora members was generally much higher — an important condition for effective capacity building.[351]

I.   Monitor the Implementation of Projects

Checks should be installed to make sure that grants are used as intended. In the EU-RQA program, evaluators found that IOM was "particularly vigilant about monitoring the self-employed business projects and making sure that the grant money was used to buy tangible assets." The €5,000 grant was disbursed in kind and participants made purchase requests for equipment and supplies, which were then purchased by IOM.[352]

Rules must be strictly respected and enforced to avoid suspicion of corruption. In some of IOM's return programs, although rules and procedures were observed most of the time, exceptions were made and extra support was given to some employers. These few cases, unfortunately, "lowered many beneficiaries' opinions of the program, as beneficiaries sometimes felt that others received special treatment at their expense." To placate would-be critics, administrators should publish procedures and clarify the motivations for such exceptions and extra support.[353]

J.   Engage the Private Sector

The private sector has an important role in diaspora programs since it is usually the actor with the greatest capacity to absorb the skills that diaspora members offer. In the EU-RQA program, evaluators found that "private sector companies were much more prepared and adept than their public sector counterparts. Beneficiaries [that is, the diaspora participants] in private companies very rarely stated that their employers were unprepared for their arrivals or that they felt that their skills were not utilized."[354] An analysis of interviews with colleagues and supervisors of diaspora participants who worked in the private sector reveals that most EU-RQA beneficiaries were well matched to their positions and possessed the necessary skills, which they had learned in similar positions in the past. In the technical fields, beneficiaries were credited with introducing

new techniques, methods, and technologies. Among management and administrative professions, participants were usually said to have brought professionalism and exactitude to tasks such as accounting and recordkeeping.[355]

Salaries in the private sector also tend to be higher than in the public sector, which led to less discontent among returnees, as in the case of the EU-RQA program.[356]

K. Ensure Efficient Infrastructure in Destination Countries to Support the Effectiveness of Innovative Programs

By using new communications technology for the virtual transfer of expertise and skills, highly skilled expatriates can share their expertise with colleagues in their country of origin without having to be physically present. One constraint, however, is the quality of available equipment. Experience has shown that some host institutions — for instance, hospitals in the MIDA Ghana project or in the TRQN projects of the Netherlands — do not have appropriate electronic communication facilities. In the case of Sudan, even Skype was difficult to use.[357]