Partnership for Democratic Governance

The Contribution of Diaspora Return to Post-Conflict and Fragile Countries

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Executive Summary

This study aims to better understand the circumstances under which diaspora*[1] return* can make an effective contribution to strengthening government capacity to perform core functions* and deliver basic services in fragile and post-conflict countries*; to consider complementary or additional means to mobilise the diaspora in these countries; and identify specific policy recommendations for governments in home and host countries* as well as for donors (at both headquarters and field level). The study draws on an extensive literature and policy review, supported by a small sample of interviews in **Afghanistan**, **Haiti** and **Southern Sudan**.

Members of the diaspora may have the skills, experience and networks to adopt critical positions in government to strengthen state capacity. Multiplier effects may apply where there is the capacity* to transfer their expertise to others and nd the successful return of even just one individual has been demonstrated to serve as a magnet for further return. At the same time, promoting diaspora return is only one element in a range of policies for establishing the skills-base required in post-conflict and fragile states, which also includes training for skilled personnel in-place and using international staff to fill time-bound and specific gaps, different combinations of which may be appropriate in different contexts.

Existing research demonstrates that promoting the return of members of the diaspora, especially long-term or permanently, is often problematic, especially in post-crisis countries. An important challenge is a mismatch in supply and demand. In some cases, governments (which make demands for diaspora contributions ranging from remittances to specific skills and expertise) have relied too heavily on the diaspora, where at least some of the required skills are actually available within the local population. In other cases, members of the diaspora (representing the supply of knowledge, wealth, skills and networks) have found their skills on return under-utilised, for example where there is inadequate capacity to absorb or optimise them. Equally, members of the diaspora may return with unrealistic expectations, both for their career trajectories and for their home country. They may find it hard to re-adjust to local norms, which is a particular problem for women returning to patriarchal societies. In these cases return almost certainly means a reduction in wages. In addition, many members of the diaspora have the legal right to permanently live abroad and thus have little incentive to remain in their country of origin when these countries face deterioration in their political, economic or social situations, or revert to conflict.

[1] Words and concepts marked with an asterisk (*) are defined in the Glossary (page 49)

The effectiveness of diaspora return is assessed in this report in three ways: evaluating under which conditions diaspora return can be encouraged; assessing the extent to which diaspora return has a positive impact on capacity development, at both the individual and organisational levels; and analysing the extent to which return is likely to be sustainable and conducive to positive externalities for the home country, as well as to returnees themselves. Overall effectiveness depends just as much on the enabling environment in home countries as the individual attributes of the returnees concerned. Developing an enabling environment in post-conflict and fragile states is a significant challenge.

A common motivation for return is the possibility of contributing to the home country. Other often-stated motivations are improved peace and security in the home country, the desire to raise children in the homeland, economic reasons such as the employment outlook, specific personal issues and negative experiences living in the diaspora. All of these motivations were found in the case study countries.

There is a distinction to be drawn between the **formal recruitment** of diaspora members — often through programmes organised by the United Nations or international agencies — and **informal recruitment** through social networks and political ties. In Afghanistan, Southern Sudan and Haiti, respondents tended to identify available positions through informal means such as network ties, rather than through formal return or placement programmes. Little evidence was found across any of the study countries for formal standardised appointment procedures. While informal recruitment procedures may be effective in the short term, this study demonstrates that they are unlikely to access the full pool of potential returnees* within the diaspora, do not represent good practice, and are not an effective way to match the supply and demand of skills and expertise.

The returnees interviewed for this study in Afghanistan, Haiti and Southern Sudan tended to be either advisers or in technical roles, and some were in senior positions. Around one in six stated that they felt they were able to transfer skills directly to their colleagues; however very few were under the impression that they had influenced broader administrative and governmental processes to promote good governance. There was also very limited evidence for specific mechanisms in place to take full advantage of returnee skills and experience, for example by systematically involving them in training, mentoring, twinning or coaching programmes. It appears that the effectiveness of return programmes, and the individual progress of returnees themselves, has not been systematically monitored or evaluated in any of the study countries in recent years. This conclusion supports findings from the wider research that specific capacity development is required to realise the potential of diaspora return.

While it was not possible in the study countries to methodically compare the performance of returnees with that of expatriate staff either already employed in the country by donors and NGOs or imported to support government capacity, a basic analysis indicates that returnees were more effective than local hires in comparable positions as a result of better

education and more experience, although they often lacked a nuanced understanding of the local context.

Resentment between returnees and local hires is a common problem, often because of significant disparities in wages and benefits. Within the study countries, very few respondents stated unequivocally that they would remain in their current government positions in the long term. There were indications, although no firm evidence, that a number of returnees were keeping their options open to return to the diaspora, even though they had been employed in 'permanent' positions.

Diaspora return represents one of a range of policy options to mobilise the diaspora. Others include maximising remittance flows* and other diaspora resources so that they contribute to local investments, community development and possibly job creation; temporary returns; and consolidating knowledge networks; although significant capacity development is required to promote each of these, especially in post-conflict and fragile settings.

This report makes the following broad set of recommendations to governments in the home country, governments in the host country and international donors (both at headquarters and country level):

1. Enhancing the capacity development impact of diaspora returnees in the context of fragile states

To governments in the home country:

- Develop an inventory of skills among local staff, and identify gaps for the short and longer term;
- Identify where such expertise might be available in dialogue with diaspora groups and governments in host countries, while ensuring coherence with existing technical assistance programmes to avoid duplication;
- Undertake preparatory visits to ensure that facilities for placements are adequate in the particular institutions in which diaspora returnees are to be employed. Optimise the ability of returnees to be able to pass on knowledge and have a significant capacity development impact at the individual and organisational levels. This can be done in formal terms of reference and appointment procedures; and,
- Lift restrictions on the employment of diaspora returnees within government, for example on the basis of dual nationality.

To governments in the host country:

- Develop a social and economic profile of diaspora members from priority states for development assistance, in collaboration with diaspora associations, and provide reassurances of anonymity where necessary; and,

- Disseminate information through diaspora associations on formal remittance transfer mechanisms as a supplementary measure to return.

To international donors:

- Support governments in home countries to undertake basic needs assessments across government and within priority sectors of the national labour market to identify specific skill requirements;
- Identify and provide expatriate staff with specific skills that are required and not immediately available to the government in home countries, preferably on time-bound assignments only;
- Support training for local staff in specific skills that are in short supply;
- Support the development of procedures to match members of the diaspora who wish to return with work opportunities in their home country, for example by funding an employment desk within specific embassies and consulates or through the establishment and promotion of specific schemes in key governance areas;
- Support governments in home countries to identify and profile the skills of members of the diaspora who have returned outside of formal return programmes;
- Support initiatives to reduce local brain drain (*e.g.* where diaspora members, who have returned to government jobs, later move to work for donors because of better salaries and perks); and,
- Work with governments in host countries to favour a whole-of-government approach to migration, development and diaspora policies.

2. Encouraging the sustainability of diaspora contributions

To governments in the home country:

- Commission local research institutions to undertake evaluations of the obstacles experienced in various government branches where clear capacity needs have been expressed and can be met by diaspora returnees, and develop specific policy responses on that basis;
- Anchor diaspora return programmes within broader government human resource reform (*e.g.* through the work of the Office of Management and Human Resources, *Office de management et des ressources humaines/OMRH*, in Haiti) by setting up mediation mechanisms and developing clear reporting lines to ensure that diaspora returnees are integrated into mainstreamed processes;
- Encourage individual returnees to participate in informal knowledge networks so that their contributions are also anchored into a broader

dialogue and other knowledge mechanisms, even if return is only temporary; and,

- Provide mentoring schemes for a sample of diaspora returnees to identify and respond to specific problems.

To governments in the host country:

- Co-operate with governments in home countries to provide cultural orientation before return (*e.g.* about the particular sector to which return will take place), supported where feasible by virtual networking and teleconferencing to make initial contact between the diaspora member and a particular institution in the home country.

To international donors:

- Monitor and evaluate all sponsored diaspora return programmes and establish clear indicators in collaboration with governments in home countries; and,
- On the basis of these indicators, adjust return programmes accordingly.

3. Based on country context, supporting the return of diaspora members

To governments in the home country:

- Identify through local surveys the needs and expectations of the diaspora before return, and identify specific incentives for both short- and long-term return (*e.g.* through tailored return programmes, adapted regulations or specific fiscal advantages). Ensure that the demand for contributions is articulated through official channels (*e.g.* consular posts), networks (*e.g.* diaspora associations, international organisations), and informal channels (*e.g.* web-based newspapers and home country religious organisations) alike;
- Identify positions specifically suited to temporary or periodic placements; and,
- Instate incentive schemes to leverage remittances for capacity-building as a supplementary measure to return.

To governments in the host country:

- Lift restrictions, for example regarding re-entry visas, to facilitate short-term visits by diaspora members considering permanent return, and encourage twinning programmes at the institutional level; and,
- Support the diaspora contributions that are likely to best meet the expectations and actual needs of the home country.

To international donors:

- If a clear demand for a systematic return programme is expressed, support governments in home countries to develop formal recruitment and appointment procedures for all government positions, including by advertising locally and within the diaspora, establishing transparent criteria for selection, developing terms of reference for appointees, and undertaking regular performance appraisals and evaluations;
- Fund a roster of short-term volunteers within particular embassies and consulates. Extend existing temporary return and volunteer programmes to target countries, taking full account of the national context; and,
- Collaborate with other donors to share lessons on a regular basis and co-ordinate return programmes.

Summary Report

1. Aims and objectives

It is an increasingly common trend that citizens with better education and skills leave states in situations of fragility or undergoing conflict in disproportionately large numbers, especially when the conflict endures. Their return, though, can be an essential component both in the immediate term for securing a sustainable peace settlement for post-conflict reconstruction, and in the longer term for strengthening government capacities. The permanent return of such diaspora members has, however, proved difficult across a range of countries in recent years, as explained in the next section.

On this basis, this study has three main goals. The first is to better understand the circumstances under which diaspora return can be effective and how policies in home and host countries as well as by international organisations and donors can support return, including by creating an enabling environment for diaspora participation. The second is to consider complementary or additional means to mobilise the diaspora in post-conflict or fragile settings, for example by encouraging temporary return or investments from abroad. The third is to identify policy recommendations for the range of involved stakeholders. This report relies on an extensive literature and policy review, supported by limited primary research and interviews with diaspora returnees serving in government positions and their supervisors and co-workers in Afghanistan, Haiti and Southern Sudan.

2. Background

There are multiple and competing definitions of the concept diaspora, the most straightforward being that they are emigrants (and their descendants) who maintain a connection, psychological or material, to their country of origin, or so called homeland. Members of the diaspora are often, but not necessarily, relatively well-educated and skilled nationals, who have settled abroad either permanently or for the long term, and usually in the more developed world. Such populations are thus distinct for example from refugees — who flee conflict zones in larger numbers, but who usually move within the immediate region — and from labour migrants — who may go abroad to work on a regular basis but who often return home in the intervening period.

Diaspora return can be an essential component both in the immediate term for securing a sustainable peace settlement for post-conflict reconstruction, and in the longer term for strengthening governance

capacities. In particular, more skilled personnel are normally required to support the re-establishment of government structures, promote the rule of law, and to serve in management, technical and administrative positions across the public and private sectors, for example in the health, education or banking sectors. It is often the case in post-conflict and fragile states that there is but a limited supply of skilled personnel already in place, and while they may have certain advantages as compared to members of the diaspora, for example as regards local networks and a more nuanced understanding of the national political context[2], they may not have been exposed to new skills or developed international networks, as is often found among diasporas. International staff and expatriates can also help fill gaps in the short-term (often in the form of donor-supported technical co-operation). Promoting diaspora return is therefore but one element in a suite of policies for establishing or enhancing the skills-base required in post-conflict and fragile contexts. This range of policies also includes training for skilled personnel in place and using international staff to fill short-term gaps, and it is important to understand which blend of these options is most appropriate in a particular setting.

Supporting and possibly promoting the return of members of the diaspora, especially long-term or permanently, has however often been found to be problematic. An important challenge is a mismatch in supply and demand. In some cases governments in the home country have relied too heavily on the diaspora, whilst many of the required skills are actually available within the local population. This can generate resentment both by co-workers and within the wider population, and raise suspicions of favouritism and nepotism, and has been a regular problem in Afghanistan[3]. In other cases, members of the diaspora have found their skills on return under-utilised, for example where there is inadequate capacity to take advantage of them, as in Kosovo during the late 1990s[4]. Equally, members of the diaspora may return with unrealistic expectations, both for their career trajectories and for their home country[5]. They may find it hard to re-adjust to local norms — this is regularly a problem for women returning from relatively independent careers in more developed countries to more traditional and patriarchal societies, and has been reported in a number of West African countries[6]. In more practical terms, return almost certainly also means a reduction in wages. In addition, many members of the diaspora have the legal right to live permanently abroad, and thus have little incentive to remain at home when things go wrong.

Even if diaspora return is largely self-selective and normally occurs in relatively small numbers, it is important to establish the right policy settings for those who do choose to return. Their economic and potentially political significance far outweighs their numerical significance. They may have the

[2] Hanifi, 2006; Meyer and Wattiaux, 2006; Phinney et al., 2001

[3] IOM (2007)

[4] Black et al. (2002)

[5] Berry, 1997; Cobas, 1987

[6] Manuh, 2004

skills, experience and networks to adopt truly critical positions either in government or in the private sector. Multiplier effects (positive externalities) may apply where there is the capacity to transfer their expertise to others. And the successful return of even one individual may serve as a magnet for further return. Equally, it is important to acknowledge that there are alternatives and often equally effective ways for diasporas to engage in post-conflict reconstruction and strengthening fragile states, for example through temporary returns, and economic, political, social and even cultural, engagement from abroad.

3. Methods

This report relies on three main sources of information. The first is an extensive review of the academic literature, which emerges largely from the field of migration and development. A reservation is that relatively little of this literature is concerned with diaspora return, instead focusing on the contributions of diasporas from overseas. Furthermore, even within the limited literature that is concerned with return and reintegration, very little directly addresses the contributions of diasporas in government service. As a result, a second source of information has been policy documents – including unpublished 'grey' material – emanating from governments in both home and host countries, as well as international agencies and, to a lesser extent, civil society. While both these reviews have been generic, they have focused on the three study countries (Afghanistan, Haiti and Southern Sudan), in particular to bolster the results of limited primary research there.

Interviews in Afghanistan, Haiti and Southern Sudan were based on questionnaires designed and analysed by a team of researchers, and conducted by locally based consultants. A comprehensive list of questions covering personal data, biography, hiring process, employment experience, personal feelings, work experiences and future prospects were aggregated into four questionnaires for returnees, their supervisors, local-hire colleagues and a general data questionnaire.

A number of limitations emerged from the primary research and noting these here is of relevance for efforts to undertake further primary research on diaspora return. One was that few senior government officials accepted to make themselves available for interview and the information and data requested of the various governments in home countries was not received. Response rates were also disappointing: Overall, only 27 valid responses were received from Haiti, 39 from Afghanistan (of which 13 were invalidated) and 55 from Southern Sudan. Very few respondents answered all the questions, and often their answers were vague and at times contradictory. Despite efforts to achieve a gender balance, most of the respondents were male, which made women under-represented. A number of analytical challenges also arose, in particular in the effort to assess how effective diaspora returns have been. Very few supervisors or co-workers were willing to provide information about their colleagues, for example, and no published evaluations of the return programmes referred to in this report were available. Thus there was no way to independently verify the findings.

Terms of Reference were not provided for any of the positions held by returnees, which made it hard to benchmark their performances. Finally it is probably the case that the number of case study countries (3) and the final number of interviewees is too small to serve as a significant statistical sample.

The conclusions from these case studies are therefore tentative. On the whole, however, they do support the conclusions from the literature and policy review. Therefore this study is probably best viewed as a pilot for further research and a basis to provide emerging policy recommendations to both partner and governments in host countries as well as donors in headquarters and in the field, with the understanding that each of the suggested recommendations will have to be tailored to the country's specific context, and periodically re-assessed, for instance through political economy analysis.

4. Country profiles

Three post-conflict and/or fragile countries were covered by this study (both the literature and policy review and the primary research): Afghanistan, Haiti and Southern Sudan. It is important to note that research for this study was completed before the 2010 earthquake in Haiti[7] and before the 2010 elections in Southern Sudan. All three countries are recovering from years of war or violent civil turmoil which left them with limited individual and organisational capacities and an enabling environment that is not particularly conducive to optimising the contributions from diasporas. These situations of fragility are manifested by the inability of the state to deliver basic services and/or government functions to its citizens in a context of political instability, weak governance and systemic corruption, a weak social contract between the state and its citizens, and a system where informality prevails and the rule of law is, at best, limited. The government in all three of these countries has little experience in delivering core government functions and services to the public despite very different historical trajectories. In all three countries there has also been a significant movement of educated and experienced citizens into the diaspora.

Of the three countries, Afghanistan has had the most active return programmes. Supported by the international community, the Government of Afghanistan has developed a sophisticated system for recruiting from the diaspora for both short- and longer-term positions such as the IOM Return of Qualified Afghans Programme. Short-term volunteer recruitment has been offered through UN Volunteers (UNV) and UN Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) programmes. The Government of Afghanistan has placed diaspora returnees in senior positions, including as

[7] However, after the 12 January earthquake, and in light of the mobilisation of the Haitian diaspora for Haiti's reconstruction, additional points have been added to this particular case study, which were also able to inform the overall policy recommendations, given their timeliness for the international community and partners from post-conflict or fragile states

ministers and deputy ministers. A prominent example is former Minister of Finance Ashraf Ghani.

Haiti has in recent years also benefited from TOKTEN, although there has been no systematic attempt by either international donors or the government to encourage the recruitment of diaspora personnel. Attempts are now underway, however, by IOM to resume former contacts with partners and a programme of diaspora return is expected soon. Haiti maintains a Ministry of Haitians Living Abroad for contact with the diaspora, but this Ministry is not officially charged with supporting the repatriation of diaspora members. Overseas remittances from the diaspora are a major source of funds both for the government and for the people of Haiti, and before the 12 January 2010 earthquake the promotion of remittances — rather than supporting diaspora return — was a deliberate policy choice. Since the earthquake, however, members of the diaspora have returned spontaneously to help fill immediate gaps, for example as doctors, nurses and engineers, although they are not expected to remain in the long term. The international community has encouraged the Government of Haiti to adopt a multi-pronged strategy towards the diaspora, mobilising remittances at the same time as encouraging those diaspora members who are willing to return and contribute to do so.[8]

Box 1. Key considerations for the Haitian Diaspora

The OECD Partnership for Democratic Governance, speaking at a forum convened by the Organization of American States (OAS) on 'Key Considerations for the Haitian Diaspora' in Washington (21-23 March 2010), emphasised that donors should seek to: (1) Support the capacity of the Haitian state to deliver basic services and perform its core functions, in-line with the National Plan of Action (PARDN); (2) Develop an agreed-upon platform between the Government of Haiti and representatives from diaspora groups in order to best harness the diaspora's responses to the needs of the government; (3) Adapt the existing regulatory and legal framework to facilitate the participation and contributions of the diaspora in the recovery, reconstruction and development efforts in the medium and long term; and (4) facilitate remittances from the diaspora to support Haitian households in the short term, while setting out sustainable modalities in the medium and longer terms.

In Southern Sudan, political considerations (*e.g.* the division of Sudan into two functional administrations) have meant that international support for returnees has not emerged as a major priority. Members of the Government of Southern Sudan express an interest in encouraging diaspora return. In practice, however, with the exception of what appears to be a relatively low-profile TOKTEN programme that covers all of Sudan, there is no systematic government return programme. IOM, for example, has recently implemented a Return of Qualified Sudanese programme focusing on public sector institutions. At the same time, much of the Government of

[8] OECD/UNDP (2010)

Southern Sudan, at all levels, includes diaspora returnees who have returned from neighbouring countries.

5. The effectiveness of diaspora return

Assessing the effectiveness of any policy or process is difficult, especially in a post-conflict or fragile setting. This section combines the literature and policy review with evidence from the three case studies to assess effectiveness across three main indicators. The first is why and how diaspora return takes place, in order to answer questions such as: *To what extent are returns self-selected or prompted by policy interventions? What is effective practice for matching returnee skills with the requirements of job openings at home? How effective are return programmes?* The second is the extent to which diaspora return can be gauged to have a positive professional impact, relating for example to the level at which returnees are appointed, the dissemination of their experience, monitoring and evaluation, and the extent to which returnees perform as effectively as local hires or international staff. The third indicator relates to individual satisfaction among diaspora returnees, concerning for example relations with work colleagues and social integration, which is taken as one measure of the sustainability of return.

5.1. Why and how does return take place?

It is impossible to accurately predict whether or not any individual will return voluntarily to their country of origin. The return decision is always complex. It is often made on the basis of multiple factors that are hard to disentangle even for the person making the decision. It can depend on individual experiences and propensities that are virtually impossible to measure. It can also be irrational. The working 'model' of the factors determining the decision to return (Figure 1) has been developed primarily on the basis of previous research on migration decision-making and return.[9] Existing literature and policy reviews suggest that there are two key components to the individual decision whether or not to return. One is information about the options available to the individual. The decision to return — as long as it is voluntary — is typically made after comparing the conditions and prospects in the host country with those in the country of origin.[10] An additional element in this decision is information about policy interventions, in the form of extra incentives or disincentives to stay or to return.[11] The second key component to the individual return decision is depicted as a series of 'inputs' in Figure 1. The point here is that no one is a perfectly 'rational' decision-maker, and furthermore that different people come to different conclusions even on the basis of the same evidence.[12] One

[9] Black et al. (2003)

[10] Koser, 1998; Faist, 1999; Muus, 1999; King, 2000

[11] von Arb, 2001; Bloch and Atfield, 2002

[12] Malmberg, 1997; Fisher and Martin, 1999

reason relates to individual attributes such as age and gender.[13] Another relates to the broader context of social relations including peer pressure to stay (or not) in the diaspora and the perceived influence that one will have on the home country.

It is possible to conceive of a wide range of conditions in the country of origin and the host country that potential returnees might take into consideration when deciding whether to return. They can be broadly divided into economic, social and political conditions. Economic conditions typically include employment and housing,[14] aspects of the social condition such as social welfare and healthcare. For asylum seekers and refugees, political conditions are likely to be particularly important, especially security.[15]

Policies can change the overall conditions in countries of origin and host countries.[16] They can provide incentives to return, for example by providing assistance with travel costs, reintegration grants, loans and training. They can also take the form of disincentives to stay, for example by removing legal status. It seems likely that such incentives and disincentives will also be considered in the decision whether or not to return. What is not clear from the existing literature is how important a role they play in that decision.

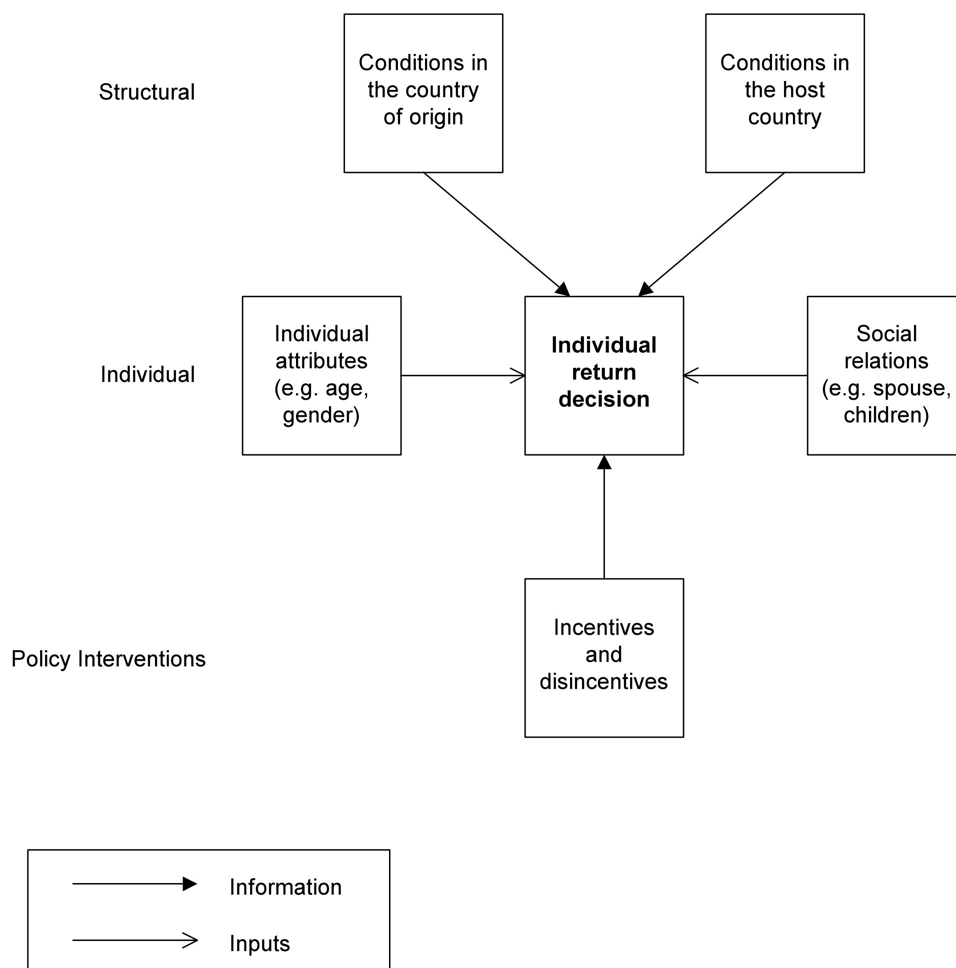
[13] King, 2000; von Reichnert, 2002

[14] Rogers, 1981

[15] Refugee Council (2001)

[16] Richmond, 1981; Eltink, 1999

Figure 1. Factors determining the decision to return



Source: Black *et al.* (2003)

A crucial assumption in the 'model' is that in making their decision, individuals have 'perfect' information about conditions in the host country and country of origin, and about policies affecting their return. Intuitively this is unlikely to be the case and an important implication for this study is that in order to match the demand for skills with the potential supply in the diaspora, clear channels of information are required. It may be that people are not taking the risk of returning home because they do not know enough about conditions there.[17] Or it may be that people are not returning because they are not aware of the opportunities at home. Clearly information is another area where policy can intervene, for example through more proactive communication about policies affecting the diaspora.

[17] Walsh *et al.*, 1999

Even if the balance of conditions at home and abroad and incentives and disincentives is clearly biased towards staying or returning, individuals may nevertheless take apparently 'irrational' — or better, 'personal' decisions.[18] The wider migration literature[19] suggests, for example, that the decision to return is often linked with the life-cycle, in that people may wait to return until they are older. The economic rationale for this may be that people wait until retirement before they return which disconnects their decision from economic incentives and makes it more clearly related to social and cultural reasons to return.

Men and women may also adopt very different perspectives on the prospect of return. Research among Ghanaian migrants in Canada, for example, shows that for men the prospect of return represented an opportunity to reassert their 'control' in a largely patriarchal society. Women, in contrast, perceived return as a threat to the independence that they had enjoyed in a non-patriarchal society.[20] Men and women and old and young may focus on different elements of the conditions at home and abroad in their return decision and exactly the same configuration of conditions might make return attractive to some people and unattractive to others.

A final 'input' to the individual decision is the broader context of social relations.[21] In reality the decision to return is rarely a simple individual decision. Certainly where migrants are married or have partners, and have children, then a decision may be made to the best advantage of the collective as opposed to the individual. Even where a migrant is single and childless, his or her decision may be influenced by a wider social network.[22]

The single most common motivation stated for return across the three countries in this study was the possibility of contributing to the home country. This motivation was particularly strongly expressed among Afghan returnees. The data collected for this study do not allow a proper analysis of the extent to which such respondents perceived return as presenting a better opportunity to contribute than, for example, short-term return or investing from abroad. Other stated motivations among the respondents included improved peace and security in their home country (several returnees to Haiti were optimistic of change after democracy was restored), the desire to raise children in their homeland, economic reasons such as the possibility of finding a job, specific personal issues (*e.g.* caring for an elderly relative), and negative experiences living in the diaspora. Very few people identified a single motivation for return; but it was not possible to rank motivations where individuals stated multiple reasons.

It is a significant finding that, in contrast to general expectations, for at least a proportion of the diaspora across the three study countries, return is

[18] Janis and Mann, 1997; Boyle et al., 1998

[19] King, 1978, King *et al.*, 1983

[20] Manuh, 2003

[21] Morrison, 2000; Agesa and Kim, 2001

[22] van Andel, 1999

an option that is seriously considered after the end of conflict or instability. There is a role for policy in supporting the return aspirations even of the relatively few, for example by providing information on the possibilities upon return, and supporting return where appropriate. Equally — and while acknowledging that for most returnees the option exists to return again to the diaspora — attention needs to be paid to ensuring the sustainability of return once it has taken place.

In turning to the question of how diaspora return takes place, it may be useful to distinguish programmes that recruit members of the diaspora community to permanent positions in their country of origin and those that aim to recruit returnees for temporary deployments only. Each programme type can be run by either governments in home countries or international agencies, and often in partnership between the two. A third category of return is 'self-return', initiated by migrants themselves.

All three return 'types' were found across the three study countries. The Government of Afghanistan has been engaged in a concentrated effort to recruit diaspora members to help reconstruct and develop the country. Personal recruitment plays an important part: one informant, a former senior member of government, was invited personally by his minister to fill a technocratic position, and this does not appear to be unusual. Given the close kinship ties that bind Afghans, it is unsurprising to find that individuals try to ensure places for their kin in relatively stable positions in government. In addition to individual and political recruitment to government positions, a number of initiatives and programmes have been designed to bring diaspora members back to Afghanistan to work both in the public and private sectors. Some of these are based on international organisation initiatives, others on the government. A number of expatriate recruitment programmes run more or less in parallel.[23] UNDP offers short-term volunteer consultancies through the UNV and TOKTEN programmes. The Government of Afghanistan's AEP (Afghan Expatriate Programme) is part of a general scheme of capacity development in government. The AEP is designed to provide the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission with experts for technical assistance and support. IOM has offered short-term and longer-term placements through its Return of Qualified Afghans programme, which has operated in close collaboration with the interim administration, provisional government as well as with local government focusing on reconstruction efforts by enhancing policy and institutional capacities within the public administration.

Data from Haiti shows that the return of educated diaspora members often takes place as an *ad-hoc* and personal dynamic rather than as an organised return. This has intensified after the 12 January 2010 earthquake. In fact, the Haitian government has until recently indicated that it views TOKTEN programmes as unsuited to Haiti.[24] All returnees in this study had 'self-repatriated'. Most returnees had found government positions on the basis of personal networks, something affirmed by both personal

[23] Embassy of Afghanistan (2006)

[24] Agenda 21 (1997)

experiences reported and on the basis of data from the government. Haiti does have a Ministry of Haitians Living Abroad (established in 1994), which monitors and tries to maintain contact with the diaspora throughout the world. It does encourage the return of qualified Haitians from abroad, though this is far from its major mandate. A new programme to provide support for entrepreneurs from abroad has been agreed bilaterally with France; and a TOKTEN programme has been in operation in Haiti since 1987, despite statements from the Government of Haiti to the contrary. A particular feature of recruitment by the Government of Haiti is that government positions are filled on the basis of a non-negotiable Letter of Nomination — not a contract. Commonly, such letters have no associated Terms of Reference. Several informants have noted that the working environment and requirements are fluid, negotiable and, particularly in comparison to conditions abroad, not fixed. This in turn means that while government service might be attractive for anyone in Haiti, where jobs are scarce, it is a poor basis for long-term return, unless one expects some form of political patronage.

Recruitment in Southern Sudan is similarly almost always dependent on personal ties, as well as on considerations of political benefit to the job 'owner' — that is, the political function that controls the job and its budget. This also extends to positions funded by international organisations: two senior advisors whose posts were funded by international organisations had kinship ties with the political post they are advising. No evidence was found in this study that recruitment is based on a specific needs assessment reflected in Terms of Reference, excluding recruitment for posts with international organisations which are always linked to Terms of Reference.

Informal recruitment procedures may not be ineffective. They may often represent a low-cost way to appoint an appropriately qualified person to a particular position, especially when there is a need for a quick appointment and for an appointee who can be accepted within the current administration. At the same time there are likely to be drawbacks. Even the perception of patronage may generate resentment among co-workers and immediate supervisors, and thus impact both the effectiveness and the sustainability of return. Such procedures are also unlikely to access the full pool of potential returnees within the diaspora, thus potentially overlooking better suited candidates. Ultimately, meritocracy — especially in government positions — is a critical aspect of good governance. For such reasons, an important priority for capacity-building in post-conflict and fragile states should be the establishment of sound recruitment procedures and employment practices that can, in turn, be applied to diaspora returnees and other local staff alike.

5.2. The capacity development impact of diaspora return

The benefits and costs of return from the diaspora must be weighed against each other from the perspective both of the country of origin, as well as that of the returnees themselves. Repatriation is often seen as essential to

peacebuilding;[25] and return migration can help legitimise the post-conflict state.[26] However, "paradoxical[ly]…such states are, almost by definition, unable to provide the kind of stability and security, the lack of which induced their citizens to become refugees in the first place."[27] There is little consensus on the roles diasporas play in civil conflict transformation, with evidence cited of civil conflict resolution thanks to diaspora input,[28] as well as conflict exacerbation.[29] Few sources specifically address the physical presence of newly arrived diasporas in terms of their impact on the development of key government and civil society functions. Additionally, administrative tasks have in the past been often largely fallen under the remit of the World Bank or UN. Furthermore, most of the existing literature on diasporas focuses on contributions they can make from afar, for example through remittances, investments or political engagement.[30]

The major question in the context of diaspora return to post-conflict and fragile societies is to what extent returnees are effective in transferring the skills, know-how and resources they acquired abroad to their local colleagues. Post-conflict countries often suffer from a dearth of managerial and technical talent in the civil service,[31] with the best workers among those who remain attracted to the private sector. Whether skilled members of the diaspora represent a solution is a contentious issue. Some are optimistic about returnee contributions. According to a report on Afghanistan issued by the International Crisis Group,[32] the contribution of returning refugees to reconstruction and development through skills acquired in exile is significant, and should be further facilitated. On the other hand, business literature has found that much of the knowledge that repatriated employees possess is 'tacit' — knowledge which is difficult to transmit verbally.[33] Even where knowledge is explicit (rather than tacit), it is not easy to transfer it into a different cultural context. Rather, as Iles *et al.* point out, it has to be translated or 'reinterpreted' in order to make sense in the returnees' environment.[34] What is more, although returnees may be multi-talented, having been exposed to multiple education systems and languages, it remains "difficult to determine whether returnees are among the most successful migrants abroad or, on the contrary, those who failed to 'make it' abroad" due to "deskilling…because of obstacles such as the difficulty to acquire legal status, to have academic qualifications recognised and to

[25] Koser (2009)

[26] Jackson (1990)

[27] Turton and Marsden, 2002: 35

[28] Mohamoud, 2005; Zunzer, 2004

[29] Collier, 2000; Lyons, 2007; Warnecke et al., 2007

[30] Agunias (2010)

[31] Beschel, 2002

[32] ICG (2009)

[33] Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007

[34] Iles et al. (2004)

master the language of the receiving country".[35] In this context, Brinkerhoff recommends turning away from broad and general return programmes, and thoroughly assessing the set-up of a specific diaspora. This can answer questions about the potential gains of diaspora recruitment — the pool of skills and experiences available in the community — as well as the risks involved, like "…the security and legitimacy implications of diaspora recruitment into government."[36]

This study used a number of indicators to consider the ability of diaspora returnees to make a sustainable difference at the individual level. None of the study countries was able to provide a comprehensive list of diaspora members working for government, so a quantitative measure of the degree of involvement of diaspora in government in the study countries was not possible. But the impression coming out of this analysis is that it was very high in Southern Sudan, and lower in the other two countries.

Returnees occupied positions at all political levels — including as political leaders — in all three study countries. In general, however, they filled two main types of positions. On the one hand were returnees who fulfilled advisory roles in the administration. Across all three study countries the impression was that many of these appointments were largely political and that appointments had been made on the basis of patronage or membership in specific ethnic or political groups. On the other hand, a number of respondents were occupying positions as technocrats. These were generally individuals with specific skills who seemed content with the responsibilities and scope of activities that their position offered them.

Overall, 23 returnee respondents stated that they were able to transfer skills to their colleagues; and 15 local-hire respondents indicated that they had learned from returnees, especially from trained teachers and to some degree technocrats, and also from those returnees who headed autonomous administrative or implementation units, for example in one case a government statistics office.

A critical additional measure of the effectiveness of diaspora return, however, concerns their ability to influence broader administrative and governmental processes and to promote organisational change and better practices in their professional environment. In this regard many respondents (including some who noted they had successfully disseminated new practices) were frustrated with both slow and unresponsive administrative procedures. Seven of the Haitian respondents, for example, indicated frustrations at work arising from the local work culture; and five more felt that the political and social nature of the country made life difficult. Four Afghans indicated frustrations at work due to 'old-fashioned' practices and attitudes, and with their local-hire colleagues, whom they characterised as unwilling to learn, slow to respond to timely needs, and inertia-prone.

[35] Ionescu, (2006) p.22

[36] Brinkerhoff (2008), p.259

Any assessment of the impact on the home country's capacity development (with particular emphasis on government capacity) of diaspora return in post-conflict and fragile states needs to recognise that returnees from the diaspora must adapt to an established, possibly under-functional administrative culture, which is not always open to newcomers. Even in specific departments that might be more welcoming for diaspora returnees, the capacity to absorb change and endogenise it might be lacking in fragile states, as explained below. The ability of the returnee, however well-qualified and experienced, to make changes to existing administrative practices (that is, to have an impact on capacity development at the organisational level) is usually curtailed.

If returnees are integrated into working cultures and social networks, their contributions occur as and when the systems within which they operate allow. The main implication that arises is that it is of crucial importance to identify countries as potential beneficiaries of diaspora return migration. Developing countries in economic transition or recovering from conflict situations are not homogenous for all the factors they may share in common. For many, therefore, the condition of the state to which they return is as important as the ability to return to the country of origin. "Capacity development involves much more than enhancing the knowledge and skills of individuals. It depends crucially on the quality of the organisations in which they work."[37] It follows that it is important to gauge the existing capacity in the country of origin. A certain level of existing administrative structures is necessary for highly skilled returnees to work effectively. As Beschel puts it, "[i]t is risky to try to leapfrog over various stages of administrative development, and adopt sophisticated human resource practices that rely upon management systems that may not be up to the task."[38]

These limitations are the result of a weak enabling environment and are a major obstacle to the full return and successful contribution of diasporas in post-conflict and fragile countries. Studies have demonstrated how a critical element in effecting change is that individuals need an enabling environment to be successful,[39] for example change initiators need to be well-embedded within their organisations, and they need a social status that allows them to induce change and critical communication and training skills. In this context there is a clear policy implication for developing local capacities more effectively to take full advantage of the skills and experiences of diaspora returnees. Eleven returnees in this study, for example, either implied or stated that they found it extremely difficult to deal with the local administrative culture. In this context a second issue addressed in the interviews was whether the necessary support and resources were provided for structured and sustained training efforts centred on returnees. Educational institutions aside, there was only limited evidence that such support was provided. In Haiti, independent department

[37] OECD (2006)

[38] Beschel (2004) p.8

[39] Boesen and Therkildsen, 2005; Kotter, 1996; OECD-DAC, 2006

heads did claim to make efforts to train their subordinates; but, in contrast respondents who were technical appointees, reported being forbidden to train peers. In Southern Sudan, research indicated what amounts to a general indifference to capacity development based on Sudanese government appointments.

Fewer than ten respondents indicated that they felt extremely effective in executing their tasks. At the other end of the spectrum, sixteen were extremely (and overtly) frustrated about their work, and felt that they had so far been unable to utilise their skills and be effective at work. Even those who claimed they were effective noted that administrative, political, infrastructural and social barriers to some degree limited their effectiveness in practice. There is some evidence from interviews with work colleagues and supervisors that returnees were indeed effective in their positions, but this too is a subjective assessment.

Overall, little evidence was found for a careful monitoring of return programmes for effectiveness and whether the outcomes originally set out were achieved; and neither was there any indication that, beyond the numbers of returnees, there was any measure of capacity being developed. There is no monitoring of return programmes, or of the effectiveness of returnees in their posts in either Haiti or Southern Sudan. The Afghan return programmes are monitored by a local board, but it was impossible to ascertain the results; and no Afghan respondent indicated that any form of monitoring was being conducted while they were performing duties.

It is difficult to compare in any meaningful way the performance of returnees with that of expatriate staff across the three study countries. For a start, it is only in Afghanistan among the study countries that core government roles are filled both by returnees and expatriate staff — in Southern Sudan some non-Sudanese expatriates work for the government on UN or other contracts as advisers, but do not perform formal administrative roles, and similarly in Haiti most of the administration is composed of Haitians, including returnees, with very few foreign technical advisers. This is however changing a bit in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, where several high-level advisers have been placed in key ministries (including Prime Minister Bellerive's cabinet) to assist in the reconstruction process.

A rudimentary comparative analysis of the performance of returnees and local hires was possible through the data collected. In two of the study countries — Afghanistan and Southern Sudan — higher education facilities virtually ceased their work during the years of violence. In both, younger personnel thus tended to have lower skills and administrative experience than returnees. In Haiti, where the administration was less disrupted under President Préval's administration, there were also disparities between those who received higher education at institutes abroad, and those educated at home. Returnees in all three study countries were therefore likely to have better qualifications and usually also greater professional experience. This however must be balanced by the fact that local hires often appeared much more familiar with the technical (*e.g.* how to navigate within the bureaucracy) and political (*e.g.* how certain functions are necessarily

politicised) circumstances of their country. Claims by some local hires that returnees did not know how to function effectively in the local context were echoed by some of the returnees themselves. The ability to navigate and make sense of the political economy of government bureaucracy is an important skill in countries like Haiti. Returnees often cannot call upon others to solve some of the issues they are faced with, as their own networks tend to focus on other returnees who do not necessarily coincide with the power holders. This is particularly the case for governmental positions, whereas in more 'technical' and less-politicised fields such as medicine and engineering, the evidence was more unequivocal that returnees were more effective than local hires.

5.3. Individual satisfaction

A prevalent theme in the literature on return migration is the question of the ability of returnees to reintegrate into their society of origin. King points out that "the more urban and industrial the value structure of the returning migrant, the greater will be the conflict in readaptation […]."[40] This is also manifest in returnees' feelings "…of unhappiness and dissatisfaction, which are often reflected in a desire to re-emigrate."[41] This suggests that members of the 'near' diaspora — those who have migrated to societies that are geographically and culturally close to the society of origin — might have an easier time reintegrating after return than members of the 'far' diaspora.

Returnees are also often faced with job frustration and envy. For those returnees not subject to 'deskilling', there may be significant negative impacts on repatriation. It may be impossible to convert the considerable theoretical potential of 'knowledge workers'. Difficulties adapting to new social or working cultures, family ties, career ambitions and travel plans represent barriers to long term (re)integration. "Returnees are often resented for having left, for the opportunities they received while abroad, or for the incentive grants they receive upon return."[42] Resentment might be more pronounced in the case of the post-conflict state which has suffered violent divisions on myriad social, ethnic and political lines as returnees may be resented for reasons other than those associated directly with recruitment plans. Reconciliation is difficult to achieve in practice, particularly if it involves formal institutional processes, such as those associated with transitional justice.[43]

There is also a gender dimension to return and diaspora engagement. Since 1993, the French diaspora organisations *Femmes de développement en Algérie* (FEDA) and *Initiatives de Femmes Africaines de France et d'Europe* (IFAFE) have operated in the belief that women — in particular from the Algerian and African diasporas, respectively — are able to promote the interests of

[40] King (2000) p.19

[41] King (2000) p.19

[42] Blitz et al. (2004) p.184

[43] Betts (2006)

development in their counties of origin.[44] Attracting women from the diaspora to recruitment programmes — depending on the legal situations regarding equality of opportunity for employment in their respective countries of origin — makes for a sound policy if such gendered attitudes to conflict are sound.

From the case studies, the most comprehensive data on aspects of individual satisfaction came from Afghanistan. Seven respondents noted that they were satisfied with their positions; however, five of these noted that the environment was unsatisfactory in terms of security and education for children. Ten who indicated dissatisfaction with their situation gave the same reasons. None of the respondents were prepared to comment on whether they would stay in government, however, given the indications (by the informants themselves) that they feel the job situation in Afghanistan will remain precarious for the foreseeable future, most of them may seek a permanent position in government. Data from the Afghan diaspora indicates that many diaspora members are prepared to return to Afghanistan for short periods,[45] but informal discussions with Afghan acquaintances — both those who had government positions in Afghanistan and those outside the country — indicate that there is a great deal of frustration about the slow pace of change in Afghanistan, and even more, about the precarious security situation.

Dissatisfaction was generally the result of insecurity and work: insecurity was a major concern for all of the respondents; the slow pace of work, antiquated processes, and inability to foster changes in the working environment were the causes of dissatisfaction for three of our respondents. Two other factors — job prospects and women's roles — also contributed to dissatisfaction for some: job prospects were especially a major concern for those from the near diaspora. The far diaspora interviewees did not mention this aspect. Three female respondents indicated that the status of women was a major source of dissatisfaction. This may be because all three were employed in the Women's Affairs Ministry, which appears to have little power or effect. Whether their frustration represents a common position by women in government is impossible to say.

As indicated previously, a key obstacle for many return programmes is a mismatch in supply and demand, resulting in many cases in dissatisfaction among individual returnees, who have either returned with unrealistic expectations, or found their skills and expertise under-utilised after return.

Some of the measures of individual satisfaction, such as the positions occupied by returnees, and the extent to which they were able to utilise their skills and experience, have already been alluded to. Some returnees in Afghanistan, who were paid by an international body, enjoyed the benefits and salaries of their expatriate peers, which was often greatly in excess of what their local-hire counterparts received for the same type of position. It

[44] http://www.forim.net/forim/membres/inter_pays/federation_des_initiatives_des_femmes_africaines_de_france_et_d_europe_federation_ifafe/historique_de_l_organisation (IFAFE homepage); http://www.feda-site.org/ (FEDA homepage).

[45] Hanifi (2006)

also often meant that the returnees identified, and were identified, as part of the expatriate group. In other cases, notably in Haiti and Southern Sudan, returnees were paid on a local scale. At times this created significant problems for the returnees. In Southern Sudan, it was one reason for why returnees did not bring their families with them. As a result, they either searched for a second job (notably in Haiti, where seven respondents had a private business activity) or were quickly attracted to work for an international organisation, where they received a much higher salary (especially in Southern Sudan and to a degree in Afghanistan). The latter case poses undeniable issues in terms of capacity, whereby donors are perceived as 'stripping' potential local capacity further by employing former diaspora members. When returnees worked for the government only, there was some evidence that some government posts also provided opportunities for corruption, and thus for supplementing incomes.

Returnees in all three study countries often reported experiencing resentment from their local-hire colleagues. Several reasons were suggested. One, as explained above, is that returnees often earned higher salaries than local-hires. More generally, a job taken by a returnee at any level of skill is perceived as one not available for locals, even if in reality the necessary skills are simply not available locally. Nevertheless this finding reinforces the need for a careful skills inventory by governments in home countries before diaspora return is encouraged.

The source of resentment is not just economic. Returnees who have not endured the war years or political unrest, and who furthermore retain the option of returning to their country of residence, are additionally often viewed with disdain. Local hires often argued that returnees can be arrogant. In Haiti, resentment is sometimes focused on the inability of returnees to speak proper Haitian Creole, which sets them aside as '*blan*' (meaning 'foreigners'). Paradoxically, demands by returnees to change local conditions can also rebound on them: returnees were often seen as people who were unable to comprehend the reality of the country of origin and who made excessive demands for comfort and gadgets. In some cases this reflects a romanticised vision of their home country by the diaspora and an idea of how things should work, which hardly ever corresponds to reality. Resentment is not necessarily one-sided. Eleven returnees in Haiti claimed that their local-hire colleagues were slow to respond to their suggestions, often resisted changes and did not accept instruction. This is not to say that the relations between returnees and local-hires were always bad — indeed twelve returnees across the sample indicated that they felt they had successfully integrated — but more often tension was evident. It was not possible to ascertain how far this tension reaches into the social lives of returnees. In Haiti, where it apparently does, some local-hire respondents accused returnees of being unsociable and only associating with other returnees. Nor is it clear to what extent resentment might jeopardise the effectiveness of return programmes or individual contributions.

Another way to gauge individual satisfaction is to consider to what extent returnees end up staying for the long term (if this was their original plan), and what they ended up doing as a result. It proved impossible to assess how many returnees from each study country go back to the

diaspora. Research in other contexts (for example Bosnia, Eritrea and Kosovo) indicates that some of the main reasons that members of the diaspora have returned to their country of residence include insecurity, inability to adjust socially and frustration with their jobs.[46] One indicator that this has been the case in recent years in the study countries is the large number of returnees who retain overseas citizenship. Even in Haiti, where government positions are conditional on having no other citizenship than Haitian, eight respondents noted that immediate family members remained abroad. This implies that even these returnees are ensuring that they have the opportunity to move back to the diaspora under the favourable conditions of family reunion.

There is insufficient evidence to determine whether returnees were willing to continue working in government positions in the medium to long term. Only five respondents from Haiti reported unequivocally that they would continue, of whom one was a career diplomat and another had hopes for high political office. Seven respondents from across all three study countries indicated unequivocally that they would not continue. Most others did not respond, which could also be attributed to the degree of uncertainty surrounding these jobs, which can be highly politicised and subject to sudden termination.

6. Complementary and additional ways to mobilise the diaspora

It is clear from the preceding analysis that encouraging members of the diaspora to return and stay for the long term, and maximising their potential after return, are significant policy challenges, especially in post-conflict and fragile states. Yet there are many members of the diaspora who have both the desire and the capacity to make a contribution to their home country, especially during periods of crisis or disaster, or in their aftermath. This brief section therefore draws on the literature and policy review to consider complementary and additional ways to mobilise the diaspora and optimise its contribution to developing capacity in the countries of origin, for example where long-term return is unlikely or ineffective, or even when return is an option but where no structured programme has been put in place. These include (i) optimising remittance flows and their impact, (ii) encouraging diaspora investments, (iii) the temporary return of diaspora members, for example as volunteers or (iv) more systematic knowledge networking or twinning of institutions in host and home countries.

While such initiatives may not directly affect the enabling environment or the organisational capacity of the home country's government in the way that diaspora returnees in core government functions may, they can still represent important contributions to longer-term capacity development and importantly they are not mutually exclusive with full return. The main policy conclusions are twofold: first, there are multiple approaches to be considered for mobilising the diaspora simultaneously, which are not mutually exclusive, although each has its challenges. Secondly, these

[46] Black and Koser (1999)

options have to be carefully weighed against what the government in the home country needs, and is willing and able to absorb. Therefore, what is needed is a country-specific *ex-ante* analysis of capacity and political economy to determine which policy setting will be most effective. The latter should ideally be conducted in collaboration between donors (or host countries) and the government in the home country.

6.1. Maximising remittance flows

Remittances worldwide in 2009 amounted to over USD 300 billion, and although this represented a slight reduction from 2008 as a result of the effects of the global financial crisis, remittances are still by far the most significant source of foreign income for most post-conflict and fragile states, exceeding official development assistance (ODA) in many developing countries,[47] including in Haiti and Southern Sudan. Much of the current policy attention on remittances focuses on ensuring that they are transferred wherever possible through formal rather than informal systems, as formal remittances are more likely to be leveraged for capacity-development and poverty reduction, as explained below. The best ways to optimise formal remittance flows are already well-understood. These include reducing the costs and increasing the speed of formal transfers, for example through the promotion of competition between transfer providers; disseminating information to both members of the diaspora and receivers about opportunities for formal transfers and the risks of informal transfers including by providing training in financial literacy; and promoting the development of new technologies for money transfer, for example using mobile telephones.[48] Achieving these goals, however, requires considerable capacity building, in both home and host countries, and among an array of stakeholders, and presents special challenges in post-conflict and fragile settings.

6.2. Enhancing the developmental impacts of remittances

While it is important to understand that remittances are private monies (and should not be amalgamated with ODA-sponsored return programmes), and that the scope for policy to intervene in how they are spent is thus appropriately limited, capacities can still be developed to encourage the investment of remittances in projects that contribute to capacity-development and local community development and have an impact beyond the immediate receivers. One way to achieve this would be to provide special privileges, such as temporary exemptions from taxes, for enterprises established with capital financed from remittances, or for those that engage in public-private partnerships. Another initiative is to establish a scheme for loans or micro-credit for families using remittances as a guarantee. Another is to encourage diasporas to contribute on a collective rather than individual basis, for example to support specific infrastructure projects in their home towns. A critical aspect to support such initiatives,

[47] Koser, 2010

[48] IOM, 2010

especially in post-conflict and fragile states, is for partner governments and donors to address capacity issues through the enabling environment, and more specifically to support the development of a banking system and to allow for the necessary changes in regulations that might hamper investment and the business environment. Good practice in this regard is to adopt an integrated and holistic approach, thus improving the investment climate for all enterprises, rather than to create new distortions by granting special privileges to one particular sector. In addition, broader governance reforms and improving the rule of law needs to be supported, thus minimising uncertainty and risks for investors from the diaspora and other investors. These changes, however, are likely to bear fruit only in the medium to long term and are highly dependent on the political will to conduct such reforms.

6.3. Temporary return

Since 1987, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has promoted the temporary return of diaspora members as a means of improving government services and building capacity in developing states. TOKTEN programmes have operated in over thirty countries, including in post-conflict states such as Haiti and Afghanistan. Since 2001, building previous Return for Qualified Nationals programmes, IOM has implemented its Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programme to mobilise the development potential of the diaspora through continuous short-term assessments in their countries of origin, as well as through the transfer and sharing of knowledge and skills using available modern technology in many countries. Assessing the effectiveness of TOKTEN and MIDA programmes was not within the mandate of this study; however, it is worth reporting that local-hire respondents in the study countries had a mixed attitude towards such short-term volunteers, who were in some cases resented but in others considered role models. Evidence from other case studies suggests that TOKTEN volunteers may attract less resentment than long-term returnees, precisely because their return is temporary, their compensation is more modest than that of the longer-term returnees hired by donors, and they are not directly competing for permanent positions. Another conclusion from reviews of TOKTEN programmes in other contexts is that they appear to be particularly effective in countries that have well-established, well-educated and well-trained administrations[49]. Such a conclusion is confirmed by similar findings made by IOM, but raises questions about the potential role for such short-term volunteer programmes in post-conflict or fragile states. There are also examples of state-sponsored volunteer return programmes, for example in China, India and the Philippines, although none of these programmes encourage involvement in core government functions, and they focus on technical, scientific, commercial, planning and development issues. Some of these national programmes have, on the other hand, induced volunteers to return permanently to the country of origin, and it has been suggested that one

49 Murphy, 2006

reason why some national programmes have had relatively high retention rates is precisely because they are 'depoliticised', in that the diaspora returnees are not engaged in core (and thus contested) government functions.

6.4. Consolidating knowledge networks

Another way to engage the diaspora is through the development of knowledge networks, allowing the transfer of skills and expertise without necessitating a physical return (this is sometimes referred to as 'virtual return'). Effective technology transfer, however, depends on three factors: members of the diaspora must be employed in sectors that grant access to useful information and the right freely to use that information; a knowledge network needs to be established, typically via the Internet; and the home country must be in a position to take advantage of the new information.[50] Alternatively these can be complementary approaches, with knowledge networks established for example to maintain momentum after an initial secondment. The rapid rise of the global internet is making this an increasingly feasible option, although there are important reservations. There are three main areas to establish and consolidate such knowledge networks which can in turn have an impact on developing capacity. First, members of the diaspora need to be employed in relevant sectors and occupations. Second, the appropriate technology is needed both in origin and destination countries to allow knowledge transfer – including the internet and video-conferencing. Third, the home country needs to have the capacity, and in particular appropriately trained personnel, to implement the knowledge that is transferred[51].

7. Recommendations

7.1. Enhancing the capacity development impact of diaspora returnees in the context of fragile states

To governments in the home country:

- Develop an inventory of skills among local staff, and identify gaps for the short and longer term;
- Identify where such expertise might be available in dialogue with diaspora groups and governments in host countries, while ensuring coherence with technical assistance programmes already in place to avoid duplication;
- Undertake preparatory visits to ensure that facilities for placements are adequate in the particular institutions in which diaspora

50 Lucas (2005)

51 Sriskandarajah, 2006

returnees are to be employed. Optimise the ability of returnees to be able to pass on knowledge and have a significant capacity development impact at the individual and organisational levels. This can be done in formal terms of reference and appointment procedures; and,

- Lift restrictions on the employment of diaspora returnees within government, for example on the basis of dual nationality.

To governments in the host country:

- Develop a social and economic profile of diaspora members from priority states for development assistance, in collaboration with diaspora associations, and provide reassurances of anonymity where necessary; and,
- Disseminate information through diaspora associations on formal remittance transfer mechanisms as a supplementary measure to return.

To international donors:

- Support governments in home countries to undertake a basic needs assessment across government and within priority sectors of the national labour market to identify specific skill requirements;
- Identify and provide expatriate staff with specific skills that are required and not immediately available to the government in home countries, preferably on time-bound assignments only;
- Support training for local staff in specific skills in short supply;
- Support the development of procedures to match members of the diaspora who wish to return with work opportunities in their home country, for example by funding an employment desk within particular embassies and consulates or through the establishment and promotion of specific schemes in key governance areas;
- Support governments in home countries to identify and profile the skills of members of the diaspora who have returned outside formal return programmes;
- Support initiatives to reduce local brain drain (for example where diaspora members who have returned to government jobs move to work for donors because of better salaries and perks); and,
- Work with governments in host countries to favour a whole-of-government approach to migration, development and diaspora policies.

7.2. Encouraging the sustainability of diaspora contributions

To governments in the home country:

- Commission local research institutions to undertake evaluations of the obstacles experienced in various government branches where clear capacity needs have been expressed and can be met by diaspora returnees and develop specific policy responses on that basis;
- Anchor diaspora return programmes within broader government human resource reform (*e.g.* through the work of the Office of Management of Human Resources, OMRH, in Haiti) by setting up mediation mechanisms and developing clear reporting lines to ensure that diaspora returnees are integrated into mainstreamed processes;
- Encourage individual returnees to participate in informal knowledge networks so that their contributions are also anchored into broader dialogue knowledge mechanisms even if return is only temporary; and,
- Provide mentoring schemes for a sample of diaspora returnees to identify and respond to specific problems.

To governments in the host country:

- Co-operate with governments in home countries to provide cultural orientation before return for example about the particular sector to which return will take place, supported where feasible by virtual networking and teleconferencing to make initial contact between the diaspora member and a particular institution in the home country.

To international donors:

- Monitor and evaluate all sponsored diaspora return programmes and establish clear indicators in collaboration with governments in home countries; and,
- On the basis of these indicators, adjust return programmes accordingly.

7.3. Based on country context, supporting the return of diaspora members

To governments in the home country:

- Identify through local surveys the needs and expectations of the diaspora before return, and identify specific incentives for both short- and long-term return (*e.g.* through tailored return programmes, adapted regulations, or specific fiscal advantages). Ensure that the

demand for contributions is articulated through official channels (*e.g.* consular posts), networks (*e.g.* diaspora associations, international organisations) and informal channels (*e.g.* web-based newspapers and home country religious organisations) alike;

- Identify positions specifically suited to temporary or periodic placements; and,
- Instate incentive schemes to leverage remittances for capacity-building as a supplementary measure to return.

To governments in the host country:

- Lift restrictions, for example regarding re-entry visas, to facilitate short-term visits by diaspora members considering a permanent return, and encourage twinning programmes at the institutional level; and,
- Support the diaspora contributions that are likely to best meet the expectations and actual needs of the home country.

To international donors:

- If a clear demand for a systematic return programme is expressed, support governments in home countries to develop formal recruitment and appointment procedures for all government positions, including by advertising locally and within the diaspora, establishing transparent criteria for selection, developing terms of reference for appointees, and undertaking regular performance appraisals and evaluations;
- Fund a roster of short-term volunteers within particular embassies and consulates. Extend existing temporary return and volunteer programmes to target countries, taking full account of the national context; and,
- Collaborate with other donors to share lessons on a regular basis and co-ordinate return programmes.

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Glossary

AusAid	Australian International Aid organisation
Basic services	As embodied in the Millennium Development Goals, basic services are understood to include inter alia primary education, basic healthcare, water supply and sanitation.
Capacity development	Understood as the process whereby people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time.
Core government functions and services	OECD-DAC (2009) defines the core functions of the state as: Law enforcement and citizen protection, justice and conflict resolution, raising and expanding revenues, provision of basic services and facilitating economic development. The OECD Handbook takes into account two types of core government function. First, there are those that are essential to the exercise of sovereignty (such as approving and enacting state law, setting taxes, and conducting international relations) where there would be restricted possibilities of contracting. Second, there are functions that relate to the internal administration of the state apparatus (such as the administration of public finances and human resources) which present possibilities for contracting over defined periods. With regard to the delivery of essential services (for example basic education, healthcare, water and sanitation to consumers), there is no necessary limit on the scale and duration of contracting except as decided by government policy
Diaspora	Diasporas are emigrants and their descendants who maintain a connection, psychological or material, to their country of origin.
Enabling environment	The combination of enforceable rules and legal, regulatory and policy frameworks in a given country.
Expatriate	Citizen of a country employed for a period of time in another country.

Fragile state	The concept of fragility is still unfolding in the donor community. There are numerous typologies, and also quantitative indices that measure different features of fragility. The OECD-DAC's definition has moved on from one which sees fragility as the absence or weakness of political will and/or capacity of state structures to one which privileges the state's inability to 'meet its population's expectations or manage changes in expectation and capacity through the political process.' There is also no fixed list of countries in situations of fragility. This study refers to fragility for countries in which the state's capacity to address the essential needs of its citizens is limited.
Home country	The country of origin of a diaspora member before migration.
Host country	The country to which the diaspora member has migrated.
IO	International Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force. Allied organisation providing security in Afghanistan
Local-hire	Individuals who have been hired in the country in question and have not lived in the diaspora.
MIDA	IOM's Migration for Development in Africa program. Developed in 2001 it is the successor to IOM's RQAN which stresses mobility of professionals rather than return. The programme supports the transfer of skills of Africans in the diaspora through short term visits, longer term assignments, permanent and virtual return.
Return	While this report focuses on permanent return, there is a range of other return types, including commuting, short-term return, and circular migration.
Returnees	Returnees were defined as members of a diaspora who spent some time (measured in months rather than days) working at a salaried position in the country of origin.
RQAN	IOM's Return of Qualified African Nationals program (1983-1990). An IOM program intended to bring back African diaspora professionals through voluntary return. The programme had three phases, starting in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia in 1983.

RQAP	Return of Qualified Afghan Personnel program. A joint UN/Afghan government program intended to bring back diaspora professionals.
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
TOKTEN	Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals program. A UN program designed to provide short-term expertise to country of origin through utilizing diaspora experts.
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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