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How can the EU and member states foster development through diaspora organisations?

The case of Ghanaian diaspora organisations in the Netherlands

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Key messages

Integration and participation 'here' significantly influence the ability of diaspora organisations to function 'there'. This derives from diaspora's dual affinity with and engagement in more than one homeland.

Diaspora organisations provide diaspora communities with platforms for constructive engagement with host country institutions and participation in policy processes.

Raising the visibility of diaspora participation and boosting its added value for host-country societies through policy and public debates would contribute to informed perceptions of migration.

Diaspora organisations performing activities centring on enterprise and investment in the country of residence and the country of origin have the potential to address issues such as unemployment and burden on the welfare system.

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Acknowledgements

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author only and should not be attributed to any other organisation.

Acronyms

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific countries
AFDOM	African Development Organisation for Migration
AMYIP	African Migrant Youth Initiative for Peace Keeping
ASDA	African Social Development Aid
BSN	Citizen service number
BV	Private limited company incorporated under Dutch law
BZK	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations
CMS	Centre for Migration Studies
CoGhaC	Council of Ghanaian Chiefs in the Netherlands
CoGhaN	Council of Ghanaians in the Netherlands
COGNAI	Council of Ghanaian Associations in Italy
CORDAID	Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid
EC	European Commission
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EU	European Union
FRONTEX	European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union
GAPNET	Ghana Poultry Network
GIPC	Ghana Investment Promotion Council
GIS	Ghana Immigration Service
HIVOS	Humanist Institute for Cooperation
HTA	Home-town association
ICCO	Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation
IMTRAD	Institute for Multicultural Training & Development
IMWG	Inter-Ministerial Working Group
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JAES	Joint Africa-EU Strategy
JMDI	Joint Migration and Development Initiative
MA	Metropolitan Assembly
MIPEX	Migration Integration Policy Index
NCDO	National Committee for International Corporation and Sustainable Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
POS	Political Opportunity Structure
RECOGIN	Representative Council of Ghanaian Organizations in the Netherlands
RU	Radboud University of Nijmegen
STAND	Stichting Afrika Naast de Deur
TRANSCODE	Transnational Synergy for Cooperation and Development
TQRN	Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals

UN
UNDP
VOSW

United Nations
United Nations Development Programme
Voice of Sub-Sahara African Women

1. Introduction

The effects of global human mobility and the serious policy and legislative challenges it poses to the governments of both developed and developing countries is a subject that has dominated much of recent migration literature and policy debates. How to leverage human mobility for development, while at the same time minimise its adverse effects is both a political and a policy challenge for many governments. In response, a growing number of governments in migrants' countries of origin are initiating mechanisms for strengthening ties with their diaspora¹ (Aquinas, 2009; Zoomers et al., 2008; De Haas, 2006; Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). Similarly, governments in migrants' countries of residence, especially in the European Union, are searching for constructive ways to manage cross-border mobility (in the form of labour, asylum and irregular migration flows), as well as for addressing the multicultural implications of ever-larger migrant communities in their societies (Fauser, 2012; Castles 2000, p. 275; Castles & Davidson, 2000).

The development potential of diasporas has been captured in a plethora of literature (Brinkerhoff, 2008; Faist, 2008; Newland & Patrick, 2004; Van Hear et al. 2004; Kapur, 2004). However, the limitation of such perspectives is that they do not take account of the 'here' and 'there'² dimensions of diaspora contributions to development through collective forms of participation. For this reason, the conceptualisation of diaspora participation used in this study looks at their contribution to development from both a 'here' and a 'there' perspective. This perspective is informed by the simultaneity of the different forms of diaspora activity and their outcomes in multiple contexts. Such an approach recognizes the fact that diaspora transnational activities and development potentials are embedded in contemporary globalisation processes engendered by human mobility.

This perspective is also premised on the notion that integration and participation 'here' significantly influence the ability of diaspora organisations to function 'there'. This derives from diaspora's dual affinity with and dual engagement in more than one homeland. The fact of being established in a host society enables members of diaspora organisations to generate income from jobs, while at the same time mobilising resources with the aid of Political Opportunity Structures³. In the framework of their contribution to development in the country of residence, diaspora organisations contribute to societal transformation by means of social remittances, entrepreneurship, politics, lobbying and advocacy, as well as by delivering services in the countries of residence. From a 'there' perspective, diaspora contributions to development are greatly influenced by the close link they maintain with different locales in the country of origin. They mobilise capacities and resources in their countries of residence to foster local development processes in their regions of origin. This is reflected by remittances (social and financial), entrepreneurship, lobbying and advocacy as well as by the services delivered by the diaspora in their countries of origin. These activities constitute diaspora participation⁴ and transnational experiences (Nyberg-Sørensen, 2007). These

¹ The use of the term 'diaspora' is based on the definition given by Scheffer (1986), who uses it to refer to ethnic minority groups of migrant origin residing in host countries, but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin.

² The term "here and there" is used in this paper to refer to the country of residence and origin from the perspective of diaspora activities and their outcomes in the two contexts.

³ The concept of Political Opportunity Structure as applied in this paper refers to the dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action that covers the political, cultural, structural, material, and organisational elements including the formal rules and institutions of the political system (Kriesi, 1995; Hooghe 2009, pp. 978, 982).

⁴ The term 'participation' as used here refers to formal and informal diaspora involvement in policy planning, decision-making and policy implementation. It relates to the ability of diaspora organisations to collectively demand space in order to play an active role in the community, influence agendas during policy formulation and decision-

transnational activities and experiences are influenced by the way in which diasporas are embedded in multiple local institutional settings. This is why we need to arrive at a more balanced understanding of the transnational activities of diaspora. We are then better placed to harness the developmental potential of migration and foster migrants' contribution to development. This understanding requires a close examination of the following factors:

1. the impetus for diaspora to collectively organise themselves in their countries of residence;
2. the incentives for taking part in local development processes in their countries of origin;
3. the kind of political opportunity structures that enable diaspora to participate in multiple contexts.

This paper highlights factors that influence diaspora organisations and the development potential of such organisations in the countries of origin. It uses the case of Ghanaian diaspora in the Netherlands to illustrate the areas of diaspora participation, on which the European Union (EU) and its member states can focus in their diaspora engagement⁵ and participation policies. Understanding the dynamics that influence diaspora participation is also important for informing the EU's and member states' migration and development policies, especially as one of their aims is to harness the developmental potential of diaspora in their countries of origin.

From a host country policy perspective, it would be worth examining ways of scaling up the activities of diaspora organisations that have the potential to contribute to development in both contexts. A growing number of diaspora communities in the EU undertake activities that transcend national borders. Hence, working towards policy coherence in diaspora engagement and support for activities that contribute to development in their countries of origin requires an understanding of diasporas' multiple identities and affinity and adherence to multiple legal systems. Such an understanding will make it easier to support diaspora organisations, in order to scale up their participation and development input in both the country of residence and the country of origin.

The paper is organised as follows. Chapter 2 describes the factors that influence the formation of Ghanaian diaspora organisations and their participation at national and local levels in Ghana. Chapter 3 examines the types and characteristics of diaspora organisations and their implications for engagement in policy processes. Chapter 4 analyses the influence of political opportunity structures on diaspora engagement and participation and on the ability to harness their development potential. Chapter 5 examines the challenges facing policy-makers and diaspora organisations. The final chapter summarises the main conclusions and recommendations for EU and member state policies on diaspora engagement and participation.

making that affect communities (Gaventa, 2004). The term includes initiatives that originate from diaspora organisations in cases where governments do not take an interest in diaspora communities.

⁵ The term 'engagement' as used here refers to government overtures to diaspora communities through policy measures that establish formal channels for making contact with and involving diaspora organisations in policy processes. It also refers to the formal and informal interactions between diaspora organisations, government institutions and development agencies and key actors in these organisations.

2. Factors influencing roles played by diaspora organisations

A number of factors influence the role, played by Ghanaian diaspora organisations at national and local levels in Ghana. There are a wide variety of motives for setting up such organisations (see Box 1). However, contextual factors also play a role. As Box 2 illustrates, the link between social, economic, political, institutional and legislative factors 'here' and 'there' influences the development of diaspora organisations. The other impetus for the emergence of diaspora organisations is linked to what Alejandro Portes calls 'situational social capital' (Portes 2010, p. 171). This relates to diaspora agency and initiatives that are informed by the need of diaspora organisations to cope with the policies and socio-economic conditions in which they find themselves in their country of residence.

Box 1: Motives for setting up Ghanaian diaspora organisations

- A desire to learn from personal experiences in the country of origin and/or the country of residence
- A desire to impart in the country of origin professional skills acquired in the country of residence
- Community needs in the country of residence
- A desire to change socio-economic conditions in the country of origin
- A response to political and policy environment through representation and a desire to have a say in policy processes
- Philanthropic ideals: a desire to contribute to development in the country of origin
- Personal interests

Source: author's research, 2010-2012.

2.1. Factors in the country of residence

The fact that migration is a policy issue in the EU and its member states has much to do with the rise in global mobility, which poses a major challenge to policy-makers. Migration has become a big issue in EU foreign and development policies, as is illustrated by the ACP-EU Joint Council on the dialogue on migration and development.

The EU's Global Approach to Migration is also important in this respect: its aim is to address all relevant aspects of migration in partnership with non-EU countries (EC-COM, 2011). The idea is that EU foreign policy and development cooperation should be based on this approach.

Conceptualising migration and development at a European level (ECDPM/ICMPD, 2012, p. 31) entails several themes:

- remittances;
- diaspora as actors of development in the country of origin;
- circular migration and brain circulation;
- mitigating the adverse effects of a brain drain (*ibid.*, p. 32).

Policy initiatives are informed by an acknowledgement of the fact that migration is all about people (i.e. they are migrant-centred) and that good governance of migration will also bring vast development benefits

(EC-COM, 2011, p. 6). Policy initiatives also emphasise the importance of legal immigration for fostering economic growth in the EU and boosting the Union's competitiveness in line with the goals of the Lisbon treaty. Despite the moves towards a more restrictive migration policy in Europe, several EU member states have engaged with their own migrant communities in taking policy initiatives that recognise the potential offered by migrants. These initiatives have concerned migrant participation in the labour market and political processes (Atger, 2009; Bauböck, 2006; Martiniello, 2005).⁶ In recent years, a number of EU member states have also sought to engage with migrant communities in pursuing investment opportunities for SMEs in the countries of origin.⁷

The formation of diaspora organisations is context-specific and is greatly influenced by the institutional, policy and legislative environment in the country of residence. The contextual conditions in the country of residence also play an important role in the development of diaspora organisations. The term 'contextual conditions' is taken as referring to the socio-economic conditions of migrants in the host society, as well as the political, institutional, policy-making and legislative framework that enable individuals and groups to participate in society. Diaspora members often experience vulnerability in the host society caused by a lack of language skills, insufficient societal knowledge, non-recognition of qualifications, and problems with legal status and access to basic services. Moreover, migrants are most likely to be the first to be laid-off during economic downturns (Van Dalen & Henkens, 2007). This is due primarily to the concentration of migrant workers in sectors with more volatile employment patterns (Chaloff et al. 2012, p. 40). Such sectors include the cleaning, logistics, construction and horticultural industries.

The social and economic conditions in the country of residence thus play an important role in the ability of diaspora organisations to take part in society. They provide the basis for mobilising resources in the form of public funds or gainful employment. Both individuals and organisations need these resources in order to participate in society in both the country of residence and the country of origin.

⁶ According to the Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) (2012), non-EU nationals can stand as candidates in municipal elections in 13 of the EU countries surveyed. Non-EU nationals are entitled to vote in local elections in 19 countries, in regional elections in seven countries, and in national (i.e. general) elections in two countries (viz. Portugal and the UK). Consultative bodies have been formed at local level in 15 countries, and at national level in 11 countries. They provide only semi-meaningful opportunities for migrants to change policies. About half of the countries fund migrants' political activities, while a third inform them of their political rights. See: <http://www.mipex.eu/political-participation>.

⁷ A recent example is the Conference on Building Bridges, diaspora for Business and Development, held in Frankfurt on 14 April 2012 and organised by the Gesellschaft Fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit and Dutch Consortium of Migrant Organisations. See: <http://www.diasporabusinesdev.com>.

Box 2: What factors determine the formation of diaspora organisations?

1. the size of the community;
2. the needs of the community in the host society;
3. the social, economic and political conditions in the country of origin and the country of residence;
4. immigration and integration policies in the country of residence;
5. the availability of, and access to, political opportunity structures, i.e. programmes and subsidies provided by institutions in the country of residence;
6. the level of integration with and participation in the host society, i.e. in terms of language, education and jobs;
7. diaspora agency;
8. individual initiative and leadership;
9. creativity and entrepreneurship.

Source: author's research, 2010-2012.

For this reason, we may posit that the prevailing economic situation and shifts in immigrant and integration policies in the country of residence have the potential to create or hamper the necessary political opportunities structures that are needed in order for migrants to take part in society. For instance, poor economic performance leaves migrants in a precarious position on the labour market, but also has implications in terms of the austerity measures that the government might adopt in response to an economic crisis.

Immigration and integration policies and programmes mounted by national and local institutions as well as the EU significantly influence the formation of diaspora organisations. The Netherlands, for example, is a very favourable environment for the formalisation and registration of diaspora organisations (Ong'ayo, 2010b). From a policy-making and legal perspective, legal status plays an important role in the extent to which a migrant can participate in a host society. In the Netherlands, it is possible to register an organisation with the chamber of commerce anywhere in the country. Registration is cheap and the only requirements are documentary proof of the legal status of the board members (i.e. an identity card or passport and a residence permit). The process takes about 45 minutes.

2.2. Factors in the country of origin

The social and economic conditions in the country of origin (Asare, 2012; Awumbila et al. 2008; Anarfi, 2003) are important motivators for diaspora organisations targeting regions of origin, in this case in Ghana. This is clearest in rural areas and informal settlements close to big cities, where there is inequality and where poverty levels have increased dramatically in the wake of the government's neo-liberal policies (Obeng-Odoom, 2012). The migration paradox in Ghana is that, while the country has huge natural resources (Eberhardt & Teal, 2010) and is undergoing rapid economic growth, poverty and poor social conditions persist. This paradox is the result of national politics and policies on the distribution of national resources, both of which explain why Ghanaians, particularly those living in the north, remain poor (Rimmer, 1992). The major concerns in rural and suburban areas are the high cost of living⁸ and the difficulty of finding a job (Aryeetey & Baah-Boateng, 2007; Brown, 1994). It is virtually impossible for young

⁸ Including the high cost of food, housing, and school fees, healthcare and access to clean water.

people and people without the right networks to find jobs and other economic opportunities. These examples of vulnerability illustrate not just the consequences of a growing economy characterised by widening inequality between rich and poor, but also the uneven regional development in Ghana.

These conditions provide an impetus for various types of intervention by Ghanaian diaspora organisations. These organisations target developmental gaps and seek to make up for the diminished capacities of local institutions, inadequate facilities and the shortage of essential services in their regions of origin. At an individual level, diaspora interventions address basic needs and provide safety nets for families, create opportunities that empower the next of kin and at the same time build up 'something to return to' (Portes, 2009).

Due to the relatively favourable political climate in Ghana, Ghanaian diaspora organisations have been able to persuade the government to address diaspora needs such as citizenship rights. A constitutional provision for dual citizenship, for instance, now enables Ghanaians living abroad to have dual nationalities. This means that the majority of Ghanaians can now move easily between Ghana and their countries of residence. Consequently, the government's recognition of diasporas legitimises their actions, including their efforts to participate in local development processes. The recognition of diaspora members as *bona fide* Ghanaian citizens, regardless of whether they have been naturalised in the Netherlands, enables the leaders of Ghanaian diaspora organisations to register the latter (especially issue-based and home-town associations) with local authorities without any difficulty. Diaspora organisations are able to exploit this situation by capitalising on the interplay between formality and informality when policies and legislation are not clear.

The reality of incompatible institutional and policy frameworks in Ghana and the Netherlands also presents Ghanaian diaspora organisations with both opportunities and challenges. Institutional gaps in Ghana and incompatibility with the Dutch institutional framework mean that issues involving the regulation and management of the various dimensions of diaspora participation are not easy to manage coherently. At the same time, most diaspora organisations try to acquire a formal status in order to conform to Dutch and Ghanaian laws. In other words, they seek to meet all the relevant legal requirements. What is important for most organisations is to have an opportunity to participate in both contexts. As pointed out by the director of AfroEuro Foundation a Ghanaian diaspora organisations based in The Hague:

"We belong to both countries and wish to contribute through the different initiatives that we feel can benefit the communities we live in. Policies that remove obstacles to our participation in the two countries are what are needed."

This statement suggests a sense of affinity and commitment to both the country of origin and the country of residence. It implies that Ghanaian diaspora in the Netherlands simultaneously use political opportunity structures in the Netherlands and Ghana to pursue objectives that benefit both contexts. This means mobilising resources in the Netherlands to undertake activities in both the Netherlands and Ghana. The 'here and there' aspect of diaspora participation is thus inherent to the duality of their experiences and affinity, as well as the dual identities that the diaspora acquire over time. The differences in the institutional frameworks between the country of residence and the country of origin add to the complexity of diaspora participation. As an unintended consequence, their special character enables them to create certain political opportunity structures in the country of origin.

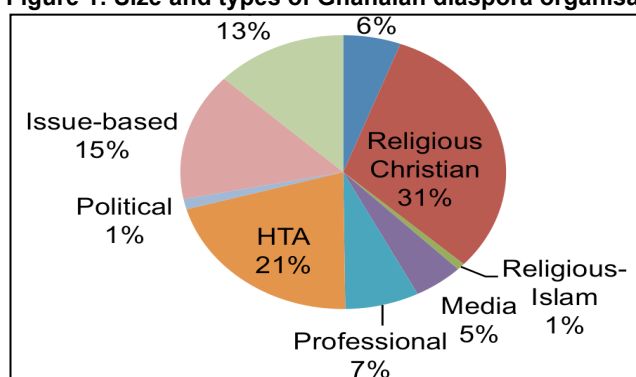
3. Types of diaspora organisations

It is because of the diversity of diaspora organisations in the Ghanaian community in the Netherlands that we need to identify those groups that are most likely to engage both in the public arena and between 'here' and 'there'. It is nonetheless very difficult to account for all Ghanaian diaspora organisations in the Netherlands, on account of their fragmentation, informality and organisational structures that transcend the customary identity markers.⁹ For instance, there are individual initiatives that fall outside the activities performed by formal and informal Ghanaian diaspora organisations. This category includes individual Ghanaians who function independently of any group or ethnic affiliation, and participate at different levels in Dutch and Ghanaian society. They use a combination of personal resources and volunteers to perform projects in Ghana. The individuals in this category also include Ghanaian professionals and expatriates, as well as mixed Ghanaian-Dutch couples who initiate community development activities in Ghana.

A recent attempt to map Ghanaian diaspora organisations in the Netherlands (Ong'ayo, forthcoming) demonstrates the relative invisibility of the activities performed by certain types of Ghanaian diaspora organisations. Combined with fragmentation and the challenges posed by informality, this makes it hard to set certain criteria for deciding which types of organisations qualify as Ghanaian diaspora organisations. For instance, certain Ghanaian organisations formed by native Dutch and Ghanaians citizens, or exclusively by native Dutch citizens, nonetheless have Ghanaian names (of places, villages or words with a symbolic meaning). These organisations apply for subsidies from the same sources (see Table 2) and undertake similar activities in Ghana as 'regular' Ghanaian diaspora organisations.

A conservative estimate in the same study suggests that there are about 245 Ghanaian diaspora organisations in the Netherlands. As shown in Figure 1, there is a wide variety of formations that constitute Ghanaian diaspora organisations however not every formation has orientation towards diasporas themselves and regions of origin in their activities. Nor do all formation undertake activities both in the Netherlands and Ghana.

Figure 1: Size and types of Ghanaian diaspora organisations in the Netherlands



Source: Ong'ayo (2014)

The most relevant types are hometown associations (HTAs) and issue-based organisations (incorporated under Dutch law as non-profit-making foundations, or *stichtingen*). The two types together account for about 36 per cent of all Ghanaian diaspora organisations. The next most important type of organisation is

⁹ Such as culture, religion, gender, ethnicity and political affiliation.

the umbrella organisation, which accounts for about 6 per cent of the total. Ghanaians of various backgrounds and persuasions subscribe to different umbrella organisations. The extent to which an organisation is capable of functioning in the public sphere and transnationally between the Netherlands and Ghana also varies markedly. This aspect has implications for the organisation's involvement in policy processes at different levels.

Organisations in these three categories are considered as 'significant' if it:

- is capable of functioning in the public sphere between the Netherlands and Ghana,
- is in constant interaction with host society institutions and
- is capable of participating;
- has the potential for making a broader impact and contributing to development in both the country of residence and the country of origin;
- has experience with the co-implementation of policies at local and national levels;
- has a proven track record (Ong'ayo, forthcoming).

Table 1: Characteristics of main types of Ghanaian diaspora organisations

Type of organisation	Membership	Organisational structure	Type of activity	Capacity and professionalism	Average annual budget
Issue-based	None	Advisory Board, Founding Director, Management Board and Branch in Ghana. Activities performed by local staff and partners.	Capacity-building, investment, services ¹⁰ , lobbying and advocacy	Physical office and functioning secretariat. Activities performed by qualified people. Online presence. Track record of activities.	€50.000 - €300,000
Home-town	20-100 individuals	Advisory Board and Executive Board. Members contribute ideas and participate in decision-making. Activities performed by local community in Ghana.	Services, community development projects in region of origin, donations, representation of a single group.	Run by the executive and volunteers. Activities performed by members and volunteers. Online presence. Track record of activities.	€10.000 - €50,000
Umbrella	10-40 Organisations	Advisory Board and Executive Board. Members contribute ideas and participate in decision-making. Activities performed by member organisations and volunteers in the Netherlands.	Services, lobbying and advocacy, Representation of the wider community.	Physical office and functioning secretariat. Activities performed by qualified people. Online presence. Track record of activities.	€50.000 - 100,000

Source: author's research, 2010

3.1. Main types of organisations and their roles in Ghana

The formation of issue-based diaspora organisations (see Table 1) follows from motives and issues that transcend cleavages such as ethnicity, regionalism, politics, and religious affiliations. For this reason, they have wide geographical coverage in their activities in Ghana. In the Netherlands, they are mainly registered

¹⁰ These include activities that address the needs of members and community namely: information about health services and access to the labour market, Dutch language course, skills training, emergency funds, and cultural events.

as non-profit-making foundations (*stichtingen* under Dutch law¹¹) whereas in Ghana, they acquire NGO status in order to be able to work at local community level. A review of their activities points to a dispersed pattern of project implementation. Most issue-based Ghanaian diaspora organisations were founded, and are still led, by individuals, most of who are professionals in their respective fields. A certain degree of professionalisation is common, and this is also reflected by the presence of paid staff (1-3), which other types of organisation do not generally have. They are able to employ staff thanks to their large budgets. They also maintain websites with up-to-date information on project and annual reports.

As Table 2 shows, these organisations derive their funding mainly from government ministries, development agencies and some local authorities. A few organisations, such as Sankofa and AfroEuro, have managed to obtain grants from the EU and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Issue-based organisations are also involved in development and policy debates in the Netherlands, sending delegates to consultation meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences. Their thematic and activity choices are also influenced by policy discourses in the development sector from which they obtain subsidies for their activities. Examples of organisations that grant subsidies are development agencies such as Oxfam-Novib, CORDAID, HIVOS and ICCO, as well as by international institutions such as IOM and UNDP.

Table 2: Sources of diaspora funding

Source	Estimated amounts per project or programme	Recipient organisations
EU	€130, 000 – €180,000	Issue-based organisations.
Development agencies	€2,000 - €300,000	Issue-based organisations and HTAs.
Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health Welfare & Sport, Social Affairs, Security and Justice	€5,000 - €100, 000	Issue-based organisations, HTAs and umbrella organisations. Funding is channelled through development agencies and local authorities.
Dutch municipalities	€2,000 - €100,000	Issue-based organisations, HTAs and umbrella organisations. Funding is channelled through municipalities and local health authorities (GGDs).
IOM	€10,000 - €30,000	Issue-based organisations participating in IOM programmes.
Corporate sponsorship	€500 -€10,000	Issue-based organisations and umbrella organisations.
Donations from private individuals	€10 -€6,000	Issue-based organisations, HTAs and umbrella organisations.
Own contributions (money, materials and time)	€1,000	HTAs, umbrella and issue-based organisations.
Membership fees	€2.5 -€10 per month	HTAs and umbrella organisations.

Source: Author's research, 2010-2011.

¹¹ Examples include Sankofa, AfroEuro, African Social Development Aid (ASDA) and Voice of Sub-Saharan African Women (VOSAW), Bokemei, Stichting Afrika Naast de Deur (STAND) and African Migrant Youth Initiative for Peace Keeping (AMYIP).

The other main category is that of hometown associations (HTAs,¹² see Table 1). These are generally registered as foundations and associations, and are organised along ethnic lines or are related to the village or city district from which the group in question originates. This is evident from their names, which correlate either with the ethnic group to which the members belong or with the group's ethno-regional background.¹³ They are all membership-based and rely on both individual and collective efforts to implement their activities. Membership ranges between 20 and 70 households. They meet regularly, often every other weekend, and some hold special end-of-year events for their members and the Ghanaian community in general. The bi-monthly meetings are generally guided by an agenda and conclude with refreshments. Members pay a fee ranging from €2.50 to €10 a month. Even though their main activity focus is 'here' in the Netherlands, they also undertake activities 'there', especially in the communities, regions or villages of origin in Ghana (see Table 1). In the Netherlands, Ghanaian diaspora organisations in this category address the needs of their community (i.e. members) in the municipalities in which they live. They play a significant role in enabling their members (both new and old) to integrate in Dutch society and cope with the complexities of their new living environment, and also provide emergency and other forms of support. This role prepares new arrivals for the challenges of living in a foreign country.

Besides meeting certain needs in the Netherlands, HTAs also perform development activities in Ghana, despite their narrow focus on their members' region of origin. HTAs contribute to local development in these areas, by performing activities that target both individual (i.e. family) and community needs by providing basic services and facilities. These Dutch-based institutions are key players in the implementation of social policies. For example, most of them contribute to local return-to-work programmes, language courses and cultural activities (Ong'ayo, forthcoming). The migrants argue that, if they are not fully integrated into Dutch society, they cannot have the necessary tools to participate in the labour market. Their ability to mobilise resources either through jobs or subsidies thus depends on the degree of their integration into and knowledge of Dutch society.

A third significant category consists of umbrella organisations (see Table 1). They are mainly registered as associations (a *vereniging* under Dutch law), even though a number of them have both association and foundation (*stichting*) status. They have a broad membership including both HTAs and issue-based organisations, averaging 15-45 member organisations.¹⁴ Umbrella organisations focus on the broader needs of the Ghanaian community in the Netherlands. They perform welfare-related activities in local municipalities in the Netherlands. Most of their activities in Ghana are undertaken by member organisations. They are well structured administratively, and are managed by an executive board that meets once a month, with members' meetings held on a quarterly basis. The meetings generally take place during the weekends and in the evenings. They also organise workshops and symposia for members on topics relating to welfare, integration and participation in Dutch society. Other activities include annual events for members and the Ghanaian community.

¹² While many African migrants are beginning to emerge from urban areas, the majority are from rural areas. It is in this context that ethnic associations play an important role. Hence, the references in the literature to migrant organisations as home-town associations do not reflect the contextual reality in Africa

¹³ Examples include the Fayila Youth Association, the Kwahuman Association in Amsterdam, the Kumasi Muslim Youth Association, and the Okyeman Association.

¹⁴ Examples include the Representative Council of Ghanaian Organisations in the Netherlands (RECOGIN) and Akasanoma (formerly SIKAMAN), Council of Ghanaian Chiefs (CoGhaC), Council of Ghanaians Community in the Netherlands (CoGhaN) and Ghanatta.

4. Characteristics of diaspora organisations

4.1. Objectives

Ghanaians diaspora organisations are characterised by their diversity: they have both very different and very similar objectives. The motives for their formation and the choices they make in terms of activities are critical determinants of their organisational form and management structure. For example, certain organisations revolve around the material well being of their members in the Netherlands, their work including the provision of social safety nets such as informal health and funeral insurance (see Mazzucato, 2005). Due to limited access to the formal job market, most Ghanaians, especially the undocumented, join networks and groupings to secure part-time employment or voluntary work.

Ghanaian diaspora organisations also help newcomers by organising extra language courses and programmes on Dutch society as part of their integration. These programmes are implemented in collaboration with the local authorities in the municipalities in which the Ghanaians reside. Organisations become a coping strategy for dealing with the complexities of a new society: they offer members psychological support, a sense of belonging and a connection with the cultures in the country of origin. Examples include the annual Ghana Day in Almere, the Afrika festivals in The Hague and Hertme, and the *odwiratuo* festival celebrations organised by the Okyeman community.

The desire to address socio-economic problems in Ghana is also an important motive for setting up a diaspora organisation. A recent study on participation by Ghanaian diaspora organisations in the Netherlands revealed that about 79 per cent are involved in activities that focus on the welfare of Ghanaians in the Netherlands, while 21 per cent focus purely on support for community projects in Ghana (Ong'ayo, forthcoming). The same study also showed that 86 per cent of organisations of all types perform activities or support community development initiatives in Ghana, whereas 14 per cent only operate in the Netherlands (*ibid.*).

4.2. Structure

Ghanaian organisations, especially umbrella and issue-based organisations, have relatively well-structured forms of management, as well as physical offices and regular staff. Some organisations also operate from homes, particularly issue-based organisations and hometown associations with no office facilities. Additionally, Ghanaian diaspora organisations tend to pay attention to their public image through various media outlets. Diaspora organisations make increasing use of websites, where they post contact details, newsletters, annual reports, and photographs. They also have Facebook and Twitter accounts for rapid and instant communication about their activities.

In regions in Ghana where Ghanaian diaspora organisations are active, they have teamed up with local partners to form well-developed structures for project implementation and monitoring. Members play an important role in the daily management of membership-based organisations, in the form of collective decision-making, voluntarism and financial and material contributions. Among foundations (*stichtingen*), decision-making by issue-based organisations in particular tends to depend on an individual leader, with some input coming from the board in a supervisory role.

4.3. Membership and composition

Membership is restricted largely to hometown associations and umbrella organisations. In the case of hometown associations, membership tends to be based on ethnic affiliations. The main Ghanaian ethnic groups represented in the Ghanaian diaspora community in the Netherlands are Fanti, Ashanti, Ga, Ewe, Dagomba and Kwahu. In the case of umbrella organisations, membership is open to different types of organisation. A small number of umbrella organisations, such as RECOGIN, CoGhaN and Ghanatta, accept both organisational and individual members. By contrast, foundations, especially those in the issue-based category, are generally made up of 4-6 leaders plus between 3 and 10 volunteers.

4.4. Sources of funding

The type of resources available for collective activities help to shape the choice of organisational structure and the kind of activities the organisation in question is likely to undertake. For instance, membership-based diaspora organisations rely on fees and donations from their members, while issue-oriented organisations have no members and hence rely heavily on donations and subsidies from host country institutions. The types of resources that an organisation is capable of mobilising thus influence its capacity to undertake activities in the Netherlands and Ghana.

The legal status of just about every category of Ghanaian diaspora organisation provides scope for mobilising resources beyond the membership (see Table 2). For instance, an examination of the activities of issue-based organisations reveals that those that previously focused predominantly on Ghana seem to be moving more towards municipal activities in the Netherlands. A growing number are combining activities in Ghana with activities in The Hague, Delft and Rotterdam, the towns where they operate and where they maintain a significant presence. This shift is influenced by the resource-related opportunities available at local government level and the increasing needs of the Ghanaian community in such fields as education, youth services, health and the care of the elderly.

4.5. Capacity and professionalism

Alongside structure and organisation, the level of professionalism and capacity in the various types of Ghanaian diaspora organisation is another key factor. A mixture of people with professional backgrounds in ICT, accounting, banking, business management, media, healthcare, social work, academic teaching and logistics run most of the Ghanaian diaspora organisations on a voluntary basis. Examples include RECOGIN, Sankofa, AfroEuro, Bokemei, VOSAW and African Social Development Aid (ASDA), which are all run by a team of highly qualified volunteers and part-time staff.

Professionalism in this regard is not confined to individuals. Ghanaian organisations are trying to improve their capacity by taking part in programmes initiated by mainstream Dutch development agencies and NGOs. This has been facilitated by training and subsidies (see Table 2) from Dutch institutions for capacity-building initiatives that target both the organisations and their leadership.

The next section explores the different types of Ghanaian organisations and their implications for collective participation, as well as the potential for fostering social transformation in the Netherlands and Ghana.

Table 3: Themes and activities ‘here’ and ‘there’

Netherlands		Ghana	
Theme	Activity	Theme	Activity
Integration	Representation	Health: awareness, facilities and services	Representation
Welfare of members	Participation in policy	Skills acquisition and capacity-building	Participation in policy
Education: exchange programmes	consultation processes	Gender: empowerment	consultation processes
Health	Mobilisation	Education: microfinance initiatives	Services
Labour market participation	(community and resources)	Agriculture and food security	Lobbying and advocacy
Skills acquisition and capacity-building	Services	Rural development	
Gender: empowerment	Lobbying and advocacy		
Remittance for investment			
Culture and social cohesion			

Source: Author's research, 2010-2011.

The description of the different types of Ghanaian diaspora organisation highlights the importance of disaggregating diaspora organisations as a precondition for selecting suitable categories for engagement. The description suggests that organisations that are well structured in terms of having a competent and professional leadership, are well-equipped and capable of managing resources, but also operate both ‘here’ and ‘there’ are most suited for inclusion in policy processes. Additionally, their broad coverage of issues that are relevant to policy as well as their broad outreach to large segments of the community are also important considerations. The various types of organisation also exhibit the necessary characteristics for constructive engagement with government institutions. These factors determine the extent to which their activities can make a difference in their countries of residence and origin.

5. Themes and activities

The thematic issues to which Ghanaian diaspora organisations in the Netherlands subscribe have a big impact on their choices of activity. These choices are also directly linked to their organisational objectives. They are also influenced by government policy on the participation of minority groups in Dutch society. Thematic and activity choices are influenced by diaspora welfare needs in the Netherlands, as well as by community needs in the regions or villages of origin in Ghana. International organisations such as the EU, UNDP and IOM are a further influence on the thematic choices of organisations, especially issue-based organisations. Certain Ghanaian organisations are working together with these international organisations on projects in Ghana. A final influential factor is the discourse generated by the development agencies that supply the diaspora organisations them with subsidies.

5.1. Skills development and capacity-building

This is an area in which the Ghanaian diaspora organisations, together with their local partners and communities (target groups), take a great deal of interest. It is a field covered by most organisations, as Box 3 shows. On the one hand, capacity-building as a theme is influenced by donor discourses reinforcing

the assumption that many development partners in the South lack capacity. On the other hand, Ghanaian diaspora consider the theme as a necessary organisational resource for developmental input. For this reason, they seek to transfer the same capacities to their local partners and beneficiaries in Ghana. At a local community level in Ghana, diaspora organisations also adopt the same language on the need for capacity-building, but use it in different ways when dealing with local partners and target groups. Some of the issues viewed as part of capacity-building by diaspora organisations are not about making up for a lack of capacity. Rather, they entail seeking practicable methods that the targeted groups can easily comprehend in addressing new developmental challenges at local community level. Various diaspora skills acquisition and capacity-building programmes aim to increase local capacities: they are targeted, for example, at raising awareness of issues such as women's rights, hygiene and health, as well as financial literacy (in relation to microcredit facilities in rural areas of Ghana).

5.2. Agriculture and food security

Agriculture and food security (see Box 3) has emerged as one of the critical areas of diaspora intervention in Ghana. This is because of the high cost of food and increased levels of food insecurity due to climate change. The high cost of food production affects most of the rural population in Ghana. The dramatic shift towards a market economy is having a growing impact on people's livelihoods due to the combined effect of low wages and high food prices, which have a huge impact on local communities without any regular income. The targeted regions include the north, west and east. These are relatively dry regions where there are big internal migration flows (Twumas-Ankrah, 1995). Their main crops are maize, soya, pepper, rice and tomatoes and various other subsistence crops.

The Sankofa Foundation is also active in agriculture, with a special focus on poultry and rice farming. Its activities are aimed at poverty reduction, as well as the empowerment of local women and youth groups to generate incomes that will lead to higher living standards. The expected outcome is a reduction in the number of people leaving rural areas for urban areas and other destinations abroad, as part of regional and international migration flows.

5.3. Health

Health is another big theme for Ghanaian diaspora organisations. This is because health is closely linked to poverty. Despite the introduction of the Ghana National Health Scheme, the cost of healthcare and the lack of facilities make it difficult for many families to access basic services (Mensah et al., 2009). With many Ghanaians leaving for urban areas in search of jobs, old people are often left behind in rural areas. As a result, care at family level becomes an individual responsibility. Hence the emergence of new interventions from members of Ghanaian diaspora experiencing these challenges in their own families.

Healthcare as a theme is also influenced by experiences in the diaspora: Ghanaians living in the Netherlands wish to see similar services and facilities in the communities from which they originate. These motives persuade many diaspora organisations to incorporate health issues in their interventions. In 2009, for example, ASDA raised about €10,000 for children's wards in hospitals. The beneficiaries were some 1,400 children. A further 15,000 people are estimated to have received spectacles funded by the project in 2010. The participation of diaspora organisations in local healthcare in Ghana therefore contributes to improved facilities, better access and higher quality services. They fill gaps in the national healthcare system by complementing government initiatives.

5.4. Education

Education is another key area of intervention by many Dutch-based Ghanaian organisations. The theme is common both to the Ghanaian community in the Netherlands and to the regions of origin in Ghana. The main issue in Ghana is the high cost of education. This mainly affects people in rural areas and informal settlements. These locations are hard hit by poverty and face exclusion in education, on which people's ability to access the formal labour market and other resources depends. The emphasis here is on facilities, equipment and teaching materials.

Education in all its forms consumes a large proportion of Ghanaian diaspora remittances to their families. The focus on education by Ghanaian diasporas is also influenced by their experiences in the Netherlands and by their desire to reverse the conditions that drove them out of their rural areas.

By way of example, it was thanks to the facilitating role played by Stichting Naast de Deur (STAND) that a Centre of Disability and Research Studies was built at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology with support from the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC) and the Dutch embassy in Accra. The facility serves the disabled at transnational, national, regional and local community levels in Ghana and West Africa. It opens up a new area in the field of education, whose absence in the Ghanaian education system locks out the most vulnerable in rural areas.

5.5. Rural development

Rural development is another prominent theme. It has been adopted by a number of organisations, especially those targeting rural areas in Ghana. The issue of rural-urban migration in Ghana has also been raised in the international policy debate and has become a focus of various types of intervention, e.g. return, circular and retention policies (IOM, 2010). The policy debate affects decisions taken by organisations that address rural poverty and mobility (Ghana Statistical Services, 2007; Litchfield & Waddington, 2003). Diaspora activities on this issue therefore resonate with government policies in both the country of residence and the country of origin, as is illustrated by the circular migration programmes.¹⁵ Diaspora interventions targeting local communities thus assist poverty reduction by raising incomes and improving living conditions in rural areas. They address the poor socio-economic conditions that are the main driver of migration (both internal and external) in Ghana.

5.6. Microfinance and remittances

The issue of microfinance and remittances (see Box 3) is one that a number of Ghanaian diaspora organisations have taken up, especially issue-based organisations. Their aim is to find ways of using diaspora remittances to reduce poverty in Ghana, while at the same time meeting the financial interests of migrants through a form of collective investment. These interventions target food production both also seek to earn a financial return on investments for partnerships formed between Ghanaian diasporas and Dutch people. In Ghana, this theme informs initiatives undertaken in relation to micro-credit facilities for women and youth groups. For Ghanaian diasporas and small businesses in the Netherlands, it is a new source of

¹⁵ Examples include programmes implemented by International Organisation on Migration namely Temporary Return of Qualified nationals (TQRNs) and Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA).

investment opportunities and jobs. At the same time, the reverse remittances result in improved living conditions in the Netherlands (Mazzucato, 2011).

6. Do diaspora organisations make a difference?

From a collective perspective, diaspora organisations are a big source of remittance capital (representing 33 per cent of total remittance flow) through migrants' contributions to collective remittances. Subsidies for projects in Ghana account for about 70-95 per cent of issue-based organisations' budgets. This compares with organisations with double programmes in the Netherlands and Ghana, who spend between 60-70 per cent in the Netherlands and about 40 per cent in Ghana, depending on the type of organisation. Some issue-based organisations also spend about 95 per cent of their funds on projects in Ghana. Hometown associations spend about 70 per cent of their resources in the Netherlands due to their strong focus on members' welfare. However, 90-100 per cent of the resources mobilised for specific projects are spent in Ghana.

Ghanaian diaspora organisations do not focus solely on classical community development projects. A growing number, particularly issue-based organisations, are also interested in microfinance, which some organisations are now trying to link with the maximisation of remittances. This is evident in the microfinance initiatives taken by ASDA, AfroEuro, Sankofa and AMYIP, all of whom grant small loans of between €150 and €500 per person to the 1,000 or so women for whom they cater. AMYIP, ASDA, and Sankofa have also sought to establish links with foreign investors by creating 'diaspora business centres'.¹⁶ These types of collective remittances ultimately help to raise household welfare and ease poverty, thanks to backward linkages and local economic growth (Mercer et al. 2008, p. 230).

¹⁶ See <http://www.diasporabusinesscentre.com/?portfolioentry=test-project>.

Box 3: Outcome of capacity-building, microfinance and investment initiatives taken by diaspora organisations**AfroEuro Foundation**

As part of AfroEuro's programme for empowerment and skills acquisition in relation to poverty alleviation (capacity-building through remittances and trade), a number of women's groups and farmers' and traders' associations were formed with the aim of setting up a farmers' cooperative funded by microfinance and remittances. Number of beneficiaries: 100 in Accra, 84 in Tema, 20 in Kumasi, 20 in Kibi, and 200 in Tamale (100 women and 100 boys).

Sankofa poultry project

Since 2009, 210 selected beneficiaries (70 per cent female and 30 per cent male) in five rural communities in Greater Accra and northern regions of Ghana have benefited from funding and training from Sankofa, as part of the EU-JMDI funded programme:

130 people were trained in poultry health and production, financial literacy and micro-finance management;
170 women received micro-loans to support livelihood-sustaining activities;
300 women were trained by the Ghana Police Service in coping with domestic violence.

ASDA foundation

Between 2010 and 2011, about 250 women in Kumasi were granted loans of between €150 and €500 under ASDA's micro-credit programmes targeting women and small traders. ASDA provides business and financial training before the credits are disbursed. In July 2011, more than 1,500 new clients had signed up and were on a waiting list for the next batch of micro-credits from ASDA.¹⁷ ASDA also set up a business association in Kumasi, of which some 96 business owners are members. In all, the microfinance initiative has reached about 250 households, 610 micro-saving groups, and 96 small businesses.¹⁸

At a local community level, development is defined in the most basic terms. The significance of the diaspora activities was captured in the following words of a community member:

"The women participating in these activities get motivated to pick up their lives in different ways – farming, poultry, microfinance, etc. They get an opportunity to learn through diaspora initiatives such as training before projects, financial literacy, health education and so on. It shows that someone is thinking about them – the link with home – and that Ghanaians who are far away value them. The diaspora support encourages women to achieve something in life. Diaspora support fills a gap – a development gap caused by local conditions and governmental failures."

For women in rural areas and small traders in informal settlements around cities such as Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale, development stems from sales of products from the respective projects (eggs, rice, goats, chicken and other merchandise). These activities generate income, thus enabling women to pay community levies, and meet their day-to-day family needs and contribute to the cost of funerals and other celebrations as part of Ghanaians cultural practices.

However, the support provided by Dutch-based Ghanaian diaspora organisations does not come exclusively in the form of finance. Social remittances also play a big role in the lives of communities and families. Issues-based diaspora organisations and hometown associations also transfer experience, skills and knowledge, material goods, project ideas, thus empowering local populations by sharing information

¹⁷ Interview with Amos Ackah of ASDA, 10 August 2011, Kumasi.

¹⁸ Interview with Cecilia Arthur of ASDA, 14 August 2011, Kumasi.

and practices with them. They address the health needs of local communities by sending equipment, constructing buildings and upgrading health facilities such as clinics, hospital wards and eye clinics. They have introduced new types of services in certain institutions, such as care for the elderly and people with dementia. In terms of education, diaspora organisations target the upgrading of school facilities and the expansion of schools, vocational training centres and research facilities.¹⁹ Finally, Ghanaian diaspora organisations also impart new values and practices, teach new skills and raise cultural and civic awareness (Nyberg-Sorensen, 2004), which can be positive if compatible with the local reality.

The above activities illustrate the highly diverse nature of the role played by diaspora organisations. They illustrate the link between the 'here and there' factors that influence diaspora participation, especially the resources and capacities deployed by these organisations in the course of their participation. The type of organisation, activity focus and level of available resources largely determine the balance in resource utilisation between 'here' and 'there'.

It is also the case that the interventions of diaspora organisations have broader implications for societal transformation, since they encourage social enterprise through microfinance and collaborative investment initiatives. The various forms of diaspora participation help to combat undesired forms of migration, but also create opportunities for migrants and local people alike to collaborate in joint ventures. Such business initiatives are likely to facilitate investments in emerging markets in the country of origin. This is a highly valuable aspect of diaspora engagement as it has the potential to make a difference in both the country of origin and the country of residence.

7. Political opportunity structures and diaspora engagement

The ability of Ghanaian diaspora organisations to engage at a local level in Ghana depends on a number of conditions linked to the political opportunity structures in the Netherlands and Ghana. These conditions are embedded in the institutional settings and policy environments in which diaspora organisations function. These include encounters with constraints and opportunities configured by the institutional arrangements and the prevailing patterns of political power (Roots 1999, p.1). Although political opportunities structures (See Table 5 in Annex II) are context-specific, their use by Dutch-based Ghanaian diaspora organisations in two contexts depends on migration experiences gained abroad and their capacity to contribute to development (Nyberg-Sørensen 2007b, p. 203).

The main political opportunities structures in the Netherlands and Ghana consist of both formal state institutional structures and informal procedures. In the Netherlands, the political, institutional and policy environment and the symbolic repertoires from the development agencies provide incentives and resources to facilitate the formation of diaspora organisations (Van Heelsum 2004b, p. 10). From an institutional policy perspective, simple, cheap registration procedures make it easy for diaspora

¹⁹ This applies for example to Stichting Afrika Naast de Deur (STAND), ASDA and German-based Ghanaian diaspora support for the only vocational training centre in Akori, a village in the east of the country. There is also a Ghanaian diaspora exchange programme between a Norwegian school and VRA International School in Akosombo.

organisations to access a variety of resources. In the Netherlands, the availability of political opportunity structures in the institutional setting and policy space depends on two criteria:

1. the recognition of migration as a key policy area in which institutions address issues, engage with diaspora organisations and eventually allocate resources to facilitate the latter's engagement;
2. the participation of diaspora organisations has to be structured and constructive, i.e. channelled through formal organisations.

The latter criterion as a precondition requires diaspora organisations to be well-organised, and to have enough visibility, credibility and capacity. This is because, due to the diversity and fragmentation of the diaspora community, government ministries and institutions prefer to engage with platforms or groups that have broad representation.²⁰

In Ghana, on the other hand, the political stability, openness and tolerance of the polity (Tarrow 1991, pp. 34-6), occasioned by the relative democratic space, gives Ghanaian diaspora organisations a number of advantages. The ease with which one can register an NGO in Ghana and the freedom to operate in any location without hindrance shows how the political context facilitates collective action, especially by diasporas. The prevailing political and policy environment allows non-state actors such as diaspora organisations to engage transnationally and locally in development activities.

Ghana's 1992 constitution restored a multi-party political system and ushered in a period of democratic transition, political and economic stability. Subsequent legislative amendments permitted dual nationalities and enabled Ghanaian citizens to move between Ghana and other countries. These policy and legislative measures acted as safeguards for government incentives targeting the diasporas, such as dual citizenship, representation, tax waivers and entitlements. Diasporas would have forgone these benefits if they had had to maintain their foreign nationalities at the expense of their Ghanaian citizenship.

Another aspect of the political opportunities structures in Ghana is the existence of institutions that deal with various dimensions of migration, but with whom diaspora organisations can also engage. Although not yet synchronised in terms of their inter-organisational linkages, complementarities and policy coherence, the political opportunities structures provide diasporas with a framework in which they can lobby, both individually and collectively. As a result of interactions between diaspora organisations and policy-makers and in response to the demand for participation, the government makes certain provisions, launches initiatives and programmes and creates institutions and legal and financial tools. These policy responses play an enabling, inclusionary and catalytic role in diaspora participation.

Institutional and actor configurations at local government level also help to create unique political opportunities structures based on local realities and dynamics. The political environment for collective action and participation enables diaspora organisation to participate freely and to use local resources. The political will of traditional chiefs and their direct responsibility for local resources such as land and forests are a good illustration of how this works. Decisions by local chiefs authorising diaspora activities are final and their legitimacy is similar to that of central government decisions. As noted in the discussion of how policy-makers deal with migration at both national and local levels, the local government policy response has a dual aspect in terms of its implications for the participation of Ghanaian diaspora organisations. A

²⁰ Interview with a policy officer at the Unit of Migration and Asylum, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, 18 February 2011.

minimum of interference by national and local governments creates both opportunities and constraints. As the director of the AfroEuro Foundation pointed out (whose projects involve negotiations with chiefs in Brong Ahafo and Kibi in the eastern region):

“In such a free environment, organisations are able to function with less interference and achieve most of their goals due to reduced bureaucracy and costs. ... but a lack of government involvement also makes it difficult to link with official policy priorities and development plans for the locations where we operate.”

Local networks and connections also provide political opportunity structures that are needed to facilitate diaspora activities. These are infused with the attitudes, perceptions, culture and receptiveness of the local community and its leaders. The relationship between Ghanaian diaspora organisations and local chiefs is a very significant political opportunity structure in terms of the benefits derived from contacts and good relations with institutions. As noted by Kleist, chiefs in Ghana, particularly ‘return chiefs’²¹ go beyond local custom to bring development and innovation to their districts, mobilising international networks, touring European and North American countries and collaborating with international development agencies, NGOs and migrants’ organisations (Kleist 2012, p. 629). For instance, the chiefs have the authority and influence to facilitate access to the community and can also approve diaspora activities, thus lending legitimacy to them. Recognition by local chiefs thus provides diaspora organisations with legitimacy within the prism of local development needs. Such contacts enable them to acquire premises for educational facilities such as nursery schools and knowledge centres or land for women’s groups.

These examples show that the political opportunity structures used by diaspora organisations derive from both the existing institutional framework as well as diaspora agency. In the Netherlands, Ghanaian diaspora organisations play an important role in the co-production and reproduction of political opportunity structures at different levels. Their input includes cooperation, skills, experiences and the legitimisation of institutions, new ideas and initiatives that add value to institutional and policy processes. At national and local government levels in Ghana, a combination of formal and informal institutions as well as diaspora agency drives the prevailing political opportunity structures. At the same time, the lack of government interference opens up space for creativity, innovation and diversity in the activities undertaken by diaspora. This paves the way for a broad coverage of issues affecting local communities. Nevertheless, a *laissez-faire* environment also makes it difficult for diaspora organisation to plug their activities into government development plans for the regions where they are active. The consequence could be imbalanced development outcomes if such activities are concentrated in a few regions or locations.

8. Challenges for diaspora engagement

This section examines the challenges encountered by Ghanaian policy-makers and diaspora organisations in the process of diaspora participation in local development. These challenges emanate from the experiences of the various Ghanaian diaspora organisations at national and local government levels in the Netherlands and Ghana. They reflect the issues that continue to hamper the realisation of the full development potential of diaspora organisations.

²¹ This refers to persons of Ghanaian background who have chieftaincy titles through family lineage have maintained these titles during their stay in the diaspora but have since decided to return to Ghana to resume full chieftaincy functions.

8.1. Challenges in the Netherlands

8.1.1. Changes in government policy

Policy-makers encounter challenges related to the *level of preparedness among diaspora groups and municipalities for the consequences of migration* to a new society in terms of coping strategies.

Migration as a policy issue undergoes constant change at national level, which consequently affects the municipalities where the policies in question are actually put into practice. Even though some policies originate from the municipalities, the main policy planning and the funding for national programmes come from central government. Policy shifts thus disrupt local policy initiatives since they create discrepancies, discontinuity and complexity in endeavours to integrate migrants and facilitate their full participation in society.

8.1.2. Fragmentation

Fragmentation is a challenge to Dutch institutions: who should they deal with among diaspora groups, some of whom represent one specific group whilst other represent a number of communities?²² At community level, umbrella organisations such as RECOGIN, CoGhaN, and Akasanoma have to contend with different and constantly shifting loyalties. Fragmentation in the diaspora communities leads to divergent loyalties as well as less opportunity for the long-term commitments that are needed in order to build membership-based organisations. Since diaspora organisations are largely individual initiatives, the extent to which they can claim legitimacy during activities targeting diaspora communities outside Ghana can be very limited. As demonstrated in the case of the Dutch-based Ghanaian umbrella organisations, not every Ghanaian organisation or association is represented by an umbrella organisation. This is partly a matter of diversity and partly the results of an orientation towards divisions on the grounds of ethnicity, religion or regionalism, which tend to exclude groups that have no affinity with the same region of origin or faith. Hence, reaching out to a wide range of groups is much easier through a framework that takes account of the diversity of Ghanaian diaspora organisations, especially broad-based umbrella organisations representing different segments of the community.

8.1.3. Understanding the political setting in the Netherlands

The majority of Ghanaian diaspora organisations face challenges in *understanding how the Dutch political and institutional setting works* and how to gain access to it at different levels. This challenge is a matter of communication between municipal departments, the diaspora community and their organisations. Problematic issues include expectations, perceptions and *modus operandi*. The ability to 'listen' and the attitude adopted during engagement also have implications for the building of a relationship of trust between diaspora organisations and host country institutions.

²² Interview with policy officer at the Unit of Migration and Asylum, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, 18 February 2011.

8.1.4. Access to financial resources

Access to financial resources is also a big challenge for Ghanaian diaspora organisations. Funding for integration programmes depends on central government policy and budgetary priorities, which determine the amount of funds allocated to different social programmes. With the change of government and the shift in policy in a more conservative direction, plus the budget cuts caused by the economic crisis, local authorities in the Netherlands are cutting the funding available for integration programmes.²³

8.1.5. Remote management and supervision

Although many organisations undertake activities on the ground in Ghana, they nonetheless face challenges concerning the supervision of these activities. One reason is that most of their leaders work on a voluntary basis. Secondly, the majority of them do not have enough time to travel to Ghana to oversee all their activities. In such cases, the analysis of contextual conditions and needs may be misrepresented as a result of getting information at second and third hand. In order to stay abreast of local developments, the majority of diaspora organisations with a focus on broader issues try to engage with serious local partners. These include universities and colleges,²⁴ but also credible NGOs.²⁵ In some cases, the leaders of these organisations have taken time off work or joined circular migration programmes such as Migration for Development in Africa²⁶ so as to use their skills in institutions with specific needs while at the same time using the opportunity to identify local intervention needs.

8.2. Challenges in Ghana

8.2.1. Matching diaspora resources with national development plans

This is also a question of how to attract the diaspora back, how to deal with diasporas without skills, and how to match what people have been doing in the country of residence, either as individuals or as organisations, with what is possible in the country of origin. There is a difference between professionals and those doing manual jobs. For example, 90 per cent of Ghanaian professionals come back to Ghana for visits or to invest. While the members of another group, commonly referred to as 'hustlers',²⁷ do not return to Ghana as often, they nonetheless wish to participate in Ghanaian society in different ways. The paradox here is that the latter group appears to be in the majority in most countries of residence, and is the main source of financial remittances. The unique characteristics of different diaspora groups with a potential to contribute to development thus require innovative policy and legal mechanisms that facilitate their participation by regularising their status and mode of participation.

²³ Interviews with representatives of local councils, 2010-2011.

²⁴ As with the working relationship between RECOGIN and the Centre for Migrations Studies in Legon.

²⁵ For example, Sankofa's partnerships with GAPNET in Accra and AFDOM in Tamale.

²⁶ This is an IOM capacity-building programme that seeks to mobilise competences acquired by African nationals abroad for the benefit of Africa's development. It mostly addresses institutional capacity gaps in field such as ICT and medicine.

²⁷ This a term used to describe undocumented Ghanaians or those who travelled abroad through irregular channels.

8.2.2. Multiple identities and the second-generation question

Some diaspora returnees have identity problems that affect their sense of belonging and satisfaction with life in Ghana. In such cases, the government faces the challenge of helping returnees fit in with contemporary Ghanaian society. Although the government has been making efforts to reach out to the diaspora, these have been targeted primarily at economic operators thus far. Ambassadors in the countries of residence implement these policies through the council of Ghanaian associations abroad. Nevertheless, these initiatives encounter problems of legitimacy and representation due to diaspora fragmentation.

There is also the question of the second generation and the latter's participation in development processes in Ghana. While current diaspora participation is largely a first-generation undertaking, concerns are emerging about the role of second-generation Ghanaians. According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2012), the number of second-generation Ghanaians currently stands at 36 per cent of the total number of Ghanaians in the Netherlands (i.e. 21,000). This group has dual identities and affinities due to its Ghanaian-Dutch heritage. These traits are likely to have implications for policy initiatives designed to reach out to Ghanaian diasporas. The challenge is how to attract or keep them connected to Ghana, and more particularly whether they would be willing to return to Ghana at some stage.

8.2.3. No coherent framework for diaspora engagement in local development

Although the Ghanaian government is trying to set up a mechanism for addressing various aspects of migration, the issue of diaspora participation has not yet been institutionalised. This omission exacerbates the fragmented nature of diaspora input and the inadequate policy response to diaspora needs. This disconnect has implications for the formation, and the use made, of local political opportunity structures in Ghana. The current position is that Dutch-based Ghanaian diaspora organisations rely on individual connections and networks to gain policy-makers' attention for their project plans. In the absence of formal mechanisms for regulating diaspora input, inside knowledge plays an important role in getting things done.

Moreover, the lack of a coherent diaspora policy and a strategic framework for diaspora engagement prevents diaspora activities from playing a full role in development plans and processes. This is due to limited awareness of diaspora organisational resources and capacity, as well as information that could facilitate the effective coordination of diaspora activities at national, regional, district and sub-district levels. While there is an accountability mechanism through which the organisations report on their activities, evidence from the selected Dutch-based Ghanaian diaspora organisations suggests that neither the national government nor the local authorities in Ghana know much about the collective resources and capacities of diaspora organisations. The limited degree of interaction means that the potential of diaspora organisations is not fully used. In other words case, policy-makers in Ghana and diaspora organisations abroad have yet to engage as partners.

8.2.4. Unpredictable political environment and lack of institutional continuity

Even though the Ghanaian government has made efforts to create institutions to deal with migration, changes of government and ostensibly fickle policy shifts have had a big impact on relations between diaspora organisations and the government. The then government under the New Patriotic Party created a

special diaspora ministry in 2004. In 2009, however, the name reverted to the Ministry of Tourism (Vezzoli & Lacroix, 2010)²⁸ and all the institutional frameworks for diaspora relations were reorganised in accordance with the political priorities of the government of the time, led by the National Democratic Congress. The lack of a clear policy framework for diaspora initiatives remains a challenge in the context of regime change. These uncertainties have undermined the confidence of diaspora organisations in the government as a development partner.

Although the contributions made by Ghanaian diaspora organisations to local development should be seen as complementary to government efforts, the government itself remains solely responsible for development. In this situation, diaspora organisations have very little choice but to act on their own initiative on matters of public concern. While this works in most cases, no proper strategy has been put in place for guiding diaspora contributions in the long term. The problem with this omission is one of accountability on the part of diaspora organisations, as well as of the government departments in whose dockets such initiatives fall.

8.2.5. Lack of resources for sustaining activities

While most Dutch-based Ghanaian diaspora organisations focus on sustainability, the funds available for their activities are not generally sufficient to meet their budget projections. As Table 2 shows, very few hometown associations with budgets of between €10,000 and €50,000 per year actually raise enough money to meet their spending needs. Subsidies account for 25 per cent of their budgets at most. Similarly, umbrella organisations and issue-based organisations with activities in the Netherlands generally have difficulty raising the funds required to meet their budgets. This is partly because of the irregularity of funding from development agencies and government institutions, but also due to the low income of members working in insecure jobs.

Such shortfalls consequently hinder their full participation, especially in activities targeting groups such as women and adolescents. Diaspora organisations have very limited options in this area, especially when the funds are from donors and are earmarked for a specific period. In response, the majority of Ghanaian diaspora organisations are beginning to combine donor funding with a form of social enterprise, whereby investments in projects are intended to sustain local groups and also to generate income for individual members of these groups.²⁹

9. Conclusions

Close examination of the various forms of diaspora participation indicates that diaspora organisations form an important element in relation to policies aimed at harnessing the developmental potential of diasporas. Diaspora organisations provide diaspora communities with platforms for constructive engagement with host country institutions and participation in policy processes. However, a favourable institutional and policy

²⁸ Ministry of Tourism, available from www.ghana.gov.gh. Accessed on 31 May 2011.

²⁹ An example of such an initiative is the food security project run by the Afro-Euro Foundation in the village of Buoku (municipality of Wenchi) in the Brong Ahafo region.

environment is needed if full use is to be made of such diaspora initiatives. Through interactions with government institutions, diaspora organisations access information, networks and social capital, thus enhancing their ability to engage effectively with formal institutions. This ensures, for example, that they are familiar with government policy agendas, programmes and project funding requirements, as well as with the departments and officials dealing with issues related to their objectives. The value of networks and social capital built on interactions between diaspora organisations and host-country institutions includes the entrenchment of the bridge-building and interlocutory role played by diaspora organisations in policy processes.

There is a broad consensus that diaspora participation is a major contributor to development in the countries of origin. This view is based on the increasingly widespread recognition of the value of remittances, especially in the case of Ghana (Smith, 2007; Casini, 2005; Kabki et al., 2004). However, looking at the nature of Ghanaian diaspora participation in various localities in Ghana, collective forms of participation stand out as being the most effective in terms of broad developmental impact. This is largely due to the cumulative nature of their resources and their geographical dispersal. For example, the activities of issue-based diaspora organisations have a wider outreach, sometimes transcending two to three geographical regions. The activities of Sankofa, the Afro-Euro foundation, ASDA and STAND, for instance, have created, or helped to improve, facilities and services cutting across Greater Accra, Ashanti, the eastern region, Brong Ahafo and the northern region of Ghana.

Diaspora contribution to development through participation should not be seen merely from the perspective of migrant organisations, but as the result of the interconnectedness between the countries of residence and the countries of origin. As the case of Ghanaian diaspora organisations in the Netherlands shows, their evolution is linked to the poor socio-economic conditions in the regions of origin, which are the major drivers of migration.

Equally, however, local living conditions and welfare arrangements in the Netherlands, as well as constantly shifting immigration and integration policies in the Netherlands, also have a big impact on diaspora organisations. Dutch municipalities with a large multi-ethnic population, such as Southeast Amsterdam and The Hague, pursue diversity policies emphasising the participation of all the groups in their population mix. Local authorities work together with Ghanaian diaspora organisations in co-implementing policies on language programmes, health awareness, diaspora participation in the labour market, debt relief and girls' schooling. Diaspora organisations working with these local authorities use these experiences and newly acquired capacities in their interventions in their regions of origin in Ghana. Others use them in providing services to migrants from beyond their own community. Because diaspora interventions are made simultaneously in both contexts, the developmental outcomes of their activities derive from the mobility of the persons responsible for the projects, the resources and materials, but also from the ideas and skills that they possess as part of reverse flows. Ghanaian diaspora organisations thus contribute to policy processes using perspectives based on prior knowledge of the community, as well as experiences and skills gained over time through training and jobs.

Examination of the transnational activities of Ghanaian diaspora organisations in the Netherlands reveals that diaspora participation is also influenced by policies transcending the local context. The combination of Dutch national policies and EU policies and directives also influences the participation of diasporas organisation, particularly issue-based organisations. For instance, the EU is exerting a growing influence on labour market policy, social policy, migration policy and anti-discrimination policy (Geddes, 2000). This mix of national and supranational policy has the potential to expand the space for participation and to

create international political opportunity structures, as is demonstrated by EU-UNDP programmes on migration and development involving migrant organisations.

The impetus for Ghanaian diaspora participation in Ghana derives largely from a combination of the political opportunity structures accessed by the Ghanaian diaspora in the Netherlands and those they find and create in Ghana. The transnational dimension of diaspora participation thus relates to the interconnectedness of translocal resource mobilisation. Access to subsidies and co-development initiatives in the Netherlands (Nijenhuis & Broekhuis, 2010) provide the basic resources, capacities, tools and symbolic repertoires that enable Ghanaian diaspora organisations to undertake transnational activities between the Netherlands and Ghana. These resources constitute the collective remittances that the diaspora send to local groups, who use them as input for income-generating activities and service delivery.

In the absence of a national migration policy framework and an institutionalised framework for diaspora engagement, the participation of Ghanaian diaspora organisations in national and local policy processes in Ghana depends largely on the strategies they adopt for dealing with local institutions, policy-makers and traditional chiefs. It also depends on their own personality and leadership qualities, in combination with the kind of networks and local connections they have established. Diaspora organisations are nonetheless able to take advantage of the prevailing institutional and policy environment to undertake activities with minimal regulation.

However, the main factors that facilitate effective engagement with government institutions in Ghana are aspects such as access, trust, partnerships, connections that can make things happen, a professional approach to project implementation, and experience of local politics. The involvement of target groups in the choice, formulation, design, implementation and sustainability of activities also contributes to the success of collective initiatives.

Finally, the participation of Ghanaian diaspora organisations seems to provoke political debate about their interventions and local development issues. This leads to a heightened awareness among local communities of the need to demand better services from the government. The interventions by Ghanaian diaspora organisations in such fields as education, healthcare and agriculture make a difference in that they complement public services and foster the well being of local communities.

10. Recommendations for policies on diaspora engagement and participation

An understanding of the dynamics of diaspora participation in multiple contexts with incompatible jurisdictions is important for devising policies that can scale up diaspora participation and its contribution to development both 'here' and 'there'. The following policy recommendations are intended to maximise the potential of migrant communities in the EU member states.

1. **Establish frameworks to facilitate institutional compatibility and complementarity, as well as policy coherence, between the EU member states and migrants' countries of origin.** For example, similar mechanisms should be established in the countries of origin so as to provide institutional compatibility and complementarity between institutions and actors at national and local

levels. Coherent approaches to diaspora participation will enhance the dialogue between the EU and the countries of origin and with diaspora organisations, thereby streamlining implementation of policy initiatives.

2. **Institutionalise diaspora participation** in policy processes in the country of residence. This would make it easier to establish an inclusive consultation mechanism. It would address the challenges posed by diversity and fragmentation within migrant communities, as well as the uncertainties linked to political transitions and policy shifts. It would guarantee the continuity of diaspora input and enhance institutional memory in dealing with the challenges posed by increased mobility.
3. **Professionalise diaspora organisations.** Harness the developmental potential of migration through the participation of diaspora organisations by identifying the main representative groups for constructive engagement. Policy-makers should focus on diaspora organisations that regularly interact with host-country institutions, and are capable of participating and fostering the development of both the country of residence and the country of origin. Professionalising diaspora organisations would make it easier for them to undertake large-scale projects and collaborate with development actors in the country of residence.
4. **Recognise and valorise the potential of diaspora organisations.** Raising the visibility of diaspora participation and boosting its added value for host-country societies through policy and public debates would contribute to informed perceptions of migration. Moving the policy debate to focus on the positive aspects of migration and its short-term and long-term benefits for host countries would make it easier to devise a practical and realistic response to the multifaceted issue of migration.
5. **Scale up support for diaspora activities with development potential.** More support for collective forms of diaspora participation would facilitate diaspora creativity and innovation by addressing some of the challenges faced by migrants in host countries. Diaspora organisations performing activities centring on enterprise and investment in both the country of residence and the country of origin have the potential to address issues such as unemployment and burden on the welfare system. At the same time, those involved in the co-implementation of integration policies and service delivery at local government level in the EU can address persistent questions about integration and social cohesion in the context of a growing multi-ethnic population in the EU member states.

Annex I: List of interviews

1. AFDOM in Tamale on 10 August 2011 and in The Hague on 23 October 2010.
2. SANKOFA in The Hague on 28 February 2011.
3. ASDA officials in Almere on 15 March 2011.
4. AfroEuro in The Hague on 9 March 2011.
5. International Institute for Multi-Cultural Training & Development (IMTRAD) in Amsterdam (Bijlmer) on 6 April 2012.
6. VOSAW in Anyaa-Accra on 5 August 2011.
7. Ghana Investment Promotion Council (GIPC) in Osu Accra on 2 August 2011.
8. Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Europe Bureau, in Accra on 17 August 2011.
9. VOSAW in Delft on 25 April 2012.
10. FRINET in Osu Accra on 1 August 2011.
11. Dutch Chamber of Commerce in Amsterdam on 4 May 2011.
12. Policy officers responsible for implementing integration programmes in Leeuwarden, Helmond, Groningen, Enschede, and Utrecht: various dates in 2011.
13. Policy officer at the Unit of Migration and Asylum, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague on 18 February 2011.
14. Amos Ackah of ASDA in Kumasi on 10 August 2011.
15. Cecilia Arthur of ASDA in Kumasi on 14 August 2011.

Annex II: Tables

Table 4: Results achieved by diaspora participation in Ghana

Field	Outcomes
Education, skills transfer and capacity-building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and training facilities. • Improved skills and examples of best practices. • New ideas, e.g. for poultry and food production using local materials plus modern technology to raise productivity.
Service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to services. • Better facilities and services. • Complementing government services. • Higher living standards.
Innovation and creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New opportunities. • Investments, higher agricultural production and microcredit lead to empowerment of vulnerable groups, especially women.
Lobbying and advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of space for participation and access to national policy processes. • Influence over government policy.
Material goods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting basic needs of the less fortunate. • Complementing local resources. • Reduced cost of supplies for essential services.
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation of contextual factors. • Respect for local actors. • Exchange of information. • Better communication and understanding. • Involvement of other stakeholders. • Joint problem definition and solution.
Cultural identity and heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining cultural identity by linking diaspora to their roots. • Observation of cultural practices and heritage.
Social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diaspora organisations maximise group membership, relationships, networks of influence and support, as well as mutual acquaintance and recognition.
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-economic development through investment opportunities and broad participation at local level • Combined development between diaspora organisations and local initiatives. • Formation of organisations that are capable of harnessing potential of diaspora.

Source: author's research, 2011-2012

Table 5: Political opportunity structures in Ghana

Level	Political opportunity structure	Originator	Outcomes	
National	<i>Top-down:</i>	<i>Policy-makers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freedom to function Invitations to participate in policy debates Taking diaspora interests into account in bilateral relations Formation of relevant institutions (e.g. diaspora desks in Ghanaian missions) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Favourable political environment Decentralised system and autonomy of institutions Recognition of developmental potential of diaspora organisations Legal framework: registration law Diaspora engagement policy initiatives 			
	<i>Iterative:</i>	<i>Policy-makers and diaspora organisations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Space for diaspora voices Incentives such as dual citizenship Complementing central government services National development through diaspora initiatives (socio-economic) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal networks Recognition of actors Validation of actors and outcomes Diaspora agency (skills, experiences, and aptitudes) Cooperation and interactions 			
	<i>Bottom-up:</i>	<i>Diaspora organisations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migration policies with input from diaspora 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal approaches (networks, contacts) Diaspora agency (skills, experiences, and aptitudes) Innovative ideas and initiatives 			
	Local	<i>Top-down:</i>	<i>Policy guidelines from metropolitan and regional assemblies, and central government</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to local resources such as land for projects Access to local communities Goodwill and cooperation from local leaders and communities Materials Complementary services to local government Social transformation at local level (socio-economic)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible approach to diaspora Devolved decision-making Recognition of diaspora contributions 		
		<i>Iterative:</i>	<i>Diaspora organisation, local policy-makers and local chiefs, local community and community-based organisations</i>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal networks Diaspora agency (skills, experiences, and aptitudes) Interactions and partnerships Networks and influential allies 		
		<i>Bottom-up:</i>	<i>Local communities and diaspora organisations</i>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal approaches (networks, contacts) Diaspora agency (skills, experiences, and aptitudes) Innovative ideas and initiatives Participatory space, status and multiple identities 		

Source: author's research, 2011-2012

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