

# DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

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**AFRICA**

**REGIONAL  
SERIES**

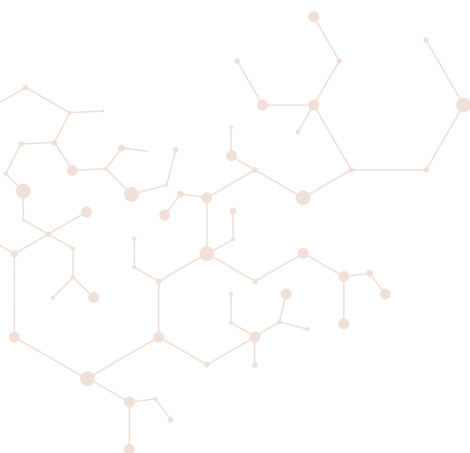
*The European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF) is the first European Union-funded project to take a global approach to diaspora engagement. Implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the project seeks to build an informed, inclusive, and impactful diaspora-development ecosystem through research, dialogue, and capacity development. EUDiF runs from June 2019 to December 2022.*

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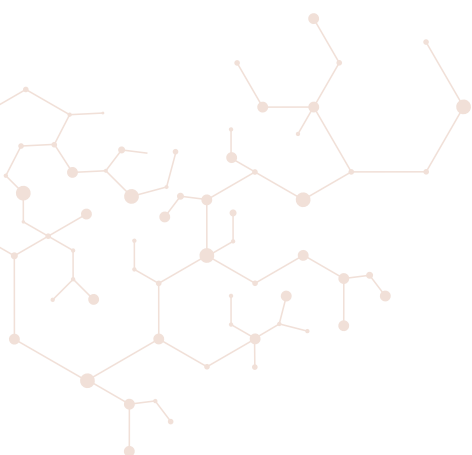


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# 1. BACKGROUND

In 2020, EUDiF worked with a team of regional experts to conduct a global mapping exercise focused on assessing diaspora engagement across six regions. The aim was to address the fragmentation of evidence on diaspora engagement policies, institutions, and practices by collating the information in an open-access knowledge hub.

The global mapping has generated 107 individual country fact sheets, which are available via an interactive map on the EUDiF website, where findings can also be compared between individual countries.

Through the research exercise, EUDiF has sought to identify the interests and challenges of countries of heritage when it comes to diaspora engagement. This publication is one of a six-part series reviewing the research results for each partner region.

EUDiF regions:

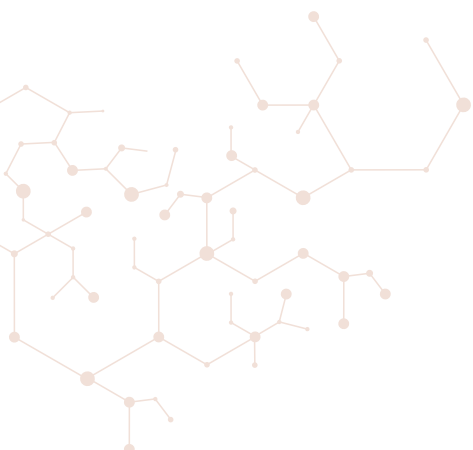
- Africa
- Asia
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia
- Latin America & the Caribbean
- Middle East
- Pacific


## AFRICA

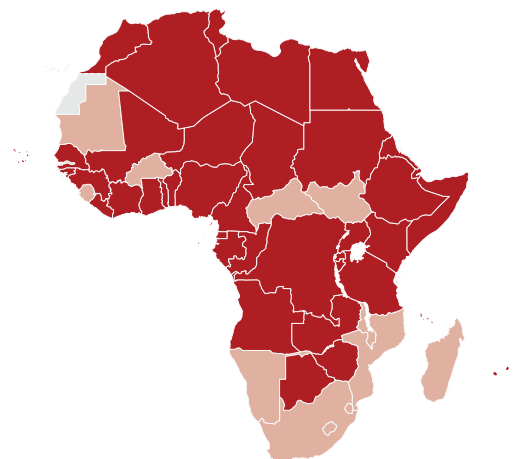
If you are interested in the specifics of the country selection methodology, email us at [eu-diaspora@icmpd.org](mailto:eu-diaspora@icmpd.org).

This document is a regional analysis of diaspora engagement in Africa. It draws on knowledge gathered during the mapping of 41 countries to study relevant policy and institutional frameworks, trends, good practices, and recommendations at regional level. The resulting document offers a consolidated source of information to:

- ▶ Promote the contribution of the African diaspora to development;
- ▶ Guide action at regional level;
- ▶ Identify opportunities for peer exchange.



 Countries mapped: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, DRC, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe. The 41 countries were selected based on a set of objective and transparent criteria.



## 2. POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS RELATED TO DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

### AT REGIONAL LEVEL

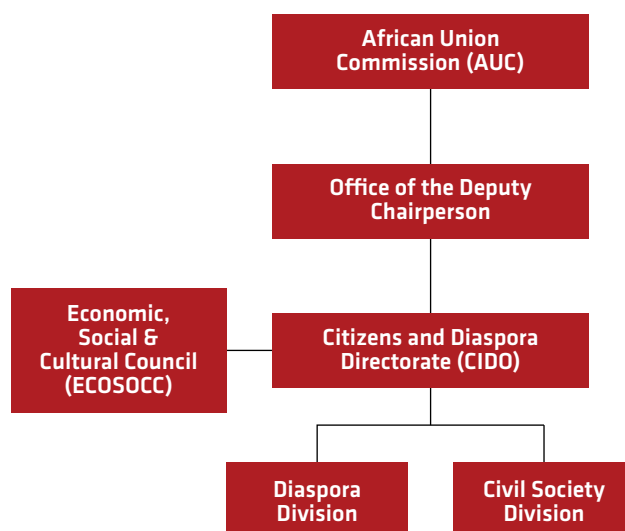
Compared to other regions of the globe, significant efforts to foster the African diaspora's contribution to the development of homeland countries have been made at continental level.

Since its creation in 2001, the African Union (AU) has systematically engaged the African diaspora in building and developing the African continent. The African Union widely defines the African diaspora as “Consisting of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union.” The evolution towards diaspora engagement at continental level by the AU is rooted in a growing recognition that the continent must look for new partnerships for its development. The **Protocol on the Amendments to the Constitutive Act of the African Union**, adopted in 2003, recognises in Article 3 the key role of the African diaspora as a development actor.

However, it was in 2012, with the publication of the **Sandton Declaration** at the Global African Diaspora Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, that the AU expressed a truly unique viewpoint on diaspora engagement at regional level by recognising the diaspora as the “sixth region” of Africa, and calling upon African governments to involve the African diaspora in national development. The Sandton Declaration prompted many African states to develop new diaspora policies, programmes, and initiatives, as governments sought to better harness different forms of diaspora capital (financial, intellectual, social, political, and voluntarism) for national development. This materialised in the form of the adoption of **five Legacy Projects**: the African Diaspora Skills Database; the African Diaspora Volunteer Corps; the African Diaspora Investment Fund; the Development Marketplace for the Diaspora (which became the African Diaspora Marketplace); and the **African Institute for Remittances (AIR)**, which was officially launched in 2014. In November 2019, a workshop was held to review the **draft African Diaspora Investment**

**Fund (ADIF) framework** and decide on the way forward. However, it seems that little progress has been made in the implementation of the other three legacy projects, if any. The current status of these projects is unclear.

The governance frameworks of the AU and the **Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC)** foresee the formal participation of the diaspora, for example by allocating seats to diaspora representatives and allowing them to participate in debates and decision-making, even though this is often seen as only symbolic<sup>1</sup>. The **Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO)** was originally created in 2001 to lead the AU's diaspora engagement and particularly to follow the implementation of the five Legacy Projects. The development of the CIDO has been important in providing leadership, coordination, and practical guidance to AU member states in relation to the development and implementation of diaspora engagement frameworks. For example, AU-CIDO piloted the creation of a **Diaspora Engagement Self-Assessment Tool (DESAT)** that was published in 2019. The **Diaspora Division**, established in 2007, takes directives and instructions from CIDO and serves as the focal point for implementing the AU's diaspora engagement positions.



<sup>1</sup> Matthew Graham, *Contemporary Africa: Contemporary states and societies* (Macmillan International Higher Education, 2018) 228.

In line with the AU's unique efforts to engage its diaspora, the **Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want** was adopted in 2015 as a strategic framework to reposition Africa in the global arena. The Agenda mentions: "The active engagement of the Diaspora can be one of the key drivers of change for Africa's development; contributing to strengthening of African economic independence through investment, expertise and general political, cultural and social solidarity". The Agenda 2063 envisaged: "Agency for Diaspora Affairs will be established in all member states by 2020 with the Diaspora integrated into the democratic processes by 2030. Dual citizenship for the Diaspora will be the standard by 2025". Even though these goals have not yet been reached, an evolution towards more institutionalisation of diaspora engagement in Africa can be observed. Among the 41 African countries covered by the EUDiF mapping exercise, 21 have a diaspora engagement policy or are in the process of drafting one, and 30 have at least one diaspora-related institution.

## AT NATIONAL LEVEL

In parallel to the development of the diaspora engagement framework at the AU level, African countries have developed national diaspora engagement priorities. In several African states, especially in North and West Africa, there was a shift away from "guest-worker", remittance-driven economic models as remittances became a less important part of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In response, African governmental and policy approaches have increasingly shifted to "courting" the diaspora to invest in the country, to return on a short or longer-term basis to invest in the national economy, to enable skills and technology transfer, and to build and maintain cultural links (especially for second- and subsequent generations of diaspora). National attempts to engage with the diaspora are complementary to the AU's attempts. Regional impetus has driven actions at national level and in return national development has fed into further regional consolidation.

**The principal, overarching trend for African states in relation to diaspora engagement has been the increasing formalisation, professionalisation, and capacity development of diaspora engagement structures, frameworks, and personnel.**

However, policy development and formalisation processes in many African states tend to be slow and are often opaque. In several instances, a lack of formal policies can also be attributed to domestic political pressures as well

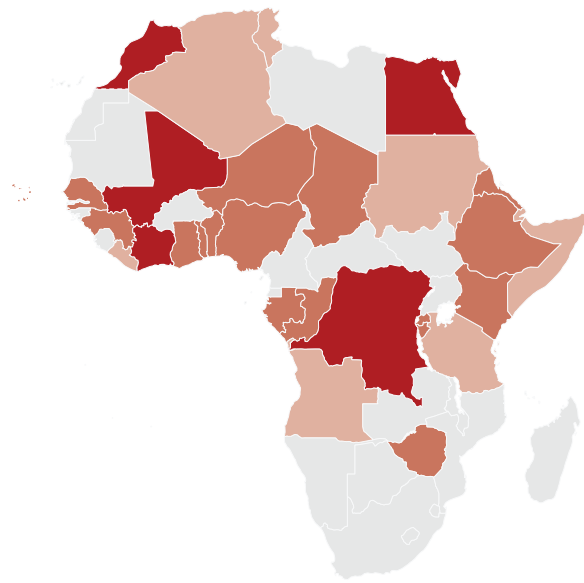
as inter-departmental disagreements and competition for resources (perceived or actual).

Benin was the first country to adopt a diaspora engagement policy in 2000, followed by Senegal in 2006 and Rwanda in 2009. Out of the 41 countries mapped, these three are the only ones that started institutionalising their diaspora engagement in the 2000s, long before the Sandton Declaration. Following the declaration, in 2013, Uganda developed its diaspora engagement policy. In 2014, diaspora engagement policies were adopted in Cape Verde, Kenya and Morocco, and a policy was drafted in Tanzania. However, the majority of diaspora engagement policies were adopted (or drafted) after Agenda 2063 was proposed in 2015 (2015: Burundi, Ethiopia and Mauritius; 2016: DRC, Liberia and Zimbabwe; 2017: Djibouti; 2019: Chad, Nigeria, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia). Negotiations have also been initiated for the development of diaspora engagement policies in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.



The institutionalisation of diaspora engagement also happens through the establishment of structures specifically meant to address diaspora issues, such as fully dedicated ministries (in Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Egypt, Mali, and Morocco), diaspora departments in ministries of foreign affairs (in Benin, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, and Zimbabwe) and sub-ministerial bodies (in Algeria, Angola, Djibouti, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, and Tunisia) and often a combination of different bodies<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> A more detailed analysis of the existing institutions will be provided in a typology of diaspora institutions (upcoming EUDiF publication).



- Fully dedicated ministries
- Diaspora departments in ministries of foreign affairs
- Sub-ministerial bodies

These trends towards an institutionalisation of diaspora engagement are more obviously visible in countries involved in the Rabat and Khartoum Processes, which have been beneficiaries of external donor support in this regard, in particular from the EU and EU member states and other international stakeholders such as IOM, ICMPD, UNHCR, the World Bank, and the African Development Bank. These subregional dialogue frameworks help to create the necessary conditions and political will as well as to provide opportunities for peer exchanges to allow countries of origin to develop their diaspora engagement framework. In this respect, it can be observed that the majority of countries that have adopted a diaspora engagement policy or have a diaspora institution have already been part of political dialogues and have benefited from foreign aid to support the development process.

# 3. REGIONAL PIONEERS

EUDiF's regional pioneers are countries that have shown significant interest and progress in the field of diaspora engagement over time. Countries are usually identified as regional pioneers because:

- The national institutional framework and enabling environment has been developed with the explicit recognition of the key role of migrants and/or the diaspora in the development of the country of origin; the importance of optimising diaspora development contributions has been highlighted.
- And/or the country has implemented notable diaspora-relevant initiatives in a given development sector.

There is no ranking of pioneers. More details on each of the regional pioneers are available in the relevant country fact sheet.

## NORTH AFRICA


**Morocco:** The Moroccan government has increased civic and political rights for Moroccans abroad (such as recognising the dual identity of the diaspora) and has developed dedicated diaspora engagement policies and programmes. Morocco has included its civil society in its institutional measures for engaging diasporas. For example, the Hassan II Foundation for Moroccans Residing Abroad and the Mohammed V Foundation for Solidarity are NGOs which coordinate a large part of the country's diaspora engagement. Morocco has also invested in the creation of institutions to engage with its diaspora effectively. There is an increasing trend for diaspora entrepreneurs to return to Morocco to set up businesses, with more interest being shown in supporting start-ups and innovative industries. A delegation from the Democratic Republic of the Congo visited Morocco in 2018 on a **fact-finding mission** on the *Conseil de la communauté marocaine à l'étranger* (Council of the Moroccan Community Living Abroad [CCME]). The purpose of this mission was "to benefit from Moroccan experience and expertise in the field of migration, especially in its organisational aspect", highlighting its perceived status as a role model.

## WEST AFRICA

**Cape Verde:** The government has sought to implement a number of reforms to strengthen the business and investment climate, including efforts to improve the efficiency of public administration to deliver services to citizens and businesses, including the diaspora. The **Casa do Cidadão** ('Citizen's House') was created in 2007 as the main point of access and information for the Cape Verdean diaspora. This government service works towards improving communication, de-bureaucratisation, and coordination with diaspora groups. It also provides information on setting up businesses and investing in Cape Verde. Additionally, **DIAS de Cabo Verde (Diaspora for Development of Cape Verde)**, initiated by the Cape Verdean Institute of Communities in partnership with the IOM and the EC, mobilised the human, social, and professional resources of the country's diaspora for the capacity building of key development sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, and tourism. It has strengthened ties between the diaspora and the public and private sectors in Cape Verde and Portugal, Italy, and the Netherlands to stimulate trade and investment as well as entrepreneurship. Cape Verdeans living abroad have had the right to vote in presidential as well as legislative elections since 1992. Six members of parliament represent Cape Verdeans abroad: two each from the Americas, the rest of Africa, and Europe.

**Ghana:** Following the success of Ghana's PANAFEST African diaspora celebration in the 1990s, the government began to more actively court Ghanaians abroad at the turn of the century, when it launched a national process to formalise its relationship with the diaspora – Ghana's '11th region' – beginning with a 'Homecoming Summit.' Around the same time, the government broadened its previous focus on large diaspora investors to include the development role of remittances sent by the diaspora as a whole. The state's increasing diaspora focus was further demonstrated through moves to permit dual citizenship (including anyone of African descent). In 2017, the Office of the Presidency established its own Diaspora Affairs Office (DAOOP) to engage with diaspora associations and international partners more directly, underscoring the importance the highest levels of government placed on the contributions of the diaspora to the economy. In 2019, Ghana showed its sustained commitment to diaspora engagement by organising a large-scale outreach campaign,





the Year of Return, reaching Ghanaian and African diaspora communities across the world. It should be noted, however, that Ghana does not have a diaspora engagement policy.

**Senegal:** Senegal has a threefold approach to diaspora engagement and management. Firstly, the establishment of systems and institutions for the management and monitoring of Senegalese abroad, the foremost of which is the *Direction Générale des Sénégalais de l'Extérieur* [General Directorate of Senegalese Abroad (DGSE)]. Senegalese municipalities have also developed territorial migration profiles to better understand and engage with diasporas. The second focus is on actively encouraging the diaspora to engage in Senegal's economic development, especially through investment opportunities. Lastly, the Senegalese state seeks to attract the return migration of highly skilled Senegalese diaspora professionals. The country has a record of enabling diaspora civic and political participation (the right to vote and to be elected in Parliament for all diaspora). In 2008, Senegal created two funds for Senegalese abroad to invest in diaspora projects in Senegal and to promote women entrepreneurship in host countries.

## EAST AFRICA

**Kenya:** Kenya has made diaspora engagement an integral part of its foreign and national development policies and it has invested in institutional structures to facilitate diaspora engagement. There is recognition that the diaspora plays a vital role as cultural and brand ambassadors for the country with vital skills for national development. Dedicated diaspora portals for each Kenyan embassy and

consulate were established by the Kenyan government and include a skills matching programme. Kenya was also successful in the issuance of **diaspora bonds**. These bonds were open to all investors, including foreign individuals. After the uptake of these bonds, Kenya continued with the first Eurobond issuance (in two tranches of five and 10 years) for US\$2.6bn in 2014, and a 2018 issuance of US\$2bn, in two tranches of 10 and 30 years. In 2017, Kenya took another pioneering step by launching **M-Akiba** as the world's first ever mobile phone-based bond. Over 300,000 people registered on the platform, but only about 6,000 people (2%) subscribed to bonds, raising US\$2.4 m (24%) of the US\$10 m target. Despite the low take-up, indicators were positive enough for the Kenyan government to re-launch M-Akiba in February 2019. This re-launch increased the bond subscription to 79% and the number of people registered on the platform rose to 450,000.

**Rwanda:** Rwanda's approach to diaspora engagement has been twofold. On the one hand, the government works with chapters of Rwandan community associations based in diaspora countries of settlement; these have a significant support base in the diaspora and are able to mobilise people and resources quite effectively for initiatives in Rwanda. On the other hand, the Government of Rwanda has also reached out to those who are politically neutral and invited them to participate in Rwanda's development and reconstruction. Dedicated structures to facilitate diaspora engagement began to emerge in the early 2000s. In 2001, a desk in charge of the diaspora was created in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, and in 2008 the Diaspora Desk was formalised into the Diaspora General Directorate.

## 4. TERMINOLOGY

As noted above, the AU has a wide definition of diaspora. However, it could be criticised for not recognising an intra-African diaspora given that it only mentions “people of African origin living outside the continent”.

National definitions of diaspora are usually a close variant of the AU’s definition but they do recognise intra-African diaspora as they mainly use the notion of living “abroad”. Nigeria and Ghana went further and included in their definition of diaspora members of the historic African diaspora, who choose to identify with Nigeria/Ghana and to support the achievement of its national goals.

The terminology used in different African states varies, but there are some common overarching trends. Anglophone countries tend to use the term ‘diaspora’, although the formulation ‘citizens abroad’ (e.g. Batswana/Motswana abroad or Kenyans abroad) is also increasingly used. Eswatini refers to its diaspora as ‘liSwati (s.)/emaSwati (pl.) (a Swazi term for Eswatini citizens) abroad.

The term diaspora is also used as a calque/loan word in several states in the Horn of Africa, where a strong Anglophone influence remains from the colonial and Cold War periods - for example the term *diyaspōra* is used in both the Amharic language of Ethiopia and in Tigrigna (ጥግርኛ), a language spoken in Eritrea.

Arabic-speaking states in North Africa and the Horn of Africa tend to avoid the term ‘diaspora’, as this has politically sensitive connotations of the worldwide Jewish diaspora and the Palestinian diaspora. Instead, they tend to use the formulation ‘citizens [resident] abroad’ or ‘expatriates’ (e.g. ‘*al-masriyyūn fī-l-khārig*’, ‘Egyptians Abroad, Egyptian expatriates’, ‘*al-maghariba al-muqayyimūn bi-l-khārij*’, ‘Moroccans Resident Abroad’, or ‘*as-sudāniyyūn al-‘āmiyyūn fī-l-khārij*’, ‘Sudanese working abroad’).

In Francophone states in Africa, the term diaspora is used quite widely, although in official usage there has been a shift towards the formulation ‘citizens [resident] abroad’ (e.g. ‘*maliens de l’extérieur*’, ‘Maliens abroad’, and ‘*congolais de l’étranger*’ in DRC). Arguably, this usage has developed from the influence of Francophone North African states.

Similar terminology is used in Lusophone states in Africa, such as as ‘*diáspora*’ (Portuguese) but also ‘communities abroad’ (*comunidades no estrangeiro*).

Equatorial Guinea refers to its diaspora as ‘Equato-Guineans abroad’ (*Ecuatoguineanos en el extranjero* in Spanish), although the term diaspora is also used in some government communications.

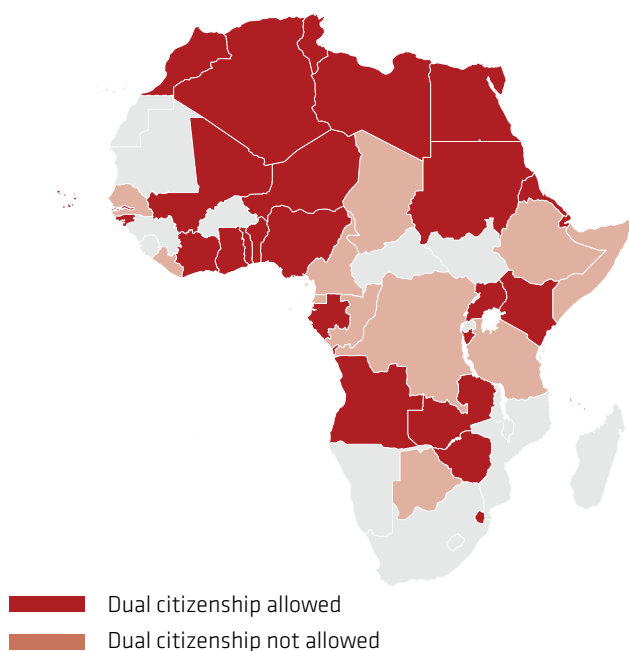
## 5. KEY TRENDS AND PRACTICES

The EUDiF global mapping on diaspora engagement showed that some trends are global (e.g. increasing remittances, attracting investment, creating links with the diaspora through events and network building). Nevertheless, each region also has its own specific trends and distinct practices. In this respect, Africa is diverse and includes diaspora political and civic rights, diaspora networks, remittances, investment and entrepreneurship, skills transfer and youth engagement as its main diaspora engagement priorities.

The following trends and practices were identified by the mapping of 41 African countries.

### POLITICAL AND CIVIC RIGHTS

One of the main trends across Africa has been a greater recognition of diasporas both as important contributors to national development and as citizens. As mentioned above, Agenda 2063 aspires that all AU Member States shall grant dual citizenship by 2025. Currently, the majority of African states permit dual citizenship, although some regulations impose restrictions, as the map below shows. For example, Libya and Eritrea only allow dual citizenship with the government's official approval.



The importance of this shift should not be underestimated, with regard to African states (where post-independence decisions were widely made to prohibit dual citizenship) and especially the diasporas themselves. It can be observed that all “pioneers” highlighted in the previous section do allow dual citizenship.

**Adopting dual citizenship laws is an integral part of diaspora engagement strategies.**

This can be explained by the fact that dual citizenship evokes a feeling of identity and connectedness among diaspora members engaging with their country of origin. In Gabon and Nigeria, for example, dual citizenship was recognised following years of lobbying by diaspora groups and it represented a turning point in the diaspora engagement of these countries. The recognition of dual citizenship also helps to build trust between a diaspora and its country of origin. For example, **Zambia's** approval of dual citizenship in 2016 was regarded as a promise to help rebuild trust between the diaspora and its government. This is important as a lack of trust is a challenge to diaspora engagement. Dual citizenship also makes it easier for diaspora members to return home, work and invest in their country of origin because they are allowed access to local bank accounts, do not require visas to enter the country and work, can own land, etc.

However, the issue of dual citizenship remains controversial in many African states at government and popular levels, reflecting concerns about foreign interference in political processes. Several countries that allow dual citizenship only do so in limited circumstances. Ethiopia does not permit dual citizenship but allows its diaspora to obtain a diaspora ID card which gives holders access to certain benefits and entitlements, such as the right to own land or property, or open local currency bank accounts. The Angolan Embassy in Namibia announced in October 2019 that it was organising the registration of undocumented Angolan migrants and diaspora in Namibia, issuing **consular ID cards** to give them greater protection and allow them to cross the Angolan border legally for work. This came in response to concerns raised by the Angolan community in Namibia about a lack of appropriate documentation and the high number of young people who illegally cross the border in the Cunene province in search of work.



Other related issues concern the right of diaspora members to participate in political processes in their country of origin, and the question of diaspora representation in national assemblies and parliaments. Increasingly in Africa, the trend is to allow diaspora voting, or at least to engage discussion of the issue at government level. Out of the 41 countries mapped so far, 32 have granted their diaspora the right to vote (in some cases with restrictions) but only 18 have allowed this from the country of residence. Diaspora voting is important because it holds the potential to engage the diaspora as equal and active citizens in the political life of the country. However, the phenomenon can be problematic, especially for states where a significant proportion of the population live in the diaspora, as this can feed concerns about foreign interference and distortion of political processes (Cape Verde, for example, implemented a quota system to mitigate this risk, as its diaspora is larger than the population living in the country). Enabling voting abroad can also have resource implications, and not all countries can afford to implement it.

Additionally, a small number of African states mapped so far (Senegal, Cape Verde, Tunisia, Niger, and Algeria) have allocated a certain number of seats in their national assemblies for deputies representing diaspora communities, and in 2016 Côte d'Ivoire introduced diaspora representation in the Senate. These are important steps in terms of diaspora engagement, and it is hoped that these pioneers will be joined by more countries in the future. Enabling diaspora voting and representation in national parliaments should enhance inclusivity and effectiveness in policy-making.

## NETWORKS AND OUTREACH

Structuring and acknowledging recognition of the diaspora's contribution are important conditions for maximising diaspora engagement for development. Notable practices exist on both fronts in Africa.

Having realised the importance of building united, strong, and professional African diaspora organisations, major

efforts have been developed by the African diaspora, compared to other "continental" diaspora, to create diaspora networks. Such networks not only help promote and give visibility to the work of diaspora organisations, but also constitute recognised interlocutors in dialogues with national and regional authorities. In Europe, the establishment and gradual consolidation of the **Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT)** has greatly contributed to structuring and cementing the voice of the African diaspora in the development arena.

In parallel, a number of African institutions have opened channels to network with diaspora organisations, hence anchoring their recognition. For example, the Institute of Angolan Communities Abroad and Consular Services held a **series of meetings** with representatives of Angolan diaspora organisations in Lisbon and other countries of residence of the diaspora. During these meetings, representatives of the Institute listened to the concerns presented by representatives of Angolan associations in the diaspora. The issues raised included social integration, employment, social security, leadership and associative skills, and legalisation and regularisation of documents, as well as the role, vision, mission, and competence of consular missions. Similarly, the Tanzanian government organises an **Annual Diaspora Conference** to bring together diaspora representatives from around the world and discuss how the diaspora can best contribute to national development. In Sudan, the Secretariat for Sudanese Working Abroad (SSWA) organises **diaspora conferences**, attended by representatives of diaspora groups and professional networks, as well as officials from different ministries, to discuss ways of increasing diaspora participation in the country's development in different sectors. The conferences make recommendations to SSWA for programmes and initiatives to be developed and implemented. In Guinea, in June 2018, the president invited diaspora and political groups in exile to return to the country to participate in the sixth **National Dialogue**. During the Dialogue, representatives of the diaspora and opposition parties were able to participate and make recommendations, particularly for greater political and other freedoms in the country.

## REMITTANCES, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INVESTMENT

Evolution of remittances received (\$ billion)						
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019	2020
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	4.8	20	32	42	48	37
<b>Middle East and North Africa</b>	12	24	38	53	62	47

The amount remitted by migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has grown tenfold in two decades, from US\$4.8bn in 2000 to US\$47bn in 2019, although this is foreseen to change. The World Bank's latest *Migration and Development Brief* predicts that international remittances to SSA will decline by 23% in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, with detrimental implications for major recipient countries in the region. According to the same report, remittances to the Middle East and North Africa are projected to fall by 19.6% to US\$47bn in 2020. Over the past decade financial technology and regulatory frameworks have improved as African migration has risen, and remittances have become an increasingly important share of the economies of many low to middle-income developing countries in SSA. Out of the 41 countries mapped so far, eight are among the largest remittance receivers in total amount (Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, DRC, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Mali) and seven are among the largest recipients in share of GDP (Zimbabwe, Cape Verde, Comoros, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Togo). The World Bank indicates that **remittances have become the main source of foreign exchange revenue** for the continent. Remittances will remain crucial to many low and middle-income countries because it is expected that foreign direct investment will drop by around 35% in SSA due to travel restrictions adopted in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, disruption of international trade and decline in the stock prices of multinationals. Nevertheless, in some countries, remittances have been key in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Eritrean diaspora members have donated several million dollars via teleconferences. **ADEPT** also launched a large online campaign to promote the work of the diaspora during Covid-19.

While encouraging remittance flows remains a priority for many African governments, there is an increasing interest in boosting diaspora investments in micro, small and medium enterprises where the bulk of diaspora investments

are targeted.<sup>3</sup> Priority sectors are IT, education, health, renewable energy, property (including affordable housing for foreign workers), and technology transfer. One reason diaspora entrepreneurship has increased recently in Africa is because it provides a means to reduce remittance dependency among extended family members. Some diaspora members have found it more sustainable to invest in SMEs that generate income for family members rather than sending remittances. For example, the **Liberian Diaspora Social Investment Fund** was established by the Khana Group and the Liberian Professional Network in order to direct remittances into anti-poverty and job-creating initiatives through direct investment in small and medium enterprises, as well as opportunities for entrepreneurship skills development, including business skills, accounting, and marketing. Using a **risk sharing arrangement**, 75% of the fund came from the diaspora, while the remaining 25% came from multilateral organisations. Additionally, **diaspora enterprise Afric** have been running trade missions to Chad since 2015. These missions work to promote economic development, access to finance, training and the international market for Chadian SMI/SMEs, with a particular focus on the agro-industrial and sylvo-pastoral sectors. The most recent mission in 2019 resulted in 20 agreements and partnership contracts with Dutch firms, as well as the priming of ten start-ups and the development of business plans for nine projects.

Additionally, some countries set up Diaspora Development Funds to stimulate Diaspora Direct Investment (DDI). In Morocco, the **MDM (Marocains du Monde) Invest** programme enables Moroccans Living Abroad to access a grant of up to 5m dirham (over US\$500,000) or 10% of costs, for projects implemented in Morocco. For Senegal,

<sup>3</sup> See also the Collection of Diaspora Engagement Practices published by the Rabat Process Secretariat in November 2020, in particular the section "Innovative initiatives for economic development", <https://www.rabat-process.org/en/document-repository/category?id=70>



the **FAISE** programme provides low-interest, five-year loans of up to 15m CFA francs (over US\$25,000), with repayment holidays for diaspora projects. Other countries (Algeria, Guinea, Mali, Rwanda, Senegal, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe) have made it easy for the diaspora to access domestic investment incentives by developing financial products targeted at the diaspora, such as diaspora savings accounts, granting custom exemptions, access to loans, tax exemptions, and developing more flexible foreign exchange regulations. In Guinea, the government's Private Investment Promotion Agency (APIP) has established an online e-government platform – **SYNERGUI** – allowing Guineans, including the diaspora, to access business creation processes online. In Togo, the Enterprise Formalities Centre (CFE) introduced opportunities for **online business creation** in 2019. Some countries also provide grants and co-financing schemes (**Dias'Invest 237 scheme** in Cameroon, the Franco Comorian co-development programme, and the Programme to Support Solidarity Initiatives for Development in Senegal). Additionally, the Government of Rwanda established the Rwanda Diaspora Mutual Fund in 2011, which acts as a pool of capital from the diaspora for collective investments in Rwanda.

Several African states have also sought to leverage diaspora direct and portfolio investments via financial products targeting the diaspora. Perhaps the most well-known examples are diaspora bonds, or bonds marketed at the diaspora along with other types of investors. Among the diaspora bonds issued by Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nigeria, Senegal, Rwanda, Kenya, and Zimbabwe, the Central Bank of Kenya's Infrastructure Bond (auctioned in 2014) and Nigeria's diaspora bonds (first issued in 2017) were the most successful in terms of the sums they managed to raise. Even though many African states have declared their interest in attracting diaspora investments and have recognised the great potential of the diaspora in this regard, in practice, **initiatives are still quite rare** and their success often limited.

In addition to homeland-led DDI incentives, a number of initiatives co-finance diaspora-led projects operating from Europe. These include: **Diaspora Programme Support** social enterprise grants of US\$75,000 (Denmark); **AF-FORD Business Centre (ABC)** social enterprise grants and loans of US\$38,000 (UK); and **MeetAfrica** providing up to €15,000 in technical assistance for the establishment of diaspora enterprises in Africa (France and Germany).

Finally, in some cases, diaspora-led platforms were also successful in attracting investments from the diaspora. The **Enaleni Community**, a local diaspora investment platform in rural Zimbabwe set up by a group of female diaspora investors based in the UK, is a case in point. The platform involving over 50 diaspora investors was used to set up and finance a local agricultural cooperative in Zimbabwe. Within a few years, it attracted almost £150,000 of blended finance (diaspora investment and grants), created 25 full-time jobs, and provided income to thousands of farmers and their families, along with the associated social impact and stimulated local economic development.

## SKILLS TRANSFER

In terms of diaspora mobilisation, there are four recognisable categories of human capital transfer schemes:

1. Permanent talent attraction programmes that include a package of incentives to encourage qualified nationals around the world to return and support the home country's sectoral development, for example by establishing their own business;
2. Short-term targeted human capital transfer programmes that consist of deploying expatriates with marketable skills for temporary business visits, most of them volunteer-based;
3. Diaspora knowledge networks, primarily among scientists and engineers, that support information sharing among communities of skilled experts and their home countries, training of local staff, and investment projects. Emerging economies, especially those in Asia, are at the forefront of exploring such opportunities;
4. Partnership programmes with the diaspora – such as town twinning projects between the diaspora community based in a given city abroad and a city in the home country – mainly based on virtual and remote cooperation.

In the case of the 41 African countries mapped we can see that the vast majority of programmes are either short-term human capital transfer programmes or diaspora knowledge networks.



Several African states have sought to leverage the intellectual capital of their diaspora through skills transfer schemes at national level (in Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Senegal, Zambia) and through international schemes (in Cape Verde, Cameroon, Congo, Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mali, Senegal, and Zimbabwe). Perhaps the most well-known international skills transfer schemes are the Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) programme implemented by UNDP, and the IOM initiatives Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) and **Connecting Diaspora for Development** (CD4D). These programmes facilitate short-term assignments of diaspora professionals in countries of origin, mainly in fragile home states (primarily in Africa and the Balkans) where return tends to be challenging. Considering, among other assets, their knowledge of the culture and language as well as possible networks, diaspora members are likely to be effective in supporting the development of their country of origin. This phenomenon – which contributes to reversing brain drain – has been referred to as the “**diaspora option**”.

Moreover, African diaspora professional groups and networks themselves have established a number of diaspora skills transfer initiatives, utilising their links and contacts with governments and institutions in both countries of heritage and destination. For example, the German-Moroccan Skills Network (DMK) organises regular skills transfer programmes in Morocco, in some cases in partnership with the private sector. The Zambia-UK Health Workforce Alliance (ZUKHWA) is a partnership between Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust (London, UK) and a network of Zambian-based and UK-based organisations who have professional healthcare experience in UK health institutions. They work together to promote and improve the coordination and impact of Zambia-UK joint work in health in Zambia. The iMED programme (Improving Medical Education and Health Care Delivery through Diaspora Engagement) links doctors and nurses in Cameroon with Cameroonian medical, pharmacy, and dentistry students in Germany who founded the Cameroonian diaspora association Camfomedics. Similarly, Zimbabweans in the diaspora founded the **Zimbabwean Diaspora Health Alliance (ZDHA)** to strengthen diaspora participation in Zimbabwe’s health system and address skills shortages in the health sector through training for health professionals in Zimbabwe and recruitment of diaspora health professionals. The ZDHA serves as a Single Point of Access (SPA) for the diaspora to the Ministry of

Health in Zimbabwe. DISEKTEA 1.0 was another initiative focused on skills and technology transfer and set up by the Association of Cameroonian Engineers and Computer Scientists (VKII) and DÄSAV (the German-Ethiopian students and academics Association) with the support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. Outside of such well-organised diaspora-led skills transfer schemes, Ugandan diaspora health professionals in the UK and the US are active in health system strengthening in Uganda, particularly in relation to mental health treatment. Ugandan diaspora health professionals regularly volunteer to train their counterparts in Uganda in the latest techniques and methods, with a focus on learning exchange.

Increasingly, governments understand the need to facilitate diaspora skills transfer. For example, in 2019 **President Déby** called for greater involvement of the diaspora in Chad’s development efforts, and noted the need for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the heads of diplomatic and consular missions to raise awareness, mobilise, and support the diaspora in order to address skills shortages in the country, especially in the health, education, and energy sectors.

## **YOUTH DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT, BRAND BUILDING AND CULTURAL CAPITAL**

Many African states attach great importance to building links with their diaspora of the second and subsequent generations, and have established programmes to achieve this through cultural and educational activities in countries of settlement and origin (e.g. “summer universities” in Algeria and Morocco, the **Itorero** youth training programme in Rwanda and the Seychelles Indian Diaspora Day), or mother tongue language classes in countries of settlement with the support of local diaspora groups (e.g. in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Ethiopia, and Mauritius). Gamlen (2008) calls these practices “**diaspora building**”, aimed at promoting recognition of the diaspora among countries of origin and cultivating the diaspora’s identity.

Even though the primary goal of cultural diaspora policies is not to promote the integration of the diaspora into the host country, they can contribute to it. For example, by organising cultural events or establishing a cultural centre, opportunities are created for migrants as well as other members of society to meet and interact.



Most African diaspora organisations focus not only on integration activities but also on the development of countries of origin. A diaspora's cultural capital is therefore useful for supporting the integration of new migrants into host communities and for keeping the link between the country of origin and second- or third-generation diaspora members to ensure that they keep on participating in the economic and social development of their country of origin.

Some African states are also keen to work with their diasporas to help build national “brands”. There is a demand for products and services that the diaspora used to consume prior to migrating abroad, which remind them of their countries of origin. This relates to the topic of “nostalgic consumption”. For example, Moroccan banks and telecommunications companies have proved skilful at marketing banking and phone products to their diaspora in Europe, as billboards in any Moroccan airport attest. So-called “heritage tourism” is another sector of interest to some African states and local tourism companies, following the same logic of “nostalgic consumption” and thus serving as another tool towards building national “brands”. Tourism agencies and tour companies in Egypt, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Senegal have sought to promote “heritage tourism” to diaspora communities, encouraging them to visit the historical and cultural sites of their homelands. Kenya, in its diaspora policy, and Comoros (even though no formal scheme is currently in place) have also shown interest in attracting investment

from their diasporas to support the tourism sector. **The Nubian Initiative** supports local and international entrepreneurial efforts towards sustainable tourism in Nubia. It is a diaspora initiative that runs transboundary projects centred on Nubian cultural preservation and sustainable socio-economic development efforts. It produces online multimedia archives to represent the endangered Nubian history, archaeology and culture, and engages local communities, particularly young people, in viable socio-economic projects, specifically focused on the green economy and sustainability.

Finally, other notable initiatives so far have been the **Year of Return** and **Beyond the Return** campaigns aimed at encouraging African diasporas to visit, return to, and invest in Ghana (as mentioned in section 3). In 2019, the Office of Diaspora Affairs worked with the tourism ministry and several organisations to organise a series of events, commemorating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first recorded African slaves in the Americas. As a result, Ghana experienced a record number of visa applications and tourist visits, including a 45% year-on-year increase in visitors (around 237,000 additional visitors) from January to September 2019. The tourism ministry subsequently launched the Beyond the Return initiative, a ten-year plan to encourage sustained dialogue with diasporas and inbound investment. The two campaigns underlined the government's innovative approach to broadening diaspora engagement to reach the many African diaspora communities around the world.



## 6. RECURRENT CHALLENGES

The following recurrent challenges were identified through EUDiF's mapping of diaspora engagement across several of the 41 countries mapped in Africa. These are challenges faced by governments in their attempt to engage with their diasporas. In many cases, the same challenges are faced by diaspora organisations and individuals who find their involvement in the development of their country of origin impeded due to a weak enabling environment. There is no specific ranking of the challenges listed below and most can also be observed in other regions.

**Issues of trust:** Issues of trust between African governments and their diasporas rank among the most cited challenges to diaspora engagement in Africa. The problem was flagged in several countries mapped. The reasons for these issues of trust vary from country to country, but historical, ethnic, and political differences have in many cases led to an antagonistic relationship between the diaspora and its country of origin. The distrust is often mutual. Local citizens can also become distrustful of government efforts to engage their diaspora, which can lead to tensions related to policy developments and implementation, for example in relation to dual citizenship.

African governments are usually aware of the issues of trust among their diasporas, and have sought to mitigate this both by relying on pro-government supporters in the diaspora, and by trying to reach out to those who are ambivalent about the government.

**Government bureaucracy:** Members of the diaspora may not fully understand local systems in their country of origin, and these systems can be highly bureaucratic and lacking in transparency. Bureaucracy often leads to restrictions towards diaspora engagement as well as delays and is considered a barrier to engagement. Corruption is another latent issue in several African countries.

**Lack of policy coordination and implementation:** Policy implementation remains a challenge due to issues of resource allocation and limited coordination between government departments. In several countries, ministries and other national institutions often struggle to ef-

fectively collaborate. This challenge is even more acute in countries that do not have any dedicated institution to diaspora engagement.

**The gap between policy development and implementation can be a source of frustration and may lead to disengagement.**

**Limited human and financial capacity:** Prioritisation of adequate resources for diaspora engagement is a challenge in most African states, especially in those with restricted government resources in the first place. Limited institutional memory is a related challenge. Trained and experienced staff often move on relatively quickly, and there is therefore a need to build on sustainable capacity development for diaspora engagement structures, institutions, and programmes. Moreover, the "pay-off" of such investment is only likely to come in the medium- to long-term, which makes negotiating and securing adequate resources for diaspora engagement much harder for policymakers and officials.

**Low-quality/digital information services:** While most African states are moving towards making provision of e-services to their diaspora, the majority of these suffer from poor accessibility, websites that do not work, and limited availability of services. The few that have proved more successful in this regard (such as Ethiopia or Morocco) have invested significantly in their ICT, web, and social media capacity.

**Failure to adapt programmes to diaspora needs and circumstances:** This is a challenge for many African governments and their international partners and donors. The issue is related to the limited data that governments have on their own diaspora.

**Inadequate knowledge on the diaspora and its potential is a major obstacle to building adequate diaspora engagement policies and programmes, making it difficult to effectively reach and communicate with the diaspora.**

# 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to strengthen capacity in diaspora engagement in Africa include the following:

To countries of origin:

- **Know your diaspora:** African states need to know their diasporas in order to be able to propose adequate opportunities for engagement. Data collection exercises, such as diaspora mapping and profiling in host countries, are a key first step in this regard. The capacity to collect and analyse the data of national institutions needs to be further strengthened. EUDiF's mapping, promotional efforts, and diaspora consultations' reports provide first-hand information on the locations and interests of diaspora members.
- **Embrace the diaspora's diversity:** Some diaspora groups can be unwilling to collaborate for different reasons (i.e. due to political, religious, ethnic, or geographic motivations). This is often the case in post-conflict settings like Rwanda, DRC, Somalia, or Burundi, for example. Similarly, many governments tend to focus their diaspora engagement policies and actions on only one segment of the diaspora (i.e. those sharing similar political views and/or the wealthier). In order for a diaspora engagement policy to be coherent, all segments of a diaspora, including the most vulnerable, should be embraced by policymakers. National authorities could collaborate further with embassies and consulates as well as diaspora organisations providing basic services to vulnerable diaspora members. Diaspora organisations focusing on integration activities could be included in discussions with policymakers. As African diaspora organisations are usually well structured, they can be key partners for government authorities, and taking an inclusive approach could help fight against polarisation within the diaspora and increase trust on both sides.
- **Develop diaspora engagement policies in line with development policies:** Most African states have developed National Development Plans that have already been in operation for at least a decade. It is important that diaspora engagement policies build


on these existing policies not only to embed diaspora engagement in development but also to avoid duplications and overlaps. Diaspora engagement should be mainstreamed in development at national and local levels in order to strengthen the role of the diaspora in the sustainable development of a country. Some African states, such as Senegal, have already taken successful steps in this regard, and less advanced countries may take inspiration from this example. Additionally, diaspora engagement policies necessitate differentiated objectives that take into account the diversity of the diaspora. For example, the vast majority of African countries have tried to attract remittances, but the diaspora may have much more to offer and this should be taken into consideration in the policy development process.

To diaspora organisations:

- **Undertake peer-to-peer learning, exchange, and networking:** These could be further fostered among African diaspora organisations. Networking spaces could be strengthened and supported, including exchange platforms between governments and diaspora organisations. As several diaspora networks are already well established at African level, it would be interesting to share lessons learned with peers based in other regions of the world. In addition, thematic peer exchanges could be further developed with a view to creating thematic networks across regions. Data collection exercises and outreach events in host countries could further consolidate knowledge of the mosaic of diaspora organisations and support collaboration.

To donors and implementing agencies:

- **Tailor capacity development:** It is important to embrace divergent local realities and the diversity of diaspora engagement sectors and priorities in Africa. Indeed, capacity development support should not aim at standardising diaspora engagement policies and practices; instead, the objective should be to coordinate support for states and diaspora organisations to develop the most appropriate tools and technical skills needed over time. Capacity



development programmes need to be conducted jointly by diaspora organisations, local/national actors, and ownership: co-development is essential in order to grasp ground realities and build on existing efforts.

- **Access to funds:** This is a key challenge for African diaspora organisations, echoing a traditional challenge for most diaspora organisations worldwide. Organisations face difficulties in accessing funding because they lack financial, human, and administrative capacity. There is a need for professionalisation and support in finding and applying for funding. Moreover, diaspora organisations across Europe are advocating the creation of local, national, and European funds dedicated to diaspora organisations.
- **Sustainability:** In order to avoid loss of institutional memory due to turnover of staff in governmental institutions, there is a need to institutionalise capacity development efforts and invest in methods of cascading knowledge and skills (e.g. training courses for trainers).