



Wetenschapswinkel

Policy Brief

Public Participation by the African Diaspora

Moving beyond migration, integration and trade

The African Diaspora Perspective



WAGENINGENUR
For quality of life

Africa In Motion (AIM), a lobby organisation of the African diaspora in the Netherlands that focuses on the economic emancipation of Africa, requested the Science Shop of Wageningen University and Research centre to carry out research on the involvement of the African diaspora in Dutch and European policymaking concerning Africa. Three different research projects were conducted over a period of one year. The projects revealed the existence of

- 1 **Unique insights within the African diaspora;**
- 2 **A shift from exclusion and passive participation to self-mobilisation and an aspiration for functional and interactive participation;**
- 3 **A growing aspiration to be engaged in policy domains concerning their home countries beyond the scope of migration, integration and trade;**
- 4 **The need for representative bodies;**
- 5 **A complex dual relationship between the home country and the host country; and**
- 6 **Various constraints faced by the African diaspora.**

Key recommendations

- 1 Acknowledge the African diaspora as principal partners in international cooperation with African countries;
- 2 Include the African diaspora in consultations on, and in the realisation of, policies and programmes whose outcomes have a meaningful impact on their home countries;
- 3 Invite and include the African diaspora in the formulation of the terms of reference (ToRs) of calls for proposals, in strategic partnerships and on advisory boards; and
- 4 Support African diaspora organisations to (trans)form representative bodies by opening up funding schemes and capacity-building programmes to the diaspora.



"Just with our own networks and understanding of the issues we are able to achieve great things."

Research outcomes

- 1 **Unique insights within the African diaspora**
African-Dutch professionals are familiar with agricultural, communication, cultural, health, trade and other kinds of practices because of their experiences and contacts in their home countries and in the Netherlands. This provides the African diaspora with unique explicit and tacit knowledge. It gives the diaspora specific visions on international cooperation and sustainability. Their notion of sustainability includes, for instance, the processing of raw materials in the region.

"If the raw materials are processed, you can take the cost of the processing to make the price."

- 2 **A shift from exclusion and passive participation to self-mobilisation and an aspiration for functional and interactive participation**
The diaspora are involved in some policy discourses at municipality level, and a minority are involved at national/international level. However, this often tends to be passive. To address this challenge, the diaspora tend to mobilise themselves into diaspora organisations or advocacy groups.

"We are not limited to institutions or rules or partners. We can work freely together, focusing more on our goals and less to please everybody else, which makes us very flexible and innovative in the developments of our own projects."

3 A growing aspiration to be engaged in policy domains concerning their home countries beyond the scope of migration, integration and trade

The diaspora are familiar with the impact of certain Dutch and European policies in their home countries; and a growing number of the African diaspora are realising the importance of tackling these policies here in the Netherlands and in Europe.

"It was mainly discussions on migrant integration in the Netherlands, but hardly regarding foreign policymaking for Africa."

4 The need for representative bodies

The African diaspora appreciate their diversity. Even within the diaspora from one single home country there is great diversity. However, they seek to have unified bodies that would first serve as a platform for the diaspora to discuss policy issues, and secondly serve as a lobby conduit between them and the Dutch Government and the European Union.

"It's very important for African diaspora organisations to show that they are well organised and represent their countries."

5 A complex dual relationship between the home country and the host country

The diaspora are of the opinion that policies that affect their home countries indirectly affect them in the host country. Hard economic times in their home countries mean that they have to make financial remittances. The total amount remitted is more than the budget for development cooperation.¹ This financial involvement is not reflected in the extent to which the African diaspora are involved in policymaking and programmes relating to their home countries. This exclusion results in a 'we' versus 'they' feeling amongst the African diaspora.

"We have been telling them that there are enough qualified people there. But they always take their own people there."

6 Various constraints faced by the African diaspora

It is hard for diaspora organisations to take the lead in programmes because of the required turnover and track record, but also because of development organisations' lack of interest in alliances with diaspora organisations. The African diaspora articulated the need to build lobbying capacity.

"There are funding opportunities but these arrangements are not very accessible."



"The power of the African diaspora is that they can visualise the consequences of certain Dutch, European policies in their home countries."



"I realised that very few Africans are present at conferences and meetings that concern them directly."

¹ In 2012, remittances worldwide were in excess of US\$400 billion, exceeding official aid and virtually equalling the sum total of foreign direct investment. Source: Kosse, A. and Vermeulen, R. (2014) Migrants' choice of remittance channel: Do general payment habits play a role? World Development 62, 213–227.

The advisory commission of this Science Shop project consists of

Max Kofi, Robin Bukenya, Rico Lie, Elena Johannsen, Benhardt Edem Norglo, Brahim Fattah, Antony Otieno Ong'ayo, Marcel Uzoigwe, Gebreamlak Tsiwa, Gerard Straver and Margriet Goris.

The policy paper is based on

Johannsen, E., Goris, M. and Lie, R. (2014) Make Africa Shine. Narratives of the African Diaspora on PolicyMaking concerning Africa. Wageningen: Science Shop 313.

Norglo, B., Goris, M., Lie, R. and Ong'ayo, A. (2015) Public Participation by the African Diaspora: A shift from migration, trade and development to holistic participation (probable publication autumn 2015).

The first publication can be found at www.wageningenUR.nl/nl/Onderwijs-Opleidingen/wetenschapswinkel/Projecten/Show/De-betrokkenheid-van-Afrikaanse-Diaspora-bij-Nederlands-en-Europees-beleid-aangaande-Afrika.htm. More information on the research project is available at this website.



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