

CHAMPIONS OF TRANSFORMATION: THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IN IRELAND



May 2016



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The aim of this report is to raise awareness, highlight the strength, skills, knowledge, contributions and resilience of Africans in Ireland and as well challenges myth and misinformation about Africans.

“Being from Africa is the best thing that could have ever, ever happen to me. I cannot see it any other way. All of my fundamental principles that were instilled in me in my home, from my childhood, are still with me”.

— Hakeem Olajuwon

May this report give strength, hope and reassurance to all Africans living in Ireland and other parts of the world and may the generations to come get to experience a just and equal World.

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I. Overview

Migration is as old as the World. Contemporary migration, especially at international level comports issues susceptible of attracting the attention of different actors and stakeholders, including policy makers, government agencies, International Organisations and NGOs activists. If migration can present challenges for host nations, migrants however should be viewed as important actors playing a major role in global development. Through their economic activities such as employment, business enterprises or studies in host countries, migrants contribute not only to the economy of these countries by paying taxes but also to the development of their countries of origin through remittances and supporting community or group projects as members of the diaspora.

Diaspora is today an important discourse as it relates to the international development. The African Union for example considers the African diaspora as 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." Its constitutive act declares that it shall "invite and encourage the full participation of the African diaspora as an important part of our continent, in the building of the African Union." Thus, Africans living abroad become the champions of transformation of their continent.

Africans living in Ireland are not a negligible group when it comes to making contribution to the development of Africa. If their integration in Ireland is maximised and well facilitated, their role in international development will well fit into the strategies of the Sustainable Development Goals as desired by the International Community.

The present report highlights the contribution by the African Diaspora in Ireland and in their countries of origin. And this is contextualised by the narrative on international migration and development that emphasises on the importance of members of Diaspora championing transformation at political, social and economic levels in countries of destination and of origin. It is important to state that the efforts made by immigrants is often challenged by difficulties that hinder their full social, economic and political participation as it is the case of Africans in Ireland. The adoptions of international instruments that guarantee and protect the rights of immigrants are still to be adhered to. However if existing models of support to Diaspora initiatives by host countries are also implemented in Ireland as good model of practice, the contribution of its African Diaspora will be prompted to a scale that balances the global wealth distribution. This is the contextual framework that will support the findings of this mapping exercise which will be presented before a conclusion and recommendations.

1.1. International Migration and Development

By the end of 2013, the United Nations estimated that there were over 232 million migrants, or around 3.2 per cent of the global population, living abroad worldwide, and this number have been steadily rising since the new millennium (UN International Migration Report 2013). Now, with the world facing a global refugee crisis of over 50 million displaced peoples due to conflicts in places such as Syria and North Africa, international migration is poised to be one of the defining characteristics of the era (Amnesty International Report 2015).

Migrants leave their home countries for a variety of reasons – to find work, to flee conflict, to escape political persecution, and so on. Developing countries, which are typically more at risk of these issues produces the vast majority of the world's migrants while the developed regions of the world have long remained the most popular destination. Of 136 million migrants in the developed world recorded in 2013, 82 million originated from a developing country. In developing countries themselves, 82 of the 96 million migrants were from other developing countries, illustrating the disproportionate fluxes present in the global system (UN International Migration Report 2013). The increasingly transitory populations of these countries present a significant problem for development, as the best and brightest find ways of leaving the country in search of a better life elsewhere, and may never return.

However, the Diaspora of a country can also be utilized to lead development rather than hinder it. One of the most common ways that migrants interact with their native lands is through remittances of funds from — sending money from what they earn to their families back home. In 2006, the total global value of remittances from migrants was estimated at 220 billion USD, making it the second biggest and most stable form of income for developing countries after Foreign Direct Investment. These remittances are an extremely important source of capital and poverty alleviation in recipient countries (Gamlen 2008). Migrants also often acquire vast knowledge capital abroad, gaining skills and expertise in technological, scientific, economic, political, and other professional fields that can be passed on to their country of origin through 'Diaspora knowledge networks.' 'Brain drain,' long discussed as a major problem for net emigrant countries, can successfully be turned into 'brain circulation or brain gain' with the right Diaspora engagement policies in place (Kuznetsov 2006).

Members of the Diaspora can also work to raise awareness on issues that are present in their countries of origin and make useful connections either economically, politically, and otherwise while abroad. Often, Diaspora members do not realize their own agency to affect change, simply because they are not mobilized, but in cases

where organised efforts are undertaken, they are often the most crucial players in influencing policies and aiding their home countries in times of major crisis. Though this is an under-researched aspect of Diaspora engagement, anecdotal evidence, such as the hugely successful 2011 Somali-American Diaspora engagement effort to send aid back to Somalia during the country's most recent famine, suggest that this is a promising opportunity for future policy (Global Diaspora Forum Event Report 2012).

Host country support to diaspora initiatives is crucial for their engagement in international development. There are many examples of successful Diaspora engagement strategies across the world, and Ireland is one of the most prominent. During a period of wide-scale emigration stretching over 150 years or so, the Irish Diaspora spread all over the world and now claims some 70 million descendants, one of the largest in the world (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2013). In recent years, Ireland has made significant strides in engaging with its Diaspora, including such initiatives as the Global Irish Network, a Government-sponsored network that connects 300 of the most influential Irish professionals living abroad, and the lobbying efforts of the Irish Development Agency to connect with prominent Irish-Americans to bring the large firm Intel into the country (Gamlen 2008).

From 2008 to 2010, the Italian government funded the Migrant Women for Development in Africa project (WMIDA), which aimed to mobilise African migrant women permanently residing in Italy to develop their own skills, as well as connecting with women in their countries of origin to help them develop their own small and medium-sized enterprises. The project was widely lauded for being one of the first Diaspora engagement projects to include women at every stage of concept, implementation, and execution, and was only discontinued due to government budget cuts. WMIDA, along with the preceding project Migrants for Development in Africa (MIDA), funded a wide variety of development initiatives and inspired further follow-up projects (Keusch & Schuster 2012).

On an international scale, since 1977 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has operated the Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) project, in response to the perceived growing problem of brain drain. With nearly 40 years of continuous operation, TOKTEN has connected highly skilled members of various Diasporas from all over the world to state institutions, NGO's, private sector firms, and school systems back in their countries of origin. Though success varies from country to country and project to project, TOKTEN is widely acknowledged as the one of the only international efforts to turn brain drain into a positive factor for development, and is widely acknowledged to be a financially sustainable program (Keusch & Schuster 2012).

1.2. African Diaspora and Migration in Ireland

There were approximately 735,535 immigrants living in Ireland in 2013 (UN International Migration), and of these, 544,000 were non-Irish, making up 12 per cent of the population (INIS 2013). The population of immigrants in Ireland is significant enough to warrant a need for overall integration and unification with the Irish population. 54,419 individuals indicated that their birthplace is in Africa, thus revealing that there is a significant population of Africans who have immigrated to Ireland (CSO 2011). According to the African Centre Annual Report of 2013, the population of Africans in Ireland is put at more than 66,000 (Africa Centre Annual Report-2013).

Africa diaspora in Ireland, while resilience, have been very active socially, economically and politically and their efforts toward integration are apparent. For example, Rotimi Adeberi originally from Nigeria, was elected as a counsellor (local representative) in County Laois and later appointed as the first black Mayor in Ireland. Many other Africans in Ireland have made great contribution in the last ten years, as social entrepreneurs, setting groups and social support networks for their communities as well as business enterprises. This include organisations such as AkiDwA, Breakforth, Ireland Sickle Cell Society, Metro Eireann, Faith based groups, ethnic shops, etc.

Ireland's experience with immigrants can be viewed as a relatively new for most natives as Immigrants in large numbers only arrived at the turn of the 21st century, and challenging an Ireland with rather a strong culture of emigration. Fear of the unknown was therefore perceived among the Irish themselves. In a study done by Eurobarometer in 2000, the Irish were asked if they found the presence of minorities 'disturbing,' and 42 per cent answered that they did as compared to a mere 16 per cent affirmative response in 1997 (Moreo 2010).

In addition to social attitudes towards immigrants, there are a number of barriers to integration. A significant area of concern is language, which is vital to communicating needs and information between immigrants and government officials, NGOs, and other figures. Efforts have been made to provide Adult refugees English classes, as well as computer classes, and children have access to primary and secondary education. However, some vulnerable groups, including women from armed conflicts (Wezesha 2016) are still in need of specific language support that will help them overcome isolation from their communities and engage with the Irish population for a successful integration.

Also, language is directly related to earnings for immigrants. Although subjective, a better grasp of English language has a positive correlation to earnings, meaning that

those who struggle with the language barrier do not earn as much as their counterparts (O'Connell and McGinnity 2008).

Transfer of education is also a barrier to integration for immigrants. A survey indicated that while 71 per cent of respondents had earned some type of degree in their country of origin, only 13 percent were able to validate that education in Ireland (UNHCR 2014). As a result, access to higher-paying jobs can be more difficult for immigrants. Of the African migrants in Ireland, 12,302 indicated that they had completed at least a Bachelor's level degree or above – meaning that nearly a quarter of African migrants in Ireland are highly trained educationally and or, qualified professionals (CSO 2011).

African immigrants who attempt to receive higher education (third level) in Ireland are often discouraged or limited by the cost depending on their immigration status in the country. The international fees for some immigrants can be up to three times higher than for European Union nationals, making access to education expensive and perhaps even impossible. As such, without a third level degree, the job opportunities for immigrants are limited to those that do not require higher education and typically result in lower earnings (Linehan and Hogan 2008). This barrier funnels immigrants who could potentially earn degrees into low-paying jobs without an opportunity for advancement.

Discrimination is perhaps the largest barrier to integration, especially for African immigrants. 43.2 percent of Africans reported frequent racist experiences (Moreo 2010). Discrimination extends past individual incidences, however, and can be found in institutional structures as well. This is most obvious in looking at employment and earnings. O'Connell and McGinnity's research (2008) reveals that Africans are nine times as likely to be unemployed as Irish nationals. While asylum seekers make up a portion of the unemployed, the general trend of higher rates of unemployment still persists.

Immigrants who are employed report discrimination two times as often as Irish nationals. Again, the ability to overcome the language barrier results in less discrimination overall. African immigrants are severely disadvantaged in the labour market in comparison to other immigrants, both in terms of risk of unemployment and ability to secure a job (O'Connell and McGinnity 2008).

When employed, however, African immigrants contribute to the Irish economy significantly. While the first two largest groups of African workers in Ireland are in caring personal service occupations and elementary administration and service occupations, the next largest group are health professionals, with the majority of Africans working under the general category of human health and social work

activities (CSO 2011). The contributions of African immigrants are often overlooked or ignored altogether, but their input into Irish society is very clear.

Another significant area of contribution on the behalf of African immigrants is that of education and educated persons. 84 per cent of African immigrants in Ireland have at least completed upper secondary education, and 55 per cent have completed at least a third level of education, as compared to only 28.3 per cent of Irish nationals. This indicates that the Africans immigrating to Ireland are not only bringing their culture, but their knowledge as well. They have social, economic and cultural capital which is seldom recognised (Mac Einri 2008). In addition, Africans make up 28 percent of ethnic entrepreneurs, indicating that their knowledge is utilised to drive the market economy (Cooney and Flynn 2008).

However, the communication between government entities and support agencies and ethnic entrepreneurs is weak and needs improvement. While support agencies exist to assist these entrepreneurs, reaching business leaders has proven to be difficult and participation of ethnic entrepreneurs in business organisations is very limited (Birdthistle 2012).

While African immigrants create a sizeable portion of Irish society and economy, they often find it difficult to integrate into their new homes, whether due to language or discrimination. In a 2009 survey of refugees by UNHCR, 'a significant number of participants felt that they had not been sufficiently supported in their efforts to integrate.' Thus, Ireland must take steps to further the integration process for refugees and immigrants in order to create a more cohesive society, and to develop the capacities of the African Diaspora to strengthen the Irish economy. From here, it is possible to engage the Diaspora in efforts to lead the development of their countries of origin from their place in Irish society.

Beside the Africans who are emigrating from Africa to live in Ireland due to poor governance, conflicts, poverty or a combination of all three, many professionals have in fact migrated in search of advanced qualifications and ensure sustainable incomes for themselves and their families. A large number of these Africans who pursue advanced degrees in Irish universities and institutes of technology, including children who migrated with their parents or born here in most cases, fail to return to their countries of origin upon graduation. According to a report by the Africa Development Bank, the rate of expatriation of students remains exceptionally high for Sub-Saharan Africa, with the exception of South Africa. This situation is unlike other regions of the developing world, including the Maghreb region, Asia, Latin America, and Near East where the proportion of students who study abroad is stabilizing and even declining due to considerable expansion of higher education domestically over the past two decades. Docquier and Marfouk noted that the brain drain is now much more extensive than it was two or three decades ago.

For example, African immigrants in U.S.A. are more likely to have a higher level of education, compared to the average immigrant as many had arrived to pursue advanced degrees, having completed undergraduate programs in Africa. Of the African-born population age 25 and older, 86% reported having a high school or higher degree compared to 62% of the total foreign-born population; and, “about 44% of all African immigrants hold a college diploma, which is slightly more than for Asian immigrants (42.5%), nearly twice the rate of native-born white Americans, and four times the rate of native-born African Americans”.

As mentioned above, the vast majority of Africans living in Ireland are highly qualified; most of them are holders of university degrees in various domains. This is a major resource for development that both Ireland and sending countries should not overcome. The lack of employment for Africans in Ireland as discussed earlier is not a good indicator and a loss of brains by Ireland. Furthermore, the lack of support to the African Diaspora as in the above case of Italy or elsewhere does not contribute positively to the global development. The Sustainable Development Goals actually recognise that Diaspora is resourceful capital for global development. However, despite the lack of consistent income, the Africans who are here in Ireland have shown interest in the development of their home countries where they are heavily involved in supporting, not just the household economies but also community development through the remittances that they send.

Remittances provide benefits at several levels. Many Diaspora prefer to invest in their own countries in establishing small businesses in the assumption that they might one day return and would need to have a source of income locally. In such cases, they create employment for the people who are in their community. Such establishments invest in the purchase of land and assets, transfer of technology and skills, and relatively modernized approach to management and at times also open up regional markets through value added cross-border trade.

At the household level, recipients of remittances in Africa were found to have higher levels of education were more likely to have some form of savings account and a higher than those not receiving money from abroad. For example, research shows that about 10-20 % of the US\$ 40 billion remittance flow to Africa is saved or invested. Moreover, evidence shows that a 10 % increase in official international remittances as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) leads to a 2.9 % decline in the poverty headcount. Remittances also support families during national conflicts, when regular salaries and wages are often interrupted. In Sierra Leone for example, these transfers remained a significant source of income during the country's civil war.

However, it is important to point out that African emigrants are yet to build a significant wealth as like that of the Chinese Diaspora. For example, in 2006, the

Chinese Diaspora would have combined wealth of about US\$1.1 trillion. In Indonesia for instance, overseas Chinese constitute only 2.5% of the population but control more than 70 % of that country's wealth (Young and Shih, 2003). Indians abroad generated an annual income equal to about 35% of India's GDP which was \$1.16 trillion in 2008. In 2007, total remittance inflow to China was \$32.83 billion and averaged about \$25 per migrant; the flows into India amounted to \$35.26 billion, at an average of \$30 per migrant while per capita remittances for African migrants were \$26. These comparable figures of per capita remittances from Chinese and Indian and African migrants suggest that with the appropriate support, African migrants can make contributions to economic development of their countries of origin along the lines, if not magnitude, of those seen in South and Southeast Asian economies.

1.3. Legal framework on discrimination

Ireland is a model for peace and justice and has demonstrated its commitment to the international norms by signing and ratifying treaties that seek to protect such immigrants in general, including the people of African Descent (PAD). In 1968, Ireland signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) but ratified it in 2000. The ratification appears to have been prompted by the multi-cultural diversity that had just started emerging at that time. Provisions on the prohibition of racial discrimination can also be found in other human rights treaties to which Ireland is party to. For instance, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), though in a strict sense not a treaty, proclaims a philosophy in which the dignity and equal worth of human beings are recognised. The UDHR has had a huge influence in the emergence of international treaties as well as national constitutions. Provisions of the treaties and national constitutions mirror those in the UDHR. More relevant for our purpose is a treaty known as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which commits its parties to work progressively towards the fulfilment of economic, social, and cultural rights to individuals, including labour rights etc.

These treaties have wider implications for States. For instance, as international law ICERD is binding on Ireland. At the regional level, Ireland is bound by the equality norms as espoused by the European Union. Similarly, at the national level, equality rights are entrenched in the Irish Constitution and other statutory provisions. Ireland has also enacted laws intended to protect equal access to the labour market. The **Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2011** outlaw discrimination in a wide range of employment and employment-related areas. These include recruitment and promotion, equal pay, working conditions, training or experience, dismissal and harassment, including sexual harassment. The legislation defines discrimination as treating one person in a less favorable way than another person based on –Gender, Civil status, Family status, Sexual orientation Religion, Age, Disability and **Race**. **Race includes skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin.**

On 1st November 2014 Ireland established the **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)**. The IHREC is a statutory independent body, which is both a national human rights institution as well as an equality body as required by the EU 'Race' Directive 2000/43/EC. The Commission has the following functions:

- To protect and promote human rights and equality
- To encourage the development of a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in the State
- To promote understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights and equality in the State
- To encourage good practice in intercultural relations, to promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity in the State and respect for the freedom and dignity of each person
- To work towards the elimination of human rights abuses, discrimination and prohibited conduct

Although these treaties and enactments offer the legal framework for the non-discrimination principles, a huge angle of racial discrimination figures prominently in the labour market in Ireland. The Economic and Social Research Institute recent research found that black people have the highest rate of unemployment because of racial prejudice and that white people are preferred in the labour market (Kingston, McGinnity and O'Connell - 2015). It is here that the purported integration process fades.

It must be pointed out that it is quite easy to introduce national and international laws as well as policies designed to deal with racial discrimination. However, their implementations can be a big challenge. Article 1 of ICERD defines racial discrimination as:

Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

Understood in terms of this definition, racial discrimination is therefore about a group of people having a negative attitude towards another group of people on grounds as mentioned in the article. What is critical here is that discrimination is ingrained in the minds of people. As such, it takes place at every level of society. Because it is ingrained in the minds of people, racial discrimination is a deep-rooted problem.

Unfortunately, the unpleasant scenario that has always emerged is that, those who are mostly affected by racial discriminated are people of African descent. As subjects of such discrimination in the global north, most of them face exclusion in many spheres. The fact that racial discrimination remains a big challenge, it does not

render itself immune from revolution. It can be stumped out by changing people's attitudes through raising awareness and diversity inclusion training. Indeed for many years discrimination has been on the international agenda for its eradication. There have been World Conferences with resolutions intended to be catalysts to the implementation of the non-discrimination principles embedded in the legal framework as highlighted above. Some of such resolutions to combat racial discrimination are as follows:

- First Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination - **1973-1982**
- First World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, Geneva - **1978**
- Second World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, Geneva - **1983**
- Second Decade for Action to Combat Racial Discrimination - **1983-1992**
- Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination - **1994-2003**

Despite the above efforts by the international community, which ran for three decades (**1973-2003**), its principal objectives to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination were not attained and countless people continued to be victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related prejudices. The ethnic minorities continued to experience unexpectedly high level of unemployment (Sandra Fredman, 2011). The situation had already been noticed by the UN before the end of the last millennium. In 1997, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 52/111 to hold the World Conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. In the following year, the UN focussed on taking action and declared 2001 as the International Year of Mobilization against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was held in Durban, South Africa from 31 August to 7 September 2001 (United Nations 'World Conference against Racism'). The Durban Declaration and Action Plan, which was adopted by consensus, calls upon governments and others to ensure the full integration of people of African descent into social, economic and political life. The Durban declaration has its end as the upholding of non-discrimination principles that embrace equality, justice and dignity. To uphold these principles, the Declaration calls upon States to come up with tougher anti-discrimination legislation and administrative measures.

Because discrimination is generally ingrained in the minds of people, the realisation of genuine equality, justice and dignity can be difficult unless there is a political will and commitment. Against this background, the United Nations launched the

International Year for the People of African Descent 2010. The Year sought two things:

- a. Strengthen political commitment to eradicating discrimination against people of African descent.
- b. Promote greater awareness of and respect for diverse heritage and culture of people of African descent.

On the occasion, the Un Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, expressed concern over the fact that most of the African people are affected by racism in the global north (Ban Ki-moon 'Remarks on International Year for People of African Descent'). He stated:

We must remember that people of African descent are among those most affected by racism. Too often, they face denial of basic rights such as access to quality health services and education.

In December 2014 United Nation proclaims 2015-2024 the decade dedicated to the people of African descent under its programme known as the International Decade for the People of African Descent (IDPAD), acknowledges that millions of Africans live in other parts of the world, outside of the African continent. It envisages a situation where people of African descent are recognised as human beings, accorded justice and their development facilitated. States around the world have been encouraged to adopt and implement activities that promote the decade. ENAR Ireland has tried to launch the decade although with no State support. A similar approach was adopted by the EU. In 2009, the Stockholm Programme envisaged the EU region as the area of justice, freedom and security for the period 2010-2014.

However, despite the three themes, i.e. Recognition, Justice and Development, the reality remains that the integration of People of African Descent into their respective countries of residence is a big challenge. As a result, integration is at a very low pace not as anticipated by the UN. While the above mentioned international and national laws as well as policies are in place, racism and racial discrimination occur on a daily basis (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – Durban Review Conference). For instance, Africans living in Ireland still find it extremely difficult to secure employment (Liam Coakley and Piaras Mac Einri - 2007) regardless of the fact that they are highly qualified. This is despite the fact that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993, calls for the speedy and comprehensive elimination of all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances. What is more disturbing is the fact that Ireland is not better equipped in terms of statutory provisions to deal with racism (Shane O'Carry March 2015). The absence of appropriate legislations to deal with racism means that black people are inevitably subjected to racial discrimination in the labour market. If anything, they are offered

far fewer employment opportunities adequate with their academic achievements (Lucy Michael, November 2015).

Through formal and informal interactions with Africa Diaspora, Wezesha has established that Africans living in Ireland are indeed highly qualified but without proper employment opportunities. This is also noted by the Central Statistical Office in Ireland (2009-2014) that show that foreigners are not generally favoured in labour market.

Foreign Nationals: PPSN Allocations, Employment and Social Welfare Activity 2014

Year PPSN allocated	Allocations to foreign nationals aged 15 & over	Number with no employment activity 2009-2014	Employment activity by year						
			2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	
			20,74	20,3	16,1	14,2	13,0	12,34	
2009	62,984	31,844	2,	88	27	32	74	6	
				21,1	21,4	16,8	14,7	13,43	
2010	59,310	29,065		86	95	27	78	6	
					21,7	22,5	18,0	15,61	
2011	58,258	27,889			84	09	10	3	
						24,8	26,0	20,64	
2012	64,193	30,714				35	86	6	
							28,9	31,24	
2013	75,812	38,197					02	1	
								34,84	
2014	85,724	50,876						1	

As indicated on the table above, just about one fifth of foreign nationals assigned PPSNs in 2009 had employment activity in Ireland in 2014.

II. Champions of Transformation: The African Diaspora in Ireland

2.1. Research background

Wezesha, Swahili for 'empower or enable' is a diaspora led development organisation working with women and children affected or likely to be affected by conflict, violence, war and poverty. Wezesha works in collaboration with local groups and organisations in establishing partnerships to raise awareness, end sexual and gender-based violence and poverty. Currently, the organisation has pilot programmes in two African Countries, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Kenya.

One of Wezesha's key objectives under the migration and development pillar is to mobilize the African Diaspora for engagement in international development. The Organisation also hopes to support and strengthen the African Diaspora groups, help in establishing and partnering with other African Diaspora internationally in order to facilitate the channel of resources, enhance investment, draw on expertise, capitalize on remittances and address other issues affecting migration practices.

It is within this context that Wezesha aims to document and profile Africans with different skills, knowledge and talents that will be used to establish and support mentoring programme, volunteering as well as profile them as role models.

1. Objectives of the Survey

- To identify, document and outline skills, knowledge and expertise of members of African Diaspora living in Ireland.
- To profile professionals and experts of African Diaspora living in Ireland and to connect them with employers, decision makers and other fields of interest.
- To tap into the list for mentoring purposes in particular for future generation of African migrants
- To tap into the pool of expertise and promote the role of the Diaspora in Africa's development
- To portray professionals and experts of African Diaspora as role model and dispel myths and misinformation about Africans in Ireland

2. Methodology

The mapping exercise was carried out between May 2015 and January 2016. It was done through the online or printed copies survey with the intention of obtaining information on the skills, expertise, and knowledge that exist in the African Diaspora in Ireland. The survey was also intended to gauge the Diaspora willingness to

contribute to Africa development. Also to distribute the questionnaire and to ensure they reached more respondents, random method of distribution was used. For example, during the Africa Day, Africans who were attending the event were given the questionnaire by hand and were requested to fill them in. While some respondents did so on the day, others chose to take the questionnaire home with them to have them filled in and later sent through the post or hand delivered to Wezesha office.

A survey was designed to elicit responses to the following:

- Educational qualifications
- Professional expertise and employment
- Issues and concerns in country of residence (Ireland)
- Issues of Concern in country of origin
- Level of involvement in Africa

The data collected and analysed for this report was based on interviews by the use of questionnaire method. Over 270 questionnaires were distributed through email or handing printed copies, the respondents returned them to the Wezesha by post and email. The other method employed was champion's interview. This involved talking to some of the champions who are involved in various activities here in Ireland and are also heavily engaged in development and community activities in Africa. The final method used to tenable the researchers to get varied opinions about the role of the African diasporas were case studies. Case studies involved talking to people who have experiences about issues such as unemployment, exploitation, education and other issues which stood from the norm and were willing to share. Such mixed methodological approaches made the research rich and more representative of what was happening on the ground. However, it is important to point out that no single methodological approach would be sufficient to unearth the impact of exploitation, discrimination and racism which define the lives of many Africans here in Ireland and as a result the mixed methodological approach brings to the fore an in-depth analysis of issues at Irish level. The findings have been used to identify, where possible, the African Diaspora contributions and role in driving development both in Ireland and in Africa, as well as the role of cultural diversity in enriching the cultural experience of their host countries.

2. 2. Research Outcomes

Out of all the questionnaires that were sent or handed out, 156 people responded. 103 of the respondents were from county Dublin. The heavy concentration of

respondents around Dublin can be attributed to availability of employment opportunities and accessibility to amenities. Female respondents were slightly more than male respondents, 61% against 39%; ages ranging mainly between 31-50 and the majority have lived in Ireland more than 10 years. The respondents were articulate in terms of their academic and professional qualifications, and expertise in specific areas. Most expressed their desire to participate in the economic development of Ireland through employment and other initiatives. However, they cited lack of migrant support and racial discrimination as the main issues that they face in Ireland. Almost all of them stated that they were involved in one way or another in assisting their families in their countries of origin and also contributing to the development of Africa. These findings are in line with the World Bank remittance figures by the African Diaspora which exceed the amount of foreign aid to Africa.

The above figures are relevant in profiling Africans living in Ireland and will help understand issues that will be discussed in the sections below. As earlier pointed out, Africans in Ireland are highly qualified in various areas of expertise. The following subsection is going to capture the various qualifications which Africans have acquired and the kind of work they are doing.

2.2.1. Educational Qualifications

The survey revealed a whole range of academic qualifications starting from the Irish Leaving Certificate to Doctorate Degrees. Specifically, the respondents are qualified in Online Marketing/Sales, Nursing, Development studies, International Relations, Information Technology, Photography and Film, Broadcasting, Gender studies, Law, Political Science, European Studies, Business Studies, Sociology, Philosophy, Accounts, Medicine, Sciences.

Education	Total
PhD	11
Masters	42
Degree	74
Diploma	23
Leaving Cert.	6
Totals	156

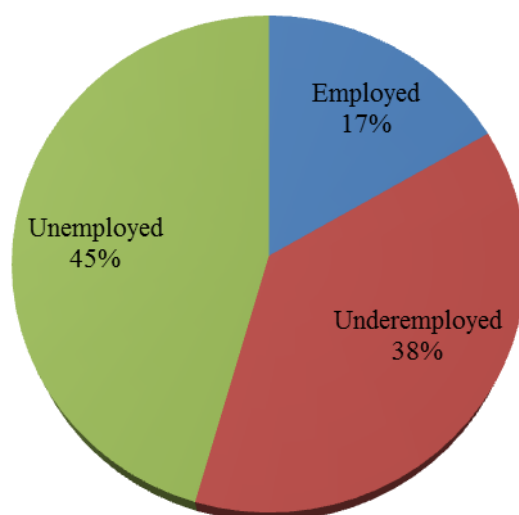
Table 1. African Diaspora Education Statistics

Fig. 1. African Diaspora Education Statistics

2.2.2. Professional Expertise and Employment Status

Despite having such qualifications and professional expertise, most of them are underemployed or unemployed. Out of the 11 respondents with PhDs only 1 was in employment matching their qualification. This represented about 9 percent. Compared to the percentage in relation to employment at PhD level, there was a decrease in the percentage of people with qualification matching jobs at Master's degree level. Only 3 out of 42 were employed in areas which reflected their qualifications and that represented just 7 percent. There was an increase at first-level degree (Bachelor's) graduates. There were 74 degree holders in total and 11 were in employment matching their qualification which represented about 15 percent. While those with diplomas were 23 out of which 7 were in employment in an area matching their qualification thereby representing 30 percent of the diploma holders. An overall picture here is that, out of the 156 respondents just about 17 percent were in employment appropriately matching with their qualifications. For those generally underemployed, the survey showed they work as security guards, carers, cleaners, child minders etc.

Education	Total	Employed	Underemployed	Unemployed
PhD	11	2	1	8
Masters	42	3	10	29
Degree	74	11	33	30
Diploma	23	7	15	1
Leaving Cert.	6	3	-	3
Totals	156	26	59	71

Figure 3: **Professional Expertise and Employment Status**

As indicated by the figures above and the chart, high numbers of respondents are unemployed and majority of those that find jobs are underemployed and are in employment that do not match their qualifications.

2.2.3. Issues of concern in Ireland

Although the respondents said that they are not getting a job which matches their qualifications, there were other issues pointed out such as racism and discrimination in the work place as narrated in the following case study.

Case 1

I work as a nurse in a local hospital. I studied here in Ireland and I have a BSc in Nursing. I remember this one incident in the hospital where a patient in the ward where I was working complained saying that she did not want to be handled by me, describing me by how I looked. The behavior of the elderly patient was challenging even to the other nurses, and the way the issue was handled by the head of the ward was condescending to say the least. It has not been easy in my workplace because I find that mostly I am discriminated against in my work place. Sometimes it is not about lacking adequate qualifications but also being viewed as an outsider due to the colour of one's skin. I know a few other nurses from Africa who are also complaining of unfair treatment in their places of work just like me. We also see this kind of discrimination a lot when we are being asked to handle African patients who present with various

problems in the hospital, using culture as a way to make me feel inferior and sometimes not knowing that Africa is a vast continent with many countries and that I may not be in a position to know what pertains in particular African countries outside my country of origin.

Case 2

Another respondent with a MSc in IT said that when he was called for an interview, the interviewers narrowed down to his nationality and asked about his ability to cope in a multi-cultural workplace. He felt that the obsession with his home country was uncalled for, when he had over and above the qualifications the employer was asking for. Besides, he was already a naturalized Irish citizen.

2.2.4. Issues of concern in Countries of origin

Lack of security: This creates a less conducive environment for Diaspora engagement; many people expressed their concern over security issues and fear of erupting conflict or terrorist acts. Other felt level of corruption in countries of origin hinders them from investing or contributing as much as they would like to.

Lack of access to Dual citizenship: For many African Diasporas, lack of dual citizenship limits their full engagement potentials with their countries of origin. Most of the African countries are yet to allow dual citizenship. This affects mainly individuals who have surrendered their citizenship through naturalization in their country of residence. Policies that make it easy for members of the Diaspora to travel between their country of origin and country of settlement can positively influence the decision to engage in the homeland. Offering multiple re-entry permits and long-term visas to transnational entrepreneurs encourages them to actively supervise their investments.

Property Rights: Many countries place limits on foreign nationals' ownership of real estate and property. These limitations on foreign property ownership curtail the options that are available to members of the Diaspora who have surrendered their citizenship to their adopted country.

Lack of Support by local government: Majority of the African diaspora supporting or running projects in country of origin fail to get support from their governments in particular if they are transferring material or equipment in support of schools, hospitals or any other infrastructure. The survey respondents indicated that national governments in country of origin should establish support, cooperation and collaboration based on trust, commitment and expectations of mutual benefit. These can range from inciting African Diaspora communities around an issue of national concern to incentive-based schemes to match-fund with small local community projects.

2.2.5. Level of involvement in Africa

Almost all the respondents said that they were heavily involved in providing support both at family and community levels in their home countries. 85.37% support their families on regular basis and several times through remittances. With an average of 50 euros per month sent by each single adult in Africa, not less than 30 million per year can be counted as gross contribution by the Africans to the development of their countries of origin. 41.46% of respondents reported that they support their local communities in Africa through various projects of which a case study will be presented. Remittances sent to Africa helps in catering for various expenses as listed below.

Food

Food and nutrition is a basic need for human growth and proper development. The respondents said that they not only support their own families to meet their food and nutrition needs but also those of cash strapped neighbours who do not have a relative in the Diaspora. As noted in the World Bank (2011) report earlier quoted, having someone in the Diaspora is viewed as a way of easing poverty by many families in Africa. This support is not limited to food but also health needs.

Health

Health is another area in which the participants said they contribute to. This is mostly when family members get indisposed and they are called upon to pay for hospital bills and to buy drugs. One participant had this to say:

“When such needs arises, it is up to me to know how a loved one is going to access good health care. Most often, this does not come cheap. Through the work I do as a cleaner, I just send money home to cater for such needs. The last time was when my father had a major operation in a private hospital and I paid more than 3000 euro. During that time, I found myself liaising with doctors to ensure that he was diagnosed as quickly as possible. If I was not here in Ireland, my father would have been subjected to the public hospitals where it would have taken long for his disease to be diagnosed and hence proper treatment would have been delayed. After hospitalisation, my father was put on drugs which I still pay for on a monthly basis.”

As earlier mentioned, the provision of good and adequate health care is a responsibility of the government but in most cases, people in the diaspora find themselves paying for their relatives to access quality health care because the governments of the vast majority of African countries are not able to meet this crucial need for their populace.

Education

In households where there is a person in the diaspora, lives of those left behind in

Africa are positively affected. A very important area where those in the diaspora, especially the respondents interviewed said that they pay for the education of their younger and sometimes older siblings. Just like in the health case narrated in the previous page, they help in ensuring that those left behind can access quality education.

Agriculture

The mainstay of most African countries' economy is agriculture. According to some of the respondents, they contribute to this by buying seed and fertilizers for planting during planting season, sending money to hire farm hands to quicken the planting, weeding or harvesting process for their parents, buying livestock and poultry to improved household nutrition and also income. Income is accrued from such ventures when people sell the surplus eg milk, eggs etc after household consumption. Through their exposure to improved farming methods here in Ireland, the participants said that they find themselves advising their families on more cost-effective methods which end up bringing high yields for families. Encouraging families to depart from the traditional farming methods is one way of ensuring food security at both family and community level.

Development/Supporting Community Projects

Africans in the diaspora, especially here in Ireland are not only involved in supporting their immediate families but have heavily invested in their communities. The respondents said that they support community projects such as women empowerment programmes, youth projects, water projects and are also involved in school fundraisers. The following case studies serve to demonstrate the level of involvement and contribution by Africans both in Ireland and Africa.

That Wezesha has carried out this research is an obvious case of support to Africa. The Organisation was established as an initiative of members of the African Diaspora in Ireland. It supports women and children affected or likely to be affected by conflict, violence, war and poverty. Wezesha works both in Ireland and in Africa with pilots programme in two African countries, Kenya and DR Congo. In Ireland, Wezesha works with women who have originated from war torn countries and has recently produced research *healing the wounds of war* that will help in development of projects to support these women. In Kenya and DR Congo, Wezesha has run successful micro-finance projects for women improving livelihoods and contributing to women economic empowerment where over 500 members have benefited from microfinance in both countries in the last three years. With support of partners on the ground Wezesha is currently running member mobilisation for development through manufacturing entrepreneurship. Wezesha is also in the process of establishing a Centre for women peace and development in DR Congo, for which land has already been purchased.

Another strong contribution by Africans is through media practices. In April 2000, Metro Eireann, Ireland's first and only multicultural newspaper was set up by two Nigerian journalists, Chinedu Onyejelem and Abel Ugba. Published by Metro Publishing and Consultancy Limited, Metro Eireann is the primary source of news and information on Ireland's fast-growing immigrant and ethnic communities

Apart from supplying up-to-date news and analysis, Metro Eireann has become a forum for inter-cultural communication, showcasing the rich cultural diversity of Ireland. Metro has a number of objects both in Ireland and Nigeria. In Ireland, it is involved in the following:

1. Publishing newspapers, books and magazines
2. Offering training in media, entrepreneurship, personal development and employee needs.
3. Metro is also involved in event management, for example,
 - a. Mama Award which is intended to promote multiculturalism in Ireland.
 - b. Ethnic Entrepreneur of the year intended to promote immigrants in entrepreneurship.
 - c. African Day Award for successful entrepreneurs.
4. Promoting African Diaspora in Ireland.

In Nigeria, Metro is engaged with offering training in many fields including Public Relations and Communication to state bodies. At the moment it is working towards establishing a community library in Imo State with the aim of promoting a reading culture, adult education, entrepreneurship and access to the internet.

In all this Metro creates employment both in Nigeria and here in Ireland.

Also based in Ireland and involved in community development in Africa is Children's Education Development Fund (CEDF) founded by Sylvia Gavigan.

Children's Education Development Fund (CEDF) is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation founded in 2007. Its main aim is to provide support to young people suffering from HIV/AIDs and other disadvantaged and vulnerable youths through education and health care programmes in Uganda. CEDF was founded in 2007 by Sylvia Gavigan, the current Honorary Consul for Uganda in Ireland. She started organising the community in her rural village in Mbarara District from her mother's old garage which was lying idle. From those humble beginnings, the organisation has managed to construct a centre which is well equipped with sewing machines. This offer girls from poor backgrounds to learn skills such as dressmaking and embroidery. The graduates of the centre have become self-reliant and are now able to support themselves and their families. This would rather have been difficult without the

intervention of the initiatives such as CEDF. The organisation has also been working closely with volunteers from Ireland who visit Uganda to help the community with building classrooms, and teaching improved farming methods, as well with counselling and educating men and women in areas such as HIV/AIDs among other health issues.

These case studies have demonstrated that Africans in diaspora have a strong desire to develop the African continent. It is therefore not surprising some have gone to the extent of lobbying the African governments to provide their people with essential services.

Advocacy and Lobbying

As demonstrated in the case studies above Africans in Ireland are making valuable contribution both in Ireland and in Africa. If the Irish government becomes more supportive to such Diaspora initiatives, their contribution will greater impact on lives of people since poor governance in most African countries has a spill over effect in the ability of people to meet their needs.

Towards this end the participants said that they find themselves educating their people back home on what to look for in a good leader and also how to hold leadership responsible when they do not meet a certain mark. This can be attributed to what they have seen happening here in Ireland, and also their exposure to other leadership models within the EU and beyond.

Also Africans in Ireland, mostly when they visit home, they do their level best to lobby their governments to provide good leadership and direction to the people. According to one participant, it is devastating to see neighbours and communities lacking basic needs such as education, health, water and food which the government is supposed to provide. They added that pointing out systemic and structural failures is important to having an informed populace and eradicating endemic poverty and diseases.

Another area where Africans in Ireland have been able to point to their home government, though without success, is the issue of corruption which affects many African countries. One participant said that he warns his relatives about the negative effects of corruption on the provision of essential services to the people. According to him, he also encourages his wards and kins to be actively involved in writing letters to their government and demand accountability in the spending of public funds. These in most cases go unanswered, but are steps in the right direction.

Another group of Sudanese Doctors based here in Ireland and United Kingdom, are also involved in educating their communities in Sudan about Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) where the practice is almost universal at over 80 percent. According to the doctors, pointing the dangers of such a cultural practice and encouraging communities to stop this practice is their way of giving back to their communities. The doctors

pointed out since they came to Europe to study medicine, it has not been easy to go and practice in the volatile Sudan but they are able to organise yearly visits to their home country where they talk to gatherings of the whole communities and leaders encouraging the enactment for laws against FGM.

III. Conclusion

The research shows that African Diaspora in Ireland are highly qualified but are living at the margin of the society, they are faced with challenges of accessing employment and majority that tend to secure employment manage to get only low paying jobs that do not match their qualifications. However African Diaspora in Ireland are resilient and after two decades of their visible presence in Ireland, they have shown to transform lives both here in Ireland and in Africa despite the challenges that they encounter. The research also indicates they are contributing a lot through remittances, transfer of skills, humanitarian aid, support for Community programs to improve the quality of life and microfinance programs to promote entrepreneurship in Africa.

To date there are no support systems for Diaspora organisations in Ireland and most of the diaspora communities are operating with minimal or no resources. It is important to implement a strategy and render support to build the capacity and systematic working structures of Diaspora groups/organisations in Ireland.

This research is useful in identifying and profiling Africans living in Ireland; it highlights their strengths and potential and also challenges stereotypes and myths about Africans. Ireland and in particular international Irish NGO operating in Africa should take advantage of the expertise, skills and knowledge of African Diaspora. They are a resourceful group that could help and add value to their work in Africa.

IV. Recommendations

1. Utilise and take advantage of skills, knowledge, talents and expertise of African diaspora in Ireland and allow them to contribute positively into all levels of the society.
2. Encourage and provide training on equality, diversity and inclusive policies with employers and frontline services.
3. Given Ireland record in humanitarian action and support for international development by state through Irish NGOs, all actors should engage and link up with the African Diaspora and build on and use their existing skills, knowledge and expertise.
4. Provide information and support on rights and entitlements and in particular on how to handle discrimination faced by Africans living in Ireland.
5. Provide support both financial and capacity building to the development projects of Africa diaspora organisations.
6. Develop effective integration policies for migrant that include Africa Diaspora and promote policies that encourages social inclusion and addresses marginalisation.
7. Promote cultural diversity as a positive dimension by highlighting and acknowledging positive socio-economic and cultural contribution of migrants, including Africans at local, regional and national level.
8. Ensure migrants and in particular Africans are fully protected by establishing policies and legislations, including hate crime laws.
9. Develop support for victims of racism (including emotional support) and establish proper reporting procedures.

Appendix

Questionnaire

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. First Name: _____

2. Last Name: _____

3. Sex

☐ Male ☐ Female

4. Please indicate your age group ☐ 18-30 ☐ 31-50 ☐ 51-65

5. Select Marital Status ☐ Married ☐ Single

6. Email Address _____

7a. What is your current country of residence? _____

7b. What is your current city/state of residence? _____

8. How long have you lived in your current country of residence? _____

9. Please indicate your African Heritage ☐ by Birth ☐ through descent

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

10. Please indicate your highest level of education and areas of expertise _____

PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

11a. what are your areas of specialization/Expertise? _____

11b. In which of these specializations are you currently working in _____

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

12a. what are your issues and concerns in your country of residence (Ireland): _____

12b. what are your main concerns regarding Africa/country of origin? _____

LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA

13a. When did you last visit Africa/Country of Origin in Africa? _____

14a. Have you ever contributed to Africa development through any of the following areas (select all that apply): ☐ Health ☐ Development- Supporting project ☐ Advocacy

14b. In what capacity did you contribute? ☐ Sending Money ☐ volunteering ☐ others

14c. How often do you provide these contributions? ☐ Once off ☐ several times

15a. Are you a member of any Community Based (Diaspora) Group/Organization/Association?

16. In what capacity would you be willing to support Africa development (select all that apply)?

☐ Volunteering ☐ Advocacy ☐ raising awareness ☐ Financial contribution to projects in Africa

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