

# Diaspora in *Action*



Expertise

Entrepreneurs

Emergencies

The Hague, 2 June 2015



International Organization for Migration

# Conference Report

2 June 2015  
The Hague



International Organization for Migration (IOM)



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the  
Netherlands

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On 2 June 2015 IOM The Hague organized the conference 'Diaspora in Action' in the framework of the **'Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals'** (TRQN) programme.

The event took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands and brought together senior government officials and representatives from host institutions from the nine TRQN target countries, Dutch government officials, diplomatic representations, diaspora organizations, NGOs, academics and other relevant stakeholders.

The Conference aimed to share best practices and evaluate the impact of TRQN. The Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals programme offers a window for diaspora professionals to contribute to the social and economic development of their country of origin. Their knowledge, expertise and familiarity with the local culture and language make the TRQN volunteers suitable agents for development and reconstruction.

The conference was chaired by Mrs. Anke Reuvekamp, focal point at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the TRQN III project until June 2015.





## Opening Speech

Ms. Reina Buijs,  
Deputy Director General International Cooperation,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Netherlands

- Migration is a dynamic process, with migrants moving back and forth and, once they have settled, keeping close relationships with their country of origin.
- Our MFA values the good cooperation with IOM, in the Netherlands and around the globe, sharing the same goals on protecting rights of migrants, refugees and Internally Displaced Persons as well as strengthening migration management and combating exploitation of migrants, including human trafficking.
- Diaspora professionals who return to their countries of origin contribute to development. Because of their hybrid identity they bring the best of two worlds and can function as a bridge.
- Diaspora members can also contribute by 'virtual return', for example in the E-learning entrepreneurship project in Ebola affected Sierra Leone.
- The importance of the Migration and Development terrain is growing. Increasing numbers of migrants are trying to reach Europe hoping for a better life and many lives are lost. An integrated approach is needed and close partnerships with countries of origin and transit, to put an end to the tragedies on the Mediterranean Sea.
- The MFA aims to contribute to development in countries of origin. The contribution of the diaspora is highly valued.



## Word of welcome

Mr. Martin Wyss, Chief of Mission IOM the Netherlands

Martin Wyss, Chief of Mission IOM the Netherlands welcomed all guests on behalf of IOM the Netherlands with special mention of those from abroad and representatives of Governments, Embassies and Consulates of the TRQN countries.

He reiterated the crucial role of the Diaspora for the development of their respective countries of origin by referring to its place in the Migration & Development context.

The focus of the entire Migration for or versus Development debate can be narrowed to two key points leading to one big question:

- 1 Remittances or the **Financial Capital** gains contribute to development.
- 2 Brain Drain or the **Human Capital** losses impede development.

The question: **Can remittances balance the loss of human capital?**

The answer must be a resounding NO, as migration leads to significant human resource gaps in countries of origin, while it overwhelmingly benefits countries of destination.

The main aim of TRQN's 400 specialized assignments is to **compensate** some of the Know How lost as a result of migration.

Successful assignments have three key ingredients:

1. precise terms of reference
2. ownership of the host institution
3. dedication of the qualified specialist.

While lasting effects of short-term knowledge transfer assignments are difficult to achieve, some sustainability is gained from building bridges between the Diaspora and their countries, by establishing links between institutions, and by setting up networks among professionals which continue beyond the period of the assignments.



# Presenting TRQN

Mr. Adri Zagers, Project manager TRQN

Key principles of the Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals Programme:

- Engaging diaspora for development and reconstruction.
- Priority sectors defined by countries of origin.
- Knowledge and skills transfer.
- Sustained contacts after assignments; linkages between institutions.
- 405 assignments in a three year period.
- Additional internships, study visits and courses for relevant officials from the countries of origin in the Netherlands.
- Examples of TRQN assignments were shown with regard to digital education (Cape Verde), tourism (Georgia), construction (Afghanistan), water management (Sudan), local government (Morocco), academic education (Afghanistan) and emergency medical care (Kurdistan region of Iraq).



**Panel Discussion:**

## **The Migration Development Nexus and TRQN**

**Mr. Mowlid Mohamoud Ibrahim**, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation of the Republic of Somaliland.

**Mr. Tauhid Pasha**, IOM Geneva, Migration and Development Specialist.

**Mrs. Nathalie Lintvelt**, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Head of the Migration and Development Group.

**Mrs. Vivianne van der Vorst**, Migration Studies, Maastricht Graduate School of Governance and UNU-MERIT.

**Mr. Awil Mohamoud**, Director of the African Diaspora Policy Centre in The Hague (ADPC).

**Mr. Mowlid** stressed the importance of the contribution of three TRQN participants to the Somalilan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Their contribution was in the field of communication, legal advice and development cooperation.

**Mr. Awil Mohamoud** mentioned that the contribution of diaspora is obvious, but often not yet fully integrated in a policy programme in the countries of origin.

**Mr. Tauhid Pasha** highlighted the positive contribution of diaspora, not only to the country of origin, but also to the country of residence. It is important that rights of diaspora are protected. The better they are integrated, the more they can also contribute to the country of origin.

**Mrs. Vivianne van der Vorst** stressed that the minimum length of the assignment depends on the Terms of Reference. Some assignments need to be longer in order to ensure serious impact.

**Mrs. Nathalie Lintvelt** highlighted some of the priorities of the Migration and Development Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which includes strengthening the migration management capacity of countries of origin to maximize the positive outcomes of migration (preventing brain drain, and increasing brain gain and brain circulation). The importance of the diaspora with regard to contributions to the Netherlands as well as their country of origin, is underscored. In this regard remittances and trade investments remain important, as well the TRQN project. The MFA would be interested in more EU-broad programmes to work towards a more integrated approach of international cooperation.

***The panel discussion was guided by two challenging propositions:***

**Proposition 1:**

*Diaspora involvement for development of the country of origin is a natural process (e.g. sending of remittances). There is no need to design special programmes by governments and international organizations.*

**Proposition 2:**

*A programme of knowledge transfer by diaspora is only successful and sustainable if it is mainstreamed with the diaspora policy and strategy in the country of origin.*



There is consensus among panellists from the different perspectives that diaspora involvement is happening, but that governments in countries of origin should be engaged to make the contributions more valuable.

**Mr. Mohamoud:** there should be a coordination body in countries of origin, prioritizing certain sectors (e.g. health, education) to streamline diaspora contributions.

**Mrs. Van der Vorst:** different levels of impact are to be considered (local, national, international).

**Mr. Mowlid:** diaspora contribution is a national process, but a diaspora policy is still needed. Diaspora cannot always move freely, e.g. in the case of people originating from Somaliland, who cannot go to Somalia.

**Mrs. Lintvelt:** The Dutch government wants to stimulate diaspora initiatives. The diaspora themselves are in the driver's seat.

**Mr. Pasha:** governments need to create an environment enabling the diaspora to fully contribute to their countries of origin.

**Mr. Wyss:** diaspora policies in countries of origin are important, but should not governments in the south also focus more on attracting highly skilled third country nationals (like in the EU blue card programme)?

**Mr. Pasha:** There may be tensions between local communities and diaspora, who often left in times in trouble. There may be imbalances if diaspora are paid high salaries. It is important to manage perceptions well. Diaspora should work together with their governments, not aiming to replace them.



*The audience raised following points:*



- In the case of Sudan there is not much cooperation with the Sudanese government. Instead partnerships are built between institutions such as universities. These partnerships between institutions are still very important, e.g. in the field of water management.
- With regard to diaspora contribution different categories of knowledge can be distinguished: the facts (know what), the rules behind the facts (know why), broad innovation and implicit knowledge (know how) and the diaspora networks (know who) (Mr. Ilyas).
- There are examples of negative social capital by diaspora, e.g. in the case of Cambodia, through involvement of drug trade and human trafficking (Mrs. Wijers)
- It is important to connect to the business sector and the cities. Businesses are interested in developing sustainable societies (Mr. Bouwen).

- Next to development, diaspora can also contribute to diplomacy and peace building (for instance in countries like Iraq and Syria)
- Many African countries experience a rapid economic growth. Diaspora contributions should also be viewed from the entrepreneurial side.



Presentation by Dr. Jennifer Leith and  
Dr. Althea Rivas, TRQN evaluators  
**‘Evaluating the impact of  
TRQN Assignments –  
Opportunities and Challenges’**



**Aim of the evaluation:** To assess the impact and relevance of the TRQN III.

**The Approach:** The evaluation questions focused on capacity change, skills and knowledge transfer in practice, usefulness, levels of satisfaction and awareness of the value of the project to individuals and staff.

**The Tools:**

- Desk review.
- Field Visits: Afghanistan, Armenia, Georgia, Ghana, Morocco and Somalia.
- Visit to the Netherlands – IOM, Experts and Diaspora Organizations.
- Virtual interviews via Skype.
- Two online Surveys.

**The Report:**

- Key findings: Relevance; Outreach; Diaspora Culture and Return; Impact.
- Recommendations grouped by stakeholder.
- Full report available through IOM the Netherlands.

**Some outcomes:**

- ✓ Flexibility of the TRQN concept. Changes were adopted along the way to adapt to local circumstances and challenges.
- ✓ Identifiable commitment of the diaspora to contribute to the development of their countries of origin.
- ✓ Governments' increased awareness of and more conducive to the positive role of diaspora community for development.
- ✓ Positive outcomes emerging from target countries.
- ✓ Individuals can make a difference.

**and challenges with regard to:**

- ✓ Supporting behavioural change is an important part of creating impact.
- ✓ The length of the assignment and benefits.
- ✓ Technical skills transfer vs. policy or management development Interventions.
- ✓ Post-conflict vs. lower middle developed country strategies.
- ✓ Invest to support institutional change and impact.
- ✓ South-South co-operation initiatives.





Panel Host Organizations in CoO's an TRQN Participants - Questions and Answers

## Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals in Practice

### *Host Institutions Representatives*

**Mr. Omar Ali**, Chief of Staff of the president of the Federal Republic of Somalia

**Mr. Levan Menabde**, Ministry of Economy, State Property Agency, Georgia

**Mr. Rachid El Boury**, Ministry of Higher Education in Morocco

### *TRQN participants*

**Mr. Clement Adu Twum**, ICT specialist on Bridging the ICT Gap of the Tamale Hospital, Ghana

**Mrs. Niloufar Rahim**, Educating and training future Afghan Doctors Afghanistan

**Mr. Ali Omar** started as Chief of Staff a year ago. All together there have been four diaspora returnees to his office. They contributed to the office procedure set up and Human Resource training. Next to the formal knowledge transfer, the diaspora experts brought about behavioural changes, like respecting office hours. This has increased the overall productivity.

**Mr. Menabde** stressed the important contribution made by Mrs. Marechi Togonidze during her multiple assignments. She has developed a system for privatization of state owned enterprises. The system is now operational and working well.

**Mr. El Boury** expressed his gratitude for the diaspora expertise that was made available for the introduction of a big ICT project at the Ministry of Education. The project had been delayed for five years, due to lack of local capacity, but has since been introduced.

**Mr. Adu Twum**, as ICT specialist, introduced a new ICT system in different hospitals in Ghana. Next to that, he also trained local staff in how to use the system of digital patient registration. Moreover, he managed to connect the ROC Mondriaan School (his employer in the Netherlands) and its students to the Ghanaian hospitals, which led to important donations of ICT software to the hospitals.

**Mrs. Rahim** is finishing her Master's degree at Leiden University. She is also a member of Keihan, an Afghan professional organization in the Netherlands. She and two colleagues went to Afghanistan to train students in practical clinical skills. This practical content was appreciated by the students, who up to then were mainly taught from theoretical books. The training has now become part of the regular curriculum. The Keihan foundation is also instrumental in creating and maintaining a sustainable linkage between Kabul University and Leiden University in the Netherlands.

### ***Short Q & A session with the audience***

Do we need more or less research? A lot of research has been done, which is of little practical use, e.g. in Afghanistan. We do not need research for research purposes, but to be embedded in projects, in order to focus on impact. TRQN adopts a flexible approach. Of course we aim for impact, but some assignments, like the emergency operation in Northern Iraq, clearly fill a gap, at times when there is not enough local staff. Such assignments are very important and life saving, even if not sustainable.



# Four Workshops

## I. Context, Maximizing Impact and Strategic Knowledge Transfer through TRQN Assignments.

*Workshop moderation by Dr Jennifer Leith and Dr Althea Rivas, evaluators of the TRQN III project.*

The workshop had three areas of focus all related to understanding and increasing the potential for impact.

### 1. Plan

It is very important to formulate a strategy that leads to measurable impacts. We ask country programmes to identify "what do you want to achieve with all the experts" as a coherent whole. Without a country strategy, there is a scattershot approach, which does not add up to coherence in the project. The sum of the project is not a total of the parts. The approach of having many experts in many sectors means that while there is some improvement in the sector, there may not be much of a coherent impact for development.

### 2. Strategic knowledge transfer

How do you know when you get there? What was the desired change you identified in the strategy and how can your plan be measured? Measuring outputs such as numbers of people trained does not tell us if they are the right people, in the right jobs to make the expected changes. We need to ask: "And then what happened?" This is the outcome question that gets at "what difference did the experts make?"

### 3. Sustainability

Is the knowledge that was transferred lasting? This sustainability question helps us to know what difference TRQN made, and did it add up to a coherent whole? Without a strategy at the beginning, based on context, this is impossible. Without sustainability, there is no lasting impact. This is the challenge of continuity, to make a lasting impact.

### *Opportunities*

1. Flexibility in design, country specific plan, fewer sectors, more focus.
2. Capacity building and innovation, two way knowledge transfer.
3. Changing perceptions of diaspora.
4. Train the trainers approach for sustainability and building networks.
5. Monitoring and evaluation framework in design.

### *Challenges*

1. Finding the right people for the needed positions.
2. Building a monitoring and evaluation framework in design.
3. Making sure that inputs are strategic at all levels.
4. Making targeted assignments.
5. Enough capacity built at host institutions?

## 2. Innovative Approaches to Knowledge Transfer; Towards a Greater Involvement of the Private Sector.

*Workshop moderation by Professor Gerd Junne of The Network University (TNU).*

TNU facilitates innovative learning and capacity building, specializing in creating e-tools for education and networking in the field of development. TNU is closely involved in different diaspora initiatives that aim at a greater involvement of the private sector.

### **1. Three days ago the four week online programme of ADPC was finished**

\*designed for African top decision makers on diaspora policy with 30 participants from Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda.

\*combining knowledge transfer with common knowledge creation.

\*equivalent of the four face-to-face workshops that ADPC gave in 2010-2014.

### **2. E-learning for entrepreneurship in West Africa powered by diaspora in the Netherlands**

\*Online entrepreneurship coaching programme of two years.

\*For 100 starting entrepreneurs in Sierra Leone.

\*With 13 diaspora entrepreneurs as coaches in The Netherlands and 3 local trainers at IAMTECH in Freetown.

\*Monitoring and evaluation by IOM The Hague and IOM Freetown

\*Financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### **3. Migrants as franchise-takers of Dutch SME companies, experiments by Oikos and Spark**

#### **4. Diaspora Link**

\* a global network on transnational entrepreneurship research.

\* initiated in Sweden, coordinated from Denmark ,financed by the EU.

\* with partners in 20 countries.

\* started in February 2015.

\* strong emphasis on dissemination.

\* TNU responsible for the dissemination work package.

#### *10 Innovations*

1. Formulate business in a box models
2. Share templates for contracts
3. Involve diaspora as coaches
4. Cooperate with trust instilling institutions
5. End business-plan fetishism
6. Concentrate on building ecosystems
7. Stay involved for longer periods
8. Link programmes to each other
9. Experiment with franchising
10. Conserve knowledge in an accessible way.



**Opportunities**

Virtual return: Involve diaspora on a large scale in online coaching.

Integration of programmes: Integrate knowledge-transfer with other programmes (e.g. remittances, micro-finance, WASH, trade...).

Franchising: Experiment with migrants as franchise takers in home countries.

Investing in improving the Eco systems in the CoO to improve business setup environment.

New Economy structures go beyond the formal structures, and therefor have the ability to surpass the traditional obstacles: Corruption, Bureaucracy , monopolies etc.).

**Challenges**

Connectivity: Access to Internet still a considerable problem.

Securing start-up capital: Labour-intensive coaching of step-by-step company development and financing.

Business plan fetishism: high failure rate of traditional entrepreneurship programmes and business competitions.

### 3.Setting the Right Conditions for Transfer of Knowledge in Conflict and Post Conflict States

*Workshop moderation by Frantz Celestin, IOM programme Manager MIDA Somalia.*

Working with the diaspora can be a double-edge sword. Some diaspora groups may serve to further destabilize their countries of origin, especially if the regime in power is the reason for their exile. On the other hand, the diaspora can be the key to resolving a conflict. They can provide a neutral space for the warring parties to negotiate. They can use their political and cultural influence to facilitate negotiations. They can also use their influence in their host countries to bring more international attention to their homeland.

The diaspora should be an integral part of any development/reconstruction plan of a country that is currently in crisis/conflict or coming out of a crisis/conflict. A well informed and neutral diaspora is best placed to put their country of origin on the path to development. Using the diaspora as the center piece of any development and reconstruction programme is important because they understand the local context, which reduces the likelihood of improper or even harmful programming. They also understand the language, which ensures that nothing is lost in translation and they are able to effectively communicate with the local population.

Another key aspect of getting the diaspora involved in the development/reconstruction of their country of origin is freedom of movement. Because they understand the culture and understand the language, they can easily blend in. This makes them better agents for change, assuming they have the good of the country in mind. The diaspora can also be involved in the economic stability of their country of origin as private investors. The diaspora are usually involved in heartstring investments. They are the first ones in. This in turns paves the way for international investors with more robust investments to come into the country.

The diaspora cannot be seen as replacing or displacing those who stay put throughout the conflict. They have to complement the efforts of the local population, not to supplant them. In some cases the returning diaspora are seen as arrogant and they may think that they are superior to those who were left behind. This, in itself, can create a new conflict. Thus, it is important to recruit experienced and humble diaspora experts, with more of the interests of the country in mind than those with political aspirations.

While being aware of these potential pitfalls, if harnessed through well-structured and well-organized programmes developed and implemented by development partners in close collaboration with the government authorities and other key stakeholders, the diaspora can be a positive force in the development of their countries of origin.

#### ***Opportunities***

1. Diaspora can establish linkages and build bridges
2. Diaspora can shift the mind set and capacity building of the government
3. Create job opportunities
4. Diaspora can contribute to political stability
5. Promoting diaspora investment
6. Seek synergy and coordination of activities.

#### ***Challenges***

1. Political clash. Different objectives /agenda
2. Lack of capacity
3. Mistrust between diaspora and international organizations
4. Diaspora can push for their own agenda
5. Coordination of diaspora. Diaspora is not a unified entity.

## 4. Diaspora Policies in Countries of Origin; Creating The right Conditions for Brain Circulation

*Workshop moderaton by Mr. Awil Mohamoud, Director of The African Development Centre in The Hague (ADPC).*

- The African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) is a leading African diaspora think tank in Europe in the field of migration and development. It is a unique African diaspora institution set up by the diaspora in order to spur and galvanize the contribution of African diaspora in Europe to the social and economic development of the continent in a more structured, sustainable and systematic manner.
- The capacity building training programme was developed to respond to capacity deficits affecting the performance of the emerging diaspora ministries and other institutions in the African countries tasked with overseeing diaspora and development related matters.
- The overall overall purpose of the training programme is to support African countries in developing a national diaspora policy that facilitate the integration of diaspora-driven development into the overall national development agenda. Having in place a national diaspora policy will enable African countries to address effectively the huge policy and institutional challenges they are currently confronted with in their dealings with migration related issues. It will also enable them to develop skills and

tools for feasible instruments and programmes aimed at maximising the contribution of the diaspora to the homeland development.

### Preconditions for successful engagement of diaspora in homeland development

Two-way street

#### **Homeland side**

- Diaspora-friendly environment on the ground
- Existing formal channels of communication that facilitate a constructive dialogue and regular conversations with the Diaspora (such as home coming summits, etc)
- Having in place a diaspora-oriented national policy strategy
- Having in place smart policies and programmes designed to reach out to potential diaspora along sectoral lines.

#### **Diaspora side**

- Commitment and willingness to participate in the homeland development
- Having the capacity and resources to make their intervention in the domestic development effective and sustainable (better and professionally organized, influential networks and contacts and access to funding mechanisms in the host country)
- Having reliable local partners in the homeland.

##### ***Opportunities***

- Building bridges between diaspora organizations to bundle knowledge.
- Creating resourceful networks between the country of origin and the host country.
- Design effective policies and programmes targeted at reaching out to professionally organized diaspora groupings.

##### ***Challenges***

- Lack of long term vision (not knowing how to use the diaspora potentials).
- Frequent changes of government.
- High turnover rate of staff (diaspora institutions).

## **Plenary conclusions from the workshops and general wrap up: Martin Wyss**

The conference offered an opportunity to pool the different experiences and share them directly with the participants, the beneficiaries and all interested in Migration and Development.

TRQN is a programme with a long tradition and it has slowly evolved from punctual manifestations of solidarity and personal, voluntary contributions of charity to higher standards of assignments with a view to making a lasting difference (sustainability).

The conference has clearly shown that communities abroad can be further connected to their countries of origin and that they can be motivated to reach out beyond their family contacts.

The challenge lies in identifying suitable candidates for selected assignments which is not always easy when the pool of experts in the Netherlands proves to be too limited.

The story of Niloufar Rahim, who left Afghanistan when she was two years old, shows that a sense of solidarity in the Diaspora is a real source that needs to be tapped into and that capacity building and advocacy work with Diaspora networks must be given new priority so that the engagement for voluntary contributions for development from the Diaspora's side becomes more organized and more self-supporting.

Many diaspora experts do have time limitations, as they are engaged in the Netherlands or other EU countries. Still they should continue to contribute through multiple short assignments, or through virtual contacts, as the workshop on e-learning has shown. This approach will be explored further and integrated in the next phase of TRQN.

In the past technical assistance through traditional development aid channels and often delivered by ex-pats has not always proven to have the desired impacts. This is why government institutions and host institutions need to do more preparatory work to formulate clear terms of reference, and indicate what they want to change.

A good preparation with clear terms of reference will ensure that the selected diaspora experts will be on the same page and have the same expectations as the host institution.

This was always the aim and the challenge of TRQN - fewer assignments would have allowed to invest more in the much needed preparations before departure.

If we find out that an intervention is not working, we should be alerted in a timely fashion to adapt or possibly stop the intervention.

The diaspora experts are not usually supposed to replace local staff, but sometimes they can also fill some temporary gaps in case of emergency situations. If we continue with this approach, it will have to be further clarified as there are different aspects to this type of charitable intervention.

The overall purpose of TRQN covers two domains: motivate and engage the Diaspora here in the Netherlands and support development there in their respective countries of origin.

Killing two birds with one stone is difficult, but if done with diligence and care, it can be done.

The ideal outcome is building new bridges and strengthening existing ones to counter-balance the losses endured by countries of origin due to emigration.

Martin Wyss thanks the audience for the active participation and stresses that the conference report and the evaluation report will be made available.