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Abstract: The growth of the diaspora community across the globe has prompted governments to come up with policies and strategies that seek to tap into the diasporic economy for social, financial, human and intellectual capital. This means that there is a growing realization of the development potential of diasporas. This paper therefore explores how governments' policy agenda and focus strikes a balance between the expectations and interests of the diaspora community with the country's development thrust and aspirations. Essentially, the paper aims to examine the extent to which demands, interests, development needs and lobbying from the diasporas, as individuals and collective actors, are co-opted into international, regional and domestic diaspora policies. The research is premised on the ex-prior assumption that if diasporas are consulted and involved in national development policies and plans, they can effectively unleash their development potential. Multiple surveying techniques consisting of on-the-field and on-line surveys will be applied and these will be complemented by a meta-analysis of diaspora engagement in policy design and realization. Responses will be collected from Zimbabwean diasporas, officials from International Organization for Migration (IOM Zimbabwe), focal persons of the African Union's Citizens and Diaspora Organization (CIDO), returnee diasporas as well as government officials. Through its findings, this paper seeks to contribute to the advocacy for inclusive participation of the diaspora in national discourse as well as lobby for inclusion of their demands, development needs and interests in global, regional, national and local policies.

Keywords: Diaspora, Policy, Engagement, Government, Contribution

1. Introduction

Global economic fragility has witnessed massive migration of persons in search of economic emancipation. This has given rise to diaspora communities which are not necessarily countries in their own right. The displacement of these persons, voluntarily or forced, from their countries of origin poses both challenges and opportunities in both Countries of Origin (CoO) and Countries of Destination (CoD). Literature acknowledges that contribution of the diaspora as catalysts of development (Constant et al, 2016). However, their participation has mainly been restricted to remittances, skills and knowledge transfer, trade and investment when in actual fact the diaspora also can contribute in policy formulation, implementation and review. The developmental contribution of the diaspora and policymakers are drafting policies and strategies to attract and take full advantage of the untapped potential within the diaspora. Concern arises when one has to interrogate the extent to which the diaspora needs, concerns, aspirations, demands and interests are taken into consideration when policies that have

a bearing on their welfare are being crafted. In this regard, the paper gives an expose of the policies and strategies that are being employed at the world forum, in the regional context and at national to local level with regards to diaspora participation and contribution. Therefore, the paper will bring to light whether or not interests and demands of the diaspora are considered and adopted in policy formulation, implementation and review. The paper will conclude by forecasting the policy agenda items that might be topical post-COVID.

2. Global Diaspora Policies

It is well noted that migrants (and diasporas included) represent about 3% of the world's population while producing more than 9% of global GDP. This according to IOM and McKinsey & Company (2018) indicate a US\$3 trillion more output than if they had stayed at home. Evidently, these statistics warrant a call for a coordination of policies that govern the way in which these diasporas move and conduct themselves in CoD and CoO, as they have a developmental impact. There are no direct governing global policies on diaspora, serve to indicate that collectively there are attempts to administer migrants and migration, broadly, through the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG framework seeks to address the complex and dynamic relationship between migration and development and how migrants can shape development outcomes. Among a host of targets are migration-related SDG targets covering:

- Student Mobility (SDG 4.B) – which envisages increasing the number of cross-border scholarships, thereby enhancing higher education opportunities for people from least developed countries and deserving countries. It further creates opportunities for knowledge and skills transfer.
- Labour Migration and Employment (SDG 8.5, 8.7, 8.8) – promote decent work, address forced labour, trafficking for forced labour, child labour and all forms of labour exploitation. It further seeks to uphold the rights of all migrant workers and address issues relating to, among others, working conditions, wages, social protection, migration status, occupational safety and access to health care. Recruitment practices will be strengthened and recruitment fees eliminated. IOM (2017e) envisages that realization of this target would curb human trafficking, reduce debt bondage and eliminate forced labour.
- Remittances (10.C) – calls for the reduction and capping of remittances transaction fees by increasing competition and transparency in the money transfer market. If not addressed, this discourages and burdens the diaspora and as such remittances will be channeled through informal means.

Diaspora concerns are covered in this framework with the exception of how binding and enforceable the provisions of the SDGs are. If these provisions are obligatory, countries and stakeholders would be bound to ensure the full implementation of set targets and hence guaranteed promotion and protection of diaspora interests, demands, rights and concerns. Further there is no dedicated institutional arrangement to administer diaspora matters.

3. Regional Diaspora Policies

The African continent and its regional bodies have witnessed an evolution of migration or diaspora policies since 2006 with the first Migration Policy Framework for Africa. A host of policies have evolved since then with the aim of ensuring greater liberalization of labour and better working conditions, among them:

- the African Union Social Policy Framework (2008), which sought collaboration between social security schemes to ensure benefits from labour circulation;
- the Declaration of the Global African Diaspora Summit (2012);
- the African Union Youth and Employment Pact (2013), which aimed to develop an African Union and regional economic community labour migration plan;
- the African Union Horn of Africa initiative on human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants (2014); and
- the African Union Commission Strategic Plan (2014–2017), which contained a strategy to promote labour migration.

The most recent is the revised AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa (2018 – 2030) (MPFA) which provides comprehensive policy guidelines to AU Member States and RECs in order to bring coherent management of migration on the continent.

It is worth noting that only the Declaration of the Global African Diaspora Summit is one platform which directly dealt with diasporas specifically. During this summit, a number of policy propositions were endorsed which spoke to establishment of the:

- African Diaspora Volunteer Corps;
- African Diaspora Skills Database – which mobilise diasporas to mitigate brain drain;
- African Institute for Remittance;
- African Diaspora Investment Fund – which is aimed at providing grant funding to diaspora investors; and
- Development Market place for African Diaspora – a business development program aimed at enhancing innovative entrepreneurial diaspora and diaspora investment.

In this regard, the five thematic areas of this 2012 Summit and framework on diasporas were more focused on developmental thrust rather than diaspora needs or concerns. More of them goes along with the definition of diaspora as spelt out by the AU which views the African diaspora as, "peoples 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." Emphasis from the thematic areas is on creating institutions which facilitate the CONTRIBUTION of African diasporas as enunciated in the African diaspora definition. With the recognition of the diaspora as the sixth region of the AU, surely consideration must have been made to establish institutions, policies or strategies that aim at advancing the needs, demands and interests rather than just mobilizing their participation. Much as there is Citizens and Diaspora Organization (CIDO) as a department responsible for diaspora affairs, there is need to either empower it or create one that ensures enforcement of the rights of the diaspora.

4. National/ Local Diaspora Policies

National diaspora policies take a leaf from the regional policies and marry them national development priorities and ultimately customize it to internal realities. It is encouraging that in Zimbabwe the National Foreign Policy which is anchored on three pillars has as one of its key tenants, the pursuit of aggressive diaspora diplomacy. This together with the Zimbabwe Diaspora Policy (2016) speaks of government's commitment to engaging the diaspora and manages diaspora affairs. The Zimbabwe Diaspora Policy was formulated with the thrust of harnessing and maximizing diaspora potential to contribute to national development as well as meeting the needs and expectations of the Diaspora in order to develop a mutually beneficial relationship (MMEPIP, 2016).

Notable specific objectives of the Zimbabwe National Diaspora Policy speak to:

- Enhancing diaspora protection to safeguard their rights
- Providing support in cases of emergency
- Developing mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation with the Diaspora
- Mainstreaming the diaspora into national development processes
- Providing opportunities for diaspora participation and contribution

A detailed action plan unveils strategies to be employed which are anchored on pillars of:

- Capacitating diaspora managing institution
- Building trust and confidence
- Promoting diaspora investments and remittances
- Diaspora engagement, among others.

The researchers also noted that Zimbabwe has other sectoral policies that have a bearing on the diaspora and one such is the National Labour Migration Policy. This policy which is complimentary to the ZDP is aimed at ensuring organized labour migration and safeguarding the rights of migrant workers abroad.

At provincial/ district government level, it is fundamentally important to mainstream diaspora matters and welfare in local government policies. This is important as these policies may play a complementary role to national government's effort of integrating the diaspora in national development. The diaspora would want to make a difference in the areas from which they come from and local government policies should therefore be supportive of such initiatives. Ethiopia has done well on this front wherein the provincial authorities allocate land to the diaspora for commercial development. With the deliberation on decentralization gaining momentum in Zimbabwe, it becomes vital to ensure that provincial/ district authorities develop strategies that suit the needs and aspirations of the diaspora in bringing development to their roots.

5. Diaspora Policies post-COVID

Today's realities have witnessed government resorting to migration management tools in order to mitigate the potential effects of COVID-19. These range from travel

restrictions and border closures leading to widespread mobility challenges. COVID-19 has had its effects, both negative and positive, on all facets of life and issues of migration/ diaspora and mobility are not spared. The life and fate of the diaspora is not certain post-COVID pandemic. It is a fact that the way coronavirus is being managed has exposed issues and gaps on the management of diaspora affairs across the globe. It is inevitable that coronavirus pandemic will usher in a new normal in the world economy, and diaspora welfare, administration, management and policies will be affected. The challenges that the diaspora encountered as a result of COVID-19 clearly provides an opportunity for policymakers at all levels to consider policy propositions that address the negative effects of COVID-19 while building on the positive externalities. Questions therefore arise on the nature of a new normal that will be experienced with regards to diaspora policies beyond the pandemic at national, regional and international scale.

The intriguing question is why the diaspora continue to face a myriad of challenges despite the presents of outlined policies. Could it therefore mean the policies at all level are not adequate, or it is the lack of institutions to enforce implementation. With enquiry from a pool of sources in both the diaspora, diaspora management agencies and policymakers, the paper established that a new policy agenda may need to be considered. This might entail buttressing the same provisions, proposing new ones or strengthening enforcement measures so that diaspora needs, concerns, demands and rights are observed/ granted. Policy decisions are likely to be experienced in key areas of:

5.1 Diaspora protection

In the wake of mitigating against the socio-economic effects of Covid-19, policy makers have mostly been concerned about the welfare and well-being of their citizens. While unemployment crept in as most companies could not sustain the workforce during the lockdown, governments were forced to cater for their people and provide social safety nets. With limited financial and fiscal capacities, labour migrants (diasporas) may not have been so much of a priority and hence their vulnerability to hunger, poverty, accumulated debt, cut off from utilities and services. There are also claims that diasporas have been accused of spreading the virus in other countries and this has resulted in xenophobic attacks being reported.

Ideally, diaspora policies after Covid-19 may have to consider aspects of diaspora protection in order to ensure that foreign nationals are accorded the protection due. This can be done through strategically signing government-to-government labour agreements with high diaspora destination countries to ensure protection of the diaspora. Better still a deliberate pursuit of regional agreements with clauses on diaspora protection and opening up of the Trade in Services (TIS).

5.2 Diaspora insurance and assurance policies

In the USA and Europe, some social sectors such as health have (migrants) Africans and Zimbabweans to be specific working therein. With the strike of the pandemic, travel restrictions and the lockdown measures instituted across countries, some of the foreign nationals have been frontline workers meaning their exposure to contracting the virus and possible fatality was very high. For instance, migrants constitute 17% of frontline workers in the US, while in Switzerland 47% of doctors and 32% of nurses are migrants (MPI, 2020). Africans have also been found in the tourism sector and with how hard hit the sector has been, most diasporas have been left without disposable incomes and in some instances unable to pay their insurance and assurance premiums. If it was difficult for diasporas to access healthcare in normal circumstances due to lack of health insurance, cost, administrative hurdles, lack of access to facilities, and language barriers, the rate might even have heightened during the pandemic. This is substantiated by Batalova et al (2020) noted that in the United States, 20% of immigrants lacked health insurance in 2017 versus 7 percent of locals.

Future diaspora policies must therefore emphasize the need to ensure diaspora insurance packages are well provided for in contracts prior to employment engagement. Such provisions that considers the repatriation of benefits accrued abroad must be seriously considered.

5.3 Re-integration Programmes

As some members of the diaspora have been able to return to their CoO, it is imperative that support systems be enhanced in order to cushion them against severe economic impact of COVID-19. Some lost their jobs and benefits, some could not take back anything with them and as such re-integration programmes need to take their emotional, financial and social needs into perspective. Allowing them to come back is the first move, as did Zimbabwe. Then creating a database with their profiles becomes essential in order to trace them during and after COVID-19 with engagement opportunities.

5.4 Diaspora Emergency fund

After COVID-19 diaspora policies must emphasize the need for countries and regions to establish Diaspora Emergency Funds. These could have a collaborative contribution of both governments and the diasporas. This will make it easy for unforeseen circumstances that may require immediate evacuations or provision of provisional accommodation or allowances in order to reduce the diasporas' vulnerability.

5.5 Recognition of Diaspora networks

It is worth noting that as diasporas encountered challenges in CoD, their immediate consideration would be Diaspora Networks and Associations to which they are affiliated to. It is thus vital that diaspora policies beyond COVID-19 take full recognition of Diaspora Networks and support them.

Some diasporas have lost lives in CoD and due to international travel restrictions across the globe and transport challenges, Diaspora Associations and Networks played a vital role in giving a decent burial to the deceased. They have also been key channels of communication with families back home and embassies on what is prevailing on the ground.

5.6 Remittance

Due to travel restrictions and lockdown, diasporas could not access money transfer services and hence impacting on families back home. As salaries dwindle and sources of income vanished, remittances could have been a source of livelihood for many. However, with the disruptions in the sector, many were affected. As noted by the World Bank (2020) that before the pandemic, around US\$700 billion has been sent in remittances from about 270 million migrants to their home countries.

It is imperative that inflows of such magnitude be preserved by instituting policies that lowers the cost of sending money and incentivize remittance through formal channels. Further creation of a friendly-regulatory environment as well as financial support will ensure viability of the sector.

5.7 Diaspora Status and provision of primary documents

As a result of lockdown measures and travel restrictions, diasporas may fail to renew their travel documents and permits thereby making them illegal immigrants in host countries. Some however, may have entered into these receiving countries without proper documentation. All this makes the diaspora vulnerable as they will not be legally entitled to receive services due to those with proper documentation.

Diaspora Policies of the future should consider assisting diasporas who find themselves in such predicament with issuance of documentation. This can be done based on bilateral agreements between CoO and CoD. The World Bank (2020) reports that the United Kingdom automatically extended the visas of foreign doctors by one year.

6. Conclusion

Striking a balance has never been easy, however by attending to the needs and demands of the diaspora, policymakers stand to see increased cooperation and participation from the diaspora as they will feel obligated to contribute in every way possible.

As such global, regional and national authorities need to review the experiences of their diasporas and tailor-make policies that will re-dress the vulnerability of diasporas post-COVID.

The need for creating database and making use of diaspora networks and embassies to gather information on diaspora welfare and administering interventions through them cannot be over-emphasized.

Government-to-government agreements between CoO and CoD as well as regional agreements must be enhanced in order to ensure harmonization of standards, allow free movement of persons, guarantee protection and safety of diasporas.

Lastly, creation and empowerment of institutions that enforces the rights, interests and needs of the diaspora has to be a priority beyond COVID in order to ensure their protection and undisrupted contribution.

The pandemic is a disruptive way that can be used to review and reform the diaspora policies at all levels taking into considerations the realities, concerns, experiences and rights of the diaspora.

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The diaspora can also use the experience acquired in their host countries to support the formulation of public policies and institutional building. Migrants can bring new ideas, attitudes and practices regarding work, gender, democracy and values (Docquier et al., 2011; Spilimbergo, 2009).

Diaspora Interests, Demands, Development Needs and Lobby

Diaspora Protection

Diaspora Opportunities

- no harmonization of policies

- different development stages and migration issues

- regional

Inter

- global compact on migration

- diff interests

Forecasting

- fragility and so xenophobia will

- diaspora protection through diplomatic

- SA caps on particular sectors –labour and migration issues and rights

- return benefits to be repatriated and accrued in home

- SADC employment portability of benefits

- Resource transfers –projection is that decline – socio-eco issues

Regional framework on payment systems and cheaply

Greater demand for cooperation btwn diaspora – systematic way thru which finances can be channeled for support

No policy structure to support without duplication

Diaspora focused committees

More granular context sensitive – greater inclusion – phases and systemic approach

Return migration – issues of emergency

Employment

Status of others eg those without primary documents