

## Concept Note<sup>1</sup>

### **Capacity building workshop for the staff of the Direction des Camérounais à l'Etranger, des Étrangers au Cameroun, des Réfugiés et des Questions Migratoires (Directorate of Cameroonians Abroad, Foreigners in Cameroon, Refugees and Migration Issues) by the African Centre for the Study and Research on Migration (ACSRM) within the framework of the CRPM (Cadre Régional des Politiques Migratoires) Project, Expertise France**

Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22 June 2023 – Yaoundé, Cameroon

#### **I. Context and objectives of the workshop**

##### **1. Context**

- **Causes, patterns, trends, and drivers of Ivorian international migration**

Cameroon's international migration is characterized by the diversity of departing zones, destination countries, and migrant profiles (skilled and unskilled migrants). Cameroon is increasingly an origin, transit, and destination country. Cameroonians are located in various parts of the world, although there is a significant concentration of Cameroonian nationals in Europe. Cameroonian international migration is intra-African and extra-continental. However, there is more focus on Cameroonian international migration outside the African continent regarding policymaking.

The volume of Cameroonian international migration has increased over the last decades. According to some estimates, France, Gabon, Nigeria, and the USA represent some of the primary destinations of Cameroonian nationals abroad. There is a significant volume of Cameroonian international migration to the countries of the Gulf of Guinea.

Cameroon is a destination for international migration from neighboring countries such as the Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, and Nigeria. Cameroon is a host country for nationals from the region fleeing to escape conflicts and insecurity in countries such as Chad and the Central African Republic.

The profile of Cameroonian international migration reflects the prominence of long-term migrants. Long-term migrants, i.e., those living abroad for over ten years, represent 40% of the total migrant population. Cameroonian migrants living abroad for more than 5-10 years represented 16%.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibrahima Amadou Dia, Director of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Migration (ACSRM). This is a translation of the Concept note originally in French. The workshop was conducted exclusively in French.

Sharing national borders with almost all the Economic Community of Central African Countries (ECCA) countries makes Cameroon one of the fundamental drivers of the sub-region's migratory dynamics. Therefore, the sub-region's migration trends, patterns, and challenges impact Cameroon's migratory dynamics. Also, geographical proximity significantly impacts international migration in neighboring countries. Statistics do not enable measuring the extent and magnitude of Cameroonian international migration accurately due to constraints related to access to accurate and disaggregated statistical data. Furthermore, procedures such as naturalizations in destination countries can lead to underestimating statistics of Cameroon's international migration (Kamdem 2015). However, Cameroonian migration outside Africa tends to increase.

One of the main characteristics of Cameroonian migration is the prominence of extracontinental migration. 63% of Cameroonian migrants reside in economically developed countries, while they represented 43% in 1990. OECD countries (notably France, the USA, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, and Spain) represent the main destinations of Cameroonian nationals abroad. Its huge selectivity characterizes Cameroonian migrations to OECD countries.

Cameroonian intra-African migrations Cameroon's intra-African migration is prominently geared to countries of the Gulf of Guinea due to the "proximity of communities." However, increasingly, there are migratory dynamics of Cameroonian nationals to West and Northern African countries.

Over the last decades, Cameroonian migration has slightly declined in the sub-region towards West Africa (notably Nigeria and Mali). However, the migration of Cameroonians within the continent remains primarily directed to the sub-region (namely Gabon, Chad, and Congo).

- **Cameroonian Diaspora and homeland development**

Diaspora is a fundamental dimension of Cameroonian migration, with several diaspora organizations and associations in the main destination countries, especially in the context of extra-continental migration. There are decentralized migration cooperation patterns (i.e., Program on Chieftainships Road) (Kamdem 2017). However, a lack of accurate, disaggregated, and updated data significantly hinders a better understanding of the Cameroonian diaspora and its mobilization to respond to the concrete development needs of the country of origin.

Remittance transfers of Cameroonian nationals abroad are crucial in alleviating families' and households' precarious living conditions. There is an increasing volume of remittances sent by Cameroonian migrants. Remittance transfers of Cameroonian migrants represented 11 million USD in 2004 and significantly increased in 2008 (amounting to 167 million USD). Remittance transfers represented 0.8% of GDP in 2008. They play a fundamental role in improving the families' living conditions (use of monetary transfers for household expenses related to healthcare, education, and consumption, etc.). In 2022, according to estimates, the volume of remittance transfers directed to Cameroon via WorldRemit amounted to 75 million GBP due to the increased use of digital technologies in sending remittances due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Cameroon migration profile report, the monetary transfers have significant economic impacts as they substitute for credit and other finance schemes. Remittance transfers also represent a catalyst for income-generating activities. Moreover, remittance transfers contribute to some extent to respond to the limited volume of banking services in Cameroon.

Besides remittance transfers, the scientific and technical diaspora (knowledge or skilled diasporas) or international highly skilled migration can represent assets to the origin country's scientific progress and human capital development. Highly skilled migrants can catalyze financial flows and investment opportunities.

## **2. Workshop objectives**

The workshop aims to deepen understanding of the options for mobilizing and engaging the Cameroonian diaspora for national development. The specific objectives are the following:

- Identify the constraints and opportunities for mobilizing the Cameroonian diaspora for national development.
- Present the policy options, strategies, and measures for diaspora engagement and international best practices and reflect on the conditions for their replicability in the Cameroonian context.
- Strengthen the capacities of institutional actors in elaborating and implementing diaspora mobilization and engagement strategies and programs.
- Moreover, it reduces the volatile nature of economic growth in some countries.

### **II. Policy options on the migration and development nexus and diaspora mobilization and engagement for national development to be addressed during the workshop**

- **Strengthen the migration and development nexus**

The effective integration of migration into poverty reduction policies and strategies and sustainable socioeconomic development policies can foster Cameroonian migrants' development potential. There is a need to implement effective diaspora mobilization and engagement policies and strategies to strengthen the role of the Cameroonian diaspora in national development. Fostering better interinstitutional coordination and coherence can enable better migration governance, a sine qua condition to maximize migration-related opportunities and minimize its underlying challenges.

- **International skilled migration: the burning and unresolved brain drain issue and the possibilities for brain gain (knowledge and technology transfer, research and innovation, remittance transfers, etc.) if a conducive environment is put in place for**

## **attracting back and retaining highly skilled professionals and mobilizing and engaging them for the origin country's development**

The exodus of competencies negatively impacts the African continent's development and inclusive economic growth efforts. Highly skilled international migration is a primary concern for African governments, although it can lead to brain gain. According to estimates, more than 70,000 highly skilled professionals leave the African continent annually, thus raising the brain drain issues in policy debates.

Therefore, youth unemployment in Africa is one of the major causes of international migration to Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Oceania. Besides conflicts and insecurity, bad governance, infrastructural gaps, corruption, climate change, and environmental degradation, among other factors, accentuate African international migration to other regions of the world, contributing to brain drain.

Brain drain exacerbates a deficit in human capital in the critical sectors of African economies, thereby hindering efforts and capacities in research, innovation, production, and growth. Brain drain is particularly an alarming phenomenon in sectors such as the health system, confronting a chronic shortage of skilled health personnel and affecting African countries' capacities to build resilient, inclusive, and sustainable health systems (AfDB 2020).

Skilled international migration can lead to financial loss, considering the investments made by African countries to educate and train their nationals abroad. The cost of training a health professional is estimated between 21,000 and 59,000 USD for each African country. Destination countries benefit from highly skilled personnel, while they do not contribute to the cost of their training (MO Ibrahim Foundation 2018). The international health professional migration results in a brain drain with a financial loss of around 2 billion USD annually (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2018). The exodus of competencies and the ensuing human capital loss led to rising education and training expenditures to compensate for the deficits of human capital.

Furthermore, according to more optimistic rhetoric, migrations can stimulate financial flows, namely remittance transfers, trade and investment opportunities, and knowledge and technology transfers.

However, despite the fundamental role of its diaspora, the African continent does not seem to benefit substantially from Africa's international migration and the diaspora's contribution to inclusive and sustainable development. Knowledge diasporas can be fundamental to the origin country's socioeconomic development. Highly skilled international migration can facilitate the transfer of knowledge, technologies, capital, and investments. In reducing information costs related to investing in the origin countries, highly skilled migrants can promote capital flows and investments to benefit countries of origin. They can foster human capital development and strengthen the scientific and technological capacities of the countries of origin thanks to the transfer of knowledge and technologies and the international circulation of competencies (World Bank 2019). Knowledge diasporas have been fundamental to the industrial advancement of

countries such as Japan, South Korea, China, and India through the transnational networks of their diasporic communities, facilitating knowledge, innovation, and know-how transfers that contributed to boosting industrial development and scientific and technological research, including Research-Development in these countries.

The realization that highly skilled migration can constitute a gain (brain gain) and a loss to the country of origin has raised fascination about the “diaspora option” (Science and Technology) in response to this burning issue of brain drain (Gaillard and Gaillard 2006). Increasingly, African countries adopt policies and measures to maximize the diaspora contribution to national development (though there is no in-depth assessment of the impact of such policy options). Diaspora has significant potential to positively impact “cultural, symbolic, economical, technological and organizational” (Meyer 2007: 15). Diasporas can play a fundamental role in knowledge and technology transfers, including strengthening the capacities of the origin countries. Confidence and trust are crucial for knowledge transfer. Multiple obstacles hinder knowledge transfer, including gaps in beliefs, values, and practices between knowledge transfer recipients and actors. Knowledge diasporas can directly enable their national counterparts to benefit from their competencies and qualifications through training and capacity-building programs, short stays, diaspora engagement policies and programs, and international organizations programs.

### **International circulation**

The circulation of competencies relates to temporary or transient international highly skilled migration followed by the return to the home country after gaining professional experience abroad and the possibilities of brain gain in terms of positive impacts such as increased productivity at the local level, remittances transfer, increasing demand for higher education, and knowledge and technology transfers. Skilled diaspora can create transnational networks enabling investment opportunities, knowledge, and technology transfer, such as Taiwanese engineers in Silicon Valley who play a fundamental role in Taiwan's scientific and technological advancement by creating transnational links with the scientists and technologists based in Taiwan. Similarly, Indian IT specialists based in the USA played a fundamental role in creating transnational links between American firms and IT specialists based in India, enabling US companies to benefit from a cheap, highly skilled Indian workforce.

Language skills, familiarity with the homeland culture, and social networks, among other elements, enable highly skilled migrants to create transnational links to strengthen business linkages between the destination country (USA) and Asian origin countries. Such transnational links contribute to accelerating the globalization of the labor markets and strengthening entrepreneurial, investment, and trade opportunities between the USA and emerging Asian economies (Saxenian 2002).

### **Remittance transfers of diasporas and their potential role for inclusive and sustainable development**

Remittance transfers represent a prominent part of the external financial flows to Afrique. They surpass international development assistance, foreign direct investment (IDE), and Portfolio investment and represent the primary source of sustainable external financial flows directed to the African continent. Over the last decades, a significant increase in the volume of net remittance transfers (from 37 billion USD in 2010 to 87 billion in 2019) was witnessed. The volume of remittance transfers has undergone a 3.9% reduction, amounting to 83.6 billion USD in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, remittance transfers increased in 2021 (95.6 billion USD during this year) (KNOMAD – World Bank, May 2022).

The African diasporas can contribute to national development beyond remittance transfers. They can support development policies and initiatives in Africa regarding philanthropic activities, knowledge transfer and sharing, promotion of trade relations, and facilities to access international capital markets. They also can promote a country's credibility and financial solvability vis-à-vis creditors and enable access to international capital markets (World Bank 2006).

Remittance transfers can promote increased household investment in education, entrepreneurship, and healthcare, impacting human capital and general social development. According to the Africa Migration Report (2020) estimates, 75% of the remittances sent by African migrants are used for consumption, including livelihoods and housing. The other 25% are used for socioeconomic investments, of whom 10% are used to address needs such as access to education and healthcare. Around 15% are used for savings and investment in housing, income-generating activities, and small enterprises. The high remittance transfer fees are one of the significant hindrances to increasing the volume of remittance transfers in Africa.

Reduced remittance transfer fees could result in a significant increase in the volume of remittance transfers. Difficulties related to accessing formal remittance transfer services, a lack of regulation of informal remittance transfer channels, coordination gaps, gaps or lack of statistical data related to remittance transfers, and inexistent adequate mechanisms to maximize and manage remittance transfers and direct them to productive investments (beyond consumption) hinder the increase of the volume of remittance transfer.

Securing remittances can contribute to promoting its role in fostering investments. Remittances can contribute to minimizing shocks linked to external macroeconomic policies and reduce the volatile nature of economic growth in some countries. Remittances can contribute to addressing challenges related to financing investments, strengthening internal savings, and facilitating financial intermediation.

“Diaspora bonds” represent an alternative to development financing. They represent instruments set up by origin countries to raise funds through their diaspora instead of borrowing from international financial markets and other creditors. Diaspora bonds represent a significant potential for development financing. The relatively low cost of “diasporas bonds” is due to the patriotic spirit of investors who are more enthusiastic about the idea of contributing to the

development of the country of origin rather than being driven only by profit and reflects the significant development potential of diaspora bonds (page 6).

By enabling access to essential information related to the market for trade, by creating networks for exporters from the origin country and buyers, by enabling their national counterparts to understand the markets better and align with the government laws and regulations and the market conditions, diasporas have a significant potential to promote trade for the benefit of the origin country. Diasporas represent a pathway to promote bilateral trade and investment relations between origin and destination countries. Diasporas can help minimize information asymmetry and other market failures and facilitate linkages between consumer goods producers and relevant distributors.

Direct investments of the diasporas to the origin and destination countries contribute to socio-economic development through job creation, innovation, trade linkages, circulation, and knowledge transfer. African countries should create a conducive environment for diaspora investments through incentive policies and measures, granting the same rights and advantages given to local investors to investors in the diasporas, taxes and customs duties exemption for imported products, and reduced ticket travel for development actors and diaspora entrepreneurs; tax waivers, subventions, co-funding, credit guarantee, establishing a Diaspora Commission to respond to the diaspora needs.

Moreover, diasporas can help to create transnational links between destination and origin countries regarding investment opportunities for the benefit of origin countries and familiarization with the laws and regulations of the country of residence. Linguistic competencies and familiarity with the origin and host country's culture can foster investments beneficial to countries. Moreover, due to their capacity to assess investment opportunities and their social capital in the origin country, investors can be inclined to take more risks than other investors.

### Day 1: Wednesday 22 June 2023

Time	Activities
9: 00	Participants' registration
9: 30	<b>Opening Sessions</b> Welcoming remarks Ministry of External Relations Cameroon Expertise France/ CRPM
10:00	Family Photo / Coffee-Break/Tea
10: 30	Introducing the participants Objectives of the workshop Pre-test

10: 40	<b>Session 1:</b> Causes, patterns, trends, and drivers of Cameroonian international migration and characteristics of the Cameroonian diaspora (presentation followed by discussions, questions, and answers)
11: 20	<b>Session 2:</b> Diaspora mobilization and engagement for the development of the country of origin: constraints, opportunities and policy implications
12: 00	<b>Session 2 (Continued):</b> Working group on diaspora mobilization and engagement for the country of origin's development: constraints, opportunities, and policy implications.
13:00	Lunch break
14: 00	<b>Discussions with CRPM assessors</b>
15:00	<b>Session 3:</b> International skilled migration and development of the country of origin: brain drain, brain gain, circulation of competencies? Policy implications
15: 30	Coffee/ tea – break
16: 00	<b>Session 3 (Continued):</b> International skilled migration and development of the country of origin: brain drain, brain gain, circulation of competencies? Policy implications
17: 00	End of day 1 of the workshop

## Day 2: Thursday 22 June 2023

Time	Activities
9: 00	Summary Day 1
9: 15	Coffee-Break/Tea
10:00	<b>Session 3 (Continued):</b> International skilled migration and development of the country of origin: brain drain, brain gain, circulation of competencies? Policy implications
13: 00	Lunch break



14: 30	<b>Session 4:</b> Remittance transfer and their potential role for inclusive and sustainable development of the country of origin: trends, opportunities, challenges, policy implications and measures
15: 00	Coffee/tea break
15: 30	<b>Working Group Session 2:</b> Diaspora mobilization and engagement for the development of the country of origin: challenges, opportunities, and policy implications
16:00	Summary of Day 2  Concluding remarks
16: 30	<b>End of workshop</b>