

Report on Monday on the Couch #1

Title: Role of Diaspora in Development Work

Time: 1700hrs CET



Introduction

On the 31st of May, the Monday on The Couch discussion brought together three experts, Wadzanai Motsi-Khatai, Sannssi Cissé and Oheneba Boateng, from the African Diaspora community in Germany whose work includes doing research, working with start-ups, building communities and advocacy. The discussion, moderated by Elizabeth Maloba whose work involves facilitating cross-sectoral responses to complex challenges took place on the Bosch Alumni Virtual Community Space.

Monday on the Couch is a monthly discussion format of the Bosch Alumni Network in which experts from our network present and discuss a current political or societal topic. Participation was free of charge. The event was held via Zoom.

Attendance: 27



The one and a half hour event was attended by an average of 27 participants from different parts of the world including, Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Germany, USA, Uganda, Sweden and other countries.

The Panel

Elizabeth Maloba

Elizabeth Maloba has over twenty years' experience in addressing complex challenges - she works in cross-sectoral, trans-professional, multi-stakeholder settings to enable people to make decisions; solve problems; exchange ideas and information; and learn. She has a strong experience in International Cooperation, Development Cooperation, and Private Sector Development. She works to support development of leaders, teams, policies, strategies, plans, and business models that contribute to addressing development challenges. She lives in Nairobi, works across the World, and speaks English, Swahili, German and French. <https://ke.linkedin.com/in/elizabethsmaloba>



Elizabeth



Oheneba

Oheneba Boateng

Oheneba Boateng is a research associate at the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI) in Berlin, focusing on humanitarian action. In his work, he investigates how social accountability affects the success of humanitarian and disaster responses. Specifically, his research probes questions of responsibility, accountability, trust, and the exercise of power in disaster zones. He is currently investigating post-disaster trust-building processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

<https://www.gppi.net/team/oheneba-boateng>

Sannssi Cissé

Sannssi Cissé is the Head of Operations of the GreenTec Capital Africa Foundation and the founder of the Berlin-based start-up MotivationBros. In his work, he focuses on empowering people in Europe and Africa through supporting entrepreneurial efforts and enabling personal development. As professional speaker, moderator and coach, Sannssi initiates and facilitates stakeholder dialogues between business, politics and civil society with a focus on youth. He co-led the organization of the first G20 Investment Summit - involving i.a. Chancellor Angela Merkel, President Paul Kagame and other Heads of States. Sannssi is part of the second-generation diaspora, being born and raised in Berlin, Germany whilst having his roots in Guinea.



Sannssi



Wadzanai

Wadzanai Motsi-Khatai

Wadzanai Motsi-Khatai has over 6 years of experience working with government, international non-profit organizations, as well as community organizations. Her diverse professional experience includes working with the Government of Zimbabwe, working with young political activists in Tunisia, Egypt, Ghana, the Czech Republic and Cambodia, and building a community for a circular economy in Berlin, Germany. She is a Program Manager at the Center for Intersectional Justice in Berlin, a regular contributor to the African Policy Initiative in Germany, and co-founder of the Sangano Black Business Hub. Wadzanai is a staunch advocate for building intersectional communities and is committed to building a more inclusive, mindful and socially just world.

<https://wmkhatai.com/services/>

Nora Chirikure one of the curators of the MotC Discussions welcomed the participants and introduced the discussion topic “Role of Diaspora in Development Work”. She explained that this discussion is meant to start a conversation on what development is in Africa, who should be doing what, how, when, where and why. She explained that the discussion will interrogate the concept of development, its history and current discourse surrounding development work in Africa and why it is critical that we focus on power imbalances, transparency and accountability. As well as bringing to fore what role Diaspora communities can play in fostering sustainable development - both by their activities in Africa and in Europe. She introduced Elizabeth Maloba as the moderator of the discussion.

Reflections from the audience!

The Discussion started with an interactive session led by Elizabeth on Slido. This interactive session was aimed at capturing the importance of the discussion and the relationship of the discussion subject to the experiences of the audience. Below is a mini report of this interactive session.

Why is this conversation important to you? (1/2)

0 1 2

- It is a field that I am currently working in and I am interested in getting more diaspora participation from the youth.
- worked in development and would like to see the sector change
- I came across it on LinkedIn and found it very interesting and would really like to be part of it
- Would like to learn more about the diaspora role
- Diaspora always want to do something back home, the question is how to do that on a sustainable basis
- I think that diaspora can have a key role in projects and act as ambassadors
- I would like to know more because I am engaged in the Non government sector and I just need to understand the intersection between the diaspora and development
- I am diaspora
- it will make me understand on how the people in the diaspora can contribute to development in the developing countries.
- I am part of the Diaspora myself

What would you still like to find out about development cooperation?

- Why is development aid discussion more prominent than trade discussion?
- How can we get involved in a way that makes it end?
- to get know the different players
- How a development cooperation functions and what the difference is with development organizations.
- What is already out there, so we don't repeat existing projects and strategies.
- This is quiet new for me. Curious about everything
- what is changing ?
- Why it is never ending
- how it works

What do you know about development cooperation so far?

- I am involved in some projects as expert e
- I have Limited knowledge about that.
- Nothing much
- Not much
- Not much really
- Dont know yet



Discussion Points

- Elevator speech by speakers introducing what they do and who they are
- The speakers' understanding of development - what is it? How has the dialogue evolved over time? Where are we now?
- How the popular narrative in the development discourse of Africa Rising resonates with Oheneba
- Dominant narratives - Africa Rising - tend to hide alternative narratives. What is the discourse within the Mittelstand, the African Start-Ups, and the Development Sector in Germany? Has Sannssi seen any shifts?
- Considering the challenges we face, what role could the diaspora play in developing solutions? Both in Africa and in their adopted countries
- What would need to change in the living conditions and perceptions of African Diaspora so that they can make valuable contributions to solution development? (remittances, impact of short term migration)
- What practical steps can the audience take towards solution development?

Key takeaways from the discussion

Development Corporation

Wadzanai

“Development is largely centred on providing aid and technical expertise (Mining, Infrastructural development) to the less privileged countries. It is an exchange between the Global North and the Global South. Within that framing there is a need to understand what development is all about”

The danger of having a single narrative

What we have now is one directional understanding of what development is stemming from the colonial era. There exists a westernised definition of development that is quite problematic!

Africa Rising Narrative: Not so good narrative

Oheneba

“The idea of Africa rising is linked to Africa meeting Western Standards of development. This narrative posits that Africa can only develop through learning from the West. That is problematic because it kills local initiatives, it destroys home-grown solutions”.

Are we so dependent on Development Aid and Cooperation?

A new narrative coming up: Entrepreneurship!

Sannssi

“There is a new wave on Entrepreneurship though happening on a micro level, it is changing the popular narrative on what Africa needs to develop. However the Private sector in Europe has not changed its perceptions about Africa. There is a need to support entrepreneurship in Africa”.



Here is the whole discussion and key takeaways in summary.

Migration: a complex phenomenon

There are so many layers to Migration. Contrary to the popular belief that there is a huge rate of Migration from Africa to Europe there is a lot of intra Africa migration going on. It is difficult to change the perception of people wanting to migrate to Africa. It goes back to the basic issues of quality of life, ideologies and to basic bread and butter issues. Wadzanai added that there is however a need to change the systems that manage the movement of people. There should be migration justice and balance in how Europeans move in and out of Africa and vice versa. Generally if there weren't so many restrictions on movement of Africans into and out of Europe the migration situation will be so easier, people would freely return to their countries knowing they will not struggle to visit Europe. The panellists reiterated that there is a need for a whole movement system overhaul because there is a lot of colonial and racial ties to Migration.

Diaspora Remittances

The panel hammered that there is a need to recognise diaspora remittances because they are slowly stripping development aid. One key issue is that diaspora contributing to their own countries should be able to influence political processes like Voting. Diasporans are often denied influence as compared to donors who with their aid get to influence countries' priorities and political processes.

What role could the diaspora play in developing solutions? Both in Africa and in their adopted countries

Oheneba – Be informed and involve the people

- Diaspora should get perspective from the ground, so that they know what needs to change.
- Find, support and partner with people who are already organised, it saves time and resources.
- The diaspora who want to implement development projects in Africa should avoid working directly with the government, they should not however completely exclude the government – If you want to help people go to where they are directly.
- There is a need for Diaspora people to build connections – to find specific issues that can drive policy change.

Elizabeth

“There is a need to bring the government to a dialogue table to get their support and policy change in development”

Wadzanai – Engage the political structures at subnational level

- In engaging and implementing development projects it is important for the diaspora to understand the democratic processes and engagement at subnational level (District and provincial leaders).
- Sometimes you have to align your work with existing political structures to avoid resistance.
- Diasporans need to be mindful of the conversations and what is happening generally. There is no need to be arrogant in their approach to develop Africa.

“There is a political side to development that needs you to engage leaders to gain access”

Sannssi – Drive economic Empowerment

- There is a need for strategic Political engagement and this can be done through gaining economic muscle (INVESTMENTS)

“It is important for you to have leverage. In negotiating for space, you need to reach a certain level of Economic Power hence the focus on supporting Entrepreneurship in Africa”.

- One can set up smaller investments to support entrepreneurs
- Diasporans can influence their adopted countries, policies and priorities on African development.

Oheneba – Invest in the people

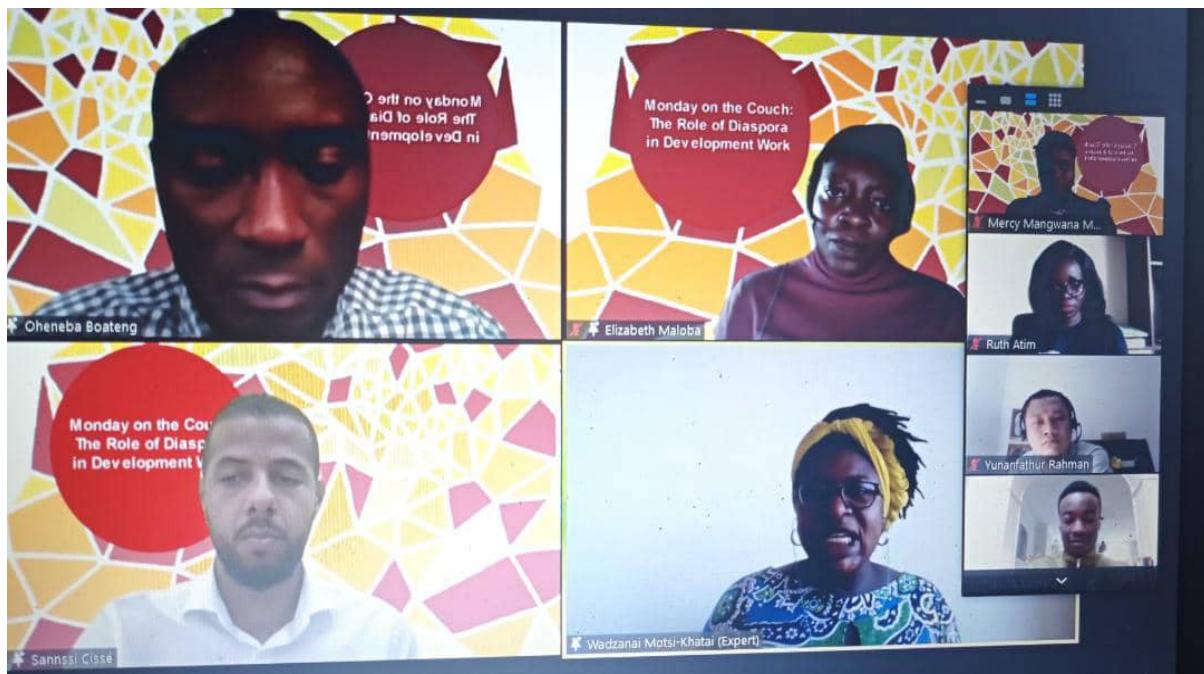
- There is need to support political and economic empowerment of Africans.
- We need to move away from measuring Sustainable development through Gross Domestic Product which essentially does not translate to change in economic and social services. We need to measure human development, education, people's access to opportunities and their ability to drive change.

Q & A Session

Elizabeth opened the discussion to the audiences who had a number of questions for the panellists. Below are the outstanding questions to be responded to by the panel on a separate document to be shared with the audience.

1. Many people in diaspora are not connected to their origin society, except visiting the country on holidays. Can a diaspora-led solution be considered 'homegrown'?
2. Is it possible for Africa to "develop" on her own terms, using our own "home grown" solutions considering most of the investment funds are coming from the west?
3. Who must invest in the people and how must this be done?

The dialogue ended on a high note with the audience sharing messages on the chat box appreciating this timely and rich discussion on the role of diaspora in development. Ruth Atim one of the curators of this discussion thanked the speakers for sharing their expertise and everyone for attending the event.



The Bosch Alumni Network is a cooperation between the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the iac Berlin and brings together over 7,000 former and current fellows, grantees, and staff members of the Robert Bosch Stiftung and its partners and supports them as changemakers in their communities. It contributes to an open, just and sustainable world by bridging diverse perspectives, sharing knowledge and taking action together.

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