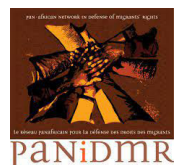


Policy Paper

Role of diaspora in shaping narratives on migration and culture

Paddy Siyanga Knudsen, Mbemba Jabbi, Dr Iman Ahmed and Hakima Haithar



Contribution to discussions at the GFMD summit 2024

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Policy Paper

Role of diaspora in shaping narratives on migration and culture

In submission for GFMD RT5 Draft background paper

Authors: Paddy Siyanga Knudsen, Mbemba Jabbi, Dr Iman Ahmed and Hakima Haithar



Foreword

By the African non-state actors platform on GFMD/GCM

Culture and narratives is one of the priorities of the Global Forum on Migration & Development (GFMD)

Chairmanship, with Roundtable 5 centred on: “Improving the perception migration in public opinion through narratives, culture, emotion and rational discourse.” Led by Canada and the Philippines, the RT has a background paper and global outlook as its key outputs and throughout the GMD 2023 process, the co-chairs have been intentional about bringing in civil society contributions through the call for comments and preparatory meetings feedback.

From the onset, the African non-state actors platform was deliberate and pragmatic in their engagement in the roundtable discussions. It was during the first preparatory meeting that the gap on covering Africa as a region was noted. Representatives echoed the need for a more comprehensive picture on narratives through the thematic experts and also meetings were arranged with the co-chairs and penholder which resulted in co-chairs granting drafting space in the background paper to civil society partners.

This was welcomed as progressive and encouraging with the platform seeking support from its members to undertake this important contribution to the GFMD output.

This paper represents a fuller policy brief covering the aspects on the role of diaspora in shaping narratives and culture. The platform would like to thank the drafting team for sharing their expertise and knowledge as well as the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) FMCC for the financial and morale support in continuously walking alongside the African civil society in shaping its own agenda in global migration discourse. Special mention to the co-chairs of GRTS, Alexandra-Lund and the Philippines, Jet, for the open door.

This policy brief reflects the views of the African non-state actors group that brought together essential inputs on the role of diasporas as well as African migration narratives. Comments were sorted from the group members and this version includes their extensive comments.

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Where the African continent stands today

Africans are on the move, first and largely within the continent, and next to its neighbouring continents and partner countries (see box). The African continental and sub-regional frameworks are in sync with global and international policy frameworks that put migration at the centre of the development agenda¹. While implementation on the Free Movement of Persons Protocol and the fast-tracking of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) need concerted efforts at sub-national to sub-regional levels, Africa's policy frameworks are consistent with the ambitions of the Agenda 2023 on Sustainable Development. The Blueprint for Africa also goes into some depth highlighting what African countries want to keep within their radar. The African Union recognises the importance of diaspora, its sixth (6th) region, in fostering sustainable development on the continent and also its efforts off the continent. The Agenda 2063 of the African Union calls for self-confidence in Africa's identity, heritage, culture, and shared values and as a strong, united, and influential partner on the global stage making its contribution to peace, human progress, peaceful co-existence, and welfare². Indeed, African countries face social economic challenges – compounded by conflict, food insecurity, environmental degradation, political turmoil, and the impact of climate change. All these can and do trigger mobility and impact on migration trends and patterns.

With migrants who have settled in countries of destination, the role of the diverse range of diasporas both in the host and home countries whose contributions – and issues – are equally essential in the migration and development discourse. These include remittances, investments, philanthropic and humanitarian support as well as extending to the current discourse where diasporas from the global South (e.g. African, Asia and Caribbean) engage on the claims to cultural heritage, centred around restitution and reparations. The African Union is clear on the role of diaspora calling for reparations for legacies of the past, including the trade and trafficking of enslaved Africans, colonialism, and racial segregation.

At the same time, the focus on the contributions that migrants and diasporas make in terms of financial and other types of remittances and contributions (e.g. social, cultural, and expertise) are expanded to depict a diversity of diasporas, operating at various levels.³



Real picture of African Migration - Afrobarometer

According to the Afrobarometer survey on 34 African countries, 63% of the respondents are not considering migrating. In 2017, only 14.1% of the world's migrants were from Africa, much less than Asia's (41.0%) and Europe's (23.7%) shares. This demystifies

I the notion of a mass exodus outside of the African continent.

As a home to migrants, Africa hosted a growing part of the global migrant population at 9.6% of the world migrant stock (24.7 million) in 2017

The role of diasporas in shaping migration narratives and culture

Diasporas are often viewed only as economic intermediaries. However, they also strongly contribute to the human, social, and cultural enrichment of their countries of origin, transit, and destination by building bridges and fostering mutual understanding among different cultures⁴. At the same time, they are seen

1 UNGA, New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, A/RES/71/1 Resolution adopted on 19 September 2016, par. 14, 39. Available at : https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_71_1.pdf

2 Agenda 2063 -Te Africa We want - https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf

3 Global Forum on Remittances, Investment and Development 2023 Outcomes report – <https://gfrid.org/publications/outcomes-report-of-the-global-forum-on-remittances-investment-and-development-gfrid-2023/>

4 Conclusions of the GFMD Thematic Workshop “Culture, Narratives and Human Mobility”, which took place on 27 June 2023 in Paris, France, organised by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

as agents that contribute their cultural heritage and knowledge of their countries of origin in their destination countries. They are also viewed as advocates of migrants' rights, often supporting new migrants to integrate and advancing the interests of workers' rights within the context of labour migration, as well as other human rights for those that fall in undocumented and irregular migration categories. Central to empowering diasporas as development agents are concepts around building trust, mobilising resources and supporting sustainable development⁵.

This section intends to depict the role of diasporas in migration narratives and culture and the co-authors of this section bring out the pertinent issues, trends, and ways to illustrate the phenomena on narratives from the Africa region. We note that Africa is viewed beyond its 54 member states touching on the diversity of its vast cultures, languages, and peoples. However, we also look for common threads with its population migrating largely within Africa and with trends towards Middle East, Asia, Europe and the Americas. Given the definition's context (see below), the reference to migrants is distinctly made when both diaspora and migrants are discussed.

African migrants and diaspora: what shapes its perceptions and where does culture fit in

The narrative on the migration of Africans within and outside the continent, as well as its diaspora, is largely shaped by references to its historical and colonial ties, trade partners, national political dynamics, development frameworks at continental, sub-regional, and national level. At another level, conflict, food insecurity, environmental degradation, and climate change have a direct consequence in people choosing or needing to cross borders to seek safety and livelihoods. These aspects also impact the narrative on migrants and migration.

Outside of these political and socioeconomic factors, the world of information, knowledge generation, and technology also influences narratives on migration in Africa and of Africans beyond the continent.

Understanding migration narratives requires a closer

examination of these important facets as well as exploring on the other hand, how migration policies influence migration narratives. Research projects such DYNAMIG, a collaboration of African led institutions such as the African Migration Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC) will bring fresh light to the discourse from an African perspective.

The discourse around culture in the context of migration is often propelled by migrants and diasporas seeking clarity on their identities linked to homelands, on the one hand, and tied to integration pathways and identity discourse in the host community, on the other.

Often, being accepted within the societies in countries of residence becomes a pre-occupation for social cohesion which, while necessary, can also make cultural identities secondary, rather than co-existing. From language to food, and from festivities to dealing with conflict, pre-departure orientation and integration courses or channels are lined up with "how to fit into a new identity" and less with "how to balance your various identities". This shapes narratives on identities of migrants and diasporas as well as how migration is viewed by the host societies. Within this sphere lies an opportunity – unique for migrants and diasporas – as cultural brokers between their countries of residence and homelands enriching societies and promoting their cultural heritage.

There is a large African diaspora within the continent that is not well captured in data statistics of African member states, regional economic communities and even at the continent level. The result is that this majority is less accounted for when compared to African diaspora living outside the continent. The reason is largely due the definition of "diaspora", as defined by African Union, which considers diaspora to be "people of African origin living outside the continent". Further, more recent efforts in improving data on migration are welcomed such as the African Union Statistics as well as mapping initiatives led by diaspora organisations.

At the national level, diaspora data needs to be disaggregated geographically, including on the continent, to fit with the known phenomena of a larger migration of Africans within the continent. It would be of benefit for Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and DRC to know its diaspora composition in South Africa - their largest migration corridor. Equally, knowing Kenya's diaspora within East

5 Maximizing Diaspora Engagement: Building Trust, Mobilizing Resources and Ensuring Sustainability. Insights and Reflections Paper - <https://publications.iom.int/books/virtual-exchanges-maximizing-diaspora-engagement-building-trust-mobilizing-resources-and>.

African Community members, such as Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda, would provide important information for policy measures that enhance their engagement.

As such, the African Union definition is a missed opportunity for member states to collect data through dedicated government services. This would include harnessing the potential contributions and transfer of knowledge within the African continent. It misses greatly on leveraging opportunities to mainstream and advance South-South cooperation, a concept that has been strongly promoted by the United Nations since 2019.

African migrants and diaspora contributions to the global development agenda



Central to the narratives discourse is the African diaspora contributions towards the continent and the data complexities which play into the African narrative on migration. While recent decades have shown efforts to systematically track remittances and investment, there are several methodological limitations as well as inadequate measures across African countries. These data collection limitations are coupled with a lack of disaggregation of data and does not account for the non-financial contributions of diasporas as cultural capital, social capital, as well as technical capital they represent for all countries they are tied to.

International students from African countries comprise an important category of African diaspora particularly in Asia, Europe, Australia and the Americas, however not counted. Further, this category brings along a wealth of

financial transfers and cultural richness to the countries of residence, which are less documented and explored.

Overall, the discourse around African diaspora up to the present moment has mainly adopted a narrow view of diaspora as foreign labour or professional workforce that generates financial resources and sends remittances back to the homeland. This reductionist approach completely disregards the amount of money flowing from Africa towards other continents to secure those educational opportunities and assist African migrants to live in dignity and complete their educational endeavours. African diaspora in other continents not only creates a flow of funds but also an accompanying flow of goods, foods, music, and cultural practices.

The abovementioned reductionist approach is not only harmful but also perpetuates colonial legacies – that contributions only move from the Global North. It dehumanises the experiences of the African diaspora and must be challenged and the narratives around it corrected. Lastly and of equal importance, further research and integrating into global migration outlook is needed of the African's diaspora contribution from other parts including other Global South (Middle East, Asia) which show migrants' agency and South-South cooperation beyond the Euro-centric and Western-centric perspectives. This agency and contributions realities are central to shaping how migrants from Africa and their role in development is framed.

Arguments for Correcting the dimensions of African narratives on migration using game changers

African migrants and diaspora are economic actors through their remittances, investment, philanthropy as well as through their contribution to host countries' tax base and social security funds.

In Africa, most migration occurs within the continent as migrants seek opportunities and employment in regional hubs. According to the [African Migration Report \(2020\)](#), 80% of migrants have no interest in leaving the

continent contrary to popular belief and images shared through media channels. [The African continent](#) further contributes only 14% of the global migrant population, compared to 41 percent from Asia and 24 percent from Europe. Africa is also the wealthiest continent in the world with an abundance of natural resources. According to the [United Nations](#), Africa has 40 percent of the world's gold and up to 90 percent of its chromium and platinum and the largest reserves of cobalt, diamonds, platinum and uranium, yet continues to be depicted as poor whilst its resources are exploited.

During the colonial era and the scramble for Africa, "Europeans decided how they could best break down traditional social and economic networks for more efficient social control and resource extraction"[1]. They further forced the continent to "produce raw materials and agricultural goods to meet the needs of Europe's industries and consumers[2]."

In today's economy these trends continue with recent push backs from some West African countries and the decolonisation attempts of the African Union's Free Movement Protocol, although this too has little traction from the continent with only four countries having ratified the protocol.

The recent [speech by the Pope](#) in referring to the Democratic Republic of the Congo sums up the sentiment of the continent, he stated "Hands off Africa, stop chocking Africa, it is not a mine to be stripped or a terrain to be plundered". Africa needs to be addressed from an equal footing and rights-based lens.

The African diaspora further supports the continent's people through remittances with flows superseding the Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Over the last decade remittances doubled reaching [\\$100 billion in 2022](#), yet it does not obtain the same privileges as other philanthropy, such as tax breaks and reduced sending fees.

African diaspora on reclaiming cultural heritage linked to restitution

and reparations (e.g. AU, Ethiopians, UK campaigns, Belgian)

The African diaspora has been actively engaged in discussions and initiatives related to reclaiming cultural heritage, often tied to the concepts of restitution and reparations. These efforts have gained significant momentum recently and have been supported by various organizations, governments, and grassroots movements in European countries.

The African Union (AU), with the call from member states and the diaspora, has established the African Union Ministerial Committee on the Return of Cultural Property, which focuses on addressing the repatriation of African cultural heritage. The AU has also adopted a common position on the matter, emphasising the need for the return of stolen and looted cultural artefacts⁶.

Ethiopia has been actively pursuing the return of valuable artefacts, including the looted treasures from the Battle of Maqdala in 1868. These efforts gained international attention and support, especially concerning the return of Ethiopian cultural heritage from British institutions, such as the British Museum⁷.

African diaspora activists and organizations in the UK, including the Benin Dialogue Group, have been pushing for the return of artefacts taken during the colonial era, such as the Benin Bronzes and other valuable items.⁸

Belgium has also faced calls from the African diaspora for the restitution of African artefacts, particularly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was a Belgian colony. Efforts to repatriate stolen or looted cultural items have been part of a broader global movement seeking justice and redress for colonial-era injustices⁹.

The main arguments and motivations for the African diaspora's engagement in these restitution and reparations efforts are based on the fact that these actions were unjust and that the rightful owners deserve to have their cultural heritage returned. It was also argued that the restitution of cultural artefacts is seen as a way

6 African Union (AU), December 2021, The Continental Experts' Workshop on the Restitution of Cultural Property and Heritage Holds at the Museum of Black Civilization in Dakar, Senegal. <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20211202/continental-experts-workshop-restitution-cultural-property-and-heritage-holds> Accessed on 7th November 2023

7 The British Museum, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/contested-objects-collection/maqdala-collection> Accessed 7th November 2023

8 African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) 2020, <https://www.afford-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/RoIPolicyBriefFinal.pdf> Accessed 7th November 2023

9 Belgium's Africa Museum rethinks its relationship with Congo, <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-65827002>, Accessed on 7th November 2023

to reconnect with lost elements of African culture and history, helping to preserve and promote African heritage and identity, but also, they can be used for educational purposes, enhancing knowledge about Africa's history and culture. The African diaspora advocates point to international agreements and norms that support the return of stolen cultural artefacts. The 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property is often cited in this context.

Africa's languages and the global recognition

In 2021, **UNESCO declared the 7th July as World Kiswahili Language Day** recognising a Bantu language spoken and connecting over 200 million people, predominately living in the Eastern part of Africa, but with growing vocals in parts of the world. It is no surprise that together with Nigeria's Yoruba, Ethiopia and Eritrea's Amharic, South Africa's isiZulu or Congo's Lingala, that Swahili features in some global educational centres as well as a supplementary courses in prestigious language faculties of universities in Northern Europe, Asia and the Americas. Kiswahili, among other African languages, connects communities across borders and advancing their political and economic interests.

African diaspora are cultural brokers and social actors through their diversity in languages, music and food, propelled by an intergenerational engagement and supported by media houses

The growth of African footprints in the creative and entertainment industry is evident through mainstream and social media. The features of docuseries and shows on Netflix covering the rise of Afrobeats and the link to the diaspora's pursuit of musical heritage and an African touch to popular music has extended the presence of African film industry into mainstream media (see box below). These docuseries are a way of sharing the African narratives on fashion, music, tales, food, and spirituality depicting the daily lives and lifestyles that demystify stereotypes on Africa and its migrants, off

and on the continent. The mainstream media is delighted to understand Africa's rich history before its kingdoms and tribe, before and after colonisation history. These perspectives offer an African narrative underpinned by a strong kinship and a tie to its rich traditions and narratives, even on the origins of commonly found dishes in world capitals. The expanded use of African languages stands out as an important driver for narratives.

The African diaspora's contributions as cultural and social actors are diverse and impactful, which have enriched the cultural tapestry of their host countries while also playing important roles in advocating for social justice and change. Their influence extends beyond their immediate communities, making a global impact in various domains. Even if they have moved away from home for decades, the African diaspora has maintained a profound metaphysical bond with their ancestors, seeking to preserve cultural practices, spiritual beliefs, and a sense of identity. This deep-rooted connection extends beyond geographical boundaries, allowing individuals to draw strength, wisdom, and guidance from their ancestral heritage as they navigate the challenges and opportunities of their migratory journeys. We have heard of songs being sung by slaves and currently, choirs led by people of African descent, creating vibrant communities of singers and songwriters in Europe, and North America Okoli, 2023¹⁰.

Role of African media houses

The Voice of African Migrants in Italy, a platform for African migrants to share their experiences and participate in advocacy campaigns aimed at improving their living conditions and protecting their rights, but also African migrants' and diaspora voices have contributed to shaping global policy debates and initiatives on migration, diversity, and human rights, including the discussions and adaptation of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018, recognized the contributions and challenges faced by African migrants, which emphasised the need for greater protection of their rights and well-being (Valdez, 2019). We are requesting African diaspora and migrants to be engaged as Penholders and policy makers in every country for the realisation of the GCM, otherwise its achievement will be difficult.

The African diaspora, especially the second and

10 Christian Adofo, The Rise of Afrobeats: From West Africa to The Diaspora 1950-2010, Reflecting on how African music crossed over into wider pop culture. <https://www.billboard.com/music/features/afrobeats-history-rise-west-africa-diaspora-1950-2010-1235047715/> Accessed 2nd November 2023

subsequent generations have made substantial contributions to the cultural landscapes of their host countries, including music Afrobeats, dance, art, cuisine (Senegalese Jollof rice)¹¹, and fashion. African diasporic cultural elements, such as jazz, reggae, hip-hop, and Afrobeat, have had a profound impact on global music, additionally art, including sculptures, textiles, and literature, have gained recognition and influence worldwide.

African diaspora communities have also played a pivotal role in the spread of various religious and spiritual practices. For instance, syncretic religions like Vodou in Haiti, Santería in Cuba, and Candomblé in Brazil have roots in African spirituality, and they have influenced the religious landscape in these countries.

The United Nations (2018) International Migration Report 2017 has not only indicated that African migrants constitute one of the largest groups of migrants globally, but also face significant challenges, including discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and violence in countries of residence which hinders their integration, inclusion, and productivity. Nevertheless, African diaspora and migrants have remained resilient in the face of these challenges and have continued to participate actively in the promotion of social justice, equality, and human rights in their host countries and globally by working with rights groups and creating civil society organisations aimed at advancing their rights and addressing the challenges they face from healthcare, legal support, discrimination, social and psychological support to their members and other migrants using professionals of African heritage backgrounds¹².

Hindrances to the role of diaspora

A number of elements pose as hindrances to promoting these narratives as summarised:

1. Lack of disaggregated data: The lack of focused, intentional, targeted and well disaggregated data about African diaspora within the continent and on the global scale is a major hindrance to meaningful work concerning African diaspora. It makes it hard to quantify and monetize the

contributions of the African diaspora living in other continents, and further complicates taking stock of the contributions of diaspora within the continent.

2. Lack of implementation on commitments to eliminate structural discrimination:

An open letter¹³ to the EU on the hosting of its first EU Anti-racism summit in 2021 was signed by 81 civil society organisations, including African diaspora. The letter called for among others, “commitment to further national efforts to collect equality data disaggregated by race to track and measure improvement on political, social and economic indicators.” A key outcome of the 2022 Summit was a push towards National Action Plans against Racism in EU member states and high-level political representation from Portugal, Spain, Germany, Sweden and the European Commission, publicly championing anti-racism in the EU at the highest decision. The implementation of commitments is fundamental towards curbing discriminatory practices.

As such, many countries within Europe and, as a matter of fact, on the African continent also need to invest in efforts to attain GCM Objective 17 (eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote balanced view to migration narratives that are supported evidence).

Ultimately, no country is a champion on achieving this objective or linked to effectively addressing outright discrimination or unwritten administrative discrimination that propagates formed by narratives cast in structural spaces and workspaces, with a dangerous premise of white supremacy.

For highly skilled migrants privileged to fit matching jobs, there is a point in career stagnation where the sentiment of otherness is entrenched so that while “you are one of us [you’re] ... not the best of us.” For nearly all migrants, the likelihood of being racially profiled remains a sad reality despite the growing discourse in public and private spheres on diversity and inclusion. A recent study in Germany sheds some light¹⁴:

11 Yinka Adegoke, How to end the Jollof wars, <https://www.semafor.com/article/07/09/2023/nigeria-ghana-senegal-and-jollof-war>, Accessed 2nd November 2023

12 Izuchukwu Kizito Okoli: An African Journal of Innovative Studies: 26814-0788 (Print) 2814-077X (e). Vol. 4 No. 4. 2023 A Publication of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies. Exploring the Metaphysical Dimensions of African Migration and the Global Community. file:///C:/Users/info/Downloads/3738-Article%20Text-12026-1-10-20230815.pdf Accessed 2nd November 2023.

13 <https://www.presenciagitana.org/210216-letter-to-president-EU-EN.pdf>

14 “Racist Realities — How Germany Deals with Racism.” - National Discrimination and Racism Monitor

...focussing on attitudes toward six groups: **Jews, Muslims, Sinti and Roma, Black people, Asians and Eastern Europeans**. It found that people experienced discrimination based on their skin and hair color, but also because they wore a headscarf or had a foreign-sounding name.

The narrative for change has to be rooted in the education system - both formal and informal. What children and young adults are taught about a multicultural society with a view of diversity in ethnicity, culture, language, religion and identities is crucial to how they are raised to respect others and establish connections with people different from them.

3. A misleading narrative on Africa's realities to pay into attracting support and financing of the global development agenda: Earlier sections looked at the new and emerging narratives on Africa's culture and heritage as well as how positive images are also making headlines, amidst the negative narratives. Messaging and the play of language by policy makers and politicians is key to how the continent is depicted. The famous writer, Binyavanga Wainana, in his well-known piece of how to write about Africa shows the way the continent is spoken and written about. Reinforcing stereotypes and pre-existing ideas of Africa are best clarified by facts and stories written by Africans away from one narrative.

The writer Chimamanda Adichie illustrates it very well through her TED talk on "the danger of a single story." This continues in media spaces, journalists, UN organisations, INGOS, and with leaders, continuing to enforce whose humanity matters more than another. While the continent needs resources and expertise to foster its growth and development, the language used in diplomacy and negotiation can unintentionally reinforce the negative narratives against Africans. These stereotypes may impact how African migrants are viewed and even influence discriminatory visa regimes limiting migrants to exercise their

freedom of movement. Collaborations that shape African narratives on migration continue to grow like AfricaNoFilter¹⁵ and diaspora-led information platforms on African life, news, trends and trendsetters such as Ongolo¹⁶ as well as platforms that highlight migrant and diaspora achievers such as digital diaspora. On social media, diasporas and migrants use these tools to communicate their personal stories, struggles and wins. In form of entertainment, these tools bring diasporas and their families closer, as it can also be a very lonely space away from home.

4. Limited capacity of Africa-led vs. powerful Western media in depicting African migration narratives The portrayal of African migration narratives in the media had a significant impact on public perceptions and attitudes towards these issues (Africa Centre, 2012). The role of powerful media in depicting African migration narratives can be both negative and positive, and it can also contribute to the growth of African culture in how it is covered.

Media can sometimes and in most cases perpetuate negative stereotypes about African migrants, portraying them as criminals, economic burdens, or threats to national security. This can reinforce bias and discrimination as experienced in the current migration trends in Europe. Some media outlets and social media posts have focused on sensational and tragic stories, such as migrant deaths at sea or inhumane living conditions, without providing a broader context (UNDP, 2023). This can create fear and anxiety around African migration, but also to host countries.

"The tiny Italian island of Lampedusa struggled to cope with a surge in migrant boats from North Africa after numbers peaked at 7,000 people – equivalent to the entire local population" (France 24, 2023). More recently, new media houses run by African creatives in film and entertainment showing in Nollywood, South Africa's Mzansi, East African movie industry are paving way but they face limited resources and some gate-keeping (see box above)¹⁷.

The media has also been used for political purposes, framing **African migration as a crisis to serve specific**

15 <https://africanofilter.org/shifting-narratives-pg2>

16 <https://ongolo.com/-run-by-Zambian-diaspora>

17 <https://www.forbesafrica.com/frontrunner/2022/10/27/more-and-more-african-storytelling-a-media-moguls-tv-tales/>

political agendas, which may not accurately represent the realities on the ground.

Multilevel governance engagement: role of African member states

In the course of unpacking critical issues that premise narratives of African migrants and migration, the GFMD Africa non-state actors platform engaged with co-chairs of the RT Culture and narratives as well as with various civil society actors. Another key player are the African member states who have a number of institutions and entry points for a deeper analysis. In Nov 2023, the Africa GFMD platform exchanged on culture and narratives GFMD agenda with member states, under the auspices of the Organisation of African Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) secretariat and shared several recommendations as an outcome.

GFMD Thematic Workshop between African Actors and Member states - 6 Nov 2023 - Recommendations on Migration narratives and Culture

Reposition the economic contribution of migrants and diaspora through remittances, investment, philanthropic initiatives as well as contributions in host countries, as a game-changer in shaping narratives of migrants, recognising the link to member states' role in enhancing legal pathways, decent work and social protection.

Adopt a multi-layer approach that includes civil society actors in balancing the narrative on migrants and

migration conscious of the evidence, role of media, technology and information networks emphasizing the human stories from African migrants, showing their individual stories, talents, and resilience. This should extend to the visibility of African cultures and traditions in the host countries to promote acceptance and proper integration.

Promote coherent national and regional policies for member-states in engaging the diaspora, through clarifying Africa's definition of 'diaspora', outlining the continent's approach and strategies to diaspora's engagement, and creating a comprehensive database that documents the diaspora contribution to national and regional development agenda.

Re-prioritise Pan-Africanism that is focused on heritage and culture as part of our global history linking the diaspora to countries of origin, and amplifying the cultural capital of diaspora in sustaining the cultural heritage of their countries and regions of origin.

Promote the engagement of the diaspora that considers the importance of generational links through mapping and engagement of multigenerational diaspora as well as focus on preserving African culture and contribute to the cultural mosaic of host societies.

Recognise the important contributions of second and subsequent generations of diasporas (that is the children of migrants and their descendants) in all areas of migration and development as well as humanitarian support and encourage their continued support in diaspora engagement efforts.

Strengthen the role of the AU Reparations to African countries showing the link between decolonisation and greater oversight over the continent's resources and economic affairs.

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6. France24, Around 7,000 migrants arrived on Italy's Lampedusa island in the past two days. <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230914-around-7-000-migrants-arrive-on-italy-s-lampedusa-island-in-past-two-days> Accessed on the 2nd November 2023

ANNEX – Additional practices

Cameroun: An inclusive approach: Radio and Youth in Cameroun

Promouvoir et Défendre la personne Migrante (PRODMI) is a project implemented by AJVC (Association Jeunesse Verte du Cameroun) and FCJ (Fondation Conseil Jeune) working with community radios. It seeks to improve the protection and defense of the rights of migrants in the town of Kye Ossi, in Cameroun, by educating the local host population, civil society leaders, migrant heads of households and the media about the fundamental rights of migrants and sensitizing local government authorities, the police, and diplomatic representatives to the various forms of violations of the fundamental rights of migrants, their living conditions.

The project was a game changer in improving the living conditions of migrants stationed in border areas, by improving accommodation and access to healthcare and supporting vulnerable migrants in gaining effective access to their rights.

The Voice of African Migrants in Italy, a platform for African migrants to share their experiences and participate in advocacy campaigns aimed at improving their living conditions and protecting their rights, but also African migrants' and diaspora voices have contributed to shaping global policy debates and initiatives on migration, diversity, and human rights, including the discussions and adaptation of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018, recognized the contributions and challenges faced by African migrants, which emphasised the need for greater protection of their rights and well-being (Valdez, 2019). We are requesting African diaspora and migrants to be engaged as Penholders and policy makers in every country for the realisation of the GCM, otherwise its achievement will be difficult.

Author's Biography

Paddy Siyanga Knudsen is a Zambian national with over 17 years of professional experience as a Development Economist. She holds a Master in Financial Economics from SOAS and BSc Development & Economics from London School of Economics. Her work covers development cooperation, regional integration and migration governance. Her experience includes supporting governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), bilateral development partners, EU institutions, Civil society as well as UN agencies in engagement strategies, research, programme formulation, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation. On migration governance, she has worked with IOM, UNESCO, UNHCR, EU, civil society, foundations and diaspora organisations in continental Europe, Jordan, China, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe as well as other assignments in West, East and Southern Africa. Her areas of interest in migration governance include labour migration, migration and development as well as diaspora engagement. She is a Vice President of the Global Research Forum on Diaspora & Transnationalism (GRFDT), member of GFMD civil society International steering committee, civil society rapporteur under the GFMD-GCM team, UN Network on Migration work streams on remittances/Diaspora as well as Indicators. She also coordinates the African nonstate actors platform on GFMD/GCM.

Dr. Iman Ahmed (she/her) is a Global Health and International Migration expert with over 20 years of practice in international development, large scale humanitarian emergency management and the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN).

She holds a Medical Doctorate from the University of Khartoum Sudan, a Master of Art in Global Affairs and Public Policy from the American University in Cairo, specializing in Migration and Refugee Studies, and a Master of Public Health from University College Cork, in Ireland.

Throughout her career, Iman worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Health Organization (WHO), and as a researcher at the University of Toronto and The American University in Cairo. She is a founding member and the Secretary of External Affairs of the Sudan Doctors Union -Canada, representing the organization in the Coalition of Sudan Doctors Abroad (SDA) - an umbrella of 6 diaspora organizations supporting the health system in Sudan.

Iman is currently an international consultant and a Fellow of the Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism focusing on migrant and refugee health and contributing to the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration indicator process and the Global Forum on Migration and Development Civil Society Mechanism with a special concentration on culture, narratives, and the return of artefacts to the African continents.

Her published work includes a combination of articles in medical journals and a chapter titled: "The Merowe Dam in Northern Sudan, A Case of Population Displacement and Impoverishment" in a book titled: "Refugees and Forced Migration in the Horn and Eastern Africa: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities" under the Springer series: "Advances in African Economic, Social and Political Development".

Hakima Haithar is the Regional Deputy Director for the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Southern Africa. She has consulted with the University of Witwatersrand's Mobility Governance Lab at the African Center for Migration and Society a collaboration between Oxford University and the University of Witwatersrand. She further consulted with the Global Coalition On Migration (GCM), the African Union and the United Nations task team on the Global Compact on Migration. She was previously the Regional Migration & Displacement Manager for Save the Children International. She has been working in the development sector for the past twenty years. Her experience ranges from human rights, philanthropy, democracy, as well as migration & displacement work. She has worked with institutions such as the Ford Foundation, Amnesty International, Freedom House and Idasa. She holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Public and Development Management from Wits School of Governance as well as a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Migration studies from the University of Witwatersrand.

Policy Paper

Role of diaspora in shaping narratives on migration and culture

