

انخراط المغتربين في التنمية في الوطن الأم - حالة فلسطين

Diaspora Engagement with the Development Back home – the case of Palestine

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الملخص:

تعتبر مشاركة الشتات و المغتربين المهرة في تنمية بلدانهم الأصلية أحد الاهتمامات الرئيسية للحكومات المعاصرة والمنظمات الدولية. لا شك إن المساهمات التي قدمها المغتربين لتنمية بلدانهم الأم من خلال المشاركة عن بعد و / أو العودة الفعلية. وتشمل هذه المساهمات على سبيل المثال لا الحصر التحويلات المالية والاستثمار ونقل المعرفة ورأس المال الاجتماعي. بشكل عام فإن مساهمات الشتات الفلسطيني تتمثل في مجالين رئيسيين: التحويلات المالية ونقل المعرفة. تعتبر تحويلات المغتربين الفلسطينيين إلى فلسطين هي من بين أعلى المعدلات في منطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا. أما فيما يتعلق بالشق المعرفي فقد بدأ الانخراط الفلسطيني في نقل المعرفة إلى وطنهم في التسعينيات من القرن الماضي بعد إنشاء السلطة الوطنية الفلسطينية حيث كان لمساهماتهم تأثير ملموس على المؤسسات ورأس المال البشري في فلسطين. إن تعزيز العلاقات مع المغتربين يتطلب تفعيل المؤسسات ذات العلاقة بالشتات وبناء مقاربة لاستهداف الشتات الفلسطيني واطلاق سياسات وأنشطة موجهة لتحقيق هذا الغرض.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهجرة والتنمية، التحويلات المالية، حركة الكفاءات، الشتات، المهاجرون، الوطن الأم.

ABSTRACT:

The engagement of the emigrants and skilled Diaspora abroad in the national development of their home countries is considered one of the main concerns of contemporary governments, and international organizations. The contributions made by migrants to the development of their countries of origin through transnational distant engagement and/or return are well obvious. These contributions include but are not limited to, remittances, investment, knowledge transfer, and social transfer. The contributions of the Palestinian diaspora were in two main areas: remittances and knowledge transfer. Remittances to Palestine are among the highest in the Middle East and North Africa. Palestinian engagement in knowledge transfer to their home country was started in the 1990s after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. Their contributions had a tangible impact on institutions and human capital in Palestine. Strengthening relations with the diaspora through formulating diaspora policies, activation of diaspora-related institutions and outreach activities directed to Palestinian diaspora is crucial to approach diaspora effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: Migration and development, remittances, brain circulation, diaspora, immigrants, home country.

Introduction

The relationship between migration and development was one of the most important issues that occupied a large space in the discussions and dialogues between countries and international organizations. In the last decades, research and policy have made significant progress in understanding the crucial linkages between migration and development. Definitely, this link between migration and development can contribute to the re-correction of the immigrants' relationship with their home countries on the basis of a mutual understanding, taking into account the interests of all parties involved in this process (home countries, countries of destination, and the immigrants). Undoubtedly, the labour-exporting countries can reap benefits from immigrants to varying degrees, as evidence shows in many countries that there are developmental impacts from the cash flows that are sent from immigrants to their countries. It can be said that national economies have benefited enormously from the immigration flows, which have contributed to the balance of payments of the countries. Migration and development have received considerable attention since the early 2000s. Furthermore, in 2005 discussion and communication on migration and development identified remittances, diaspora engagement, and brain circulation, as priority areas for enhanced cooperation between the countries of

destination and countries of origin. Migration and development have been high also on the agendas of individual home countries and countries of destinations. To institutionalize diaspora engagement in development back home and to strengthen the relationship with their diaspora, many countries established diaspora-related institutions and outreach promising policies directed to their overseas communities. For instance, in North African sending states the linkage between migration and development “is not a new issue, as migration has been an integral part of national development strategies since decades”. (De Haas, 2007: 147). The aspects that a migrant can contribute to serving his home country and enhancing development opportunities are numerous; these aspects include but not limited to, remittances and the role they can play in enhancing development and investment in the home country, brain circulation, and knowledge transfer. Undoubtedly, if immigrants’ remittances are used efficiently in economic or social productive programs it could provide job opportunities and reduce poverty and unemployment rates. In addition to migrants' remittances, human capital is one of the main contributions that migrants can make to their home countries, as the transfer of knowledge, experiences, and skills that they have acquired abroad can positively affect the enhancement of the capabilities and skills of human resources in the home country, especially as brain drain is one of the most important problems facing developing countries.

At the Palestinian level, although quite a few Palestinians emigrated for various reasons, such as education, searching for better job opportunities, or their unwillingness to live within the socio-economic environment imposed by the Israeli occupation, the general feature of Palestinian immigration was the systematic mass displacement carried out by Zionist gangs against the Palestinian people. Actually, the Israeli-Arab wars in 1948 caused the displacement of about 725,000 Palestinians fleeing their homes and lands seeking refuge from the Israeli army, mainly in neighboring countries (Bartolomeo, et al., 2011: 1). The catastrophe (Nakba) of the Palestinian people in 1948 was the most prominent and tragic event in the modern history of the Palestinian people, and its suffering continues to date as a result of its repercussions. Although immigration from Palestine fluctuated from one period to another after 1967, it represents one of the main challenges facing Palestinian society and affects the chances of achieving sustainable development as a result of the brain drain. However, the possibility to

transform brain drain into brain gain has become an option through engagement of highly skilled migrants with development back home. Based on the foregoing, this study came to highlight the relationship between migration and the opportunities it entails as a result of the contributions of migrants, whether in the field of remittances or human capital. Furthermore, this study will shed light on the contributions made by immigrants to the development of their home country, and it will also explore the initiatives and efforts of immigrants to participate in development back home. Last but not least, institutionalizing diaspora is another objective of this article.

What are the Main Migration-Development Linkages?

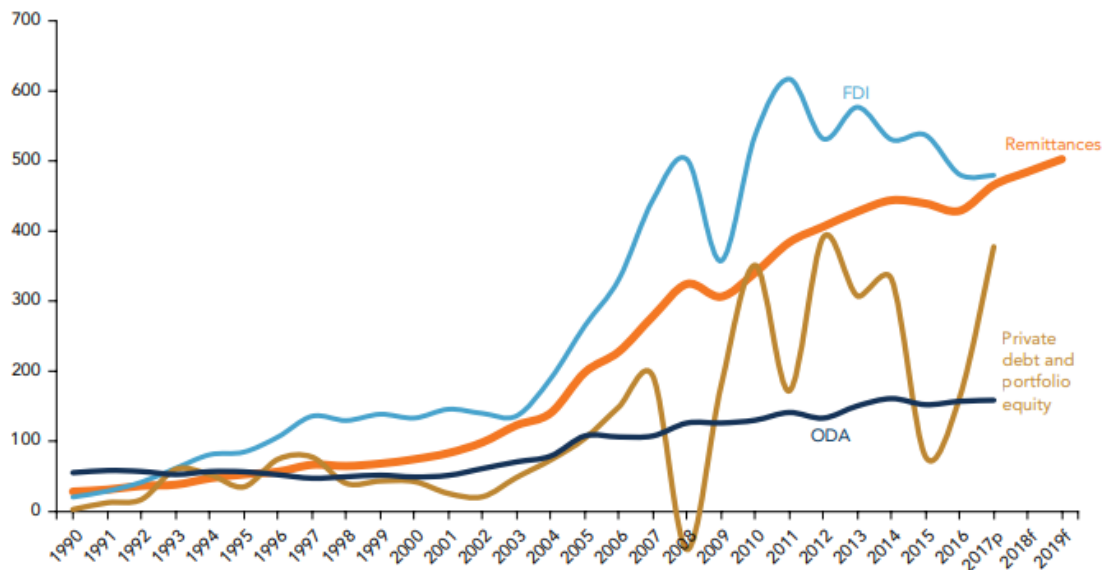
International organizations, countries of origin, and countries of destination open up certain channels for the contribution of both low-skilled and high-skilled migrants in development back home. Talent has a large economic value and its mobility has increased with globalization, the spread of new information technologies, and lower transportation costs (Solimano, 2006: 1). Although, the world today is flattened and it provides equal opportunities for those who have the intention and abilities to change and keep pace with scientific and technological progress the international migration is producing unbalanced outcomes between countries. This led to a disparity in knowledge accumulation among countries. Nevertheless, “skilled migration may also have a positive effect, strengthening ties between North and South and facilitating knowledge transfer” (Bolay & Tejada, 2014: 187). The nexus between migration and development, however, goes far beyond the role of remittances alone. Even though the relationship between migration and development initials a wide spectrum of initiatives and contributions, this study will concentrate more on remittances and brain circulation.

Migrant Remittances and Economic Investment

Remittances are among the most tangible links between migration and development. Furthermore, remittances have been a central focus since earlier discussions about Migration and Development. According to World Bank estimates, officially recorded remittances flows in 2010 totalled over \$440 billion worldwide (IOM & MPI, 2012: 113). In fact, remittances represent one of the main benefits received from migrants by origin countries. However, “the volume of remittances depends primarily on

income, the propensity to save and the strength of social ties on the part of the migrants, and the institutional mechanisms for money transfers on the part of the governments of the sending and the receiving countries” (Tejada *et al.*, 2013: 21). Remittances are now more than three times the size of official development assistance excluding China; remittance flows are also significantly larger than foreign direct investment (FDI) in low- and middle-income countries (World Bank Group, 2018:3). Accordingly, the first trends in Migration and Development policy and practice focused overwhelmingly on exploiting migrant remittances for the benefit of homeland development. Figure 1 shows the differences in remittances flows, FDI, official development assistance, and cyclical private debt and equity flows, to low and middle-income countries.

Figure: 1. Remittance flows to low and middle-income countries are larger than official development assistance and more stable than FDI and private debt, 1990–2019.



Source: World Bank Group, 2018: p. 3.

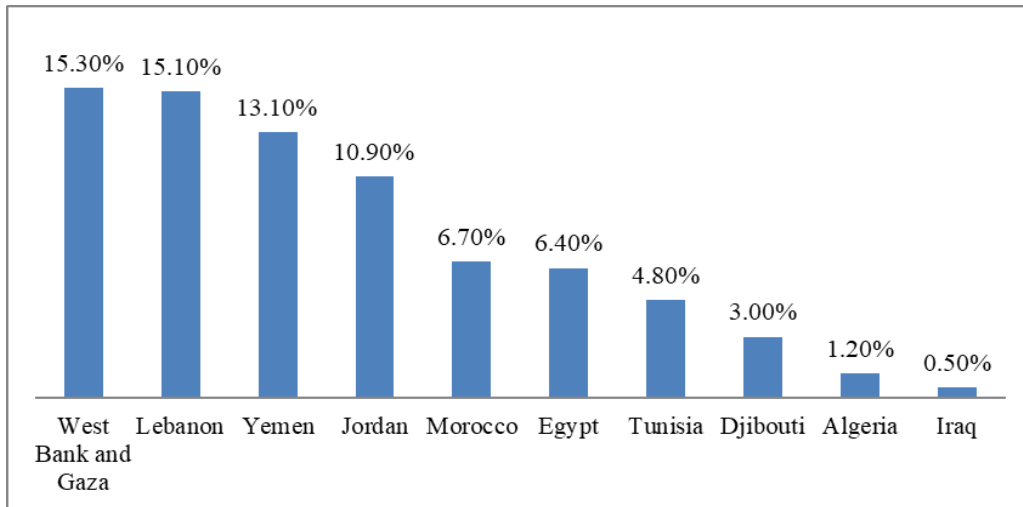
Arab countries are among the most significant recipients worldwide of remittances, which constitute a major source of foreign exchange in countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Egypt) and thus play a major macro-economic role (Schramm, 2006). To maximize the benefits of remittances, many Arab countries have established contacts with their Diasporas. The main efforts in the region today aim to reduce the cost of remittances, increase the use of formal transfer channels, and enhance the financial

literacy of migrants and their families. Morocco, for instance, established a network of overseas consulates, post offices, and bank branches in the 1970s and 1980s in order to stimulate remittance transfers back home (De Haas, 2007). While in Egypt migrants remitting through banks receive tax breaks for up to ten years from the time of the first formal transfer (IOM/MPI, 2012: 114).

At the Palestinian level, remittances, in the form of money sent back to the home country by Palestinian migrants, represent the major means by which Palestinians in the diaspora show solidarity with other Palestinians. Although remittances played a crucial role both in the Palestinian economy during the 1980s (Lubbad, 2008: 15) and in the creation of a large Palestinian middle class (Hilal, 2007: 12), they began to decline after 1984, and this trend continued following the second Gulf War which led to the expulsion of 300,000 Palestinians from Kuwait and other Gulf states (*Ibid*: 16). Remittances from Palestinian emigrants abroad have fluctuated since the 1990s, and while Palestinians' total remittances during the period 1995–2012 averaged 22.3% of GDP, there were wide variations during this period. The proportion of remittances to GDP ranged from 14.1% in 2005 to its highest level at 31.3% in 2002 (Qubbaja, 2014: 9).¹ This increase in the value of remittances as compared to those received by other Arab countries is due to the fact that they include remittances from Israel.² *Figure 2* shows the ratio of remittances to GDP in some Arab countries, including Palestine.

¹ The data above only cover remittances that transfer regularly. Remittances are not included if they are sent in an emergency or brought by expatriates when they return.

² According to another Palestinian study, remittances from Palestinian workers in Israel constituted 30% of GDP in Palestine before the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000 (Shtayyeh, 1998: 34).

Figure 2: Ratio of remittances to GDP in some Arab countries 2017

Source: World Bank Group, 2018: p. 31.

Figure 2 shows that the West Bank and Gaza Strip receive the highest ratios of remittances to GDP among Arab countries, with remittances representing 15.30% of GDP, followed by Lebanon (15.1%) and Yemen (13.1%) while Iraq's ratio is just 0.05%.³ The study's findings revealed that most of the Palestinian immigrants send remittances back home in case they have families or relatives there. It is worth noting that sending money back home is part of Palestinian culture, particularly when the expatriate has relatives and family in the home country. Egypt was the largest recipient of remittances in the Middle East and North Africa.

The largest proportion of these remittances to the Arab countries was used for consumption purposes, education, and healthcare to meet the needs of the immigrant. However, a small percentage of these remittances were used for investment and entrepreneurship purposes. For example, "15% of the overall remittances were invested in Egypt in 2010, while this ratio was only 5% in Algeria" (League of Arab State, 2014: 37). To put it differently, it has become clear that benefits from remittances at one level can contribute to poverty reduction at the family level, but these benefits may not be translated into economic growth at the national level.

³ Although the data above show that Palestine has among the highest rate of remittances, the inflow of remittances is still in decline. The inflow of remittances to Arab countries was as follows: Egypt \$20 billion, Lebanon \$8 billion, Morocco \$7.5 billion, Jordan \$4.4 billion, Yemen \$3.4 billion, Algeria \$2.1 billion, West Bank and Gaza \$2.0 billion, Tunisia \$1.9 billion and Syria \$1.9 billion (World Bank Group, 2018: 31). This indicates that the population size affects the ratio of remittances to GDP.

Indeed, realizing the notable impacts that diaspora involvement in business and investment could have on capacity building and development back home is crucial. Therefore, many countries possess policies and programs targeting their diaspora abroad (IOM, 2005: 205). These kinds of projects are particularly important because they provide facilities and offer opportunities for others who are ready to invest or transfer knowledge to their counterparts in their home country. Governments and private sector initiatives have chosen different approaches in their bids to tap into their diaspora resources to engage them in economic development. These initiatives can include “supplying training programs directly, with a one-stop shop for investment information or organizing business events for diaspora members. In other cases, local entrepreneurs are encouraged to establish links with their diaspora counterparts (IOM & MPI, 2012: 131).

Economically speaking, the diaspora can enhance foreign direct investment (FDI) and the business environment in their home country, which in turn can generate jobs and trigger economic growth. Furthermore, diaspora entrepreneurship is particularly important for the domestic market which is, in general, less attractive either due to its small size or the absence of certainty. The main advantage offered by the diaspora is their ability to make connections with other partners, both in the host and home countries. Consequently, they can create opportunities to transfer experience and technology from developed countries to developing countries which are crucial in entrepreneurship enhancement. The engagement of the diaspora in entrepreneurship and investment in the country of origin also allows them to tap into cheap labour and resources back home. However, and not surprisingly, maximizing the potential of diaspora engagement in business is not an easy process, especially in a risky and unstable environment like that which exists in Palestine. According to Hanafi (2001: 9), the substantial factors that determine the engagement of the skilled Palestinian diaspora in development back home are the “current political and economic situation and bilateral relationships between the PNA and the host country”. Given this context, it is not expected that the West Bank and Gaza Strip will witness a massive return movement of Palestinian businesspeople and investors in the foreseeable future.

This linkage between migration and development can create opportunities to transfer knowledge and technology from developed countries to developing countries. In broader economic terms, migrants enhance foreign direct investment (FDI) and the business environment in their home country, which in turn can generate jobs and trigger growth. Furthermore, diaspora entrepreneurship is particularly important for the domestic market which is, in general, less attractive either due to its small size or the absence of certainty. It is also important to note that the advanced technologies, methods, and experiences that could be transferred to home countries are so effective and influential. Being familiar with the cultures of both origin and host country, highly skilled migrants are quite eligible to bridge the gap between the developing and the developed worlds. Moreover, expatriates' connections and interests in the homeland foster the creation of networks and follow-up mechanisms (Lowell & Gerova, 2004: 8). Despite this modest and not surprising result, the existence of successful models in entrepreneurship carried out by skilled Palestinian diaspora can be observed. For example, a study of US Palestinians in the 1990s found that "diaspora interest in homeland investment did not wane during periods of increased political or economic risk" (Riddle & Nielsen, 2011: 236). In fact, the transfer of knowledge related to business and investment assumed more than one form. Some diaspora members created manufacturing operations or established subsidiaries of businesses based in their host countries, or set up consulting companies or other service operations in their home country, while others chose to share market information with their counterparts in the home country. The Palestinian associations abroad continued to support Palestinians back home in a number of ways, which included providing "protection for Palestinian resources and investments by mobilizing diaspora communities to help schools or provide free passage for goods and services" (Hijab, 2004: 2). Likewise, other Palestinian expatriates established the Arab Palestinian investment company (APIC) which set up many subsidiaries, including in consumer goods, medical services, shopping centers, and food. It also invested in other companies such as PALTEL and the Arabic Islamic International Bank (Nasr, 2004, cited in Hilal, 2007: 23).

The solidarity activities undertaken by the Palestinian diaspora are not limited to the remittances they send for Palestinians back home; they also extend to include development and social activities in the

home country. Historically speaking, the interest of the Palestinian diaspora in philanthropy and development in the home country began in the 1980s and grew out of their sense of social responsibility to the home country. Hilal (2007: 26) pinpoints the starting point as “1983 when a group of businessmen and intellectuals met in Geneva and established welfare association with the aim of funding projects for Palestinian education, health, human resources, and social development”. This association served the Palestinians and contributed to strengthening their steadfastness, especially in geographically marginalized areas. It also encouraged small enterprises and home production. Furthermore, “wealthy Palestinian immigrants (in North America and the Gulf States) did, and still do, send money to their needy villages and families when the latter face a serious problem” (*Ibid: 29*). It is worth mentioning that some Palestinian migrants have built schools and other types of infrastructure, such as community centers and even mosques, in their towns and villages. All in all, the Diasporas’ contributions towards their home country take more than one form and may include money given directly to relatives and needy families, funds transferred to philanthropic projects, or funds given to associations to support their social activities.

Brain Circulation

Brain circulation is the circular movement of skilled labour across countries. This paper addresses the concept of brain circulation from a particular point of view in order to ascertain how knowledge is derived as a result of transnational activities and the circular migration of highly skilled Palestinian migrants. Brain circulation contributes to the transfer of knowledge and good practices from the host countries to the home countries. This paper’s broad understanding of the meaning of knowledge encompasses awareness and document-sharing, policy formulation, learning by doing, training and lecturing, guidance, problem-solving, sharing new ways of working, and clarification of roles and responsibilities, etc.

Although advanced knowledge and modern technologies can be accessed through other tools such as multinational organizations, this article has chosen to focus on the skilled diaspora as a primary and reliable means of knowledge transfer back home. According to Meyer & Brown (1999: 12), the engagement of diaspora in development and knowledge transfer to their home country can be

achieved through two main possible means, either by physical return or through remote mobilization that connects the skilled diaspora with local people through social networks. In the case of Palestine, in addition to the contributions made by individual and organizational initiatives, the transfer of knowledge by migrants returning to their home country has been enabled thanks to the cooperation of three main actors: diaspora organizations; initiatives instigated by Palestinian institutions; and international organizations. Since its establishment in the mid-1990s, the Palestinian National Authority has become more interested in engaging the skilled Palestinian diaspora as a potential source of knowledge transfer and investment. Although the engagement of this skilled diaspora has remained somewhat weak, some programs have been formulated to enhance the participation of diaspora communities in economic development and the nation-building process. The most prominent initiatives launched in this regard were the Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals program (TOKTEN), and Palestinian Scientists and Technologists Abroad (PALESTA). The first one used temporary return and circular migration as its main approach, while the second adopted remote connectivity and technological engagement and aimed to engage highly skilled Palestinian migrants through virtual participation in academic, scientific, and cultural programs at home. The following is a summary of knowledge transfer programs in Palestine:

- *Attracting Expatriate Economic Competencies for the Development of Mediterranean Countries:* This European Union project was implemented in Palestine in partnership with two local partners: the Palestinian Information and Communications Technology Incubator (PCTI) and The Palestinian Investment Promotion Agency (PIPA). The project aimed to “connect Palestinian skilled diaspora members who had success in Europe with local entrepreneurs in Palestine. Although a national working group was formed from a group of Palestinian governmental and private institutions, its accomplishments were very modest” (Al-Labadi, 2018: 11).
- *Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals program (TOKTEN):* This program appeared initially in the 1980s, but this is an on-going program and it focuses on a number of countries of origin. Recent TOKTEN programs have focused on Afghanistan, Mali, Palestine, Rwanda, and Sudan (Kuschminder, 2011: 8). The program aims to convince skilled diaspora members to come

back temporarily. The reason for its success is that it has mainly focused on people who are professional and distinguished in their fields. The participants have contributed to developing hospitals and changing practices (Murphy, 2006). Although the mission has time limits, some expatriates have permanently returned.

In Palestine, the program was established by the United National Development Program (UNDP) in 1994. "The UNDP recruited many highly skilled Palestinian experts to serve as returned volunteers for a period ranging from three weeks to three months" (League of Arab States, 2008: 95). The UN offers them a solid platform for return, and by providing security and living allowances and securing travel it removes obstacles to participation while reinforcing all of the good reasons for migrants to come and volunteer. Almost 600 experts have come to Palestine through TOKTEN, for either short- or mid-term periods. Most of them come to serve in Palestinian ministries or institutions of higher education. The contributions of these experts included "city planning, medical services, university curriculum development, academic networking, the upgrading of film and television capacities, or cultural preservation including the Bethlehem 2000 project" (Hanafi, 2001: 8). The objectives also included human development and building the capacity of the Palestinian National Authority.

The program made only a modest impact since the need for skilled experts in Palestine greatly exceeded the capacity of the two hundred returned migrants involved. The program concentrated on the public sector, rather than on the private and NGO sectors, and this is likely to have reduced its efficiency and effectiveness. Also, there was a problem reported concerning communication between visiting experts and the staff of their host institutions. This problem was caused by misunderstandings and feelings among local staff that the visiting experts were overestimated and received higher salaries than them. In addition to its developmental and capacity-building achievements, "One of the advantages of the program is that some 34 TOKTEN experts continued living in the Palestinian Territories after their assignment" (*Ibid: 8*).

- *PALESTA*: Four years later, in 1998, the Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation initiated a program called Palestinian Scientists and Technologists Abroad, or *PALESTA* (League of Arab States, 2008: 95). It sought to utilize the scientific and technological

knowledge of highly skilled migrants in support of social and economic development in Palestine. PALESTA created a database of engineers, scientists, and technologists and made it available on the internet, which was the main means of communication between participants. PALESTA's database currently contains the details of around 1,300 expatriate Palestinian professionals. Only about a third, however, are active members. This active membership is concentrated in the United States (56%), while 17% live in Europe (Hanafi, 2001: 10). The cumbersome central administration of the project, combined with the voluntary and sporadic nature of communications, rendered it rather ineffective (League of Arab States, 2008: 103).

Despite their limited results, these initiatives highlight some of the characteristics of the relationship between the Palestinian diaspora and the home country. Most notably, the mobilization mechanism used by the Palestinian National Authority concentrates on centralization rather than on a participatory approach. Another major feature of these programs is that the vast majority of highly skilled experts and immigrants who have contributed to the transfer of knowledge through them are from North America and Europe. The end of these programs does not definitely mean the end of the brain circulation pathway towards Palestine; in fact, other sporadic initiatives are led by individuals, health organizations, and academic institutions. Emotional ties and patriotic feelings appear to be important factors in driving the contribution of highly skilled migrants towards development and knowledge transfer to Palestine. However, the contribution made by highly skilled migrants and the diaspora is still relatively modest, and incentives from the Palestinian government are vital to promote and encourage return migration and knowledge transfer by talented and skilled migrants.

Institutionalizing Diaspora Engagement

To enhance the relationship with the diaspora and fully reap the potential developmental impact of the skilled diaspora, the following policy implications and recommendations ought to be considered by the Palestinian government and institutions: First, given that migration is a multi-local process, the need to improve the performance of the relevant Palestinian institutions both on the national and local levels are also immensely advocated. Supporting an inter-agency collaboration platform, leading to a better

flow of information, and more sustainability for diaspora-oriented institutions through the implementation of well coherent policy actions ultimately enhances the effectiveness of these institutions. Second, the capability of any government to engage their diaspora in national development back home depends basically on the level of awareness regarding the importance of the role that diaspora may play in development and investment back home. Undoubtedly, diaspora is a more reliable and less expensive source than other sources. Furthermore, the experience of other countries such as Ireland, India, China, Ethiopia, revealed that adopting efficient policies and creating a database on expatriates and diaspora are crucial in this regard. Therefore, Palestinian associated institutions particularly embassies need to develop a systematized database on Palestinians abroad to properly identify the Palestinian diaspora.

Create a conducive environment to facilitate the efforts of those who are willing to contribute to the social and economic development of their home country is another critical factor. The engagement of highly skilled migrants in development and knowledge transfer without offering them incentives may be inadequate to attract Palestinian talents scattered over the world. Therefore, recruiting and utilizing these highly intellectual expatriates to return and contribute to capacity building at home can be done through financial rewards and the adoption of a package of incentive policies. These incentives may include tax exemption, social insurance, one-stop-shop service for returnees, and thereof. There is no doubt that the use of modern technologies in institutional work facilitates the transfer of knowledge and encourages expatriates to participate in relevant programs. It is not easy to attract and recruit highly skilled people in the diaspora at a time when you suffer from weak technology, education, healthcare, and other capabilities.

The presence of a comprehensive vision of the relationship between the home country and the diaspora is another key factor in the institutionalization of this relationship. This vision must be enforced by policies, plans, and programs identifying the expected role these diasporas can play. Additionally, diaspora associations must play a key role in preparing this vision and policies. Undoubtedly, there are different levels of diaspora engagement in the development back home. These may include but are not limited to, the governmental institutions level, local government institutions level, and the private sector and non-governmental organizations level.

Finally, it is not surprising to note that anchoring a sustainable partnership between the diasporas and the Palestinian government is more likely to succeed if there is mutual trust. Indeed, there are various approaches to enhance the relationship with the diaspora and build such trust. These include, in addition to providing incentives, educating and updating diasporas about the local context in Palestine to keep expatriates in touch with their home community. Moreover, one of the most important things that can be accomplished in this regard is the launch of a website that allows expatriates to share and contribute knowledge to their home country. It is equally important to mention that the engagement of skilled diaspora is a two-way process, whether in terms of giving or trust. The experiences of many countries have shown that they have been able to attract increasing numbers of their communities when they have provided them the necessary incentives and requirements for the success of their mission. Moreover, the adoption of good governance principles and best practices in public administration, and the promotion of political participation, are important factors in attracting highly-skilled expatriates. On the other hand, widespread corruption, nepotism, deteriorating services, and political instability pose real obstacles to the participation of skilled diaspora in the development of their home countries. Hence, it is very important to have a democratic government that promotes the values of transparency and good governance, fights corruption and bureaucracy, and encourages scientific research and individual creativity.

Conclusion

The ways through which skilled diaspora can contribute to development back home are numerous, these may include but are not limited to, remittances, and knowledge transfer. Remittances can play a crucial role in development back home if they are used in an efficient way to finance developmental and productive programs, this would help in decreasing unemployment and increasing opportunities mainly for youth. Along with the same note, human capital and knowledge transfer consider another main aspect the skilled diaspora can contribute to their home country. Indeed, transferring knowledge and skills gained abroad by highly skilled expatriates to their counterparts' back home affects them positively.

Learning from the experience of other countries is one of the main landmarks of diaspora engagement in knowledge transfer to the home country as a development approach. Successful experiences of others have taught us that the engagement of skilled diaspora in knowledge transfer and development must be based on evidence and concrete data on highly skilled migrants, and the presence of efficient and clear mechanisms to maximize the benefits and reap the opportunities provided through the engagement of Palestinian skilled diaspora.

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