



## **Zanzibaris in Diaspora Perceived Government Initiative on Institutionalizing Diaspora Affairs.**

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## **1. Introduction**

For many years Zanzibaris have been living in exile as Diaspora. There is, however, no official census and estimates, both of Zanzibar's total population and of Zanzibar exiles vary considerably, since Zanzibar entering the various recipient countries prior were registered upon arrival as "Tanzanian" rather than "Zanzibaris". Besides earlier labour migration and intellectual exile movements, migration from Zanzibar has taken place in various major waves. It was written that the first wave took place before and when Zanzibar struggles for independent period. The second wave took place after Zanzibar Revolution in 1964, where many flee the country for feared of persecution. The third wave took place after the assassination of late first President of Zanzibar Sheikh Abeid Aman Karume. Finally, last wave of Zanzibar's migration occurs after re-introduction of multiparty system in Zanzibar.

Zanzibar Diaspora makes good progress after reaching to the country of exile, was able to compromise with the society and makes the necessary activities of life. They made these countries as home country, while other promising would return to their original country. To be able to cope with the flow of this new life, Zanzibar Diaspora were forced to join the community and earn education, labor and other social needs. Conditions of that period it was easier to compromise with the community and to succeed. A large percentage of Zanzibar Diasporas were able to succeed in life.

Since Zanzibar Revolution of 1964, six phases passed without a communication, link, partnership, association, etc, between Diaspora and their country of origin - Zanzibar. The different of ideology between two sides raise conflict between Diaspora and their government. Each phase of the government was misunderstood with wave of Diaspora depending on factors existing at that period. For example: a group of post-revolutionary Diaspora had conflict with the Government as they were ousted pro-government.

It seems clear, the advent of the seventh phase, for the first time, stimulate a new sense of collaboration, communication, etc that would be fostering successful relationships between nations and their Diaspora.

## **2. The Initiative of the Government and The President of Zanzibar**

Honourable President, Dr Ali Mohammed Shein, initiated the establishment of nurturing the Diaspora by forming a department with the authority to deal with international cooperation and activities of Zanzibar who live outside the country – Diaspora, hence, has made status of Zanzibar immigrant improved.

Many countries have benefited by engaging its citizens living outside their country. The lesson have been learnt in both Scotland and Ireland where sustained attention is now being given to the potential benefits which might flow from renewing and refreshing

relationships with overseas Diasporic populations. This has manifested itself in a raft of Diaspora related policy initiatives. The flagship event Homecoming 2009, inviting Scots to return to Scotland for a holiday or perhaps more permanently, has served to galvanise resolve to further harness the energies, knowledge, talents, and good will of the Scottish Diaspora.

In Eritrea, the Diaspora has been characterised by a common commitment to the project of Eritrean independence. During the struggle for independence from Ethiopia and in the post-independence phase, the Eritrean Diaspora constantly engaged in post-conflict reconstruction (Mezzetti 2008, p. 161)

### **3. The initiative in the right approach for engaging Zanzibaris in Diaspora**

Diasporic populations have long played a significant role in the economic, political, social, and cultural life of their home nations. Remittance receipts in particular have served a critical role in maintaining domestic economies which otherwise would have become inactive. The overall political, economic and social context in the origin country does not only have a direct impact on state–Diaspora relations and the ability and willingness of Diaspora members to engage with Zanzibar, but also determines the extent to which such interaction might affect the situation in Zanzibar.

Of course this is the right time for Zanzibar Government to fully engage on Zanzibar Diaspora. Any kind of engagement may distinguish between individual and organised initiatives. Individual engagement refers to financial and social remittances, foreign direct investment, skills transfer through return, whereas financial contributions to the state are often also raised and transferred collectively by Diaspora associations. While organised Diaspora engagement refers to all social, economic and cultural activities of Zanzibaris associations, groups and initiatives abroad. In addition, as research in several European countries has revealed, there is a broad range of community groups and organisations engaged in self-help and cultural activities (Warnecke, 2009).

Zanzibar Diaspora joining those who move in search of employment, education, professional advancement, marriage or for other purposes. Previous research and policy have tended to frame refugees as ‘problems’ rather than considering their potential. For example, it is only very recently that research, has shown how refugees can and do remit substantial amounts of money to their countries of origin. Estimated to total US\$100 billion in 2000 (Martin 2001), migrants’ remittances represent a large proportion of world financial flows and amount to substantially more than global official development assistance or aid. Of the ten countries receiving most officially recorded remittances, two are low-income (India and Pakistan); six are lower middle income (Philippines, Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Thailand and Jordan); and two are upper middle-income (Mexico and Brazil) (Gammeltoft 2002). Currently about US\$500 million may be

remitted to Somalia annually and perhaps the same amount to Somaliland (Ahmed 2000; EIU 2001).

The lack of scientific data from the Government, yet not known how much does Zanzibar Diaspora contribute to the country. In the absence of a reliable formal banking system, Zanzibar Diasporas have developed novel means of transferring money. The system works very simply. If a Diaspora needs to send money to a relative in Zanzibar, s/he takes the money in pounds or dollars to the broker in her/his country, who then contacts the office in Zanzibar or else where by fax, telephone or email. Once identities have been checked and verified, the local currency equivalent is handed over to the recipient relative by the office in Zanzibar.

On other hand, we still do not know how many Zanzibar live in exile, nor systematic information on the skills and educational background of refugees, so it is impossible to assess to what extent the educated or skilled are disproportionately represented. At the same time, activities that sustain or support the society and culture of the home country within the exile community are considered to be equally important in shaping the future of the home country. For Zanzibar refugees there is a strong conviction that children born in host countries should learn their mother tongue, and share a national consciousness.

#### **4. Enhance effective engagement of Zanzibaris in Diaspora**

William Safran's definition of Diaspora conceives of Diaspora as only one particular form of mass migration, that involving forced exile and a fraught and lengthy period of resettlement and planting down of new roots in regions of destination. On this basis Cohen identified five types of Diaspora:

- Victim Diasporas (e.g., classic Diasporas forced into exile such as the Jewish, African, Armenian Diasporas)
- Labour Diasporas (e.g., mass migration in search of work and economic opportunities such as the Indian and Turkish Diasporas)
- Trade Diasporas (e.g., migrations seeking to open trade routes and links such as the Chinese and Lebanese Diasporas)
- Imperial Diasporas (e.g., migration among those keen to serve and maintain empires such as the British and French Diasporas)
- Cultural Diasporas (e.g., those who move through a process of chain migration such as the Caribbean Diasporas).

It is probably no surprise that better integration tends to empower Diaspora and increase their capacity to participate. To engage Zanzibar Diaspora, we need the following:

- Need of clear definition who is Zanzibaris, similarly who is falling under the Diaspora and as such be included as part of a targeted Diaspora strategy.

- Government structures and programs that are best suited to the establishment of new relations with diasporic population.
- Organise Diaspora and their underlying structure and predispose them to engage in different ways with home nation.
- Social, economic, and demographic objectives ought to underpin the extensions of relations with diasporic population
- Policies and intervention are currently being introduced and what innovations merit closer scrutiny.
- Open debate to enhance current situation and stimulate thinking and practice about the way in which Zanzibar might most productively mobilise and engage its Diaspora

On the other hand we need a debate that will involve all groups, particularly the last three refugee waves according to their wishes. Each group has their own language like to hear. It also has their interests according to the reason why they emigrate. Either for further analysis, we need to set aside areas where refugees are discussing, this includes; acquisition of property by the Diaspora, Construction contracts, Foreign direct investment and trade, improve local infrastructure and generate local employment opportunities.

Returning is very important part. Only few exiles decided to move back to Zanzibar and invest their competence and knowledge in infrastructures and services. The department should do more to avoid disillusioned after a short period of time for those who returned. Inclusion of Returnees of taking government posts has also played a huge part to engage Diaspora. This can be in decision-making positions preventing skills transfers and limiting their potential contribution to the state-building process.

Promoting NGOs engaging in relief and development activities, which often closely cooperate with Zanzibaris. Such organisations abroad are permitted to directly support government-led development or humanitarian projects or run projects that have been approved by the government.

The Government allows Social remittances, where as “Social remittances are the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities” (Levitt, 1998)

## **5. Suggestion to other Zanzibaris in Diaspora**

It was found that refugees make significant political, economical, and social contributions in their country of origin. Such influence Diaspora has in their hosting country is very important to alleviate their country of origin. Clearly, the current global economic downturn will have ramifications for Diaspora policy, affecting remittance transfers, philanthropy, extension of welfare entitlements, migration patterns, tourist

flows, and the functioning of economic networks. It is precisely that Diaspora groups have an even greater role to play in promoting national social, cultural, and economic development.

For the government might need to work harder if it is to engage its overseas communities as it cannot rely on the spontaneous self organisation of the diaspora. And yet Zanzibar-mindedness is essential to any Diaspora programme as the Zanzibar Diaspora will only do work for and alongside Zanzibaris over the long-term. It is clear that a whole number of initiatives now underway will play an important role to this end, will require different diaspora strategies simply because the conditions which motivate them to engage their respective diaspora populations are different.

As Zanzibar in Diaspora we can use technology to create network for different kind of groups, such as business network connecting highly skilled Zanzibar around the world, a social and community network linking overseas Zanzibaris, special campaign seeking to encourage tourist visits Zanzibar, creating official day for Zanzibar Diaspora in country we are living to celebrate the heritage and legacy of Zanzibar emigrants; an organisation that promotes Zanzibar culture and arts both at home and abroad, agencies to promote skilled migration,

Recently we have seen Zanzibar turn to its diaspora stem as new idea. It is real challenge for them as it lack of knowledge, expertise, and networks. Zanzibar in diaspora can assist the government as its need. This is opportunity for all Zanzibaris to be part of our government. Expatriates already had a sense of connection to Zanzibar and could be more easily lured back by the magnets of good educational and career opportunities, a cosmopolitan and tolerant multi-cultural ethos, a vibrant night time economy and series of consumption opportunities, and by the desire to bring up families and care for parents in their old age.