

**PRESENTATION BY H.E. MRS. EBUN JUSU AT THE HIGH LEVEL INTERACTIVE PANEL
ON THE IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF MIGRATION
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Today, impelled by the forces of conflict, natural disasters, changing demographics, globalization and persistent discrepancies in wages and opportunities, migration has recuperated prominence and has become a defining facet of economic, social and political life in the world. The importance and benefits of migration on individuals, societies and countries are deep and complicated; many of which are directly or indirectly related to development processes. Migration can be both a cause and a result of underdevelopment, while underdevelopment can be either assuaged or aggravated by migration. Consequently, the occurrence of migration cannot be unconditionally seen as either an impediment to development or an approach for its realization.

What is important to note is that Migration has been very influential in shaping the progress of human civilization. It has over the years influenced the advancement of states, societies, economies and institutions. Although it is argued that international migration has largely been shaped by the drop of skilled people from developing countries to the developed world, growing evidence has shown that it has positive effects on social and economic development in developing countries. The millions of people in the Diaspora from the developing countries are directly and indirectly contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (M.D.Gs) of their respective countries.

The process of people moving to other countries in search of a better life is not new. What has however changed is the increasing voluntary movement of both low-skilled, low-wage workers and high-skilled, high-wage workers from less developed countries to developed countries that is fueled by the dynamics of globalization, in particular the structural needs of industrialized markets.

In the past, the tendency was to focus on the negative implications of migration in terms of development, which are the lack of opportunities and economic prospects in the country of origin which are the catalyst for emigration, and the adverse effect this loss of essential human resources (brain drain) could have on local development. It is however acknowledged that if properly managed, international migration can be of benefit to local development.

This change in emphasis has been intensified by the fact that Diaspora remittances and the income multipliers they create are becoming critical resources for the sustenance strategies of receiving households as well as agents of local and national development.

While abroad, migrants attain not only skills and experience, but also earnings that they often partly transfer to support their families back home. Remittances represent a key area through which migration can affect the economic and social development in countries of origin, as they have become a major source of income for many countries. They can have a significant effect on the standard of living of households receiving them. It is generally believed that individual migrants almost always benefit by migrating from a poorer to a richer country, and that through the money they send back home, their families also benefit. Remittances sustain livelihoods through increased purchasing power for food, education, health, consumer goods, housing and other essential services that would be invested in human capital. It is believed that, on average, a 10 percent increase in the share of international migrants in a country's population will lead to a 1.9 percent decline in the share of people living in poverty (US\$1.00 a person a day). It is also believed that, on average, a 10 per cent increase in the share of international remittances in a country ' s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will lead to a 1.6 percent decline in the share of people living in poverty.

Remittances can also reduce the proportion of people living in poverty through investment induced multiplier effects. Although there is limited information on how remittances are spent, there is no doubt that having a large, flourishing, influential and skilled Diaspora is an asset for any country. Investments, venture capital and technology transfers from Diaspora populations have the potential to stimulate local and national development efforts.

Migration can also bring considerable macro-economic benefits to destination countries through lessening of labour shortage, enhancement of human capital and the job opportunities and wealth that result from migrant entrepreneurial activities. These are factors which can increase the flexibility and efficiency of the economy and contribute to development. In the same vein, if migration is properly managed, it could have a positive effect on labour surpluses in developing countries by providing job opportunities abroad. However, if not properly managed such

emigration could itself lead to labour shortages, especially of skilled professionals in certain sectors of the economy.

Migration can also lead to knowledge and skills transfer when migrants return home on a temporary or permanent, virtual or physical basis; relief from unemployment and underemployment. In addition, migrants often contribute to modernization, democratization and respect for human rights and the rule of law, whether from abroad or upon return.

It is also recognized that in addition to money remittances, what is sometimes referred to as social and political remittances also occur through the transfer of values, traditions and practices. Migration can lead to the empowerment of women. The proportion of women who are involved in global migration flows is increasing rapidly. Until the mid 1980s, migration was regarded as a male phenomenon, while today women account for almost half of the migrants' population. Although a majority of the women end up working in low-skill and low-wage occupations (health care, household and commercial service sectors), an increasingly growing number of skilled and professional women are also migrating from the developing countries to the developed countries in response to expanding employment opportunities in business, education, health and other sectors.

The growing feminization of migration is a key pathway to reducing gender inequality, reducing poverty and enhancing women's economic security. For instance, by drawing them away from their usual social networks and exposing them to more open societies, migration tends to produce positive and empowering experiences for women; hence it can promote changes in gender roles. More importantly, the feminization of international migration is providing means of economic sustenance for families left at the places of origin as well as the future economic sustenance of female immigrants themselves. Some of the values obtained in more open societies are often transmitted to communities left behind, thereby altering the landscape of gender relationships. Thus, the growing links between migration and women's empowerment are an encouraging development.

In addition, communities that are linked to hometown and other associations in the Diaspora can significantly gain from transnational investments in clinics, hospitals, and public works projects in water and sanitation made by such groups.

Having presented on my reflections on the importance and benefits of migration to all countries and sections of society, it is my pleasure to share with you my personal experience as a successful migrant in the United States (U.S.).

I believe that I can rightly say that I am a great example of the benefits of migration to both my country of origin and my host country. Having qualified as the first Sierra Leonean female to register at the newly established faculty of law at the University of Sierra Leone, I thought I could broaden my horizon by the study of law abroad. When the prestigious Georgetown University in Washington D.C. offered me a place in their Masters in International Law programme in July, 1994, I jumped at the chance. However, the trauma of relocation was so great that I decided to go home for the Christmas vacation. On my return to the U.S. in January, 1995, I was unfortunately subjected to a random U.S. immigration search at the airport and found to be in violation of my immigration status. I never knew I needed a student visa. Although I was later released, I was however immediately put in deportation proceeding. I spent the next four years navigating the U.S. Immigration Courts to regularize my immigration status.

My first advice to migrants everywhere is that they should try their best to regularize their status because that is the first and most important step to real integration in the host country. Regularizing my stay gave me the status and opportunity to attend the University of Georgia as a permanent resident with the corresponding benefit of paying state fees which was much cheaper than the international fees I had to pay at Georgetown University. The Doctorate in Jurisprudence degree from the University of Georgia gave me the requisite legal training to take the Georgia Bar Examination and upon passing, the standing to practice law in the U.S.

The next step was to find a job and finding a professional job in the U.S. is extremely challenging. I had graduated with a class of 22-24 years old, young and competitive people. I was over forty, female, black, with an African accent, a formidable set of tasks for job discrimination. I was forced to work as a waitress while sending out countless resumes in my job search. Finally, I decided to create my own employment and with a colleague from Ghana, I opened the Law Office of Aforo and Associates, P.C. in Stone Mountain, Atlanta, Georgia.

The metropolitan counties of Atlanta in Georgia State were most hospitable to migrants and therefore, there was a large number of African and Eastern European migrants in need of legal services. These formed the basis of my clientele as immigrants are usually more comfortable with their own, especially in the provision of legal immigration services. So I created a niche for myself in the provision of legal services. I also had a family law practice which was responsive to the needs of an African Diaspora especially in terms of providing a bridge between our family values and that of the alien American family law. I was also a Juvenile Lawyer and impacted the lives of both America and African juveniles caught in the legal system. My law offices also created employment for people, I paid taxes and in diverse ways conferred a benefit on my host country.

As regards benefits conferred on my country of origin, let me hasten to say that my years in the U.S. coincided with the brutal war in Sierra Leone when the whole fabric of government was virtually down. Those of us who were in the Diaspora by our remittances provided financial help not only to family members in Sierra Leone but also to those who had migrated temporally to the neighboring countries of Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia. When the war was over, we also contributed to the rebuilding of homes and lives destroyed by the war.

I decided to return home in 2007, which I call a "Reverse Migration". It is a most difficult decision because after success and the comfort of life in the Diaspora, it is not easy to return home mindful of the problems of employment, provision of the basic needs of life – water, electricity etc. However, some of us realized that we must return home to rebuild the nation and pay back to our countries. Initially, I lived in Sierra Leone for six months and then six months in the U.S.

In December, 2011, I was appointed Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Sierra Leone by H.E. the President. While in the Diaspora, I had kept in touch with my community in the U.S. and also with the community in Sierra Leone, thereby making myself visible as a possible candidate for political office in Sierra Leone.

Governments in developing countries now need qualified people especially women to contribute to governance. Those who have been in the Diaspora and have enhanced their education while abroad can provide the necessary leadership for the development of their nation. The Arab spring has impacted the outcry of women to actively take part in governance in countries like the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia , Tunisia, Afghanistan, to name but a few. This I suppose is due to the increasing influence of the Arab women in the Diaspora.

REVERSE MIGRATION

Ladies and Gentlemen, having dilated on the importance and benefits of migration and shared with you my personal experience as a successful migrant, I would like to comment a little on the concept of “Reverse Migration”. Most migrants have a dream of returning home at some point, and also because of the increasing financial and other difficulties such as xenophobia in the host country, migrants are now returning home. This I refer to as “Reverse Migration”. Because of the difficulties in returning home, it is a decision that has to be carefully contemplated. Usually, I say it is both a mental and a financial decision. Mental in coming to terms with the trauma of downgrading from a relatively comfortable life to a life of uncertainty. Financially, I usually say it is a plan of 3-5 years to be financially prepared for the challenge.

In terms of securing a job, this could be a great challenge in most developing countries where in most cases the unemployment rate is about 50%. However, it would be pertinent if returning migrants could be sensitive to creating a job. It is advisable for them to examine the skills they have acquired in the Diaspora and how best they can transfer such skills back home and create a job based on them. We have over the years seen doctors, dentists and lawyers who have opened their own businesses. Other people have gone into various successful entrepreneurial businesses.

I believe that patience, persistence and willingness to stay will get one through. It is also important while abroad to keep in touch with family and friends as they will be very instrumental and serve as resource persons for reintegration into the society.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) through the support of the Dutch Government is implementing the Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals – TRQN projects in Sierra Leone. This TRQN personnel serve as resource persons in some of the Ministries, Departments and Agents of the Sierra Leone Government; like Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, Marine Resources and Fisheries, to name but a few. We are very much grateful to the Dutch Government and IOM.

I thank you for your attention.