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Cooperating with Diaspora Communities

Guidelines for practice

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Preface

Outfitting an Afghan village with a solar module for EUR 10,000 or building up a Free and Open Source Software education centre for youths in Senegal in order to cover the local demand for IT-experts are not exactly run-of-the-mill ideas. The inspiration for these ingenious ideas comes from a group of experts who live »between several worlds«. These transnational innovators have a migration biography, which gives them a unique advantage as mediators, consultants and experts in the field – and which they can use, if we at GIZ invite them to do so.

Migrants who despite their »scattering« (Greek: diaspora) all over the world have never lost their ties to their country of origin and today implement their ideas in concrete projects or use their remittances collectively can be interesting partners for development cooperation. The actors from the realms of development cooperation, politics and society are only very slowly becoming aware of this notion. The next logical step would now be to involve migrants (migrant organisations) in our work. For this reason, in 2007 GTZ¹ established a pilot programme on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to promote non-profit engagement. The programme provides the organised diaspora in Germany with opportunities to jointly implement projects in their countries of origin with GIZ. Prior to the programme launch, too little was known about the structures and organisational forms of migrants in Germany, and even less was known about their engagement in their countries of origin. In order to get better acquainted with these areas, GIZ carried out studies on the diasporas from ten different origin countries.

¹ The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH was founded on 1 January 2011. It brings together the long-standing expertise of DED, GTZ and InWEnt. For further information, go to www.giz.de.

In the past ten years in particular, the rapid growth of remittances transferred throughout the world has provided solid quantitative arguments for the development impact of labour migration. This money transfer contributes to the improvement of living conditions in the origin countries. However, it represents only one side of the development results. The other side is the non-monetary, non-profit engagement by people from the diaspora. While this area has received little attention in the past and is very difficult to quantify, its development effectiveness should not be underestimated. Quite the opposite is true, in fact. Promotion provided by the pilot programme can ensure that joint projects of the diaspora organisations and German development cooperation are harmonised and jointly implemented – in areas in which there are thematic interfaces.

The pilot programme provided an impetus to see migrants as partners of development cooperation. In our two years of in-depth public relations and advisory work we have gathered a great deal of experience which we would like to pass on to our colleagues in the form of these guidelines. We hope that you will make good use of them.



(Regina Bauerochse)



I. Introduction

Practical orientation – Why cooperate and who is the target group?

Diaspora communities are engaged in their countries of origin in a number of ways and contribute to development there. In international development cooperation, initiatives to tap into this engagement and enter into dialogue with diaspora communities are just getting off the ground. For actors of development cooperation (DC), however, there are still only very few practical criteria for designing cooperation arrangements with diaspora communities that can serve to generate added value in the partner countries with regard to development cooperation.

This practical orientation is based on experience gained by German DC since 2007 in its cooperation with diaspora communities in the area of their non-profit activities in the partner countries.

It intends to

- identify preconditions for successful cooperation with diaspora communities,
- provide criteria for the practical design of a cooperation arrangement with diaspora communities with regard to their non-profit activities.

It is directed towards

- employees in German DC projects,
- institutions in Germany that cooperate with diaspora communities ,
- other donors or implementing organisations in international DC.

The practical orientation also serves to provide information to employees of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Who do we cooperate with? – Defining the term »diaspora community«

Today, the term »diaspora« is used in a variety of ways. In this paper, it refers to a (non-homogenous) group of people with a migration background who live in Germany and at the same time maintain emotional and material ties to their country of origin. We refer to people in the diaspora who organise themselves in communities (associations) for certain purposes as »members of diaspora communities«. The term »migrant organisations« is also used.

The members of such diaspora communities are linked by their common origin from the same country, the same region or even from the same village. Often diaspora communities are also founded on the basis of a common profession, as is the case for engineers or doctors. The relationships in their country of origin are multi-faceted and may include family ties and obligations, commitment to a certain place, partnerships and cooperation arrangements with associations, schools and universities, hospitals and the local government, all the way to contact with ministries.

Not all diaspora communities are actively involved in their countries of origin. Some of them consider it to be their main responsibility to help other migrants become integrated in their country of residence. Experience gained in cooperating with diaspora communities has shown that there is a positive correlation between migrants' engagement in their country of origin and their integration in Germany.

Why cooperate? – Potential for synergy

■ Diaspora communities make significant contributions to development in their countries of origin

Many diaspora communities support initiatives such as village associations in the health care or education sectors. Others work together with partners in the country of origin to propose new ideas in the area of education and innovative approaches, for instance, in the energy sector. Diaspora communities with a certain professional profile use know-how transfer in particular to contribute to the promotion of development in the partner countries by training doctors or setting up academic exchange programmes between universities.



■ Diaspora communities have different kinds of potential

Not all diaspora communities can and want to be involved in their countries of origin. The degree to which they are professionally organised varies and the type of engagement in the country of origin is frequently a question of resources. Diaspora communities who engage in non-profit activities generally have very limited financial means (for instance, from membership fees or donations) and have limited time capacity as well (volunteers). However, they are quite frequently the contact partner for village associations, for educational and training institutions, hospitals or universities in

the regions of origin in matters concerning the improvement of overall living conditions, the education and training situation or health care. They often maintain long-term relationships with their partners, and this provides them with more in-depth insights into the living situation and needs on the ground. Specific professional and technical capacity is also bundled in many diaspora communities. Many highly skilled migrants live and work in Germany, some of whom have been educated at German universities or who were able to upgrade their professional skills through employment experience in the country. They build bridges between the countries of origin and residence and also serve to transport and transfer know-how and innovations.

Non-profit engagement and areas of potential for »brain gain«

Around 100,000 Afghan migrants live in Germany. They have immigrated to the country since 1979. Many of them have joined and set up associations, including professional associations (e.g. doctors, engineers) and women's associations. These diaspora communities become engaged through collective non-profit activities in the infrastructure (education, health, energy) or transfer knowledge through basic and further training, for instance, for medical staff in Afghanistan.¹

Today, around 15,000 Cameroonian migrants live in Germany, many of whom are highly skilled professionals. They constitute the largest group of university students and graduates from sub-Saharan Africa. Their main courses of study are engineering, mathematics and natural sciences. Professional associations (e.g. engineers) also exist in the Cameroonian diaspora and new organisations and networks are becoming established.²

¹ Baraulina et al. 2006: Egyptian, Afghan and Serbian diaspora communities in Germany. How do they contribute to their country of origin? Eschborn (GTZ).

² Schmelz 2007: The Cameroonian diaspora in Germany. Its contribution to development in Cameroon. Eschborn (GTZ).

■ Diaspora communities and DC can harness potential for synergy

Studies on various diaspora communities and the dialogue with their representatives in Germany have revealed that they share a number of goals with DC in the partner countries, in particular the goal of alleviating poverty with the participation of disadvantaged sections of the population. A number of diaspora communities also consider cooperation with DC to be a source of added value. The diaspora harbours a wealth of »dormant« capacity that is relevant for the origin countries and which can contribute to achieving development-policy goals in DC. Tapping into this capacity allows the participating partners to create added value. DC projects can expand the nature and quality of their range of advisory services when they take diaspora communities into account as civil society actors in the partner countries and include them in their activities. This can allow them to broaden the base for knowledge transfer as a central aspect of DC. In cooperation, they can strengthen the development orientation of diaspora communities' activities and at the same time, use their capacity and resources (including technical competency, networks, intercultural competency) in their projects. By dealing with the »diaspora perspective« (for instance, by including actors from the diaspora in conferences and political dialogue events) and creating opportunities for them to participate in DC activities,

they can support efforts by partner governments to mobilise the diaspora.

Institutions in Germany that engage in causes such as municipal DC (e.g. Millennium Development Goals/ Agenda 21 initiatives, city twinnings) can use diaspora communities to recruit other civil society actors in Germany as well as in the migrants' countries of origin as partners for their activities. Activities and contacts of diaspora communities in origin countries can offer interesting potential points of contact in their countries. Through the dialogue with diaspora communities in Germany, they can add the diaspora point of view to their initiatives and enrich it both in terms of content and through new forms of cooperation.

In their cooperation with DC, diaspora communities profit from its specialist know-how and can carry out their activities in the origin countries in a more sustainable manner. Financial subsidies from promoting institutions for joint project activities in the partner countries can allow them to expand their options for action and the scope of their activities. They can use cooperation as an opportunity for professionalisation and qualification, as well as for additional promotion opportunities. Through cooperation with institutions in Germany, they can network with other (local) civil society actors and expand their scope of action and their competencies.



II. Practical section

What matters? – Dealing with challenges

■ Suitable cooperation partners in the diaspora

Not every diaspora community has suitable (time, financial) capacity or specialist competency for cooperation projects with DC. Some migrant organisations have proven to be »one-man shows« in real-life cooperation situations. This does not necessarily have to be a reason for discontinuing the cooperation. However, it is safer and in many cases, necessary, for authority and responsibility to be distributed to several people, especially because of the fact that in most cases, engagement is unpaid.

Whether it is a »one-man show« or responsibility is shared, members generally donate a substantial part of their time as well as considerable resources for the activities in their country of origin. The motivation and capacity to make one's own effective contribution also serves as a basis for cooperation with DC. Promising cooperation arrangements with diaspora communities should pick up on already existing engagement in order to reinforce its results.

In this effort, various strengths and competencies of diaspora communities as partners may be central factors, including specific professional expertise (for instance, in the areas of engineering or health care), networks in the partner country and in the diaspora, the possibility of mobilising resources for the country of origin and intercultural competence. However, their capacity to act can also be affected by conflicts of loyalty in the interaction with partners on the ground or by a certain political orientation. This is one of a number

of reasons why it is essential to clarify which skills and possibilities the diaspora community should have in a cooperation project with DC. Important questions may include the following: Can the diaspora community use its competencies (for instance, contacts and networking with other relevant actors) in the project or are there reasons why its capacity to act may be limited? What kind of relationship does the diaspora community have with the government in the origin country? Do the members have enough time and organisational resources?

These and other questions should be discussed with a potential partner prior to establishing a cooperation arrangement.

■ The right intermediary institutions

Prior to cooperation, diaspora communities generally do not have any connections to DC. Intermediary institutions that are in touch with diaspora communities can help to identify suitable cooperation partners. It is important to clarify the intermediary institution's field of activity. For instance, does the institution have suitable contacts? This not only concerns development-policy engagement on the part of diaspora communities. For example, institutions involved in integration work primarily work with diaspora communities that focus on overcoming obstacles to integration in Germany rather than on engaging in the origin country. This may involve finding out the specialist profile of diaspora communities.

In order to find interesting organisations in the diasporas and make contact with them, the following addresses may be helpful:

- GIZ Sector Project Migration and Development
- Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM) – Returning Experts Programme

- BENGGO, an advisory service for private-sector development cooperation organisations
- Diaspora communities' umbrella associations
- National development-policy networks of NGOs
- Chambers of commerce and associations in Germany – research institutions
- German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)
- Diaspora ministries or parliamentary committees in the partner countries that maintain contact with diaspora communities.

■ Sensitivity to political attitudes of diaspora communities

Members of diaspora communities have a special relationship with their origin country. There is a wide range of motives for migration. The background can include the social, economic, as well as political situation in the country of origin. Political appropriation of a cooperation arrangement or limited capacity to act of the diaspora community in the partner country can be prevented as follows: the political attitude or even activities of diaspora communities should be reviewed and discussed prior to setting up the cooperation in order to prevent it from triggering overt political positioning of the DC partner or to keep it from being the object of political instrumentalisation on the ground. Reviewing the organisation's by-laws or finding out about the organisation on the internet can reveal insights about its political neutrality. The role of diaspora communities in conflicts in partner countries should also be taken into account. It would be unrealistic to consider establishing a cooperation arrangement that involves the participation of the diaspora community in conferences and consultation panels that are connected to politics without first investigating the organisation's political orientation.

■ The significance of cooperation relationships with partners on the ground

In their engagement in their country of origin, diaspora communities often work together with partners on the ground with whom they already maintain long-term relationships. Examples may include village associations, educational institutions, hospitals or municipalities in the origin region. The reliability and capacity of the (contact) partners there is a key factor for the successful implementation of activities on the ground. The frequently close relationships with places where members of diaspora communities are engaged and to people with whom they work entail their intimate acquaintance with the environment and needs there. However, this does not exclude the possibility that they may intend to pursue political ambitions with their

work with diaspora communities should be aware of this aspect and assess the implications.

Considering that cooperative activities entail new challenges, it makes sense to critically review the cooperation relationship of the diaspora community with its partner(s), asking questions such as, What role does the partner play in the project? How will the project change its relationship with other actors on the ground? Have the partners agreed on mutual objectives? Can the partner meet the specific requirements of project management? And above all: Are the conditions in place for functioning communication between the diaspora community and the partner on the ground? For this reason, it is recommended that contact with the local partner of the diaspora community should be established through a DC project prior to beginning a

engagement. In many cases, social status is a motive or at least a positive (side) effect of engaging from the diaspora. DC projects or other actors who would like to

cooperation arrangement. This can clarify whether or not the partner is in a position to implement the planned project.



■ Representative nature of diaspora communities

If plans call for diaspora communities to participate in events such as political consultations or meetings, it may be important for them to be representative of their diaspora or of a professional group in the diaspora. This includes their legitimacy to speak for a certain group. Political or ethnic affiliation in the society of the origin country, as well as organisational structures of diasporas in the country of residence (for example, whether or not any umbrella organisations exist) play an important role in this area. Experience in cooperating with diaspora communities in Germany to date shows that few diaspora communities explicitly claim to be representative. However, diasporas are rarely homogenous. For this reason, potential rivalries and conflicts among diaspora communities from the same country of origin should be taken into account.

What is the best way to cooperate? – Possibilities for cooperation

■ Joint project activities

Not all diaspora communities have suitable (time, financial) capacity. There are a number of programmatic interfaces between the activities of diaspora communities and those of German development cooperation, and initial experience has been gained in implementing joint pilot projects in the partner countries.

On behalf of BMZ, GIZ's Sector Project Migration and Development has established contact with diaspora communities in Germany and initiated possibilities for cooperating with DC. In order to stimulate such cooperation, the project has taken on an intermediary role between diaspora communities in Germany and DC projects in the partner countries. This has allowed the first joint pilot projects in the partner countries to be promoted.

Cooperation relationships can start with mutual exchange and can also include joint design and implementation of projects. From the perspective of DC, there are several factors that can be crucial for making joint project activities possible:



Level of action: Diaspora communities and DC projects start with their activities at the same level (for example, in a municipality) or measures at different levels can supplement each other in an expedient manner.

Competences: For DC projects, certain types of sectoral competency are relevant (for example, in the area of renewable energy) and the transfer of know-how through a diaspora community consistent with ›brain gain‹ can give rise to an interesting partnership.

Partners on the ground: Through a cooperation arrangement with diaspora communities, new partners or networks of actors (for instance, civil society organisations) can be identified and cooperation can expand the ›visibility‹ of the DC contribution in this area.

Joint project activities can be promoted through a financial subsidy on the part of the DC partner for the diaspora community. The way such cooperation partnerships are financially endowed plays an important role.

If at all possible, the (financial and non-financial) investment of the diaspora community and DC partners in joint project activities should be equal. Since the financial resources of diaspora communities tend to be quite limited, the value of the diaspora community's voluntary engagement should be assessed as and be counted as a non-financial contribution by the community itself.

A real-life example

In Afghanistan, only about 15% of the rural population have access to electricity. For this reason, improving the energy supply, particularly through the use of renewable energy sources, is a priority area of German development cooperation.

As part of a cooperation project, a migrant organisation in a rural community successfully demonstrated how electricity could be obtained from solar and wind power and used on a sustainable basis. Together with local partners, locally produced energy stations were introduced there. Employees of a centre for renewable energy founded by the migrant organisation in Afghanistan were able to further enhance their skills through the project and train young people from the community.

The project brought about broader cooperation with a DC project in which electricity in rural areas could be produced via solar energy. This allowed know-how transfer from the diaspora in the area of renewable energy to be used for development in Afghanistan.

■ Participation in conferences and consultations

In many diasporas, in some cases regular meetings or conferences take place on themes related to the country of origin. Such conferences are also organised to address issues that concern several countries of residence. Embassies are invited to a number of meetings and other meetings take place at the initiative of the embassy or the government of the country of origin. The participation in individual activities of diaspora communities or DC projects (for example, »round tables« on certain themes in the partner country) also provides opportunities for cooperation that can generate added value for both sides. For DC projects, the perspective of diaspora communities as actors in the partner country can be enriching. It provides insights into the way problems in the partner country are assessed in

the diaspora and on (potential) patterns for return and potential for knowledge and know-how transfer.

■ Support mobilisation initiatives of partner governments

Many partner countries have long since identified the potential contained in the mobilisation of their diaspora. There is a growing number of partner government initiatives and strategies in which the diaspora is explicitly addressed as an actor and valuable »resource« for development in the country of origin. These aspects primarily concern the promotion of »brain gain« for the partner country as well as points such as the improvement of the infrastructure in rural areas. DC projects can support these types of efforts by partner governments at various levels and use various means to do so.

Initiatives in partner countries: The Tres Por Uno programme in Mexico

In order to promote the non-profit collective activities of diaspora communities from the region, in 1986 the district of Zacatecas established the Tres por Uno (Three for One) programme. This programme has existed at the national level since 2001. With this matching fund, the government, the federal states and municipalities subsidise every dollar that is sent by »hometown associations« to the country of origin with one dollar. This especially makes infrastructure and social projects in the migrants' regions of origin possible.

■ Training of diaspora communities

Institutions in Germany too are increasingly engaging in dialogue with diaspora communities, for instance, in the context of municipal DC. The experience gained by GIZ in cooperating with diaspora communities and

that of other institutions has demonstrated an enormous need for professionalisation in the management of projects in the country of origin. Institutions in Germany can use training offers to make an important contribution to strengthening the potential of diaspora communities for development in the partner countries.

What is important? – Success factors for cooperation

■ Clear objectives

Diaspora communities were not originally partners of German DC. In the cooperation arrangement they can be introduced to the larger development-policy context. At the same time, DC projects can become familiar with their specific competencies and their performance capacity and harness this potential. For this reason, it is especially important for there to be clarity with regard to joint objectives and the associated expectations from the respective partner.

■ Reliable partnerships

If partners of the diaspora community on the ground participate in a cooperation project, their performance capacity, as well as their motives and understanding of their roles, are key factors. Identifying these factors is essential for the success of the cooperation.

■ Ownership

The starting point for cooperation with diaspora communities is their already existing engagement in the countries of origin. If this engagement is integrated in the cooperation project and reinforced, it can generate added value for the partners involved. It is important for the diaspora community to continue to make its own contribution. The weighting of the participation can be constituted by both non-financial and financial inputs. Cooperation projects should be designed such that diaspora communities remain in the position to raise a substantial contribution of their own.

■ Monitoring

Many diaspora communities are not familiar with the standard project management processes used in DC or even in other institutions in Germany. In addition, engagement from the diaspora usually entails a geographical distance to the project activities and requires close cooperation with partners who work on the ground. In order for the particular strengths and possibilities of the participating partners (for example, diaspora community in Germany, its partners and the DC project on the ground) to complement each other well and to prevent the distance of the diaspora community from having a negative impact, close monitoring of the project activities is imperative. Diaspora communities and their partners must become acquainted with the cooperation projects' formal requirements (evidence of use, project reports, etc.) at the beginning of the cooperation project.

III. Annex

In practice – Checklist for the first steps

■ For DC projects in the partner countries

Cooperation with diaspora communities is a challenge and an opportunity for DC projects. An organisational unit at GIZ tasked with supporting the theme of migration and development assists interested projects.

- Identify a problem** that cooperation with diaspora communities can help solve (e.g. brain drain/shortage of experts in certain sectors or in educational institutions, the lack of empowerment on the part of civil society actors, absence of infrastructure in rural regions).
- Explore possibilities for cooperation** with diaspora communities and their partners on the ground (e.g. joint project activities, participation in professional events, cooperation in existing initiatives of the partner government for mobilising the diaspora).
- Map the diaspora** in Germany or other countries (size of the diaspora? Relationship of diaspora communities with the government of the origin country? Percentage of highly skilled professionals among the migrants?).*
- If needed, involve intermediary institutions** that can establish contact with diaspora communities (e.g. GIZ's Sector Project Migration and Development Project, BENGGO, chambers of commerce and associations, diaspora ministries in the partner country).
- Identify suitable diaspora communities** as partners (weigh the strengths and weaknesses of the organisations with regard to the project, for instance, sectoral competence, performance capacity).
- Clarify joint objectives and expectations the various sides have of each other** (DC projects, diaspora community, partners on the ground, other partners of the DC project) as the basis for successful cooperation.
- Establish direct contact with partners of the diaspora organisations** on the ground in order to test their performance capacity and potential role in the project (for instance, organisational capacity, relationship with the partner in the diaspora, risk of political instrumentalisation of the project activities).
- Determine formal procedures and requirements** for the participating partners (including assignment of roles, responsibilities for managing the project).

■ For institutions in Germany

- ❑ **Identify objectives**, that can be achieved together with the diaspora communities (for instance, objectives in the context of city twinnings, MDG/Agenda 21 initiatives and municipal DC).
- ❑ **Explore opportunities for cooperation** with diaspora communities and their partners – in the countries of origin and in Germany (for instance, joint project activities, participation in events, training measures for diaspora communities).
- ❑ **Map diasporas** in Germany (size, distribution among federal states or municipalities? Organisational forms? Relationship of diaspora communities with the government of the origin countries?)
GIZ has carried out studies on a number of diaspora communities in Germany. They provide a breakdown of areas of potential the communities have for the development of their countries of origin.*
- ❑ **If needed, involve intermediary institutions** that can establish contact with diaspora communities (e. g. GIZ's Sector Project Migration and Development Project, BENGCO, chambers of commerce and associations).
- ❑ **Identify suitable diaspora communities** as partners (weigh the strengths and weaknesses of the organisations with regard to the project, for instance, sectoral competency, performance capacity, partners and networks in the countries of origin/relationship with the government in the country of origin).
- ❑ **Clarify joint objectives and expectations the various sides have of each other** (institutions in Germany, diaspora communities, partners on the ground) as the basis for successful cooperation.
- ❑ **Establish direct contact with partners of the diaspora organisations** on the ground in order to test their performance capacity and potential role in the project (for instance, organisational capacity, relationship with the partner in the diaspora, risk of political instrumentalisation of the project activities), for instance, via DC projects.
- ❑ **Determine formal procedures and requirements** for the participating partners (including assignment of roles, responsibilities for managing the project).

* Available from GIZ (Sector Project Migration and Development), Internet: www.giz.de/migration.

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Registered offices
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Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5
65726 Eschborn, Germany
T + 49 61 96 79-0
F + 49 61 96 79-11 15

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Division Federal government/states/local authorities; migration and employment;
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Addresses of the BMZ offices

BMZ Bonn	BMZ Berlin
Dahlmannstraße 4	Stresemannstraße 94
53113 Bonn, Germany	10963 Berlin, Germany

T +49 228 99 535-0	T +49 30 18 535-0
F +49 228 99 535-3500	F +49 30 18 535-2501

poststelle@bmz.bund.de
www.bmz.de