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Workshop

Remittances and Development: The Role of the African Migrant Community

Date: Saturday, 07 February

Time: 18:00 – 20:15

Venue: Dalwijk 100A (Ganzenhoef), Okyeman Palace, Amsterdam

Introduction and Welcome

Mr Vincent Gambrah, Director Afroeuro Foundation, opened the session by welcoming all the participants to the workshop. He also explained the purpose of the workshop as being an opportunity for the community to meet and share ideas on how to develop Ghana through development projects and investments.

Workshop chair

Nana Baarfour Frimpong Effapanin II

In his welcome address, the chair reminded participants the workshop is coming at the right time since a change of mind set is needed to push forward the the development of the African continent. He stressed the need of awareness of the remittances from the African Diaspora as constituting an important source of revenue for poverty alleviation. In light of this importance, the workshop constitutes a step in the right direction.

Issues Raised

1. In his introductory remarks, Mr Ackah acknowledged the fact that even though the migrant community do not have so much money the remittances sent home are most often not well accounted for.
2. To him the migrant is often caught between the economy of the country of residence and that of his country of origin thus the need for a methodology to bridge these two economies.
3. corporate or companies worked for by migrants can create a fund with contribution from employers to invest in migrant's country of origin. He challenged organizers to create a platform to research into areas of the best use of remittances.

Most members present bemoaned the ineffective use of remittance and the challenges the migrant faces when he returns home. Various questions for discussion came up.

1. How do we collectively invest at home?
2. What are some initiatives to be taking?
3. Are there tools or framework for the supervision of these investments?
4. What can be done to help stabilize that which has been sent home?



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Various ideas were expressed by participants, the first being the creation of a management pool that will basically have the function of managing investments of migrants back home so as to avoid the usual misappropriation of investments by family members.

Secondly, one participant was of the view that instead of putting money in the hands of one individual who will misappropriate it, it's best the money is invested in small scale ventures to accrued profits. In so doing, employments is created, the economy is boosted and the youth that would want to migrate to search for greener pastures can stay and have something to do.

To the second view another participant advised the building of a Diaspora cottage in specific areas to provide a playground for education technical skills. He entreated that whatever is to be done should be seen as a business investment and not charity.

Further, it was agreed that a creation of a website will not only bring togetherness but will also serve as a business ground and a platform to implementing these ideas. Here too another participant suggested not only a research of the environment of investment but also a mouthpiece to lobby policies in favor of those in the Diaspora. Again, creating a partnership with each using his skill to help and advice on sensitive issues for the benefit of all. Thus doctors among the group will advice on issues of health, a teacher on education etc.

In conclusion it was a well organized discussion, well participated at which participants agreed that management of the remittances and investment has been the bane of progress.

Thematic working groups

1. Impact: Impact of remittances on poverty alleviation, community and the family
2. Collective remittances: Advantages and Drawbacks
Discuss issue of HTA and NSA
3. The corporate sector and the enhancement of remittance flow
Discuss issues of exchange rates, money transfer costs and export market for goods from developing countries
4. Investing in country of origin: Advantages and Drawbacks