

eAfrica

The electronic journal of governance and innovation

The African Diaspora – The Medicine for What Ails Africa

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 Silla Grobbelaar – Managing Editor
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EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD:
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 Thabo Leshilo, Dr Pandelani Mathoma and
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To subscribe:
eafrica-subscribe@saiia.wits.ac.za
 Send comments and suggestions to
editor@saiia.wits.ac.za
www.wits.ac.za/saiia

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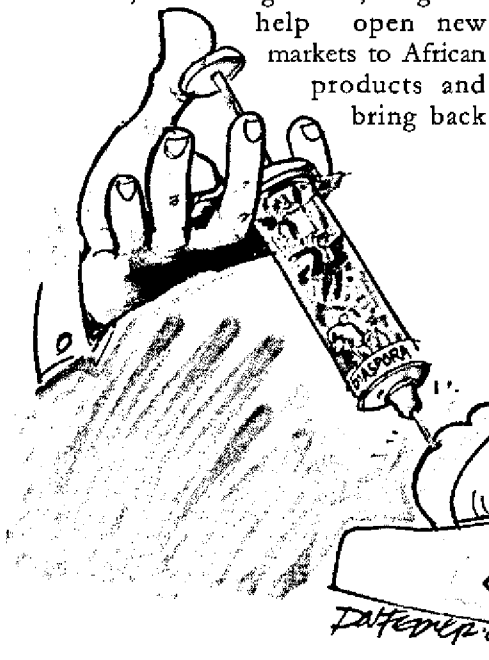
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AFRICA is losing the battle to keep its most skilled citizens employed on the continent. The evidence is stark: More African scientists and engineers are now working in the US than in all of Africa. At the same time, more non-African professionals are working in Africa than in the 1960s. The most damaging emigration affects health care: 75% of the doctors trained in Zambia have emigrated, for example.

However, the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, many African governments and non-governmental organisations have begun energetically seeking ways to halt Africa's brain drain and reach out to the vast pool of talent in the diaspora.

This issue of *eAfrica* examines the best of those efforts. Our broad conclusion is that, ultimately, Africans will only stop leaving when political repression ends and personal opportunities improve on the continent. While the brain drain is damaging in the short-term, in the longer-term, emigrants

help open new markets to African products and bring back



badly needed financial resources and new political and technological ideas. A key lesson is that emigrants may not return permanently but can make a dramatic difference by returning intermittently to be involved in development projects, charities and business ventures. This issue profiles a Microsoft programmer who returned part-time to found a university and stimulate a software industry in Ghana.

The political expectations and technological changes that such people bring can be threatening to autocratic regimes, but the evidence suggests that an injection of outside experience from the diaspora is precisely what Africa needs.

One of the most startling facts about the diaspora is just how much Africa depends on it financially. Although the continent spends much time courting foreign investment by multinational companies, remittances from the diaspora represent a far larger source of funds for many African countries and have played a major role in stabilising collapsing currencies.

This issue also examines the just-completed Rwandan elections and the country's efforts to heal the wounds of genocide by returning to an ancient practice of open-air community courts, which ought to provide valuable food for thought

to many African states torn by conflict.
 – Ross Herbert

Verbatim

“Appointing gay priests, deacons or allowing same-sex marriages cannot be condoned in Africa, since the Bible does not encourage such.” – Retired Kenyan Anglican Archbishop David Gitari reacting to the selection of a gay bishop in the US.

“Others are advocating genocide, but you need not be afraid when you elect me. I will protect you.” – Rwandan President Paul Kagame before the country’s first democratic election since the 1994 genocide.

“It is good that ethnic grouping no longer appears in identity cards, but Hutus remain Hutus and Tutsis remain Tutsis.” – Faustin Twagiramungu, Rwandan presidential candidate.

“The conviction demonstrates to those who do business in developing countries that they do not have a licence to buy favour from governments by making corrupt payments to persons in authority. If they do so they will be vigorously prosecuted and severely punished if convicted.” – Part of the Lesotho High Court’s judgment against Canadian Acres International, which lost its appeal against a conviction for corruption in the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. Acres was fined \$1.4 million.

“(Idi) Amin’s death is a sad comment on the international community’s inability to hold leaders accountable for gross human rights abuses.” – An Amnesty International spokesman.



“I leave you with these parting words, God willing I will be back.” – ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor as he left his country for exile in Nigeria.

“It has indeed been a shameful thing that, as Africans, we have killed ourselves for such a long time.” – South African President Thabo Mbeki at a ceremony before Liberian Charles Taylor departed for exile.

“Here’s a guy breaking all the rules of democracy and no African government is stepping forward and saying: ‘It’s time for you to go’.” – Moeletsi Mbeki, deputy chairman of SAIIA referring to Zimbabwe’s President Robert Mugabe.

“Those (smart) sanctions (imposed on Zimbabwe) should be lifted now.

The quicker they are lifted, the quicker more influence for positive growth and change can emerge.” – Benjamin Mkapa, new chairman of SADC.

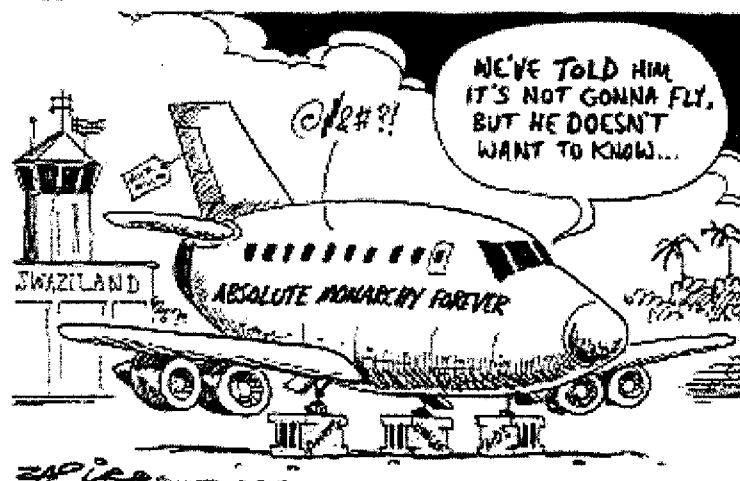
“The only thing that would satisfy us more would be to have Gaddafi’s head delivered on a platter over to the US and let us all walk by it and spit on it.” – George Williams, an American who lost his son in the bombing of

PanAm Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988, after Libya agreed to set up a \$2.7 billion fund for victims’ families.

“Whenever I go into an important trade negotiation, I always take 50 of my top businessmen into the room with me.” – Canadian trade negotiator on lack of African business involvement in preparing for WTO talks.

“The Deputy President wishes to reiterate that he is not guilty of any wrongdoing or corruption.” – South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma’s office after the state said he would not be prosecuted even though investigators say there is a *prima facie* case against him. But Zuma’s adviser, Schabir Shaik, is being charged with tax evasion, paying \$160,000 to Zuma, taking elaborate steps

to hide the payments and assisting Zuma in seeking bribes from a French arms maker. Shaik’s company, Nkobi Holdings, which had no defence experience, won a share in a controversial arms deal. The charge sheet alleges that the ruling ANC party holds a 10% interest in Nkobi, which the ANC denies.



NOTED

Stepping in: An internal or external threat to any of the countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) could generate intervention by its member countries under a mutual defence pact signed at the SADC summit in August 2003. It could allow SADC to play a more direct role in trying to restore order in Zimbabwe and bringing democracy to Swaziland, which continues to be ruled by an absolute monarchy.

Burying the past: The Ivorian government has ordered the reintegration, into the national armed forces, of all soldiers who took up arms against the state and later deserted army ranks. The country's parliament voted unanimously to grant amnesty to all Ivorian soldiers who had participated in acts of rebellion against the state. The decision followed the release on 9 August 2003 of some 54 political prisoners, in accordance with the amnesty law. Analysts said the amnesty was a further attempt by Ivorian authorities to promote peace and reconciliation in the war-torn country.

Liberia still suffering: Despite ex-president Charles Taylor's departure into exile in Nigeria and a peace deal signed by Liberia's caretaker government with the two main rebel groups in mid-August, fresh fighting erupted northeast of the capital Monrovia, with 1,000 people reportedly killed. Gyude Bryant, a prominent church figure and leader of the Liberia Action Party, will take over the interim administration of Liberia from President Moses Blah at the beginning of October 2003, and is tasked with organising elections in 2005.

Sentenced to death: Four of the 87 defendants who appeared in a Moroccan court in connection with the Casablanca suicide bombings in May 2003 have been sentenced to death on the charge of premeditated murder. The other defendants received sentences ranging from 10 months in jail to life imprisonment. At least 45 people, including 12 bombers, were killed in the incident.

Liberia's Shame Is Our Shame

AFRICANS are known to be passionate about their continent. In fact, they are so passionate that anecdotal evidence suggests that none of the world's other continents has been more celebrated in song and poetry.

The passion the continent arouses in her children is evident in the volume of creative works they produce – either praising, wailing at her bosom or lamenting her misery. I am reminded here of Ingaopele Madingoane's epic poem *Afrika My Beginning* and Enoch Sontonga's *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica*. Our passion for the continent is also reflected in our artwork, which shows a continent oozing energy, beauty, courage, goodwill and other virtues.

But, alas, we have a strange way of showing the love we claim to have for this vast continent. I mean, how does one explain the barbarism accompanying the conflict in Liberia? Or have we all become so accustomed to mayhem that we're unmoved by more than 600 people, mostly innocent civilians, dying in one town in a week?

We really outdid ourselves in reinforcing the pessimistic view of the continent. Could there be a more shocking sight than bodies of children, the victims of shelling in Monrovia, being piled up outside the US embassy by frustrated protesters angry at Washington's lack of action?

Horrible as this is, nothing can be more repulsive than killing someone, decapitating him and displaying his head for sport. I can't shake off the picture of one of Charles Taylor's rag-tag soldiers smiling for the camera while holding the head, with blood dripping, as a trophy. His partners in crime were shown slipping a cigarette in the dead man's mouth with the calmness of a

street meat trader preparing his goods for sale. I can almost hear squeals that such a deed is no worse than Americans gleefully displaying mortuary pictures of Saddam Hussein's sons on television screens. I agree fully. Both actions, one by bloodthirsty thugs with rudimentary training and the other by the world's biggest and richest democracy, are equally despicable and should be condemned. But, simply because the US disregards rules, decency and good taste does not mean we should too.

Back to Liberia. Such images are like manna to our detractors who waste no time claiming them as yet more evidence that

Africans are innately savage and beyond redemption. That's rubbish, of course. But it is hard to fight against this view when Africans themselves are feeding the lie. This is a really sad state of affairs.

Even sadder is the fact that the continent's uninspired leaders seem bent on

scuppering efforts to pull Africa out of the quagmire. They dilly-dally in the face of what UN secretary-general Kofi Annan says are unspeakable horrors that should fill every African and human being with shame. Africa desperately needs mechanisms to address problems that hamper its development – be it in Liberia, the DRC, São Tomé, Burundi and other trouble spots. An African peacekeeping force is long overdue.

It boggles the mind how most African leaders choose not to sign the necessary protocols for the establishment of a pan-African parliament, court of justice and a peace and security council to tackle conflict. History will judge such leaders very harshly. – Thabo Leshilo, editor of the *Sowetan Sunday World* newspaper, South Africa

'Have we all become so accustomed to mayhem that we're unmoved by 600 people dying in one town in a week?'

Return to Ancient Justice

Can traditional community courts heal the wounds of genocide and repair the torn social fabric of Rwanda?

IN A hilly neighbourhood of Kigali, Rwanda's rambling capital, beneath a makeshift tent bathed in mid-morning sunlight, a pivotal social experiment unfolds. A woman, her face creased with pain, addresses a panel of stern-looking men. To their side, a man and his wife listen in stony silence.

'These people,' the woman begins, pointing at the couple. 'My husband was running as fast as he could. He found a hiding place. But these people found him and caught him and handed him to the militias, who killed him and left him for the wild dogs.'

In a normal society, face-to-face encounters like this one usually take place in a police station or wood-panelled courtroom. But across this deeply traumatised central African country, the survivors of a state-sponsored genocide are starting to confront their alleged attackers in community courts convened in open fields and school yards – literally 'in the grass,' where the dead were once piled high.

Almost a decade after the erstwhile extremist Hutu government launched a wave of ethnic slaughter that left an estimated 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu dead in 1994, the country is grappling with two related and potentially destabilising issues: Nearly all of the country's trained judges and court staff were slaughtered in the genocide and, as a result, more than 100,000 suspects are still in detention awaiting trial.

According to some estimates, it would take the remaining judges and clerks more than 150 years to hear their cases. To cope with the backlog and promote national reconciliation, Rwanda has adopted an approach that some hold up as a model for other African nations needing to restore social cohesion after extensive civil strife.

After years of preparation, during which judges were trained and perpetrators were identified, Rwanda has established community tribunals to hear all but the most serious cases connected with the genocide. Called *gacacas*, the Kinyarwanda



In a setting like this one, people in Rwanda are starting to deal with the evils of the 1994 genocide through the gacaca courts

word that means 'in the grass', these panels eschew the procedures and sentences of formal courts in favour of direct, face-to-face encounters between victims and alleged perpetrators. The goal is to promote remorse and forgiveness.

Truth-telling as a means of social healing is not new. In the past 20 years more than a dozen countries set up truth commissions to mend their societies after prolonged and traumatic civil strife. That approach, for example, enabled South Africa to shed light on the worst atrocities of its apartheid past and foster racial healing.

'Victims need closure,' says Charles Villa-Vicencio, a former member of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. 'They need to articulate their anger and see the perpetrators stand accountable. It is cathartic for victims when the culprits admit to what they have done.'

Now the executive director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Villa-Vicencio is advising Rwanda in its *gacaca* process. When perpetrators relate their crimes, he says, 'there is great remorse which often leads to forgiveness'.

Rwanda has a long and tortured ethnic history. Its population is 85% Hutu, 14% Tutsi and 1% Twa. The stark imbalance, however, isn't all that it seems. All Rwandans hail from just 18 clans. They speak the same indigenous language. Culturally, the names Hutu and Tutsi referred more to economic status than

ethnic affiliation. But German and Belgian colonial rulers exploited those social divisions to suit their purposes. The divisions engendered deep resentment and Rwandans have suffered waves of ethnic killing in the decades since independence.

Gacacas are an age-old practice in Rwanda. Traditionally, elders initiated the process when they judged an offence or a dispute serious enough to be brought before the entire community. The courts' goals weren't so much punitive as to restore harmony.

Organising the *gacacas* to respond to the genocide has been slow. In October 2001, Rwandans elected over 200,000 people to act as 'persons of integrity'. Prior knowledge of the law, or even a basic formal education, weren't prerequisites. Candidate judges needed only broad community recognition to be considered.

Part of the challenge has been finding sufficient financial resources to train the *gacaca* judges. Government officials estimate it will cost up to \$75 million to run the courts successfully. So far, officials say, they have raised only a fraction of that.

Although the judges underwent about six weeks of training in relevant basic legal principles, observers worry that other factors could undermine the courts. 'We need to see more sensitisation, more education, and more efforts to motivate personnel,' said Klaas de Jonge, a senior researcher for Penal Reform International,

a non-governmental organisation monitoring the process. 'The judges (who receive no salaries) were promised health benefits and other advantages like education for their children. But none of this has been done. You, therefore, have unmotivated judges, and if nothing is done to change the way things are, I doubt whether *gacaca* will achieve its objectives.'

There is a danger, consequently, that the *gacaca* courts will lack credibility.

'Because of the very nature of these courts, genocide victims and their families will end up thinking they are too lenient,' says David Songa, a retired military officer. 'Someone who lost 30 family members wants stiff sentences, not forgiveness or lenience.'

Billboards promote the idea that *gacaca* will help repair the nation with the slogan: 'The truth heals, let's tell what we saw, let's confess to what we did, this will heal us.'

Government officials and *gacaca* supporters say the approach is the only way to bring closure to such a traumatic episode in the country's history. The International Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania, illustrates why. Set up in 1997, the tribunal has heard cases against only 82 accused, with 13 concluded. The Arusha process, furthermore, is designed to prosecute only the most serious offenders – the planners of the genocide, or *genocidaires*. Only the tribunal or Rwanda's own formal courts can impose the death penalty.

Government officials say the most important potential benefit of *gacacas* is their participatory nature. Many survivors are angry that alleged killers could walk free. Some Hutus complain that alleged Tutsi crimes aren't being investigated, and others are reluctant to talk about the past for fear of reprisal. The *gacacas* may help to break that resentment and reticence.

'Ever since the end of the genocide, the *gacaca* courts so far are the only fora where Rwandans, Hutus and Tutsis alike, can meet, listen to each other, and hear what caused some to do what they did,' says Charles Kayitana, a spokesman for the *gacaca* process. 'Publicly expressed remorse sends the message that massacres and genocides will have no place in the country anymore.' – Shyaka Kanuma, in Kigali, Rwanda

An Imperfect Election

PAUL Kagame, the Tutsi strongman who has led Rwanda for the past nine years, kept his job in the August 2003 presidential election – the country's first since its devastating genocide in 1994.

Beyond that, the poll results are as muddied as a Kigali street after a hard rain. Observer missions disagreed over the conduct of the poll. Most African teams said the election was clean. The European Union cited irregularities.

But in a country that has experienced successive waves of ethnic slaughter over the past 40 years, the critical question is whether the election solidified or undermined its delicate process of national reconciliation.

In 1994 the extremist Hutu government then in power incited an orgy of killing that left 800,000 minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus dead in 100 days.

Some say the vote is a decisive step forward. Roughly four million people – half the population – cast ballots, queuing peacefully in the same schools and churches where their relatives killed or were killed in horrific massacres nine years ago.

But the size of Kagame's victory margin – he won just over 95% – raises questions about what role fear played.

In his victory speech, Kagame declared the election 'a victory ... for all Rwandans (that) brings hope'.

Others aren't so sure. The opposition candidate, former prime minister Faustin Twagiramungu, claims he was unfairly stigmatised by his opponent for being a Hutu. Although ethnicity was officially barred as an election issue, Kagame repeatedly accused his challenger of practising the politics of 'divisionism'. Opposition supporters were harassed and arrested during the campaign season.

'Like it or not, Hutus could very well begin asking themselves whether the issue of divisiveness won't be used perpetually to exclude them from the political process,' wrote Rwandan political analyst Charles Kabonero in a recent newspaper column.

A Western diplomat based in Kigali agreed. 'It looks like ethnic divisiveness is becom-



Paul Kagame received more than 95% of the votes cast by Rwandans

ing a weapon to beat opponents into line. A good future for Rwanda cannot be ensured by people amplifying their ethnic differences all the time.'

The EU observer mission noted that in some polling stations, the number of ballots counted exceeded the number of voters listed. Observers were not allowed to watch the counting process.

Even so, Colette Flesch, the EU mission leader, called the vote an important step forward. 'There is still work to be done in terms of credibility, transparency and freedom of expression,' she said. 'Nevertheless, the elections were an opening for a new, more democratic era in Rwanda.'

For many ordinary Rwandans, the opportunity to vote in peace was enough. They are tired of living in fear and suspicion. In a country where the average annual income is \$220, according to the World Bank, voters want their leaders to focus on providing jobs.

On the eve of the election, Hamad Mossi leaned back against the side of his taxi and mused about life in this blood-soaked country. 'We have seen enough violence in the past,' he said. 'We have seen where the politics of Hutu and Tutsi took us. I shall only vote for whoever will better ensure the peace we enjoy.'

The next morning, he cast his ballot for Kagame. – Shyaka Kanuma, in Kigali, Rwanda

SPECIAL FEATURE

Reversing the Brain Drain, Harnessing the Diaspora

Instead of bemoaning the brain drain Africa is looking at creative ways of tapping the intellectual and financial resources of the African diaspora

CHECK the weekly newspapers in Africa and recruitment advertisements abound: teachers, nurses, computer technicians – wanted in the US, UK, Australia and Saudi Arabia.

A recent check for 'recruiting agencies abroad' on a South African Internet search engine found 20,000 hits, while a global search engine found 1,040,000 hits with thousands of agencies specifically targeting African professionals to work abroad.

At a time when Africa most needs its skilled professionals, the continent is experiencing a steady, debilitating brain drain caused by aggressive professional recruiting agencies, personal ambition, and the substantial wage gap between the developed and developing world.

There are currently more African scientists and engineers working in the US than in all of Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). At the same time, more non-African professionals work in Africa now than in the 1960s.

Human capital flight from Africa is accelerating. According to IOM and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, an estimated 1,800 Africans a year left the continent from 1960 to 1975. The pace quickened to 4,444 a year from 1975 to 1984. Since 1990 more than 20,000 people leave the continent annually. The UN's *Africa Recovery* journal recently noted that half the doctors in the Saskatchewan province of Canada were foreign-trained – with 20% from South Africa.

The developed world has become so



The Taxi Ambassadors: To promote tourism and catch the attention of the South African diaspora in London, the South African tourism authority took 80 British taxi drivers on tour in South Africa, where they were shown the sights and informed of the many things the country has to offer. In exchange for their holiday, the drivers agreed to have their taxis painted with the South African flag. The flag was not only a rolling advertisement for South Africa but a natural conversation ice breaker between passengers and drivers, who – flush with information and memories of their holiday in South Africa – would chat with their thousands of passengers as unofficial ambassadors. Picture courtesy of SA Tourism

bold in its search for professionals from developing countries that African governments have launched something of a backlash in recent years. South Africa, for example, has sought bilateral agreements with the United Kingdom and other governments to end state-sponsored recruiting of teachers and medical staff.

Statistics and common sense suggest that such attempts to directly block the brain drain will never halt the outflow of skilled personnel.

Despite diplomatic agreements, head-hunting continues unabated by private industry. Many countries tailor immigration rules to lure top professionals. And the dramatic difference in salaries is as large and alluring as ever for African professionals.

For example, the average doctor in the US earns 31 times as much as a doctor in Zambia (\$17,141 a month versus \$540, according to figures from the American Medical Association and the Zambia Resident Doctors Association). Even minimum wage jobs, which pay \$5.15 an hour in the US (\$892 a month), are alluring to people in Africa, where two-thirds of the population live on less than \$60 a month, according to the UN.

Redefining the problem and the solutions

Historically, African leaders have tended to frame the brain-drain problem as a simple consequence of higher wages abroad. That conception led many states to conclude that solutions were impossible, given the power of market forces. But a growing number of African leaders and organisations are shrugging off the pessimism and seeking creative solutions to harness the intellectual and financial strength of the diaspora – something the Asians have already discovered.

Since it began opening to the West and sending college students abroad in the 1970s, China has had its own brain-drain problem. Of the 232,000 students who

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went to universities overseas until the end of 1997, only 32% returned, according to David Zweig, of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and Stan Rosen of the University of Southern California, who are collaborating on a study of the return of the Chinese diaspora.

However, incentives to returning scholars and economic liberalisation have brought back a wealth of experience and know-how. Zweig and Rosen wrote recently in *Sci-Dev.net* that out of '65 returners interviewed in high-tech zones in Hangzhou, Guangzhou and Wuhan, nearly half had imported technology of which 71% was state-of-the-art while another 23% was new for China. Also, 23% had imported foreign capital, while 28% maintained overseas contacts on a daily basis. In-depth interviews reveal that these returners are raising the technological level of China's domestic economy.'

Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar, the former editor of the *Economic Times* of India, argued in the *Times of India* that focusing on the brain drain alone ignores the ways the developing world benefits from the diaspora and the flow of ideas: 'The overwhelming bulk of brainpower used in our university courses comes from research and writing done in the West. No Indian pays for the knowledge of Newton or Euclid, or for the huge and constant flow of knowledge in new scientific papers and journals.'

'The West does not pay for the contribution of Aryabhata (the great Indian mathematician) either. But let us concede that the overwhelming flow of free knowledge is from the rich to poor countries. Yes, we export free brainpower in the form of engineers. And yes, we enjoy a huge import of free brainpower in a multitude of forms. On balance, we get far more than we supply. So, I think we need to abandon the concept of a brain drain. But we can indeed talk of flows of brainpower, of global flows of innovations, ideas and creativity.'

Similarly, African policymakers have begun to look upon the diaspora as a human network through which new ideas, capital and technology flow back to the continent. Damtew Teferra, a lecturer and researcher on the diaspora at the Centre for International Higher Education in Boston, United States, notes: 'Egypt ... considers its diaspora as its treasures kept abroad. It is vital to affirm that these unclaimed treasures can potentially serve as another window to

the industrialised world, as another bridge in knowledge transmission and exchange, and as another catalyst in fostering knowledge creation and utilisation. It is apt to remark, therefore, that the diaspora is a vital and influential community of "undercover" ambassadors – of their home countries and regions – without formally designated portfolio.'

While Africa's 'brain drain' debate has focused heavily on the loss of doctors and other top professionals, scores of students and unskilled Africans have also emigrated and – because they had no preconceived career paths – have gained management experience and other skills in a wide variety of industries. Many of these people have returned with valuable new ideas and practices that improve the effectiveness of African business.

Although many émigrés will not return, they all retain deep family, ethnic and nationalistic loyalties that have powerful potential – if they can be tapped.

Consider the case of Dr Michael Bongo. In 1991, Bongo left the turmoil in the Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire) to study neurosurgery in South Africa, a discipline unavailable at Congolese universities. Today, he has settled in South Africa and won't consider returning permanently to Congo.

'I have not been back since I left and until DRC is stable, what future can I offer my family?' says Bongo, who requested that his real name not be used. 'Some of the other doctors in my field and I have discussed going to DRC to do workshops with the doctors there to give them our knowledge and expertise. But on a rotational basis – not permanently.'

Raising salaries to developed world levels may be impossible, but much could be done to make salaries regionally competitive, provide better housing and find sponsors for research grants to provide a more attractive and satisfying professional environment at home.

There are also ways to head off

Facts on the Diaspora

- One out of every 35 people globally is a migrant.
- The number of people living in a country other than their own is 175 million or 3% of the global population.
- One out of 10 people in the developed world is an immigrant, compared to one out of 70 in developing countries.
- There were only 32 doctors per 100,000 people in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Of the 1,200 medical graduates in the 1990s in Zimbabwe, 840 have left the country.
- There are currently just 20,000 scientists and engineers in Africa. An estimated million are needed for Africa to meet its development goals.
- Some 35 countries now use networks to connect diaspora with activities at home.
- Of about 20 faculty members of the physics department at Addis Ababa University who left for Ph. D. studies abroad none returned (Teferra, 1997).

Sources: International Organisation of Migration, *World Migration Report 2003*, diaspora researcher Damtew Teferra, as well as Wilma Meeus and David Sanders at the University of the Western Cape

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emigration before it begins or to limit its duration.

Netcare, a private healthcare and hospital management company in South Africa, contracts with the British National Health Service (NHS) to provide doctors and nurses on short-term assignments that ease the UK skills shortage. The South African staff are barred by contract from working in the UK for two years. Thus South Africa profits from the UK skills shortage without permanently losing doctors. (See page 14).

Other companies needing to fill professional jobs in Africa – such as Unilever, which manufactures consumer products across the continent – have specifically recruited African students at British universities on the assumption that students abroad will return home if they have a job waiting for them.

One such programme is Africa Recruit, which is funded by the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC). It organises job fairs to recruit Africans studying abroad for jobs back in Africa and acts as an employment agency searching for talent in the diaspora.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo praised Africa Recruit for directing skills back to the continent and providing a vehicle 'to explain the various reforms being put in place to restore the continent to the path of growth and prosperity, a process in which they are stakeholders'.

Another benefit of the diaspora that has yet to be tapped is their potential role in promoting African exports. Many small and medium businesses in Africa cannot

afford to travel abroad to find distributors and export marketing partners for their goods. African expatriates often do that work for them.

'Some companies needing to fill professional jobs in Africa specifically recruit African students on the theory that they will return home if they have a job waiting'

Take Cecilia Ruto, for example. A Kenyan entrepreneur who ran a postal business that was forced to close because of government regulations, she feared the political turmoil as president Daniel arap Moi's 24 years in office drew to a close and set off for Australia seeking new work opportunities. Put off by the strict immigration rules there,

she decided to try New Zealand. Serendipitously, she discovered that, while the country had a passion for tea, its markets seemed to stock only poor-quality brands.

'I managed to organise with connections back home to import some tea for a trial run and the locals who tasted it were very impressed. They loved it. Then I knew that I was onto a winning idea,' Ruto said. Thus emigration created a new market for Kenyan exports that had previously been unexplored.

'Another benefit of the diaspora yet to be tapped is their potential role in promoting African exports'

Like Ruto, many in the diaspora are not high-tech professionals but do have the trader's nose for business. If African embassies and trade ministries could seek out such enterprising individuals and help connect them with African manufacturers,

they could jointly contribute to growth and development in Africa.

Given the potential of the diaspora, what specific steps can Africa take to harness the intellectual, business and financial resources of Africans abroad? Stories in the following pages outline some of the solutions from across the continent.
– Ross Herbert and Trish Guy

One Who Returned – At the Top

THE best Ghanaian students try to gain places as undergraduates in US or European universities, hoping to remain abroad after graduation. One who did was Patrick Awuah, who went on to become a code writer at Microsoft. Awuah decided to leave Microsoft in order to help Ghana, his native country, better compete in the software world. Showing no shortage of ambition, he founded a new university 18 months ago.

The university is called Ashesi, which means 'beginning' in Twi, the country's dominant traditional language. It is housed in an attractive compound in the central Accra neighbourhood of Labone. To ensure that students gain a foundation in the school's core subjects, Ashesi offers a fixed lineup of courses for the first two years. These courses create a common experience for students, help to maintain quality of instruction, and reduce the cost of running the school. The goal is to blend training in software engineering with liberal arts and business studies. In early 2002, Ashesi began its second year of instruction, with a freshman class twice the size of the previous year.

The very existence of a Patrick Awuah comes as a shock to theorists of underdevelopment and the digital divide. Africa is not supposed to supply code writers to Microsoft, and it certainly is not expected to get them back older, wiser, and more idealistic. Yet Awuah is literally trying to bring the spirit of Silicon Valley to Accra. Awuah is a quiet revolutionary, bent on creating a cadre of successful technology business leaders who are public-spirited and committed to lifting Africa by its bootstraps into the age of cyberspace. 'We're not just building a technical workforce,' he says. 'We're training ethical and entrepreneurial business leaders.' – G Pascal Zachary, a research fellow at the International Computer Science Institute and author of *The Diversity Advantage: Multicultural Identity and the New World Economy* (Westview, 2003).

SPECIAL FEATURE

Using Digital and Social Networks to Tap the Diaspora

NIGERIA has a special assistant to the president for the diaspora. Senegal created a ministry of foreign and diaspora affairs. Ghana changed its laws to allow dual citizenship to make it easier for the diaspora to return.

Increasingly, African countries, non-governmental organisations, and continental organisations like the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) Secretariat are seeking new ways to reverse the outflow of African talent.

Because Africans leave the continent for a wide variety of reasons – political persecution, lack of employment, better career and education opportunities – no single solution will plug the drain. Africa needs to develop a range of reforms and incentives to attract expatriate professionals back to the continent, experts say.

A number of African countries, including Senegal, Ghana and Rwanda, have held diaspora conferences to find new ways to help their expatriates and their families return home. One lesson from Ghana's effort is that if Africa wants émigrés to return, the process must be easier. In particular, spouses and children born abroad should have the opportunity to claim citizenship easily and be allowed to maintain dual citizenship to make it easier for émigrés to continue to conduct business. The Ghanaian embassy in Washington maintains a computer skills bank on its nationals working in the US. Senegal, which has lost nearly a quarter of this economically active population through emigration, is creating a similar database.

Engaging through the internet

'The world wide web has enabled us to reach many frontiers, and we hope that

these developments in technology can help maximise the exploitation of the brain mobility potential,' said Damtew Teferra, a lecturer and researcher on the diaspora at the Centre for International Higher Education in Boston, US.

Nurturing links with the diaspora is crucial, Teferra says. India has sent many thousands of professionals to

California's Silicon Valley, but they maintain strong links with families and – like their Chinese counterparts – send funds back home and actively help to develop business start-ups in India and Indian-US joint ventures.

Because it is cheap and instantaneous communication, information technology enables countries to utilise the resources of their diaspora in vital new ways. For example:

■ The Nigerian website Nigeriaweb offers news articles, information on banks and commercial institutions that can help expatriates send money back home. It even offers advice on how to apply for emigration to key countries such as the US.

■ The South African Official Information Website (www.safrika.info) was originally designed to promote tourism. Now it includes information to help South Africans living abroad find each other, connect with expatriate social clubs, develop investment opportunities back home and find South African products and services.

■ The South African Network of Skills Abroad (SANSA) helps channel émigré

scientists into projects back home through a database of more than 2,000 skilled professionals abroad.

■ The Association of Kenyans Abroad and the Association of Nigerians Abroad have developed 'knowledge networks' – databases to facilitate the exchange of ideas and skills across the oceans.

■ In Ghana the diaspora helped to create the Ghana Association of Distance Learning and Computer Literacy. It has the full support of the government of Ghana and colleagues in Ghana. The same group also established non-profit organisations to solicit financial and in-kind assistance to support activities in high schools.

■ Ghana Cyber Group is an online organisation of 6,000 Ghanaian expatriates, which seeks to promote computer education by getting members of the Ghanaian diaspora to contribute \$20 a month to sponsor the computer education costs for two students. The group tries to tap the alumni sentiment by getting them to sponsor students at the high schools in Ghana where the émigrés graduated. In addition, the group raises funds in the US to rebuild Ghanaian hospitals and distribute books to universities in Ghana. (www-gcgfoundation.org).

Using culture and social networks

While internet databases offer global access, they have significant limitations. Tracking professionals abroad requires constant updating and immense effort. Relying on people to maintain their own information online is also unreliable.

Consequently, many electronic lists are inaccurate.

'One lesson from Ghana's effort is that if Africa wants émigrés to return, the process must be easier'

'Tracking professionals abroad requires constant updating and immense effort'

SPECIAL FEATURE

Even if a perfect list of émigrés could be compiled, the information is useless unless the right people can be connected with the right opportunities – a task that grows more difficult as a database grows.

To get around that problem, some countries and organisations have adopted 'soft' approaches to encourage the participation and patriotism of Africans living abroad. For example, the Homecoming Revolution project was started by South African advertising executive Angel Jones, who returned home from London in 2001. She concluded that many other South Africans would follow in her footsteps if encouraged. The project website highlights positive stories of people returning and good news emerging from Africa (see story page 12). Working through social and sports clubs, she developed a database of 27,000 South Africans working abroad to whom she sends monthly electronic mail missives.

Social clubs, which get together to cheer for the national side in sporting events or to celebrate national holidays, can be a fast and inexpensive way for nations to stay in touch with their diaspora. While perhaps less organised than formal databases, social networks are a kind of living database that is a far more durable and reliable means of tapping the diaspora. And because they are built around interest in news from home and social interaction with countrymen, the effort needed to keep tabs on contact details is provided freely by members. With so many South African IT professionals living abroad today, the number of online South African social clubs has proliferated in recent years.

There are other ways to stay connected. School or university alumni associations are another source of contact with professionals in particular disciplines. There are also a variety of nationally focused internet 'chat rooms' frequented by the diaspora to stay in touch with events back home. African embassies can hold regular functions around national holidays and sporting events. Once in contact with networks of émigrés, embassies can forward news of job

opportunities and new development projects for which expertise is required. Even if only a fraction of the diaspora ever permanently returns to Africa, such clubs sustain a vital sense of national solidarity upon which any successful appeal to the diaspora depends.

That sentiment also has major potential to help build African tourism. South Africa recently launched a television advertising campaign using celebrity figures with the slogan: 'South Africa – Alive with Possibilities', creating an uplifting vision of what it means to be a South African.

The University of Cape Town's Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship recently joined a World Bank project to expand business opportunities using diaspora networks. South Africa and Armenia were chosen as test countries. The project assessed databases and facilitates networking among expatriates and Britons with business interests in South Africa. It also identified and targeted all companies interested in off-shore trade.

'Once we identified those companies, we made personal presentations and we met them and followed up with emails and appeals,' said Jonathan Marx, leader of the South African part of the project.

Paul Grove, president of the UK-South African Business Club, believes that the majority of those who have settled abroad are unlikely to return. 'It's a personal decision and maybe a generational one,' he says. 'But I think we are all patriotic in the broader sense. We are willing to promote South African products and South African tourism destinations and also through our own business ventures and alliances with South African partners. We would like to be living examples of business integrity.'

'There is a strong perception internationally of African corruption and inefficiency,' says Grove, who lives in London. 'We can overcome those prejudices by being shining examples of good business ethics. We are unofficial ambassadors for our country.' – Ross Herbert and Trish Guy

Making a Difference Back Home

ON THE morning of 9 April 1996, Sylvain Zongo made a phone call – and Burkina Faso got wired.

Sitting at his desk in the Institute of Research in Ouagadougou, the capital, that morning Zongo made the country's first internet connection.

Although a mere footnote in the grand story of the information age, Zongo's phone call is a compelling illustration of what happens when the diaspora comes home.

Three years earlier, Zongo had the world at his feet, graduating from the University of Rennes in Paris with a degree in computer science at the top of his class. Job offers were piling up on his desk. But for Zongo, all that glittered in Paris was not gold. All he ever really wanted to do was take his skills home.

A decade later, Zongo is something of a local hero in Ouagadougou. By any account, the list of his contributions is impressive. After running the Institute's computer department for several years and making the country's first online connection, Zongo set off to take the internet to the people. He and an old university friend drew all their savings, pooled the money and opened Cyber Frites, an internet cafe that quickly gained in popularity.

In 2002 the pioneering Zongo launched the first internet telephone service in Burkina Faso. The fledgling company made \$100,000 in its first year. But Zongo's success didn't please everyone. Government officials accused him of threatening the state-owned telephone service's monopoly.

Zongo is very aware of the social impact of his work. Landlocked and poor, Burkina Faso has a new connection to the world. – Caroline Sorgho

SPECIAL FEATURE

Capturing the Wealth Abroad

Remittances from the African diaspora greatly exceed FDI, but get little policy attention

ERITREA is perhaps the best example of an African nation combining patriotism, social networks and effective organisation to tap the strengths of the diaspora.

During its 30-year war for independence from Ethiopia, Eritrea developed a system for facilitating contributions from citizens living abroad. Since independence in 1993, it has maintained systematic contact with foreign-based citizens. It was one of the first, and remains one of the only, African states to collect taxes from its expatriates.

When the new nation wanted to launch a national television system, it was able to finance it entirely with contributions from abroad. Later, it financed its 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia with \$300-\$400 million in remittances from the diaspora. Those funds not only made the difference between survival and defeat, they propped up the national currency that was only six months old when the shooting started.

Social clubs and associations are the heart of the Eritrean system, through which Eritreans abroad spread news from home, share music, and facilitate the delivery of gifts. The trust between members of these social networks is a key ingredient enabling Eritrea to sustain the remittance flow.

Himbol is one of the largest Eritrean remittance agencies, which operates among Eritrean expatriates in 14 countries. A Himbol contact in each Eritrean association abroad accepts cheques from citizens and deposits them in a bank account, where they are bundled with other funds and later transmitted electronically to Eritrea. Himbol does not wait for cheques to clear or for every individual deposit to be transmitted before dispensing money in Eritrea (which would greatly increase the transaction cost and reduce the incoming forex). On trust alone, funds meant for families back home are immediately dispensed.

Although Africa has focused on courting foreign investors, new research notes that

the value of funds transmitted back to Africa as worker remittances is in many cases far larger than total foreign direct investment (FDI). The World Bank's *Global Development Finance 2003* study found that emigrants from developing countries moved a total of \$72.3 billion in remittances from the developed world to developing countries in 2001. For all low-income countries, remittances were 213% of FDI.

In most African countries – with the exception of those countries that receive high levels of oil-industry investment – official remittances are larger than foreign direct investment. For most of the 1990s remittances also exceeded the value of official development aid in much of Africa. Remittances were 4.5% of gross domestic product in Benin from 1980 to 1999, for example, and 13.5% in Cape Verde, according to the study. For 10 of 18 African countries for which remittance and FDI data are available for 2000, remittances per capita were greater than FDI per capita. Tiny Somaliland, with 1.5 million people, receives an estimated \$500 million a year from its diaspora. Other studies indicate that the level of remittances moved through informal financial channels is double or triple the officially acknowledged rate.

While the brain-drain debate has focused on professional emigrants, non-professional émigrés actually send a far greater proportion of their salaries back to Africa, according to the World Bank. Wealthier professionals tend to keep their surplus capital in the country where they work. However, the Senegal government is working with investors in the diaspora to set up a *Banque des Emigrés du Senegal* (bank of Senegalese emigrants) that would act as an investment bank to allocate funds for long-term development projects in Senegal. To lure funds away from other market-based investments, such an institution must have a sound financial footing and rigorous project-selection standards. Government-

guaranteed depositor's insurance also would eliminate the perception that 'social investment' institutions are high-risk.

What else could Africa do to encourage this underappreciated flow of funds from the diaspora? To expand the flow of remittances, analysts say, Africa needs to:

- Reduce service charges and make banking easier at home and abroad.

- Invest in proper computerisation and national identification systems to facilitate financial transfers and ensure the financial systems are not as easily exploited by criminal or terror networks.

- Allow citizens to hold foreign-currency accounts and enable foreign banks to operate in the consumer sector – where they can facilitate remittance accounts.

- Ensure that deposit interest rates are higher than inflation rates, that banks are liquid enough to dispense remittance funds efficiently, and official exchange rates are close to market rates so customers have an incentive to keep funds in the formal banking sector.

Such reforms are even more important in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September 2001. Concerned that terrorists were using informal financial networks and electronic transfers, Western governments have tightened financial regulations and closed networks such as those funnelling money into Somalia.

Through such reforms some countries have already realised sizeable benefits. In Paris, three banks – *Banque de l'Habitat du Senegal*, *Banque de l'Habitat du Mali* and *Banque des Ivoiriens de France* – cater specifically to Africans wanting to send cash home. Together these banks make more than 400 transfers a day; the Senegalese bank alone brings \$24 million to Senegal annually, or more than a quarter of all official remittances. – Ross Herbert

SPECIAL FEATURE

A Positive Spin on the Web

ANGEL Jones has started a revolution – a ‘homecoming revolution’. Using the internet and electronic mail, she is making a nostalgic appeal to expatriates to bring their skills back to the lands where their hearts lie.

In 2000, Jones was working in London for international advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi. After seven years abroad, she wanted to return to her native South Africa. She persuaded her bosses that the company needed to establish a South African branch, which she was eventually tasked with heading. But in the process of setting up the new operation she ran squarely into the brain-drain problem: As she was recruiting staff she repeatedly came across many talented young South Africans who said they were thinking of going overseas to further their careers.

Jones knows first hand that once South Africans got settled internationally they tend to stay there. They are drawn overseas by dreams of better job opportunities, higher wages and more stable societies.

But Jones also knows well that those dreams don't always turn out quite the way people imagined they would. Expatriates almost always retain a deep attachment to their homeland. With a little encouragement, Jones believed, many of her fellow South African might be persuaded to head home.

But how? After struggling with the problem for a while, Jones decided that she could put her advertising and marketing skills to work to change perceptions of South Africa and help those who were already considering going home.

Six months ago she launched ‘The Homecoming Revolution’ online to make a nostalgic appeal to



South Africans living abroad.

‘We must make South Africa an attractive destination for returning professionals and that means highlighting the positives and not just the negatives,’ she said. ‘We have many positive attributes. We have more than just great tourism destinations and we have a wonderful energy and drive.’

Jones built a database of South Africans living in the UK and the US. She went to South African social clubs, embassies – all the places where her fellow countrymen might get together to cheer on their favourite sports teams or trade business notes. Many of these places have electronic mail lists maintained through personal friendships.

Now, she sends monthly bulletins to all of the people on her database, highlighting positive developments in South Africa and reminding her compatriots that their talents are sorely needed back home. So far the database includes some 27,000 skilled professionals. In the past six months, Jones says, she has been contacted by about 1,000

South Africans who have returned home.

Jones realises that crime and unemployment are common reasons why professionals stay abroad. The Homecoming Revolution campaign – whose motto is ‘Come home and make it even better’

– provides a mix of positive news to counteract the negative perceptions and also stories of those who have gone

home successfully. ‘We don't want to be unrealistic but we want to give them answers,’ she said. ‘We want people to come back and be part of the solution.’

The website also offers links to a number of useful resources, such as a removals company that is willing to give online quotes and discounts and a recruitment company that lists resumés online.

So far, Jones has compiled around 500 profiles of South African professionals who have returned to their homeland after working abroad. The website, www.homecomingrevolution.co.za, receives about 160,000 hits a month.

Jones has persuaded South African Airways to show an in-flight documentary during December, when expatriates come home for the holidays, showing families who have returned to build happy lives after living abroad.

‘Our research has shown that many people feel that if they go abroad they have to prove they made it big or they are seen as a failure,’ she said. ‘We want to get the message out there that we need them back. We need as many skills in our country as possible, everyone can make a difference. We need people with a pioneering spirit.’

Jones likes to quote Mahatma Gandhi, who lived in South Africa in the 1890s and the start of the 1900s and was influential in that country's freedom struggle before returning to lead India's resistance campaign against British colonial rule. ‘You must be the change you wish to see in the world,’ he said.
– Trish Guy

‘Many people feel that if they go abroad they have to prove they made it big or they are seen as failures’

Exiles and Political Reform

The flow of ideas from diaspora to Africa helped bring traumatic but needed democratic change

FOR Africa the brain drain is usually thought of in terms of economic costs. A powerful positive effect is consequently often overlooked. The African diaspora has brought back ideas that have profoundly reshaped political thinking and expectations on the continent.

There's an important reason for this. The countries with the greatest exodus of skilled people have typically been those countries with the worst political instability, repression and economic mismanagement. Failing autocratic regimes consistently drive out the best and brightest – those who are most likely to resist political oppression, corruption, and fiscal irresponsibility.

'At the first sign of political resistance your government clamps down on any opposition, the academics start to leave, the economy starts to fail,' says Moses Moyo, an exiled Zimbabwean. 'The government gets mad and the economy gets worse. Then all of the skilled professionals start to leave and the government starts shooting anyone who opposes them.'

People who are forced out under such political circumstances don't always leave for good. But drawing them back requires significant political reform.

Ethiopian emperor Menelik may have been the first to reach out to the diaspora. In 1909 he wrote an open letter to a black American newspaper urging people of African descent to settle in Ethiopia, where he said a surplus of land, gold and diamonds made the nation 'too rich'.

The very concept of pan-Africanism was begun by African Americans like W.E.B. DuBois, who organised the first three pan-African congresses beginning in 1900. Those philosophical ideas percolated back to Africa. Kwame Nkrumah and Nnamdi Azikiwe, who led Ghana and Nigeria, respectively to independence, both studied in the US in the 1930s and were deeply influenced by the energetic debates there around reclaiming black pride and fighting

for emancipation. In turn, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe studied in Ghana, where he met his first wife and was influenced by Nkrumah.

More recently, the diaspora played a decisive role in pressurising African governments to end the era of the one-party state and open up to multiparty democracy. The repression of the Marxist Derg regime in Ethiopia in the 1980s drove hundreds of thousands of professionals and others out of the country, from where they helped fund and organise the armed opposition that toppled Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991. Ignored by both sides in

'The fall of apartheid in South Africa was hugely influenced by the contributions of exiles'

the Cold War, the Eritrean diaspora financed Eritrean resistance to Ethiopian rule for 32 years.

Africans who studied abroad and experienced genuinely free press and well-functioning public institutions returned with new expectations for African economic management, political governance and freedom to speak and protest. The fall of apartheid in South Africa was hugely influenced by the contributions of exiles like Oliver Tambo, Joe Slovo and Thabo Mbeki. Mbeki, now president, spent years abroad in Africa, Britain and Russia, gaining experience and being exposed to ideas that have profoundly influenced the direction of his party's post-independence policies as well as the formation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the African Union.

Similarly, Africans driven abroad by persecution have returned to agitate for change in Kenya, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Mali and many other nations.

Eritrea has arguably been the most successful African nation in tapping its diaspora who have made huge contributions to national development (see page 11). But that same network of expatriates is also demanding radical political change at a time when President Isaias Afewerki refuses to permit political pluralism, despite long-standing pledges and constitutional provisions requiring the country to adopt multiparty democracy after it gained independence in 1993.

In 2001 Afewerki closed down all independent internal media and jailed ruling party heavyweights who were calling for multiparty reforms. The main agitation for change is coming from a band of academics and former diplomats abroad who use the internet to spread word of government repression and monitor the broken promises. That places Afewerki in a quandary. The state is deeply dependent on remittances and taxes from the diaspora. If he refuses to heed the diaspora politically he may find those funding streams drying up.

Because politics is the factor that drives many to leave Africa, a change in political regime can be the trigger that brings many emigrants home. The end of apartheid brought South African exiles home in droves. The ending of Daniel arap Moi's 24-year iron grip in Kenya in January 2003 seems to be having the same effect there.

'I sense an energy out there in the diaspora that wants to participate, but it needs someone to manage the process,' said Pete Ondeng, who is chief executive of the Kenya Nepad Secretariat. Ondeng went abroad from 1998 to 2002 to work in a financial services firm that loans money for development projects in Africa and Asia.

'I get so many calls from people wanting to come home, but they want a stronger sense of affirmation that this new government is not just a passing cloud.'
– Ross Herbert

SPECIAL FEATURE

Africa's Health Care Crisis

AFRICA is losing its best doctors and nurses in the greatest numbers at a time when it needs them the most.

The *British Medical Journal* estimates that 23,000 health-care professionals emigrate annually from Africa. A survey of South African medical schools suggests that between a third and a half of their graduates leave for jobs in the developed world. The costs are enormous. Every doctor who leaves Africa costs \$184,000 to replace, according to a study by the UN Conference on Trade and Development. Those 23,000 thus represent \$4.2 billion in lost educational investment. In addition, Africa spends roughly \$4 billion on salaries for foreign experts, the study found.

The lure of higher salaries, better research facilities, and less-traumatic working conditions is powerful – and plugging the drain is difficult. Not even bilateral agreements between African and Western governments have slowed the exodus.

According to the London *Independent*, the UK National Health Service is side-stepping a British government ban on poaching nurses from poor countries by acquitting African nurses through private recruitment agencies that are not subject to the pact. In May 2003 the UK Nursing and Midwifery Council said 3,472 nurses from countries subject to the recruiting ban had been registered in the last year.

The SA government has set aside R500 million this year and R750 million next year to adjust the salaries of public-sector doctors and expand the number of rural medical jobs. Within Africa, wealthier countries like South Africa, Botswana, and Côte d'Ivoire are both victims of the medical drain to the developed world and recipients of many doctors and nurses from poorer African states. Zambia has trained more than 1,600 doctors at state expense since 1964 but fewer than 400 remain in the country, the International Organisation on Migration reported.

To stop the outflow, South Africa and other African got Commonwealth health

ministers to sign a protocol on the ethical recruitment of health professionals. The UK and Netherlands are the first of four countries with which South Africa hopes to strike agreements to halt government recruiting of health professionals.

Higher salaries, however, aren't the only reason drawing African health-care professionals overseas. Many doctors say that African hospitals are so poorly equipped and funded that they are forced to stand by while patients die needlessly. In South Africa, doctors say the government's refusal to administer anti-retroviral drugs to Aids patients was demoralising.

'We are constantly and persistently out of drugs, especially antibiotics, while the equipment we use is obsolete. We have to improvise both on medicine and equipment and yet the government, through the Central Board of Health [CBOH], is fully aware of our grievances,' said Dr Aameck Kamanga, president of the Zambia Resident Doctors Association, which went on strike this month.

South Africa has also made medical interns participate in a two-year compulsory community service in an effort to keep them in the country in locations where they are most needed. But this solution, too, has had only limited success. Cuba has helped developing countries by offering doctors on contract. Zimbabwe, facing a haemorrhage of doctors, recently received 190 Cuban contract doctors.

Laurence Levy, a Zimbabwean professor of neurosurgery, wonders whether African medical schools should change training standards to ensure graduates do not have internationally recognised credentials.

'In our anxiety to be recognised by the First World we have produced first class medical professionals whose expectations we cannot meet,' he said. 'We don't have the resources to compete. Secondly, the First World has allowed successive governments to under-fund their own health services so that few of its own young people want to go into nursing and ancillary fields. So many

hospitals desperate for staff will recruit from anywhere they can. Africa is ripe for the picking. If we produce graduates whose qualifications are not recognised abroad, because they are seen to be of a lower standard, then at least they would be here and be of some help to their own countries,' Levy argued recently in the *British Medical Journal*.

'The First World will go on underpaying their top staff and the vacancies in the health professions will be unfilled and the Third World will be too proud to stop training top class people, therefore allowing the northern hemisphere to suck in our qualified people while we continue to finance it,' he said. 'It's another form of colonialism. We produce the resource and the First World takes it.'

In South Africa, one of the largest private hospital groups has formulated another approach to stopping the brain drain. Netcare has recently participated in a programme with Britain's National Health Service to help with a backlog of NHS patients requiring specific operations.

They send teams of specialist doctors and nurses over for short-term contracts to help with consultations, operations and follow-up care. 'Through these initiatives we are able to offer our staff an opportunity to work in overseas hospitals to gain international experience in the healthcare sector without having to emigrate,' said Dr Richard Friedland, chief executive officer of Netcare Operations. 'All the staff who have participated have entered the United Kingdom on a short-term work permit and will be restricted from getting any permanent employment from the NHS for a period of two years.'

In the meantime, Friedland said, they keep their benefits and get to earn in a stronger currency. 'Our gut feel is that most employees do not want to emigrate,' he said. 'They do want to earn more money and for some a chance to be exposed to a wider world is the attraction. We give them that opportunity.' – Trish Guy with reporting by Anthony Mukwita

SPECIAL FEATURE

22 Good Ideas for Using the Diaspora

HERE are the best ideas we've found to get Africans living abroad involved in developing their home country.

Embassies and emails

1 Know your resources. Each African country's embassies abroad should compile a list of key academics, professionals and business people operating in that country, as well as social and sporting fan clubs. These lists should be co-ordinated in a central database, and regular communications should be sent via email to help expatriates share information about news from home, business opportunities, permanent job openings, and development projects needing short-term assistance.

2 Slay the occasional goat. Embassies should keep fellow nationals in touch with each other by hosting occasional get-togethers. They can tap visiting sports stars and musicians for shows that promote their countries. These occasions provide opportunities to highlight projects where members of the diaspora can volunteer their skills or contribute financially.

3 Boost embassy budgets and staff. Most African embassies do not have dedicated trade-support staff and almost none has staff to support the diaspora. This gap should be filled and embassies properly funded to support outreach and database activities.

Adverts and academics

4 Promote Africa as a tourist destination. Create an advertising campaign under the African Union to encourage expatriates and those of African descent to take holidays in Africa. In addition to the continent's natural beauty and wildlife, emphasise the historical and culturally significant attractions such as the slave forts in West

Africa, Robben Island, Timbuktu and Great Zimbabwe.

5 Give incentives to bring new faces to Africa. Offer coupons or frequent flier miles to every visitor who provides the email addresses or contact details of friends. Send promotions to those friends and greater mileage awards if those friends actually travel to Africa.

6 Use positive video on airplane flights. Run video profiles of African successes on flights to and from African destinations to counter the generally negative perceptions of Africa abroad.

7 Utilise alumni associations. Keep track of Africa's best and brightest through their alma maters. The Association for Higher Education and Development, for example, is an association of Ethiopian academics abroad who have created a foundation to improve their country's higher education.

8 Develop an African Peace Corps. Offer opportunities for young people from the diaspora to come to Africa to re-connect with their heritage and contribute to development projects.

9 Look for home-grown employees first. Encourage businesses to recruit from the diaspora when looking for top-skilled professionals and make it easy for them to use embassy databases and staff in recruitment efforts.

10 Advertise vacancies abroad timeously. Ensure that copies of government personnel adverts and privatisation and tendering notices are sent to embassies and posted on government and embassy websites. Email such notices to interested Africans living or working overseas, so they can apply in good time.

BRIEFLY

Spoiling for a fight: Idi Amin's death in Saudi Arabia, in August, was greeted with relief by many people, while others were outraged that he died without standing trial for charges of gross human rights violations. The Ugandan dictator was responsible for the torture and execution of thousands of opponents. His 54 children are fighting over the distribution of his wealth, which includes millions of dollars, houses and cars.

While Zimbabwe crumbles: Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe is building a lavish retirement home 25km north of Harare at a cost of almost \$9.6 million. Relief organisations have continued to warn that almost half the country – about 5.5 million people – would need food aid before the year-end.

Swiss freeze: Swiss authorities have frozen bank accounts worth \$1.5 million belonging to two associates of former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor. Officials from the Swiss Justice Ministry said no bank accounts held directly by Taylor had so far been discovered. The Swiss authorities agreed to freeze accounts linked to Taylor following a request by the UN-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone. Liberia accounts for more financial transactions with Switzerland than any other African nation. According to 2002 figures released by the Swiss National Bank, Liberian assets in Switzerland were worth \$3.3 billion.

Blowing their mines: Kenya committed itself to destroy 35,774 of its stockpiled anti-personnel landmines by the end of August 2003. National Security Minister Chris Munungaru said: 'The government of Kenya agrees with the Ottawa Treaty and will destroy assorted anti-personnel landmines worth \$400,000 dollars.'

Bellies banned: Egypt is protecting its natural assets from foreign exploitation. From 1 January 2004, only Egyptian women will be allowed to perform belly dancing in Egypt. A recent influx of foreign performers, especially from Russia, thought to be taking the jobs of the locals, prompted the ban.

SPECIAL FEATURE

11 Share your know-how. African scientists and medical specialists living overseas should be encouraged to share their expertise through teaching sabbaticals or by posting their papers and advertising upcoming conferences on their specialities on websites. The South African Network of Skills Abroad is one such enterprise. It has a database of more than 2,000 skilled South African professionals who have emigrated and encourages them to lend their skills to advancing scientific developments back home. Similar efforts are underway by the Association of Kenyans Abroad and the Association of Nigerians Abroad.

12 Expand the development focus at First World universities. Most African studies departments in the developed world have better funding and access to books than African universities. But they focus on history and identity with little emphasis on practical challenges Africa now faces. Work through African universities to press for an expanded development and business focus and use the diaspora to help fund access to those programmes for African students.

13 Expand use of digital instruction. Most of Africa's best minds in engineering and the sciences have left for the developed world. The African Virtual University uses satellite transmission to permit lecturers in the developed world to teach students on African campuses where there are shortages of instructors in technical subjects. Expand the programme to more African countries and enlist more lecturers from the diaspora.

Cut the red tape

14 Simplify visa procedures. Make it easier for non-citizen members of the diaspora to gain permanent

residence back in the country of their ancestry. Adopt simpler procedures for business visas and work permits in all areas where Africa has skills shortages.

15 Offer dual citizenship to returning families. Many countries are examining how to make it easier for those living abroad with foreign-born children or spouses to return home. Dual citizenship would facilitate the freedom of movement of Africans between developed countries and the continent allowing skills to move as opportunities arise. It will also help prevent well-educated children born abroad from losing touch with Africa.

16 Make Africa retirement friendly. Make it easy for members of the diaspora, including those without African citizenship, to bring their skills and financial assets back to the continent when they retire. Make it easy to acquire retirement visas and transfer funds, and make it easy for foreign medical schemes to cover medical costs in Africa.

Network in the North

17 Organise the diaspora to press for change. Latin America has successfully used its diaspora, churches and non-government organisations to create substantial political support to change certain US policies. African Americans similarly played a crucial role in pushing for greater funding for HIV/Aids. Africa could organise the diaspora to press for trade concessions, debt relief and more funding and participation in African conflict resolution, which many developed nations shy away from.

18 Open formal channels into the African Union. The channels for diaspora participation in the AU and Nepal need to be clear and efficient to bring expertise into African ventures and to allow

influential non-governmental groups in the diaspora to lobby for African interests in the developed world. The Western Hemisphere African Diaspora Network – which raises funds and facilitates participation by people of African descent on the continent – proposed making the diaspora the 'sixth region' to complement the five existing geographic regional communities in the AU.

19 Facilitate remittances. Governments should improve their banking infrastructure and laws to make it as easy and inexpensive as possible to bring foreign funds back into their countries. Transaction charges should be minimised. Computer recordkeeping should be improved to fight fraud while foreign-currency accounts should be made easier to open.

20 Create safe Africa investment funds. Remittances are sent home to support families, but the major investments of wealthy émigrés remain abroad. Create government-backed project investment funds to enable socially conscious but safe investment in Nepal and other African development projects. Also open the African Development Bank to direct private investment.

21 Create remittance backed bonds. Because remittances are a large and reliable source of foreign currency, they can be 'securitised' or used to back government bonds. Brazil created such a remittance-backed government bond that enabled the government to raise \$300 million at preferential interest rates.

22 Use African expertise. Press aid agencies to 'untie' aid and utilise African doctors, engineers and professionals rather than 'importing' such expertise at much greater cost from the developed world. – Ross Herbert

Some Useful Internet Literature on the Diaspora

A Program for Africa's Computer People – An in-depth profile on how the Ghanaian diaspora are returning and drawing on experience gained in the US computer industry – <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=41889>.

Revisiting the Doctrine of Human Capital Mobility in the Information Age – Examines new perspectives on the brain drain. www.iom.int/africandiaspora/pdf/TEFERRA.pdf.

Workers' Remittances: An Important and Stable Source of External Development Finance – Outlines the impact worker remittances from the diaspora have on developing countries. http://www.worldbank.org/prospects/gdf2003/GDF_vol_1_web.pdf.

Reversing Africa's Brain Drain: New Initiatives to Tap Skills of African Expatriates – Provides an overview of initiatives, particularly with UN involvement, to return skills to Africa. www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol17no2/172brain.htm.

Policy Implications Of The Brain Drain's Changing Face – Notes the growing awareness among specialists of major shifts in the patterns of migration in the past three decades that require a paradigm shift in government policy away from consideration of 'brain drain' to 'brain circulation'. <http://www.scidev.net/dossiers/index.cfm?fuseaction=policybrief&dossier=10&policy=24>.