

Exit and voice: diaspora population and national development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This article interrogates the role of the Nigerian Diaspora in contributing financial and intellectual remittances for national development. It does so because conventional diaspora studies have focused on how various diaspora populations adapt to the social, economic, and political realms in the countries of settlement even as they seek to maintain their own traditions and cultures. Recent developments indicate Diasporas have played prominent roles in the political, social, and economic development of their countries of origin. As a result, it becomes crucial to integrate the role of the Diaspora in contributing not just financial but also intellectual remittances to enhance national development. This is because intellectual remittances are critical for institution building and addressing leadership deficit which will in turn channel financial remittances into proper national development agenda. Yet, this is too often neglected in the extant literature. Relying on the diaspora option theory and Hirschman's exit, voice and loyalty theory, with data gleaned from a structured questionnaire survey, interviews, institutional reports, and other secondary sources, this article explores how diaspora communities serve as critical bridges that facilitate national development through financial and intellectual remittances. The study revealed that whereas financial remittance is important for addressing development gaps, it becomes more forceful when combined with other forms of remittances such as intellectual and social remittances.

IMPACT STATEMENT

The motivation for this study was to understand the contributions of the diaspora population who in spite of their physical exit from home continue to make their voices heard and felt by contributing both knowledge and financial resources towards the growth and development of Nigeria. Nigeria faces scary challenges of national development, and the quest for socio-economic transformation led the government to devise an engagement strategy to draw from the experiences and expertise of her citizens living outside the country known as the diaspora population. Incidentally, this segment of the population living outside the shores of their home country is sometimes forced by dire socio-economic circumstances to migrate and settle in other climes where they not only contribute to the growth of their host country but make monetary and knowledge contributions to families and communities back home. The study concludes that the diaspora contribution is crucial and pivotal to national development but it is not a magic wand or elixir that can fix all the challenges affecting the country.

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Introduction

Increasingly, countries with extensive Diasporas have sought to connect with the extended, transnational communities in order to tap into the resources and networks they offer for domestic developmental purposes (Gumedze, 2019; Magocha, 2020; Yong & Rahman, 2013). Consequently, there has been a lively

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global debate over the last two decades promoting migration as a novel opportunity for increased economic and social development in migrant-sending countries (Chikanda et al., 2016). The numerous approaches adopted for understanding global engagements, from raising awareness to offering incentives and providing mechanisms for members of the Diasporas to engage or re-engage with the home country, have become part of the development strategy of many emerging economies (Gumedze, 2019; Magocha, 2020).

In Africa, the Diaspora is considered an important segment of the continent to the point that they are regarded as the sixth region among others, namely: north, east, west, south, central and the Diaspora (Kamei, 2011). In fact, the birth of the reformed African Union – AU – is a function of the Diaspora. This implies that the Diaspora is a crucial component of Africa. There is rarely any country in the world that develops without its diaspora (Magocha, 2020). This is done to address several complex problems challenging nations of the world. Africa's 'wicked problems', to use the phrase of Lawrence et al. (2022), and du Plessis (2022), require the collaboration of its diaspora to transform the continent. Thus, African and particularly Nigerian Diasporas offer many examples of the connections between engaging the diaspora population and development.

The return to civil rule in 1999 opened an opportunity for harnessing Nigeria's numerous diaspora population. In 2001, the Federal Government (FG) under former President Olusegun Obasanjo established Nigerians in the Diaspora Organisation (NIDO) to organize Nigerian residents outside the shores of the country and to stimulate development. To achieve this objective, NIDO established a two hundred-million-dollar investment fund to be drawn upon by both local and foreign-based Nigerians seeking to invest in the country, thereby inducing competition among various components of NIDO globally (Akinrinade & Ogen, 2011; Obadare & Adebawwi, 2009; Wapmuk et al., 2014). As such, NIDO and subsequent like-minded organisations – Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa (DTCA) – provided the platform to encourage the input of the Diaspora in Nigeria's domestic affairs. On 25 July 2006, President Obasanjo launched National Diaspora Day to commemorate the contributions of the diaspora to national development (Tella, 2021). Under President Muhammadu Buhari, the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM) headed by Honourable Abike Dabiri-Erewa emerged to provide such coordination and induce national development (Nuhu, 2020). The implication of engaging the diaspora was to harness several human and material resources scattered all over the world to address the country's numerous 'wicked problems' and shape national development questions.

Existing discourses on Nigeria's Diaspora have not adequately interrogated the role of the Diaspora in national development through remittances – financial and intellectual (Aderinto, 2022; Akinrinade & Ogen, 2011; Kperogi, 2020; Tade, 2022; Wapmuk et al., 2014). Although there have been several nuanced and insightful scholarly writings linking migrations and development at the global level – an area the World Bank has extensively considered (Maimbo & Ratha, 2005), at the local level, there are few studies explaining the ways diaspora population has influenced national development through financial remittances that 'have been critical in sustaining the socio-economic upliftment of households in terms of food, housing, education, and small and medium-sized enterprise'. There is also intellectual remittance often neglected in the literature but crucial in shaping knowhows and structuring institution-building in Africa (see Aderinto, 2022).

Besides, conventional diaspora studies have focused on how various diaspora populations adapt to the social, economic, and political realms in the countries of settlement even as they seek to maintain their own traditions and cultures (Mercer et al., 2008). Recent engagements have drawn attention to the ways the departure of the diaspora affects all aspects of the life of those left at home. Olaoluwa (2023) in what he creatively termed extalgia- the opposite of nostalgia, insightfully discussed the parallel suffering, creativity, and coping mechanism of loved ones left at home by the diaspora. In this wise, the stay-at-home are not just passive recipients of financial remittance for family upkeep in the discourse and engagement with the diaspora. Still, extant studies draw attention to the questions of belonging – home associations in the diaspora and how they affect civil societies in their countries of origin. These studies suggest a strong connection between the political economy of migration and the wider debates concerning ethnicity and belonging (McCann, 2010; Mercer et al., 2008; Obadare & Adebawwi, 2009). Beverly Mullings' study shows that in an attempt to enhance human capital and tap into 'global flows of investment, knowledge, and innovation, the Jamaican state' turned to the skilled members of its diaspora

as a vital resource to achieve these objectives (Mullings, 2011, p. 24). This situates the diaspora as a crucial partner in state building and knowledge transfers. In 2007, Nigeria's National Universities Commission (NUC) initiated the Linkages with Experts and Academics in the Diaspora Scheme (LEADS) to foster collaborations between Nigerian academics and experts living abroad with their counterparts in Nigerian universities. While the aim was to build capacity and strengthen development, there are few empirical studies engaging the LEADS initiative as a critical but missing element in the role of intellectual remittance for development in Nigeria (see Wapmuk, 2021).

By focusing on the manner and means by which the diaspora communities engage and contribute to their country of origin, this article explores how diaspora communities often serve as critical bridges that facilitate development through remittances and generating useful transnational networks for various socio-economic initiatives and development. The study was guided by the following questions. What is the connection between the Diaspora population and national development? In what ways have the Nigerian diaspora's financial and intellectual remittances contributed to household upliftment, institution building, and development in Nigeria? To what extent has the Nigerian government engaged its Diaspora in structuring national development? What are the crisscrossing patterns and processes between the Nigerian Diaspora of the past and the present-day diaspora population? This article is animated by the stated objectives.

To achieve its objective, the paper is divided into five parts. The first explores the concepts of diaspora and development and draws attention to the nexus of the two notions. The next section draws on the transdisciplinary approach and frames the argument of the article on the Diaspora Option theory and Albert Hirschman's exit, voice and loyalty theory explaining the heterogeneous notion of diaspora and its role in promoting the socio-economic development of their countries of origin. The third section historicises the Nigerian Diaspora and population flow. The next section explains the role of the Nigerian Diaspora in influencing development in Nigeria. This section engages the financial and intellectual remittances of the diaspora and how that improves the socio-economic upliftment of households in terms of food, housing, education, and small and medium-sized enterprise. It also captures government efforts at organising the Nigerian Diaspora towards achieving national development. The fifth section offers the conclusion.

Diaspora, remittances, the diaspora option and the development question

In this article, we align with Pellerin and Mullings and describe the diaspora as 'an internationally dispersed population whose members share a collective memory and identity linked to the place with which they maintain ancestral ties and a common commitment to, and engagement in, activities to maintain or improve the economic, social and political situation there' (2013, p. 91). Mullings deploys the term diaspora to explain 'the social space created by populations of ... ancestry who have lived periods of their lives outside the territorial boundaries ... but whose identities connect with the people and cultural practices...'. Butressing further, Mullings contend that 'diasporas emerge when groups that migrate from one home location to at least two others develop a collective memory and vision of their homeland that they seek to improve through transnational economic, cultural and emotional exchanges' (Mullings, 2011, p. 25). In this context, diasporas are a population that have moved from their countries of origin but chose to have ties to the homeland, with a vision to improve the homeland 'through transnational economic, cultural and emotional exchanges'.

The concept of development, in this paper, is a process of improving human well-being by enlarging peoples' choices through the expansion of human functioning and capabilities. The concept, which probably originated from human biology and implied human formation and growth from one stage to another was less frequent in the literature of political, economic, social and cultural phenomena until the 1950s (Fukuyama, 2013). Unlike in Biology, social development – changes in human societies – does not have to begin at a specific or designated point. 'Development is not only about economics. Political institutions develop, as do social ones. Sometimes political and social development are closely related to economic change, but at other times, they happen independently' (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 19). Diaspora's contribution to development straddles economics, political, social and cultural institutions.

Remittance is a concept deployed in explaining development finance and the transfer of financial resources between migrants in one economy and their families in another (Maimbo & Ratha, 2005). It is

the 'transfers made by migrants to their families to cover basic household costs...' (Detrell et al., 2014, p. 69). This conception consigns remittance to the movement of migrants' money to their countries of origin neglecting other capitals such as intellectual resources. Lindley (2011) suggested that migrants' capital – money and resources – could be classified as remittances. This implies that the intellectual resources often deployed by the diaspora to reduce poverty, building capacity, and building institutions are forms of remittances. In 2007, Nigeria's National Universities Commission established Linkages with Experts and Academics in the Diaspora Scheme (LEADS) targeted at drawing on the country's diaspora to address challenges in the higher education sector and strengthen national development (see Wapmuk, 2021). As such the major ambition of the LEADS program was to foster collaborations between Nigerian academics and experts living abroad with their counterparts in Nigerian universities. In this connection, 62 LEADS scholars on the Scheme, drawn from European and North American universities shared their expertise with their counterparts in several tertiary institutions in Nigeria (NUC, 2020).

The LEADS scheme has also been credited with encouraging industry experts to participate in teaching, research, and cross-fertilization of ideas in Nigerian universities (Wapmuk, 2021). Thus, intellectual remittance is a crucial component of diaspora remittances that form a critical part of Nigeria's development. Aderinto (2022) has recently taken this approach while keynoting a conference on diaspora remittances. Consequently, remittances have a connection to development since money transfers and movements increase savings, enhance small-scale industries and boost household welfare while reducing poverty in such places. Moreover, Mohan (2002) has argued that there is a strong connection between the diaspora and development. In this discourse, Mohan categorized the nexus between diaspora and development into three: development 'in' the diaspora; development 'through' the diaspora; and development 'by' the diaspora. For him, development in the diaspora refers to the utilisation of diasporic links to ensure the welfare and well-being of members of a diaspora community. Development through the diaspora simply extends the frontiers of development in the diaspora by engaging and collaborating with different global diasporic networks; finally, development by the diaspora refers to the flow of material/financial, and intellectual/technical knowledge that facilitates development in the home countries. Yet, there are fewer theoretical and empirical discussions on how the diaspora influences development in Nigeria, particularly the interaction between remittances and development. This draws attention to the diaspora option and the development question in Nigeria.

There is a plethora of literature exploring the discourses of brain drain and brain gain in diaspora studies on Africa and the Global South (Chikanda et al., 2016; Gumedze, 2019; Magocha, 2020; Yong & Rahman, 2013). While these studies draw attention to the brain drain and emigration of scientific personnel, they do so less as a permanent exodus from a homeland but more as a form of transnational brain circulation where talent goes abroad but contribute back substantially to the individual's country of origin (Kperogi, 2020; Rahman, 2013). There was a significant shift from the focus on brain drain in the 1970s to the narratives of brain gain in the 1990s. Initially, the goal of the migrant-sending countries – most times developing societies – was to stimulate a 'reverse brain drain', where the skilled personnel would bring back their knowledge and enhanced human capital and put it to work for their home country (Pellerin & Mullings, 2013).

In this connection, Meyer et al. (1997) postulated two main theoretical positions for implementing brain gain, which they claimed are the return option and the diaspora option. For them, the return option involves the physical return of the expatriates to their home countries where they can contribute to its development. This option has been successfully realized in various countries, including the Caribbean, Singapore, Korea, India, and China (Ite, 2002; Rahman, 2013; Trotz & Mullings, 2013). The relative success of this option in these countries has been attributed to the opening of their economies and policies to foster domestic investment in innovation as well as research and development (Ite, 2002). In Nigeria, while this option has always been explored, it has become dominant since the return to civil rule in 1999 where skilled professionals are extensively drawn to contribute to the country's development agendas including the LEADS initiative of the NUC. In the post-1999 period, Nigeria had skilled professional diasporans significantly contributing to development in terms of financial and intellectual remittances.

In addition, the diaspora option focuses on the remote mobilisation and association of skilled professionals to the development of their countries. The 'diaspora option' reconceptualises the brain drain and

the migration of scientific personnel, seeing it less as a permanent exodus or loss to the home country, but more as a form of 'brain circulation', where talent goes abroad but circulates information and resources back to the individual's country of origin (Rahman, 2013, p. 128). Under this condition, such diaspora population tend to find ways to participate in the economic and scientific development of their home country through scholarly, business, and educational exchanges (see Kperogi, 2020; Aderinto, 2022).

As such, the return and diaspora options can significantly transform an impending loss into a substantial gain. While proponents of the diaspora option thesis assume that professionals are not likely to return, they contend that it has numerous advantages: is relatively inexpensive and provides the opportunity to contribute to their countries of origin without necessarily giving up their overseas situations (Meyer et al., 2001). For these scholars, the diaspora option becomes a moral necessity since it might be difficult and significantly unlikely for most of the Third World to trigger a reverse brain drain. In her engagement with her diaspora, Nigeria relies on and combines Meyer et al. (1997) return and diaspora option thesis.

In light of the above discourse, Albert O. Hirschman's (1970) seminal and influential work becomes relevant. Hirschman explains why and when people migrate and when and how they protest, and resist cases of political oppression. He suggests two possible but important responses to cases of state decline or oppression – exit – emigrate from/out of the country – or voice – remain in the country and protest against the decline or political oppression in the state. In this context, exit and voice represent a union between economic and political action, indicating that while disgruntled and dissatisfied citizens may seek to leave the country, they may do so and still make economic, social, cultural, and political contributions back home. Hirschman referred to this category as the 'loyal' since they are concerned with the well-being of the state. He suggests that 'loyalty', exit, and that the stifling of voice increases departure.

Yet, exit does not always undermine voice (Hirschman, 1993). Earlier, Brubaker (1990) captured how both exit and voice could work together when he indicated that the growing dynamics of those exiting in East Germany at the time and its dynamics stimulated a quest for change in those who stayed. Here, Hirschman's (1970) hypothesis is challenged since it did not consider that those that exit in most cases maintain social ties to their home country and attempt to have a say in public affairs. It is in this context that Bert Hoffmann (2010) contends that 'in transnational migration, exit, voice, and loyalty are no longer exclusive options', and that 'the nature of migrant transnationalism is defined precisely by the overlapping and simultaneity of these categories' (2010, pp. 59–60).

As such, the diaspora may have exited their home countries for various reasons, and under numerous conditions, they continue to maintain ties with the home country (indicating loyalty) and at the same time continue to shape public opinion, contribute to public affairs, and provide intellectual capacity (voice). Like Hirschman, we deploy 'exit and voice' to show how the Nigerian citizens exited at different times and how they continue to make their voice felt back home, but unlike him, we argue that Nigeria diaspora's exit, voice, and loyalty work simultaneously towards the development of their home country. This article draws on the combination of the diaspora option thesis with the exit, voice, and loyalty argument to explain the contributions of the Nigerian diaspora in promoting national development.

Data and methods

This research drew from institutional reports, and newspaper editorials in Nigerian dailies on the connection between the diaspora population and national development; the ways the Nigerian Government has engaged its diaspora; and the ways the diaspora has shaped national development in Nigeria. The study also retrieved data from the World Bank database on country remittance inflows and outward remittances.

There were also 20 in-depth interviews involving members of the diaspora via Zoom, returnee diasporas, policy-makers, and beneficiaries of diaspora competence-building/intellectual remittances in order to address the objectives of the study. In addition, the study also utilised a survey to triangulate the study objective on national development and household upliftment. Initially, we randomly identified households in Nigeria based on their responses on whether they receive remittances from abroad via an online survey. Using a purposive sampling technique, respondents were then selected from those who responded in the affirmative to receiving remittances from abroad. 200 copies of a questionnaire were printed, distributed, and administered. Out of the 200 sampled respondents, 150 copies were returned.

Of the 150 copies returned, 5 copies were discarded as the responses were not consistent with the research questions, and 145 copies of the questionnaire were filled and successfully returned, yielding a response rate of 72.5 percent.

The interview participants for this study were identified by their geographical locations and professions. Secondary data were obtained largely from the literature on migration, diaspora, and development. The data analysis was performed using thematic and regression approaches to derive significant inferences and insights.

Results

Statistical information on how Nigeria diaspora financial and intellectual remittances contributed to household upliftment, institution building and development in Nigeria.

Demographic characteristics

Table 1 describes the demographic variables of the 145 questionnaire survey respondents. The frequency of the sample statistics of their age, gender, education qualification, and marital status were considered and reported. Statistics show that the frequency of age below 18 is 9 at 6.2%, age 18–24 is a frequency of 56 and 38.6%, age 25–34 is a frequency of 19 and 13.1%, age 35–44 has a frequency of 33 at 22.8%, age 45–54 has a frequency of 19 at 13.1%, and finally age 55–64 is with the frequency of 9 at 6.2%. On gender, the male respondents had a frequency of 61 at 42.1% while the female respondents has a frequency of 84 at 57.9%. Statistics on educational level reveal that secondary school has a frequency of 14 at 9.7%, National Diploma/NCE has a frequency of 2 at 1.4%, HND/Bachelors degree has a frequency of 45 at 31.0%, and finally, Postgraduate/Professional degree has a frequency of 84 at 57.9% (Table 1).

Regression constructs

Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 address the question of the ways the Nigerian diaspora's financial and intellectual remittances have contributed to household upliftment (HU), institution building (IB), and national development (ND). While Tables 2, 3, and 4 among other things explain the summary statistics of each of the constructs that represent household upliftment (HU), institution building (IB), and national development (ND) identified as the dependent variables, Tables 5 and 6 identified as the independent variables [government engagement (GOE) and financial and intellectual remittance (FRIR)]. Cronbach's alpha values indicate that all of the constructions are reliable and valid. Participants' responses are rated on a Likert scale of 1–5. The respective mean and standard deviation of these items associated with each variable are as follows.

The regression analysis is deployed to analyse the relationship between household upliftment and the Nigerian diaspora's financial and intellectual remittances in Nigeria. Given the summary of regression results in Table 7, Household Upliftment (HU) is the dependent variable while financial and intellectual remittances (FIRI) is the independent variable. The coefficient of financial and intellectual remittance (0.556) is highly significant since the probability value (0.00) is less than 5% level of significance. The positive sign of the coefficient signifies the positive relationship between household upliftment and financial and intellectual remittance.

Table 1. Demographic variables of survey.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum (based on assigned code)	Maximum (based on assigned code)
Age	3.17	1.390	1	6
Gender	1.58	0.495	1	2
Educational level	4.37	0.920	2	5
Members are in your household	4.72	0.583	2	5
Average monthly income household	4.42	1.091	1	5

Table 2. Household Upliftment (dependent Variable) constructs.

Household Upliftment (HU)	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
To what extent have financial remittances contributed to job creation or employment opportunities within your household?	2.64	1.282	130	0.933	10
To what extent have financial remittances allowed you or other household members to start or expand a business?	2.73	1.316	130		
To what extent have remittances contributed to reducing poverty or improving the standard of living in your household?	3.06	1.160	130		
To what extent have remittances facilitated the accumulation of savings or investments that contribute to long-term household upliftment?	2.66	1.185	130		
To what extent have financial remittances played a role in financing educational expenses for family members, including school fees, books, or vocational training?	3.15	1.124	130		
To what extent have remittances positively influenced the overall well-being of individuals within your household, including nutrition, and healthcare?	2.91	1.210	130		
To what extent have the remittances helped you improve your living standards?	2.75	1.216	130		
To what extent have the remittances contributed to meeting your household's basic needs (food, shelter, clothing)?	2.92	1.214	130		
To what extent do you believe that the remittances have positively influenced the economic prospects of your household in the long term?	2.85	1.301	130		
To what extent have remittances contributed to improving the housing conditions in your household?	2.82	1.320	130		

Table 3. Institution Building (dependent Variable) Constructs.

Institution Building (IB)	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
To what extent have financial remittances facilitated access to financial services, such as savings accounts, loans, or insurance?	2.79	1.162	145	0.764	3
To what extent have remittances played a role in improving healthcare access, including medical expenses, or the ability to seek better healthcare facilities?	2.77	1.179	145		
To what extent have the remittances enabled you to invest in any income-generating activities or assets?	2.51	1.208	145		

Table 4. National Development (dependent Variable) Constructs.

National Development (ND)	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
To what extent do you believe that intellectual remittance can positively impact national development in Nigeria?	3.23	0.987	132	0.677	3
To what extent have remittances been utilized to support community development projects or initiatives within your locality?	2.64	1.224	132		
To what extent have remittances facilitated investments in infrastructure development within your community, such as roads, water supply, or electricity?	2.55	1.087	132		

Table 5. Financial and Intellectual Remittance (Independent Variable) Constructs.

Financial and Intellectual Remittance (FRIR)	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
Households, including mine or those close to me, receive financial remittances from family members living abroad	2.66	1.247	99	0.646	5
How do you utilise the financial remittances in your household?	1.99	1.165	99		
The financial remittances received are consistent from month to month	2.88	1.081	99		
How familiar are you with intellectual remittance in Nigeria?	2.05	1.091	99		
To what extent have you witnessed successful initiatives or projects that were driven by intellectual remittance?	2.59	1.030	99		

The second regression analysis of the impact of financial and intellectual remittance (FRIR) on institution building (IB) as displayed in Table 8, the coefficient of FRIR (0.263) and its probability value (0.009) are positive and highly significant respectively. Thus, it can be concluded that financial and intellectual remittance (FRIR) has a direct relationship with institution building (IB) in Nigeria.

The last variable relating to this objective discussed the regression result that examines the relationship between national development (ND) and knowledge of financial & intellectual remittance (FRIR). From the regression result in Table 9, it can be inferred that there is a positive relationship between financial and intellectual remittance and the national development in Nigeria, with the probability value of (0.000) the financial and intellectual remittance has a significant.

Table 6. Government Engagement (Independent Variable) Constructs.

Government Engagement (GOE)	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
To what extent do you agree that governments should actively encourage and support intellectual remittance?	2.87	1.315	100	0.024	2
How familiar are you with intellectual remittance in Nigeria?	2.06	1.090	100		

Table 7. Regression of Household Upliftment and Financial Remittances.

Variables	Beta coefficient	t-Statistics	p-value	Adjusted R Square	F-Stat
a. Dependent Variable: Household Upliftment				0.167	15.46 (0.00)
(Constant)	1.423	5.137	0.000		
Government Engagement	0.025	0.249	0.803		
Knowledge of Financial and Intellectual remittance	0.556	4.516	0.000		

Table 8. Regression Result financial and intellectual remittance (FRIR) on institution building.

Variables	Beta coefficient	t-Statistics	p-value	Adjusted R Square	F-Stat
a. Dependent Variable: Institutional Building				0.147	12.20 (0.00)
(Constant)	1.767	7.934	0.000		
Government Engagement	0.162	2.035	0.044		
Knowledge of Financial and Intellectual remittance	0.263	2.658	0.009		

Table 9. Financial & Intellectual Remittance (FRIR) and National Development Regression Result.

Variables	Beta coefficient	t-Statistics	p-value	Adjusted R Square	F-Stat
a. Dependent Variable: National Development				0.173	16.085 (0.000)
(Constant)	1.807	8.896	0.000		
Government Engagement	0.014	0.197	0.844		
Knowledge of Financial and Intellectual remittance	0.419	4.641	0.000		

To explain the extent to which the Nigerian government has engaged its diaspora in structuring national development, the regression result in Table 9 is explored. The coefficient and probability value of government engagement (GOE) is examined and discussed. With the sign of GOE being positive (0.014), there is a direct relationship between GOE and national development but the probability value (0.844) is not statistically significant.

From the past to the present: the crisscrossing patterns of Nigeria diaspora population movements in perspective

Nigerians' involvement in international migration dates back to pre-colonial times. This began when 'Hausa transnational links found its expression in the trans-Saharan trade between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries' (Akinrinade & Ogen, 2011, p. 73). This was followed by pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina as well as the trans-Saharan trade and trans-Atlantic slave trade, which marked a significant milestone in the forced movement of Nigerians to Europe and the Americas. Today, Nigerians constitute the largest population of migrants from developing countries in Africa to industrialized countries in Europe and elsewhere (IOM, 2009). While the pre-colonial movements were important, diasporic literature categorizes the migratory history into four main waves (De Haas, 2006). Emerging trends indicate a fifth wave – *japa* – is currently on-going.

The first wave, between 1914 and the 1960s, was during the colonial era and the immediate post-colonial period. While the United Kingdom and later the United States were the main countries of destination, the purposes of migration were primarily to acquire a university education.¹ Subsequently, business and work purposes became a crucial push factor for Nigerians leaving the shores of the country. The second wave, which occurred between the 1960s and 1980s, resulted from a combination of factors including political instability and civil unrest (Reynolds, 2002). While the considerable increase in

oil revenues at that period turned Nigeria into a destination country for African migrants, political upheavals, civil unrests, and the oil crisis which began in the 1980s facilitated increasing migration of Nigerians into other African states such as Cameroon, Ghana, Gabon, Botswana and South Africa (Wapmuk et al., 2014; Akinrinade & Ogen, 2011). Discussing the second wave a respondent and a Nigerian Diaspora claimed that:

I totally agree with the classification of the waves of migration. I belong to the second wave. I left Nigeria in the 1970s. Although I travelled to the United States with the sole aim of studying and returning to contribute to the development of Nigeria. Apart from the civil war, which ended in 1970, civil unrest and political instability of the 1980s forced most of us to remain abroad. While few returned, many were warned by their families never to return home because things were difficult at home. Some of those who returned at that time later regretted it while others were happy they took the decision... Yet, for most of us who remained abroad our voices and decisions were taken seriously at home despite our exit...²

Similarly, another respondent claimed:

I left Nigeria in the early 1970s but I returned home in 1987 shortly after I completed my PhD in Canada. I returned because there were promises of a great nation at the time. One United State Dollar was exchanged for three Nigerian Naira. Things however changed for the worse and I was almost regretting returning at the time I did. When I returned from Canada, my family remained there. They pressured me to return but I chose to visit occasionally and return to Nigeria...³

From the above, it is evident that most emigrants from Nigeria have the desire to return and contribute to the country's development and not settle permanently. These respondents draw attention to the difficulties of the 1980s, which in turn gave rise to the third wave.

In the third wave, – between the 1980s and 1990s – highly skilled Nigerians left the country largely due to questions of human insecurity, poor remuneration and lack of self actualisation. During the 1960s, Nigerian emigrants commonly returned after completing their studies. However, the economic downturn in the 1980s alongside other factors resulted in an increase in permanent migration from Nigeria.⁴ Specifically, the gulf that opened up since the dawn of independence widened in 'the 1980s with the coming of the Washington Consensus and the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) which sapped the foundation of the state and further alienated it from the people' (Obadare & Adebani, 2009, p. 508).

The fourth wave occurred between the 1990s and early 2000s (Wapmuk et al., 2014). At this time, the nature of Nigerian migration movements changed, from predominantly temporary migration to permanent settlement. Due to increasing migratory pressures, contemporary Nigerian emigration to Europe also encompasses large numbers of undocumented migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, groups which more often are exposed to the risk of becoming subject to exploitation and abuse – i.e. victims of trafficking, smuggling, and so on. In this context, a respondent claimed: 'I left Nigeria for South Africa in 2000 when my business crumbled. I left in search of greener pastures but I ended up studying for a Ph.D. While I still work in South Africa, I have medium-scale investments here and I come home regularly to monitor them.'⁵ The trend gave rise to a similar trend but with a thin line in migration discourse referred to as *Japa*.

Japa – the latest and the fifth wave – began in post-2015 Nigeria. Derived from the Yoruba language literally implying 'to flee or to run', *Japa* is seen as means of escaping the torturous economic conditions experienced in post-2015 Nigeria (see Liu, 2023). The phenomenon coincided with the unprecedented mismanagement of the economy under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari and became popular with Nigerian Afrobeat musician Naira Marley's song titled *Japa* in 2018. The trend was complicated by the devastating effects and economic hardships occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic and worsened by the various forms of police brutality against young people, leading to the ENDSARS protest that was poorly managed by the government.⁶ These factors combined to intensify the exodus of young Nigerian professionals in the healthcare, IT, and educational sectors whose skills are in great need in the global north following the mortality rate that resulted mainly from the effects of Covid-19. Beyond the movements and remittances, the present wave is most likely to benefit the country in terms of brain circulation. What is clear is that the various waves of

movement from Nigeria particularly between the 1960s and present resulted from several socio-economic and political upheavals. Yet, such populations have kept in touch with home, making their voices felt despite their exits.

Data on Nigerian emigrants are largely unavailable. Various Nigerian ministries and agencies have mandates related to migration issues, but they largely do not have the capacity to collect, collate and publish relevant migration data (IOM, 2009). The only information available is collected and published in destination countries. Nigeria's National Diaspora Policy document alluded to this challenge when noted that there is 'inadequate information of Nigerians in the diaspora'. An additional obstacle to having a clear picture of Nigerian emigration is the large number of irregular Nigerian migrants, which makes assessing the total stock of Nigerians abroad even more complex. However, the World Bank estimates that 1,000,523 Nigerians were residing abroad as at the year 2010. Recently, the Nigerian state has estimated that there are about 17 million Nigerians living in the Diaspora. About 'six million of this population reside in the Americas particularly in the United States of America and Canada while another 3 million reside in Europe with the United Kingdom as the destination of choice'. Nevertheless, Nigeria's diaspora population have continued to play prominent roles in the country's development through remittances and institution and capacity building. One respondent in a Zoom interview suggested the:

Diaspora has taken its place in providing informed discussion on national issues such as matters relating to the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), issues of corruption in universities and other higher institutions, and fuel pump prices. In most cases, attention drawn to these matters by the diaspora, has influenced public policies ... ⁷

Although extant literature suggests that there is a form of 'intolerance of and unease with dissent in Nigeria since its founding' (Kperogi, 2020, p. 135), the respondent above agrees that on some occasions, the Nigerian state has responded by improving on issues raised by the diaspora population. The diaspora, therefore, has continued in many ways, to contribute to national development.

Migration and remittances: the role of the Nigerian diaspora in household upliftment and national development

The quantitative results earlier presented on [Tables 2 to 9](#) corroborate the qualitative data and show that there is a relationship between Nigeria's diaspora remittances, household upliftment, and national development. The data shows that international migration is one of the most important factors affecting economic, political, and cultural relations between developed and developing countries today. Emerging research on diaspora studies has emphasised remittances as a critical element of development (Chikanda et al., 2016; Lindley, 2011; McCann, 2010; Obadare & Adebaniwi, 2009). In 2021, Nigeria's Federal Government (FGN) framed a diaspora policy to further engage the country's Diaspora population with the aim of 'engaging Nigerians in the diaspora as strategic partners in the national development process'. Nigeria, therefore, recognizes the Diaspora as a veritable tool for the socio-economic and political development of the country leading to the desire to draw a national policy that guarantees their right of participation in the socio-economic and political development of their homeland. A significant percentage of Nigeria's diaspora population constitutes a large pool of skilled human capital, the critical means through which the country needs to take off in the 21st century, bearing in mind that galvanization and utilization of intellectual capacity are integral to development.

On Tuesday, 11 January 2022, President Muhammadu Buhari approved the establishment of the Nigerian Diaspora Investment Trust Fund (NDITF) to encourage domestic development. Apart from pledging support for the fund, President Buhari noted that the 'foreign exchange remittances by Nigerians in Diaspora go a long way in helping families and enhancing the development index in Nigeria'. He also suggested that Nigeria has human capital while admonishing that 'rebuilding Nigeria is not the responsibility of Nigerians who live at home alone but every Nigerian irrespective of the place of domicile' (cited in Aro, 2022). On Friday 23 June 2023, Nigeria's incumbent president, Bola Ahmed Tinubu during his first presidential diaspora engagement admonished

Nigerian diasporas in Paris to continue to send in remittances to better the lives of families and old people at home. His appeal suggests that and supports our claim that diaspora remittances play leading roles in household upliftment. On the diaspora and the upliftment of families, a respondent claimed:

My family and I benefitted from our diaspora relatives in the sense that all siblings went to school on account of our relatives abroad. Some of us established small businesses after school. In these businesses, we have also employed people. This intervention did not only lift us from the dungeon we lived in before my brother travelled to the US after the death of our father, it has also lifted those we have employed. Today, I am doing a Ph.D. and am now positioned to build on this foundation.⁸

The above respondent is clear on how diaspora financial remittances contributed to uplifting his family and also establishing other families through employment in the small-scale businesses that diaspora remittances created. Drawing attention to Nigeria's large skilled human capital in the diaspora a respondent claimed that:

Nigeria has the second largest and most skilled Diaspora population in the United States behind India. The record shows a tremendous pool of Nigeria's skilled human capital in the United Kingdom. This population engages in services and earns foreign exchange. The key point is that we have other countries paying Nigeria for services, which is expected to trigger development at home but state managers have mismanaged this process. Secondly, the Diaspora has significantly built human capital which has a greater effect on overall economic activities and development.⁹

The above respondent raises crucial questions on the management of Diaspora remittances in Nigeria. It underscores the recording and monitoring processes of the remittances. Here the respondent – a skilled Diaspora – suggested that the large foreign exchange remitted into the country is not properly accounted for which places a barrier to development. The question of poor recording and monitoring of diaspora remittances was captured on Friday 11 August 2023 by the acting Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Folashodun Shonubi when he attributed the continuous weakening of the Naira against the Dollar to the diversion of diaspora remittances by the commercial banks to the unofficial markets which offer higher exchange rates.¹⁰

Apart from capacity building, remittances and financial flows play vital roles in this migration/development regime. As such, emerging studies show that 'remittances of different kinds, the return of migrants with novel experiences or lifestyles acquired abroad, the establishment of investment, trade, and intellectual links, as well as wider socio-cultural links between diaspora associations and developing countries may indeed potentially benefit development'. The World Bank reported that the total volume of international remittances received by developing countries in 2011 was USD 325.5 billion out of a total USD 440 billion in global remittances flow. In the same year, Nigeria received USD 19 billion making it the only African country in the top ten international remittance recipients in the world. This figure excludes transfers concluded through irregular and informal channels (Olatuyi et al., 2013). 'In 2017, Nigeria was ranked as the 5th largest remittance receiving developing country in the world, and the highest in Africa, with an estimate of 22 Billion US dollars'. As such, recorded remittances are now significantly larger than overseas aid flows and comprise an annual flow of around US\$240 billion into the Global South (Mercer et al., 2008, p. 7).

For Nigeria, Diaspora remittances have increased rapidly over the years, generating debates on both sides of the Atlantic on how best to channel these transfers toward economic development. Nigeria is the largest recipient of remittances in sub-Saharan Africa. The country receives nearly 65 percent of officially recorded remittance flows to the region and 2 percent of global flows. The charts below show the remittances since 1999 and highlight its linkages with the country's GDP (Figures 1 and 2).

Diaspora remittance, therefore, is placing emphasis on the evolution of global market capitalism – the diffusion of knowledge, and investment in training and skills of people. The breakdown of migrant remittance for 13-year period showed a tremendous increase in the last four years. There is evidence to suggest that several financial remittances into Nigeria in the past two decades have been deployed into small and medium scale businesses which have in turn employed several Nigerians (see Aro, 2022). This claim corroborated a respondent who noted:

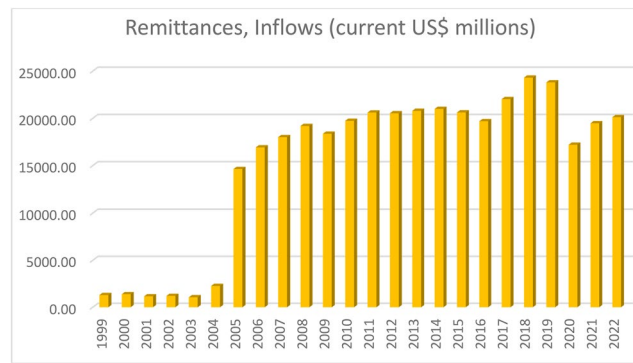


Figure 1. Bar chart showing the inflows of remittances.
Source: Authors' computation as extracted from World development indicators 2023.

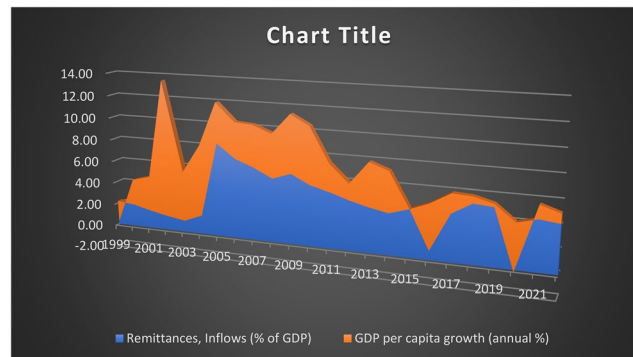


Figure 2. Bar chart showing the trend of inflow of remittances (%of GDP) and GDP per capita income (annual %).
Source: Authors' computation as extracted from World development indicators 2023.

While we acknowledge challenges in generating accurate data on our Diaspora and their remittances, it is clear that many of such remittances have boosted investments, created small and medium-scale industries, which have successfully employed hundreds of thousands of Nigerians. In other words, diaspora remittances have not only addressed issues of poverty but it has generated development. In return, Nigeria as a people must begin to engage in policies that will not only encourage the Diaspora, but also protect their investments in Nigeria as well as protect them wherever they are.¹¹

The above implies that the Nigerian state should not only design policies that will protect the investments of the diaspora at home but also make their stay comfortable in their host countries. Such policies may 'pay attention to hostilities against Nigerian Diaspora as is frequent in South Africa or as obtained in Libya and even China'.¹² There must be exit strategies at a time of threat to life of the Diaspora, a diplomatic breakdown, and occasions of global health diplomacy as observed during the Ebola crisis and the Covid '19 public health emergency. Similarly, the country must also lessen the stress of passport renewal to encourage the Diaspora to continue to play a key role in the development of the country.

Intellectual remittances form an integral part of social remittances. The contributions of the Nigerian academic diaspora to the development of Nigerian higher education cannot be over-emphasized. For instance, Kennesaw State University has partnership agreements with a number of Nigerian universities. It is worth noting that from the University of Ibadan alone, about ten academic staff from the Faculties of Arts and Education have benefited from the KSU-UI staff exchange programme. In the same vein, ten KSU faculty have also visited Ibadan (Adebayo, 2010, pp. 7, 26–27).

In recent times, the Lagos Studies Association (LSA), the TOFAC conferences, and the Igbo Studies Association conferences have significantly impacted competencies at home as they organise annually to contribute to the institution and nation-building process. This is crucial as it has continued to shape

institutional capacities. The nation building process is based not only on financial resources but also on social and political dialogue, advocacy and awareness to stability for development.

Diaspora professional networks often hold conferences in their home countries and raise awareness about new practices, carry out vital services, or address areas that have not been focused on in existing domestic practice. One respondent drew attention to the rigor and deepening of scholarship and how that translates to human capital development in Nigeria by the LSA. He noted:

I am happy with what I see in the LSA. They tend to focus on early career academics and professionals, preparing them on how to contribute to Nigeria's development. Annually in the LSA, young people are equipped with teaching and research pedagogy while others commence graduate programmes in Europe and North America. This for me is necessary for our overall development and I give credit to the diaspora led by Saheed Aderinto for powering the LSA.¹³

Another respondent who benefited from LSA's capacity building workshops noted:

I am a beneficiary of a Lagos Studies Association (LSA) pre-conference training in June 2018. Apart from training several of us – young Nigerian Academics – on how to develop course syllabus, which we call course outline here, the convener, Saheed Aderinto, extensively exposed us to teaching pedagogy. The training exposed me to the fundamentals of teaching. I have since applied the skill received and I can assure you it has not only improved my teaching techniques, but has helped me to write better as an academic and I have secured two international scholarships since then.¹⁴

Thus, capacity building is a significant remittance towards the development of the country. Such expatriate knowledge of the diaspora population has significantly propelled the shaping of national development. In this manner, diaspora contributions go a long way in addressing the question of burgeoning youth unemployment in Nigeria estimated to be over 60%. Besides, there is an additional advantage for developing economies like Nigeria in terms of new technologies, new skills, expansion in capacity and general economic growth that goes with attracting its diaspora to invest back home. The best people to invest in a country are its nationals who understand the economy and its risks.

Conclusion

This article examined the role of the Nigerian diaspora in its development. While discussions suggest that diaspora financial remittances are crucial for development in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, it indicates that diaspora contribution to development is beyond financial remittances but also contributes through social and intellectual remittances, foreign direct investment, knowledge, expertise, skills and networks (Woodrow Wilson Center, 2020). These have been significantly leveraged for trade, technology, peace, and security. Significantly, the connections between the Nigerian diaspora and the prospects for national development received elaborate attention.

As shown in the summary of regression results in Table 7 where Household Upliftment (HU) is the dependent variable and financial and intellectual remittances (FIRI) are the independent variables, remittances are critical elements for development – economic, political, social and cultural. On the said table, the coefficient of financial and intellectual remittance (0.556) is highly significant since the probability value (0.00) is less than 5% level of significance. The positive sign of the coefficient signifies the positive relationship between household upliftment and financial and intellectual remittances. In the second regression analysis of the impact of financial and intellectual remittances (FRIR) on institution building (IB) as displayed in Table 8, the coefficient of FRIR (0.263) and its probability value (0.009) are positive and highly significant respectively. Thus, it can be concluded that financial and intellectual remittance (FRIR) has a direct relationship with institution building (IB) in Nigeria. Furthermore, the regression result that examined the relationship between national development (ND) and knowledge of financial and intellectual remittances (FRIR), indicated that there is a positive relationship between financial and intellectual remittances and national development in Nigeria. Consequently, remittances – financial and intellectual – are crucial for national development.

While financial remittances alone are not sufficient in addressing the development question, they play leading roles combining with other forms of remittances like intellectual remittance as this study has shown. Social and intellectual remittances are critical for institution building and addressing leadership deficit which will in-turn channel financial remittances into proper national development agenda. In terms of the prevailing diaspora-homeland development mantra, the study is of the view that the eventual impact of remittances will depend on the use to which such remittances are deployed (Bakewell, 2008, p. 11). Individuals and their kin may become better off, but their places of origin will largely remain backward or underdeveloped because migration and remittances by themselves do not enable any country to escape poverty (Houngbo, 2007, p. 1). Hence, intellectual remittances are crucial for national development.

The study recommends that in order to facilitate diasporas'engagement in the development process of Nigeria, the Nigerian government should strengthen its links with the existing diaspora networks and organisations, such as religious organisations and communities, associations, and venues of engagement created and maintained by the Nigerian diaspora. There should be the establishment of elaborate networks with Diaspora organisations, which should include the African diasporas within the continent of Africa, especially within the Sub-region of West Africa, in order to facilitate collaborations among the various West African State governments.

Notes

1. Interview with Germany based Nigerian diaspora, February 18, 2020.
2. Interview held with a Nigerian diaspora resident in the United States of America in his Nigerian home in Lagos, December 10, 2019.
3. Interview with a Nigerian Professor of Political Science held in Ibadan, March 1, 2019.
4. Interview with Canada based Nigerian diaspora, January 20, 2020.
5. Interview held a Nigerian diaspora resident in South Africa, 8 June, 2019.
6. Interview with an Academic of Diaspora Studies, University of Lagos, Nigeria. Lagos, June 25, 2023.
7. Virtual interview with US based Nigerian diaspora, 10 October 2021.
8. Interview with Nigeria student in Pretoria, August 13, 2022.
9. Interview with a Nigerian diaspora returnee and a policy-maker in Lagos, 27 February 2019.
10. Folashodun Shonubi, Distinguished Personality Lecture titled: Diaspora Remittances and Nigeria Economic Development delivered for the members of the Executive Intelligence Management Course (EIMC) 16 at the National Institute for Security Studies, Abuja, 11 August 2023.
11. Interview with a Nigerian Professor of Economics in Lagos, 28 February 2018. Earlier version of the interview held May 6, 2017.
12. Interview with former President, Chattered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria, 28 February 2018.
13. Interview with Nigeria based Academic, University of Ibadan, July 28, 2022.
14. Interview held with a junior Nigerian Academic and a beneficiary of the 2018 capacity building workshop organised during the pre-conference trainings of the Lagos Studies Association (LSA) convened by a Nigerian diaspora, 26 June 2019.

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