



**“Let us Rebuild our Country”
Migration-development scenarios in Ghana**

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been a reconfiguration of the relationship between states and international migrants. From an overall perception of migration as a problem to be solved, a number of international development agencies, policy makers, and academics are taking the position that migration contributes to national development – if well managed. This aspiration indicates the (re-)discovery of non-resident citizens or former citizens as populations to be governed by their states of origin. The implications of this aspiration are examined in this working paper, focusing on migration-development scenarios in Ghana. The paper is inspired by anthropological and critical development studies on statecraft and public policy, approaching migration-development scenarios as a cultural and political object of study. Using the theatrical metaphor of scenario, it analyzes actually implemented policies as well as policy visions and debates, focusing on the underlying narratives and imaginaries of how migration and development are interlinked and can be governed.

The paper argues that the Ghanaian migration-development policy initiatives are attempts to symbolically include international migrants in the nation and to constitute them as a patriotic and governable population, ascribing a central role to the state in facilitating and governing international migration for national development. The policies thereby send a signal to migrants as well as to other states of the Ghanaian state's ambition to perform sovereignty in the sense of controlling subjects and resources – even if they are located outside the national territory. Migration-development initiatives thus also function as a policy spectacle where the government signals that it is taking its responsibility as a migrant-sending state seriously.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a reconfiguration of the relationship between states and international migrants. From an overall perception of migration as a problem to be solved, a number of international development agencies, policy makers, and academics are taking the position that migration contributes to national development – if well managed¹. This aspiration indicates the (re-)discovery of non-resident citizens or former citizens as populations to be governed by their states of origin. During the last decade, the World Bank and the International Organization of Migration (IOM) have become patrons of this position as well as it has been debated at a range of high-level meetings, such as the Global Forums on Migration and Development. Likewise, policy makers all over the world are now engaged in debating or actually implementing migration-development policies² – especially in states with large numbers of citizens or descendants of citizens abroad.

In this working paper I explore the implications of this aspiration, analyzed through the lens of migration-development scenarios in Ghana. The paper is inspired by anthropological and critical development studies on statecraft and public policy, approaching migration-development scenarios as a cultural and political object of study. Using the theatrical metaphor of scenario, I analyze actually implemented policies as well as policy visions and

debates, focusing on the underlying narratives and imaginaries of how migration and development are interlinked and can be governed. Likewise, I pay attention to actors and audiences³ to shed light on how governments and migrants are addressed or positioned in the migration-development field, especially in relation to their perceived roles and agency. As a part of this, I explore the ‘discovery’ of migrants as development actors and how states attempt or desire to govern migrants through different technologies and rationalities – i.e. the governmental effects (or desired effects) of migration-development scenarios.

The paper has a two-fold objective. First to examine the narratives on the relationship between states and international migration with specific focus on the roles of migrants and states. Second to analyze the implications of these scenarios in terms of governing and categorizing the population in relation to migration, as articulated and envisioned from a state perspective – in this case by senior government officials in Ghana. It is guided by the following questions: How and when do international migrants emerge as development agents and populations relevant for state governance? What kind of agency is ascribed to international migrants and the state in migration-development scenarios? Which underlying assumptions do they draw upon? And who are the actors in and intended audiences for these scenarios?

Ghana is one of the more proactive African states in terms of passing a range of policies intended to mobilize and govern migrants for development during the last decade, offering an interesting case study. Today about 75 percent of the estimated 1.8 million international

1 E.g. Global Commission on International Migration, *Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action* (Geneva, 2005); Maurice Schiff and Caglar Özden, *International Migration, Remittances and the Brain Drain* (Washington: World Bank, 2005).

2 Alan Gamlen, “Diaspora Engagement Policies: What are they, and what kinds of states use them”, *Compas Working Papers* 32 (2006), 1-31.

3 Cf. Finn Stepputat, “Elevating Dead Bodies. State Ritualization between War and Peace”, submitted to *Ethnos*.

Ghanaian migrants stay in West Africa⁴, while about 350,000 Ghanaian citizens – or former citizens – live in Western countries, and it is especially these migrants that have attracted the policy attention of the government. Generally speaking, Ghanaian migrants remain in contact with their family members, they send remittances, invest in houses, land, and the private sector, and some go on lavish holidays in Ghana. Likewise an increasing number of Ghanaians visit as tourists, or stay for longer periods of time, or return to pursue a career, go into business, or retire⁵. This situation has not gone unnoticed by Ghanaian politicians. Since 2001, the Ghanaian governments have recognized non-resident Ghanaians as holding a huge development potential and initiated a range of migration-development policies and initiatives to mobilize and govern migrants for development, such as a homecoming summit, the introduction of dual citizenship, and franchise for non-resident citizens.

Being a stable (neo)liberal democracy – praised by Western development agencies for economic growth as well as peaceful and democratic transitions of government – Ghanaian migration-development scenarios primarily focus on development. Likewise, they are characterized by being non-coercive, and both policy makers and migrants emphasize the cordial relationship between Ghana and her migrants. As a case study, Ghana thus offers a particular perspective, different from states with a recent history of civil war and genocide

as well as different from less neo-liberal states, highlighting development, democracy, and an articulated positive relationship between state and migrants.

However, Ghana has also been affected by economic and political crisis and conflict in the 1970s and 1980s⁶, causing emigration of highly skilled workers as well as the establishment of a diasporic political opposition. And while an impressive range of migration-development policies have been debated and passed, few of these have actually been implemented. Even more importantly, Ghanaian migrants do not seem to care much about them, being guided by family obligations and hometown affiliation, expressing lack of trust in government and state bureaucracy. The relationship between the Ghanaian state and international migrants is thus more complicated than appears at first sight. In the paper I argue that – in spite of ambitions to govern international migrants abroad and thus extend sovereignty beyond national borders – most government officials realize that migrant contributions primarily are embedded in family obligations and local affiliation, rather than patriotic sentiments. It is thus difficult to actually govern migrant contributions to development at the *national* level. Second I suggest that in spite of this realization, an important aspect of continuously initiating, debating, and passing migration-development policies and activities is to signal sovereignty, state agency and responsibility to several audiences: migrants, development agencies, and other nation states. Hence, while policies may not ‘work’ in the sense of enabling the government to ‘tap’ migrant re-

4 UNDP, “Human Development Report”, accessed September 6, 2010, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2009/>.

5 Estimates range between 1.5 and 3 million people. Takwiyaa Manuh, *At Home in the World? International Migration and Development in Contemporary Ghana and West Africa* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2005); Peter Quartey, *Migration in Ghana - A Country Profile 2009* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2009).

6 Constitutional rule and multiparty democracy was established in 1992 when Jerry Rawlings – head of the military regime in Ghana during the 1980s – was elected president. He lost power to John Kufuor in 2001 who served until 2009 when John Atta Mills – former Vice President under Rawlings from 1997 to 2001 – took over power again.

sources for national development, they may enable the government to appear as actors on the global and national migration-development stage – and hence signal sovereignty. Migration-development scenarios in Ghana thus have a strong symbolic and performance dimension, constituting a policy spectacle with several audiences.

The paper is based on interviews with high-level state officials from nine ministries as well as from the Bank of Ghana, Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC), Ghana Immigration Service (GIS), the Ghanaian Embassy in Denmark and the High Commission in the UK. The interviews focused on actual migration-development policies as well as the interviewees' perceptions and visions of migration and development and were carried out between February and July 2008 (under Kufuor's government) and again in January 2010 (under Atta Mills' government). I thus analyze migration-development scenarios through this particular lens. In addition, I refer to interviews with return migrants in Ghana and with Ghanaian migrants in Copenhagen, focusing on their transnational involvement and their collaboration with or their opinions on political authorities to discuss how migration-scenarios are received by some of their intended audiences. I start by setting the stage for the analysis of Ghanaian migration-development through a historical outline of the changing relationships between migrants and states.

MIGRATION, DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATE

During the last 50 years, policy and theoretical perceptions of international migration and its development potential have revolved around the question whether migration constitutes a potential resource for development or a symptom of crisis and underdevelopment. And, in consequence, whether migrants should be mo-

bilized and governed for the benefit of national development by governments and other political actors – or rather should be controlled and delimited. There has never been full academic or policy consensus about these issues. Rather different migration-development scenarios have dominated, offering political and theoretical repertoires and guidelines that are used, recycled or discarded over time.

After several decades where migration was seen as an impediment for national development, migration was 'discovered' as a development potential in policy and academic circles in the 1960s⁷, coinciding with economic growth and demand for labour in Western Europe as well as with decolonization and independence of many former African colonies. Guest workers and (former) colonial subjects moving to the old colonial powers to study or work were seen as development agents in their countries of origin through the transfer of remittances, human capital, and eventual return to fully realize their development potential, presumably achieved through working or studying in Western countries. Theoretically, this view corresponds with modernization theories and the belief that states can shape economic growth and development. Likewise it reflects a liberal economist perspective where migration represents efficient adaptation to the economic system – for instance in the case of West Africa⁸.

The migration-development optimism reversed in the following two decades, following the global oil crisis, the 1973 European immi-

7 Hein de Haas, "Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective", *International Migration Review*, 44 (2010), 227-264; Thomas Faist, "Transnationalization and Development. Towards an Alternative Agenda", *Social Analysis*, 53 (2009), 38-59.

8 Beverly Lindsay, "Migration and National Development: An Introduction" in *African Migration and National Development* ed. Beverly Lindsay, 1-17 (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985).

gration ban, and not least widespread economic and political crisis in Africa. Theoretically, structuralist and Marxist theories on dependency, underdevelopment, and world systems contested the idea of a development potential in migration, asserting that labour migration causes underdevelopment and suffering⁹. In these views, capitalist forces exploited Africa in terms of extracting natural resources and skilled population – e.g. so-called brain drain – and migration constituted a symptom of crisis and failed policies. Migrants are seen as victims of capitalism, or, in the eyes of some states, as traitors or deserters¹⁰. The relationship between migrant and the state is thus conceived as non-existing or of an antagonistic nature.

The view of migrants as symptoms of crisis – or indeed of migrants *as* crisis – continues to date. Yet while brain drain is still debated today, much policy emphasis is on immigration as a problem to be regulated and solved through migration management and restrictions at the national and international levels, securitizing migration and outsourcing border control¹¹. However, parallel to the securitization of migration, the linkage between migration and development re-emerged during the 1990s and 2000s, when researchers and policy makers (re)discovered that many migrants do not cut off their relations to their country of

origin but engage in transnational practices at social, economic, political, and religious levels – contributing to development (and conflict) in various ways. The notion of the migration–development nexus was introduced¹², gaining academic and political prominence during the 2000s. The main policy focus is on how international migrant populations – now often termed diasporas – in Western countries fuel development in their countries of origin through the transfer of remittances, human capital, and return – much like in the 1960s.

Indeed, much of the (initial) optimism of migration and development refers to the growth of migrant remittances to developing countries, rising from an estimated USD 85 billion in 2000 to up to USD 300 billion in 2006¹³. Remittances dwarf both official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment (FDI) in many developing countries. Likewise, the rediscovered interest in migration and development coincides with increased demands for skilled labour and circular migration in developed economies and neo-liberal agendas in which the responsibility for development and service provision is increasingly privatized and outsourced to non-state actors¹⁴. For Ghana as well as other African countries this scenario implies a political focus on migrants as development agents vis-à-vis their remittances and transfer of skills, competences, and liberal democratic values. It thus presumes the agency and responsibil-

9 Elliott P. Skinner, "Labor Migration and National Development in Africa" in *African Migration*, ed. Lindsay, 18-39.

10 Cf. Hein de Haas, "International Migration and National Development: Viewpoints and Policy Initiatives in Countries of Origin. The Case of Nigeria", *Working papers Migration and Development Series*, (2006), 1-28; Boris Nieswand, "Development and Diaspora. Ghana and its Migrants", *Sociologus*, 59 (2009), 17-31.

11 Hein de Haas, *Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union: An Overview of Recent Trends*. (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2008); Riina Isotalo, "Politizing the Transnational. On Implications for Migrants, Refugees, and Scholarship", *Social Analysis*, 53 (2009), 60-84.

12 Ninna N. Sørensen, Nick van Hear and Poul Engberg-Pedersen, "The Migration-Development Nexus. Evidence and Policy Options State-of-the-Art Overview", *International Migration*, 40 (2002), 1-47.

13 Oliver Bakewell, "'Keeping Them in Their Place': The Ambivalent Relationship between Development and Migration in Africa", *Third World Quarterly*, 29 (2008), 1341-1358.

14 Nina G. Schiller, "A Global Perspective on Migration and Development", *Social Analysis*, 53 (2009), 14-37.

ity of migrants, their willingness and capacity to transfer resources, as well as a restoration of migrants' trust in the state.

THE EMERGENCE OF GHANAIAN MIGRANTS AS DEVELOPMENT AGENTS

In many ways, the case of Ghana constitutes a textbook example of the evolution in migration-development policies. Ghana has a long history of migration of a both voluntary and forced nature, consisting of a mix of internal, regional and international movements¹⁵. Being the first African country to become independent, in 1957, political and economic optimism thrived in the late 1950s and first part of the 1960s. In this period, Ghana was one of the major destinations of West African migrants, especially in relation to mining and plantation work¹⁶. Likewise, a number of Ghanaians engaged in education migration to Western countries, supposed to return and develop the country as good patriots. However, optimism vanished in the mid-1960s with economic hardship and political crisis, expressed in a succession of coup d'états and the establishment of Rawlings' left-populist military regime in 1981. This situation spurred large out-migration of the opposition and the elite, fleeing from the political persecution and/or looking for better economic opportunities¹⁷. It has been estimated that, after Uganda, Ghana

15 Emmanuel Akyeampong, "Africans in the Diaspora: The Diaspora and Africa", *African Affairs*, 99 (2000), 183-215.

16 Aribidesi Usman and Toyin Falola, "Migration in African History: An Introduction" in *Movements, Borders, and Identities in Africa*, ed. Toyin Falola and Aribidesi Usman (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 1-36.

17 The situation was further aggravated by the expulsion of more than one million Ghanaians from Nigeria in 1983.

accounted for second largest exodus of highly skilled persons from Africa between the 1970s and 1982, leaving to Western as well as neighbouring countries. Likewise, a diasporic lobby was formed during the 1980s¹⁸, mainly in opposition to Rawlings. Skilled migration and political tensions thus characterized big parts of Ghanaian migration, and until the middle of the 1990s the general relationship between migrants and the Ghanaian state was tense¹⁹.

The political situation changed in the 1990s when the Fourth Republic established constitutional rule and multiparty democracy. Rawlings and the social democratic National Democratic Congress (NDC) won the parliamentary and presidential elections in 1993 and again four years later, ruling throughout the 1990s. In this period international remittances to Ghana grew rapidly, more than doubling from an estimated USD 201.9 million in 1990 to USD 506.2 million in 2000²⁰, causing government interest in the development potential of migration in the late 1990s. Yet emphasis was on brain drain of health personnel²¹, and in 1998 the government invested USD 2 million to curb migration of nurses and doctors through promotion of better working conditions in the country²². The following year, right of abode was granted in the new Immigration

18 Giles Mohan, "Making Neoliberal States of Development: The Ghanaian Diaspora and the Politics of Homelands", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 26 (2008), 464-479.

19 Nieswand, "Development and Diaspora".

20 Ernest K.Y. Addison, "The Macroeconomic Impact of Remittances" (paper presented at the conference Migration and Development in Ghana, La Palm Royal Beach Hotel).

21 In 1995, 60 percent of Ghanaian doctors left Ghana, a number increasing to 90 percent in 2002, see Simona Vezzoli, *Building Bonds for Migration and Development. Diaspora Engagement Policies of Ghana, India and Serbia* (Esborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, 2010), 3.

22 Vezzoli, *Building Bonds*.

Act (Act 573), introducing a range of rights for Ghanaians holding passports of countries not allowing dual citizenship and for “Africans in the Diaspora who want to return to Ghana and set up home, business etc.” The government was thus starting to reach out to Ghanaian migrants and descendants from the slave trade, encouraging their return.

In 2000 Rawlings and NDC lost power to the pro-market New Patriotic Party (NPP) and opposition leader John Agyekum Kufuor. When Kufuor became president in 2001, he thus did so in a period where the emergence of migrants as development agents started to gain policy prominence – not least in relation to remittances. Furthermore, in the Ghanaian case, the change of ruling party also corresponded with a transfer of power backed by big parts of the diasporic lobby. Being politically and economically active, Ghanaian migrants emerged as development agents of interest to the government, and Kufuor’s presidency marks the beginning of explicit migration-development scenarios to target the Ghanaian population in Western countries. In his inaugural speech in January 2001, Kufuor explicitly addressed Ghanaians living outside the country.

I must also acknowledge the contributions made by our compatriots who live outside the country. Currently, you contribute a third of the capital inflow into the country. Many of you do more than send money home, many of you have kept up keen interest in the affairs at home and some of you have even been part of the struggle of the past twenty years. I salute your efforts and your hard work and I extend a warm invitation to you to come home and let us rebuild our country [...] Those of our compatriots who have made homes beyond our shores, I make a special plea for your help; we need your newly acquired skills and contacts, we need your perspec-

tive and we need your capital. Those who have left and stayed out, only because of the military revolution or political differences, I say come back, come back home where you belong and let us join in building a new Ghana²³.

Drawing on an authenticity discourse of Ghana as homeland, Kufuor articulates non-resident Ghanaians as a part of a transnational Ghanaian nation, not only emphasizing their economic assets but also their skills, contacts, and perspectives. This statement signals a new relationship between migrants and the state as “part of the struggle”, forming an alliance rather than being adversaries. Migrants are characterized as successful and skilful, still belonging to Ghana, and contributing to national development. They are thus constituted as resourceful citizens, patriotic partners and responsible collaborators – and thereby also positioned as a receptive audience and constituency for the president’s visions.

THE HOMECOMING SUMMIT

The articulation of a patriotic, successful, devoted, and economically endowed migrant population informs subsequent migration-development scenarios. This is demonstrated in the homecoming summit in July 2001, organized by the newly established Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC). The summit was based on the reflection that “not only the multinational companies hold a potential for investing in Ghana but also our own nationals living abroad who have the skills and resources

23 John A. Kufuor, “Inaugural Speech, 2001”, accessed August 12, 2010, <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200101070055.html>.

to develop the country”²⁴ and had the theme “Harnessing the Global Ghanaian Resource Potential for Accelerated National Development”. It had the following three objectives:

- a) to develop a process for the renewal of confidence of Ghanaians living abroad in their country, b) to enhance dialogue and explore opportunities for productive relations between Ghanaians living abroad and their country, c) to identify the means to tap into the acquired capacities of Ghanaians living abroad for the creation of national wealth²⁵.

During three days, altogether 830 participants – including 572 non-resident Ghanaians as well as a number of local participants, representatives of international organizations, and politicians – debated how to mobilize and “tap” migrant resources for development. These debates resulted in a five-point action plan²⁶ with key policy issues and recommended actions, identifying dual citizenship, franchise for non-resident citizens, and the establishment of a Non-Resident Ghanaians (NRGs) secretariat as well as the establishment of a comprehensive NRG database, as “it is estimated that we can easily identify one million of compatriots whose resources and goodwill the country would enjoy on a regular and consistent basis”²⁷, as the half-year report optimistically stated it. These issues and actions thus reflect a belief in patriotism,

the migrant potential and not least in the state’s ability of governing this group.

Mr Appiah, a successful businessman and politician – and return migrant from Denmark – who participated in the summit, shared the enthusiasm in the GIPC reports, characterizing the homecoming summit as a wonderful event and as a reflection of the dedication of Ghanaian migrants to develop Ghana. He further described extensive plans for the establishment of a Privatization and Industrialization Fund – another of the stated aims of the action plan – which he and a group of other Ghanaian migrants had developed in the wake of the summit²⁸. The fund was to be funded by non-resident Ghanaians to provide free water to all citizens and thereby constitute a viable alternative to the privatization of water supply in Ghana. In a written memo, Mr Appiah described how “we, Non Resident Ghanaians, voluntarily and sustainably, [will] act like FATHER CHRISTMAS and provide support and assistance to our country” through worldwide monthly collections during five years. Mr Appiah and his collaborators thus shared the notion of Ghana as homeland and non-resident Ghanaians as a resourceful, patriotic and benevolent population – acting like Father Christmas – who can be governed and mobilized for development. However, the Ghanaian government did not accept the offer, making Mr Appiah speculate why.

I can only guess why the state did not go forward with it. First because we marked ourselves saying that we are against privatization of water. Secondly, I believe and suspect that the government thought that we will become too strong a pressure

24 Interview, former GIPC employee, Accra, June 2008.

25 GIPC, *Homecoming Summit for Ghanaians Living Abroad, Accra, July 23-25, 2001. Summary Report on the Way Forward* (Accra: Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, 2001).

26 GIPC, *Action Plan. Homecoming Summit Recommendations* (Accra: Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, 2001).

27 GIPC, *Homecoming Summit. Half-year Status Report as at December 2001* (Accra: Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, 2001), 2.

28 The real name of Mr Appiah has been changed. Interview, Accra, May 2008.

group, so it's better to deal with us individually rather than as a group. So they let the opportunity fall down.

According to Mr Appiah, the homecoming summit constituted a great opportunity that the government dropped because of lack of political courage, suggesting that the involvement of collective actors was seen as a threat by the government – even when the relationship between the state and non-resident citizens was supposed to be cordial and collaborative as in the Ghanaian case. In his analysis, he and his collaborators transgressed the position appointed to them by the government, being too politically assertive – wanting to govern rather than being governed. The government imposed limits to their political engagement; suggesting that the invitation to return and be involved in the rebuilding of the country implies an acceptance of the alliance between government and migrants.

GHANAIAN POLICY INITIATIVES AND CHALLENGES

While the Privatization and Industrialization Fund was not established, the Ghanaian government did realize several of the policy initiatives identified at the homecoming summit, aiming at encouraging, governing, and facilitating migrant involvement in Ghanaian development. At the same time, the government liberalized the economy and emphasized civil society and other so-called non-state actors' responsibility for and contributions to development – ranging from traditional authorities to hometown associations. As a state Ghana has thus gradually embraced “a particular reading of development, which is founded on entrepre-

neurialism and a self-help charitable ethos”²⁹. This political orientation puts an increasing focus on family obligations and private contributions to local development – such as migrant remittances which continued to grow in the 2000s, culminating at an estimated USD 1.8 billion in 2007³⁰. The migration policy initiatives should thus be seen in this light of privatization of service provisions and increasing civil society and non-state actor involvement.

Ghanaian migration policy initiatives can be divided into bureaucratic reform, investment policies, extension of political rights, extension of state services abroad, and symbolic policies³¹, aiming to facilitate economic and political contributions and as well as to strengthen migrant belonging and trust in the nation state. The most important policy initiatives since 2001 are summarized in Table 1 below.

At first sight these initiatives identify Ghana as a very pro-active African state in terms of migration and development. However, the table also shows that most policy initiatives took place between 2001 and 2006, whereas initiatives waned in the last part of the 2000s³². The most important *bureaucratic reform* is the National Migration Bureau/Migration Unit. In 2006, Cabinet decided to establish an inter-ministerial National Migration Bureau located in the Ministry of Interior with the aim of coordinating ministries and public sector institutions working with migration, following the coun-

29 Mohan, “Making Neoliberal States”, 47.

30 Estimate kindly provided by Dr Addison, Director of Research, Bank of Ghana, 20.01.10.

31 Cf. Peggy Levitt and Rafael de la Dehesa, “Transnational Migration and the Redefinition of the State: Variations and Explanations”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 26 (2003), 587-611.

32 Cf. Vezzoli, *Building Bonds*.

try's admission into IOM³³. The Bureau is supported by IOM Ghana³⁴ and was inaugurated for the first time in 2008. It consists of members from a number of ministries as well as state institutions such as Ghana Immigration Service, Bank of Ghana, Ghana Investment Promotion

Centre, Ghana Statistical Service, and the National Development Committee. Following the change of government in 2009, its name changed to the Migration Unit and was officially (re-)launched in 2010 with the Deputy Ministry of Interior, Dr Apea-Kubi, as chair.

Table 1: Overview of main migration-development policies

| | Bureaucratic reform | Investment policies | Political rights |
|---|--|------------------------------|---|
| 2001 Kufuor Gov. 1st period | | Homecoming summit (GIPC) | |
| 2002 | | | Dual Citizenship Act |
| 2003 | Non-resident secretariat (GIPC) | | |
| 2004 Elections | | | |
| 2005 Kufuor Gov. 2nd period | | | |
| 2006 | Extension of portfolio: Ministry of Tourism and Diasporean Relations Cabinet decision: Establishment of Migration Bureau (Min. of Interior) | Foreign Exchange Control Act | Representation of People's Amendment Bill (ROPAB) |
| 2007 Ghana 50 | | Golden Jubilee Saving Bonds | |
| 2008 Elections | Inauguration of National Migration Bureau | | |
| 2009 Atta Mills Gov. | Name change: From Ministry of Tourism and Diasporean Relations to Ministry of Tourism Name change: from National Migration Bureau to Migration Unit | | |
| 2010 | Inauguration of Migration Unit | | |

33 The Statesman, "Migration Bureau Committee Inaugurated", accessed January 2, 2011, <http://www.modernghana.com/news/170095/1/migration-bureau-committee-inaugurated.html>

34 Interview, IOM, Accra, March 2008 and January 2010.

Other institutional changes include the establishment of a NRG secretariat “to coordinate all activities and serve as the centre for all projects, programmes and issues involving Ghanaians living abroad”³⁵, launched at GIPC in 2003³⁶, and the extension of the Ministry of Tourism to include ‘Diasporan Relations’ between 2006 and 2008. *Investment policies* include the Foreign Exchange Control Act in 2006 (Act 723) and the Golden Jubilee Saving Bonds in 2007³⁷. Likewise the Bank of Ghana has established closer collaboration between banks and money transfer agencies to further the use of formal remittance channels³⁸. *Political rights* consist of the Dual Citizenship Act in 2002 (Act 591) as well as the Representation of People’s Amendment Bill (ROPAB) (Act 699), passed in 2006, granting franchise to Ghanaian citizens living outside the country. There appear to be only few *extensions of state services* abroad, though diplomatic missions have been designated to play a greater role in servicing and uniting Ghanaians abroad, such as encouraging investment in Ghana, participating in cultural and fundraising events, and liaising

with Ghanaian migrant associations³⁹. Finally, *symbolic policies* include public and political statements about international migrants as parts of the Ghanaian nation, such as Kufuor’s inaugural speech, as well as events and institutions focusing on belonging and inclusion, such as the homecoming summit. Likewise, most of the interviewed government officials were very enthusiastic about the development potential of international migration in Western countries and emphasized the positive relationship between Ghana and her migrants with characteristics as “cordial” and “home is home”. Government officials thus shared the authenticity discourse of Ghana as homeland for non-resident Ghanaians.

However, I quickly realized that this enthusiasm was not necessarily reflected in the actual implementation or realization of policy initiatives – especially not in relation to initiatives directly targeting or servicing international migrants. While coordination and the development of a comprehensive migration politics were and are the stated aims of the Migration Bureau and later of the Migration Unit, the actual implementation of this goal was still in the preparatory phase in both 2008 and 2010. Indeed, with a few exceptions, government officials in 2008 and 2010 generally knew little about what went on in other ministries, explaining that coordination is lacking and that a comprehensive migration politics is yet to be developed⁴⁰. For instance, none of the interviewed government officials knew what had happened to the NRG secretariat that turned out never to have had its own offices, being downscaled to a Diaspora Investment Unit at

35 GIPC, *Summary Report*.

36 Kwasi Abeasi, *Launch of the Non-Resident Ghanaian (NRG) Secretariat at the M-Plaza Hotel Accra on Wednesday, 30th April 2003* (Accra: Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, 2003).

37 The bonds are a government initiative, launched in relation to the 50 years anniversary of independence as a means to raise money for the development of the country and as a means for non-resident Ghanaians “to channel their remittances adding that the total value of private transfers into Ghana”, see “HON MINISTER OF FINANCE LAUNCHES GHANA’S JUBILEE BONDS”, Website of Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, accessed January 18, 2011, <http://www.mofep.gov.gh/bond31207.htm>.

38 Interview, Bank of Ghana, Accra, May 2008 and January 2010.

39 Interview, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Accra, February 2008; interview, Ghanaian Ambassador in Denmark, Copenhagen, October 2007; interview, Ghanaian Deputy High Commissioner in the UK, London, October 2008.

40 Cf. Quartey, *Migration in Ghana*.

GIPC in 2007⁴¹. Likewise the extensions of political rights to migrants have not been successful or implemented at all. Dual citizenship was only granted to 5,903 persons between January 2003 and August 2008⁴² and, according to a government official in the Ministry of Interior, only 20 former Ghanaian citizens and no African Americans had obtained Right of Abode⁴³. The extension of voting rights to Ghanaian citizens abroad was not implemented for the 2008 elections. Finally, while private remittances to Ghana grew until 2007, the government initiative of the Golden Jubilee Bonds did not live up to the expectations⁴⁴.

RECONFIGURING THE STATE-MIGRANT RELATIONSHIP?

The Ghanaian case thus shows a discrepancy between the stated intentions of the government and the actual realization of policy initiatives. This can be grounded in institutional sluggishness and barriers within the political system⁴⁵, aggravated by different agendas and power positions between different ministries and state institutions. For instance, political interest in migrant return does not necessarily go hand in hand with efforts focusing on national security and the curbing of undocumented migration. Furthermore, in contrast to immigration and the control of subjects and resources *inside* the national territory, migration-development policy initiatives go beyond the traditional sphere

of governance and sovereignty, as they target subjects outside state borders. In Levitt and de la Dehesa's words, such initiatives are "redefining the relationship between the state and its territorial boundaries, and hence reconfiguring understandings of sovereignty, citizenship and membership"⁴⁶. Indeed, Kufuor's invitation to non-resident Ghanaians 'to come back where they belong', the homecoming summit, the passing of the dual citizenship act and ROPAB send strong signals of inclusion of migrants into the Ghanaian nation and citizenry, in principle decoupling residence in the country of origin with membership, obligations and rights⁴⁷.

As Gamlen suggests, such policies can be seen as efforts to render non-resident populations governable. With reference to Foucault's theory of power, he explains how states attempt to govern migrants through relationships of transnational communication and the building of diaspora institutions, based around notions of an extended nation⁴⁸. The extension of rights to non-resident Ghanaians can be seen as a gesture offered by the state, acting like a legitimate sovereign that grants rights to its constituencies⁴⁹. However, without the actual implementation and extension of rights, the inclusion remains on a symbolic level, catering for belonging and loyalty, rather than full membership. Furthermore, it is important to remember that the state-migrant relationship is constituted by the state *as well as* by migrants. Therefore, while the symbolic inclusion of migrants in the nation represents a reconfiguration of this relationship on the symbolic level, it tells us little about the government's ability to actually govern migrants.

41 Interview, GIPC, Accra, June 2008 and January 2010.

42 Quartey, *Migration in Ghana*, 82.

43 Interview, Accra, January 2010.

44 Interview, Bank of Ghana, Accra, January 2010.

45 Darshan Vigneswaran, "Enduring Territoriality: South African Immigration Control", *Political Geography*, 27 (2008), 783-801.

46 Levitt and Dehesa, "Transnational Migration", 588.

47 Cf. Levitt and Dehesa, "Transnational Migration".

48 Gamlen, "Diaspora Engagement", 5.

49 Gamlen, "Diaspora Engagement", 6.

Nor does it tell us whether migrants' senses of belonging and loyalty are based on ideas of the extended nation or, more mundanely, if they know Ghanaian policy initiatives and are willing to engage themselves on these terms.

When I asked Ghanaian migrants in Copenhagen about their relationship to Ghana and their opinion of Ghanaian migration-development policies, the responses were mixed. All the interviewees expressed a positive view of their relationship to Ghana, sharing the overall discourse of Ghana as homeland. However, when it came to government policies, it was another story. As mentioned above, Mr Appiah had been very involved in the homecoming summit and was disappointed by the lack of government courage and commitment. Other migrants only knew very little about the policy initiatives or stated that they are meant for business people and not 'ordinary people'. Most of the interviewees were engaged in transnational practices, ranging from being in close contact with relatives and friends still living in Ghana, sending regular remittances, following news from Ghana on a daily basis, or building houses, to involvement in Ghanaian migrant associations and sending used equipment to their hometown. In spite of their involvement, none of them paid any attention to migration-development policies or found that they were relevant for them. Indeed, as other migrants around the world, Ghanaian migrants tend to organize themselves around family obligations and local development⁵⁰, being guided by local affiliations and obligations and not state policies. This implies that transnational involvement at the local level is not dependent on trust in the Ghanaian state. On the contrary,

several return migrants in Ghana complained about state bureaucracy and corruption, especially in relation to the acquisition of land and difficulties of infrastructure. From their point of view, the policy initiatives of the government are insufficient or simply irrelevant. This situation poses a specific set of challenges to policy makers.

THE WONDERS OF WELL-MANAGED MIGRATION

The paradox of less successful policies but flourishing transnational involvement was admitted by the interviewed government officials who were well aware of the family and local involvement of Ghanaian migrants. Government officials also explained that remittances and donations from hometown associations and other private actors are exactly of private nature, that they are uncoordinated and unpredictable and therefore cannot be directly included in state planning or budgeting. Likewise some government officials were aware of the difficult situation that many Ghanaian migrants find themselves in abroad and the delimitations it puts on their contributions. Others again stated that Ghanaian migrants will do whatever they want to and that there is little the government can do to change their behaviour. However, while some government officials thus emphasized the challenges in crafting effective migration-development policies, blaming globalization, global inequalities, and cultural norms, almost all regarded the huge migrant involvement as promise of a yet unexploited potential for national development – if well managed. A high-ranking government official explained it in the following way.

With the development of globalization and ICT, information is becoming more available to people, so the desire to migrate will

50 Nauja Kleist, "Modern Chiefs. Tradition, Development, and Return among Traditional Authorities in Ghana", *African Affairs*, 110 (441), 629-647; Mohan, "Making Neoliberal States"; Nieswand, "Development and Diaspora".

be there. In most cases, people migrate for economic reasons, to seek better job facilities and to be able to earn enough to care for themselves and their families [...] If there's information about the country where you want to migrate to, you migrate orderly; before you leave, you have a job, or you know there are jobs available, what are they, the contract, welfare, where you're going to settle, the conditions involved. So, you have all the ingredients to make an informed decision before you leave the home country.

The idea is that *when labour migration is managed very well*, then it tends to allow win-win situations for the sending country and the receiving country as well as for the migrants. [...] The sending country is benefiting from [less] unemployment and its attendant social frictions, or whatever the case may be. The receiving country has an opportunity to upstage their shortage of labour in their country. Migration increases productivity and productivity produces money, money creating more money – and everybody becomes a winner. The migrants are exposed to high levels of technology; so they absorb these technologies and then they get the know-how, the technical know-how. And then eventually, when they come back to their home country, they are able to utilize or to introduce all these technologies⁵¹.

This statement expresses an ambivalent view of migration-development policies, shared by many government officials. It presents migration as an uncontrollable and unstoppable force, powered by globalization. Likewise free

mobility is a constitutional right in Ghana (as well as in other countries that have signed the Convention of Human Rights), a point emphasized by several government officials, explaining that the Ghanaian state in principle cannot regulate emigration. Indeed, with the exception of the Ministry of Health, where several initiatives have been established to curb the emigration of skilled health personnel⁵², there seem to be no government regulations or objections concerning regular emigration. Commenting on the high level of education migration, a government official in the Ministry of Education simply said that “If you have your papers in order, then it's bye-bye – nobody will stop you”, further explaining that migration has become a social phenomenon and “we all want to be there [abroad]”⁵³.

This laissez-faire attitude feeds into a general understanding that people want to go and cannot be stopped – that prospective migrants are attracted and lured by ideas of better lives and salaries abroad. In spite of this understanding, the statement above also shows a strong belief in the benefits of migration if orderly planned and well managed, creating win-win situations – or rather win-win-win situations for the sending and receiving countries and the migrant alike. Rather than brain drain, some government officials talked about brain gain and brain circulation, a tendency that also is found in policy circles⁵⁴. However, such scenarios not only presume ‘orderly’ and informed migration decisions and processes but also a range of other preconditions. If migration is to mitigate social frictions related to unemployment,

51 Interview, Accra, July 2008.

52 Interview, Accra, June 2008 and January 2010.

53 Interview, Accra, June 2008.

54 E.g. Awil A. Mohamoud, *Reversing the Brain Drain in Africa. Harnessing the Intellectual Capital of the Diaspora for Knowledge Development in Africa* (Amsterdam: SAHAN, 2005).

emigrants are assumed to be from professions characterized by unemployment rather than a shortage of labour to avoid brain drain; in addition this scenario presupposes that social frictions primarily are rooted in (presumed) unemployment and not in other political, social or economic structures. Likewise, this scenario presumes that migrants get employment that match and upscale their qualifications, are exposed to high-level technology, and finally, that they return to Ghana and are able to utilize their new skills there. Such preconditions are rarely fulfilled⁵⁵ and are difficult to control for governments and migrants alike. It shows how the idea of win-win-win scenarios is based on a belief that well-managed migration *in itself* possesses a transformative power that enables migrants to overcome structural barriers and constraints in Ghana and abroad⁵⁶ – and, not least, to overcome conflicts of interests between migrant sending and receiving countries. It is, as the official framed it, exactly an idea, based on a range of presumptions as well as a good deal of optimism.

BIOPOLITICAL AMBITIONS

In spite of the belief in the power of well-managed migration, Ghanaian government officials also explained that migration management is fraught with challenges – especially concerning international migrants who are by definition located outside the state's territory. One challenge is the lack of knowledge. The number of non-resident Ghanaians is estimat-

ed to range from 1.5 to 3 million⁵⁷ and nobody knows the exact number, location or skills of this group. Government officials were thus lacking one of the most fundamental dimensions of modern statecraft: detailed knowledge of the population. Indeed, according to Scott, one of the characteristics of the modern state is its attempts “to create a terrain and a population with precisely those standardized characteristics that will be easiest to monitor, count, and manage”⁵⁸. As he have shown, states have engaged in the construction of visible and standardized units – such as mappings of particular populations and their division into discrete categories – to be able to govern their populations more effectively. While Scott is focusing on technologies of legibility inside the state territory, Ghanaian government officials called for statistics and databases on Ghanaian international migrants in order to enable better governance. An example is the visions of the director of the Ghana Immigration Service, Mrs. Elisabeth Addei.

If we leave migration as a private enterprise, where people can go anywhere they want to and just bring anything in and spend it privately, then it will not make any impact on our development. We are thinking about people who move, that their mobility [should be] tracked, recorded, documented, so we know where they are. We want to have a skills bank, so we know where people are and when we can

55 For instance, many Ghanaian labour migrants end up doing menial work, rather than exploiting their training, e.g. Eli Vasta and Leander Kandilige, “‘London the Leveler’: Ghanaian work strategies and community solidarity”, *Compas Working Papers* 52 (2007), 1-32.

56 Cf. de Haas, “Migration and Development”.

57 Kwaku Twum-Baah, “Volume and Characteristics of International Ghanaian Migration” in Manuh ed. *At Home in the World*, 55-77.

58 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 81-82.

invite them to make an impact and come and contribute to our economy⁵⁹.

While not questioning the right of free mobility, the director did question the benefits of a laissez-faire politics “where people can go anywhere they want to” and do what they want. Indeed, she was an outspoken proponent of the necessity of governing and managing migration to secure development, demanding the mapping and recording of Ghanaian migrants to enable the state to benefit from their migration in an orderly way. She thereby expressed an ambition of exercising biopolitics – e.g. “the administration of life [...] understood at the level of populations”⁶⁰. This requires technology to survey and thereby govern the population. The desire of a skills bank or database of migrants was widely shared among government officials and, as mentioned above, one of the tools discussed at the homecoming summit. Other suggestions include registration of all Ghanaians (including undocumented migrants) at the diplomatic missions, listings of Ghanaian migrant associations as a ‘bridgehead to the diaspora’, and more generally, that the diplomatic missions play an active role in reaching out towards Ghanaian migrants. In 2008, I did not hear about any implementation of such measures, but in 2010 the Ghanaian Embassy in Washington DC started compiling a database of Ghanaian residents in the US, based on voluntary registration “with the objective of promoting and protecting their welfare and ensuring active participation

in national development efforts”⁶¹. Likewise, GIS and Ghana Statistics were reported to prepare a database on non-resident Ghanaians in 2010⁶².

These biopolitical ambitions aim to document and track non-resident Ghanaians. They constitute visions of seeing and performing like a state⁶³ in an era of mobility and globalization, mirroring a desired reconfiguration of the state’s ability to govern migrants. And while it seems unlikely that the Ghanaian government and its missions abroad can actually survey and map the entire non-resident population, the visions can be seen as a claim of sovereignty – or rather the desire thereof – in the sense of the state controlling subjects and resources. As Hansen and Stepputat suggest, sovereignty is an aspiration that requires constant performances whether claimed in the name of the nation, the state or a local despotic power, being dependent on the “will to rule”⁶⁴. In the Ghanaian case, this is articulated in relation to national development and welfare, or in other words, with the aim to ameliorate the country and the population; it is embedded in good intentions. Yet as Dean⁶⁵ remarks, even the best of biopolitical intentions have the potential of being harmful, being grounded on divisions between those deemed as capable or incapable of handling their freedom – or, in this case, their mobility. Indeed, the creation of

59 Interview, Accra, April 2008.

60 Mitchell Dean, “Demonic Societies: Liberalism, Biopolitics, and Sovereignty” in Thomas B. Hansen and Finn Stepputat eds., *States of Imagination. Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 41-65.

61 Vanessa Mensah-Adu, “Database for Ghanaians in US”, accessed January 14, 2011, www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/diaspora/artikel.php?ID=199649; www.ghanaembassy.org accessed January 14, 2011.

62 Interview, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 2010.

63 Cf. Scott, “Seeing Like a State”.

64 Thomas B. Hansen and Finn Stepputat, “Introduction” in Thomas B. Hansen and Finn Stepputat eds., *Sovereign Bodies. Citizens, Migrants and States in the Postcolonial World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 3.

65 Dean, “Demonic Societies”.

a legible and governable population not only relies on an overview of persons but also on the differentiation and classification of different categories of subjects⁶⁶. The GIS director stated that very directly.

We have the category of unskilled people; that is the most difficult category who also wants to leave this country to go to other places in search of greener pastures. The way they do it, going across the desert, means the loss of lives and ... you know ... uncertainties. Ultimately it does not make them good migrants because they are not able to get [legal] settlement and therefore get returns from their migration. So their contributions to the country in terms of migration are really very limited⁶⁷.

The division between positive and negative effects mirrors a market logic, based on whether the state investment in its population pays off – such as abundant remittances, business investment, skills transfer, and return. It should be accentuated that the director did not only focus on the limited economic benefit from undocumented migrants but also emphasized suffering and the losses of life. Nevertheless, she classified undocumented migrants as ‘not good’ migrants because of their limited returns to the state – in contrast to those migrants with a more promising development potential. Both categories are objects of governance where the former are courted for their development potential whereas the latter are subjected to education and information activities, carried out by GIS and IOM to hinder undocumented

mobility. Another initiative is the European Commission’s AENAS 2006 project with the objective of “stemming illegal migration and developing legal migration”⁶⁸ in Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Libya. Being funded by a 2.6 million EUR grant from the European Commission and two Italian Ministries, the project shows how Ghanaian migration policies and initiatives not only reflect efforts to strengthen national development but also are shaped by European agendas.

In addition to Ghanaian migrants, other states thus also constitute audiences for the government. Indeed, Ghanaian government officials explained that undocumented migrants and deportations constitute an embarrassment to the government, as “the mass deportations of Ghanaians give the impression of Ghanaians as being worse than we are”⁶⁹ and the government is uncomfortable and worried about “the false and negative reputation of Ghana”⁷⁰. This indicates that, from a government perspective, another problem of undocumented migrants is that they expose the failure of the Ghanaian government to control and govern their citizens. The migrants’ irregular presence in other countries and ensuing deportations signal to other governments that the Ghanaian government’s claims and ambitions of transnational governance and sovereignty are not realized. Likewise, migrants can be seen as a sign of failed biopolitics: these citizens *could* have been used more productively by the state and their losses of life as well as their suffering *could* have been prevented. The embarrassment of Ghanaian government officials may thus also

66 Scott, “Seeing Like a State”; James Wedel, Chris Shore, Gregory Feldmand and Stacy Lathrop, “Towards and Anthropology of Public Policy”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 600 (2005), 30-51.

67 Interview, Accra, April 2008.

68 IOM Accra, *Facilitating a Coherent Migration Management Approach in Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Libya by Promoting Legal Migration and Preventing Further Irregular Migration*, (Erata Hotel, Accra, April 8-9, 2008), ii.

69 Interview, May 2008, Accra.

70 Interview, June 2008, Accra.

be grounded in a feeling of not ‘mastering’ its population in an optimal way.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have explored the relationship between states and international migrants in relation to development, focusing on Ghana. The paper shows that international migrants re-emerge as development agents in the early 2000s, convergent with an increased policy focus on remittances and, in the Ghanaian case, with a change of government backed by a diaspora lobby. Using an authenticity discourse, the Kufuor government invited non-resident Ghanaians ‘back home’ and initiated a range of measures and policies aimed at ‘tapping’ into their capacities to furthering their contributions to national development – ranging from dual citizenship and franchise to the biopolitical ambition of establishing databases of international migrants. I argue that these initiatives are attempts to symbolically include international migrants in the nation and to constitute them as a patriotic and governable population. Indeed, Ghanaian government officials expressed a strong belief in the benefits of well-managed migration, endowing migration management with a transformative power to overcome structural barriers and constraints. Government officials thereby ascribe a central role to the state in facilitating and governing international migration for national development. Likewise they send a signal to migrants as well as to other states of the Ghanaian state’s ambition to perform sovereignty in the sense of controlling subjects and resources – even if they are located outside the national territory. I therefore argue that migration-development initiatives *also* function as a policy spectacle where the government signals that it is taking its responsibility as a migrant-sending state seriously. This is a strategic signal, given the in-

ternational attention and huge resources put into the securitization of migration as well as Europe’s struggles against undocumented and unwanted African migrants.

These signals and policy initiatives form part of a more general reconfiguration of the relationship between migrants and the state, where membership, rights and obligations are decoupled from residence and territory. However, as I have shown, the reconfiguration takes place on a symbolic level, mirroring a *desired* extension of the state’s ability to govern migrants: from enticing and facilitating migrant involvement through different policy measures in Ghana to actual governance of citizens living outside the territory of the nation state. The desire to control them thus represents a transgression of internal and external realms of sovereignty⁷¹. However, though transnational involvement is flourishing in Ghana, it is mainly based around local affiliations and family obligations. Migration-development policies specifically targeting international migrants generally have not been implemented or taken off. Furthermore, Ghanaian migrants do not seem to be interested or trust the state, being embedded in family and webs of obligation and affinity, rather than patriotism. This observation accentuates the point that the reconfiguration between migrant and state is less comprehensive than assumed in the optimistic tales of migration and development. Migrants may not trust the state or want to redirect their involvement along state-directed lines. And states may not want to or be able to implement their visions and grant migrants real rights as citizens.

71 John G. Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations”, *International Organization*, 47 (1993), 139-174.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
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| IOM | International Organization of Migration |
| FDI | foreign direct investment |
| GIPC | Ghana Investment Promotion Centre |
| GIS | Ghana Immigration Service |
| NDC | National Democratic Congress |
| NPP | New Patriotic Party |
| NRGs | Non-Resident Ghanaians |
| ODA | official development assistance |
| ROPAB | Representation of People's Amendment Bill |
| UNDP | United Nation Development Program |

