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Involving the Diaspora through Co-participative Programs

The case of Fondazioni4Africa-Senegal

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	3
1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. THE PROJECT F4A-SENEGAL	6
3. HYPOTHESIS AT THE BASE OF F4A	8
4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED	9
4.1. Remittances and microfinance	9
4.1.1 Lessons Learned.....	10
4.2. Capacity building activities.....	11
4.2.1 Lessons Learned.....	12
4.3. Lesson learned from the Project.....	14
5. CONCLUDING REMARKS	15
BIBLIOGRAPHY	17

ABSTRACT

The paper presents the results of a three year project (Fondazioni4Africa-Senegal), a unique experience in Italy where 4 Italian NGOs, 4 Senegalese associations and the research institute CeSPI participated in defining, projecting and putting in place development and co-development activities in Italy and in Senegal. The research activities highlighted a wide range of results and outcomes, among all the importance (as a precondition) of gaining the public recognition of the diaspora as actor of development (in both countries); the necessity to build and reinforce migrant capacities as actors of development to better evaluate their interventions in the homeland; the difficulty to channel remittances into job generating activities (to break dependency paths) and the necessity to build up institutional and economic corridors and conditions between in the two countries**.

** This document is based on the research papers and activities undertaken by Cespi within the project Fondazioni4Africa 2008-2011 (in particular: Ferro, 2011; Ferro e Frigeri, 2009; Mezzetti 2011; Istituto Superiore St. Anna, 2011) and on the analysis of unofficial documents and internal discussions. It overall provides a general reflection upon the initiative representing the author's opinion.

1. INTRODUCTION

Migrant Diasporas are currently considered by Governments and International Agencies as actors of development for the countries of origin due to the social, cultural and monetary remittances sent home. Resulting in a moral obligation for most migrants, remittances often represent the only source of income for families back home and one of the main financial inflows for many developing countries, often exceeding international aid. Not only individual, but also collective remittances by migrant organizations represent a crucial resource, being a substitute of public intervention and social welfare: thanks to the funds sent from abroad, local communities often obtain hospitals, medical staff/equipment, schools and education services/equipment, infrastructural works in their villages. Remittances can more easily improve life conditions of families/community of origin, but this does not automatically signify or imply development, keeping in mind the difficulty to define what development is. In this document we identify the development effect of remittances in the possibility for people to work and to be independent from external aid. One of the main debated aspect today considering the channeling of remittances is to what extent they can in fact create a development impact and stop dependency paths.

Migrant remittances generate positive and negative effects in the country and community of origin that can be more or less visible and intentional. In positive terms, the diaspora interprets and directly reaches families' and local needs: the money/intervention from abroad better corresponds to the local requests and necessities. Moreover, remittances could be the spin off for local productive activities. In negative terms, entering local affairs and decisions, the diaspora can play a disruptive and conflicting role towards local authorities and community cohesion and remittances can generate income inequalities or can affect stability of the exchange rate and inflation. All in all, being extremely important per se, remittances may as well perversely produce the effect of stimulating a dependence culture from the abroad resources among the local population. While respecting the money ownership of migrants and their original will for the use of the money sent², the main current debate is focused in (how) directing migrant remittances towards productive development (i.e. job generating) activities and not just to a consumption employment (Ferro, 2010a).

From the other side, migrant associations produce effects also in the destination country, being determinant in the process of integration. They are in fact the first and preferred subject in providing mutual help to first arrival migrants (including undocumented ones) and they have become the preferred interlocutor for local institutions towards migrant communities.

Based on the above elements and evidence, the diaspora has become the protagonist of the “co-development” model of international cooperation. Firstly employed in France³, the term “co-development” refers to those practices and policies that involve migrants and territories in decentralised cooperation schemes, often building on migrants' spontaneous transnational practices. Although migrant associations are not generally professional actors of international cooperation (as namely the NGOs), they are spontaneous agents of “co-development”. Under the assumption that migrants can be agents of development in their countries of origin, *co-development* includes initiatives which sustain migrants' associations in transnational activities through a variety of projects. These schemes typically involve different local institutions and actors in migrants' countries of residence⁴ and counterparts in migrants' countries of origin⁵ (Grillo and Riccio, 2004). This model of international cooperation expresses a “triple win approach” that recognizes a triple

² “*It's their money*” and this has to be recognized by International Agencies.

³ From a first evidence of the role of migrant associations during the 1970s, co-development started in France, afterwards revealing a politics of assistance to a return migration. The concept has then changed up to the creation of a *Ministère de l'Immigration, de l'Identité Nationale et du Développement* in 2007 (Mezzetti, Ferro: 2008).

⁴ Regional and municipal authorities, NGOs, and crucial migrants' associations based locally in countries of residence, representing particular villages or clusters of villages where migrants originate, with funding from the state, or the EU.

⁵ Local authorities, NGOs, village associations, etc.

advantage and benefit: for the migrants, the country of origin and the country of residence. Such approach has been officially identified and adopted as development strategy by International Agencies and Organizations at global scale⁶, through concrete programs such as MIDA⁷ (Migration for Development in Africa), by the IOM (International Organization for Migration), the Financing Facility for Remittances⁸ program/call by IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) and the Joint Migration and Development Iniziative promoted by UN-EU⁹.

Co-development is becoming a more commonly assumed model and approach, both at the level of international cooperation and public debate and both in terms of growing number of experiences that embrace it. Compared to other countries, Italy presents the peculiarity of a national (cooperation for development) policy that still considers international cooperation in a traditional way¹⁰. Although the Italian Cooperation had financially supported some co-development programs in the past (such as MIDA, by the IOM), the diaspora role and involvement in development issues has not yet been formally recognized nor supported by permanent programs, policies or *ad hoc* resources. The distinguishing feature of the Italian case stands although in the large scale existence of co-development initiatives, expression of a very active civic society and of the support of local authorities (Municipalities, Provinces, Regions) within decentralized cooperation schemes. Among all, we quote just some remarkable examples and initiatives that occurred in the last few years: the “Laboratory for development” (a group gathering some of the main Italian associations and NGOs directed to support migrant associations development activities through capacity building paths)¹¹; “MAPID” (Migrants’ Associations and Philippine Institutions for Development directed by the ISMU Foundation to reinforce the migration link between Italy and the Philippines through the role of migrant associations¹²); the co-development program of the Municipality of Milano¹³ (with its yearly call for proposals directed to migrant associations necessarily focusing on co-development activities, in Italy and in the origin country). Last, but not least, the Fondazioni4Africa (F4A) program that we aim to analyze in this document.

⁶ The UN crated the *Global Commission on Migration and Development* and the permanent *Global Forum on Migration and Development*; the UE Commission expressed a positive opinion in the *Communication on Migration and Development: Some Concrete Orientations-2005* and in the *Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘Migration and development: opportunities and challenges (2008/C 120/18)*; the creation of the *Global Remittances Working Group* led by World Bank and involving the G8 countries.

⁷ Programme launched in 2002 by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), supported by the Italian Cooperation. This Programme sought to mobilise the participation of Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants residing in Italy in the development of their countries of origin. It took place in two phases and came to an end in December 2007. The MIDA Programme has supported about 18 rural/local migrant association development initiatives to benefit the villages of origin of their members (infrastructural and technological development, agricultural development, responsible tourism and entrepreneurial activities, or a combination thereof). These initiatives, linked to the spontaneous behaviours and practices of *trans-migrants*, including the investment of collective remittances for local/community development, were matched with co-funding by the IOM and Italian government agencies, non-governmental organisations as well as local, provincial and regional government agencies (Stocchiero, 2008), bringing together different institutional levels.

⁸ A multi-donor fund that opened a call for proposal in 2008 and 2009 directed to leveraging remittances in rural areas in developing countries: www.ifad.org/remittances.

⁹ Started in 2009, the initiative promoted the *Migration for Development* call for projects dealing with the valorisation of remittances and of migrants’ capacities and competences [www.migration4development.org].

¹⁰ Either through ODA-Official Development Assistance flows, or through development funds directly dedicated to priority country of interventions, and there basically relying on the Italian NGOs work in loco.

¹¹ [<http://www.cespi.it/INFOEAS.html>].

¹² The project is EU funded through the Aeneas program (smc.betaprojex.com/MAPID/mapid.html).

¹³ [<http://www.cespi.it/WP/WP-49%20Ferro-Mezzetti.pdf>].

2. THE PROJECT F4A-SENEGAL

Based on the above premises – receiving and adopting the general indications and orientations promoted at the International level – Fondazioni4Africa (F4A)-Senegal¹⁴ represents one of the most interesting example and application of co-development approach that we are about to illustrate as a good practice to share and discuss.

F4A-Senegal is a 3 year programme (currently entering its fourth year), initiated in 2008 and funded by four Italian bank foundations that decided to operate together with a total amount of resources of 5€ millions¹⁵. The programme aims at *promoting* innovative development initiatives in support of the rural population in Senegal, trying at the same time to support in Italy the role of Senegalese migrants' associations for development. The initiative is run through the partnership of several actors including 4 Italian NGOs (3 working in Senegal and one in Italy), the think-tank CeSPI and 4 Senegalese migrants' organisations¹⁶. Migrant associations *partner* of F4A are both *beneficiaries* of capacity building activities in Italy as well as *leaders* of their own development activities in Senegal¹⁷. Besides the 4 migrant associations partner of the project, there are 4 more migrant groups that joined the project in the following years with a sole role of *beneficiaries* of capacity building activities in Italy.

The originality of this project stands in its bottom up approach and participatory governance, combining research and action, and in the direct engagement of migrants groups. The initiative is in fact innovative as it sees migrant organisations sitting as “peers” in the mixed partnership, i.e. by receiving directly funds they must manage within their activity programme; by being involved in the decision making processes, etc.

Another distinguishing element (that makes this project different from EU or other typical donors' programs) is represented by the continue re-programming and re-defining of the contents, actions and instruments of the project. Yearly, in fact, all partners (individually and in group) are asked to evaluate, re-think and re-determine all activities, according to the predicted and un-predicted outcomes obtained. Although the main objective of F4A is to increase capacities of migrant groups and achieve better living conditions and local development in rural areas, its goals and expected results are not fixed and immobile since the beginning. The whole project is therefore an ongoing process intended to follow a *participatory* and *consequential approach*. In this way, a better quality of the projecting and its appropriateness is ensured¹⁸. As a consequence, all steps and actions undertaken correspond to the partners capacities and are subsequent to the concrete and effective results obtained. Compared to other “traditional-vertical-predetermined” programs, the open chances to modify and re-discuss activities are much larger. The downside is that the project keeps requiring an extended and sometimes fatiguing activity of discussion including reflection and redefinition and re-targeting among partners¹⁹.

The programme itself is extremely extended and articulated in its multisectoral approach, nature and areas of interventions. It includes activities in Italy/destination country and in Senegal/origin country. In Italy, activities take place in 4 regions and are directed at: education to multiculturalism (with initiatives in schools managed by Italian NGOs, directly involving some migrant associations); capacity building activities. Within the latter, the project developed a model of

¹⁴ [www.fondazioni4africa.org].

¹⁵ The program is twofold including a project focused in Senegal and one in Uganda, for a total amount of resources of 11€ million.

¹⁶ Plus an external subject in charge of critically-but-friendly evaluate the initiative, and a role of the 4 Bank Foundations not just acting as donors, but actors deeply involved in the project/process.

¹⁷ As for instance, activities in Senegal dealing with responsible tourism, food processing or education to multiculturalism.

¹⁸ Especially when problems and critical situations occur, requesting different solutions/decisions.

¹⁹ Clearly, migrant groups and NGOs have different time constraints and resources to dedicate.

“adoption” and tutorship from the Italian NGOs towards some migrant associations -some are partner of the project, some are not. Capacity building paths have been differently designed according to the specific needs and requests emerging from each migrant association, including international cooperation and development issues as well as association and institutional reinforcement.

In Senegal the initiative is mainly directed at rural development, basically reinforcing and extending previous activities run by the Italian NGOs in Senegal in certain regions (for instance: microfinance, mango cultivation, fishery, breeding, milk production, craftsmanship/tissue painting etc). Such activities had been strengthened including aspects of capacity building, food transformation and processing, commercialization in local, national and international market etc.. Most of these activities in Senegal take place through the involvement of Italian NGOs and local organizations (i.e. rural saving banks, local producers, farmers, female cooperatives etc). In some cases the migrant partner associations of F4A are directly involved with their local counterparts. In some cases the NGO-migrant association collaboration started/developed with the project or was prior to it.

Three more activities are distinctly transnational and go beyond the above differentiation. The first is sustainable tourism, that foresees promotion initiatives in Italy and reinforcement or building up of tourist trajectories and services in Senegal, involving since the beginning two partners: a migrant association and an NGO.

The second is the promotion and reinforcement of partnerships, at different levels and in both countries. This activity includes aspects that overlap with the decentralized cooperation consisting in reinforcing the relationships between municipalities and local authorities in Italy and Senegal and migrant associations, and also in promoting contacts and accords at a higher institutional level²⁰.

The third transnational and more cross sector component is research, supervised by the think-tank CeSPI²¹. Research activities have been undertaken in order to provide hints and useful suggestions for operative activities in other project components. The research areas include:

- 1) The role of migrant associations as actor of development and the need to build and reinforce capacities and competences of migrant groups – in order to obtain a double effect of *development*, in the origin country and *integration*, in the destination country (methodology: focus groups; interviews and participant observation), (Mezzetti, 2009);
- 2) Channeling migrant remittances into job generating activities in the origin country, especially towards micro-finance institutions (methodology: focus groups; interviews and participant observation; multisided research in Italy and Senegal), (Ferro, Frigeri, 2010);
- 3) The consumption of typical Senegalese food products abroad and the role of Senegalese women in relationship with food consumption and distribution (methodology: focus groups; interviews and participant observation), (Ceschi, 2009);
- 4) A comparative analysis of the policies and a multi-sited research on the personal plans of migrant return, with particular attention to the possibility/capacity to treasure the migratory experience and the competences acquired abroad (methodology: desk analysis, interviews; multisided research in Italy and Senegal), (Ferro, 2010b).

²⁰ Such as: the agreement signed in Senegal with the Direction of Microfinance and with the Minister of Tourism; with the FAO; with the Association of Italian Foundations or the many exchanges with the Italian Bank Association and the Italian Cooperation/Minister of Foreign Affairs.

²¹ [www.cespi.it/africa-4fond.htm].

3. HYPOTHESIS AT THE BASE OF F4A

It results important to point out some hypothesis upon which the project is established and that represent some leading points and research findings that emerged and were confirmed during the last 3 years.

a) F4A SHARES AND INTERPRETS THE “MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT-INTEGRATION” LINK by sustaining that the development of the origin country passes (not only, but also) through the *recognition* of the role of diaspora abroad. Formal recognition is the first step to legitimate migrants in their role and in their initiatives.

b) THE DEVELOPMENT EFFECT IN THE ORIGIN COUNTRY IS REINFORCED AND AMPLIFIED WHEN SUPPORTED AND ACCOMPANIED BY A SUCCESSFUL PROCESS OF INTEGRATION ABROAD.

- The more integrated migrants/associations are abroad, the more they can gain capacities, knowledge, resources, possibilities - all in all “capitals” - to be employed for the development of their homeland. On the other side, the less integrated migrants are, the less effective their interventions back home are.
 - o It is evident to say that those migrants/associations presenting less intense levels of integration abroad, still are crucial for their contribution in the homeland. Although, their intervention (including the resources, relationships, capacities involved) could be definitively intensified and improved when migrants reach a better recognition and inclusion within the social, economic, cultural dimensions abroad.
- The more integrated migrants are and the more they go transnationally, the more *co-development* can represent a strategy and a chance to gain access and recognition within the *public spheres* in both countries²². Through their transnational engagement as development actors, migrants can in fact obtain easier access, recognition and influence in those public environments and arenas that would be otherwise interdict or less approachable (without the “transnational” commitment).
 - o Going transnationally is an habitual and embedded behaviour for most migrants. It could be eventually the result of denied possibilities in the country of residence (as a consequence of a missed or incomplete integration abroad, migrants forcibly look at the origin country). But going transnationally could also and certainly trigger elements and resources for development that can originate in the integration process abroad.
- Sustaining the role of diaspora means understanding that migrant groups are *not professional actors* of international cooperation, but they commonly rely on a spontaneous and voluntary involvement that suffers the lack of time, resources and capacities. It is therefore important to ensure that the reinforcement of migrants includes the analysis of their needs, the strengthening of their competences, but also the fostering of exchanges and relationships with other actors of the civic society and the local institutions.

²² Especially in the residence country, there interacting and establishing contacts with local actors and institutions and being identified as “diaspora”.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

All project activities highlighted a wide range of outcomes, reaching improvements and upgrades. Focusing on the *research component* only, the different areas of study²³ gained an increased knowledge in these fields and registered important results. In this section we will highlight some (in particular related to the channeling of remittances and the capacity building of migrant associations) and will try to comment and reflect upon them assessing the unexpected outcomes and outlining the lessons learned during the whole process.

4.1. Remittances and microfinance

Remittances per se do not create development, if we consider it as the possibility for people to be independent from external aid and to be in the conditions to work and be self sufficient. The idea to channel remittances into microfinance responds to the objective to treasure these resources, value the money ownership of migrants savings, and sustain the creation of job generating activities in rural areas. At the moment this link is absent. In this section, based on the experience of F4A we will try to consider “*to what extent migrant remittances can really create development? What could be done when trying to link remittances and microfinance*” and offer some hints and reflections based on the F4A experience.

Research activities in Senegal and Italy highlighted a wide range of elements. First of all, *migrant financial needs* directed to the origin country are not corresponded by adequate *financial products and services*, either in Italy or in Senegal and this impedes the chance to give them real value. In both countries the financial institutions seem not to understand that remittances can be differently treasured if considered as part of migrant’s savings at large. At the same time, although some migrants are very skilled and knowledgeable, a general need of *financial literacy* is widespread and, if accomplished, could bring an advantage in both territories (sustaining the financial inclusion of migrants and of their families). Moreover, while generally interested in microfinance-and-remittances to help their families to manage their resources locally and have access to credit, many have no complete information and result cautious towards these institutions.

Finally, few migrants demonstrated to be able to employ remittances for productive purposes, generally lacking of resources, capacity and experience and expressing a need of entrepreneurial assistance (Ferro, Frigeri, 2009). Based on our analysis, remittances do not really create development as we intend it and microfinance is not yet able to reach the migrant population abroad and offer the possibility to treasure their resources. More below we present a concrete solution that we are proposing and some recommendations based on the F4A experience.

Concrete result. We shared and embraced the crucial premise that remittances are not a simple money transfer, but they are an important part of migrant resources and savings that are differently allocated between the destination and origin country, and that financial inclusion – a goal to be achieved – is part of the more complex integration process. We are now implementing a pilot phase directed to channel remittances from Italy to microfinance institutions (MFIs) in Senegal. Within our model, channeling and giving value to remittances requires a financial intermediation that can guarantee remittances to become an mean of local development. This implies the creation of a structure of governance of MFIs in Senegal that shall connect to the Italian banking system in Italy. This latter shall offer to all Italian banks the possibility to establish a link with MFIs and develop new “transnational” financial products and services (Ferro, Frigeri 2011). This model/platform responds to the general need for money ownership expressed by migrants in relationship to the

²³ That are: leveraging remittances towards microfinance institutions; reinforcing migrant associations capacities and competences and sustaining the commercialization of Senegalese food products.

remittances sent home, and it takes into consideration that the interest and willingness of migrants to invest in the origin country is not likely obvious or taken for granted, but it needs , but it requires forms of guarantee and institutional support.

4.1.1 Lessons Learned

During these years, we realized that, when talking of the canalization of remittances, we have to consider, match and integrate different levels for a sustainable result. It is in fact necessary first of all to consider a *long term commitment* (of the project/partners) that has to concentrate first on the *institutional level*, than on the *banking/microfinance* level in both countries and finally on the migrant/family/user/consumer level.

- The institutional and international cooperation relations. While the effectiveness of the channeling of remittances into MFIs is provided by the interest and acceptance by the market and its actors (migrants, banks, MFIs, users) once provided the conditions to correctly implement our platform, it is overall important to obtain the support of institutional actors in order to implant the legitimacy and sustainability of the initiative and the different significance given to remittances. The institutional support (in particular, in Italy, from the Italian Cooperation²⁴ and in Senegal, from local Ministers) serves the advocacy purpose of gaining adherence in each country and sustaining the recognition of migrants as development actors. In some cases, although, *fears of interference* have been expressed by the partners involved for the risk of external or political intromission in the Governance of the initiative. The institutional support could serve though to access to *further resources* or to amalgamate with similar schemes or programs (as for instance the World Bank or other International Cooperation Bureau). This would be help the long term sustainability of the initiative and its effects.

More generally, *advocacy actions* represent a central aspect, not just for the channeling of remittances, but for all components of F4A²⁵ interesting in sustaining migrants role for development and migrants rights for a full integration process → What to do: lobby and pressure; bilateral and multilateral agreements; matching up with other development programs and agencies.

- The financial system in Italy. The financial system in the destination country has to be mature and acknowledged enough to go beyond the concept of remittances as a simple money transfer and to be aware of the role and consequences that banks can have in terms of development abroad. Remittances can be the bait for a financial inclusion process. Awareness of the significance of microfinance in Senegal is absent in Italy and has to be filled up. A climate of trust and familiarity towards the Senegalese financial system has to be built up.

Channeling remittances into microfinance institutions and productive and development activities has to be financially rewarding for all, opening the doors to new markets and services sensitive and aware of the financial transnational behavior of migrants (that includes saving plans, family and solidarity remittances, entrepreneurial and/or return projects). → What to do: lobby and pressure; campaign of awareness; research and dissemination.

- The finance and microfinance system in Senegal. In general, microfinance institutions (indeed, like all Senegalese banks) are not really aware of what the authentic financial needs of migrants are. More easily they consider migrants as “*sources and dispensers*” of money, instead of economic and rational actors with strategies and transnational needs that miss corresponding financial products. It is therefore important to promote a better knowledge of migrant needs as

²⁴ Still under discussion.

²⁵ Most advocacy activities to sustain the remittance-MFIs experience have been undertaken by central/Project representatives and CeSPI and not directly by NGOs, local partners or migrant associations as, at the moment, it is important that conditions are created at more institutional level to leave then room for local actors.

well as acknowledge financial actors of the migrant potentials for development, if only appropriate products and services could exist.

Sustaining the channeling of remittances towards MFIs and in general towards productive activities has to consider also the necessity of training and tutorship for those return migrants interested in entrepreneurial activities.

Overall, in order to obtain a significant effect and result in Senegal, it is important to reason in aggregated terms and towards a system vision. Whereas it is difficult to work in collective and cooperative terms among similar actors who are indeed competitors in the market (banks and MFIs), this is the only way to obtain valuable changes and long term changes. → What to do: *research on migrant needs and capacities and dissemination; awareness campaign among institutional/economic/financial actors; advocacy and lobby; development of new local and transnational financial platforms, services and products.*

- The migrants level. Migrants in Italy have to sustain (and ensure sustainability to) the system we propose by using it and by sending remittances through it. To sustain this model, but more generally to sustain the financial inclusion process, migrants shall improve their **financial literacy** and their knowledge of what microfinance in Senegal is and what it can offer. A better – financial/micro-financial knowledge and advantage of migrants produces benefits for themselves and for their family. → What to do: *financial literacy; awareness campaign; involvement of migrant associations as sounding board to reach other migrants and the families in the homeland.*
- The families of migrants. Microfinance in rural areas often represents the only chance for people to work and have access to financial services. Again, remittances can be the hook for fostering a financial literacy and inclusion among rural population. During our researches, we realized that remittances are very rarely employed for productive and entrepreneurial activities. If different *products and services* could be offered, a small quota of remittances could be easily destined to either saving products or to help people obtain credit to work. Another limit is the *culture of dependency* from external aid, where families and local communities have often *large expectations* on the monetary contribution of migrants and migrant associations. Although, not much *awareness* exist on the difficulties and sacrifices that migrants face abroad. A necessary shift is crucial and different actors can contribute to make a change: migrants first (individuals and associations), by expressing a different money ownership and differently channeling remittances; microfinance institutions and Italian banks can help offering new products and services dedicated to promote local development and work; NGOs can help in sustaining the emergence of a new culture of remittance employment by local population. → What to do: *research and dissemination; campaign of awareness; involvement of migrant associations as direct link and “trainers” for their families/communities; NGOs and MFIs to change local dependency culture.*

4.2. Capacity building activities

The emphasis on role of diaspora corresponds to one of the fundamental hypothesis of F4A. Nevertheless, the possibility for the diaspora to emerge is obviously influenced by the social-cultural-political and economic national framework. Italy is indeed a complicated country in terms of migrant integration and citizenship rights. The number of co-development initiatives is indeed growing, but still the different polices (migration-integration-international cooperation) do not dialogue among each others. The difficulty is that co-development refers to diverse and delicate aspects: migration flows and legislation, integration processes, migrant associationism, international cooperation actions and schemes, access and availability to resources etc. In general terms, co-development can therefore face obstacles in the general framework where it is incorporated, but it is also subject to critics itself, as sometimes too easily considered as a mantra and resolution for

development. For this reason in this section we try access “to what extent co-development projects demonstrate that migrants contribute to development of the origin countries? What are the measures to take?” We ground our analysis on the F4A experience that has largely espoused the co-development approach, but for its same nature is also open to reflect and regard it. Our aim is to improve and share the understanding to better future initiatives.

One of the most original aspect of F4A is represented by its component dedicated to reinforce migrant associations. The originality stands mainly in the method employed: each NGO partner positively embraced the “*learning by doing*” approach and “adopted” one or more migrant associations, in order to help analyze their needs and tutor them (trying to pass its experience and knowledge and assist them to develop their potentials towards the origin country). The *assessment of needs* highlighted that migrant associations have generally two sets of *requests*: increase their capacity to promote and manage development project, and reinforce them as “associations” (ie. mission, vision, structure, organization, institutional relations etc.). Together with “individual” moments of reinforcement for each association²⁶, there were moments of “*collective*” trainings, gathering all migrant associations involved in the project (total 8 associations). This streamed, at the end of the III year, into a communal experience²⁷. At the moment, we are envisaging the possibility for migrant groups to constitute into a *network*, but still it’ is too early to evaluate it. While the dialogue between associations is still weak and intermittent, there are encouraging elements for the possible articulation of a larger platform. The *maturity* of this process is not achieved yet, and technical instruments, especially to translate this into advocacy, are missing. If/when commonly agreed exchanges and actions will take place among the groups, it is possible that they will perceive and eventually pursue the importance of a national platform. Although, questions are still open whether and to what extent this has to be a completely spontaneous process and how much the project shall induce or sustain it.

4.2.1 Lessons Learned

- A delicate aspect is represented by the *relationship between NGOs and migrant associations*. NGOs are traditional cooperation actors that are not generally familiar with working in partnership with migrants in developing countries. Clearly, the two do not have the same experiences, competences and capacities (as NGOs are professional and full time organizations), therefore the partnership can result somehow imbalanced. In addition, if the 4 NGOs involved tend to present the same levels of experience and resources among each others, all migrant associations do not share homogenous competences and practices. This aspect emerged since the beginning, determining the creation of individual reinforcement paths, but also possible frictions and antagonisms among more or less skilled migrant groups.

Probably, some of the main results that have been achieved by the exchanges between the two attain to the process of integration in Italy (more than the impacts in Senegal). Migrant associations improved their capacities and they appeared together side by side with the NGOs in front of local institutions, there gaining recognition and legitimacy. Moreover in some cases, thanks to the exchanges within F4A, further collaborations and projects started.

All in all, while a real *partnership* is indeed the goal to be reach, still the relationship presents prevalent features of *tutorship* and assistantship. In some cases, migrant associations also expressed their determination of “*independence*” by the NGOs, but in rare cases their professionalisation pathway results really proficient and mature to let them walk alone.

The relationship between NGOs and migrant associations has large potentials for the international cooperation and integration process, considering them not as possible competitors but partners, although migrant groups can perceive this as an ambivalent opportunity of growth,

²⁶ That implicated partner and beneficiary associations.

²⁷ The “learning by doing” had been applied to the organization of a final set of events called “caravan for Africa”.

as well as an inadequate appreciation of their value. We observed that a double relationship exists between NGOs and migrant associations: they are equal partner within F4A, but there is also an *asymmetry* between who tutors and who's assisted. This switch is sometimes difficult, especially when it implies the negotiation of *new* activities or collaborations for migrant groups²⁸. Overall, we realized that the relationship seems to smoothly function when it tracks and reinforces prior, spontaneous and autonomous relations and vocations of migrants and when it treasures their existing capacities.

This is an open field that can successfully work, but it needs new and specific resources, conditions and frameworks of action, especially grounding on the promotion and sustain by the side of the Italian Cooperation or from local authorities. → What to do: *analyze migrant association needs; to work together well, find common ground between migrant groups and NGOs; consider evolving capacity building paths (from assistantship to partnership); NGOs have to familiarize with this new actor and reframe its development strategies and actions.*

- Transnational relations and partners. As previously explained, F4A operates in Italy and in Senegal and migrant partner associations have been involved in both territories and activities. When working with migrant groups in the perspective of sustaining development processes in the origin country, we are often dealing with organizations based abroad and, at the same time, with their counterpart associations in loco. It is not always clear how relationships between the two are (formally and informally) structured and how decisions and discussions are taken. More likely, they represent two different subjects revealing their own diverse needs that do not necessarily echo or correspond among each other²⁹. Embracing the co-development model means understanding and including the *transnational dimension of migrant/associations and therefore learn to relate to their translocal structure and relationships*. This has sometimes been a revelation (that determined to re-think and re-model some project activities), unveiling the twofold nature of many migrant groups, the intricacy of their decision making process and governance relations and their possible divergence of needs and goals among those “here and there”. Moreover, while local counterparts were not partner of F4A, it has then become evident the importance to provide them with technical competences, in order to be able to face activities, and to somehow integrate them in the project. → What to do: *understand and get to know the nature of migrant associations; be ready to work on a transnational scale with different actors under the same associations; analyze needs and objectives of the two.*
- We argue that, within F4A, the “double” involvement of migrant associations in activities in Italy and in Senegal generally intensified the engagement of migrant groups into the project, provided them of an more integrated involvement in development issues and offered them a more legitimate and esteemed position in front of the community of origin. In addition, it gave NGOs the opportunity for an inner understanding of how development can interact with integration and how development projects could differently take shape including migrants.

On the other side, migrant associations do not appear yet *capable* to successfully and professionally manage activities in both countries. While it is a positive result that many have reasoned about development issues and gained awareness and recognition, this doesn't mean that all migrant organizations have to concentrate on development nor that they could be able to do it. The importance of F4A shall be of individuate and treasure in migrant associations *existing interests and capacities* and create the conditions for them to express their inner abilities and vocation. → What to do: *understand and get to know the nature of migrant associations; analyze needs and objectives.*

²⁸ This happened in some cases when migrant associations started to work with new NGOs – with whom they never exchanged or related before – or were asked to provide/be trained in competences and capacities they never experienced and developed before.

²⁹ Both of them differently express needs of reinforcement of the association and capacity building of the members.

- An occasionally highlighted aspect is the *centrality of diaspora organizations' leaders* both in managing relationships in Italy (with NGOs and other local actors) and in relating to the Senegalese part. Many organizations, too focused and dependent on some figures, have difficulties to delegate duties, tasks and relationships to different members, crucial condition for having a more stable and self-sufficient structure³⁰.

We are not saying that leadership per se is negative, although the protagonist figures can alternatively be an obstacle or an asset for the organization, but we simply highlight that this tends to be a quite *common weakness/trait* for many voluntary migrant associations that need to be taken into consideration within reinforcement and capacity building pathways.

Moreover, we observed that co-development practices can foster the emergence of leaders that, enhanced in their role and status in both origin and destination countries, operate in translocal spheres, representing a bridge between demands and actions. Within F4A, different central figures emerged, giving also evidence to the fact that co-development can foster individual circular and positive returns. For some of them, co-development is becoming a “profession” and it allows to give expression and value to their potentials. → What to do: *work with and know better associations; support the leadership emergence, but also help leaders to expand the base.*

4.3. Lesson learned from the Project

- F4A represents a unique and uncommon experience in Italy expressing the idea that international cooperation (instead of pursuing the typical vertical method of the call for proposal) could follow a *bottom up and participatory approach*. The governance scheme, involving a mixed group of beneficiary organizations co-projecting activities, results particularly significant compared to the traditional international cooperation, by formally including and introducing a new actor (migrant associations) in development activities. This responds to the aim of sustaining the protagonism of the diaspora.

During the last three years, migrant associations have sometimes shown not to have the capacities or resources as NGOs. It is overall important not to *underestimate*, nor to *overestimate* migrant organizations and their possibilities, since there is large room of enhancement for them, but also there is the *risk* for them of being unable to handle too challenging/demanding projects. At the moment, migrant associations within F4A still need to follow reinforcement pathways and the “*tutorship/adoption*” method, while ambivalent, seems encouraging.

- In general terms, thanks to co-development projects, migrant associations tend to achieve a larger *mobilization* (including an augmented visibility and exposure) towards development and an increased sense of self-recognition and *awareness* as international cooperation/integration actors. This happens not only in the destination country, but also in the country of origin. There, through a more direct dialogue and exchange between diaspora and local counterpart/community, migrant associations tend to increasingly define their translocal spaces and role and become incorporated in the local context. The accomplishments and relationships of transnational leaders and transnational associations can contribute to the acquisition of legitimisation in the homeland in the social-political and economic spheres³¹.

³⁰ Therefore expressing a necessity of reinforcement and re-structuring of migrant associations.

³¹ We can provide two examples and proof of this, based on F4A. One, is the recent position assumed by the Mayor of Kebemer (an important city in Senegal located in the Region of Louga and origin area of many migrants living in Italy), during some meeting organized within F4A. Adopting a possibility offered by the Senegalese law, the Mayor formally recognized the right for migrants from Kebemer to participate to the local Council and affecting local decisions. Another example, refers to the tourist structure that migrants started off in the town of Lompoul. After some first obstacles from the local community that envisaged incorrectly this intervention the as massive intrusion from “outsiders”, migrants and their project has been accepted and obtained legitimacy to enter local decisions. Moreover,

- The Project nature is expressed in its *multi-sectoriality* and in its *mixed governance*. We might say that, by having many different components it is somehow hard to grant information to circulate and activities to really integrate. Working with a smaller and more thematically homogeneous group might be envisaged. In addition, the *governance* included a large variety of actors, different for competence, nature and area of intervention. In this sense, the mixed partnership has been one of the main challenge. Internal relationships had to be negotiated between NGOs, NGOs and migrants and among migrant groups. While NGOs tend to be direct competitors in the same market of international cooperation, migrants and NGOs can find their fruitful combination. The partnership seems to have worked positively when the interest and engagement to collaborate to a common activity and the importance to share and exchange competences and capacities was high and appreciated.

In order to recommend other similar initiatives, it results very important to ground co-development programs and funds first on activities dedicated to the strengthening of the mix partnership and to the reinforcement of migrant groups (in the residence country), understanding their needs and potentials. Secondly it is important to understand the vocation of migrant groups and their transnational functioning/nature to identify how to properly include them and cooperate in development projects.

- The institutional and public players of development (for our case, the Italian Cooperation) shall rethink their definition and working schemes including migrants as formal and recognized actors of development, together with other traditional strategies. Not only official policies of cooperation shall be revised by acknowledging the diaspora for its role, but also they shall create the conditions for migrant groups to become professionalized and acquire operative and conceptual instruments. To do so, resources should be addressed to sustain relationships and partnerships between new and old actors of development (namely, migrant associations and NGOs).

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

With this document we tried to access the F4A experience, considering some of its results and reflecting upon the expected and unexpected effects. When possible, we tried to underline lesson learned and provide recommendations.

More particularly two general questions were addressed: “*to what extent migrant remittances can really create development? What to do when trying to link remittances and microfinance*” and “*to what extent co-development projects demonstrate that migrants contribute to development of the origin countries? What are the measures to take?*”.

For the **first one** we underlined that a widespread recognition of the role of diaspora is a prerequisite for any action. More specifically, remittances need different and *new conditions* in order to be treasured and bring development and this has to be sustained by the origin and destination country actors with a long and committed engagement at different stages. We recommend the importance to work on a *multilevel approach* and with a system vision, therefore creating the *institutional and financial conditions* to have the market develop adequate products and services to facilitate the channeling of remittances and to guarantee its sustainability. Moreover, it is

the migrant association Faenza Insieme, within the activities to promote transnational partnerships, has been able to create a network among 10 Italian towns where the presence of senegalese is relevant and the origin region of Ziguinchor.

equally important to dedicate attention to the *base* (migrants and the families back home) providing financial literacy and therefore supporting the financial inclusion process. The positive effects are evident in both countries, in particular the possibilities to access financial services in rural areas increase, there sustaining the set up of micro-productive activities. In general term, we consider that, in order to create the conditions to channel remittances, it is important to work on a system and articulated framework including and involving institutional and financial actors in both countries. Small projects engaging for instance just a migrant group, a bank abroad or a MFI in the homeland, can not gain any visible or significant lasting impact.

The **second question** was “to what extent co-development projects demonstrate that migrants contribute to development of the origin countries? What are the measures to take?”

We provided many elements based on the “capacity building activities for migrant associations” undertaken within F4A project and on the overall reflection on the initiative.

We can confirm that migrant groups are generally very important for their community of origin as well as for their community abroad. Associations are distinguished for their vocation (acting “here” and/or “there”) and it is important to respect it and sustain it. A mistake to be avoided from cooperation programs/agencies is not to underestimate nor overestimate them, and mostly not to forcibly push them towards development engagement, but respect their inclination.

Co-development project are an important platform or a showcase that can offer migrant associations occasions to gain public recognition, interact with institutional actors and obtain resources (in both countries of origin and destination). We overall observed that the more integrated migrants are abroad and the more they go transnationally, the more co-development can represent a strategy and a chance to gain access and recognition within the public spheres in both countries. Still, to better contribute to development in the origin countries, migrant associations shall improve and particularly reinforce themselves (in terms of sense and structure of the association and in terms of concretely dealing with development projects). In this sense, co-development can be functional to express and value migrant potentials (both in collective terms for associations, but more likely for a leadership emergence as we are witnessing within the F4A project). First, migrant associations shall concentrate on themselves to reinforce, become professional in what they want and decide to do. Integration passes also through the reinforcement of migrant associations, gaining and ensuring a better inclusion in different spheres of the destination country. A better integration, which is good per se, helps also strengthening the migrant recognition and legitimation in the homeland.

Co-development have to be built up concretely, through knowledge, practices and relationships. The more *spontaneous* they are, the better it is. Co-development schemes imply in fact different actors (migrant groups, civic society as NGOs, local authorities etc.) that have also to become familiar with the transnational nature of migrant associations³² and with working with this new non-professional subject. The learning by doing approach between NGOs and migrant groups can include deep negotiations and conflicts, but has large potentials.

Finally, it is important to create the conditions to publicly and formally recognize the central role of diaspora and to set the premises for advocacy actions among central and local institutions in both countries.

To conclude, a *more integrated dialogue* at national level between integration, migration and international cooperation polices could bring an advancement in the host society and effects in the origin country. Migration and development actions should be additionally intertwined with a more complex political and international process of public policies aiming at fostering human mobility and grassroots exchanges and dealing positively with the transnational field.

³² As for instance being based abroad and having a local counterpart in the homeland.

Moreover, a double recognition process of the role of diaspora (in the origin and developing country) shall be accompanied by a process of empowerment, organisation and reinforcement that diaspora and diaspora actions have to face.

In more general terms, this initiative has been engaged with the Senegalese community, that is a very much transnational group, very well integrated in Italy and very much characterized by collective groups and associations. In addition, between Italy and Senegal many development initiatives have been undertaken at different level (civic society, local authorities, central institutions) lately and the scientific knowledge has largely improved over the years. We wonder whether the same results would have been similar if working with another community and to what extent we could replicate the outcome and reflections here obtained in other contexts. A good example is provided by the “remittances” component, where we are currently reproducing the “platform to channel remittances into microfinance institutions” between Italy and Ecuador. This is a proof that the model that we developed can be employed also in other corridors.

As for the “capacity building activities” and the knowledge that we there gained, we think that this is a challenge that is worth to be taken, although its outcomes might be too far to see and too distant (between here and there) to be visible and related.

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