Factors Influencing the Divergence and Convergence of ICTs within African Diaspora Entities in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

With the increase in International migration, migrants and diasporas contribution and engagement with their countries of origin has seen growing focus from academics, policymakers, governments and other stakeholders. This has been especially the case in the development sector where remittances form a sizeable percentage of some low-income country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Official remittances data suggest that in 2016, migrants sent an estimated US$441 billion to developing countries, a figure three times the size of official development aid. Beyond remittances, there are numerous examples through which the linkage between diaspora and migrants and countries of origin contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth. With the proliferation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools, there is a growing interest in how diasporas are utilising these tools to facilitate transnational knowledge transfer, skills, and social change. This paper examines the use of ICT tools by diaspora organisations in the United Kingdom to engage in international development or/and community development in the UK and discusses the incorporation of information and communication technologies, focusing on the potential of ICTs to assist development at a micro and macro-level, and the effectiveness of these approaches in realising the potential of information communications technology for development (ICT4D). In examining the role and importance of societal factors - specifically structure, agency and social capital- the research adopts Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice as the theoretical framework., building on the concepts of the duality of structure and agency. This study is situated between three themes that are emerging on their own right but rarely married in development literature- Diaspora, Transnationalism and ICT4D - the case-studies presented in this paper suggest that a range of limiting factors in both host country (i.e. funding, skills) and global South countries (local partners capacity, infrastructure, and affordability) leads to programmes and initiatives by diaspora organisations more often being limited by ICTs rather than being facilitated or driven by the technology itself.

Key Words: Diaspora; African diaspora organisation; Transnationalism; Globalisation; ICT4D
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Introduction

With their roots around the world, diasporas are uniquely positioned to amplify and sustain global growth (Cohen et al, 2015). African diaspora communities in the UK are a powerful engine for development in the African continent, facilitated by their connectedness to local networks and access to resources. The remittance flow from the UK to Africa, which is estimated to have reached over £4.1billion ($6.4billion) in 2015, is often used to illustrate the influence of diaspora communities. But remittances, while crucial to helping low-income countries grow, are transmitted directly to households rather than to shared community resources.

Diasporas tend to occupy spaces between two or more cultures, and thus have the advantage of intimate knowledge about different social situations, local conditions and networks and cultural experiences in country of origin to a far greater extent than individuals from host countries (Mercer et al, 2013). The comparative advantage and added value of the diaspora enable them to bring better quality information and different views and perspective to international development institutions and policymakers in host country.

In this respect, the African diaspora can become more influential when applying their unique strategic position as bridge-builders into assets for the country of origin. For instance, they can build up an effective lobbying constituency in the UK with the aim of influencing UK government policy positions and strategies towards the peace and development initiatives in the continent. In addition, a bottom-up cooperation between diaspora and civil society-based organisations in the UK and mainstream development agencies can tap into and benefit from the social capital of the diaspora for their language skills and direct access to the population in the country of heritage.

However, while diaspora in the UK, especially the second generation, are showing a resurgent desire to engage with their countries of origin and alleviate poverty for those who are from low-income countries, though they may not necessarily consider returning to reside there (Wessendorf, 2007, Reynolds, 2008). And thus, many are contributing through various formal and informal projects that are organised, directed and delivered through ICT and online mechanisms.

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1 A 2016 report by Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination (DEMAC) drew together insight into current mechanism by which Sierra Leonean, Somali and Syrian diaspora-based relief organisations and initiatives based in the UK, Denmark and Germany act as first-line responders during humanitarian crises. http://www.demac.org/content/2-sharing-knowledge/1-demac-publications/demac-phase-i-report-final.pdf
Medium and small organisations and individuals are channeling assistance through trusted local groups and individuals that are known by affected communities and draw their legitimacy from them. The case studies in this paper represent activities where diaspora entities work with or implement grassroots projects that aim to empower local communities in the global South\footnote{The term global South (and global North) gained popularity in academic and policy lexicon after the end of the Cold War in the 1990s to define what historically had been referred to as ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ or ‘third world’ parts of the world. Scholars such as Alvaro Mendez and Thomas Hyll and Eriksen argue the term should be understood in the wider context of globalisation – allowing us to move away from the hierarchical terms, such as developed and developing, previously used.} as well as diaspora communities in the global North. These organisations are neither homogeneous entities nor political in terms of function, thus unlike much of the diaspora discourse that tend to focus on seeking to understand diaspora engagement in terms of remittances to country of origin, and integration in the country of settlement, they represent a focus that is not on peacebuilding and peace-making, but that on job creation, skills development, and community empowerment and development (Page and Plaza, 2006).

Diaspora contribution often requires careful planning and communication, elements that are particularly important because many, especially from conflict-affected countries, have little trust in their origin-country governments and institution where ICT may play a role by state actors as well as rebel groups to spread propaganda (Brinkerhoff, 2012). Among diasporas that emigrated for political and economic reasons, an opinion of pervasive corrupt and autocratic government at home leads to a lack of trust in the government’s ability to build effective policies and programmes that make a difference. Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) allows for individuals and organisations to circumvent government scrutiny as well as reducing the costs entailed by physical presence, in addition to easing mobility and enhancing availability of skills (Bashri, 2014). Breaking down physical space across diaspora and homeland communities through modern technology and the Internet has important relevance to long-term economic and social progress. African diasporic communities do not only connect with their country of heritage and their new country of settlement, but also with other diaspora communities who settle in other countries, social media sites show this connectedness between diaspora communities across the UK, Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and other location (Kindler et al, 2015).

This degree project aims to examine and identify the dimensions, activities, purpose, and extent to which Information and communication technologies (ICT) play a role within UK based African diaspora entities in delivering development projects and initiatives in African countries. In recent years, diaspora discourse has shifted away from sociological and anthropological studies and re-focused on the economic and
political power that these historically marginalised groups have in both host and origin countries. Recent examples, such as the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, are showing that diaspora communities are harnessing ICT to help deliver resources, knowledge, and skills to countries and regions of origin (Rubyan-Ling, 2015).

Aims of the Study/Research Rationale

Through case study method, the study provides an overview of some of challenges and opportunities that diaspora organisation face in navigating the international development architecture, followed by a discussion of diasporas and their current role in international development, and an examination of the potential mobilisation and other benefits afforded by ICTs. An analysis of three diaspora entities, with varying degrees of ICT utilisation, will demonstrate the varied depth and range of diaspora entities development activities. While assessing actual development outcomes is beyond the scope of this study, it will provide a foundation for further exploring ICT’s potential to contribute to supporting diaspora entities engagement in international development, both directly and indirectly.

The significance of this research lies in its policy relevance, contributing to a better understanding of the contributions made by various forms of ICTs in supporting diaspora entities as development partners, and how policy-makers can formulate realistic goals for resources deployed in support of organisations of this nature.

Research Question

The goal of this study is to explore the trends and practices within African diaspora organisations in utilising of information and communication technologies (ICT) tools to communicate, interact, exchange information, promote social change, and enhance political mobilisation across borders. Through case studies, the research questions guided by the goal of this study are as follows:

- What are the trends and practices in terms of utilisation of ICT tools of United Kingdom based African diaspora entities engaged in international development in African countries and regions and/or diaspora community development and sub-question;
- What opportunities and limitations do ICTs offer African diaspora entities in terms of representativeness as strategic and equal partners within the United Kingdom’s development policies.
Research Limitations

The approach used by this study comes with some limitations that should be acknowledged. The study is useful in order to contribute to the understanding of the African diaspora organisation in the United Kingdom and their engagement in development and seeks to identify potential for constructive role ICTs can have, however, the study is not representative of the whole spectrum of African diaspora entities in the United Kingdom, for example, there are several ethnic, alumni, and religious associations as well as political groups, youth groups and other forms of organisations that I was unable to reach out to. The study is, therefore, more representative of active and accessible organisations (i.e. have an active digital presence and are accessible through for example website or social media and/or have held events in the UK within the last 12 months). In addition, the limited timeframe of the fieldwork conducted for the study also might have led to the non-response of some organizations to the request for interview, due to potential organisation representatives indicating having no time during the research period to participate, for example, I initially approached 6 organisations, of those only three, were able to commit the time for the interview process. More importantly, it has to be considered that the work of diaspora organisations is predominantly done on a voluntary basis besides the regular employment and family obligations, which further limits willingness to give up time for an interview.

Research Relevance to the Field of Communication for Development

Communication for development, which may generally be defined as “a process of strategic intervention toward social change,” has evolved from a concept used primarily in the context of “developing countries” towards “a more broadly defined interest in social change, applicable to any group, regardless of material base or geographical setting” (Wilkins 2008).

The relationship between communication and international development can be argued to be one of accountability, where there is an overlapping power relation between donors, governments, NGO’s and citizens (Valters, 2014). The study and application of communication for development is dominated by two distinct conceptual models; diffusion and participation. The diffusion model – conceived by Everett Rogers -typically involves both mass media and interpersonal communication channels (Kohles et al, 2013). The participatory model –based on ideas from Paulo Freire- focuses on community empowerment and stresses community involvement and horizontal and bottom-up dialogue as a medium for empowerment (McKenna, 2013).
Information and communication technology for development (ICT4D) is a relatively new field of development intervention where ICTs can offer access and opportunities in economic and social development. Yet they can also mean a risk to amplify inequalities within and between societies if the uses are not strategically planned for strengthening development and reducing poverty (Pieterse, 2010).

In the context of this research, to study how ICTs are used and perceived by diaspora organisations and identify the tension seen in relation to power dynamics between diaspora actors within the wider development and humanitarian architecture.

The overall aim of the study is to fill a research gap in relation to how diaspora organisations in the Global North navigate this new field of ICT4D. The research will consider the potential of ICTs in increasing participation of diaspora actors in development and, at the same time, to be able to define key aspects to consider for creating an environment where diaspora organisations are able to use ICT4D according to the contextual needs of the different actors involved.

1 Key Concepts

1.1 Diaspora

Diaspora was originally a term used to denote populations that were forcibly removed from a homeland and settled elsewhere, who still orientate their lives, and plans to return to such a homeland as in the case of the Jews and recently the Palestinians. The term evolved more recently to describe any population which is considered ‘deterritorialised’ that is, ”which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks across the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe” (Cohen, 2008).

While diaspora and transnationalism are sometimes used interchangeably, the two terms reflect different experiences. The term diaspora historically referred to those dispersed due to a traumatic event, such as armed conflict, that led to involuntary migration, traumatising the group as a whole and creating a central experience of victimhood, while transnationalism is a process by which immigrants build multiple social, economic and cultural relations that link their societies of origin and settlement, without being saturated with the same deep historical narrative associated with the term diaspora. More contemporary understanding of the term, however, moves away from a sense of powerlessness, longing, exile, and displacement, to one that demonstrates more elasticity, designating an ever-widening range of meanings; a collectivity, a condition, a process, or attributes such as diasporic citizenship, consciousness, identity, imagination, networks, and culture (Brubaker, 2005). This elasticity and proliferation has been alternately criticised, for eroding its analytical value, and praised for lending itself to different modes of identification.
and mobilization (Cohen 2008; Kleist 2014). An additional limitation of the term diaspora is that while many studies point out that diasporas are not a homogenous entity and should be studied with that understanding, there still remains a gap in detailed studies that further distinguish between first generation and second and subsequent generation and what characteristics distinguish them.

In recent academia and policymaking arena, there has been a shift in the discussion from viewing emigration of skilled people as a loss for a country to viewing skilled migration as an opportunity to circulate trade and investment projects and new knowledge. As detailed in the Literature Research section, diasporas not only contribute with remittances sent back home, but they also contribute to other forms of tangible and intangible capital. According to Chikezie (2011), there are five forms of diaspora capital, or what the author calls the “5Cs”; ”Intellectual capital; Financial capital; Political capital; Cultural capital; Social capital”, which are closely linked to Bourdieu's concept of capital (Bordeiu, 1998), which shifts concept of capital as one of material wealth to symbolic forms of capital as organising framework that are central in the understanding of societal power relations.

1.2 Diaspora Organisations

While the terms diaspora and transnational appear frequently in social science and geography literature, there is no extensive discussion or analysis focused specifically on the typology and characteristics of diasporic organisations operating in host country or transnationally, and thus there is a gap in studies that combine a substantive focus on diaspora organisations with an empirical exploration of their sites of intervention at countries or regions of origin, making it difficult to expand on identifying an encompassing term during this research.

In literature, diaspora organisations have been identified and celebrated as key transnational infrastructures for promoting the development of origin countries, but also in some cases to further the destination country’s foreign policy objectives. Analytical attention has concentrated heavily on the channeling of 'collective remittances' to public services (hospitals, schools), infrastructure and micro-credit schemes and humanitarian assistance. Diaspora organisations have also been cited as prominent actors in 'political transnationalism', utilising the strategic space of diaspora to lobby and gain the support of both 'host' and 'home' governments on issues they believe to be of relevance to the progress of their communities and countries or regions of origin (Kleist 2008; McGregor 2009). Their activities span social service provision, humanitarian assistance, advocacy, political, or civil society involvement, cultural events and integration-related activities in the country of settlement. Contributions to development, relief and reconstruction are
thus just one aspect of what diaspora organisations do, and they often go hand in hand with activities focusing on the country of settlement (Lampert, 2014).

1.3 Transnationalism

Transnationalism is not a new phenomenon and has emerged under different guises, taking different forms, frequency, and intensity. As a subject, it has flourished in the social sciences to analyse multiple identities in various locations (physical and conscious), which considers technological advancement and ease in transportation. However, there is no singular definition of transnationalism and discussions to do so have continued unabated for the last few years (Itzigsohn, 2000, Bauböck, 2008, Bauböck and Faist, 2010).

Transnationalism is understood as a set of practices or process by which immigrants build multiple social, economic and cultural relations across geographic and/or political boundaries. The conceptualisation of the term, however, has undergone significant broadening since it was first defined. Transnational theory was, at its inception, primarily concerned with economic and political interconnectedness that migrants maintained with their home country, however, new communications technologies, have made transnational practices more intense, more immediate, more systematic than in the past allowing migrants to forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link to both their societies of origin and settlement.

In transnationalism, non-state agents, among them prominently but not exclusively migrants, are defined as crucial agents. Country of origin, country of destination and migrants thus create a triangular social structure, which can be expanded through the inclusion of countries of onward migration (Bruneau, 2010).

In this multilayer structure, the element of migrant formations covers a host of organisations and groups, including migrant associations, such as hometown associations, religious communities and volunteer organisations.

Both diaspora and transnationalism deal with homeland ties and the incorporation of persons living ‘abroad’ into the regions of destination. Diaspora approaches usually focus on the relationship between homelands (‘referent-origin’) and dispersed people (Dufoix 2008), but also on destination countries. Empirical research in a transnational vein places somewhat more emphasis than does the diaspora literature on issues of incorporation and integration in immigration countries. The diaspora literature usually emphasises the cultural distinctiveness of diaspora groups, while parts of the transnational literature have started to look more extensively into migrant incorporation and transnational practices. This is perhaps related to the fact that most scholars following a transnational approach are situated in immigration countries and frequently also take their cues from public policy debates characterised by keywords such as ‘integration’ and ‘social cohesion’.
1.4 ICT4D

ICT4D is an interplay among information, communication, technology (ICT), and development (D) (Heeks, 2007). The concept of ICT4D came to prominence in the 1980s and 1990s, when use and development of technologies, such as radio, television, the Internet, personal computers and mobile technologies, and their application flourished within the social, political, physical, and financial spheres. Multilateral agencies such as the United Nations and World Bank considered ICTs as important in terms of achieving the millennium development goal, and in the overall fight to reduce poverty, improve healthcare, provide better education, foster gender equality, and extend global partnerships for development in developing countries (Batchelor et al, 2003).

The rapid innovation and diffusion of ICTs globally, heralded an age where information exchanges between and within financial intuitions, corporations, governments, universities, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and multilateral development bodies, demonstrated a trend towards the establishment of a technological infrastructure that allows instant computer communications at any time of day in any place that is suitably equipped (Connors, 1993).

Within development, discourse ICT have become to be viewed as instrumental in enabling and extending access to health, education, government services, and income generation opportunities for marginalised communities and global South countries. It should be noted, that the role of emerging technologies in the development process varies within different development paradigms. A transition has taken place from a more technically oriented view toward a more socially oriented view, focusing on the influence that ICT may have on development (Walsham, 2017).

2 Literature Review

Literature reviews can create a firm foundation for advancing knowledge through identifying the status, research gaps, and where more research is needed. Within this chapter, I examine both ‘ICT4D’ and ‘development’ as complex and contested concepts. As a result, it is important to engage in research to understand both the discursive processes by which these concepts are constructed and the constraints and enabling factors of those processes. Such research is of vital importance for the wider project of revealing policy positions about ICT4D, which ultimately impact the role and positioning of diaspora organisations within the development and humanitarian landscape.
2.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Discussions

Theoretical discussions relating to ICT for development range from the role of ICT in a global society and its impact on the developing world, to exploring ICTs role at the individual level. At the global level, Castells (1996) argued that ICT has created a global network society with information as a mode of development.

There are several publications that interrogate the state of ICT4D, often with a focus on specific aspects. Unwin (2005, 2017) sought to form an understanding of Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) structures, both conceptually and in practice, in development, with a focus on partnerships that are formed to engage in delivering ICT4D initiatives. Taking the approach of focusing on the implications of ICTs for development, Zheng et al (2017), seek to shift the discussion from the application of ICT4D, to what ICTs mean for development, not exclusively in the global South, but in all contemporary societies, addressing issues such as interconnections between countries and groups and the need of academia and development agencies to avoid technology determinism, and focus on contextualised and nuanced conceptualisations of socio-technical processes that constitute developmental outcomes.

Mishra and Deichmann, (2016) World Bank’s Digital Dividends report, article by Bezuidenhout Louise and colleagues (2017), and book by Massimo Ragnedda (2017) addresses barriers to universal opportunity to harness ICTs stemming from social and institutional structures, specifically point to the impact of leading to social exclusion and dwindled human development in global South countries, who have been excluded from benefiting from the digital dividends enjoyed by global North countries.

2.2 Impact of ICT4D Initiatives

Unlike most other sectors where it may be reasonably easy to identify tangible outcomes and impacts, this is not the case with ICT4D projects, which may, at least partially, explain the lack of understanding of how the many ICT4D initiatives have influenced development outcomes, despite an early awareness of the importance of and endeavours to develop evaluation frameworks for ICT4D. Researchers have wrestled with the evaluation of benefits and impacts of ICT projects. Heeks and Molla, (2009) presented a set of frameworks, based on ICT4D value chain- assessments divided into four targets: readiness, availability, uptake, and impact-, for use by ICT4D practitioners, policy-makers and consultants to understand the impact of informatics initiatives in developing countries. Their approach focuses on less tangible social factors and impacts, such as exclusions and action resources rather than economic outcomes for communities (Kleine and Unwin, 2009).
Despite the many calls for streamlined and robust ICT4D evaluation framework, researchers have used extensive conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and methods in fragmented ICT4D evaluation efforts. In attempts to lead to a better understanding of relationships between ICT and development, some, using “traditional” approaches have tried to deduce causality, while other studies have questioned the quest for causality (Mansell, 2006; Ramirez, 2007; Ramirez & Richardson, 2005), suggesting that at most, indicate complex, rather than direct effects can be acknowledged.

While longitudinal studies of ICT4D are difficult to find, there are claims and some evidence of ICT’s constructive contribution to poverty reduction and livelihood enhancements (Avgerou, 2003, Batchelor et al, 2003, Unwin, 2009; 2017, Avgerou, 2010, World Bank, 2012, Singh et al, 2017). Many ICT4D projects and general ICT infrastructure have delivered improved communication, but this is more like an indirect contribution to development. The varied and at times contradictory literature could reflect variations in understanding and definitions of ‘development’ as well as implementation practices.

There is evidence suggesting those benefiting most from ICT — directly by adopting ICT and indirectly through its knock-on effects — are often socio-economically and higher educated groups (Alampay, 2006b; Cecchini & Scott, 2003; Dalvit, et al., 2007; Pigato, 2001; Wang, 2006). Noting that only the wealthier gained benefits from the use of ICT for income generation, Souter, et al. (2005).

2.3 ICTs and Diaspora


Interest in African diaspora’ role in development, has received interest from scholars, policymakers as well as governments in the global South and global North. African governments are reaching out to the diaspora, launching plans and initiative to incorporate their diaspora communities as partners in development projects.
Several African countries, such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Tanzania, have established institutions to interact with the diaspora. These initiatives have taken various forms, ranging from the creation of dedicated ministries to deal with migrant communities by adding specific functions to the ministries. Both sending and receiving countries are have also implemented policies to boost flows of financial resources, information, and technology from diasporas. Several Global North countries, for example, Denmark, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom have initiated programmes focused on reversing the so-called brain-drain by working with Global South diaspora groups, providing resources to support diasporas to promote the development of their countries of origin. However, there is little information on sustained initiatives and few external evaluations of their effectiveness (De Haas, 2006).

A well-explored area of academic work has addressed the use and consumption of media by diaspora populations (e.g. Aksoy and Robins 2000; Allievi and Nielsen 2003; Karim 2003; Mattelart 2007). Emerging area focus is the theoretical consideration and empirical research (e.g. Adams and Ghose 2003) is also emerging in the area of how migrants utilise computer-based and mobile technologies to communicate, interact, exchange information, promote cultural and religious practices, and enhance political mobilisation across borders.

Studies by Meyer (2006), Brinkerhoff (2009) and Kapur (2001) discuss ways in which diaspora groups leverage ICTs as a vehicle to in their development activities, for some, by incorporating technology transfer into social, economic, and political assistance activities. While other works Avgerou (2003), Heeks (2002; 2007), Walsham (2013) focus on exploring the linkages between the diffusion of ICT products and technologies and development.

### 2.4 Critique of ICT4D

Although the application of ICT4D promises benefits towards achieving human development, it may also cause some negative aspects. For instance, Yusoff and Lim (2003) contend that the application of ICT4D may widen social-economic inequalities amongst peoples and nations around the world. The World Bank ‘Digital Dividends’ report (2016) shows that most of the global North countries have made significant

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4 The term brain drain refers to the phenomenon of abandonment of a country in favour of another, characterised by a one-way flow of professionals or people with a high level of education, generally following an offer of better pay or living conditions (Grubel, 1994)
progress in harnessing the benefits of ICT in their development. In contrast, most of the global South countries, particularly in Africa, still lag behind. As a result, the lack of ICT implementation contributes to the social exclusion and lack of access to economic growth opportunities for communities striving to improve their living conditions.

The contending views range from those questioning whether ICT4D should be a priority on the basis that there are more urgent and basic needs of the poor to the post-modernist development perspective, which after deconstructing ICT4D with enthusiasm concluded that it brings more dangers than benefits (Escobar, 1995). Some, like Pieterse (2014), argue, that ICT4D is an attempt to revive the modernisation theory, with its focus on technology transfer and economic growth (Castells, 1996; 2009, Wade, 2002), while others argue that ICT4D projects are often not rooted in a set of structures: discursive constructions, cultural context, systems of power, leading to inadequately conceived and implemented projects (Haikin and Flatters, 2017)

3 Methodologies, Method, and Theory

3.1 Research Design

I had several considerations regarding which tools are the most plausible for this type of study. At the outset of planning this research, I had considered use of survey as well as semi-structured interviews, however, upon further reflection, it became apparent that with the time constraints and availability of the study’s prospective participants, that a more realistic model was to have few selected organisations that would form the main case studies, making the chances of carrying out the collection of empirical data feasible. For the reason that I have intended to present an understanding of the variables and correlations in terms of ICT use within African diaspora organisations. As a systematic methodology, I found that Grounded Theory provided me with a suitable and flexible framework needed to allow for an understanding to emerge as the data is collected and analysed.

3.2 Methodologies

3.2.1 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory, originating from the collaboration of Glaser and Strauss (1967), has its foundations in
social science and symbolic interaction and has been utilized to build a theory about a phenomenon by systematically collecting and simultaneously analyzing relevant data (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The intent of grounded theory is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical process (Creswell, 2007).

In practical measures, grounded theory research explores basic social processes that occur within human interactions and is well suited when the researcher is seeking to understand the meaning or nature of experiences of people under specific circumstances. The underlying principle is that the researcher does not begin with a preconceived theory that needs to be proven, as is common in quantitative studies because this research method focuses on building theory, not a testing theory (Dey, 2007). While early grounded theorists sought to discover patterns of behaviour in the data and conceptualise their properties through abstraction (Glaser and Strauss 1967) constructivist grounded theorists seek to understand difference and variation among research participants and to co-construct meaning with them (Charmaz 2006). Charmaz acknowledges that a risk in any inductive method such as the constructivist approach is overemphasis on the individual, emphasising the active, reflective actor to the neglect of the larger social forces acting upon him or her and she is mindful that the researcher needs to learn how social forces affect the actor and what if anything the actor thinks, feels and does about them (Charmaz, 2000).

The embedded inductive nature of grounded theory allows for the use of a constant comparative approach to data collection and analysis. Bryand and Charmaz (2007) suggest that grounded theory research encourages researchers to persistently interact with their data, and —remain constantly involved with their emerging analyses. In other words, in grounded theory research, data collection proceeds simultaneously with data analysis allowing the researcher to identify emerging themes and to inform and streamline subsequent data collection. This allows for the investigation of the legitimacy and relevance of emerging themes by comparing new data with the results of the initial analysis. This process of moving back and forth between data and analysis —makes the collected data progressively more focused and the analysis successively more theoretically (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007), a strategy to ensure reliability and validity of the research.

### 3.2.2 Case Study Approach

In the social sciences, case studies are in-depth analyses of single or a few communities, organisations, or persons' lives. They involve detailed and often subtle understandings of the social organisation of everyday life and persons' experiences. Case studies usually involve extensive interviews about persons' lives, or
direct observation of community or organisation activities, or both (Yin, 2014). Because case study methodology is expected to capture the complexity of a single case, it can produce a detailed historical account, while simultaneously considering the context, and thus can encompass many variables and qualities, which in the case of the proposed research topic is one of the major strengths as a method. In allowing participants to give personal account and interpretation, case studies can allow for the exploration of the dynamics that make up the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘who’ as well as the context in which diaspora are engaging in transnational development activities.

As the research proposed is what Streb (2010) defines as ‘exploratory’, meaning that data analysis involves thematic analyses, the case study approach would allow me to understand occurrences systematically and coherently without predefined preliminary propositions and hypotheses. It is possible that this approach will also raise a range of research questions that are not envisioned at the start of the project. The appropriateness of selecting case study approach to the degree project is informed by the proposed unit of analysis, which would be individual diaspora. Case studies are well suited for exploratory approach, enabling a focused approach to the study's goals of answering the "how" and "why" diaspora engage in transnational practices. As noted by Blatter (2008), case studies offer an advantageous approach to producing detailed historical accounts as they allow the researcher to participate in in-depth interviews that elicit experience and meaning from participants. In pairing multiple methods of case studies and semi-structured interviews, I intend to ensure that I seek the same or similar data from multiple sources which would support the verification and authentication of findings.

There are several reasons using case study in this project is advantageous. Firstly, it allows for the examination of data that is collected within the context of the activity being studied, so if individuals within diaspora organisation are selected as a case study, they may be observed in the environment in which they operate. In addition, a case study can produce detailed qualitative accounts that reflect the complexities and details of real-life situations that might not be as easily captured in quantitative data research (Yin, 2014). Case studies as a component of the research strategy provide insights that are contextual and revealing of processes. Contextualisation is an especially important consideration as the research is exploring cross-national activities. However, it is also important to point to some of the criticism of case study as a research tool, specifically the contention that it depends on a single or limited number of cases to reach a generalised conclusion (Tellis, 1997). The issue of generalisation is a factor that would need to be considered and mitigated as much as possible in the study as cases will be purposefully selected instead of being representational sample because they offer the most relevant and in-depth information-rich, are revelatory or unique.
3.3 Method
This study primary method of data collection was semi-structured in-depth interviews. Where useful, informal documents such as grey literature and online reports published have also been quoted to support and develop points from the interviews. The interviews were conducted using an interview guide, which can be found in Appendix 1.

The interviewee is given an opportunity to give verbal consent at the start of interview recording and given the opportunity to change their consent at the conclusion of the interview in the light of the information they have disclosed. Arrangements are made to review the write-up with the interviewee. They are thanked for their time and contribution and asked for any suggestions regarding other interview participants that could be approached.

In general, the sequence of the questions was flexible in order to be able to adjust the interview to the individual situation during each interview. With the permission of the interviewees, all interviews were recorded. Afterward, the interviews were transcribed to allow for comprehensive analysis of the collected qualitative data.

3.3.1 Semi-structured Interview
Interviewing is a central technique in qualitative research that traditionally involves an interviewer and an interviewee engaging in face-to-face conversation. As the prominence of interview as a research method has expanded and grown to become one of the most common knowledge production practices in social sciences, so the interviews are conducted. The formats under which interviews can be conducted is now numerous, encompassing many formats beyond face-to-face, including through telephone interviews, online video-based platforms and focus groups (Brinkmann, 2008). How interviews are administered can also vary, in terms of degree of depth, focus and scope. However, the common underlying idea of interview method is to obtain complex knowledge by focusing on eliciting a personal narrative, revealing details of an individual's practices attitudes and experiences (Edwards, et al, 2013). How an interview is designed and carried out very much depend on what type and purpose the research questions the researcher seek answers to. For example, informal, conversational interview with little or no predetermined questions allows for the interview to remain as open and adaptable as possible to the interviewee's nature and priorities. Structured and semi-structured interview approach ensures that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee; this provides more focus than the conversational approach, but still, allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting the information from the interviewee. My proposed approach of semi-structured interviews allows for the emphasis to be on the interviewees own perspectives on their
engagement in transnationalism and civil society, which can complement the questionnaire data by offering an opportunity to explore more in-depth issues and findings raised. Semi-structured interviews as a qualitative method generate information that may be critical for eliciting and understanding the story behind a participant's experiences (Edwards et al., 2013), in other words, because qualitative interviews can give insight into the meanings that individuals and groups attach to experiences, social processes, practices and events, they add value by allowing further investigation of specific findings of questionnaire. An additional consideration in choosing semi-structured interviews is that they offer flexibility, allowing for new questions to be brought up during the interview or during subsequent interviews as a result of interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews don't restrict respondents to answer limited pre-defined choice of interviewer’s questions as in surveys (McDowell, 2010).

There are however concerns regarding the issue of whether interview as a method is anecdotal, illustrative, too positivistic, and/or biased, as well as the challenges of ensuring ethical protocols are incorporated into all stages of the interview design. When it comes to dealing with human participants, Edwards et al. (2013) emphasise the importance of ethics as an important element as interviews are considered an intrusion into respondents' private lives with regard to the time allotted and level of sensitivity of questions asked. Therefore, to protect the participants' rights and to avoid causing them any harm, researchers would need to ensure that the collected data is treated with confidentiality and where appropriate anonymity.

I recruited interview participants using snowball sampling; recruiting was initiated from my personal network and then extended using references from interview respondents. Snowball sampling (also known as ‘chain sampling’ or ‘referral sampling’). This involves asking participants for recommendations of contacts who might qualify for participation, leading to “referral chains” (Morgan, 2008)

The preliminary interview was conducted with interviewee from African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) who I had previously been introduced to through my work with African Diaspora Organisations (ADO’s). To ensure that as a researcher I addressed the issue of neutrality, ethics and rigour in this research, the research design was set out initially with well-defined questions and areas of interest to be covered with them during the interview. It was made clear to interviewee at the outset that the interview would be discussing only their experience with ICTs in the organisations and that the focus of the research was the organisation, the interview was also conducted at the offices of the interviewee.

Semi-structured interviews were performed, in which the interview participants responded to a pre-set list of questions that gave overall guidelines of the interview (see the Appendix 1 for the interview questions).
My role as an interviewer was to be a flexible moderator as much as possible rather than to exercise tight control (Berger, 2000). Face to face interviews were performed for two interviews and Skype was used for one as the participant was in Sudan at the time. Follow-up questions were sent via email. Compared to in-person interviews, the Skype interviews followed a more structured protocol because interviewees may have tried to organize their answers, while face to face interviews elicited more elaborate responses.

### 3.4 Theoretical Framework

This section introduces the theoretical framework that will serve as the analytical grounds for this study. The theoretical framework for this research, Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice (1977), is intended to allow for analyses of power relationships between different agents in the field of international development.

#### 3.4.1 Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice

The research framework, Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice (Bourdieu, 1977), builds on the concepts of the duality of structure and agency, where structures refer to the institutionalised domains of social activities: economy, state, civil society; that determine and condition thoughts and behaviours. This framework allows for the research to interrogating the complex interplay of Bourdieu’s main concepts, namely field, habitus and capital.

Bourdieu (1977) stated that everyday life is governed by an infinite amount of interactions, for example, discussions, negotiations or conflicts. Understanding these interactions requires first reflecting on the place, rules and circumstances in which they are produced. For Bourdieu, underlying structures are determinants of individual or group actions, or ‘Habitus’. Habitus is the dispositions, habits, ways of doing things, ways of thinking, and ways of seeing the world that we each, individually and in groups, acquire as we travel through life. The habitus thus incorporates prejudices and expectations. The field, for Bourdieu, is the given set of circumstances within which an agent is currently living, experiencing and acting. Each field contains its own cultural logic, and its own power structure, power struggles, formal structures of control. The concept of field can refer to both metaphorical constructs or real relations of power (Bourdieu, 1989). It’s important to note, that differing and at times opposed field(s) exist for diaspora organisations, such as the governmental fields of ‘home’ and ‘host’ states, the field of diasporic institutions in different countries, the transnational political and economic fields that constitute ‘the diaspora’ are therefore not the same field.

Discerning the difference between a field and a social space allows us to understand the interrelation, at the transnational level, between agents whose habituses and stakes are not similarly focused, but that is still affected by common problems and are in struggle. Social space is defined by Bourdieu as the difference or
gap which one’s position within a certain space is defined by capital, which can take many forms such as economic capital (in its different forms), cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital” (Bourdieu, 1989) access to which determines or provides the conditions/resources for action. Capital might be thought of as resources. Diaspora entities, their various networks and communities, and the diverse groups with whom they come into contact, each have differing and changeable amounts of economic, human, social, and symbolic forms of capital. While Bourdieu’s theory of practice is criticised for attributing to structural conditions the role of agency and fixed social order, Anthony Giddens theory attempts to unify structure and agency through the notion of the ‘duality of structure’, the idea that structure is both ‘the medium and outcome’ it recursively organises, what Giddens calls ‘structuration’ (Giddens, 1984).

Giddens identifies a number of characteristics that enable actors to take action that can change the structures they constitute: their *transformative power* (i.e. the capacity to act upon structures), their *knowledgeability* (the stock of knowledge they rely on to undertake action), their *rationality* (the capacity to assess their situation and establish priorities) and their *reflexivity* (i.e. the consciousness, as a social actor, of their transformative capacity and the capacity to monitor one another’s actions). Because of these characteristics, actors are thus able to use available means to make their way into life. We thus see that the structuration theory puts forward a perspective in which actors’ inner motives are applied so that structures are produced and reproduced through actors’ practices.

Perceptions and practices of diaspora entities and how these are reflected in the professionalized development *field* in which different actors interact, is guided by implicit and explicit ‘rules of the game’ – such as underlying notions of development, governance, and accountability, that reproduce and circumscribe development interventions, and ideals of proper implementation and professionalism. According to Bourdieu, all actors in a field recognise the existence of the ‘rules of the game’ whether they adhere to them or contest them. Understanding development in this way implies that the ways development aid agencies support and interact with diaspora entities not only reflect explicit intentions or value judgements but also convey underlying notions of how diaspora organisations can be perceived within the professional development field and how certain practices may not be recognised as ‘correct’ development, falling outside the field.

The international development space is led and driven by institutional donors/funders who dictate what development is and how it should be carried out. Diaspora organisations are by their nature staffed by diverse actors, most of whom are migrants. These organisations tend to have an in-depth knowledge of the local context in global South countries because of the knowledge brought by the actors. In a sense, they
operate in ways that fit that context, and this can mean they do not meet the operational standards set by global North institutions. The challenge of navigating a top-down system means that Diaspora organisation position as agents of development within the international cooperation ecosystem is that of a subordinate. They are dominated by the system architects and navigate the rules set by those with more capital. The strength of diaspora organisations is their adaptability and agility, they are however limited by lack of symbolic capital within the rules of the development field.

4 Defining the Case Studies

4.1 Typology of Diaspora Actors

Diaspora organisations are characterized by considerable diversity in their form and focus. Diaspora organisations are defined by Bush (2008) as:

“complex, formal, informal or semi-formal organizations that articulate and pursue goals that are asserted to be representative of the interests and aspirations of ‘the diaspora’ as a whole”.

This research focuses on the role ICT’s play in diaspora organisations and what challenges and opportunities they present. Of usefulness in assigning a typology to the organisations interviewed, is the typology formulated by Mohan (2002) for considering the role of diasporas in home country development:

- **Development in the diaspora**: ‘how people within diasporic communities use their localised diasporic connections to secure economic and social well-being and, as a by-product, contribute to the development of their locality’ (Ibid.: 104)

- **Development through the diaspora**: ‘how diasporic communities utilise their diffuse global connections beyond the locality to facilitate economic and social well-being.’ (Ibid.: 104).

- **Development by the diaspora**: ‘How diasporic flows and continued connections ‘back home’ facilitate the development -- and sometimes the creation – of these homelands’. This includes ‘flows of ideas, money and political support to the migrants’ home country, be it an existing home(land) or one which nationalists would like to see come into being.’ This is diasporic development ‘across space’ (Ibid.: 104, 123).

During the identification and interviewing process during this research, each of these types was found among the selected case studies. However, within the case studies presented, these three forms of diaspora development links are interlinked, meaning that diaspora organisation in turn function in several ways, for example facilitating development in the diaspora and development through the diaspora. It was also found organisations operate in a range of scales and conditions, including
economic, social, political and cultural, in host and home countries/regions, that influence and impacts the use of ICTs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Thematic activity areas of diaspora organisations interviewed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
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<tr>
<td>African Foundation for Development (AFFORD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al Sudaniya Mentoring (ASM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FORWARD UK</td>
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4.2 Case Studies- The Organisations

4.2.1 African Foundation for Development (AFFORD)

Established in 1997, AFFORD’s activities are centered around raising awareness of the African diaspora’s actual and potential contributions to Africa’s development; shaping and advocating for policies aimed at tapping into the diaspora’s resources in flexible ways that do not require permanent return; and helping build the capacity of U.K.-based African diaspora organisations. More recently, the organisation has focused on harnessing the African diaspora’s resources to support entrepreneurs in creating and sustaining jobs in Africa and has developed innovative programs in several African countries to that end. AFFORD’s flagship programme, AFFORD Business Centre (ABC,) supports diaspora organisations in the UK with resources and support to enable fast-growth socially responsible businesses to enhance local supply chains and create long-term, career-orientated jobs. The organisational goal is pursued through programmes, projects and activities undertaken independently or in collaboration with partners in Africa. The individual projects fall within overlapping programme themes, including; Enterprise & Employment Development, Diaspora Remittances & Investment, Diaspora Engagement and Capacity, Action-Research, Policy and Practice.

AFFORD receives funding from a range of Europe based entities, including in 2017 from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to carry out migration studies in the diaspora, Pharo-Foundation-
a private foundation- who funded job creation and sustainable social enterprises in Ethiopia., UKAID/Comic Relief's Common Ground Initiative (CGI), which promotes increasing and diversifying diaspora investment in Africa.

### 4.2.2 Al Sudaniya Mentoring (ASM)

Al Sudaniya Mentoring is a geo-ethnic women’s organisation, established in London, United Kingdom in 2013 as an initiative to bring together Sudanese women in Sudan and in the diaspora to develop the skills of young women in Sudan. The organisation utilises the skills, and experience of female Sudanese professionals across the globe to guide and develop young Sudanese women in Sudan through a structured mentoring program delivered online. The aim to empower these young women through tailored one-to-one mentoring so that they can in order for them to harness their newly acquired skills to contribute to a better Sudan. The programme was developed for two main reasons; the first is to connect Sudanese women from across the globe with Sudanese women living in Sudan, and the second being to provide professional and life skills that are often inaccessible through traditional education institutions in Sudan. The core components of the program consist of one to one online mentoring sessions, monthly in-country workshops, and Sudan based community group projects.

ASM is running as a voluntary organisation, it is currently undergoing a process of registration as a not for profit in Sudan. While the organisation has been established for several years, its status as a non-formal (registered with Charity Commission in the UK), means that the organisation receives no formal funding from external sources and mostly covers its costs through its network of supporters. The organisation is able to keep its running costs low by operating as a virtual organisation with no formal office space, assets or paid staff.

### 4.2.3 FORWARD UK

Today, the eradication of the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is firmly on the global sustainable development goal agenda and child marriage has gained recognition on the global development agenda, as has action on fistula is gaining new momentum. FORWARD is a United Kingdom based organisation that works collaboratively with diaspora community organisations in the United Kingdom, and in partnerships with Africa based organisation with a focus on girls and women’s rights and health. FORWARD also works with local organisations in African countries to build capacity and support the development of women-led organisations. Working with these local entities, FORWARD UK participatory approach to collecting evidence is fundamental in their aim of accelerating social change. The organisation
has several thematic programs, the majority of which focus on social change through undertaking training, research and advocacy in partnership with a range of organisation, both in Europe and Africa. The organisation has worked in 9 countries across African, supporting over 18 partner organisations, including women-led organisations. Currently, they help support 50 girls’ clubs in several countries in Africa, involving over 1,500 girls, where peer support, information and projects on sexual and reproductive health and girls’ rights are delivered.

FORWARD UK works with a range of organisations and entities in the UK as well, including those setups or supporting diaspora communities, providing a platform and space for capacity development, mentoring and engagement to enable community actors to become agents of change. Through The Girl Generation initiative, the organisation has played a role as the United Kingdom representative in the African led movement which aims to end FGM in a generation. FORWARD is an implementing partner in the movement and works specifically to link African diaspora organisations in the UK to support Africa-led initiatives to end FGM in Africa.

The organisation receives funding from a variety of sources, reflecting the range of programs and initiatives they undertake. Their Africa Programme is funded by Comic Relief, delivering their diaspora communities programs and advocacy in the UK is funded by entities such as London Councils, which represents London’s 32 borough councils and the City of London. They also receive funding from UK state agencies such as DFID, Arts Council, and multilateral organisations such as Directorate General Development and Cooperation (EuropeAid).

Framed by Bourdieu’s theory of Practice, the analysis indicates that diaspora organisations have access to social and cultural capital, and in some instances, economic capital. The ubiquitous nature of ICT has created an opportunity for consistent and thorough knowledge sharing between the Diaspora and home country counterparts, in particular as it pertains to local development.

5 Analysis and Discussion

Employing a qualitative method, the aim and research questions of the study was to investigate the use and adoption patterns of ICTs by United Kingdom based African diaspora organisation, in addition to their perceived benefits and barriers that may affect the use of these technologies for development in Africa.

Having identified the three case-study organisations, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with
one member of staff from each of the three organisations. All the interviews were tape-recorded with consent and were between one and two hours in duration. Given that the size of the case-study organisations varies from eight in the case of ASM, to several hundred or so staff and members in the case of AFFORD, the interview sample was not proportional to associations or/and membership. However, rather than constructing a statistically representative sample of each organisation, I employed a purposive sample designed to capture something of the diversity of positionalities found in and around each organisation, with the purpose of generating a range of perspectives on the issues of interest and to facilitate an understanding of how motivations, experiences and perceptions might vary between organisations.

I analysed how the participant’s organisation’s practices excluded and/or included ICT in their activities, such as communication, organisational advancement, capacity building and knowledge transfer between global North and global South. I also investigated how ICT’s affected their participation as key actors (advocacy) in development policy.

The importance of organisational capacity as a barrier to mainstreaming of ICTs as components within their work is underscored by AFFORD’s experienced with the implementation of projects such as Business Centers in Sierra Leone. The organisation does not necessarily design projects with technology in mind, they are much more focused on achieving engagement than the technology to be used to do so. Social media plays a significant role in the outreach and engagement with both diasporas in the UK as well as individuals in African countries. The simplicity of the ICT is an important consideration as the organisation often find digital literacy of their constituents, who tend to be first generation diaspora who face language barriers and lack of experience with using ICTs in general. The teams within the organisation invest a significant time ensuring that their constituents who face barriers such as digital literacy are guided by complex applications (such as funding proposals), they try to be open to innovation and using technology, but through experience, they have learned that expedience of communication or guiding is actually more streamline when not mediated through ICTs.

“Some people find filling a detailed form on a website quite problematic….we know that our audience is not always tech savvy so we spend a lot of time sorting that out and spend time communicating and working with them on a one way, and a direct way” AFFORD

The success of the organisation’s mission relies on their cultural and social capital. With its long history and established connections to diaspora communities in the UK and support of partner organisations in African countries, AFFORD is able to, through its social media presence and support of entrepreneurship,
to reach and interrelating individuals and communities thus building social capital. AFFORD, through events such the annual African Diaspora and Development Day, and in their role as The Secretariat of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Diaspora, Development and Migration (APPG DDM), offers policymakers access to communities that trust the organisation which in turn facilitates the process of integrating diaspora into strategic development transformation plans.

The political capital of diaspora organisation also plays a significant role, both as something that can be gained and exercised. While political capital is an underdefined term, Bourdieu conceptualised political capital as a form of ‘symbolic capital’. For Bourdieu, political capital is considered to be variant of social capital (Bourdieu, 2002), related to citizens ability to negotiate and translate social capital into a political resource or/and material benefit. An example of this form of capital in African diaspora organisation, FORWARD UK demonstrate how they are able to harness from their role as a network of political engagement and contextual position, political capital through perceived legitimacy as a voice of diaspora communities and local-global North actors, which in turn provides it with access to funding and policy platforms inclusion in global North institutions. This, in turn, made it more affordable/desirable for the organisation to undertake advocacy and communication using the resources they are able to leverage through their political capital.

While FORWARD UK and AFFORD can be considered to be most prominent of the notable African diaspora organisations in the UK5, by virtue of the income (In 2017, the organisation secured funding of between £1.3-£1.5 million), the contrast between their ability to navigate the system of development architecture and that of a small organisation such as ASM is stark. FORWARD UK and AFFORD, both indicated that ICTs are used at several levels of the organisation they feel that funders and stakeholders such as state actors, expect and encourage innovation that is embedded in ICT4D, for example, AFFORD received funding to undertake diaspora mapping in the UK in the expectation that these actors would be better connected and reachable in future development projects.

“Everyone wants you to be innovative and even us when we do policy advocacy will always try to encourage technology that works like mobile money transfer platform like mPesa, so we encourage (that)…..we definitely are aware that in many cases also where, when and how it is needed, there's a context” AFFORD

5 Key African diaspora organisations, in addition to those included in this research, working in the development sector include: Sub-Saharan Advisory Panel (SSAP), Diaspora for African Development, African Council Scotland, Africa Diaspora Youth Forum.
FORWARD UK has undertaken several initiatives such as TuWezeshe Akina Dada (My Rights My Freedom) consortium project and My Body My Rules\(^7\), to advocate and educate against child marriage and FGM using ICT tools including social media, video and petitions. In essence, these two large organisations operate and embed ICTs in similar ways to other non-diasporic development organisations, and arguably face similar challenges when it comes to capacity and funding.

“Women share their story via recorded video, these are shown to men in the community so show how women are impacted by FGM, these videos are also shared with local organisations...[they] have more impact than person talking [at them]”  FORWARD UK

ASM is unlike the previously mentioned organisation in terms of both size and approach to ICT4D. The initiative itself is born from the opportunity transnational connectedness can be harnessed by diasporas. The use of internet and telephone applications and tools has allowed the organisation to create linkages between Sudanese diaspora women and young women in Sudan. Navigating the complexity of legal requirements governing non-governmental organisations and charities in the UK and Sudan can be an existential challenge to many voluntary organisations without the expertise and resources to navigate the complexities of these systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Advocacy</em></td>
<td><em>Capacity</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Communication</em></td>
<td><em>Funding</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Outreach</em></td>
<td><em>Local infrastructure</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Knowledge transfer</em></td>
<td><em>Relavance/Bespokeness of ICTs</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Mobilisation</em></td>
<td><em>Local and/or international policies</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Fundraising</em></td>
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**Figure 1: Areas where diaspora organisations interviewed use ICTs and the barriers to wider/deeper use**

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\(^6\) [https://tuwezeshe.org/](https://tuwezeshe.org/)

\(^7\) *My Body My Rules* is a three minute an animated film aimed at raising awareness of female genital mutilation amongst primary school aged children in the UK: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2IStB6Z3Vw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2IStB6Z3Vw)
During interviews, organisations identified “economic opportunity” and “community development” as a greater concern and priorities than ICT skills development. Several interlinked reasons lay behind this position, foremost was the lack of access and infrastructure to support ongoing and universal access to ICT tools. For example, rural communities in Tanzania, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone, have unreliable access to services (electricity for example) and resources (funds to secure phone devices and airtime credit) that would support the beneficial widespread use of ICTs.

In the case of AFFORD, preventative barriers limiting the use of ICTs in a formal way is the lack of knowledge and skills within the groups the organisation works with. Whether its governmental entities in African countries, beneficiaries in remote communities or diaspora organisation in the UK. AFFORD does on the face of it use several tools to communicate and reach their audiences, from webinars, social media and email communication, however, even these methods have limitations. For example, diaspora organisations in the UK are often staffed by older, first-generation diaspora who have limited experience with using ICT tools, and governmental agencies in African countries such as Uganda and Tanzania, who often have clunky and out of date websites.

ASM, unlike the other two other case studies, is an organisation that uses ICTs to bridge distance both literal and metaphorical, between young women in Sudan and diaspora female mentors spread across the globe. Leveraging a range of ICT’s including Skype, web-based sharing and collaboration platforms (such as Google Drive), and mobile technologies, ASM reaches young women in Sudan who are under-resourced due to lack of programmes not catering to their personal and professional needs. ASM bridges this and other obstacles by providing those based in Sudan and globally dispersed female Sudanese diaspora mentors with a way to connect via internet and mobile. The group of mentors are recruited from across the global diasporic Sudanese community via social media. Once mentees have been matched with a mentor, a digitally available curriculum is used as a guide for helping to improve the confidence of girls while providing them with life and professional skills they can use to fulfil their potential over a 6 month period.

“Everyone is on social media these days, everyone has a smartphone so I don’t really find that is really is a barrier, especially…the mentors, most are in their 20’s and 30’s….most of the time they have these apps on their phone…these days technology especially Instagram, Whatsapp, Twitter and Facebook, everyone is very active…” ASM

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8 For the study, ‘economic opportunity’ refers to secure employment and/or enterprise creation
9 ‘Community development’ refers to improving the standard of living and well-being of community members
This case study demonstrates how human-centred design and basic ICT tools used to develop a technological, transnational, equivalent of conventional offline programmes. As a small organisation, ASM faces similar challenges to those identified by the larger organisations interviews, namely that capacity internally and lack of funding to support to allow for mainstreaming ICT4D as a standalone approach of the program, means that scaling and effectively monitoring and evaluating and understanding the relationship between ICT and development.

The conceptualised understanding of monitoring and evaluating is often that of measuring quantifiable value and progress. In ICT4D, the complexity of measuring ICT impact is often embedded in the variety of methodological approaches and indicators applied, such as country-level availability of ICT infrastructure, or the implementation of eGovernment\textsuperscript{10} initiatives, and at an individual level, indicators such as availability, affordability and skills, are applied.

\begin{quote}
\textit{“I think costs (is a barrier) because if we had funding then we could invest in so many of these various apps, those and making the website look different possibly with different things”} ASM
\end{quote}

Whilst these are examples can be important in indicating or determining the degree of ICT access and use, they cannot offer an illustrate a definitive cause-and-effect relationship between ICTs and poverty elevation. Significant data gaps in global South countries, in comparison to most global North countries, also mean that the data required for monitoring and evaluation of large-scale ICT4D initiative at a country level is challenging. The Empowerment framework developed by Ruth Alsop and Nina Heinsohn (2005), offers a basis with which monitoring and evaluation frameworks of ICT4D can move from current focus on quantifiable values, such as number of those who can access the internet, to indicators of impact that are rooted in the analysis of empowerment\textsuperscript{11} and agency, at both community level (Kleine, 2010).

The data gathered for this study was not in itself aiming to quantify or compare the degree to which the assumption that African diaspora organisations transnational practices contribute to a contextual, relevant and participatory, bottom-up forms of development than large INGO organisation. However, several key issues remain as challenges to diaspora organisation doing development “differently”. First, do diaspora organisations and entities repeat similar mistake or steps by simply complying to the rules of the system, or what Bourdieu refers to as ‘playing the game’, to ensure they can function within the development sector?

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{10} eGovernment is the use of ICTs to improve the activities of public sector organisations

\textsuperscript{11} Empowerment is defined as a person's access to and ability to transform choices into desired actions and outcomes.
\end{footnotesize}
For example, by participating in funding bids that embed technology transfer or other tech-centric outputs, diaspora organisations become entangled in delivering of outcomes that meet the objectives of the funders and their agendas, which are constructed on their definition of development. On the other hand, how diaspora organisation use ICTs, for example, the sophistication of their website, using crowdfunding platforms to generate funds or enhancing their advocacy through social media platforms, can also have the benefit of elevating their visibility and perception to global North funders and public.

It can, therefore, be argued that benefits of influence and access at international, national and local levels that diaspora organisations are said to have, is susceptible to being shaped by traditional development actors, rather than African diaspora organisation independently being able to influence the broader developmental processes in Africa.

5.1 Reflections on Study Findings

In the context of the current ‘euphoria’ on diaspora, remittances and development, and role of ICT for development and in development, it is also essential to set realistic expectations through increasing awareness of past experiences and studies that show ICTs are no panacea for development. Neither diaspora organisation, nor ICTs alone can overcome structural development obstacles such as poor infrastructure, political instability and an unfavourable funding climate. Expectations must, therefore, be set more realistically to avoid disappointment and the subsequent abandonment of the diaspora and ICT development agenda. Governments and development agencies should avoid setting double agendas. Diaspora organisations are unlikely to cooperate with development policies whose hidden agenda is to outsource development and curb poverty through diaspora, without at the same time giving diaspora organisations the power and voice to structure policies and input their experiences and genuine challenges they face in sustaining themselves.

Setting unrealistic aims and expectation for diaspora organisations to be able from a subordinate position, to undertake transnational engagement that overcomes the vulnerabilities and capabilities challenges they and the communities they work with face. There are, however, some indications identified during this research that there is a potential for ICT to play a growing role in terms of diaspora activism in the global North, for example improving conditions for minorities, and not only focused on global South. For example,
AFFORD’s collaboration with Comic Relief and Global Giving on the Diaspora Accelerator Crowdfunding campaign, helps the organisation to both raise its profile to a larger development sector audience, and potentially reach diaspora individuals and groups they may not have been able to reach through their traditional methods.

The outcomes of the interviews clearly indicate that, although technology is a facilitator for addressing and delivering development for the organisations studied, use of ICT4D needs to be synchronised with the provision of adequate systems, capacities and processes, both at countries of residence and countries/regions of delivery, to make the transfer of innovative products and services seamless and efficient.

6 Conclusion

From the promises of open and big data to concerns about transparency and ethics – ICT4D has become a dynamic field, with terms like ‘innovation’, ‘disruption’ and ‘revolution’ being used frequently to describe the impact of ICT-based tools in facilitating sustainable development and poverty reduction. Despite the many predictions and claims of ICTs ability to bring about gains in productivity, efficiency and social development in ICT4D discourse, there is growing focus in trying to understand the many associated and increasingly complex social dynamics and development processes of addressing global poverty are often overlooked or underestimated. ICTs for example have been implicated in recreating neoliberal forms of uneven accumulation, economic extraversion, and market concentration by focusing on modernistic western notions and assumptions about economic growth and digital inclusion and overlooking agency, culture and structural drivers of socioeconomic change.

This research project has provided a lens through which to explore the opportunities, challenges and limitation African diaspora organisations negotiate in leveraging ICT in alleviating poverty and challenging inequalities in African countries and diaspora communities in the United Kingdom. It is apparent that the twin challenges of requiring considerable investment in resources (in host country), as well as the creation and maintenance of local capacity, will take a significant commitment from all stakeholders, including local (global South) organisations, global South Governments, and global North funders and policymakers.

12 AFFORD recently partnered with the crowdfunding platform Global Giving to provide African diaspora organisations with resources to crowdfund for community development or social enterprise projects in their countries of heritage/interest. http://www.afford-diasporafinance.org/news/join-the-afford-globalgiving-diaspora-accelerator-crowdfunding/
These challenges reflect past and evolving development paradigms. With modernisation approaches outdated by decades, many of the diaspora organisations included in this research, suggest they continue to be expected to operate within a top-down framework, where development is being defined by increased access to information and connectivity, rather than measurable improvements in quality of life. Fragmented evaluation frameworks often means that evaluating and identify tangible outcomes and impacts of ICT4D has not moved beyond repeated anecdotal narrative, making it a risky proposition for diaspora organisations to invest their limited funds and time. To be worth investing their limited resources into ICT4D initiatives, diaspora entities would be best supported by a reformulation of how success and impact is measured, with a focus on adaption that allow for longitudinal investment in ICT4D projects, this approach will allow diaspora organisations the time and space needed to design and follow their own contextual strategies, benchmarks and indicators.

The social worlds in which ICT4D projects are implemented involve multiple stakeholders, including individuals, groups, organisations, whose interactions shape the configurations of the structural relations in those social spaces. Bourdieu’s (1977) practice theory brings to the foreground the struggle between those who are in dominant (in most cases global North corporations, private-sector contractors, organisations and states) and dominated (diaspora organisations, global South local organisations, and individuals) positions, as well as strategies that they use to gain superiority in the field. As highlighted through the below quotes, it is apparent that African diaspora organisations are using ICTs as a component of mechanisms that facilitate knowledge transfer, advocacy and communication rather than using ICTs for development as a core function within the organisations. Communicators within diaspora organisations identify their own communication aims and choose their own communication tools according to what is appropriate, available, affordable and effective in reaching and hearing from their constituencies.

“We realise that sometimes it's much quicker to just pick up a phone and call someone then sending emails, or a quick visit you will do 6 months’ worth of working [than] that sent by email.....so remote working doesn't really work there and things are much more efficient if it's sort of direct.” AFFORD

“[Platforms like] Salesforce and Slack, [offer], a really amazing opportunities, but because of our small size we are unable to fund ourselves to use them, another barriers, the costs. So we have the Google business account email for and ideally it'd be great to maybe have five or six for each individual team member” ASM

In terms of my primary question; what are the trends and practices in terms of utilisation of ICT tools of
United Kingdom based African diaspora entities engaged in international development in African countries and regions and/or diaspora community development, the findings of the study found that barriers to mainstreaming ICT use often stems from social and institutional structures, revealed in lack of affordability, language issues, low digital literacy, and lack of capacity. While ICTs have broadened the possibilities of dialogue and communications locally and globally for diaspora entities, in order for communication to be effective at the local and global level, the societal and political environment needs to be enabling, and a primary challenge faced by diaspora organisations is the inadequate technical infrastructure in African countries, where the diaspora organisations work, which limits their ability to address the specific needs of marginalised individuals and communities.

While these findings do not suggest that ICTs are inappropriate for diaspora organisations, they do indicate the misguided nature of the universalist visions of economic and institutional development that currently accompany efforts to promote the diffusion of technology. These visions frustrate efforts to make sense of locally meaningful, horizontal approach to accommodating ICTs in development and/or socio-economic activities, which further emphasises the need for ICT4D researchers and practitioners to shift their consideration from studying in isolation ICT infrastructure, access, and use, to examining actors and their interests, and the broader social, regulatory, and political context.

Returning to the sub research question; what opportunities and limitations ICTs offer African diaspora entities in terms of representativeness as strategic and equal partners within the United Kingdom’s development policies, the findings of the study demonstrate that in terms of opportunities, the flexibility of ICTs tools have the potential to enable diaspora organisations, if used consistently and broadly, the agility to reach multiple audiences, i.e. policymakers, state agencies, the public and diaspora communities rather than a single, specific audience. Social media platforms, especially, offer an important and cost-effective means by which African diaspora organisations can improve and enhance their 'perception' to funders by creating and enhancing their visibility and promulgate their reach and impact.

ICT4D initiatives are often permeated by multiple discourses about participation. As actors with more resources than individuals, African diaspora entities participatory practices are rooted in their social capital and connectedness to grassroots actors as stakeholders, however, that does not negate the tension of inclusion and exclusion, social media channels offer an opportunity for African diaspora organisations to reach second and subsequent generation diaspora, who tend to be younger and more versatile in the use of ICT, and less likely to be reached through traditional channels.
Emirbayer and Johnson (2008) argue that individuals’ habitus is generated through everyday activities, and to a certain degree form through interactions which in turn shape people’s practices. This view helps us understand the notion of agency among diaspora in the United Kingdom. In this research, most participants indicated while ICT tools were readily available to them, the institution use of these tools is not mainstreamed in transnational activities. Bourdieu (1977) suggests that the degree of conformity of practice in habits can be described as a ‘game’ as it involves defined rules, just as development and policy institution have rules of practice. In this research, the concept of ‘game’ applies to the participants’ choice of particular ICT tools for communication, advocacy, knowledge exchange, and learning. When these ICT tools worked as expected, the organisations were more likely to make them part of their everyday practices, integrating them into the rules of the ‘game’, that is, their pedagogical practices. However, Schmidt (1997) argues that desires and emotions can play a part in this adoption and thus affect the degree of adoption. Consequently, some diaspora will avoid using a tool if they feel it can jeopardise their ability to impact the purpose of their practice; for instance, they may avoid using the email if they perceive its slow speed or accessibility as a barrier to their way of communicating with local partners in global South.

“*What I have learned personally and through organisational experience, is that sometimes picking up the phone and calling is sometimes the best solution.*”

In conclusion, the findings of the study indicate that further research and exploration of how African diaspora organisation can collaborate, presenting a unified voice, to explore ways to seek nuanced funding models that better meet their priorities will enhance their abilities to actively design and encourage user-centred approaches to ICT4D. The global South infrastructural challenges noted during this study also need further interrogation, understanding how, who and what role diaspora can play to advocate for improved ‘last-mile’ to help combat the continuing problems with not reaching their target communities and consequently benefiting the field greatly.
7 References


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Appendices

Appendix 1: Diaspora Organisation Representative Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. Introductions: introduce self and personal interest in the topic; ask them to introduce themselves, the organisation, the key programmes and countries where the organisation operates
   a. What was the role for local actors/partners
   b. Which types of actors are involved and how (benefiting, delivering, intermediaries, partnering)?
   c. Is local capacity (in global South) being developed as an outcome of your programs
   d. What are the cooperation challenges among actors?
      i. those delivering same programmes,
      ii. within the organisation
   e. Apart from challenges, what is working well among the actors
   f. What type of technology is being employed?
   g. How was the technology decided upon?
   h. Describe interesting elements of your approach or the effects of these ICT-related initiatives (how you sourced/chose the technology, design, delivery, deployment, audience research, technology sourcing, partnership/business models, intended/unintended effects,
positive/negative outcomes, short/long-term impacts, etc.)

i. What strategies have been used to overcome any shortfall in critical success ingredients?

j. What, in terms of policy, funding and investment environment, needs to change to better support ICT initiatives with a social purpose? (Recommendations to policymakers, or other actors in the sector?)

Appendix 2: List of Research Participants

The table below lists the interviewees who were involved in this research through semi-structured interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African Foundation for Development (AFFORD)</td>
<td>Communications Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Sudaniya Mentoring (ASM)</td>
<td>Founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOWARD UK</td>
<td>Training and Development Coordinator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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