

Connecting Africans in the Diaspora and the Continent: Prospects and Challenges of the African Diaspora Development Institute (ADDI)

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Abstract

The study examined the African Diaspora Development Institute (ADDI), as an initiative that was established to inter-connect Africans in the diaspora and Africans in Africa. The institutional theory was adopted as the basis of analysis. For the method of data collection, the study adopted the secondary method of data collection which is qualitative. Data were sourced from online articles and the African Diaspora Development Institute website, to get adequate information. From the findings of the research, it was discovered that the ADDI is the first of its kind in Africa. The initiative was born out of the desire of well-meaning Africans most especially Ambassador Arikana Chihombori-Quao, the former African Union Ambassador to the United States. The initiative is to promote the envisioned African project of a Wakanda city. This city has been tagged futuristic because it is a work in progress. Also discovered in this study were the prospects of the ADDI which are to return Africans in Africa, and Africans in the Diaspora to their forgotten history, promote unity and regional trade in Africa, promote Youth and Women empowerment, and establish a regional monetary policy called Oduwacoin; built on a blockchain similar to the bitcoin cryptocurrency. In the challenges of the ADDI, the study predicted that the institution was likely going to experience some setbacks, most especially financial constraints, corruption, and the dilemma of insecurity. While providing the way forward for the initiative, the paper recommended that; the ADDI should seek financial support from organizations like the AU, and other sub-regional organizations in Africa; insecurity should be well addressed to encourage Africans in the diaspora to return to Africa and support the ADDI initiative; corruption should be permanently eradicated to safeguard funds for the ADDI projects, and lastly, the AU should adopt similar programs to that of the ADDI to promote African development.

Keywords: African, Challenges, Diaspora, Development, Institute

Introduction

Over the years in Africa, there has been the desire and necessity to inter-connect Africans in the diaspora and Africans in Africa. The establishment of the African Diaspora Development Institute (ADDI) is a response to this desire. Those who are referred to as Africans in the diaspora are mostly a product of slavery and western subjugation in the 16th and 18th centuries. But in recent times, there has been a large migration of educated Africans to America, Europe, and Asia known as the brain drain (Tucho, 2009). From the 16th to 18th century, enslaved people amounting to over (10-15 million) were brought to America, Central America, South America, and Brazil (Lituchy, 2019). The Americas has the largest number of Africans in the diaspora. In general, Africans in the diaspora are over 140 million in 2010 (World Bank Report, 2010).

The need for unity among Africans in the diaspora started in the late 19th century. This resulted in the establishment of numerous Pan-Africanist movements. Pan-Africanism according to Boddy-Evans (2019), calls for African unity (both as a continent and as a people). Boddy-Evans further argues that Pan-Africanism has different views such as that of Edward Wilmot Blyden, calling for African unity, and his view was to return Africans in the diaspora back to Africa. While in the Pan-African view of Frederick Douglass, Africans in the diaspora were encouraged to fight for their rights rather than return to Africa. The idea of recovering the lost African identity can be traced to William Edward Burghardt, the founder of the oldest American civil rights organization; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). This movement fought for the rights and equality of the blacks in the United States, laying the foundation for other similar movements.

The ADDI as a case in point is headed by Ambassador Arikana Chihombori-Quao, the former African Union Ambassador to the United States. The initiative is to promote the envisioned African project of a Wakanda city. This city is a futuristic project and also a city of excellence, President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana once realized the need for the children of Africa who were formerly enslaved out of African continental shores to return to Africa as a place of identity. Wakanda city is targeted to be in each region of Africa, starting from the one on Cape Coast (ADDI, 2022). This study, therefore, is to take a brief insight into the envisioned ADDI project, its prospects, and its challenges.

Method of Data Collection

Data used in this study was based on information received from qualitative sources mostly obtained from the African Diaspora Development Institute website, articles, and online journals.

Conceptual Clarifications

i. The Concept of Development

The concept of development has many defining features: growth, economic buoyancy, and the total absence of underdevelopment (Agaba, Bissala, and David, 2022). Developmental analysts have been placed with uncertainty about the exact meaning of development, this means there

is no concise term to quantify development. In the words of Omotola (2010), development emerges as an adjunct of globalization which further has no universally accepted definition. Todaro (1985) cited in Omotola (2010), opines that development as a concept is multi-facial. It encompasses distinctive changes in social structures, attitudes, national institutions, and accelerated economic growth. Furthermore, development is traditionally interpreted as economic growth (Cobbinah and Black, 2011). Development can be best described as the transformation, as well as the establishment of conditions that will allow change and such change to continue in a positive sphere.

ii. The Concept of Diaspora

Diaspora simply refers to the spread of any people from their original homeland to a new country. Page and Mercer (2018), posits that diaspora was used to describe the Jewish people, who fled their lands during the time of war between 640 and 610BC. In recent times, the term has continued to cover any population that has been dispersed across many countries for whatsoever reason. In the view of Longley (2021), diaspora best explains the movement of a people who have been forced or elected to leave their state and settle in another state.

He further argued that scholars recognize two kinds of diaspora: forced and voluntary. Forced diaspora often arises from traumatic events such as wars, imperialistic conquest, enslavement, or natural disasters like famine or extended drought. As a result, the people of a forced diaspora typically share feelings of persecution, loss, and desire to return to their homeland. In contrast, a voluntary diaspora is a community of people who have left their homelands in search of economic opportunity, as in the massive emigration of people from depressed regions of Europe to the United States during the late 1800s, and most recently the movements of Africans to Europe, America, Middle East, in search of enabling and favourable living conditions, causing a large gap of brain drain.

iii. The Concept of Pan-Africanism

Pan-Africanism is the call for Africans in the diaspora to return home. This movement started towards the end of the 19th century. Africans in the diaspora saw the need to return home, as they were dispersed by their American counterparts. Pan-Africanism calls for Africans to be united and share common goals and aspirations. Pan-Africanism, according to Adejumobi (2008), emerged in the late nineteenth century in response to European colonialization and exploitation of the African continent. The political project of Pan-Africanism is the unification of all Africans into a single African state, sometimes thought of as providing a homeland for their return (Appiah, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the theory of Institutionalism as the basis of analysis. The institutional theory of societal development was developed by John Meyer and Brian Rowan in the late 1970s as a way to better understand how organizations fit into and are formed by their societal, state, national, and global settings. According to Kivisto (2011), the institutional theory is a process

and technique through which structures, and rules, become established as authoritative guidelines for social conduct. It investigates how such systems emerge, how they spread, and what role they serve in providing social activity with stability and meaning. Institutional theory is a widely accepted theoretical position that prioritizes productivity, ethics, and legitimacy (Scott, 2008). A Crucial discovery of the theory is that it optimizes decisions, practices, and structures, organizations look to their peers for pointers and ethical behaviour.

Based on the institutional theory, the ADDI is an emerging institution that is distinct from regional organizations such as; the African Union and other supranational or sub-regional entities which are established by states and are engaged in several intergovernmental dealings. In contrast, the ADDI is yet to reach that height of full acceptance as a program or institution under the AU or any sub-regional body as it is still a private initiative sponsored by well-meaning Africans. The ADDI as an emerging institution is formed out of a common need which is for the unification of Africa. This is because the issue of shared identity has long declined in Africa and among the black race at large. If the ADDI can achieve its full objectives, Africans in the diaspora and Africans in Africa will surely be on the pathway towards progressiveness and achieving the age-long prophecy of pan-Africanism.

ADDI: Evolution and Structure

i. Movement of Africans to the Diaspora

The earliest movements of Africans to the diaspora originated from the era of slavery and colonial market expansions in Europe and America. This resulted in the slave masters coming into Africa which was like a reserve tank to get labourers at almost an unresistable cost. Between 1400 and 1900, close to 20 million individuals were captured from Africa during four sizable and mostly simultaneous generations orchestrated to trade enslaved people: Trans-Saharan, Red Sea, Indian Ocean, and Trans-Atlantic trades of enslaved people (Boddy-Evans, 2019). During the period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Europeans did not have the power to invade African states or kidnap enslaved Africans (Thompson, 2020). With this, between 15 and 20 million estimated people were transported across the Atlantic ocean from Africa and Purchased from traders of enslaved people throughout Europe and European colonies (Thompson, 2020). On reaching Europe and America, African slaves toiled in every major industry: extracting precious metals and timber; growing and harvesting coffee; building railways; extracting tobacco, rice, and most importantly sugar. There was never enough labour for these industries among the Europeans or America India people, so enslaved Africans were forced to fill the void (History-Extra, 2020).

The decline of slave trading, took effect in the 18th century when the British parliament passed laws to abolish the trade in 1807 replacing it with legitimate trade, and stopping the use of slaves in British territories. In 1833, slave owners were granted twenty million pounds in compensation (Hardy, 2019). With the abolition of the slave trade, a new form of settlement generated acceptability in the formal slave trader's country, particularly in the Americas. This resulted from the lost identities of most slaves who began settling in the United States and Caribbeans, making a large community of Africans in the diaspora. As time passed, Africans

in Africa decided to move to the diaspora to search for better pastures due to the high level of insecurity, bad governance, poverty, poor educational system, and dilapidated health system. According to Ibrahim (2018), the brain drain has resulted in the loss of many skilled and potential Africans, as the African Union (AU) estimates over 70,000 skilled potentials emigrate from Africa every year.

ii. Formation of the ADDI

It is a truism that African economic status is what it is today because of the massive exodus of Africa's manpower through the brain drain that has occurred over the past 400 years starting with slavery followed by the most recent immigrants who left Africa in search of greener pastures with the majority who came out to the United States or Europe or the Asian countries for Education. Regrettably, the continent had no one-stop shop for everything African or to capture the picture of the exodus of the people of Africa out of the continent. Even business Communities around the world, African Diaspora, or people interested in African tourism had to visit 55 African countries to find out information about Africa. With this situation, the need for a one-stop organization where people can go to get information about Africa became imperative, hence the establishment of the African Diaspora Institute(ADDI) by Arikana Chihombori-Quao, a Zimbabwean and one-time Ambassador of the African Union to the US.

More importantly, in this era of globalisation and the African Continental Free-Trade Area, the ADDI was established so that the children of Africa in the Diaspora could return home to Africa and join their brothers and sisters on the continent to build the Africa of our dream(Christopher,2021). The ADD is designed in a way that the development of Africa will start from each subregion region through the building of an African Diaspora Center of Excellence, aka Wakanda One Smart City. According to Christopher(2021), each center of excellence is to be a developmental hub for each subregion from which development will spread throughout the region. If for example a teaching hospital was built in each of these Centers of Excellence, aka Wakanda, it was the dream of ADDI to have more teaching hospitals and clinics built strategically in a coordinated manner with specialized hospitals, clinics, and healthcare centers in specific parts of the region, each designed to collectively deliver the best healthcare system to the region and this replicated in every sector. Christopher(2021) painted a clear picture of how this was going to be realised in the other sectors when explained that the same approach will be applied in every sector. Each center is going to be pillar on a University system with emphasis on healthcare, education, and capacity building of skilled workforce, entrepreneurs, and innovators. The African Institute of technology will be part of the University system. The University system will deliver not only higher education but also

technical and vocational training. An innovation center will be part of this system. The conditions on the ground in Africa demand that education be responsible and designed to equip the workforce with the necessary tools to meet today's as well as future workforce needs

iii. Structure of ADDI

As regards the structure of ADDI, it has Arikana Chihombori-Quao as the President and founder while Prof. PLO Lumumba serves as the Vice- president. Other members of the administrative team include Jote Taddesse(Chairman and Sectors Leader), Olivier, Kamanza(Director of Finance), Kliphord Darkwa(Chief Legal Adviser), Benson Kasue(Chief Accountant), Agrippa Ezozo(Director, Human Resource), Sharif Dawson(Director of Compliance), Rehanna Thompson(Director, Project Management), Sylvia Robertson(Director, Chapter Formation) and Amirah Ansaar(Director, Outreach). ADDI has three reputable Africans as its patron. These are Andrew Young(Former Ambassador to the UN), Joyce Banda(Former President of Malawi), and the Imperial Majesty -Oni of Ife, Oba Ayeye Ogunwusi (ouraddi.org)

To ensure the smooth running of the institute, and to help achieve its objectives, ADDI is compartmentalised into various departments. These include sectors, Wakanda one, and project unit departments. For the sector department, there are fourteen (14) units with each unit headed by a global director and assistants. These fourteen(14) units include agriculture, chapter formation(international and USA chapters), information technology, education, culture, engineering and architecture, finance, health care, legal, media, mining and mineral, project funding, outreach, essential business development, and trade and investment units.

As stated in the foregoing, there are two chapters, the international and the State of America chapters. The international chapter takes care of ADDI's work in countries in part of Europe, Latin America, the Caribbeans, Australia, and those in the Oceania. They include chapters in Antigua, Argentina, Australia, and New Zealand, Austria, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Canada(both astern and Western Canada, China, Columbia, Costa Rica, France, Honduras, Italy, Paraguay, St. Lucia, Suriname, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, Uk, and Wales and Venezuela. The US chapter oversees ADDI's activities in some major cities and states in the US. They include California, Delaware, Florida-Jacksonville, Illinois-Chicago, Washington DC, Maryland and Virginia, Nevada, NewYork –French, Texas- Austin and San Antonio, Texas-Dallas, and Tri-stat (ouraddi.org)

Prospects of ADDI

i. African Development and the Wakanda City

The ADDI has been projected to provide a platform that will help foster African Unity through the envisioned project of a Wakanda city. Wakanda city has been considered to be a city for the future, built on the premise of Pan-Africanism and Utopianism. According to Sam (2020), Wakanda city will be the hub for African development and also the African diaspora centre of excellence spreading throughout the sub-regions of Africa. This city is envisioned to be a physical city where Africans in the diaspora can return home and appreciate the continent's cultural heritage. President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana opined that Wakanda city will be developed at the same harbour from where slaves were transported to North America from Africa (ADDI, 2019). The Wakanda city project was launched by the ADDI in Ghana, calling for more stakeholders to participate in this face of African transformation. According to Annoh (2021), in keeping with the new Africa Agenda 2063, which aims to develop the continent into a global powerhouse, the ADDI intends to provide investment potential in many areas of the economy. In the words of Diakite (2020:2), Wakanda city seeks to be a pilgrimage for African-Americans to learn about their history, culture, African civilization, and role in the building of the modern African economy, and further argued that:

There are five phases to the city project. Once completed, the city will feature a one thousand-bed teaching hospital, a university and technical college, five-star hotels and resorts, a pharmaceutical manufacturing plant, parks, and green space, a shopping centre, and roads that are ready to support self-driving electric cars, and more. The project is expected to create approximately 3,000 jobs in Cape Coast. "The African Diaspora is committed to changing the African narrative and strongly feels that a united African Diaspora can bring the capacity that is needed to move Africa to its rightful place on the world stage (Diakite, 2020: 2).

Once completed, Wakanda City will boost the GDP of the entire African continent and the world at large through tourism and infrastructural development, thereby reducing the burden of most African states with fewer opportunities for development in the area of health, education, and technological advancements. According to WTTC Report (2019), before the Covid19 pandemic, travel, and tourism (including its direct, indirect, and induced effects) accounted for 1 in every 4 new employment produced worldwide, accounting for 10.6% of all jobs (334 million) and 10.4% of global GDP (US\$9.2 trillion). Meanwhile, in 2019, overseas visitor expenditure was US\$1.7 trillion (6.8 percent of total exports, 27.4 percent of global services exports). This alone saw Africa's contribution in 2019 at around 6.9% in Dollars in travel and tourism, and 6.5% in total travel and tourism to employment opportunities. The implication of this simply means the tourism industry in Africa will provide more employment opportunities for both the travel industries and Africans in Africa via Wakanda city.

ii. Returning Africans to History

The ADDI is concerned with returning Africans to their forgotten legacies. Before the era of colonialism and the European conquest of Africa, the continent had its history which was passed from generation to generation as oral and not written down like pieces of works of

literature making it quite difficult to gather all African history in a codified document. The ADDI has started the progress in sharing forgotten African history with Africans in the diaspora and Africans in Africa, to remind them of their historical roots. Sam (2020), argues that the ADDI is an initiative that was born out of the realization that there is no one-stop-shop for everything African. This realization posits that Africa has lost most of its history due to negligence and the acceptance of western culture above African historical values, meaning this initiative is targeted at making African history more relevant and well kept to avoid total extinction.

iii. Promoting Regional Trade and Development in Africa

Regional trade relations have become a major prospect for the African Union (AU). The efficacy of full African regional economic relations will promote more Pan-African ideas. The ADDI as an institute of progressiveness has always supported the recognition of the African free trade area. The ADDI mission, according to (ADDI, 2022) is to:

1. Promote unity among Africans in diaspora and encourage them to participate in the development of Africa;
2. To educate the African Diaspora about investment opportunities in Africa;
3. To promote the African Continental Free Trade Area to the African Diaspora.

iv. Promoting Youth and Women Empowerment

According to ADDI Report (2022), the organization has made the empowerment of women and youths a priority area of the initiative. The ADDI program will assist youth and women financially to provide employment opportunities through innovative programs, by promoting entrepreneurship and innovative skills. The amount of \$250 – \$1,000 is estimated to start or grow a business for African youths and women, making it the first of its kind in Africa (ADDI Report, 2022).

v. Promoting African Regional Monetary Policy

The ADDI has envisioned the establishment of a single platform of one African monetary policy through digital and technological advancement. The OduwaCoin is a new digital cryptocurrency, which according to the ADDI Report (2022), is the first indigenous cryptocurrency designed to empower people of African descent. It is the most feasible cryptocurrency alternative to Bitcoin, a medium of exchange that uses encryption to maintain individual coin ownership information in a decentralized ledger. To safeguard transaction records, control the creation of more coins, and validate the transfer of coin ownership, Oduwacoin uses its blockchain.

Challenges of the ADDI

The ADDI is likely to face a very peculiar challenge affecting most developmental initiatives in Africa, particularly in the area of finance. The initial funding is largely dependent on donors and free will givers. The implication of this, simply means it will relatively be difficult for the

organization to achieve its full purpose of establishment, and to complete most of the huge and futuristic projects already embarked on.

Also, most African states are in a circle of chronic destabilization, especially the dilemma of insecurity. This has diverted the attention of African leaders to deal with this issues ranging from corruption, poverty, health sector degradation, and insecurity. It relatively means governments of African states will not take the project too seriously by adopting some of its initiatives as they can be the real sources of finance to the ADDI.

The inability to eliminate corruption from the face of Africa puts the ADDI at risk. Funds that may be garnered to inject into projects like Wakanda city, if not duly monitored will face high risks of being misappropriated or diverted by single individuals.

The continuous increase in insecurity and threat to human life is likely to slow this project. The Africans in the diaspora might be afraid of returning to Africa so as not to be victims of uncertainty or death.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the ADDI is a partway toward uniting Africans in Africa and Africans in the diaspora back to their historical roots, and towards the actualization of the pan-Africanist dreams and aspirations of African nationalists such as; Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Nnamdi Azikwe of Nigeria, and Africans in diaspora such as; Edward Wilmot Blyden, Frederick Douglass, and many others.

This study, therefore, discovered that the ADDI is a futuristic project which needs to be given much attention by African leaders and financially buoyant individuals because if duly supported, there will be employment opportunities in the areas of tourism, technological advancements, harmonization of a single currency, women and youths empowerment, and the reduction of the brain drain syndrome. Most especially, the initiative will awaken the lost African identity which was once forgotten due to colonialism and western exploitations.

This study subsequently has provided a few areas in which the ADDI will achieve greater progress if considered, they are;

- i. The ADDI should adopt strategies for getting financial support such as; approaching the AU and other African sub-regional agencies as sponsors and supporting partners.
- ii. African states should put more effort into tackling insecurity, for this will encourage Africans in the diaspora to return to Africa and support this initiative.
- iii. Africans should intensify their efforts in discouraging corruption to safeguard funds for the ADDI projects.
- iv. The programs of the ADDI should be adopted by the African Union and other sub-regional organizations in Africa, for this will transform the African continent into greatness.

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