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The American
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School of Global Affairs
and Public Policy

Center for Migration and Refugee
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THE ENGAGEMENT OF HIGHLY SKILLED EGYPTIAN MIGRANTS IN OECD COUNTRIES

By Iman Dawood



The Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS)

The Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) is an interdisciplinary center of the American University in Cairo (AUC). Situated at the heart of the Middle East and North Africa, it aims at furthering the scientific knowledge of the large, long-standing and more recent, refugee and migration movements witnessed in this region. But it also is concerned with questions of refugees and migration in the international system as a whole, both at the theoretical and practical levels.

CMRS functions include instruction, research, training and outreach. It offers a Master of Arts in migration and refugee studies and a graduate diploma in forced migration and refugee studies working with other AUC departments to offer diversified courses to its students. Its research bears on issues of interest to the region and beyond. In carrying it out, it collaborates with reputable regional and international academic institutions. The training activities CMRS organizes are attended by researchers, policy makers, bureaucrats and civil society activists from a great number of countries. It also provides tailor-made training programs on demand. CMRS outreach involves working with its environment, disseminating knowledge and sensitization to refugee and migration issues. It also provides services to the refugee community in Cairo and transfers its expertise in this respect to other international institutions.

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Preface

Egypt is one of the largest emigration countries in the world. In the Arab, Middle East and North Africa, region it is the first country of origin of migrants. Egypt is also amongst the highest beneficiaries of migrants' remittances. In 2010, it received \$12, 453 billion, representing 3.53 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP). Only eight other developing countries of origin received higher levels of remittances in that year.

A good part of Egyptian migrants are highly-skilled individuals, outputs of tertiary education, who flee unemployment or seek better work opportunities, than those available at home, in external labor markets. This is particularly true of Egyptian migrants in countries of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Linkages between migration and development have recently figured increasingly on research agendas and in governance and policy discussions at the international level. Beyond remittances, the debate has encompassed issues such as brain drain, brain waste and brain gain, the acquisition of skills, transnational linkages, return migration and the reinforcement of ties between migrants and their home countries. Positive impacts of migration for development have been largely adduced. It is evident, though, that the materialization of these impacts depends on a multitude of factors. Policies of countries of origin with respect to their emigrant communities are one such major factor. Countries such as India and China provide good examples of policy geared towards maximizing the development impacts of migration.

In Egypt the migration and development debate has received little attention in policy circles beyond some measures to attract migrants' remittances for investment purposes. It is obvious, nonetheless, that given the large volume of Egyptian migration, especially the highly-skilled, that the different components of this subject deserve special consideration from both researchers and policy-makers.

With the above in mind, the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS), of the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP), at the American University in Cairo (AUC), has asked Iman Dawood to write a paper on Egyptian policies of engagement of highly-skilled migrants. The paper focuses on OECD countries where the percentage of highly-skilled migrants among the Egyptian stocks is very high. Benefiting from research she undertook to receive her MA degree in political science, and based on the theoretical literature, Ms. Dawood has traced a conceptual framework for her study. She then proceeded to review the Egyptian policy against this conceptual framework. Ms Dawood thus successively examined institutional capacity-building, extension of rights and extraction of obligations policy measures. Obligations should not be understood in the literal sense of compelling, but rather as moral commitments. In fact, extension of rights and the extraction of obligations are closely related. In the conclusions, Ms. Dawood sketches out a number of policy recommendations. CMRS hopes that this new Cairo Study on Migration and Refugees will contribute to energizing the debate on migration and development linkages in Egypt. It also hopes it will be of benefit for policy makers in their efforts to formulate and implement a comprehensive migration policy for Egypt. CMRS intends to carry on undertaking research on the different aspects of such policy.



Ibrahim Awad
Director



Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASRT	Academy of Scientific Research and Technology
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics
ETF	European Training Foundation
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOESA	Friends of Egyptian Scholars Abroad
MME	Ministry of Manpower and Emigration
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOHESR	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
MOI	Ministry of Interior
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
TOKTEN	Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals
UNDP	United Nations Development Program



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1. Introduction

Within the Middle East and North Africa region, Egypt can certainly be considered the number one emigration country in terms of total number of emigrants¹. But even within a larger pool of countries, the developing countries for instance, Egypt still occupies a position within the list of top ten-emigration countries according to the World Bank². Egypt is also amongst the top remittance-receiving countries with only thirteen other countries worldwide receiving a higher level of remittances in the year 2010³. While accounts of the actual number of Egyptian migrants vary greatly due to the unavailability of accurate and comprehensive data (estimates range from 3-8 million), there is no doubt that there are millions of highly-skilled Egyptians abroad in both Arab and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries⁴. One would assume that much research has gone into exploring the effects of such high levels of highly-skilled emigration on Egypt's development. However, the reality of the matter is that the relationship between Egyptian emigration and development has not received enough attention.

Meanwhile, in the international arena, debates about the relationship between migration and development have raged over the past decades. More recently, though, a growing body of literature has begun to stress the positive effects emigration can have on the development of labor sending countries. This body of literature points to the resources (both financial and non-financial) available in migrant communities that can be leveraged for home country development⁵. There are multiple factors, nonetheless, that shape this process and determine whether or not emigration can yield such a positive result. Of these factors, home country policy has surfaced as a majorly influential determinant in recent years.

In the case of Egypt, though, there has been very limited research specifically conducted on the Egyptian government's recognition, or possibly lack thereof, of the value of the millions of highly-skilled Egyptian migrants presently abroad for Egypt's development. Especially following some of the developments that have emerged in the past couple of decades such as the emergence and applicability of the transnational approach to migration, the increasingly skilled nature of Egyptian migrants, and the proven benefits associated with home countries' (such as India and China) engagement of their migrants, an examination of this topic is well overdue. Survey and analysis of present day Egyptian migration policies and more specifically Egyptian engagement policies towards migrants is essential to understanding the current effects of Egyptian highly-skilled emigration on Egypt's development and to maximizing the benefits that Egypt can amass as a result of such highly-skilled emigration.

This paper hopes to make a contribution towards this end. It will focus on Egyptian government policies, beginning in the early 1980s, towards highly-skilled migrants. This time period has been selected as it constitutes the most recent phase of Egyptian migration policy. For the purposes of this paper, "highly-skilled migrants" are defined


1 The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2011), 29.

2 The World Bank, "Migration," 20.

3 The World Bank, "Migration," 13.

4 Omar Ashour, "ElBaradei and the Mobilization of the Egyptian Diaspora," last modified September 2010, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/09/29/elbaradei-and-mobilization-of-egyptian-diaspora/6bwg>.

5 Hein De Haas, "Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective," *The International Migration Review* 44(1) (2010): 227.



as those that have, at the least, a university degree. In this case, we have decided to further focus our study specifically to the engagement of highly-skilled migrants residing in the OECD. This focus was selected due to the value of highly-skilled migrants for home country development and the large proportion of them in OECD countries as well as to the greater availability of data on migrants in OECD countries. Hence, our main research questions for this paper are what are the policies of the Egyptian government towards the migration of highly-skilled Egyptians and towards the engagement of highly-skilled migrants specifically in the OECD? And are these policies likely to engage highly-skilled migrants in the OECD for Egypt's development? Before we delve into an examination of this question, though, we believe it will be useful to briefly review some of the theories that have emerged on transnationalism and the engagement of migrants in recent decades as they constitute the guiding framework for this paper.

2. Engagement of Highly-Skilled Migrants in a Transnational World

Traditionally, international migration was perceived as a linear process, where migrants simply travelled from point A to point B. Under this traditional approach to international migration, migrants were either viewed as “emigrants” departing from their home land or “immigrants” arriving in the host country. In the past couple of decades, however, such views of international migration have become outdated and newer theories have been needed to account for new developments in the field of international migration⁶. Easier and cheaper modes of transportation as well as new information and communication technologies (ICT) are believed to have facilitated the mobility of people and goods in an unprecedented manner and have hence transformed the field of migration. It is under this light that transnational theory that centers on the exchanges, connections, and practices that take place across borders and therefore transcend the national space as the primary reference point for identities and activities began to be applied to the field of international migration⁷.

Several authors have since attempted to apply transnational theory to the field of migration. In their article “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration,” Nina Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc explain that “a new concept of transnational migration is emerging, however, that questions this long-held conceptualization of immigrants, suggesting that in both the U.S. and Europe, increasing numbers of immigrants are best understood as ‘transmigrants.’⁸”


Transmigrants are then defined, in the same article, as migrants who maintain multiple and frequent interconnections across borders and whose identity is reliant on these connections—suggesting that they identify with more than just one nation. The authors explain that migrants cannot be defined as sojourners for they do actually settle in their host country but at the same time they still identify, connect, and engage with their home country i.e. they are embedded in more than one society⁹.

6 Nina G Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc, “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1995): 48.

7 International Organization for Migration, *Migration and Transnationalism: Opportunities and Challenges*, last modified March 2010, http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/microsites/IDM/workshops/migration_and_transnationalism_030910/background_paper_en.pdf.

8 Nina G Schiller et al, “From Immigrant to Transmigrant,” 48.

9 Ibid.



Dina Ionescu also discusses this feature of transnational populations arguing that although they may live in one place they still maintain links with their home country and are hence both “here” and “there.”¹⁰ Manuel Orozco also defines migrants in this way, stating that they are “at the core of the transnational global landscape”¹¹. Their position at the core of the transnational global landscape, he argues, thus allows them to still have political, economic, social, and cultural interactions with their homeland. Because of the nature of today’s transnational world, then, migrants are able to continue to participate in their homeland’s development¹². Transnationalism has thus transformed international migration from a simple zero-sum game (where the home country’s loss of essential human capital is the host country’s gain) into a phenomenon that has the potential of being mutually beneficial for both home and host country.

This new development in the field of international migration led the way for an examination of the ways that migrants could be potentially useful for home country development. The resulting literature was able to identify multiple resources that migrant communities possess that could be of benefit to home countries (in the case that migrants are successfully engaged by their home country). These resources are in the form of different types of capital and include: human capital, financial and entrepreneurial capital, social capital, affective capital, and local capital. Perhaps of these types of capital the most oft-researched and discussed by scholars and policy makers alike are: financial capital, human capital, and social capital¹³.

Migrants’ financial capital, which is usually the type of capital most frequently targeted by home countries, refers to the financial resources available amongst migrants. The transfer of these financial resources can take different forms such as that of foreign direct investment (FDI), trade, remittances, savings, start-up or business investments, purchase of real estate, and even the provision of humanitarian support¹⁴. Human capital, alternatively, refers to the levels of education, training, skills and knowledge available in a diaspora that might be drawn on for home-country development initiatives. More attention is currently being given on the importance of this human capital for development and on the ways that this human capital can be transferred from migrants to home countries¹⁵. Ways of doing this have varied and include brain circulation or circulation of skills, technology transfer, virtual participation, networks, temporary return, and skill-matching programs, banks or databases. Finally, social capital is often defined as “networks together with shared norms, values and understanding that facilitate cooperation within and among groups.”¹⁶ Of the various types of social capital of interest to home countries¹⁵, the special ties and linkages migrants have amongst themselves, with their host countries, and within their host countries are especially important. Home country governments are usually also interested in the ties that migrants have with their home countries; increasing the

10 Dina Ionescu, *Engaging Diasporas as Development Partners for Home and Destination Countries: Challenges for Policymakers* (Geneva: The International Organization for Migration), 13, 2006.

11 Dina Ionescu, *Engaging Diasporas as Development Partners for Home and Destination Countries: Challenges for Policymakers* (Geneva: The International Organization for Migration), 13, 2006.


12 Manuel Orozco, “Diasporas, Development, and Transnational Integration: Ghanians in the US, UK, and Germany,” (a report commissioned for Citizen International) Institute for the Study of International Migration and Inter-American Dialogue, 6, 2005.

13 Dina Ionescu, “Engaging Diasporas,” 40-51.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 OECD, “The Wellbeing of Nations: The Role of Human and Social Capital,” 2001.



trust of migrants in home country institutions and maintaining ties with them is often a goal of home countries because there is evidence that this type of social capital may reduce transaction costs and facilitate trade relations for example¹⁷. Social remittances are another type of social capital and they are composed of ideas, practices, identities and social capital that flow from receiving to sending country communities are also of relevance to the migration-development discussion¹⁸. These social remittances have been found to be transferred from migrants to members of their home country consequently shaping social values and even transforming lifestyles in home countries. It should be noted here that social remittances do not always have a positive effect on homeland development and that their effect may at times actually be negative.

Scholars and policy makers have since devoted much attention to the ways that labor-sending countries, through engagement policies, can engage their migrants and consequently benefit from migrants' rich capital. Alan Gamlen in "Diaspora Engagement Policies: What Are They, and What Kinds of States Use Them?" explores, for example, the different policies used by states towards this end¹⁹. Gamlen sees engagement policies as part of a state's attempt to recreate citizen-sovereign relations with its diaspora members and consequently benefit from its migrants even while they are abroad. Gamlen explores over 70 different countries' policies using his three-type policy typology. The main three policy areas he has identified are: capacity building, extending rights, and extracting obligations. We will briefly explore Gamlen's policy typology here as it is perhaps the clearest examination of the different types of policies pursued by states in an effort to engage their migrants.

According to Gamlen, states pursue the first policy type, that of capacity building, in an attempt to produce a "cohesive, state-centric national society at the transnational scale, with a corresponding set of institutions."²⁰ Basically, governments seek to build a symbolic nation state for their migrants so that their migrants can feel as though they are part of a transnational community. States hope that migrants who belong to this symbolic nation state are more likely to feel allegiance to their home state which is no doubt an important element for productive state-migrant relationships. Gamlen explains that states also build institutions to help them govern this transnational community and to help provide services to it. In the second policy type, that of extending rights, states try and extend political, social, and civil rights to migrants so they can maintain their appearance as legitimate sovereigns for their migrants. It is hoped that by providing these rights to migrants will work in the same direction as capacity building policies and increase migrants' sense of belonging to the transnational state. In the third policy type, states may attempt to extract obligations from their migrants in return for previously extending rights to them. Hence, what is understood here is that after states have symbolically built a nation state, have built institutions to help govern this symbolic nation state, and have extended rights to this symbolic nation state, only then can they attempt to directly benefit from their migrants by extracting obligations. The term obligations, used here, is not a literal one

17 Dina Ionescu, "Engaging Diasporas" 49.

18 Panitee Suksomboon, "Remittances and 'Social Remittances: Their Impact on Livelihoods of Thai Women in the Netherlands and Non-Migrants in Thailand," *Gender, Technology and Development* 12, no. 3 (2009): 461-82.

19 Alan Gamlen, "Diaspora Engagement Policies: What Are They, and What Kinds of States Use Them?" (working paper published by COMPAS) Oxford, 2005.

20 Alan Gamlen, "Diaspora Engagement," 22.

and only suggests that migrants may feel obliged to assist in their home country's betterment. Assisting can take multiple forms that either have economic ends (which he terms investment policies) or political ones (which he terms lobby promotion). Investment policies often take the form of remittance transfers, FDI, paying taxes, or participation in knowledge transfer programs. Lobby promotion on the other hand refers to situations where migrants groups lobby on behalf of their home countries within their host countries. According to Gamlen, both these types of policies can produce outcomes that are beneficial to home countries.

The figure below demonstrates Gamlen's policy typology and the logical sequence of these policies. Of course, in reality, not all migrant-engaging states pursue all aspects of this policy typology and even those who do may not do so in that order. Nevertheless, Gamlen's typology is useful for outlining for us the different policies that states often pursue when attempting to engage their migrants.

Figure 2.1: Engagement Policy Sequence



Source: Based on Alan Gamlen, "Diaspora Engagement Policies: What Are They, and What Kinds of States Use Them?" (working paper published by COMPAS) Oxford, 2005.

Now although Gamlen does not speak explicitly about the engagement of highly-skilled migrants in his policy typology, the policies he has identified are more often than not biased towards highly-skilled migrants. When attempting the inclusion of migrants into a transnational community, for example, states may choose to honor notable members of the transnational community or high-profile individuals who are more likely to be highly-skilled. Likewise, highly-skilled migrants are likely to be engaged through conferences set up by their homeland that aim to include migrants into a transnational community. This is also especially true when states pursue Gamlen's last policy type of extracting obligations. Many states have recently recognized that migrants' rich human capital may be the most precious resource available in their transnational community and have thus pursued specific knowledge transfer policies and programs to that end. These policies no doubt target highly-skilled migrants in an attempt to reverse brain drain and transfer migrants' skills, knowledge, and experience back to the homeland which demonstrates the importance of highly-skilled migrants for homeland development. Because Gamlen's policy typology is especially relevant to the engagement of highly-skilled migrants, we have decided to adopt it as our guiding framework for this paper. It will help us examine the Egyptian government's policies, in section 5, by acting as a yardstick against which we can measure the comprehensiveness and success of Egypt's policies in engaging highly-skilled migrants in the OECD.

We are now ready to examine the case of Egypt. In the next section, then, we will explore the nature of Egyptian highly-skilled migration to the OECD as well as the characteristics of Egypt's migrants and their potential usefulness for Egypt's development.

3. Egyptian Highly-Skilled Migration to OECD Countries

Egyptian emigration can be characterized by two main emigration streams—that of emigration to Arab countries and that of emigration to OECD countries. As we have mentioned in the introduction, in this paper we have decided to focus solely on the emigration of Egyptians to OECD countries. In this section we will try to distinguish some of the defining characteristics of Egyptian emigration to the OECD and of the migrants themselves currently present in OECD countries. A note must be said, however, about the often incomplete, inaccurate, and outdated data available about this topic. Although generally speaking data on migration is by nature difficult to collect, it will become clear in our later discussions that Egyptian institutions related to migration matters are lacking in capacity—a factor no doubt at least in part responsible for the absence of accurate and comprehensive data. Nevertheless, we have decided to still use the data available so as to at least point out the major trends of Egyptian emigration to the OECD.

One major trend in Egyptian emigration to the OECD is the recent increase in the rate of emigration to the OECD. Whereas Egyptian emigration to Arab Countries and particularly to the Gulf has declined as a result of increasing competition from Asian migrants and as evidenced by the number of annual contracts signed by Egyptians in Arab Countries, Egyptian emigration to the OECD has actually been increasing as of late. The number of Egyptian migrants in OECD countries has generally increased—with the highest increase taking place in the United States²¹. Although data is scarce for more recent years, Leila Talani reports, in her book *From Egypt to Europe: Globalization and Migration across the Mediterranean*, on the increases that took place from the period of 1990-1998. She reports an average of an 83 per cent increase in the number of Egyptians migrating to developed countries²². Regarding the actual number of Egyptians in OECD countries today, estimates once again vary depending on their source.

A major difference in numbers can be found between the data provided by the OECD and the data gathered by Egyptian institutions (there are often differences even between different Egyptian sources such as the Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) and the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration (MME)). According to the OECD, there are approximately 340,000 Egyptians currently living in OECD countries²³. Now it is interesting to find that this number is very close to CAMPAS estimates for the number of migrants only in the United States (320,000 Egyptians)²⁴. This definitely points to the significantly different numbers provided by different sources and to the generally inaccurate nature of this data. Perhaps these large gaps can be attributed to (i) differences in the definition of a migrant, (ii) the fact that some migrants have been naturalized in their host country, and hence are no longer considered migrants in the census or other types of surveys, and (iii) the fact that irregular migrants are more likely to register at Egyptian consulates, but usually are not registered with the host country. OECD estimates seem to be at the least 60 per

21 Christophe Schramm, "Migration from Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia Synthesis of Three Case Studies," (World Bank Background Paper), 9.

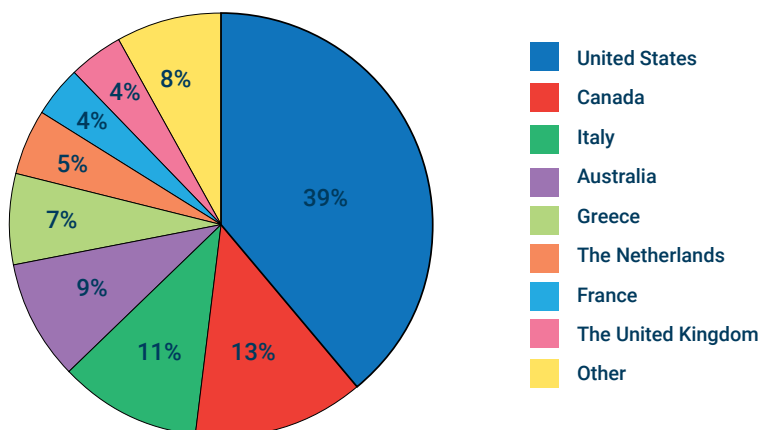
22 Leila Talani, *From Egypt to Europe: Globalization and Migration Across the Mediterranean*, (London: I.B. Tauris), 2009, 70.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

cent less than Egyptian estimates²⁵. Even Egyptian sources, though, are also unlikely to be accurate for the some of the same reasons just mentioned such as the fact that few migrants actually register with Egyptian consulates abroad. What is clear though from the data collected, is that of the OECD countries, the United States, Canada, Italy, and Australia top the list of destination countries for Egyptian emigrants (as can be seen in the figure below).

Figure 3.1: Distribution of Egyptian Emigrants in OECD Countries by Country of Residence (2000)



Source: Data Derived from CAPMAS 2000

As we have just mentioned, the inaccuracy of this data can be traced in part to irregular migration. It is thus important to clarify here that irregular migration is a significant characteristic of Egyptian migration to the OECD. More recently there has been an increase in the incidence of irregular migration of Egyptians to Europe. The tightened policies of the European Community, especially after the Schengen agreement in 1990 and the Maastricht Treaty, have contributed to the upsurge in the number of irregular Egyptian migrants. It is important to keep in mind that while irregular migration is usually associated with low skilled workers, in the case of Egypt irregular migrants are not only poorly-educated unemployed youth but also often fresh or relatively inexperienced university graduates²⁶. This of course contributes to brain drain at the very least in the sense that it deprives Egypt of the human capital it had already invested many resources in. The fact that irregular migrants are rarely represented in the data points to the likelihood that the actual average educational attainment and skill level of Egyptians in OECD countries may be higher than is actually estimated.

While once again data about Egyptian migrants' educational and skill level is generally incomplete, the OECD does nevertheless possess and make available information about Egyptian migrants residing in the OECD. In this case we will rely on the OECD's online database for information on the skill level of migrants living in OECD countries²⁷.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ayman Zohry, "Egypt: A New Player a New Player in the Euro Mediterranean Migration System," (2006): 5.

²⁷ See <http://www.oecd.org/els/internationalmigrationpoliciesanddata/databaseonimmigrantsinoecdcountriesdioc.htm> for the Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC).

We find that on the whole many Egyptians living in OECD countries are highly-skilled. The highest percentages of highly-skilled migrants (for the year 2008) can be found in Canada and followed in suite by the United States (65%-62% respectively). A little bit less than half the Egyptian migrants in Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and France also tended to be highly-skilled during the year 2008. The exact percentages of the number of migrants in each OECD country possessing at the least a tertiary degree for the year 2008 can be found in the chart below. Overall, OECD data reports the percentage of highly-skilled Egyptian migrants to be 51.2 per cent²⁸. The significance of all these percentages becomes even clearer when they are compared to the educational level of Egyptians residing in Egypt—only 9.59% of Egyptians possessed tertiary education in 2008²⁹. This suggests that, on the whole, Egyptian migrants in the OECD possess rich human capital that could no doubt be useful for Egypt’s development.


Table 1: Percentage of Egyptian Migrants in OECD countries with Tertiary Education or Advanced Research Programs

Country of Residence	Percentage (%)
Australia	31.3
Austria	30.6
Belgium	41.5
Canada	65.4
Denmark	33.3
France	43.5
Greece	26.0
Ireland	58.9
Italy	21.7
Spain	33.0
Sweden	47.2
Switzerland	51.2
United Kingdom	43.5
United States of America	62.7

Source: The OECD Database in AymanZohry and PriyankaDebnath, “A Study on the Dynamics of the Egyptian Diaspora: Strengthening Development Linkages” IOM. 2008.

28 Jean-Christophe Dumont and Georges Lemaître, “Counting Immigrants and Expatriates in OECD Countries: A New Perspective”, Social Employment and Migration Working Papers, 2005, 34.

29 Ayman Zohry and Priyanka Debnath, “A Study on the Dynamics of the Egyptian Diaspora: Strengthening Development Linkages,” IOM, 2010, 23.



Egyptian migrants not only seem to have a higher educational profile than Egyptians in Egypt, but they seem to have also gained many additional skills upon travelling and working in their host countries. In a study by Zohry and Debnath, Egyptian migrants in the United States and the United Kingdom were surveyed and 97.5 per cent of them reported feeling that they had acquired new skills while working abroad³⁰. These findings suggest that Egyptian migrants in the OECD not only have a higher educational attainment level than Egyptians in Egypt, but that Egyptian migrants have also attained new skills as a result of their emigration. These newly acquired skills make Egyptian migrants more valuable for Egyptian development and shed light on the importance of engaging them for Egypt's development.

Of course it is not enough to discuss the skill level of Egyptian migrants without taking into consideration the nature of their employment. One of the central questions one should ask when examining migrants' skill level is: are migrants actually using their skills within the host country or are these skills going to waste? There is no doubt that although many Egyptian migrants possess a high level of education they may be underemployed in their host country especially in countries such as Italy. The Istituto Di Ricerche Sulla Popolazione conducted a survey on Egyptian migrants in Italy and found that approximately 30 per cent of Egyptian migrants in Italy are highly-skilled. It is interesting to note that this figure is about 10 per cent higher than the one given by the OECD which once again points to variances in data of this type.


Nevertheless, what is most important for us is that this survey found that some highly-skilled Egyptian migrants are employed in occupations that are wholly unrelated to their educational qualifications³¹. This of course suggests that, in some situations, Egyptian migrants may be wasting their skills while being employed in low-skilled jobs which may make them less useful for certain types of migrant engagement such as knowledge transfer. Nonetheless, the degree to which Egyptian migrants are able to use their skills abroad is quite impressive when compared to other migrants such as Albanian, Moldovan, or Tunisian migrants. In a survey by the European Training Foundation (ETF), it was found that amongst those groups, Egyptian migrants fared best. The ETF found that many highly-skilled migrants were actually employed as professionals or managers while they were abroad. Of the returning migrants surveyed, only 4.5 per cent of Egyptian migrants had been working in a low skilled job, as opposed to 60 per cent in Albania and Moldova and 12.5 per cent in Tunisia³². This suggests that this is not that significant of a phenomenon in the case of Egypt and once again reiterates the value of Egyptian migrants for Egypt's development.

Finally, it is important to note that Egyptian emigration to the OECD is more likely to be of a permanent nature than Egyptian emigration to Arab countries and particularly the Gulf. Because gaining the citizenship of an OECD country is possible (although becoming increasingly difficult due to tightening immigration laws) Egyptian migrants in the OECD are likely to be permanent migrants. Although the line between what constitutes a permanent and temporary migrants has no doubt been blurred,

30 Ayman Zohry and Priyanka Debnath, "A Study," 43.

31 Corrado Bonifazi and Miria Savioli, "Egyptian Immigration in Italy," *Demotrends*, no.2, 7, (2000).

32 Jesús Alquézar Sabadie, Johanna Avato, Ummuhan Bardak, Francesco Panzica, and Natalia Popova, *The Experience of Migrant Workers from Albania, Moldova, and Tunisia*, (Washington DC: World Bank Publications, 2010) 4.



a permanent migrant is still described in today's Egyptian migration Law 111, as an "Egyptian who stays abroad permanently, by obtaining the nationality of a foreign country, or a permanent residence permit to stay in this country; or who stays abroad for at least ten years, or obtains an emigration permit from one of the countries of emigration specified by a resolution of the Minister concerned with Emigration Affairs." At the same time, it is still extremely interesting to note that studies have found that Egyptian migrants, even those who are living in OECD countries, are still very well connected to Egypt. Zohry and Debnath found that, of those surveyed in the United States and the United Kingdom, many still maintained ties with Egypt. Over 30 per cent of Egyptians surveyed reported visiting Egypt a few times a year and approximately another 39 per cent reported that they visit Egypt once a year on average³³. Another study, specifically focusing on Egyptian migrants in Italy found that migrants' links to their extended families in Egypt remain strong. Various Egyptian families, living in Italy, for example, were reported to want their children to return to study in Egypt³⁴. These findings suggest that although Egyptians may choose to permanently emigrate to the OECD they are likely to remain very connected to Egypt—typical of today's transmigrants as was discussed earlier in section 2—which makes them opportune subjects of engagement policies. The next section of this paper will therefore be devoted to examining Egyptian government policy towards the migration of highly-skilled Egyptians. This will then prepare us for the most important section of this paper where the policies shaping the Egyptian government's engagement of migrants in the OECD are examined.

4. Egyptian Government Policy towards the Migration of Highly-Skilled Egyptians

As we have just seen in the last section, Egypt currently has a large number of highly-skilled migrants residing in the OECD. It is interesting to note that Egypt did not always witness the emigration of so many migrants, however, and until the late 1960s Egyptian emigration policy was quite restrictive. Only towards the late 1960s did emigration begin to be partially encouraged by the state—most likely in response to the deteriorating state of the Egyptian economy and rising unemployment. This partial encouragement, however, was interestingly accompanied by restrictions on the emigration of highly-skilled professionals in certain fields such as medicine and engineering as well as many other fields deemed important for Egypt's development³⁵. Once Egyptians had emigrated, however, the government seemed to recognize their value only in financial terms. This can be seen, for example, in a policy statement that was issued in 1967 by a ministerial committee in which the importance of preserving ties with migrants so as to encourage them to visit Egypt and to remit parts of their savings was emphasized³⁶.

Most of the restrictions on emigration (such as the quotas for certain professions mentioned above) were removed in the 1970s and emigration was encouraged even more vigorously³⁷. The 1971 constitution, for example, established the right to both permanent and temporary emigration. It is important to note here that while


33 Ayman Zohry and Priyanka Debnath, "A Study," 33.

34 Andrea Stocchiero, "Fostering Egyptian Local Development Through Diasporic Networks Italy," Rome, CeSPI Policy Paper, 8, 2004.

35 Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "The Shift in Egypt's Migration Policy: 1952-1978," *Middle Eastern Studies* 18, no. 1 (1982): 57.

36 *Ibid.*

37 Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "The Shift," 59.



these measures taken to protect against the loss of essential Egyptian human capital were removed, they were not replaced by any other similar measures. Egypt's sole recognition of the value of Egyptian migration seems to have been related to the economic benefits of migration. Nadine Sika confirms this in her article about Egyptian highly-skilled migration arguing that Egyptian policy makers saw the importance of easing restrictions since the mid-1970s. She attributes this to policy makers' recognition of the fact that the Egyptian market has been and continues to be unable to absorb the growing number of employees seeking employment and to the states' growing dependency on migrants' remittances to reduce the deficit in its balance of payments³⁸. These socio-economic conditions persisted and emigration policy was further liberalized in the 1980s. Presidential Decree No. 574 was issued in the year 1981, for instance, and established the Ministry of State for Emigration Affairs to further encourage emigration. Talani states that "the role of this new ministry was to provide services to Egyptians willing to migrate abroad. The ministry was also in charge of drafting an Egyptian migration strategy aimed at favoring the economic development of Egypt."³⁹

As can be seen, the establishment of this ministry reflects the dire need of the Egyptian economy for the economic benefits that result from high levels of Egyptian emigration. A comprehensive migration, Law 111, was soon after passed in 1983 and is still in effect today. This law consists of five chapters and establishes Egyptians' right to emigrate and the rights associated with this. For example, in the first chapter, Egyptians are given the right to remain Egyptian nationals, have dual nationality, and benefit from the constitutional and legal rights afforded to Egyptians. The first chapter also established the Supreme Committee for Emigration which was supposed to be responsible for various things amongst which is the setting up of training centers to prepare Egyptians for emigration by providing them with the necessary skills. It is important to recognize here that the establishment of these training centers is another very direct method of encouraging the emigration of skilled Egyptians. Other measures taken to encourage emigration are also mentioned in this law. The fourth chapter, for example, details the numerous rights and advantages attributed to Egyptian emigrants by the Egyptian government such as the possibility of being exempt from taxes and migrants' right to return to their jobs in the public sector within two years of the date of emigration.

More recently, in 2009, the Egyptian government also stated that it has been working to sign bilateral agreements with some Arab and OECD countries to facilitate the legal migration of highly-skilled migrants. Sika states, in her article, that the government has been negotiating an agreement with Canada, for instance, concerning highly-skilled migrants in the fields of energy and construction. She also mentions that similar agreements with Germany and France were also in the making. Although these agreements were never reached, such negotiations point to the Egyptian government's encouragement of highly-skilled migration.

We will now use Gamlen's policy typology, described earlier in section 2, in order to see whether the Egyptian government recognizes the value of its highly-skilled migrants for other reasons beyond the accumulation of remittances and the reduction in unemployment levels. We seek to understand whether and how the Egyptian government engages its migrants for the development of Egypt.

38 Nadine Sika, "Highly-Skilled Migration Patterns and Development: The Case of Egypt," CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes, 2010, 9.

39 Leila Talani, "From Egypt," 65.

5. The Egyptian Government's Engagement Policies of its Highly Skilled Migrants in the OECD

Here we will explore Egypt's policies towards its highly-skilled migrants residing in the OECD. Using Gamlen's policy typology, we will first look at Egypt's capacity building policies, then its extending rights policies, and finally its extracting obligations policies. We will depend on Egypt's main migration Law 111, policy documents of various bodies of the Egyptian government as well as some interviews with Egyptian policy makers and experts on the topic for our analysis of the Egyptian government's engagement policies. We hope to emerge with an understanding of what policies are currently in place and whether these policies are likely to bring about the engagement of Egyptian highly-skilled migrants in the OECD for the purposes of Egypt's development.

Capacity Building Policies


According to Gamlen, states pursue capacity building policies of two types. The first type of capacity building policies is that of symbolic nation-building. Symbolic nation-building includes, for example, a government's use of inclusive rhetoric and symbols when communicating with migrants in an attempt to make them feel part of a greater symbolic nation and to feel allegiance to the state⁴⁰. We have found that Egypt does in fact use such rhetoric as it addresses Egyptian migrants abroad as the "Sons of Egypt Abroad." Moreover, the Egyptian government honors significant members of the migrant community—especially those that are highly-skilled. The Cultural Affairs and Missions Sector of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR), for example, often identifies various highly-skilled members of the Egyptian community abroad to honor them for specific contributions. Egyptian engineer HanyAzir who built the Berlin Hauptbahnhof in Germany, for instance, has been previously honored in Germany by the Egyptian cultural attaché in Germany. Likewise, the MME, the ministry currently in charge of dealing with emigration affairs, has been known to also honor notable highly-skilled Egyptian migrants⁴¹. While the Egyptian government's use of inclusive rhetoric and symbols does seem to be aimed at reincluding migrants into a greater symbolic nation state, it is unlikely that these activities actually incorporate a large percentage of the highly-skilled Egyptian migrant community.

Other symbolic-nation building policies, explains Gamlen, can relate to the dissemination of a country's culture amongst its migrant communities abroad. Article 2 of Law 111 does dictate that this activity is a priority for the Egyptian ministry concerned with emigration matters; however, the reality of the matter is that besides some cultural activities carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in some OECD countries, this policy is one that does not seem to be effectively implemented. Ibrahim Badran, former president of the Friends of Egyptian Scientists Abroad (FOESA) confirmed this in an interview and argued that Egypt definitely needs to expand these activities giving the successful policies of the Philippines as an example worth emulating.

The use of media is also an extremely significant element of successful symbolic nation-building policies. Gamlen speaks mostly of the traditional modes of media

40 Alan Gamlen, "Diaspora Engagement," 6.

41 Alaa El Khaseery, "Aisha Abdel Hady Meets Scholars and Citizens of Egypt Abroad." Al Nahar. December 9, 2010, <http://www.massress.com/alnahar/24534>.




used by governments in engaging their migrants. In the case of Egypt, we found in Article 2 of Law 111 that the Egyptian government is deemed responsible for “providing the mass media suitable for addressing the issues of interest for Egyptians abroad, as well as providing them with reliable information about their homeland.” In practice, we found that the Egyptian government has continued to use traditional media modes (such as guaranteeing that Egyptian governmental newspapers such as Al Ahram are available abroad and establishing multiple satellite channels) and have actually more recently entered the world of websites and social media. Such media modes are especially important for connecting with Egyptian migrants in the OECD, however, it must be said that the degree to which these methods are successful is questionable. The Vice President of the Egyptian Association in the United Kingdom, for instance, has previously called for the establishment of a satellite channel specific to Egyptians abroad in 2007⁴². These types of statements by Egyptian migrant associations abroad no doubt point to room for improvement in the implementation of this policy.

Finally, we can discuss the hosting of conferences for symbolic nation-building purposes. Gamlen expresses in his policy typology that “in many cases, home-states have held large conferences and conventions with a range of purposes in mind: to symbolize a willingness to listen inclusively to ‘constituents’; to meet or appoint diaspora ‘representatives’ and establish patronage relationships with them; to air state concerns and solicit feedback and help; and to broadcast messages at a captive audience⁴³.” In the case of Egypt, Law 111 does state that the ministry responsible for emigration should be responsible for “encouraging the conferences and seminars that address national issues [for the diaspora].” In reality, some conferences have been hosted by the MME, particularly under the patronage of former minister Aisha Abdel Hady. The last of these conferences was held in 2009 and was titled “Interaction, Welfare, and Development.” One would assume from its title that the conference dealt with a plethora of different areas of interest to migrants, however, a look at the conference proceedings unearths one main conference topic: investments by Egyptian migrants abroad. There is no question that this limited focus on what is required from migrants, as opposed to a more balanced conference agenda with room for feedback from the migrant community would have been more successful in incorporating migrants in the OECD into a symbolic nation state. In an interview, a senior official of the MME, Wael Farrag, explains that the main reason these conferences fail is because they make migrants abroad feel as if the government is not concerned with their welfare and is only trying to “suck them dry.”

The second type of capacity building policies, according to Gamlen, is that of institution building. Basically, what is meant by institution building is that states choose to build institutions to help cater to and govern their migrant communities. These institutions are essential for successful migrant engagement. Gamlen mentions multiple types of institutions: monitoring institutions, ministerial level agencies, and consultative bodies and transnational networks. In regards to the monitoring institutions, there are multiple institutions in Egypt that the government has assigned monitoring roles to. Here, monitoring is related to the surveillance of the activities of the migrant community abroad. Gamlen explains that “this process is often not merely a way of

42 Salah El Sharbany, “An Satellite Channel for Egyptians Abroad,” Al Ahram, September 25, 2007, <http://www.news-bank.net/cached-version.aspx?id=hrm-249662&highlight=%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%20%D9%84%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86%20%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AC>.

43 Alan Gamlen, “Diaspora Engagement,” 7.



collecting inert data, but a way of selecting actors whom it would be profitable to deal with and forming long-term relationships with these actors.⁴⁴ The MME, MOFA, and MOHESR all partake in the collection of data on migrants. One of the main objectives of the MME's emigration section, for instance, is: "to establish an integrated database on Egyptians abroad."

The MOFA also collects data on Egyptian migrants in the OECD through its consulates abroad. Finally, it is interesting to note that the MOHESR plays a role in the collection of data specific to highly-skilled migrants. A report explains that "Egyptians wishing to study abroad also have to obtain a permit from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and to re-register on return. The Ministry holds and publishes data on such students⁴⁵." Other ministries do partake in this collection of data on migrants such as the Ministry of Interior (MOI). Nevertheless this basic element of monitoring, the collection of data, is not implemented effectively as evidenced by the present day limited data on Egyptian migration. Furthermore, the complete definition of monitoring is not carried out by the Egyptian government—the government does not seem to go beyond the simple collection of data.

Additionally, although the Egyptian government does have a ministerial level agency for migrants, it is not a ministry that deals exclusively with migration or migrants. Instead, the MME also deals with manpower issues i.e. it is the ministry of labor. The lack of a ministry specific to migration issues has been reported during our interviews, even by members of the MME itself, to be a problem. In some other migrant engaging countries, such as India for example that has the Ministry of Overseas Indians, a separate ministry is devoted to migration matters. While the success of Egypt's engagement policy is not dependent on the establishment of a ministry specific to migration (since this is not the case in all migrant engaging countries), the success of Egypt's engagement policy is dependent on the capacity of the ministry concerned with emigration. In this case, Egypt's emigration sector within the MME is seriously lacking capacity⁴⁶. At the same time, the MOFA which boasts better capacity often executes a lot of the responsibilities that could fall under the domain of the ministry concerned with emigration. This seems to have caused tension between the two ministerial level agencies as is often the case according to Gamlen who says:

As institutions dedicated to expatriate affairs grow within the state system, a tension sometimes emerges between the powerful agency containing the immigration bureaucracy (often the labor or justice department) and the foreign service. The former tends to claim a traditional stake in anything related to migration policy, while the latter inevitably forms the front line of home-state contact with expatriates⁴⁷.


As can be seen in Gamlen's statement, such tension is to be expected, but in the case of Egypt is heightened further by the uneven allocation of resources amongst the two ministries. A senior official in the MME, during an interview, referred to the MOFA

44 Alan Gamlen, "Diaspora Engagement," 8.

45 "Arab Republic of Egypt: Country Statistical Situation Report," last modified August 2009, European Union, http://ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/european_neighbourhood_policy/documents/CSSR_Egypt_-_EN_0509.pdf

46 Simona Vezzoli and Thomas Lacroix, "Building Bonds for Migration and Development" (discussion paper published by Migration and Development Sector Project) Eschborn, 2010, 19.

47 Alan Gamlen, "Diaspora Engagement," 9.



as the ministry of the “pashas” and then referred to his own ministry as the “black duck” of ministries. No doubt this metaphoric statement points to some very real differences between the two ministries and to the serious need for the reinforcement of the institutional, technical, and financial resources of the migration ministry. Finally, although consultative bodies and transnational networks are mostly absent in the case of Egypt, we came across one main consultative body created for Egyptian migrants. Created in 1985, the General Union for Egyptians Abroad is composed of three returned Egyptian migrants and twelve migrants still abroad. There are, however, currently problems within this union’s board of trustees and members have often complained of much interference by the Egyptian government as the union is mainly funded by the government⁴⁸. Therefore, it is unlikely that this body is effectively carrying out the role expected of a proper consultative body.


As we have seen in this section, the Egyptian government does in fact attempt to engage with its migrants abroad. We have noted that some of these policies have been specifically aimed at highly-skilled migrants in the OECD while others have simply engaged the Egyptian migrant community on the whole. Due to the weaknesses in the implementation of some of these policies we cannot expect a very strong symbolic nation state; however, we will now examine the Egyptian government’s extending rights policies in order to have a better understanding of the Egypt’s state-migrant relationship.

Extending Rights Policies

Extending rights policies refer to the extension of political, civil, and social rights by a state to its migrant community. By guaranteeing these rights for their migrant communities states desire to appear as a legitimate sovereign. By providing these rights for their migrants, states also hope that they will be able to later demand responsibilities from their migrant communities. The first of these rights according to Gamlen, political rights, refer to issues of dual nationality, voting, and even parliamentary representation for migrants⁴⁹. In the case of Egypt, Egyptians have had the right to dual nationality even before Law 111. It was understood that along with this right to dual nationality, Egyptians abroad could still benefit from the same political rights afforded to Egyptians—such as the right to vote as stated in Article 1 of Law 111 which reads: “permanent or temporary migration shall not result in violating the constitutional or legal rights they [Egyptian migrants] enjoy in their capacity as Egyptian citizens, as long as they do continuously keep their Egyptian nationality.” The implementation of these rights, though, was deeply lacking and Egyptians were unable to vote abroad in practice. Calls for greater political rights by the Egyptian migrant community abroad were often voiced by Egyptian groups abroad—especially those housed in OECD countries such as the United States. It is interesting to note that there have been some recent developments in the implementation of this policy following the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, however. Calls for greater political rights and specifically the right to vote were even greater during the events of January 25 and the Egyptian government during such a period could not afford to not answer these requests. Thus, Law 130 of 2011 was issued making it possible for Egyptians abroad to vote using their national ID cards. While this move may seem to be aimed at politically incorporating

48 “The General Union for Egyptians Abroad: Hopes and Ambitions,” Al Jalia Magazine, June 30, 2011. <http://www.aljaliah.net/articles-action-show-id-234.htm>

49 Alan Gamlen, “Diaspora Engagement,” 10.



all Egyptian migrants, the reality of the matter is that many Egyptians abroad do not have a valid national ID card and hence would be barred from voting. Other steps taken by the Egyptian government have also restricted the political incorporation of Egyptian migrants. On March 30, 2011 the Egyptian Supreme Council of Armed Forces issued a constitutional declaration that instituted laws to govern the presidential and parliamentary election processes. Article 26 of this constitutional declaration actually had the effect of restricting the political rights of many Egyptian migrants with dual nationality for instance. In order to be eligible for the presidency, it was decided that candidates must not have ever held another nationality, must have been born to two Egyptian parents, and must not be married to a non-Egyptian⁵⁰. No doubt such a restrictive move has had a negative effect on Egypt's political incorporation of its migrants. Likewise, continuing to deny Egyptians with dual nationality to be elected to parliament as well as the government's lack of other more incorporative steps suggests a hesitant implementation of Egypt's extension of political rights policy. This hesitant policy also certainly has an effect on Egypt's other engagement policies such as symbolic nation building, for how can a nation include its migrants with dual nationality into a symbolic nation state if it deprives them of so many political rights that other citizens of Egypt possess?

Likewise, although the importance of guaranteeing other rights such as social and civil rights is guaranteed by Article 1 of Law 111, the reality of the matter is quite different. Like political rights, the implementation of social and civil rights seems to also be lacking. The MOFA and its consulates in OECD countries are mostly responsible for the implementation of this policy. At times Egyptian diplomatic missions have attempted to protect Egyptian workers, ensure their welfare, and offer them legal help. The truth of the matter is, though, that this type of assistance is rarely applicable to highly-skilled Egyptians who can afford to avoid dealing with Egyptian institutions abroad. This is mostly due to Egyptian institutions' reputation of being inefficient⁵¹. Thus, we will not examine Egypt's attempts at extending to their migrants social and civil rights any further. What can be said about Egypt's extending rights policies though is that on the whole there seems to be much room for improvement in their implementation making it very unlikely that these policies would successfully engage Egyptian highly-skilled migrants in the OECD.


Extracting Obligations Policies

Based on our analysis of the Egyptian government's first two policy types of capacity building and extending rights we could conjecture that Egypt's attempts at extracting obligations are likely to be ineffective since as Gamlen argues the success of the last policy types is at least in part dependent on the success of the first two policy types. Nevertheless we will proceed with our analysis of Egypt's extracting obligations policies which can be divided into investment policies (that deal with financial and human capital transfers) and political lobbying (which refers to Egypt's use of its migrants abroad for the purposes of improving Egypt's position in the global arena).

Perhaps the strongest of Egypt's extracting obligations policies is that of investment policies and more specifically policies that relate to remittance transfers and FDI. As we briefly mentioned in section 4 of this paper, the Egyptian government seems to

50 See http://www.cabinet.gov.eg/aboutegypt/constitutionaldeclaration_e.pdf for the full text of the Constitutional Declaration.

51 Ayman Zohry and Priyanka Debnath, "A Study," 8.




have recognized the importance of remittances as early as 1967—as evidenced by the policy statement issued then that points to the importance of maintaining ties with migrants in order to encourage Egyptian migrants to remit back to Egypt. Since then, the Egyptian government seems to have pursued various policies to intensify the level of remittances remitted back to Egypt by migrants. An example of such a policy move was when the Egyptian government permitted Egyptian migrants to open foreign currency accounts in Egyptian banks. Such a move, as well as another move that later granted Egyptians high interest rates in these banks, was certainly aimed at encouraging migrants to remit⁵². Currently, Article 15 of Law 111 states that: “the returns of the investment of Egyptian migrants’ deposits in one of the banks operating in Egypt shall be exempted from all taxes and fees.” The strength of this particular policy is no doubt related to the need of the Egyptian economy for this source of foreign exchange as mentioned earlier in section 4. The level of remittances coming into Egypt has definitely been on the increase in recent decades with \$7.1 billion through formal channels in 2009 equating to approximately 4 per cent of GDP according to the World Bank and an estimated \$2-2.5 million through informal channels. Nonetheless, this is not evidence enough of the direct correlation between these policies and the level of remittances.

In regards to Egyptian policies aimed at increasing the level of investments by Egyptians abroad, these have also been initiated early on. The benefits Egypt could amass as a result of Egyptian migrants investing in Egypt seem to have been recognized by the Egyptian government as early as the 1970s. In 1977, for instance, Law 32 was issued that allowed Egyptians tax exemptions of a similar nature to the ones granted to foreigners⁵³. Certainly such moves were aimed at intensifying the level of investment brought forth by Egyptian migrants. In Egypt’s main migration law, Law 111, the importance of encouraging investments by the migrant community was further reiterated. The ministry concerned with emigration was deemed responsible, in Article 3, for “considering and suggesting the means that enable Egyptian migrants abroad to contribute with their savings in productive development projects in Egypt.” In practice, the MME has contributed to the realization of this policy. Within the MME, the emigration sector has been mainly responsible for the implementation of such a policy. A visit to their website reveals many different investment opportunities in the different Egyptian governorates for Egyptian migrants. However, it is difficult to tell how up-to-date such information is since it does not seem to have been revised in a while. Likewise, the investment opportunities are only uploaded in the Arabic language, and unlike other elements of the website, are not available in English. Moreover, we can examine some of the conferences hosted by the MME for Egyptian migrants. As we have mentioned before in this section, the majority of conferences ever held for migrants have been aimed at advertising investment opportunities. The degree to which these conferences are successful, though, is unclear. It seems that the implementation of this policy is also lacking and based on Egypt’s overall low level investments it seems unlikely that such policies are very successful in bringing about a high level of FDI.

We can now proceed to an examination of another investment policy subtype—that of knowledge transfer policies. Unlike the transfer of financial capital from Egypt’s

52 Ali E. HillalDessouki, “A Shift,” 63.

53 Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, “A Shift,” 63.




migrant community, it seems as though the transfer of human capital has been given less thought and attention. The only mention of the importance of migrants' human capital, in Law 111, can be found in Article 3 which states that the Egyptian government and specifically the Egyptian ministry concerned with emigration shall partake in: "suggesting means of capitalizing on the expertise and knowhow of Egyptian scientists abroad in the development and production fields in their homeland." There are no details, however, about how this is to be accomplished. The MME's emigration sector does in fact consider this to be one of its objectives; objective 3 on the emigration sector's website states that the sector aims to: "achieve the maximum capitalization of Egyptian potential abroad, whether in relation to scientific and research knowledge transfer or to the contribution in savings to Egyptian development strategies; to support Egyptian capacities inside and outside Egypt⁵⁴."

According to Gamlen, the implementation of this knowledge transfer policy could occur in two ways: the Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) program and the virtual cluster approach which basically relates to the virtual participation of migrants. Although there are other forms of knowledge transfer, in this case we have decided to review the two that Gamlen has identified. The TOKTEN program is a program that was introduced in 1977 by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in an effort to reduce brain drain. It basically offers an opportunity for expatriate nationals who supposedly have experience in their area of specialization to return to their home countries for short periods of time and to transfer this experience. In regards to Egypt, we found that the TOKTEN program has in fact been hosted by the Academy for Scientific Research and Technology (housed in the MOHESR) since the 1980s, but that it unfortunately does not seem to have been very successful. The TOKTEN program invites and sponsors Egyptian highly-skilled migrants for short visits in various Egyptian institutions that are supposedly of relevance to Egypt's development⁵⁵. We found, however, that the areas in which these consultations have occurred have not been very relevant to Egypt's development. Likewise we found, during an interview with former minister of the MOHESR Amr Ezzat Salama, that these consultations are of a very short nature and hence are unlikely to be very effective in transferring Egyptian migrants' knowledge to Egypt. Finally, it must be noted that although this program is meant to invite highly-skilled migrants from all over the OECD—the reality of the matter is that Egyptians living in the United States are overrepresented. While this can be understood in part, it is not completely justifiable as there are no doubt plenty of highly-skilled migrants in other OECD countries that would be of benefit to Egypt's development. While there are certain weaknesses to TOKTEN's implementation in Egypt, some of these weaknesses are intuitive to the nature of the program itself which assumes that knowledge transfer can occur through such short visits for example. Hence, other efforts have more recently been exerted to bring about knowledge transfer through other means such as virtual participation. In regards to the virtual participation of highly-skilled Egyptian migrants in the OECD, we were only able to come across one statement by the MME that stated that Egyptian migrants would be engaged through videoconferencing technologies⁵⁶. However,

54 "Objectives," The Emigration Sector, <http://www.emigration.gov.eg/AboutUs/Objectives.aspx>, (Accessed April 17, 2012).

55 Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, "Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) System in Egypt" (Cairo:ASRT) 47. <http://www.asrt.sci.eg/ar/pdf/ASRT-Booklet.pdf>

56 Mohamed Abd El Shafy, "A Program for the Welfare of the Diaspora and Benefiting from their Experiences and Abilities," Al Ahram, October 6, 2000. <http://www.news-bank.net/cached-version.aspx?id=hrm-206659&highlight=%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1%20%D9%84%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86%20%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AC%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%A1>



MME officials, when asked during interviews, stated that such virtual participation actually never occurred. Thus, the success of Egypt's policies aimed at engaging its highly-skilled migrants for the purposes of transferring migrants' human capital seems unlikely.


Finally, we can discuss Egypt's political lobbying policies. According to Gamlen, states at times choose to mobilize the support of their migrants so that their migrants may work as lobbyists within host countries. In the case of Egypt, a survey of Egyptian government policy documents revealed in no way the Egyptian state's intention of mobilizing Egyptian migrants so as to act as lobbyists. Ironically, in reality, although Egyptian lobby groups do exist in OECD countries, these lobby groups are aimed at lobbying for their rights vis-à-vis the Egyptian government. This is the situation with multiple lobby groups around OECD countries that until recently has been mainly lobbying for their right to participate in Egyptian elections. Another example of Egyptian lobby groups are Coptic associations that lobby, such as the American Coptic Association in the United States, specifically for Coptic Egyptians' rights and have pressed their host countries to take action with the Egyptian government for more religious freedom. These lobby groups do not operate in the United States only, however. Marta Severo and Eleonora Zuolo have also found Egyptian groups in Germany, for instance, who lobby for individual interests.⁵⁷ The failure of the Egyptian government to mobilize Egyptian migrants in the OECD to lobby for them points to their general failure in implementing capacity building and extending rights policies. Because the Egyptian government, as we have shown, has generally failed to extend any serious political, social, or civil rights to its migrants, it is not surprising to find that Egyptian groups are in fact lobbying against the Egyptian government instead of for it.

6. Conclusion & Policy Recommendations

In this paper we have examined Egyptian highly-skilled migration to the OECD and attempted to unravel the Egyptian government's policy both towards highly-skilled migration in general and towards the engagement of highly-skilled migrants in the OECD specifically. We found that the Egyptian government has been encouraging the emigration of the highly-skilled for decades now and that although Egyptian migrants in the OECD tend to be highly skilled, on the whole, it does not seem that the Egyptian government's current engagement policies are likely to be conducive to much fruitful migrant engagement.

More specifically, we examined Egypt's capacity building policies which are supposedly aimed at including Egyptian migrants into a symbolic nation state but found that they are quite weak and are unlikely to be actually incorporating the majority of Egyptian migrants into a transnational state. We also lamented the deficiencies in Egyptian institutions pointing to the lack of a strong migration institution, the weak and ineffective "General Union for Egyptians Abroad", and the uncoordinated, competitive, and often redundant nature of Egypt's capacity building policies. Furthermore, we evaluated Egypt's extension of rights to migrants and found that although Egyptian migrants with a national ID are now capable of voting in their host country, the implementation of this has been lacking. Likewise, we found that even following the Egyptian Revolution, the extension of political rights to migrants has been quite hesitant in nature. We called attention to the constitutional declaration of March 2011 and Egypt's electoral

⁵⁷ Marta Severo and Eleonora Zuolo, "Egyptian E-Diaspora: Migrant Websites without a Network?" *Foundation Maison Des Sciences De L'Homme*, 7, 2012.



law which deny Egyptians with dual nationality some of their political rights such as the right to run for president or be elected to parliament for instance and to the negative effect this is likely to have on Egypt's capacity building efforts. We also noted that there is much room for better provision of social and civil rights for Egyptian migrants. Finally, we examined Egypt's attempts at extracting obligations from its highly-skilled migrants in the OECD and found that Egypt has identified the value of remittances and investments from early on, but besides the ineffective TOKTEN program has not made much use of the rich human capital in the migrant community. Egypt has also been unable to mobilize its migrants to lobby for it. Thus, as can be seen, it seems as though Egypt's current engagement policies are unlikely to be conducive to a strong developmental role for Egypt's migrant community.

We will now offer some recommendations aimed at improving Egypt's engagement policies and maximizing the benefits that Egypt can accrue from such highly-skilled emigration to the OECD. We hope that this last section will be of utmost use to policy makers as these recommendations no doubt come at a critical time—following the Egyptian revolution—when for the first time in decades amendments to Egyptian policy may not only be possible but may be actually actively pursued by the new ruling regime.

Better Data Collection

The first recommendation that emerges from our findings is related to the topic of data collection. No doubt the Egyptian government needs to devote more attention to the process of data collection. Currently, the data on Egyptian migration is out of date, incomprehensive, and generally lacking in accuracy. Data on the number of Egyptian migrants, their location, their skill level, occupation, type of employment, remittance patterns, and degree of connectivity to Egypt and other such relevant information is needed. Having data on which to base policymaking would no doubt improve the quality and effectiveness of Egypt's migration and engagement policies.

Listen to Egyptian Migrants

Besides having data about Egyptian migrants, it is necessary for the Egyptian government to go beyond rudimentary data collection and actually consult Egyptian migrants. We noted that the Egyptian government although does host conferences for highly-skilled migrants, does not offer them a venue for the expression of their feedback or concerns. Listening to migrants and basing Egypt's engagement policies on migrants' feedback would make for a better targeted engagement strategy with better chances of success.

Take Account of Nuances in the Migrant Community

Of central concern to us are the differences that exist amongst the Egyptian migrant community. There are differences even amongst migrants living in the OECD. The characteristics of migrants living in the United States and Canada are no doubt very different than those living in Italy and Greece for example. The skill level, field of expertise, and average number of years spent abroad are all examples of the differences that need to be addressed. Egypt's engagement policies should take account of these intricacies in order to effectively engage with the diverse migrant community.



Reinforcing Ministerial Capacity

Implementing an effective migrant engagement policy would not be possible without a ministerial level agency with very high capacity. Currently housed in the labor ministry, the migration department does not have enough capacity or room to effectively formulate and implement policies related to migration and maximize the benefits of this phenomenon for Egypt. In order to effectively engage with migrants the body concerned with migration, whether an independent ministry or housed in another ministry, needs greater resources. More attention needs to be paid to this body in particular.

Build the Capacities of Egyptian Institutions

Generally speaking, Egypt needs to focus its effort on building the capacities of all its institutions. Such weak institutions cannot implement the desired policies effectively. Furthermore, these institutions need to gain the trust of the Egyptian population at large and the Egyptian migrant population. Unless Egyptian institutions can increase their level of efficiency and regain the trust of those they serve, the successful engagement of migrants would be unlikely.

More Coordination and Less Competition

Also, in regards to institutions, it is necessary for Egyptian institutions to learn the art of cooperation with one another. Tension and competition between the MME and the MOFA, for example, is not conducive to effective migrant engagement in any way. Likewise, Egyptian institutions need to survey the field for other parties or organizations working towards these same goals and cooperate with them. Multiple NGOs have since the 1970s recognized the importance of Egyptian human capital abroad and have attempted to engage with them in their own manner. Cooperating with NGOs and other parties would no doubt enhance Egypt's engagement policies.

Reinforcing International Cooperation

Similarly, coordinating with host countries where Egyptian migrants are housed would also be of benefit to the Egyptian government. Host countries are particularly important for the success of a home country's engagement strategy. Gathering information and data about migrants, for instance, requires the work of host country institutions. As we have seen in this paper, the OECD database has provided us with data about Egyptian migrants' skill level that we would not have been able to find otherwise. Likewise, cooperating with host countries would enhance the effectiveness of all three engagement policy areas identified by Gamlen: capacity building, extending rights, and extracting obligations.

Pay More Attention to Migrants' Rights

Our survey of Egyptian engagement policies revealed that highly-skilled migrants in the OECD have been campaigning for more rights, especially political rights, for years. While it is true that voting has become possible for migrants following the Egyptian revolution, Egypt's extension of rights to migrants has been very hesitant leaving Egyptian migrants unsatisfied. Granting Egyptian migrants the right to vote using national ID cards has not proven to be very effective as mentioned earlier in this paper and there is much room for an increase in rights such as the right to run for office or have parliamentary representation. Certainly, extending rights to migrants would strengthen Egypt's migrant-state relationship and increase the likelihood for effective extracting obligations policies.



Make Better Use of Available Technology

We have mentioned in our discussions on transnationalism that one of the main reasons migrant engagement has gained in popularity over recent years relates to the new ICT that has emerged in recent decades. This new ICT has proven important for efficient migrant-state interactions. The Egyptian government needs to move beyond traditional modes of engagement such as hosting conferences and explore the options now available that facilitate the virtual participation of Egyptian migrants.

Compose a Comprehensive Migration and Migrant Engagement Strategy

The final recommendation for the Egyptian government is related to all of the recommendations that have been discussed above and focuses on the establishment of a more comprehensive migration and migrant engagement strategy. Our work brought forth a generally weak migration strategy that has been focused only on encouraging migration for economic benefits failing to mitigate any negative effects of migration and failing to accrue other possible benefits. We suggest a more comprehensive and up to date migration strategy that takes into account all the factors we have discussed throughout this paper. We also hope to see a strong migrant engagement strategy that not only attempts to extract obligations from migrants but also works on building the capacity of Egyptian institutions and extending rights and services to migrants.

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