Forging a Link: Diaspora Developmental Activities for the Homeland, The Case of Eko Club International

Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani
Morgan State University, htijani@jewel.morgan.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/jgi

Part of the African Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/jgi/vol3/iss1/4

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu.
Forging a Link: Diaspora Developmental Activities for the Homeland
The Case of Eko Club International

Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani

This paper focuses on relatively unknown Diaspora group (Eko Club International—ECI), analyzing its activities both in the Diaspora and the homeland. My attempt is to present a tentative survey of the activities of the association within the last seven years. Despite being recent, the ECI has made remarkable impacts through social and developmental projects, members' monthly financial contributions, and networking with government in the homeland. Unlike exiting studies about Diaspora associations, this paper is not about remittances by Lagosians in the Diaspora. Rather, it is about their efforts at collective social and developmental projects for the homeland.

In 2000, Colin Palmer surmised, "Diasporic communities, generally speaking, possess a number of characteristics" (Palmer, 2000). He maintained that regardless of their location, they are organic; they share emotional attachment to their ancestral land; they are cognizant of their dispersal and resettlement in new lands; and if conditions warrants they sometimes renewed movement and resettlement elsewhere. Earlier in 1970, N.A. Fadipe noted, "wherever there is an appreciable community of Yoruba, either outside Yorubaland or even only outside their own particular communities, an organisation will spring up complete with officers" (Fadipe, 1970). Like most Diaspora communities and associations, members of the Eko Club International (ECI) possess a sense of racial, ethnic, or religious identity. Contrary to Palmer however, the members of the ECI are actual, politically active, socially upbeat, and eagerly interested in developing their homeland (Palmer, 2000, p. 29). Both the United Nations Population Fund and the World Bank noted in their Year 2000 reports that the push-pull
factors led to global migrations that brought about Diaspora consciousness of their identity, cultural affinity, and linkages. Such push-pull factors like conflicts, poverty, famine, and human reasons continued to give credence to the concept of “Bilateral Diaspora Ethnicity.” First used by Pires-Hester (2001), the concept remained an essential tool for analyzing activities of Diaspora associations in the contemporary time. The mission statement of the association states categorically “ECI’s mission is to advance, promote and project the cultural, social, political and economic lives of Lagosians anywhere in the world” (Eko Club International Pamphlet, undated).

The roles of Diaspora associations and clubs in developmental efforts have been the subject of scholarly research in recent time (Johnson, 2007). Their role became important in a globalized world that cannot separate global migration from development. The centrality of the role of the Diaspora associations and clubs has been the focus of some scholarly writings in recent times. The London based non-governmental agency, African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) succinctly notes that, “movements of peoples from other regions of the world have given rise to similar patterns of activity vis-à-vis development” (AFFORD, 2006). I must note that AFFORD’s conclusion that the scale, scope, and impact of different diaspora efforts for development will vary by a range of factors, not least the size of the developing country in question and complexity of the challenges it faces. It concludes “diaspora efforts complementing those of other development actors in common purpose to eliminate poverty and promote development” (AFFORD, 2006, p. 2).

While rapid improvements in communications technology have both created conditions more favorable to maintenance of Diaspora-ancestral home links, we identify three major factors for the realization of the typology classification. For ECI, these are economic, political, and social capacity, and desire as a collective group. For most members, it is imperative to be socially and financially stable in the host country. This translates into legitimate residency, naturalization, and a well-paid job or success in private enterprise. This is the prelude to economic stability in the home country. In addition, securing economic, political, social capacity, and desire is linked with participation in the home country’s development. Towards realizing this however, the Diaspora associations, such as the ECI, relied on positive attitude of home government, positive attitude of host country/government, and the socio-political integration of Diaspora by home government as central to achieving their goals (Orozco, 2004).
Who are the Lagosians and What is ECI?

The question thus arise, who are the Lagosians? If the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is used as evidence for definition, I can say all those born in what is today Lagos State (Tijani, 1996). This includes people who have parents who are not of the Awori or Yoruba ethnic group. It implies that it is not limited to folks on the Island, but what constitutes the former Lagos colony and its protectorates that became Lagos State in 1967. Thus defined, one can identify Yoruba Lagosians, Awori Lagosians, Ijebu Lagosians, Ibo Lagosians, Ijesha Lagosians, and Hausa Lagosians, etc. The ancestors of this new generation of Lagosians were not necessarily born in Lagos State, but their offspring were born in Lagos State (Oyeweso, 2006). In fact, there are those who claim to be Lagosians based on long-term residency and property ownership in Lagos State. These categorizations are however controversial among scholars and those with strong claim to Lagos State because of historical settlement that predates British colonial period. The controversy is not however limited to Lagos State, it is a national problem in contemporary Nigeria. The issue of identity and the changing nature of its definition and construction is one of the plagues affecting progress in Nigeria. The ECI would seem to transcend this problem of identity because among its membership are Lagosians of different historical background and linkages.

The ECI is thus defined as a community based organization of Lagosians in the Diaspora, established to foster cooperation, collaboration, unity, brotherhood, and sisterhood amongst its members. It is an association that hopes to empower its members politically, socially, and economically, with the goal of positively contributing to the advancement and prosperity of Lagos State (ECI Pamphlet, undated).

Contextualizing the Concept

It is imperative to define the concept – “Bilateral Diaspora Ethnicity” – in order to underscore its suitability for explaining the activities of the Eko Club International (ECI) both as socio-cultural and developmental association in the Diaspora. This is what Pire-Hester refers to as the “Bilateral Diaspora Ethnicity” (Pires-Hester, 2001). To her, “Bilateral Diaspora Ethnicity is the strategic use of ethnic identification with an original overseas homeland to benefit that homeland, through relations with systems and institutions of the current actual homeland” (Pires-Hester, 1994, p. 486). She notes that “the roots of bilateral diaspora ethnicity can be found in long-standing remittance patterns, gradual politicization of voluntary associations and transformed attitudes of Cape Verde toward its diaspora population” (Pires-Hester, 1994, p. 490).
To me, this theoretical framework and conception is not limited to the development of the diasporic identity, but also a continual reinvention of the homeland through socio-economic works, contributions, and linkages. It is similar to "transnationalism" – the process whereby migrants forged and sustained multi-stranded social relations that connect their society of origin with the society of settlement/residency. This is what Patterson and Kelley refer to as "the construction and reproduction of diasporic identities – to the creation of a diasporan consciousness" (Petterson and Kelley, 2000). In addition, my analysis of the ECI differs from William Safran's case study because "violent forces" do not dictate the association's consciousness nor is it created by the "marginalization in the new location" (Safran, 1991).

In relation to the ECI and Lagosians generally, "Bilateral Diaspora Ethnicity" emphasizes ties between indigenous Lagosians in the Diaspora and the homeland. The ECI (the United States, Canada, and England) since its inception in 1999 continues to galvanize Lagosians in the Diaspora towards homeland development. The association with branches in USA, Canada, and England instituted partnership and networking with homeland State institutions and individuals with a view to assisting in developing infrastructures, preservation, and human services. Like the Cape Verdean, Malian, or Somaliland migrants for instance, their role transcends sending money home through the Western Union or the Money Gram. Rather, they are more conscious about physical and technical assistance, preservation of heritage, gentrification of the urban and rural areas, health, and education. They are committed to progress and development of their homeland through visible participation. They refuse to be docile or subaltern citizens in homeland politics. Although the constitution of the club excludes members from sponsoring homeland political parties, members have vied for political offices using the association as a springboard for actualizing their pursuit of political office in the homeland.

I must state that the study of the ECI also fits into Cohen's classic Diaspora typology. Understanding the multi-dimensional nature of the Diaspora, Cohen maintained that Diaspora typology is not fixed (Cohen, 2004). It is applicable to the Jews as it is to the Lagosians. It is however dynamic and shaped by number of factors. As it relates to ECI and Lagosians, we identify that in its organizational classification, the ECI fits into Cohen's "Hometown Association," "Ethnic Association," "Investment Group/Business," "Political Group," "National Development Groups," and "Professional Association". Individually, members' strong links to Lagos State indicates that ECI could be classified under "Individual" typology. An outline of ECI's purpose indicates that it aimed at actualizing the various academic concepts stated above. Its core activities and programs include, community based programs in Lagos State and the Diaspora, fundraising for
homeland developmental projects, and investment in homeland and host country properties for economic security (O. Ladega, personal communication, March 2007). In brief, the association exists for the following purposes:

- Foster cooperation, unity, and understanding amongst Lagosians;
- Grow economically, socially, and politically;
- Promote and encourage service, leadership, and good citizenship;
- Contribute positively to the advancement and prosperity of Lagos State;
- Promote good community relations, family, and cultural values;
- Advance and promote the social, economic, educational, cultural, and civic and welfare of Nigerians in the Diaspora; and
- Assist and provide moral and financial support to members during sickness, death, or social activities (ECI Pamphlet, undated).

**ECI Projects in the Diaspora and the Homeland**

The planning and implementation of developmental goals of the association are based on six core activities and programs. These are the bi-annual convention, the quarterly meetings, community based programs in Lagos and the Diaspora, membership benefits and support programs, fundraising, and investment (T. Okupe, T. Abass, K. Opeifa, O. Ladega & G. Gbadamosi, personal communication, July 2005). I must state that members' commitment, selfless service, and successful fundraising have been the bedrock of the success of the association thus far. Each chapter is mandated to make an annual contribution of $1,500 to the ECI, which is used for partial administration and other miscellaneous activities. Such contribution came from members' monthly contributions at different chapters in Amsterdam, Canada, London, Germany, and the United States. Lastly, members are often committed to making extra financial commitments depending on needs, programs, or activities.

Although major parts of its projects are in the homeland, the ECI and its chapters strongly believe in investment (properties) in the host country for economic self-sufficiency. ECI's multi-purpose building proposed for Baltimore, Maryland would generate an annual $2 million dollars after tax from rent and royalties. The Eko Plaza, Houston is a multi-purpose building in the heart of Houston, Texas that generates regular revenue for the Chapter. The revenues along with membership dues are main sources of fund for homeland activities and projects. Other Chapters in Canada and England are now embarking on owning a property as a means to a secured revenue generation. The members' resolve is however the most significant motivating factor for success and progress. Members are skilled professionals at the apex of their careers. In terms
of educational attainment, the least academic qualification of members is a bachelor's degree from reputable institutions worldwide. This perhaps explains the diversity, interests, and focused goals of the association in the Diaspora.

**The Medical Mission**

In a memo to all members of ECI, Tajudeen Abass explained the purpose of the medical mission and implored members to support the mission to Lagos in July 2007. The mission was to "address major public health issues and preventable diseases" in the homeland (EKO Club Medical Mission Report, March 2007). The focus was on diabetes, hypertension, asthma, malaria, HIV/AIDS, and infectious diseases. While the association was not aimed at taking over the role of government, it realized that it could assist in view of its members' commitment and support. I should state at this point that the prevailing medical facilities and governmental efforts was the most significant reason for the association engagement and commitment in this regard.

In the homeland, the Tinubu administration (1999-2007) strived to fulfill its electoral promises to Lagosians but for the Federal government's refusal to release federal subventions to the State. The government embarked on an ambitious free community-based primary health care in 1999 despite the financial constraints. It began to rehabilitate dilapidated health centers and make available medical examinations for the elderly free of charge. Under the State's comprehensive health insurance scheme free medical service is given to those aged 0-12 years and those 65 years above. In addition, it began to upgrade local government health centers to general hospital status. This is crucial because of the service that a general hospital is expected to provide greatly outnumbered that of a local health center. The consequences are upsurge of patients, inadequate equipments and facilities, space, and labor. The government had no alternative but to seek private participants and non-governmental assistance. The Houston Chapter of the ECI was the first to come to the aid of the government and people of Lagos State. The historic Massey Hospital was renovated through funds from members of the Houston Chapter in the sum of $6,000 in 2005. Moreover, at completion of the rehabilitation, the complex was officially returned to the management of the hospital. Earlier in September 2006, the Atlanta Chapter of the association spent $5,000 to renovate the maternity ward of Surulere General Hospital. The Chapter also provided mosquito nets and a heavy diesel powered generator for regular supply of electricity.

This explains the significance of the Medical Mission coordinated by Dr. Lola Ishola, Dr. Olabisi Jagun, Tajudeen Abass, and Olanrewaju Ladega between July 8-21, 2007 in Ikeja and Epe, Lagos State. To achieve its goal, the Mission
organized health education and health screenings at Ikeja and Epe. Realizing the need for continuity, the Mission maintained effective network with local health care providers and government officials. This is important in view of the need to follow up with patients and continue monitoring their health. One can deduce that the long term success of the Medical Mission will depend on good relationship between the sponsors, health providers, and the homeland government.

The idea and planning, however, predates 2007. In early 2006, the ECI assembled medical personnel and volunteers from Canada, England, the United States, and Nigeria to brainstorm about the state of medical facilities in Lagos State (O. Ladega and T. Abass, personal communication, March 2006). Identifying the deplorable state of affairs is significant in its efforts to network with Nigerian medical professionals overseas. The association is concerned with inadequate medical facilities in the homeland; and how it could assist in ensuring adequate supply, medical technological transfer, and personnel training. It stated as its main goal the promotion of a healthy living standard amongst the people of Lagos State through education, treatment, and the provision of essential medicines. In addition, the 2007 Mission focused on major public health issues and preventable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma cancer, and infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The Mission also promoted health education and screenings for high blood pressure, blood sugar testing, and general urinalysis. Treatment and medicines for patients was provided gratis through members’ general donations and contributions.

As part of its attempt to sustain the Medical Mission, chapters were requested to make material donations to be distributed to health centers in the homeland. Thus, in October 2007, three chapters of the ECI (Florida, Houston, and Minnesota) contributed the following materials towards the Medical Mission’s vision:

- one carton (10 boxes of 100/box) of large latex free gloves (1000)
- two cartons of medium latex free gloves (2000)
- five boxes of small latex free gloves (500)
- five boxes of extra large latex free gloves (500)
- four cartoons of sterile three-ounce urine cups (300) (ECI Minutes, 2007)

In its letter of request to members and chapters, the executive board of ECI identified the following medical supplies as essential:

- Cotton wool
- Mentholated spirit
- Glucometer strips
While the Medical Mission remained a watershed in the history of developmental programs of the association, I must state that individual chapters have carried out several self-help activities such as paying for the burial of members as in the case of Messrs Olugbenga Joseph (Washington, D.C. Chapter) and Sanni (Dallas, Texas). The importance of this is the solidarity and commitment of members to aid the family of the deceased. In the case of late Mr. Joseph, an endowment fund in the sum of $5,000 was set up for his two children by ECI (R. Opanuga & A. Odunlami, personal communication, December 2007). The association (ECI, Washington, D.C. and Dallas Chapters) paid all burial costs. The benefit was financial relief for the wives and families of the deceased. The sudden death of these members reenergized members' drive for a group life insurance separate from their respective employers' program. The premium for group life insurance is paid from contributions of members directly to the insurer. Some chapters such as Washington, D.C. Chapter, under Richard Opanuga began a compulsory annual medical check up for members utilizing free services of nurses and medical specialists within the metropolis (R. Opanuga, personal communication, December 2007).

The most celebrated medical assistance organized by the association was the 2003 Shobowale conjoined twins. The medical situation and urgency of the needs of the conjoined twins showed the inadequacy of medical facilities in the homeland. To ECI and the Washington, D.C. Chapter however, it was a test of their goals and aspirations for the people in the homeland. It also indicated the cordiality between them and the government of the homeland (State and Federal in this case). Lastly, it reflected members' spirit of selfless service to humanity. The ironic aspect of the event is the fact that efforts of the ECI and the Washington, D.C. Chapter were unnoticed by the media. The only reports are oral recollection of members and a piece in ECI newsletter, *Eko Communicator* (2006).

Born on July 16, 2003 and christened Favor and Faith, the Shobowale conjoined twins were destined to receive favors from government and non-
governmental bodies. Upon the completion of a long surgical operation at Lagos Island Maternity Hospital on the early hours of July 16, it was realized that the twins must be separated for them to live. It was during this period that the State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Leke Pitan was visiting the hospital. He met the parents of the conjoined twins and the news soon spread like wildfire throughout Nigeria. The State Governor, Hammed Tinubu and his wife, Oluremi, became involved. They networked with a cousin of the Governor, Dr. Ade Tinubu, a physician at the world renowned Johns Hopkins University Medical Center, in Baltimore, Maryland. Ade Tinubu at this time had an observer membership status with Eko Club Washington, D.C. Chapter. Although he was host to the Shobowales during their stay in the United States for the surgical separation of the twins, Dr. Ade Tinubu networked with members of the ECI and other Diaspora organizations particularly the Redeemed Church of Christ, Laurel, Maryland (R. Opanuga, S. Agbebi, A. Odunlami & T. Okupe, personal communication, December 2007). At Johns Hopkins Hospital, the twins were separated gratis on September 11, 2003 by a team of surgeon led by Dr. Paul M Colombani, the chief medical doctor and professor of surgery, pediatrics, and oncology. Dr. Lao and Professor Robert Garret from the same hospital assisted him (The Sun News, 2004). Four months afterwards, the president of the ECI, Tajudeen Abass pledged to finance the education of the twins to high school level. The Washington DC Chapter donated the sum of $5,000 towards the education endowment fund of the twins (Eko Communicator, 2006; R. Opanuga, T. Okupe, personal communication, December 2007).

The Pathways

The structure of the ECI is perhaps one of the reasons for its success thus far. The second reason is commitment of members followed by consciousness of a better homeland. The question arises, what are the avenues through which the association channels its activities in the homeland and their place of residency?

Lagos Sister Commission and the Lagos Committee

In 2005, the ECI established the Lagos Sister Commission (LSC) to serve as the portal through which the government in the homeland and government officials in their place of residency could collaborate in developmental projects. In fact, former members who assumed political positions in the homeland used the forum to galvanize their base and collaborate with governments in the Diaspora. For instance, in October 2005 Wahab Owokoniran, a former resident of Chicago, utilized the networking forum of LSC to establish a sister relationship between
Ikeja Local Government and the city of Chicago. To him, the benefits of such a partnership and networking are enormous and more importantly beneficial to Ikeja and Lagos State in general. It created an informational forum for Ikeja through the Chicago Chamber of Commerce as well as provided economic opportunities for investors in the homeland. Cities of Atlanta, Georgia and Gary, Indiana also established socio-economic relations with the government of Lagos State during Governor Hammed Tinubu’s administration (1999-2007). Through the LSC, members give advice on all matters relating to developmental projects gratis. Of significance was the promotion of good governance through annual ECI presidential award initiated by Tajudeen Abass in 2005. Greatly influenced by experience in the United States, Abass set various awards to celebrate accomplishments by members, government officials (homeland and place of residence) and administrators, government units, and agencies that demonstrate the values of a responsive, efficient, and effective governance. The pacesetter in this regard was however the Washington, D.C./Maryland Chapters during the presidency of Shola Agbebi. In 2003, Agbebi and his cabinet members recognized Governor Hammed Tinubu, Mrs. Remi Tinubu, Oba Rilwan Akiolu, and other Lagos State officials for good service delivery, adherence to government responsibility to its citizens, and measurable impact on development within the State. While this is a lofty idea, it remained questionable the yardsticks for such awards. Again, ECI strived to be relevant in homeland matters such as good governance and governmental responsibility (O. Ladega, personal communication, December 2007).

The Lagos Sister Commission chaired by Prince Rilwan Alowonle has strived to improve upon the scope and goals of the commission through youth education, sponsorship, outreach activities, etc. The commission served as the liaison between organizations in the homeland and sponsored Lagosia youth in the Diaspora to visit the homeland. In September 2006, the secretary of the Commission Kemmy Baljak (Canada) sent 50 letters to different Black organizations in Canada and the United States informing them about the organization, its activities, and the commercial opportunities in Lagos State. This was the first step taken by the Commission towards establishing a Sister-State relationship between the homeland and cities in Canada and the United States. The primary goal according to Baljak is “for the purpose of attaining rapid industrial and economic developments for Lagos State and its people” (Record and Minutes of Lagos Sister Commission, 2006).
The Women and Youth Forum

The ECI believes in its future through a sustained involvement of its women and children in programs and projects. Although not all ECI Chapters are open to female membership, the umbrella body, ECI, continues to engage female Lagosians in all its activities. Apart from recruiting sons and daughters of members into the youth forum, the committee coordinates and sponsors them to many educational conferences. For instance, it has sponsored youths to the annual Association of Nigerian Physicians of America (ANPA) – a forum for mentoring aspiring medical doctors or physicians. It organizes educational forums for scholarships, historical excursions, and social activities. The committee also monitors the welfare of wives and children of deceased members in order to ensure that they are adequately cared for after the death of a member. In recent times, it has become a focal point for women and youth empowerment in the homeland through its networking with the office of the Governor’s wife at Ikeja, Lagos. In summer 2007, the Youth Forum and the Lagos Sister were instrumental in the successful visit of physicians, physician assistants, and trainee medical students to Lagos. Through the visit, ECI was able to educate citizens of Lagos in health and medical matters. Of significance were the medical examination of over 500 patients and the provision of free medication to them during the visit. Under the leadership of Toyin Ola, the Women Forum organized cancer awareness month for members and the public in their place of residency. It also proposed to organize a similar forum for men so that they are better informed about prostate cancer (Record and Minutes of The Women Forum, 2006).

The uniqueness of the Youth Forum and its closeness with the Women Forum is in relation to heritage and culture in the Diaspora. It is recognized that the youth are the future of the association and the link between the past, present, and the future. Lagos history, culture, and heritage are not just nostalgic or rhetoric, they are embedded in the vision, goals, and aspiration of the youth. The Forum thus operates on five goals:

- To develop a complete image of the Lagos State youths using the most unalloyed tools within our range (The government, The Royal Fathers and the influential in Lagos State);
- To propel a good name and continue to promote effective membership drives;
- Sponsor a representative based on his/her active role in developmental activities in Lagos State;
- Arrange and sponsor television, and radio programs to promote the youth policy; and
• Identification and encouragement to certified youth who have demonstrated the skill, commitments, and leadership in fuelling our progressive role (Record and Minutes of ECI Youth Forum, 2006).

These goals fit into the vision of the Forum which is to “create a strong link between the youths and government, preparing the youths for leadership roles in Lagos State, advocating for progressive ideas” among others (Minutes of ECI Youth Forum, 2006). It seems that unlike their parents, youths are being trained to be more conscious of their double identity and strive to establish a close link with the homeland earlier in life (B. Onimole, personal communication, December 2007). Due to logistic problems, the leaders of Youth Forum have only been able to organize cultural and heritage events during the annual convention. In its short life, the Forum had made significant impact on members’ children everywhere. Apart from networking and linking the children (particularly those that are in the age group 17-28), the leaders had organized visits to Lagos, regular phone conversion, instant messages using the Internet network or via ECI website, and immersion in Yoruba language by adopting it as language of communication during these events.

Under the leadership of Bunmi Onimole, 13 youth members were sponsored to the 2007 Dallas convention where cultural immersion, language, and heritage were performed to visitors and members. About $5,000 was spent on transportation, feeding, and accommodation of youths for the four day event. The significance of the youth presentation is the fact that it reflected on the multicultural nature of the homeland – Lagos – that remained a melting pot for all Nigerians. Lagos since European encounter has enjoyed the enviable position of an economic cockpit and political fulcrum of Nigeria. It has become a mega city, and its culture, heritage, and history in recent time reflects that. Hence, when the youth did cultural dance, they wore traditional attire indicative of the three dominant ethnic groups in Lagos – Yoruba, Hausa, and Ibo. This cultural immersion is based on the principle of “Amu sa ni ilu Eko, ko kuku nigbe” (Literally, Lagos is a pot with an endless resources) which perhaps distinguished efforts of the youth leaders among Nigerian homeland associations in the Diaspora. This ideology would aid in sustaining the culture, heritage, language, and continuity in networking when the pioneers are no longer operative.

Conclusion

The contributions of ECI to developmental efforts in Lagos State are enormous. Evidence suggests that members’ efforts transcend remittance, ethnicity, and religious affiliations. Their commonality is development and how to accomplish
goals set by ECI's executive and board of directors for its chapters in Canada, England, and the United States. Investment in properties both in host country and the homeland is ranked as the highest pivotal of developmental plans. While such effort is still in its gestation period, one can conclude that there is a sincerity of purpose amongst members. Importantly, the ECI and its chapters have demonstrated the significance of a Diaspora association as potential partner in homeland development. This study has highlighted the applicability and relevance of main Diaspora typologies in narrating the activities of the Eko Club International and its Chapters in Amsterdam, Canada, England, Germany, and the United States. Unlike some hometowns, associations in the Diaspora, their goals and activities are not limited to emergency aids and charitable assistance. In addition, there is no evidence of intra-ethnic ferments within the association now. This is uncommon and unique because Diaspora associations are oftentimes clouded by homeland ethnic rivalries. This is not to say that the association is free of problems and rivalries. There is evidence that some members have not been forthcoming in their donation promises nor do they make monthly dues on a timely manner. In recent time, “non-ethnic” grouping reflecting “prebendalism” and “clientilism” was noticed during the annual convention of the association in Dallas, Texas. This “timed bomb” might endanger the future of the association.
References


Eko Club International Pamphlet, no publisher, no date.
Eko Club International Record and Minutes, various chapters, various years, unpublished record.


Endnotes

1 There are twenty-one Chapters in the United States and one Chapter in Amsterdam, Canada, London, and Germany. Perhaps, Eko Club has the largest number of membership amongst Nigerian hometown associations in the Diaspora.

2 Tajudeen Abass to members/sponsor, "Why is Eko Club International (ECI) supporting a Medical Mission to Lagos State", ECI record, n.d. Abass became president of the association in 2005 at the annual convention in Los Angeles, California.

3 This is the grey area of Nigerian federalism. It should be noted that throughout his presidency, Olusegun Obasanjo refused to make available federal allocated funds to Lagos State government controlled by another political party. Newspaper reports and commentaries are enormous and one can only state that it stultified the functioning of the State government in all matters.