Transnational migration and globalization have transformed the relationship between individuals and their surrounding communities, particularly between migrants, their homelands, and their host countries. In the context of this new transnationalism, new players have emerged, expanding the scope of international interaction. One such player is the hometown association (HTA) formed by immigrants seeking to support their places of origin, maintain relationships with local communities, and retain a sense of community as they adjust to life in their new home countries.

An HTA is an organization formed by migrants living in the same community and sharing a common nationality. Through an HTA, migrants can transfer money and resources to their home countries. While the total number of HTAs worldwide is unknown, it is clear that their presence is significant. Mexican HTAs, for example, number approximately 3,000, Filipino groups may amount to 1,000, and there are about 500 Ghanaian organizations.¹

According to a survey conducted by Orozco in 2008 looking at migrants from different nationalities in the United States, there are differences among certain groups when it comes to membership in HTAs (see Table 1). Focusing on Latin Americans living in the United States, for example, 38 percent of migrants from Paraguay belong to an HTA, compared to 20 percent of Dominicans, 16 percent of Mexicans, and only six percent of Bolivians and four percent of Salvadorians. When it comes to African migrants, 57 percent of Ethiopians in the United States participate in an HTA, 23 percent of Ghanaians do, and 22 percent of Nigerians are members. Meanwhile, 13 percent of Indians living in the U.S. belong to a hometown association.

¹ Manuel Orozco is Director of the Remittances and Development Program and a Senior Fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue. Eugenia Garcia-Zanello is a Research Assistant at the Inter-American Dialogue.

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Table 1: Membership in HTAs by Country of Origin (Source: Survey administered by author, 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Belongs to an HTA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>57.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>23.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>13.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>15.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>22.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>38.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>8.20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that in the case of Ghanaians abroad, the percentage of migrants who are active in a HTA is relatively higher among migrants living in Europe, especially the Netherlands, compared to those in the United States. Similar trends are seen in the Southeast Asian region, suggesting that dispersed communities may be more organized in certain places than in others.

Table 2: Percent of Ghanaian remitters who contribute to an HTA (Source: Surveys administered by author).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of residence</th>
<th>Ghanaian remitters who contribute to an HTA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghanaians in the Netherlands</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghanaians in the United Kingdom</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghanaians in Germany</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Percent of Southeast Asian remitters who contribute to an HTA (Source: Manuel Orozco and Rachel Fedewa, *Regional Integration? Trends and Patterns of Remittance Flows within South East Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Dialogue, 2005)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of residence</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Indonesia</th>
<th>Philippines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is difficult to pinpoint the factors that may lead certain groups of people to participate in an HTA, but they may have to do with political culture, family links, material circumstances, cultural identity, and levels of integration. Specifically, there
is a relationship between the migrant’s identity and his or her social context: Identities are shaped by socio-cultural surroundings. At the same time, individuals can express their identities through the social channels around them. To do so, they often engage in activities that allow them to experience both a sense of belonging and identification with the broader community, as well as give them an opportunity to contribute to the society around them. Influenced both by the experience of transnationalism and by a desire to connect with their home and host countries, migrants often seek an instrumentalization of belonging, not just a search to define the self, through the activities of their hometown associations. Thus, belonging to HTAs has both a symbolic links with the migrant’s identity, as well as a tangible impact on the community that surrounds them. HTAs represent channels through which migrants can make a difference in their country of origin and of settlement, and are means for them to engage in philanthropy.

The desire to maintain a cultural identity and contribute to society provides the foundation for the link between philanthropy and development. In an effort both to maintain roots in their host countries and, most importantly, to contribute to the development of their homelands, migrants often engage in philanthropy and typically do so through HTAs. As a result, migrant associations have gained potential as development players, given the possible link between philanthropic activities and the economic development of the migrants’ homelands. With this in mind, it is important to evaluate the capacity of HTAs as effective development players and the possible ways in which the activities of migrants can be leveraged for development.

In this paper, we explore the link between philanthropy and development using a set of criteria developed by Orozco to evaluate the effectiveness of HTAs as development players. We then introduce various case studies of hometown associations in different countries in an effort to evaluate the potential of HTAs to contribute to development. Finally, we conclude with a set of recommendations on ways to leverage the potential of HTAs as development players.

**Philanthropy and Development**

Migrants often see their engagement in a HTA as a means to engage in philanthropy, and in this sense, attempt to contribute to the development of their homelands. While their aim is philanthropic in theory, it is important to question whether their activities truly have the capacity to do so.

Development is often associated with a condition that ensures a better standard of living for people—linked to education, health and material asset accumulation. Economic development in particular refers to a condition by which individuals, and
society at large, enjoy a healthy quality of life; are free; have opportunities for upward mobility; and are able to improve their material circumstances. A development player aims to find solutions to these human needs, and to offer alternative ways to promote self-sustainability. Looking at HTAs, their activities could be considered to have a developmental impact on their beneficiary communities if they help advance these conditions.

On the one hand, the objectives and activities of HTAs aim to contribute to development. The work of HTA’s typically targets the most vulnerable populations, such as children and the elderly—and, though it is primarily philanthropic in nature, it often overlaps with economic development activities. The typical activities performed by HTAs range from charitable aid to projects that address public infrastructure, including building and maintaining schools; waterworks; electricity; and telecommunications networks. The activities of HTAs often deal with the most immediate needs of their home communities, such as in the wake of a natural disaster, or if the community does not have a way to meet the most fundamental human needs like education or a reliable water supply. For example, groups working in Latin America, Southeast Asia and Africa donate school or medical supplies to local institutions, or provide basic infrastructure through the construction of clinics, classrooms, parks and homes.

These types of projects are significant because of their potential to promote equity, an important component of development philosophy. The activities of HTAs may often provide aid in communities where the capacity of the local government has fallen short. Indeed, HTAs have the potential to improve the quality of life of households in a given community by facilitating projects that might otherwise be impossible for those communities to implement. The case of Mexico is striking in this respect. In Mexican hometowns with fewer than 3,000 people, HTA donations are equal to more than 50 percent of the municipal public works budgets. In towns with populations of less than 1,000 people, HTA donations can amount to up to seven times the public works budget.

It is also possible, however, that even though HTA donations are channeled primarily to the poor, these resources alone do not constitute a solution to the structural constraints of the poor. What is more, they often fail to create financial security for households or sustainable development in a community. Common HTA projects such as charitable aid or the construction of religious and recreational facilities do not necessarily constitute wealth generating projects. While migrant HTAs are undoubtedly improving the quality of life in the communities they serve, their influence is further limited by both funding and organizational restraints. Groups are for the most part led by volunteers who are not necessarily trained or experienced in the organization, implementation or evaluation of development projects. Most HTAs operate with
Hometown Associations: Transnationalism, Philanthropy, and Development

less than $20,000 annually, and many do not effectively work with local community stakeholders to understand local development priorities and ensure that the beneficiary community will properly care for new facilities or donations.

Thus, HTAs have the capacity to contribute to development, but they also face several obstacles that may hinder them from effectively engaging in the promotion of development, and so it is important to examine their efficacy objectively. Orozco has identified a set of criteria that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a migrant HTA as a development player (see Table 6).10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Correspondence</th>
<th>Sustainability</th>
<th>Replicability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community members participate in decision making; community members participate in implementation; and community members have control of project after completion.</td>
<td>Project meets basic needs; needs met are a development priority; and implementation occurs in association or coordination with other institutions.</td>
<td>Project enables development goals; does not constitute a burden or entail added costs; and has a long life cycle.</td>
<td>Resources for project are available in other communities; as well as institutional environment facilitating implementation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


First, ownership refers to the ability to provide people with a sense of control of their personal and social lives, an idea central to inclusion in the community. When considering the HTA contribution to development, local ownership of projects is key and providing tools for that ownership is essential. Projects must encompass not only a collective good, benefiting all members, but also a means to transmit ownership or control of the projects to the members, to legitimate them as their own. Ownership of a project can occur through participation in the decision-making and implementation process or by directly transferring the property to the community.

Another issue central to development is the degree to which a project’s goal corresponds with the community's true needs. This is best described by idea of “correspondence.” To assess correspondence in HTA projects, we considered three indicators: a project must (1) respond to the broad social needs of a community; (2) be based on a clear understanding or diagnosis of the status of health-care delivery, education, public and financial infrastructure, and other related activities, as well as an understanding of the economic base of the community; and (3) allocate its resources to those areas defined as being of highest priority for the community.

Another important factor enabling a project's contribution to local development is its sustainability. A project is sustainable when it delivers the means to enable people to improve their quality of life and material circumstances. Sustainability also requires
that the investment yield a long-lasting impact that does not burden the community or its future generations. Finally, a project makes a successful contribution to development when its attributes and functions may be replicated with ease and do not depend on the local circumstances of a community nor on the unique situation for the institutional donor. The replicability of a project allows for the establishment of regional strategies focused on achieving a development goal beyond the effects on a single community.

The following section describes the activities of hometown associations in various countries. We use these case studies to exemplify the typical features of hometown associations and the type and nature of HTA activities, specifically relating to projects related to philanthropy and development. Using the criteria outlined above, we evaluate the potential of migrant HTAs as development players.

**HTAs as Development Players**

**Mexican HTAs in the United States**

Hometown associations established by Mexican migrants are among the most widely studied forms of HTA organization. There are some 1,200 Mexican HTAs worldwide, 95 percent of which are based in over thirty U.S. cities, representing communities from various Mexican states, and most of these associations have been in existence for at least 11 years. Their organizational nature is relatively cohesive, with a close-knit membership that follows basic rules of group discussion and decision-making. These associations adapt to changing circumstances by either joining other groups, such as federations, or electing new authorities. This section is based on the findings from fieldwork by Orozco in 2005 looking at Mexican hometown associations based in the United States.

Mexican HTAs identify community needs and projects in several ways: through liaisons in the hometown, based on the preferences of HTA leaders and members; in response to natural disasters in the hometown; and in partnerships with other institutions. Usually an HTA member visits the community, returns with a list of identified needs, and proposes that the association work on three or four activities while concentrating efforts on one large project. On average, the amount Mexican HTAs raise for a project is less than $10,000. Immigrants directly donate their resources to a project and avoid intermediation costs by having a counterpart in the hometown, usually a relative or other community member, volunteer to oversee the project. HTAs typically collaborate with other institutions. Nearly 80 percent have approached municipal leaders to discuss their projects, coordinate efforts, and distribute resources.

In the case of Mexican HTAs, it is interesting to note how the Mexican federal government has inserted itself into the partnerships. The range of formal and informal
relationships between the two entities culminated with the Three-for-One Program, in which half of all Mexican HTAs participate. This program matches donations the clubs make to community development projects in their hometowns with funds from the three levels of the Mexican government (federal, state, and municipal). The government officially implemented this program on a national level in 2002, after HTAs demanded partnerships in projects that benefit their communities of origin. In 2003, the projects connected with the Three-for-One Program totaled $36 million, one-quarter of which came from the contributions of HTAs. Nearly two-thirds of the national total allotment for the program was apportioned to four states: Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán, the source of about 30 percent of Mexican migration to the United States.

Mexican HTAs are having a direct effect on communities by providing goods and services that benefit collective needs in health, education, and economic infrastructure. The aggregate volume of annual HTA donations to Mexico reached $30 million in 2003. Funds are channeled primarily to localities with basic development problems, which are also the places that have high emigration rates precisely because they have historically lacked employment opportunities as well as basic health, education, and housing. Mexican HTAs donate to localities with populations as small as one thousand people—representing a $7 donation per inhabitant. In many communities, the donations represent as much as the amount the local municipality allocates for public works. Three-for-One Program contributions average $23,000 and represent over 20 percent of the municipal budget allocated for public works.

The sections below preview three sample projects by HTAs supported by the Three-for-One Program in the Mexican municipality of Jerez. Jerez, home to 55,000 people, is representative of areas with high emigration and with a history of receiving large flows of remittances. At least ten HTAs are active in the region. Between 1999 and 2003, $3.65 million in donations was invested for the implementation of 109 Three-for-One Program projects. To analyze the link between the philanthropic activities of HTAs and their potential to contribute to development, Orozco relates the local macro-socioeconomic conditions to individual project dynamics, using the measures of ownership, correspondence, sustainability, and replicability.

San Juan del Centro: School Rehabilitation Project
San Juan del Centro is a community of 419 residents where a Three-for-One project was completed on the rehabilitation of primary and secondary schools. This renovation included installing windows, potable water, and bathrooms; extending electricity;
replacing the roof; building basketball courts; and creating a computer classroom with 14 computers.\textsuperscript{17} This required an investment of $68,000, with 25 percent being donated by the HTA. The total cost was three times the municipal funds spent on public works for education in 2001.\textsuperscript{18}

- \textit{Ownership}: The local community elected a project committee, formed by students’ parents, to oversee and coordinate project implementation and completion. Community involvement, and hence, community members’ sense of “ownership,” continues today through the local school board, which makes decisions about curriculum and the use of school funds.

- \textit{Correspondence}: There was sound correspondence with the community’s development needs. The school was in need of repairs and improvements, and once the facility’s renovations were completed, it offered adult education and computer-literacy classes.

- \textit{Sustainability}: San Juan’s local government body, which oversees public education, maintains the renovated school. The government welfare program, \textit{Oportunidades}, provides aid to families to meet education costs. Community members also help sustain the project by paying a small enrollment fee for the computer classes to offset maintenance costs.

- \textit{Replicability}: HTA donations channeled to educational needs are a common practice and similar school renovation projects can be replicated. The project’s implementation was enabled by institutional support from existing government programs and institutions, so the project could potentially be replicated as part of regional or national development strategies.

\textit{Jomulquillo: Microenterprise Project}

Jomulquillo is a rural community home to 305 residents where employment opportunities are a major need, as fertile agricultural land is in short supply.\textsuperscript{19} In 2001, seven women organized themselves into a sewing cooperative after taking classes offered through a Zacatecas state government organization, \textit{Brigada de Educación Rural} (BER), dedicated to educating members of rural communities in self-employment strategies. The local HTA president proposed a Three-for-One project to build a workspace for the microenterprise. An investment of $7,224, with 25 percent contributed by the HTA made this possible. The BER then donated industrial sewing machines. To help cover start-up costs, the women also obtained a loan from another state-level government program designed to support women in rural areas.

- \textit{Ownership}: Today, these women make collective decisions about using revenue, paying off the loan, and developing business strategies. Their participation in the management of this small enterprise enhanced their sense
of being valued within the community.

- **Correspondence**: The limited possibilities for productive investment in Jomulquillo demand creative employment-generating strategies, especially due to low market prices for local crops, small agricultural output, and lack of land ownership. Employment opportunities are particularly scarce for women: only 11.6 percent of women are economically active. This project illustrates the channeling of community donations to an employment-generating endeavor, by providing the means for economic independence of women partners.

- **Sustainability**: The difficulty in increasing the cooperative’s revenue is the main obstacle to ensuring a long lifespan for this microenterprise. As long as there is an adequate margin of profit to provide input and labor, the sewing workshop will stay in business. Under these conditions, the business represents no added cost for the community: it is self-sustainable. At present, the additional government support aids in project survival.

- **Replicability**: The project’s essential inputs are relatively simple: an organized group of individuals with sewing skills, and access to capital to implement the project physically. Institutional support providing resources and opportunities can be found in many rural Mexican communities. The HTA and the Three-for-One Program partnership, the government loan, the BER’s equipment donation and the technical support, have similar counterparts in other communities and states. However, lack of access to or awareness of public and private financing is a common obstacle to business development in the region.

**Sauz de los García: Potable-Water Project**

Sauz de los García is a community of 138 residents, where the building of basic infrastructure occurred only recently. A Three-for-One project was implemented in 2001 to construct a potable-water system, at an investment cost of US$175,263, with 25 percent donated by the HTA.

- **Ownership**: The project enhanced the community’s control over its own well-being. By allocating resources to a high-priority development area, it allowed the community to work toward additional development goals. For example, now that a potable-water system is in place, they hope to install a water-irrigation system to improve local agricultural production.

- **Correspondence**: For 25 years, there had been persistent efforts to bring potable water into the area. Its water sources were wells dug near the river, susceptible to contamination from agricultural waste. Only when sufficient
funds became available were they able to access the equipment, infrastructure, and geologic testing to make access to potable water possible.

- **Sustainability**: By design, potable-water projects are relatively sustainable because of simple maintenance procedures and the long lifespan of the equipment. The water utility company conducts monthly cleaning and water-quality treatment and testing. As a subsidized service, domestic water use is affordable. Thus, once a potable-water project is completed, it does not represent an added burden to the community it benefits. The lifespan of a particular project depends on the population size it serves and the quantity of water available, but in the case of Sauz de los García, the project’s lifespan is expected to be between 50 and 300 years.

- **Replicability**: This potable-water project demonstrates that obstacles to fulfilling basic needs are surmountable. In similar cases where environmental factors impede the realization of a project, access to financial resources is key. The contribution of the HTA, matched with government funds under the Three-for-One Program, was the prime enabling factor here.

In addition to these projects in Jerez, there are other examples of projects by HTAs in other regions of Mexico. Since January 2009, the Federation of Zacatecan Clubs in Southern California has been focusing its efforts on a program of Productive Projects. This program is geared to promote economic development through projects that promote job creation in various parts of Zacatecas. Their main sponsor for this program has been the Mexican foundation *Rostros y Voces de Mexico*. Like the projects under the Three-for-One Program, these projects employ a One-for-One Program, where the government contributes one dollar for every dollar donated by the HTA to support the productive projects. Some examples of these projects include the construction of tequila processing factories in Moyahua and García de la Cadena, Zacatecas; a candy and fruit jam factory in Valparaiso, Zacatecas; en ecotourism museum in Guadalupe, Zacatecas; and a honey processing factory for beekeepers in Nochitzlan, Zacatecas.

**CENTRAL AMERICAN HTAS IN THE UNITED STATES**

This practice of development through HTA philanthropy is also observed among other nationalities. Hometown associations of Central Americans living in the U.S. shows that there is similar level of organization and an interest to work on home country affairs. This section looks at the experience and practices of these HTAs relying on data from interviews with more than thirty association leaders by Orozco in 2006.

**GUATEMALAN HTAS**

**THE BROWN JOURNAL OF WORLD AFFAIRS**
The number of Guatemalan associations in the United States is uncertain. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has identified 164 Guatemalan organizations based mainly in California, New York, and Illinois. Most Guatemalan associations have small core groups of members that meet on a regular basis. These active members often make up the organization's board of directors, president, secretary, and treasurer. Associations have anywhere from five to twenty active members, but often have a much larger individual donor base throughout the Guatemalan community. For example, one association in Delaware boasts a general membership of around 250 people. Most of these groups have been created since 1991 in response to compelling needs in Guatemala, such as natural disasters. They also provide needed representation to the Guatemalan immigrant community in the United States, especially those of indigenous descent.

Membership is mostly composed of migrants from a common community or region in Guatemala. As a result, the international activities of these groups are then focused on these municipalities, and association leaders in the United States maintain close ties to community groups in their hometowns. In Guatemala, projects by HTAs are mostly focused around health, education and disaster relief. Sample activities carried out by HTAs have included gathering in-kind donations like blankets and clothing for victims of Hurricane Stan and school supplies for local students, providing prenatal care for women, and assisting in the development of infrastructure, such as roads.

**Salvadoran HTAs**

According to the Salvadoran Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there are some 200 Salvadoran HTAs distributed throughout various parts of the United States. Interviews were conducted by the Orozco in 2006 with the leaders of twenty associations based in Los Angeles and Washington, DC. Most Salvadoran HTAs have a well-defined structure, involving a board and a few active members, numbering around ten. They often work with a parallel board in their home community. Efforts to raise funds translate into various kinds of activities, including raffles, pageants, and dinners arranged for the migrant communities. Most groups raise less than $15,000 a year for projects, but a few raise more. Even when the total is greater, it does not all necessarily go to El Salvador, instead, the money is used for activities supporting Salvadoran culture in the United States.

Individual Salvadoran HTAs focus their activities on one town. The members come together because they have shared connections to a singular community and often a singular political history. Frequent visits keep members in close communication with association members and family in the hometown. Salvadoran HTAs work on a range of projects that often involve a bi-national exercise of activities carried on both countries. On the Salvadoran side, the majority of projects seem to focus on health and
education. In health, the funds are invested in building health clinics, medicine and ambulance donations. On education, the funds are invested in libraries, school water systems, school supplies, and school repairs.

**Honduran HTAs**

Though, it is not completely certain how many Honduran associations exist, rought estimations put the number around 30.\(^{22}\) Like other HTAs, Honduran groups are led by a board of directors as well as presidents, secretaries and treasurers who are elected on an annual or biannual basis. Groups consist of fifteen to one hundred members that meet on a regular basis. However, given the bi-national nature of many of the groups’ activities, locally based volunteers and clients could number into the hundreds. Like other HTAs, activities tend to concentrate on health, education, infrastructure and disaster relief. Honduran associations have also become involved in innovative campaigns to link the Honduran community in the United States to their homeland. The group Unidad Hondureña de Florida, for example, organized a voter registration drive for immigrants wishing to vote in the last Honduran presidential elections and personally delivered voter registration cards to officials in Honduras. The Organización Hondureña de Palm Beach, also based in Florida, secured in-kind donations from local Honduran-owned painting businesses for use in construction projects in San Pedro Sula. Other projects include assistance with the repatriation of remains, school supply drives, the construction of community centers and computer labs, the donation of medical supplies and investment in tourism projects.

Fundraising efforts on the part of Honduran HTAs are often creative and have a strong cultural focus. Activities have included trips to the beach and casinos, a Mother’s Day buffet, dances, pageants and other cultural performances. Many groups also rely on the individual donations of their members, like the New Horizon Investment Club in New York, whose members pool their personal contributions for collective investment in things like stocks or real estate. Most groups raise less than $10,000 a year, but some indicate that they have taken advantage of other sources of funding, from participating in entrepreneurial business activities to acquiring the support of major donors such as the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter American Development Bank.

**Guyanese HTAs**

It is hard to identify the exact number of Guyanan HTAs in the United States, but in a previous study by the author nearly 200 organizations were identified.\(^{23}\) Guyanese hometown associations are not necessarily organized to help one community in particular, but instead focus more on an issue or organization they wish to assist.
this sense, they differ from Mexican and Salvadoran associations, which work with a specific geographic location. According to data gathered during interviews by the author, the Guyanese have the highest percentage of HTA membership as compared to other nationalities. Although the membership of HTAs is generally under twenty members, they receive donations from more than 100 donors, meaning that one quarter of those donating (some 40,000 immigrants) have been involved in some way with a Guyanese HTA. Also, it is important to note that 29 percent of remittance recipients reported that their relatives in the United States help their town through charitable work.24

The HTAs work on a range of projects involving a binational exercise of activities. On the Guyanese side, the majority of projects seem to focus on health and education. These include activities in support of hospitals, AIDS awareness campaigns, and donation of medical equipment and medicine. In education, the funds are invested in scholarships and teacher training, as well as the donation of books, computers, and school supplies. In addition to carrying out projects in Guyana, these organizations work in the United States to promote cultural, political, and religious identity and awareness. In some cases, the organizations report being approached by people and organizations in Guyana and lobbied to work on specific projects. Another interesting feature of Guyanese HTAs is that a few of them work directly with the embassy or consulate or both. On occasion, these embassies and consulates provide project ideas. In addition, members make visits to Guyana and identify projects through their local contacts.

**Ghanaian HTAs in the Netherlands**

Similar patterns of engagement can be found among migrants in Europe. For example, the Ghanaian community in the Netherlands maintains important transnational links to both the Netherlands and Ghana. Over 50 percent of Ghanaians there belong to a HTA, as described by a study of Ghanaian HTAs in the Netherlands by Orozco in 2007, with an update by the authors in 2009.

Although the majority of Ghanaian migrants send money individually, 52 percent of migrants contribute to HTAs to help their communities in Ghana. These associations establish links to their communities in Ghana through collective projects such as building schools, churches and bridges. Moreover, these HTAs are often involved in both Ghana and the Netherlands. For example, the Representative Council of Ghanaian Organizations in the Netherlands (Recogin) was set up by Ghanaian migrants in 1992 soon after the Bijlmer plane crash of October 1992 and has become an umbrella for thirty-six organizations and churches. Recogin organizes activities like workshops, symposia and conferences to update their fellow countrymen about socio-political developments in the Netherlands.

Ghanaian organizations are not only active in the Netherlands but have expanded
to other European countries as well, including England, Spain and Italy. Technology, such as the internet and mobile phones, has played a crucial role in this expansion of communication between transnational Ghanaian communities by creating simple and convenient forms of contact. Dispersed Ghanaians stay connected largely through web-based radio stations. Online radio has become an important meeting point where Ghanaian migrants in Europe can exchange views and opinions about family or religious issues and situations in both Ghana and the Netherlands. Ghanaians own most of these Ghanaian websites. In the Netherlands, one of the most prominent migrant websites is www.ghanatoday.com.

One of the key Ghanaian HTAs in the Netherlands is the Sankofa Foundation. This foundation is an active organization that began in 2000 as a group of Ghanaian migrants living in Holland. Initially, the group organized small activities in The Hague. These included cultural activities that aimed to raise money for projects in Ghana, and activities that promoted interaction between the Dutch and Ghanaian people. The aims of the organization were to promote social and economic interaction between Ghana and the Netherlands.

With the support of their partners in the Netherlands, they raised funds for local NGOs in Ghana, allowing them to pursue economic activities in the fields of agriculture, education, micro-financing and other income-generating projects in rural communities. These projects involved the integration of computers into the Ghanaian education system. Sankofa then began to broaden its range of activities. Currently, its main project in Ghana has been the Sankofa Family Poultry Project. This project is a three-year program to support 320 women through income-generating activities in agriculture to enhance women’s income generation capacity and improve household food security. Initially, the project was in partnership with the Ghana National Association of Farmers and Fisherman (GNAFF). As of 2009, they changed partners and are now working with the Ghana Poultry Network. The positive social and economic impact of this program so far has pushed Sankofa to replicate the model in other districts of Ghana.

In addition to its activities in Ghana, Sankofa is actively engaged in projects that contribute to the Ghanaian community in the Netherlands. For example, Sankofa organizes the African Festival, an annual music festival held in The Hague during the month of July. The festival serves as a platform for HTAs to promote their activities and network with Dutch organizers, as well as to talk about joint fundraising activities. For 2009, Sankofa expects approximately 5,000 to 10,000 people to attend the event.

Sankofa’s most recent project has been a documentary film depicting the social
impact of migration on the Ghanaian communities in Holland. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs sponsors this project in partnership with the Ghanaian Broadcast Corporation. The objective of the film is to inform prospective migrants in Ghana about the realities of migration and the broader community about the contributions of migrants to both their home and host countries. The film depicts the lives of three Ghanaian families in Holland and their respective families in Ghana. It shows the migrants’ social contributions to Holland as well as their impact on communities back in Ghana through remittances and philanthropy. The film also features interviews with university professors in Ghana, who discuss the impact of migration on development. Sankofa began to work on this film in 2008 and plans to have a finished product by May 2009. It will be shown on Ghanaian National Television for viewers in Ghana and in workshops for Ghanaian migrants sponsored by Sankofa in Holland.

LEVERAGING THE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF HTAS

The case studies outlined above suggest that migrant hometown associations are valuable contributors to their homelands. Moreover, it demonstrates that they could have the capacity to function as effective development players. Nevertheless, HTAs often encounter obstacles given their structural limitations. To overcome some of these inherent structural and operational constraints, migrant associations often liaise with local groups in the home community in order to implement their projects. Around the world, nonprofit and international organizations have already begun to lead the way in developing innovative partnerships with HTAs in order to promote development.

While these partnerships are promising, there is still more potential for collaboration between HTAs and public and private donors. The development impact of HTA activities depends on the extent to which HTAs and local communities share a commitment to invest in high-quality projects. On this front, international organizations, foundations and governments have the potential to link their development priorities to the work of the diaspora, helping HTAs to define their goals and better operationalize their strategies. Contributions can be material and human, and it is important for states and donors to work with migration organizations to develop a joint agenda that will address issues of common concern. Opportunities for collaboration with HTAs also include organizational capacity building, technical assistance on community development needs, joint investment schemes in social and economic projects, and outreach between the diaspora and the government.

Establishing a line of communication with migrant organizations is critical for creating effective development partnerships with dispersed peoples. Both HTAs and donors need to find a space for interaction and communication to bridge the divide that
current separates them—the fact that HTAs are predominantly volunteer organizations. Moreover, governments need to develop confidence-building tools and initiatives that make migrants recognize that governments are serious and committed to working with them. These kinds of measure will develop successful partnerships.

**CONCLUSION**

Our study suggests that hometown associations affirm their identity by engaging in philanthropy that contributes to the development of both their homelands and their host countries. The objectives and typical activities of an HTA are closely associated with the promotion of development. Nevertheless, as discussed in this paper, it is crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of HTAs against four criteria to determine their capacity to serve as development players: ownership, correspondence, sustainability, and replicability.

The case studies analyzed show that HTAs are increasingly contributing to development. These organizations, however, often face challenges given their organizational structure. This is an area in which international organizations, foundations and governments can help to enhance the development potential of hometown associations. Overall, a development strategy is justifiable, considering the presence of millions of migrants who are regularly connected with their homelands and the impact that those connections have on their local economies and communities.

**NOTES**

4. Ibid.
7. Orozco, *Hometown Associations and Opportunities for Development*.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

13. When the program was created on a national level in 2002, it allowed any group of Mexican citizens to apply for government matching funds. The rules of operation changed in 2004 to require that all applications demonstrate having the support of a registered Mexican HTA (see: www.sedesol.gob.mx).


15. Ibid.


17. Interview with Local HTA representative: Club San Juan del Centro, August 9, 11, 12 August and September 10 September, 2004.


20. INEGI, *Cuaderno Estadístico de Información Municipal de Jerez, Estado de Zacatecas*.

21. Interview with project coordinator, Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Sur de California, August 6, 7, and 18 September 2004.


24. Ibid.