



# THE FUTURE OF DIASPORAS

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Publisher: International Organization for Migration  
17 route des Morillons  
P.O. Box 17  
1211 Geneva 19  
Switzerland  
Tel.: +41 22 717 9111  
Fax: +41 22 798 6150  
Email: [hq@iom.int](mailto:hq@iom.int)  
Website: [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)

Required citation: International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2021. *The Future of Diasporas*. IOM. Geneva.

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ISBN 978-92-9268-095-4 (PDF)

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PUB/2021/075/EL



# THE FUTURE OF DIASPORAS

 **IOM** | IOM  
UN MIGRATION | DEVELOPMENT  
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Funded by  
the European Union

 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
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Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC

 **ICMPD**  
International Centre for  
Migration Policy Development



# Foreword

What does the future hold for diaspora engagement? At a time where our present efforts are still focused on coping with the continuing immediate and longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it appears critical to turn our attention towards harnessing emerging opportunities and identifying and mitigating future risks to be able to design effective potential responses and seek the contributions of key actors. The *Future of Diasporas* project was born out of the realization that reflections around diaspora engagement all too often come down to States of play and lacked much-needed forward-looking vision. Through this project, the Africa–Europe Diaspora Development Platform and the International Organization for Migration intend to present a set of innovative perspectives on diaspora engagement that goes beyond immediate results or potential solutions.

This publication contains 12 thought-provoking articles written by global experts who have devoted their careers to better understanding diaspora engagement and creating conditions for transnational communities to contribute to sustainable development. Whether they are based on the observation of megatrends, the identification of hypotheses or the expression of simple wishes, these pieces are refreshing. Likewise, whether they highlight clear ruptures, mere bifurcations or future possibilities, these articles' added value lies in the authors' willingness and capacity to plunge into the unknown and explore the forthcoming two decades.

Centred around three main principles – diversity, freedom and originality – *The Future of Diasporas* serves as an avenue for selected contributors to address topics pertaining to diaspora engagement, freedom of style, tone and choice being one of the distinctive features of this project. These authors – who come from all walks of life, working on and/or with diasporas for non-governmental organizations, governments and academia, to name a few – have succeeded in presenting innovative and multidisciplinary reflections. Besides the variety of profiles, be it in terms of area of expertise or intervention, the plurality of geographies covered, in terms of country of origin or residence, is remarkable, with Africa, North and South America, Asia and Europe being represented one way or another. Lastly, the wide array of themes addressed adds to the richness of the opus. A broad scope of diaspora engagement-related issues is, indeed, examined throughout the publication: from diaspora policy to social capital, migrants' sense of belonging and diaspora diplomacy, and from economic capital and entrepreneurship to human capital and innovation – and not to forget digitization and technology.

Predicting how diaspora engagement will evolve is a complex task. Nevertheless, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration reflects a commitment to improving cooperation in international migration. With Objective 19 of the Compact, in particular, States have committed to creating conditions for diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development by ensuring the full and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This task will be carried out by integrating migration into development planning; acknowledging the social, human, cultural and economic capital of transnational communities; and collaborating across sectors and countries to keep enabling environments for the recognition, participation and empowerment of diasporas.

This publication crystalizes successful collaboration across disciplines, areas of expertise and geographic regions to shed light on the potential of diasporas for development and the need to keep investing in and calling upon these communities, which have invaluable potential for both countries of origin and residence.

Coming full circle, one may be tempted to ask *What is next?* after reading the publication. Some may see *The Future of Diasporas* as an invitation to momentarily detach oneself from the present to lightly probe alternative futures. Others may view it as an implicit call to embrace and apply foresight methodologies, approaches and tools to allow for the transformation of diaspora engagement, all the while managing the uncertainty and unpredictability of a future in the making – in short, a call to jump from vision to action. Either way, we hope *The Future of Diasporas* will enable the broadening of readers' perspectives by allowing for change to be seen as a possibility – from the present into the future.



**Monica Goracci**

*Director*

Department of Migration Management  
International Organization for Migration



**Carine Nsoudou**

*Executive Director*

Africa–Europe Diaspora Development  
Platform (ADEPT)

# Acknowledgements

This publication was made possible, thanks to the partnership between iDiaspora, a platform funded by the IOM Development Fund (IDF), and the Africa–Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT).

Carine Nsoudou, Executive Director at ADEPT, Roberto Cancel Comas, Senior Regional Thematic Specialist on Labour Mobility and Human Development at the IOM Regional Office for South America in Buenos Aires, and Larisa Lara Guerrero, Transnational Communities and Digital Communications Officer at the IOM Headquarters in Geneva, developed the concept and managed the production of the publication in coordination with Marina Manke, Head of the Labour Mobility and Human Development Division, and Rahab Ahmad, European Union Regional Programme and Policy Analyst, both at the IOM Regional Office for the European Economic Area, the European Union and NATO in Brussels.

The project coordinators of the project are extremely grateful to the authors of the articles and also acknowledge the important contribution of Hilal Fauzi Rahman, who was in charge of this publication's cover design.





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# Intergenerational diaspora engagement: Thinking in the long term

Bashair Ahmed<sup>1</sup>

It is 2031, on a hot summer's day at the end of May. Zaina looks at the metal entrance door to the Sudanese Embassy situated on Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, D.C. To proceed, she has to present her ID card to a screen on the side of the door, a legal requirement for entering public buildings after the 2020–2022 pandemic. It is only ten o'clock in the morning, but she is happy to escape the searing heat. Temperatures have regularly reached 40°C over the last couple of weeks, and it is going to be an even hotter summer. She mutters to herself, “Climate change is real!” and proceeds to remove her face mask and gloves – compulsory outdoor wear to deal with potential outbreaks of new strains of SARS-CoV-2.

The entrance hall is cool. There are a number of screens flashing information about the Sudan and speakers piping out music. A robot with a screen approaches her. The screen shows a receptionist working from home – a setup that has become the norm.

**Receptionist:** [In Arabic] Good morning, Zaina. How can I help you?

**Zaina:** [In English] Hi! Sorry, my Arabic is not that good. I came by to learn more about the origin returns programme. Can I get details about it?

**Receptionist:** Of course, no problem. It's great that you want to join the programme! Do you want to do the remote programme or the one in person? The in-person one is pretty popular. However, with the travel restrictions, you might have to wait a few months.

**Zaina:** Thank you. I don't mind waiting. [Pausing for a moment] I prefer the old-school style of face-to-face interaction anyway.

**Receptionist:** I understand. All the information is available from our 360 Virtual Office. Of course, you can try the virtual “live” experience right here to learn more about the programme. The goggles are on your right.

Zaina looks to her right and sees an oversized chair with a pair of goggles on it.

**Zaina:** [Puts on the goggles] Hmmm...is there someone I can speak to directly, like ask them questions about it?

**Receptionist:** Let me check... [Looking at his computer screen] You are in luck. The Ambassador has a 15-minute slot and would be happy to talk to you. Please walk through the door on your left and have a seat in the waiting area.

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<sup>1</sup> Bashair Ahmed, PhD is Executive Director of Shabaka, a research organization focused on diaspora engagement in humanitarian action and a member organization of the Africa–Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT). She holds a doctorate in migration studies from the University of Sussex and has over 19 years of experience researching issues related to migration, human rights and humanitarianism. Bashair has worked with several United Nations agencies and international organizations focused on conflict-affected regions. She may be reached at [bashair@shabaka.org](mailto:bashair@shabaka.org).

Zaina proceeds to the waiting area. It looks very different from the last time she was there, as a child. The carpets are gone, replaced with marble flooring, and instead of the old television set showing Sudanese news, there is now a large wall of screens tuned in to different channels featuring programmes about the Sudan.

She hears footsteps getting closer. A woman in a colourful traditional Sudanese dress emerges.

**Ambassador Sharifa:** Good morning, Zaina. I hear you are interested in joining the programme?

But which programme?

This made-up story is meant to instigate our thinking. How can the children of today become tomorrow's leaders and thinkers? How can we engage them positively to find solutions to address social inequalities? What conversation will Zaina have with the Ambassador? It depends, as there are three potential scenarios.

### Scenario 1: No national diaspora policy

In this scenario, the Government of the Sudan prioritizes diaspora engagement, discusses it and includes it in its national plans. However, events overtake the implementation of plans, and the Government does not have the resources and capacity to develop a comprehensive cross-government policy. Different ministries build their own strategies and outreach initiatives that manage to secure funding from various sources. However, these initiatives, which rely on old, existing networks with links to universities and professional sectors, are only able to reach certain individuals. The dispersal of knowledge and resources, with their limited impact, does not carry over to subsequent generations, losing an important opportunity gained from the significant momentum in diaspora engagement built during the 2019 revolution.

The Ambassador offers to connect Zaina to one of the ministries but knows that it would be difficult for her to qualify for a local programme, as she has no networks or family in the country. She suggests that Zaina instead apply for the programme organized by the United States Government as part of its [Agenda for the African Diaspora](#).

### Scenario 2: A diaspora policy focused on diaspora investment

The Government of the Sudan has realized the importance of its diaspora since the early days of its transition period. It is particularly interested in the diaspora's economic investments, which are seen as a critical tool to help the country address its financial crisis and fund its ambitious development plans. These plans are likely to follow in the footsteps of similar policies by other governments that focus on supporting their massive infrastructure projects, such as those of [Rwanda](#), or which seek to ensure protection and integration support in settlement country for their diasporas, such as [Mexico's migration policy](#). Seeing the economic crisis at hand, the Government of the Sudan opts to set up a programme that encourages investment in the country and expands tax relief initiatives, alongside a highly skilled returnee programme, and offer other tools and incentives for diaspora engagement. The projects have brought some success. However, the number of diasporans engaged dwindles after a few years, as the policy primarily focuses on obtaining commitments from the first generation only.

The policies of the Government are geared towards a specific profile of diasporans and narrowly focus on the first generation and on financial investment. Skills exchange, volunteer and similar programmes that target the growing second and third generations are missing. The Sudan thus risks losing a sustainable economic lifeline and, more significantly, the engagement of younger segments of the diaspora population, who can serve as advocates for raising awareness of the country's cultural richness and diversity, for example, by promoting its various arts, to rebrand its image. Critically, in terms of global representation, the diaspora is helping to expand the country's global reach and offers a sense of belonging to the many Sudanese and their descendants worldwide, who can be essential allies in future diplomatic engagement.

*Zaina sees that the programme is primarily geared towards Sudanese in the diaspora who are more established in their careers. As a university student, she does not qualify, as she would need at least ten years of experience. She decides to explore another programme.*

### Scenario 3: A comprehensive diaspora policy

In the third scenario, the Government of the Sudan is thinking deeply about diaspora engagement and opts to invest in a wide-reaching programme that looks beyond remittances. Intergenerational engagement comes at a cost and requires imagination to think outside the box. Such out-of-the-box thinking includes establishing programmes that facilitate investment and engage intergenerationally to connect young people to their (or their parents') country of origin. An example of the latter from the United States of America is [Birthright Africa](#), which aims to engage people of African heritage, including the historical diaspora. Another initiative that has been able to engage the diaspora intergenerationally is [Ireland's Diaspora Strategy 2020](#). These programmes look at investing in young people, who, in return, will become a critical source of support years or even decades later. There are also shorter-term initiatives, such as the [Year of Return](#) by the Government of Ghana.

Zaina is elated that the programme offers language learning, as she is keen to improve her Arabic and Tigrigna. Despite her young age, she is already an artificial intelligence and machine learning specialist, and she has been eager to share her expertise in workshops organized by Kassala University.

### What is the future of diaspora engagement?

The diaspora can either be a resourceful conduit for or a challenge to the government of the country of origin. This is especially significant in conflict situations, as the diaspora can be influential. An origin country can attempt to contain its influence by curtailing the transmission of ideas, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected regions.

Looking back, have we been thinking mostly in the short term? How will diaspora engagement look like in times of continuing global upheaval, advances in technology and growing demographic disparities between the global North and the global South?

Governments of settlement and origin countries, as well as other actors, need to look beyond short-term gains. Policies and programmatic interventions need to ensure they do not box the diaspora in a single, homogenous group, but instead disaggregate the needs of different generations, genders, socioeconomic backgrounds and so on. Also, governments need to have bigger visions and ambitions and pursue longer-term planning for diaspora engagement, in order to safeguard future investments.

While each context differs, of course, there are a few basic elements that policymakers should take into account when considering diaspora engagement.

- (a) **Generation.** Policymakers need to start thinking intergenerationally about diaspora engagement – something that is missing in the numerous activities and plans currently underway. How does the first generation engage with the second and subsequent generations? Can it extend beyond the usual “duty” framing? What can we offer the diaspora in return?
- (b) **Financial focus.** Remittances and how they can be “captured” appears to be the ultimate goal of many origin countries. This is a short-term focus, and governments need to think bigger, as remittances are mostly sent by the first generation and drops significantly among the second and subsequent generations.
- (c) **The future is not male.** To reiterate, the focus so far has been on the first generation, often males with tertiary education. But what about others who do not fit this profile, especially those in the second and subsequent generations of the diaspora who associate with broader ideas and identities? For example, there is a growing trend of migration among women. Are we limiting our knowledge and experiences by not using more disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data?
- (d) **Looking beyond the dichotomy of origin and settlement countries.** We have already seen that identities transcend these concepts. The idea of the nation-State is not the only source of identity. Generationally, people associate with broader identities that extend beyond the nation-State. Thus, diaspora engagement can be initiated from beyond these two sites. Regional institutions, such as ASEAN and the African Union, for example, can develop blueprints for member States to establish policies that support diaspora engagement across borders.
- (e) **“Governments can create “triple wins” for migrants, countries of origin and destination countries.”**<sup>2</sup> Diaspora engagement is not only for the benefit of the settlement country, but also the origin country. Promoting growth and development in the origin country can increase youth employment opportunities, for example. Also, having a population that can bring back different perspectives and circulation of knowledge creates space for more incredible ideas and solutions.

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<sup>2</sup> Kofi Anan, United Nations Secretary-General, at the High-Level Dialogue of the General Assembly on International Migrations and Development, 14 September 2006, New York.

# The future of diasporas

Kingsley Aikins<sup>3</sup> and Martin Russell, PhD<sup>4</sup>

The pandemic is rampaging out of control and has the world by the throat – economies are decimated, millions are dead, and people are exhausted, scared and nervous. However, the year is 1918 – not 2020 – and the pandemic described is the Spanish flu, which is wreaking havoc across the globe. And yet, and yet this awful tragedy was followed by an extraordinary period of creativity, innovation and growth that led to the “Roaring Twenties”. This era of development was fuelled by two drivers: technology and pent-up capital. In the United States of America, mass electrification and the production of millions of motor cars led to the construction of roads and highways, hotels, restaurants and sports stadiums. Radio linked the nation and movies entertained the masses. Success went to individuals and companies who embraced technology.

So what if, just a little over 100 years later, we have a “repeat performance”, fuelled again by technology – through, for example, the global rollout of 5G broadband and massive investment in the green economy – and pent-up capital?

And what is the lesson from all this?

*Don't get down – get ready.*

As they say in Ireland, “When business is down, that is when you paint the shop.” We are in for a period of great disruption and turbulence, but also opportunity. The McKinsey Global Institute, in its recent report, *The Future of Work after COVID-19*, states that 100 million people in eight major world economies will have to switch occupations between now and 2030.<sup>5</sup> Companies have started reconfiguring their staff structures and people are going to have to reconsider their career options. Change is, indeed, in the air. As the Chief Executive Officer of Mercedes Benz said, “Change is happening now faster than ever before and never will be as slow again.”

This new reality means that success in the past is no guarantee of success in the future, and the strategies that got us to where we are today will not get us to where we want to go in the future. As the legendary American management consultant, Peter Drucker, said many decades ago, “To create the future, you have to be the enemy of today”. Much earlier, famed British anthropologist and evolutionary theorist Charles Darwin had postulated that “those who survive are the ones who most accurately perceive their environment and successfully adapt to it.” Given this backdrop, it is worth asking ourselves three questions: Are we in for more or less dramatic shocks to the system in the future? Will the pace of change increase or

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3 Kingsley Aikins is Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Dublin-based The Networking Institute. Prior to holding this position, he was, for 17 years, the Boston-based Worldwide CEO of The Ireland Funds, a global philanthropic organization that raises funds from the Irish diaspora for projects on the island of Ireland. Before that, he was the Sydney-based representative of the Irish Trade Board and the Industrial Development Agency (IDA Ireland). He is an economics graduate of Trinity College Dublin.

4 Martin Russell completed his doctorate in diaspora strategies and conflict transformation at the University College Dublin (UCD) Clinton Institute, where his research focused on diaspora media, diaspora philanthropy and diaspora politics. He was a visiting fellow at the United Nations University – Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT) and is currently an adviser at The Networking Institute. He also sits on the advisory board of Ireland Reaching Out and, having worked globally on diaspora issues, has a long publication record that includes several diaspora strategies and policies.

5 Susan Lund, Anu Madgavkar, James Manyika, Sven Smit, Kweilin Ellingrud, Mary Meaney and Olivia Robinson, *The Future of Work After COVID-19* (New York, McKinsey Global Institute, 2021). Available at [www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/the-future-of-work-after-covid-19](http://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/the-future-of-work-after-covid-19).

decrease? Will there be greater or less competition among nations in the world economy? Our guess is that the answer is in the affirmative for each of these questions.

So, what does all of this mean for the world of diaspora engagement? Where will it be a decade from now?

We suggest a series of opportunities.

Just as it was back in 1918, when success went to individuals and companies who embraced technology, so will it be today and in the future. When it comes to diasporas, it would help us to ask these perennial questions:

- Who are they?
- Where are they?
- What are they doing?

If we are to be truthful, we would admit that we do not have the answers to these questions today – but we might, a decade from now.

COVID-19 has accelerated a trend towards adopting the principle that it is more important what you do than where you are. This has huge implications for work, including among diasporas. In the old days, your geography dictated your identity. Nowadays you can live a “hyphenated” life as an Irish–American, Greek–Australian or Polish–Canadian. Accordingly, it does not matter where you live. What really matters is what your skills are. We used to say that “Geography is destiny.” Now we say, “Geography is history.”

A decade from now, there will be increased distinction between the nation and the State, with the latter being determined by lines on a map and the former being a global notion of belonging. This is important, as rooting diaspora engagement in the idea of belonging opens up many other opportunities for the diaspora sector. For example, we are seeing how a sense of belonging to a place or organization has interwoven with diaspora engagement, with new areas to explore such as alumni engagement, diversity and inclusion, local development, and private sector engagement, including diaspora marketing.

We can already see how the Indian diaspora has developed, in a relatively short period of time, a sense of “global Indianness”. Countries have built “empires” not through military might or economic prowess, but through the mere fact that so many of their people who have left still retain a sense of allegiance and connection to them.

A decade from now, there will be increased awareness of the potential of diaspora capital, which we at The Networking Institute define as the overseas resources available to a country, region, city, locality or organization. This capital is made up of flows of people, knowledge and finance. Over 100 countries, cities and regions are now actively putting in place strategies consisting of policies, programmes and projects to connect to this capital. These will increase over the next decade, and governments, multilateral organizations and corporations will be drawn to the diaspora sector, with investment in it growing substantially. It will no longer be seen as wholly the preserve of foreign affairs departments, but a “whole-of-government” and “cross-sectoral” issue that needs time, attention and resources.

Remittances will continue to increase, but they must be seen as a pathway for – rather than the endgame of – diaspora capital potential. This journey of development in diaspora engagement will accelerate due to intergenerational transfers of wealth. Such transfers, which Accenture

estimates will amount to over USD 30 trillion between now and 2050 in North America alone,<sup>6</sup> will have a strong diaspora dimension as people decide how to distribute their wealth and, later in life, appreciate the importance of their countries of origin, ancestry or affinity. They will want this to reflect in their philanthropic decision-making. Philanthropy can be a powerful “first step” in engaging diasporas with their home countries and can act as a “portal” to get them involved, which can then lead to multifaceted engagement.

Ten years from now, environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors will be well entrenched in business life, and impact investing will attract huge amounts of capital. The generation coming into the global job market over the next decade will want to work for companies with a purpose and that are conscious of their environmental impact and footprint. This generation will punish companies that they do not see as doing the right thing. Future generations will be wired with an ethical constitution that bodes well for the well-being of diaspora engagement as the core of what makes diaspora work so strong: A sense of belonging and specifically, an emotional connection, is coded within this morality.

There will be a strong dimension to the influence of diasporas on trade and investment, with the awareness that diasporas can constitute an interesting and significant subset of foreign direct investment, sometimes referred to as diaspora direct investment. Diasporas have high levels of motivation to invest in their home countries despite difficulties that might otherwise deter non-diaspora investors. They have knowledge and expertise globally and locally. They have both financial resources and networks of “A and I” – affluence and influence.

A decade from now, a heightened realization that diasporas do not have to return to their home country to have influence will be mainstream. In fact, they could have better impact by being successful away from, rather than failing at home. Instantaneous connectivity via technology means that they can be involved all the time.

Finally, governments will increasingly see the potential of the “soft power” of their diasporas. (As defined by Professor Joseph Nye of Harvard University, soft power refers to the ability of a country to achieve its aims through attraction rather than coercion.)<sup>7</sup> As such, diaspora diplomacy will become increasingly mainstreamed.

Indeed, an interesting exercise is to look back about 15 years. If we had said back then, “I am in an Uber, on an iPhone, booking an AirBnB in Dublin”, the only name in that sentence you would have recognized would be “Dublin” because the other three were not yet in common parlance.

Hence, the decade to come will be marked by the impacts of exponential change. Building global networks will be key, and diasporas represent such an opportunity. All countries – and small countries particularly – as well as many actors in the public and private sectors, are going to need their friends, or diasporas, around the world. Therefore, putting in place expansive, imaginative and effective diaspora engagement strategies will bring great rewards as these “lost actors” are turned into assets.

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6 Accenture, *Point of View: The “Greater” Wealth Transfer*, Wealth and Asset Management Services Series (Chicago, Accenture, 2012).

7 Joseph S. Nye, Jr, *Soft Power: The Means to Success In World Politics* (New York, PublicAffairs, 2005).



# Raising the future of diasporas on their own terms: A new sense of belonging

Emira Ajeti<sup>8</sup>

## *Diaspora as a notion*

I have probably known the term “diaspora” ever since I was a little girl. In Kosovo<sup>9</sup> and Bosnia and Herzegovina, both my places of origin and both located in South-eastern Europe, people have always been proud of their diasporas, because they are the ones to step up for them in their greatest times of need. To be frank, I remember being a bit jealous of not having any close family members abroad while growing up, because those who did had a support system in place.

By 2009, about 30 per cent of households in post-war Kosovo<sup>9</sup> had one or more members living abroad.<sup>10</sup> Today, Kosovo’s<sup>9</sup> diaspora contributes to over 30 per cent of its GDP and accounts for the majority share of foreign direct investment inflows (around EUR 300 million annually) and over EUR 1.2 billion spent on export services. Similarly, more than two decades after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, an estimated 2 million Bosnians and their descendants live in the diaspora, many of whom are involuntary immigrants.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the diasporas of both Kosovo<sup>9</sup> and Bosnia and Herzegovina, pre- and post-war, have proven to serve as safety nets for their homelands in difficult times. After all, the most devastating of memories and those shaped by certain traumas often hold the most potential to unite communities.

## *Diaspora identity: Where are you really from?*

I was part of the diaspora myself during my bachelor’s studies in Europe, and then again in the United States of America during my MBA studies and earlier professional development. Also, as a child from a mixed marriage in the Balkans, I got asked all kinds of questions, to which I always had rehearsed answers that were a legacy of who I thought I and my family were. My sense of identity often changed across different settings or contexts, or with different people. Basically, I needed more than one identity!

Much too often, on top of being asked the classic, “Who are you, and where are you from?”, I was quickly asked the additional, “...where are you *really* from?”

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8 Emira Ajeti, MBA and diaspora advisor, is a dynamic leader with over 13 years of experience in bridging the gap between the private and the public sectors. She has interacted intensively with the African and Balkan diasporas, and has most recently designed and developed diaspora engagement national policies, strategies and action plans for Mauritius and Lesotho, as well as diaspora mapping and profiling exercises and other research papers in relation to Egyptian migrants. She also serves on the advisory board of the iDiaspora platform of IOM.

9 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

10 Russell King and Julie Vullnetari, “Remittances, return, diaspora: framing the debate in the context of Albania and Kosovo”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 9(4):385–406 (2009).

11 Estimate cited in: Adna Karamelic-Oates, “Reconceptions of ‘home’ and identity within the post-war Bosnian Diaspora in the United States” [PhD dissertation], Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Alexandria, Virginia, 2018.

Most diaspora members are too familiar with this follow-up question. They know that they have to face these minor interrogations to legitimize who they are and how they got to where they are today. And it is always easiest to let others define your identity for you and go along with whatever they choose to believe about who you are, because while your lifestyle at home may mirror the lifestyle from your country of origin, you are also exploring your other identity – that is, one based on your host country – every day while at school or at work.

That is why I believe all of us “hybrids” have a hard time isolating ourselves from cultures and communities to define who we are, and at some point in our lives most of us start to question where home is to us.

### Inheriting the homeland

Diasporas can be key to ensuring that their homelands capture the “hearts and minds” of other countries and their people – that is, to reach a universal appeal as a diverse product in form and content, and thus build trust among global audiences to better influence diplomatic choices and outcomes.

I myself have met and networked with various diasporas all my life – and let me tell you this: They are certainly the most powerful medium to spread messages and narratives about their home countries. To date, they have influenced what I think of their respective countries of origin.

Yet, in much of the diaspora engagement work I have been involved in, I have often witnessed how governments make the mistake of communicating with limited diaspora groups that are not necessarily representative of their respective diasporas, as a diaspora is not a unified group of people motivated by a single agenda. Instead, a diaspora comprises of many generations of migrants with different occupations, skills, ages, attitudes, concerns, ideals, motivations, levels of technological savviness and levels of connection to the homeland. This is why a low level of success is to be expected from generalized efforts to promote the homeland.

Similarly, I have often been a witness of the formation of various diaspora groups across the globe, be they business or cultural associations and networks, which unfortunately did not represent the interests and needs of the wider diaspora they held themselves accountable to. Thus, they would end up alienating especially the youngest of the diaspora – the future generation.

Despite an increasing shift in gender roles among the younger diaspora, many of the first-generation diaspora who desire to pass on their emotional attachments to their homelands to their children continue to do so through an inherited patriarchal mindset. As such, the men of the family keep in touch with the homeland, or are active diaspora leaders, while they trickle down their connection to homeland to their family members, especially children raised in host countries. In that way, these men become the bridge between their homeland and the rest of their family members, as they continue to transmit to them the distinct skills that are unique to their country of origin, loyalties and homeland ties.

In such cases, children are expected to “inherit the homeland”, but rarely do they find their own, unique connection to the country of origin. Instead, they merely adapt to the boundaries of the connection to the homeland imposed by the head of the household – even when they are not able to truly understand and feel that connection.

## Raising the future: A new sense of belonging and engagement

There is a growing range of opportunities to develop ties to the homeland, thanks to technology and the driving desire of many youngsters wanting to be part of things that matter. Fortunately, the diaspora may just be one of the most imperative mediums to meet that demand.

Ensuring that diaspora work is done through caring available actions that promote equality and inclusivity is very important to future generations. Due to the catalytic reawakening of diasporas as a result of the current pandemic, we have already started to see how a representative diaspora engagement approach can only be delivered by developing a sense of inclusive belonging in harmony with contemporary diaspora ties to the homeland, spurred by untapped diaspora capital.

That is why raising the future – the next generation of world citizens – around their sense of belonging has never been more important. And while allowing them to build their sense of belonging on their own terms may result in an entirely new form of belonging, it can be just as powerful.

The latter has recently been illustrated by women in the diaspora, who have managed to increasingly contribute to changing gender roles and family dynamics back home, both by distancing themselves from the sometimes-forced clinking of their communities to their regressive cultures, as well as by being the main source of financial support for their families back home, accounting for women empowerment and increased opportunities. Therein lies the power of diaspora in transferring new, progressive ideas and attitudes to their homelands.

Hence, exploring contemporary ties with the homeland is crucial to helping the diaspora address the big concern for them – the intergenerational preservation of diasporic connection – and ease their struggle with the evolving parameters of affinity and belonging that cut across generations. These unique ties represent the newly made individual connections to the homeland, which are nurtured and ever-changing, and are unlike the ties developed and passed along by generations before migration to host countries started to take place.

Culture is a perfect example of what makes the diaspora reminisce, laugh and sometimes tear up. It builds upon various surfacing emotions and is at the core of diaspora engagement. But how will new generations adapt culture as a way of diaspora engagement?

Young members of diasporas have their own ways of transnational engagement in culture, arts, humanitarianism, climate change and tourism which provide an interesting lens into the agility afforded to diaspora work by technology. Engaging diaspora youth by mixing home and host elements and capitalizing on fun and immersive ways to explore their stories, including diaspora competitions, are some unique ways to get the next generation going.

Throughout my most recent work on diaspora engagement in Mauritius, we explored the great potential of both music and dance, as two important intangible cultural expressions, which are an added value to Mauritian diplomacy for nation-branding, given how “multi-musical” Mauritius is. In that context, young Mauritians abroad have been observed to mix old or traditional elements of Mauritian music and dance with the new(er) or modern music and dance styles of their host countries or elsewhere, therefore promoting their Mauritian heritage abroad. The same applies to the famous Mauritius cuisine, which is probably one of the strongest connections that young Mauritians have to their roots.

There remains a clear knowledge gap regarding diasporas' forthcoming contributions to development, attributable to the novelty of and the rapid changes in this field. As the needs of future generations change, so will the concept of diaspora.

Forthcoming generations of diasporas are closely watching what corporations and governments are doing as they navigate the space of diaspora engagement, for the future of diaspora engagement must lie in our ability to influence the change we want to see in the world.

# Using technology to channel diaspora knowledge home

Ronit Avni<sup>12</sup>

*This article is adapted from a chapter written for the forthcoming Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Diplomacy.*

## Brain drain beginnings

In the 1950s, the Royal Society drew attention to a big problem: Top scientists and doctors who were educated and trained in England were leaving for the United States of America. The Royal Society sounded the alarm – worried about the impact of these departures on the national economy – and is credited with coining the term “brain drain”.<sup>13</sup>

What was true in Britain 70 years ago is still top-of-mind for governments around the world. Countries lose up to 30 per cent of the population that they have nurtured and educated to brain drain.

In the past, when accomplished professionals wanted to give back to their communities of origin, there were a handful of ways they could do so: They could channel tourism dollars back home as visitors, or they could volunteer, invest or send remittances. These activities, while important, required considerable time, money and/or logistical planning. For most diasporans, barriers to giving back without having to return on a regular basis were simply too high.

## Shifting to brain gain

To compete in this era of exponential technological and data-enabled economic transformation, societies need every highly skilled person they can find – especially those they have nurtured and educated. This is why China, for example, has historically maintained policies to stay connected to Chinese academics and scientists abroad,<sup>14</sup> and to incentivize and celebrate returnees.

There have been efforts in some places to encourage the return of their top talent using financial incentives, to mixed results. Nearly a decade ago, a fund was set up in Kosovo<sup>15</sup> to encourage top professors to return home. Yet over a four-year period, not a single eligible candidate applied for the endowed positions.

Kosovo<sup>15</sup> also set up a diaspora registry and asked respondents to fill in three core data points: a diasporan’s name, occupation and location. This example illustrates the traditional approach countries have adopted to engage diaspora professionals, which involves locating talent abroad and appealing to them to come home, or to invest or contribute.

12 Ronit Avni is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Localized. A Peabody Award-winning producer and founder of the media organization, Just Vision, she was selected as a Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum in 2009. Originally from Montreal, Canada, Ronit is now based in Washington, D.C.

13 See, for example: Mario Cervantes and Dominique Guellec, “The brain drain: Old myths, new realities”, *OECD Observer*, January 2002, pp. 40–42. Available at [www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/oecd-observer/volume-2002/issue-1\\_observer-v2002-1-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/oecd-observer/volume-2002/issue-1_observer-v2002-1-en).

14 Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, “Converting migration drains into gains: Harnessing the resources of overseas professionals”, in: *Diasporas, Skills Transfer, and Remittances: Evolving Perceptions and Potential* (Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff and Clay Wescott, eds.) (Manila, Asian Development Bank, 2006). Available at [www.adb.org/publications/converting-migration-drains-gains-harnessing-resources-overseas-professionals](http://www.adb.org/publications/converting-migration-drains-gains-harnessing-resources-overseas-professionals).

15 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

This article argues that three very different questions – emblematic of a core shift in diaspora engagement – are essential to turning brain drain into brain gain.

## Knowledge remittances

Successful immigrant professionals want to share their time and expertise from their new homes. As part of our internal research before launching our company, Localized ([www.localized.world](http://www.localized.world)), we interviewed nearly 100 diaspora professionals from the Balkans to India, and from Ethiopia to the Middle East. Some were professors at top universities. Others worked in the private sector. Asked if they were willing to teach courses in their mother tongue remotely, many professors answered in the affirmative. Ferdi Alimadhi, Senior Director of Engineering and Products at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), is one such example. As MIT professor Ethan Zuckerman reflected to me about his colleagues: “It’s a great idea – virtually every expat professor I know has some involvement with her home country, so finding a framework to formalize it is very smart.”

In a 2016 World Bank survey,<sup>16</sup> 87 per cent of diaspora professionals from the Middle East and Northern Africa strongly agreed with the statement, “I am willing to invest time in mentoring individuals back in my country of origin.” In fact, the same study found that more people were willing to do this than to give money.

Let us put that in perspective: If monetary remittances already account for USD 600 billion annually, and more people are willing to give their expertise and time than their money, imagine unleashing the knowledge remittance economy at scale. As a practitioner, and not an academic, I define knowledge remittances as the highly technical, scientific or professional know-how and expertise that diaspora professionals can share with their communities of heritage. I recently learned that these fall within a broader category that Peggy Levitt termed “social remittances”,<sup>17</sup> which encompasses a very wide range of values, behaviours and practices that “migrants bring home with them or that they send home from abroad.”

## Unleashing the knowledge remittance economy

The World Economic Forum projects that 65 per cent of children today will work in jobs that have not yet been invented. You cannot train students for jobs that do not yet exist, but you can future-proof them by connecting them to people in sectors at the vanguard of change, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, education technology, financial technology, medical technology and more. This is why schools like Stanford University are building what is called a “career community” – so that no matter what field a student chooses to go into, they can talk to experts who can see the trends in these industries, identify gaps in them, and maybe even offer the student a job.

Stanford draws upon its alumni to serve as that career community. Now what if, for countries facing brain drain, diaspora experts could serve that same function – that is, as a “career community” to young people around the world? Suddenly, diasporas become assets by living abroad – if their knowledge can be harnessed and channelled home at scale.

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16 Mariem Mezghenni Malouche, Sonia Plaza and Fanny Salsac, “Mobilizing the Middle East and North Africa diaspora for economic integration and entrepreneurship” (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2016). Available at [www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/publication/mobilizing-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-diaspora-for-economic-integration-and-entrepreneurship](http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/publication/mobilizing-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-diaspora-for-economic-integration-and-entrepreneurship).

17 Thomas Lacroix, Peggy Levitt and Ilka Vari-Lavoisier, “Social remittances and the changing transnational political landscape”, *Comparative Migration Studies*, (2016)4:16. DOI 10.1186/s40878-016-0032-0.

In other words, brain drain may become brain gain precisely because diaspora professionals do not move home, but instead channel their experiences, learnings, social capital and more to their countries of heritage remotely. This is the inverse of the previous model, which required professionals to return in some form. Thus, a professor like Ferdi is better placed to help Albanians from his post at MIT than he would be by moving back home.

Taking this idea a step further: While there may not be four or five Albanian-speaking professors in Ferdi's department at MIT, if you aggregate professors like Ferdi across a range of top universities and disciplines, you are likely to find between 5 and 10 who teach engineering, education or medicine. These professors would be willing to teach in Albanian remotely. Thus, entirely new and highly relevant majors can be combined in financial technology, medical technology and educational technology, among others, by bringing together these professors' courses, without any of them having to relocate with their families. The cost of such a programme would be minimal, but the benefits could be exponential – yet this approach has yet to be tried at scale.

To be fair, attempts have been made by countries to connect students with diaspora mentors. Our internal research showed that small countries that attempted this approach often failed, since they had to build and maintain technology platforms while engaging their diaspora members. We learned that if each society – from Jordan to the Republic of Moldova – stays siloed by focusing on developing platforms exclusively for their youth, their efforts become expensive and hard to sustain, especially since these platforms are largely volunteer-driven. More significantly, you lose out on potential partnerships with large companies that may have multiple diaspora communities in their ranks but are unwilling to favor one over another. Our conclusion was that since countries from Armenia to Ethiopia faced the same challenge, the problem should be addressed at scale.

Because knowledge now flows in all directions, diaspora professionals stand to gain more than just the pride and satisfaction of being able to give back. They – and the organizations they serve – can gain market insights, access to talent pools and exposure to new approaches to tackling problems.

A Gallup poll in the United States before COVID-19<sup>18</sup> found that companies in every industry are growing their distributed workforces. This trend has only accelerated over the last year. Now employers need to find, train and retain excellent employees – no matter where they live – and diaspora members can help. Specifically, diaspora members can serve as cultural ambassadors and as a critical link between employers and fresh talent.

Over the years of interacting with global professionals whose “hearts are in two places”, we found that they are not interested in being compensated monetarily for their time or expertise – frankly, they do not need it, and it is often said to “cheapen the experience”. Instead, they are driven by a desire to make a difference and to ensure that they – and especially their children – stay connected to their roots.

On the basis of these and other insights, our team created Localized, a career tech company that helps students and recent graduates prepare for the future of work. Through our platform – which draws on diaspora professionals – youth can access career guidance, role models and expertise from global professionals who share their language, culture and roots. As the ecosystem grows, we invite employers on to look for talent. Once again, diaspora professionals play a key role – because they understand the credentials of students from their communities of heritage, they can translate these credentials for recruiters and human resource leads.

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<sup>18</sup> Gallup, *State of the American Workplace* (Washington D.C., Gallup, 2017). Available at [www.gallup.com/workplace/285818/state-american-workplace-report.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/workplace/285818/state-american-workplace-report.aspx).

Localized is not the only initiative working to harness diaspora expertise. Other examples of platform-based approaches to diaspora engagement include [HireLebanese.com](https://hirelebanese.com), Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund and BuildPalestine. What is central to all of these approaches is the recognition that diaspora professionals are better placed to be of service from abroad and can leverage technology and resources to do so at scale.

“Proximate role models” are people we aspire to be because we recognize ourselves in them. Their experience, daring or success motivates us, even if our interaction with them is more limited than with traditional mentors. These are the people that make us feel that “if they can do it, maybe we can, too.” Proximate role models often lead us to “Aha!” moments wherein we feel energized and challenged to reach for more.

A tech executive from Jordan described how his life changed when a Microsoft employee, also from Jordan, spoke to his senior class during an hour-long session. Seeing someone from his country land a job at a company like Microsoft broadened his sense of what was possible. And it only took an hour. Today he works at Google in Dubai and volunteers for Localized to give back to fellow Jordanians.

An hour of a proximate role model’s time can be life-changing for others, especially students who may not otherwise have access to mentors in cutting-edge fields. Diaspora professionals thus have an important role to play as proximate role models.

This brings us back to the Kosovo<sup>15</sup> diaspora registry, which asked for each respondent’s name, profession and address. Yet knowing where someone lives and their occupation (lawyer, physician, engineer, etc.) is much less useful than understanding their areas of technical expertise and how much time, if any, they would be willing to volunteer. In these days of specialization, “engineer” is an almost meaningless category, but an expert in cloud computing, crypto-analytics or machine learning is not. Someone’s current address has marginal utility if they are not willing to return to the home country. On the other hand, knowing if an expert in data science can devote 10 hours a week to teaching or mentoring remotely can be priceless for the individuals impacted.

Many countries are now recognizing the strategic importance of their diaspora communities when it comes to increasing their geopolitical influence, remittances and economic growth. However, few have taken the leap to digitally incentivize, celebrate and reward those who contribute their knowledge remittances from afar. With the spread of COVID-19 and the rise of remote learning and remote work, the time is ripe to channel these knowledge remittances at scale.



# A world without diasporas

Roberto Gil Cancel Comas<sup>19</sup>

What if, in 20 years, there was no more diaspora engagement at all? What if, as a field of public policy and international cooperation, it simply no longer existed? No more diaspora policies or strategies to be developed or implemented. Where, instead, governments recognize transnational communities as simply another constituency whose needs, resources and aspirations must be taken into account in every public policy, whose voices must be heard because of the important role they play in the sustainable development and resilience of the country. Imagine a world without diasporas, where transnational communities are considered an integral part of society and not merely a distant “add-on” visible only during elections and times of crisis or when promoting investment opportunities. Imagine nations without physical boundaries, conceived of as global interdependent communities bound instead by a sense of duty, responsibility and care.

This vision may seem, at turns, utopian or dystopian depending on one’s perspective but, in either case, it is not beyond the realm of possibility. Whether it happens in 20 or 80 years, the increasing recognition of the importance and potential of transnational communities has already become almost universal. While some States aim to control and others seek to empower, most understand the incredible impact that these communities have on the economies, public opinion, and even norms and values in their societies of origin. Although, in fact, diasporas can and do impact their countries of destination, as well as giving back to their countries of origin, the latter will be the focus of this article.

But why focus on countries of origin? Well, the answer is twofold. First, from a practical perspective, countries of origin have generally been the most active in developing policies and programmes to engage with diaspora communities. Second, from a more conceptual point of view, diasporas are a natural extension of the “territorial nation” of countries of origin. The latter point is at the crux of this vision of a world without diasporas.

The modern nation-State is heavily predicated on the notion that the natural unit of political administration is the “nation” – a somewhat nebulous concept – to the extent that the widest-reaching international governing body is called the “United Nations”, not “United Countries” or “United States”. It has even crept into the very language used in discussing global issues or activities, in terms such as “international” and “transnational”.

What constitutes a nation is far from universally agreed upon and, in fact, changes depending on context. That said, etymologically speaking, “nation” has its root very clearly in the idea of sharing a common origin, coming from Latin *nasci*, which means “be born”.<sup>20</sup> It is in this root that the potential lies for the diaspora, as a group of people who share a common origin – even if only an imagined sociocultural construct – to become part and parcel of this fundamental concept underpinning the global political landscape. This is not a novel idea; it can be found clearly expressed in the below quote from a task force report by the Irish Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2002:

19 Roberto Gil Cancel Comas is Senior Regional Labour Mobility and Human Development Specialist for South America at the International Organization for Migration. He has been working to empower migrants and members of various diaspora groups for over a decade. He has a master’s degree in cultures and development studies from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and, as a migrant and part of the Puerto Rican diaspora, has accrued diverse experience spanning from East Asia to Europe, and from North Africa to the Americas.

20 This can be contrasted with “State”, which comes from the Latin *status*, meaning “position, place, posture or condition” See: [www.etymonline.com/word/state](http://www.etymonline.com/word/state).

A key thread running through this report has been a conviction that the Irish Abroad are an integral part of the Irish Nation and must be recognised and treated as such. As the Constitution recognises, nationality is essentially about identity, not territory. Those who have left this country remain part of what we are as a Nation.<sup>21</sup>

The impacts of this inclusive approach to the notion of nation on diaspora engagement policies and programmes cannot be understated. Often today, diaspora engagement is treated merely as a subsidiary policy area under the umbrella of migration governance; such an inclusive notion would effectively mainstream diaspora engagement in national policies across all relevant sectors. This is important because migration policy can be politically sensitive and become fodder for heated debate in many countries, as political parties instrumentalize the issue for electoral ends. In this way, the policy area often does not receive the due attention, care and resources it merits, a deficiency of which diaspora engagement has suffered by extension. However, if members of diaspora are recognized as an extension of the nation, their needs and potential must be addressed in every sectoral policy – from education and employment to economic development. This would constitute a fundamental reprioritization of the role of transnational communities in society. Yet this approach is not so distant from how many States already formulate their work on diaspora engagement.

The term “diaspora” is far from being universally applied, with States around the world choosing, for a variety of reasons, to use other terminology to refer to work that one might refer to as diaspora engagement. Some States – for example, in the Middle East – prefer to eschew the term due to its associations with the Jewish diaspora and, ergo, the modern State of Israel, while others have found other formulations a better fit for their national realities. While there are a variety of alternative formulations, a common one is some variant of “nationals abroad”, which can be found in use throughout South America, as well as the Middle East and North Africa. While this formulation may, at times, denote a narrower constituency – that is, those born in and with the citizenship of the country of origin – in other cases, it is used more broadly and synonymously with “diaspora” in its modern sense, that is, to include all first-generation migrants regardless of citizenship, as well as second and third generations. This is the case with Morocco, for example, where public policies use the terms *marocains résidents à l'étranger* (“Moroccans living abroad”) and *marocains du monde* (“global Moroccans”) to cover both emigrants and their descendants based on the fact that the Moroccan Nationality Code states that everyone born to a Moroccan father or mother is automatically considered a Moroccan national.<sup>22</sup> While still framed within the logic of a narrow definition of “nation” as comprising those with the country’s nationality, the notion of “automatic nationality”, irrespective of whether one undertakes the administrative procedures to formalize one’s status, means that the Moroccan nation, in practice, is an inclusive one.

A key in the approach described above is the recognition of dual citizenship. Above and beyond the administrative facilitation, what is more fundamental is the acknowledgement that national identity is non-exclusive, and that loyalty is not a zero-sum game. Feeling Moroccan or Maghrebi does not detract from one’s French-ness, or vice versa, nor would it if that person also feels an affinity for the United Kingdom after studying and working there for several years. What is more, it is exactly these people with multi-layered and multifaceted identities who are best placed to find solutions of mutual benefit by discovering ways of serving their various communities rather than seeing the interests of each inherently in competition. This, in turn, is a potent perspective much needed to meet the global challenges the world faces today.

21 Brian Cowen, “Ireland and the Irish abroad: Report of the Task Force on Policy regarding Emigrants to the Minister for Foreign Affairs”, August 2002. Available at [www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebsitemedia/ourrolesandpolicies/TaskForceReport.pdf](http://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebsitemedia/ourrolesandpolicies/TaskForceReport.pdf)

22 Rilke Mahieu, “Diaspora policies, consular services and social protection for Moroccan citizens abroad”, in: *Migration and Social Protection in Europe and Beyond (Vol. 3)* (Jean-Michel Lafleur and Daniela Vintila, eds.), IMISCOE Research Series (Cham, Switzerland, Springer, 2020), pp. 231–246.

Examples, like the one of Morocco, may still be outliers today; however, the spotlight that the COVID-19 pandemic has put on the incredible contributions, beyond remittances, that diasporas make to their countries of origin could see an acceleration in the evolution of diaspora engagement practices. It is, of course, impossible to know what shape this evolution will take, but its melting into an expanded, inclusive notion of nation is a tantalizing prospect, as such an outcome would not only impact transnational communities and how States conceive of and enact their relationships with them. In fact, the conceptual implications are far-reaching. An inclusive notion of nation would signify a decoupling of the nation from the physical territory of the State, as the State's obligations would reside with every member of that nation, regardless of where they live in the world. Thus, a world without diasporas would be populated by nations without borders.



# How does diplomacy fare in a digitized world?

Paul Raymund P. Cortes<sup>23</sup>

Policy emanates from the will of the people. It springs forth from the desires of the community and what they perceive as priorities, as far as their goals are concerned, and the strategies to be used to achieve these goals. If a democratic government is to be true to its mandate – to echo the voice of its people or, in the case of diplomatic and consular missions abroad, to be the voice of its diaspora – then a deeper interaction or dialogue between missions and its overseas communities must be put in place.

Understanding the needs of a migrant community should be the paramount objective of diplomatic missions. Absent any sort of coordination between a mission and its overseas community, there would exist a disharmony between the government's and the community's views on how to reach the community's goals. Moreover, goals that are sorted out as priorities by the government, and not by the people themselves, exacerbate this disconnect. For instance, imagine a local government unit coming up with a programme that would highlight the tourism potential of a municipality, only to find out that the people in the township do not welcome the influx of thousands of tourists, as it would destroy the environmental grounds they deem sacred. The policy process leading to the push for tourism should have first begun with understanding the needs of the local community and, from there, balancing that understanding with the overall or national strategy towards development goals.

In the case of the diaspora, one should keep in mind that the overseas community stays on while personalities or officials of the diplomatic and consular missions get rotated every so often. Keeping track of the diaspora's direction, therefore, is a determinant of a migrant community's successful journey as productive additions to their host communities and resources for their home countries' development tools.

With this in mind, assuming my first post in the Middle East and as my first as Chief of Mission, in mid-2015, I knew that much of my efforts here would be to effectively liaise, partner and collaborate with the community. My priority was to dialogue, to the best of my ability, with the overseas Filipino community and understand how they feel the consulate – that is, our diplomatic mission – must guide them towards their desired goals.

Considering the number of Filipinos in the United Arab Emirates, this strategy of continued engagement with the community is challenging, if not logistically infeasible. There are an estimated 650,000 to 700,000 Filipinos in the country – possibly even more. That said, the overseas Filipino community in this part of the world is massive and a defining element, not only as far as its place within the overall migrant community is concerned, but also with regard to tackling Philippine social, economic, cultural and even political development issues back home – albeit only if the diaspora is able to share in the process of defining policy and its subsequent execution.

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23 His Excellency Paul Raymund P. Cortes has been serving as Consul General of the Philippines to Dubai and the Northern Emirates, United Arab Emirates since 2015. He previously held the position of Vice-consul and then Consul of the Embassy of the Philippines in Budapest, and Consul and then Deputy Consul General of the Philippines in Honolulu, Hawaii. He also served as Director of the Office of ASEAN Affairs of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines. Mr Cortes holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from the Ateneo de Manila University and a master's degree in public management from the University of the Philippines.

Community engagement is a task that needs to be analysed and requires detailed planning. Obviously, there is merit to beginning with perceived community leaders who represent segments of the community through professional organizations, groups representing specific regions of the country they are from, civic organizations or associations related to the arts or subfields thereof.

Just as we hit the ground running, in mid-2015, we began communicating with a group of artists who lamented the lack of a place to showcase and share the fruits of their artistic endeavours, such as paintings, illustrations and photographs. These were Filipinos, who were active contributors to the domestic art scene back home and now live here in the United Arab Emirates as company employees, have no access to art or venues for collective displays of their art. When we thought of opening the consulate to regular exhibits of the works of overseas Filipinos, this brewed more interest among artists in the Filipino community to use the consulate as a space or repository for their artistic expressions.

We also came up with a programme for Filipino songwriters who did not have an avenue for showcasing their music. Dubai Dubai Musikahan was a songwriting competition that targeted Filipinos who wrote, composed and produced music. These were music creators whose work needed to be shared with audiences. By coming up with an initiative to highlight and present their work, there was more interest among those in the songwriting community, as well as performing arts society, to be part of the consulate's outreach programme. In addition, we also endeavoured to link the products of these initiatives with the local or domestic artistic community in the Philippines, providing a bridge for overseas Filipinos to songwriting opportunities back home and, perhaps, a chance to reintegrate themselves not only into the domestic economy but, more importantly, with our national artistic elements. They had become not just overseas Filipinos who help prop up the economy through their remittances, but also innovative contributors to our collective heritage.

Philippine school administrators and young overseas Filipino students, in our dialogues with them, shared the need for programmes that would train and strengthen the speaking and writing skills of our students. Articulation and self-expression, whether spoken or written, was key to having a diaspora that was unafraid to speak up for what they perceive are their rights and needs. The consulate then partnered with Filipino media practitioners to organize an inter-school debate competition and an inter-school journalism workshop for younger members of the diaspora. Another programme was The History Hour, a vlog series featuring Filipino students discussing and analysing key Philippine historical events relevant to nation-building.

There were more initiatives – in sports, financial literacy, entrepreneurship and a host of other areas. These experiences illustrate the crucial collaboration between the consular mission and the constituency within its jurisdiction. Such partnership, however, must be balanced with the host government's regulations in maintaining order, especially in a territory populated with ethnicities that cover the global population, diverse in religion, language, culture and philosophy. Ensuring a migrant population's continued development in its host country therefore becomes a product of the mission's partnerships with its community and the mission's guidance of its community, while taking into account the host country's regulatory environment.

The policymaker–diaspora bridge must be strengthened so that there is always free flow of information between the two sides. Since the advent of the digital and information age in the 2000s, avenues to achieve this end has grown leaps and bounds, such as through social media. Among Filipinos, it is Facebook and YouTube that is most popular and most used. Other media include Twitter, WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber and Instagram, among many others. It has not become difficult to monitor the pulse of the diaspora and their families back home. Tuned into the communities' "frequencies", policymakers should not find it time-consuming and resource-

heavy to spot trends and sense the direction of what migrant communities will demand and hope for.

Social media triggers a deeper interaction between origin countries and the migrant population. It allows constant dialogue, often in real time and demanding quick turnaround in the policymaking consultation, formulation and implementation cycle. The ubiquity of avenues for the public to express their perspectives makes it incumbent upon the government to be on the constant lookout for shifts in the public's paradigms and to be ready to respond to these shifts with appropriate policy swerves. With social media becoming more pervasive in the lives of many, missions cannot anymore play deaf to nor brush aside the pleas of their migrant communities.

Social media has also been widely used to fuel even more mobility. Undeniable is the proliferation of recruitment services enticing migrants to seek employment abroad via Facebook. Jobseekers do not have to look very far to search for opportunities that suit their educational and work experiences and their career paths and directions. Often, they are allowed access to greater movement without the need for excessive controls in origin countries. Many bypass these regulations, their movements becoming more fluid and labour increasingly market-oriented. With greater movement of people, policymakers are now forced to review their policies and amend them to suit migration trends and directions. Naturally, there are international obligations countries must abide by, which these trends may be off-tangent to and not be easily amended to suit the new shifts. But as foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy, States are obligated to respond more effectively to domestic concerns.

Social media also forces destination countries to be more attuned to global standards in migration, including those pertaining to the human, economic and social rights of the migrants. The kafala system has since seen major policy shifts in some Gulf countries, reflective of the demands by the migrant population and pressure from origin countries. The digital presence of migrants, recruiters and policymakers will certainly allow for changes in migration regulations more frequently, thus enabling them to be more responsive to trends.

With the playing field for public policy shifting digitally, it is highly crucial, therefore, for diplomatic and consular missions to adapt to and adopt a more virtual presence. Along with the conscious embrace of the concept of digital diplomacy by missions, engagement with the diaspora will see a shift from physical interactivity between the missions and their constituencies to virtual collaboration, so that more man-hours must be dedicated towards sustaining this new relationship. Foreign service officers and other personnel will need to undergo appropriate training to understand the rudiments of this new brand of diplomacy and use it effectively with its overseas communities. Critical new skills would include, among many others, the careful and judicious use of the deluge of information made available to diplomats, creating quicker and more personal communication lines with the diaspora and managing the emerging role of the overseas communities in the policy process. Those tasked with strategizing and managing the missions' digital footprint and social media accounts must be adept and adroit in crafting their messages in a manner that digital natives are familiar and proficient with, and in ensuring that these messages are efficient and effective as far as twenty-first-century digital norms are concerned.

In a decade or two, social media and other digital avenues will be key in the full governance process. Public policy practitioners and the citizenry will overwhelmingly use the digital network to fuel their objectives. Obviously, for a government to continue its mandate to represent its population, its diplomatic missions should strategize on how to maximize their resources to effect transition towards deeper use of the current and projected digital infrastructure within a whole-of-government framework.

Inevitably, those in charge of policy will come from the tail end of Generation Y and early Generation Z, who are all digital natives and more skilled in maneuvering the nexus between the public policy process and digital infrastructure, and in optimizing the use of social media for public information campaign procedures. Similarly, these Generation Y' and Z'ers will now be a part of the global workforce and migration circle, so that their perspectives are even more important to listen to and understand. In the case of the Philippines, as early as now, Twitter and Facebook are both playing decisive roles in discussions on migration and the international health-care response to the pandemic, forcing diplomats to closely monitor these social media avenues and even determining their course of action accordingly. Consultations with the public may or may not begin with the various groupings or associations we defined earlier, but the success of visual artists, songwriters or sports practitioners will certainly spur others in civil society to likewise plod their way through the once-mighty cordon that separated the public and their government's bureaucracy.

The future of migration will be more and more defined not by policymakers in their ivory tower, but by the population itself through their interaction and participation in the dialogue process via social media. Gone are the days when diplomatic missions are perceived as above and beyond their migrant populations. Their relevance now depends not on hobnobbing with host government players or their ruling elite, but with their capability to voice the concerns of their migrant populations and reflect their dreams. They must retool themselves as expressers of their people and avoid being advocates of an effete corps of impudent snobs, detached from the diaspora they have sworn to represent.

# The climate–development nexus and the role of the African diaspora

Saliem Fakir<sup>24</sup>

Crises breed melancholy, but they are also an opportunity to rethink old ways of doing things and reimagine the future – Africa’s global diaspora needs to be part of this reimagining. And many would, no doubt, want to be part of this process, given how rapidly Africa is urbanizing. Its urbanization rate is the fastest in the world at the moment.

In July 2003, the African Union Summit adopted amendments to the Constitutive Act of the African Union, including the insertion of subparagraph (q) in Article 3, which states: “Invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our Continent, in the building of the African Union.”

There have been several African Diaspora Ministerial Conferences, and the African Union has created institutional mechanisms for engagement with the African diaspora – which, unlike other diasporas, are often marginalized and subject to prejudice in countries in which they reside. Following an African Diaspora Ministerial Conference in 2012 and announcements of a plan of action, there still has been little development in terms of building stronger ties and networks.

It is proposed here that the climate–development nexus, largely couched as a risk to the continent (which it is), is also an opportunity to take the climate crisis challenge head on and reimagine the African economic and urban landscape. The climate–development nexus can be transformed from a negative to a proactive proposition for new investments in climate change adaptation and energy transition.

For one, Africa does not need to go through the traditional route of developing its electricity sector – like it did with mobile telephony – and can leap-frog the renewables revolution in Africa.

In mobile telephony, the diasporic community – through its their networks, skills and capital – enabled this leap-frogging process to unfold because diasporans best understood the ethos and the milieu within Africa to revolutionize the integration of the technology on the continent, not to mention other innovations that followed in financial technology and in the form of other mobile services.

There is no reason to believe that such application of ingenuity by those living on the continent and outside of it cannot be done in the climate–development nexus space. One way to build a bridge of relations and exchange between the African diaspora and resident Africans is to conceive of a grand challenge: a continent-wide programme for energy transition involving the private and public sectors.

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<sup>24</sup> Saliem Fakir is Executive Director of the newly established African Climate Foundation (ACF), which has a mandate to operate across the African continent on issues relating to energy transitions, sustainable land use and agriculture, and urban transitions.

The concept of a mission-oriented approach to development is being championed by Marianna Mazzucato in her latest book, *Mission Economy: A Moonshot Guide to Changing Capitalism*. The book features useful examples and approaches to mission-oriented programmes that are very applicable to the scale of the challenge in energy access currently faced in sub-Saharan Africa.

The climate–development nexus cannot be achieved without a conversation about a set of policy actions aimed at economic transformation. However, there are several things we first have to be cognizant of.

The first is pre- and post-colonial economic dependency on commodity-driven exports, especially in oil- and gas-producing countries that have not been able to translate them into positive dividends for the mass of Africans. Historical dependency on commodities and models of extractive relations with former colonial powers have uniquely shaped forms of economic production and exports. In Africa, this is so much so that these enclaves of extraction have become “islands” of their own, held captive by a narrow set of global and national interests. These countries have struggled to expand their tightly held and exclusivist economies for the benefit of their peoples. This is also evident in the high degree of informality of African economies, the relative unproductivity of the informal sector, and the low levels of tradability within and with countries outside of the continent.

Commodity dependency has forced a system of developmental inertia that has placed majority of Africans – the unemployed and subsistence farmers – to subsist on the rural and natural resource base, without the benefit of modern services and integration into both the African continent and global economies. Solving the discrepancy in development dividends despite healthy commodity exports and growth pre-COVID-19 is one of the persistent core challenges in Africa in building diversified and resilient economies, which are a bridge towards climate resilience.

Economic transformation, with the greater connectivity and electrification of African economies, is important for integrating the African labour pool into the global economy. This frontier of interaction with the rest of the world – especially African diasporans who occupy important leadership and intellectual roles outside Africa – will give young Africans sight of new opportunities and shape the way they integrate global sources of ideas, goods and services to create uniquely African products and solutions. This is already happening in the financial technology, fashion, food, film and agricultural digital technology spaces.

The aim of a climate–development nexus lens is to consider ways in which the manufacturing and industrial base of African economies can be expanded by increasing investment in new types of clean energy infrastructure and protecting weather-prone sectors – critical for improving exports and jobs intensity – from climate vulnerability. Broadening the economic base is a way to enlarge the skilled, semi-skilled and low-skilled labour workforce.

This absence of thriving, productive manufacturing, tradable services and industrial sectors drives African talent out of the continent.

This is why experienced, well-educated and skilled Africans migrate, bringing economic value to their newly adopted countries, depriving their countries of innovation, sources of tax revenue and savings (which can enhance domestic capital-raising better than raising costly capital from foreign sources and savings).

In addition, Africa will be forced to engage the frontier of a new wave of climate technologies because it has many of the critical minerals that are key inputs for green industrialism. In return,

Africa will be a market for these finished products that are produced outside of Africa, thereby extracting more wealth out of the continent rather than retaining it. This can be changed with good trade policies. Africa's diverse wealth of critical minerals can be beneficiated fully or partially, and some or all of the high-value production capabilities can be retained on the continent rather than it just exporting raw minerals.

Without a viable economic thesis for structural transformation and diversification, Africa's climate ambition will be limited to adaptation and resilience rather than serious industrial engagement and investment in energy transition. Fulfilling the dream of beneficiation would enable Africa to also be a participant in exports of low-carbon goods and tradable services. If not, it risks being a mere spectator and recipient of others' creativity and innovation.

The primary motivation for the African Continental Free Trade Agreement is aimed at laying the foundations for economic integration and intraregional trade to boost local manufacturing and industrial activity. The African continent will most certainly double its current GDP of USD 3 trillion in two decades and have a population of 2 billion, holding 17 per cent of the world's population, most of whom will be young.

Global decarbonization ought not to be a double jeopardy where Africa is at the receiving end of climate change risks and also penalized in the future for not having sufficiently decarbonized, as it seeks to benefit from its minerals and exports of manufactured and finished goods of high value.

The role of the diaspora is crucial, given that they have acquired experience, knowledge and expertise that are of importance to African economies. Many among the diaspora have also accumulated wealth and they would also want to seek economic opportunities back home. Revitalizing the diaspora network will also facilitate greater integration of African economies with the rest of the world.

One avenue for diaspora engagement can be around innovative models of urbanization and electrification. Akon City, a proposed smart city, in Senegal is an interesting test case where the best of resident and diasporic talent will come together to revitalize the urban landscape with new energy. The project, which is being spearheaded by the eponymous Senegal-born RnB rapper, is looking to raise USD 6 billion.

The climate agenda presents a new opportunity and an untapped potential for the African diaspora to participate in – and this can cover energy, agriculture and urban transitions. It is proposed here that foundations like the African Climate Foundation and others should seek ways to bring on board diasporic constituencies to engage with resident Africans around a concrete climate–development nexus agenda.



# Diaspora and finance: A real partnership for home country growth

Leon Isaacs<sup>25</sup>

Imagine a world where diasporans participate in their origin country's financial market out of choice – not just because there is some inherent sense of loyalty, whatever the merits are, but also because it makes great financial sense and they have the chance to choose products and services that they played a hand in designing.

While most people think that this is the stuff of dreams, it is something that could come to pass with coordination, effort, understanding and mutual trust. In some countries, it may not be so far away.

For many developing countries, the diaspora is one of their home nation's greatest assets. Frequently, the diaspora is looked upon as a potential “cash cow” – a group with a natural loyalty (or affinity) to their country of birth that will do whatever it takes to send home funds to support it. In many ways, remittances have been the most obvious measure of the contribution of diasporans to a country. Estimated at USD 540 billion in 2020,<sup>26</sup> remittances contribute significantly to many developing (i.e. low- and middle-income) countries; indeed, for ten countries, remittances make up over 20 per cent of their GDP. Remittances are, of course, private, person-to-person payments that bring substantial benefit to the sender's family and immediate community. However, remittances are completely different from diaspora investment funds, which are sums that diasporans invest in financial instruments in their countries of origin.

No one really knows how much of a financial contribution diasporans make to their countries of origin. However, a recent study that we conducted with IOM, “Contributions and Counting: Measuring the Economic Impact of Your Diaspora Beyond Remittances”, attempted to begin the process<sup>27</sup> of determining the financial contributions of the diaspora through the development of a template that measures the value of items such as trade, tourism, philanthropy, employee compensation and investments in real estate.

Furthermore, the World Bank estimated that there was as much as USD 400 billion in diasporans' bank accounts in host countries in 2011;<sup>28</sup> undoubtedly, this estimate would be higher if it was made today. Imagine how countries of origin could develop more quickly if those funds are invested back home. Attempts have been made to encourage this in the past, with diaspora bonds perhaps the most obvious example. These financial vehicles have been a phenomenon for decades, and the most frequently highlighted cases are those used by Israel and India. In

25 Leon Isaacs is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of DMA Global (an international development consultancy specializing in diaspora investment, diaspora engagement and international remittances). An economist and banker by training, he has over 35 years' experience in these areas and is acknowledged as a global expert and thought leader in remittances and financial services for migrants. Leon has spoken at numerous international events, including at the United Nations, the World Bank and the Group of Eight (G8).

26 Dilip Ratha, Eung Ju Kim, Sonia Plaza and Ganesh Seshan, *Resilience: COVID-19 Crisis Through A Migration Lens*. Migration and Development Brief No. 34 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2021). Available at [www.knomad.org/publication/migration-and-development-brief-34](http://www.knomad.org/publication/migration-and-development-brief-34).

27 International Organization for Migration (IOM) and DMA Global, *Contributions and Counting: Guidance on Measuring the Economic Impact of Your Diaspora beyond Remittances* (Geneva, IOM, 2020). Available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/contributions-and-counting-guidance-measuring-economic-impact-your-diaspora-beyond-remittances>.

28 Dilip Ratha and Sanket Mohapatra, “Preliminary estimates of diaspora savings”. Migration and Development Brief No. 11 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2011). Available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/10902>.

more recent years, Nigeria and Ethiopia have established such bonds. However, diaspora bonds are not a universal solution, as they are expensive to issue, have tight regulations and are only really appropriate for countries with very large diasporas residing in countries with enlightened regulations, including regulations on who can make investments and how they are advised and protected.

Many smaller countries with less developed financial markets have limited options for attracting diaspora finances. A systematic approach to understanding a country's current investment landscape and its relationship with its diaspora is needed. Such an approach would include mapping where diasporans are located; understanding their attitudes towards investing in their country of origin (in many cases, there are very low levels of trust within diasporas towards the government of their home country); and determining the products that diasporans can handle and which would be attractive to them.<sup>29</sup>

Studies have shown that diasporans are more likely to invest in their own country of origin rather than other countries,<sup>30</sup> but that achieving significant, targeted investment is a multi-step process. One of the key early steps is very simple: Just ask the diaspora what they want; what they would be prepared to invest in; what safeguards or protections they require; how much they are able to invest; and so on. Opening a sensible dialogue sounds simple enough, but has, so far, not often been initiated. When this task is undertaken in the future, it must be done in a way in which the views of diasporans are welcomed as much as their money is. Giving diasporans what their home-country government thinks they want – or will put up with – just does not work.

Diasporas have a great deal of financial expertise. In the future, it would be possible to imagine initiatives that show home-country governments understand, and are sympathetic to, the needs of their diasporans. Diasporans, in turn, would be actively involved in the creation of policies and actions to provide financial products that are not only attractive to all types of investors, but particularly diaspora investors. (A frequent complaint from diasporans is that they are not entitled to participate in large-yield financial products open to global investment houses and are only asked to help when no other means is open to their home country).

This future world would help to bring diasporans and home-country governments closer together, as there would be a real sense that both groups are working towards a common outcome. The positive impacts would be felt far beyond the financial health of the home country; governments and diasporans working together would also help build trust, especially if diasporans are encouraged to contribute their expertise in designing financial products, help to promote these products, and assist with legal and regulatory issues. We can confidently assume that diasporans will be more likely to invest in products that they have had a stake in developing.

This approach will be far more important as diaspora communities move towards the third, fourth and fifth generations of migrants, who will have little to no first-hand affinity with their parents', grandparents' or great-grandparents' country of origin. While there is a potential for positive bias for the origin country among these groups, the reality is that they will have many investment opportunities. Governments seeking funds must view diasporans as attractive potential investors who have other alternatives. Products designed with potential diaspora investors in mind will, therefore, need to be competitive and personalized.

29 Note that the African Development Bank has created such a tool, the *Toolkit for Understanding Diaspora Development*, available at [www.mfw4a.org/publication/toolkit-understanding-diaspora-investment](http://www.mfw4a.org/publication/toolkit-understanding-diaspora-investment).

30 United Kingdom Commonwealth Secretariat, *Understanding the Investment Potential of the Commonwealth Diaspora Results of the Commonwealth Diaspora Investor Survey* (London, United Kingdom Commonwealth Secretariat, 2018). Available at <https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/Understanding%20the%20Investment%20Potential%20of%20the%20Commonwealth%20Diaspora.pdf>.

The good news is that there are available tools that can be used to undertake targeted diaspora investment. The good news also is that there are available tools that can be used to begin this process, which some countries – such as Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan and Rwanda, among others – have already benefited from. Over time, this can create a peer group able to create and share best practice models, not just in terms of useful financial tools, but also in terms of the necessary process(es) for gaining the diaspora’s trust; utilizing the diaspora’s skills to design and promote investment and financial products; and, ultimately, in developing a joint government–diaspora programme to build the home country’s economic health and resilience and increase diasporans’ wealth.

Countries that follow this approach will grow in tandem with their diasporas rather than without them – and that will be the real win–win in diaspora investment.



# Diaspora engagement policies in South America

Ana Margheritis<sup>31</sup>

Since the last wave of democratization in Latin America in the 1980s, State–society relations have evolved in a number of ways, including through a deliberate effort to establish, maintain or expand ties between political and policy elites and citizens residing abroad (vaguely termed “diasporas”). By the turn of the century, several South American countries have developed a set of State institutions, programmes and practices aimed at reaching out to their citizens abroad. These so-called “diaspora engagement policies” represent a new form of State intervention beyond borders to govern dispersed populations – one that builds on important historical precedents and has expanded across all regions of the world in the last three decades. In academic and policy discourse, this global trend has been reinforced by linking the role of diasporas to the development of their countries of origin.

Such expectation has proven problematic. On the one hand, State–diaspora relations do not solely revolve around an instrumental seizing of diasporas’ material and non-material assets; they are actually part of a complex web of interactions with multiple – and often unexpected – effects. On the other hand, capitalizing on diasporas’ contributions requires sustained and substantial engagement of both States and diasporas, as well as collaboration with non-State actors such as political parties and non-governmental institutions. The implementation of diaspora engagement policies often requires cooperation with institutions in host States, too. It has been observed that results generally vary across countries and over time. The South American experience shows that engagement is far from automatic and incremental. Diaspora engagement policies are instead highly contingent on domestic political dynamics, diasporas’ organizational capacity and affinity with public institutions, and State commitment and capacities. A few examples help to illustrate this point.

Ecuador, under the Government of Rafael Correa (2007–2017), was considered one of the most innovative and proactive cases in terms of diaspora engagement policies. During his first term in office, his administration implemented a number of programmes in selected destinations, enfranchised and mobilized emigrants, and expanded and upgraded dedicated institutions within the State apparatus. In contrast to the rest of the South American countries, where diaspora affairs fell within the functions of foreign affairs ministries, Ecuador created an autonomous secretariat with a ministerial rank that concentrated decision-making power and resources for a few years. However, it was eventually dissolved, with its functions taken over by consular offices. Ecuador is just one example that shows a common process across the region: Domestic political dynamics shape the timing, modality and evolution of diaspora engagement policies.

Similar processes have indeed been observed in other countries, where variation can also be attributed to the type of relationship established between State institutions and diasporas. Several countries, like Brazil, Uruguay and Peru, have developed formal mechanisms to structure relations between State institutions and diasporas. Consultation councils have become a typical form to do so. These councils gather representatives from emigrant groups that regularly meet with government officials. Governments have organized events with representatives of their citizens

31 Ana Margheritis is a reader in international relations at the University of Southampton. Her areas of expertise include transnational migration, international political economy and foreign policy. Her publications have appeared in several books and a wide range of journals, which are available at <https://soton.academia.edu/AnaMargheritis>.

abroad, thus fostering transnational communication and the development of a common agenda. Although such activities tend to promote emigrants' interests, the representativeness of council leaders is debatable. Emigrants' fragmented and intermittent associational life in destination countries undermines the scope and impact of these events – more so when diasporic groups are largely distrustful of – or disenchanted with – State institutions. Governments' attempts to steer the agenda and the politicization of outreach processes tend to jeopardize the possibility of strong, long-term partnerships. In some countries of origin, a record of State violations of human rights, political conflict or dramatic crises, which prompted waves of emigration in the first place, does not provide fertile ground for engagement. Geographic dispersion and low organizational capacity among emigrant groups make it difficult to identify a clear, cohesive and engaged interlocutor. Inconsequential dialogues often lead to fatigue or lack of interest and confidence in the consultation process. For these reasons, State–diaspora relations tend to reach a plateau or lose momentum, showing that these relationships are to be constructed, rather than taken for granted, and usually remain a work in progress.

In addition, emigration and diaspora affairs do not tend to be at the top of most countries' governmental agenda on a regular basis, let alone if other pressing issues regularly absorb resources and require the attention of already troubled State agencies. Argentina is a case in point. Incipient engagement with citizens abroad in the early 2000s quickly faded before it could take full shape. In addition, a shift from emigration to immigration concerns was evident in the last decade and a half. Thus, while a few initiatives still target emigrants selectively, channels of communication have multiplied and consular assistance has improved, public officials and most political parties do not consistently invest in forging links with emigrants or involving them in home politics.

In sum, diaspora engagement policies are relatively new in South America and have waxed and waned from governmental agendas. I have argued that such outreach efforts have resembled courting practices. Courting diasporas is a deliberate expression of the ambivalent, still-incipient and open-ended relationship between States and diasporas, which is not exempt from conflict, detours and setbacks, and may (or may not) unfold into stable and fruitful partnerships.<sup>32</sup> Courting, in the form of dialogue and regular rapprochement, better encapsulates the possibilities and limitations of State–diaspora relations than engagement.

Looking ahead, two main challenges persist: (a) achieving policy consistency and sustainability over time, and (b) articulating diasporas' needs and capacities with host and home countries' interest in diasporas' contributions. The first one largely relies on the State's side of the relationship. Uruguay is perhaps the best example of the possibility of achieving such a goal, with its diaspora engagement policies having progressively expanded since 2005. Even though extraterritorial voting is still a controversial issue in the State–diaspora relationship and an unmet aspiration for many, much has been done to forge collaboration and attend to emigrants' needs. The second challenge requires the acknowledgement that engagement does not follow a cumulative, incremental path. Rather, it is an exercise in discovering and unlocking potential, as well as collaborating with other actors and extending the horizon of expectations beyond short-term political calculus. In general, Latin American countries have missed the opportunity to include other domestic actors and host States in the development of diaspora engagement policies. Few have embedded these policies in the State institutional apparatus and linked them to broader foreign policy aims and bilateral cooperation. A notable exception is Mexico, which has probably the longest and most institutionalized record of engagement with its large diaspora in the United States of America.

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 32 Ana Margheritis, *Migration Governance across Regions: State–Diaspora Relations in the Latin American–Southern Europe Corridor* (New York and London, Routledge, 2016, p. 1).

Moreover, South American countries were striving to attend to the most dramatic regional migration crisis (the Venezuelan exodus) when the pandemic hit them badly. They are thus unlikely to invest heavily in diaspora affairs for a while. For these reasons, State engagement with diasporas is likely to be sporadic and, as in the past, unfold through cycles of intense exchanges and partial withdrawals or policy inertia. If and when normality is restored, the following lessons from comparative experiences may help governments to refine their strategies and engage with diasporas in a more sustained and meaningful fashion:

- (a) Embedding outreach efforts within bureaucratic agencies and public administration practices, so that policies gain continuity despite changes in administrations and turnover of public officials;
- (b) Training foreign affairs cadres on migration-related issues, in order to validate the inclusion of diaspora affairs in consular agendas and raise awareness of the importance of moving beyond traditional consular assistance;
- (c) Improving coordination across State agencies that deal with different but interrelated aspects of diaspora policy (e.g. economic, financial, political, cultural, social and educational), as well as between institutions at home and abroad (i.e. embassies, consulates and others);
- (d) Framing such policies (including the consultation mechanisms mentioned above) as a strategic dimension of public diplomacy that might help support foreign relations with destination countries;
- (e) Including diaspora issues in domestic public debates regularly, so as to raise visibility and foster the inclusion of dispersed communities in the affairs of the nation;
- (f) Assessing the impacts of diaspora engagement policies systematically across destinations and over time, in order to improve policy design, implementation and effectiveness.



# Africans in the diaspora: A force for good

Almaz Negash<sup>33</sup>

## Introduction

The Black population of the United States of America is diverse in ethnicity, identity and origin. According to the Migration Policy Institute,<sup>34</sup> approximately 2 million immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa lived in the United States in 2018. While this represents only 4.5 per cent of the country's 44.7 million immigrants, it is a rapidly growing group. In the United States, the sub-Saharan African population increased by 52 per cent between 2010 and 2018. These numbers reflected only the contemporary African diaspora (i.e. new immigrants), although the Black population in the country is 46.8 million strong,<sup>35</sup> of which approximately 4.4 million are Afro-Caribbean.

Just as globalization is a process that has been with us since the first Africans left the continent to inhabit other parts of the world, processes of diaspora have been with us since the beginning of time. Driven by economics, politics, war or a vision for a new life, humanity has migrated from country to country, bridging cultures and nations, and bringing new perspectives and possibilities to both host countries and countries of origin.

As we consider modern Africa and the place of capital, enterprise and impact investing within it, discussions often focus upon the critical role of foreign direct relief, development and investment. Accordingly, much of our mainstream culture's attention is focused on the actions of foreign aid organizations, governments of the global North offering assistance to the global South, and regional or national initiatives within the diverse community that is Africa today.

Receiving less attention, however, is the potential – and critical – role to be played by Africans of the diaspora: Those Africans presently living overseas in the United States, Europe and elsewhere around the world who maintain close personal and business ties with the nations from which they and their communities came.

## The impact of the diaspora

With Africa being the “world's youngest continent” and future base of the global economy, Bill Gates estimates that the continent, as a whole, will outpace India and China in terms of workforce by 2040. Recognizing that there is a gap in the market, the African Diaspora Network (ADN) continues to amplify the work of the diaspora. Innovators and investors from around the world can benefit from a more connected and mobilized African immigrant network that energizes our local and global networks to shape an inclusive, innovative future for the planet.

33 Almaz Negash was named one of the 100 outstanding Silicon Valley Women of Influence in 2020 for her work in social innovation. In 2010, she founded the African Diaspora Network (ADN) to inform and engage Africans in the diaspora and facilitate direct collaboration with social entrepreneurs, innovators and business leaders to invest and improve the lives of everyone on the continent and the communities where they live. Under her leadership and vision, ADN is now the home of the African Diaspora Investment Symposium (ADIS), an annual event convening in Silicon Valley, Builders of Africa's Future, and the Impact and Investment Forums. She holds an MBA from Golden Gate University, a bachelor of arts degree from the University of San Francisco, and a certificate in design thinking from the System Transformation Masterclass of Stanford ChangeLabs.

34 Carlos Echeverria-Estrada and Jeanne Batalova, “Sub-Saharan African immigrants in the United States”, *Migration Information Source* (online journal of the Migration Policy Institute) Spotlight article, 6 November 2019. Available at [www.migrationpolicy.org/article/sub-saharan-african-immigrants-united-states-2018](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/sub-saharan-african-immigrants-united-states-2018).

35 Christine Tamir, “The growing diversity of Black America”, Pew Research Centre report article, 25 March 2021. Available at [www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2021/03/25/the-growing-diversity-of-black-america](http://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2021/03/25/the-growing-diversity-of-black-america).

The African diaspora contributes much to the United States and to Africa. In the United States, there is a significant number of intelligent and skilled sub-Saharan Africans. Sub-Saharan African immigrants have higher educational attainment compared to immigrants overall and native-born United States citizens. According to a report by the Migration Policy Institute,<sup>36</sup> tabulated with data from the US Census Bureau, 40 per cent of sub-Saharan Africans ages 25 and over in 2017 held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 31 per cent of the total foreign-born population and 32 per cent of the US-born population. In the same year, about 75 per cent of sub-Saharan immigrants ages 16 and over were in the civilian labour force, compared to 66 per cent of foreign-born and 62 per cent of native-born adults, respectively. In addition, a high percentage of sub-Saharan Africans were employed in management, business, science and arts occupations. According to a study by New American Economy,<sup>37</sup> African immigrants earned more than USD 133 billion in 2018 alone, paid almost USD 36 billion in taxes and had a spending power of nearly USD 98 billion.

The challenge of an African “brain drain” has long been recognized as a serious hindrance to capitalizing on Africa’s opportunities. Indeed, the continent loses millions of highly skilled, professional Africans who migrate to the United States and other countries, resulting in severe “brain drain”. It has never been easy to calculate the value of the economic loss and/or human capital loss when Africans leave their home country. Overcoming brain drain requires the involvement of the African diaspora.

The African diaspora does not forget their home continent. Besides being committed to the communities they live in, the African diaspora also sends remittances home. According to the World Bank,<sup>38</sup> remittances to sub-Saharan Africa were approximately USD 42 billion in 2020. This amount is less than in previous years due to COVID-19, but nevertheless shows the diaspora’s commitment to the continent. According to the study, “The diaspora and economic development in Africa”,<sup>39</sup> African diasporans also contribute to human capital and democratic development in Africa.

### The African diaspora making a difference: Beyond giving to family and friends, to becoming entrepreneurs

According to the *United Nations World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision*,<sup>40</sup> Africa will be home to 2.2 billion people by 2050. This will require targeted new enterprise growth in areas that can enhance food supply, health-care services and educational solutions within local communities. This presents a wonderful opportunity for the diaspora to explore business development on the continent.

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36 Ibid.

37 New American Economy, “Power of the purse: The contributions of Black immigrants in the United States”, research article, 19 March 2020. Available at <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/black-immigrants-2020>.

38 World Bank, “Defying predictions, remittance flows remain strong during COVID-19 crisis”, press release, 12 May 2021. Available at [www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/12/defying-predictions-remittance-flows-remain-strong-during-covid-19-crisis](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/12/defying-predictions-remittance-flows-remain-strong-during-covid-19-crisis).

39 Blaise Gnimassoun and John C. Anyanwu, “The diaspora and economic development in Africa”, Bureau d’Économie Théorique et Appliquée working document no. 2018–08. Available at [www.beta-umr7522.fr/productions/publications/2018/2018-08.pdf](http://www.beta-umr7522.fr/productions/publications/2018/2018-08.pdf).

40 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision* (New York, United Nations, 2017). Available at [https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017\\_KeyFindings.pdf](https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017_KeyFindings.pdf).

Indeed, there is no lack of talent in Africa. According to *African Economic Outlook 2017*,<sup>41</sup> released by the African Development Bank, 22 per cent of Africa's working-age population – the highest rate in the world – are starting new businesses, and 20 per cent of new African entrepreneurs are introducing new products and services.

Unfortunately, new entrepreneurs are met with barriers, including limited access to finance, unstable and costly access to electricity, political instability, high tax rates, corruption, and customs and trade regulations. Africans in the diaspora cannot resolve all of these barriers, but they can provide resources and tools to equip local leaders to structure capital investments that optimize total impact.

## The African Diaspora Network: Enabling diaspora investment, innovation, entrepreneurship and human capital development

Opportunities abound for innovation, social entrepreneurship and impact investing in both the United States and Africa. ADN believes there is a need for an intra-African voice for collaboration. There are over 46.8 million Black diasporans<sup>42</sup> in the United States, composed of African-Americans, Afro-Caribbeans and new immigrants from Africa, who present countless opportunities for collaboration and community-building between the United States, Africa and globally.

Since 2010, ADN has energized collaboration among Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, philanthropists and African diasporans to uplift its local community towards the benefit of Africa. ADN is dedicated to providing virtual and physical forums to accelerate access to resources that foster partnerships and knowledge-sharing, and advance investment opportunities.

One of the biggest challenges that Africans, Africans of the diaspora and Black Americans face is lack of access to capital for budding entrepreneurs to grow and scale the impact of their work. To address this issue, ADN has been mobilizing diasporans and friends of Africa to learn about and invest in grassroots African and US-based Black entrepreneurs through its Builders of Africa's Future (BAF) and Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship (ABLE) programmes.

BAF serves to showcase and award African entrepreneurs who are running early-stage, for-profit and not-for-profit organizations that are addressing unique needs across the continent through technology or differentiated business models. These unique needs are in health, education, energy, financial inclusion, gender inclusion, nutrition, commerce, industrial development and other areas of socioeconomic good. ABLE, another enterprise accelerator recently launched by ADN, supports US-based founders and entrepreneurs. The programme will address the most important systemic barriers to Black entrepreneurship – that is, the absence of ongoing technical and mentorship support and access to capital for Black entrepreneurs, as recently noted by the US Federal Reserve and others.

Through the BAF and ABLE programmes, ADN demonstrates its commitment to connecting a global network of Africans, diasporans and friends of Africa to entrepreneurs, investors, academics and leaders of non-profit organizations, corporations and official development agencies. Together, cohorts from BAF and ABLE will learn, engage and co-create possibilities.

41 African Development Bank (AfDB), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *African Economic Outlook 2017* (Abidjan, AfDB; Paris, OECD; and New York, UNDP, 2017). Available at [www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/AEO\\_2017\\_Report\\_Full\\_English.pdf](http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/AEO_2017_Report_Full_English.pdf).

42 Christine Tamir, "The growing diversity of Black America" (see footnote 33).

The African diaspora will have a platform for learning about the innovative work of Africans, Africans from the diaspora and Black Americans, and the opportunity to invest in them.

Diaspora entrepreneurs are competing with “white social and business entrepreneurs for funds”. In a recent article published by *The Guardian*, “American venture capital and private equity is dominating Africa, but it’s mostly funding other white foreign founders as [B]lack entrepreneurs continue to struggle to raise financing.”<sup>43</sup> There is a long way to go to unleash the abundant financial resources that are available in the United States and other countries for diaspora entrepreneurs to invest in their social enterprise. The question is, how can the diaspora turn remittances into investments to fund entrepreneurs? The conversation on the issue of remittances versus investments is ongoing.

## Conclusion

African diasporans are a force for good, giving abundantly to the communities they live in and sending remittances back home to friends and family. Africans of the diaspora are by far the largest direct investors in Africa. Through remittances received, many families are able to sustain their lives.

Remittances are not easily scalable, which is why African governments must create an ecosystem conducive for diasporans to invest. Government leaders in Africa have to create long-term, sustainable partnership programmes with the diaspora. Engaging diasporas has been proven to strengthen the socioeconomic development of their home countries through capacity-building, skills transfer and partnerships.

With Africa’s growing population and high levels of youth unemployment, there is a need for sustainable investment, which is why diaspora engagement is critical. Diaspora investment in enterprises that can enhance food supply, health-care services and educational solutions within local communities can add greater value. The African diaspora is generous and committed to the well-being of their families and communities. When presented with an opportunity and a trusted platform, they are willing and able to give to social enterprises and mission-driven organizations.

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43 Larry Madowo, “Silicon Valley has deep pockets for African startups – if you’re not African”, *The Guardian*, 17 July 2020. Available at [www.theguardian.com/business/2020/jul/17/african-businesses-black-entrepreneurs-us-investors](http://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/jul/17/african-businesses-black-entrepreneurs-us-investors).

# Diaspora development organizations: Becoming the usual suspects

Carine Nsoudou<sup>44</sup>

On 22 February 2021, as in previous years, the representative of a leading diaspora organization delivers the opening remarks at the annual [International Economic Forum on Africa](#) of the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#). She powerfully and distinctly punctuates her words intended for a diversified audience that includes distinguished delegates from African countries – a large number of which were once development aid recipients and are now full-fledged members of the [OECD Development Assistance Committee](#). Owing to strategic and structural diaspora engagement, fruitful economic investments, clever resources and international partners' management, as well as technological leapfrogging, they have succeeded in becoming high-income countries. Besides this, the mainstreaming of diaspora organizations in development cooperation, in general, and in its circles, in particular – on par with multilateral institutions, bilateral agencies, civil society organizations, foundations and the private sector – enabled the successful rethinking of development cooperation. Her address is setting the stage for an insightful and engaging discussion of the instrumental role played by African diaspora organizations and individuals in Africa's economic take-off.

Fast-backward to 2021. Such futuristic insights may seem fairly utopian while COVID-19-induced vaccine nationalism has cast a shadow on the very principles of equity and inclusiveness, and as the appetite for dystopian television shows presenting worlds where all seems lost remains unabated. Although development cooperation's transition towards full inclusion seems, in many respects, an unfinished symphony, some signs are pointing in the right direction for diasporas.

## A paradigm yet to be entirely shifted

Development cooperation has progressively opened its ranks to new actors, among which lately are foundations and the private sector. Collaborations between the European Commission on the one hand and, on the other, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation<sup>45</sup> and the Tony Elumelu Foundation,<sup>46</sup> are testaments to this willingness to do development differently, either by attracting new financing sources or by mobilizing complementary expertise and perspectives, but sometimes both. Change takes time and it seems to be all the truer when it comes to diasporas. While migrants' critical contributions to sustainable development have gained recognition, as illustrated by the 2015 [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#) and the United Nations' Agenda 2030 – COVID-19's dreaded adverse impact on remittances attesting to this – or even the 2015 [Valletta Action Plan](#), their status as qualified development actors remains challenged by some. This said, the past years have seen the emergence of support programmes for

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44 Carine Nsoudou is Executive Director of the Africa–Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT). She holds a doctorate in the history of contemporary Africa from Pantheon-Sorbonne University. She has notably served at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Head of the European Development Policy Unit and at the European Commission. Of Cameroonian descent and a French native, Ms Nsoudou is currently based in Brussels.

45 European Commission, “EU and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation join forces to support health services in Africa”, press release, 18 October 2018. Available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_18\\_6135](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_18_6135).

46 European Commission, “EU-Africa partnership: EU and the Tony Elumelu Foundation join forces to improve economic empowerment of women”, press release, 9 December 2020. Available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_20\\_2353](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2353).

migrants and diaspora interventions in origin countries.<sup>47</sup> Funded by “traditional” development actors, they aim to enable those largely viewed as “peripheral”, namely diaspora organizations and individuals, to leverage their financial, human and social capital and implement development projects for the benefit of origin countries. Words matter and auspicious signs are discernible in recently adopted international frameworks such as the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#), with its Objective 19<sup>48</sup> literally calling for States parties to create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development, thanks to dedicated structures and policies.

While COVID-19 triggered an unexpected global sanitary and economic crisis, it also put to the fore the concomitant actions conducted by diaspora members and organizations, which demonstrated their unwavering commitment, responsiveness and effectiveness in response to the pandemic. These factors should help take the conversation forward on the parts played by various actors in development and lead to a reassessment thereof, or even to upending the underlying hierarchy. Such long-overdue reflection should ultimately be conducive to the systematic integration of diaspora organizations in development at the policy and strategic levels and not solely as programme implementers or partners in development cooperation, as is too often the case.

### It is not so much about the why but rather the how

Diasporas’ significant and multifaceted contributions to origin countries’ economic growth and poverty reduction – through remittances, investment, skills and knowledge transfer or philanthropy – cannot be questioned and warrant their being considered as impactful development actors in their own right. Some may object that the lack of professionalism and continuity of some diaspora organizations delegitimize them as development actors, or that their mainstreaming may be detrimental to an already fragmented development landscape and to overcrowded development circles – thus adding further complexity to the coordination of development actions. To this, others may retort that moving diaspora development organizations away from the outskirts of development towards its centre is essential to ensuring increased development effectiveness by allowing for greater complementarity among actors. The latter far outweighs the former.

For years now, diaspora engagement in development has garnered the attention of origin countries’ national authorities and mainstream development actors, both of which have been elaborating strategies and plans<sup>49</sup> to better leverage diaspora capital – the [Gambian Diaspora Strategy](#) of January 2018 being a case in point. However, much remains to be done in residence countries. As the world’s leading provider of official development assistance in 2020,<sup>50</sup> the European Union and its 27 member States should pave the way in this regard. Nevertheless, a wide array of challenges exist which pertains, among others, to proper mechanisms and

47 Practitioners’ Network for European Development Cooperation, “Migration and development: an inclusive and comprehensive approach on human mobility”, report of the preparatory online sessions for the expert workshop, Brussels, July 2020. Available at [www.dev-practitioners.eu/media/documents/Consolidated\\_Report\\_PN\\_Online\\_sessions\\_Migration\\_and\\_development\\_final\\_vf\\_compressed.pdf](http://www.dev-practitioners.eu/media/documents/Consolidated_Report_PN_Online_sessions_Migration_and_development_final_vf_compressed.pdf).

48 “(f) Provide easily accessible information and guidance, including through digital platforms, as well as tailored mechanisms for the coordinated and effective financial, voluntary or philanthropic engagement of migrants and diasporas, especially in humanitarian emergencies in their countries of origin, including by involving consular missions” (United Nations General Assembly resolution 73/195 on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted on 19 December 2018 (A/RES/73/195))

49 International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Migration Policy Institute (MPI), *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries* (Geneva, IOM, and Washington, D.C., MPI, 2012). Available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/developing-road-map-engaging-diasporas-development-handbook-policymakers-and-practitioners>.

50 European Commission, “Preliminary figures on 2020 official development assistance”, Questions and Answers, 13 April 2021. Available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_21\\_1704](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_1704).

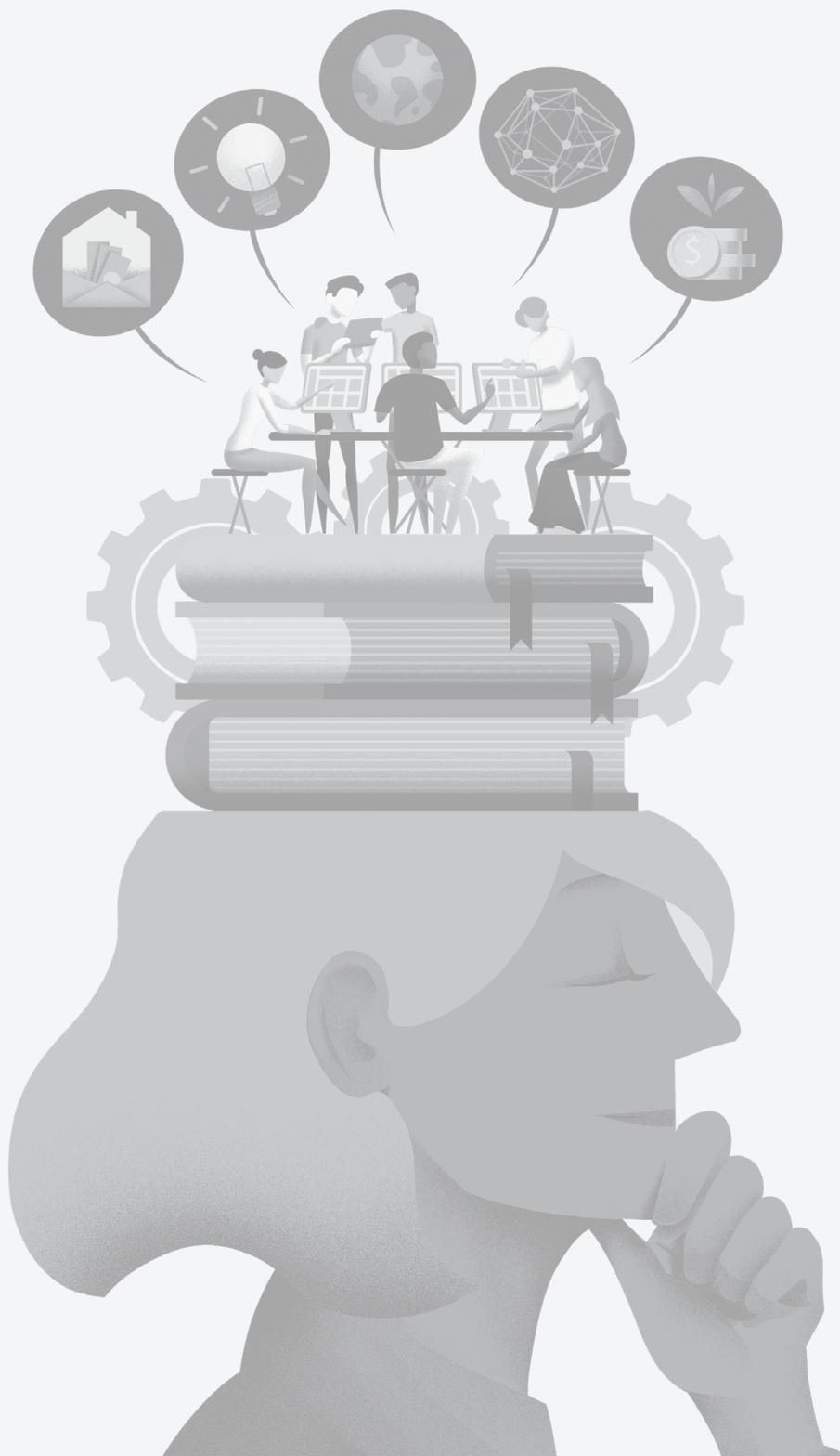
procedures yet to be established. For instance, mainstreaming should not be equated to assimilation. Modalities for systematically integrating these stakeholders – for allowing them to become some “usual suspects” of development, so to speak – should not lead to the negation of their singularities.<sup>51</sup> Conversely, their specificities should be capitalized on, thereby factoring in the fact that development actors come in all shapes and sizes. These modalities should also preserve diaspora development organizations’ agency and ownership, logically ruling out intermediation, by allowing diaspora organizations to speak for themselves and giving them direct access to policymakers and decision makers. Understandably, mainstreaming also implies trust between partners and capacity-building within residence countries’ relevant ministries – the former resulting from sustained honest and transparent relationships and the latter from political will.

Lastly, it is crucial not to essentialize diaspora organizations by restricting them to the migration–development nexus. Their interventions in a large variety of sectors justify their inclusion in development cooperation at large.

### Looking forward

The scene depicted earlier – going back to 22 February 2021, at the OECD – does not seem that unrealistic after all. The future of diaspora development organizations’ engagement lies in challenging the status quo, notably by abolishing the arbitrary and irrelevant dichotomy between them and current mainstream development actors. Being that 2020 was the year of COVID-19 and that of diasporas as well, the onus is now on residence countries’ policymakers and decision makers to harness the momentum created by the pandemic and work towards making diaspora organizations’ inclusion in development circles the “new normal”. Listening to voices from diaspora organizations and factoring in their vantage point in a systematic and institutionalized way seem to be the last mile to be completed to allow for the necessary (r)evolution of development cooperation.

51 For example, their individual emotional attachments and their small-scale projects and interventions at the local level.



# Thinking about the future of diasporas

Manuel Orozco<sup>52</sup>

A way to think about the future of diasporas begs addressing their presence in scope and depth in the global context. Diasporas are largely a by-product of human mobility and efforts of people to connect their identity to geography and to their ancestry. Such diaspora connections are likely to increase in the next ten years by virtue of continued migration, the need for globalized human capital and diasporas' own influence on policy.

In return, as this piece points out, the future impact of diasporas will be shaped by immigrant replenishment accompanied by more mature forms of engaging with their homelands. Diasporas' influence in global affairs, in turn, will also be stronger.

## Diasporas in scope

One of the main factors influencing the growing visibility of diasporas is the increase in their numbers, resulting from the deterioration of State and political stability in many developing countries. Moreover, an increasing demand for skilled foreign labour is pushing diasporas' presence to the fore.

More than half of developing countries have experienced large migration rates resulting from a mixed set of factors, most of which are related to country differentiated crises, such as earthquakes, civil wars, foreign intervention, military coups and financial crises.

Global patterns, such as the 2009 economic recession and the early-2000s global democratic transitions, triggered existing conditions that made people prone to emigrating. Although there are intangible factors at work that make predicting migration limited, recent trends in migration correlate with key economic, social and economic indicators.

Countries with higher migration growth are among the most fragile, have low incomes and account for over 14 million migrants. In 2019, 21 million migrants came from nine fragile countries.<sup>53</sup>

Economic growth – to be specific, negative per capita economic growth – is a common denominator of countries with high rates of migration. In the next five years after the global 2009 recession, migration growth from 2010 to 2015 was 4 per cent. With low incomes accompanying low economic growth, migration is also more pronounced in countries with incomes below USD 6,000, where 60 per cent of migrants come from.<sup>54</sup>

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52 Manuel Orozco is currently Director of the Center for Migration and Economic Stabilization at Creative Associates International. He is a senior fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue, a fellow at the Institute for the Study of International Migration at Harvard University, and Senior Migration and Remittances Advisor for the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Mr Orozco is also Chair of Central America at the United States Foreign Service Institute at the US Department of State. He has published six books and peer-reviewed articles, studies and projects on migration and development.

53 Manuel Orozco, "International migration post-COVID", analysis (Washington, D.C., Creative Associates, 2020). Available at [www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Insights-on-International-Migration-Post-COVID.pdf](http://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Insights-on-International-Migration-Post-COVID.pdf).

54 Ibid.

In the post-COVID-19 era, migration patterns will be shaped by increased growth in human and labour mobility. Migration growth post-COVID-19 may result in a combination of patterns similar to the 2015 and 2019 periods: Negative economic growth in 2020, 2021 and less competitive economies, accompanied by more political difficulties moving forward, will increase human mobility.

The growing social dissent and protests in several developing countries beginning in 2019 proved to be an explosive situation by 2020. The pandemic slowed but did not stop this pattern, and one consequence of these protests will be increased migration resulting from instability, both economic and political. The social protests in Haiti, South Africa, Colombia, Nicaragua, Cuba are examples of a growing pattern. As many developing countries struggle to be more effective in delivering vaccines against COVID-19, frustrations are increasing and, in turn, will have an effect on instability and eventual migration.

At the same time, the global economy is showing an increasing demand for skilled labour, and foreign workers are increasingly meeting that demand, particularly in moments of shifts towards a digital economy. The United States of America, for example, is increasing its demand for skilled labour, met mostly by people of Asian nationalities or descent,<sup>55</sup> which now represent 37 per cent of immigrant arrivals in 2018, compared to 22 per cent in 2000.<sup>56</sup>

These shifts are consistent with the current scope of globalization, which is turning to human capital that is portable, networked and flexible in its abilities. Diasporas meet these criteria, almost by definition.

### The depth of diasporas in the future: Continued and increased engagement

Many diasporas are also seeking to maintain ties and stay engaged with their homelands.

As sentiments of belonging increase from previous periods, most diasporas are organizing to implicate themselves in global affairs. They form small to large groupings engaged in not-for-profit activism, as well as in private investment opportunities. For example, research from the early 2000s pointed to the presence of few Latino diaspora organizations, commonly referred to as “hometown associations” (HTAs). Their numbers have not only increased, but the scope of work and formalization has also risen. Way back 20 years ago, 99 per cent of HTAs were not formally registered as non-profit organizations.<sup>57</sup> Twenty years later, this number may only be as high as 80 per cent – that is, a growing number of HTAs have formalized their status. These HTAs are also able to raise more funds.

Evidence from 74 countries (most of which have diaspora links from the European Union), which have nearly 130 million migrants and receive USD 343 billion in remittances, points to varying degrees of government and diaspora engagement (Table 1). Fifty-one countries recognize dual citizenship and 56 grant the right of vote, but only 17 have an explicit diaspora policies.<sup>58</sup> Most of these laws were enacted after 2000. Moreover, the interactions or activities that migrants engage vis-à-vis the nation-State (whether through its government, civil society

55 Pew Research Center, “Educational attainment among U.S. immigrants, 2018”, graph. Available at [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/ft\\_2020-08-20\\_immigrants\\_08](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/ft_2020-08-20_immigrants_08).

56 Pew Research Center, “Among new immigrant arrivals, Asians outnumber Hispanics”, graph. Available at [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/ft\\_2020-08-20\\_immigrants\\_04b](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/ft_2020-08-20_immigrants_04b).

57 See, for example: Manuel Orozco, “Mexican and Central American diasporas”. In: *New Patterns for Mexico: Observations on Remittances, Philanthropic Giving, and Equitable Development/Nuevas Pautas para México: Observaciones sobre Remesas, Donaciones Filantrópicas y Desarrollo Equitativo* (Studies in Global Equity) (bilingual edition, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2006).

58 The data provided in Table 1 is from a project on diaspora engagement of diasporas in the European Union.

or private sector) are largely of an economic nature and correlate significantly with remittances and the size of the diaspora. In other words, migrant economic engagement occurs regardless of government engagement. Such a trend is growing over time and in depth (for a list of countries, see Table 2 at end of this article).

**Table 1. Country diaspora policies, diaspora organizations and remittances**

Criteria of countries		Number of countries	Number of diaspora organizations in European Union countries	Number Remittance volume (2019), in USD	Number of migrants (2019)
Dual citizenship?	No	23	116	149 424 955 567	54 610 798
	Yes	51	335	184 880 938 710	74 983 524
Right to vote?	No	18	127	76 557 722 551	28 547 127
	Yes	56	324	257 748 171 726	101 047 195
Diaspora policy?*	No	57	331	282 931 486 007	109 416 665
	Yes	17	120	51 374 408 269	20 177 657

Source: Data compiled by the author from the International Centre for Migration Policy Development country profiles, produced by the European Union Global Diaspora Facility (<https://diasporaforddevelopment.eu/interactive-map>).

Note: \*Countries with diaspora policies are Afghanistan, Benin, Cabo Verde, Dominica, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kenya, Liberia, Mauritius, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.

Migrant engagement is not only through remittances, but also take other material and symbolic forms, either through the diaspora organizations or through investments. For example, the intention among Latin American migrants to send money and invest has remained strong despite the pandemic. This not only points to the relationship of transnational family ties, but also of diasporas thinking about investing back home. Despite income and job losses in 2020, the pandemic caught migrants better financially prepared than during the 2009 global recession.

They had more savings and liquidity (30% more than in 2009), more financial access (having spent more years in the United States). Also, their investment capacity in 2020 had remained stable, at 22 per cent (compared to 2010, when it was at 20%), with an average of USD 5,000 to invest. The rationales for investing back home were predominantly housing-related and likelihood of investing was higher among those with the intention to return (after eight years from when the survey was done in 2021) to be with their family, who are more likely to invest back home in real state.<sup>59</sup>

Therefore, in both material and symbolic circumstances, global trends, by their own motion, will ensure continued growth of the diaspora in the future, with diasporas becoming both more visible and more impactful. Specifically, the generation of diaspora work in the past thirty years has gradually increased their maturity in how they engage with their homelands and influence host country governments. Such mature evolution, in turn, gives a heads-up to the new diasporas joining the forthcoming decade.

The intersection between a diaspora renewal or replenishment, through continued and increased migration, with greater density of the scope of work in local development, in particular, signals a shift and upward trend ten years from now – that is, the influence of diasporas in global events will be felt more visibly and have greater impact.

59 Manuel Orozco and Katherine Klaas, *A Commitment to Family: Remittances and the COVID-19 Pandemic – Experiences of US Migrants*, (Washington, D.C., Inter-American Dialogue and Creative Associates International, 2021). Available at [www.thedialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Survey-of-LAC-Migrants-2020-Report-Final.pdf](http://www.thedialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Survey-of-LAC-Migrants-2020-Report-Final.pdf).

Table 2. Dual citizenship, migrants' right to vote, diaspora organizations and remittances (selected countries)

Countries and territories	Dual citizenship?	Migrants' right vote?	Diaspora policy?	Number of diaspora organizations in the European Union	Remittances as a share of GDP (2019)	Number of migrants (2019)	Year dual citizenship law was passed	Year law on migrants' right to vote was passed
Afghanistan	✓	✓	✓	11	4.34	5 120 756	2001	2004
Algeria	✓	✓		5	1.05	1 944 784	1970	1997
Angola	✓			11	-	661 590	2010	-
Armenia	✓			3	11.18	964 848	1995	-
Bangladesh	✓	✓		7	6.07	7 835 152	1972	2001
Benin	✓	✓	✓	12	1.43	666 357	1965	2019
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	✓	✓		7	3.26	878 211	2009	2009
Brazil		✓		6	0.17	1 745 339	-	1965
Burundi	✓	✓		5	1.60	623 999	2000	2019
Cabo Verde	✓	✓	✓	3	11.90	186 372	1980	1980
Cameroon		✓		6	0.86	383 029	-	2011
Chad		✓		10	-	206 400	-	2009
Chile	✓	✓		4	0.02	650 151	2005	2013
China				6	0.13	10 732 281	-	-
Colombia	✓	✓		5	2.09	2 869 032	1991	1961
Comoros				5	11.40	120 297	1979	2005
Congo		✓		5	-	239 397	-	2001
Cote d'Ivoire	✓	✓		16	0.57	1 114 003	1961	2008
Cuba	✓	✓		8	-	1 654 684	2019	1992
Democratic Republic of the Congo		✓		4	4.39	1 684 615	-	2006
Djibouti	✓	✓		9	1.78	18 668	2018	1992
Dominica	✓	✓	✓	4	8.25	78 634	1978	2010
Dominican Republic	✓	✓		3	8.34	1 558 668	2015	1997
Ecuador	✓	✓		7	3.02	1 183 685	1945	1998
Egypt	✓	✓		7	8.83	3 547 626	2004	2011
El Salvador	✓	✓		10	20.93	1 600 739	1950	2020

Countries and territories	Dual citizenship?	Migrants' right vote?	Diaspora policy?	Number of diaspora organizations in the European Union	Remittances as a share of GDP (2019)	Number of migrants (2019)	Year dual citizenship law was passed	Year law on migrants' right to vote was passed
Eritrea	✓	✓		14	-	751 481	1992	1992
Ethiopia		✓	✓	3	0.55	871 747	-	1995
Fiji	✓	✓		5	5.18	222 633	2009	2019
Georgia	✓	✓		6	12.73	852 816	2018	2011
Ghana	✓			14	5.26	970 625	2000	-
Guatemala		✓		2	13.89	1 205 644	1966	2016
Guinea	✓	✓		10	1.16	530 963	2019	2010
Guinea-Bissau	✓	✓		3	9.77	103 587	2010	-
Haiti	✓			4	38.53	1 585 681	2012	-
India		✓		5	2.90	17 510 931	-	2010
Iraq	✓	✓	✓	4	0.37	2 033 522	2006	2004
Jordan	✓			8	10.03	784 377	1954	-
Kazakhstan		✓		3	0.28	4 005 587	-	1995
Kenya	✓		✓	10	2.97	525 437	2010	-
Kiribati				1	10.26	4 370	-	-
Kyrgyzstan	✓	✓		3	28.51	754 969	2007	2011
Lebanon	✓	✓		3	13.88	844 158	1962	2017
Liberia			✓	8	9.81	219 338	-	-
Maldives	✓	✓		1	0.08	3 053	2017	2008
Mali	✓	✓		6	5.91	1 264 700	1995	2018
Mauritius	✓	✓	✓	6	2.25	188 344	1968	1968
Micronesia (Federated States of)		✓		-	-	21 819	-	1997
Mongolia				7	4.05	73 488	-	-
Morocco	✓	✓	✓	6	5.67	3 136 069	2004	2011
Myanmar		✓		4	3.15	3 699 472	-	2010

Countries and territories	Dual citizenship?	Migrants' right to vote?	Diaspora policy?	Number of diaspora organizations in the European Union	Remittances as a share of GDP (2019)	Number of migrants (2019)	Year dual citizenship law was passed	Year law on migrants' right to vote was passed
Nepal			✓	5	26.92	2 285 364	-	-
Nicaragua	✓	✓		2	13.47	682 865	1987	2012
Niger	✓	✓		8	2.48	401 653	2014	2019
Nigeria	✓		✓	18	5.31	1 438 331	1999	-
Pakistan	✓	✓		9	8	6 303 286	1951	1973
Papua New Guinea	✓	✓		1	0.01	219 126	2016	1997
Paraguay	✓	✓		2	1.75	871 638	1992	1992
Republic of Moldova	✓	✓	✓	7	15.97	1 013 417	2000	1997
Senegal		✓	✓	4	10.70	642 654	-	2001
Seychelles				4	1.39	36 788	-	-
Somalia				6	-	2 054 377	-	-
Sri Lanka	✓			5	8.03	1 775 768	1948	-
Sudan	✓	✓		11	2.25	2 040 613	2011	2012
Suriname				7	0.01	423 517	-	-
Thailand	✓	✓		6	1.30	1 020 119	1965	1996
Togo		✓	✓	8	8.40	543 277	-	2017
Tonga	✓	✓		2	-	74 433	2007	-
Tunisia	✓	✓		6	5.28	813 213	1993	1988
Uganda	✓	✓	✓	8	4.14	734 951	2005	2020
Ukraine		✓		7	10.27	5 901 067	-	2011
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	✓	✓		2	5	5 500 000	1999	1993
Zambia	✓	✓	✓	3	0.43	493 087	2016	2016
Palestinian Territories	✓			5	-	3 890 650	-	-

Sources: Data elaborated by the author from: European Union Global Diaspora Facility, "Diaspora engagement map", interactive graphic, available at <https://diasporaforddevelopment.eu/interactive-map/>; World Bank, "Development indicators – personal remittances received (% of GDP)", data set, available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TR.FP.WKR.DT.GD.ZS>; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "International migrant stock 2019", data set, available at [www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock](http://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock).





International Organization for Migration  
17 route des Morillons, P.O. Box 17, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 717 9111 • Fax: +41 22 798 6150  
Email: [hq@iom.int](mailto:hq@iom.int) • Website: [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)