



Destination-Country Policies to Foster Diaspora Engagement in Development

By Kathleen Newland

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM

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Executive Summary

Emigrants and their descendants contribute greatly to the development of their countries of origin or ancestry—not only with financial contributions to their families but also through business formation, talent partnerships, the exchange of knowledge, and more.¹ The roles of diasporas in development have become a topic of policy debate and programming around the world. But research and policy proposals on diaspora contributions have focused almost entirely on the policies of countries of origin. Few Western countries of destination that have substantial official development assistance programs are investing in sizeable “diaspora for development” projects over the long term, although there are important exceptions.

Many Western destination countries have made efforts to integrate their immigrant and diaspora populations. Some of these governments acknowledge that well-integrated diasporas are better able to contribute to development in their countries of origin or ancestry, but few have connected integration to diaspora engagement in practice—or recognized that it is a two-way street. Not only does integration promote diasporas’ development activities (since well-integrated diaspora members tend to have higher incomes as well as skills and experience to share), but involvement in diaspora organizations often is a stepping-stone to broader engagement in civil society in the destination country.

The roles of diasporas in development have become a topic of policy debate and programming around the world.

Interest in collaboration between governments of destination countries and their resident diaspora populations has waxed and waned since the early 2000s, but it has revived somewhat in recent years. Two predominant approaches have emerged. “Co-development,” as codified by the French government starting in the early 1990s, is conceived as a way of bolstering the benefits of migration for origin and destination countries alike. Meanwhile, a “leveraging” approach operates on the premise that diasporas are resources that can boost the development and foreign policy goals of the country of destination, assuming that diaspora groups and the destination-country governments have common objectives.

Governments that involve their resident diasporas in development programs—such as Finland, France, Germany, and Italy—choose different ways to engage. Some of the most common are: supporting or strengthening diaspora organizations, making grants to diasporas’ development projects, consulting with diasporas on development policies and programs, encouraging the temporary return of skilled diaspora members to countries of origin, and supporting diaspora entrepreneurship. Many such programs have been successful, but many others have been abandoned.

Reasons for fading diaspora engagement vary among development cooperation agencies. The challenges involved in working with diaspora groups are considerable. They include choosing among a wide array of potential diaspora partners and overcoming cultural differences in ways of working. Other potential difficulties include problems of representation and capacity among diverse diaspora populations, divergent development priorities, unrealistic expectations on both sides, and political or personnel changes in destination-country governments that disrupt continuity in programs.

¹ This report, originally published in April 2022, has been revised to more accurately characterize the nature of the work done by the European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF).

Some clear lessons emerge from experiences of working with diasporas in development cooperation. These lessons start with the importance of listening and learning about the priorities, capabilities, and challenges of diverse diaspora communities. Long-term commitment and patience in awaiting positive outcomes—and toleration of some failures—are needed to realize the comparative advantages that diasporas may bring to meeting the challenges of development in their countries of origin or ancestry (their linguistic and cultural fluency, for example, as well as their networks and ability to recognize business opportunities). At the same time, diasporas often need support to build capacity in their own organizations and to develop the skills to implement projects in their homelands. Development agencies should make clear their criteria for partnership, and continuously evaluate the effectiveness of their collaborations. Inclusiveness and representation are important but not sufficient; agencies also need to look for effectiveness in diaspora organizations—as shown in a record of accomplishment, commitment of their own resources, and trust within their memberships. Persistent efforts to build strong partnerships can have big development payoffs.

1 Introduction

The contributions of diasporas² to the development of their countries of origin or ancestry are now an accepted part of migration-and-development research and analysis. Policy recommendations bearing on how states can more effectively mobilize diaspora populations for development are plentiful.³ However, the advice centers almost entirely on countries of migrant origin or ancestry; to date, it has had relatively little to say about the role of countries of destination/settlement in fostering productive engagement of resident diaspora populations with development activities in their countries of origin. Furthermore, the integration of immigrants and their descendants in destination countries, and how this may influence engagement in origin-country development, is a dynamic that has drawn few policy responses.

Analyses and recommendations on diaspora engagement for development have been translated into policy and practice by many origin countries, in some cases vigorously and with important positive impacts.⁴ However, few donor countries (most of which are also countries of destination) have followed suit with sustained, scaled-up programs and policies to encourage and assist diaspora populations in contributing to development

in their homelands—this, despite broad acknowledgement of the important role that diasporas can play as investors, entrepreneurs, expert resources, philanthropists, and more. For many governments, it has

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² For the purposes of this discussion, “diasporas” refers to immigrants and their descendants who maintain a sense of connection to their countries of origin or ancestry.

³ See, for example, Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias and Kathleen Newland, *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries* (Geneva and Washington, DC: International Organization for Migration and Migration Policy Institute, 2012); Hein de Haas, *Engaging Diasporas: How Governments and Development Agencies Can Support Diaspora Involvement in the Development of Origin Countries* (Oxford, UK: University of Oxford, International Migration Institute, 2006).

⁴ For examples, see Kathleen Newland, ed., *Diasporas: New Partners in Global Development Policy* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2010).

been difficult to surmount some of the obstacles to cooperation with diaspora groups—groups that are extremely diverse and that have goals that are not necessarily aligned with donor institutions.⁵ Many diaspora organizations have little experience in the ways of official development assistance (ODA), or are too small or informal to qualify for formal partnership with governmental development institutions.⁶

Additional factors contribute to the paucity of ongoing, consistent programming. Some diaspora engagement initiatives by donor governments have not produced the expected results and discouraged follow-up, and political or personnel changes in some donor governments have shifted priorities away from promoting the role of diasporas in development. Some governments have found that potential diaspora partners were less than enthusiastic about cooperation, especially when diaspora engagement was perceived as linked too closely to government efforts to return irregular migrants and those with failed asylum cases to their origin countries, or to a broader goal of development as a route toward more limited migration. For these and other reasons, including the complexity of working with diaspora groups, few donor governments have given priority to “diaspora for development” (D4D) programming.⁷ There are some important exceptions. Even in some of these exceptional cases, however, the challenges of working with diaspora groups in the country of destination have led donors to shift their emphasis to work in countries of origin—both to support these countries in mobilizing their diasporas for development and to improve conditions at the receiving end of diaspora contributions—rather than empowering resident diasporas to make those contributions.

This report surveys the diaspora engagement actions and policies of Western donor governments to identify distinctive features as well as common threads, and to extract lessons about effectiveness and sustainability. It draws on an extensive literature review (although research in this area is sparse), official policy statements, and interviews with officials, analysts, and diaspora leaders.

While this report focuses on the policies of national governments, it should be noted that a distinctive—and important—feature of diaspora engagement in some countries, such as Spain and Italy, is the involvement of regional and municipal governments as major actors.⁸ In Spain, for example, Madrid, the Basque country, Catalonia, and Andalusia are major actors. Local governments seem to be more interested in integration of their immigrant populations and less in returns than national governments. Many have developed local-to-local programs involving some of the cities or regions that are the sources of their diaspora populations.⁹

5 See, for example, Paula Doherty Johnson, *Diaspora Philanthropy: Influences, Initiatives, and Issues* (Boston/Cambridge, MA: The Philanthropic Initiative Inc. and The Global Equity Initiative, 2007), 21; Kathleen Newland, Aaron Terrazas, and Roberto Munster, *Diaspora Philanthropy: Private Giving and Public Policy* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2010).

6 Rannveig Agunias and Newland, *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development*, 90–94.

7 Migration Policy Institute (MPI), “Missing Ingredients in Diaspora Engagement in Development: Destination-Country Policies and Integration” (webinar, April 22, 2021).

8 International Centre for Migration Policy Development, “Mediterranean City-to-City Migration (MC2CM),” accessed July 7, 2021.

9 Janina Pescinski, *The Place of Diaspora Associations in Cities* (New York: United Nations University Press, 2018).

2 The Ebb and Flow of Interest in Diaspora Engagement

Donor and destination countries' interest in diaspora engagement began to gather momentum in the early 2000s. The relationship between migration and development had been analyzed by scholars for decades,¹⁰ and some governments had recognized the potential of diasporas as development actors, but serious policy attention grew markedly starting in about 2003. Initially, the new focus was on migrants' remittances, spurred by World Bank efforts to draw attention to the until-then overlooked fact that migrant remittances surpassed the volume of all other financial flows to low- and middle-income countries (including foreign direct investment, if China is excluded from the calculation).¹¹ But policy attention soon expanded to include other ways in which diasporas contribute to the development of their homelands.¹²

The idea of diasporas as partners in development was quickly adopted by the governments of migrants' origin countries. By 2009, the governments of 56 origin countries had established 77 institutions devoted to diaspora engagement,¹³ and by 2015, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), more than 110 national governments had specialized units devoted to facilitating diaspora contributions to development.¹⁴ Several donor governments also established forums for discussion of diasporas and development or formed partnerships with diaspora organizations. Some initiated pilot projects to support the implementation of diaspora-focused development projects. A number of national governments, finding partnerships with the number and variety of diaspora organizations difficult to manage, tried to persuade them (sometimes successfully) to form umbrella organizations to speak with a unified voice, as is discussed below in Section 6.A.

The role of diasporas was also prominent in high-profile migration and development events, including the first UN High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development in 2006 and the second in 2013, as well as the first meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2007 and subsequent convenings. IOM supported research and policy development on diaspora engagement, co-publishing a handbook for policymakers and practitioners with the Migration Policy Institute in 2012.¹⁵

In June 2013, IOM convened its annual International Dialogue on Migration as the first-ever Diaspora Ministerial Conference. The conference brought together more than 600 participants, including 55 ministers or other high-level government officials, from 143 countries.¹⁶ Seventeen Western European countries participated, along with Australia, Canada, and the United States. Of these 20 donor-country delegations, 11

10 See, for example, Gabriel Sheffer, "A New Field of Study: Modern Diasporas in International Politics," in *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, ed. Gabriel Sheffer (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), 1–15.

11 Dilip Ratha, "Workers' Remittances: An Important and Stable Source of External Development Finance," in *Global Development Finance* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003).

12 See, for example, the following report, commissioned by the UK Department of International Development: Kathleen Newland and Erin Patrick, *Beyond Remittances: The Role of Diaspora in Poverty Reduction in Their Countries of Origin* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2004).

13 Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias, ed., *Closing the Distance: How Governments Strengthen Ties with Their Diasporas* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2009).

14 Laura Thompson, "Keynote Speech, Launch of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Diaspora, Development and Migration (APPGDDM)" (keynote speech, International Organization for Migration, UK House of Commons, London, February 3, 2015).

15 Rannveig Agunias and Newland, *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development*.

16 International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Diasporas and Development: Bridging Societies and States* (Geneva: IOM, 2013).

had participation from their capitals (as opposed to their local diplomatic delegations in Geneva, where the conference took place); only 4 included representatives from their development cooperation bodies.¹⁷

Since the 2018 adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, in which the role of diasporas in development is acknowledged and promoted, diaspora engagement seems to be drawing more donor interest.

Interest in and activity centered on diaspora-and-development links among donors and in international gatherings waned somewhat as the international development community began to focus on the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, in which migration as a factor in development was acknowledged but given scant attention.¹⁸ Some individual donor

countries continued to support diaspora engagement, and their sustained involvement produced more sophisticated and successful projects and programs. Since the 2018 adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, in which the role of diasporas in development is acknowledged and promoted,¹⁹ diaspora engagement seems to be drawing more donor interest.

Institutional cooperation on diaspora-for-development between donor countries was expressed almost entirely as development cooperation and was welcomed both by the governments of origin countries and by diaspora communities. The emphasis was (and largely remains) on helping countries of origin to strengthen their relations with their diasporas, and on supporting the capacity of diaspora groups to contribute to development in their homelands. Very little attention went to assessing the development impact of destination countries' policies to further the social and economic integration of immigrants and their descendants. Indeed, there was some subdued debate on whether diasporas' continuing involvement with their countries of origin might inhibit immigrants' integration at destination.²⁰

3 Two Approaches to Engaging Diasporas in Development

As interest in the role of diasporas in development revived after 2003, donor governments' approaches to the subject fell into two broad categories: the co-development approach and what one might call the "leveraging" approach. Neither can be shown to be superior to the other, though each implies a different philosophy of diaspora engagement.

The term "co-development" is often credited to a 1997 report prepared for French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin by Sami Naïr, an Algerian-born French political scientist who was then director of France's

17 IOM, "Diaspora Ministerial Conference" (list of participants, International Dialogue on Migration, Geneva, June 18–19, 2013).

18 Keith Nurse, "Migration, Diasporas, Remittances and the Sustainable Development Goals in Least Developed Countries," *Journal of Globalization and Development* 9, no. 2 (2019): 1–13.

19 Objective 19 of the Global Compact for Migration reads: "Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries." See UN General Assembly, "Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration," January 11, 2019.

20 Cindy Horst et al., *Participation of Diasporas in Peacebuilding and Development: A Handbook for Practitioners and Policymakers* (Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2010).

Interministerial Commission on Migration and, later, a member of the European Parliament.²¹

It was conceived as a way of integrating immigration and development in such a manner that migration would benefit both the country of origin and the country of destination rather than representing a loss for the origin country.

Co-development puts diaspora populations at the center of development partnerships—as a link between two countries that share a history and a present reality of migration. This approach followed from a longstanding migration-and-development program that was heavily focused on promoting return migration. It was hoped that the new approach would foster partnership between origin and destination countries in a way that traditional North-South development models did not.²² However, part of that partnership was still intended to focus on migration control.²³

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The practice of co-development in France has been criticized for its lingering focus on the return and reinsertion of migrants into their origin countries, along with a focus on reducing migration pressures so that fewer people feel the need to leave their countries.²⁴ This twin orientation dissuaded many diaspora organizations from cooperating with the French government in a project they perceived as intended to reduce the immigrant population, at the same time that admissions policy was becoming more restrictive. After several failed attempts to involve diaspora organizations, France in 2003 explicitly broadened its articulation of co-development beyond return and reintegration programs and acknowledged that diasporas could contribute to development in their homelands whether they returned or remained in France. Yet the link with the return of migrants, especially unauthorized migrants, continues to shadow the concept of co-development, even as it is more widely adopted—for example, in EU development policy.²⁵

One further criticism of co-development is that its orientation toward diasporas' countries of origin or ancestry may inhibit development cooperation with countries that do not have a significant immigrant/diaspora population living in the donor country. French ODA, for example, is centered on Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East, as well as certain overseas departments of France (such as Mayotte off the coast of East Africa and French Guiana in South America) where migration pressures from surrounding areas are high. France is not alone in identifying priority countries for development assistance according to diaspora connections or other criteria such as historical ties (e.g., Spain–Morocco), humanitarian need (Finland–Somalia), or legacies of conflict (United States–Central America).

21 Sami Nair, *Rapport de bilan et d'orientation sur la politique de codéveloppement liée aux flux migratoires* (Paris: Mission interministérielle Migrations/Codéveloppement, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 1997).

22 Graciela Malgesini Rey, Joan Lacomba Vázquez, Alexis Cloquell Lozano, and Javier Ochoa Hidalgo, *Guía Básica del Codesarrollo: Qué es y cómo participar en él* (Madrid: CIDEAL, 2007).

23 de Haas, *Engaging Diasporas*.

24 Catherine Tasca, Jacques Pelletier, and Bernard Barraux, "Le co-développement à l'essai: Rapport d'Information fait au nom de la commission des Affaires étrangères, de la défense et des forces armées (1) sur le co-développement et les relations entre politique de développement et politique de gestion des flux migratoires" (informative report no. 417, Extraordinary Session of the Senate 2006–2007, July 25, 2007), 29.

25 Jérôme Audran, "Gestion des flux migratoires: réflexions sur la politique française de codéveloppement," *Annuaire suisse de politique de développement* 27, no. 2 (2008): 101–13.

The leveraging approach, not so explicitly formulated as the co-development approach, conceives of diasporas as resources that have the potential to amplify the development goals—and, more generally, the foreign policy goals—of the destination/donor country, based on the idea that origin and destination countries have common objectives. The German development cooperation agency,²⁶ for example, in a 2009 guide to working with diasporas expressed the rationale for doing so: “cooperation arrangements with diaspora communities ... can serve to *generate added value* in the partner countries with regard to development cooperation” (emphasis added) and “Institutions in Germany ... can use diaspora communities to recruit other civil-society actors in Germany as well as in the migrants’ countries of origin as partners for their activities.”²⁷ German development cooperation continues to see diasporas in the dual roles of target populations for organizational development aid, communications, and outreach as well as advisors, partners, and contributors.²⁸

In perhaps the most expansive version of the leveraging approach, former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton portrayed diasporas as force multipliers for U.S. diplomacy, development, and defense—a central element of “smart power.”²⁹ In practice, however, the role given to diasporas is more modest. U.S. government support for diaspora organizations and activities is mostly rhetorical and sporadic, with the major engagement coming in the aftermath of natural disasters.³⁰ For example, the U.S. Agency for International Development initiated a series of virtual consultations with the Haitian diaspora in the aftermath of the 2021 earthquake.³¹

Leveraging diasporas has usually meant steps such as co-funding projects in origin countries, drawing on diaspora expertise in designing or implementing projects, tapping into diaspora networks, and consulting with diaspora groups or individuals on specific issues or geographies about which they have knowledge or experience.³² While diasporas are not central to the underlying rationale of this development strategy, some development cooperation agencies that follow a leveraging approach allocate significant roles and resources to diaspora organizations.

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The potential of diaspora-focused ODA to leverage development in partner countries has not been fully tested. The Greek philosopher and mathematician Archimedes famously said, “Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world.” If ODA provides a strong and consistent

26 The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Development Cooperation Agency [GIZ])—previously known as the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)—is a government-owned corporation that implements programs and projects in sustainable development for the German government, primarily the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

27 Franziska Bühner, ed., *Cooperating with Diaspora Communities: Guidelines for Practice* (Eschborn, Germany: GTZ, 2009), 3 and 6.

28 Author interview with Jannik Krone and Julian Siegfried Tangermann, Advisor and Project Manager at the Program Migration and Diaspora, GIZ, June 21, 2021.

29 Remarks by Hillary Rodham Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State, “Remarks at the Opening of the Secretary’s Global Diaspora Forum,” U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC, May 17, 2011.

30 U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), “USAID and Diaspora: Partners in Development,” accessed July 7, 2021.

31 Author email exchange with a representative of the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, August 23 and September 9, 2021.

32 Rannveig Agunias and Newland, *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development*.

lever for diaspora efforts and the country of destination a supportive fulcrum, a capable and committed diaspora may indeed move a country of origin with a willing government along the path of socioeconomic development.

The distinction between the co-development and leveraging approaches is often much less sharp in practice than in theory. Both tend to involve working with the governments of origin countries to strengthen constructive engagement with their diasporas and, more ambitiously, to improve the underlying conditions at origin that determine the effectiveness of diaspora cooperation. Both also, in certain contexts, have focused on facilitating sustainable return of migrants to their countries of origin.

4 Diaspora Integration and Development Involvement

While many destination countries have made efforts to integrate their resident diaspora populations, very few have connected those efforts to diasporas' engagement in origin-country development, despite the recognition in some governments that, as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) puts it, "Studies show that migrants who have integrated well in their host country make a significant contribution to development in their country of origin."³³ The converse is also true and perhaps more relevant from a policy perspective; as the German Development Cooperation Agency (GIZ) observes: "Experience gained in cooperating with diaspora communities has shown that there is a positive correlation between migrants' engagement in their country of origin and their integration in Germany."³⁴ Participation in a civil-society organization (CSO), including those formed by diaspora members, is in itself a marker of integration.

At the European level, it is encouraging that the European Social Fund Plus, the main EU vehicle for supporting socioeconomic inclusion, has for the first time in its 2021–27 budget given priority specifically to the integration of third-country nationals and marginalized communities.³⁵ It will allow migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers access to social inclusion measures that previously targeted only EU citizens. The fund's 101.2 euro billion budget will go toward interventions to support long-term integration in areas such as access to services and employability.³⁶

Realizing the connection between diasporas' engagement in countries of origin and their integration in destination countries does not necessarily translate into programming, however. To give just one example, one of the six pillars of the Netherlands' Comprehensive Agenda on Migration of 2018 is "Encouraging integration and participation," but there is no mention of migrant or diaspora organizations as structures that may foster participation.³⁷ The explanation, as in many other countries, may be that immigrant integration issues are dealt with by ministries of justice, the interior, and/or social affairs whereas

33 Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), *Global Programme Migration and Development*, "Diaspora—A Development Factor," updated January 3, 2021.

34 Bühner, ed., *Cooperating with Diaspora Communities*, 4.

35 European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027" (COM [2020] 758 final, November 24, 2020).

36 European Commission, "Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027"; EURO CITIES, "ESF+ for 2021–2027" (policy brief, April 2020).

37 Government of the Netherlands, Ministry of Justice and Security, "Comprehensive Agenda on Migration" (letter to the Dutch parliament, March 28, 2018).

development cooperation is the purview of ministries of foreign affairs or free-standing development cooperation ministries or agencies. Absent a whole-of-government approach, as practiced by the Swiss and German governments, for example, immigrant integration and diaspora engagement in development might never intersect in policy, although they do in reality. The governments of *origin* countries have, in some cases, gone further in acting on the link between integration at destination and development contributions to origin countries, by establishing programs that help their diasporas to integrate in destination countries.³⁸ The Government of Mexico, for example, has a network of 50 consulates in the United States, where the great majority of the Mexican diaspora lives; the consulates provide information on access to health services, education, identity documents, language acquisition programs, and many other elements needed for integration.³⁹

Just as integration and diaspora involvement in development are often separate in government programs, they also are often separate within immigrant and diaspora organizations. Most migrant organizations are intent on helping members of their communities integrate in the destination country, by giving advice and support on legal status, access to services, educational opportunities, employment, and so forth. Other organizations are more focused on conditions and prospects in the origin country and are determined to play a part in that country's development. Some, such as Mexican hometown associations in the United States, do both—but they are more the exception than the rule.⁴⁰

Involvement with a diaspora organization in a destination country, whether the group is focused on origin-country development or destination-country integration, often exposes members to the way things get done in the mainstream society—getting a permit for a gathering, applying for funding, interfacing with public services, and so forth. Especially valuable for recent immigrants, these experiences can develop skills that foster integration and encourage interaction with the native born. Diaspora organizations may also provide demonstrable benefits that help to build a more positive image of immigrant populations within the broader society. For example, they played a central role in Norway's COVID-19 response, as they were able to reach out to marginalized communities that were otherwise hard to reach with public-health messages on prevention of the virus's transmission and on treatment and vaccination.⁴¹

Involvement with a diaspora organization in a destination country, whether the group is focused on origin-country development or destination-country integration, often exposes members to the way things get done in the mainstream society.

38 For a thorough examination of the governance of diaspora engagement and integration, and the complex relationship between the two in the European Union from the perspective of both countries of origin and destination, see Maria Vincenza Desiderio with Agnieszka Weinar, *Supporting Immigrant Integration in Europe? Developing the Governance for Diaspora Engagement* (Brussels: MPI Europe, 2014).

39 Aaron Terrazas, Jamie Durana, and Will Somerville, *Hometown Associations: An Untapped Resource for Immigrant Integration?* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2008).

40 Manuel Orozco and Michelle Lapointe, "Mexican Hometown Associations and Development Opportunities," *Journal of International Affairs* 57, no. 2 (2004): 31–51.

41 MPI, "Missing Ingredients in Diaspora Engagement in Development."

CSOs that are not diaspora associations also provide avenues for integration. One example of this dynamic at work can be found in Norway, where the national branch of Caritas, the humanitarian aid organization of the Catholic Church, depends heavily on volunteers for its domestic programs. Some 70 percent of its volunteer force are immigrants or people of immigrant background. They get work experience as volunteers, and many find this a stepping-stone into paid employment.⁴²

Participation in a diaspora organization may be the gateway to involvement in civil society more broadly, and therefore to social integration—especially in societies where involvement in social organizations is an approved of or even expected part of civic life. In other words, not only can integration promote diaspora development efforts, but diaspora development efforts can promote social and economic integration.

5 Working with Civil-Society Organizations: A First Step toward Diaspora Engagement

The 30 members (29 countries plus the European Union) of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report on how much of their ODA is channeled through or to CSOs.⁴³ The CSOs are diverse: they may be faith-based organizations, secular humanitarian organizations, educational institutions, grassroots development associations, trade unions, private foundations, or one of many other types, including diaspora organizations. They include organizations based in ODA-recipient countries and organizations based in the donor country—for example, CSOs helping migrants and refugees in a donor country, or diaspora organizations in the donor country helping development or humanitarian efforts in the origin country.

Table 1 shows the proportion of bilateral ODA that goes to and through CSOs for DAC members whose total annual ODA budgets exceed USD 1 billion.⁴⁴ In DAC countries as a group, the proportion that goes directly to CSOs is dramatically lower than the amount that goes through them: 2 percent of bilateral ODA compared with 13 percent.⁴⁵ This implies that little investment goes to capacity-building or integration activities in the donor country. In many of the larger donor countries, however, the ratio is more even, and a few channel more aid *to* than *through* CSOs. In the majority of large donors (USD 1 billion or more), the allocation of ODA to or through CSOs increased in the 2010–18 period.

42 MPI, “Missing Ingredients in Diaspora Engagement in Development.”

43 Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Aid for Civil Society Organizations: Statistics Based on DAC Members’ Reporting to the Credit Reporting System Database (CRS), 2017-18* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020).

44 Funds allocated *to* civil-society organizations (CSOs) are programmed by CSOs and include contributions to fund a CSO’s own projects. *Aid through* CSOs is used to implement projects initiated by the donor. See Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, *Aid for Civil Society Organizations*.

45 Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, *Aid for Civil Society Organizations*.

TABLE 1

Bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) Allocations through and to Civil-Society Organizations by Selected OECD Development Assistance Committee Members, 2018

Country	Amount of ODA through CSOs (USD millions)	Amount of ODA to CSOs (USD millions)	Trend in ODA through or to CSOs, 2010–18
Australia	215	48	Down
Belgium	93	209	Down
Canada	902	31	Up
Denmark	435	39	Up
(European Union)	2,068	21	Up
Germany	698	913	Up
Italy	130	150	Up
Japan	93	131	Down
Republic of Korea	39	1	Up
Netherlands	938	94	Down
Norway	604	264	Up
Spain	595	1	Down
Sweden	937	234	Up
Switzerland	553	270	Up
United Kingdom	1,525	474	Down
United States	6,835	5	Down

Note: This table includes Development Assistance Committee members whose total annual ODA budgets exceed USD 1 billion.

Source: Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Aid for Civil Society Organizations: Statistics Based on DAC Members' Reporting to the Credit Reporting System (CRS) Database, 2017–2018 (CRS)* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020).

The proportion of ODA allocated to CSOs does not reveal how much is allocated to or through diaspora organizations, but it does show how inclined a donor is to include CSOs in its development cooperation ecosystem. Although they are not always thought of as such, diaspora organizations *are* CSOs. Some donor governments are investing in capacity-building efforts that will equip diaspora organizations to be included as development partners on an equal basis with other CSOs. In Germany, diaspora organizations make up about 20 percent of those that have taken advantage of the general call to civil society for collaboration in development activities.⁴⁶ One of the aims of the national diaspora summit in Italy is, similarly, to prepare diasporas to respond to a formal invitation for civil society to partner with government on development efforts (see Section 6.C. for additional details on this summit).

⁴⁶ Author interview with Krone and Tangermann.

6 Modes of Supporting Diaspora Engagement in Destination Countries

Governments of destination countries have engaged with resident diasporas in several ways. Working through the national structures for development assistance, the most common are:

- ▶ support to form or strengthen diaspora organizations,
- ▶ grants to development projects initiated and/or implemented by diaspora organizations,
- ▶ consultations with diaspora members and organizations on development policies and programs,
- ▶ skills circulation, including temporary return of diaspora members to countries of origin, and
- ▶ support for diaspora entrepreneurship.

These categories often overlap—for example, consultations may give rise to support for entrepreneurs or stronger diaspora organizations take on development projects. The catalog of diaspora engagement projects and processes is rich, particularly from the early 2000s until about 2016. But it is also notable how many efforts have dwindled or even been abandoned.

A. *Support to Form or Strengthen Diaspora Organizations*

Development cooperation agencies in destination countries, when convinced that diasporas can play an important role in the development of their countries of origin or ancestry, have often found it difficult to identify diaspora partners. A single diaspora population in one destination country may generate hundreds of organizations, divided along lines of region, ethnicity, language, religion, politics, clan, and so forth—many claiming to represent *the* diaspora. Moreover, most diaspora organizations in the early stages of formation (and sometimes later) have very limited capacity. In many cases, they are staffed with volunteers, have small budgets, and limited experience with managing grants. Donors may not know how well an organization represents the diaspora of which it is part. With dozens or hundreds of different diaspora organizations in the mix, governments must find competent, reliable partners.

A single diaspora population in one destination country may generate hundreds of organizations, divided along lines of region, ethnicity, language, religion, politics, clan, and so forth.

Governments have adopted several different strategies for resolving this dilemma. One is to survey existing organizations and decide which of them meet the criteria for partnership. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Department for International Development (DfID) worked with the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD), an organization founded by diaspora members in 1994—before DfID was even established. Indeed, the advocacy of AFFORD and others led to recognition of the “skills and talents of

migrants” in the white paper that previewed the creation of DfID as an asset that the department should build upon.⁴⁷ When collaboration on concrete actions is needed, the question of representativeness may be seen as less important than a proven track record and goals that match those of the donor agency.

To simplify the task of selecting among many diaspora organizations, some governments have followed a second strategy: supporting the formation of coalitions to create a single, or at least a more widely representative, “voice” of the diaspora. One of the most durable diaspora umbrella organizations is a national platform in France—known by its acronym, FORIM⁴⁸—which brings together networks, federations, and other groupings comprising about 1,000 migrant/diaspora organizations devoted to international solidarity between countries of migrant origin on the one hand and migrants, diasporas, and native-born communities in France on the other. FORIM was created in 2002 with French government funding, after years of campaigning by diaspora organizations to be taken seriously as development partners. Its members’ development activities are primarily in Francophone countries that are the origins of diaspora populations in France and are also priority countries for the French development agency, AFD. France-based diasporas from Latin America and Asia are not well represented. FORIM members include organizations that work on the integration of immigrants in France as well as development in origin countries.⁴⁹ Italy is in the process of creating structures that aim to result in such a unified voice, as will be discussed in Section 6.C.

Not all attempts at promoting a unified diaspora voice are so successful. DfID, hoping to build on its good working relationship with AFFORD, encouraged the organization to broaden its scope to all UK-based diaspora groups. AFFORD did not feel itself qualified to represent non-African diasporas but agreed to help DfID set up a diaspora platform open to all diaspora groups. The result, called Connections for Development, lasted only a few years. An evaluation report commissioned by DfID observed that “the motives for founding Connections for Development were good but a new organization instigated by DfID and not well embedded in ... diaspora communities was a poor choice.”⁵⁰ The DfID report concluded, “If an umbrella body does not exist there is probably a good reason why. DfID cannot create new civil-society organizations but it can nurture existing ones.”⁵¹ Top-down, government-funded platforms are likely to have trouble establishing legitimacy and a sense of ownership among diasporas or to have real influence on policies. They may survive, nonetheless, if they are a source of status and funding for participants.

A more successful strategy for strengthening diaspora organizations is to work with structures that diasporas themselves have created and in which they have invested. Five leading African diaspora organizations in Europe formed a consortium in 2009 to create a platform for services “to improve and enhance the capacity and impact of African diaspora organizations involved in development activities in Africa.”⁵² At a policy seminar in 2009 in which 50 diaspora groups participated, AFFORD drafted a proposal for an Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT), which the groups present voted to adopt. A pilot project from 2010 to 2013 demonstrated the viability and usefulness of the platform. The bottom-up

47 African Foundation for Development (AFFORD UK), “25 Key Moments in the History of AFFORD,” accessed July 7, 2021.

48 Forum des Organisations de Solidarité Internationale Issues des Migrations (FORIM), “Qui sommes-nous,” accessed July 19, 2021.

49 FORIM, “Qui sommes-nous.”

50 Paul Thornton and Shaun Hext, *Review of DfID’s Work to Build Support for Development through Work with Businesses, Trades Unions, Faith Communities, Black and Minority Ethnic Communities and Diaspora Groups* (London: UK Department for International Development, 2009), 29.

51 Thornton and Hext, *Review of DfID’s Work*, 29.

52 Devex, “Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT),” accessed July 7, 2021.

creation of ADEPT gave the concept credibility with both diaspora members and donors. By 2021, ADEPT had become a network of 40 members, based in Brussels and working in 30 European countries to provide services and support to about 4,000 African diaspora organizations. The European Union and SDC are major funders of ADEPT.⁵³

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA, now part of Global Affairs Canada) developed an effective strategy of “tripartite partnerships” for strengthening diaspora groups by arranging partnerships in which established Canadian development nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) mentor inexperienced diaspora organizations. With staff embedded in the larger NGOs, the diaspora organizations could learn how to prepare proposals for government funding, as well as budgeting and accounting skills, grant management, project monitoring and evaluation, communications, and so forth.⁵⁴

Diaspora policy in Finland has focused on the Somali diaspora, owing to the size and activism of the Somali community in Finland. The NGO development unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has supported a number of Somali diaspora organizations, including the Finnish-Somalia Network, a structure that was founded by Somali and Finnish NGOs working together. The goal of the network, and the ministry’s support for it, is to build the capacity of Somali diaspora organizations to fulfill the bureaucratic requirements of running an NGO, writing grant applications, and implementing projects. The network also aims to improve development cooperation with associations in Somalia.⁵⁵

B. *Grants to Diaspora Development Projects*

Donor governments provide financial support to development projects initiated by diasporas in a number of different ways. Some do it through conventional grants from their development budgets, others through grant competitions, and still others through matching grants. Any of these mechanisms may be administered directly or through intermediaries.

The French development agency, AFD, finances and supports diaspora-instigated (and other) development projects directly through its CSO initiatives mechanism. The funding is available for projects of 300,000 euros or more. For diaspora development projects below this threshold, AFD funding for local microprojects (with budgets less than 120,000 euros) goes through FORIM.⁵⁶

Germany’s Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM), run jointly by GIZ and the German Federal Employment Agency, has provided annual funding of up to 44,000 euros per project for small-scale projects in GIZ’s priority countries. Diaspora organizations registered in Germany are eligible to apply for the funding under the GIZ Global Programme Migration and Diaspora, which will wind up in June 2022.⁵⁷

53 ADEPT, “Our Partners,” accessed July 7, 2021.

54 Newland, ed., *Diasporas*, 23; Global Forum on Migration and Development, “Roundtable 1.2: Engaging Diasporas and Migrants in Development Policies and Programs—Their Roles? Their Constraints?” (roundtable meeting, Athens, 2009); Global Forum on Migration and Development, “Platform for Partnerships—Policy and Practice Database—Tripartite Partnerships (CIDA),” accessed February 22, 2022.

55 Giulia Sinatti et al., *Diasporas as Partners in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding* (The Hague: African Diaspora Policy Centre, 2010).

56 Agence Française de Développement (AFD), “Financing NGO Projects,” accessed July 7, 2021.

57 Centre for International Migration and Development, “Global Programme Migration & Diaspora,” accessed February 22, 2022.

The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has funded development projects implemented by Somali diaspora voluntary associations in their areas of origin. In 2014, 16 Finnish NGOs run by members of the Somali diaspora were implementing 22 development projects in Somalia and Somaliland with Ministry of Foreign Affairs funding.⁵⁸ The NGO umbrella platform Fingo estimates that in 2021, five to ten diaspora organizations received development cooperation funding from the ministry.⁵⁹

Global Affairs Canada–Development, formerly known as CIDA, has a long record of funding diaspora projects. From the 1980s, CIDA funded development projects in Haiti implemented by Haitian diaspora groups.⁶⁰ For example, it funded development projects executed by the Association of Haitian-Canadian Engineers and Scientists, an organization with development experience in Haiti as well as Canada.⁶¹

The United Kingdom launched the Small Charities Challenge Fund in 2017, which awarded grants of up to £50,000 for two years to UK-registered charities working to improve the lives of the most vulnerable and marginalized people, within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. While not explicitly addressed to diaspora organizations, the fund made clear that it welcomed applications from organizations with strong links to the country in which their project operates.⁶²

An example of funding for diaspora projects executed through a competition was the African Diaspora Marketplace (ADM), administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development in a public-private partnership with Western Union and the George Washington University. The ADM, which went through three rounds from 2009 to 2016, was a business plan competition in which U.S.-based African diaspora entrepreneurs could pitch a business plan to a panel of judges from business, government, and academia. The competitors were required to have a partner in Africa to help execute the projects and to own at least 25 percent of the proposed company. The first round produced 14 winners who received grants of USD 50,000–100,000, which they were required to match with monetary or in-kind contributions. The next two rounds of the competition refined the design to focus on strategic economic sectors such as information technology, renewable energy, and agribusiness. They also added mentoring and training of the competitors, technical assistance, and introductions to additional sources of investment. ADM funding, along with other funding for projects involving U.S.-based diasporas, ceased in 2016.⁶³

Some governments, rather than or in addition to funding diaspora projects directly through national development agencies, route resources through IOM. The Government of Belgium has partnered with the Government of Morocco to finance an IOM project supporting the Moroccan diaspora in Belgium to devise and implement development projects or business ideas in Morocco. Participants in the MEDMA2 project received technical assistance as well as training on the legal, economic, and administrative contexts

58 Päivi Pirkkalainen, “The Role of the Diaspora in the Civil Society Development of Somalia/Somaliland: Reflections on the Finland-Based Somali Diaspora,” *Journal für Entwicklungspolitik* 31, no. 1 (2015): 83–99.

59 Author communication with Paula Lounasheimo, Adviser, Fingo, April 12, 2021.

60 Patricia Weiss Fagen et al., *Haitian Diaspora Associations and Their Investments in Basic Social Services in Haiti* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, School of Foreign Service, 2009).

61 Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), “Engaging Diasporas in Development Policies and Programs: Canadian Experience and Lessons Learned” (Contribution to the Background Paper of Roundtable Session 1.2, Global Forum on Migration and Development 2009, Athens, November 4–5, 2009).

62 UK AID, “Small Charities Challenge Fund,” accessed July 7, 2021.

63 USAID, “USAID and Diaspora: Partners in Development.”

in Morocco. Finalists received funding for two trips to Morocco to set up the necessary arrangements for project implementation.⁶⁴

C. *Consultations with Diasporas*

Several countries have either set up consultative mechanisms specifically for diasporas or have included diaspora groups in more general civil-society consultations. Some of these have the main objective of tapping the development potential of diasporas for countries of origin, while others concentrate on integration in the country of destination. A few address both areas. A further distinction can be made between programs of diaspora engagement that are development focused and those that are more broadly concerned with foreign policy—aiming to improve relations between countries of destination and countries or regions of origin.

Several countries have either set up consultative mechanisms specifically for diasporas or have included diaspora groups in more general civil-society consultations.

In Italy, the National Council for Development Cooperation, established in Italian law, includes representation of the major stakeholders in development, including the diaspora.⁶⁵ Members of the council, who are appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for three years, can make proposals, express opinions, and offer recommendations. The council's working group on migration and development organized a National Summit of Diasporas in 2018, open to diaspora associations interested in getting involved in Italian development cooperation. But many diaspora organizations in Italy are small and new; they have limited capabilities to implement development projects. Participation in the summit process, which includes a small grants scheme, may help them to gain the skills and experience needed to participate in calls for collaboration that go out to CSOs from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, AICS. The summit's second iteration unfolded in 2021. The third will focus on training and other forms of capacity-building. The Italian government also sees the National Diaspora Summit as giving diaspora organizations in the country the means to speak with one voice. Given the diversity of the diaspora population, this may be an unrealistic goal.

Other development-oriented consultations include the Swiss Civil Society Platform on Migration and Development, which involves NGOs, academia, and migrant organizations such as the African Diaspora Council. Germany held its first formal diaspora consultation in June 2021, organized by GIZ. To allow for a real exchange of views, participation was limited to 16 relatively large organizations, each representing several groups at the federal or state level.⁶⁶ Ongoing consultations with diasporas about migration and development—and integration—take place in France through FORIM. In many other donor countries, consultations are more informal and take place as needed, for example when development officials call

64 IOM, Diaspora and Engagement, "The Mobilization of Moroccans Residing in Belgium for the Development of Morocco Programme (MEDMA 2)," updated 2012.

65 Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), "Summit Nazionale Della Diaspore: Diasporas in the Italian Cooperation," November 2017.

66 Author interview with Dennis Röntgen, BMZ, July 1, 2021.

on members of a diaspora to give advice or information when the officials are working on a development-assistance plan for a particular country.

As an example of foreign policy consultations with diasporas, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited members of the Africa diaspora in Finland to a consultation on Finland's Africa strategy as it was being drawn up in 2020. The aim of the new strategy was to expand and deepen Finland's economic and political ties with African countries, the African Union, and regional organizations in Africa. The consultation asked what the diasporas expected and hoped for from the strategy and how they could contribute to realizing it.⁶⁷

In perhaps the most prominent initiative to tap diaspora expertise for foreign policy purposes, French President Emmanuel Macron created an innovative consultation mechanism in 2017 to help reset France's relations with Africa. The Presidential Council for Africa has 12 members, almost all from African diasporas in France. They were selected not as representatives of diaspora groups as much as for their personal track records of investment in the relationship between France and Africa, actions to promote development in Africa, and willingness to be involved in partnership opportunities linking France and Africa. Asked to give frank views and advice outside the usual channels, the council members' mandate is fourfold: (1) feed their expert knowledge of issues in Franco-African relations into French foreign policy; (2) develop ties among French and African civil society, diasporas, and youth; (3) present forward-looking proposals in critical sectors such as health, education, entrepreneurship, and innovation; and (4) convey to the French president the perceptions of relations between France and African countries held by people in Africa, especially those of younger generations. With direct access to the president's office for both formal and informal interactions, a high media profile, and a wide range of expertise, the council is able to move ideas into action (see Box 1). It also sends a powerful signal, internally and externally, about the value of the diaspora and the importance of immigrant populations as talented, resourceful, and dynamic agents of change.

BOX 1 **From Consultation to Action in France: Pass Africa**

Under its current chair, France's Presidential Council for Africa is giving priority attention to diaspora entrepreneurship. It organized a "Tour de France" of African diaspora entrepreneurs in 2020, which resulted in a list of practical proposals. One initiative from this list got underway within a few months of the tour: creation of the "Pass Africa." The initiative identified 20 entrepreneurs whose businesses have strong growth potential, a record of success over at least two years of existence, and an ambition to expand their business in Africa. The participants receive coaching, mentoring, networking assistance, heightened visibility, and help with financing from the French Bank for Public Investment. Being a member of an African diaspora is not a requirement for selection, but in practice almost all of the beneficiaries of Pass Africa are.

Source: Conseil Présidentiel pour l'Afrique, "Les 7 Solutions du CPA pour Accélérer l'Entrepreneuriat des Diasporas: 7 Solutions Issues du Tour de France de l'entrepreneuriat des Diasporas et de la Diversité," updated February 12, 2021.

67 Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, "Invitation to the African Diaspora in Finland for a Consultation on Finland's Africa Strategy," updated November 13, 2020.

The proliferation of consultative mechanisms is certainly a positive development, but it is important that consultations lead to results. If not, diaspora participants may come to see them as performative rather than transformative—or even as a waste of time. One diaspora leader interviewed as part of this study warned of the danger of “consultation fatigue.”⁶⁸ Most of the diaspora members, especially those from smaller or newer associations, who take part in consultations with government will volunteer their time, whereas the government participants are doing it as part of their jobs.

D. Skills Circulation

Return-of-talent programs were some of the earliest migration-and-development programs to be implemented, both by national development agencies and by international organizations. Some of these programs, such as the United Nations Development Program’s Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN), go back to the 1970s. Some of the first return-of-talent programs that posited permanent return had limited success, so most of the more recent efforts are built around temporary returns (although permanent return is also supported).

Concern about the skills deficit in low- and middle-income immigrant-origin countries underlies a continuing interest in ways to make it possible for skilled diaspora members to return to their countries of origin to fill vital needs. Germany’s CIM, for example, assists migrants who want to return to their countries of origin with their job search, relocation, and travel; in some cases, it also supplements their local salaries for a limited time. CIM also has a program that arranges short-term assignments for diaspora volunteers.⁶⁹ In 2019, nearly 800 diaspora experts participated in these programs.

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Many countries partner with IOM in Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programs that deploy diaspora professionals to fill skills gaps and train local partners in countries of origin. One of the most successful MIDA programs has operated continuously since 2008, bringing members of the Somali diaspora based in Finland to work, primarily in the health sector, in Somaliland and in Mogadishu. The fourth phase of the project was funded by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs through 2021. An evaluation conducted in 2020 recommended further support.⁷⁰ Speaking at an event marking the 10th anniversary of the program, the Finnish Minister for Foreign Trade and Development observed, “The MIDA FINNSOM program shows what a valuable asset the diaspora can be in rebuilding the country of origin. [The] diaspora has a significant role to play in influencing change and promoting development.”⁷¹

68 Author interview with Gibril Faal, Director, GK Partners, and founding Director, ADEPT, April 22, 2021.

69 Centre for International Migration and Development, “What We Offer: Apply Now and Help Bring About Change in Your Home Country,” accessed July 7, 2021.

70 Ultimate Consultancy Firm, “External Evaluation of the Project ‘Institutionalize Health Care Improvement through the Temporary Returns of Diaspora Somali Health Professionals through Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA); a Project Funded by the Government of Finland’” (evaluation report, May 2020).

71 Speech by Anne-Mari Virolainen, Finnish Minister of Foreign Trade and Development, at the MIDA FINNSOM 10th Anniversary Seminar, Helsinki, January 21, 2019.

IOM return-of-talent programs have expanded far beyond Africa. The Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) program worked in Armenia, Georgia, Iraq, and the Western Balkans, as well as sub-Saharan Africa, and was supported by several European donor governments. After three phases, TRQN was succeeded in 2016 by the Connecting Diasporas for Development (CD4D) program, implemented by the IOM office in the Netherlands and funded by the Dutch government. The program is now in its second phase (CD4D2) and has several distinctive features that enhance its impact (see Box 2).

CD4D sends experts from diasporas, mostly based in the Netherlands, to their countries of origin for temporary assignments, usually lasting two or three months. The assignments are based on the needs of the origin countries. In CD4D2, four countries are taking part, with up to three priority sectors addressed:

- ▶ Afghanistan: health, water management, vocational training
- ▶ Iraq: migration management for vulnerable groups (internally displaced persons, refugees, minorities, etc.)
- ▶ Nigeria: information and communications technology, health, horticulture
- ▶ Somalia: local government, water management, rule of law/justice

IOM selects experts in consultation with partners in those countries (mostly ministries), as well as institutions there and in the Netherlands, and diaspora organizations in the Netherlands. The Dutch embassy in the country is also consulted.

For each participating country, priority sectors are identified, critical institutions in that sector are chosen, and diaspora experts in the Netherlands

who are willing to participate are sought. If no diaspora expert in a given field can be identified, work in that sector will not go forward—although in some cases experts may be sought in other countries (for example, Nigerian health-care workers in the United Kingdom).

For each participating country, priority sectors are identified, critical institutions in that sector are chosen, and diaspora experts in the Netherlands who are willing to participate are sought.

BOX 2**Learning while Doing: IOM Netherlands' CD4D Program Benefits from Real-Time Feedback**

Three features of the Connecting Diasporas for Development (CD4D) program that distinguish it from most other return-of-talent programs all have to do with learning on the job.

From its inception, CD4D has benefitted from continuous monitoring and feedback from an **academic team** led by Dr. Katie Kuschminder at the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, Maastricht University. The team provides not only formal reports and evaluations but also frequent verbal advice and recommendations to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its partners about how to improve the immediate outcomes, sustainability, and long-term benefits of CD4D. The program benefits enormously from this partnership.

The project receives guidance from a **task force** (this was one of the recommendations of the Maastricht team's evaluation of the first iteration of CD4D). In addition to IOM and the Maastricht team, task force members include diaspora organizations in the Netherlands, based on their expertise and degree of engagement in their country of origin. Task forces have also been set up in the participating origin countries, where they have helped to build a sense of ownership of the CD4D programs. The task forces are organized by the local IOM office and include the experts' host institutions and local partners (ministries). They have provided advice on things such as the optimal duration of expert assignments. (Often, the expected tasks are too ambitious for the time allotted under each expert assignment.) One recommendation for future programming is to better manage expectations and design realistic terms of reference for the experts.

Predeparture **training** has been available to experts since the third phase of the Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) program, but under that program, the courses were optional. In CD4D, they are mandatory. Evaluations have showed that the training is effective, and participants from origin countries have asked to be included in the trainings alongside the incoming diaspora experts.

Sources: Charlotte Mueller and Katie Kuschminder, *Connecting Diaspora for Development, Final Report* (Maastricht: Maastricht Graduate School of Governance [MGSOG], 2019); Charlotte Mueller and Katie Kuschminder, *Connecting Diasporas for Development 2, Initial Report* (Maastricht: MGSOG, 2020); author interview with Zia Gulam, Program Coordinator Migration and Development, IOM Netherlands, July 5, 2021.

E. Support for Entrepreneurship

Job creation is one of the most urgent imperatives for low- and middle-income countries with underemployed and fast-growing populations, and small and medium enterprises are often the richest sources of new jobs. For this reason, support for diaspora entrepreneurship is a common focus of development cooperation, as seen in some of the examples above. In France, the public Research Institute for Development (IRD) piloted in 2016–18 the Program to Support the Creation of Innovative Enterprise in the Mediterranean (PACEIM),⁷² a business incubator for Algerian, Lebanese, Moroccan, and Tunisian diaspora members with a French university education.⁷³ They could receive 35,000 euros in start-up funding for an innovative business in their country of origin or ancestry. IRD has commissioned a feasibility study to

72 Sébastien Dagault et al., *Extending PACEIM to Mobilise Mediterranean Diaspora Entrepreneurs in Europe: A Feasibility Study* (Luxembourg: European Investment Bank, March 2015); MEET AFRICA, "VOUS DONNER LES MOYENS D'ENTREPRENDRE EN AFRIQUE," accessed February 22, 2022.

73 Marseille Innovation, "Paceim, une union de la Méditerranée à travers les entreprises innovantes," accessed July 7, 2021.

consider expanding the program. A similar program co-financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called MEET AFRICA⁷⁴ continues through 2023 to support members of the African diaspora who were educated in France or Germany as they create companies and improve the entrepreneurial ecosystem in their countries of origin.⁷⁵ In Germany, GIZ also supports an entrepreneurship effort: It helps people living in Germany but originally from Cameroon, Colombia, Ghana, India, Morocco, Nigeria, Serbia, or Tunisia to bring start-up ideas for businesses to fruition in their homelands. It also offers networking and skills-development opportunities to support the implementation of business plans.⁷⁶

The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs co-funds a project called MigraVenture to support migrant entrepreneurs wanting to create start-ups in Africa.⁷⁷ The program includes management training, access to micro-equity, and the opportunity for participants to pitch their ideas to other potential funders. Italy also funds IOM's MIDA project for Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants living in Italy. The selected participants received 9,000–30,000 euros in funding as well as access to training courses on business start-ups, business plan development, access to credit, and other relevant subjects.⁷⁸ The Italian government also funds IOM's Migrant Women for Development in Africa, which offers a similar package of funding and business training to West African women migrants.

In the Maghreb-Belgium framework of cooperation with the Government of Morocco, the Belgian development agency, Enabel, started an initiative in 2021 to connect entrepreneurs from the Moroccan diaspora in Belgium with business opportunities in Morocco. Forty projects, chosen for technological innovation in critical sectors, will get support to establish and develop businesses in Morocco.⁷⁹ Enabel places particular emphasis on support for women entrepreneurs.⁸⁰

The Netherlands was one of the pioneers in supporting diaspora entrepreneurship, and migration and development generally, but in late 2019, the Dutch minister for foreign trade and development cooperation wrote a letter to parliament stating that, within her new policy framework, “The diaspora is no longer regarded as a distinct target group, neither for collaboration on migration nor for private sector development” efforts.⁸¹ Diaspora groups can seek to participate in government programs to support entrepreneurs on the same basis as other civil-society actors.

74 France Diplomatie, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Etrangères, “La diaspora africaine en France,” updated February 2019.

75 République Française, Campus France, “MEET Africa, Europe Rallies All Energies for Entrepreneurship in Africa,” accessed July 7, 2021.

76 Author interview with Krone and Tangermann.

77 InfoMigrants, “MigraVenture for Migrant Entrepreneurs in Italy,” updated July 19, 2018.

78 IOM and Cooperazione Italiana, *Migration for Development in Africa MIDA: Ghana Senegal* (Rome: IOM Liaison Mission to Italy and Regional Coordination Office for the Mediterranean, 2007).

79 Enabel, “Enabel Seeks Moroccan Startups,” updated June 15, 2021.

80 Remarks by Raffaella Greco Tonegutti, Lead Expert, Migration and Development, Enabel, at European Union Diaspora Facility Future Forum, June 22, 2021.

81 Kiza Magendane and Yannicke Goris, “Diaspora Inclusion in the Dutch Development Agenda,” *The Broker*, May 18, 2020.

7 Outsourcing Diaspora Engagement

A number of governmental development agencies have outsourced their diaspora engagement to NGOs or, increasingly, to intergovernmental agencies. The Danish aid agency Danida, for example, routes its diaspora-for-development funding through the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) by supporting the DRC Diaspora Program, which initially focused on Afghanistan and Somalia—two countries that are the source of large numbers of refugees while also experiencing development challenges.⁸² In the United Kingdom, DfID eventually outsourced most of its funding for UK-based diaspora groups to the Common Ground Initiative run (and co-funded) by the UK-based charity Comic Relief in close collaboration with AFFORD. After ten years, the DfID funding stream ended in 2019.⁸³

More governments are turning to IOM to implement diaspora programming, in addition to or instead of executing programs directly. Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland are among the funders of IOM's diaspora programming.⁸⁴ The Netherlands, for example, stopped its direct support for diaspora programs but continues to fund a return-of-talent program through IOM Netherlands (see Box 2).⁸⁵

Destination-country governments are asking IOM to help map their diasporas, and the organization is piloting a new tool for diaspora mapping in Ecuador and Eswatini. IOM is increasingly working directly with diaspora organizations.⁸⁶ For example, it is developing a course on governance and diaspora engagement with ADEPT. And IOM's iDiaspora platform is designed to integrate diaspora voices into discussions about how to implement development projects.⁸⁷

A new entry in diaspora programming is the European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF), a pilot project of the European Union that is being implemented from 2019 to 2022 by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development. It provides research and coordination at the EU level for Member States that are active in diaspora engagement for development, as well as an operational portfolio of projects with diaspora organizations in Europe and EU partner countries. Coordination extends, potentially, to all 27 EU members plus Norway and Switzerland. EUDiF counts 11 Member States that support some kind of diaspora engagement. One of its early projects is a mapping of diaspora engagement in 107 countries of origin. It also produces regional overviews of main trends and actors in diaspora activity, and case studies of the potential role of diasporas in areas such as heritage tourism, the green economy, labor migration, talent partnerships, and humanitarian response. The research agenda is driven by the EU agenda. EUDiF stages

The Danish aid agency Danida, for example, routes its diaspora-for-development funding through the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) by supporting the DRC Diaspora Program, which initially focused on Afghanistan and Somalia.

82 Danish Refugee Council, "Diaspora Project Support (DiPS)," accessed February 22, 2022.

83 UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, "Development Tracker—Common Ground Initiative," accessed February 22, 2022.

84 Author interview with Larisa Lara, Transnational Communities and Digital Communications Officer, IOM, June 18, 2021.

85 Author interview with Zia Gulam, Program Coordinator Migration and Development, IOM Netherlands, July 5, 2021.

86 Author interview with Lara; author interview with Carine Nsoudou, Executive Director, ADEPT, May 25, 2021.

87 Author interview with Lara.

informational presentations and discussions for Member States, diaspora organizations, and experts to establish common understanding for policy development.⁸⁸

8 Contrasting Approaches to Diaspora Engagement in Selected Destination Countries

Governments of destination countries run the full spectrum from suspicion to benign neglect to positive partnership when it comes to diaspora engagement in development cooperation. Major donor countries also display marked contrasts in the scope, consistency, and commitment of their partnership efforts. A small group of champions have stood firm in their treatment of diasporas as development partners, a few states have maintained relatively small programs at the national level, and many others have wavered, reduced their involvement, or turned away.

Development agencies in Switzerland, Germany, and France stand out for their long-standing involvement with diaspora partners, although with different approaches. SDC has selected migration as one of its core institutional themes. Within its Global Program on Migration and Development (GPMD), diasporas comprise one of six priority fields.⁸⁹ The diaspora work has two prongs: (1) supporting initiatives and projects initiated by diaspora groups and (2) working with national and local governments in origin countries to create favorable conditions for diaspora engagement. The agency has been willing to support not only Swiss-based diasporas but those in other countries—consistent with its backing for multilateral migration-and-development programs, processes, and institutions over many years.

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The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and its implementing agency, GIZ, have also been consistent supporters of migration-and-development work at the national and multilateral levels. They have worked with diasporas for more than 40 years, initially through temporary return-of-talent programs. More than 18,000 individuals have had their salaries topped up as they worked in key institutions in their countries of origin.⁹⁰ The German program has evolved over the years: In 2007–08, it started to support diaspora organizations as well as individuals. In 2009–10, it began to fund diaspora projects. In 2014–15, it opened a funding line for diaspora volunteers to work in their countries of origin on short-duration assignments, without salary. Another line has recently been opened to support diaspora entrepreneurship. The diaspora portfolio continues to grow and diversify. A new entrepreneurship platform for diasporas from Cameroon, Ghana, Senegal, and Togo bundles matching contributions from the diaspora, BMZ, and an entrepreneur in the country of origin. Diasporas have been consulted in how Germany's return and reintegration programs can be further developed, and how diasporas can be involved in them. There remains, however, some reluctance on the part of diasporas to engage with Germany's sizeable return

88 Author interview with Aurélie Sgro, EUDiF Senior Manager, and Fanny Tittel-Mosser, EUDiF Knowledge Management and Research Officer, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), June 4, 2021.

89 SDC, "Diaspora—A Development Factor."

90 Author interview with Krone and Tangermann.

and reintegration programs, which many in the diaspora see as being contrary to the interests of migrant communities as well as unhelpful for homeland development.

Three distinctive features of the BMZ/GIZ diaspora program deserve mention. One is the role of research in giving the program a solid foundation for evidence-based policymaking before and during program development. GIZ regularly commissions studies of specific diasporas; the 22 partner countries in its sector program Migration and Development (PMD) are the most studied. A second feature is the structure of GIZ as a corporation that provides services to BMZ in sustainable development (and other topics). This arrangement guarantees ongoing interaction between the operational and political spheres in programming and policymaking. A third, evolving feature is BMZ's interest in expanding diaspora engagement beyond the migration-and-development sphere. Even as BMZ seeks to strengthen diaspora organizations (many of which are young and have limited capacity in this sphere) for development work, it is also convinced that they should be more involved in education, health, labor market improvement, and other policy arenas within Germany. The COVID-19 experience has reinforced this impulse, and diasporas in many countries have provided essential services during the pandemic and helped to reach immigrant communities with messages on prevention and treatment. Broadening the scope of diaspora engagement is helped by Germany's whole-of-government efforts, as the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Labor and Employment, as well as BMZ, are also involved in migration and development.

France has perhaps the longest history of conscious migration-and-development policies, and diasporas are central to its philosophy of co-development. It has built strong relationships with diaspora organizations in France but has had a disproportionately small role in multilateral discussions. The French Plan of Action for International Migration and Development for 2018–22 has as one of its major objectives, “Enhance the contribution of migration to development.”⁹¹ Among the actions outlined in the plan to realize that objective are:

- ▶ support the organization and capacities of diaspora organizations,
- ▶ support the investment and entrepreneurship potential of diasporas,
- ▶ enhance the human capital of diasporas in France for origin-country development and greater mobility of skills, and
- ▶ improve the mechanisms of aid in assisted voluntary return and reintegration programs in a development perspective.

It is not clear whether the resources devoted to these actions have ever been commensurate with the ambitions of the 2018–22 plan of action or earlier co-development rhetoric.⁹²

The United States has long had a laissez-faire attitude toward diasporas. In a context of interest-group pluralism, diaspora organizations with strong ties to their countries of origin are normal and go about their activities without much attention from the development assistance establishment. But for a brief exception

91 AFD, “Plan d’Action ‘Migrations internationales et développement’ 2018–2022,” updated January 2018.

92 For an analysis of the budget devoted to co-development in 2008–13, see Flore Gubert, “The Discourse and Practice of Co-Development in Europe,” in *The International Handbook on Migration and Economic Development*, ed. Robert E. B. Lucas (Cheltenham, UK, and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., 2014).

when Hillary Clinton was U.S. Secretary of State (2009–13), U.S. policy has mostly ignored diasporas, except when they made common cause with the government on disaster relief in their countries of origin—or when they were perceived as a security threat. Secretary Clinton’s high-profile Global Diaspora Forum and associated activities such as the African Diaspora Marketplace withered after she left office—and disappeared entirely with the next change of administration. Since 2020, the U.S. Agency for International Development has continued some support for diaspora humanitarianism. It is funding an initiative hosted by the DRC called Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination to better understand diaspora engagement in humanitarian response and increase communication and coordination between diaspora groups and mainstream humanitarian institutions.⁹³

The United Kingdom was a pioneer in the revival of migration-and-development policy debates in the early 2000s and in diaspora engagement specifically with Africa. But its funding for diaspora development through the Common Ground Initiative was not renewed after it ran out in 2019, and in 2021 the government ended the Small Charities Challenge Fund.⁹⁴ With the end of DfID as an independent department in 2020, a rising antipathy to migration throughout the 2010s, and a 30 percent cut to development cooperation funding from 2019 to 2021 (from 0.7 percent to 0.5 percent of gross national income⁹⁵), the United Kingdom no longer can be considered a leader in this policy arena.

9 Conclusions and Recommendations

While the potential (and, in many cases, the reality) of diaspora contributions to development in countries of origin and ancestry is widely acknowledged, few major donor governments have engaged with diasporas as development partners over the long term.

Why do diaspora engagements fade? The answer is far from clear, and it is likely to be different in each country. Part of the explanation is surely to be found in politics, including the rise of anti-immigration sentiment in much of Europe after the shock of receiving roughly 1 million migrants and asylum seekers in 2015–16, and the coming to power of governments in many countries (including the United States) that were less friendly toward immigrant communities. Some policymakers may have had unrealistic expectations, leading to a perception of failure and an unwillingness to take further risks. For example, the failure rate of new small businesses in almost every setting is quite high, yet the failure of diaspora entrepreneurs in ODA-supported projects may seem less tolerable than the norm.

Another factor in the reluctance of many development actors to embrace diaspora cooperation may lie in the exertion required to identify diaspora partners and then overcome the cultural and experiential differences with them. A long and patient effort is often needed on both sides of the partnership. The difficulty of working with diaspora organizations is admitted frankly by the SDC: “While there is an increasing acknowledgement of migrants’ contributions to sustainable development and inclusive growth, the concrete cooperation with diaspora organizations is marked by many challenges. Thus, GPMD’s focus will be on supporting exchange platforms and on improving framework conditions for diaspora

93 Danish Refugee Council, “[Projects—Current Initiatives—Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination \(DEMAC\)](#),” accessed July 7, 2021.

94 William Worley, “[Exclusive: Girls’ Education Hit as UK Small Charities Funding ‘Wiped Out’](#),” Devex, April 30, 2021.

95 BBC News, “[Foreign Aid: Who Will Be Hit by the UK Government Cuts?](#),” BBC News, November 8, 2021.

engagement.”⁹⁶ Nonetheless, while the focus has shifted to conditions in countries of origin, SDC continues to work with diaspora organizations, supporting them in strengthening their organizational skills so that they can successfully implement their plans.

A further obstacle to a long and strong commitment to working with diasporas may be a suspicion that they are not malleable. If their objectives do not obviously map onto the objectives of a development agency, the temptation to walk away may be strong, rather than invest in efforts to understand diaspora objectives and why they are held—indeed, why they may be more appropriate to the country-of-origin setting and the chosen means to reach them more effective than those preconceived by development professionals. Obviously, the diaspora does not always have the superior approach, and both parties must be open to exploring differences and learn to communicate them with respect.

Comic Relief, in explaining its decision to collaborate with DfID in the Common Ground Initiative to invest in African development through small and diaspora organizations, said, “Diaspora organizations frequently bring their intellectual, political, social and cultural skills and resources to bear on the development initiatives they support, while small organizations often have a development ‘niche’ that gives their work clarity of focus and expertise.”⁹⁷ Reaching for these advantages may just seem too hard, but the rewards can be commensurate if the effort is made.

The experience of SDC with the Gambian diaspora is instructive. When a new government took office in The Gambia in 2017, after decades of dictatorship, the Gambian diaspora was poised to act. SDC co-funded (with the diaspora) the Migration and Sustainable Development in the Gambia project, implemented by a capable diaspora-led organization, GK Partners. Diaspora expertise supported virtually every ministry in the new government as well as local NGOs, businesses, and civil society. The national development plan mandated an annual Stake in the Nation Forum: a consultation with the diaspora, which was named by the new government as the 8th region of the country.⁹⁸ The diaspora poured in remittances—and increased them during the COVID-19 pandemic by almost 80 percent, amounting to 48.1 percent of gross domestic product. The SDC could not have created this surge of solidarity, but it could and did support it.⁹⁹ It did not have to mobilize the diaspora, but it was able to mobilize SDC resources to magnify the diaspora’s impact.

Recommendations

The experience of working with diasporas in development cooperation yields several key lessons for policy-makers and practitioners in destination countries:

- ▶ Listen, and really invest in efforts to understand who the members of a diaspora are, what their priorities and capabilities are, and what they are up against in trying to promote development in their

96 In this context, “framework conditions” refers to the conditions in a diaspora’s country of origin that determine how successful diaspora efforts to contribute to development may be. See SDC, *Evaluation of the Global Programme Migration and Development* (Bern: SDC, 2015).

97 UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, “Development Tracker—Common Ground Initiative.”

98 Statement by His Excellency Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of The Gambia, at the First Stake in the Nation Forum (SNF1), “Attaining Progress in the New Gambia,” Serrekunda, The Gambia, January 13, 2018.

99 Author interview with Gibril Faal, Director, GK Partners, January 25, 2021.

countries of origin and ancestry. “Know your diasporas” in all their complexity and diversity is a critical starting point for engaging them as partners in development.

- ▶ Connect diaspora consultations to policy development and implementation. Diasporas need not only a voice but an ear—and evidence that being heard is not just a gesture.
- ▶ Be patient. Too many pilot projects with too little follow-up create frustration. Donor governments need to commit for the long term, and they need to have realistic expectations. They cannot expect diasporas to break through obstacles to development that donor agencies have been unable to solve for decades—but they can expect diasporas to have ideas and insights that may work better than traditional approaches. Diaspora members often have an advantage in recognizing opportunities that arise in their countries of origin and are often better prepared to act quickly to capitalize on them.
- ▶ Donors should recognize that it is important to tolerate failure—not bad faith or malfeasance of any kind, but to recognize that, for example, the failure rate of small businesses is high in any context, and diaspora entrepreneurs will not be immune to that syndrome.
- ▶ Support diasporas to build capacity within their own communities and in countries of origin. Return-of-talent programs have often focused very much on individual experts. The goal should be to build institutions, and that requires a long-term perspective. Return-of-talent initiatives can be more effective if they are focused on building key institutions in countries of origin—hospitals, universities, research institutions, agricultural cooperatives, government ministries, municipal governments, and so forth. Twinning arrangements between destination- and origin-country institutions can be particularly effective, as they can build long-term relationships and lasting capacity improvements.
- ▶ One of the most difficult things for development cooperation agencies to do is to find the right partners within diaspora communities. It is important to be inclusive and to reach for a degree of representativeness, but it is almost impossible to satisfy everyone. Donor governments should make clear what their criteria for partnership are—and the terms of partnerships with diaspora organizations should be continually evaluated from the points of view of both sides. It is also reasonable for donors to look for effectiveness—organizations that have shown that they can accomplish things concretely, are organized, and have the trust of their members and that their members are committed enough to invest their own resources, however limited.

Much has been learned from the experience donor governments have gained in working with diasporas over the past 20 years and more. Applying these lessons patiently and consistently is the key to success in building strong partnerships for the benefit of origin-country development as well as destination-country assistance programs.

Applying these lessons patiently and consistently is the key to success in building strong partnerships.

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