



Engaging Diasporas for Development

IOM Policy-Oriented Research

1) Diaspora Terminology

There is no single accepted definition of the term “diaspora”, neither is there a legal recognition of the term which consequently has given rise to many different meanings and interpretations.

IOM’s Glossary on Migration defines diasporas as “people or ethnic population that leave their traditional ethnic homelands, being dispersed throughout other parts of the world” (2004).

The term “diasporas” conveys the idea of transnational populations, living in one place, while still maintaining relations with their homelands, being both “here” and “there”.

The use of the plural reflects the diversity of populations that can be acknowledged as diasporas and the diversity of strategies and links that people maintain individually or collectively with their homelands. Defining “diasporas” raises tangible issues of time, place of birth and citizenship, as well as subtle questions of identity and belonging.

Countries have adopted different ways of referring to their “diasporas”. The wealth of existing terms is the first sign of the policy interest in these populations: “*nationals abroad*”, “*permanent immigrants*”, “*citizen of (X) origin living abroad*”, “*non-resident of (X) origin*”, “*persons of (X) origin*”, “*expatriates*”, “*transnational citizens*”. These terms are used to cover multiple realities that differ from country to country: people settled in a host country on a permanent basis, labour migrants based abroad for a period of time, dual citizens, ethnic diasporas, citizens of the host country or second-generation groups.

The term “diasporas” refers to expatriate groups which, in contrast to “migrants”, applies also to expatriate populations abroad and generations born abroad to foreign parents who are or may be citizens of their countries of residence.

The overall development potential of the people referred to as diasporas can reach significant levels, involving such areas as business creation, trade links, investments, remittances, skills circulations, exchange of experiences and even impacts on social and cultural roles of men and women in the home society.

2) Role for diaspora policy

Policy interest is driven by the growing awareness about the diasporas’ potential contributions to development strategies, as well as by the demands and the lobbying coming from diasporas as individual and collective actors. Consequently, governments multiply provisions and initiatives, targeting mainly the human and financial capital of diasporas, through diverse programmes and tools (institutional, legal, financial etc.).

However, it is important to note that diasporas have been long active in many economic, social and political areas and the interest in brain drain or financial transfers is not new. What has evolved is the policy awareness and a better understanding of the migration and development nexus.

The “diasporas for development approach” raises a number of major policy challenges:

- How to best acknowledge diasporas’ own interests and agenda and integrate them in existing development strategies;
- How to build trust among stakeholders;
- How to establish effective working partnerships;
- How to effectively integrate diaspora contributions into endogenous growth mechanisms;
- What are the structural and contextual elements that can offset diasporas contributions; and
- How to ensure policy coherence with other national and international priorities.

However, if it is so important to allow diasporas to keep ownership of their contributions, is there a role for policy? How can it be defined? To summarise, four major roles for policy seem to emerge:

- 1 **An enabling role:** Interviews with members of diasporas show that individuals are interested in getting involved in development projects but that some major obstacles impede them. Policy makers can address major obstacles that indirectly hinder diasporas’ engagement in development (lower transfer costs, alleviate the bureaucratic burden, simplify procedures, allow dual citizenship, identify investment projects, offer security for business transactions, ensure the portability of rights). This also implies improving knowledge on these obstacles and on diasporas, and clearly defining development strategies in which to involve diasporas.
- 2 **An inclusionary role:** All studies on diasporas deal at one point with issues of images, perceptions, identity and trust. However, if the symbolic inclusion of diasporas matters this needs to be translated into real inclusion (legislative and institutional). Policies can ensure the recognition of diasporas as full citizens, recognize their inputs, address major image problems, build trust, favour institutional change and build leadership. This also involves building capacity within ministries to favour the development of policies engaging diasporas for development.
- 3 **A partnership role:** Partnership covers many types of joint actions: support and recognize existing diasporas initiatives for development, develop collaboration between home and host countries, contract alliances with associations or at local levels with regions and municipalities, collaborate with private actors, academia, public enterprises and other development stakeholders. Policy can support the building of such partnerships.
- 4 **A catalytic role:** Governments and local or regional authorities can instill a dynamic to diaspora issues and promote institutional change to create a favourable interest in diasporas. Policy management is needed to avoid conflicts of interests and inequities at international level (between the host and home country) and at national level (among different stakeholders) in order to achieve policy coherence and a good use of available resources.

Obstacles identified by Governments in developing diaspora focused policies

- **Assessing the diaspora's development potential**
- **Mobilising finance** for governmental work with diasporas
- **Collecting data** on diasporas
- **Overcoming competition** among diaspora groups
- **Building partnerships** with home or host countries
- **Lack of communication** among departments, community representatives and corporate actors

Problem of capacities, structures and ownership in country of origin
 Results: IOM Survey 2005 (49 countries)

20 Guiding Questions on Diasporas Policy

1	How do I define the diaspora(s)?
2	How do I count and register diasporas? What data do I need?
3	Who are my partners among the diasporas?
4	What are the agenda, priorities and expectations of the diasporas?
5	Who is in charge of diasporas issues in my government? How do different institutions collaborate on this matter and what are the resources devoted to these activities?
6	What are the extent and resources of my consular network and other services abroad?
7	What are the development goals, priorities and strategies I want to involve diasporas in?
8	How do they match those of the diasporas?
9	What are the main resources of the diasporas (human, social, entrepreneurial, financial, affective, local) I want to target?
10	What are the skills, know-how and qualifications of diasporas? What are the needs of my country in terms of human capital? How do I match the two?
11	What are the flows and trends of investments and remittances transfers from the diasporas? What mechanisms already exist to support them?
12	What are the existing trade and entrepreneurial exchanges established by individuals from the diasporas with the home country?
13	What networks do diasporas build between home and host countries (cultural, social, political, professional, business, academic, etc.)?
14	What are the gender specificities of the diasporas – behaviours expectations, organisations, returns – and how do I tailor my policy response to these specificities?
15	What is the political participation of the diasporas (citizenship, elections, and eligibility, consultations)? What specific legislative changes are needed to favour diasporas participation?
16	Are the social rights of diasporas portable and transferable (pensions, social security)? If not, is it a real obstacle to their involvement?
17	What is the level of trust of diasporas towards my government? What is the image of the government and country abroad?
18	What are the main obstacles that can impede my policy: both "hard" obstacles such as technical, financial, infrastructural, macro economic or administrative obstacles and "soft"

	obstacles such as negative images, perceptions, lack of trust?
19	Who are my partners within the local, private, and non-governmental stakeholders?
20	Who are the main host countries for my diasporas? How do I engage dialogue with them? What are their policies for diasporas groups on their own territory?

3) Examples of IOM diaspora-focused programmes

Policy-oriented research

[Policies Engaging Diasporas in the Development Strategies of Host and Home Countries \(2006\)](#)

This research surveys recent diaspora policy developments worldwide and provides a step by step roadmap for policy makers willing to engage with their diasporas. The research identifies and discusses a few key stages for policy development: the definition of diasporas data gathering on diasporas and their respective policy implications, the development needs and strategies to which diasporas can contribute, the role of diaspora driven initiatives, diaspora resources (human, social, affective, financial, entrepreneurial, local), measures and tools that can be used to encourage the productive contributions of diasporas, lessons learnt from existing policies involving diasporas for development and a synthesis of main policy issues.

[Diasporas, Agents for Development, Survey of 49 countries, 2005](#)

This survey compiles the results of questionnaires that asked IOM membership about institutions and strategies in place to harness the potential of the diaspora. Forty-nine countries responded to the survey.

[Diasporas, Agents for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2006](#)

This survey compiles the results of questionnaires that asked governments about diaspora policy in 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. It explains the strategies in place to harness the potential of the diaspora to increase financial transactions, promote the creation of businesses and to help work with other governments to transition into a knowledge-based economy.

Research for Capacity Building

- 2 Collaboration with the government of Albania, 2004-2005**
- 3 Building Capacity of Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment in Bangladesh, (1035 Funding) 2002**
- 1 Collaboration with the government of Mauritius, 2007**
- 2 Collaboration with the government of Moldova, 2008**
- 3 Establishment of a Labour Migration Unit at the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development and the Creation of Tools for the Assessment of Dynamics of Labour Migration in Kenya and of the Kenya Diaspora, 2008**
- 4 Training for governments on diasporas**
 - 1 [IOM and UNITAR Initiative](#)**
 - 2 [IOM and HEI training](#)**
 - 3 [IOM, Essentials of Migration Management, a guide for policy makers and practitioners,](#)**

Diaspora resource mobilization studies and programmes

4 [The Potential Contribution of African Transnational Migrants to Home Country Development in Switzerland, 2006-8](#)

This qualitative research supported by GIAN (Geneva International Academic Network), undertaken in collaboration with the University of Geneva, providing insights into transnational development strategies of transnational migrants from Senegal, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The research analysis the strategies (transfer of competences, financial flows, investments, possible returns) of transnational migrants working in the health sector are in relation to their country of origin? It studies how the professional conditions and acquisition of competences in Switzerland, in particular in the health sector, influence the willingness and capacity to contribute to the development of the country of origin and discusses the role of policy in maximizing the benefits of migration for migrants, and the host and home countries. The documentation is available in French.

5 Study on the Contributions of Moroccans Living Abroad, the Social and Economic Development of Morocco (2008)

At the request of the Government of the Morocco this project aims to support the development of a policy aiming to maximize the human, financial and social capital of Moroccan diasporas into the development strategies of Morocco. The study aims to assess the current situation and tools that are in place to encourage diasporas' involvement, as well as to propose new ways to facilitate diasporas' investments, human and financial transfers.

- **International Migration in West and Central Africa: National and Regional Country Migration Profiles for Strategic Policy Development (2008-2010)**

This programme aims at enhancing governmental capacities to promote comprehensive and proactive migration and asylum management policies. Activities include research in eight countries (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal, while Chad and Cameroon will be associated to the project), a regional migration overview, data collection and analysis, capacity building and training. The objective is to create a sustainable working tool and to promote a comprehensive migration policy at the regional level. "Country Migration Profiles" and "Regional Migration Profiles" were developed in two main regions in 2007, the Balkans (seven countries) and the Black Sea (nine countries). Profiles for selected countries in South America will also be developed in 2008. All research exercises provide detailed insights into diasporas data as well as diaspora-related institutions and policies.

6 Survey of lusophone Diaspora Organizations and Networks in Portugal (2007-2008)

The survey analyses existing lusophone networks and associations organized by diasporas in Portugal. It analyses their strategies towards their home countries, in particular in terms of local development. The study is produced in Portuguese with an English executive summary.

7 Study on the Dynamics of the Egyptian Diaspora (2008)

This study aims to gain a better knowledge of Egyptian diasporas abroad, in terms of location, numbers and levels of skills. The project aims to inform policy on diasporas with individual and collective data as well as qualitative information about the Egyptian diasporas.

8 Profiling Malian Nationals Abroad and Enhancing Their Expertise for Mali's Socio-Economic Development, 2007

This pilot project constitutes a preliminary step to establish a comprehensive approach to enhance the links between Malian migrants and their country of origin, and is a component of the broader IOM Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) strategy. The project facilitates the profiling of Malian emigrants through an inventory of Malians abroad, and will strengthen an information network on Malian diaspora by directly involving consulates and other relevant entities in the main countries of destination, i.e., the Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Cote d'Ivoire and Spain.

9 Profiling Senegalese Nationals Abroad and Enhancing Their Expertise for Senegal, 2006

This pilot project is part of the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) strategy. It constitutes a preliminary step to set up a larger programme aimed at enhancing the links between migrants and their country of origin. The project facilitates the profiling of Senegalese emigrants through an inventory of Senegalese abroad and creates an information network by collecting data available in consulates and assessing their competencies necessary for the development of priority sectors in their country of origin.

10 Facilitation of the Recruitment and Placement of Foreign Health Care Professionals to Work in the Public Sector Health Care in South Africa: Assessment, 2006

The project proposed is a preliminary assessment phase of a subsequent programme that aims to strengthen the capacity of the public sector health care services in South Africa by facilitating the recruitment and placement of foreign health care professionals. The Government of South Africa has been implementing a number of strategies to relieve shortages of health care professionals in the public sector and has, to date, already recruited foreign qualified health care professionals through bilateral agreements between South Africa and countries such as Cuba, Iran and Germany. The study assesses the interest and availability of health care professionals in three developed countries (the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) to work in the public sector in South Africa, via a mapping exercise of relevant institutions and associations.

- **Migration for Development in Ghana : Diaspora to Strengthen Health Sector (2008)**

The IOM office in Accra and the Ghanaian Ministry of Health have signed an agreement to encourage Ghanaians and other African health professionals employed in The Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Germany to take up temporary employment in Ghanaian health institutions. This initiative will primarily focus on the health needs in Ghana's three northern regions and on the central Brong Ahafo region. Like other many other countries in Africa, Ghana has suffered from the loss of qualified health professionals who have emigrated to Europe and other parts of the world to find employment.

11 Enhancing the Impact of the Salvadorian Diaspora in the Development of El Salvador, 2006

This project aims to enhance the impact of remittances sent by Salvadoran migrant associations in the United States on development in migrant sending communities in El Salvador and enhance coordination between key actors in both countries (US and El Salvador). To this end, leaders of El Salvadoran migrant associations in Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles, California are engaged

in a series of trainings to enhance their capacity to design and manage remittance-linked development projects. Similar capacity building training sessions are offered to leaders of partner groups in migrant-sending communities receiving remittances in El Salvador. This project has as a secondary aim, the development of a sustainable bi-national communication mechanism (such as a web site) to facilitate on-going communication and coordination among all involved parties on remittance-linked development initiatives.

12 [IOM London Mapping Exercises for a Media-Specific Purpose \(2006-08\)](#)

The mapping exercises identify the main channels of information and the location of potential beneficiaries for IOM voluntary return programmes. Their goal is to improve the communication strategies with foreign language communities in the United Kingdom and to understand diasporas access to media. Mapping was conducted for Afghanistan, Angola, Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bolivia, China, Jamaica, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Punjab, Russia, Somali, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Ukraine, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

13 [Mapping Study of Peruvians Abroad \(2005\)](#)

The study mapping Peruvians abroad (general quantitative and qualitative identification of diasporas) is based on a survey of 774 Peruvians living in the cities of New York, Miami, Madrid, Santiago de Chile and Guatemala between September and December 2005, based on data from the Peruvian consulates.

14 Pilot project - Mobilization of the Burkinabe Diaspora and Identification of Priority Needs in Burkina Faso (MIDA Burkina Faso) 2005

This pilot project is part of the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programme and constitutes a preliminary phase for the implementation of further activities within this framework in Burkina Faso. With a view to supporting the Government of Burkina Faso in involving migrants more effectively in the development process of their country of origin, the project aims to create a database on human and other resources available in the diaspora and to identify priority needs and human resource gaps in Burkina Faso. A website will be established to allow for the dissemination and exchange of pertinent information and for the collection of further data.

15 Mobilization of Qualified Benin Diaspora and Identification of Benin's needs in terms of Scientific and Technical expertise 2005

This project seeks to complement the Government of Benin's efforts in capitalizing on their diaspora resources at both intellectual and economic levels. The actions proposed are as follows:

- Establishment of a database, or a directory, of interested nationals abroad compiled through embassies in selected countries, migrant associations and a website on the model of the one developed for MIDA Ethiopia.
- A compilation of the priority areas, job and investment offers identified in the country.
- An information service to migrants, again through the website, complemented by information leaflets and networking.

16 Impact of Family Remittances in Guatemalan Households and Communities, 2004

This project has aimed to carry out a survey of family remittances in Guatemalan households and communities sending international migrants, in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of remittances. Specifically, this project has aimed to a) provide a comprehensive understanding of family remittances as a community development mechanism in Guatemala; b) define a new methodology for measuring the economic and social impact of remittances in receiving families and communities; and c) set up a data management system capable of

collecting, processing, and analyzing data on family remittances.

17 Establishing an Observatory on the Moroccan migrant community living abroad (2003)

Under the project and with the assistance of IOM, the Hassan II Foundation is developing a Migration Management Data and Research Unit (MMDRU). An appropriate staff has been appointed by the Hassan II Foundation in the context of the Observatory. The staff is part of the Hassan II Foundation personnel. The MMDRU constitutes the core of the Observatory and its full development plays a key role in the Observatory project. The MMDRU will only carry out research on migration issues.

18 Micro-Enterprise Development for Guinean Women, 2003

This project aims to contribute to the economic and social empowerment of low-income women in selected regions of Guinea. This will be achieved by supporting micro-enterprise development support in both technical and material terms. Women of the Guinea diaspora in the ECOWAS region will be mobilized to deliver training to selected beneficiaries, and low interest loans will be made available to the participants through sub-contracted local micro-credit institution. A total of 30 women will be identified and selected from various regions of the country. Following an intensive course to be delivered by skilled expatriate Guinean women in the creation and management of micro-enterprises, the beneficiaries will proceed to develop business proposals for funding consideration by the project's micro-credit fund. Additionally, the project will help strengthen linkages among women's groups living in Guinea and Guinean women in the diasporas.

19 Diaspora for Development Study Tour and Programme Development Support – Pakistan (2001)

The project aims to increase opportunities for legal overseas employment of potential émigrés, and to link the émigré community with local development actions. The Government of Pakistan sought to further build the capacity of the Ministry for Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis to gather and manage data, articulate strategies for engaging the labour diaspora in local development, and enhance Pakistan's market share of regular overseas employment opportunities.

20 Networking of Highly Skilled Uruguayan Abroad, 2001

This contribution has supported the initiative of the Uruguayan Government to elaborate a network of highly-qualified Uruguayans abroad to enable the country to better benefit from this type of migration, especially from the experience acquired abroad by the migrant workers. A National Commission for the networking of highly skilled Uruguayans has been created. This Commission has proposed new programmes that link Uruguayans working abroad. It has also established mechanisms of networking, and institutionalizing the programme. The activities envisaged under the programme were, inter alia, the creation of databases and the elaboration of a web page for the circulation of information between the different stakeholders.

Related Links

For Return of Qualified National programmes please visit:

<http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/742>

For Migration for Development programmes please visit:

<http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/1306>

For the Online Diasporas Database please visit:

<http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/1810>

For the Diaspora Dialogues please visit

<http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/cache/offonce/pid/1674?entryId=14916>

For International Dialogue on Migration diasporas' related events please visit:

<http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/385>

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