



Global Diaspora Summit Background Note

Session 6 – Digital Diaspora: Technological Tools for Engagement

Overview

Diaspora engagement has often been described as ensuring that diaspora communities can be at home abroad. With the transformative change of pace in communications and technology, diaspora communities can now be instantaneously connected with home. Digital innovation has essentially reshaped the diaspora engagement landscape and the ability to design new ways of thinking and doing.

For example, whilst some of the foundational questions of diaspora engagement are still the same, digital tools have now allowed a critical reimagination of how these can be answered. Similarly, due to technological tools, diaspora engagement can now be driven through new codes of communication and governance that embed authenticity and accountability to nurture the key ingredient for diaspora engagement – trust.

Digital Diaspora: Reshaping the Diaspora Engagement Landscape

In reshaping the engagement landscape, it is important to think through the different capacities afforded by digital diaspora engagement tools for the key actors across the diaspora engagement framework. Diaspora organizations can now unleash digital tools to create and sustain a sense of belonging within the diaspora and design targeted engagements that align with the interests operating across diaspora communities. There are emerging digital platforms across different types of diaspora organizations that are building digital communities around ancestry, culture, gender, youth, and various areas of interest.

Underpinning such work is the entry of global digital market leaders into the diaspora engagement landscape, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok, and other digital communication entities. These tools, and the evolution of services they provide, are now being designed to drive digital diaspora communities of purpose. This is creating collective movements of changemakers in areas such as advocacy, social entrepreneurship, and development. It is also democratizing the engagement process as diaspora users are empowered to decide what to follow, what groups to engage with, and how to share their voices. This, of course, has not been without its challenges. It has led to tensions and polarization across diasporas but perhaps more significantly, it has opened critical discussions around issues of misinformation. Much work is still needed to ensure veracity of output generated through digital diaspora tools with the impact of disinformation and misinformation becoming more prevalent. Communication strategies to engage both with and through diaspora communities must not shy away from such issues.

From the perspective of governments, digital tools have begun to afford them new capacities to structure dialogues with their diaspora communities and centralize the important skills of listening and networking with their diaspora. New digital tools and capabilities have realigned the skillsets required for effective diaspora diplomacy in the networked 21st century. In terms of implementing diaspora engagement from a whole of government and whole of society approach, digital tools have now also begun to nurture innovation in key areas of traditional diaspora engagement such as skills transfer and financial investment.

Whilst the digital landscape has realigned agency in the diaspora engagement journey, questions remain unexplored on how to balance these new tools with the off-line community engagement of diaspora communities. Diaspora engagement, no matter what your area of focus of engagement may be, is now “high-tech” and “high-touch”.

Scope of Session

The scope of this session will be to share innovative digital tools for diaspora engagement to inspire global action through digitalisation. The session will also scope how digital creativity can inspire and sustain diaspora communities of purpose and impact. In this light, the importance of global digital connection hubs such as iDiaspora will also be discussed.

Discussion will also focus on how digital innovation can draw in powerful new actors into the diaspora engagement landscape. It will identify how diaspora engagement can shape a call to action for new enablers of diaspora engagement through digital empowerment of the sector. This will include how digital tools can enhance a voice for marginalized communities through diaspora engagement.

To achieve these outcomes, guiding questions for the session include:

- What are the key steps in ensuring constructive and safe use of digital tools for diaspora engagement?
- What areas of diaspora engagement can be innovated through digital tools?
- What contributions can digital tools make in elevating the role of government in diaspora engagement?
- How can diaspora organizations utilize digital tools to support their organizational capacity and development, including fundraising, increasing community membership, communication strategies, and other areas of organizational growth?
- How can digital tools empower silent or marginalized communities through diaspora engagement and advance advocacy on their behalf?
- How can diaspora engagement attract global digital brands to support the development of the diaspora engagement sector?

Methodology of Session

The session will open with an input from the governmental host to share their diaspora engagement story, followed by an inspirational address from a global leader on the topic.

The session will conclude with a showcasing of a diaspora organization exemplar and an interactive discussion with participants to help develop recommendations for the enhancement of digital engagements of diaspora within international development. In line with aims of the summit to provide peer-to-peer exchange and knowledge sharing, the digital platform also provides networking capacity throughout the session for participants to engage with each other. The final outcomes generated through the panellist and participant interventions will be reflected in the summit report and provide insight for the final ‘Outcome Document’ of the GDS.

We look forward to welcoming you to this session to learn about your ideas and views on digital diaspora engagement to generate a new generation of technological practices across diaspora engagement!

