

Background

The growing climate change impacts on people and the planet demonstrates the need for more urgent climate action by mobilising the whole-of-society. Although diasporas¹ already contribute to development and disaster response efforts across the world, their potential to contribute to climate action² remains largely untapped. Diasporas have transnational networks, knowledge of heritage and host countries, and domain expertise, that can be leveraged to accelerate global climate action. Yet, there are few programmes that integrate diasporas into planned climate action and policies that enable such integration. IOM’s Diaspora 4 Climate Action (D4C) project aims to leverage the connections between diaspora communities and their countries of origin to strengthen climate action in climate vulnerable countries (see also Box 1 below).

Project Information

Project title: Diaspora 4 Climate Action (D4C): Leveraging the Potential of Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change through Diaspora Engagement in Bangladesh, Ghana, Jamaica, and the Republic of Moldova

Project Duration: January 2023 – December 2024

Donor: IOM Development Fund

Key objectives: Raising the visibility of diasporas as key actors in climate action and creating opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between the diaspora and stakeholders in countries of origin

Target Countries: Bangladesh, Ghana, Jamaica, and Moldova

Key Stakeholders: UK-based diaspora, relevant government ministries in Bangladesh, Ghana, Jamaica and the Republic of Moldova, and other national stakeholders including academia, civil society, and the private sector

International frameworks supported: SDGs (7, 10, 13, 17), GCM (2, 18, 19, 20), Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework (1-4)

Multi-country Case Study and Methodology

In response to large knowledge and research gaps regarding the potential of diaspora involvement in climate action the D4C project has produced a multi-country case study analysing the potential, challenges, and opportunities for diaspora engagement in climate action.

The study focuses on Bangladesh, Ghana and Jamaica and their respective UK-based diasporas. The study focuses on diasporas’ level of awareness of climate change and climate action measures in their countries of heritage (i.e., priority areas for climate action). It also explores opportunities, pathways and mechanisms for the diaspora to increase its contribution to climate action, especially in the heritage country (e.g., regulatory mechanisms, laws, etc.)

The study also explores previous diaspora engagement in national development. The study adopts a mixed methodological approach (see Box 2, which has been applied in both the UK and the countries of origin. It is an explorative study, the results of which are not statistically representative, but due to the variety of methods used, paint a realistic picture of the diasporas and their potential for climate action in the heritage countries.

Box 1: Diaspora Climate Champions Workshop



As part of the D4C project, IOM UK organised a two-day workshop in London with 16 diaspora members from the Bangladeshi, Ghanaian, Jamaican, Moldovan, and Somali diaspora communities in the UK. The workshop was designed to equip participants with the tools to lead climate action initiatives, mobilize other diasporas, and engage in dialogues with governments and key stakeholders at national and international levels. Day 1 of the workshop focused on strategic partnership, leadership, and strategic communications. Day 2 focused on the terminology, frameworks and funding issues related to climate change. These diaspora members have developed solutions to address a climate action priority in their country of heritage (see box 3).

¹IOM defines diasporas as “migrants or descendants of migrants whose identity and sense of belonging, either real or symbolic, have been shaped by their migration experience and background. They maintain links with their homelands, and to each other, based on a shared sense of history, identity, or mutual experiences in the destination country”; see IOM (2019) Glossary on Migration.

² The term climate action includes all measures to mitigate future climate change and strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and disasters; see UN (2015) Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 13 “Climate Action”).

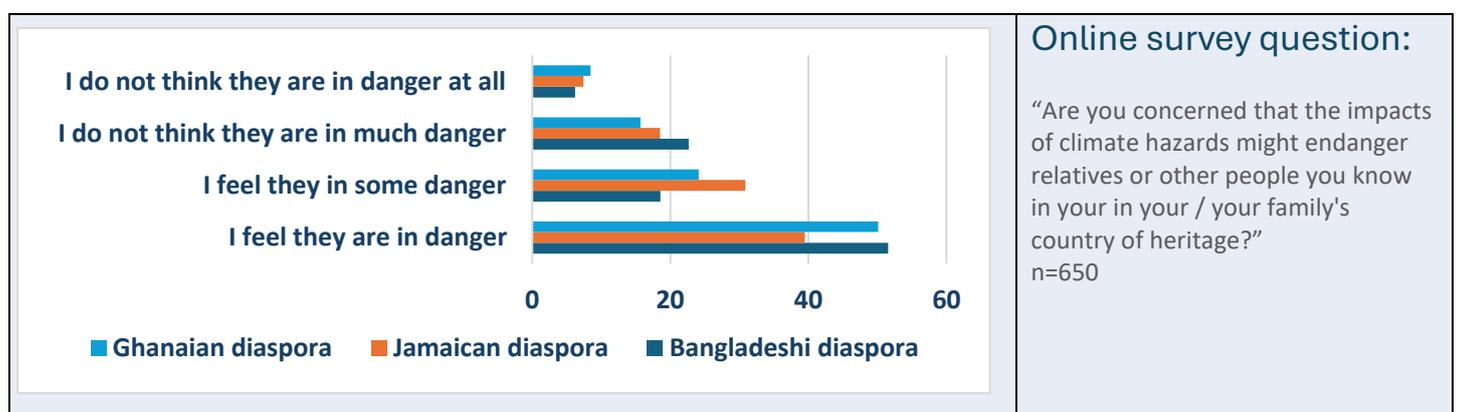
Box 2: Overview of research methodologies applied in the project

Secondary literature and document analysis	Key informant interviews (KIIs)	Focus Group Discussions (FGDS)	Online survey
Analysis of relevant policy documents and analysis of the relevant academic literature.	12 KIIs among diaspora members in the UK; 23 KIIs among relevant stakeholders in Bangladesh, 8 in Ghana and 23 in Jamaica (66 in total).	3 FGDS in the UK (one per diaspora community); one FGD in Bangladesh and one in Ghana.	Online survey for the UK-based diasporas based on a convenience sampling; overall 650 participants (Bangladeshi diaspora=97, Ghanaian=485 and Jamaican=81).

Key findings: Opportunities and Challenges for Diaspora Engagement in Climate Action

Diasporas are heterogeneous groups with varied abilities to contribute to climate action in heritage countries. Despite the heterogeneity, the research found many similarities among the three diaspora groups:

- **Diasporas are concerned about the adverse impacts of climate change** in their countries of heritage and are motivated to be involved in climate action. Research participants expressed concerns about the adverse impacts of climate change related hazards on family members in the countries of heritage leading to food insecurity, loss of livelihoods, property damage, health and energy insecurity in all three countries.
- **There is already some climate action-related diaspora engagement in the countries of heritage.** The Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK, for example, has a long tradition of supporting households and communities in Bangladesh to respond to the consequences of disasters. In these engagements, diaspora members often partner with community-based organizations, individuals/ households, local authorities, and charity funds (see box 4 for some examples).
- **All three UK-based diasporas maintain close relationships with their respective countries of heritage,** mainly through remittances. Cash or in-kind remittances support relatives when it comes to healthcare, education, food, economic activities, or housing. Some diaspora members are also engaged in skills exchange, philanthropy, and investments. Motivations range from a social or religious obligation to family honour, and patriotism.
- There is **limited familiarity with climate action policies and plans in the countries of heritage** among the three diaspora communities. Diasporas also recommend effective implementation of policy into practice.
- **Diaspora members feel that their expertise is often overlooked by governments** and that there is a **limited awareness of engagement opportunities** among the diasporas and **lack of financial incentives** for diaspora to contribute to climate action priorities.
- The study reveals that the **diasporas have higher levels of trust in international organizations, religious groups, or community-based organizations.**
- Despite the challenges mentioned, the study could **identify several good examples of diaspora engagement,** some with a strong environmental/climate action focus (see box 4).



Box 4: Good Examples of Diaspora Engagement

The study could identify several good practices, programmes, and initiatives when it comes to diaspora engagement in climate action. These require further support and funding to scale them up and to increase collaboration with the respective governments:

The Global Jamaica Diaspora Council (GJCD) is designed to foster more effective engagement between Jamaica and its worldwide Diaspora. It emphasizes inclusivity, growth, and collaboration within the Jamaican diaspora, and strengthens the essential partnership between Jamaica and its diaspora for national development. The GJDC is a principal element of Jamaica's National Diaspora Policy and seeks to create modalities of how diaspora can contribute to national development.

The Bangladeshi Diaspora Climate Action (BDCA) Group is a network of cross-sector professionals from the UK Bangladeshi diaspora collaborating with counterparts in Bangladesh to raise awareness of, and deliver actions against, the impacts of climate change on the country. BDCA aims to leverage collective skills, expertise, and networks to progress solutions and deliver actions that mitigate climate change impacts in Bangladesh and develops the country's climate resilience, whilst facilitating mutual learning.

The Jamaica Conservation Partners, is an environment-driven initiative led by a consortium of founding trustees and representatives from various NGOs, has diaspora board members.

The Year of Return is an initiative of the government of Ghana, which is intended to encourage African diasporans to come to Ghana (or other African countries) to settle and/or invest. Part of the initiative are activities including visits to heritage sites, theatre and musical performances, lectures, investment forums and relocation conferences.

The Diaspora Succeeds at Home "DAR 1+3" programme, launched by the Government of Moldova, aims to stimulate rural and urban development in Moldova by attracting human and financial capital from the diaspora, maintaining connections between emigrants and their hometowns through local development projects, and increasing diaspora participation in local socio-economic development. Funding follows the "1+3" formula, involving the Government, local authorities, development partners/donors, and diaspora associations/initiative groups. Eligible areas for funding include infrastructure, environmental

Even though Bangladesh, Ghana and Jamaica – like their diasporas - are different in various respects, including the hazards affecting them, the study findings reveal several similarities:

- All countries' economies are severely affected by **climate change impacts including impaired agricultural production, disrupted livelihoods, and damaged infrastructures.**
- The **most vulnerable population groups**, across the three countries, are **rural and marginalized populations, women, children, and people with disabilities.**
- Bangladesh, Ghana and Jamaica have all **formulated climate action related policies** (see Box 5) and are **interested in engaging their diasporas** in various priority sectors (as highlighted by the countries' policies).

Box 5: Climate Action-Related Findings and Results based on Research in Bangladesh, Ghana and Jamaica

	Bangladesh 	Ghana 	Jamaica 
MAJOR CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS	Sea-level rise, floods, and cyclones particularly affect rural populations, coastal populations, slum dwellers and women.	Floods, sea-level-rise, and changing precipitation patterns are mainly affecting coastal populations, rural farm households, women, children and people with disabilities.	Hurricanes, sea-level rise, and droughts affecting farm households, coastal populations, informal settlements, women, youth, elderly and people with disabilities
KEY NATIONAL CLIMATE ACTION POLICIES	Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) , National Adaptation Programme of Action , and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) .	NDC , National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) , and National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) .	Vision 2030 Jamaica , NDC , Comprehensive National Adaptation Planning Process in Jamaica (JA-NAP; in progress) , and Climate Change Policy Framework .
CLIMATE ACTION PRI	Early warning systems, disaster relief, renewable energy, more emphasis on locally led adaptation and nature-based solutions.	Sustainable and adapted agriculture, land and forest restoration, water management, and renewable energy.	Community-led adaptation, renewable energy transition, waste management, resilient infrastructure, and afforestation

Recommendations: Leveraging Diasporas' Potential in Climate Action

The results show that diasporas can play an essential role in accelerating global efforts in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Fully harnessing diaspora contributions requires the systematic integration of diaspora engagement in climate action policy and programming, clear communication of climate action needs and priorities in countries of origin, and higher visibility and recognition of diaspora contributions in climate action. For the different stakeholders, this means the following:

Governments form Countries of Origin:

- **Integrate:** As diaspora members are engaged in their countries of heritage, the national governments should integrate diasporas as one of their key partners in climate action and sustainability efforts in collaboration with local institutions (community-based organizations, local NGOs and local authorities).
- **Invest:** Governments should create online platforms and regularly update them with calls for experts, webinars, events, or applications for programmes that provide an opportunity to harness diasporas' financial and intellectual capital.
- **Incentivise:** Governments should create dialogues with the UK (and other destination countries) to create regular migration pathways / skilled labour programmes focusing on relevant skill gaps. Furthermore, they should also promote diaspora contributions in relevant media platforms.

UK government and international organizations/development partners:

- **Optimise:** The UK government, relevant international organizations and development partners should improve diaspora-sending country relations by launching matching-grant schemes, decreasing remittance transfer costs, promoting temporary returns or establishing diaspora advisory boards for policy consultations – there are good examples of such endeavours (see box 6).
- **Open up:** The UK government and other partners should open up (further) to the diasporas via mapping diaspora communities and hosting consultation sessions to gain a better understand of diasporas' needs and willingness to contribute.

Diasporas:

- **Mobilise:** Diasporas should mobilise within their own ranks - diaspora organization could support their members in i) finding peers with similar interests in climate action; ii) formalising the group, and iii) building concrete, scalable and sustainable action plans to address climate action priorities in your country of heritage (see box 4).
- **Message & match:** Diaspora organizations could furthermore support “climate action groups” in i) sharing their engagement, interests and passion for climate action through strategic messaging and branding; ii) in identifying and partnering with credible development actors.

Box 6: Example from the US - The International diaspora Engagement Alliance

The United States State Department's Office of Global Partnerships, in collaboration with USAID, launched the International diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA), which is supposed to leverage the global connections of diaspora communities to promote sustainable development in their countries of heritage. IdEA supports/facilitates: i) partnerships in entrepreneurship, volunteerism, philanthropy, and innovation, providing a platform for capacity-building and cross-sector collaboration to improve lives in countries of origin; ii) diaspora entrepreneurs in building sustainable businesses and stimulating trade in their countries of origin; iii) research and resource collaboration between diaspora science and technology communities and their home countries; and iv) diaspora volunteerism and philanthropic efforts in education, health, nutrition, and disaster relief. Additionally, IdEA organizes an annual Global Diaspora Week (GDW) to celebrate diaspora communities and their contributions to global development, fostering awareness, collaboration, and learning among diaspora-focused initiatives.