



## Diaspora Dynamics: Advancing Partnerships for Regular Pathways

### INTRODUCTION

The International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Strategic Plan 2024-2028 integrates diaspora engagement to address global challenges, including saving lives, managing displacement, and promoting regular migration. By partnering with diasporas,<sup>1</sup> IOM taps into their unique insights for policy development, enhancing safe mobility pathways.

This strategy is built on IOM's expertise and the document "Regular Pathways Essentials: Why, What, and How for Transformative Change." It emphasizes diasporas as key allies in facilitating migration pathways, bridging home and host countries, and supporting the entire migration process.

Diasporas have long been central to IOM's mission, seen as vital contributors to positive change and sustainable development. Over decades, IOM has collaborated with Member States and diaspora communities to make migration beneficial for all, recognizing their talent, agility, and networks. Initiatives like the Return of Qualified Nationals and Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programs have deployed thousands of professionals to crisis-affected nations. These efforts, have mobilized diaspora professionals to contribute to critical sectors like health and education, maximizing their potential for global development.

IOM has extensive experience supporting governments worldwide in developing diaspora policies and strategies, from Albania to Zimbabwe. In 2012, IOM and the Migration Policy Institute created a handbook, [Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development](#), which remains a key reference. The following year, IOM organized the first [International Diaspora Ministerial Conference](#), bringing together key stakeholders from government, academia, civil society, media, and the private sector. This event solidified IOM's commitment to [engaging, enabling, and empowering](#) diasporas to contribute to global development.

Since then, IOM has fostered strategic partnerships with diasporas, supporting Member States and partners. Key developments in migration governance, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration \(GCM\)](#), have further advanced diaspora engagement. Objective 19 of the GCM emphasizes empowering migrants and diasporas to contribute to sustainable development. In April 2022, IOM co-hosted the Global Diaspora Summit (GDS) with the Government of Ireland, providing a platform for dialogue between governments, diaspora organizations, and the private sector. The culmination of this summit, the [Dublin Declaration](#), outlines a comprehensive plan of action to institutionalize and operationalize diaspora cultural,<sup>2</sup> economic,<sup>3</sup> social<sup>4</sup> and human<sup>5</sup> capital across policies and programmes through meaningful partnerships across sectors and levels of government.

1. IOM defines diasporas as "migrants or descendants of migrants, whose identity and sense of belonging have been shaped by their migration experience and background." (IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019).

2. Diaspora Cultural Capital related to the acquisition and transfer of new values, perspectives and ideas by diaspora communities that enrich diversity and resilience of societies (IOM, 2022).

3. Diaspora Economic Capital encompasses the financial resources, assets, and activities that individuals or groups have or undertake in their country of origin or residence. This encompasses a range of endeavors, including business ventures, trade activities, remittance sending, philanthropy, investments, ownership of assets, and tourism (IOM, 2022).

4. Diaspora Social Capital refers to the values, perceptions, and practices prevalent within diasporas, encompassing various dimensions of social engagement. This includes political participation, advocacy, and other socially oriented activities aimed at fostering community cohesion (IOM, 2022).

5. Diaspora Human Capital refers to the skills, knowledge, and expertise possessed and utilized by individuals within diaspora communities (IOM, 2022).



IOM has also developed practical tools to support diaspora engagement, such as the [IOM Diaspora Mapping Toolkit](#), the [Contributions and Counting: Guidance on Measuring the Economic Impact of your Diaspora beyond Remittances](#), the [IOM Framework for Diaspora Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance](#), and [iDiaspora](#). Many of these resources are supported by the IOM Development Fund, which has provided seed funding for diaspora engagement efforts since 2001. These tools aim to create sustainable opportunities and foster collaboration across sectors and governments to maximize the contributions of diaspora communities worldwide.

## DIASPORAS AS ENABLERS OF REGULAR PATHWAYS

Diaspora's unique capital, operationalized through their talent, networks, and diverse resources, positions them at the forefront of migration. Serving as [agile](#), [legitimate](#), and [powerful](#) bridges between societies, they reduce distances and maximize strategic connections, intensifying partnerships and resource mobilization for the benefit of migrant communities. These distinctive characteristics make them strategic enablers of regular migration pathways.

IOM's comprehensive approach to diaspora engagement, encapsulated in its 3E framework – [engage](#), [enable](#), and [empower](#)<sup>6</sup> –, acknowledges and celebrates the diverse and significant contributions of diaspora communities in creating an enabling environment for functional and impactful regular pathways.

Diasporas hold a key role in evidence-based decision-making, providing valuable insights into migration drivers and pathways. They effectively communicate this knowledge to various stakeholders, enhancing national governance through a whole-of-society approach. Empowered diasporas advocate for migrants' rights, influence legal frameworks, and promote improved policies for regular migration. Their social capital fosters local, regional, and international cooperation, serving as a catalyst for dialogue and collaboration. Diaspora diplomacy, especially in countries where they represent a significant population, plays a crucial role in facilitating constructive dialogue between states, ensuring mutual interest in the well-being of migrant communities.

Diasporas' social capital can forge partnerships, amplifying community voices and engaging businesses, academia, and media on migration issues. Their cultural capital helps reconcile stakeholder interests by leveraging an understanding of values and norms, fostering cooperation, and tailoring solutions to migrants' customs. Embedded across all sectors, first to third-generation migrants use their networks, talent, and resources to develop migration solutions.

### THE EGYPT DIASPORA INITIATIVE

The Egypt Diaspora Initiative (EDI), active since 2017 on Instagram, advocated for permanent consular services worldwide for renewing Egyptian national ID cards. Serving over 50,000 Egyptian migrants, EDI provides news, debates, and support. ID cards are crucial for passport issuance, voting, property registration, banking, and administrative procedures, making them essential for Egyptian citizens abroad.

Beyond remittances, their economic capital aids integration by creating jobs, supporting reintegration, and investing in origin communities through initiatives like development cooperation, philanthropy, trade, and tourism, strengthening stable communities throughout the migration cycle.

6. International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2013. SCPF/97, IOM's Work on and with the Diaspora.



## DIASPORA DIPLOMACY: ESTABLISHING, EXPANDING AND ENHANCING REGULAR PATHWAYS

Diaspora diplomacy leverages transnational communities' unique knowledge to engage in dialogue, negotiation, and advocacy with authorities in both origin and destination countries. Diasporas can influence policy as powerful constituencies and, in some cases, as decision-makers themselves. Recognizing diasporas as bridges connecting societies with unique **agility, legitimacy, and power** allows for the full operationalization of diasporas support, reaching IOM's three over-arching objectives to harness the potential of migration.

### ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP (APPG) ON MIGRATION AND REFUGEES

The APPG on Migration promotes evidence-based political debate on UK migration challenges and opportunities. Its key activities include organizing cross-party parliamentary meetings, producing briefing papers, and disseminating reports. The APPG ensures parliamentarians hear from academics, businesses, civil society, and individuals with lived migration experience to inform their work and support informed discussions on immigration issues.

### ESTABLISH NEW REGULAR PATHWAYS



Diaspora knowledge and influence are crucial in creating new migration pathways between their countries of origin and destination. They can mobilize communities to advocate for humanitarian pathways, as seen when the Haitian diaspora secured Temporary Protected Status in the US. Diasporas also act as sponsors for family members displaced by crises, facilitating access to legal pathways. Additionally, they leverage professional networks to inform employers of skilled compatriots and help origin-country governments better negotiate regular labor migration pathways with destination countries.

### EXPAND AND IMPLEMENT EXISTING REGULAR PATHWAYS



As diaspora communities receive new members through existing pathways, they find themselves in a privileged position to gather information on the effectiveness of these pathways in practice. Drawing from this knowledge, they can provide policymakers with potential solutions to address operational inefficiencies and, ultimately, scale up existing programs. Moreover, diasporas often organize themselves based on regional collective identities, such as Latin-American, African or Arab groups (IOM, 2022). These collective identities can aid in identifying existing regular pathways that could be expanded to other countries within the region with similar characteristics.

### ENHANCE ALL REGULAR PATHWAYS FOR BETTER IMPACT



With deep knowledge of their communities and grassroots efforts to uphold human rights, diasporas ensure a principled approach to migration pathways. Embedded in both origin and destination communities, they offer unique insights into migrants' needs and challenges. Acting as intermediaries with policymakers, NGOs, and businesses, diasporas provide accurate information, advocate for migrants' rights, and facilitate smoother transitions. Their dual engagement allows them to offer practical solutions that address both immediate and long-term needs, ensuring more effective and humane migration pathways for all involved.



## UNIDOSUS

Established in 1968, UnidosUS stands as the largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization, dedicated to addressing the concerns of the Latino community in the United States. Operating as a nonprofit and nonpartisan entity, it strives to promote humane and effective federal immigration policies, emphasizing family unification and migrant integration. UnidosUS advocates for the inclusion of migrant populations in national health systems, advocating for access to social benefits regardless of immigration status. Over the years, the organization has facilitated citizenship for 1.4 million immigrants.



## POWERFUL PARTNERS IN THE MIGRATION CYCLE

Diasporas bridge connections with migrant communities, facilitate evidence-based decision-making, and promote diverse representation. They counter xenophobia by demonstrating the positive impact of migration and advocating for regular pathways. In addition to advocacy, they offer tangible support and technical solutions throughout the migration cycle. Diasporas effectively communicate with their communities, inspire newcomers, and assist from pre- to post-arrival, ensuring smoother and sustainable migration pathways. By leveraging their networks and resources, they play a pivotal role in advancing and implementing regular migration pathways.

### PRE-MIGRATION

Diasporas play a key role in the pre-migration phase, providing trusted information on regular, safe migration pathways. They inform family and networks about opportunities like family reunification, visa procedures, and protection risks. Additionally, they offer valuable guidance during pre-departure orientation, helping migrants understand destination country laws, culture, and work environments, particularly for labor migration, ensuring smoother adaptation.

### ADMISSION

In the admission phase, diasporas provide essential support for newcomers' entry and integration, serving as sponsors or employers for programs like the US H-2B visa and Canada's private refugee sponsorship. They assist with bureaucratic processes, especially for short-term visas, and help newcomers access education, healthcare, housing, and language training. Their support continues throughout integration, ensuring a smooth transition.

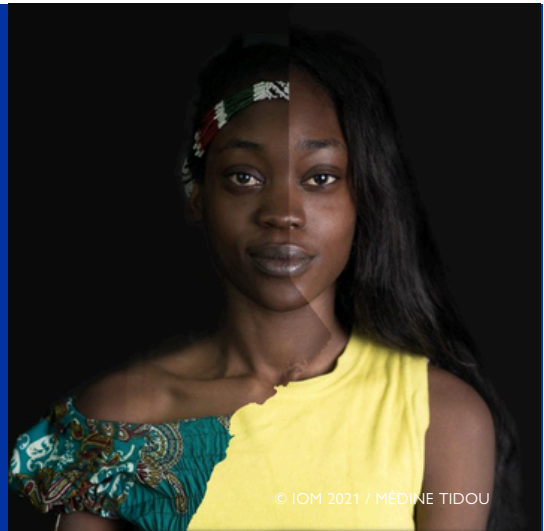
### STAY

Diasporas help immigrants adapt by offering practical advice, fostering a sense of belonging, and supporting socio-economic inclusion. They provide essential safety nets and psychosocial support. Diaspora leaders and entrepreneurs create opportunities through training, hiring, and coaching, while more established members advocate for the needs of recent arrivals with local and national authorities, ensuring smoother integration into new societies.



### AFRO FASHION ASSOCIATION

The AfroFashion Association, an Italy-based diaspora organization established in 2015, believes in the transformative potential of fashion, art, and culture as a means for cross-cultural exchange, empowerment, and sustainable development. With branches in Cameroon, Ghana and Rwanda, the organization aims to bolster local capacity to leverage arts and culture as an engine for social and economic development. They provide emerging Central African art professionals with study and internship opportunities in Europe, while advocating for an increased diversity and inclusion culture in hosting companies.



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### RETURN

Diasporas support return migration by creating jobs through business investments and donations to local initiatives, benefiting both migrants and local communities. They engage temporarily or virtually, providing technology, knowledge, and networks. These efforts enhance reintegration and community development. Diasporas also help disseminate return opportunities to vulnerable populations, strengthening referral mechanisms and facilitating smoother returns to their host countries.

### RUMIÑAHUI ASSOCIATION

The Rumiñahui Association was founded in 1997 with the aim of protecting migrant populations and helping them in their integration processes in Spain. The Rumiñahui Association has also developed initiatives to inform the migrant population about their rights and in particular about their rights to regularization. In addition, the organization assists migrant vulnerable populations in the process of enrolling in the minimum living income programme.



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### NON-RESIDENT NEPALI ASSOCIATION (NRNA)

The NRNA implemented the COVID-19 Response to Nepali Migrant Workers' Relief and Repatriation Program to support the return of Nepalis stranded in UAE, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Malaysia Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman. The program provided assistance to 28,127 vulnerable Nepali migrant workers, offering support such as immediate shelter and food distribution, medical and legal counseling, re-employment support, documentation assistance, passport renewal, payment of fines, tele-medicine or small medical aid, air tickets, and PCR tests.



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## ONWARD MIGRATION

Additionally, transnational networks span across the world, connecting potential migrants with other diaspora communities in other cities and countries globally. These networks serve as hubs of information and connections, which can help migrants find opportunities that better fit their needs and access regular pathways to pursue them.

### AFRICAN DIASPORA NETWORK

The African Diaspora Network (ADN) fosters collaboration between African diaspora members, Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, and philanthropists to uplift Africa and local communities. Since 2010, ADN has provided resources, partnerships, and investment opportunities. Its Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship (ABLE) program supports Black-led startups in the U.S., graduating 38 entrepreneurs since 2021, promoting sustainable growth and empowering leadership within the community.



## CONCLUSION

Diasporas are key partners in enhancing regular migration pathways, providing responsiveness, support, and influence. Their contributions, often ad hoc, need greater institutional support at national and international levels to reach full potential. Recognizing diasporas as genuine partners allows them to negotiate, advocate, and deliver solutions for their communities throughout the migration cycle.

The [Dublin Declaration](#), from the [Global Diaspora Summit](#), marks a pivotal moment for IOM and Member States, mobilizing the diverse cultural, economic, social, and human capital of diasporas. It establishes a comprehensive framework to integrate all levels of government and society, enhancing migration pathways and addressing the politicization of migration. The [launch of the Global Diaspora Policy Alliance \(GDPA\)](#) further supports this, fostering an ecosystem for collaboration among Member States, diasporas, and stakeholders.

GDPA's Technical Working Groups, focusing on Gender and Youth, Climate Action, and Health and Well-being, aim to empower diasporas worldwide and complement existing platforms. This engagement accelerates the implementation of the SDGs, unlocking opportunities for impactful partnerships and projects.

IOM emphasizes values-led engagement with diasporas, prioritizing authentic collaboration and long-term solutions. By understanding their needs and capabilities, IOM aims to further establish, expand, and enhance regular migration pathways through strengthened partnerships with diasporas.

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International Organization for Migration (IOM)

17 Route des Morillons, P.O. Box 17, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 717 9111 • Fax: +41 22 798 6150 • Email: [hq@iom.int](mailto:hq@iom.int) • Website: [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)