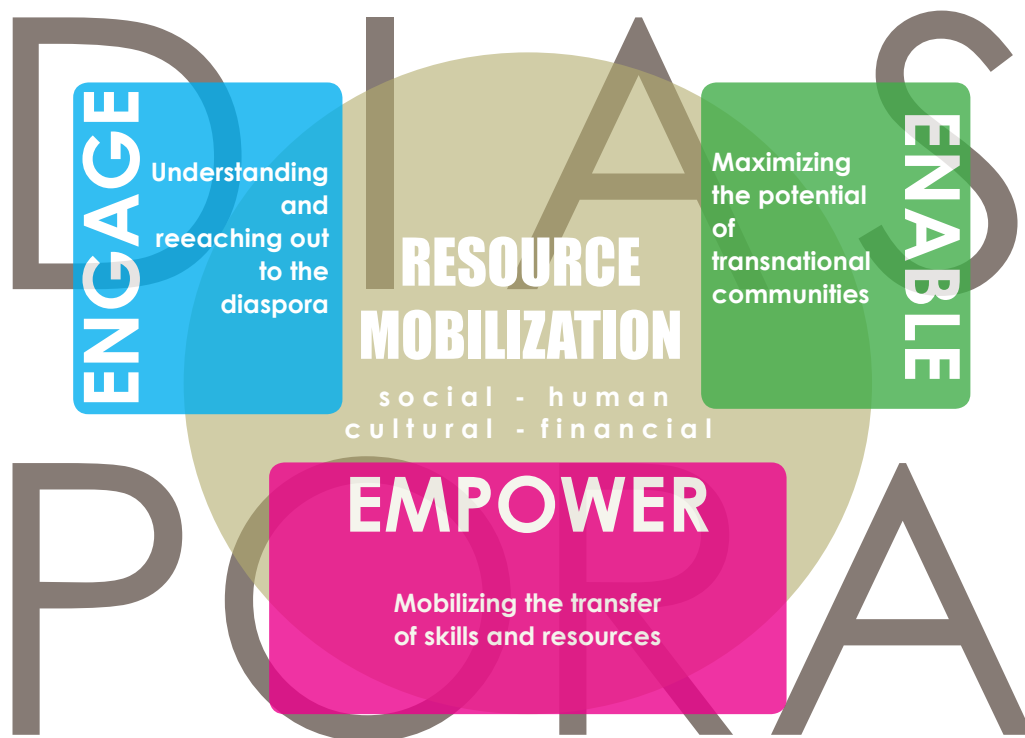


IOM's Strategy

to Enable, Engage and Empower diaspora

Drawing on its long-standing experience, IOM has formulated a comprehensive strategic approach centred on the 3Es for action: to enable, engage and empower transnational communities as agents for development – with each area involving a range of interventions by governments and other stakeholders, supported by IOM through policy advice and programming.



What does "diaspora" mean?

Diaspora or transnational communities are migrants or descendants of migrants, and whose identity and sense of belonging, either real or symbolic, have been shaped by their migration experience and background. IOM also refers to diaspora as transnational communities, because in a world of unprecedented global mobility, they comprise people who are connected to more than one country.

The transnational nature of diaspora implies that these people are crucial when it comes to connecting countries and communities, because they can call on multiple networks, relate to different identities and share a sense of belonging to more than one community.



How do diaspora communities contribute to development?

There is a growing recognition that transnational communities facilitate increased trade, investment and cultural linkages between the different countries that they are connected to, and that they are important development actors. They have been playing this important role long before the international community took notice. The resources of these communities that flow across borders are immensely varied and range from skills, knowledge and ideas to cultural capital, finance and trade links.

Human and social capital may be described as the human resources that diaspora members constitute through their skills and knowledge, and the extended networks that they maintain. Skills accumulated by diaspora members are invaluable in terms of the development of a variety of sectors such as health, education and technology. The transnational networks that they maintain are crucial to facilitating a more open flow of trade, investment, skills and knowledge, and are based on relationships with families, friends, colleagues or associations.

Economic capital is not only represented by remittances and savings, which constitute only a fraction of total private capital flow, it also includes direct investments made by diaspora members in business activities. Members of diaspora communities will often be in a prime position to take advantage of new economic opportunities in the countries where they both reside and originate from, and they are more willing to invest as a result of their personal ties.

Cultural capital is the rich and diverse background that transnational communities bring to the societies in which they reside, and the acquisition of new values and ideas that make up their ever-changing identity. Cultural capital not only contributes to creating diverse societies that are more dynamic and innovative but also enhances relations between countries. The ideas and different social constructs that diaspora members possess can break down barriers among different groups and contribute to greater gender equity, peace building efforts and enhanced participation in political processes in both countries where these communities reside and originate from.

Engaging

Knowing and understanding transnational communities is crucial to engaging effectively with them and developing the appropriate outreach strategies towards diaspora. IOM regularly maps and surveys diaspora communities to assess their socioeconomic profile and their willingness to contribute to the development of their countries of origin, and to improve the understanding of communication pathways within diaspora communities.

Outreach can often take place in countries of origin through bodies that connect with returning members of transnational communities, including investors, skilled professionals or academics. In countries where diaspora members reside, outreach often requires countries of origin to establish and strengthen their embassies and consulates, including training labour attachés, whose portfolios now increasingly include service provision to these communities.

IOM and the Migration Policy Institute have developed a handbook, *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries*, that presents a menu of viable policy and programme options for engaging with the diaspora based on actual experiences from around the world.



Enabling

The creation of appropriate conditions is essential to enable transnational communities to become effective agents for development. The degree to which diaspora can contribute is directly related to the ability of members of these communities to develop their full potential and acquire the necessary skills and resources to serve as architects of economic and social progress. Steps to enhance the well-being of members of the diaspora include reducing the vulnerability of migrant communities by guaranteeing their access to essential services such as healthcare, and ensuring respect for their social rights to maximize their potential as agents for development. Addressing migrant health is a prerequisite for enabling migrants to contribute to development and reduce poverty – for themselves, their families and the wider communities in both origin and destination country.

IOM has been working with governments to strengthen the political and institutional frameworks that reduce the social and financial costs of migration, such as those promoting ethical labour recruitment in order to protect job-seekers from abuse and exploitation; reducing the costs of remittances; and developing institutional policies in countries of origin that mainstream migration into national development policies.

Effective integration policies in countries where migrants and transnational communities reside ensure that members of these communities are able to adapt quickly to their environment and face minimal barriers in the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and capital. These policies promote social inclusion and address marginalisation through information and awareness campaigns which also serve to combat xenophobia and anti-migrant sentiment, thereby limiting vulnerability.






Empowering

With the right conditions in place, transnational communities will spontaneously transfer resources and strengthen links between their countries of origin and destination regardless and often in spite of administrative, regulatory and other constraints. However, governments can empower this process by introducing special measures and programmes in a variety of fields.


IOM initiatives have been designed to facilitate trade and investment between communities abroad and the countries from which they originate, targeting investment in local projects with a positive socioeconomic impact. IOM is currently piloting an innovative project that establishes public-private partnerships between Moroccan authorities and financial institutions that facilitate direct investment by potential entrepreneurs among the Moroccan community in Belgium. Financial literacy training and the dissemination of information on remittance services and costs serve to heighten awareness of the various financial services and products available to remittance senders, and to provide options for the productive use of remittances. One example is the website launched as part of MIDA Italy and certified by the World Bank.

The mobilization of skills, knowledge and expertise can be facilitated via the actual return of skilled diaspora members on a short- or long-term basis. Transfer of knowledge can also take place 'virtually' through online support. IOM and beneficiary governments, through MIDA and TRQN programmes, have identified and prioritized key sectors that can be considered crucial to human development and can benefit from diaspora resource mobilization. Examples include health, education, justice, and supporting the entrepreneurial potential of both local and transnational communities. IOM has developed particular expertise in facilitating the mobilization of health professionals residing abroad to address, in their countries of origin, health sector shortages that hamper the realization of development goals.

Countries that have been affected by civil war, armed conflict, natural disasters or other crises are faced with the difficult task of rebuilding the physical and social infrastructures essential to reinstating stability in their societies. Transnational communities have been playing a significant role in efforts to rebuild and strengthen government and civil society institutions. Countries that have benefited from IOM's diaspora skills-transfer programmes focusing on post-conflict reconstruction include Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Serbia, Somalia and Timor-Leste.



Mobilisation des Marocains résidant en Belgique pour le Développement du Maroc



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