

Learning by doing



series drawing on research and capacity development actions

DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT AND HUMAN CAPITAL

Climate action and environmental sustainability

Funded by
the European Union



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Context

Climate change is one of the world's most pressing challenges today, threatening people's health and safety, homes, livelihoods, infrastructure and natural ecosystems. Many of those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change are found in developing countries, which in recent years have experienced countless human fatalities and direct economic losses as a result of extreme weather events ([United Nations, 2020](#); [Germanwatch, 2021](#)).

There is growing effort throughout the global community to mobilise a wide range of resources – natural, human and financial – and direct them towards effective solutions to climate change and to promote green growth (i.e. environmentally sustainable use of natural resources and protection of global ecosystems to support health and wellbeing, now and in the future). [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 13, Climate Action](#), urges individuals, public institutions, the private sector, and civil society to take urgent collective action to combat climate change and its impacts. SDG 13 is intrinsically linked to all 16 other SDGs because climate action is essential for global sustainable development which can only be achieved by simultaneously promoting people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.



Diaspora communities around the world are taking action against climate change and promoting greener growth, both in the form of short-term emergency response and longer-term climate change adaptation and/or mitigation. In line with SDG 17, the establishment of strong effective partnerships with the diaspora can help vulnerable countries maximise opportunities to combat the effects of climate change.



As a future-focused project, climate action and environmental sustainability have been priority areas of EUDiF's research, dialogue and capacity development activities. We have explored the different roles that diasporas play and reflected on opportunities for countries of residence and heritage to strengthen their policy frameworks to accommodate support from the diaspora. The learnings from practical work and research make it clear that "diaspora for development" and "climate action" are complementary concepts with huge potential for growth. In this dossier we share inspiring practices and insights for future policymaking and initiatives.

Diaspora youth: pivotal drivers in climate action

As the generation taking over global challenges and most affected by the long-term consequences of climate change, youth is particularly committed and active in driving green solutions. In EUDiF we recognise this reality and work to harness the powerful, yet under-valued, potential of youth diaspora to address these challenges.

One example is the [Future Forum 2023 Youth Pitch Competition](#) for which youth-led organisations were invited to submit development-oriented ideas that leverage the potential of young diaspora to combat climate change. Two of the three finalists' ideas were on climate action – read more [here](#) (page 23) about the "African Loop" supporting young climate entrepreneurs in Senegal and "Frontline speaks" platforming the voices of those on the frontline of the climate crisis.



Taman Mhoumadi, DiasporaVoteEU, pitching the African Loop

Main challenges



Lack of technical expertise:

Many developing countries lack the technical expertise and resources needed to effectively combat climate change and implement sustainable environmental practices.



Limited climate funding:

Adequate funding is crucial for implementing climate adaptation and mitigation measures, yet many initiatives face financial constraints.



Awareness and education:

There is a need for increased awareness and education on climate change and environmental issues, both among policymakers and the general public.



Policy gaps and weak governance:

Weak policy frameworks and governance structures hinder effective climate action and environmental sustainability efforts.



Diaspora roles in climate action

In the first phase of EUDiF, three actions leveraged expertise from the diaspora to support climate action and environmental sustainability in Ethiopia, Mexico and the Philippines. In these actions diaspora professionals were recruited to play the role of **technical experts** and transfer knowledge in their area of professional expertise. In each action, the added value of working with diaspora really shone through with many simultaneously playing additional or bonus roles from the following non-exhaustive list of roles EUDiF has observed diaspora play on this topic.



■ Technical experts

Drawing on their area of professional expertise, diaspora members can play a crucial role as technical experts and transfer knowledge to help their countries of heritage develop the capacities and tools needed to combat climate change. Diaspora experts possess specialised knowledge in areas that are pivotal in the green economy such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, water management, and disaster preparedness. Additionally, diaspora experts can support designing localised solutions due to their understanding of the local context, culture, and challenges.

- ▶ Learn how two Filipina diaspora experts supported local government and a university in Palawan in building their capacities on environmental sustainability and climate adaptation. ▶ [Page 9](#)
- ▶ Discover how Mexican diaspora academics and scientists, led by a diaspora expert in sustainable education and circular economy, developed a toolkit for citizen climate action for Mexico. ▶ [Page 11](#)
- ▶ Read about a team of five Ethiopian diaspora professionals working with a local university in their home region of Amhara to build a curriculum in agri-food business and environmental informatics. ▶ [Page 13](#)



■ Emergency responders

Diaspora communities are vital emergency responders, offering crucial support during times of environmental crises in their countries of heritage. Their contributions span everything from the mobilisation of financial aid and relief goods to volunteering onsite, demonstrating the power of transnational connections and solidarity.



See the case study [Diaspora Engagement in Times of Crisis](#) for more on the key role of diaspora as emergency responders.



■ Funders

Diasporas can also play an important role in providing financial support through remittances, donations or other financial instruments. In the context of green growth, diaspora communities playing the role of funders contribute to projects that promote climate resilience, adaptation, and mitigation measures. Such contributions are made altruistically, with no expectation of a return on the contribution.



■ Investors

The transnational knowledge of diaspora allows them to more easily identify and access investment opportunities in relevant sectors. The role of remitter can evolve to investor, and there are initiatives seeking to leverage this potential, amongst a plethora of diaspora investment initiatives, some specifically on climate adaptation and mitigation. Green investing is a potential growth area for youth diaspora, who are particularly active on the topic and less likely to send remittances because of often being second or later-generation.



■ Innovators

Bringing experience and know-how between countries of residence and heritage, access to tools, platforms and networks and awareness of local challenges, diaspora can act as innovators for green business ideas and localised adaptation strategies. Similarly, innovators often create spaces for collaborative innovation and solution design at local level, with methods like hackathons.



Practice collection: green initiatives

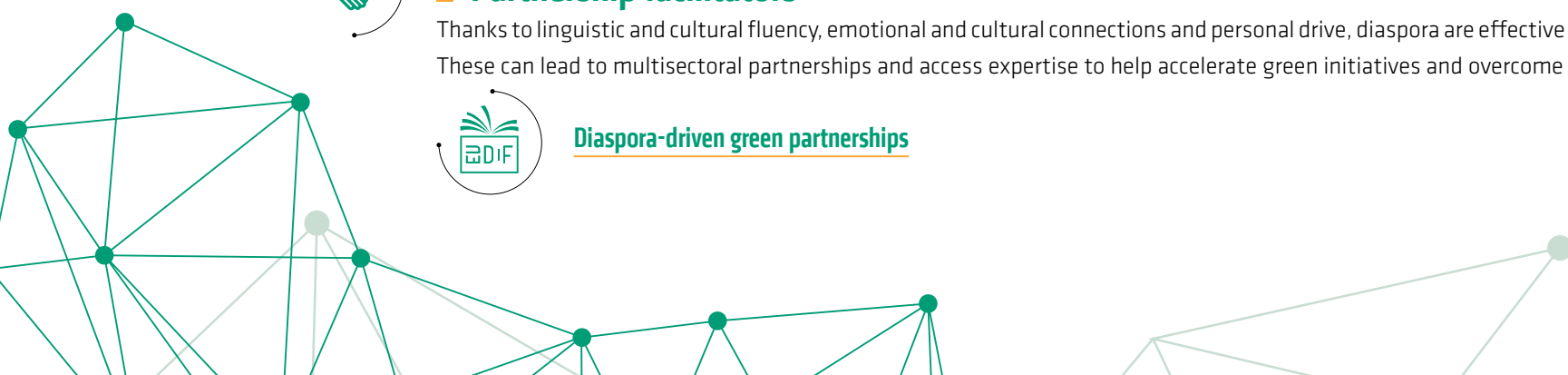


■ Partnership facilitators

Thanks to linguistic and cultural fluency, emotional and cultural connections and personal drive, diaspora are effective at building cross-border networks. These can lead to multisectoral partnerships and access expertise to help accelerate green initiatives and overcome legal and bureaucratic gaps.



Diaspora-driven green partnerships





■ Awareness raisers

Similar to other roles, the diaspora's position as bridge-builders enables them to play a fundamental role in green advocacy by lobbying for projects, policies, and activities. This also entails raising awareness about the various roles the diaspora can play in climate action and environmental sustainability.



■ Mentors

Diasporas act as vital mentors and educators in climate action and environmental sustainability, leveraging their international mindset and intercultural skills. They provide leadership and guidance in several manners such as through the development of educational curricula, delivering trainings and workshops, and actively engaging with fellow nationals in their countries of heritage to mentor them in the development of environmental initiatives.

Gender and green remittances

Non-commercial money transfers from the diaspora can serve as a critical source of development finance, particularly in vulnerable regions most affected by the consequences of climate change. In these areas, extreme climate change-induced natural disasters such as droughts, floods and cyclones severely hamper livelihoods and local development. Remittances are not only reactive financing, but can also offer a more stable and predictable source of income for investment in climate-resilient infrastructure.

When analysing green remittances from a gendered perspective, women send a higher proportion of their income than men and are more frequent and consistent senders. Women are more prone to invest remittances in community resources including climate-resilient infrastructure, compared to men.



Practice example: [RemitResilience](#)

Technical experts in action



Knowledge transfer on environmental sustainability and climate adaptation from the Filipino diaspora

In partnership with the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff (PCSDS) and the Palawan State University (PSU)

Summary

EUDI² connected PCSDS, PSU and local government units (LGUs) in Palawan with three members of the Filipino diaspora in Europe, specifically Germany and France. They acted as technical experts to provide local authorities with the knowledge, tools and skills to advance the agenda for sustainable development in the province. The diaspora professionals shared their expertise on three topics: (1) education for sustainable development (ESD); (2) funding for climate adaptation; and (3) project management for environmental projects.

Strands of work

1. Developing a novel and tailored higher education curriculum on ESD and training PSU teachers to deliver it;
2. Training PCSDS and LGUs on fundraising and project proposal development for climate change adaptation;
3. Providing PCSDS and LGUs with supplementary project management training to implement environmental projects.

Technical experts



- ✓ Education for sustainable development
- ✓ Climate financing
- ✓ Project management for environmental projects



Denise Margaret Matias, Filipina diaspora professional working in the action with PCSDS and PSU.

Bonus roles

In addition to acting as technical experts as per their contracts, the diaspora professionals performed additional roles during the action. These “bonus” roles go above and beyond the expectations of a short-term intervention, but demonstrate the overwhelming added value of working with diaspora on development projects.

- 
Partnership facilitator: The action paved the way for collaboration between PSU and the diaspora expert's university in Germany. One of the diaspora professionals started a new partnership with PSU teachers, involving them in a project that maps wildlife consumption and trading in Mongolia and the Philippines, focusing on the conservation of the Philippine pangolin. Another of the diaspora experts put PCSDS in touch with several donors and invited them to the training to deliver presentations.
- 
Awareness raiser: Diaspora professionals coordinated with 24 local government units and the PSU to promote the action's activities and the corresponding results. They used a wide variety of means, such as traditional email channels, social media, government websites, and government functions or meetings.

Read more about



The action

ACTON OBJECTIVES

- The Project aimed to improve development built capacity established in 2008 by the Philippine Migration Act (RA 7615). It focuses on the DPO of the Philippines (the Council of Representatives) and the diaspora professionals to enhance their capacity in providing technical assistance to various, diverse and context-specific resource holder on the island of Palawan. The conceptual framework aims to provide the public and private sectors with technical assistance, advisory, and training services and to provide the diaspora professionals with the opportunity to engage in development projects, activities, and programs in Palawan.
- The Project aims to improve the local development and capacity building in Palawan. It focuses on the DPO of the Philippines (the Council of Representatives) and the diaspora professionals to enhance their capacity in providing technical assistance to various, diverse and context-specific resource holder on the island of Palawan. The conceptual framework aims to provide the public and private sectors with technical assistance, advisory, and training services and to provide the diaspora professionals with the opportunity to engage in development projects, activities, and programs in Palawan.

MAIN FEATURES

- Component of annual FADP (Foreign Assistance Development Program) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Palawan. It focuses on the DPO of the Philippines (the Council of Representatives) and the diaspora professionals to enhance their capacity in providing technical assistance to various, diverse and context-specific resource holder on the island of Palawan. The conceptual framework aims to provide the public and private sectors with technical assistance, advisory, and training services and to provide the diaspora professionals with the opportunity to engage in development projects, activities, and programs in Palawan.



The Philippines

Facts & Figures

- Emigration:**
 - % of population: 4.7%
 - % of total population: 9.8%
 - % of total population: 14.1%
- Top countries of destination:**
 - United States of America: 2,018,000
 - Saudi Arabia: 628,000
 - Canada: 528,000
 - United Arab Emirates: 338,000
 - Australia: 212,000
- Political rights:**
 - Free & fair: 9.0/10
 - Right to vote in national elections: 9.0/10
 - Right to stand for national elections: 9.0/10
 - Right to participate in political decision-making: 9.0/10
- Doing Business Index (DBI) 2019:** 84.9/100
- Doing Business Index (DBI) 2018:** 84.9/100

Key findings:

- Palawan is not a diaspora engagement policy.



There are a lot of Filipinos working in the climate change arena which could provide specialised skills... [As a diaspora professional] the motivation is the thought of being able to give back to my country in my own little way. I have always planned to be back and serve my community again.

- Julie Amoroso-Garbin, Diaspora professional

Transferring knowledge on climate change and circular economy from the Mexican diaspora

In partnership with the British chapter of the [Mexican Talent Network – Red Global MX \(RGMX-UK\)](#)

Summary of the action

EUDiF partnered with RGMX-UK on a mission to harness the power of knowledge transfer for climate change action in Mexico. The main objective was to create a structured scheme that facilitates the generation and exchange of knowledge between academic diaspora members and Mexico. This scheme was piloted in climate change and circular economy education, specifically through the co-creation of a toolkit for citizen climate action.

Strands of work

1. Enhancement of RGMX-UK's database of members through needs assessment, the development of a methodology to expand it and trainings to implement the new methodology.
2. Organisation of co-creation workshops with RGMX-UK's members, Mexican diaspora academics and CSOs in Mexico to harness knowledge into outputs for sustainable development and the drafting of a guide for the organisation of these events capturing the lessons learned from the process
3. Development of a toolkit for citizen climate action and circular economy, leveraging the insights and expertise of the Mexican diaspora community and local actors in Mexico through a co-creation process.



Toolkit: List of Personal Actions for the Circular Economy

Technical experts

- ✓ Sustainable education, circular economy and climate change

Bonus roles

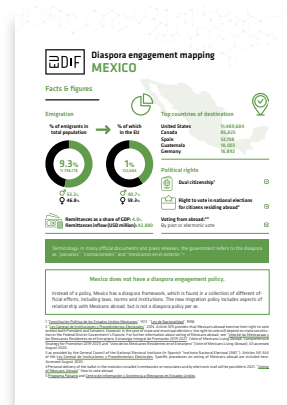
- ✓ **Partnership facilitator:** The diaspora professional harnessed her network in the field of climate action and environmental sustainability to connect RGMX-UK with relevant stakeholders, both in Europe and in Mexico. These new connections were pivotal for the co-creation of the toolkit adopting an interdisciplinary approach involving the Mexican diaspora, academia and civil society, as well with its final dissemination event in Mexico.
- ✓ **Mentors:** The diaspora professional facilitated the co-creation workshops to develop the toolkit and provided RGMX-UK with tools to enable the organisation of future co-creation events.

Read more about

The action



Mexico



 By strengthening learning-bridges between nationals abroad, local communities and civil society we can catalyse sustainable development and climate action across borders.

- Agustín Searle Vial, EUDiF Associate Project Officer



Presentation of the toolkit in Pachuca, Mexico





Piloting digital learning on agri-food business and environmental informatics in Ethiopia

In partnership with [Wollo University](#)

Summary of the action

Through onsite and virtual assignments, a team of Ethiopian diaspora professionals supported Wollo University in the Amhara Region to pilot digital learning solutions in agri-food business and environmental informatics.

Strands of work

1. Developing an interdisciplinary e-curriculum in agri-food business and environmental informatics.
2. Piloting and delivering the new curriculum and courses to WU students.
3. Developing a Learning Management System and training WU academic staff and IT personnel on its use.

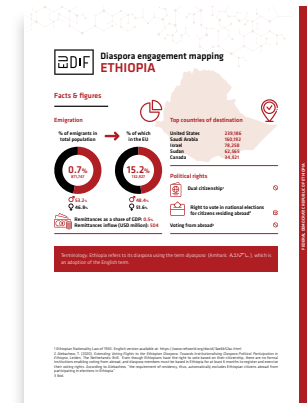
Technical experts

- ✔ Agriculture, food and environmental sciences in the areas of agri-food business, agricultural economics and management information systems.
- ✔ Software engineering and digital technologies in the areas of programming, environmental informatics, data analytics, big data and artificial intelligence.

Bonus roles

- ✔ **Partnership facilitator:** Post-action, Wollo University teamed up with one of the diaspora experts to draft a proposal to the EU Erasmus call, in order to raise funds for a EUR 800 000 project to replicate the digital curriculum developed during the EUDiF action in 5 other African universities.

Read more about



What comes next



Philippines

On the one hand, PSU is currently working on integrating ESD curriculum to make it accessible for students. On the other hand, PCSDS is finalising climate finance proposals to submit to different donors. Diaspora professionals working in the action have remained in touch to offer support and reinforcement, and specifically to start new partnerships with international universities and to collaborate in climate finance proposals.



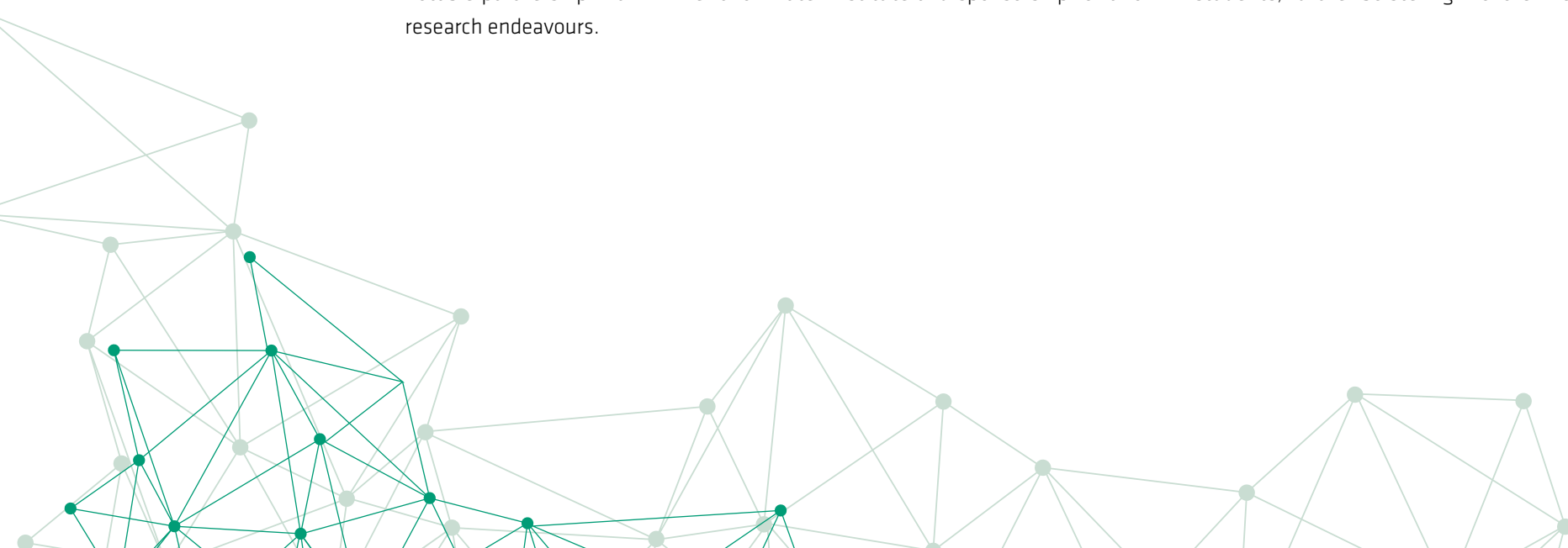
Mexico

RGMX-UK will continue the engagement with local Mexican civil society to seek opportunities to expand the application of the toolkit. The possibility of Integrating the toolkit into the school business curriculum has also been discussed with RGMX partners. Moreover, RGMX-UK is seeking sponsorship and funding opportunities for the continuity of the circular economy initiative on which the development of the toolkit was based.



Ethiopia

Wollo University will seek to make the interdisciplinary curriculum in agrifood business endorsed and subsequently to be replicated at other universities. Furthermore, the university has capitalised on the expertise of the diaspora expert team, securing additional research funding. This includes a notable partnership with IHE Delft for Water Institute and sponsorship for two PhD students, further bolstering Wollo University's academic and research endeavours.



Recommendations

The potential for diaspora engagement in climate action and green transition is starting to be recognised, but the climate emergency is affecting communities all over the world at a rapid pace. While EUDiF's actions are typically small-scale and short-term, they are designed to be sustainable, and have also allowed for reflection on future opportunities to scale up diaspora engagement for climate action and green growth. In this section, we recommend steps to maximise and accelerate the potential of diaspora engagement in climate action and environmental sustainability.

1. Raise awareness about the roles diaspora can play in helping combat climate change.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) highlights the importance of educational and public awareness campaigns in changing attitudes and getting more people to participate in initiatives against climate change ([UN, 2021](#)).

While there are many opportunities for diaspora to contribute to climate action and green growth, this is not yet common knowledge for most countries of heritage and residence. As such, it is important to raise awareness about the roles diaspora can play and highlight examples of diaspora-led projects in the environmental sector that are feasible, effective and impactful.

2. Build and enhance networks to facilitate partnerships for diaspora-led initiatives.

It is important to provide a space for actors to connect and discuss concrete ways to collaborate on diaspora-led green initiatives. This involves identifying the gaps in technical capacity that actors, especially diaspora organisations and/or governments in countries of heritage, have in terms of thematic knowledge on climate change and environmental sustainability, as well as skills they would need to implement diaspora-led projects on these topics. It also involves sharing practices and strategies for cross-sector and public-private partnership building.

3. Provide funding for diaspora-led initiatives on climate action and green growth.

One of the key barriers to the long-term implementation of diaspora-led initiatives, including those in the environmental sector, is the lack of funding, as well as insufficient organisational capacity to fundraise.

Access to sustainable funding would not only raise the profile of the work of the diaspora, but also allow them to go beyond pro-bono engagement and volunteerism and contribute to environmental projects more sustainably. Funding opportunities must be coupled with capacity development for government and diaspora actors to identify, apply for and manage funds effectively.

4. Strengthen political frameworks to explicitly recognise the role of the diaspora in climate action.

While there are many opportunities for diaspora to contribute, for instance through humanitarian assistance, remittances, green investments, and skills transfer, governments are yet to develop the enabling environment to unlock the full potential of diaspora contributions for climate action.

Countries of both residence and heritage ought to explicitly recognise the roles that diaspora communities play in climate action and green growth, as well as to set up concrete mechanisms to act on the opportunities.



Further reading

Thematic publications



Mobilising the diaspora for the green transition: Ways to engage in the energy and waste sectors

Conducted in partnership with Gret and FORIM (Forum des Organisations de Solidarité Internationale issues des Migrations), this EUDiF case study aims to better understand diaspora commitment to the green economy and to propose concrete recommendations to make the most of the partnership potential. Three countries (Haiti, Togo and Vietnam) and two sectors (energy and waste) were explored in-depth.

Future Forum and green action

In all editions of EUDiF Future Forum, the topic of green initiatives and diaspora engagement was discussed in depth, especially on diaspora knowledge networks. During one of the sessions, the EU recognised the special role diaspora plays in generating green solutions as part of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Read more:

- ▶ [Future Forum 2021 conference report and Going Green visual](#)
- ▶ [Future Forum 2022 conference report and Session 5b Green Innovation graphic recording](#)
- ▶ [Future Forum 2023 conference report](#)



United Nations
Framework Convention on
Climate Change

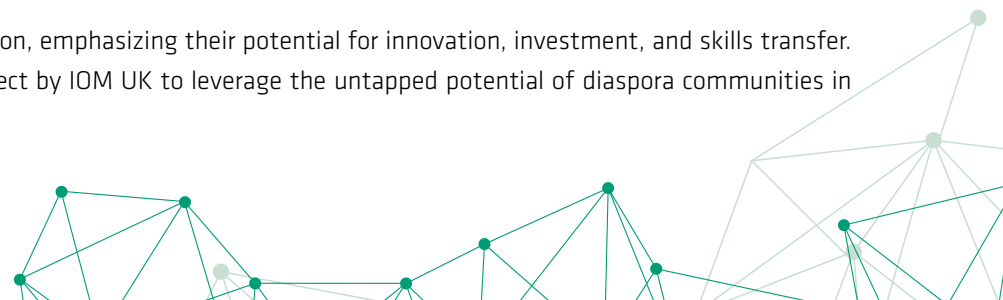
Climate-induced displacement and migration: Policy gaps and policy alternative

This policy paper analyses the causes and consequences of forced displacement and migration in the context of climate change. It analyses existing protection mechanisms at the national and international levels, and argues for a new Legal Protocol under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for long-term rights-based solutions.



Unlocking the potential of diaspora for climate action

The article discusses the crucial role of diaspora groups in climate action, emphasizing their potential for innovation, investment, and skills transfer. It highlights the launch of the Diaspora for Climate Action (D4C) project by IOM UK to leverage the untapped potential of diaspora communities in Bangladesh, Jamaica, Ghana, and Moldova.



Regional reviews



Climate change and migration issues in the Pacific

This report provides a synthesis of the knowledge available on the linkages between climate change and migration in the Pacific and discusses gaps in the existing knowledge base. More specifically, it identifies 'hotspots' in the Pacific that are likely to induce migration, which would then require increased research into climate change impacts, in situ adaptation responses, demographic processes and community security.



Migration, integration and diaspora engagement in the Caribbean: A policy review

The report examines the different forms of migration in the Caribbean and its governance, and discusses the role that climate change and natural disasters have played in driving internal, intra-regional and extra-regional displacement. It discusses the region's response to climate-related displacement and points out remaining policy gaps that need to be addressed in order to make the Caribbean more resilient against the effects of climate change.



Climate change, development and migration: An African diaspora perspective

This paper discusses the vulnerability of Africa to the effects of climate change and its interaction with development and migration issues. Examining relevant policy fora and opportunities to drive change, it proposes a step-wise approach to develop the capacities of diaspora communities to become active agents in the fight against climate change.



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This publication was funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of EUDiF and does not necessarily reflect the views of ICMPD nor the European Union.

Citation: Searle Vial, A. and Tongson, M.R., (2024) Diaspora engagement and human capital: Climate action and environmental sustainability. EUDiF Learning by doing publication, Brussels: ICMPD

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