

# DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

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## LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

REGIONAL  
SERIES

*The European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF) is the first European Union-funded project to take a global approach to diaspora engagement. Implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the project seeks to build an informed, inclusive and impactful diaspora-development ecosystem through research, dialogue, and capacity development. EUDiF runs from June 2019 to December 2022.*

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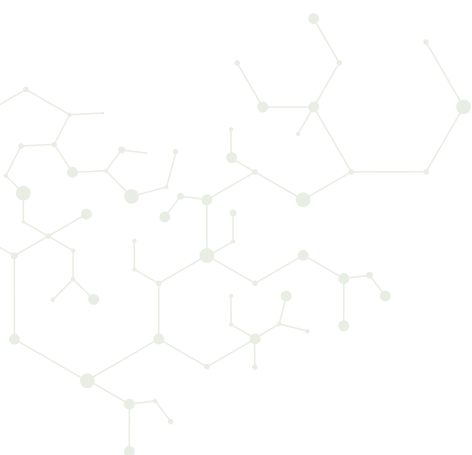


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# 1. BACKGROUND

In 2020, EUDiF worked with a team of regional experts to conduct a **global mapping** exercise focused on assessing diaspora engagement across six regions. The aim was to address the fragmentation of evidence on diaspora engagement policies, institutions and practices by collating the information in an open-access knowledge hub.

The global mapping has generated 107 individual country fact sheets, which are available via an interactive map on the EUDiF website, where findings can also be compared between individual countries.

Through the research exercise, EUDiF has sought to identify the interests and challenges faced by countries of heritage when it comes to diaspora engagement. This publication is one of a six-part series reviewing the research results of each partner region.

EUDiF regions:

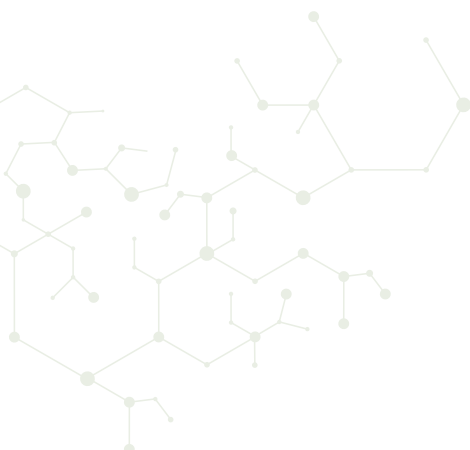
- Africa
- Asia
- Eastern Europe & Central Asia
- Latin America & the Caribbean**
- Middle East
- Pacific

## LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

If you are interested in the specifics of the country selection methodology, email us at [eu-diaspora@icmpd.org](mailto:eu-diaspora@icmpd.org).

This document is a regional analysis of diaspora engagement in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). It draws on knowledge gathered during the mapping of 24 countries to study relevant policy and institutional frameworks, trends, good practices and recommendations at regional level. The resulting document offers a consolidated source of information to:

- ▶ Promote the contribution of the LAC diaspora to development;
- ▶ Guide action at regional level;
- ▶ Identify opportunities for peer exchange.



Countries mapped: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela.

## 2. POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS RELATED TO DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

### AT REGIONAL LEVEL

At the regional level, emigration is an area of **primary interest**. However, no regional framework properly focuses on either migration or on diaspora engagement; instead, interest is shown by countries individually.

A few attempts have been made towards increasing regional cooperation on diverse specific areas that contribute to diaspora engagement. However, such efforts remain marginal. For example, the **Quito Declaration** was adopted at the 2016 meeting of Heads of States and Governments of the **Community of Latin American and Caribbean States** (CELAC). This declaration underlines the need to support the possibility of promoting exchanges, cooperation and dialogues with the diaspora, in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the **Plan of Action Plan for the Decade for Persons of African Descent in the Americas (2016-2025)**. This Plan of Action is a document from the General Assembly of the **Organization of American States** (OAS), in which member states commit to gradually adopting and strengthening public policies and other measures to ensure persons of African descent in the Americas can fully exercise their rights (economic, social, civil, political, etc.) and enjoy equal participation in all areas of society. This declaration, however, does not include all diasporas in LAC as it only focuses on Afro-descendants and mainly relates to their integration.

Additionally, the **Ibero-American Multilateral Agreement on Social Security** ratified by Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela, allows workers abroad to access, if applicable, old-age, disability or death pensions in other countries. Furthermore, the **Pacific Alliance** was created in 2011 by Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru as an initiative of regional integration. In 2014, the four countries launched the programme “**shared embassies**” and opened several joint embassies, to fulfil the purpose of strengthening their presence around the world, while at the same time reducing their operating costs.

An incipient regional policy related to diaspora engagement has been initiated by CARICOM's Regional Nursing Body, with the aim of addressing brain drain in the health sector in Caribbean states. It has defined a strategy for retaining adequate numbers of competent nursing personnel. This strategy is based on the recognition that migration cannot be stopped where principles of individual freedom are respected and supports the view that the migration of nurses can be managed to the benefit of all stakeholders concerned.

### AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Several LAC countries have taken steps to institutionalise diaspora engagement and to create an enabling environment for the diaspora's contribution to development, especially through policies related to civic rights and social benefits for citizens abroad.

The **Emigrant Policies Index** (EMIX) has built a framework to analyse the “degree of adoption” of emigrant policies in 22 LAC countries<sup>1</sup>. Findings show that there are substantial disparities in the LAC region regarding the degree of adoption of emigrant policies designed to maintain economic, political or social links with emigrants. Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico have developed the majority of the emigrant policies used by the EMIX in their analytical framework, while other countries have a weak focus on emigrant policies. EMIX also shows that there is no common strategy in place to maintain or build links with the diaspora in terms of policy priorities or the type of institutions created to cover diaspora issues. Of the 24 mapped LAC countries, 14 have an institution specifically dedicated to diaspora engagement. The Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica

1 Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.

and Mexico have ministerial-level authority. In Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Guyana, Paraguay and Peru the dedicated institution is at sub-ministerial level.

However, only a very limited number of LAC countries mapped by EUDiF have a diaspora policy. Of the 24 countries, only Dominica (2010) has adopted a diaspora engagement policy (Jamaica and Guyana are in the process of doing so). Dominica's diaspora engagement policy focuses on citizenship rights, skills retention, skills transfer, financial and economic incentives, investment opportunities, trade promotion, tourism promotion, and cultural exchanges. The goal of Jamaica's National Diaspora Policy, while still in the drafting stage, is that by 2030, there will be "transformative engagements and partnerships providing an enabling environment for the empowerment of the Jamaican Diaspora to realize their fullest potential [...] while optimizing contributions to national development." The working document highlights eight main goals, including: to increase diaspora engagement in national development planning, to recognise diaspora networks, to encourage diaspora investment, and to promote research of diaspora contributions to development. In Guyana, the draft Diaspora Engagement Strategy and Action Plan is designed to formally guide the administration's relationship with the diaspora with focus on three main operational areas: Diaspora Communities, Home Country and IT Social Media. The strategy aims at strengthening and expending the resources of the Diaspora Unit, boosting short- and long-term youth programmes, and increasing remittances in the form of philanthropy.

**Once the diaspora engagement policy and strategy is adopted, Jamaica and Guyana will become the only LAC countries with both a dedicated diaspora institution and a diaspora engagement policy.**

It is also worth mentioning that Mexico does not have a diaspora engagement policy per se, but it has a diaspora framework, which is manifested in different official efforts, including laws, norms and institutions. Moreover, development policies in Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago explicitly recognise the role of the diaspora in the development of the country of origin. The development policy of Honduras places emphasis on return and reintegration; in Guyana the focus is primarily on skills transfer; and in Nicaragua and Mexico, the protection of the diaspora is taken into account.

Out of the 24 LAC countries mapped by EUDiF, 21 allow dual citizenship. The EMIX underlines that citizenship policies can be seen as a fundamental type of emigrant policy, because they mark the basis of a formal connection to the national community. As indicated above, citizenship is a focus of the diaspora engagement policy of Dominica. The government of Argentina also has a very welcoming policy for citizen naturalisation, which entitles any native Argentine parent to apply for citizenship for their child. In Barbados, actions that foster inter-generational national identity have also emerged, such as **legislative initiatives** to confer citizenship by descent for second and third generations.

Among the countries mapped, only Brazil, Guatemala and Suriname do not allow dual citizenship. In Suriname, the **Persons of Surinamese Origin Act (PSA Act)** defines Surinamese descent to include persons with at least one parent or grandparent born in Suriname. Thus, the status of PSA beneficiary can be created for all those who do not have Surinamese nationality but are of Surinamese descent. PSA beneficiaries must apply for the status in order to activate it and receive the associated work and residency benefits. This status is not synonymous with dual citizenship. In Paraguay, dual citizenship is limited to two countries: only Spain and Italy have signed a bilateral agreement.





- Do not allow diaspora to vote
- Allow diaspora to vote

As with dual citizenship, diaspora voting is allowed by most LAC countries covered by the EUDiF mapping. Only four countries do not authorise voting for citizens residing abroad: Barbados, Haiti, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. In 2017, Chileans abroad were granted the right to vote in presidential elections, presidential primaries, and national plebiscites. There was a **low turnout** of voters from the diaspora in the first presidential primaries. However, on 25 October 2020, for the first time, Chileans abroad exercised this right in a national referendum on a new Constitution agreed by politicians after a month of social unrest. Considering the opportunity for the diaspora to be part of an historic process, the number of Chileans abroad registered to vote **increased by 48%**, leading to a **turnout of 51.93%**. In Nicaragua, the right to vote in national elections is recognised for citizens residing abroad, but it has never been exercised. Voting through digital means is available or being developed in a few countries. In Colombia, for example, in 2016 a tech non-profit organisation launched the digital voting platform **Plebiscito Digital** and worked with several civil socie-

ty organisations to allow Colombians abroad to cast symbolic votes through the platform. The Digital Plebiscite was powered by blockchain technology, to test a new way of validating and authenticating electoral votes. In Mexico, a **website** has been set up to promote and encourage the diaspora to vote, and campaigns have been designed to facilitate registration and voting for Mexicans abroad. Additionally, access to the exercise of migrants' rights are improved through the **Titulo Net** project, a joint initiative of the Superior Electoral Court and the Regional Electoral Court of the Federal District. This allows for the registration, transfer, and regularisation of Brazilian voters outside the country by electronic means, with immediate processing by the Electoral Justice after data and documents have been checked and endorsed by registered consular agents. However, in practice, diaspora voting remains low in Brazil.

The EMIX index shows that countries adopt varied approaches to retain or build relations with their diasporas. One of the findings is the extensive development of social policies, including retirement benefits, healthcare or education programmes. Out of the 24 countries mapped, 14 have adopted such policies or concluded relevant international agreements (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru). For example, in Brazil, the 2011 **Action Plan** comprises around 100 joint activities aimed at meeting the demands of the Brazilian diaspora. The plan covers areas such as consular services and assistance, education, social security, labour, health, social services and human rights. In Argentina, in accordance with the **Law on Migration**, the government may subscribe international agreements to guarantee labour and social security rights to Argentines abroad. Chile has signed **bilateral agreements on social security** with at least 27 countries. The Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health and with the support of the Mexican consular network, has implemented several health initiatives to facilitate access for Mexicans abroad to primary and preventive health services, in addition to providing information, education and advice on health issues.

## 3. REGIONAL PIONEERS

EUDiF's regional pioneers are countries that have shown significant interest and progress in the field of diaspora engagement over time. Countries are usually identified as regional pioneers because:

- The national institutional framework and enabling environment has been developed with the explicit recognition of the key role of migrants and/or the diaspora in the development of the country of origin; the importance of optimising diaspora development contributions has been highlighted.
- And/or, the country has implemented notable diaspora-relevant initiatives in a given development sector.

There is no ranking of pioneers. More detail on each of the regional pioneers is available in the country fact sheet.

**Mexico:** Currently, Mexico is one of the region's most advanced countries in terms of diaspora engagement. The Mexican government has a very comprehensive approach to its diaspora, with a commitment to diaspora engagement evident in a variety of official efforts, including laws, norms and institutions. Indeed, Mexico's diaspora engagement is strong both at federal and state levels, even though it does not have a diaspora engagement policy per se. Diaspora engagement at state level has developed considerably in Mexico since 2000. Some interesting local initiatives can be highlighted, such as the replication of the federal "Programa 2x1" in the **State of Zacatecas**. Mexico also works towards addressing return migration. A few programmes have been designed to encourage the diaspora to return, whether permanently or not, such as the Paisano Guide, "**Housing for Mexicans Living Abroad**" and "**Build in your homeland**".

**Jamaica:** There has been progress in policy initiatives to expand on inclusivity and development of the diaspora population, as well as to bridge relationships between diaspora youth populations and Jamaicans living on the island. The **Global Diaspora Youth Council** was created in 2019 to sustain these connections. The Ministry of For-

eign Affairs and Foreign Trade has made it a priority to develop boards and commissions that focus on the diaspora population. Ultimately, the government encourages members of the diaspora to **return** home to work, raise families, invest, and retire. Jamaica is currently the second country in the whole region to be drafting a fully-fledged diaspora engagement policy.

**Guyana:** In 2011, as a result of the Guyanese government's recognition of the important role the diaspora can play as a contributor to Guyana's development, a **Diaspora Unit** was created within the Foreign Affairs Ministry. The Unit is designed to liaise between the diaspora and the government, and some of its main functions are to collect information about the diaspora and maintain relations with its leaders. The government has adopted an ongoing rhetoric in which it recognises that the diaspora is helping to fill the human capital gap in Guyana and that it is in a position to contribute to the implementation of its National Development Strategy (NDS). Guyana is currently the third (and last) country in the whole region to be drafting a fully-fledged diaspora engagement policy.

## 4. TERMINOLOGY

The term diaspora is used in: Costa Rica, Cuba, Haiti, Guyana, Suriname, Barbados, Dominica, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Peru, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic.

However, most states refer to nationals living abroad (Bolivians abroad, Brazilians abroad, Colombians abroad, Ecuadorians living abroad, Guatemalans abroad, Mexicans abroad, Nicaraguans abroad, Argentinians abroad, Costa Ricans abroad, Peruvians abroad, Chileans abroad, Paraguayans abroad) or 'migrant persons' (i.e. El Salvador, Honduras).

In Guyana, the government also uses the terms "overseas Guyanese", "expatriate Guyanese" and "Guyanese living overseas".

In Mexico, in many official documents and press releases, the government refers to the diaspora as "paisanos" and "connacionales".



# 5. KEY TRENDS AND PRACTICES

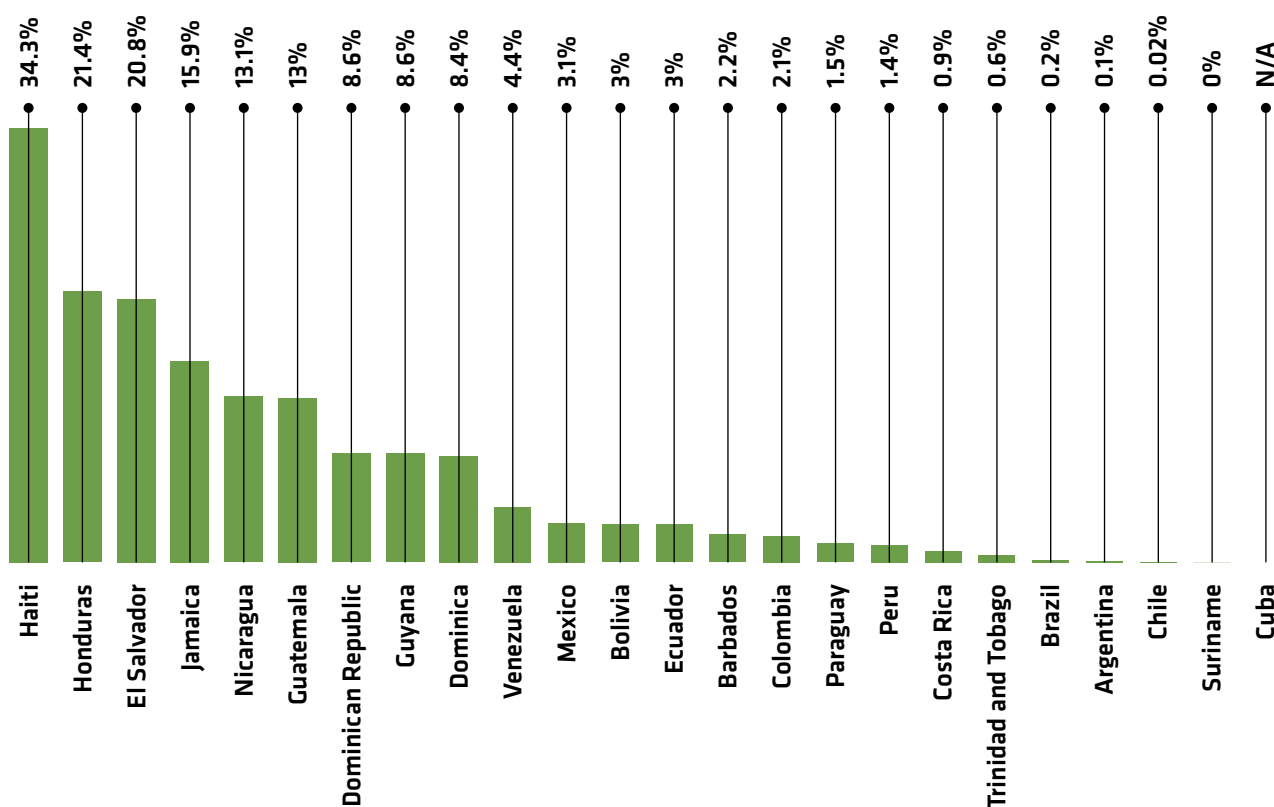
EUDiF's global mapping of diaspora engagement showed that some trends are global (e.g. increasing remittances, attracting investment, creating links with the diaspora through events and network building). Nevertheless, each region also has its own specific trends and distinct practices.

In LAC, efforts largely focus on remittances, digitalisation, and consular services.

## REMITTANCES AND DIGITALISATION

Keeping remittances flowing is a key priority across LAC. In 2019, 40 million households in the region received remittances, corresponding to the main share of gross domestic product in some countries:


Remittances in % of gross domestic product



Haiti (34.3%), Honduras (21.4%), El Salvador (20.8%), Jamaica (15.9%), Nicaragua (13.1%), and Guatemala (13%). These remittances help families to cover their living, educational and health expenses; in addition, they support investment in improvements to housing and family businesses. A recent survey by the Centre for Latin American Monetary Studies on 32,000 migrant workers in the eight largest remittance-receiving countries in LAC shows that, for 22% of households, remittances are the sole source of income. It was expected that the Covid-19 pandemic would lead to a severe decrease in remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean. However, this projection

has turned out to be inaccurate in several LAC countries. Indeed, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, among others, have experienced an increase in remittances compared to previous years in the same period.

Predictions also indicated that the Covid-19 health crisis might be a contributing factor to the increased digitalisation of money transfers and banking services in the region. Yet even before the coronavirus outbreak, estimates indicated that 30% of remittances to Latin America would be digital by 2030. Jamaica's National Policy on International Migration and Development states that the government




aims, by 2030, to have modern mechanisms in place that will facilitate global technological advances in remittance transmissions to improve accessibility to remittance transfer services for the diaspora community. The transition could be accelerated as people are now being encouraged to stay at home, with some banking and cash-out points remaining closed (at the time of writing), in compliance with restrictions to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Remarkable initiatives supporting the digitalisation of remittances were implemented before the coronavirus outbreak. For example, to improve the effectiveness of remittances to Bolivia, **Tigo Money and Western Union** began collaborating in 2016, offering immediate international remittance transactions through mobile wallets. As a result, users can send funds via a Western Union agent or through their digital channels to Tigo's Mobile Wallet application. The funds can be transferred or used to make payments. Western Union's tariffs are applied to the money transfer, which is paid by the person who sends the money; the recipient is not charged. The objective is to provide clients with access to Western Union's services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In 2019, the Brazilian exchange broker Frente Corretora de Câmbio (The Front Exchange) launched "**Simple**", a fintech collaboration with San Francisco-based start-up Ripple. The blockchain platform is designed to enable people in Brazil to send money abroad without the high fees and slow transaction times that are common in traditional money transfer mechanisms. Ripple uses Simple to address the fragmentation and unreliability of current remittance structures.

International cooperation has focused on **financial inclusion**, through financial literacy as a means to formalise savings of remittance recipients. Financial education and the financial inclusion it offers is a pertinent objective in itself. At regional level, the **Remittances and Financial Inclusion Programme**, financed primarily by the Centre for Latin American Monetary Studies and the Multilateral Investment Fund, aims to develop regulatory frameworks that promote the financial inclusion of remittance clients through services, information and products. The programme supports central banks and other relevant authorities in identifying, reducing and eliminating barriers to financial inclusion; at the same time, it stresses the importance of promoting knowledge on how to seize the advantages of digitalisation. However, to be really beneficial to the development of the country of origin, the advantages of financial education programmes should be further leveraged. Currently only a few such initiatives have been

developed. The most notable of these is the **Brazilian Support Service for Micro and Small Businesses** (CAIXA's partner) which has taken steps to ensure that remittance recipients in Brazil receive training to start and strengthen their own businesses. Another interesting initiative is the "Housing Subsidy for Migrants", provided by the Ecuadorian government. The programme aims to: facilitate access to housing for migrants and their immediate family members; strengthen migrants' links to Ecuador; increase private sector participation through the construction industry; and encourage individuals through the provision of incentives to save their remittances to acquire housing. Finally, since 2014, the **Remittances and Savings Programme of the Multilateral Investment Fund** (MIF), a member of the Inter-American Development Bank, and Visión Banco signed a project agreement to reduce the vulnerability of remittance clients in Paraguay and improve their livelihoods by promoting savings at a formal financial institution. In 2011, the Asociación Hondureña de Instituciones Bancarias (AHIBA) initiated the "**Friends of the Migrant Project**", a corporate social responsibility initiative which includes assistance on: awareness raising and education of migrants and their families on the proper use of remittances, encouraging a savings culture, and holding a semi-annual running event to raise funds for returned migrants with disabilities. AHIBA and the Instituto Nacional de Formación Profesional (INFOP) of Honduras signed a Cooperation Agreement in 2012, through which they offer training on entrepreneurship to deportees (forced returnees). In the same vein, a **campaign** promoted by the Mexican government offers Mexicans in the United States information and services to strengthen their education and financial inclusion, through strategic alliances with actors in Mexico and the United States. In 2017, more than 70,000 people benefitted from orientation workshops on access to financial services, business development and basic skills development for personal and family financial management. A similar **programme promoting financial education** for Mexican migrants was launched in 2019 by the Institute of Mexicans Abroad through the consular network with the collaboration of various financial actors.

Finally, remittances can also be closely linked to educational services in LAC. The objective of the initiatives listed below is to encourage a large number of people to mobilise savings to invest in education, thereby contributing to economic and human development. One of the best examples of such an initiative highlighted by the EUDiF mapping exercise is the **Opportunities for My Community**



**Project**, implemented by USAID and the Inter-American Dialogue, which links remittances, education and savings to promote economic and human development in Guatemala. It works to engage the Guatemalan government and the diaspora with the country's development through resource mobilisation directed towards educational programmes within Guatemala. The project has also collaborated with remittance companies to engage the Guatemalan diaspora in addressing development obstacles. For example, it worked with the companies Dolex and Viamericas to deliver approximately 20,000 informational brochures to Guatemalan remittance senders, raising awareness about the importance of financial literacy in Guatemala. The Ministry of Education works with local schools and diaspora organisations to implement after-school education programmes funded by the diaspora. Remittances have also funded an educational camp for people with disabilities in Guatemala. In Honduras, the government's **Solidarity and Productive Remittances Programme** – which ended in 2017 – was an initiative supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support 17 community development projects. These projects included diaspora cash donations matched by the government to build and support schools and community centres in the cities of Comayagua, La Paz and Intibucá. In Mexico, as the **Three-for-one matching fund scheme** is a public aid programme whereby every \$1 contributed by diaspora associations is matched by both the federal and state governments. This money is collected in a fund that is then used to invest in local development (including infrastructure, job creation, water treatment, school and university buildings, sports centres and health facilities). The local communities play an active role in the scheme as investment decisions are made by local residents and contributing emigrants.

## CONSULAR SERVICES AND DIGITALISATION

It is a growing priority in many LAC countries to expand consular services. Providing quality consular services to citizens abroad can be seen as a basic way to engage with the diaspora. Indeed, this plays a pivotal role in fostering relations and trust. For example, the Brazilian diaspora is relatively autonomous and not substantially engaged with the country's development. In return, the Brazilian government maintains a low profile, its efforts mainly limited to enabling remittance transfers and providing consular services. In Cuba, the Division of Migration Policy and Cuban Residents Abroad focuses predominantly on

consular services for Cubans abroad. El Salvador has made efforts to facilitate diaspora engagement through its expansion of embassies and consular offices, staffing new personnel for that purpose. Salvadorans now have wider access to assistance from the government with the opening of new embassies such as the one established in China in 2018 as well as the addition of four new consulates. Services expanded by El Salvador include legal assistance to Salvadorans in the US. Diaspora engagement in Bolivia, on the other hand, is quite limited and does not appear to be a priority on the national agenda. However, progress is evident in the provision of consular services to allow Bolivians abroad to engage with government officials, make enquiries about which services they can access, and keep their Bolivian documentation up-to-date with more straightforward processes. It is interesting to note that some twinning initiatives have already been implemented in terms of improving consular services. For example, in an effort to strengthen programmes for Paraguayans abroad, a delegation from the Dirección de Atención a las Comunidades Paraguayas en el Extranjero and consuls based in major US cities attended a meeting in 2018 on consular best practices at the Mexican Consulate in New York City.

Several countries have made efforts to improve consular services through digitalisation. For example, the Chilean government has set up a detailed, interactive **website** where anyone can find a local embassy or consulate and information about any upcoming or previous events related to Chilean cultures. Additionally, to facilitate communication with Salvadorans abroad, an institutional WhatsApp was created. Through these efforts, Salvadorans residing abroad have received assistance relating to family registration, notary services, visas, and other related matters. New technologies have also been introduced to increase access to consular services for Bolivians abroad. "**Bolivia en Tus Manos**" applies facial recognition techniques to provide Bolivians with documents. A Digital Consulate allows Bolivians living abroad to process documents and renew their driving licences. Furthermore, a Mobile Consul assists individuals 24 hours a day with their questions.

In the early 2000s the Mexican State promoted the issuing of their "**matricula consular**" (MC) among its diaspora, which was considered an important success in the region. The MC is an identification card issued by the government through consular offices to confirm that the carrier is a Mexican national. The consular identification card became an important vehicle for Mexicans abroad to obtain driving licences and open bank accounts, for example.



## 6. RECURRENT CHALLENGES

The following recurrent challenges were identified through the EUDiF mapping of diaspora engagement across several of the 24 countries mapped in LAC. These are challenges faced by LAC governments in their attempt to engage their diaspora. In many cases, they are also faced by diaspora organisations and individuals who find their involvement in the development of their country of origin impeded due to a weak enabling environment. There is no specific ranking of the challenges listed below and most can also be observed in other regions.

**Low priority:** Government commitment to engage with diasporas is not a common policy priority in the LAC region. There are no differences in engagement among countries that are more “diaspora dependent” in terms of remittances (El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti) or in terms of size of the diaspora (Emigrants in total population in Paraguay 12.2% and in Brazil 0.8%). Moreover, LAC countries have directed their attention towards addressing the challenges resulting from the mass Venezuelan exodus. As a result, resources have been focused on internal migration policy. The few countries (i.e. Dominican Republic, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago) that have

recently shown specific attention to linking the diaspora with the country’s development will need time to create relationships with their diaspora and to develop mechanisms to reach out to them.

**Weak and informal nature of diaspora organisations based in the EU:** Diaspora organisations based in the EU with heritage in LAC are relatively disorganised, informal, small and fragmented. Their resource capacity is quite limited, and their engagement agendas are limited in scope (relating to a small territory or a given issue, but not on a national level). This situation makes government work quite difficult as their resources are thin and they are understaffed. More capacity-building efforts are needed to target diaspora-led development initiatives.

**Limited access to resources:** Governments need to dedicate time and resources to identify and create relationships with the diaspora. In the most fragile states, natural disasters (in Dominica, for example) have led to the reduction of resources available to engage with the diaspora, because funds have had to be redirected to respond to immediate needs.

# 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to strengthen diaspora engagement in LAC include the following:

To countries of origin and diaspora organisations:

- **Formalisation of diaspora organisations:** Support in terms of capacity building and access to funding should be provided to organisations to enable them to better structure themselves. Better structured diaspora organisations would allow for the emergence of interlocutors for governments which could be conducive to fostering dialogue.
- **Peer-to-peer learning and networking:** These are effective ways to further develop the capacities of institutions and diaspora organisations dealing with diaspora engagement. Networking spaces should be further strengthened and supported including exchange platforms between governments and diaspora organisations across LAC. It would be interesting to share lessons learned with peers based in other regions of the world where diaspora engagement is already further advanced (i.e. Africa). In addition, thematic peer-to-peer exchanges should be further developed with a view to creating thematic networks across regions.
- **Focusing on the development and implementation of policy frameworks:** In many cases in LAC the

policy framework related to diaspora engagement is insufficient. Support should be provided to identify policy frameworks that have already been successfully applied to inform the design of national policies. Twinning initiatives and capacity-building activities can be used to reach that objective. Moreover, support should be provided to policymakers to facilitate effective implementation of policies and programmes.

To donors and implementing agencies:

- **Access to funds:** Access to funding should be made easier for all stakeholders and more funding should be made available specifically for diaspora engagement initiatives.
- **Tailored capacity development:** It is essential to embrace divergent local realities and the diversity of diaspora engagement sectors and priorities. Capacity development support should not aim to standardise diaspora engagement policies and practices but rather to accompany states and diaspora organisations to develop the most appropriate tools and technical skills needed over time. Co-development of capacity development programmes with diaspora organisations and local/national actors and ownership are paramount to attain a better grasp on ground realities and build on existing efforts.