



Diaspora engagement mapping MAURITIUS

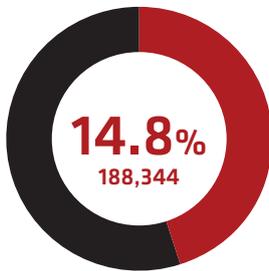
Facts & figures

Emigration

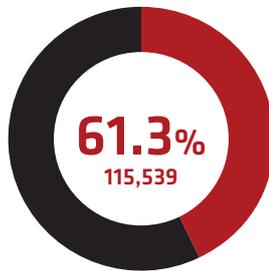
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 45.2%
♀ 54.8%



♂ 43.0%
♀ 57.0%



Remittances as a share of GDP: **1.7%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **255**



Top countries of destination

France	48,820
United Kingdom	48,766
Australia	31,380
Canada	16,933
South Africa	14,883



Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Voting from abroad



Terminology: Mauritius defines diaspora as: “a Mauritian citizen holding a valid Mauritian passport, a child or grandchild of this Mauritian citizen, whether or not they hold a Mauritian passport.”³

The Mauritian Diaspora Scheme



The Mauritian Diaspora Scheme aims to “encourage professionals and other Mauritian entrepreneurs living abroad to come and practice in Mauritius as employees or by setting up their own account in sectors where their expertise is in great demand.”⁴ It provides incentives for diaspora engagement, investment, and skills transfer under a single, integrated scheme (see Spotlight section).

1 Constitution of Mauritius (1968, amended 2011). Full text available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---ilo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_126778.pdf

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Investment Promotion Act

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2015** ● **Investment Promotion Act**⁵ provides the basis for the main policy framework governing diaspora engagement in Mauritius. It established the Mauritian Diaspora Scheme, which is administered by the Economic Development Board under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the principal migration ministry within the Mauritian government.⁶
- 2017** ● **Vision 2030**⁷ is the government of Mauritius' long-term development strategy. While it does not reference diaspora explicitly, it does stress Mauritius' deep connections with Europe, Africa, and Asia as a means to attract investment, the importance of SMEs to the country's future growth, and sets out ambitions to become a 'cyber island', which can be achieved with foreign expertise. There is scope therefore for aligning this with diaspora engagement policies and programmes in the future to promote the return of diaspora professionals.
- 2018** ● **National Migration and Development Policy** was developed by the National Steering Committee on Migration and Development in collaboration with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) between 2012-2017 as part of the EC-Funded MiEUX programme.⁸ This policy aims to provide a balanced approach to migration and development that supports delivery of the government's Vision 2030 Strategy. The policy includes three main axes: facilitating safe, regular and orderly migration; maximising the socio-economic and human development impact of migration and minimising its negative consequences; and strengthening the domestic migration governance framework. The first two of these axes relate most strongly to diaspora engagement, and focus on promoting brain circulation, and diaspora investment and enterprise. The policy recognises the importance of the SME sector in particular in maintaining economic growth as part of Vision 2030, and seeks to encourage diaspora investment in growth sectors such as agro-industry, manufacturing, tourism, financial, information communications technologies, and the ocean economy.⁹ It was formally endorsed by the Government on 1 June 2018.¹⁰ The current state of publication and implementation is unclear, and the policy does not seem to be publicly available yet.
- 2019** ● **Immigration Act and Non-Citizens Employment Restrictions Act.** Originally adopted in 1970, these Acts have been amended several times over the past two decades to manage migratory flows more effectively and align them with national development and investment priorities, especially in relation to addressing labour and skills shortages caused in part by emigration of Mauritian professionals.^{11,12} As of 2019, spouses of Mauritian citizens who are non-residents are required to apply for Work and Occupation Permits.¹³ This has implications for diaspora families, and this seems to contradict the guidelines for the Mauritius diaspora scheme (see below).

5 Full text of the Investment Promotion Act is available here: <https://www.mra.mu/download/InvestmentPromotionRegulation-sNo196of2015.pdf>

6 See Mauritius Immigration Policies, Laws and Regulations Handbook - Strategic Information and Regulations 2018

7 Available at: https://www.un-page.org/files/public/mauritius_jan-feb_2017_reprint_compr.pdf

8 <https://www.mieux-initiative.eu/en/actions/167-mauritius-accelerated-partnership-for-economic-integration-apei-labour-migration>

9 National Migration Policy 2018

10 <http://www.govmu.org/English/News/Pages/Government-approves-proposed-Migration-and-Development-Policy-.aspx>

11 <http://attorneygeneral.govmu.org/English/Documents/A-Z%20Acts/1/Page%201/IMMIGRATION%20ACT,%20No%2013%20of%201970.pdf>; see also <https://allafrica.com/stories/201904170914.html>

12 For a comprehensive discussion of these frameworks, see: IOM 2018 Migration Governance Snapshot: the Republic of Mauritius <https://migrationdataportal.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/Migration%20Governance%20Snapshot-%20The%20Republic%20of%20Mauritius.pdf>

13 <https://www.mcci.org/en/media-news-events/business-updates/regulations-under-the-non-citizens-employment-restriction-act-for-foreign-spouse/>

» Trends

Mauritius is a country that was forged during the colonial period out of migration from across the Indian Ocean by diverse diasporic communities with links to Africa, India, China, Europe, and beyond. As such its government is keenly aware of the need to capitalise on these links to harness diaspora financial and intellectual capital and maintain growth in the country's economy. Increasingly it is seeking to engage with its diaspora not just in Europe, but also in India and China, to leverage investment.¹⁴

As 'brain drain' is an issue of concern, Mauritius has sought to adopt strategies to encourage diaspora return.¹⁵ The skills mismatch between tertiary level education and the job market has been acknowledged as one of the root causes of unemployment in Mauritius and the government. To address this, the government put in place the Mauritian Diaspora Research Funding Scheme (MDRFS), aimed at bringing in experts from the Mauritian diaspora to stimulate research or teaching programmes. The scheme had disappointing uptake, however, so it was absorbed into the Mauritian Diaspora Scheme which sought to make it a more sustainable policy by providing incentives for permanent diaspora return, such as tax advantages.¹⁶ However, the lack of dedicated skills transfer schemes means that short-term voluntary diaspora skills transfer risk being neglected. The Mauritius Diaspora Scheme is an ambitious attempt to create a simplified, single point of entry for diaspora engagement. However, since its launch, the results of the scheme and its impact remain unclear.

Obstacles



- **Need to build second and third generation diaspora connections:** Many Mauritian emigrants settled in Europe, North America, and South Africa, where they forged successful careers. Whilst these may return to Mauritius as retirees, their children and grandchildren often lack the same connection to the country. This will be important to address labour and skills gaps, as well as to enable skills transfer to build capacities in the future.
- **Perception that the government is more interested in expatriate over diaspora contributions:** Historically Mauritius seemed to prioritise recruitment of, and investment from, expatriates rather than the diaspora. The Mauritius government has sought to address this with the introduction of its Diaspora Scheme.
- **Lack of economic opportunities for skilled professionals:** Emigration of skilled professionals has been an issue since the 1960s. The government is keen to encourage their return. However, the lack of economic opportunities for returnees serves as a barrier to diaspora return.

14 <https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-africa-maritime-cooperation-the-case-of-western-indian-ocean-57250/> ; see also Cowaloosur H. (2014) *Diaspora in Mauritius: A Recipe for Contested Development*. In: Sahoo S., Pattanaik B. (eds) *Global Diasporas and Development*. Springer, New Delhi; and Gopaldas (2019), 'Does Mauritius have an identity crisis?', Institute for Security Studies, available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/does-mauritius-have-an-identity-crisis>

15 See Vision 2030 and the draft National Migration and Development Policy.

16 <https://www.village-justice.com/articles/inciter-les-citoyens-mauriciens-expatriees-retour-mauritian-diaspora-scheme,32847.html>

SPOTLIGHT: Effective practices



EDB Mauritian Diaspora Scheme

NETWORKS

Also known as the Mauritius Diaspora Programme, this brings together a range of incentives and entitlements to encourage inward migration, investment, and skills transfer from the diaspora, including tax exemptions, access to the Property Development Scheme (below), and right to permanent residence for Mauritian diaspora who are not citizens of the country.¹⁷ The scheme has a dedicated diaspora web-portal. <http://www.diaspora.mu/>

Property Development Scheme (PDS)¹⁸

HOUSING

The PDS, which forms part of the EDB Mauritius Diaspora Scheme set out above, offers the right to residency in Mauritius to a purchaser and their family, and allows the development of a mix of residences for sale to non-citizens, citizens and members of the Mauritian diaspora. Under the new PDS Guidelines, at least 25% of the residential properties developed under PDS must be sold to Mauritians and members of the Mauritian diaspora.

International Conference of the Mauritian Academic Diaspora 2018¹⁹

NETWORKS

The University of Mauritius organised a conference on the topic of 'Mauritian diaspora: Showcasing international success' in 2018. Government ministers joined over 30 members of the Mauritian academic diaspora to discuss topics such as artificial intelligence and robotics, econometrics, ICT, medicine, nanotechnology, social sciences and humanities, law, marketing, education, and international relations. Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth said "the academic excellence that the diaspora can bring to the local universities will be instrumental in boosting their competitive edge, resulting in job and wealth creation."

¹⁷ <http://www.diaspora.mu/>

¹⁸ <https://www.sovereigngroup.com/mauritius/immigration-and-residency-in-mauritius/>

¹⁹ <http://www.govmu.org/English/News/Pages/Mauritian-Academic-Diaspora-is-an-important-Asset-for-the-Country,-states-PM.aspx>

Annex:

List of Actors



Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU CIDO) www.au-cido.int

Mauritius is a member of the African Union and nominates a diaspora focal point to represent the country as part of the AU CIDO Continental Meetings.

Southern African Community for Development (SADC) <https://www.sadc.int/>

Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) <https://www.comesa.int/>

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Prime Minister's Officer (PMO) <http://pmo.govmu.org/English/Pages/default.aspx>

The PMO is the national focal point for issues pertaining to migration and diaspora engagement.

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development <http://mof.govmu.org/English/Pages/default.aspx>

The Ministry oversees delivery of the Mauritius Diaspora Programme by the Economic Development Board (EDB)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration & International Trade
<http://foreign.govmu.org/English/Pages/default.aspx>

The Ministry provides consular services to Mauritian citizens abroad.

- At sub-ministerial level

Economic Development Board (EDB) www.diaspora.mu

EDB is responsible for administering the Mauritian Diaspora Scheme

National Steering Committee on Migration and Development

The Committee coordinates between government entities is facilitated by the National Steering Committee on Migration and Development, chaired by the Prime Minister's Office. Established in 2015, the Committee is composed of relevant ministries dealing with migration issues, as well as the Bank of Mauritius and the Economic Development Board (EDB, created as a result of the merger of the Board of Investment, Enterprise Mauritius and the Financial Services Promotion Agency).

Diaspora organisations in Europe



Association Franco-Mauricienne France <https://www.facebook.com/Association.Franco.Mauricienne/>

The association organises cultural activities for the Mauritian diaspora in France.

Association musulmane mauricienne de l'océan indien France <https://www.ammoi.fr/>

Development activities

The association provides religious education for Mauritian Muslims in France as well as supporting local Muslim educational projects in Mauritius.

Mauritian Diaspora Project <https://www.facebook.com/mauritiandiasporaproject>

Development activities

A network of researchers in the diaspora and in Mauritius that undertakes social research on issues affecting Mauritius and its diaspora worldwide.

Mauritius Hindu Association United Kingdom

<https://beta.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details?regid=1120485&subid=0>

Development activities

The association provides social, cultural and educational services to the Mauritian diaspora in the UK, and delivers local education and poverty reduction projects in Mauritius.

Mauritian Islamic Welfare Association (MIWA) United Kingdom https://directory.walthamforest.gov.uk/kb5/walthamforest/directory/service.page?id=vA9_MU0JHpA&directorychannel=1-3

Development activities

MIWA provides after school classes for young Mauritians, educational seminars and conferences, as well as English as a Second Language classes, boxing and self-defence classes for men. They also support social enterprises in Mauritius.

The Mauritian Telegu Association in the UK

<https://beta.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regid=1021132&subid=0>

Development activities

The association works to promote the culture, religion and language of the Telugu faith among the communities in the United Kingdom. It also endeavours to relieve poverty amongst community members in the UK and Mauritius.

Written by: **AFFORD**
Edited by: **EUDiF**
April 2020



Implemented by



Funded by
the European Union

