



Diaspora engagement mapping

UGANDA

Facts & figures

Terminology: From the government's perspective, the Ugandan diaspora comprises of all people of Ugandan origin living and/or working outside Uganda. It also includes Ugandans who may have lost their citizenship through acquisition of other citizenship.¹

Political rights



Dual citizenship²



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad⁵



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **2.5%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **1,430³**

Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from UNDESA (2024) and remittances from the World Bank (2023).

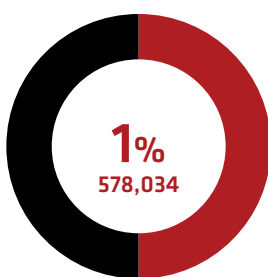
Emigration



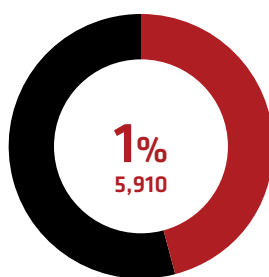
% of emigrants in total population⁴



% of which in the EU



♂ 50%
♀ 50%



♂ 46%
♀ 54%

Top countries of destination



Kenya	274,655
South Sudan	156,437
Rwanda	91,955
Canada	15,355
South Africa	7,678

¹ Diaspora Service Overview <https://www.mofa.go.ug/tour/diaspora>

² Dual citizenship is permitted for citizens of birth only. <https://washington.mofa.go.ug/visa/citizenship-dual-citizenship#:~:text=In%20Uganda%2C%20dual%20citizenship%20means,the%20third%20citizenship%20is%20renounced>

³ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>

⁴ From UNDESA Migration Stock Statistics for 2019.

⁵ <https://allafrica.com/stories/202006220239.html>.

The High Court in Kampala ruled that Ugandans in the diaspora should be allowed to vote in 2020, and due to be implemented for the 2021 elections.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



2013

National Diaspora Policy (draft). In 2013 Uganda developed a draft diaspora policy in 2013 with support from UNDP and other stakeholders, although it is yet to be formally adopted. The draft policy is part of a broad national strategy designed to support mobilization and utilization of diaspora resources in the country's development agenda. The main objective of this is to accord full participation of the diaspora in national development.

2015
2019

National Development Plan II 2015/16-2019/20⁶ is Uganda's second national development strategy. It notes the importance of harnessing diaspora support and investment for national development beyond remittances. Within NDP II, the Public Administration Sector (PAS) has a strategic objective of 'attracting cooperation assistance and contributions from the diaspora', in particular regarding the recruitment of Ugandan diaspora professionals under objective 4 to 'Increase the human capital stock in the NDP II priority areas', in particular in the health and education sectors.

2020
2025

National Development Plan III 2020-2025 (2020)⁷ is Uganda's latest national development plan. Like its predecessor, it acknowledges the need to harness diaspora and the private sector to resource its full implementation, and proposes the use of diaspora bonds and online treasury bills as a means to achieve this. NDP III also includes objectives to operationalise the National Diaspora Policy and develop a National Diaspora Investment Strategy.

2021

Uganda Vision 2040⁸ provides development paths and strategies to operationalize Uganda's Vision statement which is "A Transformed Ugandan Society from a Peasant to a Modern and Prosperous Country within 30 years". Diaspora are envisioned as contributing to private sector development through their remittances.

>> Trends

Historically, there has been a lack of trust between the Ugandan government and its diaspora. However, since the mid-2000s this perception has been evolving and the government has increasingly sought to engage its diaspora so as to harness their contributions to national development.⁹

While the Ugandan government's policy and strategy documents reference the importance of diversifying diaspora contributions beyond remittance flows, there is a lack of detailed planning on how this is to be achieved. Uganda has become an important host country for refugees displaced from neighbouring countries in recent years, and arguably managing immigration flows, both of refugees and irregular migrants, which has been a greater priority for the government. The Ugandan diaspora are themselves involved in humanitarian relief activities in refugee settlements in the country.

6 Full text available at: <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/uga151369.pdf>

7 Full text available at: https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/uganda_ndp-3-finale.pdf

8 <https://www.npa.go.ug/uganda-vision-2040/>

9 Diaspora Diplomacy: A case study of Uganda https://www.diplomacy.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/23082010102413_Bulwaka_28Library29.pdf



Achievements

The establishment of the Diaspora Services Department (DSD) in 2007 marked an important milestone in Uganda's diaspora engagement. DSD has sought to develop programmes to enhance diaspora participation in the country's economic and technical development. The World Bank supported DSD financially to perform feasibility studies aimed at engaging diaspora talents in the infrastructure sector, specifically in the energy, roads, and railways subsectors with a focus on developing the technical skills of staff.¹⁰ In 2012, DSD worked with the Uganda Investment Authority and UNDP to develop a compendium of investment opportunities for Ugandan diaspora to invest back home.¹¹

There has been renewed interest in diaspora engagement from the government and from parliamentarians in recent years, and in June 2020 The High Court in Kampala ruled that the electoral franchise be extended to Ugandans who are incarcerated or who are in the diaspora, with the prospect that these groups will be able to vote in elections in 2021.¹² However, as of 2024, the Electoral Commission has not taken concrete steps to implement this ruling, and there are growing concerns that Ugandans in prison and the diaspora may once again be excluded from participating in the 2026 elections, despite their constitutional right to vote and significant contributions, particularly through remittances.¹³

The Ugandan diaspora are important contributors of remittances flows and investments, although the latter tend to be in the micro-, small-, and medium-enterprise (MSME) sectors of the economy.¹⁴ Ugandan diaspora business and investment networks regularly hold trade and investment events in countries of residence and in Uganda, focussed on a range of sectors such as property, energy, IT and Fintech, agriculture, and hospitality.¹⁵

There were significant South Asian diaspora communities in Uganda that were deported by Idi Amin in the early 1970s, and who sought refuge in Canada, India, and the UK among other countries. These Ugandan-Asian diaspora communities maintain business and family ties to Uganda and play an important role in the Ugandan economy.¹⁶

In December 2024, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) established a Diaspora Desk to strengthen coordination with Ugandans living abroad. The Desk aims to promote diaspora investment, enhance communication and engagement, support skills transfer, and foster cultural and national connections. The initiative responds to long-standing calls from the diaspora for a dedicated government contact point and reflects a broader effort to integrate diaspora contributions into Uganda's development strategy.¹⁷

10 <https://washington.mofa.go.ug/diaspora/current-programs>

11 See MOFA and UNDP articles

12 <https://allafrica.com/stories/202006220239.html>

13 <https://www.independent.co.ug/uganda-must-guarantee-right-to-vote-for-ugandans-in-prison-diaspora/>

14 Remittances are also a significant source of diaspora investment capital; it is estimated that between 20% and 30% of remittance flows are used for small-scale investments, often in family-owned businesses and land/property. See Asquith, P. and Opoku-Owusu, S (forthcoming), 'Diaspora Investment in Africa to help achieve the SDGs: Prospects and Trends' in Foreign Direct Investment Perspectives, INTECH

15 <https://businessafricaonline.com/fintech-agenda/>

16 See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-36132151> ; <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/uganda-asian-exodus-rose-tinted-memories-current-realities-180528065513973.html>

17 <https://theinspector.co.ug/pm-nabbanja-sets-up-a-diaspora-desk-in-opm-directs-silver-ssewanyana-to-coordinate-issues-affecting-ugandans-in-diaspora/>

Obstacles



- **Lack of trust:** Among the diaspora, there is a general lack of trust of government structures and schemes, and corruption (perceived or actual) is a barrier to diaspora engagement.¹⁸
- **Lack of information & infrastructure:** Detailed information on government-led diaspora engagement opportunities in Uganda is not easily accessible to the diaspora, with a lack of targeted communications and investment-support infrastructure.
- **Capacity:** Diaspora engagement structures and programmes lack adequate human and capital resourcing to maximise their potential.¹⁹
- **High cost of capital:** Accessing financing for diaspora investment, especially long-term finance, can be extremely expensive in Uganda. Matters are aggravated by the constant need for collateral by financial institutions.²⁰

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

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The Ugandan Diaspora Agribusiness Network 2022

It brings together around sixty Ugandan diaspora agripreneurs residing in nine countries of destination in Europe, Japan, and the USA. The members are identified and mobilized through focus group discussions, and the Network is comprised of country chapters/networks and a global chapter that collaborate with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Agriculture. One focal point per country has been identified in order to collaborate with the migration and rural stakeholders and keep the network active beyond the project.

The Network is currently involved in the FAO first Ugandan diaspora-youth agribusiness matching programme to facilitate the transfer of network members' skills and investments into Ugandan youth-led agribusinesses. FAO has supported Ugandan youth to prepare their business pitches and mobilized diaspora agripreneurs and investors through Business-2-Business meetings and business forum.

Programme Harnessing the Positive Effects of Migration 2020

Bringing together public and private sector stakeholders, the programme has contributed to making the diaspora voice part of decision-making processes and enhancing visibility of diaspora contributions to agribusiness development through the organization of the first edition of the Ugandan Diaspora Agrifood Investment Conference and Award and the setup of UDAN. In addition, the project has contributed to empowering diaspora as agents of development through the provision of tailored coaching in agribusiness and the inclusion of their voices in the formulation of the National Diaspora Policy.

¹⁸ <https://wirejames.com/2018/03/27/investment-challenges-faced-by-ugandans-in-the-diaspora/>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

FORWARD/MIFUMI – Campaigning against early marriage 2015

Diaspora organisations FORWARD and MIFUMI in the UK have developed innovative programmes to address social problems in Uganda such as early and forced marriage, domestic violence, and Female Genital Mutilation. MIFUMI successfully lobbied the government and was mandated to hold the first social referendum in Uganda in December 2001, which resulted in 60% approving the reform of bride price. MIFUMI has also pushed for reform in laws resulting in enactment of The Tororo Bridal Gifts Ordinance into law in 2009, and a no-refund ruling on bride price by the Uganda Supreme Court on 6th August 2015.²¹

ADVOCACY

Ugandan Convention UK 2011

Ugandans in the diaspora are active in organising their own trade and investment events. The Uganda North America Association Convention and the Uganda Convention UK are important and successful annual diaspora trade and investment expos that mobilise diaspora finance for investment in different sectors such as property, agriculture, and energy. An additional conference is set to take place in 2024 in Sweden with the Uganda Europe Convention.

NETWORKING

Uganda Diaspora Convention

In December 2024, Uganda held its inaugural Uganda Diaspora Convention under the theme “Mobilizing the Diaspora for Social Development.” Organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the event brought together members of the diaspora, government officials, and development partners to strengthen collaboration on national development priorities. The Convention highlighted the critical role of the diaspora in sectors such as health, education, ICT, and agribusiness. The event is expected to become an annual platform for engagement, policy dialogue, and partnership-building.

NETWORKING

UGANDA

²¹ <https://mifumi.org/who-we-are/campaign-against/bride-price>

Annex:

List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 430+ institutions](#)

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU-CIDO) 2001

AU-CIDO is responsible for implementing the AU's engagement with non-state actors through the involvement of the diaspora and civil society. Uganda nominates a diaspora focal point to represent the country at AU-CIDO Continental Meetings.

East African Community (EAC) 1967

The East African Community (EAC) is a regional intergovernmental organisation of six Partner States that works to promote greater regional integration. One of its integration pillars is the Common Market, introduced in 2010, which includes free movement of people, goods, and services, and right of residence for EAC nationals.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) 1996

Uganda is a member of IGAD, which works to promote regional cooperation and integration to add value to Member States' efforts in achieving peace, security, and prosperity. The 2012 IGAD Regional Migration Policy Framework prioritises collaboration with the diaspora for national development and to address brain-drain.²²

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) 1962

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for implementing Uganda's foreign policy and its networks of missions abroad. Its objectives include mobilising bilateral and multilateral resources for development; providing protocol and consular services to Ugandans and Foreign dignitaries, as well as enhancing Uganda's image abroad through Public Diplomacy. The MoFA is the lead ministry for diaspora engagement in Uganda.

Ugandan Parliament Diaspora Desk 2020

In 2020, the Ugandan Parliament established a Diaspora Desk to facilitate communication with Ugandan diaspora citizens, although its services are still in development.

²² Available at: <http://migration.igad.int/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Regional-Migration-Policy-Framework1.pdf>

- At sub-ministerial level

Diaspora Services Department 2007

The Diaspora Services Department handles diaspora issues and facilitates their contribution to the social, economic, technological, and policy development in Uganda. It also serves as a coordination point for various diaspora issues and offers a range of services to Ugandans in the diaspora and their relatives at home. Its responsibilities include policy development, diaspora relations and communications, and mobilising resources for diaspora programmes.

Uganda Investment Authority (UIA) 1991

UIA is a semi-autonomous government agency operating in partnership with the private sector and Government of Uganda to drive national economic growth and development. UIA works with Uganda diaspora investment networks around the world to promote investment opportunities in Uganda. UIA regularly participates in Ugandan diaspora trade and investment expos held in Europe, North America, and the Middle East.²³

Office of the Prime Minister - Diaspora Desk

Established in December 2024, the Diaspora Desk within the Office of the Prime Minister serves as a central coordination point for diaspora affairs in Uganda. Its mandate includes identifying and promoting investment opportunities aligned with diaspora interests, strengthening engagement and communication with Ugandans abroad, and facilitating their participation in national development initiatives. The Desk also supports cultural exchange, skills transfer, and partnerships between the diaspora and government institutions. It works in close collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of the President, and Uganda's foreign missions to ensure a cohesive approach to diaspora engagement.

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Buganda Heritage Association Committee (BHA) 2003

UK and Northern Ireland

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

BHA is an organisation that promotes, teaches, develops and preserves the cultural heritage of the Baganda (the Ganda people of Uganda, a prominent ethnic group from whom the country takes its name) within the diaspora. BHA works with other community groups/charities in supporting young people to flourish in the community and society in general.)

Butabika East London Link (BEL) 2005 UK

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

BEL is a multi-disciplinary, institution-to-institution collaboration between East London NHS Foundation Trust, Ugandan diaspora health professionals in the UK, and Butabika National Referral Hospital, Uganda. It uses diaspora expertise and voluntarism to build capacity in mental health services in Uganda through training and professional development for Ugandan health professionals. It also runs projects to develop service user and carer involvement in mental health care provision in Uganda and the UK.

23 <https://www.ugandainvest.go.ug/press-release-ugandan-diaspora-events-start-in-kampala/>

Read more about diaspora organisations
in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora
organisation](#)"



FORWARD 1989 UK

- ✓ **Development activities**
- ✓ **Integration activities**

FORWARD is an African women-led organisation working to end violence against women and girls. From female genital mutilation and child marriage to domestic and sexual violence, its tackle abuse and discrimination – enabling African women and girls to have the dignity, health and equality they deserve. It delivers education, training, and health services for women and children in Uganda and other African countries, and has worked with another diaspora organisation, MIFUMI, to campaign successfully against early marriage bride price in Uganda.

MIFUMI 1994 UK

- ✓ **Development activities**
- ✓ **Integration activities**

Since its establishment, MIFUMI has directly changed the lives of more than 50,000 women and children through comprehensive services in education, healthcare, micro-enterprises and domestic violence advocacy. Its most significant achievements have been reforms in bride price and domestic violence in Uganda. MIFUMI has a regional network and partners in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and the UK.

Uganda Diaspora Health Foundation (UDHF) 2011 UK

- ✓ **Development activities**
- ✓ **Integration activities**

UDHF works to raise awareness of, and improve treatment for, mental health in Uganda and in diaspora communities. UDHF offers global research and cultural sensitivity consultation within the mental health context, with the view to breaking down barriers to accessing mental health support. UDHF works with the Butabika-East London NHS partnership project to build mental health capacity at Butabika hospital in Uganda through training and volunteering.

Ugandan UK Health Alliance 2018 UK

- ✓ **Development activities**
- ✓ **Integration activities**

The Uganda UK Health Alliance brings together organisations working in Health sector in UK and Uganda. Its Co-Chairs are Dr. Diana Atwine, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health Uganda, and Prof Jed Byrne, Director, Global Engagement, Health Education England, and its board is composed of senior health experts and officials from Uganda and the UK, including the Ugandan High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.

Ugandan Community Relief Association (UCRA) 1984 UK

- ✓ **Integration activities**

UCRA was formed with the initial aim of assisting Asian Ugandan refugees deported by the Ugandan government at the time. UCRA designs and delivers a range of training courses for local communities to help find employment through developing soft skills, CV-building, and interview practice.

Ugandan Community in Manchester (UCOMM) 2005 UK

☑ Integration activities

UCOMM aims to promote the wellbeing of people of Black and Minority Ethnic origin with particular emphasis on those of African heritage, be it by way of promoting health or improved social integration within the wider multicultural community.²⁴

²⁴ <https://forevermanchester.com/uganda-community-in-greater-manchester/>

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