

Regional Thematic Meeting: **Middle East and Central Asia**
Diaspora engagement initiatives on **skills transfer**

The [European Union Global Diaspora Facility](#) (EUDiF) is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). EUDiF is the first EU-funded project that works towards fostering an informed, inclusive and impactful diaspora-development ecosystem on a global scale.

In 2020 EUDiF completed a diaspora engagement mapping of 107 countries, exploring policies, practices and trends in diaspora engagement around the world. The table below is a compilation of 40 spotlight initiatives related to skills transfer: 7 in the Middle East, 1 in Central Asia, and 32 from elsewhere.

We are interested in learning more from you! Should you wish to share details on diaspora skills transfer initiatives with us, please complete the [diaspora-led projects form](#).



COUNTRY	NAME	DESCRIPTION	LINKS
MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA			
Afghanistan	Return of Qualified Afghans (RQA) programme	The IOM initiated the RQA programme in December 2001 to tap into the expertise of qualified Afghans abroad and to engage them in the reconstruction process. The programme helped Afghans abroad to return home and to place them in key positions within ministries, government institutions and the private sector, thus enabling them to contribute to national development. By 2018, 1665 Afghan experts had returned home from 29 countries.	https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/countries/docs/afghanistan/rqa_programme_08.pdf https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/countries/docs/afghanistan/IOM-Afghanistan-RQA-Factsheet-January-2012.pdf
Egypt	Ministry of Emigration and Affairs of Egyptians Abroad e-portal	The ministry's e-portal provides digital services to Egyptians abroad. These include a diaspora complaints portal, guides on investment opportunities in Egypt (especially in the housing and infrastructure sectors, but also IT), remittance service registration with the Central Bank of Egypt, guides on housing for Egyptians abroad, a 'Science Hub' for skills and knowledge collaboration and exchange; and an e-fatwa service providing religious guidance.	http://www.emigration.gov.eg/DefaultAr/Pages/services.aspx
Iraq	Iraqis Rebuilding Iraq (IRI)	IRI was implemented jointly by IOM, UNDP and the Ministry of Planning and development Cooperation (MoPDC). The objective was to fill gaps in Iraqi ministries with expatriate expertise in order to encourage diaspora members to return to their home country, to develop local experience, and to create a roster of potential experts willing to return to their home country.	https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/microsofts/IDM/workshops/return_migration_development_070708/iraqis_rebuilding_iraq.pdf



Iraq	Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals	<p>The Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals programme has facilitated 48 assignments in Iraq in the areas of education, health, engineering and humanitarian assistance. A second phase of the project is currently ongoing within which members of the Iraqi diaspora in the Netherlands could contribute to the development of Iraq through their expertise, knowledge and entrepreneurship by participating to the IOM's Connecting Diaspora for Development (CD4D) project. Through temporary assignments, professional diaspora members were linked to the selected institutions in Iraq to share knowledge and expertise. Through this project, IOM also enabled diaspora entrepreneurs to start or expand a business in Iraq. Selected candidates could participate in go-and-see missions in Iraq to scan the business climate to decide if their business idea is viable.</p>	<p>https://iom-nederland.nl/en/migration-and-development</p> <p>https://iom-nederland.nl/en/migration-and-development/connecting-diaspora-for-development-cd4d</p>
Iraq	Germany-Iraqi Management Training Academy (AGI)	<p>The AGI is a German consultancy company. Since 2005, hundreds of Iraqi scientists, medical doctors and company leaders gained expertise through qualification programmes arranged by AGI. AGI builds a human bridge between Germany and Iraq that brings knowledge, understanding and development from both sides.</p>	<p>https://www.access-germany-iraq.de/</p>
Jordan	Migrant Support Measures from an Employment and Skills Perspective (MESMES)	<p>The interventions supported by the Ministry of Labor include supporting and regulating the emigration of Jordanians abroad by providing an online portal that allows Jordanians to search for employment opportunities in Jordan and abroad. In addition, due to rising unemployment rates, the Ministry promotes emigration by tracking job opportunities in Gulf countries and supervising the activities of private recruitment agencies. There are 73 private recruitment agencies currently supporting potential emigrants in finding employment abroad. Moreover, MESMES verifies emigrants' level of education and work experience by approving the diplomas and certificates received from all public and private training and educational institutions, as well as from official employers in specific sectors.</p>	



Lebanon	Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN)	In partnership with the Council for Development and Reconstruction, TOKTEN is a UNDP mechanism that allows the utilisation of expatriates' expertise by facilitating short-term consultancies in Lebanon. According to the final report of TOKTEN (2010-2012), the project benefitted 16 Lebanese institutions, trained 600 nationals, and deployed 19 experts from around the world. No figures on more recent deployments are available.	http://www.toktenlebanon.org/ https://www.lb.undp.org/content/dam/lebanon/docs/Governance/Projects/Project%20document.pdf
Palestine	Transfer of Capital through Expatriate Knowledge (TOKTEN UNDP)	The TOKTEN project, implemented by UNDP, deploys 'highly qualified' professionals from the diaspora to serve as short-term volunteers in various Palestinian institutions. Running since 1994 in the West Bank and Gaza, this initiative illustrates how a skilled expatriate workforce can contribute decisively through sectoral interventions – primarily in education, health and information technology – to institution-building processes in a challenging context while fostering a sense of national affinity.	https://www.ps.undp.org/content/papp/en/home/operations/tokten.html
OTHER COUNTRIES			
Burundi	Diaspora Week	Last held in July 2019, Diaspora Week is an annual multi-stakeholder event organised by the Ministry of External Relations and International Cooperation, supported by the IOM. It seeks to promote skills transfers, investment opportunities, and bring together key Burundian stakeholders to network and share experiences through discussion of investment opportunities, national and regional migration policies and diaspora policies. These discussions serve to further inform and develop the existing draft national policy on migration, as well as the national diaspora policy soon to be developed with the support of the IOM.	https://www.iom.int/news/burundi-engages-diaspora-development



Burundi	Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA)	The MIDA programme run by the IOM has been active within Burundi since 2001, and has the primary objective of engaging highly skilled members of the diaspora in periods of short-term return for capacity building. The programme is focused on the diaspora in Europe and particularly in Belgium, with active projects in the areas of education, health, and rural development.	http://www.migration4development.org/en/projects/mida-migration-development-africa
Cabo Verde	Diaspora For Development of Cape Verde (DIAS de Cabo Verde)	Dias de Cabo Verde, initiated by the Cape Verdean Institute of Communities in partnership with the IOM and the EC, mobilised the human, social and professional resources of the country's diaspora for capacity- building of key development sectors such as health, education, infrastructure and tourism. It has strengthened the ties between the diaspora and the public and private sectors in both Cabo Verde and Portugal, Italy, and the Netherlands. The project was funded by the European Commission and co-funded by the Portuguese Cooperation.	https://www.gfmd.org/pfp/ppd/3
Cameroon	Developing a diaspora mobilisation strategy	In 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in partnership with the IOM MIDA programme, was working to develop a diaspora mobilisation strategy specifically focused on the return of qualified nationals. During its pilot phase the project facilitated Cameroonian specialists in the health and education sectors to return to Cameroon and help build up the human capital much needed by the country. Its current status is unclear.	https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/how-diaspora-contributes-development-cameroon



<p>Congo</p>	<p>MIDA Congo-Brazzaville</p>	<p>The main objective of the Migration for Development in Africa programme was to strengthen the capacity of the Government of the Republic of the Congo to mobilise the Congolese diaspora's skills for a beneficial contribution to the development of the country. MIDA aimed to respond to the challenges of human resource shortages facing Congo-Brazzaville in two priority sectors: health and higher education. In order to achieve this objective, IOM undertook two parallel processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening the capacity of the government in the mobilisation and management of the Congolese diaspora through its Cellule de Mobilisation de la Diaspora (Diaspora Mobilisation Unit) based at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, and Congolese Abroad. - Implementation of an effective mobilisation of the Congolese diaspora in France, in close collaboration with the Forum of International Solidarity Organisations for Migration (FORIM), to contribute to the development of health and higher education sectors in Congo-Brazzaville. 	<p>https://iomfrance.org/mida-congo-brazzaville</p>
<p>DRC</p>	<p>Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA)</p>	<p>The MIDA programme was implemented by IOM in collaboration with the DRC Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Security with funding from the Belgian government from 2001 to 2013. The programme supported the socio-economic development of the country through the transfer of knowledge and technical know-how on the basis of short-term consultancy from highly qualified expatriate DRC nationals, with over 200 MIDA missions to the country undertaken by 2013.</p>	<p>https://www.iom.int/countries/democratic-republic-congo#md</p>



<p>Dominica</p>	<p>Diaspora Connect</p>	<p>Following Hurricane Maria, the High Commission for The Commonwealth of Dominica relaunched its website to include a section called “Diaspora Connect” in order to identify and strengthen its diaspora. Diaspora Connect shares information related to Dominican associations and events relevant to the diaspora. This section includes a volunteer registration page that allows Dominicans to enter their information so they can be contacted when their assistance is required. The High Commission plans on creating a skills database to identify individuals within specific professions.</p>	<p>https://www.dominicahighcommission.co.uk/single-post/2017/11/29/Dominica-High-Commission-launches-new-website-and-Social-media-feeds</p>
<p>Eritrea</p>	<p>EUTF / IOM Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) for Eritrea</p>	<p>This three-year IOM Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) programme seeks to facilitate the voluntary participation of Eritrean Diaspora to support institutional strengthening in key socio-economic sectors agreed with the Eritrean government, including, education, health, water and sanitation, agriculture, energy, infrastructure, civil engineering, financial systems, and information technology. In addition, the programme will support the Department of Eritreans Abroad in playing a coordinating role for the diaspora engagement, through skills transfer, and strategy development.</p>	<p>https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/migration-development-nexus-multi-year-diaspora-engagement-eritrea_en</p>
<p>Ethiopia</p>	<p>Connecting Diaspora for Development (CD4D) 2016-2019 / Entrepreneurship by Diaspora 4 Development (ED4D)</p>	<p>CD4D has supported the short-term return of high-skilled diaspora on assignments from the Netherlands to their countries of origin to promote skills transfer and diaspora enterprise. The first phase sent Ethiopian diaspora experts in agri-technology, enterprise and job creation, and fair-trade coffee imports. The programme was implemented by IOM in collaboration with PUM (Programma Uitzending Managers – a network of Dutch senior experts and professionals). The related ED4D project aims to encourage Ethiopian diaspora in the Netherlands, or Dutch entrepreneurs in partnership with the diaspora, to engage themselves as entrepreneurs for the development of the private sector in their country of origin.</p>	<p>https://www.iom.int/news/cd4d-conference-diaspora-action-hague-30-october-2018 https://www.connectingdiaspora.org/ed4d/countries/ethiopia/ https://www.connectingdiaspora.org/ethiopia/ https://www.connectingdiaspora.org/ed4d/about-ed4d/</p>



Guyana	Diaspora skills mapping and engagement	As part of the Guyana Diaspora Project is the mapping of the Guyanese diaspora. The purpose is to analyse available skills and resources that could be employed by the public and private organisations and institutions in Guyana. The mapping is to be carried out through an online survey, in person interviews and conversation between project staff and members of the diaspora, as well as workshops.	http://guydproject.minfor.gov.gy/diaspora-skills-mapping-and-engagement/
India	Skilled Workers Arrival Database for Employment Support	To ensure returnees have opportunities for post-return employment, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), under the Skill India Mission, has partnered with the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and created a database of qualified citizens – based on skillsets and experience. Under the SWADES programme, returning citizens are required to fill up a SWADES skill form following which a SWADES skill card is issued. The Ministry then shares the collected information with companies for suitable placement opportunities in the country.	http://www.nsdindia.org/swades/
Ivory Coast	Diaspora Excellence Award	Since 2013, the Ivorian state has awarded national excellence awards ('prix d'excellence') to recognise Ivorian citizens in different fields. The awards include a Best Ivorian Diaspora Excellence Award to notable Ivorians abroad. The Director-General of Ivorians Abroad in 2018 stated that the award demonstrates the government's willingness to support all the diaspora's initiatives. Winners of the award receive 10 million XOF (around 15,200 EUR) and a certificate of honour.	http://www.gouv.ci/actualite-article.php?recordID=10309 https://news.abidjan.net/h/646639.html http://www.gouv.ci/actualite-article.php?recordID=10309
Kenya	Kenya's Diaspora Diplomacy	Kenya recognises the vital role played by the diaspora as cultural and brand ambassadors for the country, as well as possessing skills vital for national development. Dedicated diaspora portals for each Kenyan embassy and consulate were established by the Kenyan Government and include a skills matching programme (e.g. https://kenyahighcom.org.uk/diaspora.html#Diaspora-diplomacy).	https://kenyahighcom.org.uk/diaspora.html#Diaspora-diplomacy



<p>Mali</p>	<p>TOKTEN</p>	<p>The TOKTEN programme was established in Mali in 1998 to enable the Malian diaspora to contribute with their skills to the economic and social development of the country in key areas such as education, technical and vocational training in health, agriculture and SMEs. TOKTEN allows the temporary return of the scientific and technical diaspora with the aim of contributing to compensate for the lack of qualified teaching staff to improve the quality of tertiary teaching and training. The programme is under the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Malians Abroad and African Integration for its daily management, with the support of UNDP and the EU.</p>	<p>https://www.rabat-process.org/images/RabatProcess/Documents/context-document-malian-diaspora-engagement-thematicmeeting-2016-bamako-diaspora-engagement-rabat-process.pdf</p>
<p>Mauritius</p>	<p>EDB Mauritian Diaspora Scheme</p>	<p>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, and right to permanent residence for Mauritian diaspora who are not citizens of the country. The scheme has a dedicated diaspora web-portal.</p>	<p>http://www.diaspora.mu/</p>
<p>Mexico</p>	<p>Red Global MX</p>	<p>It is an independent network with strong ties to the Mexican government and nongovernment institutions, which attempts to leverage the resources of its highly qualified diaspora members to help Mexico develop a knowledge-driven economy. One of its achievements is the “SinLímites” initiative, coordinated by the Math2Me and the Red Global MX, which promotes the recreational use of mathematics and their mass distribution by virtual channels.</p>	<p>https://www.gob.mx/ime/prensa/talento-mexicano-en-el-exterior Accessed September 2020.</p>



Mongolia	Returning Experts Programme	Run by the Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM), the programme supports individuals from developing, emergent and transition countries who live and work in Germany – or have completed education or training there – to return to their home country to use their skills and knowledge. It enables diaspora experts to contribute to development back home by applying their knowledge, experiences and contacts in the right places. The programme aims to promote international migration as a positive factor in development and to encourage the transfer of knowledge through the professional integration of returning experts. Since 2004, the programme has assisted more than 10,000 persons with career planning, returning to their home countries and the search for appropriate positions there. There is also extra financial support for experts returning to a list of 23 countries, including Mongolia.	https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/diaspora_handbook_en_for_web_28may2013.pdf
Morocco	Deutsch-Marokkanische Kompetenznetzwerk e.V. (DMK) Medical Missions to Morocco	The German-Moroccan Competence Network (DMK eV) and the Medical Competencies of Moroccans Abroad (C3M) organized medical campaigns in 2016 in southeast Morocco. These included ongoing professional training in gynaecology and other capacity building activities targeted at local medical professionals.	https://www.dmk-online.org/medizinische-aktionen/ https://www.dmk-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Actions-Figuig-2016-2.0.pdf
Nepal	Brain Gain Centre	The government opened a unit in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs aiming at fostering partnership with Nepali experts and professionals overseas. Prior to the centre's opening, Nepali professionals abroad were invited to register with the centre's database; more than 450 registered within a month.	https://mofa.gov.np/bgc/



<p>Niger</p>	<p>Transfer of diaspora competencies</p>	<p>In 2007, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) established a Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) programme in Niger as part of a long-running global United Nations programme established in many countries since the 1970s. As in other countries, TOKTEN Niger identified diaspora talent and attempted to engage them in their country of origin. As part of the programme, Nigerien institutions selected diaspora experts whom they wished to work with. The programme then covered the experts' travel expenses and living costs for short missions. TOKTEN Niger began with a focus on the education sector.</p>	<p>http://www.nigerdiaspora.net/index.php/diaspora-archives/item/9464-projet-tokten-niger</p> <p>https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/45677387.pdf</p>
<p>Nigeria</p>	<p>Nigerian National Volunteer Service (NNVS)</p>	<p>Since 2003, the NNVS has been mandated to provide information on volunteering opportunities that enable the diaspora to support development initiatives in Nigeria. The NNVS also arranges educational and scientific conferences, as well as developing partnerships with medical diaspora associations, with the aim of harnessing diaspora expertise for national development.</p>	<p>https://www.nnvsnigeria.gov.ng/</p>
<p>Philippines</p>	<p>Balik Scientist Program</p>	<p>The Balik Scientist Program encourages Filipino scientists, technologists and experts to return to the Philippines and share their expertise for the country's scientific, agro-industrial and economic development. From 2007 to May 2019, the program attracted 236 scientists deployed in 348 projects. Most of them came from North America and Asia and a few from Europe, Australia and Africa.</p>	<p>http://www.pchrd.dost.gov.ph/index.php/news/6455-balik-scientist-program-bsp-balik-puso-balik-pilipinas</p>
<p>Senegal</p>	<p>Programme of Support for Solidarity Initiatives for Development – PAISD</p>	<p>PAISD is a mechanism aiming to mobilise and support solidarity actions and economic initiatives from the Senegalese diaspora in France, Belgium, Spain and Italy for the benefit of Senegal. The programme provides funding of up to 80% for local development activities carried out by diaspora associations in Senegal. It also conducts studies related to investment opportunities and mobilises highly qualified expertise and youth from the diaspora for short-term missions in Senegal in education, agribusiness, health, environment, communications and tourism.</p>	<p>https://paisd.sn/</p>

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<p>Sudan</p>	<p>Sudanese Partnership for Knowledge Transfer by Expatriate Nationals (SPaKTEN)</p>	<p>To address the problem of brain drain in the country, SSWA launched the SPaKTEN initiative to recruit Sudanese diaspora experts for short-term consultancy assignments in Sudan in different sectors, including specialists in medicine, education, agriculture and livestock management, engineering, environment, and energy, IT, finance, and other sectors of strategic importance to Sudan’s development. The SPaKTEN network is comprised of 215 experts based in 34 different countries. Experts typically undertake assignments of 2-3 weeks and are paid travel, expenses, and a small stipend.</p>	<p>https://www.spakten.com/</p>
<p>Sudan</p>	<p>Diaspora Development and Humanitarian Expertise</p>	<p>Diaspora professional networks and research groups are active in organising events and conferences, especially in relation to knowledge transfer and development. The Sudan Research Group (SRG) and Sudan Knowledge (SK) bring together Sudanese diaspora and other experts from across the world to discuss issues relating to sustainable development, science and technology management in Sudan. Similarly, Sudan Development and Humanitarian Professionals is a networking and knowledge exchange platform to share opportunities, knowledge, experiences, and skills focused on the aid sector. Shabaka undertakes research on diaspora development and humanitarian response, and advises the Sudanese and other governments in Africa and Europe.</p>	<p>https://www.sudanknowledge.org/</p>
<p>Suriname</p>	<p>International Organization for Migration. Projects: “Effective and Sustainable Diaspora Engagement for Development in the Caribbean” and “Mapping the Diaspora”</p>	<p>The Surinamese government partnered with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on two projects that sought to engage the diaspora for economic development under the umbrella Diaspora Unite Suriname Project. According to the sources cited by the IOM the government received technical assistance for drafting a migration policy, building an official website for the diaspora, conducting surveys to map the diaspora, and implementing a programme to expose foreign entrepreneurs to Suriname’s business climate and network.</p>	<p>https://www.iom.int/news/iom-suriname-government-launch-website-engage-diaspora</p>

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Thailand	Project RETURN	An initiative of the Association of Thai Professionals in Europe (ATPER) in Denmark, the project aims to create a forum for Thai people with knowledge, skills and experience accumulated abroad to apply and share it back home. It also seeks to inspire all Thai people through cooperation and communication as well as to give them an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience from abroad. Target areas are science and technology, law, agriculture, forestry and environment, energy, transportation and health.	https://atper.eu/return/
Thailand	Reverse Brain Drain Project	The project was established within the National Science and Technology Development Agency to use the knowledge and connections of Thai professionals overseas to help in Thailand's development, particularly in the science and technology sectors. Around 35 projects were initiated before RBD began to shift its emphasis to short-term visits, involving knowledge sharing and technology transfer workshops. Through e-newsletters, RBD also disseminates information about Thailand's science and technology needs among overseas Thai professionals, government agencies, academic communities and the industrial sector.	https://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/migmain.showPractice?p_lang=en&p_practice_id=43
Trinidad and Tobago	Mapping diaspora skills and organisations	The Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago in Washington DC is building a database of diaspora members living in the United States as well as diaspora organisations. This is being done through a Google Form available on the embassy website. Information collected allows for geographically mapping the diaspora, identifying fields of employment, and affiliation with diaspora organizations.	https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf9XjNPT5QLfsMxrXvqtNPgVkv4YVwPnkaY7K0LNQQQYYrIA/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1
Zambia	Partnership for Diaspora Skills Transfer in Health	The Zambia-UK Health Workforce Alliance (ZUKHWA) is a partnership between Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK, and a network of Zambian-based and UK-based organisations who have experience as staff in UK health institutions. They work together to promote and improve the coordination and impact of Zambia-UK joint work in health in Zambia. The Alliance was launched in 2009.	https://www.zukhwa.ed.ac.uk/



Zimbabwe	Temporary Return of Health Workers and Academics, IOM/ Government of Zimbabwe	<p>In 2007/2008, the Government of Zimbabwe in collaboration with IOM implemented a programme that facilitated the temporary return of qualified professionals who returned on a short-term basis to offer their expertise at the University Teaching Hospital and other tertiary training and learning institutions.</p>	http://diasporazim.org.zw/801-2/return-of-qualified-nationals-from-the-diaspora/
Zimbabwe	Zimbabwean Diaspora Health Alliance (ZDHA)	<p>Zimbabweans in the Diaspora founded the Zimbabwean Diaspora Health Alliance to strengthen diaspora participation in Zimbabwe's health system and address skills shortages in the health sector through training for health professionals in Zimbabwe and recruitment of diaspora health professionals. ZDHA serves as a Single Point of Access (SPA) for the diaspora to the Ministry of Health in Zimbabwe.</p>	https://www.facebook.com/groups/525768257806126/

