



European Union  
Global Diaspora Facility



# DIASPORA-DRIVEN GREEN PARTNERSHIPS

**CURATED  
PRACTICES FROM  
COMDU.IT AND  
ZIDICIRCLE**

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the European Union



Implemented by



**ICMPD**

International Centre for  
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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of EUDiF, ICMPD or the European Union.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

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*“Diasporas possess competitive advantages and an undeniable potential to sustain the green economy because of their economic, human and social resources.”*

This is one of the main findings of the case study report *“Mobilizing the Diaspora for the Green Transition: Ways to Engage in the Energy and Waste Sectors”* produced in 2022 in the framework of the EU Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF), in collaboration with the Groupe de Recherche et d’Echange Technologique (Gret) and the Forum des Organisations de Solidarité Internationale Issues des Migrations (FORIM).

To delve deeper into green partnership options and practices with the diaspora, this complementary reflection paper provides practical insights based on the experience of two organisations: Comdu.it and Zidicircle. The core research question of this paper is: *what can we learn from inspiring practices in diaspora-driven green partnerships?*

This paper offers tips and tricks on how green partnerships with diaspora organisations can be spotted, initiated, formalised, and implemented. We answer the following questions:

- *What types of green projects can diaspora drive/support?*
- *What success factors to partner with diaspora organisations emerge?*
- *What frameworks exist that diaspora organisations can use to increase their impact?*

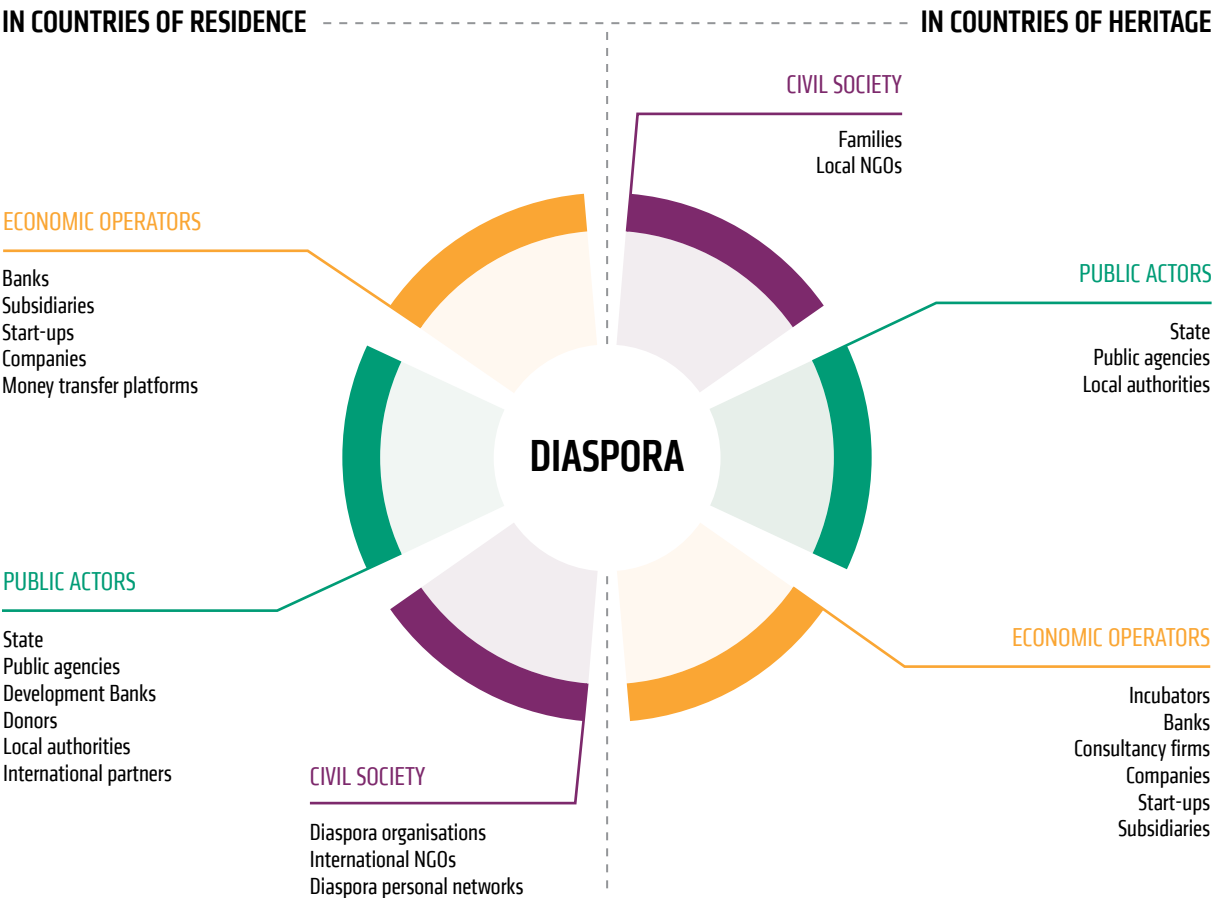
*To address these questions, the paper first maps key actors and introduces a partnership cycle. It then unpacks concrete practices displaying different types of innovative green projects in which diaspora are partners. Ultimately, the paper offers recommendations to inform future green partnerships with the diaspora and provides inspiration for future action.*



# 2. GREEN PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE DIASPORA

The concept of partnerships between diaspora organisations and other players in sustainable development cooperation is a vital one, as it allows for the sharing of resources, knowledge, and expertise to achieve common goals. These partnerships can take many forms, such as joint projects, networks, or coalitions, and can involve a wide range of actors, including governments, private sector actors, civil society organisations, and international organisations.

**FIGURE 1: STAKEHOLDER MAPPING: DIASPORA AND GREEN ECONOMY**



Since diaspora partnerships inherently involve transnational engagement, managing partnerships and projects in a transnational setup requires a unique set of skills and strategies. Diaspora partnerships often span different countries, regions, and time zones, which can make it challenging to initiate and manage them effectively.

On the one hand, people, budgets, and processes must be managed in the country of residence, while on the other those structures must also be managed in the country of origin. Additionally, there must be engagement and coordination between the structures in each location. Partner organisations from both countries can help overcome project and partnership difficulties.

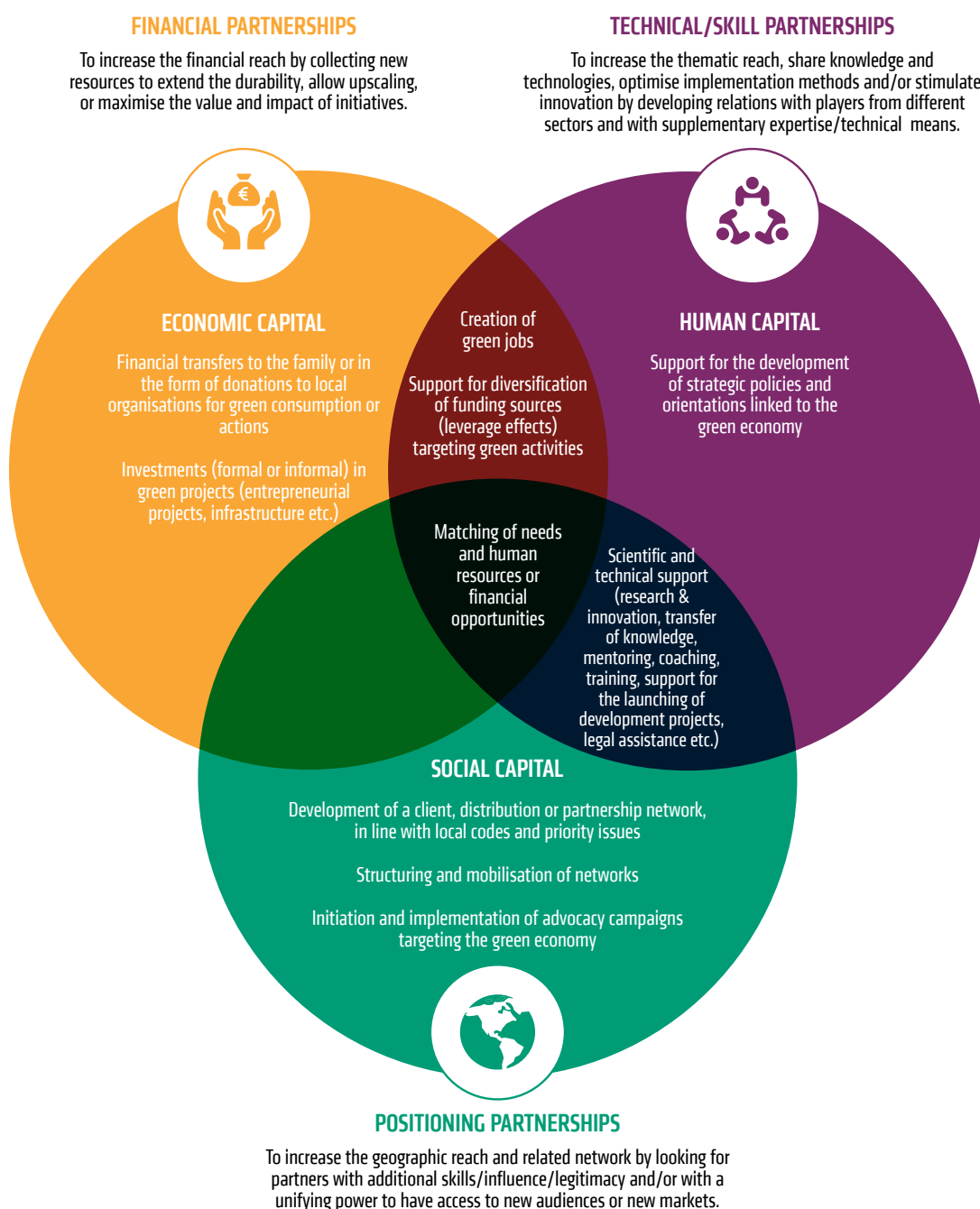


Given that the green transition is a complex long-term and sustainable transformation of society, different forms of partnerships are emerging to achieve this goal. We are now able to start categorising some such partnerships, based on duration and scope. One category is project-based partnership, on which this paper focuses.

Project-based partnerships entail a collaborative effort between organizations with the goal of achieving clear and measurable objectives. They are completed within a specified timeframe. Due to their time-bound nature, a project-based partnership requires a comprehensive approach to management and implementation.

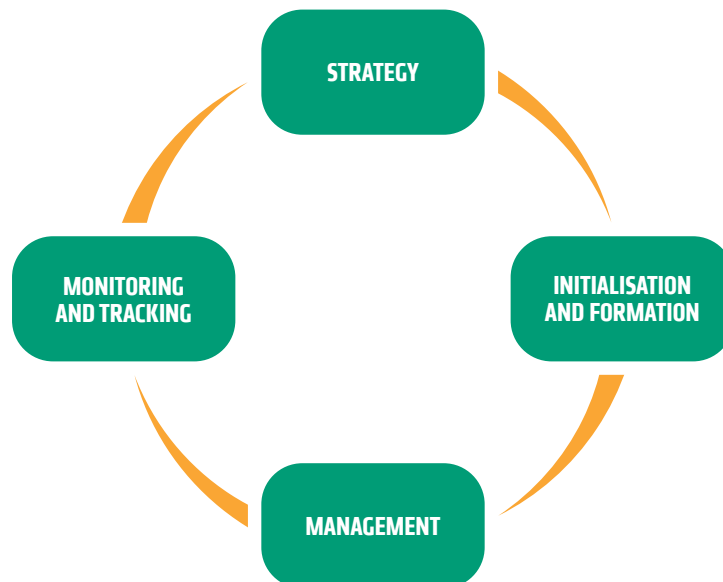
Those partnerships can be of different types (fig. 2). Just as diaspora capital is often intertwined, blended partnerships are very common, as illustrated in the inspiring practices below.

**FIGURE 2: MAIN TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS AND DIASPORA CAPITALS**



## PARTNERSHIP CYCLE

In the experience of Comdu.it and Zidicircle, to effectively establish and manage partnerships, it is important to have a clear and structured approach. The two diaspora organisations follow the following four-stage partnership cycle:



**Strategy (or scoping):** This stage involves identifying the goals, objectives, and outcomes that the partnership aims to achieve. It also involves identifying potential partners and assessing their strengths and weaknesses. This stage is critical for determining the feasibility and sustainability of the partnership and ensuring that it aligns with the overall goals of the diaspora organisation and the sustainable development agenda.

**Initialisation and formation:** This stage involves formalising the partnership through agreements, such as Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) or partnership agreements. It also includes establishing the roles and responsibilities of each partner and identifying the resources that will be required to implement the partnership. This stage is important for ensuring that all partners are committed to the partnership and that there is a clear understanding of how the partnership will be implemented.

**Management:** This stage involves implementing the partnership and managing its day-to-day activities. This includes managing the partnership's budget, communication, and decision-making processes. This stage requires effective leadership, communication, and coordination among all partners to ensure that the partnership is implemented efficiently and effectively.

**Monitoring and tracking:** This stage involves regularly monitoring the partnership's progress, evaluating its impact, and adjusting as needed. This includes tracking the partnership's performance against its goals and objectives and reporting on its progress. This stage is critical for ensuring that the partnership meets its objectives, adjusts when necessary and learns from the partnership experience.

Overall, this partnership cycle emphasises the importance of a clear and structured approach to partnership development and management to achieve sustainable development goals. It is also important to note that building trust and mutual understanding among partners is essential for the success of the partnership, and that continuous evaluation and adaptation are needed as the partnership progresses.

## 3. INSPIRING PRACTICES

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Here follows an examination of the use-cases of inspiring green partnership practices from Comdu.it and Zidicircle. These practices cover diverse green sectors – including sustainable agriculture, waste management, energy transition and investment in green SMEs – and demonstrate partnerships with different actors, ranging from CSO to private sector and development agency. They point to a myriad of opportunities and options to partner with diaspora to advance green goals.

The core focus will be on understanding the unique challenges and opportunities that each of these stakeholders present for successful partnership implementation. This analysis provides insight into the development of effective green partnerships within the diaspora community. For each example of a partnership practice, the partnership cycle and the specific characteristics of these partnerships are examined.

### 3.1 COMDU.IT – FROM GERMANY TO SRI LANKA AND BEYOND

#### INTRODUCTION

Comdu.it Germany is a sustainable development organisation with the aim of implementing digital and analogue projects in cooperation with the Tamil diaspora in the north and east of Sri Lanka and India. The voluntary association has more than 100 members; it aims to strengthen the engagement of diaspora communities in sustainable development cooperation and to develop a model for diaspora engagement. It has established chapters in Canada, Switzerland, and Sri Lanka.

As an organisation, Comdu.it wants to mobilise diaspora resources at grassroots level in the “Global South” for empowering projects. Comdu.it strengthens the community structures on the ground so that they can be sustainably empowered to develop and implement their own ideas. Comdu.it’s focus is on Sri Lanka, and the organisation is in contact with other communities to gradually adapt and implement its model in different regions in the Global South, starting with India. In recent years, Comdu.it has implemented projects in the fields of environment, education, and entrepreneurship in close cooperation with local organisations.

#### PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

One notable feature of Comdu.it is that its partnerships are closely tied to specific projects, providing a unique opportunity to examine the impact of these partnerships on sustainable development efforts. All Comdu.it’s projects aim to intersect with the economic, human, and social capital of the diaspora, although some projects may have a stronger focus on a specific area.

Another defining feature of Comdu.it is that it does not implement standalone projects in Sri Lanka or India. Instead, each project is carried out in partnership with a local organisation that possesses a deep understanding of the local context and challenges. This approach is based on the recognition that, although Comdu.it is part of the diaspora community, local organisations have a better insight into the current needs and issues facing their communities.

Comdu.it’s partner selection process places significant importance on identifying and collaborating with early adopters within the partner ecosystem. Early adopters are defined as organisations that are at the forefront of exploring new technologies, applications, or ideas within their respective fields. Early adopters are highly valued because they possess the necessary skills and experience to implement projects. In particular, they have established trust and respect within the civil society, allowing them to effectively engage with local communities in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, if diaspora organisations were to engage directly with local civil society without the involvement of early adopters, their outreach could be significantly limited due to power dynamics and distrust of diaspora organisations. As such, early adopters can help to enable diaspora engagement. Research has shown that early adopters are motivated to collaborate with diaspora organisations for various reasons, including the desire to access new resources, expand their network, and benefit from the knowledge and expertise within the diaspora. By working with early adopters, Comdu.it can facilitate effective collaboration and maximise the impact of projects.

A key driver in partnership is the desire for to broaden understanding and knowledge of specific topics. Collaborative efforts allow for the exchange of information and ideas, leading to a collective learning experience that extends beyond the individual’s own knowledge base. Additionally, there is **evidence** to suggest that individuals are more likely to seek out collaborative opportunities with those who share a similar identity, such as shared culture or language. Diaspora organisations, are often composed of individuals who share a common heritage, language, or cultural background. Collaborating with individuals from similar backgrounds can facilitate communication and understanding, leading to increased cohesion and effectiveness within the organisation.

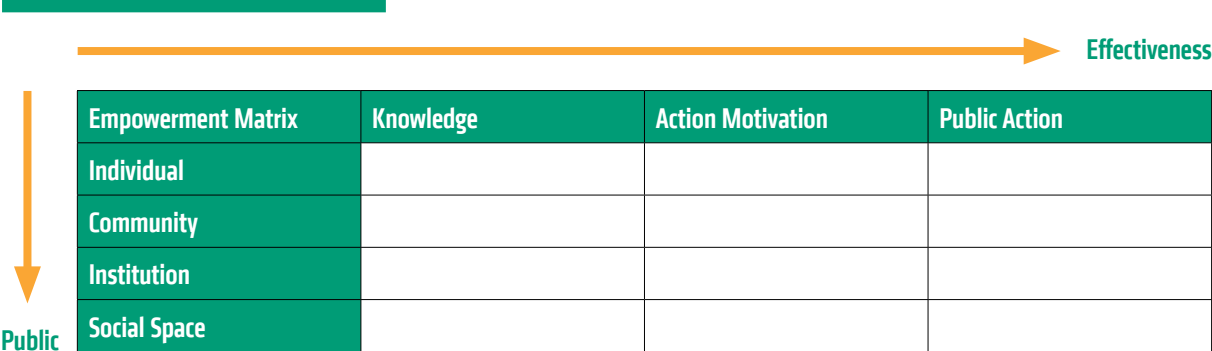
In short, by working with early adopters, Comdu.it aims to reach a wider audience and engage communities that might otherwise be inaccessible, such as those involved in resettlement projects, all whilst creating an opportunity for mutual learning.

**THE COMDU.IT EMPOWERMENT MATRIX**

In the planning period, all Comdu.it’s projects are guided by the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aim to maximise their impact through local partnerships. Comdu.it’s Empowerment Matrix serves as a tool to measure and monitor the impact of its projects, ensuring that they are aligned with its overall mission of promoting sustainable development.

The empowerment matrix is an outcome of a reflection process that aimed to identify the project with the highest potential for impacting the community, while grappling with the challenge of defining and measuring impact.

**FIGURE 3: EMPOWERMENT MATRIX**





The empowerment matrix serves as a crucial framework for Comdu.it in evaluating the potential impact of its various activities on society. The matrix encompasses four dimensions, representing distinct levels of impact: individual, community, institution and social. This framework asserts that the effectiveness of a project or partnership varies depending on the level at which it influences society.

According to the matrix, the impact of an activity may be assessed in terms of its ability to enhance knowledge, stimulate motivation for action, or mobilise the public towards action. The matrix provides a systematic method for evaluating the long-term impact of Comdu.it’s projects and partnerships, enabling the organisation to determine the extent to which its activities have a positive influence on society. By utilising the matrix as a foundational principle, Comdu.it strives to continuously improve its approach to promoting sustainable development in Sri Lanka.

**UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: NEORGANICS WITH OMNE AND SUVADI**

Practice ID	
	<b>Type of partner</b> CSO
	<b>Type of partnership</b> Technical and positioning
	<b>Area of intervention</b> Sustainable agriculture
	<b>Duration</b> April 2021 – April 2023



**Germany’s ambassador to Sri Lanka visits, Holger Seubert, visits the organic farm**

**Strategy**

The agricultural sector is crucial for the economic development of Sri Lanka, particularly in the north and east regions. Recognising the importance of this sector, Comdu.it has been approached by individuals within its network to support the agricultural industry in Sri Lanka. In response, Comdu.it became aware of the Organic Movement of North and East (OMNE), a movement that promotes organic farming and aims to inspire other farmers to adopt organic production methods.

To evaluate the potential partnership between Comdu.it and OMNE, a needs assessment was conducted to understand the current state of agriculture in Sri Lanka, the goals of OMNE, and how these goals aligned with Comdu.it’s objectives and the SDGs. This phase involved both informal collaboration and desk research, which lasted 4-6 weeks. The result of the needs assessment was a document that outlined the most critical goals of both organisations, the challenges and needs in agriculture.

During this phase, Comdu.it also reached out to other diaspora organisations in Germany and Canada to gauge their interest in supporting this partnership. They all declined involvement in this specific project. Upon reaching out to potential partner organisations, Comdu.it discovered that many organisations expressed interest in forming partnerships but cited capacity restraints as a primary reason for their inability to commit to collaboration at that time.



Despite these challenges, the organisations communicated a strong interest in forming partnerships with Comdu.it and encouraged it to reach out to them again in the future.

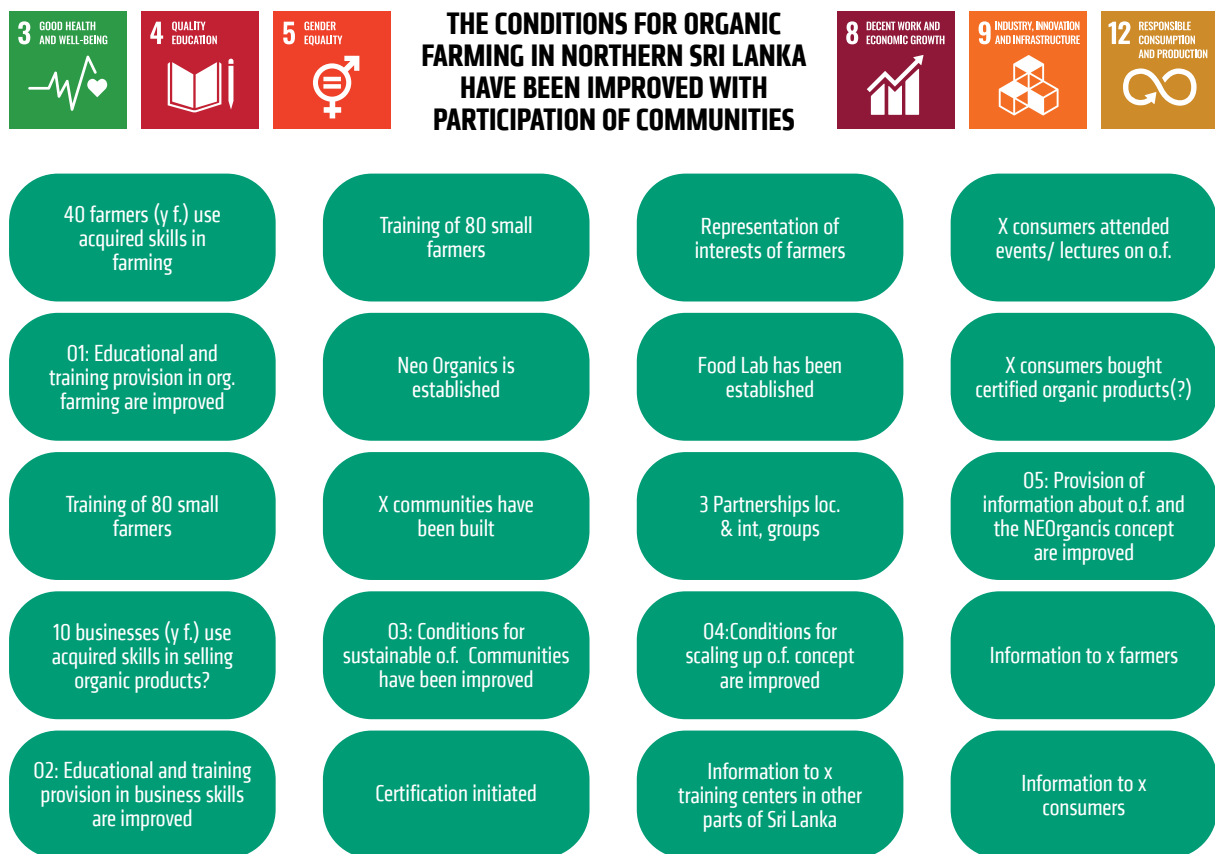
### Initialisation and formation

The objective of this partnership was to establish a separate social enterprise, NEOrganics Food Innovation Lab, that would serve as a platform for the farmers associated with OMNE to effectively engage in financing and negotiations with the government, and other relevant stakeholders. The goal was to provide a space where farmers could come together, exchange information, be trained on necessary business skills and best practices around organic production and present themselves as a unified community through a registered entity.

After the foundation of the collaboration, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed that defined the roles and responsibilities of both OMNE and Comdu.it. OMNE was focused on the local implementation of the project, including the gathering of resources and expertise to implement the project in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Meanwhile, Comdu.it was responsible for fundraising and project management, as well as overall coordination of the project.

The initiation phase of the project was concluded with the signing of the MoU, the development of a project plan, and the creation of a roadmap. The project plan also included an impact matrix that aimed to demonstrate the inputs and expected outcomes and impact of the project. The foundation for the impact matrix is theory of change. Comdu.it's research team use it as an analysis of the impact that they want to achieve.

**FIGURE 4: IMPACT-MATRIX FOR NEO PROJECT**



## Management

The next phase was the management of the project and partnership. Responsibilities in an organisation might differ depending on the partnership and project. In this project, communication was key to understand preferences, behaviour, and work culture. For the partner, it was new to working via remote applications (like MS-Teams or Zoom) including for documentation and follow-up, but for the success of the project these tools were necessary.

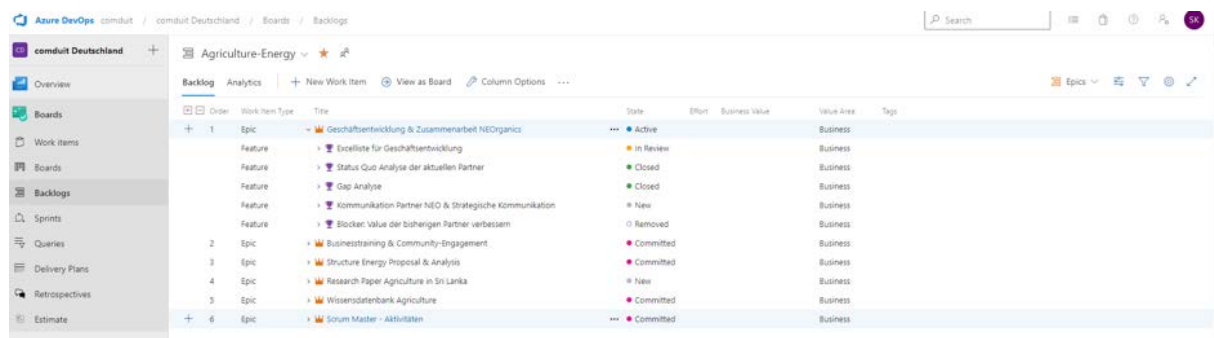
OMNE and Comdu.it respectively assigned 2-5 people to deal with the project and partnership. Since most projects are staffed with volunteers or a limited number of full-time employees, 5 people guarantee that a project can be carried on. Comdu.it's project experience has shown that adequate staffing is a critical factor in the success and sustainability of projects. Insufficient staffing can lead to delays, decreased productivity and, ultimately, project failure. In resource-constrained environments, it is particularly important to establish a minimum staffing requirement to ensure the sustainability of the project. Furthermore, having a minimum staffing requirement of 2-5 individuals can facilitate teamwork and collaboration, which are essential components of successful project implementation. The presence of multiple team members can also provide diverse perspectives and expertise, leading to more effective problem-solving and decision-making.

The project setup consisted of weekly calls with an agenda for initiating the next phase of the project. The project already has raised some funds. However, to enhance upcoming work an important goal was to increase the overall funding. Comdu.it was responsible for capitalising on its experience in this regard and OMNE identified the necessary experts and documents to set up NEOrganics as a separate legal entity.

## Monitoring and tracking

The project management activities are monitored and tracked using the [Azure DevOps platform](#), which integrates various work packages and assigns them to different project team members. Customisation was carried out to align it with the Impact-Matrix. Team members receive real-time notifications for any changes to the project activities. Additionally, a rigorous weekly review system was set up to ensure the effective implementation of all planned activities.

**FIGURE 5: PROJECT ACTIVITY TRACKING WITH AZURE DEVOPS**




## Challenges

Cross-cultural collaboration and coordination across different time zones can introduce complexity and challenges to project implementation. Nevertheless, proactive planning and anticipation of potential challenges can significantly reduce the impact of such complexities on project outcomes.

## Success factors

- ✓ **Respect:** An understanding of the cultural setting, local perspectives, and circumstances in which local organisations operate as well as empathy towards local challenges to devise context-specific solutions and demonstrate respect.
- ✓ **Ownership:** The formulation of clear expectations, common goals, and a long-term vision of desired impact.
- ✓ **Sustainability:** A project setup with a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities to give each partner ownership over a portion of the project.
- ✓ **Documentation:** Constant effort to document decisions and progress at each step of the partnership to maintain a clear and consistent focus on the partnership's objectives.

## JAFFNA CLEAN CITY COUNCIL: FOSTERING INCLUSIVE URBAN WASTE GOVERNANCE BY ENABLING AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Practice ID	
	<b>Type of partner</b> CSO
	<b>Type of partnership</b> Financial and technical
	<b>Area of intervention</b> Urban waste management
	<b>Duration</b> June 2021 – March 2023



Sri Lanka is among the most vulnerable regions to climate change. Despite this, national authorities have given low priority to climate goals. However, various groups in localities have engaged systematically in climate change initiatives. The [Jaffna Climathon](#) collaborated with the [Global Climathon](#) initiative and conducted an Ideathon and Hackathon to gather civilians in a single format to discuss project ideas for combatting climate change. From this event, the idea of establishing a council as part of the Jaffna Clean City Initiative has emerged.

The primary objective of the Jaffna Clean City Initiative is to promote inclusive governance in urban waste management in Jaffna. This objective will be achieved through the creation of a Clean City Council, a participatory planning and governance mechanism. The Clean City Council facilitates interaction among community stakeholders, the municipality, and other government authorities in co-creating a livable city center, with a focus on urban waste management.

The expected long-term outcomes of this initiative include strengthened links and continuous collaboration among communities, businesses, public institutions, and municipalities as a result of the project's capacity development activities. The Clean City Council's activities are expected to be funded continually by government institutions, non-governmental agencies, and businesses in the area. Additionally, the Clean City Council is expected to become a significant stakeholder in municipal affairs, serving as an advisory body, pressure group, think tank, and implementing agency as required.

### **Strategy**

During the development of the Climathon Jaffna project, the co-organiser approached Comdu.it, as members of the diaspora, with a proposition to support a promising project. Comdu.it's primary responsibility was to focus on the financing and overall coordination of the project. The project's objectives align well with Comdu.it's mission, as it aims to address an important topic that currently lacks support from local authorities. Additionally, the project's setup aligns with the principles of the SDGs. The project will involve various organisations, including NGOs, businesses, and the Jaffna Municipal Council, reflecting our strategic objective of initiating high-impact projects based on the impact matrix.

### **Initialisation and formation**

The project team consisted of several individuals from various organisations, all of whom were part of the project team. Consequently, it was necessary to clarify responsibilities in the project team and the leading organisations. This led to the challenge where multiple organisations were keen to be part of the project team but were reluctant to bear the associated responsibility. This discussion persisted throughout the implementation and highlights the challenges of coordinating multiple stakeholders for a project. To resolve the issue, a proposal was agreed whereby a "primary partnership" between Comdu.it and Suvadi, a long-term partner with funding from the Canadian Embassy, led the project. All other project members and their organisations became "additional partners" in the agreement, but the legal responsibility for the implementation was with Comdu.it and Suvadi. A MoU agreement to this effect was formulated and documented.

### **Management**

The project team consisted of approximately 15 individuals responsible for the project implementation. The team was led by a project manager on-site in Sri Lanka, while Comdu.it ( a 5 person team, including a project leader) from the diaspora oversaw budget management. Suvadi led the implementation team, which consisted of two employees and 5-10 volunteers. From these volunteers, a core team of five members emerged. The employees worked for 40 hours per week, while the volunteers worked for 10-20 hours per week. The core team met on Saturday mornings to discuss the previous week's activities and plan for the upcoming week. Additionally, the core team in Sri Lanka and the diaspora team from Germany and Canada held separate meetings to discuss project management activities and progress, including budget allocation. The Sri Lanka core team requested training and knowledge transfer from the diaspora team, which was facilitated. Decisions were made jointly by the Sri Lanka core team and the diaspora team, with established protocols, deadlines, and briefings to guide project activities.

### **Monitoring and tracking**

Monitoring and evaluation was conducted throughout the project to assess the progress made in achieving the common goals of the partnership, and enable modification and realignment where necessary.

## Challenges

- **Project size:** The Jaffna project was one of the most complex projects undertaken by Comdu.it, given its size and the involvement of multiple local stakeholders, such as the Jaffna Municipal Council, companies, and NGOs. Comdu.it's lack of an independent office space meant that it had to rely solely on the implementing organisation's resources and expertise in managing other organisations. Comdu.it was not present in Sri Lanka to provide solutions to any arising conflicts on due to access limitations. One major lesson learnt from this project was the need for additional funding to execute other large-scale projects.
- **Project scope and volunteer participation:** The project scope for establishing a Jaffna Clean City Council was challenging to grasp for many volunteers. The added value of direct democratic involvement in waste management decision-making was not apparent or tangible to every volunteer. Previous projects such as beach cleanups were more tangible for volunteers and staff.
- **The volatile economic and political situation** in Sri Lanka posed challenges that resulted in significant changes in the project team and its size.

## Success factors

- ✓ **Emotional connection:** A crucial success factor for implementing sustainable development projects is to acknowledge and address the emotional connections that stakeholders have to the issue at hand. While technical aspects are important for project implementation, it is essential to anchor the emotional enthusiasm of volunteers in the project's goals. In the case of the Jaffna Clean City project, stakeholders were directly affected by the pollution and lack of waste management, which highlighted the importance of establishing a Jaffna Clean City Council for long-term green transitions. However, focusing solely on technical aspects risks overlooking the emotional component, which can undermine project implementation. Including this emotional component in the project set-up allowed for more effective implementation, as tangible and emotional topics were prioritised.
- ✓ **Governmental authorities:** Engaging and communicating effectively with governmental authorities is crucial for implementing sustainable development projects. In the case of the Jaffna Clean City project, challenges were encountered in engaging and communicating with official bodies. Scheduling enough time to deal with longer communication cycles is important to ensure that official bodies are effectively engaged with and that the project goals are understood and supported.
- ✓ **Cooperation with local organisations:** Working in partnership with local organisations is an important success factor in implementing sustainable development projects. The Jaffna Clean City project was one of the biggest projects implemented in cooperation with organisations from Sri Lanka. Continuous feedback from all stakeholders in every process was essential in ensuring ownership and collaboration.
- ✓ **Practicability:** Having a practical and tangible approach to project implementation is a key success factor. While management procedures may be defined in theory, the practical implementation may vary due to unforeseen circumstances. In the Jaffna Clean City project, it was observed that practical solutions were often prioritized over analysis that is more theoretical.

## ECOSTEEM – STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TO ENABLE ENERGY TRANSITION IN SRI LANKA

Practice ID
<b>Type of partner</b> Private sector
<b>Type of partnership</b> Financial and technical
<b>Area of intervention</b> Energy transition
<b>Duration</b> April 2022-ongoing



### Strategy

The energy situation in Sri Lanka has undergone a significant decline in recent years, with a notable increase in reliance on fossil fuels and imported energy. This has resulted in intermittent petrol shortages and regular power cuts across various sectors. Given the vital role of energy in driving economic prosperity in Sri Lanka, numerous partners contacted Comdu.it, requesting its assistance in developing solutions for the current situation from the diaspora. To address this challenge, Comdu.it sought a strategic partnership with a partner capable of providing significant contributions to resolving the energy situation, and with whom they could explore preliminary approaches.

Ecosteem, a company that develops solar systems, was recommended by Comdu.it's network. Working with Ecosteem allowed Comdu.it to better comprehend the current economic and political situation in the country

### Initialisation and formation

The partnership was formalized via a MoU, where both parties agreed to gain a comprehensive understanding of Sri Lanka's energy situation and gather data about the energy situation in Sri Lanka.

### Management

Since this was not a project-based partnership, Comdu.it scheduled casual calls to conduct research activities, with specific interviews with our contact person to identify key information on the energy infrastructure, needs, and challenges. Comdu.it's process involved collecting information on energy issues through Comdu.it's internal research database, generating a list of questions to discuss with Ecosteem, conducting the interview, and identifying any remaining gaps. This cycle was repeated over three times. Analysis indicates that through this research, Comdu.it has achieved a level of comprehension nearing 80% regarding the holistic overview of the energy situation in Sri Lanka.

### Monitoring and tracking

Monitoring and tracking were critical aspects of the partnership, and Comdu.it spent significant time gathering information in collaboration with Ecosteem, as well as other funders, sponsors, and NGOs.

## Challenges

A significant obstacle this partnership faced pertains to the effective monitoring and tracking of their progress. Determining the pertinent variables that require tracking, and the frequency of monitoring remains a challenging task. Consequently, Comdu.it is currently deliberating upon the development of an appropriate framework to address these concerns.

## Success factor

- ✓ **Expertise:** A critical success factor was understanding the existing expertise and competencies, enabling the identification of additional experts required to address the situation effectively.

## 3.2 ZIDICIRCLE – BRIDGING THE EU AND AFRICA

### INTRODUCTION

Since 2016, Zidicircle has worked with development organisations, governments, and diaspora organisations to facilitate African diaspora entrepreneurship and investment both in their host countries in the European Union and their home countries in Africa. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have a huge part to play in Africa's development. SME growth is activated by the availability of resources, both knowledge and capital. Zidicircle activates diaspora as a great source of both knowledge and funding as demonstrated by huge knowledge transfer and remittances flows. For diaspora outreach in Europe and beyond, Zidicircle engages with partners who extend their work through various communication channels such as events, social media, electronic and print media among others. To reach African SMEs, Zidicircle partners with local ecosystem players such as development organisations, incubators, and other entrepreneur support organisations. Zidicircle seeks to close resource gaps through:

1. **Entrepreneurship capacity building** for diaspora entrepreneurs and SMEs/startups in Africa.
2. **Encouraging angel investing:** Capacity building for aspiring diaspora, international or Africa angel investors on how to start venture investing.
3. **The Zidicircle Coop**, a structured : diaspora investment vehicle governed by diaspora through which angel investments are aggregated and channelled to SMEs.
4. **Diaspora engagement:** By mobilising the global diaspora towards economic development in host and home countries, rallying governments into creating an enabling environment for the diaspora, and creating vibrant entrepreneur support and funding ecosystems in Europe and Africa.



## PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

Zidicircle and its partners often have specific objectives in certain geographic areas, and by working together towards these objectives, they can achieve their goals more effectively. It is important for partners to complement each other's strengths.

Zidicircle is driven by creating impact - this is an integral part of each partnership formation. The impact is defined by key beneficiaries from the diaspora and other beneficiaries. An example is the number of SMEs who get funded by diaspora investors, or the number of households reached in specific countries because of these specific interventions.

## UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: GREEN VENTURE BACKERS PROGRAMME WITH SNV, PART OF EU GREEN PROJECT IN GHANA

Partnership ID	
	<p><b>Type of partner</b> Public development agency</p> <p><b>Type of partnership</b> Financial, technical and positioning</p> <p><b>Area of intervention</b> Investment in green SMEs</p> <p><b>Duration</b> July 2021 to November 2023</p>

Zidicircle partnered with the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) in Ghana to run the Green Venture Backers Programme, a programme whose aim was to equip investors in Ghana and the diaspora seeking to invest in Ghana's green economy with the knowledge and skills to start investing in green SMEs in the Ashanti and Western regions.

This project was part of the Boosting Green Employment and Enterprise Opportunities in Ghana (GrEEn) project, a four-year action funded by the EU, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ghana, SNV and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) which aims at creating greater economic and employment opportunities for youth, women, and returning migrants. To do so, the GrEEn project promotes and supports sustainable, green businesses in Ghana's Ashanti and Western regions.

As part of the GrEEn Project, SNV Ghana was tasked with the incubation and acceleration programmes that support green businesses and start-ups at the early stages of development to make better use of natural resources, be energy efficient, properly manage waste and pollution, and operate profitable business ventures. Zidicircle joined forces with SNV in Ghana to mobilise and strengthen the role of diaspora and investors in supporting green SMEs led by youth, women and returning migrants by ensuring access to innovative financing opportunities and solutions. Zidicircle and SNV built synergies and coordinated activities to support sustainable growth, development, and financial inclusion of green entrepreneurs through diaspora investment, mentorship, and portfolio management.

Zidicircle recruited and trained aspiring angel investors both in the diaspora and Ghana on how to invest in green startups and SMEs in Ghana. Venture backers/angel investors learnt how to identify, evaluate, and engage in compelling investment opportunities. They even became qualified investor judges where they evaluated pitches from entrepreneurs during a **Green Pitch Day** in a blended event physically hosted in Kumasi and Takoradi in Ghana in August 2022.

## Strategy

In 2019, Zidicircle had incubated businesses from the Entrepreneurship by Diaspora for Development (ED4D) initiative in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM-Netherlands). During this project, Ghanaian diaspora entrepreneurs living in the Netherlands were trained and supported to set up businesses in Ghana. Zidicircle's take-aways from the incubator would guide its future work:

- Ghanaian diaspora predominantly propose green sector ideas as potential businesses;
- Some participants required matching with a green entrepreneur as a co-founder;
- Once in Ghana the diaspora entrepreneurs did not have a smooth landing and launch of their projects;
- Segments of the diaspora would prefer to become investors in existing businesses in Ghana;
- At the time, the green sector in Ghana needed a lot of sector specific support, and presented a wealth of untapped opportunities.

Based on these observations, Zidicircle made a strategic decision to focus on the green sector and to mobilise diaspora towards green transitions by developing products like the a green-diaspora match-making programme as well as the green venture backers' programme.

Zidicircle then sought to identify and to engage with like-minded partners who would collaborate to extend this work. Partners were identified both on the diaspora engagement side as well as local partners in specifically identified countries in Africa, and in reference to this case study in Ghana.

## Initiation and formation

It is common practice for Zidicircle to notify existing and potential partners on new project or products launch as well as to invite them to events. It is during one of these outreach events that Zidicircle and SNV started having exchanges on future collaboration based on the ongoing projects within the two organisations. Several bilateral meetings were held between the two organisations to identify the areas of collaboration. It was during these meetings that Zidicircle presented their venture backers programme and SNV presented the green project that was being implemented in Ghana. From the onset there seemed to be strong synergies. SNV wanted to tap into diaspora resources to support green entrepreneurs at a time when Zidicircle wanted to tap into Ghanaian green entrepreneurs who could be supported by trained diaspora venture investors. These two aspects would extend the work of both parties in a complementary way, which is a very important approach in Zidicircle's partnership approach. The next step was the drafting and signing of the partnership's MoU. Specific objectives also needed to be drafted in a service agreement when it came to activities requiring a payment, such as the training of diaspora investors.

## Management

Managing the partnership meant that certain rules of engagement were set in both the MoU and contract documents. This means that each party had clear deliverables set in relation to project execution. In this case, the collaboration between Zidicircle and SNV Ghana was to build synergies and coordinate activities to support sustainable growth, development, and financial inclusion of green entrepreneurs through diaspora

investment, mentorship, and portfolio management. To achieve this, the partners assumed specific roles that were stipulated in sections of the MoU.

The project team was formed by both staff from SNV and Zidicircle. All staff members were coordinated within their respective organisation and answerable to their project managers.

Communication was managed jointly with messaging from both organisations being aligned and moderated by a communications advisor. Specific marketing and project branding materials were developed and approved jointly. Where major announcements were to be made, these were to be approved by project managers of both organisations.

This partnership management approach made the working relationships in both organisations run smoothly.

### **Monitoring and tracking**

All project resources were documented in the contracts together with the deliverables and timelines. For each milestone set, reports were written with key outcomes well documented with evidence. This promoted transparency and accountability in monitoring and tracking the project and the partnership. Progress reports were made on a quarterly basis. Project managers met quarterly to review progress, but also held ad hoc meetings during the project.

Quarterly progress reports were a basis for reviewing what was and was not working. This prompted some revisions of timelines or approach based on discussion of the reports. In some instances, budgets or key resource persons were affected, but these issues were amicably resolved.

### **Challenges**

Even though this project had all aspects of a good partnership including clear agreements, clear timelines and deliverables, enough resources, clear communication, and adequate monitoring, some challenges remained.

Although this project was set up between SNV and Zidicircle, other parties were involved on both sides that were very relevant to the implementation of the project. The more the parties the more complex partnerships can become, and often accommodating all dynamics can be challenging. The project faced a few delays even though such eventuality was foreseen. To overcome these challenges, at times extra resources were allocated. Thanks to the clear communication structure, bottlenecks were easily addressed, and solutions easily agreed upon.

### **Success factors**

This partnership has been a true success for both Zidicircle and SNV. All deliverables were met, and measurable outcomes achieved.

- ✓ **Commitment:** SNV and Zidicircle agreed to run a joint green-diaspora match making involving Ghana's green SMEs in the Ashanti and Western regions of Ghana and Ghanaian/international diaspora to identify co-founders, and create expert and investor matches.
- ✓ **Objectives:** It is important to note that both parties were aligned in-terms of countries of focus; both being Dutch and focussing on Ghana. SNV had an extensive network of green business incubators and accelerators in Ghana, while Zidicircle had an extensive network of interested Ghanaian diaspora investors in the Netherlands and across Europe.
- ✓ **Agreements:** Having a clear MoU and service agreements helped all parties involved to stick to one objective and clear deliverables. Resource sharing - which is often a basis for disagreements - was also very clear.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DIASPORA ORGANISATIONS

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Green diaspora projects are multi-dimensional and require engagement with various stakeholders, such as public actors, economic actors, civil society, and diaspora organisations themselves. Based on the experience of Comdu.it and Zidicircle, core recommendations for project-based partnerships in this space have been formulated. Following these recommendations should ensure effective stakeholder engagement in green diaspora projects.

It is important to note that not all recommendations can be directly applied to any green diaspora project. While these experiences and success factors can inform future partnerships, each project is unique and requires tailored approaches.

### Public actors

- Identify and engage with relevant public actors such as government officials, policymakers, and regulatory bodies to understand the legal and regulatory framework for diaspora engagement in sustainable development projects. This can involve attending relevant conferences, workshops, and seminars, as well as conducting research and analysis to gain a better understanding of the regulatory landscape.
- Build strong relationships with public actors through regular communication and collaboration. This can involve organising meetings and workshops with government officials and policymakers, providing regular updates on project progress, and highlighting the potential benefits of diaspora engagement in sustainable development projects.
- Work with public actors to create an enabling environment for diaspora engagement by providing incentives, removing barriers, and promoting investment opportunities in the green sector. This can involve developing policies and regulations that support diaspora engagement, providing financial and non-financial incentives for diaspora investors, and promoting investment opportunities in the green economy.
- Ensure with all projects that the final impact is conceptualised before the project and tracked within for example an impact or empowerment matrix. Thus far, in our projects, it has been observed that even well-established stakeholders have not implemented an impact or empowerment matrix.

### Economic actors

- Identify and engage with economic actors such as investors, entrepreneurs, and businesses with a focus on the green economy. This can involve attending relevant industry events, building relationships with key players in the green sector, and conducting targeted outreach to potential investors and entrepreneurs.
- Highlight the economic opportunities and benefits of diaspora engagement in sustainable development projects, including access to new markets, expertise, and funding. This can involve creating targeted marketing materials that showcase the impact of diaspora engagement in the green sector, organising networking events and webinars, and providing regular updates on project progress and impact.

- Build strong relationships with economic actors by providing networking opportunities, sharing success stories, and showcasing the impact of diaspora engagement in the green sector. This can involve developing a community of practice for diaspora investors and entrepreneurs, organising site visits to sustainable development projects, and hosting regular networking events and workshops.

### **Civil society**

- Identify and engage with civil society organisations that have a focus on sustainable development, including environmental, social, and governance issues. This can involve conducting targeted outreach to relevant organisations, attending relevant conferences and events, and building relationships with key players in the civil society sector.
- Collaborate with civil society organisations to raise awareness about the benefits of diaspora engagement in sustainable development projects and to mobilise support for green initiatives. This can involve creating targeted marketing materials, organising public events and workshops, and engaging with the media to promote the impact of sustainable development projects.
- Build strong relationships with civil society organisations by involving them in project planning, implementation, and monitoring, and by sharing knowledge and resources. This can involve creating formal partnerships and collaborations with civil society organisations, providing training and capacity building support, and engaging in regular dialogue and consultation.

### **Diaspora organisations**

- Identify and engage with diaspora organisations that have a focus on sustainable development in their home countries, including green SMEs, investors, and other relevant stakeholders. This can involve conducting targeted outreach to diaspora organisations, attending diaspora events and conferences, and building relationships with key players in the diaspora sector.
- Build strong relationships with diaspora organisations by understanding their needs, challenges, and opportunities, and by creating tailored engagement strategies that meet their specific requirements. This can involve developing targeted marketing materials that appeal to diaspora investors and entrepreneurs, providing networking opportunities and mentoring support, and engaging in regular dialogue and consultation.
- Foster a culture of continuous feedback and communication with diaspora organisations to ensure that they remain engaged and committed to sustainable development projects. This can involve providing regular updates on project progress and impact, creating mechanisms for feedback and dialogue, and engaging in regular consultation and dialogue.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

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In conclusion, it can be asserted that diaspora-driven green partnerships have the potential to create significant, measurable, and sustainable impact globally. The key to realising this potential is an understanding of the necessary environment for diaspora organisations, which requires collaboration with public actors, economic actors, and civil society.

The design and structure of partnerships are contingent upon the specific requirements and stakeholders involved. Thus, it would be erroneous to view this paper as a prescriptive blueprint for partnership development. Instead, a more fruitful approach would be to draw on the insights and success factors derived from the various partnerships discussed in this paper and leverage them as learnings for partnership creation.

Moreover, the success factors identified in this paper can enable diaspora organisations to create a more systematic approach to project implementation, ultimately leading to improved outcomes. The integration of these success factors can enhance project planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes, ultimately leading to more effective and impactful diaspora-driven green partnerships.

The success factors identified in the aforementioned project examples can be generalized to other projects, thereby facilitating their application in diverse contexts. A crucial initial step in partnership development is to establish a clear understanding of the partnership's objectives and the specific outcomes that are sought. While seemingly self-evident, this is a fundamental requirement that cannot be overlooked. In the case of diaspora partnerships, which frequently involve international stakeholders, it is essential to establish a common working model and a shared language during the first meetings. Furthermore, the development of efficient management structures and the establishment of clear communication channels are crucial for successful diaspora-driven green partnerships.

One notable characteristic of diaspora organisations is their emotional connection to their countries of origin, which can be harnessed to generate a potent force for effecting change, particularly in the context of addressing the pressing challenge of climate change.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the green transition is a long-term and sustainable transformation that requires collaborative efforts from different stakeholders. Diaspora-driven green partnerships can act as a catalyst for this transformation by fostering cross-border collaboration and knowledge sharing.

In summary, diaspora-driven green partnerships can be a valuable tool in advancing the green transition and creating measurable and sustainable impact. By incorporating the core recommendations and success factors identified in this reflection paper and fostering collaboration with various stakeholders, diaspora organisations can maximize the impact of their projects and contribute to a more sustainable future.



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