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# DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT AND HUMAN CAPITAL

## Peacebuilding and post-crisis recovery

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# Context

Sustainable Development Goal 16 emphasises peace, justice, and strong institutions as essential pillars for achieving sustainable development. These elements form the foundation for building societies where stability and prosperity can thrive.



Within the United Nations, peacebuilding refers to efforts to assist countries and regions in their transitions from war to peace and to measures to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities for conflict management and laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development.

Peacebuilding is a central objective for development agencies and international organisations, particularly in fragile and conflict-prone regions. Unlike humanitarian responses during crises – where diasporas often emerge as some of the most effective and fastest-acting contributors (see: Research Launch: Diaspora Engagement in Times of Crisis and Reflections One Year On) – peacebuilding takes a long-term approach. It addresses the root causes of conflict such as inequality, weak governance and lack of social cohesion, to prevent further conflict and foster resilient societies

The interconnection between diasporas and peacebuilding has gained increasing attention. With this in mind, EUDiF explores the long-term involvement of diasporas in the conflict or post-conflict development of their countries of origin. Just as in their engagement in development, diasporas are driven not only by strong personal motivation, but also by a deep sense of responsibility, solidarity, and commitment to sustainable peace. Clear patterns are emerging in the roles diasporas are increasingly playing in conflict prevention, reconciliation, transnational justice,<sup>1</sup> as well as in the promotion of the rule of law, both formally and informally.

1 **Transitional justice** refers the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempt to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past violations and abuses to ensure accountability, serve justice, and achieve reconciliation. Source: About transitional justice and human rights | OHCHR

To harness the full potential of diasporas in peacebuilding, it is essential to recognise their unique position, provide adequate support, and ensure they are fully included in the peace process. By addressing the challenges and meeting the needs outlined below, diaspora communities can become even more powerful agents of positive change, contributing to lasting peace and stability in their countries of heritage and beyond. Stable and peaceful societies, in turn, create the necessary conditions for economic growth, improved education, and better health outcomes.

#### Did you know?

Women play a critical role in peacebuilding, making peace processes more inclusive, effective and sustainable. They bring greater attention to human rights, social justice and community well-being, while also advocating for the needs of displaced populations, survivors of gender-based violence, and marginalized communities. Read more on the role of women in Colombia's peace process, collective memory and healing post-crisis in our [interview with Mujer Diaspora](#).

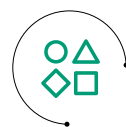


# Key challenges

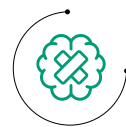
Peacebuilding is inherently challenging. In addition to the complex dynamics faced by all stakeholders, diaspora face specific challenges to their participation:



1. **Legitimacy and recognition:** diaspora actors may not always be recognised as legitimate partner in peacebuilding processes, either by the governments in their countries of origin or by international organisations due to their “distant” relation with the home country. This limits their capacity to influence decision-making or engage in meaningful peace initiatives.



2. **Diversity and polarisation:** diaspora communities are frequently diverse, comprising individuals with varying political, cultural, and social backgrounds. “They may be viewed as peacemakers by some and as peacebreakers by others”<sup>2</sup>. Disagreements and divisions within the diaspora, whether rooted in political ideologies, personal experiences, or allegiances, can hinder collective action.



3. **Emotional and physical barriers:** many diaspora members carry emotional burdens from trauma or loss due to conflict or wars in their countries of origin. These experiences can both inspire and complicate their involvement in peacebuilding. Additionally, ongoing danger in their home country may pose significant security threats and physical barriers, preventing direct engagement in development activities on-site.



4. **Lack of structured engagement:** diasporas often lack well-established formal channels or frameworks to engage in peacebuilding in an organised manner. The absence of institutionalised connections between diaspora organisations and peacebuilding efforts in the home country can result in missed opportunities for collaboration.

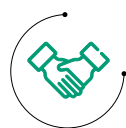


5. **Limited resources and expertise:** while diasporas are often motivated to contribute, they may lack the necessary resources, knowledge, or training to do so effectively. Their contributions could also be fragmented and unsustainable if there is no adequate infrastructure to support them.

2 Democratic Progress Institute, Kerim Yildiz, and Caitlin Collis. “Makers or Breakers of Peace - the Role of Diasporas in Conflict Resolution.” Democratic Progress Institute, August 2014. <https://www.democraticprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Makers-or-Breakers-of-Peace-The-Role-of-Diasporas-in-Conflict-Resolution.pdf>.

# Diaspora roles in peacebuilding

EUDiF has observed diaspora from all regions demonstrate different roles they play in peacebuilding. We have identified eight distinct roles, though many individuals and communities will play multiple roles at a time. It is also important to note that diaspora are constantly innovating and playing or creating new roles in peacebuilding.



## Trust builders and gatekeepers

Due to their dual identities and connections, diaspora members bridge divides between communities by fostering dialogue and mutual understanding. This unique position can allow diaspora to mediate, facilitate, and influence the flow of critical resources and information between their home and host countries.



**Example:** Somali diaspora facilitated mediation efforts between clans by leveraging transnational networks, providing financial support, and utilizing their perceived neutrality to promote community-level dialogue and reconciliation.



## Ambassadors for positive peace

Due to their exposure to peacebuilding values in host and democratic societies, well-integrated diaspora very often promote long-term peace by addressing root causes like inequality, exclusion and hate speech back home. As well, there are peace education initiatives, where diaspora partner with schools to integrate peace studies and conflict resolution trainings.



**Example:** Rwanda's diaspora supported post-genocide reconciliation programs, by fostering dialogue and unity among Rwandans both abroad and at home. Ethiopian youth-led diaspora wove the fabric of peace through education, advocacy, and action.



## Advocates for transitional justice

Truth-seeking diaspora push for accountability for past atrocities, war crimes and reparations in post-conflict settings. Through their lobby and transnational networks, they amplify local voices and contribute to healing and justice-seeking efforts, mobilising international support.



**Example:** The Chilean diaspora formed by the forced exile of approximately 200,000 individuals during Pinochet's dictatorship, has been instrumental in seeking justice for regime-era crimes by supporting legal actions, preserving historical memory, and advocating for human rights accountability both within Chile and internationally.

### Storytellers



Diaspora document and share lived experiences, preserving history and humanizing conflicts through art, cultural movements and storytelling. Initiatives include highlighting refugee resilience, theatre performances on war crimes, exhibitions on raising awareness on atrocities, collecting stories from victims to promote reconciliation and social healing.



**Example:** Syrian diaspora organised exhibitions and performances featuring the work of young Syrian artists, using art, literature, music, and poetry to promote Syrian civil society and resist repression, sustaining creative expression in the face of dictatorship and sharing these messages globally.

### Capacity developers



Skills and knowledge transfer is a strong way diaspora strengthen institutions, communities and resilience capacities. Such capacity development can be directly related to peacebuilding, or contextualised.



**Example:** Armenian diaspora engaged in mentoring programs and developed training materials to enhance the business skills of women entrepreneurs on the margins of the conflict, thereby enhancing resilience and crisis management (read more on p. 6).

### Narrative shapers or promoters



Using journalism, documentaries, literature and art to counter divisive rhetoric, diaspora influence discourse and engage in peace negotiations by offering alternative perspectives. This can be done through public engagement, media advocacy, social media, demonstrations etc.



**Example:** The Colombian diaspora has contributed to shaping peace agreement discussions through media campaigns, public forums, and advocacy to amplify their voices, thereby securing representation in national peacebuilding institutions and contributing to transitional justice efforts.

### Fact finders and truth-tellers

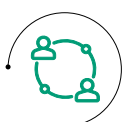


Diaspora members can counter mis- and dis-information and propaganda by providing fact-based narratives and direct access to people on the ground.



**Example:** Ukrainian diaspora actively countered war-related disinformation by launching digital campaigns to debunk false narratives and engaged in lobbying efforts at EU institutions, exemplified by initiatives such as the establishment of a Ukrainian Hub at the European Parliament's Station Europe Building in March 2022, which serves as a platform for advocacy and information dissemination.

### Partnership enablers



They connect local actors with international organizations, civil society, universities and various private sector actors and offer networking and partnership opportunities for recovery and peace initiatives in post-conflict settings.



**Example:** Ethiopian diaspora helped to create partnerships and mobilise donors to contribute to the recovery of Wollo University following the severe impacts of the 2022 warfare, particularly in Dessie, by providing funding, lobbying, and training (read more on p.7).



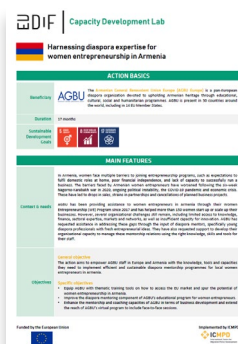
# Diaspora peacebuilding in action

Diaspora communities have proven to be valuable partners in peacebuilding and crisis response. Within the EUDiF framework, this has been evident in two actions: our collaboration with the Armenian General Benevolent Union Europe (AGBU Europe) and with Wollo University in Ethiopia. Additionally, we have closely examined the Ukrainian diaspora as a case study: Diaspora Engagement in times of crisis. In each of these contexts, diaspora actors made a significant impact in achieving the following contributed significantly to the outcomes outlined below.

## Fostering resilience and crisis management

Diaspora mentors from the AGBU network provided ad hoc training and mentorship sessions on resilience and crisis management for women entrepreneurs in response to the conflict in the country in late 2022. In this context, the diaspora played a crucial role as capacity developers and promoters, quickly adapting to the changing security environment, helping marginalised groups from remote areas strengthen their understanding of, and ability to navigate conflict-related challenges.

Read more:





## Driving post-crisis recovery

Due to warfare in Ethiopia in 2022, the collaboration with Wollo University was severely impacted. In response, the diaspora expert team adapted and played a key role in the university's recovery, contributing through funding, lobbying, training, and sustained efforts to rebuild the institution. Their support helped restore the learning process, including a pilot digital curriculum to boost the agri-food business sector. The diaspora team served as a bridge between the donors, partners and the university, helping the latter to find solutions for its recovery and restoration.

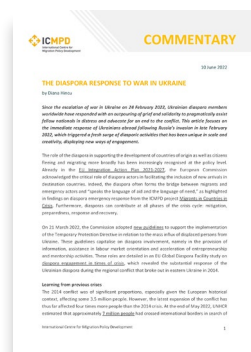


Read more:

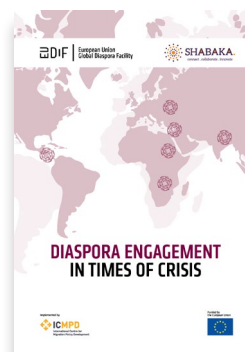


## Advocating for awareness and support

Following the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Ukrainian diaspora has mobilised its forces to provide humanitarian aid, refugee support and international advocacy. Together with responding to emergency needs, Ukrainians abroad also focus on raising awareness, combatting war-related disinformation through digital campaigns and lobbying EU institutions for increased support.



**The diaspora response  
to war in Ukraine**



**Diaspora engagement  
in times of crisis**



During our projects in Ethiopia and Armenia, emerging conflicts created challenges, but the diaspora teams immediately adapted and began playing roles beyond those we had foreseen. Suddenly, as well as experts in their fields (agrobusiness, European law and entrepreneurship), they were also acting as bridge builders, promoters, and negotiators.



– Diana Hincu, Senior Project Manager, EUDiF

## Recommendations for effective engagement

Drawing from our experiences and observations, several key lessons have emerged. The following recommendations aim to guide more effective, inclusive, and sustainable diaspora engagement to ensure that their peacebuilding potential is fully realised:

### 1. Recognise and legitimise diaspora participation

Governments and international organisations should formally recognise diaspora groups as legitimate peacebuilding stakeholders. This includes involving diaspora representatives in peace talks, policymaking, and development planning. Such recognition fosters a sense of ownership and long-term commitment to peace.

### 2. Provide financial and technical support

Diaspora-led peacebuilding initiatives should have access to financial support through grants, loans, or partnership opportunities. Complementary technical assistance, including tailored training in conflict resolution, advocacy, negotiations and governance, can help ensure sustainability and scalability.

### 3. Strengthen coordination and networking

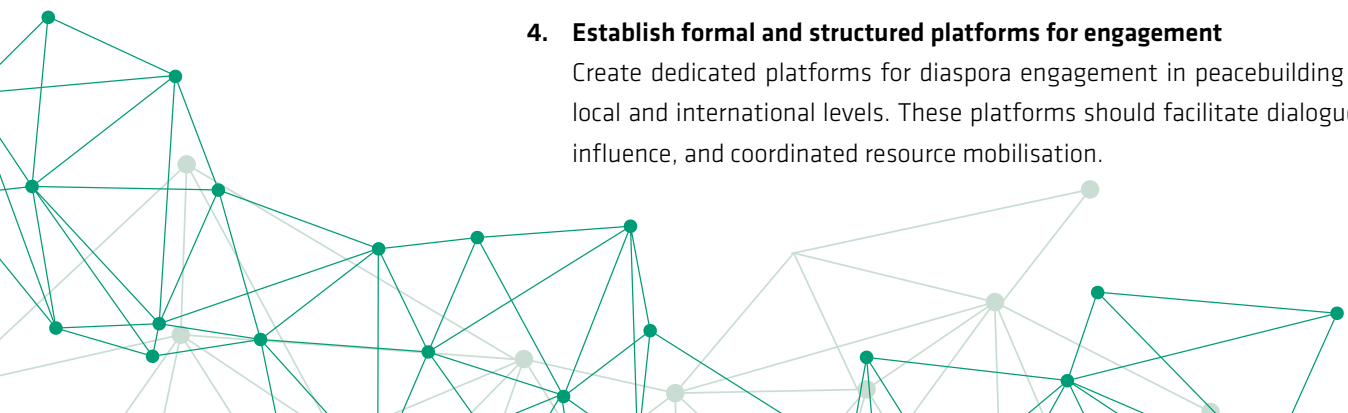
Encourage closer collaboration between diaspora organisations, peacebuilding institutions, local civil society, and government. Regional and global networks can help share resources, align efforts, and amplify the impact of diaspora contributions, ensuring a unified approach.

### 4. Establish formal and structured platforms for engagement

Create dedicated platforms for diaspora engagement in peacebuilding at both local and international levels. These platforms should facilitate dialogue, policy influence, and coordinated resource mobilisation.

Contrary to viewing diasporas as threats, recognising their potential as active contributors to peace and development efforts is essential for harnessing their unique resources and perspectives.

– Read more from Dr Fanny Tittel-Mosser



### 5. Address psychological barriers

Offer targeted psychosocial support to diaspora communities affected by trauma, stress, or burnout. This will help individuals engage in peacebuilding with a greater stability, clarity and resilience.



Read the [interview](#) with Jin Dawod, a founder of the mental health platform "[Peace Therapist](#)". On the topic of **mental health**, diaspora actors like Jin play a crucial role in offering culturally sensitive care tailored to the unique experience of refugees from their home country. This support can significantly contribute to fostering resilience, promoting healing, and aiding to the integration

### 6. Promote an inclusive approach

Acknowledge the contributions of all diaspora groups, including women, youth, and marginalised groups. Inclusivity strengthens peacebuilding efforts by bringing diverse perspectives and fostering equitable participation through targeted initiatives and policies. This can be achieved through gender-sensitive policies, initiatives that prioritise women's leadership, the inclusion of youth and facilitation of intergenerational and interregional dialogue.



# Learn more



## **Diaspora Engagement in Times of Crisis (2021)**

The European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF) commissioned the researchers at Shabaka to unpack how diasporas respond to emergencies, decrypt trends and challenges, and analyse systems of cooperation between diasporas and 'traditional' humanitarian actors. The report examines diaspora humanitarian responses in six countries: Lebanon, Nepal, Nicaragua, Sudan, Ukraine, and Zambia.

## **Reflections one year on – EUDiF (2022)**

EUDiF reflects on its 2021 publication by Shabaka to assess how diaspora humanitarianism evolved over the following year in crisis-affected countries, emphasizing the diaspora's flexible and context-specific roles in humanitarian and development responses.

## **Liza Bezvershenko on the Global Ukrainian Community and diaspora as strong partners in the recovery of Ukraine (2024)**

Liza Bezvershenko highlights how the global Ukrainian diaspora has become a vital partner in Ukraine's recovery, emphasizing its roles in advocacy, humanitarian aid, education, and reconstruction planning, particularly through initiatives like the Ukraine Recovery Conference and diaspora-led innovation hubs.



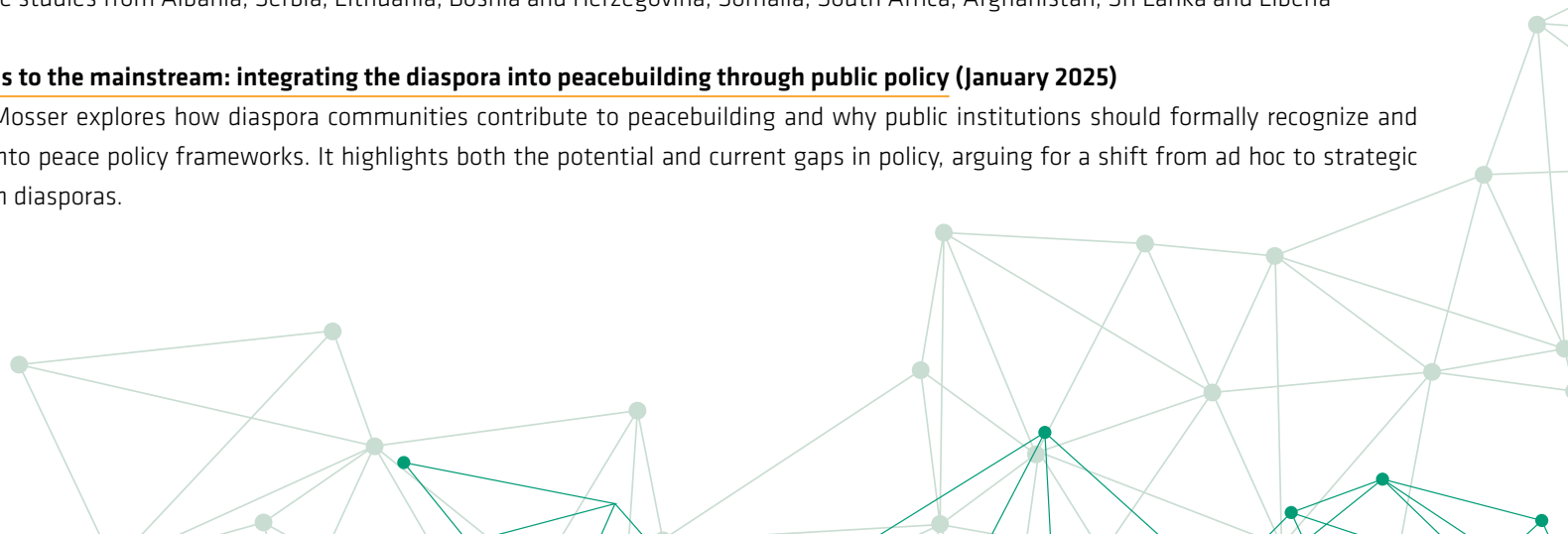
## **Diaspora Engagement Report: Case Studies and Best Practices for Ukraine**

Developed by ICMPD's CORE-UA project, the report features recommendations on effective diaspora engagement in peacebuilding and recovery, featuring the case studies from Albania, Serbia, Lithuania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, South Africa, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Liberia



## **From the margins to the mainstream: integrating the diaspora into peacebuilding through public policy (January 2025)**

Dr Fanny Tittel-Mosser explores how diaspora communities contribute to peacebuilding and why public institutions should formally recognize and integrate them into peace policy frameworks. It highlights both the potential and current gaps in policy, arguing for a shift from ad hoc to strategic engagement with diasporas.



**“Operationalizing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) through Displacement and Diaspora Engagement” (2019)**

IOM provides practical guidance on how to incorporate diaspora actors into the HDPN framework. It outlines strategies for leveraging diaspora resources and knowledge in addressing root causes of displacement, strengthening resilience, and supporting sustainable peace and development. The report emphasizes the value of inclusive, coordinated approaches across humanitarian, development, and peace sectors.

**Diaspora Building Peace (2017)**

The publication by Jasmin Nordin explores how diaspora groups actively contribute to peacebuilding in their countries of origin through mediation, advocacy, development work, and bridging divides. It offers key lessons and policy recommendations for strengthening the impact and recognition of diaspora peace efforts.



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