

CITIZENS OF THE WORLD

Legal and policy tools beyond passports



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Citation: Puthanveettil, F.A., (2025) Citizens of the world: Legal and policy tools beyond passports, Brussels: ICMPD

Foreword

This publication was inspired by a Capacity Development Lab project in which the partner institutions discussed the challenge of engaging the diaspora from a country which does not facilitate dual or multiple citizenships, given that this is a common ask from the diaspora. In response, we commissioned Farseen Ali Puthanveetil to investigate alternative legal and policy tools in such settings. This was Farseen's research assignment during his time as a Diaspora Youth Intern with EUDiF.

As a young man in the Indian diaspora, Farseen brings lived experience and a strong subject sensitivity which is keenly valued by the EUDiF, not least because he holds one of the statuses presented in the publication below. Farseen is one of the citizens of the world for which the publication is named.

Charlotte Griffiths
Public Partnerships Lead

About the author

Farseen Ali Puthanveetil is an trained social worker experienced in migration, diaspora engagement, development, education, and humanitarian work. He holds two master's degrees: an Afro-Asian-European Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's in Migration and Intercultural Relations, and a Master of Arts in Social Work. In addition, he has earned a Postgraduate Diploma in Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law, and Refugee Law.

Farseen has gained diverse professional experience working with organisations such as the Government of Kerala, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Erasmus Mundus Association (EMA), the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), among others.

He has experience conducting research among communities such as Tibetan refugees in South India, Malayali labour migrants in West Asia, and the Indian diaspora in Norway. He was a recipient of the prestigious Erasmus Mundus scholarship awarded by the European Commission.

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The author wishes to express appreciation to Charlotte Griffiths (Public Partnerships Lead, EUDiF) for her research guidance and editorial review; to Nale Barbieri Pederiva (Communications Officer, EUDiF), for his assistance with proofreading and design support; and to Mohammed Ameen Arimbura (Project Officer, ICMPD) for his comments on the draft.

Introduction

Nationality and citizenship¹ regulations vary significantly across nations, shaped by distinct historical legacies, geopolitical considerations, and cultural, religious, and ethnic contexts. In the context of diaspora engagement, dual citizenship is a hot topic, creating both opportunity and division within the country of heritage and in its diaspora.

As diasporas are made up of people with transnational identities and connections, the legal frameworks which facilitate their access to countries of heritage and home have both personal and practical importance. The ability to hold multiple nationalities/citizenships is often desirable to those who wish to retain a strong connection with their country of heritage, whilst continuing to live and work in the country of residence, be they from the first generation to migrate or their descendants.

Some countries enforce a strict single-citizenship policy, while others allow citizens to hold dual or multiple citizenship.

Out of the 123 countries covered by EUDiF, 91 countries allow dual citizenship. By region, this represents 74% of countries in Africa, 63% in Asia, 87 % in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 73% in the Pacific (out of the countries covered by EUDiF). Among these, most permit it without legal restrictions, while only a few impose limitations.

Certain countries that do not permit dual citizenship have nevertheless introduced special legal categories for their diasporas. This has been, in part, a response to vocal demands from diaspora communities, who often advocate for dual citizenship, voting rights, and formal recognition of their continued ties to their homeland, along with the governments' own interest in leveraging the diaspora. Such mechanisms allow the countries to maintain cultural, economic, and social connections not only with former citizens who have acquired another nationality, but also with their descendants.

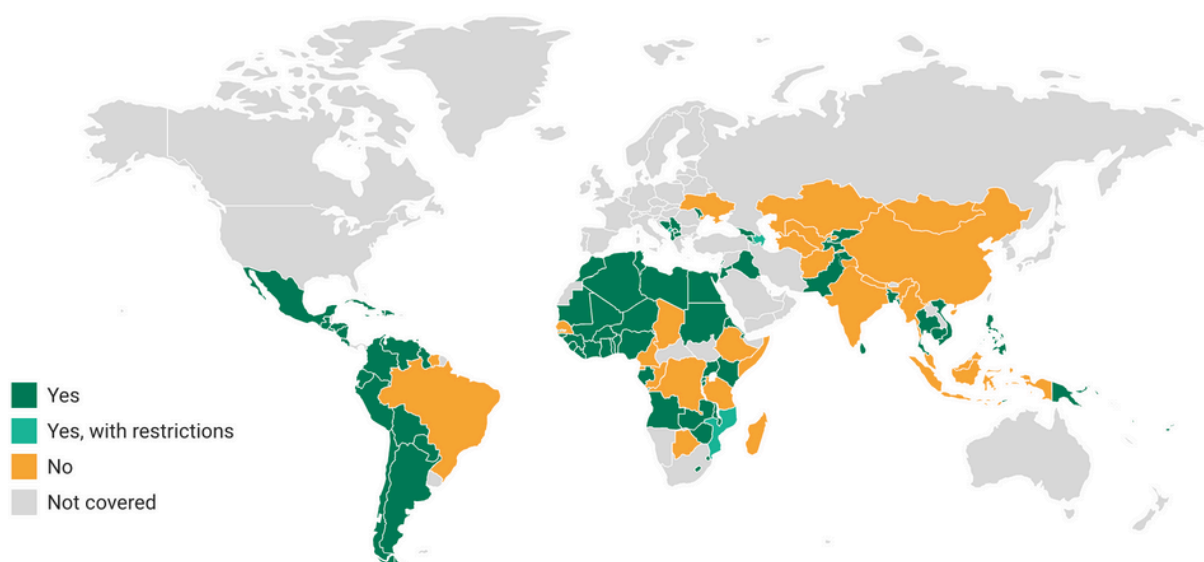


Figure 1. Dual citizenship policies around the World (EUDiF)

1. For the purposes of this document, the terms 'nationality' and 'citizenship' are used interchangeably to denote the legal bond between an individual and a State. This follows the usage in the International Organization for Migration (IOM) [Glossary on Migration](#) which notes that both are frequently used synonymously.



Governments view alternative citizenship schemes as tools to achieve objectives such as:



Strengthening foreign exchange reserves through remittances.



Attracting foreign investment from diaspora entrepreneurs.



Facilitating skill transfer and promoting brain circulation by leveraging diaspora expertise.



Expanding global influence through diaspora diplomacy and the exercise of soft power.



Promoting tourism and deepening cultural engagement with overseas communities.



Diasporas view alternative citizenship schemes as opportunities to gain benefits such as:



Formal recognition of belonging and strengthened family connections with homeland.



Easier mobility through visa-free entry or long-term residency options.



Enhanced property ownership rights and potential tax advantages.



Expanded business and investment opportunities with legal protection.



Access to education, social, and cultural programmes that foster belonging.

This document presents tools from three Asian countries, India, Indonesia, and Nepal, outlining eligibility criteria, advantages, and limitations (where specified in the law). It demonstrates how countries balance diaspora engagement with national sovereignty and legal frameworks to

create instruments like the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI), Non-Resident Indian (NRI), the Indonesian Diaspora Card (KMILN), and Non-Resident Nepali citizenship (NRN) to enable people of shared heritage a privileged status.





India

India's engagement with its global diaspora is built around two core legal categories: Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs). While both groups maintain strong links with India, they differ significantly in legal status, rights, and policy purpose. NRIs are Indian citizens holding an Indian passport who reside outside India, whereas OCIs are foreign nationals of Indian origin who hold a lifelong visa and residency rights in India but are not Indian citizens.

The Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) scheme was introduced in August 2005 by amending the Citizenship Act, 1955, in response to ongoing calls for "dual citizenship," particularly from the Indian diaspora in North America and other developed nations². This instrument was built on the 2001 report of the High-Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora³, which had recommended granting dual citizenship within the framework of the Citizenship Act, likely influenced by strong grassroots pressure and the government's growing interest in the diaspora's economic and cultural potential.

In practice, however, India refrained from offering dual citizenship due to security and other concerns. Instead, it created its own model: the OCI, which evolved from the earlier Person of Indian Origin (PIO) scheme and represents a middle ground between single and dual citizenship. While OCI confers a lifelong visa and a range of economic and cultural rights, it does not grant political rights.

In contrast to the OCI, the Non-Resident Indian (NRI) scheme is not a single programme, but a broad framework of policies, banking facilities, and investment channels designed to encourage Indian citizens living abroad to maintain strong economic and social ties with India. It began in 1970, when India launched the Non-Resident (External) Rupee Account scheme, allowing NRIs to hold rupee deposits from their overseas earnings, with the aim of attracting their savings and strengthening the country's foreign exchange reserves.

READ MORE



- [India country factsheet by EUDiF.](#)
- [Further information on the Overseas Citizenship of India.](#)

² It is worth noting that not all segments of the Indian diaspora supported this policy. In many countries that do not recognise or permit dual citizenship, advocating for Indian dual citizenship was seen as potentially undermining the political integration and influence of their Indian-origin communities within their host nations.

³ Ministry of External Affairs ([press release](#)), 'High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora under the Chairmanship of Dr L M Singhvi MP', 8 August 2025

Non-Resident Indian (NRI) and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)

Non-Resident Indian (NRI)		Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)	
Definition			
Indian citizens holding an Indian passport who live and/or work in another country		Foreign citizens of Indian origin holding a lifetime visa and long-term residency rights in India	
Eligibility			
Indian citizens residing outside India for more than 182 days during a financial year.		<div>Foreign citizens who are:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Former Indian citizens or those eligible for Indian citizenship.Persons who belonged to territories that became part of India after 15 Aug 1947.Children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren of the above individuals.Minor children with a parent with Indian citizenship.Foreign spouses of Indian citizens/OCI holders (married 2+ years). <div>Excludes anyone with a parent, grandparent, or great-grandparent who is or was a citizen of Pakistan, Bangladesh, or any country determined ineligible by the Union Government.</div>	
Entry & residency			
Unlimited (as Indian citizen)		Lifelong multiple-entry visa for unlimited stay	
Political Rights			
<div>Full political rights:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Full voting rights (voting in person in India, no online or postal voting).Can contest elections and hold constitutional posts.		<div>No political rights:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Cannot vote.Cannot contest elections.Cannot hold constitutional posts.	
Inheritance			
Parity with resident Indians			

Property rights

- Can buy/sell immovable property in India (except agricultural land, farmhouses, or plantations).
- Can buy/sell movable property in India.

Banking

Can open special NRI accounts:

- Non-Resident External (NRE) Account – rupee account funded from overseas, fully repatriable, tax-free interest.
- Foreign Currency Non-Resident Bank (FCNRB) Account – foreign currency term deposit, fully repatriable, tax-free interest.
- Non-Resident Ordinary (NRO) Account – manage income in India, limited repatriation, taxable interest.

Eligible to obtain a Permanent Account Number (PAN), a unique number which is used for taxation and several other financial activities in India.

Eligible for loans from Indian banks.

Business and investment rights

Can establish any type of business

Can set up Limited Liability Company (LLC) or a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)

NRI/OCI specific financial products such as the Portfolio Investment Scheme (PIS) and NRI bonds

Taxation

Income earned abroad not taxable in India.
Income earned in India is subject to the applicable tax laws.

Educational rights

Eligible for all educational opportunities available to Indian citizens, and additionally eligible for reserved NRI quota seats in private universities, as well as in select government institutions.

Eligible for national entrance tests only under NRI or supernumerary seats, and for reserved NRI quota seats in private universities.

Restrictions

-

- Cannot work for the Government.
- Cannot visit Protected/Restricted areas, undertake missionary, mountaineering, or journalism work without prior permission.



Indonesia

Indonesia's diaspora policy has been slowly evolving over the years. Diaspora associations such as the Indonesian Diaspora Network (IDN) have played a key role in advocating for dual citizenship, parliamentary representation, constitutional recognition, and property ownership rights for Indonesians living abroad⁴. A major milestone in formalising support for the diaspora came in 2016, when the government issued [Regulation No. 26](#), allowing former Indonesian citizens to apply for multiple-entry visas valid for five years. This was followed in 2017 by Presidential Regulation No. 76, which officially recognised Indonesian citizens overseas and introduced the Diaspora Card (Kartu Masyarakat Indonesia di Luar Negeri – KMILN). The KMILN acts as an identification card for Indonesians abroad – both those with and without citizenship – and serves as a tool for mapping and mobilising the potential and networks of Indonesians abroad for national interests.

Despite these advances, opposition to the concept of dual citizenship remains, often justified on philosophical and ideological grounds, rooted in the country's historical foundations and the [Youth Pledge](#) of 28 October 1928, which declared: "One homeland, Indonesia. One nation, Indonesia. One language, Indonesian." However, in recent years, some senior officials have hinted at a possible shift in the government's position. Discussions around the introduction of a limited form of dual nationality to attract skilled members of the diaspora – possibly following the model of India's Overseas Citizenship scheme – have been reported in the [media](#).

READ MORE



- [Indonesia country factsheet by EUDiF.](#)
- [Further information on the Indonesian Citizen Card Abroad \(KMILN\).](#)

⁴ Ani W. Soetjipto et al, '[A Cartography of Overseas Indonesians: Preliminary Mapping of Diaspora Actors, Their Positionalities to the State and Implications for Protection](#)', IR-UI Commentaries Vol. II, No. 03 (March 2021)

Kartu Masyarakat Indonesia di Luar Negeri - Indonesian Citizen Card Abroad (KMILN)

Indonesian citizens abroad with KMILN		Foreign citizens (former Indonesian citizens) with KMILN ⁵	
Definition			
Indonesian citizens living overseas who hold KMILN (diaspora card) to maintain connections with Indonesia.		Foreign citizens who were formerly Indonesian citizens, their children, or those with Indonesian biological parents holding KMILN (diaspora card).	
Eligibility			
Indonesian citizens living/working abroad		<div>Foreign citizens who are:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Former Indonesian citizens.• Children of former Indonesian citizens.• Those with Indonesian biological parents. <div>Additional requirements:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 18 years old.• Resided/worked abroad minimum 2 years.• No activity detrimental to Indonesia.• No national security threat.• No legal issue with Indonesian government.	
Entry & residency			
Unlimited (as Indonesian citizen)		<div>Multiple-entry visa:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5-year validity.• Each visit: 60 days (extendable max 2 times). <div>This visa also applies to the spouse of ex-citizens and their unmarried biological children who are under 30 years of age.</div>	

⁵ While all foreign citizens are subject to the same laws, the KLMIN status provides additional benefits and facilitates administrative processes.

Political Rights

Full political rights
Voting rights in presidential elections (includes overseas polling stations and postal votes).

No political rights

Property rights

Can own/ purchase property in Indonesia (KMILN can be used as the Indonesian national ID for identification purposes).

Conditional property ownership/purchase according to laws and regulations (KMILN facilitates/eases the process).
Property ownership with 30-year use rights certificate.
Rights can be extended and inherited.

Banking

Can open accounts at public banks (KMILN can be used as the Indonesian national ID for identification purposes).

Can open bank accounts "per applicable regulations" (Holding KMILN facilitates/eases the process).

Business and investment rights

Can establish Indonesian business entities (KMILN can be used as the Indonesian national ID for identification purposes).

Can establish business entities as per applicable regulations. (Holding KMILN facilitates/eases the process).

Work rights

Full rights to work (as Indonesian citizen)

Limited but expandable:

- Visitor visa holders can get ITAS (Limited Stay Permit).
- ITAS can be upgraded to ITAP (Permanent Stay Permit).
- ITAP holders can work in Indonesia.



Nepal

Since 2008, Nepal has increasingly recognised the important role its diaspora can play in the country's socio-economic transformation. [The Non-Resident Nepali Act of 2008](#) provided the first comprehensive legal framework for diaspora engagement. It granted Non-Resident Nepalis (NRNs) the rights to invest, repatriate earnings, purchase property, operate businesses, and send tax-free remittances for approved purposes. It also introduced the NRN Citizenship Card, which allows

cardholders visa-free entry and access to various social, cultural, and economic benefits. A major development came in 2016, when the Constitution was amended to include an NRN Citizenship Provision⁶. This enables certain non-resident Nepalis to obtain non-resident citizenship. Such citizenship provides economic, social, and cultural rights as defined by federal law, though it does not currently include political rights.

READ MORE



- [Nepal country factsheet by EUDiF.](#)
- [Access the full text of the Non-Resident Nepali \(NRN\) Act.](#)

⁶ Nepal's Constitution of 2015 with Amendments through 2016

Non-Resident Nepali (NRN)

Non-Resident Indian (NRI)	Foreign citizens of Nepalese origin
Definition	
Nepali citizens who reside abroad for work or business purposes.	Foreign citizens who (or whose parent/grandparent) were once Nepali citizens and later acquired citizenship of a non- SAARC country.
Eligibility	
Nepali citizens lived abroad (excluding SAARC countries) for at least 2 years for work or business purposes (Excludes: diplomats, consular staff, students sent by Nepali government).	Former Nepali citizens who acquired non-SAARC country citizenship. Children/grandchildren of former Nepali citizens holding foreign citizenship from non-SAARC country.
Entry & residency	
Unlimited (as Nepali citizen)	Non-resident visa: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 10 years validity. • Available for NRN and family members. • Requires identity card and investment/residence in Nepal.
Political Rights	
The election commission initiated discussions for granting voting rights to Nepalis residing abroad. An all-party meeting was convened toward this goal in 2024.	No political rights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot vote. • Cannot contest elections. • Cannot hold constitutional posts.
Work rights	
Full working rights (as Nepali citizen)	Not specified

Property rights

Can purchase designated land or property in Nepal for personal or family residence (subject to certain conditions).

Banking

NRNs and NRN-promoted companies can open a convertible currency account in any bank or financial institution licensed by the Central bank of Nepal.

Business and investment rights

NRN with lawful investment can operate any industry or business like a Nepali citizen.
Can invest foreign-earned income in Nepal in industries or businesses open to foreign investment under existing laws or government notification.

Taxation

Tax exemptions on:

- Initial capital investments.
- Up to NPR 15 million per fiscal year sent to close Nepali relatives⁷ for personal use.
- Donations sent to non-profit institutions (social, religious, academic, cultural, charitable, sports, or disaster relief) via NRB-licensed banks.

⁷ "Relative" means an individual's husband, wife, son, daughter (adopted son, daughter as well), father, mother, grand-father, grand-mother, elder brother, younger brother, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, elder sister, younger sister, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, elder brother-in-law, wife's sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, grand-son and granddaughter.



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