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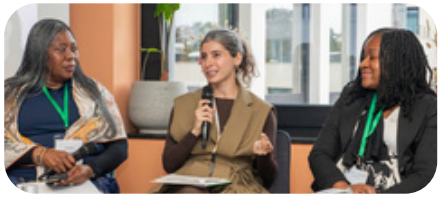

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FOREWORD

The Future Forum is a special place for the EU Global Diaspora Facility. It provides an opportunity to bring a wide range of diaspora-development actors into one space for inspiration and reflection, making it the in-person version of the “knowledge hub” the project seeks to provide to the diaspora-development ecosystem.

> “[Diaspora has the potential to] promote development in countries of origin, using the knowledge of how things are done elsewhere.”
>
> – Francesco Luciani, Director, Head of Unit for Migration and Forced Displacement, DG International Partnerships, European Commission

As a project and a team, we pride ourselves on sharing and learning, which we believe are key to maximising the potential of diaspora engagement for development. The discussions at this year’s Future Forum did this justice, with deep insights shared in keynote speeches, practice discussions, research presentations, guided networking activities and – of course – during the informal moments around food! I am especially delighted that a lot of conversations started in the room have continued since and are leading to new opportunities and exchanges around the world.

Each edition of the Future Forum reflects a different stage of the project itself: One year into the project’s second phase, the 2025 conference was the moment to build community between our current project partners.

This year we welcomed over 70 attendees connected with 40 countries, to explore good practices within the themes of enabling environments, values-based skills transfer, digital innovation and local action in underserved communities – all of which are being addressed through our portfolio of 20 new Capacity Development Lab and Diaspora 4 Development Grants projects.

"Diaspora think globally and act locally. We hold transformative power and leadership, that, when channelled meaningfully, drive change."

– Oleg Chirita, Head of Global Initiatives and Deputy Head of Brussels Mission, ICMPD

We were able to cover such a range of themes with experiences from four continents because diaspora engagement is a truly global and all-sector vector of development. Yet within this hyper-diversity, several things ring consistently true:

- Trust and belonging form the foundation of effective and inclusive engagement.
- Diaspora roles extend far beyond remittances to include social and civic leadership.
- Partnerships must evolve from consultation to genuine co-creation.
- Celebrating diversity and ensuring multi-stakeholder involvement are essential for meaningful diaspora-state partnerships.

"We are more than the volume of the contribution we give to GDP. Diaspora are a super powerful, resilient community, critical for development."

– Paddy Siyanga Knudsen, Co-Organiser, African Non-State Actors Platform on Migration and Development

On behalf of the EUDiF team, thank you to our project partners, past and present for joining us at the Future Forum 2025 and sharing your knowledge and curiosity with us all. Together we are building a community and network following the EUDiF project mantra: to ensure the diaspora-development ecosystem is as informed, inclusive and impactful as possible.

A final thanks to the European Union for believing in the power of diaspora engagement for development and continuing to support the EU Global Diaspora Facility to fully leverage the wealth of opportunity in this fascinating, evolving and high-potential area.

Diana Hincu
Senior Project Manager
EUDiF

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT?

If you were with us on the day, treat this report as an aide-memoire to connect the people you spoke during the coffee breaks to the practice discussions they took part in and the projects they are a part of. Do not hesitate to get in touch with each other: Information about each organisation is on the respective project page on the EUDiF website, linked throughout the report.

For those readers who are exploring the conference vicariously, we hope the highlights pique your interest and you will engage further in the themes via the recommended reading. If you would prefer, a shorter, more introductory summary to the Forum, we suggest reading ICMPD article on putting inclusive partnerships at the heart of sustainable development. And, just like the attendees, if you want to know more about the projects as they evolve, keep an eye on the EUDiF website, sign up for the newsletter, or drop us an email: eu-diaspora@icmpd.org.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Partnerships are inclusive if built on trust**, which is achieved through active listening, mutual accountability and transparent communication.

2. **Co-implementation** between diaspora and [local] authorities **improves project design** and **enhances long-term impact**.

3. [Digital] **innovation must be people-centred** and **context-driven** to ensure that solutions serve local needs.

4. For all voices and needs to be heard, **young people, women and marginalised groups need to be proactively included** in the migration and development conversation, both in the diaspora and in the country of heritage.

5. **Diaspora organisations should strengthen their organisational structures** and **build resilience** in a volatile funding landscape.

These are only the headlines. We encourage you to explore each session in detail — along with the featured projects and further reading — to fully appreciate the richness of the discussions at the Future Forum 2025.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS FOR STATE-DIASPORA PARTNERSHIPS

Speakers:

- Driss El-Yazami, President, Conseil de la Communauté marocaine à l'étranger, Morocco
- Aissatou Leye Diop, Cheffe de division, Direction Générale des Sénégalais de l'Extérieur, Senegal
- Mandiaye Ndao, Directeur, NeX S.A.
- Pascaline Toulouse, President, Avenir des Jeunes Filles de Dapaong, Togo-France
- Nicole Letuppe, Coordinator, Mandji, Senegal-Belgium

Moderator: Charlotte Griffiths, Public Partnerships Lead, EUDiF

A set of conditions must be in place to create an enabling environment for diaspora engagement. These include having a supportive legal framework, strong and responsive institutions, access to sustainable resources and a supportive public discourse both in the country of heritage and its diaspora. In addition to these conditions, which are arguably applicable across all areas of policy, a truly enabling environment for diaspora engagement also requires significant political will and leadership based on a long-term vision, as well as extensive coordination within the country and beyond its borders. These elements demand considerable time, energy and perseverance from individuals and institutions.

When these conditions are met, it becomes possible to develop mutual trust and establish a wide range of state-diaspora partnerships. These are more effective and impactful thanks to the structured and predictable system which allows diverse stakeholder groups to identify and define common goals and collaborate effectively.

Comparing experiences between central government institutions and diaspora organisations working in North and West Africa highlighted four key areas for an enhanced enabling environment in the country of heritage, whilst iteratively developing partnership projects between diaspora and government actors:

1) Institutional and political commitment underpin effective diaspora partnerships: Consistent endorsement from executive level in both Morocco and Senegal demonstrate how a strong message from the top embeds diaspora in national policy and programming, leading to diverse state-led initiatives and receptiveness to those brought by the diaspora.

2) Multi-level coordination between central and local governments ensures alignment: Investing in coordination between institutions enables all branches of government to participate in diaspora engagement, both as service providers and project partners. As diaspora engage via a plethora of entry points based on needs and interests, the state benefits from strengthening its internal coordination mechanisms to reduce pain points and duplication so as to increase efficiency and maximise the potential for diaspora engagement.

3) Dialogue builds trust and opens doors: Institutions that create opportunity for discussion and exchange, reap the benefits in creating goodwill and seeing diaspora make approaches with ideas, solutions and resources.

4) Pilot projects build credibility: Successful partnerships most often start small. They are based on shared accountability, systematic feedback loops and celebrate the learning that comes from trial and error. Piloting in an open, transparent manner builds experience and trust that in turn enables replication and upscaling with huge transformative power.

FEATURED PROJECTS

Capacity Development Lab

Conseil de la communauté marocaine à l'étranger: Enhancing the capacity to engage global talent through digital tools, heritage, and institutional learning.

Direction des Sénégalais de l'Extérieur & NeX-Africa SAS: Mapping diaspora skills and building institutional knowledge to coordinate, analyse and manage diaspora data.

Diaspora 4 Development grants

Mandji

Archives in motion: An artistic and digital odyssey: Preserving African cultural heritage in the archives of the 1st Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres by strengthening local skills in digitisation and artistic creation, while promoting equitable access to culture.

AJFD
Avenir des Jeunes Filles de Dapaong

Women's economic resilience through market gardening in the Savanes region of Togo: Contributing to poverty reduction and improving the income and living conditions of 38 women in rural areas through sustainable vegetable production.

Click for more

5) Culture and youth engagement enrich the enabling environment: The importance of building connections between the nation state and the diaspora cannot be overstated. Culture is a vector of connection and a vital element of diasporic identity, community building and creating a feeling of belonging. This is particularly relevant to young people in the diaspora and thus dedicating resources to youth and culture is a long-term investment that paves the way for other forms of engagement.

READ MORE

- Typology of institutions
- Starting guide: What is a diaspora organisation?
- Learning by doing: Communication for diaspora engagement
- Diaspora engagement practice database

VALUES-DRIVEN SKILLS MOBILITY

Speakers:

- Hashira Md Drus, Vice President II, TalentCorp, Ministry of Human Resources, Malaysia
- Maria Alejandra Sierra, Director of Cooperation, National Secretariat of Science and Technology (SENACYT), Guatemala
- Adriana Mendes Correia De Oliveira, Director, Avenir Ecoles Cap-Vert, Cabo Verde- France
- Jean Claude Karorero, Director, Stichting Microprojects Burundi-Netherlands

Moderator: Raffaella Greco Tonegutti, Lead expert on Migration and Development, Enabel

Skills mobility is emerging as a powerful driver of inclusive development, enabling communities to benefit from knowledge, experience, and innovation that circulate across borders. When rooted in shared values and shaped through collaboration, diaspora expertise can strengthen local systems, expand opportunities, and generate solutions that respond directly to community needs. Diaspora actors are uniquely positioned in this landscape: their dual belonging, global exposure, and strong ties to their countries of heritage allow them to bridge institutions, cultures, and approaches to development.

During this session, partners from Guatemala, Cabo Verde, Malaysia and Burundi illustrated how values-driven skills mobility takes shape in practice. Whether through scientific collaboration, women's entrepreneurship, flexible talent engagement or improved prenatal care, their initiatives showed how diaspora-led and diaspora-supported actions translate individual expertise into collective impact. Despite working in distinct sectors and regions, all projects highlighted the same underlying dynamic: skills mobility, when co-designed with local actors and anchored in community realities, strengthens national capacities, fosters shared learning, and expands pathways for inclusive development.

Grounded in the project experiences, the discussion highlighted five key takeaways to maximise the impact of values-driven skills mobility:

Click for more

FEATURED PROJECTS

Capacity Development Lab

Secretaría Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, Guatemala: Strengthening national science and innovation systems by mapping diaspora expertise and creating mechanisms for shared learning and co-designed solutions.

TalentCorp, Malaysia: Expanding talent mobility beyond return programmes through digital platforms, peer learning and new pathways for remote and hybrid contributions.

Diaspora 4 Development grants

EmpowHER Entrepreneurship & Mentorship Programme: Supporting women entrepreneurs through training, financial literacy and diaspora–local mentorship to boost income opportunities and economic autonomy.

Improving maternal health care access in rural Burundi: Reducing maternal mortality and orphanhood in Burundi by ensuring that pregnant women have access to quality prenatal care through structural and sustainable improvements to health services.

1) Skills mobility is mutual: Diaspora engagement generates two-way benefits. Local actors gain new technical knowledge, exposure and networks, while diaspora professionals reconnect with their roots and deepen their understanding of community realities. This mutual exchange, particularly evident in Guatemala's scientific diaspora platform and Burundi's health initiative, reinforces shared ownership of development outcomes.

2) Mentorship models foster intergenerational empowerment: The Cabo Verde project demonstrated that structured mentorship between local women entrepreneurs and diaspora professionals builds confidence, business skills and social empowerment. Beyond training, these relationships promote solidarity between generations and create replicable models for sustainable entrepreneurship.

3) Digital platforms enhance inclusive and flexible engagement: TalentCorp Malaysia illustrated how digital innovation can broaden diaspora participation. Tools such as the MyHeart platform enable professionals to contribute remotely – bridging distance, expanding access and supporting collaboration between institutions and individuals across borders.

4) Local ownership ensures sustainability and long-term impact: Across all projects, success depended on strong local partnerships and alignment with national systems. In Burundi, integrating diaspora-led health training into existing medical structures guarantees continuity, while in Cabo Verde and Guatemala, municipal and institutional collaboration anchors diaspora initiatives in local priorities.

5) Co-designed partnerships create collective value: The panel emphasised that inclusive dialogue between diaspora, governments and local stakeholders leads to co-created solutions rather than top-down interventions. Whether in science, entrepreneurship or healthcare, jointly defining goals ensure that skills mobility remains values-driven and community-centred.

READ MORE

- Short-term skills transfer schemes
- Collection: Skills transfer initiatives

DIGITAL INNOVATION AS A VECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Speakers:

- Toke Benson-Awoyinka, Honourable Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Lagos State Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, Nigeria
- Julienne Mukabucyana, Municipal Councillor (Toulouse), Delegate for the Organization of Local Solidarity and Humanitarian Crises, Expert for the Rwanda Biomedical Centre project, Rwanda
- Mustapha Elriz, President, Alissar
- Olivia Davis-Mbou, Founder and CEO, Mapubi e.V
- Madhab Raj Neupane, Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Advisor, Aloghar Support Group

Moderator: Hala Tarabay, Diaspora Relations Lead, EUDiF

Digital innovation is reshaping development pathways by expanding access to services, reducing inequalities, and enabling solutions tailored to local realities. When centred on human needs and embedded in local systems, digital tools can enhance service delivery across sectors such as health, education, culture, and agriculture. Diaspora actors are uniquely positioned to drive this transformation: their dual exposure, technical expertise and proximity to local contexts enable them to design, adapt and scale innovative and grounded solutions.

The experiences shared by partners across Africa and Asia revealed how diaspora-led and diaspora-supported initiatives are contributing to more inclusive digital transformations aligned with broader European cooperation efforts such as Global Gateway and Digital4Development. Despite working in vastly different sectors, all projects demonstrated how digital tools can forge new forms of collaboration, strengthen public institutions and open pathways for skills development and community empowerment.

Across interventions, five key insights emerged on how digital innovation, strengthened by diaspora engagement, acts as a vector of development:

1) Diaspora technical expertise accelerates digital inclusion and youth employability: The project led by Alissar in Lebanon demonstrated how diaspora engineers help design market-relevant digital skills programmes for vulnerable youth. By bridging local training centres and technical institutions in France and activating diaspora professional networks for internships and mentoring, such initiatives create clear post-training pathways and a replicable model for digital employability.

2) Digital tools enhance training systems and enable continuity, flexibility and scale: Insights from the collaboration with the Rwanda Biomedical Centre illustrated how online learning, virtual simulations and digital learning platforms expand the reach, quality and adaptability of medical training. Digital tools enable personalised learning, collaborative knowledge sharing and more efficient resource use. When combined with diaspora expertise and cultural understanding, they strengthen health systems while reducing barriers for learners in dispersed or resource-constrained environments.

3) Locally grounded, co-created technologies increase adoption and trust: The SmartMobileClinic initiative in Cameroon showed how diaspora actors and local health workers can co-design solutions that respond to infrastructure constraints. By involving community leaders, adapting tools to low-connectivity environments and navigating administrative bottlenecks collaboratively, diaspora organisations build trust and develop digital tools that are practical, sustainable and responsive to vulnerable populations' needs.

FEATURED PROJECTS

Capacity Development Lab

Lagos Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Nigeria: Strengthening heritage institutions in Lagos to support sustainable heritage festival development.

Rwanda Biomedical Centre: Enhancing Rwanda's mental health services by developing and delivering culturally relevant training programmes for mental health professionals.

Diaspora 4 Development grants

SmartMobileClinic – Expanding telehealth services in rural communities in Cameroon: Improving access to quality healthcare in rural areas by strengthening the use and services of the SmartMobileClinic telehealth platform in collaboration with healthcare workers and local communities.

Vulnerable youth in Beirut: Improving their digital skills for a sustainable future: Supporting the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable young people by strengthening their digital skills, employability and access to professional opportunities.

E-SALINE: Empowering coastal farmers against salinity intrusion with digital solutions in Bangladesh: Improving crop production, income and well-being of smallholder farmers in salinity-affected coastal regions of the Satkhira District.

Click for more

4) Digital innovation supports climate resilience through accessible and inclusive technologies: In Bangladesh, the E-SALINE app developed by Aloghar Support Group helps farmers adapt to salinity intrusion by providing crop recommendations in simple, accessible formats, including offline functionality and voice commands. Diaspora experts complement government and local partners by contributing technical insight and user-centred design, ensuring agriculture digital tools can be adopted even in low-literacy or low-connectivity settings.

5) Digitalisation strengthens cultural preservation and deepens diaspora–heritage ties: The Lagos State initiative underscored how digital heritage tools, such as digitised archives, festival documentation and storytelling platforms, support cultural preservation while strengthening emotional and intergenerational links with the diaspora. Working with diaspora experts enhances institutional capacity and brings global perspectives to local cultural strategies.

READ MORE

- Youth entrepreneurship & heritage tourism
- Developing Lebanon's tech sector through the Lebanese diaspora
- Preparing Guyana for digitalisation of services for the Guyanese diaspora

"To succeed in low-infrastructure environments, digital solutions must be co-created with local actors. When diaspora and local health workers design tools together, the result is technology people can actually use, even offline, even in rural areas."

– Olivia Davis-Mbou, Founder and CEO, Mapubi e.V, Cameroon-Germany

LOCAL ACTION IN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

Speakers:

- Ulan Nogoibaev, Head of the Secretariat at the Migration and Human Trafficking Council under the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic
- Coumba Diouck, Co-president and Founder of SenHandiCare
- Myriam Bouillaud, Programme Manager, Gbobètô
- Chido Govera, Director, The Future of Hope VZW
- Maria Fernanda Sarmiento Castaño, Associate Member, Kunstrial e.V

Moderator: Florian Krins,Head of Component Diaspora Cooperation, GIZ

Bringing diaspora-driven development to the local level is challenging, yet its impact is particularly profound in rural and underserved communities. With their dual perspective and deep understanding of both local realities and cultural contexts, diaspora actors promote approaches that are inclusive, rooted in lived experience and locally grounded.

Across our five projects on inclusion and local action, this practice exchange spotlighted diaspora-led initiatives tackling inequality and marginalisation, showcasing concrete examples of how diaspora engagement can strengthen local development and benefit those often left behind, including women, youth, rural populations, and people with disabilities. Throughout the discussion, four key insights stood out:

1) Local participation and diaspora co-design are essential for lasting impact: Success of inclusion-oriented projects is not measured by how many of those representing underserved communities attend meetings, but by how many of them shape decisions, and drive policy transformation. This shifts development from top-down intervention into inclusive community-led governance driven by locally rooted experience. Kurak Voices empowers local leaders in Kyrgyzstan working with women to promote public dialogue and create safe spaces for sensitive topics, related to the domestic violence, discrimination, gender stereotypes, family conflicts and women solidarity. Diaspora co-design and mentorship tailored and translated innovative methodology – both metaphorically and literally – to the local context.

"Real inclusion begins when they [communities] are not symbolic guests, but co-creators and innovators — when we don't just offer them a seat in the room, but a chair at the table"

– Ulan Nogoibaev, Head of the Secretariat at the Migration and Human Trafficking Council under the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic

2) Women's leadership drives community resilience: Women play a pivotal role in resilience-building and community development. They are highly present in sectors such as health, food, and community care, where their leadership contributes to more sustainable and inclusive development outcomes, including improved access to healthcare, better waste management, enhanced nutrition for children, and greater support for people with disabilities and their families.

D4D Grants projects in Zimbabwe and Senegal, led by women, strengthen local food systems, improve nourishment for women and children, and reshape attitudes toward disability, reducing stigma and fostering more inclusive care practices. By building on the leadership of women already active within their communities, these initiatives achieve more effective and sustainable results than external intervention alone.

3) Institutional partnerships at the local level legitimise and scale diaspora initiatives: Effective community action relies on cooperation with local authorities. In practice, diaspora actors often encounter a gap between their enthusiasm and the realities and capacities of local governance structures. While diaspora organisations may bring resources, technical expertise and strong motivation, they can sometimes overlook informal systems or pre-existing power dynamics within communities. Recognising these disparities early enables more realistic planning, strategy adjustment and trust-building.

Gbobètô's illustrates that development initiatives succeed not when diaspora arrives as external problem-solvers, but when they engage as collaborative partners integrated into local ecosystems. Sustainable impact emerges when local actors retain decision-making power and when capacity-building efforts are matched with institutional and structural support.

"It is important to work with local actors and stakeholders. You must be humble, honest, and willing to step back to observe. This way, you don't compete with local stakeholders. We may act out of love for our motherland, but we should never impose our ideas — the everyday challenges of those who live there must come first."

– Myriam Bouillaud, Programme Manager, Gbobètô, Benin-France

Click for more

FEATURED PROJECTS

Capacity Development Lab

Migration and Human Trafficking Council under the Speaker of the Kyrgyz Republic's Parliament: In collaboration with Association DANAKER, empowering local communities through inclusive public dialogues.

Diaspora 4 Development grants

DynamoLAB: Access to training – Strengthening local capacities for rural just energy transition: Addressing the lack of practice-based education for rural youth and women in Colombia through awareness-raising, certified training, and hands-on solar installations.

Towards a sustainable, inclusive and circular urban ecosystem in Porto-Novo Benin: Strengthening circular economy practices through local sorting, recycling, and awareness-raising.

I have access to healthcare, I am fulfilled: Improving access to healthcare, strengthens caregivers' independence, and fosters social inclusion for children with disabilities in Touba, Senegal.

Zim Mushroom Spawn Solutions: empowering mushroom farmers through local mother spawn production: Building local expertise and capacity in mushroom mother culture and spawn production, empowering farmers in Zimbabwe.

4) Diaspora bridges innovation in circular economy and environmental projects and empowers youth and fosters responsibility: By promoting practice-based, community-rooted training models, diaspora actors can help ensure that the green transition also benefits those often left behind — especially rural youth and women.

The experience of Kunstrial e.V in Colombia shows that diaspora expertise is most impactful when channelled into hands-on, decentralised learning spaces where participants can experiment, collaborate and turn technical knowledge into practical solutions. This approach fosters confidence and agency by enabling participants to design and install their own green technologies, while also strengthening community resilience and contributing to more sustainable local infrastructure.

READ MORE

- Diaspora Youth Recommendations: Integrating youth perspectives in migration policy processes
- Collection: Youth-focused diaspora engagement initiatives
- Collection: Women empowerment & gender-focused diaspora engagement initiatives
- Connecting the dots: gender & diaspora engagement

WHAT COMES NEXT?

At EUDiF we will continue to deepen our partnerships and facilitate connections between project partners whilst analysing the results, conducting research and framing future discussions. We are committed to ensuring that the momentum of the Future Forum translates into concrete action in all our areas of work.

The projects presented at the conference are already advancing apace. In the six weeks following the conference, D4D grantees delivered sonograms to Burundi and saline-detectors to Bangladesh, while CDL projects in Kyrgyzstan and Nigeria wrapped up activities on Inclusive Public Dialogue and digitising intangible cultural heritage at local level through diaspora expertise. To stay updated with these and other initiatives, visit the News section of our website.

The research on the how diaspora organisations build sustainable business models presented at the Forum will be published in early 2026, accompanied by a case study from a diaspora actor inspired by the Future Forum. In the meantime, our Library offers a wealth of resources to explore.

Looking ahead, 2026 will be a year focused on implementation—with new projects launching—and on continuous analysis, generating new knowledge resources that we look forward to sharing at the Future Forum 2027. Stay tuned to be the first to know when more information becomes available.

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