



Pilot mapping and profiling of the Mauritian diaspora in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom: Stories of belonging, impact and opportunity

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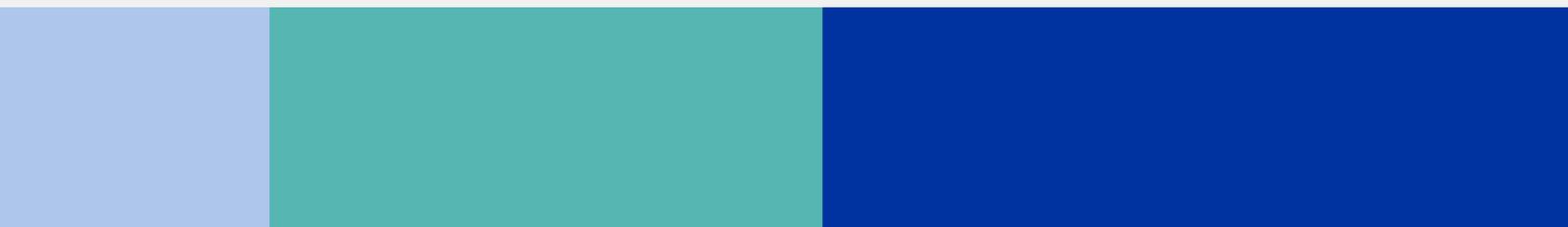
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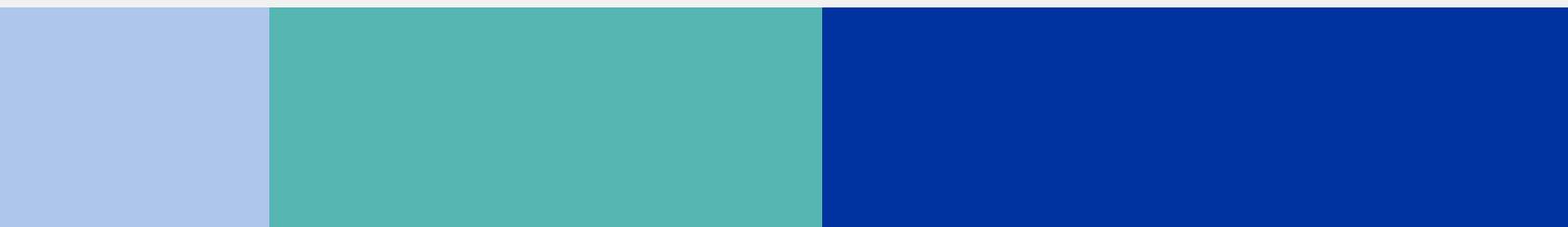
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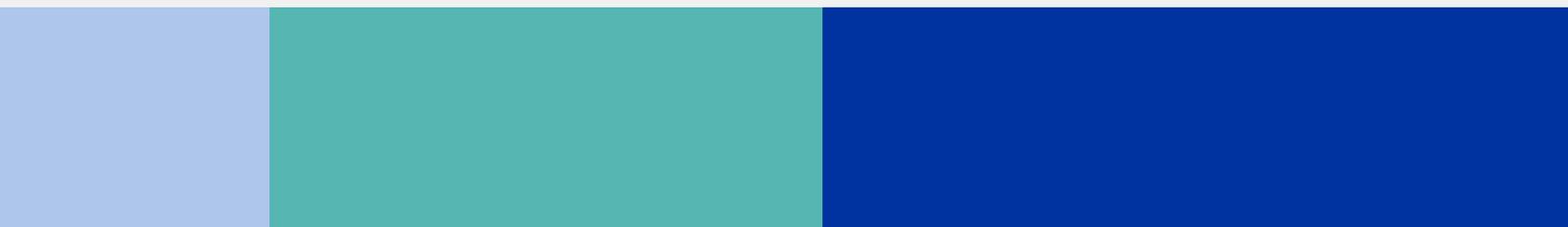
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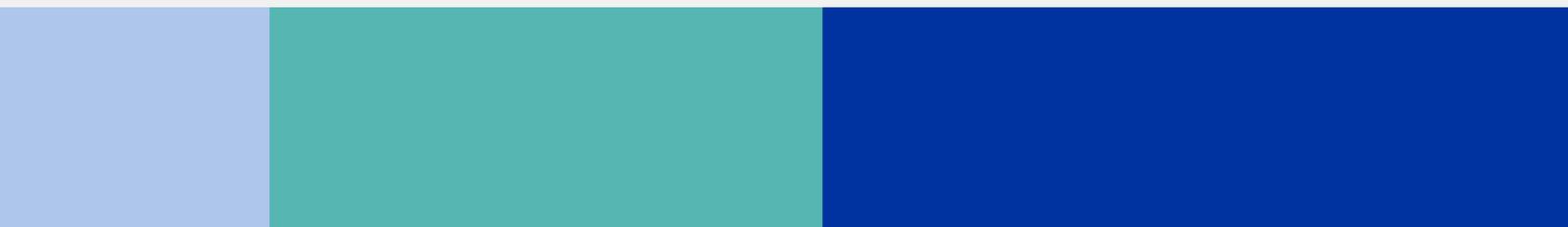
We hope the report does justice to all the hard work being done by everyone above.

Mr. Martin Russell, PhD and Mrs. Emira Ajeti.
IOM Consultants



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

IOM	International Organization for Migration
TWG	Technical Working Group
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs



INTRODUCTION

This is the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Pilot Mapping and Profiling of the Mauritian Diaspora report as part of the “Building the capacity of the Mauritian Government to strengthen linkages with the Mauritian diaspora” project. This pilot mapping and profiling arrives at a time marked by an increasing awareness and appreciation from a variety of stakeholders in the Republic of Mauritius of the strategic role that the Mauritian diaspora can play as a co-creator of the future of the country.

This pilot mapping was a listening and learning exercise with the ambition to reach out to the Mauritian diaspora in three pilot countries/regions of destination – Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, as the world looks beyond the complexities and implications of the global pandemic, early signs are emerging of diaspora engagement being positioned as front and centre of economic recovery plans for many small countries. This diaspora moment is shifting towards a diaspora movement, and the Republic of Mauritius can join this movement to bring value to its people abroad and its people at home.

Methodology

The design and research apparatus for the project was conducted through the deployment of different information sources/tools and mobilization of international expertise, addressing the non-availability of reliable data on Mauritian diaspora communities. Through a mixed-method approach, the research drew upon methodologies aligned with contemporary diaspora studies including extensive desk research and stakeholder consultations (semi-structured interviews and diaspora surveys were utilized). The surveys consisted of a Mauritian Diaspora Institutional Survey for diaspora organizations/networks and a Mauritian Diaspora Individual Survey for each of the target countries/regions.

Field research was not possible due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Other key limitations that impacted the methodological roll-out included the fact that diaspora were not familiar with the IOM, levels of digital literacy, aftermath of the MV Wakashio Oil Spill, lack of trust from diaspora, the fragmented nature of the diaspora, and a lack of an existing representative sample (database of Mauritians living in target countries).

To counter the impact of these limitations, local Mauritian Diaspora Advisory Groups were developed in key target countries/regions for the research. An extensive media and marketing campaign, supported by IOM and Beyond Communications – a Mauritian based communications agency, was developed to build awareness of the project culminating in the development of the “Mauritius: A Diaspora Success Story” webinar series. The researchers also adopted an open and transparent communication culture with the diaspora throughout.

Overall, the direct impact of these methodology outputs for the research were 9 advisory group meetings, 61 stakeholder interviews, and 624 responses to the survey (49 respondents to Institutional Survey and 575 responses to Individual Survey).

Key Research Questions

The report addresses key research questions that can be divided into 3 key categories: data, design, and operational questions. By extrapolating new insight into these issues, the report recommends steps for the development of a system of diaspora engagement for the Republic of Mauritius that is civically bound, participatory and inclusive. These recommendations are based upon a foundational aspiration of ensuring diaspora engagement mutually benefits the Republic of Mauritius and the Mauritian diaspora.

Data Questions

- Who are the Diaspora?
- Where are the Diaspora?
- What are they doing?

Design Questions

- How can Mauritius support the Diaspora? How can the Diaspora support Mauritius?
- What are the aims, concerns, needs, and hopes of the Mauritian Diaspora?
- What are the interests of the Diaspora for their future relationship with Mauritius?

Operational Questions

- What policies/programmes/projects can we shape in the short and midterm?
- What is the role of each stakeholder in this work?
- How can we build a better culture of diaspora engagement in Mauritius?

Definition

The first research commitment to achieving this mutuality comes in the form of definition. The diversity and richness of Mauritian cultures, histories, and the realities of the diaspora means that any diaspora engagement framework for the Republic of Mauritius must be based on this diversity. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, the Mauritian diaspora is defined as

citizens of Mauritius living abroad - along with those who have an ancestral tie to Mauritius or a sense of connection to Mauritius.

This is in line with global best practice on diaspora engagement and it is a recommendation of this report that such an inclusive definition remain at the heartbeat of diaspora engagement for the Republic of Mauritius.

MAURITIAN DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL SNAPSHOT

The diversity of Mauritian history and society positions it as a diaspora nation from its conception. This is a unique window of opportunity for the Republic of Mauritius as the historical contexts that have shaped its creation has positioned diaspora at the heartbeat of Mauritian communities both at home and now in the communities that reside abroad. The Republic of Mauritius and its people abroad have an authenticity in diaspora engagement that is rare.

Diaspora and the Republic of Mauritius: A Necessary Endeavour

The historical flows of emigration that have formed the diaspora communities in the target countries of this pilot study indicate that the engagement of the Mauritian diaspora is a policy of necessity not choice for safeguarding the future well-being of the Republic of Mauritius. Diaspora is a growth industry for the country.

Muritians living abroad equate to 14.8 per cent of the national population. In Australia, there was a significant increase since 2005 where the number of Mauritians grew from 20,300¹ to 31,400 in 2019 (UN DESA, 2019). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, there was noteworthy growth from the turn of the century when the community grew from 26,200 to 48,800 in 2019 (Ibid.). Since the turn of the century, the number of Mauritians in Canada has grown from 6,600 to 16,900 last year (Ibid.).

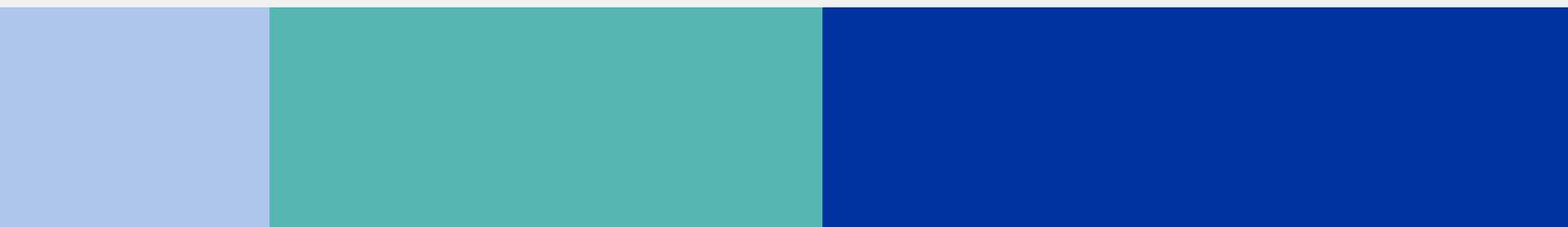
Mauritian Diaspora Networks: Landscape of Community, Communication and Culture

Annex II of this report outlines a mapping of over 100 Mauritian diaspora organizations and networks conducted during the desk research of this report. Key trends that emanated from this scoping is that these networks work across a 3-C framework to support and service the Mauritian diaspora – community, communication, and culture-based organizations/networks.

In terms of community networks, the key subsets of networks or organizations include advocacy, support, professional and student networks. Advocacy and support networks include some of the more established networks in all regions. Communication focused diaspora organizations are critically important within the community to gather information on home along with celebrating their heritage and linguistic culture. The connective capacity of culture to cross generations ensures that stronger promotion of Mauritian culture in the diaspora will need to be cultivated to bridge generations.

From the desk research and institutional surveys, the report finds that these networks display some intrinsic dynamics that inform the recommendations of this report. Many lack the capacity to grow and systematic support to these organizations and networks to develop their capacity will be important as to ensure they can support a sustainable system of engagement. The composition of organizations and networks is “high-tech and high-touch” with a range of well-established entities and newer, more informal networks on social media emerging as key convening points. Within this, promoting intergenerational engagement will be critical.

¹ As per request from Government of Mauritius counterparts, population estimates have been rounded to the nearest hundred figure.



MAPPING THE MAURITIAN DIASPORA IN AUSTRALIA, CANADA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

The report provides a detailed analysis of key findings from the Individual Surveys per target country across key thematic areas such as diaspora demographics, diaspora profiles (educational and profile), diaspora diplomacy (connectivity, community and care), and diaspora capital (remittances, investment and skills). These findings illustrate some subtle nuances between the ongoing and future relationships with home across the regions whilst certain threads of commonality do emerge.

Mauritian Diaspora: Stories of Achievement, Belonging and Opportunity

In terms of subtle nuances across the countries, these are rooted in the migratory histories that have contributed to the development of the diaspora in those countries. In Australia and the United Kingdom, the communities reflect a maturing diaspora where the communities have established roots. In Canada, the diaspora is at its own development stage.

However, across all regions, it is clear that the data supports that the Mauritian diaspora is filled with stories of belonging, impact and opportunity. In survey responses in all countries, there was strong data to verify key commonalities such as:



The Mauritian diaspora is gendered and generational. There is a prerequisite for engagement to ensure that the definition of the diaspora is inclusive and ties in concepts of affinity and ancestral linkages. Moreover, mainstreaming gender into diaspora engagement is a necessity to meet the reality of the Mauritian diaspora.

The diaspora is connected and committed with data indicating a strong culture of travel and support (financial and in kind) to the Republic of Mauritius rooted on a fundamental affiliation to Mauritian belonging. The data indicates that the diaspora does not envisage a quick return to Mauritius so engagements of the diaspora must reflect this reality.

Despite a general reluctance to return to Mauritius in the short to midterm, the diaspora stands with their homeland. The data indicates that it has robust capacity and propensity to contribute to the development of their homeland. Ongoing cultures of philanthropy along with an expressed desire to transfer human and social capital are illuminated in the data. The opportunity is to unlock such potential through a system of engagement that reflects some of the frustrations of the diaspora.

There is a key transition moment approaching for Mauritian diaspora engagement. There remains strong unease and criticisms for some within the diaspora on the image and sociopolitical well-being of their homeland. Such discord and discontent need to be acknowledged and engaged through a commitment to a values-driven framework of engagement. The diaspora requires a voice at the design and leadership table of the engagement process thus ensuring a mutuality of purpose.

An entry point to open this process is in the distinction between the Mauritian nation and state. The Mauritian nation is a global notion of what it means to be Mauritian and far outweighs the parameters of the concept of the Mauritian state. It is through this lens that diaspora engagement for the Republic of Mauritius can flourish as it opens the organizational and operational cultures to being ones of partnership and transparency. The recommendations of this report are designed in this spirit.

Another key step will be ensuring an ethics of care to the diaspora. Whilst stories of belonging, impact, and opportunity shine through the data, there are also strong insights on the need to narrow vulnerabilities for the communities abroad. Key issues highlighted included loneliness/isolation, lack of community support, difficulty meeting other Mauritians, and lack of dialogue. The Government of Mauritius can and should engage with the community on these issues and the recommendations that follow begin that process.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF MAURITIAN ENGAGEMENT: INSTITUTIONAL AND GAPS ANALYSIS

The current situation of diaspora engagement in the Republic of Mauritius provides a key foundational basis for development of a sustainable system of diaspora engagement. The Government of Mauritius, IOM and partners deserve recognition for enhancing this journey through this research and plans for a Diaspora Cell at Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (MFA).

Current Institutional Landscape

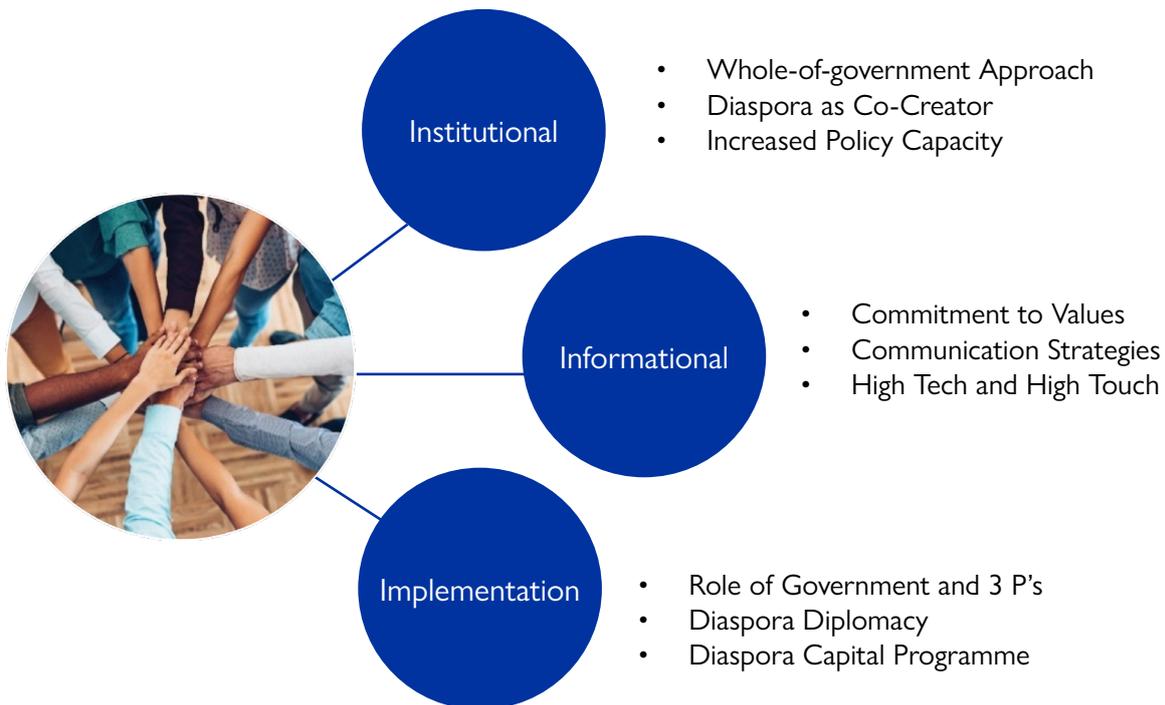
The Technical Working Group (TWG) established to help support the wider IOM Diaspora Project provides a baseline institutional mechanism upon which to develop an inter-institutional mechanism that can sustain a stronger system of diaspora engagement. This will mean embedding other key stakeholders from across the public institution landscape in the Republic of Mauritius, international partners, the private sector and the diaspora.

Current Policy and Engagement Landscape

As the IOM Migration Profile for the Republic of Mauritius in 2018 notes, “there is no dedicated institution responsible for implementing emigration policy” (IOM, 2018). With the development of a recent National Migration Policy, steps have been taken to narrow this gap. However, it will be imperative to elevate the policy and legislative standing of diaspora engagement within the Republic of Mauritius to ensure high-level and technical support to the engagement recommendations. More importantly, this will act as a sign of commitment to the diaspora and partner communities to help nurture market readiness for their support.

Early engagement designs such as the Mauritian Diaspora Scheme (MDS) and various academic diaspora engagements are innovative solutions that can be re-energized once a more viable culture of diaspora engagement is built. The data gathered during this research in areas such as preferred incentives to return, sectors of interest for diaspora contribution, and appetite for transferring human capital illustrate this. However, the current system of diaspora engagement has some important gaps to narrow.

Engaging the Mauritian Diaspora: A Gaps Analysis



The institutional gaps have already been addressed in this summary. They are centred on ensuring a whole-of-government approach, embedding the diaspora as a co-creator of the engagement journey, and ensuring increased policy capacity through the development of a diaspora engagement strategy to guide the process. The latter point is important in that the Government of Mauritius should not be expected to “go it alone” and will require capacity development investment to help them on the road ahead. Narrowing these gaps will create a viable organizational culture for engagement.

The informational gaps refer to creating an open and transparent operational culture based on values, communication and accessibility. Narrowing these gaps will accumulate trust with the diaspora by creating measurable dialogue. The cumulation of the operational culture comes by narrowing the implementation gaps which focus on the role of government and public-private partnership, enhancing diaspora diplomacy, and initiating a diaspora capital programme to unlock the diaspora capital within the diaspora.

The role of the Government of Mauritius in diaspora engagement should be one of facilitator through partnerships where they help to create the enabling environment for engagement (for example, through potential legislative reform on key issues of importance to the diaspora in the strategy for engagement). Simple steps of more effective cultural and public diplomacy as tools of diaspora diplomacy are the starting point of such engagement activities. This will, in time, allow the Government of Mauritius to deliver a series of engagement activities to attract and strengthen the diaspora capital within the global Mauritian family.

RECOMMENDATIONS: DESIGNING A DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR MAURITIUS

The recommendations are broken into two formats. Firstly, key recommendations are provided in terms of the institutional framework design to actualize the insights and arguments offered above. These recommendations are the “how to” engage the diaspora recommendations. The institutional framework design is based on three steps of leadership design, brokerage design, and design of vision and mission. It is recommended that at a top-tier level, the Government of Mauritius commit to a fifteen-year vision for the engagement of the Mauritian diaspora.

The implementation framework recommendations are based on the “what to” do in diaspora engagement for the Republic of Mauritius based on the data, insights, and testimonies gathered from the diaspora. These recommendations have key strands that are cyclic in nature and are offered as the first five-year cycle of the fifteen-year vision for engagement. Monitoring and evaluation must be built into the final design of these interventions by the Government of Mauritius and its partners.

The strands are:

- Strand 1: Institutional and Leadership Development.
- Strand 2: Diaspora Social Capital Programme.
- Strand 3: Diaspora Human Capital Programme.
- Strand 4: Diaspora Economic Capital Programme.

The recommended activities per strand are as follows:



Strand 1 – Institutional and Leadership Development

Establishment of Diaspora Cell and Inter-Institutional Steering Group on Diaspora Engagement:

The Government of Mauritius should establish the Diaspora Cell as a matter of urgency to give diaspora engagement an institutional home. It should then create an Inter-Institutional Steering Group to formalize the TWG into a public–private apparatus to engage and guide diaspora engagement.

Diaspora Engagement Training Programme for the Government of Mauritius: By investing in a training programme on diaspora engagement for the Government of Mauritius, it will ensure that the engagement activities recommended in other strands are informed by an optional process of research and development along with access to key partners.

Development of Inaugural National Diaspora Strategy: The design and incorporation of a diaspora strategy in the Republic of Mauritius will provide key consideration to the policy and legislative treatment of substantial barriers that exist to engagement. The strategy will allow for a systematic action plan of activities to be co-designed with key stakeholders such as the Government of Mauritius, diaspora, and public–private partners.

Strand 2 – Diaspora Social Capital Programme

Mauritius Means Campaign: Mauritius Means is a cultural education campaign that explores what Mauritius means to the community abroad. This will include the development of a digital communication hub/platform where the Mauritian diaspora connect, convene, and celebrate their achievements. New media such as digital networking and social media are reconfiguring the Mauritian diaspora communicative spaces and are intrinsic tools for engagement. Specific programmes and competitions should be built for Mauritian diaspora children also to explore their heritage and belonging as well as delivering a nation brand dimension to the campaign to project an informative and positive image of Mauritius abroad.

Mauritian Diaspora Leadership Network: The Government of Mauritius, in partnership with the private sector and others, can develop the Mauritian Diaspora Leadership Network. The Network can be structured at a sectoral level along with incubating the inaugural Mauritian Distinguished Diaspora Award and a special Diaspora Service Award can also be allocated for those who are actively helping Mauritius and/or the diaspora. The Network can also nurture young leaders programmes and given the strong female Mauritian diaspora then it is recommended that a Mauritian Diaspora Women’s Network be created within the wider network.

Mauritian Diaspora Summit: It is recommended that the Government of Mauritius and partners create a biannual Mauritian Diaspora Summit. The Summit will be the core convening of the global Mauritian community. Given the ongoing global pandemic, it is envisaged that this summit will occur in the mid to long term.

Strand 3 – Diaspora Human Capital Programme

Mauritian Diaspora Fellows: The Government of Mauritius, through the Higher Education Commission, can develop a diaspora fellowship programme ‘to embed’ research linkages and partnerships between academia in Mauritius and the academic diaspora. The seeds of this work are already sown, and research data indicates a preliminary supply and demand for such an initiative. A student exchange component for emerging talent can also be built into the programme.

Mauritius Mentors Initiative: The initiative is designed to be a public–private partnership between the Government of Mauritius and collaborators to create an innovative digital mentoring platform where members of the diaspora can contribute remotely to the Republic of Mauritius through mentorship of emerging talent in key target sectors back home and abroad. There is a wealth of expertise and experience in the diaspora waiting to be networked.

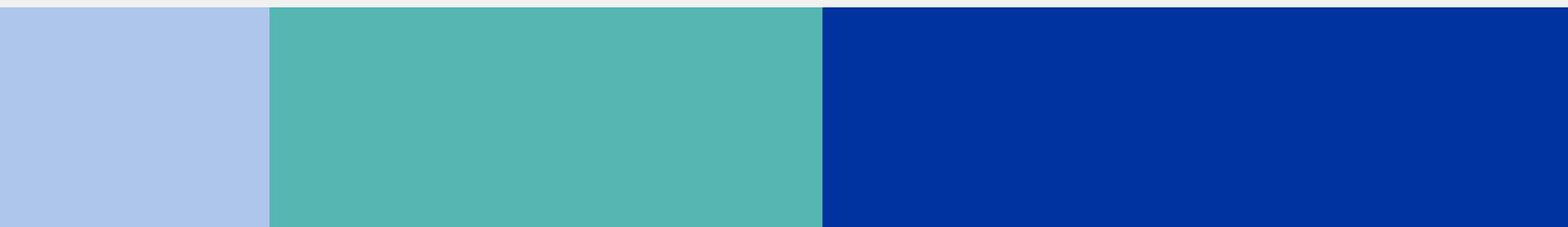
Mauritius Diaspora Next Gen Camp: The Government of Mauritius can develop an immersive cultural education and career development exchange programme for the next generation of the Mauritian diaspora to strengthen their ancestral connections to Mauritius whilst simultaneously building peer-to-peer networks with communities in the Republic of Mauritius. There is a unique opportunity to blend this cultural heritage programme with internships or short-term placements of young diaspora members with business, community, educational or social development actors in Mauritius.

Strand 4 – Diaspora Economic Capital Programme

Mauritius Diaspora Tourism Initiative: The Government of Mauritius, in association with partners, can create a year-long invitation for diaspora tourism. Additionally, Mauritian diaspora have noted they strive for their cultural heritage resources to be included in the World Heritage List. Engaging Mauritian diaspora to serve as ambassadors in such efforts is a win-win situation for strengthening engagement. Furthermore, the initiative can strategically target second and third generation diaspora to further strengthen their connections with Mauritius in conjunction with the Mauritius Means campaign.

Mauritius Diaspora Trust Fund: The Government of Mauritius, in partnership with the diaspora, can help to create a Mauritius Diaspora Trust Fund. The Fund's purpose and management structure will need careful negotiation, but it is designed to accelerate the existing culture of giving in the diaspora to support social development in the Republic of Mauritius and advance diaspora philanthropy as a tool to sensitize the diaspora to wider potentials in the Republic of Mauritius.

Mauritius Diaspora Business Competition: The Government of Mauritius with key partners can build feasibility on the development of a wider diaspora investment portfolio by creating a Mauritius Diaspora Business Competition. The competition can have two dimensions: a competition for diaspora entrepreneurs to address key socioeconomic opportunities/targets back home along with a competition for local businesses in Mauritius to access a range of supports (including potential investment) from Mauritian diaspora business leaders.



CONCLUSION

This report has been inspired by the amazing stories and people that the researchers met within the Mauritian diaspora along with a desire from the Government of Mauritius to know more about the lost actors who are now national assets for the Republic of Mauritius. Whilst challenges and barriers to engagement remain, particularly around diaspora confidence and trust with the Government of Mauritius, the commitment and passion of the Mauritian diaspora to contribute to their homeland is a dormant potential for the betterment of the Republic of Mauritius.

The opportunities for engagement far outnumber the challenges ahead. Impact for both the Republic of Mauritius and the diaspora can be realized by some simple but important steps. By creating enhancements in the development of the community abroad, bringing the Government of Mauritius and diaspora into contact more regularly, and by curating the powerful sense of belonging that exists within the Mauritian diaspora, the Government of Mauritius can begin the journey of strategic diaspora engagement.

This report commends all stakeholders for their commitment to this journey. By adopting a long-term vision based on inclusivity and transparency, it is the strong reflection of this report that Mauritian diaspora engagement can build long-term, sustainable “hearts and minds” engagements. These engagements will build connections and networks that can bring invaluable fulfilment to the Republic of Mauritius and her people abroad for the betterment of both. That is an opportunity not to be missed; it is time to meet this moment.



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