

ENGAGING DIASPORA IN DEVELOPMENT: TAPPING OUR TRANS-LOCAL POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE

**FINAL EVALUATIVE REPORT
October 1, 2011 – March 31, 2012**

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to the Canadian International Development Agency

by SFU International Development
and the Centre for Sustainable Community Development
Simon Fraser University

<http://www.sfu.ca/diasporas>

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to the potential of diaspora from the Global South to impact the development of their country of attachment. These communities are a formidable, often unrecognized, and largely untapped resource in raising awareness of international issues, mobilizing and facilitating engagement in development discussion and action, increasing understanding of international development policies and practice, and casting light on cultural and identity issues of today's transnationals. While diaspora-driven development is often carried out informally, new opportunities for local development in developing nations are taking root through the power of trans-local leaders operating globally and acting locally.

From July 2010 to February 2012, SFU International Development (IDFE) and the Centre for Sustainable Community Development (CSCD) at Simon Fraser University (SFU), with support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), led an innovative public engagement project entitled *Engaging Diaspora for Development: Tapping Our Trans-local Potential for Change*. The goal of the project was to increase active awareness and global citizenship in support of Canada's contribution to the development of a more secure, equitable, and prosperous world.

This was achieved through the establishment of a stakeholder network of organizations and individuals. Informed by the findings of an environmental scan of current diaspora-driven development in Metro Vancouver, SFU engaged this network to convene a series of five public dialogues based on the UN Millennium Development Goals and structured around powerful stories of trans-local experiences in the areas of poverty reduction, health, education, human insecurity and peacebuilding, and diasporic contributions to development. Through these dialogues, parallel research, and engaging our network, we identified priorities for learning for a series of five workshops for trans-local leaders. Concomitantly, the powerful personal narratives of diaspora-led development experiences uncovered through the project were compiled into a book of stories called *Diaspora Voices*.

A summary video of the project can be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/sfuintldev>

The project team would like to thank CIDA for providing the essential funding and support for this innovative and groundbreaking project through the Public Engagement Fund.

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PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

Expected Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline Data	Targets	Results as of Feb 28, 2012	Variance/Status
Ultimate Outcome (Long-term)					
Increased active awareness and global citizenship in support of Canada's contribution to the development of a more secure, equitable, and prosperous world.	Number of people engaged through the course of the project.	Zero	Network of diaspora continues to be active.	Network developed and active.	Completed
	Number of people that continue to access data and resources from project website.	Zero	5000 hits over the course of the project and 30 hits / month beyond the project.	Website developed and active.	Completed
	Number of concept papers developed into full proposals.	Zero	3 new proposals arise from concept papers.	4 new proposals/initiatives developed by SFU. Numerous non-SFU proposals prepared	Completed
Intermediate Outcomes (Medium-term)					
Increased awareness and understanding about the potential and importance of the diaspora in contributing to Canada's international agenda.	Number of program participants with increased understanding of the diaspora and trans-local power.	Zero To be created from evaluation forms.	70% of program participants have increased awareness. Information exchange and discussion on public fora network.	88% of evaluations demonstrate an increased understanding of diaspora and development.	Completed
Increased engagement through discussion and development of opportunities for linking the Canadian public with developing countries through the diaspora.	Number of new diaspora-facilitated linkages between Canadians and developing countries that offer opportunities to be actively engaged.	Zero Baseline to be found in initial scan.	3 new active linkages that provide opportunities for engagement.	4 new initiatives being planned at SFU. Numerous non-SFU linkages underway.	Completed

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Expected Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline Data	Targets	Results	Variance/Status
Immediate Outcomes (Short-term)					
100: Increased opportunity for Canadians to share ideas and knowledge about development through the creation of linkages across diasporic groups and with the broader public.	Number of new linkages between Canadians, through the diaspora, with developing countries.	Zero	5 new linkages developed and active. Communication networks established and active.	4 new SFU linkages underway. Numerous non-SFU linkages also established Communication networks and fora established and active.	Completed
200: Strengthened support for Canadian and international development efforts to increase global equity through access to stories, dialogues, and media.	Number of people who have participated in focus groups, dialogues, and events who are more supportive of international development efforts.	Zero Baseline of support to be assessed on event evaluation form.	70% of project participants have increased awareness and support. 5% of project participants become network members.	94% of evaluations demonstrate increased understanding of development. 108 people access project social media, (9% of participants joined networks including social media and workshops)	Completed
300: Increased understanding of and capacity for meaningful participation in Canada's international assistance program.	Number of people who have participated in focus groups, dialogues, and events who have more skills and insight into engaging in Canada's international assistance program.	Zero.	70% of project participants have increased awareness. 5% of project participants have new skills to become engaged.	All participants report increased awareness of Canada's international assistance program. 88% people report new capacity for engagement.	Completed

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Expected Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline Data	Targets	Results	Variance/Status
Outputs					
110: 90 Canadians from across stakeholder groups participate in meetings/focus groups on diaspora and development.	<p>Number of members of steering committee and number of meetings held.</p> <p>Number of men and women that participate in focus groups.</p> <p>Number of focus groups.</p>	<p>Zero</p> <p>Zero</p> <p>Zero</p>	<p>1 Project Advisory Committee (PAC) of approx. 15 people. 3 to 5 meetings.</p> <p>Approximately 60 participants in total.</p> <p>3 focus groups.</p>	<p>1 PAC of 18 people (8 men, 10 women) established and operational.</p> <p>3 meetings held.</p> <p>55 participants 23 men, 32 women).</p> <p>4 focus groups held.</p>	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Smaller focus groups allowed for deeper exploration. Extra groups planned to meet target numbers.</p> <p>Completed.</p>
120: Assessment of scope of activity of diaspora in development (environmental scan) available to the public.	<p>Research conducted on current diaspora-driven activities in Metro Vancouver.</p> <p>Report available to the public.</p>	Zero	Environmental scan report prepared and posted for public access.	Iterative research (see Appendix 1).	On track.
130: A new network of diasporic communities and those interested in diaspora and development established.	Communication mechanisms established and in use.	To be established from environmental scan report.	<p>1 Facebook group</p> <p>1 website</p> <p>1 listserv</p> <p>1 twitter account</p> <p>1 blog series</p> <p>1 Project Launch for key stakeholders</p>	<p>Facebook group established and active - 199 members.</p> <p>http://www.sfu.ca/diasporas-9,528 hits.</p> <p>1,215 members.</p> <p>SFU Diaspora with 196 followers.</p> <p>http://engagingdiaspora.wordpress.com/ 26 blogs posted</p> <p>70 attendees</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>

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Expected Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline Data	Targets	Results	Variance/Status
210: 750 Canadians have an increased awareness of international development priorities.	Number of dialogues held. Number of dialogue participants. Perceived usefulness of dialogues. Collection (electronic / audio / video) of stories of the diasporic engagement.	Zero Zero	5 dialogues 750 participants (150 each). 1 collection of stories.	5 dialogues held. 1. <i>Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth</i> – 160 participants. 2. <i>Improving Health</i> – 125 participants. 3. <i>Education for Development</i> – 114 participants. 4. <i>Human Insecurity & Peacebuilding: Diaspora Perspectives and Roles</i> – 137 participants. 5. <i>Diasporic Contributions to Development: Opportunities and Lessons Learned</i> – 166 participants. Total: 702 participants Collection of stories on website. <i>Diaspora Voices</i> book produced.	Completed
220: 1 website & 5 sets of multi-media (videos, podcasts, etc.) available to the public.	Number of times website accessed. Number of times multi-media viewed.	Zero Zero	5000 hits / downloads.	Website launched www.sfu.ca/diasporas 9,528 hits.	Target exceeded.
310: 100 trans-local and diasporic leaders /practitioners better prepared to engage meaningfully in Canada' development efforts.	Number of leaders/practitioners that participate in workshops. Number of workshops. Perceived usefulness of workshops.	Zero Zero	5 workshops 100 participants. 5 facilitators.	6 workshops held with 24 participants and 6 facilitators. Positive evaluations – 100%	Completed.
320: 5 concept papers for future engagement around diaspora and development available for further exploration.	Number of concept papers produced for future consideration.	Zero	5 papers produced.	5 concept papers developed and available on website.	Completed.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

All planned project results have been either completed or exceeded, including:

Outcome 100: convening five public dialogues, producing five think piece documents on themes related to the dialogues, designing and hosting a series of five learning workshops with diaspora project leaders, conducting 5 focus groups, conducting a program needs assessment, conducting conceptual research and establishing a growing network of Canadians interested in sharing ideas and knowledge about development. Networks and communication media (including the website, a listserv, a Facebook group, and a Twitter account, and a blog account) were expanded and saw growing participation. In addition, the iterative research was completed.

Outcome 200: Support for Canadian and international development efforts was strengthened through the dialogues, blog series and the posting of relevant information, research, dialogue videos and photos, and diaspora stories on the project website.

Outcome 300: The capacity to engage in international development was increased through the delivery of six workshops, as well as the creation of a blog series and theme papers.

Changes to Planned Activities

Major changes to planned activities included:

1. the decision to host a project launch on October 13, 2010 for key stakeholders from Metro Vancouver.
2. the decision to hold four rather than three focus groups; speaking with smaller groups allowed for more in-depth understanding of trans-local initiatives and needs.
3. the production of three engaging videos that showcased some of the diaspora-led initiatives, which have been posted on our project YouTube channel.
4. through support from an NGO partner, a sixth workshop for diaspora development practitioners was held.

LESSONS LEARNED

Public Dialogues

The five public dialogues averaged 150 people per session. There were many excellent observations and contributions made during these sessions that have shed light on the rich lived experience of diaspora leaders who are driving development projects in regions of attachment in the Global South. Given the great diversity of experiences and perspectives, the dialogues were often divergent and freewheeling yet important insights and ideas for action were emergent.

According to the feedback from evaluations, many who attended these free public dialogues reported that it was the **first time a space had been opened up** for stories of diaspora experiences. There was a profound appreciation for the opportunity for connecting across differences; the dialogues offered a rare venue for public expression, and over time, the cumulative experience was one of community building.

New partnerships were forged and participants experienced increased motivation to continue with the challenges of their development initiatives. There were increased feelings of support and shared values, as well as frustration regarding inadequate institutional and financial support for “untapping” diaspora potential.

The engagement grew over time. Many participants at the dialogues attended more than one session in the series and others heard about the programming through friends, word of mouth, the SFU network, and ads in the Georgia Straight. Those who attended the public dialogues and the workshop series noted that they particularly enjoyed the small group format that preceded the large group sessions. Others came expecting a more traditional presentation/lecture approach and were surprised by the degree of participation invited. In terms of attendance, the numbers grew over time and the fact that there were new attendees at every dialogue indicated that the interest was growing.

New voices were discovered. The dialogues invited a multitude of voices and issues raised were wide ranging. This was indicative of broad interest and a unique opportunity for people to find each other and share their views.

Examining complex issues is not always easy. Sometimes it was difficult in the midst of the dialogue to recognize the connections and links made by the contributions. Upon reflection, the meaning of the dialogue was often more clear. “When you step back from the dialogue you see what may have seemed like an irrelevant point was actually quite profound.”

Workshop Series

The workshop series (6 half-day sessions over 6 months) was successful because of the high level of discourse; the smaller size (maximum 24 people at each one) and the way the participants acted as co-learners along with special guest resource people, allowed for the opportunity to work through challenges and share successes.

There were many themes emergent from this series: It was considered by those who attended as a good place to gain skills about specific ways to ‘do’ development, including fundraising, articulating the project’s story, and project design/ modeling. However, as important, the series gave participants the opportunity to question ways of doing development and look for greater innovation. Above all, because the individuals participating in the workshops remained fairly constant over the series, strong inter-group relations were forged and resources shared among group members. Participants continue to share ideas and successes through an email list serv.

Tensions:

The written feedback from participants consistently offered positive observations, but analysis of the feedback and impressions also revealed a series of tensions:

- Community and academia (i.e., in terms of language/level of discourse, stories/theories).
- Theory and practice of development (assumptions about development were constantly questioned).
- Tight and loose structure (i.e., if the session programmed too many stories this did not allow for spontaneous commentary, too few stories failed to anchor the program and the dialogue was less focused).

- Talking and action (i.e., many people were happy to have the opportunity to examine the many layers and interconnections of the issues while others pressed for immediate change, often to “big lever” policies that needed to be made at the federal level (e.g., accreditation of foreign credentials and funding to small scale diaspora driven development projects).

Feedback from the participants of the dialogues and workshops as well as the Program Advisory Committee indicated that the project managed to find a good balance of not programming too tightly, and pre-determining or over defining outcomes for the series. This allowed space for the inclusion of academics, activists, and the public interested in development issues.

Key messages heard from the dialogue and workshop

- Diasporas are making a difference.
- Their work would benefit from greater public, government, and university recognition and support – individually and collectively.
- Established organizations such as SFU and CIDA should take a leadership role and build on the momentum.

PROJECT RESEARCH (see Appendix 1)

PROJECT BUDGET & FINANCIAL REPORT (see Appendix 2)

Appendix 1: Project Research Report

Research Findings – A Summary

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This report summarizes the research methods and findings of the *Engaging Diaspora in Development* (EDD) Project. Although diaspora come from all regions of the world, the project's focus was on diaspora originating in the Global South living in Canada, and in particular those residing in the Greater Vancouver Area (GVA).

Research Questions

Three sets of questions informed the research:

1. Who/what is the diaspora and is any value added to our understanding of development patterns and outcomes at various scales and places by a focus on diaspora?
2. What is the nature and scope of diaspora contributions to development, and what type of development?
3. What conditions enable (and constrain) diaspora-led development, within 'host' and 'home' societies as well as transnationally and globally? What are the main challenges to and strategies for effective engagement of diaspora in development?

Method

In seeking to answer these questions, the study adopted a modified 'grounded theory' approach, drawing inspiration from various strands of social theory and critical constructivism. The focus was on interpreting and understanding meanings constitutive of diasporic social action and interaction, exploring the various forms that meaningful social action assumed, and interrogating dominant representations of social reality and the forms of knowledge produced. At the core of the research was a narrative analysis in which the researcher listened to the 'stories' of research subjects in the effort to understand the relationships between their experiences and their social framework.

The research was undertaken through a series of steps. The first involved an extensive review of the literature on diaspora and their role in development, and preparation of an exhaustive annotated bibliography. The second involved a critical exploration of the diaspora concept and the preparation of a *Concept and Research Note* (Oct 10, 2010). It developed a framework for conducting research into the nature of diaspora located in the

GVA and the scope of their development activities. This framework, subsequently refined through interviews with diaspora leaders, and discussions with members of the EDD Project Advisory Committee (PAC), and SFU graduate students, helped generate research questions.

The third step was an ‘environment scan’ designed to map the scope, scale and variety of development activities internationally and in Canada undertaken by diasporic individuals, groups and organizations in the GVA. Interviews were conducted with 12 diasporic leaders as part of the environment scan. While this was not an exhaustive survey of such organizations and may fall short of being a fully representative sample of the diversity of diaspora in the GVA, it did provide rich insights into the activities, motivations and challenges facing a diverse group of diasporic individuals and organizations. These organizations are all headed by individuals claiming a sense of connectedness to regions outside of Canada spanning Africa, South and East Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America.

The main sources of data included the narratives (‘perspectives’, ‘contexts’, ‘scripts’, and ‘frames’) of diaspora members living in and around the GVA who participated in the EDD project workshops, dialogues, and focus groups. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups discussions and small-group workshops, and participant observation in dialogues. Major secondary sources included document analysis of published scholarly, policy, and community-based literature.

Major Issues and Findings

Four main sets of findings are summarized, addressing the core research questions -- on the nature of diaspora; the nature and scope of their development activities; the enabling conditions for diaspora led development; and the challenges to and criteria for enhanced engagement.

Section I: Nature of Diaspora

After conducting the extensive literature review and in the context of preliminary observations of participants in the EDD project, four major issues arose:

Issue 1. How to reconcile the emphasis on fixed ethno-cultural communities linking ‘host’ and ‘home’ in the diaspora literature with ‘real world’ observations that the bases of collective identity among diasporic groups varied widely.

For example, in the GVA, diaspora-led development activities included those for whom shared ethno-cultural attributes was central (e.g. Nepal Cultural Society of BC) to those who did not affiliate with any specific diaspora in particular (e.g. Mosaic, Immigrant Services Society of BC, Maria-Helena Foundation). Diaspora also included groups that were divided or fragmented reflecting divisions in ‘home’ countries (e.g. diaspora from Rwanda and Columbia). The data also revealed that the identities of diaspora are

contingent and contextual and defined at various scales. Good examples are diaspora from Somalia who variously identify with ‘clan’ sub-groupings, a national group (Somali), and continental/global (‘African’/‘black’); and members of ‘Latincoover’ whose identity is defined to encompass virtually all Spanish and Portuguese-speaking people from Central and South America and the Caribbean living in the GVA. We also found that diaspora attachments could be based on ‘place’ where people feel an attachment to a ‘home’ place or location even when they do not apparently possess (what the literature has deemed to be) the same ‘objective’ ethno-cultural attributes as the inhabitants of that location. A prominent example are members of the Ismaili faith in the GVA who feel an attachment to locations in East Africa even though they differ ethno-culturally from the majority of inhabitants in these regions.

The research report thus cautions against over-emphasizing static ethno-cultural attributes in identifying diaspora, and notes that the growing popularity of the diaspora concept in public policy and academia is potentially a move towards studying people in their own right. It represents a way to go beyond the essentializing (and often racialized and pejorative) discourses associated with reified notions of ‘ethnicity’, ‘culture’, ‘tradition’, ‘tribe’ etc, that are often imposed on ‘ethnic minorities’ from the Global South living in the Global North.

Issue 2. How to reconcile the ‘groupism’ attributed to diaspora in the literature with the observation that in the GVA it was often *individual* diasporic actors who took the initiative, made connections and mobilized resources in support of development activities; and that only a relatively small fraction of the overall number of any given diaspora are actively engaged in development activities. This was true in virtually every case of diaspora-led development originating in the GVA that we examined.

Issue 3. How to differentiate diaspora development networks and organizations from traditional development NGOs and other actors in ‘civil society’. We observed that although many diaspora organizations are modeled along the lines of NGOs and charitable organizations, there was something different about them. In the GVA, they include highly institutionalized organizations deeply integrated in the institutional landscape of British Columbia (SUCCESS, Mosaic, and Immigrant Services Society of BC) to others that operate independently of an institutional framework (Point Youth Media, BC Young Afghans). They also included networks and organizations that were more ad hoc and amorphous.

Issue 4. How to differentiate diaspora from immigrants/migrants. We also observed that although all diaspora are ‘immigrants’ (in the sense that they or their ancestors migrated from somewhere else into Canada), not all immigrants/migrants become or are diasporic. ‘Diaspora’, unlike the broader category of ‘immigrant/migrant’ requires the existence of some kind of ‘consciousness’ about, and connection to, individuals and groups in two or more locations based on some kind of meaningful and *enduring* structured social relationship.

In response to these observations, the research report reformulated the diaspora concept arguing that diaspora are better defined not by *who* the people are in a primordial sense (i.e. based on fixed ethno-national, socio-cultural, religious, linguistic or racial attributes) but by *where they are* (spatiotemporally) and *what they do*. Diaspora, then, is conceived simultaneously as a *space* of connections and activities ('being in a diaspora'); and a *process/condition* ('becoming diasporic' or 'acting diasporically').

The report offered the following theoretical/conceptual definition of diaspora:

Diaspora is a space of civic engagement occupied by individuals/groups connecting their locations of current settlement ('host') with locations of 'origin' ('home') via translocated and embedded social relationships. It is also a process/condition in which individuals/groups reflexively (re)position to form attachments with other individuals/groups in 'host' and 'home' based on assumed identities, shared values and interests.

The theoretical/conceptual definition was operationalized by identifying key attributes of diaspora and distinguishing diaspora from other related phenomena (particularly other civil society actors such as development NGOs, and from immigrants/migrants generally). The discussion below elaborates briefly on these attributes, and provides illustrative examples from the environment scan, interviews, dialogues, focus groups and workshops.

Attribute 1: Diaspora as a space of translocated and embedded social relationships

As a *space* (or spaces) of connections, attachments, and activities, diaspora is a facet or manifestation of civil society. Diaspora civil society actors, however, generally differ from the more recognized associations such as traditional NGOs in the following ways:

1) Translocation: Diaspora often combine links and attachments to locations of 'origin' with experiences obtained in the locations of settlement. Much more than traditional transnational NGOs involved in development, contemporary diaspora are by definition linked or attached to two or more locations simultaneously. The ability of diaspora to be and act in more than one location simultaneously, in part a product of the enhanced mobility spawned by globalization, is described in the report as one of *translocation* (modified from the original notion of 'translocality' developed in the Concept and Research Note). In this sense, rather than describe diaspora as occupying more than one location, it may be more accurate to say they occupy spaces that are neither wholly 'here' nor 'there'. Integral to the notion of translocation is *transilience* – the ability to move across two or more locations fairly quickly. As used in this context, transilience addresses not only the relative speed of physical movement between different locations, but also the relative ease (and speed) in the ability to change and adapt to those locations.

2) Embeddedness: Diaspora display a 'dual embeddedness' in relation to 'host' and 'home' locations. Embeddedness here simply refers to being enmeshed/encompassed within a larger context of structured social relationships, based on assumed (not pre-determined and fixed) cultural, linguistic, and other extra-familial traits and attributes.

Embeddedness is a key factor generating social trust and establishing and stabilizing expectations. Traditional NGOs, by contrast, tend to be disembedded and somewhat 'disconnected' or 'distanced'. Although this appears to be changing, the very principles of humanitarian internationalism upon which traditional more established NGOs have operated – impartially and neutrality – necessitate that they maintain some 'distance' between themselves and the people/issues they assist and champion.

Embeddedness, together with their transience, gives diaspora varying abilities to 'blend in', 'fit in', gain 'acceptance', win 'trust' and 'legitimacy', and acquire 'fluency' (i.e. knowledge of languages, local social norms, mores, customs, habits, etc.) that enable them to participate in both locations in ways traditional NGOs cannot. Embeddedness also means that diaspora can tolerate higher levels of social 'ambiguity' in terms of construing meanings, values and practices than traditional NGOs.

Various participants in the dialogues, focus groups and interviews made reference to these notions (translocation and embeddedness) although they did not use the exact terminology. For example, in the first dialogue, Sumana Wijeratna, founder of the Van Lanka Community Foundation which helps build sustainable community development projects in Sri Lanka, and Antonio Arreaga Honorary Consul General of Costa Rica in Canada and founder of the Ethno Business Council of BC, both alluded to translocation and embeddedness in explaining the added value of their activities. Fahreen Dossa, who has worked with Doctors without Borders, noted in an interview how familiarity with the language, religion and cultural mores of Pakistan and Afghanistan greatly assisted her work in these regions. She made some very interesting observations in reference to differences between diaspora and traditional NGOs that are worth reproducing in some detail because they were echoed by many of the participants in the dialogues, workshops, and focus groups:

"If we go to another community we are observers, guests, and partners. NGOs try to control things, to shape and direct the projects in which they are working in an effort to establish themselves. They should be focusing on increasing partnerships with the local people... Expatriate members (of international NGOs) are separate from locals in developing country communities... They are not interested in social understandings with the locals, and remain outsiders... The best way to undertake development work is to have an attitude of reciprocity, of multicultural sharing, and collaborative partnership. We need to pay more than lip service to these ideas. I disempowered myself [in my development work]; I didn't take control and direct others about what to do. I was always an observer."
(Fahreen Dossa Interview, October 3 2010)

Attribute 2: Diaspora as a process/condition of reflexive (re)positioning

As a process/condition, the research report argues that individuals/groups are, or become, diasporic when reflexively they relate to and identify with individuals and groups living in

other locations to whom they perceive an attachment. Contemporary diaspora thus tend to form 'reflexive communities' -- particular ways of behaving, thinking and reaching decisions by individuals/groups, which in turn reflect the social construction of their position in wider society at a particular location and time. These communities, forged by complex cognitive and affective linkages and attachments including solidarity, empathy, patriotism, guilt, pride, etc., are rooted in historical processes conditioned by contemporary globalization.

From this perspective, the diasporic condition *is* a social identity in itself that enables particular forms of agency, which migrants/immigrants assume or acquire when they think, feel and act in particular ways. Thus, although all diaspora are migrants/immigrants not all migrants are or become diasporic.

Diaspora, then, are distinguishable from larger immigrant/migrant social formations by three features central to diasporic agency and reflexivity:

- 1) A level of consciousness or awareness of being in a diaspora;
- 2) An on-going attachment to and relationship with people in other locations beyond immediate familial ties, obligations and remittances; and
- 3) An 'ethic of commitment and obligation', not to the self but to wider 'imagined' communities -- i.e. the belief that 'I/we can make a difference'.

The notion of 'reflexive (re)positioning' thus reveals that translocation denotes not only the spatiotemporal movement of diaspora between different physical locations but also the contextual and situational 'movement' of diaspora between and across identities. This facilitates the investigation of other constructions of difference (in addition to 'culture') based on various identifiers and signifiers, and identity becomes part of 'process' rather than a static attribute. Conceptualizing diaspora as a process/condition of reflexive (re)positioning also makes it possible to look beyond immigrant communities as homogenous groups bound by fixed collective identities, and open up analytical insights into different narratives of 'belonging' and 'otherness' in the various locations they occupy.

The narratives of participants in the dialogues, focus groups and interviews made reference to processes of translocational reflexive positioning and formation of 'reflexive communities' in explaining their activities (although they did not use the terminology). Three examples serve to illustrate how diaspora in the GVA (re)configure identities in ways that are anti-essentialist and transcend fixed notions of self, location, culture, ethnicity and citizenship:

Muhammad Iqbal, founder of the Maria-Helena Foundation, which undertakes development work in Pakistan and other parts of South Asia claims virtually no connection to a Pakistani diaspora community either here in Vancouver or internationally (based primarily on ethno-cultural or religious ties). Instead, his sense of 'community' is greater towards individuals and groups who share his concern and passion for

development issues. In contrast, Ritendra Tamang of the Nepal Cultural Society of BC spoke of a well-organized and networked Nepalese diaspora in Canada, and attributed the high degree of cultural cohesion to a sense of urgency in respect of issues affecting Nepal. At the other end, Amos Kambere co-founder of Umoja Operation Compassion Society, while acknowledging the divisions among members of the African diaspora in Canada, suggested there was nevertheless a sense of common identity amongst them resulting from the shared sense of ‘otherness’. Those members of the diaspora who were born and raised in Africa, he suggested, develop ‘double minds’: even when they become Canadians, they never lose their heritage. For Kambere the African diaspora consists of Africans, Indians and Caucasians who possess ‘the spirit of Africa.’

Section II: Nature and Scope of Development Activities

The report emphasizes the need to broaden understanding of how diaspora contribute to development and the scope of their activities beyond the current preoccupation with remittances and other quantifiable economic activities and impacts by donors. The nature and scope of diaspora contributions to development is much broader and includes (but is not limited to:

- a) Economic development and poverty reduction
- b) Social development (health, nutrition, etc.)
- c) Political development (e.g. addressing issues of political representation), peacebuilding and human security
- d) Knowledge and skills development.

Examples of diasporic individuals and networks engaged in development activities across these four areas are provided in the abbreviated environment scan included at the end of this research summary.

In discussing diaspora contributions to development, the report cautions against ‘romanticizing’ diaspora. Diaspora-led activities can have positive or negative development impacts and outcomes.

As far as positive outcomes are concerned, the research report stresses that diaspora do not only contribute to development internationally but also to Canada’s development. This is due to ‘feedback’ and ‘looping’ effects – the former referring to ways in which mobilizing resources in Canada for development work overseas brings benefits back to Canada; the latter to the fact that individuals/groups acting for development outside Canada are altered both by the experience and consequences of their actions.

The report also raises some troubling questions about the donor-driven discourse on ‘diaspora and development’ as a system of representation and accompanying practices, in terms of what type of ‘development’ is being promoted, how diaspora is defined, and where/how they fit in.

The report welcomes the recognition of ‘diasporic civil society’ (albeit belated) by the major bilateral and multilateral donors in the global development industry, including Canada, and the important initiatives have been undertaken in this regard. However, the report notes that despite this recognition, the initiatives are largely ad-hoc and fragmented. No comprehensive engagement strategies or policy frameworks have emerged. In some cases, limited success in engaging diaspora has led to a withdrawal of efforts on the part of the donor.

Furthermore, the report finds that ‘conventional’ or ‘mainstream’ development has only moved part way towards broadening its conception of civil society to accommodate the novel forms of agency displayed by diaspora. The donor discourse privileges particular agents in civil society – Western style NGOs and other non-profit associations – with little room for forms of civic engagement and organization that do not fit the preconceived mold.

Thus, only those diaspora associations modelled along the lines of traditional NGOs achieve recognition and visibility as potential development actors by the ‘professional development establishment’ in Global North countries including Canada. Many, if not most, of the diasporic development associations and networks are currently outside (or only loosely attached to) this professional development establishment.

A theme that surfaced constantly in the narratives of diasporic leaders in the GVA was that their agency was not fully recognized, and there was no legitimate partnership with established development agencies, public and private.

Section III: Enabling Conditions for Diaspora-led Development

Here, the report embraces a core insight of constructivism -- *agency can only flourish where there are opportunities and means available to it*. Thus, in discussing diaspora and development, we must be sensitive not only to their (internal) capacities actual and potential (i.e., their agency) but to the broader (external) structures that enable or constrain such agency. Specifically, we need to examine broader power structures and relations, as well as structures and relations that foster various patterns of equality/inequality, equity/inequity, inclusion/exclusion, and discrimination.

Enabling conditions include a complex mix of material (e.g. socio-economic) and non-material (ideational, normative, etc.) factors.

On the positive side, with respect to material factors several diasporic leaders stressed the importance of achieving a measure of ‘success’ (in terms of employment and income), ‘integration’ (not assimilation) and/or ‘settlement’ in Canada as a key factor in relation to their ability to undertake development activities internationally. In this regard, Canadian government policies that influence diaspora formation include policies on immigration, settlement, integration and citizenship, as well as multiculturalism.

With respect to non-material factors, several diasporic leaders stressed that the pluralism and tolerance (within limits) of Canadian society (compared to the societies that many had emigrated from) provided comparatively higher levels of ‘freedom’ allowing them the ‘space’ to pursue their interests and values.

On the negative side, Canadian labour market policies, as well as policies and attitudes towards knowledge/skills development and credential recognition have the greatest material and non-material impacts on diaspora formation and their ability to be involved in development. Many diaspora in the GVA expressed great frustration with the fact that they are consistently under-employed or unemployed despite their capacity and desire to be gainfully and meaningfully productive in Canada.

For example, Paola Murillo of Latincoover, describes this phenomenon as a ‘double loss’ wherein the ‘home country’ loses skilled talent to Canada, and Canada loses the opportunity to take advantage of those skills once here. One participant in dialogue 5 lamented the vast gap between the relative ease with which immigrants and refugees to Canada receive work permits and the great difficulty they often have in finding work. He noted the preference of Canadian employers for hiring people with ‘Canadian experience’ and the trap that requirement creates for new Canadians.

The primary reason for this challenge is that Canada, which actively seeks out skilled immigration, fails to recognize the credentials and experience of many of the professionals it imports, particularly those from non-European countries. This preference for credentials from certain countries and regions (European and other developed nations) over others (developing nations) does not necessarily match the academic/professional standards of the accrediting institutions. The problem is compounded by the lack of information on the training standards of non-European countries and tools with which to assess credentials from these regions, inadequate bridging training and internships, and undue emphasis on soft skills such as ‘Canadian experience’ among other things.

The research report notes that other recent studies have shown that although immigrants to Canada generally tend to have higher education levels, they are deemed to have lower employment value and thus experience higher levels of poverty. This means that immigrants focus more on earning a living and spend less time engaging in development. Often, immigrants’ contribution to their ‘home’ community is partly motivated by obligation or sheer necessity. Thus the obstacles they experience in achieving parity of employment and income with other Canadians means that they struggle even harder to make these essential contributions.

In addition to these problems, participants also pointed to the relationship (or lack thereof) between immigrants to Canada and institutions (public and private) involved with international development as another major factor constraining diaspora-led development. On the one hand, several participants in the interviews and dialogues commended the Canadian government and CIDA for their expressed commitment to

international development generally. On the other hand, diaspora expressed a frustration at the lack of acknowledgement of the value of localized diaspora knowledge.

For example, one interviewee recounted stories of CIDA having employees who actively sought out assignments in areas where they could utilize their diasporic knowledge, but were consistently turned down. When asked about Canadian government engagement with diaspora he responded sardonically “is there any?” He went on to describe CIDA’s preference for ‘experts’ whose expertise results from formal study (usually in Canada) rather than those whose expertise results from local knowledge and experience (namely, immigrants and/or members of the diaspora). Another interviewee expressed similar concerns with respect to the Canadian government’s failure to reach out to the Canadian Nepalese community in its peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts in Nepal and Bhutan. Yet another interviewee, in reference to Canada’s efforts to promote investment in Asia and elsewhere, noted that CIDA does not make a concerted effort to leverage the [diaspora] resources that exists in this country to promote these development initiatives.

While CIDA has done some engagement of diaspora in delivering development, the level of frustration expressed demonstrates that the benefits and challenges it has experienced in doing so have not been effectively communicated to those who have an interest in ongoing programming. Developing a more in depth understanding of the challenges to and criteria for enhanced engagement is critical to future programming and to responding to requests from Canadian citizens who self-identify as diaspora.

Section IV: Challenges to and Criteria for Enhanced Engagement

In addition to discussing the enabling conditions, the research report also identified some challenges to and criteria for enhanced engagement of diaspora in development.

Within or among Canadian-based diaspora, the very factors that distinguish them as a unique facet of civil society are also potentially constraints on enhanced engagement. Two key challenges arise:

- 1) How to enhance diaspora contributions to development without transforming diaspora associations and organizations into more traditional development NGOs. As outlined in section one, although modeled along the lines of NGOs, the value-added by diaspora to development is their embeddedness and transience, which traditional NGOs generally do not possess.
- 2) How to tap and harness the potential of the ‘development diaspora’ while providing the necessary safeguards to protect against some very real limitations and weakness. These weaknesses include:
 - a) Fragmentation and divisions within the diaspora.
 - b) Competition for limited resources among diasporic groups. The very act of recognizing and engaging one group excludes other groups.
 - c) The very small-scale of some of their activities. While small scale activities have some advantages (e.g. quicker responses, minimizing bureaucratic

requirements of reporting, etc.) they create challenges in terms of reducing transaction costs, coordinating efforts for maximum impact, and creating economies of scale.

- d) Pronounced variations in the type and degree of organization among diaspora groups. They range from those that are institutionalized to those that are more ad hoc and amorphous.
- e) Tensions between the 'private' and 'public' nature of their activities.

In response, the report outlines criteria designed to reduce the impact of these challenges and provide guidelines for Canadian government agencies, the Canadian public, and private associations (charities, foundations, etc.) with an interest in international development to engage more fully with diaspora.

These criteria include:

- 1) *Accountability* of the diaspora organization to the principal stakeholders in their development activities and to their funders.
- 2) *Representativeness* and *Inclusiveness* of the diasporic leaders/organizations of the groups they claim to act on behalf of and/or in the name of.
- 3) *Transparency* of their activities – they must possess a degree of 'publicness' and be open to scrutiny.
- 4) *Sustainability*. This issue becomes more important particularly in the context of very small-scale activities.

Appendix to Research Summary

Examples of diaspora-led development organizations and activities originating in the GVA

Economic Development & Poverty Reduction

Maria-Helena Foundation: Founded by Dr. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal and his wife, Isabeau Iqbal, in 1998. The Maria-Helena Foundation is “a small family-based, private, non-sectarian organization” focusing on development in South Asia - principally Pakistan. Its organizational goal is to reduce poverty through the promotion of education, skills training and health. Over the course of its 12-year existence, the Maria-Helena foundation has helped to establish 11 self-sustaining co-ed primary schools with a combined enrollment of over 3,500 students and an exclusively female teaching staff.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S: Thomas Tam is Chief Executive Officer of SUCCESS: BC's largest immigrant services organization. Throughout its 37-year history, SUCCESS has provided a wealth of services to immigrant and non-immigrant Canadians, gradually expanding its range of activities to include social services, employment services, business and economic development services, training and education services and health services. Although by identity and reputation SUCCESS is strongly associated with the Chinese community in Vancouver, 50% its clientele are in fact Canadians of non-Chinese descent. SUCCESS maintains 25 service points in British Columbia as well as four overseas offices. Its head office is located in Vancouver's Chinatown. SUCCESS engages in limited overseas development work, but recently they have provided a great deal of information about health care management for senior citizens to a delegation from Mainland China. They also advise organizations in China with regard to the organization and operation of charitable organizations.

Umoja Operation Compassion Society: Umoja is a non-profit society and registered charity initiated in 2002 by Amos and Edith Kambere, a married couple who immigrated to Canada from Uganda. Amos and Edith established Umoja in order to assist African immigrants with the challenges of transitions to life in Canada that they had experienced themselves. Since opening its doors as a family services centre for African immigrants in 2002, Umoja has expanded the scope of its operations to offer a wider variety of services to both African and non-African immigrants. Umoja's overseas programs include the construction and maintenance of an elementary school in Uganda, a water program in Tanzania, a micro-credit project in Uganda and a water project in Kenya.

Knowledge & Skills Development

Point Youth Media: Founded in 2007 by Hawa Mire and her sister both immigrants to Canada from Somalia, Point Youth Media is an initiative that aims to inspire and engage young “racialized” people in the Lower Mainland and young people in Uganda through film and photography. Point Youth Media began as a highly successful pilot program in Uganda. The program consists of a number of theoretical workshops on film and

photography followed by extended practical application sessions. Emphasis is placed on training youth to become facilitators so that they might eventually carry on the program independently. The central objective of the program is to provide youth with different types of media through which to tell their stories and to teach other youth. In Uganda this is done in partnership with a community centre (Anugaze Gemaanvi Youth Association) that serves a registered clientele of 500 youths.

BC Young Afghans: Founded by Hila Wesa, a young lawyer who immigrated to Canada from Afghanistan as a child, BC Young Afghans is a program designed to provide educational support for young Afghan immigrants to the lower mainland– in collaboration with five other young Canadians of Afghan decent. The goal of BC Young Afghans is to connect with Afghan immigrant youth and to provide them with extra help and mentorship that might set them on a path to success. The group will provide tutoring primarily in English language as well as mentorship. They are currently working to establish a space (probably in Burnaby) in which to convene the tutoring and mentoring sessions, and hope to being engaging with students in January 2011.

Social Development (Health, Nutrition, etc)

Dr. Njenga Foundation for Sustainable HIV/AIDS Projects: The Dr. Njenga Foundation for Sustainable HIV/AIDS Projects is a charitable organization with a broad mandate to support “the mentally challenged, poor, homeless, orphaned and HIV prevention”. Dr. Njenga—an immigrant to Canada established the foundation in 2007. Dr. Njenga is a professional accountant holding a PhD in finance and multiple professional designations. He began his philanthropic work in the 1980s as a Christian missionary distributing “Christian education videos” in rural Kenya. In November 2010 his foundation was granted charitable organization status by the Canadian government.

Uganda Sustainable Clubfoot Care Project: Founded by Dr. Pirani, a pediatric orthopedic surgeon at the faculty of medicine, UBC, the Uganda Sustainable Clubfoot Care Project (USCCP) aims to introduce a particular mode of care for a specific congenital bone disorder into the health care system of an entire country: Uganda. Thus, the aim of the project is not to simply care for children who suffer from this debilitating disorder, but to create the institutional capacity within Uganda to identify and treat clubfoot on a permanent basis. The project is in its 11th year and is expected to conclude within four years when doctors and paramedical workers across Uganda have developed the capacity to diagnose and therapeutically reverse clubfoot in the approximately 1 in 1000 children it affects.

Political Development, Peacebuilding & Human Security

Nepal Cultural Society of BC: Dr. Ritendra Tamang is a local academic who is an immigrant to Canada from Nepal. He is involved with the Nepalese community in British Columbia in several ways, including through his role as editor of the Nepal Cultural Society of BC newsletter. He is also part of a new international organization called Nepal Synergy International that engages with the Nepalese diaspora both in Canada and the United States. Dr. Tamang’s academic work has focused on, among other things, the

experiences of immigrants to smaller cities in Canada. He has conducted an in-depth study into the experiences of immigrants in Prince George, British Columbia, for example.

Peace it Together Society: Reena Lazar is executive director and one of the founders of this organization that brings together young people from opposing sides of a conflict to co-create films that are then used as educational and empowerment tools in the conflict region and other parts of the world. Through dialogue and production of short films about a conflict, peace it together uses filmmaking as a tool to engage, educate, empower and present alternative views on the conflict to a wider audience.