Online Diaspora Engagement Platforms: Peer Exchange Group

IOM-UNDP Global Programme on Making Migration Work for Sustainable Development (Phase III)

Synthesis Report

Contents

OBJECTIVES

Objectives:

Showcase concrete examples of online diaspora engagement platforms from Programme countries.

Identify success factors and common challenges to developing these platforms and leveraging them for sustainable development.

Provide **expert capacity building** on building or enhancing diaspora engagement platforms.

Featuring and with thanks to:

Ms. Nadejda Zubco, Head of the Diaspora Relations Bureau of the State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova

Ms. Violina Donu, Deputy Head of the Diaspora Relations Bureau of the State Chancellery, Republic of Moldova

Dr. Sergiu Porcescu, PhD in Political Sciences, Moldova Diaspora Expert and Founder of Knowledge Hub Moldova

Mr. Youssouph Dia, PAICODELS project Focal Point, Sédhiou Agence Regionale de Developpement of Senegal

Ms. Krystal Lofters, Project Coordinator, IOM Jamaica

132 participants: Government partners; diaspora and migrants' organizations members; diaspora engagement experts; civil society; private sector; academia; IOM, UNDP and SDC representatives

Bangladesh, Ecuador, Jamaica, Kyrgyz Republic, Morocco, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Serbia, Tunisia and 7 other countries

10 November 2021 from 14.00-16:00 CET

Enhancing User Experience for Better Participation

Selecting and adjusting content according to needs of migrants and diaspora members enhances platform responsiveness to diaspora needs and priorities and encourages its use.
See also Empowering Global Diasporas in the Digital Era

Providing an easy-to-navigate diaspora association **registration mechanism** onsite can facilitate and increase platform use for diaspora associations of all sizes.
See also iDiaspora Registration User Guide

Establishing **a feedback section** of the online platform, including a real-time chat support tool, can encourage feedback submission and support troubleshooting, further supporting mutual trust and engagement.
See also M4Dnet's feedback survey

Including a **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** section on the platform supports positive UX.

Collaborating with universities and posting **job and volunteer opportunities** on platforms can support employability through internship and work placements.
See also iDiaspora jobs' section

Managing The Platform

Involving diaspora associations and other stakeholders in the creation of the platform builds trust and promotes a collaborative dynamic, which can promote platform use once established.

A **centralized governance structure** with local representatives can maximize resources and sustainability of a platform while ensuring it is publicized at the subnational level and is responsive to local needs, facilitating diaspora contributions to local development.

Having distinct steering and operational committees can streamline platform governance and help enhance a sense of ownership among relevant agencies, diaspora members and local communities though stakeholder participation and sharing of responsibilities.
See also iDiaspora Advisory Board for a practical example

Establishing a **technical focal point** in the administrative entity (as in the Republic of Moldova's Bureau of Diaspora Relations) supports oversight and monitoring of website.

TIPS & TRICKS

Promoting The Platform

🚩 **Diverse promotion methods** such as simple flyers and public banners are needed to ensure platforms are widely understood and used, particularly when targeting diaspora with varying digital access and expriences.

🚩 Regional campaigns with streamlined**, easy-to-read documents** can support successful platform promotion by showcasing the relevance of diaspora engagement to at the local level.
See also the iDiaspora blog section for an example of easy-to-read documents

🚩 Establishing **focal points** for the platform among national and local government stakeholders and elected officials can help disseminate information and enhance participation by building trust and long-term relationships with diaspora communities.

TIPS & TRICKS

Technical Elements And Administrations

▸ Developing or using an existing **consultation mechanism** makes collaboration with IT partners more efficient by systematizing technical consultations.

▸ Providing **dedicated training for platform administrators** with IT partners can empower administrators and build their technical capacities to embed platform management in the agencies working directly with diaspora.

▸ Developing a **manual and other institutional knowledge transfer mechanisms** can promote platform sustainability and provide a helpful reference guide for current administrators, in turn supporting long-term engagement strategies with diaspora.

▸ The **technical creation of the platform can prove more challenging** than administering it once established, as IT partners need to be consulted at every stage of platform creation.

Running the [Emoldovata](#) online diaspora engagement platform

Established: by the Diaspora Relations Bureau of the Republic of Moldova in cooperation with IOM Moldova and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Main features:
- Diaspora-focused events
- Business assistance programmes
- Opportunities for employment and community service
- Useful links for diaspora and services for returnees and voters abroad
- E-learning courses and trainings for young entrepreneurs and diaspora members are planned to support sustainability and strengthen user interest

Development duration: 18 months, including delays related to COVID-19

Key success factors during development:
- Consultation mechanism in place between IT developers and DRB platform administrators
- Organizing platform administrator training with IT partners further empowered administrators and enhanced their technical skills, while ensuring sustainability of the platform.
- Engagement of different stakeholders from the beginning of the process was key to the promotion and use of the platform.
- Co-creation with diaspora associations confirmed the content was responsive to their needs
- Central administration of the platform at the national level supports coordination and troubleshooting, while local representatives ensure the platform is responsive to needs on the ground.

"It's an interesting process but don't be afraid. It's not technically difficult; it's more about evaluating diaspora and local stakeholders' needs. This is all you need at the beginning."

-**Ms. Violina Donu**, Deputy Head, Diaspora Relations Bureau, State Chancellery of Republic of Moldova

COUNTRY INTERVENTIONS ⚑

Senegal

Mr. Youssouph Dia from the Sédhiou Agence Regionale de Developpement in Senegal highlighted good practices and lessons learned from the <u>HELP OFFICE FOR MIGRANTS (HOM)</u> in Senegal's Sédhiou region.

- **Focal points,** including elected officials, are crucial to a successful information campaign; they serve as key 'information points' for diaspora members and migrants to learn about and understand the platform.
- Including **grassroots or 'bottom-up' contributions** by migrant and diaspora associations on the platform ensures diaspora members are aware of the national government's investments at the local level as well as the facilities and services available to them in Sédhiou.
- The development of **promotional materials specifically targeting diaspora communities**, including written articles, is vital to platform dissemination and fostering relationships between diaspora members and citizens living in Senegal; these materials had previously not existed in Sédhiou.

Jamaica

Krystal Lofters of IOM Jamaica presented the development of Jamaica's JAMDEM platform, still currently in concept phase, facilitated peer feedback and technical advice.

- **A gender sensitive diaspora engagement model** is currently under development and will be integrated into the platform to support engagement strategies tailored to the needs of specific groups.
- A **steering committee** will provide guidance and technical oversight for the platform. Planned activities include a **pre-feasibility study**, consultations and focus groups and a workshop aimed at refining plans for implementation and sustainability.
- As Jamaican diaspora members tend to be highly skilled, using online platforms to provide **opportunities for interaction beyond remittances** such as skills matching functions is vital to a successful engagement strategy.

TOOLS

Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries *(IOM, MPI)*

Contributions and Counting: Guidance on Measuring the Economic Impact of your Diaspora beyond Remittances *(IOM)*

Maximizing Diaspora Engagement: Building Trust, Mobilizing Resources and Ensuring Sustainability. Insights and Reflections Paper *(IOM, GRFDT, CISAN, ADEPT)*

Project Development Manual for Migrants' Associations: Global Development Agents *(IOM)*

Engaging diasporas in local development: An operational guide based on the experience of Moldova *(UNDP)*

The Future of Diasporas (*IOM*)

My JMDI Toolbox on Migration and Local Development *(Joint Migration and Development Initiative, JMDI):* For diaspora-related guidance, see:

- **Partnering with Diaspora Associations** (Module 2; Topic 4)
- **Empowering Migrants' & Diaspora Associations** (Module 3, Topic 3)

Check out **the Elmodovata platform** to see a concrete example of an online diaspora engagement platform

Check out **the Help Office for Migrants platform** to see a concrete example of an online diaspora engagement platform

TOOLS

Check out **iDIASPORA** for further resources and information about engaging diasporas.

Check out **M4D Net** for further resources and information about migration and sustainable development.