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Committed to the Diaspora: More Developing Countries Setting Up Diaspora Institutions

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More than ever, diasporas — the "scattered seeds" most governments previously ignored and in some cases even maligned — are increasingly seen as agents of development.

Aware of this potential, some developing countries have established institutions to more systematically facilitate ties with their diasporas, defined here as emigrants and their descendants who have maintained strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin.

The possible size of diasporas varies, from under 50,000 from the Caribbean nation of Dominica to over 30 million from China. The number of countries with diaspora institutions has increased especially in the last 10 years, and they span multiple continents.

This article, based on the opening chapter from MPI's recently released book ***Closing the Distance: How Governments Strengthen Ties with Their Diasporas***, reviews the objectives and activities of 45 diaspora-engaging institutions in 30 developing countries (see sidebar). Although far from exhaustive, the analysis shows the various ways governments choose to institutionalize their relations with the diaspora.

The institutions they have created occupy different levels of government and exhibit diverse priorities and degrees of organization. For instance, some are concerned only with their citizens abroad while others specifically target permanent residents, naturalized citizens, and second and later generations. Countries like Mexico, China, and the Philippines have multiple institutions and represent diasporas at various levels of government.

National bodies established to deal with diaspora issues are based in destination countries, as well as countries of origin. Among the countries studied, three types of bodies emerge: government institutions at home (four types), consular networks, and quasi-government institutions.

Government Institutions at Home

Most diaspora-centered government institutions operate at the national or federal level while others operate at the local level. Depending on where they

Countries in This Review

Albania, Armenia, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Chile, China, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Georgia, Haiti, India, Lebanon, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tunisia, Uruguay, and Yemen.

stand in the organizational structure of the government, these institutions can roughly be grouped into four types of institutions: (1) ministry level, (2) subministry level, (3) special offices including diaspora committees, and (4) local level.

This categorization is useful because an institution's position within the government hierarchy in many ways affects its influence within and outside of the government, as well as its mandate and effectiveness.

Ministry-Level Institutions

An increasing number of developing countries have established ministries whose explicit purpose is to address the needs of diaspora populations, with many formed after 2001.

Fifteen of the countries examined have a separate diaspora ministry (see Table 1). Nine of these ministries are dedicated solely to diasporas.

Country	Institution	Stock of emigrants, 2005	Stock of emigrants as percentage of the total population, 2005	Top destination, 2005
Armenia*	Ministry of Diaspora	812,700	26.9	Russia
Bangladesh*	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment	4,885,704	3.4	United States
Benin	Ministry for Foreign Affairs, African Integration, the Francophone Community, and Beninese Abroad	508,640	6.0	Nigeria
Dominica	Ministry of Trade, Industry, Consumer and Diaspora Affairs	42,723	54.1	United States
Georgia*	State Ministry for Diaspora Issues	1,024,598	22.9	Russia
Haiti*	Ministry of Haitians Living Abroad	834,364	9.8	United States
India*	Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs	9,987,129	0.9	United Arab Emirates
Lebanon	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants	621,903	17.4	United States
Mali	Ministry of Malians Abroad and African Integration	1,213,042	9.0	Cote d'Ivoire
Serbia*	Ministry for Diaspora	2,298,352	21.9	Germany
Somalia	Ministry for Diaspora and Community Affairs	441,417	5.4	Ethiopia
Sri Lanka*	Ministry of Foreign Employment, Promotion and Welfare	935,599	4.5	India
Syria*	Ministry of Expatriates	480,708	2.5	Saudi Arabia
Tunisia	Ministry of Social Affairs, Solidarity and Tunisians Abroad	623,221	6.2	France
Yemen*	Ministry of Expatriate Affairs	593,137	2.8	Saudi Arabia

*Ministry dedicated to diaspora.
 Note: All information current as of July 2009. This table does not reflect subsequent changes to government organization.
 Source: For stock and destination data, World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2008). [Available online](#).

One of the earliest examples of a diaspora ministry in the developing world is Haiti's Ministry of Haitians Living Abroad. Created in 1995, the ministry aims to encourage the participation of diaspora communities in technical and professional activities to advance Haiti's development efforts. The ministry informs the diaspora of local realities and changes in Haiti and encourages the diaspora to return to and invest in the country.

A more recent example is India's Ministry for Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA). Established in 2004 to address the lack of government policy coordination on migration, the ministry has programs that reach out to the Indian diaspora, particularly to youth.

Roughly similar institutions can be found in Serbia (Ministry for Diaspora), Syria (Ministry of Expatriates) and Armenia (Ministry of Diaspora). Like India, these countries have large, generally highly educated and/or well-financed diaspora populations abroad (either in absolute terms or as a percentage of the population).

As can be expected, the ministries focus on developing stronger economic links with the diaspora, mainly by encouraging the transfer of financial and/or human capital.

For instance, the Serbian minister highlighted the return of young experts and the prevention of a further brain drain as the ministry's most pressing task. To this end, the ministry created an Economic Council that includes experts from the homeland and the diaspora. It also has plans to establish a virtual business network that would house information on relevant organizations, individuals, and investment opportunities.

Bangladesh's Ministry for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment and Sri Lanka's Ministry of Foreign Employment, Promotion and Welfare are unusual because, unlike many of their counterparts, they focus mainly on ensuring the welfare of their expatriate workers and in increasing their ability to find suitable employment abroad. Both ministries attend to complaints from migrant workers, provide international job placement services, and conduct training programs.

Some countries opt for more innovative institutional structures at the ministry level. Instead of creating a separate diaspora ministry, they combine diaspora affairs with other sectors, such as labor, tourism, or foreign affairs, to form a "hybrid" ministry. For instance, in 2000, both Mali (Ministry of Malians Abroad and African Integration) and Lebanon (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants) created hybrid ministries.

In 2009, Benin created the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, African Integration, the Francophone Community, and Beninese Abroad to manage its relations with the diaspora. The ministry's objectives, among others, are to provide humanitarian assistance to Beninese abroad in the case of mass deportations or expulsions, inform the diaspora regarding government policies, and propose measures to create favorable conditions allowing Beninese abroad to contribute to Benin's development.

Similar hybrid setups can also be found in Tunisia (Ministry of Social Affairs and Solidarity and Tunisians Abroad), Somalia (Ministry for Diaspora and Community Affairs), and Dominica (Ministry of Trade, Industry, Consumer, and Diaspora Affairs). Typically, these hybrid ministries contain agencies dedicated solely to diasporas, such as Benin's Directorate for Relations with Beninese Abroad, Tunisia's Office for Tunisians Abroad, and Lebanon's Department for Diaspora Affairs.

By establishing either a separate diaspora ministry or a hybrid one, a government recognizes that traditional ministries like labor and foreign affairs cannot manage the expatriate portfolio in all its dimensions.

This review suggests that unlike other institutions occupying lower positions in the hierarchy, diaspora ministries generally enjoy more consistent budgetary allocation, support from the top of government, and, interestingly, a more explicit development-oriented mandate. Their existence also signifies that the government accords diaspora engagement the highest political importance. Indeed, some of these ministries started out as smaller offices within other ministries.

Creating a hybrid ministry can also be a cost-effective approach because it elevates the government's diaspora portfolio while avoiding the larger administrative and legislative expense normally associated with establishing a new and separate institution.

Moreover, hybrid ministries are positioned to make more coherent policies that address the shared and contrasting agendas of the merged sectors. Ideally, the approach can minimize "turf wars" that may arise when two or three ministries deal with the diaspora population in different ways.

Subministry-Level Institutions

Other countries have institutionalized diaspora engagement at the subministry level by creating special offices, typically under the ministry of labor and/or foreign affairs. One of the earliest examples comes from the Philippines.

Faced with increasing problems brought about by a rapidly expanding temporary worker population abroad, the government established in 1981 the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), an agency under the Department of Labor and Employment. OWWA, which is tasked with protecting Filipino migrant workers, provides various services ranging from repatriation to new-business loans.

Another office, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), was created a year later. Considered the "manager" of the overseas employment program, POEA has

the sole authority to regulate temporary overseas employment, including recruitment agencies.

Another body, the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs, was created in 1995, this time under the Department of Foreign Affairs. Like OWWA, the office focuses on migrant protection mainly through providing legal advice and judicial support to distressed workers. It was created as a response to increasing reports of maltreatment, illegal recruitment, and even deaths of temporary workers.

A review of the missions and activities of 10 countries with diaspora offices suggests that, like the Philippines, four have a particularly strong focus on protection (see Table 2).

Based on its 2006 activities report, Romania's Department for Relations with Romanians Abroad focuses largely on protecting Romanians abroad and partnering with Romanian associations.

Peru's Undersecretary for Peruvians Abroad, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, assists with consular paperwork and documentation and provides legal and humanitarian assistance. Also, it has created a *Guide for the Peruvian Migrant* that discusses important issues encountered in host countries.

In 2004, El Salvador created the Vice Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Like Peru, the vice ministry's mission is to defend the rights of the migrant workers, heighten their opportunities, and safeguard their interests.

Table 2. Countries with Subministry-Level Diaspora Institutions

Country	Institutions	Stock of emigrants, 2005	Stock of emigrants as percentage of the total population, 2005	Top destination, 2005
Albania	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The National Diaspora Institute	860,485	27.5	Greece
Brazil	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Undersecretary General for Brazilian Communities Abroad	1,135,060	0.6	Japan
Chile	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Office for Consular and Immigration Services; Office for Chileans Abroad	584,869	3.6	Argentina
El Salvador	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vice Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad	1,128,701	16.4	United States
Ethiopia	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs	445,926	0.6	Sudan
Mexico	Secretariat of Foreign Affairs, Sub-secretariat for North America; Institute for Mexicans Abroad	11,502,616	10.7	United States
Peru	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Undersecretary for Peruvians Abroad	898,829	3.2	United States
Philippines	Department of Labor, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration; Department of Labor, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration; Department of Foreign Affairs, Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs	3,631,405	4.4	United States
Romania	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department for Relations with the Romanians Abroad	1,244,052	5.7	Israel
Uruguay	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate General for Consular Affairs and Expatriate Ties	288,480	8.3	Argentina

Note: All information current as of July 2009. This table does not reflect subsequent changes to government organization.
Source: For stock and destination data, World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008*.

Although migrant protection remains an important facet of their work, other offices at the subministry level have diversified their portfolios by adopting initiatives that facilitate their diasporas' integration in the host country and participation in development activities at home.

A good example is Mexico's Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME), a decentralized body of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that aims to elevate the standard of living of Mexican communities by promoting their integration in the destination country. Created in 2003, IME formalized a long-standing Mexican government policy to gain the trust and support of an increasingly influential expatriate population who live mainly in Mexico's most important neighbor, the United States.

IME provides an array of services centered on health, education, and financial services. In addition, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IME has created the *Practical Guide for the Mexican Traveler (Guía Práctica para el Viajero Mexicano)*, which touches on issues of migration as well as casual travel.

In the long term, the Mexican government hopes to "create a strong relationship with the communities" to pursue joint objectives that the diaspora and the government share in relation to both Mexico and the United States.

Chile's Office for Chileans Abroad, on the other hand, has a more explicit development mandate. Established in 2001 as part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' General Office for Consular and Immigration Services, its main purpose is not only to attend to the "demands and needs of communities of Chilean residents abroad" but also to "encourage their participation in national development."

Ethiopia has a similar agency. Established in 2002 under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs has as one of its four main objectives encouraging "the active involvement of the Ethiopians in Diaspora in socioeconomic activities of the country." Likewise, Albania's Institute of National Diaspora is closely linked to the brain-gain initiatives of the United Nations Development Program and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The activities and general orientation of subministry diaspora institutions seem to follow the mandate and priorities set by the mother agency, which itself may or may not include a focus on development at home. Interestingly, this review found no diaspora institution directly under a government body or ministry that is mainly responsible for development planning.

Other Government Institutions at the National Level

Some diaspora institutions fall short of full ministry standing but still report directly to the highest executive body. These institutions enjoy a fairly influential position within the government. Six countries in this review had such institutions (see Table 3).

For instance, the Philippines' Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) is directly under the Office of the President.

Established in 1980 as part of an overall government strategy that included OWWA and POEA, the commission has a dual role of promoting both economic and cultural ties between the Philippines and its diaspora. Unlike OWWA and POEA, however, CFO focuses mainly on Filipinos that have either established permanent residence or acquired citizenship in the destination country.

Country	Institutions	Stock of emigrants, 2005	Stock of emigrants as percentage of the total population, 2005	Top destination, 2005
Chile	Interministerial Committee for Chilean Communities Abroad	584,869	3.6	Argentina

China	State Council, Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council; Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee	7,258,333	0.6	United States
Mexico	National Council on Mexican Communities Abroad	11,502,616	10.7	United States
Morocco	Ministerial Delegate for the Prime Minister Responsible for Moroccans Resident Abroad	2,718,665	8.6	France
Philippines	Office of the President, Commission on Filipinos Overseas; Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs	3,631,405	4.4	United States
Poland	Inter-Governmental Committee for Polonia and Polish Minorities Abroad	2,316,438	6.0	United States
Sierra Leone	Office of the President, Office of the Diaspora	78,516	1.4	United States

Note: All information current as of July 2009. This table does not reflect subsequent changes to government organization.
Source: For stock and destination data, World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008*.

Similarly, Sierra Leone's Office of the Diaspora is directly under the Office of the President. It encourages the return of professionals and other experts from the diaspora in order to fill critical human resources gaps within the country's government. Specifically, the office provides a list of jobs in government departments, a list of educational institutions and professional associations in Sierra Leone, contact details of government officials, and information on dual citizenship and other acts.

China's Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (SCOCAO) is uniquely positioned within the Chinese central government. SCOCAO is an administrative office under the State Council, the country's highest executive body (it includes the premier and ministers, among others). The SCOCAO staff of 120 supports the premier and assists in a wide range of activities. These include establishing databases in each city, county, and province so that overseas Chinese can find their ancestral roots, homes, and properties, and operating two universities catering mainly to members of the Chinese diaspora.

Another example is Morocco's Ministerial Delegate for the Prime Minister Responsible for Moroccans Resident Abroad. Created by a Royal Decree in 1993, the institution, attached directly to the Prime Minister, provides a wide range of resources including remittance/banking references, cultural events, and advice on investment, financial planning, diaspora tax, customs, commerce, transportation, and social security.

Other governments have created intergovernmental and parliamentary committees to coordinate actions on both the executive and legislative fronts. For instance, Poland's Inter-Governmental Committee for Polonia and Polish Minorities Abroad was formed in 2000.

In Chile, the Interministerial Committee for Chilean Communities Abroad formulates public policies on the diaspora and is composed of 12 public institutions that in some way or another are responsible for addressing the needs and demands of the nearly 1 million Chileans residing abroad.

Some governments have also established special committees within the legislative branch of government.

Poland formed the Polish Diaspora Commission in the lower house of its parliament to engage on policy matters pertaining to the diaspora. China (Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee) and the Philippines (Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs) have similar committees within their legislative bodies.

The experiences of Poland, China, and the Philippines suggest that such diaspora committees ease passage of critical legislation that supports creating larger and more organized diaspora bodies.

Institutions at the Local Level

Diaspora engagement does not stop at the national or federal level. Studies have shown that diasporas are often inclined to engage at the local level, usually in their region or locality of origin, where they are familiar with the local context and, in many cases, still have family ties.

Thus, it is not surprising that special offices for diasporas have sprung up locally. Four countries in this review created institutions at the local level (see Table 4).

Country	Institutions	Stock of emigrants, 2005	Stock of emigrants as percentage of the total population, 2005	Top destination, 2005
India	Government of Kerala, Department of Non-Resident Keralites Affairs; Government of Gujarat, Non-Resident Indian Division	9,987,129	0.9	United Arab Emirates
China	The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO) of Shanghai Municipal People's Government	7,258,333	0.6	United States
Somalia	Office for Development and Partnership with the Puntland Diaspora Community.	441,417	5.4	Ethiopia
Mexico	National Coordination for State-level Migrant Affairs Offices (various states)	11,502,616	10.7	United States

Note: All information current as of July 2009. This table does not reflect subsequent changes to government organization.
Source: For stock and destination data, World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008*.

China exhibits one of the most expansive networks of local diaspora offices. The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, described earlier, is replicated in 30 provinces, as well as in some cities and townships across China. Although local diaspora offices get their overall policy direction from the central government office, they function with relative independence and are allowed to adopt innovative methods to attract diaspora investments.

Some states in India have diaspora offices as well, the most active of which can be found in Kerala and Gujarat. The Kerala government created the Department of Non-Resident Keralite Affairs (NORKA) in 1996 primarily to protect its migrant workers from abuse and exploitation. NORKA addresses complaints against illegal recruitment agencies, provides assistance to stranded Keralites, and facilitates the repatriation of bodies. It also runs an insurance scheme for unemployed returnees, unskilled laborers, and domestic workers.

In Gujarat, the local government created a Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Division within its administration department. A review of its objectives suggests a stronger focus on development. Using a database that identifies their technical and professional skills, the NRI Division seeks to strengthen ties with Gujaratis abroad.

Similarly, in Mexico, 29 of the 32 states and the Federal District have established state-level offices or ministries that address migrant or expatriate affairs and have a national coordinating secretariat. The local offices aim to strengthen cooperation on migrant protection both within Mexico and abroad.

Local-level diaspora institutions are perfectly positioned to design programs in tune with home-country community needs and opportunities. With proper coordination, they can complement the activities of higher-level institutions and even share the cost of engagement. Members of the diaspora can also more easily monitor their contributions and investments at the local level and more effectively hold their officials accountable, thus increasing the likelihood of successful programs.

Consular Networks

For some governments, full diaspora engagement requires creating and developing institutions that are rooted not only at home but also abroad. This approach requires

capitalizing on existing structures in consulates, which remain the most important interlocutors for diaspora populations.

A review of the embassy and consulate websites of countries in this study suggests an active consular presence in top destinations of their respective diasporas. More than ever, governments are instructing their consulates to interact with emigrants more systematically.

Help in the Destination Country

The primary responsibility of consulates remains basic consular services, such as processing passports and visa applications and authenticating legal documents like birth certificates, marriage certificates, etc. Almost all countries in this review provide such services.

Consulates also have been involved in integration efforts. For instance, the Salvadoran Embassy in the United States operates a Legal Assistance Section that offers immigration assistance and advice.

Some consulates help connect migrant communities at the destination. The Sri Lankan High Commission in India offers information to organizations that support Sri Lankans in India, such as the Buddhist Pilgrims' Rest, which takes care of Sri Lankan pilgrims in India. The Embassy of Morocco in France maintains Web pages devoted to discussing the presence of Moroccan diaspora in France, including a detailed search tool to find local Moroccan associations.

Consular identification cards that citizens abroad can use in the destination country have also become more popular. For instance, the Consulate General of Pakistan in the United States issues the National Identification Card for Overseas Pakistanis, which is available to all Pakistani citizens in the United States and serves as a national identification card.

Mexico offers a similar card, the *matricula consular*, at its consulates. Since the US Department of the Treasury announced in 2002 that consular cards are valid government-issued identification, these cards have become increasingly accepted at US banks and government offices.

Some consulates partner with other actors in the private and public realm to assist migrants. For instance, in May 2003, the Mexican Consulate in Chicago responded to feedback from the community and improved access to the US banking system for recent Mexican immigrants by partnering with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and other stakeholders.

By December 2003, 35,000 immigrants in the Midwest had participated in financial education classes or workshops, and immigrants had opened 50,000 new accounts in Chicago containing \$100 million in deposits. Similar initiatives are now underway in Boston, Austin, Kansas City, Los Angeles, and Charlotte and Raleigh, North Carolina.

Beyond helping diasporas integrate at the destination, some consulates assist migrants in difficult situations. The Embassy of the Dominican Republic in the United States provides counseling and information about deportations to prisoners and their relatives.

In the United Arab Emirates, the Indian Embassy offers a hotline for "women and housemaids in distress" while the Philippines' consulate there maintains a safe house for migrants who have escaped abusive employers.

Links to the Homeland

For most consulates in this review, however, activities have focused most on linking migrants, including their descendants, to the homeland. They do so by providing information on developments at home and by implementing programs on culture, education, and economic development.

The Philippine, Chinese, and Sierra Leonean embassies in the United States post news updates on their Web sites. Many consulates also host cultural events to engage their diasporas. The Embassy of the Dominican Republic in the United States hosts cultural events specifically for children of Dominican heritage while the Moroccan Embassy in France promotes language classes.

Aside from cultural events, a number of consulates encourage members of their diasporas to study in the homeland. The Pakistani Embassy in the United States provides links to internships, medical colleges, and other universities in Pakistan. The Moroccan Embassy in France offers an extensive online list of special programs and/or universities where Moroccan nationals may study in Morocco.

Although almost all embassies provide information on business and investment opportunities, most do not specifically target members of the diaspora. However, governments are increasingly using their consular networks to sell diaspora bonds, designed to tap into the diaspora's assets. Israel and India have raised billions of dollars through their diaspora bond initiatives.

Some governments have expanded their diplomatic presence to places with large diaspora populations. Although Mexico has maintained an extensive consular network in the United States since the 1800s, the government established new consulates since 2000 to make sure it could reach the growing number of Mexican citizens in places like Boise, Idaho, and Raleigh, North Carolina. As of mid-2009, Mexico had 50 consulates throughout the United States.

Similarly, the Philippines has opened four diplomatic posts since 2008 to reflect the increasing presence of Filipinos in Ireland, Syria, and China. Currently, it maintains 88 offices in 65 countries.

The composition of diplomatic staff has evolved to accommodate diaspora needs and interests. For instance, each Ethiopian Embassy has assigned a diplomat to handle expatriate issues. About 70 to 75 IME representatives in Mexican consulates in the United States are in charge of implementing IME programs and projects.

Likewise, given its focus on protecting its workers abroad, many consular offices of the Philippines have welfare and labor attachés to attend to distressed and abused workers.

Quasi-Government Institutions

Some governments have adopted unconventional ways of institutionalizing their engagement in destination countries. By establishing and/or maintaining foundations and diaspora councils, a number of developing countries have essentially created quasi-government diaspora institutions that blur the usual distinction between official and nongovernmental bodies.

Such institutions are especially useful to origin governments that do not want to be seen — for whatever reason — as intervening too much in the affairs of host countries. Five countries in this review support quasi-government diaspora institutions (see Table 5).

Country	Institution	Stock of emigrants, 2005	Stock of emigrants as percentage of the total population, 2005	Top destination, 2005
Dominican Republic	National Presidential Council for Dominican Communities Abroad	1,068,919	12.0	United States
Morocco	Hassan II Foundation for Moroccans Resident Abroad	2,718,665	8.6	France
Mali	High Council of Malians Abroad	1,213,042	9.0	Cote d'Ivoire
Mexico	Consultative Council of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad	11,502,616	10.7	United States
Peru	Advisory Council	898,829	3.2	United States

Note: All information current as of July 2009. This table does not reflect subsequent changes to government organization.
Source: For stock and destination data, World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008*.

Foundations

In 1990, Morocco created the Hassan II Foundation for Moroccans Residing Abroad (FHII). Established via a royal decree, FHII is officially described as a "nonprofit institution with a social vocation, endowed with a moral personality and financial autonomy."

FHII is a private organization that has an especially close relationship with the Moroccan government. It is not a government institution, although the government sets its mandate. Interestingly, at one point in time, the minister in charge of Moroccans abroad also ran the foundation. Currently, FHII's president is Princess Lalla Meryem.

In an analysis of FHII, international relations expert Laurie Brand mentions an interview with then director-general Abderrahman Zahi in which Zahi said (in Brand's paraphrase) that "a foundation was preferable to a ministry because if it intervened on behalf of immigrants, it would not provoke the same sensibilities, but that as more than [an] association or an NGO [nongovernmental organization], it has a stronger voice with host governments."

Advisory Councils

Another type of quasi-government diaspora institution is an advisory council. The councils, usually a mix of community leaders and government officials, advise the government on diaspora-related matters.

One of the earliest examples is Mali's High Council of Malians Abroad, which serves as the official representative of the diaspora in Mali and in the country of residence. The council aims to promote solidarity between the diaspora and Mali, assist consular officials in the protection of Malians abroad, identify potential investors from the diaspora, and promote a positive image of Mali. Local councils are elected in various countries where Malian expatriates are concentrated. These national councils then elect representatives to the High Council.

Since 2003, Mexico's Institute of Mexicans Abroad has collaborated with the Consultative Council of IME (CCIME). Created in 2003, CCIME is composed of Mexican, Mexican American, and Mexican Canadian community leaders; directors of Latino organizations; and special advisers and representatives of Mexican state governments.

More recently, the Dominican Republic created in 2006 the National Presidential Council for Dominican Communities Abroad. This council primarily aims to integrate the diaspora into the Dominican Republic's national development efforts. The council makes recommendations to the Dominican government and supports the implementation of programs, plans, and projects.

Government-financed councils are particularly significant since they can be an excellent source of feedback from, and other relevant information about, the diaspora. Like local-level institutions, they are ideal and, in some cases, necessary complements to government bodies at both the national and local level.

However, who sits on these councils and how they were chosen are crucial factors in determining whether or not they can fulfill their potential. If the diaspora sees council members as unrepresentative or irrelevant, the councils will at best be ignored and at worst maligned.

Conclusion

Nearly all countries examined here have an institution either at the ministry or subministry level while a few countries with huge diasporas abroad have institutions at nearly all levels of government. Some governments have created innovative institutions at the local level as well as abroad by capitalizing on their consulates and creating quasi-government institutions found typically in civil society.

The real reach and effectiveness of these diaspora-centered institutions are hard to pinpoint, as is their impact on development efforts at home. Evaluations rarely exist; if they do, they are not publicly available.

The limited discussions in both academic and policy literature have mainly assumed a descriptive, nonevaluative tone. Nearly a third of institutions reviewed here are also fairly new, having been established in the last five years.

A closer look at some of these institutions reveals that translating a diaspora's promise into reality is more easily said than done. Origin governments, guided by modesty and pragmatism — and the awareness that members of their diasporas may distrust them — should start with obtaining information about their citizens abroad and what they would like from the government.

An honest assessment of the government's capacity and resources (financial and technical know-how) to initiate and, more importantly, maintain these institutions must also take place early on.

The type of diaspora institution that would be most effective varies from country to country. It should be based on the diaspora's needs and the existing institutional structure. All types of institutions can benefit from building up their technical know-how, creating meaningful partnerships, and forging a stronger link with national development plans.

Any diaspora institution should continually monitor and evaluate its services and programs, making adjustments as often as are necessary. A forum in which government practitioners and members of diaspora could share lessons learned and best practices would be valuable. The Global Forum on Migration and Development and associated preparatory meetings could play this role.

In the final analysis, diaspora institutions are in many ways no different from other institutions in developing countries. They are not immune to the challenges of institutionalization, and they cannot solve the structural problems plaguing the developing world.

Governments can only realize the considerable development benefits of diaspora institutions if they have a national development policy that recognizes their diasporas as critical partners.

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