



Co-funded by the European Union



SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT FORUM

Report

**17-19 October 2022
Belle Mare, Mauritius**

I. Background

Between 17 to 19 October 2022, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with the support of the Southern Africa Migration Management (SAMM) project and Migration Resource Allocation Committee (MIRAC), organized the Southern Africa Regional Diaspora Engagement and Investment Forum in the Residence Hotel, Belle Mare, Mauritius. The Forum provided the opportunity for the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Member States, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), African Union Commission - Citizens & Diaspora Directorate (AUC – CIDO), a Nigerian delegation, financial institutions, relevant partners, and other key stakeholders to scale up partnerships between diaspora members and their member states in the SADC region. This also served as an avenue to promote productive discourse on sustainable investments and skills transfer approaches among the Southern African diaspora community globally.

This forum was directly linked to the initiative of, “strengthening the regional frameworks for cross-border portability of accrued social security benefits and ensuring that an enhanced social protection framework is developed for migrants’ workers in the region”. It also contributed to supporting and promoting diaspora investment through skills matching and the temporary return of highly skilled professionals, thereby contributing to the realization of the overall aspirations and priorities of SADC member states. The forum identified priorities for empowering the diaspora based on the specific dynamics of the region which formed the basis for effective mapping and engagement of Southern African diaspora communities in the future.

This report highlights the key discussions during the three-day forum which sought to advance the call to ensure effective diaspora engagement toward development with focus on SADC in an attempt to establish a diaspora programme for the region. The forum aimed at:

- Building a common understanding on the state of play on partners’ understanding of the diaspora and initiatives for effective engagement of the diaspora, member states, and key actors and partners in Southern Africa.
- Sharing information and best practices on diaspora engagement and management at local, national, sectoral, and regional levels.
- Identifying Southern African diaspora priorities.
- Strengthening the best practices and lessons learned from other Member States and partners of the Southern African region by leveraging on the experiences of other member states and contextualizing them to suit the region’s overall development agenda.

Following this background, the next section provides the contextual overview of diaspora initiatives in the Southern Africa region. Key highlights from the opening remarks have been captured in after the regional context. This is followed by the global diaspora engagement, region-specific initiatives, needs, challenges and opportunities with key recommendations. Following this is a section that expands on a better understanding of the Southern Africa regional diaspora engagement from the 3Es- Enable, Engage and Empower transnational communities as agents for development. This is followed by UNDP’s presentation on South-South cooperation, financing for development and Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF). From the continental perspective, the Citizens and Diaspora Office of the African Union Commission (AUC-CIDO) shed light on the Southern Africa Regional Diaspora Engagement and Investment Forum. The discussion also covered good practices on diaspora mapping and engagement for development which was presented by the Nigerian delegation. One of the key achievements of the regional office is the development of the Southern Africa iDiaspora page which is integrated in the Global iDiaspora portal. During the forum, the portal was displayed, presented to delegates for their awareness, reference and information as a key entry point towards effective diaspora mapping and engagement. Following this presentation is the key outcome from the panel discussion on unlocking remittances and financial technology systems: innovative digital

technological tools for remittances mobilization in the region which was represented by FinMark Trust, Mukuru, Vodacom M-PESA moderated by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Before the presentations by Member States, IOM set the tone by presenting on the 3Es – Enable, Engage and Empower. The forum ended with a closing remark from the IOM Regional director who provided some key recommendations following the 3 days discussion.

II. Regional Context

In 2017, the Ministerial meeting at the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA) recommended the development of programmes and innovative activities for the active engagement of Youth and the Diaspora to make a meaningful contribution to the social and economic development of their home countries as well as the SADC Community.

During the COVID-19 pandemic which started in 2020, Member States realized the role of the diaspora in providing humanitarian support to stranded migrants within and out of the region. This served as a point of departure into a policy level dialogue about the role of the diaspora in development to reshape the migration discourse in the region.

In 2020, the SAMM project conducted a regional study to examine the existing practices on diaspora engagement and productive use of remittances among SADC Member States. The study found that while there is currently no regional diaspora policy framework or programme to ensure a comprehensive and coherent engagement of the diaspora in the SADC region, home countries in the region are making individualized efforts to engage the diaspora by setting up diaspora units, developing diaspora policies, organizing cultural conferences, instituting remittance linked products, as well as providing dual citizenship and enhancing the voting rights of people in the diaspora.

At the 2021 MIDSA Ministerial meeting, Member States endorsed the **Maputo Diaspora Declaration** which aimed at promoting regional integration and South-South Cooperation amongst SADC Member states through diaspora engagement as a practical approach towards operationalizing Migration for Development in the Southern Africa Region. The Maputo Diaspora Declaration requested IOM in collaboration with relevant UN Agencies and partners, in coordination with the SADC Member States to develop a regional programme and a regional diaspora policy to facilitate the engagement of the Diaspora and transnational communities as agents of development among SADC Member States.

The Maputo declaration was supported by the two key recommendations. Firstly, to recognize the untapped intra-regional diaspora and transnational communities abroad as critical development actors, that if leveraged effectively, can contribute to regional integration, through the transfer of diasporic capitals inclusive of skills, remittances, and socio-cultural elements at local, national and regional levels. Secondly, to support the aspirations of the Maputo Declaration and the development of a Regional Diaspora Policy and Programme to guide the mobilization and utilization of diaspora resources to enhance intra-regional cooperation and regional integration in the SADC region.

Following the MIDSA, the regional office received funding from IOM's Migration Resource Allocation Committee (MiRAC) to effectively engage the diaspora to contribute to an enabling environment to maximize the socio-economic development potential of diasporas by strengthening relevant regional cooperation and sustainable development. The main output from this project is the established Southern Africa Diaspora Page on the Global iDiaspora platform for effective mapping, registering, and profiling of the diaspora based on IOM's 3Es – enable, engage and empower with specific focus on human capital.

III. Opening

The forum kicked-off with an opening from the Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration, and International Trade and Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail of the Republic of Mauritius, the IOM Regional Director for Southern Africa and the Head of Development Cooperation of the European Union for Mauritius and Seychelles. In their account, they commended the SADC leadership and member states for prioritizing Diaspora engagement at the 2021 MIDSAs which will set the trajectory on how migration and development, regional integration and remittances could be harnessed towards development planning and the Regional Migration Policy Framework and SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020-2030. The IOM Regional Director reaffirmed IOM's commitment and indicated that this initiative will leverage opportunities and support the inclusion of migrants in general, governments and the private sector investment partners in response to the request of SADC member states.

They noted some challenges in diaspora engagement in the region. In general, the diaspora is seen as a source of taxation rather than an investment opportunity, which might cut out the second-generation diaspora. The second generation is the lost generation as they are not integrated into the country's development plan – but they can bring engagement and source of development for the country. The countries do not allow for dual citizenship – therefore the diasporas cannot contribute well to countries of origin. Many diasporas are not given the opportunity to vote and thus are disfranchised.

The obstacles to effective diaspora engagement at large scale are many and include among others the lack of trust between public institutions that deal with diaspora and diaspora partners themselves. There are also challenges in maintaining reliable data on individuals and organizations within the diaspora, as there is an overall lack of capacity (human and financial resources in particular) to map the diaspora and engage with them in a targeted and meaningful manner. In many SADC countries, there is a clear misalignment of diaspora engagement strategies with national development planning, its processes and its financing priorities (and related financing strategies and processes), which could contribute to recuperate the trust of diaspora to government plans.

As per the challenge related to the radical high cost of remittance transfer within the continent and in the southern Africa region, it is important to recognize the many reasons for this, including: the lack of competition in the money transfer market; excessive regulatory costs; foreign payment reporting requirements; as well as Customer Due Diligence (CDD) requirements for Anti-Money Laundering/Countering Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT); lack of interoperability in payment networks between banks and telecoms, and across borders; and low levels of financial literacy and financial and digital inclusion, especially for migrant women.

In the current context of multifaceted crisis in migration management towards the protection of migrants' rights; resolving issues on exploitation and discrimination against migrant workers among other issues, it has become imperative to ensure a proper alignment of the key actors within crosscutting issues of migration and development, but also the public and private actors, including diaspora. In view of the significant role and contribution of the diaspora, IOM recognizes the diaspora as a key strategic asset in building national institutional capacities and should be recognized as one of Africa's main assets of social, financial, intellectual, and political capital who share a common vision and commitment for Africa's development and integration, in which this project is aligned. In conclusion, it is important to recognise – “How to turn Brain Drain to Brain Gain”.

IV. Setting the Context

1. Outcome of the 2022 Global Diaspora Summit

Diaspora engagement is very important for both local, regional, and global level socio-economic development. Cross cutting themes – data; humanitarianism; youth; digitalization; gender and climate change emanated from three regional consultations on diaspora prior to the [global diaspora summit](#) with the unique opportunity to collaborate. In the context of Africa, the African Diaspora consultation prior to the Global Diaspora Summit provided African countries the opportunity to establish, strengthen and engage global African Diaspora Networks to support development initiatives in the continent. It also served as a platform to create strategic diaspora engagement initiatives that utilize the knowledge capital of the African Diaspora to promote brain gain and circulation in the continent. Given the uniqueness of the African diaspora and the complex approaches adopted to engage with their home countries across the globe, the platform was used to identify priorities for empowering diaspora based on the specific dynamics of the region which formed the basis of global discussions that took place during the Summit and the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF).

In effect, the consultation sought to leverage the African Diaspora for Continental Transformation. In doing so, the African diaspora were engaged to identify and exchange knowledges, experiences and possibly, good practices on how they engage, opportunities and challenges, with the home countries and governments. Based on this, country-specific recommendations were identified to feed into the development of a roadmap toward the outcome documents of the Global Summit on Diaspora in April 2022.

The summit was designed along the existing diaspora capitals - social, capital, human and economic capital. Key recommendations from the summit include, but not limited to: better expand economic focus of diaspora beyond remittances – philanthropy, entrepreneurship, investment, tourism.

The need to keep and promote a multi-stakeholder approach while promoting mutual recognition of skills to maximise contributions of the diasporas. Also, it is important to recognize the diversity of diaspora to better leverage on their skills sets – recognition of diversity of skills sets as well as strengthening diaspora connections. Digitization, especially after COVID-19 (for sharing knowledge) to strengthen diasporas in the humanitarian contexts – to know where to invest when a crisis hits (link diasporas to humanitarian needs and tap into their social capital). There is the need for cultural engagement as a key engagement strategy – connect to countries of origin and invest in cultural programmes e.g., cuisine, language; gastronomy; drama, dance to recognise the cultural contributions of diasporas to sustain diversity in order to tailor programmes to the cultural needs and sensitivities of the diaspora

2. Understanding Southern Africa regional diaspora engagement from the 3Es- Enable, Engage and Empower transnational communities as agents for development

To provide a better understanding of the diaspora for development, the IOM framework defines the diaspora as migrants or descendants of migrants whose identity and sense of belonging, either real or symbolic have been shaped by their migration experience and background. These individuals also maintain links to families and ancestral lineage. In general, migration impacts development and development affects migration; it's a two-way process. Leveraging human, social, cultural, and

economic capitals of diaspora remains the core of their unique role in the migration-development discourse. During the forum, the four (4) respective capitals were explained in details as follows:

- **Human capital:** Defined as the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual or population, viewed in terms of their value or cost to an organization or country. This working group would look at specific themes that address different dimensions of human capital development and deployment, specifically defining the skills profile of the diaspora member, the diaspora member's employment history and skill use, and facilitating knowledge transfer activities toward targeted at the country of (ancestral) origin.
- **Economic capital:** Defined as any economic resource used to buy and/or make products and provide services. This working group would look at specific themes related to financial capital, namely business and entrepreneurship activities, trade activities, remittance sending and utilization behaviors, philanthropy, savings and investment behavior and tourism to the country of (ancestral) origin.
- **Social capital:** Defined as the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. This working group would look at specific themes that capture dimensions of social engagement such as political participation in both countries of (ancestral) origin and residence and civic participation (including though civil-society organizations).
- **Cultural capital:** Defined as the acquisition and transfer of new values, perspectives, and ideas that enrich the diversity and resilience of societies. This working group would look at specific themes related to diasporas' perceptions and practices related to identity and belonging to countries and communities of (ancestral) origin and residence such as language preservation or acquisition, gastronomy, and participation in activities related to cultural identity such as national or religious celebrations.

Also, migrants' engagement in local development and connections with local authorities at the local level within SADC formed part of the priority areas in terms of achieving a common ground on effective engagement and profiling of the diaspora for development.

3. South-South cooperation, financing for development and Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF)

The agenda 2030 and the AU Agenda 2063 speak to the priorities of diaspora for development within the migration narrative. The role of diaspora in micro and macro level investment and how to align this to diaspora capital remain the core priority and mandate of UNDP. This is partly due to the resilient role of remittances as observed, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. In parallel and at the continental level, IOM together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and African Union Commission (AUC) established the diaspora framework programme in 2021 that captures and leverages all diaspora related "capitals" towards national, regional, and continental development. Therefore, IOM and UNDP are leading the implementation of this comprehensive joint framework programme, in collaboration with other relevant UN agencies and partners. IOM and UNDP Regional Offices in the Southern Africa Region have come to the realization that there is a strong need to foster coordination to support African countries in their effort to overcome the main obstacles towards effective diaspora engagement, in connection to the achievement of the SDG priorities at the country level. Following the ongoing Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) processes, UNDP and IOM are currently implementing a project that aims to address the need to establish systems and investment instruments that would generate the trust, the transparency and accountability for

diaspora and their savings to contribute to the national public investment. Countries involved already engaged with their national stakeholders, financial institutes and diaspora to different degrees towards accelerating the SDGs.

Despite the significant progress made, there is no doubt that diaspora engagement is a daunting task. This is partly attributed to the below obstacles:

- Misalignment with national development plans, regional mechanisms & financing policies
- Data collection
- Limited mechanisms and tools
- Limited dialogue
- Limited transparency and accountability
- High transfer costs

Following these observed challenges, the UNDP recommends:

- AU-IOM-UNDP joint framework programme for diaspora to make contributions to regional integration
- Diaspora transfer policy
- Diaspora financing policy

V. Southern Africa Regional Diaspora Engagement and Investment Forum – AU-CIDO

Africa has a diverse and huge diaspora base. More than 19,5 million African migrants live outside the African continent. The Agenda 2063 central tenets and aspirations ascribed key priority areas for the diaspora in the Migration Policy Framework for Africa, with one of its pillars being diaspora engagement which is handed by CIDO – Citizens and Diaspora Office of the African Union Commission that has the mandate to undertake:

- Capacity building of AU member states
- Establish global African diaspora networks
- Organize strategic diaspora engagement activities
- Promote brain circulation among the diasporas
- Diaspora workshops

While the significant role of the AU in diaspora engagement has been well recognized, the definition of the African diaspora still remain debatable by Member States.

1. Good practices on diaspora- the case of Nigeria

The Federal Government has declared that no fewer than 17 million Nigerian are currently living in various countries of the world. As Nigerians migrate for education, business, trade, work, or for leisure, they make significant impacts on their home country, especially in the area of the economy. The Nigerian population in the Diaspora remitted \$60.22bn in the three years to boost economic activities and the nation's external reserves. This is according to data from the World Bank and Budget Office of the Federation. The World Bank revealed that Diaspora remittances into Nigeria were estimated at \$23.81bn in 2019. In its 2023 – 2025 Medium Term Expenditure Framework and Fiscal Strategy Paper, the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, disclosed that Diaspora remittances were \$17.21bn in 2020 and \$19.2bn in 2021. Prior to 2020, Nigeria's remittance inflows had only fallen below \$20bn once, when it fell to \$19.7bn in 2016. Delegates from Nigeria stated that the diaspora discourse demands finance and time, it is a long process and not an easy one. The perception is that

migration is mostly from the Northern part of Africa to Europe however an assessment was conducted that shows that it is more within Africa. With technology diasporans can contribute to national development from wherever they are.

2. iDiaspora page for Southern Africa

The Southern Africa [iDiaspora portal](#) will be utilized to support MS, private sector, and diaspora to begin cooperating together to address the labour market needs and opportunities at national level and across the region and in the spirit of South-South cooperation and integrative agenda of Africa. This platform will be used to share voices, gain knowledge, and to engage with the regional community committed to the importance of diaspora. The portal will therefore serve as a platform for engagement and knowledge exchange for the Southern Africa diaspora communities. It provides comprehensive, regularly updated data and analysis relevant to diaspora communities, policy makers, NGO actors, and showcases successful diaspora actions and partnerships. This will be supported by engagement with related partners in communications, outreach, capacity building and network building activities to support the project and build momentum towards the development of a regional diaspora programme for Southern Africa.

The platform will be designed as an evolving space which will actively seek to develop an emerging portfolio diaspora engagement within the context of Southern Africa. The platform will contribute to an enabling environment to maximize the socio-economic development potential of diasporas by establishing mechanisms that contribute to regional cooperation and sustainable development.

Against this backdrop, the IOM Regional Office for Southern Africa developed the iDiaspora page for Southern Africa under the auspices of and in connection with the Regional Migration Data Hub (RMDHub) portal. The iDiaspora portal is accessible to the diaspora for registration. The Southern Africa iDiaspora portal is embedded on the global iDiaspora platform with a page for the Southern Africa region and information which applies to the context as well as an online link accessible to the diaspora groups, individuals or associations to allow the registration of and documentation of relevant information regarding the Diaspora profiles as well as social, economic, and relevant information about the countries of origin to facilitate informed decision making by the Diaspora in their engagement and participation in potential programmes. This platform also serves as a platform to connect, learn and contribute to the socioeconomic development in the region.

3. Unlocking remittances and financial technology systems: innovative digital technological tools for remittances mobilization in the region

During the panel discussion at the forum, Mukuru, MPESA and FinMark Trust discussed a session moderated by IFAD on the how to unlock remittances and financial technology systems through the use of innovative digital technological tools for remittances mobilization in the region. The key role of these financial and money transfer organizations include, but not limited to advancing financial inclusion through remittances and creating national remittances stakeholder networks. All four (4) organizations highlighted challenges that hinder smooth transfer of remittances and eventually in achieving financial inclusion to include:

- Infrastructure and network coverage – e.g. inaccessibility of remote areas in the mountainous Lesotho
- Building trust
- Regulatory bottlenecks
- Interoperability
- Undocumented diaspora – identification document requirement to remit

Regarding issues on money laundering, there are regulatory measures in place to control volume of transfers. Also, there is a limitation on the amount that can be transferred per month. The most common and recurring issue in remittance transfer space is the high fees charged on transfers outside of the common money market. This led to the role of the telecommunication networks to employ mobile money targeting low-income countries to promote financial inclusion.

VI. A better understanding of IOM's 3Es and how it is implemented by Member States

Key among the discussions were the 3Es comprehensively formulated by IOM for a strategic approach to enable, engage and empower the transnational communities as agents for development. Each of these pillars involve a range of interventions that will bring together governments and other stakeholders, supported by IOM for policy advice and programming. The 3Es give IOM the necessary guidance to analyse and understand diaspora and development issues in order to develop effective interventions with government partners. The 3Es are explained in details below:

1. ENABLE

The creation of appropriate conditions is essential to enable transnational communities to become effective agents for development. The degree to which diaspora can contribute is directly related to the ability of members of these communities to develop their full potential and acquire the necessary skills and resources to serve as architects of economic and social progress. Steps to enhance the well-being of members of the diaspora include reducing the vulnerability of migrant communities by guaranteeing their access to essential services, and ensuring respect for their social rights to maximize their potential as agents for development. IOM and partners have been working with governments to strengthen the political and institutional frameworks that reduce the social and financial costs of migration, such as those promoting ethical labour recruitment in order to protect job-seekers from abuse and exploitation; reducing the costs of remittances; and developing institutional policies in countries of origin that mainstream migration into national development policies and plans of action.

At the member SADC level, member states have advanced institutionally in engaging their respective diaspora through several platforms institutionally. Some countries have established a diaspora desk, secretariat or bureau within the ministry of foreign affairs and regional integration. Others established the diaspora technical working committees in charge of all diaspora related issues. Some member states highlighted their success stories as a result of years of engagement with their diaspora. For instance, the recent election which took place in Angola provided the diaspora with the opportunity to exercise their civic right by voting in their respective countries of destination.

Within the policy space, some member states have made significant strides in designing, developing and launching national diaspora policies. For instance, Lesotho developed National Diaspora Engagement Policy in 2020 to strengthen coordination between government, stakeholders, and diaspora inclusivity in the spirit of leaving no one behind. This led to the enactment of dual citizenship and voting rights of the diaspora. Also, Lesotho established a Migration advisory body – National Consultative Committee on Migration which is composed of Government Ministries, Department and Agencies, academia, and private sector with a focus on thematic issues related to migration.

In terms of the diaspora's role in socio-economic development under the first 'E' – Enable, some member states, through their national development planning committee, ministry of finance as well

as their central banks established the economic infrastructure – diaspora bonds, digitization to enable the diaspora to invest. In Mauritius, there is scheme set up to attract the diaspora, through tax incentives and waivers, to return to and serve the country. Mozambique implemented a system for remittance transfer through Standard Bank and Mukuru partnership at relatively lower transfer costs.

2. ENGAGE

Knowing and understanding transnational communities is crucial to engaging effectively with them and developing the appropriate outreach strategies towards diaspora. IOM regularly maps and surveys diaspora communities to assess their socioeconomic profile and their willingness to contribute to the development of their countries of origin, and to improve the understanding of communication pathways within diaspora communities. In the past decade, IOM has conducted more than 50 such surveys globally. Among the first diaspora surveys were those undertaken in the United Kingdom of the various diaspora communities resident there. Such surveys are increasingly being conducted at the request of countries of origin, but they are primarily conducted in countries in which transnational communities live. Outreach can often take place in countries of origin through bodies that connect with returning members of transnational communities, including investors, skilled professionals or academics. In countries where diaspora members reside, outreach often requires countries of origin to establish and strengthen their embassies and consulates, including training labour attachés, whose portfolios now increasingly include service provision to these communities.

In terms of diaspora engagement by member states in the SADC region, member states are committed before, and after the Maputo Diaspora Declaration at the 2021 MIDSA. With support from IOM, the Lesotho government conducted a diaspora Outreach forum in 2019 in South Africa which is the host of the largest Basotho diaspora community. Member States like Eswatini recently conducted a diaspora mapping exercise with technical support from IOM. The government of Eswatini also embarked on an outreach exercise to meet their diaspora in the UK and the USA to discuss how best to mainstream the diaspora in national development planning.

In 2017, Madagascar organized a diaspora forum which led to the establishment and rediscovery of connections with diaspora associations that already exist. The diaspora directorate also set up some missions to bridge the links and build trust with the Malagasy diaspora. Action plans are in place to identify inputs of diaspora so they can integrate into development. Seychelles government also dedicated a hotline and email address for the diaspora to contact for mapping purposes. Online registration portal on the website of the ministry – diaspora e-registration. Virtual consultations with the diaspora and developing a diaspora engagement portal

3. EMPOWER

With the right conditions in place, transnational communities will spontaneously transfer resources and strengthen links between their countries of origin and destination regardless and often in spite of administrative, regulatory and other constraints. However, governments can empower this process by introducing special measures and programmes in a variety of fields.

IOM initiatives have been designed to facilitate trade and investment between communities abroad and the countries from which they originate, targeting investment in local projects with a positive socioeconomic impact.

Financial literacy training and the dissemination of information on remittance services and costs serve to heighten awareness of the various financial services and products available to remittance senders, and to provide options for the productive use of remittances. One example is the website launched as

part of MIDA Italy and certified by the World Bank. This website, www.mandasoldiacasa.it, aims to make the costs and services offered by financial and money transfer operators more transparent and competitive.

While a lot remains to be done under the last 'E' – Empower in the South Africa region, efforts have been extended to some member states. Specifically, IOM trained governments and relevant stakeholders to empower their diaspora and other migrants in the vulnerable group. For instance, IOM trained and equipped the Basotho Diaspora Association with the relevant skills set that enabled them to register over 25 000 Lesotho stranded migrants in South Africa for food parcels during wake of COVID-19 with financing from the government of Lesotho. Also, the group trained returned vulnerable migrants in entrepreneurial skills, Tele-medicine through a COVID-19 application to manage Covid and sourcing medical equipment.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is important to conclude that the diaspora is increasingly perceived by governments, and by the private, technical and academic sectors, as assets to countries where they reside and countries of origin, because they bring with them a wealth of resources that can translate into development outcomes. It is therefore imperative to design policy frameworks that provide a conducive policy landscape for the diaspora and the transnational communities to smoothly contribute toward and be recognized as agents for development. In this regard, the Forum shed powerful and important light on the need to further enable, engage and empower the diaspora towards development. It mainly reflected the conclusions and good practices shared by member states during the forum on their engagement with diaspora. More importantly, it provided a vital opportunity to reaffirm commitments in prioritizing the diaspora through a more inclusive approach.

Following the discussions, some few key takeaways under the four (4) diaspora capitals – human, economic, social, and cultural, which are deeply embedded in the 3Es – enable, engage, and empower are as follows:

1. Key recommendations for policy (re)formulation

- Create and enhance existing institutional coordination mechanisms between and among the various state and non-state agencies dealing with diaspora issues.
- Develop diaspora engagement policies in line with regional and country national development plans.
- Strengthen diaspora engagement through establishing formal communication channels with the diaspora.
- Work directly with Banks/MTOs to reduce high cost of remittance transfer through formal channels, increase financial literacy and increase the number of remittance investment linked products.
- Make efforts to enhance competition in the remittances market by for example ensuring fair and equitable access to market infrastructure MTOs and limiting the imposition of exclusive conditions.
- Develop mechanisms to address issues of lack of trust between Member Government and the diaspora.
- Develop bilateral agreements with host country governments to facilitate effective labour recruitment and protection of diaspora members and;
- Facilitate state-led programmes to encourage diaspora contributions to development

2. Key recommendations for Economic capital

- Expand the economic focus of diaspora engagement beyond remittances to consider how diasporas can contribute to investment and entrepreneurship, trade promotion, philanthropy, and tourism in their countries of origin, among others.
- Identify and remove barriers to diaspora economic capital transfers, including access to citizenship and financial services, and take measures to improve the business environment for diaspora and other entrepreneurs alike.
- Collect data on diaspora capital to be shared at national and regional levels to measure the economic impacts of diasporas and guide policy interventions.
- Build mutually beneficial relationships with diasporas that go beyond outreach to promote diaspora wellbeing and strengthen their affinity and belonging.

Key Recommendations for Human capital

- Mainstream diaspora and capitals horizontally across national and sectoral policies, especially in labour market policies, to match diaspora talents with sectoral expertise demands and labour market needs.
- Remove policy barriers to the movement of human capital between countries of residence and origin, including administrative, fiscal, and other constraints that diaspora may face when seeking to transfer knowledge temporarily or permanently.
- Promote the mutual recognition of qualifications and the portability of social benefits (pensions, compensations) to maximize the mobility of diaspora talents and their skills
- Maximize diaspora political and civic participation and inclusion by exploring liberalizations in citizenship, residency, suffrage and political representation.
- Further institutionalize diaspora engagement by establishing platforms that enable diaspora-State policy co-creation, such as creating diaspora consultative committees or engaging diaspora representatives in executive and legislative committees or working groups.

Key recommendations for Social and Cultural capitals

- Recognize the multi-faceted developmental roles of diaspora organizations and networks in social capital transfer within migration and diaspora policies.
- Strengthen the coordination of diaspora and traditional humanitarian responses, embedding, where appropriate, diaspora response into official response frameworks and leveraging diasporas' unique access and networking capabilities in crisis context.
 - Embed cultural engagement as a central pillar of diaspora engagement policies and strategies, in recognition of the links between affinity, belonging and broader diaspora capital transfers.
 - Promote inclusive definitions of nationality and identity within countries (or places) of destination and residence to strengthen diaspora belonging and affinity with their places of (ancestral) origin, as well as fraternity amongst communities of origin.
 - Recognize and celebrate the cultural achievements and contributions of diasporas through dedicated commemorative national days or convenings that also engage communities of origin and residence.
 - Embrace cultural diversity present within nations and their diasporas in forging inclusive identities that resonate with transnational migrant and diaspora communities and homeland compatriots alike.
 - Commit to the recognition and celebration of diaspora cultural overachievers, including prominent diasporas from fields including sports, cinema, and music, as part of wider multiplatform communication strategies for engaging diaspora cultural capital.