

Diaspora Engagement Policy



Section 1: Introduction and Background

The remarkable potential of diaspora engagement to drive national development efforts is a globally recognized phenomenon. An emerging practice, adopted by many governments pursuing sustainable development, is the mobilization and strategic utilization of resources that yield mutual benefits for both domestic stakeholders and members of the diaspora.

For the Republic of Suriname, the Surinamese diaspora represents a valuable source of talent, expertise, and resources, positioned to significantly contribute to the country's development path. Suriname's first Diaspora Engagement Policy, therefore, initiates a forward-looking path, shaping Suriname's diaspora engagement to leverage this potential and facilitate tangible benefits for diaspora members. This will be achieved through the establishment of organized collaboration mechanisms and initiatives that promote social and economic development, cultural enrichment, and stronger diplomatic ties.

The Policy's working definition of diaspora aligns with the Persons of Surinamese Descent Act (*Personen van Surinaamse Afkomst*), 2014 No. 83, which defines Surinamese descendants as persons with at least one parent or grandparent born in Suriname. As diaspora-focused policies and legislation may change and expand over time, the working definition may be adjusted in the future to include Surinamese communities living outside of the Republic of Suriname who identify as a member of the Surinamese diaspora (i.e., generations beyond those with a parent or grandparent born in the country). This definition is based on International Organization for Migration's (IOM) standard definition, adapted from IOM's *Strategy to Enable, Engage and Empower Diasporas*:

“Migrants or descendants of migrants whose identity and sense of belonging, either real or symbolic, have been shaped by their migration experience and background. They maintain links with their homelands, and to each other, based on a shared sense of history, identity, or mutual experiences in the destination country.”

The Republic of Suriname is dedicated to creating the necessary conditions for achieving the vision and mission outlined in the Policy, alongside the structures needed to effectively carry out the actions outlined in the accompanying 5-Year Action Plan. Under the Diaspora Engagement Policy, the engagement of diaspora communities will take shape through their active participation, assuming pivotal roles as implementing partners, innovators, investors, network facilitators, and essential collaborators. This involvement will be in close collaboration with the Government of Suriname, the private sector, international organizations (IOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society.

The formulation of this policy was systematic and participatory, encompassing input from both domestic and international stakeholders, with direct guidance and support from IOM. The process began with a comprehensive analysis of Suriname's diaspora environment, aimed at identifying potential opportunities and challenges that would shape the Policy's goals. For example, in 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation began working with IOM to formulate a migration policy. Insights from IOM's data and research like the Displacement Tracking Matrix (2020) and the Migration Needs Assessment Suriname (2021) have contributed to shaping this policy.

To gather diaspora perspectives, stakeholder meetings and consultations were held in key diaspora hubs, including the Netherlands and France, given their sizable Surinamese diaspora communities. These engagements facilitated valuable discussions, allowing the input of diaspora members on crucial policy considerations. Additionally, input was gathered through surveys conducted in Dutch and English, providing members of the diaspora with a direct channel to express their priorities and aspirations for this policy. Moreover, national stakeholder meetings were convened in Suriname, with representation from relevant ministries and non-governmental actors to better understand their interests and capacities in overseeing the implementation of key actions outlined in the Policy. Complementary surveys have also been created, and are expected to be launched in 2024, to gather input from the citizens of Suriname and former diaspora members who have resettled in the country on the development of key actions that can promote the mutual benefit of diaspora engagement to all stakeholders.

The 5-Year Action Plan accompanying this policy will serve as a mechanism to guide the implementation of the core objectives. The Action Plan outlines specific priority areas, programs and outcomes that will advance the Government of Suriname's diaspora engagement efforts between 2024 and 2029. As mentioned, these priority areas and programs were identified through consultations with diaspora members and government stakeholders, and by examining regional and international lessons learned and best practices in diaspora engagement and migration management.

1.1 Background on Suriname's Diaspora:

Suriname, a nation rich in cultural diversity and heritage, has witnessed significant migration trends, as described in the sections below. As of 2020, an estimated 68.5 percent (423,517) of the total Surinamese population is located abroad, forming vibrant diaspora communities. However, as there are limits in accurately capturing the exact number of Surinamese diaspora members due to limitations in available datasets. Nevertheless, the dispersion of a large population of those with Surinamese heritage has resulted from historical, economic, and social factors, shaping the unique composition of our Surinamese diaspora.

Early and Regional Migration: From Seventeenth Century to World War II

During the period from the seventeenth century to the Second World War, regional migration patterns in and around Suriname were shaped by various factors, particularly among indigenous peoples and members of the Maroons community, but also with the immigration of indentured laborers from Asia. Indigenous groups often traversed borders between Suriname, Brazil, French Guiana, and Guyana, maintaining ties with their kin in Suriname. For example, maroons from east Suriname engaged in cross-border movement, particularly to French Guiana.

Official emigration records trace back to 1687, when several individuals migrated from Suriname to the Netherlands. Throughout the eighteenth century the practice of sending colonists' children to the Netherlands for education was documented. During this period, individuals of African descent as well as indigenous individuals from Suriname also migrated to the Netherlands.

Between World War I and World War II, the relatively limited migration to the Netherlands for educational purposes persisted. In many cases, individuals who left for studies did not return due to limited prospects in Suriname. In addition, other professionals, such as nurses, pursued careers in the Netherlands.

Labour and Study Migration: 1945 to 1960s

Migration from Suriname to the Netherlands increased during the 1950s, following the enactment of the "Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands" in 1954. This charter facilitated the extension of Dutch citizenship to residents of both Suriname and the Antilles.

Post-World War II, opportunities to study and find employment abroad served as a pathway to upward mobility, particularly with the bauxite sector flourishing. The bauxite sector increased the demand for foreign labour, leading to migration to the Netherlands for work. Industries recruited workers from Suriname, and Dutch hospitals sought Surinamese nurses and caregivers. These migrants experienced improved wages and social services when compared to opportunities in Suriname. Structural unemployment and limited training opportunities further drove emigration rates.

In this era, the gender ratio of migrants was more balanced, with males and females migrating in similar numbers. Recruitment of nurses and family reunification influenced this change. Until the 1960s, migration also remained balanced between emigrants and those returning to Suriname.

Migration Explosion: 1970s to 1992

The 1970s witnessed another surge in emigration, largely driven by political and economic challenges in Suriname. Surinamese from all strata of society migrated, including families, retirees, and individuals from different regions.

Migration peaked in 1975, with around 40,000 Surinamese citizens moving to the Netherlands. The 1970s also saw further shifts in gender balance, age distribution, and region of origin. Migration waves continued both to Europe and regionally, with factors such as political events and economic trends influencing these emigration trends.

Migration experienced a notable upswing during Suriname's struggle for independence, despite the Dutch government's efforts to curtail the influx of Surinamese nationals into the Netherlands and the subsequent revocation of their Dutch citizenship. Until 1980, the Dutch government permitted unrestricted migration from Suriname to the Netherlands, after which they were required to choose one citizenship. Notably, considerable waves of migration from Suriname to the Netherlands transpired during two distinct periods: 1974-1975 and 1979-1980.

Present-Day Migration Trends: Post-1992

Recent data indicates a decline in the number of new Surinamese immigrants to the Netherlands over the past decade. As of 2019, approximately 423,517 individuals of Surinamese descent reside abroad, including those born in Suriname.

Addressing Contemporary Migration Data Gaps

In the context of today's dynamic global landscape, the collection of data and statistical information on emigrants and diaspora members holds immense importance from a governmental standpoint, especially for the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Home Affairs. Although oftentimes challenging due to the dispersed nature of migration-related data, understanding migration trends, patterns, and the profiles of these individuals is crucial for informing policymaking, effective resource allocation, and the facilitation of diaspora engagement.

Acknowledging the critical role of robust data collection processes, our government institutions are proactively fostering collaboration to enhance and streamline existing databases. This Policy will prioritize concerted efforts among diverse departments and agencies to ensure more precise, current, and comprehensive data on diaspora members. Through pooling resources and specialized knowledge, these institutions aim not just to reduce duplication of efforts but also to collaborate with domestic and international counterparts to enhance the collective understanding of migration patterns, destinations, and demographics.

1.2 Overview of Government-led Diaspora Engagement Developments

In 2010, the Government of Suriname acknowledged the diaspora's role in national development and the significance of developing diaspora-focused strategies and actions. By 2012, the government had begun recognizing the diaspora community as integral to national development and established initial steps for their engagement. IOM played a pivotal role in facilitating and advising these initiatives.

The Government of Suriname has also made amendments to various legislation to facilitate naturalization processes and to improve access to benefits for the diaspora. For example, under the *2014 Persons of Surinamese Descent Act (Personen van Surinaamse Afkomst)*, the government provided a specific definition on "individuals of Surinamese descent" and established work and residency benefits made applicable to them. Amendments to the *1975 Law on Surinamese Nationality and Residence* facilitated more efficient naturalization for children of Surinamese descendants born abroad. During this time, the Republic of Suriname also partnered with IOM for the Diaspora Unite Suriname Project, to map and engage the diaspora entrepreneurs.

The President elected in 2020 has actively championed strengthening diplomatic ties with the Netherlands. As part of fostering a positive relationship between Suriname and the Netherlands, the President has underscored the diaspora's valuable knowledge and insights, which can greatly benefit the socioeconomic development of the Republic of Suriname. The President has also reaffirmed his commitment to the development of this policy, ensuring that it is based on principles of mutual benefit for both the country and diaspora members.

Under the leadership of the President, progress has also been made with the creation of the Diaspora Institute of Suriname (DI). The DI, introduced in 2020, is an independent agency serving as a hub for coordinating, facilitating, and guiding diaspora engagement. For example, the DI seeks to contribute to poverty reduction and promote prosperity through transnational engagement.

The Diaspora Institute Netherlands (DIN), a counterpart to the DI, made notable progress in promoting the country's diaspora engagement priorities. Officially launched in 2021, DIN fosters relationships between Surinamese and Dutch entities and institutions to support Suriname's development. It collaborates with DI to provide building blocks for diaspora policy and engages in diverse activities, including connecting people of Surinamese descent, enhancing knowledge sharing, and promoting institutional cooperation.

1.3 Recognizing Diaspora Contributions and Potential:

Recognizing that the Surinamese diaspora has made substantial contributions to both their countries of residence and their homeland, the Republic of Suriname seeks to streamline planned efforts within this policy framework and the associated 5-Year Action Plan. Through remittances, investments, knowledge transfer, and cultural exchange, amongst other forms of contributions, the diaspora will continue to play a pivotal role in Suriname's development.

International research on diaspora engagement illustrates that proactive government actions result in a wide array of benefits across various domains, fostering collaboration that drives economic progress, innovation, and social development:

- *Economic Development:* At a macro-level, diaspora engagement significantly contributes to the economy through the promotion of remittance transfers, investments, and trade opportunities. At a micro level, remittances boost disposable incomes and stimulate consumption for family members and kin of diaspora members. Diaspora engagement can also promote economic development by fostering increased investments and trade opportunities through diaspora members' active participation in business ventures, partnerships, and cross-border collaborations.
- *Socioeconomic Development:* Diaspora engagement contributes to socioeconomic development through philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, and community-driven initiatives. Funds from the diaspora support education, healthcare, and social welfare projects that uplift marginalized populations and improve overall living conditions. Stable remittance flows as well as targeted efforts to shift remittance flows towards development interventions can also contribute to broader economic stability and lead to alleviating poverty.
- *Investment Markets:* Diaspora engagement strengthens investment markets by attracting diaspora entrepreneurs who invest in businesses, startups, and infrastructure projects in Suriname. This inflow of capital can fuel economic growth, creates jobs, and strengthens local industries.
- *Natural Resources and Agriculture:* Investment from the diaspora can modernize agricultural techniques, improve irrigation, and promote sustainable resource management. This enhances food security, boosts agricultural productivity, and fosters rural development.

- *Tourism:* Diaspora engagement can improve the tourism sector by encouraging diaspora members to explore their roots and heritage and to promote tourist opportunities amongst their networks abroad. This niche market can enhance tourism revenue, create employment opportunities, and foster cultural exchange.
- *Humanitarian Assistance:* Diaspora communities often mobilize humanitarian aid during and after crises, leveraging their networks to provide relief and disaster risk reduction. This assistance also helps mitigate the impact of disasters, conflict, and health emergencies.
- *Human Capital Transfer:* Diaspora engagement facilitates the transfer of human capital through knowledge sharing, skills transfer, and capacity building. Experts from the diaspora contribute to education, healthcare, technology, and other sectors, improving local capabilities and promoting innovation.
- *Innovation and Entrepreneurship:* Diaspora members often bring innovative ideas, technologies, and business models from their countries of residence. By fostering entrepreneurship and innovation, they contribute to the creation of new industries, products, and services, leading to economic diversification and increased competitiveness.
- *Trade Opportunities:* Diaspora networks offer valuable trade connections and insights, which can result in improvements to exports and imports. Collaborating with the diaspora groups and businesses can open doors to international markets, create partnerships, and enhance global trade relations.
- *Cultural Preservation:* Diaspora engagement can support the preservation of cultural heritage, languages, and traditions. This is especially relevant in arts, literature, music, and cuisine. Diaspora communities are known to organize cultural events, festivals, and exhibitions that showcase their heritage and enrich the local cultural scene.
- *Healthcare Practices and Research:* Diaspora engagement improves healthcare by fostering collaboration between healthcare professionals in the diaspora and local medical practitioners and staff. This partnership enhances medical training, patient care, and research, addressing healthcare challenges more effectively.
- *Educational Improvements:* Collaboration with the diaspora enriches education through academic partnerships, curriculum development, and student exchange programs. This elevates educational standards, supports research, and enhances skills development.

Positive diaspora engagement simultaneously offers practical benefits for diaspora communities, such as fostering a sense of connection, empowerment, and mutual growth. These benefits can include:

- *Cultural Identity and Heritage Preservation:* Engagement with the country of origin allows diaspora members to better maintain and strengthen their cultural identity and heritage. By participating in cultural events, festivals, and traditions, they can pass down their cultural values to the next generation and stay connected to their roots.
- *Social Impact:* Diaspora engagement enables individuals to make a tangible and fulfilling difference in their home country. Through philanthropic efforts and community development projects, they contribute to improving education, healthcare, infrastructure, and overall living conditions.
- *Network Expansion:* Engaging with Suriname expands diaspora members' social networks and connections. These connections can lead to business partnerships, collaboration on projects, and opportunities for professional growth, both locally and internationally.
- *Investment and Entrepreneurial Opportunities:* Positive engagement can open doors to investment opportunities and entrepreneurship in Suriname. Diaspora members can invest in businesses, startups, and real estate. Investing in their country of origin allows diaspora members to diversify their investment portfolio beyond their country of residence. Engaging with their country of origin can also provide diaspora members with firsthand information about emerging markets, business trends, and investment prospects. This knowledge can give them a competitive advantage in their respective industries.
- *Skills Transfer and Capacity Building:* Many diaspora members have acquired valuable skills and expertise in their host countries. Engaging with their country of origin allows them to altruistically share these skills through training, mentorship, and capacity-building programs, contributing to local development.
- *Sense of Belonging and Pride:* Positive diaspora engagement fosters a sense of belonging and pride among diaspora communities. Engaging with the home country strengthens family ties, creates a sense of continuity, and fosters a shared commitment to the country's well-being. Overall, they become active participants in shaping the future of their home country and contribute to its progress, enhancing their sense of purpose.
- *Tourism and Cultural Exchange:* Diaspora engagement can encourage diaspora members to visit their home country, reconnect with family and friends, and explore their cultural heritage. This can boost their interest in tourism and support the development of local tourism-oriented businesses.

- *Positive Public Image:* Diaspora engagement enhances the public image of diaspora communities, highlighting their contributions beyond remittances. This can lead to enhanced relationships between the diaspora and stakeholders in the country of origin.
- *Lower Costs of Living and Doing Business:* For those considering relocating to or investing in Suriname, lower costs of living and doing business can translate into significant financial relief and reward. This can potentially improve their overall financial situation.

Section 2: Vision and Mission

2.1 Vision:

The vision of the Diaspora Engagement Policy is a dynamic Surinamese diaspora fully integrated into the country's social and economic development. It envisions diaspora members as active partners, driving progress through their talents, knowledge, and investments.

By fostering transparent collaboration and sustainable initiatives, the Government of Suriname strives to create a harmonious ecosystem where diaspora engagement becomes a source of shared pride and success.

2.2 Mission:

The mission of the Diaspora Engagement Policy is to continuously seek ways to harness the potential of our diverse diaspora communities as catalysts for national development. We seek to establish an effective and sustainable framework that facilitates meaningful participation, encourages collaboration, and cultivates a sense of shared identity.

2.3 Guiding Principles:

The Republic of Suriname's diaspora engagement approach aims to align with IOM's "3Es" of diaspora engagement:

Enable:

Creating favorable conditions is crucial to enable transnational communities to actively contribute to development. Their potential contribution relies on their ability to acquire skills, resources, and knowledge, making them drivers of economic and social development. This can involve activities such as strengthening frameworks that minimize migration-related barriers, reducing remittance costs, and integrating migration into national development policies.

Engage:

Effective engagement with transnational communities requires a deep understanding of their personal characteristics and migration dynamics. Regularly mapping and surveying these communities helps assess their socio-economic profiles and willingness to support the Republic of Suriname. Improving communication pathways within these communities enhances outreach.

Empower:

With conducive conditions, transnational communities naturally strengthen connections between origin and destination countries. Governments can facilitate this process by implementing specialized measures and programs. Initiatives that foster trade, investment, and local projects with positive impacts are essential.

Additionally, mobilizing skills and expertise through the return of skilled diaspora members, both short- and long-term, can be a powerful empowerment tool.

This policy is also guided by a number of principles that emphasize the importance of respecting the diverse backgrounds, skills, and aspirations of our diaspora members. The Policy draws strength from the following guiding principles:

- *Inclusivity*: All members of the diaspora, regardless of location or background, are integral to Suriname's development journey.
- *Cultural Sensitivity*: Cultural heritage and diversity will be celebrated and preserved through engagement efforts.
- *Mutuality*: The implementation of the strategies and actions will serve the interests of both Suriname and its diaspora.
- *Partnership*: Collaborative efforts between the government, diaspora, and local stakeholders are essential for successful outcomes.
- *Sustainability*: To ensure that there are benefits for both Suriname and the diaspora over time, the structures, processes and mechanisms resulting from the Policy and Action Plan will be institutionalized.
- *Transparency*: Clear communication, open dialogue, and accessible information are key pillars of diaspora engagement.
- *Accountability*: Management of resources and of the implementation process shall be timely, and will incorporate principles of good governance and established regional and international best practices.

Section 3: Government Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Institutional Framework

To nurture a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with the diaspora, it is crucial for the Republic of Suriname to establish a framework under this policy that improves clarity and coherence in legislative, policy, procedural and service structures. Inefficient bureaucratic hurdles could hinder efficient policy execution, and therefore, clear roles and responsibilities are required to ensure that each line ministry has specific guidelines and purviews related to their roles in diaspora engagement.

The Policy's practical application and execution will be guided by the development of an institutional diaspora engagement structure. It involves active participation from relevant government ministries and departments, diaspora organizations and representatives, IOs, NGOs, the private sector, civil society, and other relevant actors. To address current procedural ambiguities, the Policy and the 5-Year Action Plan will provide guidelines on how the various stakeholders involved will streamline coordination efforts with regularly planned meetings and communication structures.

Relevant Ministries and Departments:

Office of the President:

The Office of the President is responsible for formulating and enacting legislative regulations, state policies, and administrative decrees, including those related to migration, while providing administrative and strategic support to the President's executive functions. This includes relations with the National Assembly and other representative bodies as well as oversight on national security and foreign policy. The Office also ensures transparent communication with the public, facilitates citizen engagement, and carries out additional tasks assigned by the President.

Office of the Vice President:

The Office of the Vice President collaborates with the President and the Council of Ministers to establish the Government. The Vice President leads the Council of Ministers, which comprises ministers working together and holds the responsibility of formulating and implementing effective policies.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation has core objectives centered around nurturing relationships with countries and IOs for the betterment of Suriname as well as engaging and providing services to Surinamese persons abroad. Their policy focus areas include regional integration, bilateral and multilateral relations, migration management, development cooperation, international trade, amongst other areas.

The Ministry's diplomatic efforts are coordinated through the Department for Consular Affairs and Migration, which includes the approval and rejection of visa applications. The DI, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation, is responsible for implementing policies and initiatives relevant to the diaspora and promoting cooperation with the diaspora worldwide.

Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth Affairs:

The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth Affairs aims to achieve sustainable development by cultivating a strong, productive, and secure labour market. The Ministry seeks to foster mutual benefits for employers, employees, and organizations, both nationally and internationally. The Ministry's vision is to recognize labour as a constitutional right important for technological advancement, production, and overall economic progress. The Ministry also emphasizes continuous education and training to meet evolving national and global demands.

The Ministry's mandate is spearheaded by the Labour Market Division and the Division for Legal and Global Matters. The Department for Work Permits for Aliens is responsible for processes relevant to the approval of labour permits for migrants.

Ministry of Home Affairs:

The Ministry of Home Affairs has core objectives that revolve around ensuring effective civic administration, maintaining accurate population records, and collaborating with other Ministries for the implementation of the Government's Human Resource Management framework. The Ministry plays a central role as a service provider within the government and society, with a focus on improving efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector. Upholding principles like the rule of law, good governance, and democracy in a globalized world is a priority, and the Ministry recognizes the significance of mutual state accountability in upholding these principles.

The Office of Alien Registration, Integration and Migration Unit is responsible for registering foreign residents through the Central Bureau for Civil Affairs. The Central Bureau for Civil Affairs also maintains a database for the registration of nationals residing abroad, disaggregated by age, sex, nationality and residence.

Ministry of Justice and Police:

The Ministry of Justice and Police upholds human rights, provides legal assistance, and develops policies on the rights of those who are detained. It ensures internal security, promotes peaceful living conditions, and oversees law enforcement agencies.

The Department of Alien Affairs is specifically responsible for managing residency applications, approvals, and expulsion processes, whereas the Department of Aliens Service implements immigration policy, supervises admission of stay, and executes orders for deportation, expulsion, or extradition of foreign nationals.

Ministry of Defense:

The Ministry of Defense's core objectives revolve around safeguarding Suriname's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Their priorities for the next 5 years encompass addressing COVID-19 challenges, strengthening border control, enhancing domestic security, collaborating with production companies, safeguarding maritime zones and territorial waters, protecting strategic assets, managing immigration issues, fostering civil-military relations, overseeing disaster and calamity management, and managing activities in the digital space.

The Military Police under the Ministry of Defense checks entries and exits of foreigners at border and crossing points.

Ministry of Economic Affairs, Entrepreneurship, and Technological Innovation:

The Ministry of Economic Affairs, Entrepreneurship, and Technological Innovation takes a role in fostering sustainable and innovative economic growth, aiming to enhance Suriname's domestic and global competitiveness for the overall well-being and progress of its residents. Their responsibilities include facilitating both domestic and international trade, managing commercial policies, overseeing cost of living control, establishing and monitoring price regulations and quality standards and developing policies to support the growth of various industries.

Ministry of Finance and Planning:

The core objectives of the Ministry of Finance and Planning, include monitoring state revenues and expenditures, managing government finances responsibly and efficiently, ensuring compliance with financial rules and legislation, formulating and implementing general financial, monetary, fiscal, and investment policies, and overseeing the organization and control of the state's financial administration. The Ministry also handles various financial responsibilities, such as budgetary policy, income policy, and treasury functions.

Ministry of Land Policy and Forest Management:

The Ministry of Land Policy and Forest Management focuses on effective urban planning and coordinates with other relevant ministries. It oversees land use, facilitates targeted land allocation, manages land registry, and ensures lawful land use. Additionally, it is responsible for resource management, nature conservation, and compliance with wood production and flora and fauna regulations.

Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries:

The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries oversees policy development for proper land and water use, oversees production, processing, and quality standards, and also manages disease prevention. Moreover, it monitors compliance with legislation, and manages aquaculture and agro-industry sectors.

Ministry of Natural Resources:

With a focus on sustainable resource management, the Ministry of Natural Resources emphasizes environmental considerations and community rights. The Ministry is organized into directorates for efficient management and aims to enhance resource utilization, quality, and collaboration. The Ministry's responsibilities span across mining, water, energy, and general resource management.

Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing:

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing focuses on general welfare by caring for vulnerable groups, overseeing institutions, promoting social development, and managing housing-related matters. Its policy objectives include transparency, equal access to services, family health, and creating a sustainable living environment to improve the overall standard of living.

Ministry of Transport, Communication and Tourism:

The Ministry of Transport, Communication and Tourism has a broad scope, overseeing transportation modes, traffic facilities, communication services, and tourism promotion and regulation. It also handles matters not assigned to other ministries, aiming to ensure safe and efficient transportation and communication networks across Suriname.

Ministry of Health:

The Ministry of Health is responsible for public health oversight, ensuring quality and accessibility of healthcare services, managing healthcare resources, and regulating medical facilities and supplies. It also focuses on preventing contamination, supervising medical practice, and promoting a healthy environment. Additionally, the Ministry oversees matters related to food products, healthcare for underserved groups, and environmental hygiene.

Ministry of Education, Science and Culture:

Suriname's educational system is managed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The Ministry consists of various directorates, each with departments led by Deputy Directors.

The Directorate of Administrative and Technical Management handles administrative, financial, and technical aspects necessary for implementing policies in education, culture, and science. The Directorate of General Education is responsible for ensuring responsible pedagogical practices, managing student enrollment and teacher recruitment. The Directorate of Vocational Education focuses on advancing vocational education, while the Directorate of Culture shapes and executes cultural policies. Lastly, the Directorate of Higher Education oversees the regulation and accreditation of higher education institutions.

Other Relevant Stakeholders:

Diaspora Representatives:

The expertise and skills acquired by diaspora members can significantly contribute to the Republic of Suriname's development. Members who oversee and lead diaspora organizations or associations can foster the valuable exchange of innovative ideas. Diaspora representatives will play a crucial role in identifying challenges and barriers related to human, social and financial capital transfers, access to benefits and other barriers to their engagement. Their transnational advocacy efforts and networking capabilities will also help connect various stakeholders in Suriname and abroad.

International Organizations:

By providing capacity-building support and technical assistance, IOs can assist with the administrative and logistical coordination of activities outlined in this policy. These organizations provide networking opportunities and share best practices and lessons learned related to diaspora engagement and project management. They can also promote alignment of activities with international standards and guidelines. Moreover, IOs can support research initiatives on migration trends, diaspora mapping and inclusive policy development that can inform evidence-based decision-making.

Private Sector Actors, Non-Governmental Organizations and Academia:

The engagement of private sector actors, NGOs and academia is pivotal to the success of Suriname's Diaspora Engagement Policy, as they play complementary roles in fostering development and connecting diasporas to priority sectors and industries. Private sector actors, including the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, businesses and industries, can collaborate closely with diaspora entrepreneurs to identify investment opportunities, support business ventures, and stimulate economic growth. Their involvement can lead to job creation, innovation, and the transfer of skills and knowledge.

In parallel, NGOs serve as critical partners in diaspora engagement by focusing on community empowerment, social services, and advocacy. These organizations can establish connections within diaspora communities through cultural events, workshops, and volunteer activities, nurturing a sense of belonging. They often provide vital social services such as education, social support and healthcare to Surinamese citizens. NGOs can therefore collaborate with diaspora representatives to implement tailored development projects that address specific community needs, leading to tangible positive outcomes.

Academic institutions can also act as catalysts for fostering transnational partnerships, create opportunities for knowledge transfer and collaboration and launch research pertinent that can inform evidence-based decision-making.

The Government of Suriname, and in particular the DI and DIN, currently face several key challenges and constraints that will be addressed through the launch of this policy.

Enhanced coordination is crucial, requiring improved collaboration not only between government institutions and the DI and DIN, but also involving other government bodies, private sector entities, IOs, and diaspora organizations. Currently, the DI requires additional resources to formulate and execute actions that effectively leverage diaspora contributions. Addressing the understaffing of the DI is essential, as a first step, to enhance its capabilities and fulfill its mandate more effectively. Budget allocation is also a critical concern, particularly the need for dedicated funding for the realization of this policy and accompanying action plan.

The various aforementioned stakeholders will have distinct roles and responsibilities under the Policy. To ensure a coordinated and effective approach, a *Central Coordinating Unit* and *Steering Committee* will be established and maintained, as well as various *Thematic Working Groups* that cater to different aspects of diaspora involvement.

3.2 Policy Coordination and Oversight:

The establishment, sustainability, and effectiveness of these structures within the context of Suriname's Diaspora Engagement Policy will be carefully managed to ensure a coherent and impactful approach:

Establishment:

1. *Central Coordinating Unit:* Establishing a central coordinating unit dedicated to diaspora engagement ensures that the various stakeholders involved work in coherence towards common goals. This coordination helps avoid duplication of efforts, streamlines resources, and better supports administrative and logistical coordination. The unit should be composed of dedicated individuals with administrative roles and responsibilities that sustain the structures and outcomes envisioned in this policy. This can include members of DI, DIN, relevant IOs and dedicated staff from frontline Ministries. The Coordinating Unit will provide administrative support, including the scheduling of Steering Committee meetings.
2. *Inception Meeting:* Once the Policy is approved, the Coordinating Unit will launch an inception meeting involving relevant stakeholders, including government officials and diaspora leaders. The meeting's objective is to introduce the concept of the Steering Committee and Working Groups, discuss their mandates (incl. the development of an agreed upon Terms of Reference), and seek commitment with the development of an internal stakeholder contact register.
3. *Formation of Working Groups:* Following the inception meeting, each themed Working Group will be formed, comprising representatives from relevant ministries, departments, institutions, and diaspora organizations associated with the specific theme (*please see below*). Each Working Group will be chaired by the Ministry most relevant to the theme of the group. The composition of each Working Group will aim to be inclusive, considering the diverse purview of each group's policy goals.

The Working Groups will report to the overarching Steering Committee that is responsible for oversight of the Policy and Action Plan.

4. *Steering Committee Formation:* A high-level Steering Committee will be appointed, composed of members who are currently engaged in interministerial coordination mechanisms. The Steering Committee will provide strategic direction, oversight, and alignment across the Working Groups.

Sustainability:

5. *Clear Mandates:* The Coordinating Unit, the Steering Committee and each Working Group will have a clearly defined mandate, objectives, and responsibilities aligned with the overarching Diaspora Engagement Policy and 5-Year Action Plan. This clarity ensures sustained focus and effective contribution.
6. *Dedicated Resources:* Adequate resources, both financial and human, will be allocated to each structure. This commitment demonstrates the government's dedication to ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of the Policy. The Coordinating Unit will be responsible with the distribution of funds and the monitoring of expenditure.
7. *Regular Engagement:* The Working Groups will convene at regular intervals, facilitated by clear timelines and schedules, which are shared by the Coordinating Unit. Ongoing engagement, under the role and responsibility of the Coordinating Unit, will maintain momentum and enable steady progress.
8. *Diaspora Involvement:* Engaging diaspora representatives from key organizations and industries will not only provide expertise but also promote sustainability through continued diaspora participation and ownership.

Effectiveness:

9. *Leadership and Oversight:* The Steering Committee will play a pivotal role in providing leadership, guidance, and oversight to the Working Groups. It will ensure alignment with the overall policy objectives, receive updates on progress and resolve any institutional challenges. The Steering Committee and the Coordinating Unit will adopt an adaptive management approach, allowing for flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and evolving diaspora needs.
10. *Regular Reporting:* The Working Groups will collaborate closely, sharing information, insights, and progress. Regular reporting ensures that different aspects of diaspora engagement are assessed on a continuous basis by all relevant parties. The Working Groups will be expected to report their progress to the Steering Committee periodically. This reporting mechanism facilitates transparency, accountability, and adjustment of strategies if necessary.

11. *Result-Oriented Approach*: Each Working Group will adopt a result-oriented approach, focusing on tangible outcomes, actionable strategies, and measurable results that contribute to Suriname's development. These will be developed in alignment with the 5-Year Action Plan and the associated Results Monitoring Framework(s) (RMF).

12. *Feedback Mechanisms*: Feedback loops between the Working Groups, diaspora representatives, and the government will be established by the Coordinating Unit to incorporate insights, adapt strategies, and ensure that initiatives remain relevant.

Ultimately, by establishing a well-structured Coordinating Unit, Steering Committee and target-oriented Working Groups, the implementation of Suriname's Diaspora Engagement Policy will be robust and impactful. Each entity will have a specific role in overseeing and facilitating collaboration among diverse stakeholders to bring the Diaspora Engagement Policy into action.

Coordinating Unit:

Efforts will be centralized through the DI to ensure streamlined coordination, efficient resource allocation, and avoidance of duplication. The unit will be staffed with the specific purview of managing the administrative and logistical aspects of the Policy implementation. This can include direct staff support from DI and/or DIN, seconded staff from various ministries and staff or consultants representing IOs. The unit's function is to drive the successful implementation of the Diaspora Engagement Policy and foster impactful collaboration between the government and the diaspora community.

Role of the Coordinating Unit:

- Provides administrative and logistical supports for the Steering Committee, Working Groups, and policy implementation efforts.
- This dedicated unit ensures that all stakeholders work harmoniously towards common diaspora engagement goals.
- The Coordinating Unit prevents duplication of efforts and optimizes resource allocation across various initiatives.
- It develops work plans with Working Groups which are aligned with policy objectives.
- Comprising individuals from DI and/or DIN, relevant IOs, and frontline Ministries, it sustains the Policy's structures and outcomes.

Steering Committee:

The Steering Committee will monitor the progress towards achieving the overarching goals, objectives, and strategic direction of the Policy. It ensures that the efforts align with the broader vision and mission of each ministry, providing a clear coherent framework for all activities. It also exercises oversight in monitoring the progress of the 5-Year Action Plan and associated RMF.

It reviews reports, evaluates outcomes, and makes key decisions that influence the direction of the Coordinating Unit and Working Groups' work. This involves addressing challenges, making adjustments, and ensuring that the Policy remains in active implementation between 2024-2029.

Role of the Steering Committee:

- The Steering Committee provides strategic direction, leadership, and oversight to the entire diaspora engagement framework.
- Ensures alignment of the Coordinating Unit and Working Groups with the overarching policy objectives and the Policy's vision, mission and guiding principles.
- Receives updates on progress from the Coordinating Unit and the Working Groups, identifies challenges, and provides guidance for their resolution.
- Fosters collaboration between different Working Groups, promoting an integrated and holistic approach.
- Takes decisions that influence policy direction and ensures it remains relevant and impactful.

The Steering Committee will be composed of relevant representatives from the Ministries involved, as well as a select number of private sector partners, NGOs and diaspora representatives. Depending on their involvement and interest, the following ministries are anticipated to participate on the Steering Committee in various capacities:

- Office of the President
- Office of the Vice President
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation
- Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth Affairs
- Ministry of Home Affairs
- Ministry of Justice and Police
- Ministry of Defense
- Ministry of Economic Affairs, Entrepreneurship, and Technological Innovation
- Ministry of Finance and Planning
- Ministry of Land Policy and Forest Management
- Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing
- Ministry of Transport, Communication and Tourism
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Working Groups:

Working Groups will play a pivotal role in implementing and advancing specific aspects of the Policy. These groups are composed of representatives from the various stakeholder groups involved, each focused on a distinct domain of diaspora engagement. Their responsibilities include strategic planning, collaborative decision-making, ensuring coherence across government and non-governmental initiatives and preventing duplicative efforts, and the implementation of activities to achieve the 5-Year Action Plan outcomes.

Role of the Working Groups:

- Each Working Group has defined objectives, responsibilities, and a mandate that aligns with the policy's goals.
- Efficiently manages financial and human resources, ensuring sustained focus and the execution of activities.
- Holds regular meetings according to a shared schedule, ensuring steady progress and momentum.
- Adopts a result-oriented approach, producing tangible outcomes and measurable goals based on the 5-Year Action Plan.
- Reports progress to the Steering Committee, ensuring transparency and accountability in all initiatives.
- Collaborates closely with other Working Groups, sharing insights, information, ensuring a comprehensive approach.
- Regularly engages diaspora representatives for expertise and feedback, ensuring initiatives are grounded and sustainable.
- Adopts an adaptive management approach, allowing for flexibility to respond to evolving diaspora needs and changing circumstances.

1. Knowledge Exchange and Skill Transfer Working Group:

The Knowledge Exchange and Skill Transfer Working Group's goal is to facilitate the transfer of human capital from the diaspora to Suriname, contributing to the country's economic growth and development.

In the contemporary global context, where skills and knowledge drive competitiveness and innovation, this group focuses on leveraging the expertise of skilled diaspora professionals to bridge knowledge gaps and enhance local capacities. The Working Group will collaborate with all actors involved (e.g., private sector, NGOs, academia, etc.) to identify the key priority areas that can be supported over the course of the 5-Year Action Plan's implementation.

Role of Ministries: Collaborate with diaspora professionals to facilitate knowledge sharing, technical training, and awareness campaigns related to skill transfer opportunities across various fields and industries.

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation
- Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth Affairs
- Ministry of Economic Affairs, Entrepreneurship, and Technological Innovation
- Ministry of Land Policy and Forest Management
- Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

2. Remittances and Investments Working Group:

The Remittances and Investments Working Group's goal is to optimize the potential of remittance inflows and diaspora investments to drive economic development within Suriname.

Currently, the Government of Suriname does not have formalized remittance schemes, but it has taken steps to enhance financial inclusion for citizens, including migrants and vulnerable groups. Collaborative efforts involving the Ministries of Social Affairs and Housing, Finance and Planning, along with the Association of Bankers and Banking Network Suriname, have been initiated. Recognizing the importance of improving remittance transfers, the group will focus on exploring strategies to reduce transaction costs and enhance accessibility. To achieve this, the group will seek to develop streamlined remittance channels by assessing ongoing barriers and challenges that diasporas face.

The Working Group will also explore opportunities to enhance investment regulations that would support a more favourable investment environment for the diaspora. The Government of Suriname is committed to providing investment guidance, business loan information, accessible platforms, and networking opportunities to diaspora members, fostering economic development through informed investment and collaboration.

Research focused on diaspora bonds or other investment funds or mechanisms will be launched to assess if these tools are appropriate in mobilizing diaspora funds for development projects, encouraging investments that contribute to infrastructure enhancement, economic diversification, and foreign exchange reserves. Moreover, additional research activities will be organized to better develop guidance to diasporas on investment opportunities, to establish comprehensive investment information platforms, and to define how to better foster connections between local entrepreneurs and diaspora counterparts.

Lastly, the Working Group will seek to facilitate and coordinate efforts to better leverage diaspora engagement for the advancement of the tourism sector. The group will aim to harness the unique cultural connections and insights of diaspora communities to stimulate tourism growth and cultural preservation. By collaborating with relevant stakeholders, such as tourism agencies and diaspora organizations, the Working Group will seek to design and implement targeted campaigns that encourage diaspora members to actively participate in and contribute to tourism-related initiatives.

Role of Ministries: Facilitate networking events, investment summits, and provide guidance on regulatory research that can encourage diaspora investment, boosting production, exports, tourism and entrepreneurship.

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing
- Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth Affairs
- Ministry of Economic Affairs, Entrepreneurship, and Technological Innovation
- Ministry of Finance and Planning
- Ministry of Transport, Communication and Tourism

3. Policy and Legislation Development Working Group:

The goal of the Policy and Legislation Development Working Group is to create an enabling environment through flexible citizenship laws, accessible benefits, and general legislation and policymaking that recognize the crucial role of the diaspora in Suriname's development.

Firstly, the group will assess if a more inclusive or scoped in working definition of the Surinamese diaspora is required to support the overall implementation of the Policy and the associated actions. The formal recognition and reference to diasporas in legislation and policymaking is another key aspect of the Working Group's portfolio. This official recognition will demonstrate the government's commitment to the diaspora, emphasizing their importance as critical development actors. Through the assessment of institutional barriers and addressing issues related to overstaying permitted durations and visa and work permit issues, the group will also seek to create an inclusive and supportive policy and legal framework for diaspora engagement.

The Working Group will also focus on empowering government representatives through a comprehensive array of training initiatives, designed to enhance their competencies and capabilities in effectively engaging with diasporas. This can be facilitated through study visits, ensuring that government officials learn from best practices in other geographic contexts.

Role of Ministries: Assess and enhance institutional frameworks related to diaspora engagement, address legal barriers and facilitate training, study visits and capacity-building programs to empower government representatives.

- Office of the President
- Office of the Vice President
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation
- Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth Affairs
- Ministry of Home Affairs
- Ministry of Justice and Police
- Ministry of Economic Affairs, Entrepreneurship, and Technological Innovation
- Ministry of Land Policy and Forest Management

4. Philanthropy, Development and Humanitarian Assistance Working Group:

The goal of the Philanthropy, Development, and Humanitarian Assistance Working Group is to strategically harness the contributions of diasporas for sustainable development and humanitarian efforts in Suriname. The Working Group seeks to balance the strengths and weaknesses of various actors, including the public and private sectors, NGOs, and local communities, to strengthen sustainable development initiatives.

Activities will be designed to promote philanthropy, partnering with diaspora organizations to facilitate collective giving, and pooling diaspora donations to maximize their impact, especially in preparation for natural disasters.

The Working Group will also focus on connecting diaspora volunteers to humanitarian and development projects in Suriname, so they can contribute their expertise and resources to initiatives that positively impact local communities.

Role of Ministries: Identify priority philanthropic, development and humanitarian needs in Suriname and develop a formalized process for diasporas to support local projects and efforts.

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

5. Communication and Diaspora Profiles Working Group:

The Communication and Diaspora Profiles Working Group's goal is to enhance the clarity, transparency, and effective communication between the Government of Suriname and its diaspora communities. Acknowledging the importance of clear communication channels, the Working Group seeks to establish robust channels of information flow that outline the benefits and expectations of diaspora engagement.

The group envisions the use of an online platform and social media platforms to facilitate transparent communication and information sharing between the government and diasporas. These platforms will serve as a hub for disseminating updates, opportunities, and programs. Lastly, to improve data collection and communication, the group aims to develop a diaspora register and/or database, ensuring that demographic data and engagement trends are systematically captured and analyzed. This data-driven approach will enable the government to tailor policies and initiatives more effectively.

Role of Ministries: Identify an effective registration and communication platform, work closely with embassy networks to promote this platform and launch ongoing information campaigns (e.g., newsletters, sharing volunteer or business networking opportunities, etc.).

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation:
- Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth Affairs
- Ministry of Home Affairs

3.3 Existing Legal and Policy Frameworks

In the Republic of Suriname, the existing legal framework on migration consists of various national laws and policies that have established the basis for the development of the Diaspora Engagement Policy. The most important legal instruments with regard to migration management and governance include the Constitution, the Aliens Act, the Aliens Decree, the Work Permit Aliens Act, the Criminal Code, and the 2014 Act establishing the status of Persons of Surinamese Descent, which is also known as the PSA Act.

Integrating existing legislation, policies, and national action plans and strategies into the *modus operandi* outlined in the Diaspora Engagement Policy is essential to achieve policy coherence and continuity. A cohesive approach ensures that the Policy is aligned with established legal frameworks, and fosters a unified and well-informed approach. The following legal and policy frameworks will be considered when designing and implementing the Policy directives:

The Persons of Surinamese Descent Act (SB 2014 No. 83): This act introduces the status of Persons of Surinamese Descent (PSA), defining those without Surinamese nationality, but who possess Surinamese ancestry (i.e., those having at least one parent or grandparent born in Suriname). According to this Act, beneficiaries must apply to attain their PSA status and access work and residency privileges. Once approved, it permits eligible individuals to stay in Suriname without a visa, register as permanent residents, and/or access employment.

Agreement for the Export and Enforcement of Social Insurance Benefits with the Netherlands: Under this bilateral agreement, Surinamese nationals who voluntarily return to Suriname from the Netherlands can continue receiving Dutch social benefits that they are entitled to, including a basic Dutch pension upon reaching retirement age. Additionally, they can access special return arrangements, which may include financial support.

Amendments to the 1975 Law on Surinamese Nationality and Residence: These revisions simplify the process of obtaining Surinamese citizenship and address legal gaps that lead to statelessness among children born abroad with Surinamese ancestry. Notably, these amendments extend the ability of mothers with Surinamese lineage to pass on Surinamese citizenship to their children born outside of Suriname - a privilege previously restricted exclusively to fathers.

National Population Policy 2021-2040: The National Population Policy acknowledges the need to develop a Diaspora Engagement Policy to support aspects of its framework. This policy was designed to function as a roadmap for the Surinamese government to advance development, focusing particularly on areas including youth, labour force, migrants, and other relevant themes.

National Development Plan 2017-2021: This plan acknowledges the role of diaspora in supporting development in Suriname. The Plan focuses on five key areas to facilitate ongoing national growth: good governance, economic diversification, social development, education, and natural resource management.

National Strategic Plan 2017-2020: The National Strategic Plan describes the potential of diaspora members as development actors. It refers to the longstanding connections with the United States and the Netherlands, as well as the diaspora's connections to nations and economies viewed as influential.

Key legislative and regulatory priorities that are of high relevance to diaspora are the provision of dual citizenship and regulatory improvements to the current investment climate in the Republic of Suriname. While adjustments have been made to naturalization laws to simplify the process of obtaining Surinamese nationality, the current legal framework does not permit dual citizenship for individuals of Surinamese descent residing abroad. Currently, dual citizenship is only available to Dutch nationals of Surinamese origin if their primary residence is in Suriname. Alongside this, there are also opportunities to improve regulations on foreign investment that could encourage entrepreneurial endeavors, investment and business development in the country.

Section 4: Short, Medium, and Long-term Activities, Timelines and Targets

The Government of Suriname, in collaboration with stakeholders and diaspora communities, is committed to conducting an early research assessment to evaluate the feasibility and prioritize the diverse range of programs and actions. This collaborative approach underscores the principles of inclusivity, mutuality and partnership, engaging both the government and diaspora members in the decision-making process.

The programs and actions outlined below offer areas for the Working Groups to explore based on the needs assessment process undertaken to produce this policy. These programs and actions, spanning various sectors and initiatives, will be assessed for feasibility and refined with specific timelines and dependencies once the Policy is formally launched, and in accordance with revisions made to the 5-Year Action Plan.

1. KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND SKILL TRANSFER

In today's global economy, a country's competitiveness and growth depend on a skilled workforce. However, skill gaps and "brain drain" pose several challenges, which consequently spotlight the role of diasporas as vital partners that can help address human resource gaps. Progressive policies and programs can draw skilled diaspora members back to Suriname to contribute as educators, mentors, researchers, and practitioners on a temporary or long-term basis. More broadly, strategies for human capital transfer fall into three categories: engaging diaspora as practitioners, partners, and network members. Governments can tap into their expertise in the areas of healthcare, technology, education, and entrepreneurship, amongst many others.

By facilitating "brain gain" and transnational engagement, the Government of Suriname aims to enhance human capital transfer, fostering economic growth and diversification. Successful engagement involves mapping skills, providing incentives, and education about the local context.

The Policy envisages the following programs and actions under the Knowledge Exchange and Skill Transfer Working Group:

5-YEAR ACTION PLAN PROGRAMS AND ACTIONS:

1. Coordinating peer-to-peer exchanges:

The Working Group will collaborate with the Communication and Diaspora Profiles Working Group to design an online register or survey that can help connect skilled professionals with domestic opportunities in priority sectors, such as healthcare, IT, education, agriculture, and areas related to science/innovation. Subsequently, the Working Group will design a peer-to-peer exchange program, which will offer workshops and job-shadowing opportunities for diaspora professionals to transfer their expertise and skills to local counterparts. Opportunities may be available both on a voluntary and temporary consultancy-basis. Overall, this initiative aims to enhance local capacity, drive innovation, and boost economic growth.

2. Launching university fellowships:

The Working Group will launch university fellowship(s) to facilitate academic collaboration between diasporas and universities, in Suriname and abroad. This initiative will strengthen partnerships between academic institutions, encourage knowledge transfer, and drive research and innovation.

3. Organizing diaspora-focused events, forums and/or conferences:

The Working Group will organize annual events, forums and/or conferences to facilitate discussions on cultural, economic, political, and social topics relevant to diaspora members. These gatherings will foster professional networking, knowledge sharing, and cultural exchange between diaspora and local stakeholders. A potential example can include the launch of an annual “Diaspora Day” or “Diaspora Week”; a period to celebrate diaspora achievements and accomplishments in their countries of residence.

4. Supporting the establishment of professional networks:

The Working Group will support the establishment of professional networks by creating platforms that facilitate meaningful interactions and collaborations between diaspora professionals and their counterparts in Suriname (e.g., those in science, technology, engineering and mathematics). These platforms could include online forums, conferences, workshops, and specialized events that bring together individuals from similar fields of expertise (*see program 3 on diaspora events, forums, and/or conferences*).

Under the leadership of DI, diaspora members can share their skills and mentor local professionals, while local professionals can share valuable insights on market opportunities in Suriname.

Additionally, partnerships with existing diaspora associations, industry organizations, and academic institutions can help create opportunities where these professional networks can convene, grow and build capacity to operate transnationally.

2. REMITTANCES AND INVESTMENTS

Recognizing the pivotal role of remittances and diaspora direct investments (DDI) in fostering economic growth, the Government of Suriname is committed to leveraging these financial flows for sustainable development. The government acknowledges that creating a competitive remittance transfer landscape can reduce costs, and thus, aims to stimulate legitimate operators and educate diaspora members about transfer options. Promoting streamlined remittance channels can optimize remittance utilization.

The Government of Suriname is also dedicated to offering comprehensive investment guidance and business loan information to diaspora members, encouraging their active participation in the country's development. By designing accessible platforms that outline investment opportunities, requirements, and procedures, the Government aims to bridge information gaps in Suriname among the diaspora.

Capitalizing on the financial assets, the government will also explore innovative financial instruments, such as continuing to build off the country's existing research on diaspora bonds and similar long-term investment mechanisms. By potentially offering these forms of financial opportunities, the government aims to mobilize financial capital into impactful investments. The development of diaspora bonds, or similar mechanisms, will be a research priority, which will require longer-term collaboration across multiple actors and the leveraging of consular networks for promotion and issuance.

The Working Group will also play a pivotal role in harnessing diaspora engagement to advance Suriname's tourism sector. This group's objective will be to utilize the cultural insights and connections of diaspora communities to drive tourism growth. Through collaboration with relevant stakeholders, such as tourism agencies and diaspora organizations, the Working Group will seek to develop targeted campaigns to encourage active diaspora involvement and contribute to tourism-related initiatives.

The Policy envisages the following programs under the Remittances and Investments Working Group:

5-YEAR ACTION PLAN PROGRAMS AND ACTIONS:

5. Establishing entrepreneurship assistance for young professionals and returnees:

The Working Group will offer entrepreneurship support programs to encourage young diaspora professionals and returnees to establish businesses in Suriname. These programs seek to foster economic growth and job creation as well as the improved reintegration of nationals returning to the country.

This process will be initiated by identifying the needs, skills, and aspirations of young diasporas and returnees through surveys and consultations (e.g., needs assessment of young professionals and those who have resettled in the country). The program's design can subsequently incorporate targeted capacity-building services like training, mentorship, and access to resources. Collaboration with diaspora industry experts and business associations can enhance program credibility.

6. Strengthening the regulatory environment and mechanisms for protecting investments:

Government institutions will initiate a comprehensive research review of existing investment laws and regulations in coordination with the Policy and Legislation Working Group to identify gaps and areas for improvement. Relevant stakeholders, including legal experts, industry representatives, and IOs, will be consulted to ensure alignment with international best practices. Based on this feedback, legislative reforms will be drafted to enhance investor protection and simplify procedures. The Group will also consider hosting forums to share DDI improvements or changes with members of the diaspora community.

7. Designing a diaspora bond/investment mechanism:

The Working Group will use existing research on local needs and challenges, as well as best practices, to design a diaspora bond/investment mechanism to attract investments from the diaspora community. This initiative has the potential to infuse capital, enhance infrastructure, diversify the economy, and contribute to foreign exchange reserves.

Launching the diaspora bond/investment mechanism will require a comprehensive assessment of the diaspora community's financial capabilities and preferences, as well as the financial regulatory environment in Suriname (*see program 6. strengthening the regulatory environment and mechanisms for protecting investments*). Thorough market research will inform the bond's features and terms, in alignment with investor interests.

8. Exploring tax incentives:

The Republic of Suriname will explore potential tax incentives, including tax exemptions for returnees and tax deductions for diaspora businesses. These incentives will be designed to ensure alignment with the best interests of both Surinamese residents and diaspora members. These incentives will stimulate economic activities, encouraging local investment.

The Working Group will support this process by crafting a clear policy framework that outlines the specific tax benefits and eligibility criteria for targeted beneficiaries. Legal and regulatory adjustments will be made to integrate these incentives into existing tax laws.

9. Reducing barriers to remittance transfers and promoting remittances:

The Working Group will consult with diaspora members to better understand ongoing motivations, interests and challenges associated with remittance transfers to Suriname.

Based on this research, the Working Group will collaborate with the Central Bank and key financial institutions to design potential actions that can enhance efficiency and reduce costs.

The Working Group will also explore potential partnerships with international money transfer operators (IMTOs) to assess exchange rates and transfer fees as a means to incentivize remittance flows through formal channels.

10. Creating opportunities for diasporas to support tourism-focused initiatives:

The Working Group will design and launch tourism programs that provide opportunities for diasporas and their networks to contribute to Suriname's tourism sector. The Working Group will collaborate with tourism agencies and diaspora organizations to design targeted campaigns on business tourism and heritage tourism. These campaigns will highlight investment opportunities, cultural heritage, and local attractions.

3. POLICY AND LEGISLATION DEVELOPMENT

The Policy and Legislation Development Working Group's goal focuses on the development of adaptable citizenship laws, accessible benefits, and comprehensive legislation and policies, all of which recognize the role of the diaspora in Suriname's development. The group will assess steps needed to address barriers such as those related to citizenship laws that permit dual citizenship, as a means to design frameworks that can foster a stronger link between diaspora members and the Republic of Suriname.

By evaluating institutional frameworks, addressing challenges related to citizenship, visa and work permits, and considering issues of overstay, the Working Group will aim to formulate a mutually beneficial policy and legal framework to facilitate diaspora engagement. This assessment will also consider good practices such as the *Agreement between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Suriname on the Export and Enforcement of Social Insurance Benefits*.

The Working Group is also dedicated to empowering government representatives through a comprehensive range of workshops and training programs. By offering training on diaspora engagement to government personnel, which can be facilitated through study visits, the Working Group will facilitate more effective diaspora engagement. This approach ensures that government officials gain insights into best practices, better equipping them to develop robust legislations and policies.

5-YEAR ACTION PLAN PROGRAMS AND ACTIONS:

11. Assessment of institutional frameworks, services and processes:

Assessing institutional frameworks involves a comprehensive evaluation of existing structures on diaspora engagement. The Working Group will collaborate with relevant ministries and agencies to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

This assessment involves gathering input from government institutions, diaspora communities, civil society, and IOs. Based on the findings, a roadmap will be developed to enhance coordination, allocate resources efficiently, and ensure policy coherence across different governmental ministries and departments.

12. Addressing issues related to entry and exit regulations:

The Working Group will explore accessible communication approaches to educate diaspora on immigration and tourism policies, specifying entry requirements, visa categories, and permissible stay durations. Streamlined processes for extensions or renewals will also be explored to facilitate legal stays while deterring irregular migration, in partnership with embassies and consulate offices.

13. Assessing the feasibility of a dual citizenship framework:

A pressing priority for diaspora members is the implementation of dual citizenship. Many diaspora members desire the ability to hold citizenship alongside their existing nationality, rather than just obtaining a passport. Over a span of 5 years, the Republic of Suriname will assess the prospects for establishing a dual citizenship framework.

If applicable, the Working Group will consult legal experts, relevant ministries, and international legal standards to draft dual citizenship legislation. Application procedures will be considered when designing the legislation, including necessary documentation and conditions for eligibility. Through this legislation, dual citizens will be granted rights and obligations, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and encouraging ongoing engagement with Suriname, while maintaining ties abroad.

14. Organizing training and awareness-raising activities for government representatives:

The Working Group will conduct training and awareness sessions for government representatives on diaspora engagement. This effort will ensure that government officials are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively engage with the diaspora and implement the Policy's initiatives.

The Working Group will partner with academic institutions, experts, and IOs to develop training materials. Workshops and seminars will be organized to educate government officials about the benefits of diaspora engagement, best practices, legal frameworks, and effective communication strategies.

15. Coordinating regional and international study visits:

Study visits for government personnel supporting diaspora engagement will involve identifying priority destination countries, with particular focus on visits to countries with successful diaspora engagement models and/or those in the region.

These study visits will expose government personnel to practical strategies, innovations, and common challenges and solutions. Insights gained from these experiences will inform the adoption of effective practices in Suriname's diaspora engagement efforts.

16. Building capacity for the sustainable operations of DI and DIN:

Developing institutional capacity within DI and DIN will support their ability to implement actions under this policy and across other diaspora engagement initiatives. The Working Group will examine opportunities to increase resourcing allocated to these institutions.

4. PHILANTHROPY, DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The Philanthropy, Development, and Humanitarian Assistance Working Group will strategically leverage diaspora contributions for sustainable development and social impact in Suriname. The group will foster collaboration among public and private sectors, NGOs, and diaspora communities to drive effective development initiatives. The Working Group will also connect diaspora volunteers to local projects, enabling them to contribute expertise and resources to benefit communities in the country.

5-YEAR ACTION PLAN PROGRAMS AND ACTIONS:

17. Connecting diaspora volunteers to humanitarian and development projects:

The Working Group will seek to better facilitate diaspora engagement in development and humanitarian projects. This effort will leverage diaspora expertise, augment resources, and positively impact local communities.

Connecting diaspora volunteers to humanitarian and development projects involves creating avenues for diaspora members to contribute their specialized skills and resources to initiatives in the country. The Government will collaborate with NGOs and diaspora organizations to identify projects and match volunteers' expertise and skillsets with relevant needs (*see program 18 and 19*).

5. COMMUNICATION AND DIASPORA PROFILES

The Communication and Diaspora Profiles Working Group holds a critical role in advancing effective engagement and transparency between the Government of Suriname and its diaspora communities. Recognizing the fundamental value of clear communication, the Working Group is dedicated to establishing channels that communicate the mutual benefits and anticipated outcomes of diaspora engagement initiatives. In its pursuit of enhanced communication and data-driven decision-making, the Working Group is committed to designing a comprehensive diaspora register. This register will systematically collect and analyze demographic information and interests, providing the government with essential insights to effectively tailor impactful policies and initiatives.

Furthermore, the Communication and Diaspora Profiles Working Group envisions the identification of an online platform to serve as a dynamic communication channel between the Government and the diaspora. This channel will not only disseminate crucial updates, opportunities, and programs but will also foster open and transparent dialogue.

5-YEAR ACTION PLAN PROGRAMS AND ACTIONS:

18. Creating and updating a comprehensive diaspora register:

The Working Group will establish a diaspora register to periodically capture demographic data and track engagement trends. Developing a diaspora register includes creating a comprehensive database of diaspora members and their skills, expertise, and interests. The register can be shared widely through the consular networks as well as information sharing platform(s) (*see program 19: Updating and improving existing platform(s) to share critical information*).

19. Updating and improving existing platform(s) to share critical information:

The Working Group will improve existing platforms, such as the DI website, and leverage social media platforms, to share key information and opportunities for diaspora participation across various initiatives. These platforms will facilitate enhanced communication between the government, diaspora, and relevant stakeholders. The Working Group will also disseminate updates on relevant policies, opportunities and development projects, fostering transparency and engagement between the Government and diaspora members through these channels.

20. Establishing a periodic mapping exercise of diasporas in target countries:

Launching periodic diaspora mapping in target countries involves conducting comprehensive surveys to identify the size, distribution, and skills of the diaspora population. This data will inform tailored engagement strategies and policies, enabling the Government of Suriname to better understand the diaspora's potential for development.

Section 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms are essential to ensure the successful implementation of the Diaspora Engagement Policy and to measure its impact over time. The Government of Suriname is committed to establishing a robust M&E framework that enables regular assessment of the Policy and 5-Year Action Plan's progress. The M&E processes will involve multiple layers of review and reporting, fostering transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

5.1 Development of M&E Processes:

Setting Clear Indicators and Targets:

The Coordinating Unit, in collaboration with the Working Groups, will define specific indicators and measurable targets for each program under the 5-Year Action Plan. These indicators will encompass quantitative and qualitative measures to assess the effectiveness of the programs, such as increased remittance inflows, the number of diaspora investments, participation in training programs, and engagement through the online platform.

A formalized RMF will be developed and approved following the establishment of the Steering Committee and the Working Groups. The Coordinating Unit will continuously track and record progress against the RMF.

Data Collection and Management:

The Coordinating Unit will oversee data collection, management, and analysis of key indicators outlined in the RMF. It will ensure that accurate and reliable data is gathered from various sources, including administrative data, sources and through interviews and focus groups with government institutions and diaspora representatives. This data will be used to track progress and provide evidence-based insights to the Steering Committee.

Regular Reporting:

The Working Groups will be responsible for regular reporting on their activities, achievements, and challenges. These reports will be submitted to the Coordinating Unit and the Steering Committee, who will review them and provide feedback. This reporting mechanism will help identify areas for improvement and encourage collaboration across Working Groups.

Periodic Evaluations:

The Steering Committee, in consultation with relevant external stakeholders, will conduct periodic evaluations to assess the implementation and results of the Policy. These evaluations will involve analyzing data, reviewing reports, and engaging with diaspora representatives for their insights. This can include mid-term, final and ex-post evaluations of the Policy. The evaluations will provide a comprehensive view of the Policy's achievements and areas for enhancement.

Independent assessments may be commissioned to provide an objective evaluation of the Policy's outcomes. These assessments could involve experts in diaspora engagement, development, and related fields. Their insights will offer a neutral perspective on the Policy's impact and effectiveness.

Feedback Mechanisms:

The Coordinating Unit will establish feedback mechanisms to gather input from diaspora communities and other stakeholders. Regular surveys, consultations, and engagement sessions will enable the government to understand the diaspora's perception of the policy, identify gaps, and make necessary adjustments.

Adaptive Strategies:

Based on the findings from M&E processes, the Steering Committee will promote adaptive strategies to address challenges and promote agile change management practices.

These strategies will ensure that the Policy remains relevant, dynamic, and aligned with evolving diaspora needs and national development priorities.

By establishing comprehensive M&E processes, the Government of Suriname will demonstrate its commitment to evidence-based decision-making, accountability, and the continuous improvement of its diaspora engagement initiatives.

The collaborative efforts of the Coordinating Unit, Working Groups, Steering Committee, and other stakeholders will ensure that the Policy's goals are achieved and the vision of a dynamic Surinamese diaspora contributing to and benefiting from the country's development becomes a reality.

