
DIASPORA GROUPS OF THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN

Opportunities, Challenges and Needs for Collaboration



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I. INTRODUCTION

The Eastern Caribbean region has some of the highest emigration rates in the world: for every Caribbean national living in their home country there is one person of the Caribbean diaspora living abroad.ⁱ Members of the Caribbean diaspora are diverse, well-educated and known for maintaining strong ties with their home countries.ⁱⁱ This is reflected not only by the high levels of remittances they send home, but also through diasporas' consistent engagement with their communities of origin and interest in supporting the development of their home countries. The combination of these factors makes the Caribbean diaspora an essential and often untapped resource for governments in Caribbean countries.

One way in which diaspora communities maintain connections with their home countries is by forming diaspora organizations and informal social groups. Diaspora organizations from the Eastern Caribbean region have historically provided avenues for diaspora communities to maintain social bonds with other members of their communities of origin and contribute to their home countries. Although these organizations have played an important function in connecting diaspora communities abroad to countries of origin, little research has focused on diaspora organizations from the Eastern Caribbean region and no research to date has mapped out these organizations or assessed the needs of existing diaspora groups.

The objective of this study is to identify the level of organization of diaspora groups from the Eastern Caribbean sub-region, their needs, challenges they face and their level of commitment to engage with governments from countries of origin. Using a qualitative approach, this study maps out diaspora organizations from

eight Eastern Caribbean countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) located in Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Based on information gathered from surveys and interviews with diaspora organization leaders and government representatives, this report identifies challenges and opportunities for future engagement between diaspora organizations, governments of origin and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). In addition to this written report, this research has resulted in a database and digital map of diaspora organizations available on IOM's iDiaspora platform (www.idiaspora.org).

In this report, Chapter 2 outlines the methodology used to identify and collect data on diaspora organizations in this study. Chapter 3 provides an overview of migration trends from the Eastern Caribbean region and available data on the eight countries of focus in this study. Chapter 4 outlines the characteristics and profiles of identified diaspora organizations from the Eastern Caribbean region, their missions, objectives and key activities that they engage in. Chapter 5 considers the extent to which diaspora organizations currently engage with governments of origin, both from the perspective of government representatives and that of organization leaders. Chapter 6 analyzes the challenges, needs and changes that diaspora organizations are undergoing, particularly considering the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the report concludes with policy recommendations and a concluding section on how to continue and improve engagement between diaspora groups and governments of origin and address some of the challenges that organizations are facing.

II. METHODOLOGY

This section provides an overview of the inclusion criteria, methodological approach, the data collection process and the challenges and limitations of the study. This methodological approach could be replicated in future studies.

INCLUSION CRITERIA

Table 1: Countries of origin. Source: Compiled by author.

Antigua and Barbuda
Barbados
Commonwealth of Dominica
Grenada
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Montserrat

This study includes diaspora organizations from the seven Protocol member states of the OECS, in addition to Barbados, a key country in the region (See Table 1). The project identifies diaspora organizations based in the top three countries of destination for migrants in the Caribbean region—the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada. While not the focus of the study, diaspora organizations representing the broader Caribbean region are also included in the project.

For the purposes of this report, ‘diaspora organization’ is defined as:

A group of migrants or descendants of migrants who regularly gather or organize based on a shared sense of history, identity, or mutual experiences in a destination country.¹

The research team intentionally used a broad definition of ‘diaspora organization’ to capture a diverse range of diaspora groups and communities, including both formal and informal groups, online groups, alumni groups, sports clubs and other types of organizations.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

To create a digital database of Eastern Caribbean diaspora organizations and answer the research questions of this study, the research team collected data from a variety of sources, using a qualitative approach. Data were triangulated from multiple sources, including a review of secondary data, surveys with diaspora organizations, consultations with government officials and diaspora organization leaders and semi-structure interviews with government officials and diaspora organization leaders. Data collection tools were designed using a gender-sensitive approach to identify the roles of people of all genders, including women and persons with diverse SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics). The use of these multiple data sources and the engagement with stakeholders both from the government and diaspora organizations strengthens the validity of the report findings and the proposed recommendations to enhance collaboration between diaspora organizations and governments of origin.

¹ This definition was adapted from the definition of “diaspora” in the IOM “Glossary on Migration” (2019)

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

1. Literature review of secondary sources

Extensive desk research was conducted to contextualize the findings of this report. This research contributed to a literature review on historical and contemporary migration trends of the Eastern Caribbean region, the gender and race specific experiences of migrants from the Eastern Caribbean region and the ways in which Eastern Caribbean migrant communities engage with their countries of origin, including through remittances and the formation of diaspora groups.

2. Preliminary identification of organizations

The research team used a range of techniques to establish a preliminary database of diaspora organizations and a contact list to invite organizations to participate in surveys and interviews. This included:

- **Consultations with government officials** from ministries of foreign affairs, diaspora units, consulates and High Commissions in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada. In some cases, government officials shared pre-existing registries or contact lists for diaspora groups. In other cases, they helped reach out to other government contacts to obtain existing lists or put together a list of organizations for the purpose of this study.
- **Consultations with diaspora organization leaders**, particularly with presidents of coalitions, to inquire about lists of organizations and organizational contacts within their coalition or network.
- **Web searches** through search engines, social media platforms and websites of diaspora organizations to identify publicly available lists of diaspora organizations and individual diaspora organizations from target countries.

Country	Number organizations identified	Government registry of organizations or contact list obtained?	Number bounced emails	Number of defunct phones	Number of organizations defunct	Number of organizations verified
Antigua and Barbuda	50	United Kingdom/ Canada	5	6	0	29
Barbados	89	United States of America/ United Kingdom/ Canada	15	6	0	22
Commonwealth of Dominica	32	None	1	1	0	8
Grenada	68	United States of America/ United Kingdom/ Canada	8	0	1	11
Saint Kitts and Nevis	39	United States of America/ United Kingdom/ Canada	3	3	0	23
Saint Lucia	50	United States of America/ United Kingdom/ Canada	4	0	1	21
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	60	United States of America	6	2	3	28
Montserrat	9	None	2	0	0	0
Eastern Caribbean	1	None	0	0	0	1
Caribbean	13	None	0	0	0	8
Total	411		44	18	5	151

Table 2: Organization Identification Process. Source: IOM, 2021

In cases where organizations were identified online, information about the organization and potential contacts, such as its website, social media page, organization phone number and organization email were collected if available. In total, **411 organizations** were identified during the preliminary identification process. Out of these identified organizations, 151 were verified. Organizations were counted as verified if they responded to the survey or confirmed they were active organizations via phone or email. Table 2 shows a summary of the number of organizations identified from each country and whether the research team was able to obtain government contact lists for organizations in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada. Figure 1 shows the total number of organizations verified for each country out of all the organizations identified.

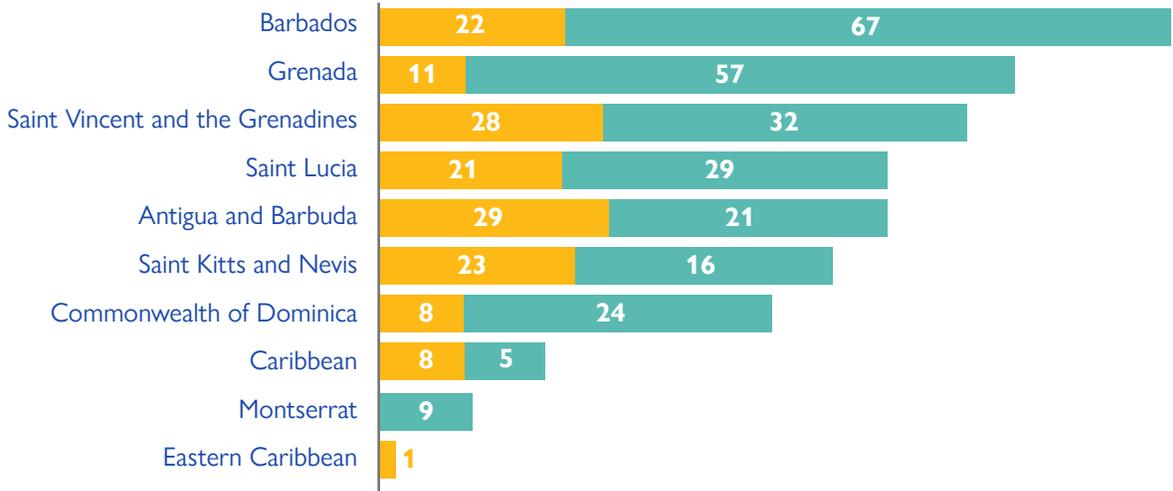


Figure 1: Number of organizations identified and verified. Yellow: number of active organizations. Green: number of identified organizations. Source: IOM, 2021.

3. Survey design and dissemination process

The research team designed an online survey that uses a mix of open and close-ended questions to gather information on diaspora organizations’ profiles and experiences engaging with governments of origin. The survey was designed to be user-friendly and relatively brief, requiring about 15-20 minutes to complete. It is composed of 43 questions altogether but utilizes “branching” so not all organizations answered every question.

Surveys were sent out to organizations from the preliminary contact list. Several of these emails bounced back, as shown in Table 2. In some cases, the researcher was able to call these organizations and obtain updated contact information. In other cases, the researcher was not able to get through to these organizations or organization reported that they were no longer active. Organizations were also contacted via social media pages, websites and WhatsApp. Several email reminders were sent out and organizations were contacted via phone to encourage as many responses as possible. Survey responses were collected between July 14, 2021 and August 16, 2021.

In addition to contacting organizations identified through the preliminary contact list, the research team encouraged organizations to send out the survey to other organizations they knew, so new organizations could be identified through the survey process. The research team also promoted the survey through the IOM Caribbean Facebook page, posted information about the project and the survey link to several diaspora groups Facebook pages and published a press release with information about the project and a link to the survey on the OECS website.

4. Interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the leaders of select diaspora organizations and government officials from countries of origin. Interviews with diaspora organization leaders expanded on the survey topics to gain more insight into the challenges and needs of organizations, as well as their experiences engaging with home country governments. Interviews also allowed organization leaders to bring up topics that were not directly addressed in the survey. Interviews with government actors focused on governments' experiences identifying and engaging with diaspora organizations. The breakdown of the number of interviews with government officials and diaspora organizations from countries of origin and destination are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

SURVEY RESPONDENT PROFILES

In total 104 organizations responded to the survey. Based on the initial preliminary list of 411 organizations, this equates to about a 25 per cent response rate. However, it is important to note that some of the emails bounced back (44) and some phone numbers were incorrect or not operational (18). In addition, five contacts communicated that their organization was no longer active. The number of organizations that are not active is likely greater, however, as many organizations did not respond at all. In addition, some organizations that were not on the initial contact list were identified throughout the process, as described above. Table 3 and Table 4 provide an overview of the total number of the respondent profiles from country of origin and country of destination, respectively.

Table 3: Respondent profiles, country of origin. Source: IOM, 2021.

Country	Number of survey responses	Number of organization interviews	Number of government interviews
Antigua and Barbuda	16	2	1
Barbados	14	2	1
Commonwealth of Dominica	7	2	2
Grenada	7	1	1
Saint Kitts and Nevis	17	2	1
Saint Lucia	12	2	2
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	20	1	0
Montserrat	0	0	0
Eastern Caribbean	2	0	0
Caribbean	5	1	0
Total	104	13	8

Table 4: Respondent profiles, country of destination. Source: IOM, 2021.

Country of Destination	Number of survey responses	Number of organization interviews
United States	60	5
United Kingdom	18	2
Canada	23	6
Other	3	0
Total	103	13

SURVEY RESPONDENT PROFILES

The scope of this research and its findings are limited by the short time frame in which it was completed and the limited availability of current data on diaspora groups. The process of consulting with government officials to obtain existing registries and contact lists took more time than anticipated, as registries and contact lists were not always readily available. In addition, as described in detail above, several of the emails and phone numbers acquired through the preliminary search were not operational, suggesting that some of the government registries of diaspora organizations were not up to date. Moreover, several organizations that were found through web searches did not have up to date websites or social media pages, making it difficult to contact them or determine whether these organizations were still active. The findings from the survey also revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic posed a major challenge to many diaspora groups, in some cases halting organizations' activities altogether. It is possible that some of the organizations initially identified became inactive or unresponsive due to COVID-19 impacts.

Another challenge was getting organization leaders to respond to the survey. To mitigate this challenge the research team followed up with organizations several times through multiple means, including phone calls, social media platforms and websites. Some organizations expressed concerns about filling out the surveys for data privacy and protection reasons.

Because of these challenges the survey results do not provide a representative sample of diaspora groups from the Eastern Caribbean region. While it is especially difficult to make any conclusions when disaggregating the results by country, given the small sample size from each country, the report will focus on analyzing the results from a regional perspective.

While it is important to keep in mind these challenges and limitations when examining the findings of these reports, the challenges also shed light on some of the obstacles that governments face in collecting data and maintaining contact with diaspora organizations. Moreover, considering the lack of existing research and data on this topic, the findings from the 104 survey responses and 21 interviews for this project provide important initial data on the current characteristics, challenges and needs of diaspora organizations. These findings can be used as an entry point to develop strategies to strengthen relationships between diaspora organizations and governments and identify avenues for future research.

III. MIGRATION TRENDS FROM THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean region has a deep-rooted history of emigration. The eight countries included in this study are all former British colonies, only gaining independence in the latter part of the 20th century. The region's history of colonization and slavery has uniquely influenced migration trends in the region and continues to shape migration dynamics to date. This section will explore the historical context driving migration patterns from the Eastern Caribbean region, more recent migration trends, largely driven by the search for employment and education opportunities abroad, the gender specific characteristics of migration from the Eastern Caribbean and the role of remittances in supporting countries of origin.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Migration patterns in the Caribbean region can be divided into four key stages in modern history: a period of intra-regional migration after Afro-descended persons were emancipated from the British slavery system in 1834 and sought opportunities outside of the plantation economy; a period where many West Indians² moved toward Panama and the Hispanic Caribbean, drawn by job opportunities and projects where migrants were actively recruited, such as the construction of the Panama Canal; a period during World War I and the Great Depression with little out-migration and higher rates of return migration due to limited opportunities abroad; and finally, a period of large scale out-migration to the United Kingdom from World War II until 1962-5.ⁱⁱⁱ The latter period is often referred to as the “Windrush Generation,” made up of about 500,000 residents who were born into Commonwealth Caribbean countries and migrated to the United Kingdom to assist with reconstruction efforts after World War II,^{iv} many through formal recruitment programmes.^v

In the 1960s, a series of changes in migration policies in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States of America shifted Caribbean emigration patterns away from Europe and toward North America. Canadian policies provided greater opportunities for skilled migrants, which attracted Caribbean migrants who generally had secondary and tertiary levels of education.^{vi} The United States Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Celler Act, dismantled quota systems based on nationality and provided opportunities for family reunification, opening up additional channels for Caribbean migration to the United States of America.^{vii} Migrants coming from the Caribbean to the United States of America and Canada were typically skilled professionals, such as women in the health and education sectors.^{viii}

RECENT MIGRATION TRENDS

The region's deep-rooted history of emigration has fostered a culture of migration which continues today. In 2019, seven out of the eight countries in this study (Saint Kitts and Nevis, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia and Barbados) were among the top twenty countries in the world with the highest proportion of its combined population living abroad, according to the IOM World Migration Report 2020.³ Saint Kitts and Nevis is the country with the highest

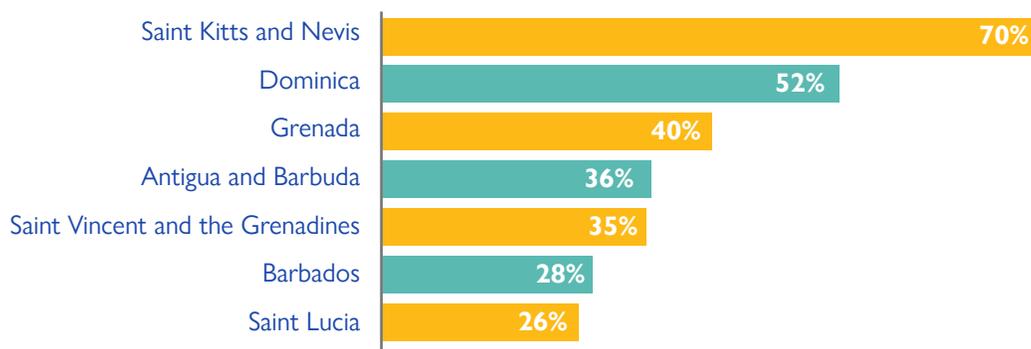


Figure 2: Proportion of combined population who are emigrants, 2019. Source: IOM, 2021

² The term 'West Indian' here refers to people from English speaking Caribbean islands.

³ Montserrat is not included in this data because the IOM World Migration Report 2020 only included countries with a combined population of over 100,000 residents and emigrants for this estimate.

proportion of emigrants in the world, with 70 per cent of its combined population living abroad, followed by the Commonwealth of Dominica, where emigrants make up just over half the country's population (see Figure 2).^x Figure 3 shows a breakdown of total number of migrants by country of origin for each of the countries in this study between 1990 and 2019, Figure 4 shows the proportion of the combined population who are emigrants between 1990 and 2019 and Figure 5 shows the breakdown by country of origin and destination in 2019. Notably, with the exception of Montserrat, the United States of America was the top destination country for all of the countries in this study in 2019.

While migration patterns have shifted in the Caribbean in part due to shifting drivers of migration, including migration policies abroad, the underlying drivers for emigration in countries of origin have remained relatively consistent. The Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which include the countries specific to this study, are particularly socio-economically vulnerable as they are dependent on a limited range of economic activities, in part due to their extended colonial histories. Historically, Caribbean SIDS have been dependent on agriculture-based economies, and since the 1980s they have transitioned to primarily service-based economies dependent on tourism. Both markets are reliant upon a fluctuating global economy and vulnerable to external economic shocks.^x

Most research points to weak economic and employment activities in the Caribbean SIDS (including in the West Indies) and the pull of higher wages, improved living standards, and greater educational opportunities elsewhere, as factors that consistently drive emigration at high rates from these countries.^{xi} Other research has suggested this explanation alone may be limiting, and factors such as family reunification and a distinct culture of migration are also decisive factors in the decision to migrate.^{xii} Nevertheless, high rates of unemployment—particularly among youth, skills gaps in national labour markets and dissatisfaction with the type of employment activities available to the population, continue to be cited as major drivers of emigration in the region.^{xiii} Economic crises, inflation, natural disasters and improved channels of communication with family members abroad have continued to fuel these patterns in the West Indies in recent decades.^{xiv}

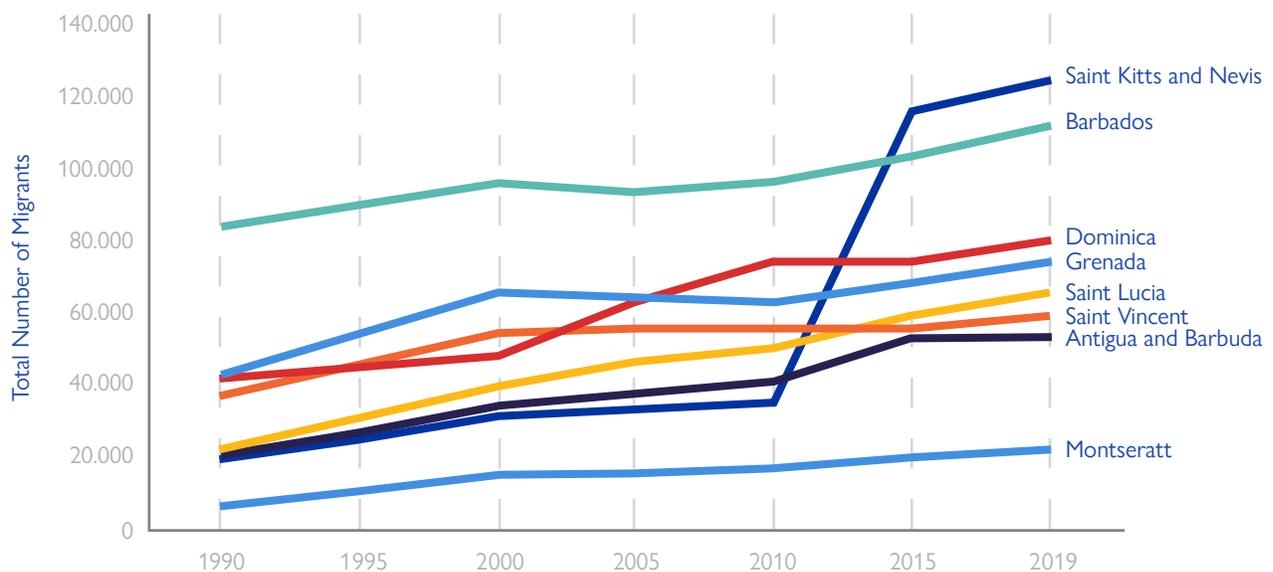


Figure 3: International migrant stock by country of origin, 1990-2019

Source; Graph created by autor based on data from United Nation Popoulation Division (UNDESA)

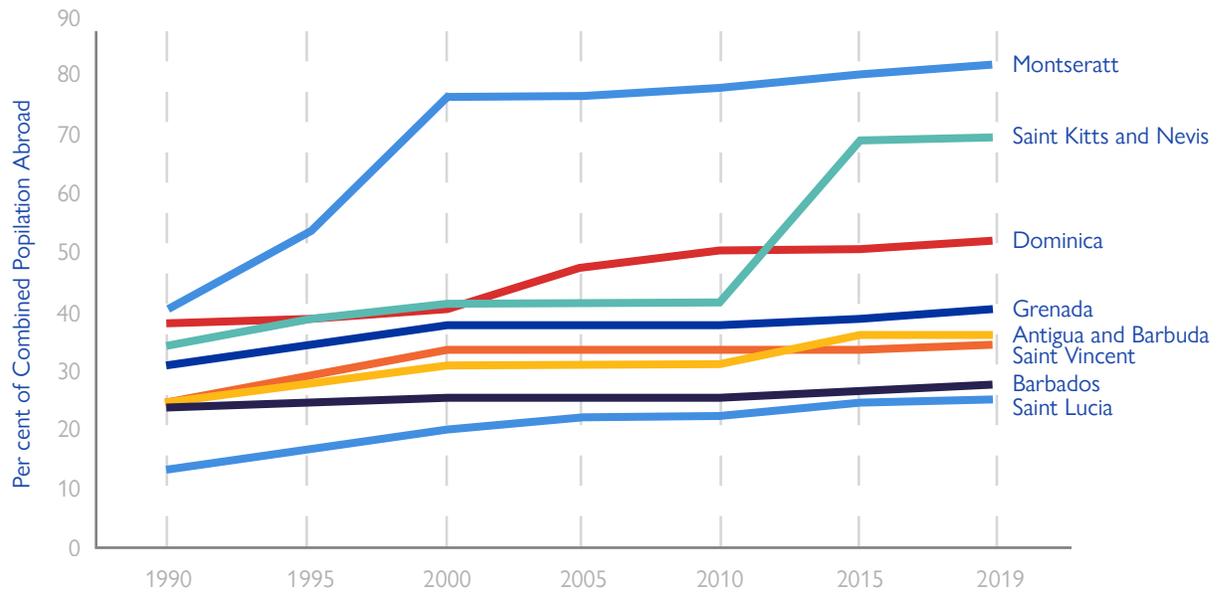


Figure 4: Per cent of combined population who are emigrants, 1990-2019

Source: Graph created by author based on data from the United Nations Population Division (UN DESA, calculated as a percentage of the population abroad out of the total combined population).^{xv}

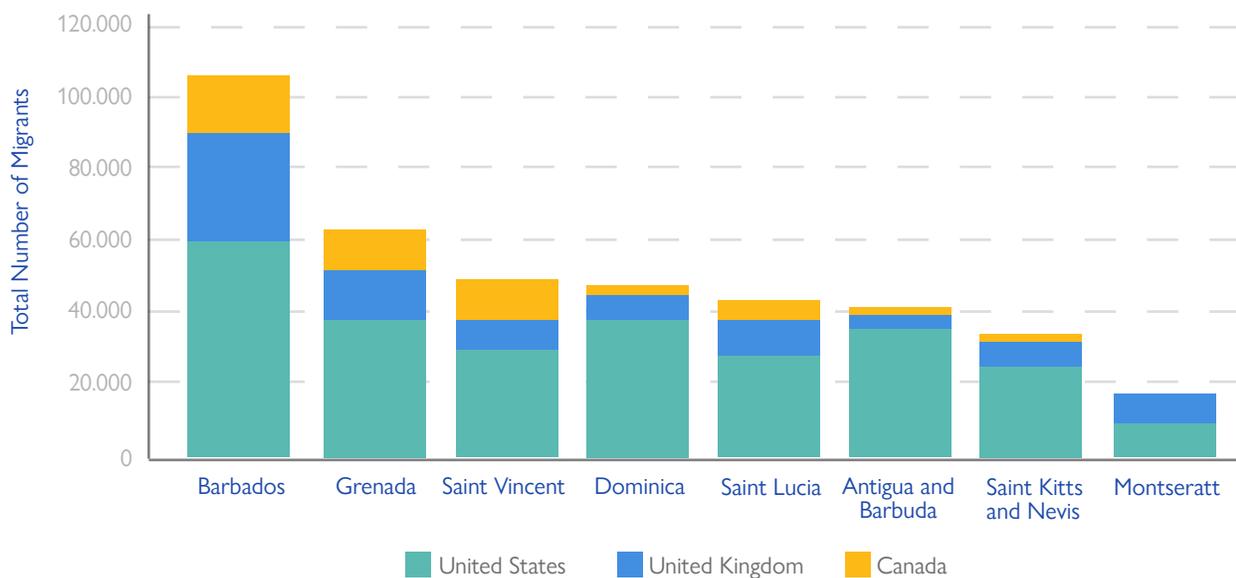


Figure 5: Migrant stock by country of origin in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada, 2019

Source: Graph created by author based on data from the United Nations Population Division (UN DESA)^{xvi}

Climate change and related economic consequences have also influenced both internal and international migration in the region. Caribbean SIDs are among the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change and climate variability and experts predict that in the Eastern Caribbean specifically, climate change is expected to result in an increase in severe hurricanes, heat stress, erratic rainfall patterns and droughts.^{xvi}

Environmental stresses and natural disasters due to climate change may exacerbate pre-existing economic vulnerabilities and further drive migration. Examining the connection between droughts and migration in Grenada, for instance, Cashman and Yawson observe that as the “frequency, intensity and duration of droughts [will] increase environmental stresses, severely affecting water supply and agriculture. . . which in turn, would play a role in individual and household decisions to around migration.”^{xvii}

Similarly, increasing frequency and intensity of hurricanes in the region have already led to severe economic damage. In 2017, Hurricane Maria caused an estimated USD \$930.9 million in damages and USD \$380 million in losses in the Commonwealth of Dominica, equating to 226 per cent of the island’s 2016 GDP.^{xviii} Hurricanes can also lead to high levels of displacement: in 2017 Category 4 and 5 hurricanes displaced over 400,000 children alone in the Caribbean SIDS, including in Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of Dominica and Saint Kitts and Nevis.^{xix} While displacement due to disasters is typically temporary and internal, the increasing frequency of these events and resulting economic damage may factor into longer term migration decisions.

GENDER

Although women make up about 48 per cent of international migrants,^{xx} rates of migration are higher among women than men in the Eastern Caribbean region. Figure 6 shows that the total number of female emigrants from the countries in this study have outnumbered their male counter parts every year between 1990 and 2019. Figure 6 shows that in 2019 women made up a greater percentage of international migrants than men for every country in this study, ranging from 52 per cent of the total number of emigrants from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to 58 per cent in the Commonwealth of Dominica.

Research indicates that female migrants from the Anglophone Caribbean region “rarely fit into the ‘trailing wife mold’” and in fact, often migrate independently to set up roots and have their families join later on.^{xxi} Some suggest that this is because women from the Anglophone Caribbean have a long history of working outside the home for wages and that “the desire for economic independence is a strong characteristic of West Indian women.”^{xxii} This history may in part tie back to the British slavery system and the plantation economy that followed, in which men would often live separately and become “stripped from their provider roles,” leaving women to care for and protect their children and dependents.^{xxiii}

Labour specific immigration policies and gendered division of labour in the United States and Canada in the 1950s and 60s may have also contributed to a culture of migration among women in Caribbean countries. In the United States, the 1965 Naturalization Act favoured migrants of particular occupations and made it easier for women than for men to receive work permits, as there was a high demand for domestic workers and nurses. In Canada, the Caribbean Domestic Scheme, beginning in the mid-1950s and lasting until 1966, allowed single women between 18-40 with no dependents to move to Canada and work in live-in domestic service jobs.

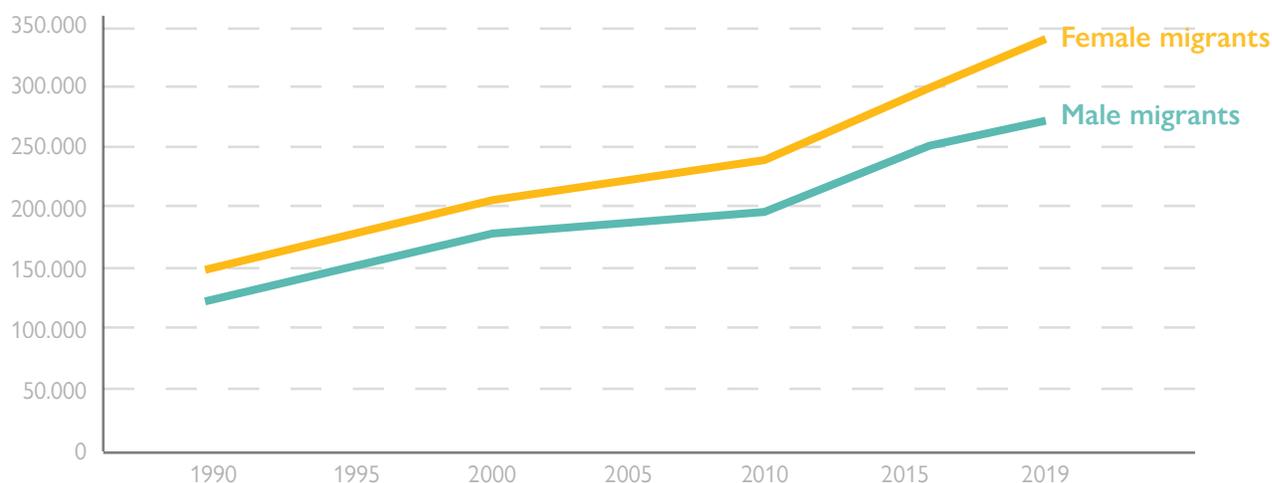


Figure 6: Number of migrants by sex from Eastern Caribbean region, 1990-2019 ⁴

Source: Graph created by author based on data from the United Nations Population Division (UN DESA) ^{xxiv}

⁴ This includes the total migrant stock from the eight countries of focus for this study: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

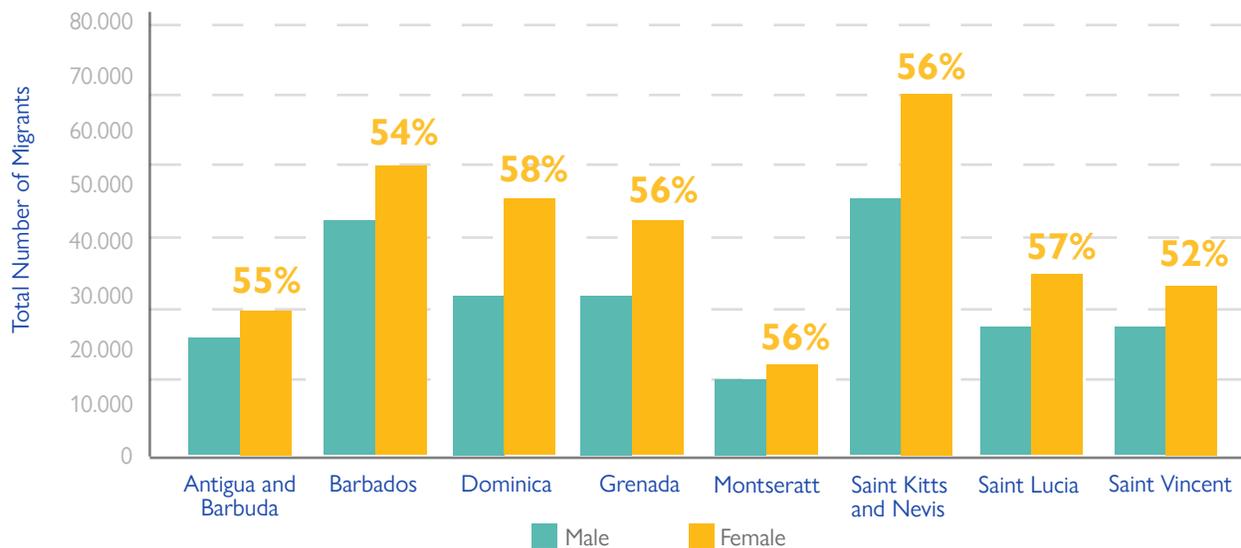


Figure 7. Number of migrants by sex from Eastern Caribbean countries, 2019. Source: IOM, 2021.

Some research finds that Eastern Caribbean women are especially likely to connect to and invest in their countries of origin. For example, women send 58 per cent of the total remittances (discussed in more depth below) transferred between the United States of America to the Caribbean region. This is supported by evidence that alumni and nursing associations from the Anglophone Caribbean region, which consistently contribute to schools, hospitals and health care in their countries of origin, are predominately led by women in the diaspora.^{xxvi}

Because of women's high rates of migration and strong interest in engaging with their communities of origin, Mortley (2017) argues that it is essential for development policy makers in the Caribbean region to employ a gender lens to understand who makes up the diaspora and better leverage diaspora for development purposes.^{xxvii} More research is needed to better understand the gender specific roles and experiences of migrants from the Caribbean region, women's level of involvement in diaspora associations and their interest in engaging countries of origin.

REMITTANCES

Remittances play a critical role in the economies of Eastern Caribbean countries. It is common for emigrants from the Caribbean region to remit substantial sums to family members back home, in part because the average Caribbean emigrant is of productive age, between 20 and 25 years old, and typically has a high level of education.^{xxviii} In 2020, remittances made up close to 7 per cent of the GDP of countries in Caribbean small states, compared to just 2.4 per cent in the Latin American region. These figures can differ substantially by country, however, as shown in Table 5.

Remittances can play an important role in stabilizing the economies of Eastern Caribbean countries, particularly during economic shocks. For example, data from the International Disaster Database (EM-DAT) indicates that after natural disasters in the region, remittances (as a per cent of GDP) spike in remittance-receiving countries. This pattern is particularly notable in the Caribbean region, where the average ratio of remittances to GDP increases from 4.4 per cent in a year prior to a natural disaster to 5.4 per cent in the year of the disaster.^{ibid:} While research shows that the positive impacts of remittances on the economies of Eastern Caribbean countries don't entirely outweigh the adverse economic impacts of loss of skills, Wong (2017) suggests that leveraging economic ties with diaspora through foreign direct investment and tourism receipts can help mitigate the negative aspects of emigration.^{xxix}

Country	Remittances Received (per cent GDP)
Antigua and Barbuda	1.7
Barbados	2.5
Dominica	10.4
Grenada	4.4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	2.8
Saint Lucia	2.4
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	5.4
Caribbean Small States Avg.	6.9
Latin America & Caribbean Avg.	2.4

Table 5: Remittances received as per cent of GDP. Source: IOM, 2021.

Source: World Bank, 2020

IV. EASTERN CARIBBEAN DIASPORA GROUP PROFILES

ORIGINS AND FUNCTIONS

In many contexts, diaspora organizations can play a pivotal role in the lives of diaspora communities, providing numerous and often overlapping functions. Diaspora organizations can serve both as a mechanism to build social networks and support migrants in their host countries and to facilitate development in their home countries. This may be through social investment in sectors such as tourism, agriculture and the development of human capital.

Historically, many diaspora organizations from the Eastern Caribbean were created by migrants who sought to maintain social connections with other members of their community and home country. Others were created in response to an extreme weather event, such as a hurricane in their country of origin, that spurred diaspora to come together and fundraise to support relief efforts in their home countries.

While diaspora groups from the Eastern Caribbean continue to serve both functions – maintaining social connections and providing relief after natural disasters and extreme weather events – the role and function of diaspora organizations have expanded and evolved over time for many organizations. Several key informants from organizations that had been operating for longer periods of time noted this evolution, suggesting that the purpose of diaspora groups has evolved and expanded with the changing needs of diaspora communities abroad. Many diaspora organizations today serve multiple purposes for their diaspora communities, including bringing people together for social events, providing support to communities back home and providing a range of support and services to diaspora communities.

Notably, while many organizations today serve multiple functions, the desire to help communities of origin remains a top priority. In fact, 96 per cent of survey respondents said that contributing to their country of origin was either important or very important to their work. As one interviewee noted “it is very important to take those skills home... to give back our knowledge and experience that we gain to help our home countries.” Although this report explores various ways in which the roles, functions and structures of diaspora organizations have changed over time and may change in the future, contributing to countries of origin remains one of the most consistently noted purposes of diaspora organizations in both the past and present and across different types of organizations.

DIASPORA ORGANIZATION PROFILES

This section will provide an overview of the diaspora organization profiles based on the data collected in this survey. While the data is not representative of all diaspora groups from the Eastern Caribbean, it provides a window into key common characteristics of diaspora organizations’ structures, locations and objectives.

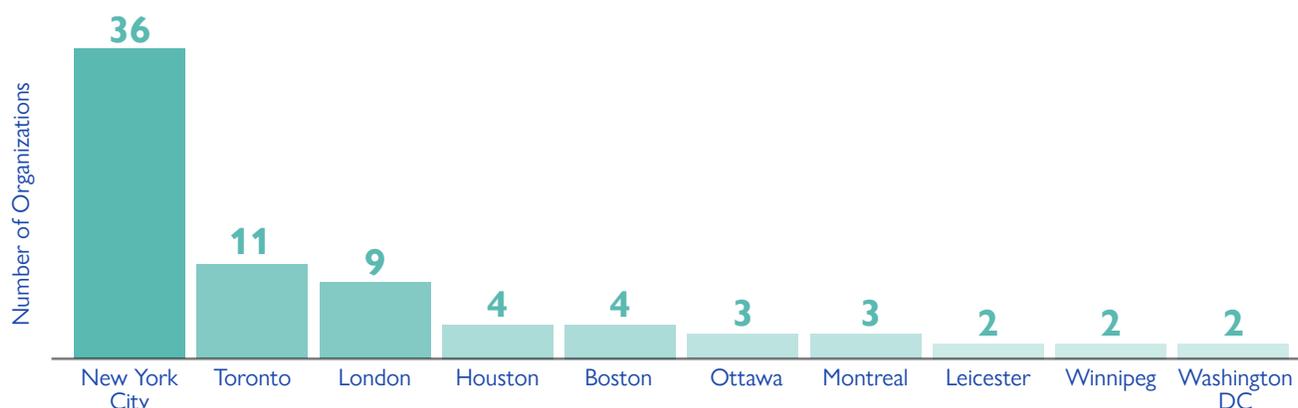


Figure 8: Top 10 cities represented in survey. Source: IOM, 2021.

Figure 8 shows the top ten cities represented from the survey sample.⁵ The greatest number of organizations are located in New York City, followed by Toronto and London. While there is limited publicly available data on the top cities of destination for emigrants from the Caribbean countries in this study, the top three cities represented in this survey are relatively consistent with data on the top destination cities for Caribbean migrants. For example, within the United States (the top country of destination for seven out of eight countries in this study), New York City was the city with the largest number of Caribbean migrants between 2015-2019^{xxx}. In the United Kingdom, 2011 data shows that London was the top destination for Caribbean migrants, with 28 per cent of Caribbean’s in the country residing in London.^{xxxii} Similarly, in Canada, Toronto was the top destination for Caribbean migrants in 2001, with 60 per cent of the Canadian Caribbean population living in Toronto.^{xxxii}

Characteristic ⁶	Percentage of organizations
Formal	53%
Informal	29%
Coalition	24%
Partially online, partially in person	30%
Exclusively online	7%
Has physical address	50%
Run primarily by migrants from country of origin it represents	92%

Table 6: Structure of organizations. Source: IOM, 2021

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

The survey asked organizations about various structural elements of their groups. Table 6 shows a summary of the percentage of organizations who identified with each element. Notably, only about half of the organizations in the sample identified as formal organizations, and close to one third identified as informal. The interviews also revealed that many of the organizations operated on a volunteer-basis with no paid staff. A small minority of organizations (7%) identified as exclusively operating online, although only half of organizations reported that they had a physical address. One interviewee noted that prior to COVID-19 their organization had difficulty finding an appropriate meeting spot, and that during COVID-19 they transitioned to using a virtual platform for meetings, which helped solve this problem. Another interviewee whose organization did not have a physical address said that they had sometimes held meetings in their government consulates’ board rooms prior to COVID-19.

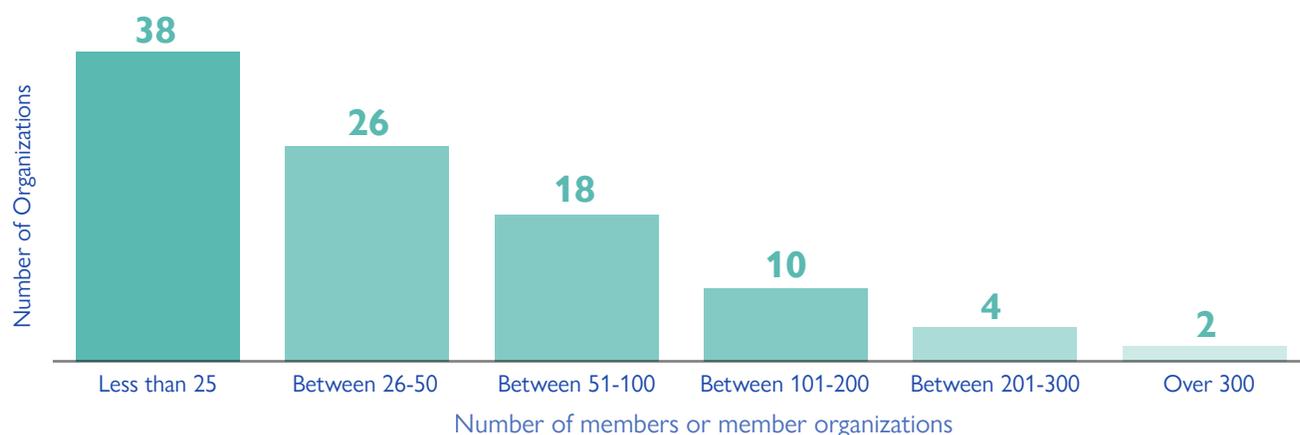


Figure 9: Size of diaspora organizations. Source: IOM, 2021.

⁵ Organizations from several other cities were also represented in the sample, including Atlanta (GA), Baltimore (MD), Conshohocken (PA), Philadelphia (PA), Jacksonville (FL), Johnston (RI), Maplewood (NJ), Miramar (FL), New Orleans (LA), New Rochelle (NY), Orlando (FL), Palm Coast (FL), Plantation (FL), Tampa (FL), and Virginia Beach (VA) in the United States of America; Bradford, High Wycombe, Leeds, and Reeding in the United Kingdom; and Hamilton in Canada.

⁶ In the survey “coalition” was defined in the survey as “a group of diaspora organizations or communities.” The other terms in Table 5 were not explicitly defined in the survey and open to the interpretation of respondents.

Figure 9 reveals that many of the diaspora groups are small, with 38 organizations indicating that they have fewer than 25 members or associate organizations, and the majority of organizations indicating that they have fewer than 50 members or associate organizations. Interviews and survey responses revealed that many organizations have struggled to maintain their membership, particularly considering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, a theme that will be discussed in greater depth later in the report. It is also notable that close to a quarter (24%) of organizations identified as coalitions. In some cases, partnering with other organizations may be a strategy to overcome difficulties in maintaining membership. One interviewee, for example, noted that their organization joined a Caribbean coalition that formed during the COVID-19 pandemic, because many diaspora groups struggled to maintain membership and wanted to share ideas and support one another.

Intended geographic reach	Percentage of organizations
City	21%
State	14%
Country	16%
International	36%
Other	14%

Table 7: Organizations' intended geographic scope of work. Source: IOM, 2021

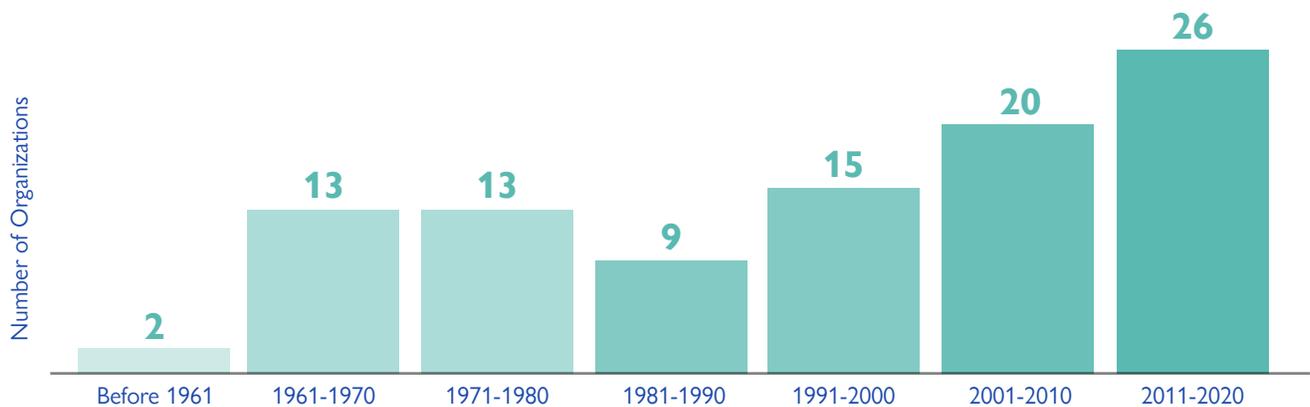


Figure 10: Diaspora organizations year of founding.

The survey results reveal that it is more common for women to work with diaspora groups than men, with 69 per cent of organizations responding that their membership comprised more women than men, as shown in Figure 11 and Figure 12. The greater representation of women in diaspora organizations may in part reflect the higher proportion of female migrants living abroad, as discussed in Chapter 3. It may also suggest that women are more interested in engaging in diaspora groups than men, supporting research that migrant women from the Anglophone Caribbean are especially interested in maintaining connections with their home countries. However, as noted in Chapter 3, more research is needed to understand the gender dynamics of diaspora organizations and women's higher levels of representation in these groups.

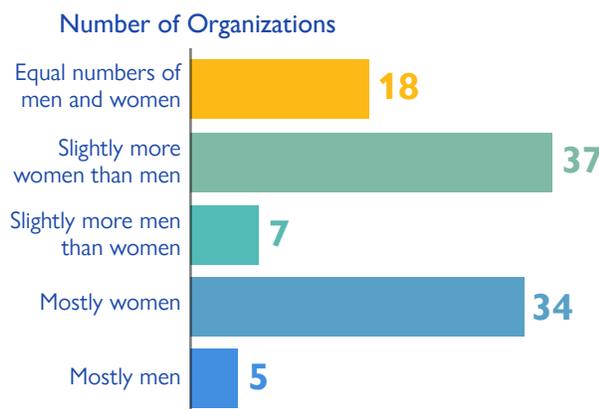


Figure 11: Detailed gender breakdown of diaspora organizations. Source: IOM, 2021.

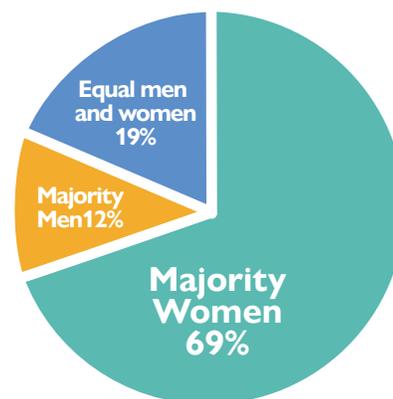


Figure 12: Gender breakdown of diaspora organizations. Source: IOM, 2021

ORGANIZATION OBJECTIVES

When asked to provide an overview of their organizations' work, survey respondents and interviewees noted a range of activities and objectives. Most organizations tended to state a broader goal or mission, while some had more narrow focuses. A common theme was to provide support and assistance to diaspora communities and communities abroad and at home, as reflected simply by an Antiguan and Barbudan organization's stated objective: "to provide assistance to Antiguan and Barbudans in the United States of America and at home." Another recurring theme was the idea of preserving and promoting culture abroad, as shown by the objective stated by a Barbadian organization: "To preserve and celebrate our Barbadian culture through hosting various events during the year." More narrowly focused objectives included statements such as an organization from Saint Kitts and Nevis whose stated objective was: "to provide scholarships to college bound students."

Two organizational leaders that were interviewed noted that it had previously been challenging to find a clear scope of work for their organization, so they intentionally narrowed the scope of their organization's work to specialize in one area, to avoid becoming overburdened by activities and overlapping too much with the work undertaken by other organizations.

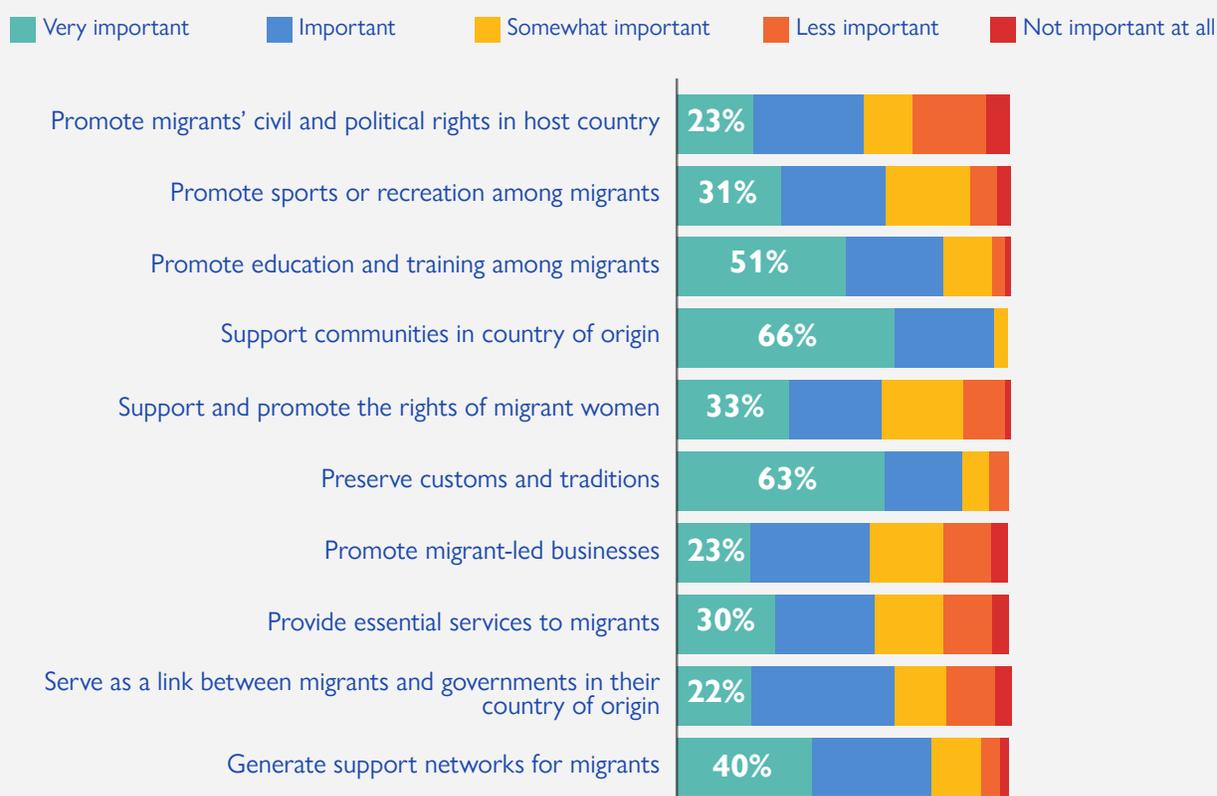


Figure 13: Organization objectives.
Source: IOM, 2021.

Figure 13 shows how organizations rated the importance of various organizational objectives. The top three objectives that respondents noted as very important were supporting communities of origin (66%), preserving customs and traditions (63%), and promoting education and training among migrants (51%). Notably, 96 per cent of respondents reported that supporting their country of origin was either important or very important to their work and no organization indicated that this was not important.

Figure 14 shows the number of organizations that provide various services. Providing educational support is the most common type of service that organizations are focused on, with 83 organizations, or 80 per cent of organizations surveyed, indicating that this is a service provided by their organization. For many organizations educational support takes the form of providing an annual scholarship either to students in their country of origin or to members of their diaspora.

Providing in-kind support, such as food and clothing and monetary support, were the second and third most common forms of support services that organizations provided, respectively. Several interviewees and survey respondents noted that one of their activities was raising money to send donations back home, often after natural disasters. The interviews also revealed that it was common for organizations to fundraise for other small island countries nearby. For example, several interviewees from different countries commented that their organization were involved in fundraising efforts after the La Soufrière volcano that erupted in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in April of 2021.

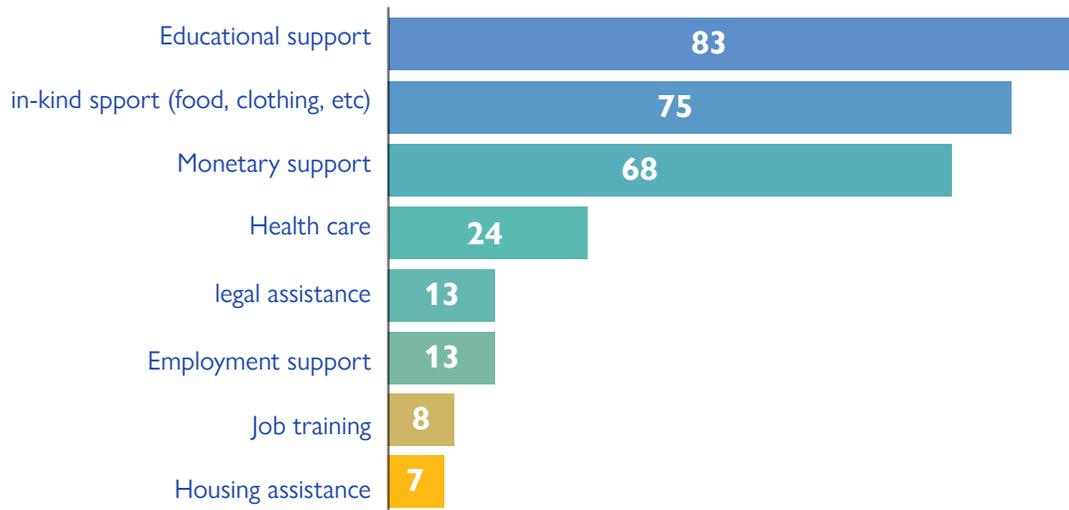


Figure 14: Most common services provided by diaspora organizations.
Source: IOM, 2021.

ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT: CARIBBEAN EQUALITY PROJECT

The Caribbean Equality Project is a “community-based organization that empowers, advocates for, and represents Black and Brown, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-conforming, and queer Caribbean immigrants in New York City.” Founded in 2015, the Caribbean Equality Project is the only registered 501c(3) non-profit Caribbean LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer) group in the United States. The Caribbean Equality Project engages in a range of activities such as facilitating an LGBTIQ+ support group for members of the Caribbean community in New York City, representing and including the LGBTIQ+ community at major Caribbean events, such as the West Indian Day Parade, educating Caribbean communities about homophobia and hate speech, building political power to represent the LGBTIQ+ Caribbean community, and advocating to protect LGBTIQ+ people in Caribbean countries. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, they started an emergency COVID-19 relief fund and raised over \$60,000 distributed to over 250 Caribbean LGBTIQ+ community members in New York City. Advocating to change laws to protect and support LGBTIQ+ people in their home country is also important to the Caribbean Equality Project’s work. As the president of the organization noted “[LGBTIQ+] people want to go back to their home country and be safe, knowing that there are laws that protect [them] as a queer people... laws in these countries inherently impact tourism,” as members of the LGBTIQ+ community may choose not to travel in countries where they feel unsafe.

Fundraising events were core activities for many organizations, often serving multiple purposes. Organization leaders commented that events such as annual picnics, independence day celebrations, or Carnival celebrations allowed their community to come together and socialize, provided an opportunity to promote and preserve their culture and enabled organizations to fundraise to support communities of origin or members of their diaspora. Chapter 6 discusses how the COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges to continuing these fundraising events for many organizations.

V. COLLABORATION BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS OF ORIGIN

GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE

Most common forms of engagement with diaspora groups

All of the government representatives interviewed reported that they had at least some engagement with diaspora organizations. One of the most common forms of engagement was through independence day celebrations, where they would typically collaborate with diaspora groups and often have speakers from members of government in their home countries. Some consulates also reported supporting organizations with their events and celebrations, for example, by arranging for artists from their home country to perform at an event and helping to cover those costs. Similarly, some consulates and high commissions have partnered with associations to hold fundraising events after natural disasters in countries of origin or support other development initiatives in their countries of origin. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the High Commissioner for Saint Kitts and Nevis in Canada⁷ partnered with a diaspora organization to send back face masks to Saint Kitts and Nevis.

In addition, some consulates reported organizing townhalls targeted to all members of the diaspora, including diaspora organizations who helped disseminate information about the townhalls to their members. One interviewee noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic the High Commission of Antigua and Barbuda in the United Kingdom hosted a virtual townhall event with a much higher turnout than would otherwise be possible. The interviewee said that this offered new opportunities to engage diaspora groups from all over the country and involve government representatives from countries of origin, noting that the High Commission would continue holding virtual townhalls or hybrid events after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Country	Entity responsible for engaging with diaspora	Year of founding of diaspora unit	Diaspora organization database? ⁸
Antigua and Barbuda	Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Diaspora Unit in development]	2021	In development
Barbados	Consular and Diaspora Division	Data N/A	Yes
Commonwealth of Dominica	Diaspora Affairs Office	Data N/A	Yes
Grenada	Diaspora Affairs Unit	2021	Yes
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Regional Integration Diaspora Unit (RIDU)	2007	Yes
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Regional Integration and Diaspora Unit (RIDU); Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2020	Yes
Saint Lucia	Diaspora Affairs Unit	2019	Yes

Table 8: Government diaspora units.
Source: IOM, 2021.

⁷ High Commissions are diplomatic missions sent from one Commonwealth country to another Commonwealth country, generally providing the equivalent function of an embassy.

⁸ Diaspora database here is broadly defined as any available list of diaspora organizations and contact persons, even if minimal or particular to a specific country or region.

Challenges and opportunities for engagement

Some government representatives reported barriers to engagement with diaspora groups. At least two representatives mentioned that they faced financial barriers, as they lack the budget to engage as closely with diaspora organizations as they would like and often had to rely on outside sponsors such as businesses or members of the diaspora themselves to engage in projects with diaspora groups. Several of the diaspora units are also small (made up of one to two staff members) and reported that they would benefit from more staff and human resources to support with diaspora engagement initiatives.

Another challenge that one government representative noted was finding and collecting data on diaspora populations and diaspora organizations. One public official noted that: “we try to, but there are some people in the diaspora who just don’t want to be found, you can register at the embassies but sometimes those web links have disappeared.” Other governments are in the process of creating registration pages through their diaspora affairs offices.

A few government representatives noted that it was challenging to engage with some groups if they did not align politically with the government in power. This may be one of the reasons that diaspora may be hesitant to engage with governments of origin. One public representative noted that minimizing the political element of diaspora engagement helped overcome this barrier: “I think with ambassadors who actually are friendly and they are politically aligned but it’s not like politics all the time... if they can identify with you on a different level I think that was one of the keys to get people to ... have that sort of engagement.”

Despite these challenges, several interviewees expressed that they would like to continue working with and reaching out to diaspora groups and in many cases wanted to reach out to them more. Table 7 reveals that many of the countries in this study only recently created distinct diaspora affairs offices or units, indicating that they are still at the early stages of developing systems to engage with the diaspora, but the structures are being put in place to do so. For example, one public official also expressed wanting to facilitate investment opportunities for members of their diaspora, noting that: “there is a great demand of people who want to invest and they would like to invest in their country as well and a lot of these times these opportunities are given to foreigners... there has to be a change in the way business is done to allow these things to be a lot easier.”

Another government official noted that communication with diaspora could improve and suggested having more frequent townhalls dedicated to listening to diaspora concerns: “I think we could have more townhalls dedicated to diaspora... If a townhall is dedicated to informing about COVID, their issue which might be about citizenship would not come up... [we need a forum to] just to listen to them, an open frank discussion.” This interviewee also suggested that having additional human resources dedicated to the diaspora in the government could help facilitate greater communication between diaspora and governments.

Government of Grenada’s Diaspora Organization Project

The Government of Grenada, which formed its diaspora affairs unit in July of 2021, is currently engaging in an initiative to create new diaspora groups in every major city where diaspora are located. These groups will be volunteers who are independent from the government and will serve to help facilitate communication and collaboration between the Diaspora Affairs Office in Grenada and other existing diaspora associations and individuals. A government official commented that this will help provide a structure to facilitate collaboration on development projects back in Grenada, allowing the government to express their needs to these groups and these groups to work with other associations to help meet those needs. This will also help prevent organizations from donating items that are not needed, a challenge the government has faced in the past. Importantly, this new diaspora project was born out of consultations with diaspora associations and individuals themselves.

ORGANIZATION PERSPECTIVE

Overview of engagement with government

The vast majority of survey respondents (84%) and 12 out of 13 interviewees said that their organization communicated with government representatives from their countries of origin. Survey respondents reported engagement with a variety of institutions including consulates and high commissions, ministries of foreign affairs, diaspora units, ministries of education, prime ministers' offices and UN ambassadors. Most interviewees said that they had the closest ties to consulates and high commissions. Of the survey respondents who reported that they communicate with their governments of origin, Figure 15 shows the top benefits that organizations reported as benefiting their countries. As shown in the figure, the greatest number of organizations reported that collaborating with government institutions helped with improving links with diaspora communities abroad and maintaining better communication with home countries. Of the surveyed organizations that reported collaborating with government institutions, only seven organizations (9.5%) said that collaboration offered no benefits.



Figure 15: Top reported benefits of collaborating with government institutions.
Source: IOM, 2021.

Overview of engagement with government

Of the surveyed organizations that did not engage with governments, four out of 14 organizations (29%) reported that there were political barriers to engagement, echoing the concern brought up by a few of the government officials. One survey respondent explained: "Our association is non-political. Associations with government institutions often get misconstrued for support of one party over another." Indeed, when asked what steps governments could take to strengthen relationships with diaspora organizations, a few organizations emphasized the importance of governments maintaining a non-partisan approach to their engagement with diaspora groups. One interviewee explained: "the governments in the smaller eastern Caribbean islands need to look at the organizations as non-political and they should be supportive regardless. The organizations should always be looked at as ambassadors."

A similar challenge that a few interviewees highlighted was that when there is a change in government it takes time to re-build relationships with new political appointees in the consulate office. Some organizations were used to receiving some types of support under one government that did not automatically transfer to the next. As one interviewee explained “When governments change, it takes a while... [this is a] severe challenge because nothing is left in place from the outgoing person.” Another interviewee speculated, “If the Ambassador and I are working great together now and a new government comes in and they want to put in a new person, we may not have that same relationship ... so how do you develop a system so that it is the embassy that’s important and not necessarily the person they put in that position? That’s the challenge.” Implementing longer term structures and policies to maintain government engagement when governments change will be essential to mitigating this challenge.

However, several of the interviewees expressed that they had positive personal relationships with their consulate representatives and high commissioners. Similar to the perspectives of government representatives, organization leaders reported that they most frequently collaborated with government officials to support each other’s events, with consul generals sometimes assisting with promoting events and recruiting speakers and cultural artists to attend events. The box to the right provides some examples that interviewees mentioned of productive collaboration with governments of origin.

Examples of collaboration between diaspora organizations and governments

- Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of Barbados has held a monthly virtual meeting with diaspora organizations, members of the diaspora, and government leaders to keep diaspora updated on issues in Barbados and provide a forum for diaspora to share their concerns and needs
- The Diaspora Affairs Unit in Saint Lucia publishes a Diaspora Affairs Magazine which highlights diaspora events, the work of diaspora organizations, and opportunities to give back to Saint Lucia
- The consulate of Saint Lucia in Toronto helped a younger Saint Lucian in efforts to form a youth organization by helping connect to other youth, connecting the organization to members of the government, and supporting the organizations events
- Several organizations mentioned that their consul general supported them by promoting and attending their signature events, sometimes donating raffle items for events such as plane tickets or hotel stays in their countries of origin, or arranging to have speakers from their government or cultural artists from their home country attend their events
- A Barbadian organization in Canada is partnering with the Diaspora Emergency Management Ministry in Barbados to implement a programme that helps manage disaster preparation and relief in Barbados
- Several governments, including the government of Saint Kitts and Nevis, Barbados, and Grenada hold diaspora conferences every two years where members of diaspora and organization leaders are invited

Opportunities for future collaboration with government

Although many of the organization leaders reported having positive and productive relationships with governments, several organizations also reported that they sought to collaborate with government entities more frequently or in new ways. In response to open ended survey questions about the type of government support that would most benefit diaspora groups and how governments could strengthen relationships and collaboration with diaspora groups, three themes emerged, summarized in Figure 16.

The first theme that appeared most frequently in the survey responses was the need for **greater government** communication and engagement with diaspora organizations, with 55 organizations surveyed (52%) mentioning that greater communication and engagement would be beneficial. Figure 16 shows the various suggestions provided by organizations under this category. One suggestion that came up frequently was the idea of encouraging governments to set up regular townhall meetings with representatives from diaspora organizations, to listen to their concerns and consider further avenues for collaboration, providing a forum for regular, meaningful exchanges. This is a practice that several governments have already implemented successfully, such as the Government of Barbados, which has set up a monthly virtual call with organizations, other members of diaspora and representatives from governments of countries of origin during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Greater communication and engagement	Greater collaboration to support country of origin	Resources, funding, and networks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful consistent engagement and open dialogue with organizations • Regular town hall meetings with organizations and government representatives • More frequent updates on government policy and priorities related to diaspora and needs of home countries • More timely responses to organizations when they reach out to government entities • Regular dissemination of government information and data • Greater recognition • Dedicated resource office for diaspora affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate and cut out red tape for organizations to engage in charitable projects • Ease restrictions on customs regulations for donated items • Assist nationals with shipping costs on items donated to countries of origin • Facilitate and promote investment opportunities in country of origin • Creation of a diaspora skills database that can be used to support projects in home country • Periodic information bulletins on local needs and key projects in country of origin that diaspora can engage in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support • Support identifying grants and other resources available to organizations • Support promoting events and fundraisers • Assist in providing speakers and cultural artists for events • Help link diaspora organizations to organizations in country of origin • Help facilitate connections between organizations and newly arrived or visiting diaspora • More resources for diaspora affairs unit

Figure 16: Opportunities to strengthen relationships with diaspora organizations.
Source: IOM, 2021

The second theme was **greater collaboration to support communities of origin**. This was a theme that arose both in the survey responses and interviews. Many diaspora leaders expressed a desire to give back to their country of origin and thought that the government could improve in tapping into the diaspora and facilitating avenues for them to give back. For example, one survey respondent suggested that governments “Contact these organizations to find out more about our mandate, how we can assist our island and its people in a more efficient manner, and what tools we could use to liaise with the local and original governments.” Another respondent suggested setting up periodic information bulletins on social media to inform diaspora of government-identified needs in countries of origin and how diaspora organizations could assist.

The final theme that emerged from the surveys and interviews, was the desire for support from the consulate in forms of **resources, funding and connection to networks**. Some organizations reported that they would like assistance identifying grants to support their events or other forms of financial support. Other survey respondents and interviewees mentioned that they would like assistance connecting to newly arrived diaspora or nationals visiting from their country of origin.

VI. ORGANIZATION CHALLENGES, NEEDS AND CHANGES

Many diaspora groups from the Eastern Caribbean region are currently facing challenges and changes due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the changing demographics, needs and interests across generations of diaspora communities. When interviewees were asked about their organization's greatest challenges and needs, the most frequent responses were related to the challenges of staying active during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the pandemic on their ability to fundraise. Another challenge that most organizations interviewed mentioned, was the challenge of maintaining their membership. Several of the older organizations mentioned that they struggled to recruit younger members, in particular. This section will first examine the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on organizations, both positive and negative and then will discuss the challenges and opportunities related to youth engagement in the diaspora.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic deeply affected diaspora organizations and their operations. Table 8 provides a summary of the positive and negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic noted in surveys and interviews. In the survey responses to these questions, one of the most commonly reported negative impacts was the loss of income due to the cancelation of large in-person fundraising events, with 27 organizations (28 per cent) mentioning this challenge. This, in turn, limited some organizations' abilities to provide support to their home countries. On the positive side, several organizations noted that being able to hold membership meetings and events online enabled them to expand their reach and engage diaspora communities from a larger global network.

While some organizations noted that online engagement has been particularly challenging for older populations, others said that older generations were able to adapt and learn to use new technologies such as Zoom. One interviewee noted that their organization applied for and received a grant from the Government of the United Kingdom to buy tablets for members of their elders' group and teach the elders how to use Zoom with the tablet. The key informant noted that this programme was successful and would continue after the pandemic, as it would open an avenue for new opportunities such as "intercontinental Zoom meetings" with diaspora communities in the United Kingdom and communities in their home country.

Other organizations, however, stopped programmes and activities altogether: in open ended survey responses regarding the impacts of COVID-19, two organizations noted that they became completely dormant due to the pandemic and eight noted that they canceled all fundraising events and activities. This equates to 10.5 per cent of organizations that responded to the survey becoming almost entirely inactive due to the pandemic. Several more organizations reported a reduction in events and fundraising ability: even if organizations were able to hold fundraising events online, many of them struggled to raise as much as they would during in-person events. Some survey respondents and interviewees noted that fundraising was also challenging because many of their members lost their jobs or were themselves struggling financially due to the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is possible that organizations which did not respond to the survey may have dissolved entirely due to the pandemic. Finally, many survey respondents reported that the pandemic led to a decrease in membership, a challenge that some organizations faced even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and that is discussed further in the next section.

Negative	Positive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in the overall number of activities, meetings and events • Reduction in ability to fundraise • Decrease in donations • Decrease in membership • Organizations becoming dormant • Difficulties maintaining programmes, services and support to country of origin due to decreased income • Elderly populations more isolated and less able to utilize online meeting platforms • Missing face-to-face social interactions • Passing away of community members due to COVID-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded reach to communities online and ability to connect diaspora from around the world at virtual events • Adapted and learned to connect via zoom and social media platforms • Increased engagement and partnerships with other diaspora groups • Higher participation in online meetings compared to in-person • Introduction of new programmes, such as a computer-literacy programme for elder populations • Generation of innovative idea

Table 9: Impacts of COVID-19 on diaspora organizations.
Source: IOM, 2021

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

One challenge that was highlighted in several interviews was a generational divide between older and younger members of the diaspora. Several of the interviewees noted that their organization was made up primarily of older, first-generation migrants. Seven out of the eleven interviewees from non-youth organizations said recruiting young members for their organizations was a challenge. Organization leaders suggested that youth today did not have the same strong connection to their home country as older generations. One organization leader from Antigua and Barbuda noted that their work: “doesn’t speak to them [younger people]. They want something that speaks to them... the focus has definitely changed and people’s needs have changed.”

Another interviewee from a Saint Kitts and Nevis organization explained:

“they [the younger generation] don’t have the connectivity. When my parents migrated over here of course they had strong connections with Saint Lucia. I have strong connections with Saint Lucia because I go there all the time and I was born there. My daughter and my son they love going there on a holiday, but I don’t think they have that connectivity and the idea of joining a club is not for them, because they are British . . . So I think all associations are struggling with their membership... we need to rethink the definition of these associations and these groups.”

This interviewee suggested that younger generations may not want to pay a consistent membership fees and join a traditional social club typical of many of the diaspora associations but would be more interested in organizing around particular issues or causes that are important to them. Similarly, an organization leader from Barbados noted:

“The older generations have always tried to engage the younger generation, we would find that the interest wasn’t there or the gap was so wide that there was nothing in common... so we’ve pulled away from trying to get young people in our organizations and allowed younger people to form their own organizations”

Indeed, some of the younger diaspora members have formed their own organizations. Two youth organization leaders interviewed for this project expressed that they had worked with other associations but did not feel they had as much of a voice in those settings, had different ways of socializing and were interested in working on different issues. One of these interviewees also expressed the importance of connecting and supporting youth in their country of origin:

“We would love to have round table meetings, not only with our organization but with all of the youth organizations in Saint Lucia, recognizing that Saint Lucia needs more involvement with young people. One thing that is being said is that young people are the pillars of tomorrow... so I always ask, what if tomorrow is today? Are the young people equipped to take over? Are we teaching them the ropes so they can take over?”

These findings suggest that while there are some generational differences in how diaspora communities would like to organize, socialize and connect with communities of origin, the younger generation has not lost interest in organizing and contributing to their home countries. Rather, new types of organizations may emerge and organizational structures may be transformed to represent the younger generations’ evolving needs, interests and preferred modes of organizing.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN THE DIASPORA: KEY FINDINGS

- Several diaspora organizations reported difficulties in recruiting youth members
- While some interviewees suggested that youth were less interested in engaging with their home countries, others suggested that youth in the diaspora have different interests, ways of socializing, and organizing than organizations with older members.
- Youth organizations interviewed for the project reported having a strong interest in engaging with governments of origin and expressed a desire to collaborate more with governments of origin to support projects and engage with youth in their home countries.

VII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

DATA COLLECTION

Governments of Origin

Maintain and consistently update a database of diaspora groups. Ensure that diaspora groups can register their organization on government consulate web pages and update their organizations information. Governments should look for and reach out to newer diaspora groups to ensure they are included in communications. Information should be collected in a centralized database so that all data is kept in one place rather than kept separately with individual consulates, embassies, or high commissions. In this process, basic data about organizations should be collected, including their contact information, address, social media pages, websites and the mission of the organizations.

Conduct ongoing research on the needs of diaspora groups using research methods like the one utilized in this project. This project was the first mapping of needs, challenges and characteristics of diaspora groups in this region. A similar methodology could be replicated at a national level: governments could send out surveys and conduct interviews with diaspora groups to assess their shifting characteristics and needs and garner feedback to strengthen collaboration with these groups. Essential to this research is the need to apply a gender-sensitive lens to understand women's role in diaspora groups and interest in supporting countries of origin, as well as persons with diverse SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics).

Organizations

Recognizing the importance of data collection for research and engagement, diaspora organizations should work to ensure they have up-to-date information registered with their governments of origin and provide updates when needed. They should encourage partner organizations to do the same and support governments with data collection when possible.

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Governments of Origin

Hold regular annual or biannual sub-regional virtual forums with diaspora organization leaders from countries across the Eastern Caribbean region to discuss diaspora organizations' needs, share ideas and projects and facilitate collaboration between diaspora groups, the OECS Comission and government representatives. Ensure these meetings accessible and inclusive to all diaspora groups, including youth organizations and groups representing persons with diverse SOGIESC. These forums could provide an opportunity for diaspora organizations to learn about other groups working on similar issues, share project ideas and exchange best practices for supporting communities in countries of origin.

Hold regular virtual forums at least quarterly with diaspora organizations, government consulates and members of governments of origin to discuss diaspora organizations needs, give an opportunity for organizations to give feedback to governments and facilitate collaboration between diaspora groups and governments. Ensure these meetings accessible and inclusive to all diaspora groups, including youth organizations and persons with diverse SOGIESC. Based on feedback from these forums governments could also set up meetings that focus on specific issues important to different groups.

Develop mechanisms to engage youth: Hold regular virtual and in-person forums specifically to connect youth groups in their country with diaspora youth groups to facilitate an exchange of information and connection between youth in countries of origin and abroad.

Hold or continue to hold diaspora conferences and invite diaspora organizations to participate. At these conferences time should be taken to specifically listen to the needs of diaspora groups and brainstorm project ideas or policies to strengthen collaboration on development initiatives in governments of origin.

Organizations

Organizations should strive to participate or have a member of their organization participate in diaspora meetings and events organized by governments. Even for organizations striving to maintain a non-political approach, attending these meetings can enable them to connect them to other diaspora organizations and help them reach their objectives to support home countries.

FACILITATE DIASPORA SUPPORT IN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Governments of Origin

Develop policies to ensure that diaspora groups can ship items or donate money to charitable causes with ease. This may include waiving duty taxes, covering or assisting with shipping costs and eliminating logistical hurdles that prevent resources from reaching their intended destination. Involve diaspora organizations in the policymaking process.

Facilitate and promote investment opportunities targeted at diaspora communities in countries of origin. Eliminate barriers to investment allowing similar opportunities provided to non-citizens.

Develop an interactive web page where organizations and/or government bodies in countries of origin can post projects they are working on and opportunities for diaspora groups to support those projects. Disseminate updates about these projects and new opportunities through social media and newsletters to diaspora groups.

Facilitate incentives to encourage diaspora organizations to support initiatives in governments of origin. For example, governments of origin could provide grants for organizations to carry out development project in countries of origin.



Organizations

Diaspora organizations should proactively consider new and innovative ways to support their countries of origin, as this is one of the primary objectives for most groups. They should proactively reach out to government bodies with ideas for projects and ask what support governments can provide.

POLITICS AND CONTINUITY OF ENGAGEMENT

Work to engage with all diaspora groups and ensure that interaction with diaspora groups is not associated with political parties.

Create structures and policies to ensure that when governments change, engagement with diaspora groups can continue and be built upon. This includes passing along a centralized database of diaspora contact persons and keeping records of the types of activities and engagement undertaken with diaspora organizations, enabling new governments to receive this information and build on these relationships.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This report reveals that Eastern Caribbean diaspora organizations can play a critical role in maintaining connections between diaspora and their countries of origin. With almost all of organizations surveyed (96%) reporting that supporting their countries of origin is important to their work, this report confirms that diaspora organizations from the Eastern Caribbean have a strong desire to give back to their home countries. Moreover, while most diaspora organizations in this study (84%) are engaging with at least one government entity from their country of origin to some extent, most of this engagement is limited to collaborating on activities in their host countries. The evidence from this report suggests that governments of origin have an opportunity to expand their collaboration with diaspora organizations for the purpose of contributing to and supporting national development initiatives in their home countries.

To begin to expand on collaborative initiatives between governments of origin and diaspora groups, governments of origin can build upon and replicate several of the productive examples of collaboration highlighted in this report and address some of the challenges raised. From the government perspective, collecting reliable, accurate and up-to-date data on diaspora organizations is an ongoing challenge, in addition to limited funding and human resources dedicated to diaspora. Increased funding and human resources devoted to diaspora units is critical to enabling these units to collect more data on diaspora organizations and carry out projects to collaborate with diaspora organizations. This will also be critical to helping governments to engage in more direct and frequent communication with diaspora groups, which many organizations reported would help strengthen their relationships with governments of origin.

Another key finding in this report is that the environment in which diaspora organizations operate is continuously changing and, in many instances, threatening the long-term sustainability of these groups. The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed the way many organizations operate, and for many organizations has resulted in a severe decrease or complete suspension of events and fundraising activities. In addition, several organizations reported difficulties in maintaining membership, in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but

also due to difficulties engaging with younger generations of diaspora. Younger members of the diaspora are not disinterested in engaging with their home countries, however. Some, in fact, have chosen to form their own diaspora organizations, because they have different interests, needs and ways of organizing than members of older organizations.

The concept of a “learning organization” prevalent in organizational theory is a useful framework that organizations can use to adapt to these challenges. Garvine (1993) defines a learning organization as one: “...skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights.”^{xxxiii} An essential component to a learning organization is the ability to sense and adapt to a changing environment. The organizations that have been most successful at overcoming the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic are those which have been willing to change how they operate—for example by embracing virtual events and taking advantage of online platforms to engage larger networks of diaspora. Similarly, understanding the changing demographics, the needs and concerns of their community members, and changing their structures and programmes to reflect those needs are key to the long-term sustainability of diaspora organizations and some government units.

As organizations implement changes to adapt to their environments, it is important that their members are involved in the planning process. According to Senge (2011) “real improvement will occur only if people responsible for implementation design the change itself.”^{xxxiv} Similarly, for governments to implement changes in the way they work with and tap into diaspora organizations, it will be essential to consult diaspora groups and create mechanisms to continuously design policies and programmes with their input and collaboration.

Finally, as organizations and governments adapt to changing environments it is crucial that they have data and evidence to understand the environments they are working in. As Morley (2017) notes, “development plans and policy within the framework of the SDGs for access to justice for all, inclusive societies and global partnerships cannot be designed within a vacuum . . . They must be designed based on real experiences, circumstances and positionality of Caribbean migrants.”^{xxxv} As this is the first report mapping Eastern Caribbean diaspora organizations’ characteristics and needs, there is a clear need for more research and regularly

collected data on these groups. Specifically, more research is needed to understand the gender specific experiences of migrants in the diaspora and women's roles in diaspora organizations. This also includes developing research on the needs and concerns of persons with diverse SOGIESC within the diaspora and diaspora organizations. The methodology used in this report could be replicated at a national level to collect country-specific data on the needs and characteristics of diaspora organizations.

The building blocks are in place to expand collaboration between diaspora organizations in the Eastern Caribbean region and their governments of origin. Supporting communities in countries of origin is a top priority for diaspora groups. While many governments are already engaging with diaspora organizations, there is an opportunity and desire for organizations to expand this engagement and collaborate with governments to give back to their home countries. Placing more resources into government diaspora units, enhancing data collection and research on diaspora groups and co-designing policies and programmes with diaspora organizations can not only strengthen relationships between diaspora groups and governments of origin, but also play a critical role in contributing to the sustainable national development of Eastern Caribbean countries.

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