

ENGAGING AND INCREASING MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN DIASPORAS

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INTRODUCTION

Governments, institutions, and organizations around the world are becoming increasingly aware of the necessity of engaging youth and providing opportunities for young people to get involved in all aspects of society. Representing one-fifth of the world's population and more educated than any other generation in history, young people across the globe today have an unprecedented opportunity to make significant contributions to reducing poverty, increasing wellbeing, and improving sustainable development of their communities and societies.

UNESCO's commitment to young people took new impetus with the recognition of youth as a priority group in the *UNESCO Strategy for Action with and for Youth* in 1998. While the organization's present Youth Program is anchored in the Social and Human Sciences Sector, youth issues are addressed across all of UNESCO's program sectors (Education, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Culture and Communication and Information). Each of the sectors integrates youth priorities in their respective work and regards this priority group as key actors and partners in achieving UNESCO's mission to "contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue" (UNESCO 2008, p.7).

It is stipulated in the *Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021)* that UNESCO will "act towards ensuring that young women and men are engaged in policies and programs affecting them and lead action to promote peace and sustainable development in their countries and communities" (UNESCO 2014) through three complementary axes of action: (i) policy formulation and review with the participation of youth, (ii) capacity development for the transition to adulthood, and (iii) civic engagement, democratic participation, and social innovation. The organization has highlighted the significance of meaningful youth participation and is committed to fostering greater youth participation in its own programs, as well as building partnerships with actors and supporting governments with similar objectives.

Some examples of youth programs carried out by the UNESCO Beijing Office include contributing to the development of the Draft Mongolian National Youth Policy, organizing workshops for capacity building and awareness raising on gender equality and gender based violence, and enhancing the capacity of youth for transition to adulthood in Mongolia by the Social and Human Sciences Sector; as well as the organization of the World Heritage Media/Communication Training Workshop for young people in February 2015 and the World Heritage Children's Book Competition by the Culture Sector.

As part of its contribution to the Mongolian Government's drafting of its Youth Policy and so as to effectively include diaspora youth in their national policy and harness their potential and contributions to national development, the UNESCO Beijing Office is engaging in this study to identify ways of engaging and increasing the meaningful participation of diaspora youth.

Given the significant and growing number of diaspora youth around the world and opportunities related to engaging them and facilitating their participation, undertaking a study on the participation of diaspora

youth in their countries of origin¹ is very relevant for UNESCO. This is especially so as it relates to the third axis of action in the UNESCO *Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021)* calling for greater civic engagement and democratic participation of young people.

Diaspora youth (those living outside their country of origin) are often overlooked by national governments when considering youth participation. However, the world has an estimated 215 million first-generation migrants, and according to the UN 75 million of those international migrants are under the age of 29 (UN 2013). While young migrants often have opportunities to participate in their new societies and communities, it is also beneficial for the countries of origin to engage and foster participation of their diaspora population for many reasons, including helping the country of origin regain knowledge and expertise lost with the “brain drain” phenomenon, as well as by making financial investments and sharing networks which can contribute to the sustainable development of the country of origin.

This report is meant to be a collection of useful resources, ideas, and case study examples for governments to reflect upon and consider when intending to engage diaspora youth and facilitate their meaningful participation, rather than a user manual on how to increase diaspora youth participation. Chapter 1 provides a basic introduction to youth participation, including definitions and key principles. Chapter 2 discusses the concept of diasporas and the impacts of migration, as well as presents examples of how countries have and can engage and facilitate participation of their diaspora communities (and diaspora youth in particular). Finally, Chapter 3 will enumerate different considerations and recommendations for governments wishing to more effectively engage and increase participation of their diaspora youth based on the concepts explained in chapters 1 and 2.

¹ Note: “Country of origin” is used in this report to refer to a country where an individual was either born or claims ancestral and/or cultural ties.

YOUTH AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

With over 1.2 billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24 around the globe, youth represent about one fifth of the world's population (UN 2011). Youth do not constitute a homogeneous group, as their socio-economic, demographic, and geographic situations vary greatly both within and between regions. Yet despite the differences, there is increasing consensus that young people today all around the world have huge potential to be drivers of positive change and agents of sustainable development, contributing to efforts to reducing poverty, increasing wellbeing of their families, and improving their communities and societies. Nevertheless, this can only be effective through a holistic approach which includes building the skills and capacities of young people and providing them with opportunities to engage and participate in their societies in a meaningful way.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

There is no single definition or universal understanding of “youth participation”. Different organizations, authorities, and groups that work with young people approach the concept of participation from a diversity of angles as a result of their different backgrounds, contexts, and motivations. What is generally agreed upon is that “Youth Participation is not an end in itself, but a means of achieving positive changes in young people's lives and of building a better society” (Goździk-Ormel 2013).

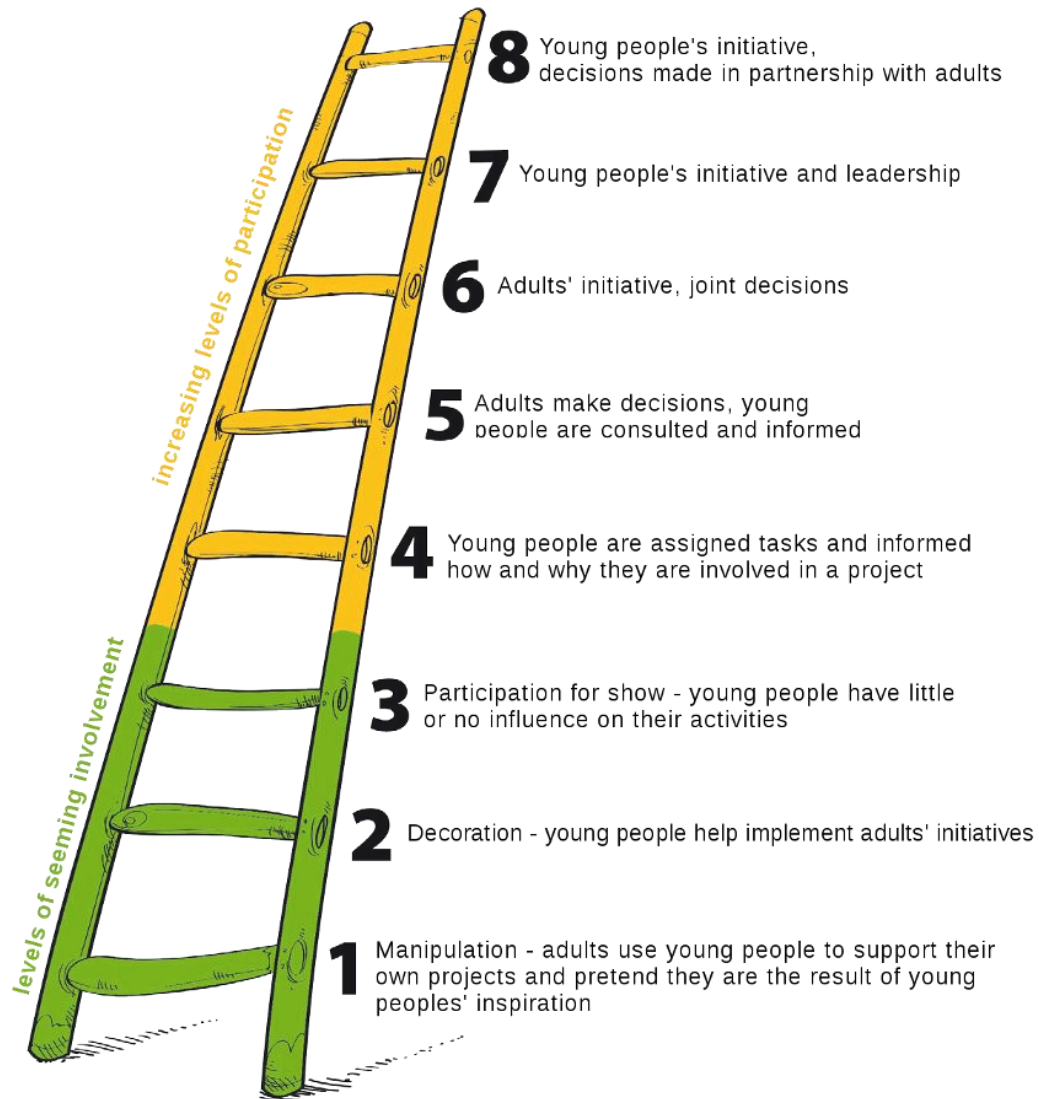
In 1995, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) established a definition of meaningful youth participation as that which “...involves recognizing and nurturing the strengths, interests, and abilities of young people through the provision of real opportunities for youth to become involved in decisions that affect them at individual and systemic levels” (Gurstein 2003).

Youth participation is defined in UNICEF's *Discussing Global Issues: What is participation?* as “...talking and listening, expressing your own views and listening while others express theirs. It can mean working together for a solution or a course of action. Participating doesn't just mean becoming a young activist, it can also mean taking advantage of opportunities that are being offered, like joining clubs to learn a new skill, or groups that feel strongly about an issue” (UNICEF 2004, p. 1).

In the *European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life*, participation is understood as “[having] the right, the means, the space, and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society” (Goździk-Ormel 2013, p.12).

These definitions suggest that youth participation does not solely consist of political involvement or activism, but rather entails young people having influence on and responsibility for decisions and actions that have an impact on their lives and their communities. Young people are regarded as active players within a society with talents and skills to be involved in dealing with issues that affect them, rather than an apathetic or vulnerable group incapable of making any meaningful contributions.

It is important to note that youth participation is not an all or nothing situation. There are varying degrees to which young people can be involved or take responsibility, depending on the local context, resources, needs, and level of experience. Thus, if we want to critically examine how participatory systems, policies, projects or initiatives really are, it is necessary to take note of the extent in which youth are actually involved. One commonly referenced model to distinguish degrees of youth participation is Roger Hart's "Ladder of children's participation", which describes eight degrees of youth involvement.



Adapted from Roger Hart "Ladder of Youth Participation" 1992, Available at <<http://www.dobrezycie.org/en/publications/youth-participation>>.

While the ladder of youth participation can be a useful tool to critically examine how participatory programs and initiatives really are, it is also important to stress that the degree to which young people can

and should be involved depends on a variety of factors, including the local context, objectives of the project, experiences, etc. The level of participation may also change over time. Generally, however, effective or meaningful participation “...gives young people the power to shape both the process and the outcome” (UN 2011, p.26), suggesting that they are not manipulated, do not act solely as decoration, and are not tokenized as described in the first three rungs of Hart’s ladder.

Preconditions for Effective Youth Participation

In order to achieve effective or meaningful youth participation, a number of preconditions must be fulfilled. While these preconditions may vary slightly given different local contexts, a set of certain practices or values should exist or be developed. These conditions include (but are not limited to):

- An understanding of what meaningful participation is
- The right to participate
- Awareness of the value of participation
- Access to mechanisms for participation for those who are not members of any structures
- Representation of the interest of marginalized/disadvantaged youth
- Physical and emotional security
- Basic needs fulfilled (food, drink, clothing, shelter, etc.)
- Access to information and technology
- Local needs identified
- Choice in the most appropriate or interesting area or form of involvement
- Financial Resources
- Participation-friendly policies
- Legal framework
- Equality (opinions of adults and youth are equally valued)
- Willingness to share power and responsibilities²

Forms of Youth Participation

Youth participation can come in a variety of different forms. Some traditional forms of youth participation include voluntary work, peer education, taking part in organizations, clubs, consultations, or youth councils, membership in political parties, and taking part in elections (both as voters and candidates). There are also a variety of “new forms” of youth participation that have emerged in recent times. Taking part in peer-to-peer networks, petition signing, boycotting products, demonstrations, international meetings, and participation in so-called “new social movements” such as flash mobs are ways in which young people are now getting involved in their communities and societies. It is important that governments, organizations,

² List adapted from (Goździk-Ormel 2013, p. 24)

institutions, and communities promoting youth participation are clear about their motivations and aware of their available resources and develop the most effective way to involve youth in their specific context.

Benefits of Youth Participation

There are several benefits that meaningful youth participation can have both for youth and for the institutions, local communities, and organizations in which they are involved.

Some of these benefits include:

- Giving youth the opportunity to use their skills and talents to make positive impacts in the lives of others
- Allowing young people to express their opinions in different arenas and have the chance to get their opinions considered
- Stimulating young people to take responsibility for their own decisions and actions but also experiences to deal with complex problems and issues
- Helping adults understand the needs of youth and recognize their skills and potential
- Allowing adults to share their knowledge and experiences with youth in a non-patronizing way
- Fostering more representative decision-making processes
- Welcoming new approaches and more diverse perspectives in solving local and regional problems

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) asserts that “Through active participation, young people are empowered to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities, helping them to learn vital life-skills, develop knowledge on human rights and citizenship and to promote positive civic action” (UNDESA).

ENGAGING DIASPORA COMMUNITIES

What is a *diaspora* and what is its significance today?

The word diaspora comes from the Greek word meaning “to scatter and to sow”, originally referring to the dispersal and settlement of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile in 568 BC (Ember et al 2005) or more generally, a group of people uprooted from their original land. This term has changed in modern times to refer to any major involuntary and voluntary dispersions or mass movements of people from one place to another who may choose to maintain strong attachments to their original cultures and countries.

The definition of diaspora used in this report will be that of French geographer, Gerard-Francois Dumont, who defines it as “a community of individuals living together on the same territory and having in common the conviction or belief of belonging, themselves or their families to another territory with which they maintain regular relations” (Ibid, p.xii). This definition highlights the importance of a common sense of belonging among diaspora communities to multiple territories, as well as the maintenance of relations between both countries of origin and destination. These are important elements that can help facilitate knowledge transfer, solidarity, intercultural dialogue, and promote learning to live together, which are all important themes of UNESCO.

Although diaspora communities have been a part of the world for millennia, their impact and significance is more significant today than ever before. First, there are far more migrants nowadays than even two decades ago: the world has an estimated 215 million first-generation migrants, a 40% increase from 1990 (The Economist 2011). Also, the availability of faster and cheaper transportation and information and communications technology (ICT) have facilitated international migration and the retention of homeland connections – socially, economically, and politically – which has changed and continues to change the face of migration. Today migrants can follow news from their hometowns on their mobile devices, invest earnings in transnational businesses, fly home regularly to visit relatives, and even play active roles in the politics and development of their homeland regions.

Impacts of Migration

The impact of migration on the countries of origins is not always positive. One of the most notable adverse effects is human capital flight, which deprives countries of origin of the economic and social contributions of their most highly educated and skilled citizens. This phenomenon, more commonly known as “brain drain”, particularly affects health and education sectors of small, developing countries where the pool of trained professionals is limited to begin with. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)’s report *The Least Developed Countries Report 2012: Harnessing Remittances and Diaspora Knowledge to Build Productive Capacities* stated that brain drain in the world’s 48 least developed countries (LDCs) are most stark: among people from LDCs with a university-level education, about one in five leaves for employment elsewhere (UNCTAD 2012). This totals an estimated 2 million university-educated people presently living and working outside their home countries, up from 1.3 million in 2000 (Ibid).

Nevertheless, there is also evidence showing that the return of migrants to their countries of origin with enhanced skills (human capital) and new networks (social capital) or enabling their participation from abroad benefits the society in the long run and can offset the negative effects of brain drain. What has come to be known as “brain gain”, research and a growing number of case studies suggest that knowledge and skills contributed by migrants outside of their country are potential resources for the socio-economic development of their home country.

In addition to new knowledge and networks, the impact of remittances and investments made at home, (economic capital) is also significant to countries of origin. At a societal level, remittances from diaspora communities may be invested into infrastructure projects and contribute to local development in general. According to the World Bank, international migrants sent \$529 billion in remittances back to their home countries in 2012, a number that has been steadily rising over time. The Pew Research Centre has a slightly lower estimate at \$511 billion in 2013 (see chart), but nevertheless showing of a steadily increasing amount.

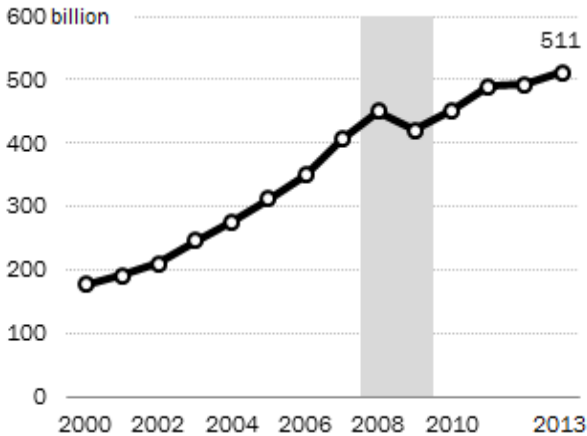
The engagement of diaspora in issues related to development, such as poverty reduction, economic growth, and post-crisis recovery has also increased over the past few decades (IOM 2013). As such, many governments (predominantly from low and middle-income countries) are now seeking to increase collaboration with diaspora communities in order to realize their own aspirations and maximize their potential for development.

Engaging Diaspora Communities

Engaging and facilitating participation of diaspora populations, and youth in particular, requires specific policies, regulatory environments, and programs undertaken by local authorities of the country of origin. Various international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration, UNDP, and World Bank have produced resources on how governments can better engage their diaspora communities as well as ways in which diaspora communities can contribute to development.

Remittances Have Been Rising

Total remittance dollars, 2000 to 2013. In billions of 2013 U.S. dollars



Note: Based on 137 countries with data for all years, which account for 93% of remittances in 2013. Shading indicates the U.S. recession.

Source: World Bank

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/12/17/changing-patterns-of-global-migration-and-remittances/

In 2012, the Migration Policy Institute in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) published *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries*. The handbook is divided into three major parts, each giving concrete examples of policies and programs that have been effective, as well as useful lessons and common challenges associated with the various topics related to diaspora engagement.

The first part outlines a strategy for diaspora engagement, starting with an adaptable “road map” that explains four strategic practices:

- Identifying the goals of diaspora engagement,
- Mapping the location and characteristics of the diaspora,
- Building trust between diasporas and government institutions, and
- Mobilizing the diaspora to act as partners in the development of the country of origin.

Part Two delves into the legal and institutional frameworks that governments have established to facilitate diaspora engagement, including institutions that governments use to interact with diaspora populations and legislative and regulatory frameworks.

More and more national bodies are being established in both destination countries as well as countries of origin to address diaspora issues, as governments realize the importance of engaging with their diaspora communities through specialized institutions. Some governments have created ministries that deal specifically with their diaspora communities (e.g., India’s Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) and Armenia’s Ministry of Diaspora), namely to develop stronger economic links with them through encouraging the transfer of financial and/or human capital. The Handbook asserts that “by establishing a separate, ministry-level diaspora institution, a government recognizes that traditional ministries such as labor and foreign affairs cannot manage the expatriate portfolio in all its dimensions” (IOM 2013, p.74). Institutions at the sub-ministry level have also been established to engage the diaspora, oftentimes with specific objectives. For example, Chile’s *Office for Chileans Abroad*, established in 2001 as part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ General Office for Consular and Immigration Services, has an explicit development mandate. The Office not only attends to the “demands and needs of communities of Chilean residents abroad” but also “encourage[s] their participation in national development” (Government of Chile in IOM 2012, p.79). The *Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs’ Office* established in 2002 under the country’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a similar objective encouraging “the active involvement of the Ethiopians in Diaspora in socioeconomic activities of the country” (Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in IOM 2012, p.79).

In recent times, consulates have also expanded their services and programs to include those that help migrants better integrate or live in destination countries through education and training, health assistance, the provision of ID cards, and counseling for families. Many consulates also help connect migrant communities through cultural events and community gatherings, as well as provide information on developments in the country of origin. Furthermore, governments are increasingly using their consular networks to sell diaspora bonds, designed to tap into diaspora assets.

Legal and regulatory frameworks are also important tools used by governments to reduce barriers to diaspora engagement and participation in the country of origin. A “Menu of Viable Options” is provided in the *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development* handbook.

Menu of Viable Options

1. Flexible citizenship laws and residency and visa requirements
 - Allow for dual or multiple citizenship
 - Flexible residence and visa requirements
2. Grant political rights
 - Allow overseas voting
 - Allow diasporas to run for public office while maintaining residence abroad
 - Reserve congressional seats for diaspora representatives
3. Special property rights
 - Allow diasporas to purchase land and other properties that are off-limits to foreigners
4. Tax incentives
 - Exempt customs duties and fees on the importation of household goods of returnees
 - Reduce income tax rates for returning citizens who have worked abroad for a certain number of years
 - Exempt diaspora investments such as providing lower tariffs on imported raw materials and equipment
 - Offer tax deductions on charitable contributions
5. Portable benefits
 - Offer portable benefits, particularly relating to pensions and medical and life insurance
 - Conclude social security agreements bilaterally or as part of regional agreements
6. General laws recognizing the diaspora
 - Introduce legislation that officially recognizes members of the diaspora or emigration in general as integral part of the national development plan.

Source: (IOM 2012)

The third and final part of the Handbook presents key programmatic areas in which diasporas have played positive roles in development of the country of origin, and identify specific policy options and lessons from the experiences governments.

A number of the practices described in the IOM Handbook are echoed by World Bank senior economist, Sonia Plaza, along with co-author Dilip Ratha in their book *Diaspora for Development in Africa* (2011), which also gives specific advice to governments in working with and engaging their diaspora communities. Further examples and good practices can be found in the UNDP Capacity Development Group’s 2007 *Case Evidence on Brain Gain* report which discusses how various countries have strategically promoted return migration through opening of their economies and policies to foster domestic investments in innovation and Research and Development (UNDP 2007). Successful practices undertaken by different governments were also explained in presentations made during the June 2013 *Diaspora Ministerial Conference* held by the IOM.

This conference was an event focusing on diaspora issues that brought together more than 500 participants, 143 country delegations, and 55 Ministers and high level government officials who shared their experiences in order to identify better ways to engage, enable and empower diaspora communities, and promote them as development actors.

Below are examples of specific practices used by the Governments of Colombia, Armenia, and Hungary to promote engagement of their diaspora in national affairs, presented during the Diaspora Ministerial Conference in 2013.

COLOMBIA

The Government of Colombia believes that the Colombia diaspora is the “extended and virtual classroom” of Colombia. The government aims to foster prosperity for Colombians living both in and outside the country, and as such has used public policy to contribute to the strengthening of transnational dynamics that favourably impact the wellbeing of Colombians and the development of Colombia and their new destinations abroad.

1. **Legislation:** The Government of Colombia modified and adapted its legislation to maintain strong links with the diaspora community. *Law 1465* created in 2011 founded the “Sistema Nacional de Migraciones” (National System of Migration), formed by a collaboration of State institutions and civil society organizations. The principal objective of the law is to accompany the national government in the design and execution of public policies, projects, and other actions aimed at strengthening links between the State and Colombian communities living abroad, as well as protecting the rights and quality of life of the latter.
2. **Political participation:** The Government of Colombia has also adjusted its legislation to favour and facilitate the political, civic, and economic participation of the Colombia diaspora. For example, the government allows for double citizenship with the goal of reinforcing a sense of belonging and allowing the exercise of civil and political rights of the diaspora within Colombia. The state constitution also gives Colombians living abroad the right to vote in the election of the country’s President, Senators, Parliamentary Representatives, and Chamber of Deputies. The government is in the process of designating two seats for representatives in the Chamber of Deputies to represent Colombians abroad.

Another initiative taken by the Colombian government is the organization of Peace Forums in Europe. In May 2013, a delegation of five members of the Peace Commission of the Colombian Congress visited four cities in Europe to establish dialogue amongst the Colombia diaspora about the Colombia peace process (between the Colombia government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)). The Peace Commission had organized forums for public participation throughout Colombia in November 2012 and inspired by these regional forums, European NGOs proposed to Congress to carry out similar dialogues in Europe for the diaspora who “[have] felt historically marginalized from political debate in the country...” All

Colombians living in Europe were welcome to the Peace Forums regardless of ideology, skepticism, or criticism of the peace negotiations. The 200 proposals approved by consensus during the forum were presented to the Colombia Peace Commission and the United Nations, who in turn are expected deliver them to the government and the FARC through the guarantor countries, Norway and Cuba (Conciliation Resources 2013).

ARMENIA

In her speech at the 2013 Diaspora Ministerial Conference, Hranush Hakobyan, Minister of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia, enumerated a number measures that the Armenian government has taken to engage its diaspora community, which is one of the world's largest spread across over 100 countries. Hakobyan explained that after proclaiming independence as a nation in 1990, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was granted a mandate to ensure the relations between the State and Diaspora and in 2008 established the *Ministry of Diaspora* with the objectives of:

1. Supporting the preservation of the Armenian identity in the diaspora
2. Identifying the potential of all Armenians and using it for the benefit of Armenia and the diaspora
3. Developing programs aimed at promoting repatriation

Some mechanisms that been implemented in order to meet these objectives include:

- The provision of **dual-citizenship** for Armenians living abroad and holding another nationality
- Allowing diaspora Armenians to make **investments** and gain profits in Armenia (over 4000 diaspora Armenians have businesses in Armenia)
- The establishment of the **Hayastan All-Armenian Fund**, “a unique institution whose mission is to unite Armenians in Armenia and overseas to overcome the country's difficulties and to help establish sustainable development in Armenia” (Hayastan All-Armenian Fund)
- Hosting **Pan-Armenian Athletic Games**, a multi-sport event held every two years for competitors from the Armenian diaspora and Armenia.
- **Birthright Armenia** program for diaspora youth to visit country (*see page 16*)

HUNGARY

Since Hungary's political transitions in 1989/90, the country's government has launched numerous new institutions, programs and initiatives aimed at to strengthening its relationship with the Hungarian diaspora and helping them preserve and nurture their national identity and cultural heritage. According to Zsuzsanna Répás, Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice, the most important measure the government has taken so far was the introduction of the **simplified naturalization procedure** which enables Hungarians living abroad to acquire Hungarian citizenship without having to leave their country of residence.

The Hungarian government has also established the *Hungarian Diaspora Council*, an independent forum of organizations for Hungarians throughout the world which has established a community consisting of churches, civil society, cultural institutions, and associations. The council pays special attention to the needs and interests of the Hungarian diaspora, serving as an independent representation for them. The organization's elected board has a direct line of communication with the Hungarian government.

In 2013, the Hungarian government launched *Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Scholarship Program* in an effort to foster greater national cohesion and to further promote cooperation and communication between the Hungarian diaspora and Hungary. In the framework of this program, Hungarian volunteers traveled to diaspora communities in the USA, Canada, Western Europe, Latin America, Australia, Israel, and South Africa to assist in ongoing cultural and community programs, such as Hungarian language courses, folk dance groups, weekend schools, and other activities aimed at preserving Hungarian heritage and identity (Répás 2013).

Youth Diasporas

Young migrants make up a relatively large portion of the overall migrant population around the world. According to the UN (2013), there are 35 million international migrants under the age of 20 and another 40 million between the ages of 20 and 29, forming over 30 percent of all migrants. The number of youth migrants as a percentage of the total youth population varies considerably, mainly by development level of the country. In 2013, youth migrants (aged 15-24) accounted for 9.1 percent of the total youth population in developed countries and 1.4 percent in developing countries.

The socio-economic and educational backgrounds of migrants, and hence their motivations and means of migration differ drastically. Some young people are subjected to forced migration; however, studies reveal that voluntary migration for work, study or family reasons is far more prevalent (UN 2013). A main driving force behind international youth migration is the magnitude of perceived inequalities in labor market opportunities, income, human rights, and living standards between the countries of origin and destination. Young people and their families often see migration as a way to improve their livelihood prospects. While some young migrants leave their home with the intention of returning, others plan to relocate permanently.

Engaging Youth Diaspora

Engaging youth in diaspora communities and creating opportunities for them to meaningfully participate in their countries of origin requires perhaps even more consideration than for adults. Amongst other reasons, even with the right to vote many have not yet reached their country's voting age and cannot participate in political elections. Also, younger migrants and especially second-generation migrants (those born to

migrant parents in a destination country) are less likely than their parents to identify with and feel strong connections to their countries of origin. Furthermore, young people generally have less financial means to engage in economic affairs and conduct business with their countries of origin, which is oftentimes how adult migrants become (re)connected to their country of origin.

Below are examples of how some governments have been promoting and facilitating the engagement of their youth diaspora in particular through specific programs. While these examples have been selected by countries and organizations, the level of actual participation varies for the different initiatives. This will be discussed further in the section following the description of the programs.

Birthright Programs

Birthright programs have been developed by governments with the aim of deepening the ties between diaspora youth communities and their ancestral homelands. Most countries with such programs tend to have a strong sense of national identity that transcends territory and closely knit transnational communities (IOM 2012). Over a dozen of such programs now exist with the aim of strengthening the relationship between homeland and diaspora through semi or fully funded trips for young people (Lim 2012). The majority of these were established over the last fifteen years, however some date back to the 1970s. Below are examples of some birthright programs currently in place.

Taglit-Birthright Israel

Since 1999, Israel has invited hundreds of thousands of Jews aged 18 to 26 from all around the world, who have neither traveled to Israel on a peer educational trip or study program nor lived in Israel past the age of 12, to visit the country on an all-expenses-paid tour to deepen their political and ethnic attachment to Israel. Since its inception in 2001, over 260,000 diaspora youth from 52 countries have participated in the program, and the Taglit-Birthright Israel organization, which is in charge of program, estimates that at the current rate of participation, within a decade one out of every two Jewish youth worldwide will have participated in one of its trips (IOM 2012).



Birthright Armenia

Armenia's government offers a program for young diaspora members to land internships and community service placements that last from eight weeks to a year in Armenia. Its mission is "to strengthen ties between the homeland and Diasporan youth, by affording them an opportunity to be a part of Armenia's daily life and to contribute to Armenia's development through work, study and volunteer experiences, while developing life-long personal ties and a renewed sense of Armenian identity" (Birthright Armenia). The program offers travel grants to those eligible, organizes living arrangements and excursions across the country, and prepares



language classes and forums. Upon completion of Birthright Armenia, program participants return to their countries of residence and have the chance to take part in alumni and networking programs.

Nepomak Discover Cyprus Program

In 2004 the government of Cyprus teamed up with the University of Cyprus and the Youth Board of Cyprus to develop the *Nepomak Discover Cyprus Program (NDCP)* in response to the demands of young Cypriots who wanted



to connect with their roots. Every summer, approximately 50 Cypriots aged 18 to 22 from eight participating countries undertake a three-week intensive language course at the University of Cyprus's School of Modern Greek and partake in a series of excursions to museums, monasteries, and other sites. Selection into the program gives priority to individuals from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds who are likely to have fewer opportunities to visit Cyprus and/or are unable to interact with diaspora communities. As of 2012, 400 individuals had participated the program. The NDCP relies on financial support of sponsors to fund scholarships that cover the cost of excursions, airfare, accommodation, and course fees for its participants.

Lakbay-Aral Program

In 1983, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) established the Lakbay-Aral ("*Travel-Study*") Program, a two-week cultural immersion program in the Philippines offered



to young Filipinos living abroad. This initiative has enabled the country's youth diaspora to "appreciate their Filipino roots through lectures on Philippine history and language and guided tours to scenic and historical landmarks. Program participants also have opportunities to meet and interact with Filipino students, public officials, and members of indigenous communities as well as to participate in local festivities" (Commission for Filipinos Overseas). Participants must pay for their own travel to and from Manila for this program.

Country Case Studies

Examples of programs used to engage and foster participation of diaspora youth from India and Lithuania are discussed below.

INDIA

With an estimated 25 million Indians living abroad (Lok Sabha Secretariat 2013), the Indian Government has paid special attention to efforts aimed at encouraging dialogue in the international Indian community for the benefit of the nation's interests. One event organized to engage the Indian diaspora is *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* (or "*Diaspora Day*"), which aims at bringing the expertise and knowledge of the Indian overseas community to India and integrating it into India's development process (Government of India 2008). Aside from this, the Government of India's Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), which was established specifically to deal with its diaspora has developed two programs targeted at engaging Indian diaspora youth: the *Know India Program* and *Overseas Indian Youth Clubs*.

KNOW INDIA PROGRAM

The *Know India Program (KIP)*, also known as the “Internship Program for Indian Diaspora”, is a three-week orientation program for students and young professionals of Indian origin living abroad to visit India and learn about “different facets of life in India and the progress made by the country in various fields, e.g. economic, industrial, education, science & technology, ICTs, and culture” (MOIA). Four to five programs are conducted every year in partnership with one or two state level governments. Some of the program’s activities include presentations on the country, political process, developments in various sectors, visits to a village to better understand the typical village life, interactions with NGOs and organizations dealing with women affairs, and presentation on the industrial development and visits to some Industries. Approximately 35 Indian Diaspora Youth between the ages of 18-26 are selected for each program, and those selected are provided with full hospitality in India during the duration of the program and have 90% of their air travel refunded.

OVERSEAS INDIAN YOUTH CLUB

The Overseas Indian Youth Club (OIYC) is an initiative of the MOIA to engage the diaspora youth aged 18-30 through Indian Missions overseas. The purpose of the OIYC initiative is “to keep the overseas Indian youth in touch with the developments in India and create a sense of belonging towards their country of origin” (MOIAb). The core membership of OIYC will comprise the overseas youth who have participated in the Know India Program and other scholarship programs for diaspora youth awarded by the MOIA, including the *Scholarship Program for Diaspora Children* and *Study India Program*. There are OIYCs in a number of different countries with large Indian diaspora communities in which youth can become engaged.

LITHUANIA

Approximately 1.3 million people of Lithuanian descent live outside Lithuania, a significant number considering the country’s population is only 3 million. Emigration has long been perceived as a threat in Lithuania but recently the government, business sector, and youth associations are encouraging Lithuanian society of view emigration in a new light – not as a threat, but rather as a challenge which can be transformed into an opportunity. Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Neris Germanas, explained at the International Dialogue on Migration in Geneva in 2013 that the government must “continue educating our societies about a largely untapped national asset – the diaspora.” In 2010, Lithuania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs was given the task of implementing the government’s newly formed policy on diaspora. Their main objective was to strengthen State-diaspora ties by promoting diaspora engagement in the life of Lithuania.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs identified two main target groups: those that promote a sense of community and Lithuanian identity, and individuals with expertise, contacts, and personal commitment which could be beneficial to the development of Lithuania. The Ministry found that research on the diaspora is crucial in

achieving their objectives; and thus, they commissioned polls, surveys, and studies about Lithuanians abroad. From this research, the Ministry created and supported various initiatives to engage their diaspora. For instance, the *Global Trade Lithuanian Award* was created to recognize notable achievements of Lithuanians overseas and is intended to promote a positive image of the diaspora and its potential contribution to Lithuania. *Create for Lithuania*, an internship program (see below), has also been established to provide Lithuanian diaspora youth in particular with an opportunity to live and work in Lithuania. The program is meant to “open doors for their return, provide an enabling environment for applying their practical knowledge and expertise in the public, private, and NGO sectors” (Germanas 2013).

CREATE FOR LITHUANIA (*Kurk Lietuvai*)

In September 2012, State agencies *Invest Lithuania* and *Enterprise Lithuania*, in partnership with the Lithuanian Government launched a pioneer project called *Junior Professionals Program (JPP) “Create for Lithuania”*. The program is aimed at providing opportunities for Lithuanian youth with graduate degrees from foreign academic institutions to employ acquired skills and knowledge in Lithuania’s public sector. It is a year-long program which consists of 4-6 month rotations, tailor-made according to JPP participants’ backgrounds, references and expectations at institutions including various ministries within the *Government of the Republic of Lithuania*, *Enterprise Lithuania*, *NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence*, and more. The 20 young professionals selected each year work on strategic governmental or municipal projects and they are provided with an opportunity to participate in high level decision making processes. The participants are provided with market-based level salaries and benefits, and are given challenging assignments and feedback on their work, as well as an opportunity to be a part of the progress made by the Lithuanian government. At the end of their placement, the youth are required to present their projects to the Lithuanian government and the public.



JPP “Create for Lithuania” participants in governmental institutions and municipalities work in the areas of education (vocational training), marketing, entrepreneurship promotion, community development, and improvement of the investment environment, amongst others. For example, some participants working in the *Ministry of Transport and Communication* analyzed the legal and technological environment for electronic voting and submitted proposals for its implementation. Other participants working with a municipal office created a curriculum for a vocational training school catered to the needs of local businesses and included apprenticeship opportunities at local companies. JPP “Create for Lithuania” participants have also contributed to positive changes in Lithuania’s labor code, migration procedures, and territorial planning.

To attract candidates with international experience and skills necessary for implementation of projects at the national or regional level, JPP Create for Lithuania organizers approach Lithuanian communities abroad, student communities in local and foreign universities, use the country’s network of diplomatic missions, various social media channels, and personal networks of participants and alumni (Barzdiene 2015). One of

the program's main goal is to encourage young professionals to stay in Lithuania after the program and to use their international experience in the public sector.

Mantas was one of the program's first batch of participants in 2012. Here is a description he gave about his experience participating in Create for Lithuania:

"I joined the program in 2012 [and] was part of the first group of participants. At that time the program had the name and official status but almost nothing was built or known. All of us soon understood that a big part of our mission was to actually establish the program, find a way it could operate in and get exposure for the kind of impact returning youth could make in the country. This clearly was one of the biggest and most exciting challenges I together with 19 other talented and ambitious people had at that time....I was heavily involved with communication activities around the program, various social initiatives we organized, also an exciting branding project for Invest Lithuania. All this experience gave me a good notion of what it takes to build things from scratch - how hard and challenging but yet exciting things are when very little is given and nothing will be until you get things done."

After the program Mantas stayed with *Invest Lithuania* for about a month and then got an opportunity to work with Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian advertisers at Google. He eventually left Lithuania but says that his ties with Lithuania and other Baltic countries are still quite strong.

"I work with Lithuanian advertisers on [a] daily basis helping them to understand digital advertising and how it can help to grow their businesses. I help export businesses, find export opportunities and expand their businesses to much broader scope than just a local small market. Together with my team we also organize various educational activities [for] schools and universities in Lithuania to inspire them and share our stories."

Mantas believes that the program is beneficial for both the participants and Lithuania, and the success of such programs should not be measured by whether or not participants decide to stay in or leave the country, or plan to return in the future.

"There is so much impact that can be [made] when living abroad. What matters is that after the program we all have become more proud of our heritage and regardless of where we are and what we do we all spread the word and show the example. Every country needs a strong and proud diaspora as much as it needs permanent residence. I am proud of being Lithuanian, I share my pride with others and I believe that despite not being a resident of the country I can still make an impact on its growth and development" (Aleksiejevas 2015).

Engagement vs. Participation of Diaspora Youth

These examples show there are numerous ways in which governments and organizations have and can engage and facilitate participation of youth in their diaspora. The Birthright and similar initiatives like the

Know India Program that draw young people back to their countries of origin on short-term visits in order to learn about the culture, politics, daily realities, and opportunities for development have generally been successful at attracting large numbers of youth participants. The different programs each have their own agendas for engaging the youth, but they all share the similar objective of connecting diaspora communities with their countries of origin.

It should be noted that while these initiatives may be effective in engaging the young people, the actual *level of meaningful participation* varies between programs. Birthright-type programs are generally not as high as initiatives like the *Overseas India Youth Clubs*, where young people have leadership and decision-making powers in communities abroad, and the *Create for Lithuania* program where the youth participants are actively engaged in initiatives and projects with adults and which have a direct impact on the development of their country of origin.

Oftentimes, the birthright-type programs may be considered as a first step to engaging the youth diaspora, sparking their interest and sense of connection with their homelands, which may lead to more meaningful participation in the affairs and/or development of their countries of origin in the future. For instance, according to one study, participants on the ten-day Israel Birthright trips were more confident advocates for Israel and more likely to feel connected to Israel than their Jewish diaspora peers who have not taken part in the program (IOM 2012).

On the contrary, programs like *Create for Lithuania* have been designed specifically to enable greater levels of participation of diaspora youth in the political, economic, and societal activities of their country of origin by giving them a chance to actively contribute to development efforts as part of the program itself. As one of the head organizers of the *Create for Lithuania* asserted, “[The program] is beneficial to Lithuanian society not only because of the creation of a global Lithuania network and implementation of strategically important projects that contribute to the competitiveness of the country, but it also encourages our people to take an active role in public affairs” (Barzdiene 2015). It is a good example of how a government program can give the opportunity to diaspora youth to contribute new human and social capital to the country origin. Furthermore, the fact that the program lasts upwards of half a year (rather than a few days or weeks) and the participants are encouraged to stay and work in Lithuania’s public sector for a year following their placement also allows for greater opportunities to actively and meaningfully take part in Lithuanian society and in its development.

For governments wishing to create opportunities to connect with their youth diaspora, it is important to first determine the goals and motivations behind their desire to engage this target group. Generating closer cultural ties and a sense of connection with countries of origin amongst a large number of young people can be achieved through Birthright type programs. This kind of program may lead to future participation by the diaspora youth in their countries of origin, but generally are not designed with the intention of allowing for meaningful participation in themselves. Programs like *Create for Lithuania* may reach comparatively fewer diaspora youth but foster higher levels of meaningful participation amongst their participants.

CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNTRIES WISHING TO ENGAGE OR INCREASE PARTICIPATION OF THEIR YOUTH DIASPORAS

As highlighted in the *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development* (2012) Handbook, there is no “one-size-fits-all” model for governments working to more effectively engage their diasporas, as each diaspora has a unique set of needs and capabilities based on its historical experience and the present realities of its countries of origin and destination. Government approaches must thus reflect and adapt to these complexities, and even more so when dealing with the youth diasporas.

Nevertheless, drawing on information presented in Chapter 1 of this publication about fostering meaningful youth participation, the advice given and examples presented in the various publications about engaging diaspora communities in Chapter 2, as well as having examined different programs governments from around the world have developed to engage their youth diasporas, some general recommendations can be made for countries wishing to engage or increase participation of this target group. This is not a step-by-step guide or template for governments to follow, but rather some key considerations to be kept in mind particularly if governments wish to foster more meaningful participation of the youth, and suggestions of how they can do so.

Learn about the youth diaspora

In order to meaningfully engage the youth, it is important to better understand the group(s) being dealt with. As mentioned earlier, a diaspora is not a homogeneous group and it is important for governments to learn about diaspora youth aspirations, the diverse skills they have to offer, if they are willing to offer them and how, and what the different groups expect from the government. This requires comprehensive data collection (through surveys, consultations and focus groups, etc.) and dialogue with the youth diaspora.

Effective youth participation requires engaging young people from the onset. Generally, the more diaspora youth ideas are taken into account and the greater opportunities there are for them to really shape the project or program and assume leadership roles, the higher the level of meaningful participation is reached.

Learning about the youth is also necessary in determining the type of participatory program to develop. As discussed in the *Forms of Youth Participation* (Chapter 1), there are an increasing number of ways in which young people can take part in society, and the same applies to diaspora youth as well. No one knows better than the diaspora youth themselves what are their needs and capacities, as well as how willing they are to participate in their country of origin. Learning about those is a crucial step in developing any plans to effectively engage or increase their participation.

Identify the goals and motivations behind engaging diaspora youth

One of the main questions governments should reflect on is *why* they would like to engage youth in their diaspora. What are the needs of the country of origin or specific goals that governments would like to accomplish through engagement of their diaspora communities? Is the purpose of engaging the youth to connect with them, introduce them to the country of origin's culture, heritage, and potential opportunities for future collaboration so that they can contribute to socio-economic development from their countries of destination? Or is it more so about harnessing their human and social capital (skills, talents, networks, etc.) and fostering their participation within the program framework to contribute to the immediate and future development needs of the country of origin from within?

Determining the motivations behind engaging the youth diaspora will help answer question of the level of participation that should be aimed for, and the type of program to ultimately design (for example, a Birthright-type or short-term travel experience versus a longer-term program, such as an internship).

Identifying the goals behind engaging youth diaspora will also help determine the *who* and the *where* to develop the program or initiative. Is there a certain target group within the youth diaspora with which the government would like to connect (in terms of age, place of residence, socio-economic background)? And should the government design a program that engages the youth in country of origin or destination country?

Develop frameworks that foster diaspora youth participation

A number of institutional and legal frameworks have been discussed in Chapter 2 for governments wishing to engage their diaspora communities. While some of the regulatory and legal options presented in the "Menu of Viable Options" for diaspora engagement are more relevant to adult migrants (e.g., providing tax incentives and property rights), many may also help facilitate engagement and participation of diaspora youth. For instance, providing dual citizenship so that migrants can go in and out of the country without hassle may help increase opportunities for diaspora youth to more easily access internships and jobs, engage in entrepreneurial endeavors, and participate in other aspects of society in the country of origin. In addition, giving those who have reached the voting age the right to vote can further increase a feeling of belonging as well as political engagement of young people in diaspora communities.

Another tool that can enable governments to formalize ways to foster youth participation is development of a national youth policy. "A national youth policy is a government's commitment and practice towards ensuring good living conditions and opportunities for the young population of a country...a set of established policy practices...which together determine how a government deals with issues that address young people" (Denstad 2009). In 2014, 127 of 198 countries had a national youth policy (Youth Policy Press 2014), a number which continues to increase as governments increasingly realize the importance of developing legislative frameworks which focus on this important demographic. Nevertheless, most national youth policies only focus on youth within the country. For governments with large youth diasporas and/or have the desire to engage them and increase their participation, specifically including a section or clauses

about diaspora youth participation in their national youth policy may help direct government programs and initiatives aimed at this target group. To maximize the relevance of a national youth policy, young people should be included and involved in its development from the beginning of the process. The process of drafting a youth policy is in itself an opportunity to engage diaspora youth and be an avenue of participation in the country of origin.

Ministries, sub-ministries, or other institutions created specifically to deal with diasporas can also be useful for engaging youth in diaspora communities by having designated resources and capacity to initiate programs catered to that target group. India's Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, for example, has taken the lead on this and has been successful at engaging young people through the *Know India Program* and *Overseas Indian Youth Clubs* described in Chapter 2.

Determine available resources & collaborate with stakeholders that work with (diaspora) youth

Governments should choose the most appropriate or interesting form of involvement based on available resources and type of diaspora youth engagement it wishes to achieve. Collaborating with organizations or corporations who have vested interest or are already working youth and diasporas could be a good opportunity, particularly if financial resources are of concern. These may be local organizations or corporations, established in the destination countries targeting the specific diaspora, or international organizations who work with migrants and diaspora communities.

Partnering with established organizations with experience working with young people – and especially those which value and promote meaningful participation – may also be helpful to governments with less experience working with youth or are less aware of their specific needs and capacities.

A program like *LT Big Brother* in Lithuania is an example of an initiative that engages diaspora youth, with which a government could collaborate within its respective country.



Launched in 2009, LT Big Brother is a global voluntary professional mentoring program for Lithuanian students around the world. Its main goal is to facilitate transfer of professional knowledge and experience between established professionals of Lithuanian origin and Lithuanian students. In 2013, the program connected 200 Lithuanian professionals (mentors) living or working in 24 different countries with Lithuanian students interested in pursuing further academic or professional development goals in Lithuania or abroad.

Unlike the *Create for Lithuania* program described in Chapter 2, LT Big Brother is not a government-run initiative. Each year the program organizers apply for funding from the Lithuanian Government's Ministry of

Foreign Affairs and private companies, but the program was initiated and is run by a dedicated team of volunteers.

According to a program coordinator of LT Big Brother, some benefits that have resulted from engaging diaspora youth through this program include the creation of strong Lithuanian communities in places with significant Lithuanian diaspora populations and an increase in knowledge and sharing of ideas with students who aspire to have international careers while also giving a broader perspective for those who remain in Lithuania. Moreover, Lithuanian student participants have the possibility to acquire knowledge required to attain competitive positions in international companies abroad through the mentorship of the young professionals from abroad. Many of the LT Big Brother mentors have taken part in the program multiple times, with over 30 of them having participated as a mentor for more than four years. Additionally, a number of international projects have emerged from collaboration between students and their mentors over the years. The program coordinator also asserts that *“while it is hard to measure, I would like to believe it also helps to bring positive Western traits to Lithuanian students which they might not acquire otherwise”* (Urbanavicius 2015).

Monitoring and evaluating the program with the youth

Monitoring and evaluation are amongst the most important undertakings in the development of any project or program. Apart from the normal benefits of monitoring and evaluating a program for what works or does not work and can be improved or deleted, monitoring and evaluation is also an avenue for engaging youth. For any program designed to increase youth participation, obtaining feedback and more importantly, valuing the opinion of the youth involved is a form of promoting participation itself. Program and initiatives can increase their ability to promote meaningful participation by giving the youth a chance to express their thoughts and opinions about the program in question and taking those into consideration while further developing the program. It is very crucial that the voices of the youth are valued and have impact, as simply asking for their opinion without valuing or really considering them can lead to adverse effects, such as frustration and apathy.

Considerations for Mongolia

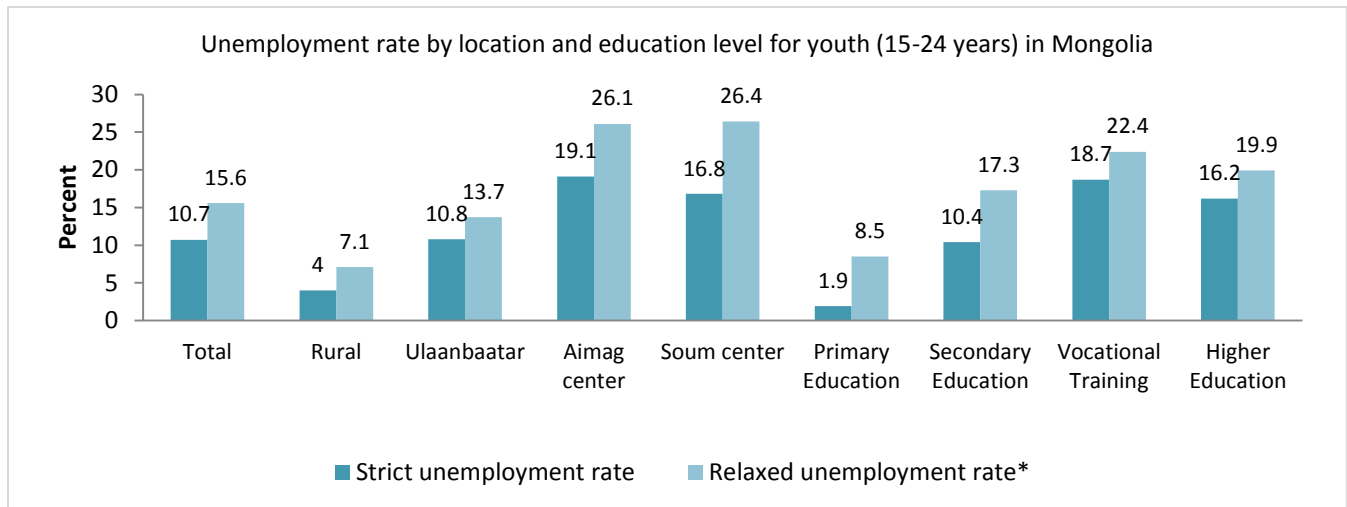
Each country's approach to engaging its diaspora communities should reflect its and its diaspora's unique contexts, characteristics, needs, and capacities. Some things the Government of Mongolia might first consider are the country's own social, economic, and political characteristics in order to better determine its capacities and needs for engaging its diaspora youth.

The Mongolian People's Republic was established as a communist regime with Soviet backing in 1924. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Mongolia saw its own peaceful, democratic revolution in the early 1990s which resulted in a multi-party system, a new constitution in 1992, and transition into a market economy. The country's current GDP (PPP) is \$17.03 billion USD (2013), making it a middle-income country (UNDP 2014). With a GDP growth rate of 11.8% (2013.), Mongolia is growing at one of the highest rates in the world (Ibid). Nevertheless, its poverty level is still relatively high, with an estimated 27.4% of its population living below the national poverty line (2012). It has a land area of 1.6 million km² and a current population of approximately 3 million (July 2014 est.), making it the world's most sparsely populated country (Ibid). Nearly 70% of the total population resides in urban areas and the annual urbanization rate is 2.8% (2010-2015). Mongolia has a relatively large youth population, with 45% of Mongolians under the age of 25 in 2014 (Ibid).



One of the major challenges currently facing Mongolia is the issue of youth unemployment. The International Labor Organization (ILO) report *Youth Unemployment Challenges in Mongolia* revealed that young Mongolians face numerous challenges in successfully transitioning to the workforce. Almost 11% of economically active young people are unemployed; a figure which rises to nearly 16% when youth available to work but not actively searching (a proxy for discouragement) are also considered (ILO 2013). Urban youth are most susceptible to unemployment, and particularly in *Aimag* (provincial) and *Soum* (district) urban centers. While unemployment rates of rural youth are relatively low, their employment is dominated by low-productivity, non-wage work concentrated in the informal economy where conditions are poor and prospects for upward mobility and escape from poverty are very limited.

Studies further reveal a positive correlation between unemployment and level of education, which points to disparities between the skills produced by the education system and those required in the labor market. This implies the need for better mechanisms to bring together skilled job seekers and employers, as well as job search support.



Source: Statistics from Mongolia Labor Force Survey, 2011, accessed from (ILO, 2013).

Engaging the Mongolian Diaspora

According to 2010 figures from the National Statistical Office, over 100,000 Mongolians live abroad (Aghajanian 2012). That number's significance is magnified when considering the country's overall population is 3 million inhabitants. Regions with the most significant Mongolia diaspora populations are South Korea (27,145 in 2013), the Russian Federation (20,476 in 2013), the United States (15,000 as of 2012), and Czech Republic (5,707 in 2013) (Aghajanian 2012, UNICEF 2013). \$288,000,000 in remittances were sent to Mongolia from its diaspora in 2012, the largest portion of that (\$118,000,000) from South Korea, followed by Germany (\$63,000,000), Japan (\$40,000,000), and the USA (\$31,000,000) (Pew Research Center 2014).

The Mongolian government may wish to engage its diaspora community to assist in the country's development, address the high poverty and youth unemployment rates through investment of remittances, as well as contribute to the country's transfer of technological, human, and social capital. The government may also be mainly interested in connecting with its diaspora youth, and introducing them to the country's culture, society, and providing opportunities for engagement in development or economic endeavors. Defining clear motivations for engaging the diaspora, and particularly the diaspora youth will help the government determine the type of program or initiative to pursue.

Developing a professional mentorship program like Lithuania's *LT Big Brother* could both foster meaningful participation of diaspora youth while also benefiting young people in Mongolia by bringing in new knowledge and skills from abroad, which may better equip youth in the transition to the labor market. An

*The strict unemployment rate represents all unemployed individuals actively searching for work and the relaxed unemployment rate includes unemployed individuals who are both actively searching and not actively searching for employment.

internship program that provides opportunities for Mongolian diaspora youth to learn and use their skills and talents to make an impact on the country's development similar to the *JPP Create for Lithuania* program could also be an option for the government. These types of programs would have the potential to generate a high level of meaningful participation of the youth diaspora.

Creating a birthright-type program for youth in the Mongolian diaspora to return to and learn about their country of origin would be another way for the government to engage its diaspora. While the level of meaningful participation achieved in this kind of initiative might not be as high as in a mentorship or internship program, it could be a first step to engaging the youth diaspora, and spark their interest and sense of belonging within the country, which may lead to more meaningful participation in the affairs and/or development of Mongolia in the future.

There are also a number of Mongolian community associations and cultural centers in various parts of the world, including Australia, Ireland, Belgium, USA, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, the UK, China, France, Czech Republic, Spain, and South Korea (Info Mongolia 2013). Connecting with these organizations may be helpful for learning about the youth in those diaspora communities, especially if they already have existing programs that engage the Mongolian youth abroad, as well as collaborating on youth participation programs. An example of one such organization is the *Ger Youth Center*, a community-based, non-profit organization located in San Francisco, founded in April 2009 by Mongolian immigrants devoted to preserving and promoting the traditional arts, culture and heritage, and language among the younger generations of the Mongolian community in the United States (Ger Youth Center). There are also organizations that work with young people in Mongolia, such as the *Mongolian Youth Development Services Center*, which provides development opportunities for Mongolian youth in the country. This organization welcomes international volunteers and interns, and could also be a potential stakeholder to collaborate with in developing a program or initiative to engage Mongolian diaspora youth.

The Government of Mongolia presently has a great opportunity to develop a strong legislative framework for engaging its diaspora youth, as it is in the process of drafting a national youth policy. Including a section within the policy that specifically addresses engagement and participation of diaspora youth would be an effective way to help guide government initiatives and programs directed at this target group. Allowing diaspora youth to be meaningfully involved in the design and development process of the national youth policy, as well as its eventual implementation, monitoring and evaluation, would also make for a more inclusive and relevant policy, in addition to being a form of meaningful participation in itself.

Concluding Remarks

Young people have huge potential to make positive changes and contribute to sustainable development in their communities and societies all around the world. This is reflected in UNESCO's Operational Strategy on Youth, which states that "around the world, young women and men are driving change and claiming respect for fundamental freedoms and rights; improved conditions for them and their communities; opportunities to learn, work and participate in decisions that affect them" and that "UNESCO will apply a comprehensive and future-oriented vision recognizing youth as agents of change, social transformations, peace and sustainable development" (UNESCO 2014).

The surge in national youth policies being developed worldwide in recent years can be seen as a reflection of the awareness by governments of the importance of engaging young people and fostering their participation in their respective countries. A growing number of governments have recognized the potential that youth in diaspora communities in particular have in significantly contributing to a country of origin's development through the introduction of new social, human, and economic capital. Engaging this group and creating opportunities for them to participate in their country of origin requires several considerations. Providing youth diaspora with the opportunity to *meaningfully* participate as active members within a society, using their unique skills and talents also has several benefits as is discussed in this report.

UNESCO is committed to both fostering meaningful youth participation in its own programs as well as supporting governments with similar objectives. This study is an example of UNESCO's work aimed at providing technical advice to interested parties. It is undertaken within an SHS sector internship program in the Beijing Office, researched and written by a young person. UNESCO in the East Asia Cluster is also working with and for youth including through supporting youth policy development in Mongolia, capacity building in leadership and management, and providing opportunities for networking among youth.

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