Framework for Diaspora Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance
Draft Reference Note
The opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the report do not imply expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

This publication was made possible through support provided by USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, under the project, “Developing and Piloting a Framework for Diaspora’s Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance.” The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID.

Publisher: International Organization for Migration
1752 N Street, N.W.
Suite 600
Washington, D.C.
USA
Tel. +1 202 862 1826
Email: diasporaforhumanity@iom.int
Website: www.iom.int

Cover photos: (1) IOM enumerators carry out door to door assessments in partnership with the Lebanese Red Cross in areas affected by the Beirut explosions to help the humanitarian community better understand the needs, plan and provide assistance. © IOM 2020 / Muse MOHAMMED

(2) In the picture, members of the Vida “Juan Martin Moye” Tilicuchu self-sufficient community horticulture gardens - a project aimed at supporting the creation of proximity gardens in a poor suburb non-urbanized area of Quito. […] The training course has equipped more than 100 diaspora associations across Italy with the key notions to design co-development initiatives, strengthening their theoretical and practical skills in the field of project development and implementation. The Course also represents an important opportunity to share knowledge, at all levels: with local institutions and partners, with the facilitators and - above all - between the diaspora associations and their members. © IOM 2019 / Natalie OREN.

© 2021 International Organization for Migration (IOM)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publisher.
WHAT IS THE FRAMEWORK FOR DIASPORA’S ENGAGEMENT IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE?

The Framework for Diaspora’s Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance is a suggested guide to support more streamlined coordination among Diasporas and Institutional Humanitarian Actors, to promote more effective humanitarian assistance to affected people and communities worldwide.

This draft note explains the core elements of the Framework for Diaspora Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance. It also provides supplemental information in reference to the interactive visuals of the Framework itself. The links to these interactive visuals are referenced throughout the note and all together at the end.

This Framework remains a working draft and will continue to be elaborated over time.

Diasporas are uniquely equipped to intervene in case of natural and manmade disasters in their countries of origin through their technical and language skills, community networks, remittances and philanthropic contributions, and local area knowledge. © IOM 2019 / Natalie OREN

---

1 See https://diaspora.pub/background
2 See https://diaspora.pub/internal-ccc
WHY is the Framework for Diaspora’s Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance relevant?

The extraordinary number of complex and protracted crises that affect more people every year around the world, compels humanitarian actors to explore innovative ways to meet the growing needs of affected populations. At the same time, the proliferation of new actors, and the need for multi-stakeholder solutions, raise the urgency to engage non-institutional actors in a more coordinated and collaborative way.

Diasporas have long been engaging in humanitarian assistance in multiple ways (i.e. in-kind donations, financial contributions and remittances, skilled volunteerism, etc.) to respond to the humanitarian and development needs of affected communities in their countries of origin and countries of residence. The question is “HOW” to more effectively engage and coordinate with diaspora groups to further leverage all actors’ experiences, skill sets, resources, and unique added values.

Building upon several decades of work around diaspora’s engagement and humanitarian assistance coordination, IOM, in cooperation with the Haiti Renewal Alliance, and other partners are proposing to develop and pilot a framework for a more streamlined diaspora engagement in humanitarian assistance, at the global and country levels, with the objective of increasing the capacity of diasporas and institutional humanitarian actors to more effectively coordinate, communicate and cooperate with each other. The goal is to increase the effectiveness and reach of humanitarian assistance to populations affected by natural and man-made disasters and more broadly along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

To WHOM is the Framework addressed?

The Framework is directed towards diaspora actors, in particular diaspora’s organizations and coalitions, and institutional humanitarian actors, both at the global and country level.

WHERE is the Framework applicable?

This framework is applicable in both natural and man-made disasters. It specifically applies to humanitarian crises affecting diasporas’ countries of origin. Adaptability of the framework to humanitarian assistance provided by diaspora in locations different from their country of origin will be object of further consideration.

WHEN is the Framework applicable?

The Framework is applicable at any stage of humanitarian assistance -- preparedness/prevention, response and recovery. Considering the important role that diasporas play along the humanitarian-development nexus, this framework is also adaptable to contexts where recovery moves towards development and/or where the same country may experience pockets of crisis within a broader development context.
HOW does the Framework for Diaspora Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance work?

The Framework addresses both internal diaspora’s coordination and external coordination between diasporas and institutional humanitarian actors. The Model for internal diaspora’s coordination suggests possible modalities in which diaspora actors from the same country of origin or heritage can work together in a more structured way. For the purposes of this note, the “Framework” for Diaspora Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance refers to coordination between diaspora and humanitarian actors. The Framework identifies actors engaged in humanitarian assistance and suggests streamlined entry points and pathways for diaspora and institutional humanitarian coordination, at different levels. The Framework clarifies:

- **WHO** is involved in coordination broadly: Diaspora Actors, Humanitarian Actors at the Country Level, and Humanitarian Actors at the Global level. Within each main macro-group there are individual actors, which often already operate within existing coordination platforms.

- **WHERE** coordination occurs, whether at the global or country level. The regional level is not explicit, but it may be relevant as one of the locations where humanitarian diaspora facilitators may operate.

- **WHAT** are the main objectives of coordination: such as information sharing/communication, capacity exchange, resource mobilization, and joint initiatives. This list is not exhaustive.

- **HOW** coordination can be streamlined for more effective assistance, through suggested entry points; pathways for actors’ coordination and; step-by-steps flows of coordination, at different levels of the humanitarian assistance. The step-by-step flows are reflected within Flowcharts³ that outline what different actors can intervene and inter-face with each other’s at different phases of the assistance, and depending on needs and capacities.

- **WHEN** coordination occurs: whether before, during, and after disasters, crises and conflicts; and also along the humanitarian-development nexus.

³ See https://diaspora.pub/flowcharts
Diaspora Engagement is More than Just a Stopgap

Although remittances remain an important lifeline to affected communities, diasporas bring much more to the table. They also bring intellectual, political, social and cultural capital that can be mobilized at different crisis stages and ensure sustainability of efforts. As countries that have been affected by conflict, natural disasters or other crises are faced with the difficult task of rebuilding physical, institutional and social infrastructures, diasporas also contribute to the transition from crisis to post-crisis phases; they are sometimes in a position to either temporarily or permanently return to their countries of origin to aid in capacity building in various sectors, such as health or education. Diasporas often support and cooperate with national and local first responders, such as civil society and local organizations, and can play an important role towards enhancing the localization of the assistance.

Strengthening Diaspora Coordination Leads to More Effective Efforts

While it may appear obvious that coordination can help engender a more informed comprehensive humanitarian assistance, it is also important to consider diaspora’s interest to maintain a certain degree of flexibility and autonomy, the possibility to cross the humanitarian-development divide, and preventing the risk to be exposed to the same hindrances as international organizations. In spite of these challenges, improving coordination may increase effectiveness, reduce gaps and create the potential for meaningful cooperation, with the goal to better assist populations affected by crises.

The positive effects of diaspora’s internal coordination have already been witnessed following the devastating August 14, 2021 earthquake in Haiti. Coordination by the Haitian diaspora, particularly by such organized bodies as the Haitian Diaspora Emergency Response Unit, or HDERU, allowed for a quick and efficient response targeting specific areas affected by the disaster. The response, led by Haiti Renewal Alliance, involved regular meetings of various Haitian diaspora actors who organized focal points and working groups based on the Cluster system. Direct efforts included mobilization of medical staff, collection of vital supplies (e.g. water and shelter materials) and arrangement of their transportation, and fundraising. More streamlined internal coordination led to addressing possible gaps and overlapping and leveraging different actors’ capacities and resources.

Additionally, the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) has developed internal coordination tools (e.g. Facebook pages, SMS alerts) to engage the US-based Filipino diaspora. Step-by-step procedures have been outlined to activate diaspora mobilization if a disaster occurs in the Philippines including points of contact for internal and external communication, initial response, needs assessments, resource mobilization, and more. These tools have been tested in consultation with national actors in the Philippines and with the Filipino diaspora.

By piloting aspects of the Framework in different contexts, it is possible to learn how to best adapt the Framework to other current and future disasters and help develop the capacities of communities to become more resilient.

To this end the draft Framework provides models for both (1) coordination among diaspora members and (2) coordination between diaspora organizations and external actors.
KEY COMPONENTS OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE
Actors

Three main categories of actors are considered within the Framework:

1. Diaspora Actors,
2. Institutional Humanitarian Actors at the Country Level,
3. Institutional Humanitarian Actors at the Global Level.

A non-exhaustive list of specific actors is included within each large circle to provide a concrete idea of who can be involved in coordination, both at the global and country level (i.e. UN agencies, international and national NGOs, national and local authorities, affected communities, donors, etc.). Existing coordinating platforms which gather and convene some of these actors are also reflected (i.e. global and in-country humanitarian clusters).

This image highlights the above main categories of actors within the Framework, including select sub-actors who may be involved in coordination at different levels of engagement. These images are just extracted samples from the Framework models; more complete models may be found on pages 12 to 13.
Entry Points – Humanitarian Diaspora Facilitators

The Framework introduces — or recognizes in a more institutional manner where already existing — the roles of facilitating actors/platforms that can serve as entry point, point of contact, and, if necessary, as a triaging center for coordination requests and activities. The framework suggests three actors/platform with complementary roles: Facilitators at the Global Level or other centralized location; Facilitators at the country-of-origin level or other centralized location; and a Humanitarian Hub within a Global Diaspora Platform. The establishment, roles, complementarity and interactions among these facilitating figures is still under elaboration and discussion with concerned stakeholders, in order to ensure that needs are met in an effective and not overlapping manner. Reference the Interactive Framework\(^4\) for more information on the suggested roles of the Facilitators. In addition to these facilitators, entry points can also include humanitarian focal points within diaspora coordinating platforms, as well as diaspora focal points within humanitarian organizations.

Pathways for Coordination

The framework indicates pathways to reflect the flows of connections between different actors. The Framework suggests more streamlined pathways – solid lines - and recognizes the current or potential use of bilateral ad hoc coordination which can be preserved if effective – dotted lines. This is meant to promote the benefits of coordination towards a more informed and effective humanitarian assistance, while considering diaspora’s interest to maintain a certain degree of flexibility and autonomy and the fact that not all actors may be interested in and able to perform the same degrees and functions of coordination.

---

4 See https://diaspora.pub/external-ccc
Coordination Among Diaspora Members

This model for diaspora coordination is a sub-component of the overall framework. Effective coordination between diaspora organizations and institutional humanitarian actors is also reliant on proper and more streamlined internal diaspora coordination. This would increase the benefits of coordination for diaspora actors involved in the coordination systems, as well as would ease the external inter-face with other stakeholders.

As a sub-component of the Model for Diaspora Internal Coordination offers guidance on possible ways diaspora from the same country of origin or heritage can come together in a more structured way. The goals of this model are to enable diaspora organizations to be better equipped to (1) provide humanitarian assistance to family, friends, and communities in their country of origin or heritage and (2) be more organized for streamlined engagement with external humanitarian actors.

The model focuses on five central components:

- Diversity of diaspora actors
- Suggested mechanisms for coordinating diaspora actors around different coordinating platforms
- How to structure the coordinating platforms, possible main functions, and tools

The model accounts for both basic coordination and more advanced levels of coordination, allowing use of different modalities and functions depending upon existing capacities and actors’ interest. There are also pathways on interfacing with external actors, illustrated by flow charts relative to phase of intervention (e.g. preparedness/prevention, and response/recovery). Partnerships between various actors are encouraged and facilitated.

5 See https://diaspora.pub/internal-ccc
Coordination Between Diasporas and Humanitarian Actors

External coordination, as outlined in the Framework described above, may be a second, but necessary step after internal coordination among their diaspora members. In the same way, it is assumed the humanitarian actors have their own internal coordination systems both at the global and/or country level. Therefore, all actors are internally organized to best facilitate coordination with external actors.

Diaspora organizations and Institutional Humanitarian Actors can coordinate together through a number of functions (e.g., information sharing, resource mobilization) through various entry points, and with different levels of coordination as mentioned previously.

Coordination at the Global Level

This Framework includes global level coordination to support streamlining engagement systems or propose suggested pathways or entry points to triage/facilitate engagement at a macro level. Emphasis is placed on interfacing with existing humanitarian systems vis-à-vis institutional actors as well as through the possible development of complementary systems or coordination tools.

Humanitarian assistance can be relevant not only in support of activities in diasporas’ countries of origin, but also to assist migrants and refugees in a third country. This level of intervention should also be considered and reflected in the framework.
Coordination at the Country Level

In addition to global coordination, most of the granular and programmatic coordination around humanitarian assistance will come at the country level. In this way, it is important that facilitators in the affected country or region work in coordination with diasporas and humanitarian actors involved on the ground, in synergy with existing coordinating processes and systems. Diaspora can collect, guide and share information on diaspora-led response initiatives and also share information and needs that they may gather from affected communities with country level humanitarian actors. Various connections and/or partnerships between diaspora organizations and humanitarian actors can be initiated or strengthened as appropriate in order to provide added value to the humanitarian assistance by leveraging different parties’ specific capacities.

© IOM 2021 / International Organization for Migration

Key Principles of Coordination

The Framework recognizes some key principles underlying coordination efforts within diaspora communities, as well as between diasporas and institutional humanitarian actors, including but not limited to:

- Trust among the actors, both horizontally and vertically, and trust building processes
- Adherence to Humanitarian Principles and standards
- Accountability to members, partners, principles and affected communities, with a feedback loop system
- Increased and more streamlined diaspora’s internal coordination (see the model on diaspora internal coordination for more information)6
- Different degrees of coordination and engagement to respect different needs and capacities of actors
- Flexibility to choose how to coordinate along the distinct aspects of the framework, like functions and pathways, which can be applied in different ways and at different phases according to the needs, interest, and capacities of the actor.

6 See https://diaspora.pub/internal-ccc
For more information on the elements of the Framework for Diaspora Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance, please reference the following:

Background information on the project “Developing and Piloting a Framework for Diaspora Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance”: https://diaspora.pub/background

Components of the Framework for Diaspora Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance: https://diaspora.pub/fmwk-design
Interactive Model of the Framework for Diaspora Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance: 
https://diaspora.pub/external-ccc

Interactive Model of Diaspora Internal Coordination to Support Diaspora Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance: 
https://diaspora.pub/internal-ccc