



The Secretary's

GLOBAL DIASPORA FORUM

MOVING FORWARD BY GIVING BACK

Event Report

WASHINGTON, DC | JULY 25-26, 2012

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Overview

On July 25-26, 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton convened the second-annual Global Diaspora Forum at the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development in Washington, D.C. Building on the success of the inaugural Forum in May 2011, this gathering underscored the importance of partnering with diaspora communities on development and diplomacy initiatives and encouraged participants to connect with one another, build global networks, and discuss opportunities for giving back to their countries of origin.

Diaspora leaders from around the globe joined the gathering representing a diverse group of stakeholders: 23 percent came from diaspora organizations, 39 percent from non-profits, 18 percent from private sector, and 11 percent from government. Of the more than 450 participants that attended the event, approximately 26 percent represented countries in Africa, 19 percent from Europe, 13 percent from Asia, 12 percent from Latin America, 11 percent from the Caribbean, and 11 percent from the Middle East.

The Forum kicked-off with an overview of accomplishments of the **International diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA)**, a partnership platform launched by the Secretary of State in 2011. Today, IdEA has over 1500 diaspora community partners and has launched three regional entrepreneurship competitions including the second African Diaspora Marketplace, the Caribbean Idea Marketplace, and the Latin American Idea (La Idea) competition. Building on these successes, the Secretary announced new commitments around this partnership.

They included the official opening of the La Idea business competition which will support small and medium sized entrepreneurs from Mexico and Central America. She also announced other new partnerships for promoting diaspora engagement, including a mentoring platform, a grassroots philanthropy program, a diaspora fellowship program, and a diaspora volunteer corps.

“By tapping into the experiences, the energy, the expertise of diaspora communities, we can reverse the so-called ‘brain drain’ that slows progress in so many countries around the world, and instead offer the benefits of ‘brain gain.’” - Secretary Of State Hillary Clinton, July 25th, 2012

Another major feature of the 2012 Forum was the new Diasporas@ program. Through this new initiative, diaspora community leaders were invited to host local parties to watch livestreamed sessions from the main Forum at the State Department and host discussion groups around topics of interest. Diaspora groups in Minneapolis, Kansas City, and Lynn, Massachusetts coordinated viewing parties and participated in online discussions about diaspora engagement. In addition, over 655 participants joined the convening online, representing groups from the United States, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Canada, Egypt, China, Philippines, Nigeria, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia, among others.

Key Themes

Secretary Clinton opened the 2012 Global Diaspora Forum by stressing the enormous potential that diaspora communities have to promote development in countries of heritage and calling for greater engagement. ([Watch the Secretary's remarks.](#)) Over the course of the two-day conference, participants shared ideas about how government and diaspora communities could work together more effectively. Key themes from the conference focused on the best ways to tap this diaspora potential and implement specific diaspora engagement strategies. Many of these discussions addressed the need to create diaspora-led initiatives that not only successfully target a critical challenge, but that are scalable, efficient, and effective enough to create a sustainable solution to the problem. Over the course of the Forum, participants discussed a variety of successful and unsuccessful initiatives, as well as the challenges they faced and the best practices they discovered for building diaspora-led partnerships. Below is a summary of the most important themes that emerged from these discussions:

1. Partnerships with diaspora is critical to more effective foreign policy

As access to technology expands and the world shrinks, diplomacy and development is increasingly becoming more inclusive. Foreign policy is no longer the sole domain of the diplomatic corps; rather we see diaspora community organizations and members play an important role in promoting stronger, deeper, more effective bilateral collaboration with their countries of heritage. Partnerships that build on existing linkages to nations of origin and draw on the talents, creativity, resources, and networks of diaspora communities are a vital part of the foreign policy process.

2. Diaspora communities are a “diplomatic bridge” during times of transition

Diaspora communities can serve as a “diplomatic bridge,” helping to reaffirm and strengthen diplomatic ties amid political upheaval and change. For example, in the aftermath of the revolution in Tunisia, Tunisian-Americans played an important role in helping to reopen economic ties between the U.S. and Tunisia. Egyptian-Americans also continue to play an important role following the political transition from a dictatorship. Meanwhile, the advice and support of Syrian-Americans was cited by Secretary Clinton as enhancing diplomatic efforts in that country through its current crisis.

3. Leveraging the diversity of the United States as an asset

More than 60 million Americans are first- or second-generation diaspora members. These individuals bring diversity to the American tableau and are an important engine for growth and innovation across every industry and sector. As Secretary Clinton remarked in her keynote address, “...the United States has always benefited from the influx of talent and dynamism that diasporas of all kinds bring to our shores.” By recognizing this and opening our doors to talented immigrants from around the world, these communities help to build lasting relationships with the foreign countries from which they came and bring new ideas to America, mutually benefitting everyone involved.

Plenary session panelists from the “Innovations for Giving Back” panel on the first day agreed that the diversity of our diaspora communities can be an especially important asset if we engage young diaspora members. By encouraging young and ambitious diaspora members to embrace their heritage, we can greatly benefit from their energy, resources and skills.

4. Remittances are important but only part of the picture

Remittances to the developing world, perhaps the most widely recognized form of diaspora engagement, have grown dramatically in recent years and are expected to continue to rise. According to the Hudson Institute, remittances from the United States alone to developing countries in 2010 were \$95.8 billion, three times what the U.S. government spent on official development assistance. There is no doubt that maximizing and channeling the large amount of remittance flows

“We are better suited to partner with diaspora communities in the United States for the purpose of supporting efforts abroad than we have ever been.” – USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, July 26th, 2012

from the United States into developing countries is a very important goal. Remittances have a large and immediate impact on those nations receiving the inflow of capital, representing a significant share of many countries’ gross domestic product. Additionally, new mobile banking technology combined with increased mobile phone penetration in developing countries is making a big impact on the facility of the remittance process.

However, when it comes to promoting sustainable development in emerging economies, remittances alone will not suffice. Receiving households tend to use these money transfers to fill immediate expenses, including food purchases and healthcare expenditures, yet there is great potential to scale up remittances’ impact from the household to the country level. Diaspora communities’ generosity and their passion for their countries of heritage will undoubtedly be among the key ingredients to promoting positive, long-term, and lasting change in some of the world’s most vulnerable countries and regions. Through public-private partnerships, diaspora communities can strategically invest in their countries of heritage, supporting innovative projects that are scalable and sustainable and greatly improve quality of life.

5. Diaspora engagement is key for exploring new markets

Diaspora communities are important catalysts when it comes to exploring new markets due to their expertise of the local economy and culture, as well as their tolerance for risk-taking. In her remarks, Mimi Alemayehou, a top executive of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), explained that diasporans are quickly becoming her agency’s most important clients. With a strong understanding of the risk assessment profile of their countries of heritage and a deep commitment to seeing these places flourish, diaspora investors tend to have a longer-term outlook than the average investor. These interactions bolster U.S. exports while helping civil society groups from around the world improve regulatory systems in their home countries to foster growth. Companies

are turning to their diaspora member employees to identify new market opportunities and understand the cultural preferences of their diaspora communities and countries of heritage.

6. Diasporas drive innovation in Silicon Valley and beyond

More than half of the CEOs of Silicon Valley were born outside of the United States, demonstrating the enormous amount of talent and entrepreneurial energy that immigrants bring to the technology and engineering sectors. It is important that successful entrepreneurs establish an accessible mentoring program to aspiring diaspora entrepreneurs around the world. New technologies will allow developing economies to close the income gap quicker. By maintaining the culture of mentoring and sharing that helped build Silicon Valley, we can keep innovating and sharing the benefits of growth, both here and abroad, in the countries of heritage of our diaspora communities.

7. Diaspora mobilization can save lives

The work of an organized, mobilized diaspora to raise awareness and money in a time of crisis and coordinate relief efforts can save tens of thousands of lives. The American Refugee Committee (ARC) proved this during the famine and malnutrition crisis in Somalia in June 2011. The primary message from the ARC was that often times diaspora communities need help simply realizing their own agency to affect change. Once unified around a goal and a desire to make a difference, the effects of their efforts can be dramatic, even when addressing a crisis thousands of miles away. The Somali diaspora in the U.S. likely helped saved tens of thousands of lives through the ARC's "I am a Star" campaign, providing a platform for everyday diasporans (as well as all other Americans) to contribute in whatever creative and productive way that they could.

Key Announcements

La Idea

The Latin American IDEA Partnership (La Idea) is a business competition platform that fosters collaboration between entrepreneurs in the United States and Latin America with the goal of expanding innovative businesses that will generate employment and economic growth throughout the Americas. La Idea winners will receive working capital grants to support their businesses. La Idea partners will also provide participants with tailored business counseling and mentorship and access to financing. Latin America's increasing affluence represents a unique opportunity for Hispanic entrepreneurs in the United States. Latin America is a region with fast-growing economies and a rapidly expanding middle class. The Hispanic community in the United States numbers at least 50 million and includes highly skilled and educated entrepreneurs who can serve as an important engine of growth and development in the United States and Latin America. La Idea will begin accepting applications starting in summer 2012. Proposals will be evaluated based on their project strategy, development impact, sustainability, scalability, and resource leveraging capability. www.laidea.us

MentorCloud

IdEA is partnering with MentorCloud, an online, peer-to-peer e-mentorship and knowledge-sharing platform. This partnership provides diaspora organizations a powerful means for their members and partners across regions and countries to exchange ideas and expertise. It also allows them to collaborate with each other to promote human resource development and entrepreneurship, in their U.S. communities, and in their countries of origin or heritage. MentorCloud features a secure, online portal where diaspora members can share their professional expertise and success stories, establish mentor/mentee/peer relationships, participate in roundtable discussions and forums, and access personalized content on topics related to social and economic development, by countries and regions of interest. The IdEA e-mentoring platform, powered by MentorCloud, is currently active and is available to all diaspora organizations that become members of IdEA. Diaspora organizations have already, with their members creating profiles and starting to engage with each other. www.mentorcloud.com

GlobalGiving

IdEA is partnering with GlobalGiving to link diaspora communities to an innovative online platform for giving back to their countries of origin or heritage. GlobalGiving works with over 1,100 organizations in 120 countries. At the 2012 Global Diaspora Forum, IdEA and GlobalGiving invited diaspora organizations to the Global Open Challenge. The Challenge is an opportunity for organizations to develop online fundraising strategies, and to expand their networks. During the Global Open Challenge, organizations can earn a long-term position on the GlobalGiving site by raising funds for their own projects. GlobalGiving gave Forum participants a headstart on the Challenge by handing out \$10 GlobalGiving gift cards for them to support the diaspora-led project of their choice. www.globalgiving.org/IdEA

DiasporaCorps

USAID, Accenture LLP, and Cuso International announced the launch of the Diasporas for Development (DfD) initiative as a new Global Development Alliance to support and encourage diaspora volunteerism under the auspices of the *IdEA Fellows Program*. DfD is the first link in IdEA's plan to establish an online Diaspora Volunteering Marketplace. IdEA will seek to provide a platform for connecting diaspora members with volunteer opportunities in their countries of heritage. Interested diaspora members will be able to use this platform to find projects that not only match their length of service and financial needs but also leverage their unique skill sets. www.cusointernational.org

Recommendations Going Forward

At the 2012 Global Diaspora Forum, participants were optimistic about the diaspora-driven initiatives already in place and motivated to do more. IdEA is the main mechanism for engagement between the U.S. government and diaspora community organizations and members. In its first year, IdEA has grown exponentially but now it is time to bring this exciting initiative to scale.

Over the next year, IdEA partners are going to interject even more energy into building the online community to ensure diasporans have an opportunity to connect and create partnerships that promote innovation, social entrepreneurship, philanthropy, volunteerism, and stronger diplomatic relations. Building on this technology and the new partnerships with MentorCloud and GlobalGiving, IdEA will continue to identify new areas for investment and collaboration in the coming year. We urge you to join the online community at www.diasporaidEA.org to stay in touch and learn more about how diaspora can become involved in the foreign policy process.

We will also build this partnership by expanding resources invested in regional business competitions. The State Department and USAID are currently working with bureaus from around the globe to launch new business competitions for small and medium size entrepreneurs and to incentivize risk-taking and innovation on a higher level. In the coming year, we expect to announce at least two more regional business competitions in addition to the recently launched La Idea and CIM marketplaces.

The problems of the 21st century are simply too big and complex for anyone government or entity to solve on its own. That is why IdEA supports the kind of collaborative efforts necessary to solve these big global issues. By getting engaged through IdEA, everyone can contribute to the worthy goal of empowering diaspora communities to achieve sustainable development around the world. The U.S. government's work with diaspora communities has already become an essential pillar of foreign policy, but this only means that efforts of the IdEA partnership are all the more important. As Secretary Clinton remarked, "...we have to send a clear, unmistakable call to action to people everywhere. They really can have a better life; they really can see their children do better than they have done; they really can live in peace, one with the other."