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## **Caribbean Migrants Encouraged to be Active in Region**

### **Diaspora Roundtable Offers Viable Solutions**

**Kingston, Jamaica, 2013/02/25**-Caribbean Governments, international donor agencies, researchers and business people met over two days to share different models on how to engage Caribbean migrants in the Caribbean's economic development; to provide shark-tank type feedback to 12 business ventures involving migrants partnered with local entrepreneurs and to award four of these entrepreneurial projects with USD100,000 grants made available by the Compete Caribbean Program.

During Day One of the "Diaspora Engagement Technical Roundtable, Startup Boot Camp and Caribbean Idea Marketplace (CIM) Awards Ceremony" held in Kingston, Jamaica on February 25 & 26, 2013, participants discussed the importance of the diaspora to the region and possible ways of engagement.

In the Caribbean, outward migration is both a concern and an opportunity for economic development. Caribbean migrants represent 18% of the total Caribbean population, and on average, 35% of university graduates leave the region. However, remittances from these migrants represent more than 6% of many of the countries' GDPs, more than doubling in the last 10 years, and proving to be more stable than other international financial flows.

International agencies, researchers, governments and businesses presented examples from successful experiences in Central America, Africa and Asia that can turn these very large figures into economic development. They discussed three models of engagement: 1) Brain circulation schemes that can attract skilled migrants to return to the region for short, specific, knowledge-transferring assignments for local firms or governments 2) Promoting entrepreneurial ventures with diaspora migrants as partners who can contribute with product and process innovations, as well as with their networks of contacts abroad 3) Stimulating the productive investment of remittances in health, housing and community development in order to provide additional benefits to senders and recipients.

In order to engage Caribbean migrants in these developmental schemes, the urgent need to understand, map and segment the diaspora was expressed, as skills, motivations and demographics differ across migrant groups. At the conference, excellent examples to map the diaspora were presented. One such example is the Guyana Diaspora Project (<http://www.guydproject.iom.int>) which uses the internet to reach out to the Guyanese diaspora and collect information on their demographics, skills, and level of engagement. Other interesting models that can

help locals connect with migrants willing to share their skills and knowledge are Mentorcloud (<http://www.mentorcloud.com>), and Diaspora Corps (<http://idea.usaid.gov/gp/diaspora/diaspora-network-alliance-dna>).

Participants concluded that diaspora projects must take into account migrants' own motivations and expectations as to the level and types of engagement; that governments' convening power gives them a key role in leading this process; that international agencies' co-financing of diaspora directed investment schemes can yield positive economic and social returns and that there is work to be done in the Caribbean to lower the costs of sending remittances while offering remittance recipients additional services. Finally, diaspora associations already active in charity work can contribute in the dialogue and communication with migrants.

The event was a Compete Caribbean Program initiative in collaboration with donors IDB, CIDA and DFID, along with the Caribbean Development Bank, as well as, Scotiabank, Digicel, Infodev and IdEA.