

DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT: CHALLENGES AND OPTIONS FOR GUYANA

Engajamento da diáspora para o desenvolvimento: desafios e opções para Guiana

Comprometimiento de la diáspora para el desarrollo: desafíos y opciones para Guyana

ABSTRACT

Based on data collected from multiple sources and a review of the existent literature on diaspora engagement for development across the world, this paper seeks to unveil potentials and challenges that Guyana (a country of high emigration) may face as it seeks to engage its diaspora for development. In addition to defining the Guyanese diaspora and reviewing interventions currently adopted by the government of Guyana for diaspora engagement, this paper also sheds light on concerns by Guyanese in the diaspora given the current political and socioeconomic conditions in Guyana and the challenges they face as efforts are made to contribute to Guyana's development. Further, a review of interventions implemented by other countries around the world is presented with the focus of widening the options for Guyana.

Keywords: Diaspora, Guyana, development.

RESUMO

Com base em dados coletados de múltiplas fontes e uma revisão da literatura existente sobre o envolvimento da diáspora para o desenvolvimento ao redor do mundo, este artigo busca revelar potenciais e desafios que a Guiana (um país de alta emigração) pode enfrentar, pois busca envolver sua diáspora para o desenvolvimento. Além de definir a diáspora da Guiana e revisar as intervenções atualmente adotadas pelo governo da Guiana para o engajamento da diáspora, este artigo também dá luzes sobre as preocupações dos guianenses na diáspora, atendendo às condições políticas e socioeconômicas atuais na Guiana e aos desafios que enfrentam e os esforços realizados em busca do desenvolvimento. Além disso, uma revisão das intervenções implementadas em outros países ao redor do mundo é apresentada com o objetivo de ampliar as opções para a Guiana.

Palavras-chave: Diáspora, Guiana, desenvolvimento .

RESUMEN

Con base en datos recolectados de múltiples fuentes y una revisión de la literatura existente sobre la implicación de la diáspora para el desarrollo alrededor del mundo, este artículo busca revelar potenciales y desafíos que la Guyana (un país de alta emigración) puede enfrentar, pues busca involucrar su diáspora hacia el desarrollo. Además de definir la diáspora de Guyana y revisar las intervenciones actualmente adoptadas por el gobierno de Guyana para el aprovechamiento de la diáspora, este artículo también da luzes sobre las preocupaciones de los guianenses en la diáspora, atendiendo a las condiciones políticas y socioeconómicas actuales en Guyana, a los desafíos que enfrentan y los esfuerzos realizados en busca del desarrollo. Además, una revisión de las intervenciones implementadas en otros países alrededor del mundo se presenta con el objetivo de ampliar las opciones para Guyana.

Palabras clave: Diáspora, Guyana, desarrollo.

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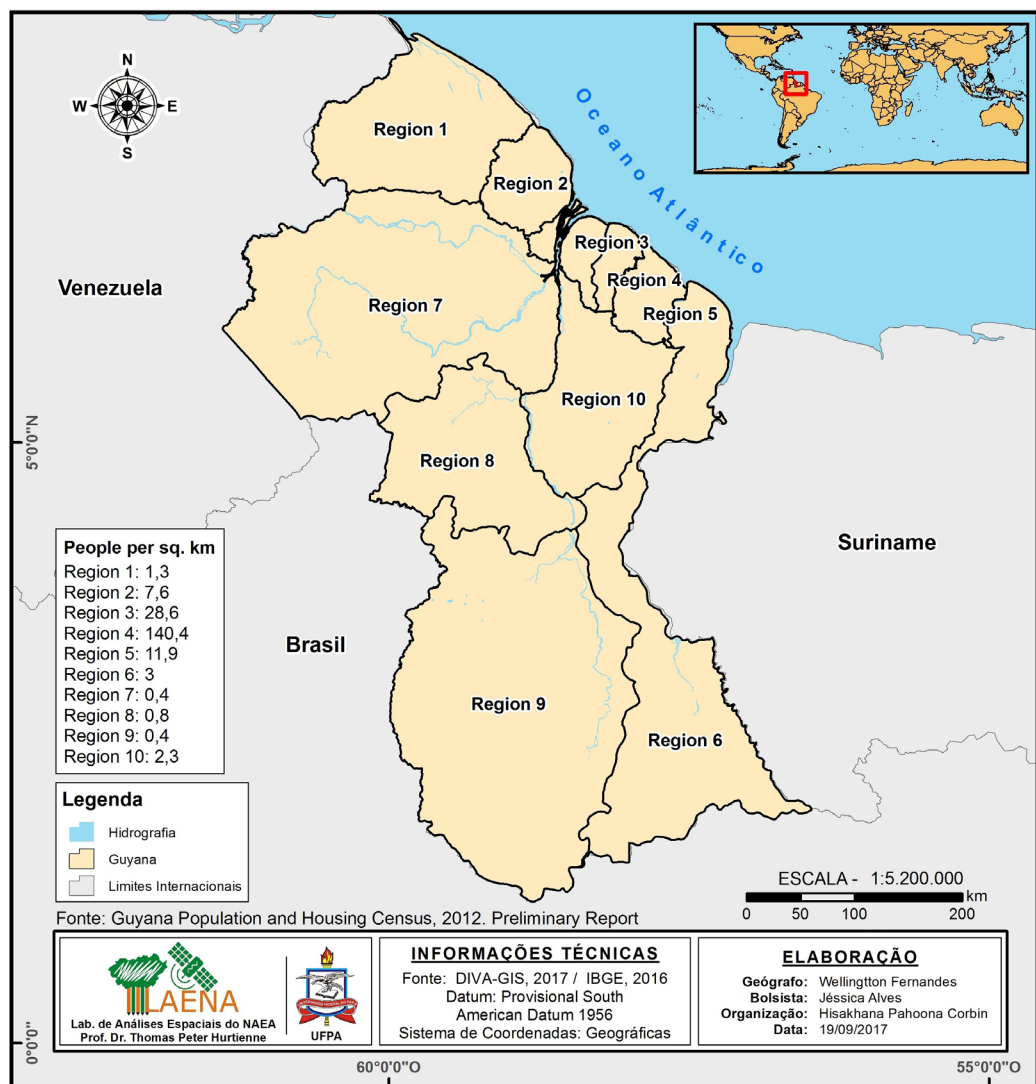
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INTRODUCTION

Guyana, formerly known as British Guiana, is located in northern South America between Venezuela, Brazil, Suriname and the Atlantic Ocean. It was first colonized by the Dutch in the seventeenth century, and then for a short time by the French in the eighteenth century, and finally by the British, who bought the territory of the Dutch in 1814. Guyana is an independent country since 1966, when British Guiana was declared the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. According

to the latest census (2012), Guyana’s land mass totals 214,999, km2 with a population of 747,884. The country is divided into 10 administrative regions (Figure 1). Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 representing the interior of the country and corresponding to approximately 75% of the national territory while accounting for only 10.9% of the total population. The rest, that is, 25% of the country’s territory represents coastal regions where the commercial activities are concentrated and houses approximately 89,1% of the population (Corbin and Aragón, 2015, p. 68) .

FIGURE 1: Administrative Regions and Demographic Density (2012)



Source: Guyana Bureau of Statistics (GBS), 2005, p. 23 e GBS, 2017.

In spite of the reality that over sixty per cent (60.8%) of Guyana's population has been lost due to migration, migration and diaspora engagement have not received much attention from the Government of Guyana until the launching of the Guyana Diaspora Project in 2013. The absence of a migration policy that seeks to unlock the development potentials of migration is a further indication, that, either policy and decision makers regard migration and remittances as irrelevant or there are no case studies to provide information that would help in the formulation of a well-defined policy.

In response to recent efforts by the government of Guyana to engage the diaspora for development, this paper seeks to underscore important challenges and options for Guyana's economy. Data was gathered from primary and secondary sources to offer a comprehensive understanding of the topic under study. The unavailability of recent data, in some cases, was one of the major limitations. However, an exploration of the literature for other developing countries with similar migratory outlook and diaspora engagement have led to the advancement of solid options that can be considered by the political administration in its endeavor to foster diaspora engagement for development.

DEFINING THE GUYANESE DIASPORA

In the light of the controversy in defining and estimating the size of a diaspora based on differences in country and region, specific definitions and other factors such as place of birth, time of emigration, citizenship, and questions of identity (Ionescu, 2006), the World Bank simply defines migrants as "people born in another country" (World Bank, 2011, p. 149). The use of this definition would only capture first generation migrants and

would exclude children and grandchildren who possibly retain important connections with the countries of origin of first generation migrants. Alternatively, the African Union (2005) defines diaspora as consisting of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the said Union. Certainly, this definition focuses more on ethnicity than on nationality and place of birth among other requirements that are demanded for Guyanese citizenship.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Guyana (2012), the Constitution and laws of Guyana provide for the acquisition of Guyanese citizenship by four means: (1) Birth, (2) decent, (3) naturalization and (4) registration, as explained below:

Birth: A person is a Guyanese citizen if he/she is born in Guyana. Such person is eligible for a Republic of Guyana passport and all other privileges given to any Guyanese.

Decent: A person born outside of Guyana is a citizen of Guyana at the date of his birth if at that date his father or his mother is a citizen of Guyana. Such persons are not required to meet residency requirements; the birth must be registered by the parents as an overseas birth registration upon which the parents can apply for a Republic of Guyana passport for the child.

Naturalization: A person is eligible for Guyanese citizenship by naturalization and must show that he is ordinarily resident in Guyana and has been so resident throughout the period of five years immediately preceding his application, that he is of good character and that he intends to reside in Guyana. On approval, the person will be granted a Certificate of Naturalization and will have to take the oath of allegiance to Guyana.

Registration: A person who marries a Guyanese citizen is also eligible to apply to be registered as a Guyanese citizen having met all the legal requirements i.e. having legally entered the country and having been legally in Guyana. Unlike persons applying for naturalization who must fulfill a specific number of years of residency, there



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is no such requirement in this case.

Persons can also apply to be registered as Guyanese citizens if they are citizens of a Commonwealth country as stated in the Constitution of Guyana or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland. The person must show that he has been ordinarily resident in Guyana or has been in the service of the Government of Guyana or has had partly such residence and partly such service, throughout the period of five years ending with

the date of his application (Guyana. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015).

Therefore, it could be expected that the Guyanese diaspora consists of persons of the above mentioned categories of legal citizenship that are currently living in a foreign country. World Bank estimates show that there are 462,636 Guyanese living abroad (Table 1).

TABLE 1: Guyanese in the Diaspora (2013)

Host Countries	Guyanese Immigrants	Percent
United States	281,371	60.8
Canada	101,004	22.0
United Kingdom	21,073	4.5
Suriname	11,530	2.5
Other	47,658	10.2
TOTAL	462,636	100.0

Source: World Bank, 2016.

In addition to the absence of more recent data, these statistics reflect first generation emigrants only as of 2013. Therefore, as data that is more recent becomes available an even larger Guyanese diaspora could be expected if their offspring are to be included in the respective total of each country.

GUYANESE DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS

The proliferation of diaspora organizations with focus on education, health and socio-cultural development may positively indicate the diaspora' commitment to return more than monetary remittances to their country of origin. It also means that migrants intend to make a wider contribution towards the development of their country rather than their family members left behind. This is a clear example of the channeling of col-

lective remittances for specific uses by groups or people in the migrants' hometown. While advocating greater coordination among Guyanese diaspora organizations to better unlock their potentials of remittances they remit to Guyana, Scott (2001) calls for an institutionalist approach for poverty reduction. Like Orozco (2003) and Peters (2009), Scott (2001) has found that diaspora institutions are making a positive contribution principally in the areas of health and education in some communities in Guyana.

With more than 60% of Guyanese living abroad, diaspora engagement can be a powerful tool for contributing to the development of hometown communities and the country as a whole. In spite of this potential, few institutional arrangements have been put in place to better engage the diaspora or to unlock their potentials as an alternative for accelerating development. While the necessary formal institu-

tions between the Guyanese government, diaspora organism and civil society seem lacking, many individuals sharing a similar background have established a number of organizations which seek to make a contribution to Guyana's development principally in the areas of health and education. Although there is currently no policy for using diaspora remittances or engaging the diaspora for accelerating socio-economic development in Guyana, members of the Guyanese diaspora form a number of groups and associations for contributing towards development. While literature reviewed indicates the presence of in excess of

three-hundred diaspora organizations principally in the USA, Canada and the U.K, their current existence remain uncertain or the contact information provided ten years ago, might have changed. A new listing of diaspora organizations located in Canada was secured through a request made to the Guyana Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015, which shows that there are currently more than one hundred organizations formed by Guyanese in the diaspora, and registered at Guyanese Consulates abroad and the Diaspora Unit of the Guyana Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Table 2).

TABLE 2: Diaspora Organizations Registered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2015)

Countries	Number of Diaspora Organizations	Percentage
United States of America	31	27.6
United Kingdom	58	51.8
Canada	13	11.6
Antigua and Barbuda	1	0.9
Brazil	1	0.9
Bahamas	2	1.8
Barbados	1	0.9
Grenada	1	0.9
Suriname	1	0.9
St. Lucia	1	0.9
Trinidad and Tobago	1	0.9
Jamaica	1	0.9
TOTAL	112	100.0

Source: Guyana Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015.

While a few are politically based, the majority of these organizations contribute to the education sector. Many public schools benefit from gifts of textbooks, laboratory equipment and other educational materials from alumni associations abroad. In addition to aid from these organizations, individual Guyanese in the diaspora also contribute to knowledge transfer for developments in human capital. This is yet another manner in which

Guyanese in the diaspora contribute toward Guyana's development in the education sector. In most cases, connections are established and/or maintained with institutions where Guyanese have studied or worked. Those linkages allow home institutions such as the University of Guyana and Cyril Potter College of Education to access highly trained Guyanese in the diaspora for human capital developments (Box 1).



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BOX 1: Knowledge transfer by the Guyanese in the diaspora

Training Course for Mathematics Teachers in Guyana

The Ministry of Education recently hosted a workshop for Mathematics teachers aimed at strengthening their skills.

A Government Information Agency (GINA) press release said the workshop was based on a non-graduate certificate in Mathematics that was developed by the National Centre for Education Resource Development. Sixteen teachers from across the country participated in the three-day workshop.

GINA said the exercise was led by Dr. Pier Junor-Clarke, Assistant Professor and coordinator of a teacher education programme at Georgia State University in the US. Junor-Clarke said it is of primary importance that teachers have a strong subject content knowledge. "What we noticed, even abroad is that sometimes teachers would have the attitude of doing mathematics, that is, taking on the exams and getting very high scores but, when it comes to teaching the mathematics that is problematic," she said.

In order to address this issue, Junor Clarke introduced the 'reflective teaching model' which focuses on teachers not only reflecting on students' achievements but on the quality of their teaching based on the knowledge of the subject. Junor Clarke said too the workshop did some reflective thinking based on the needs of the local mathematics syllabus.

Junor Clarke said based on the teachers' response she was encouraged to continue the workshop and as such one has been planned for next year.

According to GINA, until then the documents used during the programme and other materials will be provided to all 279 teachers who applied to undergo the training.

Also, contact with the current group of participants will be maintained, "this is important work because mathematics, science and technology are very important skills, a nation without this is in jeopardy," she said.

Source: *Stabroek News*, May 28, 2008.

The migration of Guyanese qualified in mathematics, other disciplines of natural science, health and technology may indeed be threatening to the country's economy especially if connections are not established to engage the diaspora in its development. An interview with Professor Junor Clarke is considered important for this paper as it points out some successes and challenges encountered as Guyanese in the diaspora seek to contribute to human capital formation in the wake of the exodus of human resources:

- Researcher: What is the Name of your foreign institution?
- Professor Junor Clarke: The name of my current institution is Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia in the United States of America.

- Researcher: For how many years have you migrated from Guyana?
- Professor Junor Clarke: I migrated from Guyana thirty-two years ago.

- Researcher: What qualification had you acquired before migrating?
- Professor Junor Clarke: I had acquired a Bachelor of Science degree, Mathematics Major and Physics Minor, from the University of Guyana before migrating to the United States of America.

- Researcher: What qualification have you obtained after migrating?
- Professor Junor Clarke: After migrating, I pursued a M.A – Mathematics Education at City College of the City University of New York, in the United States and a Ph.D. - Mathe-

matics Education at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education of the University of Toronto in Canada.

- Researcher: To which diaspora organization do you belong?

- Professor Junor Clarke: I am a member of the West Demerara Secondary School Association.

- Researcher: With which Guyanese institution do/did you collaborate for human capital formation?

- Professor Junor Clarke: I have collaborated with the University of Guyana; Guyana National Centre for Education Research and Development [NCERD] (Guyana); Cyril Potter College of Education [CPCE] (Guyana).

- Researcher: For how long have you been collaborating with the institution(s) listed above?

- Professor Junor-Clarke: I have been collaborating with these institutions from time to time since 2004.

- Researcher: What has led you to collaborate with Guyanese institutions for human capital formation?

- Professor Junor Clarke: My primary reason for wanting to collaborate is to share knowledge and expertise with the Guyanese community.

- Researcher: What are/were some of the successes?

- Professor Junor Clarke: I have successfully conducted two (2) workshops at NCERD and CPCE and served as an official external evaluator for seven (7) Master's theses and an unofficial evaluator of one (1) undergraduate thesis.

- Researcher: What are/were the most important challenges faced?

- Professor Junor Clarke: The Guyanese institutions are not willing enough to take full advantage of what I have to offer. I think that may change in the near future because I am not giving up.

- Researcher: As an educator, how do you or would you use information technology to its fullest potential for human capital formation in Guyana and other developing countries?

- Professor Junor Clarke: Information technology (IT) does have great opportunities for communication and promoting education in different ways. It offers avenues to make meaningful connections and educational advances but many people are not taking advantage of these opportunities. Cell phones and TVs are the major tools for local communication in Guyana. Let us hope for better soon. I am going to Guyana in a few months and hope to have some serious discussions with some colleagues at the University of Guyana. We could take advantage of teaching and learning online (Corbin, 2012. Information updated by respondent in July, 2017).

Based on this interview, it becomes clear that migration allows opportunities for human capital formation and the return of talents to countries of origin. According to the Head of the Diaspora Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015, Guyanese in the diaspora are willing to contribute towards the development of Guyana through the following: (1) investing, (2) trading, (3) providing consultancies, (4) transfer of knowledge and skills through returning work attachments for short periods and (5) offering charitable work. If these are to be operationalized, then local institutions must be institutionally prepared to tap diaspora resources and or services.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION FOR DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

In spite of the fact that remittances have exceeded Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) after the New Millennium (Figure 2), migration and diaspora engagement have not been given much, if any, previous formal attention in the country's policy and planning frameworks for development until the launching of the Guyana Diaspora Project in 2013 by the



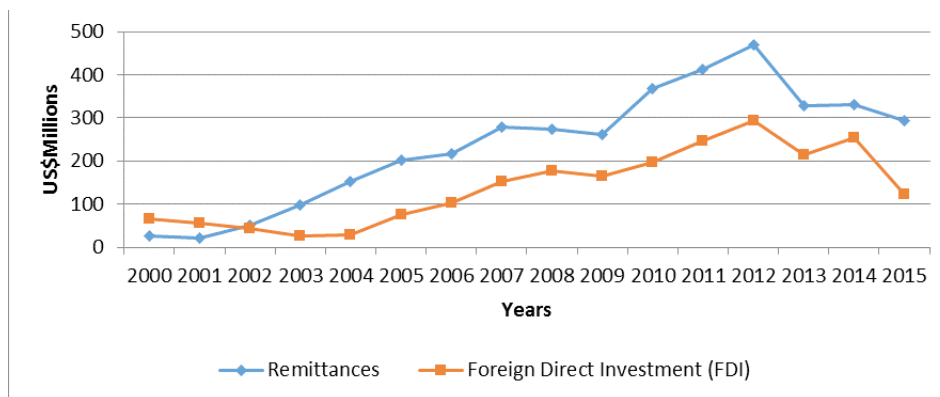
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Government of Guyana in collaboration with the Guyana International Organi-

zation for Migration (IOM) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013).

FIGURE 2: Official Monetary Flows to Guyana (2000-2015)



Sources: World Bank (2017); Unctad (2017).

In an effort to determine the size of the Guyanese diaspora, the Government of Guyana, in 2013, launched the Guyana Diaspora Project, which has the following objectives:

The overall objective of the GUYD project is to contribute to the economic development of Guyana through the support and engagement of the Guyanese diaspora. The information obtained from the GUYD Project will act as an important indicator as to what skills and resources exist in the Diaspora and the interest of the Diaspora, which will serve as important factors guiding Government policy to engage the Diaspora (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013).

More specifically, the Project, of two-year duration, seeks to:

1. promote and strengthen relations between the Government of Guyana and the Guyanese Diaspora;
2. promote a better understanding of Guyana's development goals and priority areas of focus within Diaspora communities;
3. engage the Guyanese Diaspora by encouraging them to contribute towards Guyana's national development;
4. facilitate the formal establishment of a structured mechanism to engage the Guyanese Diaspora;

5. create and manage a database which will profile the Guyanese Diaspora in the different countries and regions;

6. act as a communication bridge between the Government of Guyana and the Guyanese Diaspora;

7. create a One-Stop-Shop for overseas Guyanese who may wish to engage in investment, trade, doing business with Guyana, philanthropy or make contributions to Guyanese communities" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013).

By 2011, 93% of Guyana's population with higher education has been lost due to migration mainly to developed countries (World Bank, 2016). Consequently, diaspora engagement has also been an integral aspect of the 2015 Political Campaign by Major Opposition Parties (Box 2).

BOX 2: A Call for Return Migration

Granger calls on NY Diaspora to return home

Speaking to hundreds of Guyanese last night at the Woodbine Ballroom in Brooklyn, New York, the APNU+AFC alliance today said that Presidential Candidate Brigadier David Granger called on Guyanese in the Diaspora to return home and invest in Guyana.

The Coalition leader said “I am here (in New York) to ask you to invest in change....Guyana is open for Business.” Granger said, according to a statement from the alliance, that under an APNU+AFC administration Guyanese living in the Diaspora would be encouraged to participate in the development of Guyana. “We need you, we need your skills and your expertise... We need teachers, technicians, engineers”, he told the event.

Granger added, “we have lost a lot of our educated professionals through migration and we believe that one of the most important elements of our (APNU+AFC) new policy, would be to strengthen education, Guyana will be an education nation. We will place great emphasis on training Scientists, Technicians, Engineers and Mathematicians... [...] education is the key to our development.” [...]

The release said that he recounted the many opportunities for National Unity that the two major political parties in Guyana (the People’s National Congress and the People’s Progressive Party) had squandered and to loud applause the APNU+AFC Prime Ministerial Candidate said; “if it was right then, it is right now and on May 11th the APNU+AFC will win and we will unite Guyana.”

The release said that the event which was billed as a fund-raising reception was organized by the Guyana American Patriotic Forum, a grouping of political and civil society organisations in the Tri-State area.

Today, the APNU+AFC campaign goes to New Jersey.

Source: Stabroek News, March 21, 2015.

Quite different from most articles published in the Guyanese Press, this article has gotten much attention and one hundred and eighty-three online responses, which could be considered by Policy Makers. One such response is as follows:

Sahm: Guyana has to change from within... We can't expect some external force to come and make change... Create the conditions and then maybe you can ask the educated and skilled to return and invest in the development of Guyana. How do you expect pple [people] to return in an unsafe environment, lawlessness, weak police force, corruption, etc. Reasons why the skilled and educated left. The only ones remaining and returning to Guyana are the Criminals. (Italics added by this authors) (Stabroek News, March 21, 2015).

With the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) losing the General Election to the APNU (A Partnership for Na-

tional Unity) & AFC (Alliance for Change) coalition government, after 23 years in Government, the new Political Administration may be able to attract a greater participation among Guyanese in the diaspora if appropriate interventions are taken. However, the absence of a migration policy that seeks to, among other things, unlock the development potentials of migration is a further indication that either policy or decision makers regard migration and remittances as irrelevant or the absence of in-depth case studies the formulation of well-defined policies.

In spite of these weaknesses, the previous government’s land policy for providing the diaspora access to land is considered a positive factor for the development of the housing sector in general. The fact that many Guyanese live in houses belonging to



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family members or relatives overseas indicates a well-defined housing policy and an improvement in the living standards of Guyanese who depend on these overseas relatives. The opportunity cost of remitting money for rent is therefore the cost of building/purchasing homes to share with family members back in Guyana. While developments in the real estate industry is common in the literature reviewed, this study makes an important contribution to the existing literature by showing that, in the Guyanese context, the diaspora seeks to provide shelter for family members and, simultaneously, prioritize housing security in case of return migration rather than a focus on investments in real estate. This is yet another commonly overlooked contribution that diasporas make for improving the wellbeing of family members left behind.

The government's re-migrant programme that allows Guyanese tax exemptions on a number of items for domestic use is a positive effort to encourage return migration. However, the existing literature shows that governments around the world have been taking many other innovative approaches in diaspora engagement for development.

Although these current benefits exist, few Guyanese seem inclined to return permanently to Guyana. Given the country's long history of migration and the fact that 462,636 Guyanese currently reside outside Guyana, the current rate of return, based on re-migrant applications approved from 2004-2011, is extremely low (Table 3).

However, the low statistics of return migration and the second inter-census population decline in between 2002-2012 could be a signal that Guyana continues to be economically unattractive and Guyanese are forced to emigrate in search of greener pastures during their productive years. Paradoxically, Guyana continues to be economically attractive to immi-

TABLE 3: Re-migrant applications approved (2004-2011)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Re-migrants</i>
2004	152
2005	131
2006	163
2007	188
2008	190
2009	267
2010	274
2011	102*
Total	1467

*As of August 7, 2011.

Source: Guyana Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011).

grants, who have been granted employment, during the previous Political Administration which lasted from 1992-May 2015. With the objective of valuing local labour, Minister of Citizenship Winston Felix, of the current Political Administration, the Guyana Press states:

Concerned at the number of employment visas being granted to foreign nationals, Minister of Citizenship Winston Felix yesterday said the government will be seeking to ensure "fair play," particularly since the labour force for some of the jobs can be sourced by citizens.

"Under the previous administration, they had no regards for Guyanese labour... they build a Marriott with labourers from abroad... our people should not be left to look on at others who come in and enjoy the same jobs that they can perform," Felix said during his contribution to the budget debate last evening. [...] (Stabroek News, August 18, 2015).

Perhaps, such an intervention may have a check on emigration among some classes of workers. However, in general terms, improvements in salaries and working conditions locally, ensuring political democracy, and offering more incentives for investment, (institutional) collaboration, international hiring for home based assignments and voluntarism may be a

number of unexplored alternatives for encouraging increases in the flows of the various types of remittances and human capital sourcing and brain circulation from Guyanese in the diaspora.

Guyanese in the diaspora are also allowed the opportunity to purchase lands for residential purposes. In an effort to reduce the transaction cost, the Central Housing and Planning Department, allows re-migrants and Guyanese in the diaspora to make applications online for house lots. Regarding the criteria for eligibility, the applicant must: (1) be Guyanese, (2) be 21 years and (3) not be the owner of any property in Guyana (Central Housing and Planning Authority, 2011). Depending on its size land price varies between US\$20,000 – 35,000 (Central Housing and Planning Authority, 2011). Making lands available to Guyanese in the diaspora could lead to improvements in housing across Guyana, thus reversing the housing situation that was described as desperate after the 1980s when economic recession had a devastating effect on the working class propelling many to squat on private and public lands, particularly in urban areas.

The government's policy that permits the flows of nonmonetary goods to households could have positive and negative consequences on poverty alleviation. On the positive side, very low import taxes allow poorer households cheaper access to basic necessities from abroad, thus, contributing positively to food security. This study has also shown that receiving households are better able to allocate limited finances to other uses, which, also has a positive impact on food security. Other areas to which limited finances can be used include health and education. The propensities to save and invest, though minimal at the moment, could further increase. A healthy population could have far-reaching effects for increasing the productivity of the labour force, thus accelerating

economic growth and development as has occurred in many industrialized countries in the past. The negative effect of this policy is that it could create a situation of dependency among recipient households thus, giving rise to a counter effect on the goals of the Jagdeo Initiative, which aimed at:

[...] removing constraints to the development of agriculture in the Caribbean. It builds upon past regional efforts to develop a Common Agricultural Policy, CAP and identifies ten key binding constraints faced by the sector. ... [...] In 2002 President Jagdeo proposed to a Caribbean Heads of Government Conference that the Region should build on its past efforts to develop a Common Agricultural Policy. He stressed that in the changed global environment, the "agricultural sector was neither providing for food security nor earning the foreign exchange to cover the Caribbean's growing food import bill (Private Sector Commission, 2007, p. 1),

among other things, to increase food production and the productive capacity of the economy in general. With 65.9% females in the female working age population being outside the labour force, and the fact that women are the major recipients of remittances could be an indication that this dependency is already a chronic problem. Although, this large percentage of people outside the labour force may also be attributed to other socioeconomic, political and cultural factors within the relatively young Co-operative Republic, this import policy could certainly exacerbate the problem rather than attempting to increase the productivity of labour and the productive capacity of the economy on the long run.

The formation of human capital that accrue from collaborations by Guyanese educators in the diaspora and the existence of diaspora organizations could be very beneficial to development through empowerment and training. Unfortunately, there is no known policy or plan to better engage the diaspora to offer online training (e-learning), which is occurring in

other countries such as Ghana for university students and employees in the public and even private sector institutions to foster knowledge diffusion in strategic areas such as medicine, science, technology and innovation technology (Ndioro et al, 2011). With Guyana having specialists from at least seventy-seven (77) areas of specializations in the diaspora, this e-learning should be given priority considering the invaluable experience that the diaspora stands to gain from working in their fields in developed and emerging countries. The initiation of a diaspora unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a positive step of engaging the diaspora for development. However, a diaspora unit, without a well-defined and comprehensive policy to be implemented, may not be able to achieve a multiplier effect in different sectors of the economy.

CHALLENGES AND OPTIONS FOR GUYANA

The economic impacts of losing 93% of Guyanese with higher education may be devastating if at least diaspora engagement programs are not implemented with urgency to benefit strategic sectors of the economy. Losing 60.8% of the country's total population is also threatening to Guyana's economy. Due to a second inter-census population decline between 2002-2012, an increase in the purchasing power (consumption) from population growth could be restricted, according to the view maintained by the Keynesian economists which states that if population growth slows, then aggregate demand could decrease as in the case of Guyana.

Inflows of remittances from the Guyanese diaspora are important to Guyana's economy. Relative to GDP, Guyana is one of the LAC countries that is most dependent on remittances and diaspora resources in general. However,

the absence of a national migration policy could be a major impediment if Guyana were to become serious about harnessing diaspora remittances for the development of its economy.

With women being the major recipients of diaspora remittances, whether they are household heads or not, signals that issue of gender equality must be at the center of policies on migration and diaspora remittances for development (Corbin, 2012). This is of great significance to Guyana given the fact that 65.5% of women of the working age (15 years and over) are outside the labour force and an additional 15.1% of women in the female labour force are unemployed (Guyana Bureau of Statistics, 2005). With households and women being the major beneficiaries of remittances, a significant focus on them has been important in revealing the manner in which disposable income at the household level is diversified and allocated among competing choices for consumption, savings and investment. A lack of policy arrangements in the financial sector that allow recipients to use remittances as a source of income for opening bank accounts and securing loans for micro investment certainly limit households' investment portfolios.

Households benefit directly from flows to their households and indirectly from collective remittances transferred to institutions such as to schools, churches, universities and hospitals. Corbin (2012) confirms collective remittances remitted by individuals or diaspora organizations to institutions such as community groups, religious organizations, youth groups and farmers' associations could contribute significantly to development within communities. If this path is to be taken then greater transparency and political and ethnic cohesion would be necessary. Even if the process is to be guided by the local government body, beneficiaries

must be allowed to participate at the planning, implementation and monitoring phases of all projects for community development. Planning for local development must not be isolated from planning for national and regional development. Therefore, a comprehensive planning framework for integrating migration and remittances across sectors of the economy and at the national, regional and local (community) levels is critical if Guyana were to become serious about using diaspora remittances as an alternative source of overseas financing for socioeconomic development.

Given the state of dependency by some recipients of remittances, policies, plans and projects for harnessing diaspora remittances for development may bring new challenges to the Guyanese economy. From an economic perspective, a significant dependence on remittances may render the Guyanese economy highly vulnerable to shocks to the economies in OECD countries which are the main sources of remittance flows to Guyana. From a cultural perspective, an over dependence on the diaspora and the various type of remittances could cause local households and communities to become dependent on a foreign cultural system that could be reflected by changes in technical knowledge, customs, beliefs, mental values, symbols, behavior and even economic systems. Therefore, diaspora engagement policies must be carefully elaborated and implemented to avoid the pitfall of stripping locals of their cultural identity, where their ability to self-determination could become restricted. If precautions are not taken their future values, meanings, aspirations and projects could end up being shaped entirely by the diaspora and policy makers, who may feel that locals are powerless with regard to self-development and traditional cultures could be seen as stagnant and as obstacles to Guyanese economy and development.

An appeal by politicians for return migration may not be achieved in the medium term given the country's history of political discrimination and ethnic friction, which were listed among the main causes for the exodus of qualified Guyanese. However, this does not mean that efforts should not be made to engage the diaspora. It is frequently argued that on the long-term, migration yields benefits beyond monetary remittances to countries of origin and destination (Plaza and Ratha, 2011). Such benefits could include nonmonetary remittances, formation of human capital, hometown associations, networking in the diaspora, and brain circulation, which could give rise to accelerated development of countries of origin once appropriate intuitional arrangements are enacted (Terry and Wilson, 2005; Stubbs and Reyes, 2004; Orozco, 2004; Orozco, 2000).

Many academics and international financial institutions including the World Bank, have been calling on governments to recognize these untapped sources of wealth for socioeconomic development of both countries of origin and destination for migrants. As a consequence, governments in developed and developing countries are increasingly instituting a number of development policies that seek to tap the development potentials of diaspora remittances, which include: (1) monetary remittance, (2) non-monetary remittance, (3) knowledge transfers, (3) information and human, financial and technological capital and technology for investment, in destination and origin countries (Plaza and Ratha, 2011). While some governments focus on their diaspora, in foreign countries, some advocates on diaspora and development are encouraging governments to engage both immigrants and emigrants as agents of development of a given country (Plaza and Ratha, 2011).

Given the increasing presence of Brazilians, Surinamese and other im-

migrants in Guyana, policy arrangements to engage them as agents for development are needed. The co-development programme instituted by the French government in collaboration with the Senegalese government is one such innovative approach for diaspora to contribute towards the development of their countries of origin, while assimilating in host countries (Bräutigam, 2010). The Senegalese government has also created an Internet Portal, which further allowed the International Organization for Migration to run a census project on Senegalese living abroad in order to categorize migrants according to their professions.

A similar internet portal exists in the case of Guyana, but the focus is rather different. The University of Guyana has created this portal which seeks to track its graduates across the world (University of Guyana, 2011). Unfortunately, there is no known portal for mapping low-skilled Guyanese emigrants or Guyanese migrants who received all of their education in foreign countries. Such portals should feed into the database housed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for planning and policy formulation.

The formation of diaspora organization or hometown associations is yet another way in which migrants collectively mobilize monetary and nonmonetary remittances for development of their countries of origin (Orozco, 2003). In studying African diaspora associations in Denmark, Trans and Vammen (2011) found that capacity building and funding are necessary to increase the effectiveness of these African associations. One criticism nevertheless is that there is a significant focus on development of migrants' hometowns rather than on the country at large (Trans and Vammen, 2011).

In the case of some African countries, government agencies and private institutions are increasingly taking full advantage of fully engaging their diasporas in a number of ways. The embas-

sies of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda in London and Washington, D.C, support business trade forums to foster international trade and foreign direct investments (Crush, 2011). Regarding international trade and migration of Africans to OECD countries, Dolman (2008) found that countries tend to trade more with countries from which they have received immigrants. The same can be said of Guyana. In the case of Guyana-Brazil trade, Corbin (2007) observed a rapid increase in small scale Brazilian traders in response to the increasing volume of Brazilian migration and the diaspora demand for goods and services of Brazilian origin. In 2009, the World Trade Organization (WTO) forecasted that trade ties between Guyana and Brazil are expected to improve upon the upgrading of an all-weather road link from the mining town of Linden to Lethem which borders the Brazilian State of Roraima. Together, the Linden-Lethem road link, the Takutu Bridge, the Berbice River Bridge, and the Canawaima Ferry, which connects Guyana and Suriname, substantially improve Guyana's transport infrastructure and interconnectivity with its mainland neighbours. They, thereby, further strengthen its continental integration process, and open new economic opportunities as people, investment capital, and technology continue to move across geopolitical borders. In 2015, the newly elected President reinforced this during his speech on July 17, 2015 at the MERCOSUR Summit held in Brasilia:

The delegation of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana is delighted to be in Brasilia today. [...] My presence here today is very special for me as it marks my first official engagement with the region since assuming the Presidency of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana just eight weeks ago. [...] Guyana believes in integration. We are committed to the infrastructural integration of the continent. We are negotiating for a road access between Guyana and Brazil through a bridge link which has already been built. The con-

struction of a highway will intensify trade and investments with Brazil and the other countries of the South. We are also examining the feasibility of a bridge between Guyana and Suriname to the East. [...] Guyana's strategic geographic location on the northern shoulder of the continent has the potential to allow easier and cheaper access to the larger markets of the Americas, Africa and the Caribbean. Guyana is a natural gateway to these larger markets. We are an asset to MERCOSUR. We will foster the development of our country and this continent. The linking of our countries through roads, bridges, rail and other forms of air, land and sea communication will improve trade between the Caribbean and the continent. International trade is indispensable to economic integration and to MERCOSUR. [...] (Guyana Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015).

In spite of these calls for continental integration and trade, cross-border migration is accelerating and there is no policy consideration for migration management and engaging the diaspora to accelerate trade and socio-economic development that could be beneficial to both host and destination countries. In the case of Africa, Leblang (2011) argues that African migrant networks between migrant communities in the investing country and the migrant's country of origin, do facilitate cross-border investment by decreasing informational asymmetries as migrants have specific information about language, customs, culture, and regulations in potential markets, thus minimizing the high cost for acquiring quality information for cross-border investment.

In their study on return migration and small enterprise development in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, Guibert and Nordman (2011), state that the propensity to invest is contingent upon a number of factors including the socio-demographic profile of their migrants at home and abroad, as well as the prevailing economic climate, poor infrastructure, red taping, a lack of transparency, and unstable regulations in countries of origin – that re-

turn migrants face upon their return. Considering the absence of reliable datasets and a comprehensive understanding of the socioeconomic and demographic profiles of returnees they recommend further research to better understand the development impacts resulting from return migration and small enterprise establishments.

In the case of Africa, the governments of several countries including in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda and Rwanda have been embarking on a number of pro-diaspora development policies in-order to engage diaspora communities as partners in development projects (Plaza and Ratha, 2011).

Several scholars have written on the successes of diaspora-fed development in India and China (Bhargava and Sharma, 2008). Ketkar and Ratha (2011) reinforced the importance of diaspora bonds, which have been used as a cheap source of external financing for the development of Israel and India. They further recommend a similar model for Haiti considering the high cost of reconstruction since its last massive environmental disaster. However, poor governance and a lack of trust in the Haitian government may well undermine the government's efforts to tap into this source of external financial assistance for development.

According to the Mexican Secretaría del Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL) (2005), Municipal Governments of Mexico have recognized and are engaging its diaspora as an agent for social and economic development of micro-regions facing varying levels of marginalization. The programme, Programa Iniciativa Ciudadana, falls within the National Development Plan 2001-2006 and National Policy for Social Development 2001-2006. Collaboration, between 2002-2004, among the various government institutions, local NGOs and their connections with the diaspora and local beneficiaries have lead to identification of local development needs and implementation of

projects in a numbers of priority areas including rural development, education, health, and restoration of historic and cultural sites (Sedesol, 2005). Until 2004, greater transparency was needed from municipal government agencies for greater successes (Sedesol, 2005).

From the literature reviewed, there seems to be very little attention given to diaspora engagements from the perspectives of: (1) host countries and, (2) regional integration. However, there have been many international efforts across regions, including Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean to facilitate the mobility of people and goods in response to globalization, but until today, in the Guyanese context, little attention is given to engaging the various groups of immigrants to mobilize their monetary and nonmonetary remittances as part of either a national or regional strategy for socioeconomic development. For the region of Latin America, Terry and Wilson (2005) have stressed the importance of an institutionalist approach to increase the flow of remittances for development of the region. Going beyond monetary remittances, the untapped potentials of diaspora engagement and resources from both the north-south and south-south perspective seem to require more attention by policy makers and researchers in the region given that south-south migrants account for 45% of the global migrant stock when compared to compared to South-North migration, which accounts for only 37% of global migrants (Crush, 2011).

Furthermore, in the existing literature, greater attention is focused on the contribution and potential contribution from highly skilled diasporas in developed countries. While recognizing their importance and the need for further research, Plaza and Ratha (2011) have stressed the importance of low-skilled diasporas particularly in the context of cross-border migration. With reference to countries of

destination he further stresses that migrants' potentials are frequently underestimated or minimized as they are rarely seen as agents of development in African countries of destination. The same situation holds in other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) as in the case of remittances remitted from the Brazilian diaspora in Guyana and further shows that remittances do flow to more developed countries from less developed countries in LAC (Corbin, 2007). The informal manner in which these remittances are remitted presents a major challenge to the academic community in its quest to better estimate the flows and impacts on migrants' hometowns.

Similarly, the prejudices that migrants continue to face as they travel across borders in search of jobs could be an indication that the respective countries are unprepared to: (1) engage the diaspora and remittances as agents and/or tools, rather than hindrances to development of host and origin countries, (2) unlock the development potentials of multicultural society where multilingualism and transnationalism could be used as tools for expanding trade ties and facilitating foreign direct investment while simultaneously deepening regional integration though diaspora engagement once the necessary institutional arrangements are enacted. Furthermore, in relation to migration, diaspora and development, the 2010 World Migration Report has identified ten (10) key areas, which are still very applicable to Guyana, including optimizing formal remittance flows, engaging diaspora and promoting circular migration, which governments are encouraged to up-stream and/or mainstream into planning for development (Ilo, 2010).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the light of the above-mentioned challenges and options, the following could be worked into, among other policy and planning options, framework as the government of Guyana seeks to up-stream diaspora engagement for development into a comprehensive plan for national, regional and/or local socioeconomic development:

- Elaborate a comprehensive policy for migration and development;
- Strengthen requisite government institutions and community groups at the regional and local levels;
- Through participatory planning, conduct relevant needs assessments at the national, regional and local levels;
- Undertake a mapping exercise of the sociodemographic profiles of Guyanese in the diaspora for planning for diaspora engagement;
- Restructuring the financial system to permit recipients to use remittances as income source for investment financing in order to enhancing the developmental impacts of remittances. Particular attention should be placed on better engaging women who are the major recipients of diaspora remittances, into the formal economy, thereby increasing the productiveness of Guyana's working age population outside the labour force. Greater decentralization of banking services should be made available particularly in rural areas which account for 73.6% of Guyana's population. Considering the possibilities of savings and investment for economic growth,

then there should be national and international awareness programmes to encourage recipients of remittances to open savaging accounts and encourage remitters to channel remittances through commercial banks. This should be integrated into a wider framework to reduce the transaction cost and delays to transact business at the commercial banks;

- With 93% of its highly qualified population residing principally in OECD countries, Guyana selling of diaspora bonds could be an alternative for cheap source of external financing for the development projects;
- Consolidating knowledge networks among Guyanese in the diaspora;
- Strengthening the links between temporary and/or permanent return migrants and their homeland by amplifying the benefits of the current re-migration policy. Such policies should seek to foster small, medium and/or large scale investments by return migrants or Guyanese abroad. These policies should ensure improvements in the country's economic climate, target infrastructure improvements, reduce red taping, guarantee transparency, stable regulations and guarantee political stability;
- Promoting circular migration especially of people from neighbouring countries including Brazil and Suriname in-order to unlock the development potentials where migrants should be welcomed as agents endowed with knowledge, information, entrepreneurial skills, investment capital and culture, which could contribute to economic growth and development.

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