



**Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**  
**Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs (MFCA)**

Draft Diaspora Policy

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## ACRONYMS

BIR	Board of Inland Revenue
CAD	Canadian dollars
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCREEE	Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
CSO	Central Statistical Office
DPU	Diaspora Policy Unit
ECCE	Early Child Care Education
EMA	Environmental Management Authority
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FSO	Foreign Service Officer
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDPR	Global Data Protection Regulation
GoRTT	Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
HEAT	Health Education and Training
HTA	Hometown Association
IMA	Institute of Marine Affairs
IMG	International Management Group
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MFCA	Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs
NALIS	National Library Information System Authority
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions

NDP	National Diaspora Policy
NEDCO	National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited
NTP	National Tourism Policy
OPF	Official Policy Framework
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SWMCOL	Solid Waste Management Company Limited
T&T	Trinidad and Tobago
TTGBC	Trinidad and Tobago Green Building Council
TTMA	Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association
UNECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UTC	Unit Trust Cooperation
UWI	The University of the West Indies
VAT	Value-Added Tax
WRAP	Wind Resource Assistance Programme

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Like several countries worldwide, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT) has recognised the Diaspora as an invaluable resource for the socio-economic development of the country, resulting in the need to create a National Diaspora Policy (NDP) that establishes a suitable framework for their right of participation in the growth strategies of the homeland. This policy could not be more timely given the prospect of sluggish economic growth for the country, in face of existential threats such as climate change, the need to diversify the economy away from its current monocrop fossil-fuel dependence and currently, the socio-economic fallout from Covid-19.

The policy provides the basis for more-informed decision-making by encompassing the broader national community to include the Diaspora in the national development discourse. In this regard, the overarching objective of the NDP is to bring benefit to and improve the well-being of all Trinidad and Tobago nationals at home and abroad. The policy largely provides a framework for engagement through mutually strategic partnerships which would maximise the value of Diaspora contributions while at the same time assisting the Diaspora in achieving their own goals through a progressive relationship with the home country. As a whole, the policy sets the parameters for Trinidad and Tobago's engagement with its Diaspora, taking into account the current geo-political and socio-economic context of the country at home, as well as the external dynamics and challenges of its far-reaching Diaspora.

Input for the policy was provided through extensive consultations with various public and private sector stakeholders over a four-month period. Stakeholders chosen were involved in a wide cross-section of areas, such as the cultural, political, social, philanthropic, civic, professional, business spheres and academia. Stakeholders overseas included leaders and representatives of Diaspora associations, individual members of the Diaspora and Trinidad and Tobago missions abroad, spread over four continents. Stakeholders in the homeland were drawn from both public sector agencies and private sector entities that engage the Diaspora. In addition to a critical review of secondary data on the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora, some primary data were generated from an online survey disseminated to the Diaspora through the MFCA. Thus, it is envisioned that the policy, while preserving the rights and interests of members of Trinidad and Tobago's Diaspora, will:

- 1) strengthen Diaspora participation;
- 2) improve engagement with the Diaspora in the areas of Investment, Trade and Tourism;
- 3) promote cultural values and image-building;
- 4) drive the development of philanthropic and development associations;
- 5) enhance knowledge and technology transfer; and
- 6) further encourage remittances.

## Background

The potential contribution of the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora to development at the national level can no longer be overlooked. This requires an appropriate response to mainstream Diaspora affairs in the country's development agenda through the formulation of a policy that would boost Trinidad and Tobago's relations with its Diaspora and facilitate sustainable development for the benefit of all its citizens, wherever they may be located. The GoRTT therefore mandated the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs (MFCA) as the responsible agency for diaspora affairs, to develop a standard Diaspora policy to maximise the contribution that the Diaspora can make to increase investment and economic growth in the national economy.

The current policy document is aligned with the country's major policies, strategies and international agreements, such as:

- 1) the National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030)
- 2) the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals
- 3) the Report on the Roadmap for Recovery Committee
- 4) UN Millennium Development Goals.

Theme I of the GoRTT's National Development Strategy 2016 – 2030 (Vision 2030) speaks to "*Putting People First: Nurturing Our Greatest Asset.*" This not only offers a point of departure for considering the role of the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora in the country's development initiatives, but can also help in working towards realising the other four thematic areas of Vision 2030. These include:

- 1) **Theme i** - Delivering Good Governance and Service Excellence;
- 2) **Theme ii**-Improving Productivity through Quality Infrastructure and Transportation;
- 3) **Theme iii**-Building Globally Competitive Businesses; and
- 4) **Theme iv**-Placing the Environment at the Centre of Social and Economic Development.

Furthermore, Vision 2030 explicitly states that the Diaspora has been identified among the key stakeholders for achieving the goals.<sup>1</sup> In articulating that the collective support and commitment of the entire nation is required to effectively plan and operationalise the future that the country envisions for itself and generations to come, 'nation' is understood to include the Diaspora as an extension of the national community, despite its geographical location elsewhere.

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<sup>1</sup> Key stakeholders include the private and public sectors, civil society, labour unions, citizens, our international development partners and the Diaspora.

More recently the “Roadmap for Trinidad and Tobago Post COVID-19 Pandemic Report” made reference to the Diaspora: “In an environment in which fiscal resources must be judiciously managed, a joint commitment among the public and private sectors, academia, civil society, trade unions, the diaspora and multi-lateral development partners is a prerequisite for our survival.”<sup>2</sup> Given the acute challenges faced by T&T in the current environment, there was an urgent need from the GoRTT to respond to the problems caused by the pandemic. The aforementioned report has cross-cutting objectives and key principles for continuity with the NDP, given the expertise nationals abroad hold in several areas.

### Defining the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora: Who does this policy target?

For the purpose of this policy, the GoRTT recognises its Diaspora as:

- 1) nationals of Trinidad and Tobago by birth living overseas either temporarily or permanently;
- 2) persons of Trinidad and Tobago descent residing outside the country who may hold citizenship of another country with a vested interest in the country’s development; and
- 3) people who may be nationals of another country who have a strong affinity to the country and wish to maintain a tangible connection and foster greater relations with Trinidad and Tobago.

Over many generations substantial numbers of people from Trinidad and Tobago have migrated primarily to three countries: the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, as illustrated in Figure 2. The Diaspora is well-dispersed geographically, with smaller numbers located in Latin America, other countries in Europe other than the U.K., Asia, the Middle East, Africa and as far as Australia. Precise figures for the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora are unknown but from the available data during the period 2015-2020, the Diaspora population is estimated at less than 400,000. The United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs, Population Division lists Trinidad and Tobago’s international stock of migrants as 330,519 (International Migration 2020 Highlights). The Pew Hispanic Centre’s estimate is 360,000 based on UN data from 2015,<sup>3</sup> while the most recent statistics of the IOM are higher, at 374,492 (IOM:2017). The mid-year 2020

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<sup>2</sup> Report on the Roadmap to Recovery Committee, July 2020, (pg. 84). [https://planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/Report%20of%20the%20Roadmap%20to%20Recovery%20Committee\\_1st\\_.pdf](https://planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/Report%20of%20the%20Roadmap%20to%20Recovery%20Committee_1st_.pdf). The committee was convened by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in order to respond to the economic and social challenges posed by Covid-19.

<sup>3</sup> Phillip Connor (2010) In Nine Countries 20% or more born there have migrated or sought refuge there, Pew Research Center, Washington <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/10/in-nine-countries-20-or-more-born-there-have-migrated-or-sought-refuge-abroad/> accessed on December 6, 2018.



Census acknowledges migration as a key factor for the country's population change and a component that is "notoriously difficult to measure accurately," with an estimated 15,455 persons recorded as having migrated to other countries during the period 2000-2011.<sup>4</sup> Despite the current data gaps, a number of emerging trends as well as information has been gathered about the Diaspora from the stakeholder workshops.

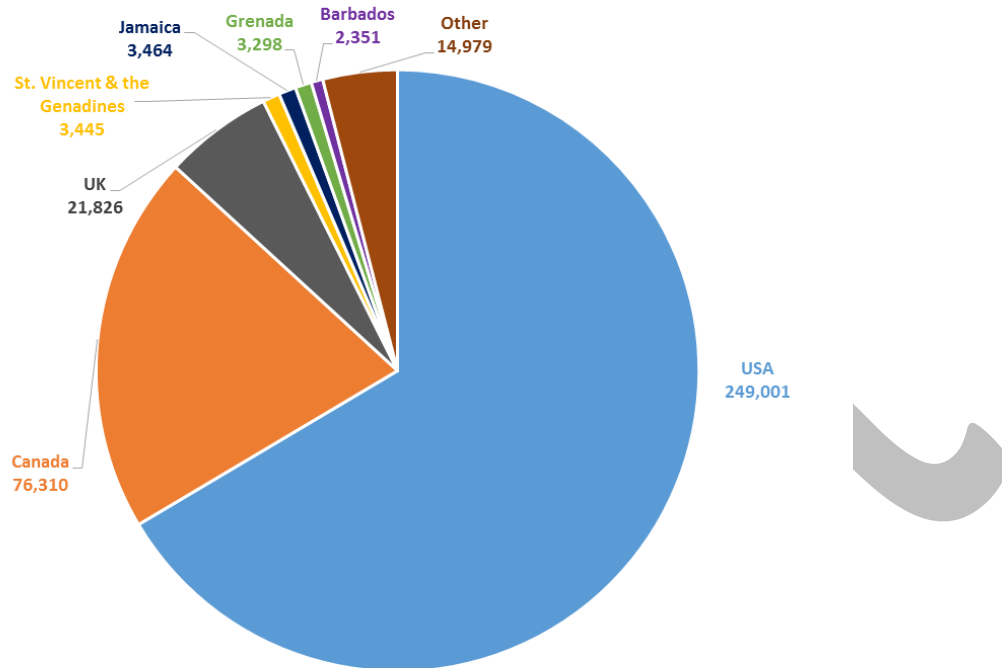
The Trinidad and Tobago community overseas is resourceful, successful, entrepreneurial and largely a reflection of the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural diversity in the homeland. The policy therefore, is a reflection of the multiple faces of Trinidad and Tobago, leveraging this diversity and creativity. In addition, the policy is sufficiently flexible to appeal to younger members of the Diaspora to ensure their participation in the development process at home. While participation in the more established diaspora associations seemed to be highest among older Diaspora members; their younger counterparts' involvement and activism were expressed by networking, utilising social media platforms. The engagement strategy shall harness the collective skills and experience of the Diaspora, taking into consideration these diverse methods of mobilisation based on differences in demographics.

The Diaspora is inherently resilient, with some individuals attaining high levels of professional success in a range of fields. Unfortunately this has not translated into large-scale advancement collectively. The Diaspora is therefore disjointed, resulting in numerous groups operating in isolation and not being sufficiently inter-connected. The lack of cohesion is only one of the many challenges facing the Diaspora. Some other identified challenges include the absence of a central repository for information on the Diaspora, including a dedicated portal or skills bank, inability to vote in elections in the homeland, the high cost of remittances, lack of online availability for renewing and applying for national documents, difficulty in doing local banking transactions from a foreign jurisdiction and the absence of a structure to interface directly with stakeholders in the home country, among others. In light of this, the broad objective of this policy is to address these obstacles by identifying areas of Diaspora needs and ensuring the requisite mechanisms are established to overcome these gaps.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://cso.gov.tt/subjects/population-and-vital-statistics/population/>

Fig. 1 Emigration from Trinidad and Tobago by 2013



Emigration from Trinidad and Tobago by 2013

Source: IOM Report, 2017 [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Working%20papers\\_%20en\\_baja\\_20.06.17.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Working%20papers_%20en_baja_20.06.17.pdf)

### Underlying Assumptions/Guiding Principles

The National Diaspora Policy is based on the following 10 (ten) underlying assumptions and guiding principles:

- a) **Mutuality:** the policy recognises that development between a homeland state and its Diaspora is not unidimensional. The GoRTT is cognisant of the fact that while collaborating with its Diaspora for the attainment of national development goals, the engagement strategy must translate into simultaneous benefits for its Diaspora. The GoRTT, through a facilitatory environment, will establish a mutually-beneficial relationship with the Diaspora.
- b) **Confidentiality:** the policy shall ensure that all information regarding the Diaspora is treated with the highest levels of confidentiality. This especially relates to the collection and management of databases or any data-gathering exercise involving the Diaspora.

- c) **Integrity:** the policy shall promote interactions between the Diaspora and the government based on trust, fair-play and mutual respect. Additionally, it shall ensure that all stakeholders remain honest, firm and impartial in executing the policy.
- d) **Participation:** the policy shall ensure that all stakeholders participate fully in the implementation, evaluation and review of the policy. A participatory approach is adopted with a view to ensuring that all plans, projects, programmes and priorities are developed in a manner that fosters cooperation to derive maximum benefits as stipulated in the policy.
- e) **Transparency and Accountability:** the policy shall ensure that all stakeholders remain open and accountable for their actions, critical to its implementation. There must be accountability to ensure that measures are adopted and carried through and consequences when there are shortfalls.
- f) **Good Governance:** There must be significant efforts to ensure that the basic elements of good governance are integrated into the policy application, particularly as this is a fairly new area of engagement for Trinidad and Tobago.
- g) **Coordination:** the policy shall ensure that all activities related to the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora are well coordinated so as to eliminate overlaps and duplication of efforts.
- h) **Responsiveness and Adaptability:** the policy is not static and therefore shall respond to changing economic, social and other circumstances, given the inherent dynamic nature of Diaspora management.
- i) **Communication:** the communication strategy shall be open, efficient, transparent and time-sensitive to facilitate knowledge-sharing and informed decision-making, promote action and dialogue on socio-economic development. Improved communication is required to inform the Diaspora of the services and opportunities available to them. The conversation should not be unidimensional.
- j) **Sustainability:** the policy shall guarantee that the structures and measures for continuity, longevity and effective Diaspora engagement strategies are institutionalised to ensure sustainable development initiatives in communities at home and abroad.
- k) **Willingness to engage:** the policy is premised on the Diaspora's connectedness to the homeland and its continued desire to engage with the home country so that it can make a substantial contribution to its sustainable development.

### Diaspora Policy Objectives

- a) To develop a clear road map for Diaspora engagement and partnerships through the creation of favourable frameworks for programmes that will contribute to the well-being and thriving of Diaspora members while contributing to long-term homeland development and progress;

- b) To implement policies, programmes and projects that support the building of networks and synergies around national priorities, through Diaspora philanthropy and volunteering, as well as promoting cultural values and nation branding/image-building;
- c) To facilitate institutional strengthening programmes and initiatives between home and destination countries for Diaspora engagement in areas of governance, rights, social protection, communication, advocacy, trade, investment, remittances, tourism, etc;
- d) To develop sound and dynamic strategies targeted at harnessing Diaspora skills and resources towards increased remittances and economic growth in the national economy, creating or strengthening where applicable, the relevant institutions for the coordination and proper administration of Diaspora issues;
- e) To create an effective mechanism for the exchange of ideas (brain circulation, knowledge exchange and skills transfer); and
- f) To ensure a congenial and receptive atmosphere exists to encourage members of the Diaspora to collaborate and identify with national development initiatives.

## **Diaspora Strategies**

The following strategies are premised on the 13 (thirteen) key thematic areas identified as important for national development by the GoRTT. The strategies are based on collected recommendations from the stakeholders themselves emanating from both the stakeholder engagement exercise as well as an online stakeholder survey disseminated to the Diaspora through the overseas diplomatic missions. The compilation of the suggestions from the interviewees are not presented in any specific order of importance. These initiatives can be undertaken with input from the respective line ministries as part of an eventual work programme and coordination by the executing agency, the Diaspora Division in the OPM. The strategies in the NDP have many synergies with initiatives in the Roadmap for Recovery Report.

### **1. Trade and Investment**

Diaspora investment is a complementary or alternative source of financing but not a substitute for development. However, potential Diaspora investors are often discouraged by significant regulatory barriers (such as lengthy procedures, inadequate transparency of government institutions, very low levels of digitalisation of state services), limited rule of law, and a lack of reliable information about local business opportunities and corresponding legal requirements. In terms of diasporic trade, the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora has significant knowledge about the local environment in their host countries. They can therefore bridge the economic divide with their critical skills and help the homeland in boosting foreign trade through the high-value goods manufactured in the source country. A key aspect of the diversification effort resides in the creative economy and the Diaspora has a potential role to play in this process.

In this regard, attention should be paid to the non-traditional areas that can be monetised, such as the entertainment industry and the creative arts. How do we market the unique things that are Trinbagonian? There is a high demand for goods and services from Trinidad and Tobago, but those opportunities are engaged directly. There must be a strong mandate to develop and facilitate access and provide technical support, for music, film, fashion and the carnival arts, with corporate sponsorship and state support. The service industry will inherently have more risk because it is more intangible in nature. The high level of IP creation coming from Trinidad and Tobago requires the establishment of a service trust. The Diaspora can provide further assistance in getting access to external markets and moving these areas forward to generate employment and earn foreign exchange. The Diaspora can impact the smaller areas that cumulatively guarantee return on investment.

In terms of infrastructural development and investment, clear measurable needs have to be communicated and issues identified, stating what are the costs. Projects need to be organised in feasible smaller sizes, so that it is less daunting for overseas nationals. What are some specific measurable points in articulating those projects and setting goals? Going after easy wins rather than setting lofty targets will empower people to feel good about themselves in terms of how they can contribute and what they can achieve, thereby cumulating victory by lowering the barriers to entry to encourage more players to become involved.

**Actions:**

- a) Refine the focus of possible areas for trade and investment by leveraging the Diaspora to do webinars through state agencies such as ExporTT and InvesTT to guide people to the markets.
- b) Follow up by diplomatic missions to ensure the country can pursue and maintain trade relationships.
- c) Devise medium to long-term strategies to enable service providers to penetrate markets.
- d) Utilise the Diaspora to play a role in bridging the gap, facilitating and furthering the process for trade agreements. Formalised channels for services export are needed and Diaspora access is important.
- e) Utilise the Diaspora Forum to advance the trade agenda for new opportunities to boost our products and encourage investment, in addition to diversifying trade markets.
- f) Establish a privately-run or public-private partnership Diaspora fund for investment projects.
- g) Invest in talented artistes in the creative industries, such as musicians, filmmakers, fashion designers, etc., providing technical and financial support to keep the next generation involved in key sectors.

- h) Provide incentives to non-resident Trinidadians and Tobagonians to invest in the tourism sector, petrochemical industry, agriculture, especially for products with global appeal to exotic and ethnic market segments, information technology and knowledge-based activities, infrastructural development, real estate and time-share/Airbnb type accommodation, the creative industries and renewable energy, recycling or environmental projects.
- i) Provide incentives to Trinidadians and Tobagonians in the Diaspora to enter into joint ventures with local business operators.
- j) Utilise the Diaspora to showcase business success for people in similar fields in the homeland.
- k) Utilise the expertise of the Diaspora to assist in diversification efforts through investment in the services sector.
- l) Utilise nationals abroad to influence necessary change in the work culture at home and work with trainees, providing mentoring for young people now entering the work force and offering insight into the expectations of national companies in the traditional energy sector in order to keep current with technological advances and changes in the industry.
- m) Organise trade fairs with overseas missions and Diaspora groups in conjunction with ExporTT to showcase local products with universal appeal and diversify the country's trade profile.
- n) Broaden the country's export profile with help from the Diaspora in sales and distribution, the promotion of Trinidad and Tobago goods, setting up distribution outlets, entrepreneurship and investment in plant and machinery.
- o) Promote and support the formation of Diaspora business associations, the objectives of which can include:
  - i. Identification of opportunities to import, distribute and sell T&T-made products;
  - ii. Identification of opportunities for investment in leading edge, sustainable businesses in Trinidad and Tobago;
  - iii. Identification of business partnerships with the T&T private sector.

## 2. Remittances/Banking

While remittances have supported economic growth, existing investment initiatives are usually limited to the wholesale sector, consumer goods, real estate and tourism, as well as agricultural activities.

During the consultative process, most of the stakeholders highlighted the extremely frustrating process of doing business with local banking institutions. Nationals in nearby jurisdictions within

the Caribbean stated that the proximity to the homeland did not necessarily translate into doing business easier.

The banking sector is faced with heightened compliance, so that transactions that were more easily accessible previously, are now more complex, costly, and time-consuming. This is partially to ensure there is no tax evasion, or that customers are not involved in questionable activity of a financial nature.

In order to energise the investment portfolio, does T&T have the environment that fosters investment? The Diaspora can be a significant impetus for stimulating the economy but in order to repatriate profits there are also foreign exchange challenges.

**Actions:**

- a) Improve avenues for remitting money from abroad in consultation with the financial services sector, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders.
- b) Prioritise a remittance facility for nationals in the Diaspora to be able to repatriate funds in the case of disaster or emergency relief.
- c) Start small project-based initiatives which utilise Diaspora crowd-funding, in which the GoRTT matches the funds from overseas nationals and other interest groups, exploring a public-private partnership between the Diaspora and the state.
- d) Find a joint solution between relevant stakeholders and the Diaspora to honour compliance with fraud and anti-money-laundering rules, in a manner that these regulations and obstacles do not hinder investment and enhance business opportunities.
- e) Enhance financial institutions' online platforms to service the Diaspora.
- f) Develop a website or portal that caters to foreign nationals that would be the central repository for information on supporting documentation to transact business locally, with linkages out to other relevant information sources such as TTConnect, etc. This could be done in conjunction with the MFCA, the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation, the Banking Association and the Central Bank, using the domain name TTDiaspora.com, as suggested by the Diaspora.
- g) Capture remittance data on flows and use of funds.
- h) Devise mutually-beneficial solutions for banking transactions that facilitate the Diaspora and nationals at home, while satisfying international banking regulations. Policies that are simple and fit-for-purpose are needed. Lines of authority and mechanisms for correcting problems and issues, as well as user-friendly, clear procedures must be outlined.

### 3. Health

There should be national conversations about areas that require change or improvement. A Health Education and Training (HEAT) model application would be useful as social policy agents of change. It needs to be determined what resources and skills the country would like matched with the skillsets that exist in the Diaspora, e.g. specialists in medicine, to increase the number of dialysis machines or technical medical equipment, etc.

#### Actions:

- a) Utilise the Diaspora to assist in implementing improved services and better administrative and management systems in the health sector, e.g. introducing digitised health records, etc.
- b) Assess reasons for capital flight of medical professionals, possible conditionalities for return and ascertain in what capacity the Diaspora p can assist.<sup>5</sup>
- c) Address the skill shortage with access to specialised medical professionals in the Diaspora that are lacking in the country, via an active mechanism that exists through the Recruitment and Retention of Health Care Workers.
- d) Establish joint technical councils comprising health professionals and administrators of the Diaspora with their counterparts in the homeland to improve systems in health care, facilitate knowledge and experience exchange.
- e) Recruit health professionals in specialised areas in the Diaspora through government to government agreements.
- f) Perform a gap analysis to assess if surplus general practitioners are being produced as opposed to specialists, as well as if they are migrating.
- g) Utilise the Diaspora by engaging in mentoring/exchange programmes local medical professionals who wish to specialise in areas that lack manpower. The knowledge of those in the Diaspora can be used to build capacity and those individuals can then return to Trinidad and Tobago.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This can be achieved by building on the work done by UNECLAC, updating it to take into account the changing global economic structure, population ageing and Covid-19. Schmid, Karoline (2003) Emigration of Nurses From the Caribbean: Causes and Consequences for the Socio-Economic Welfare of the Country: Trinidad and Tobago-A Case Study (Port of Spain: UNECLAC LC/CAR/G.748).

<sup>6</sup> Government to Government agreements may be important here to prevent the local candidates from accepting employment in the host country after the mentoring or exchange programme is completed.



- h) Utilise the Diaspora to assist with public education campaigns to look at mental health differently, bearing on the experience of the Diaspora abroad. Community care for the mentally ill will involve taking people out of the clinical areas while maintaining the levels of service provision, ensuring sustainability of the project and measuring how standards are being kept.
- i) Forge links with such associations that have considerable requisite expertise and put it to use to improve and make specialised care readily available in areas such as mental health, midwifery, ICU training, nephrology, etc.
- j) Form partnership projects between universities and teaching hospitals abroad which have faculty and personnel from the Diaspora and the Ministry of Health to assist in providing specialised training and outsourcing of technical equipment.
- k) Utilise the Diaspora to assist in revising national food safety laws, ensuring that there are active standards, that they are implemented and monitored, including public abattoirs.
- l) Establish Doctors' Abroad initiatives that would permit health professionals in the Diaspora to assist their local counterparts through telesurgery and other remote services, in addition to conducting workshops and training, while visiting the country for transfer of knowledge and skills.
- m) Utilise members of the Diaspora involved in shaping health legislation abroad especially in jurisdictions such as France, adapting innovative measures that can be applied locally on how health benefits can be made available to everyone by building a more robust health system in Trinidad and Tobago.
- n) Utilise the Diaspora to put systems in place for the enforcement of existing legislation and review of process.

#### 4. Education

In terms of modernising and reforming the education sector, a “Communities of Practice”<sup>7</sup> approach could be utilised to ensure that performance in this area is enhanced by bringing together professionals in the homeland and the Diaspora in the field of education to collaborate and share ideas and best practices. How can the Diaspora contribute to development cooperation, beyond a consultative capacity? A less theoretical approach to education is needed so that students can become familiar with the work place and get practical experience.

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to Education, the “Communities of Practice” approach can also be applied to other thematic areas such as Health, Trade, Culture, etc.

The Diaspora can also provide online teaching support. The initiative must resonate with the audience, such as resources for schools in need, mentoring, and exposure to fields that are not easily available to locals. The transition to online teaching during the pandemic provided an opportunity for education specialists in the Diaspora to partner with educators in Trinidad and Tobago to boost capacity in this area for local teachers.<sup>8</sup> Rather than attaining a lofty goal, aim for small specific projects, such as improving technology labs so citizens can teach remotely, distance learning, participation in webinars, etc. The Diaspora can provide ongoing professional development, especially as resources are becoming increasingly scarce. Teacher training and incentives, teacher retention strategies, teaching entrepreneurship and continuing curriculum changes are potential areas of Diaspora contribution.

**Actions:**

- a) Establish joint technical councils comprising educators and administrators of the Diaspora with their counterparts in the homeland to improve systems in education, facilitating knowledge and experience exchange, revising curricula, developing programmes and serving in an advisory capacity.
- b) Create avenues for knowledge and experience exchange in the energy sector utilising the Diaspora to align local university curricula with international standards and technological advancements.
- c) Upgrade and develop local curricula to international requirements with accurate information on work permit facilitation, using the Diaspora with expertise in these areas, assisting in training and bridging the gap alongside officials at the Ministries of Energy and Education.
- d) Ensure that there is a proper database of national scholarship winners, inclusive of their date of return to assist in streamlining where they are placed for national service, commensurate with their skills and newly-acquired areas of specialisation in order to minimise frustration. Match their skillsets to experiences of First World culture.
- e) Integrate the ideas of the Diaspora and other academics in the homeland as part of the national development agenda, exploring possibilities for joint research and joint think tanks.
- f) Utilise the wide range of experiences of retirees abroad and locally in education and other fields.
- g) Utilise the Diaspora to rebrand the education system, making tertiary education more accessible and to facilitate teacher training and workshops in rural schools.

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<sup>8</sup> In August 2020, Diaspora education consultants in Washington, D.C. collaborated through an online webinar entitled 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teaching and Learning in Trinidad and Tobago.

- h) Explore opportunities for exchange of visiting students, researchers and academics in the Diaspora in a wide variety of fields.
- i) Partner with institutions abroad where there are Trinidad and Tobago faculty to grant access to facilities to nationals in the homeland, as well as explore access to funding for programmes.
- j) Instil certain values as part of the early learning process for young children from the ECCE level regarding work ethic and attitudes to service, the importance of tourism and recycling and healthy lifestyles. Include these issues in a syllabus and involve the new generation to foster pride in country and the environment.
- k) Encourage students at all levels to think creatively and not learn by rote, providing a learning environment such as the ones that exist overseas with student exposure to real-life situations and challenges that require innovative thinking.
- l) Focus on teaching and improving special education teaching skills. People with expertise in this area in the Diaspora could take one semester's leave of absence and work in Trinidad and Tobago.
- m) Create avenues for teachers in the creative arts in the Diaspora to work/volunteer their time in the hostland in order to teach content aligned to the homeland's culture.<sup>9</sup>

## 5. Tourism

A significant part of developing Trinidad and Tobago's tourism package is linked to the national branding exercise. One message is required with a slogan that captures the essence of the nation's identity and what its people have to offer, rooted in its history and culture. Suggested taglines include "The Capital of Diversity," "Visit HOME," "The World in One Republic."

The Diaspora has a vested interest in the country's National Tourism Policy (NTP) and sub-policies areas such as Eco-Tourism, Community-based Tourism, Culinary Tourism, Festival Tourism and Sports Tourism. Community-based Tourism requires volunteering and maintenance of important heritage sites and other major attractions. The Diaspora also inadvertently participates in tourism through festival export.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, music teachers can teach calypso and drama teachers can teach aspects of traditional mas.

## Actions:

- a) Utilise influencers in the Diaspora as agents of change in the tourism industry aligning world renowned, international cultural icons as marketing and brand ambassadors,<sup>10</sup> to market products which could have an impact on tourism. A Proudly T&T Campaign was launched under the TTMA, promoting local businesses. Overseas missions can buy into the concept.<sup>11</sup>
- b) Encourage brand ambassadors to utilise formally-packaged cultural products so there is collective agreement on the product being advertised.
- c) Collaborate with the Diaspora and Tourism Trinidad Limited and Tobago Tourism Agency to market and promote the country's tourism product using influencers or champions who are internationally-recognised in a formal arrangement with sponsorship, using the trending #VisitTrinidad/#VisitTobago.
- d) Create a database of senior, influential Diaspora, who are employed in the international tourism industry in order to enlist their support in directing sales, marketing and investment opportunities to T&T.
- e) Seize the opportunity to utilise Trinidad and Tobago business owners to brand, market and promote the country through interactions with the clientele in host societies abroad.
- f) Utilise members of the Diaspora to refine and define the tourism product through their knowledge of the local context and experience in world-class standards.
- g) Employ the Diaspora to assist in educating the public on the benefits and value of tourism to economy.
- h) Target the youth Diaspora to teach them about the value of heritage sites and involve them in rehabilitating our tourism plant and facilities, e.g. maintaining forts, parks and museums, pairing them with youth and civic groups on the island (Familiarisation Tours).
- i) Gain inputs from the Diaspora on the National Tourism Policy, ensuring there is a strong Diaspora focus, including a data perspective and where the Diaspora is located, as well as contributing to policy decisions, marketing and destination development.<sup>12</sup>
- j) Utilise members of the Diaspora with considerable expertise in customer service training through the formulation of programmes to develop and support good governance and service excellence in the tourism sector.

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<sup>10</sup> e.g. Winston Duke for Tobago and Heather Headley for Trinidad.

<sup>11</sup> For example Trini culinary influencers living in New York, Miami, etc.

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that that a member of the Diaspora served on the Tourism Policy Development Committee for the revision of the NTP (2010). His contributions brought an international perspective to the development of the tourism policy, while allowing for a knowledge of the local context.

- k) Use inter-ministerial agreements between the MFCA and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts as a pathway to help facilitate linkages with the Diaspora.
- l) Utilise the Diaspora to get feedback on the tourism sector through webinars, allowing people to share their experiences with developments in tourism in their respective host countries.
- m) Utilise the Diaspora for input in developing the country's eco-tourism market, moving it from a nascent stage, identifying closer linkages to other sectors in the domestic economy such as agriculture for the development of high-end products such as the Trinitario cocoa as part of the eco-tourism offering.
- n) Leverage the Friends of Trinidad and Tobago Model, forming cross-cultural relationships with Diaspora groups and tourism stakeholders in the homeland to ensure consistency in the marketing materials and in the message the country seeks to convey in promoting itself.
- o) Place greater emphasis on the value of social media and technology in the tourism promotional effort coming out of the Diaspora, e.g. replicating the "Bring a Friend Home" programme that other Caribbean countries use successfully.
- p) Promote a Local Tourism Campaign aimed at stimulating economic activity and promoting local expenditure through firstly a "Staycation Campaign" focused on package deals for Trinidad residents and secondly, a "Tobago Homecoming Campaign" focused on the T&T Diaspora.
- q) Develop festival tourism with the assistance of the Diaspora, e.g. visits to religious and heritage sites, such as temples and mandirs, tours to the Divali Nagar site during festival periods, creating a seasonal flow of tourists, as well as encouraging hotels to have packages surrounding the particular festival and reduced rates for the Diaspora.
- r) Forge closer linkages between Missions/Tourism bodies and Diaspora retail outlets (food or otherwise), within source markets to promote "Visit Home" package options.
- s) Utilise the Destination websites to support the tourism promotional effort, given the importance of technology.
- t) Work with carnival band leaders in extending the band launch period as a build-up to carnival, in an effort to widen the carnival calendar, given the importance of festival tourism.

## 6. Culture

How does cultural investment contribute to Trinidad and Tobago's global hegemony and global positioning in the world? Cultural products such as the steelpan and carnival offer Trinidad and Tobago an invaluable opportunity to have a much broader profile globally and become an economic powerhouse through proper branding. The Trinidad and Tobago carnival is the most replicated internationally, yet the curation and promotion of carnival are not functioning

optimally. The carnival product must resonate with beauty and artistry, leveraging traditional mas costuming, as it is a part of the nation's distinctiveness. There must be diligence in ensuring that the symbolism and artistry of carnival are not lost. The Diaspora, through business owners, represents an invaluable asset in spreading the unique value proposition of the country, focusing on its diverse culture and natural resources to expand diasporic trade and tourism. The goods, products and services that customers in the host country consume are emblematic of Trinidad and Tobago and should be monetised. What is required is a strategy to capitalise on the receptiveness to Trinidad and Tobago goods and services based on a reputation of warmth, hospitality and a diversity that is appreciated by consumers in the hostlands. Entrepreneurship in the services sector means operating locally but thinking globally in terms of external markets.

**Actions:**

- a) Utilise the Diaspora to open up areas beyond traditional trade and investment markets to encompass the creative industries with a greater focus on how local products are received.
- b) Utilise the carnival product as an area of budding entrepreneurial activity, that provides employment for citizens at home and in the Diaspora, with separate marketing from the other regional carnivals as our festival is distinct.
- c) Utilise the Diaspora to assist in public campaigns to educate the nation on the importance of culture, the creative industries and tourism to the national good.
- d) Utilise the Diaspora in the marketing of carnival abroad as experiential tourism, leveraging traditional costuming, the art of wire-bending and performance.
- e) Utilise the Diaspora as cultural/brand ambassadors to instil a source of national pride, relying on them to provide talks, educating nationals in the homeland on how to achieve success in the arts, boost cultural confidence and professional development.
- f) Provide support to carnival organising committees and groups in the Diaspora, as they serve as cultural ambassadors and connectors. Empower people to use their resources as they serve the Diaspora community and assist in shaping how the carnival is viewed in the global landscape.
- g) Utilise the organisers of Diasporic carnivals to give input into the organisation of the local carnival product.
- h) Take advantage of creative, digital networks and work interactively between the Diaspora and various entities in the homeland to achieve a lucrative creative economy, linking Millennials and Generation Z across generations. The goal would be to monetise the culture in a way that generates foreign exchange, while providing employment and making a difference in people's lives.
- i) Involve the Diaspora in soft collaborations, mentorships and internships in the animation and creative sector.

- j) Utilise successful nationals from abroad as beacons to bring back the skills to Trinidad and Tobago, to expose locals to the talent in the Diaspora and to help form elite units in the arts locally.
- k) Utilise the Diaspora to provide locals with training opportunities in the arts and entertainment, as well as scholarships, to bring micro-projects back home, to encourage investment on location, investing in theatre companies during the season to establish linkages and create synergies between local and foreign companies and mini-outsourcing funds for local stakeholders.
- l) Encourage persons in the Diaspora to assist in providing sponsorship (through their organisations) for smaller steelbands. This can be used as a tax deduction in some countries.
- m) Develop an integrated international promotional strategy as follows:
  - i. **PROMOTIONAL AGENCY:** Develop an international promotional agency or institute that uses national Missions in countries where the Diaspora is numerically strong to create and implement a promotional strategy that bridges the gap between the Ministry with responsibility for Culture, the artists resident in Trinidad and Tobago and the markets where these Missions are located. This would include a mix of productions, promotional activities and training and development exchanges that help to drive interest in our cultural products and services.
  - ii. **GLOBAL DIASPORIC INFLUENCERS:** Identify individuals (artists, creatives, entrepreneurs, promoters, gate keepers, entertainment executives, etc) in the Diaspora who are in top positions in the global entertainment industry and who can be approached to assist in producing and promoting world class local cultural products. These individuals can be targeted for a series of co-productions in Film, TV, Theatre, Music, Festivals, Fashion, Visual Arts, Literature, etc.
  - iii. **DIASPORIC POPULATIONS:** Identify international cities and regions with large Diasporas and develop strategies to promote cultural products in their regions, via, in part, the activation of their participation as consumers, advocates and avid supporters of said products.
  - iv. **CULTURAL AGREEMENTS:** Prioritise the development of Cultural Agreements with countries where the Diaspora is largest to lay the foundation of future trade in goods and services between said countries and Trinidad and Tobago.
  - v. **CULTURAL EXCHANGES:** Utilise formal cultural exchanges with countries where the Diaspora is largest to send cultural delegations at reduced costs. These exchanges can also be used to bring Diaspora personnel home for tours and workshops at lower expenditure.

## 7. Agriculture

There needs to be a cultural shift in terms of how agriculture is viewed, which would facilitate more innovative, diverse ways of developing and utilising agricultural products, as well as addressing the use of highly-trained young persons who can apply modern technology to growing crops. The Diaspora may be exposed to the manner in which this is being accomplished in developed countries and can serve as resources that share the possibilities available in modern technology applications in the sector. Promoting better and more sustainable products would assist in reducing the food import bill. With stricter price and quality controls these initiatives could result in not only diversifying diets and palates and focusing on healthier eating, but expanding the culinary experience of nationals, which could assist the tourism sector as well. Food security, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, has highlighted the importance of agriculture, increasing opportunities for aquaponics, organic farming and more eco-friendly farming methods, particularly as global distribution chains are severely disrupted.

### **Actions:**

- a) Utilise the Diaspora to increase the value-added of local agricultural products such as cocoa and coconut to produce more high-end goods for niche markets.
- b) Identify the Diaspora willing to engage in trade initiatives with local farmers.
- c) Create a database for ease of access between the farmers and the Diaspora. Make information more accessible on the availability of farmers with an adequate supply of certain items and who have difficulty selling locally to facilitate export of their goods and generate foreign exchange.
- d) Utilise the Diaspora involved in cutting-edge agricultural projects overseas to promote the agricultural sector as an aspect of the diversification of the economy.
- e) Offer incentives to the Diaspora for agricultural initiatives in the homeland such as community farming, proper land use, organic farming and moving from a resource economy to more technology and knowledge-based applications.
- f) Ensure capital or finance is available to move to a technology-based agricultural industry both for the Diaspora and locals involved in the sector via the Agricultural Development Bank, Ministry of Agriculture grants and other sources of funding.
- g) Develop food and flavour production with assistance from the Diaspora through more agricultural crop-based investment activities that would allow people to anticipate the revenue streams.
- h) Develop more Farm to Table culinary experiences, where tourists can pick fresh food and have it cooked as part of an eco-tourism/experiential tourism offer.
- i) Consult the Diaspora to assist in planning for use of under-developed land and other agricultural development initiatives.



- j) Consult the Diaspora on ways of improving and expanding temporary foreign workers' programmes in the agriculture sector such as the Commonwealth Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Programme.

## 8. Science, Technology and Innovation

A huge challenge in enhancing and transferring technology, boosting entrepreneurship and innovation in the homeland, lies in the fact that many people in the Diaspora have ideas that are often considered too advanced, too niche, not recognised nor easily implementable in the home country context. Problems of conceptualisation arise because some things may not be relevant to Trinidad and Tobago, in addition to an absence of a policy or concept to do the ground work, or a lack of vision or understanding of the relevance of what they would like to accomplish.

- a) Fund-match programmes for IT projects initiated by members of the Diaspora, e.g. in robotics or high-tech farming, research, etc.
- b) Utilise the Diaspora to help in innovation patent creation in the creative sector, to ensure proper patenting and copyright issues of cultural artefacts.
- c) Place greater emphasis on STEM and seek opportunities through linkages between the Diaspora and university students.
- d) Include investments in the adoption and manufacture of biometric systems and use of artificial intelligence systems which can be applied in all sectors.

## 9. Brain Circulation, Knowledge and Skills Transfer

The GoRTT is committed to creating an environment that is conducive to retaining skilled Trinidadians and Tobagonians. The Diaspora serves as a potential vehicle for transferring resources, technology, knowledge and ideas to the home country, thereby contributing to social and economic development.

Current staffing profiles in various sectors need to be reviewed as part of the strategy to combat brain drain. What people are studying abroad may not be easily marketable in Trinidad and Tobago. However, it is also much easier to gain experience abroad because there is a wider pool of knowledge. On the other hand, there are niche opportunities in moving back to the country by bringing back these skills, allowing returnees to become experts in their chosen field because of the relative lack of competition at home.

Transformational thinking is required to influence change in moving forward. More opportunities need to be created to foster a transformational society. 'Points of Light' in the society or positive role models are needed to highlight the richness of human resource potential.

## **Actions:**

- a) Utilise the skills professionals have acquired in the host countries to mentor people in the homeland as well as provide expertise to the government in areas where there are gaps locally and to further develop local content.
- b) Utilise the Diaspora to help ensure improved governance on state boards and other public entities, providing a larger cadre of overseas expertise, outside of the sphere at home. Improve the functioning of the board with overseas experts with different perspectives and strong CVs. Use virtual meetings to discuss issues and brainstorm, gain input and experiences from the outside which can be adapted for solutions at home. It could be useful to leverage the experiences and good resources in the overseas context.
- c) Utilise the Diaspora to expand the creative arts and the sports sector. The creation of a Sports Development Academy similar to IMG in Florida was recommended and this would give a boost to sports tourism and also provide scholarships.
- d) Encourage crowd-funding in the Diaspora: There are several avenues for Eximbank, InvesTT, or through entities connecting people and providing funding for students in Trinidad and Tobago through affiliation with certain universities with capital sourced from the Diaspora.
- e) Utilise Diaspora expertise to assist in developing a model for tourism policing in Tobago that helps integrate civil society/communities as this requires more than policing bodies and careful knowledge transfers in the sector.
- f) Utilise the Diaspora in developing Overseas Temporary Workers' Programmes which will facilitate the temporary employment of Trinidad and Tobago nationals in businesses abroad where they can acquire the necessary experience and skills for which opportunities in the local economy may be limited.

## **10. Climate Change, Renewable Energy and the Environment**

It is important to utilise the Diaspora for outreach, growth and imparting knowledge of global standards in various sectors while incorporating these in local initiatives in the homeland. Progressive international countries have well-developed and integrated environmental policies. In Trinidad and Tobago, a cultural shift is needed along with a dedicated campaign to find more proactive ways to engage the youth for sustainability. In the area of the environment, what is required is the application of a big-picture context of what needs to be accomplished, expanding horizons using the Diaspora as a change agent.

In 2018 the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE) opened in Barbados with international development partners, financial resources and technical expertise on how to make the structure sustainable. Trinidad and Tobago needs to capitalise on this venture as regionally-based experts from the country are involved in this process, which could

help develop a regional strategy for standards as it relates to energy efficiency. Diaspora members would have the capacity to make changes to fit the national context in Trinidad and Tobago, inclusive of revised building codes that incorporate energy efficiency. Sustainable living has to be the solution, not the alternative.

The GoRTT is committed to making the shift to renewable energy. Through the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries a national energy policy green paper on renewable energy and energy efficiency is being developed, in addition to spearheading various initiatives and projects. The Ministry of Planning and Development is piloting the development of a Just Transition Policy to a low carbon economy.

There should be Diaspora involvement in the chain, from policy design, legislation, to implementation, etc. Community involvement and accountability are required. Communication must not be top-down; it should be circular and continuous. There needs to be a shift. These changes need to be communicated from the Prime Minister, the Opposition, the mayors, at the level of Town Hall meetings, at the regional corporation level, village council level, etc. It must come from the communities themselves to create sustainable cities.

**Actions:**

- a) Utilise the registry of skilled nationals to locate and engage nationals in the Diaspora with expertise in renewable energy, green technology, recycling and climate change to benefit Trinidad and Tobago and reduce the country's carbon footprint.
- b) Utilise members of the Diaspora to educate and introduce community recycling projects with ecological and civic groups in the homeland.
- c) Utilise the Diaspora to provide Trinidad and Tobago with greater exposure to technical advancements in renewable energy and to have discussions about the most feasible source of alternative energy for Trinidad and Tobago (wind, water, solar). The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries has embarked on a Wind Resource Assessment Programme (WRAP).
- d) Establish a green building code as part of the new building codes for public and other infrastructure, looking at models that work elsewhere and adapting them to the Trinidad and Tobago context with joint input from the Diaspora and local stakeholders and institutions such as the Trinidad and Tobago Green Building Council (TTGBC).
- e) Devise and implement a clean air policy with joint input from the Diaspora and local stakeholders and institutions to assist in fast-tracking the transitioning of vehicles powered by fossil fuels to those using alternative sources of fuel (electric cars, hybrids, etc.) on a phased basis, with increased incentives than the current offer to conversion and exemptions for certain tax brackets.

- f) Incorporate nationals abroad through joint technical councils to serve in an advisory capacity, giving input as to what is required in associate agencies by developing products at the local level as they already have an understanding of the local context. Foreign-based nationals in the Diaspora would be more aware of the needs of SIDS and micro states than foreign or international consultants.
- g) Utilise the joint technical council to revisit the draft document on a clean energy policy, incorporating a wider body of stakeholders to include the private sector for buy-in. Initiative and insight must come from powerful private sector entities who partner with public sector agencies.
- h) Get government Ministries on board in the recycling effort using the Diaspora to assist in the review and implementation of initiatives as well as the monitoring of systems and implementation of fines, regulatory procedures, research and sharing of resources and information.
- i) Incorporate other entities such as ICare, through the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), the Regional Corporations, SWMCOL, the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA), etc.
- j) Get a greater number of people involved, offering incentives for recycling, repurposing, and upcycling programmes targeting sustainable production and consumption, forming partnerships between Diaspora groups and schools. Visiting nationals can come to the schools to do demonstrations and lectures.
- k) Twin local schools with foreign ones where Trinidad and Tobago nationals are teachers to establish joint recycling programmes. The effort must extend from ECCE level to tertiary education.
- l) Involve the Diaspora in local projects that make recycling a part of every individual's life, with each community having its own coloured bags, so that the community/county gets back the money. There are many ways in which this can be done with proper communication protocols. Promote recycling through community competitions to generate pride.
- m) The Diaspora can be approached to facilitate climate mitigation and adaptation programmes in Trinidad and Tobago. This is a critical element, given the country's commitment to the Paris Agreement through the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) laid out by the Ministry of Planning and Development.

## **11. Diaspora Philanthropy and Volunteering**

Diaspora Philanthropy and Diaspora Volunteering have the capacity to contribute significantly to improving the livelihoods of Trinidadians and Tobagonians at home and abroad. The promotion of social remittances, such as skills transfer, by ensuring the greater mobility of Diaspora experts and/or organisations keen to support development in the country of origin will have a positive

impact for communities in the home country as well as those overseas. An explicit development mandate that meshes with the ideas of the Diaspora will facilitate positive outcomes. However, structures are not currently in place to benefit from philanthropy from a foreign entity. Some key issues that require addressing are naming rights for what is donated, identifying potential donors, shipping and customs clearance, as well as procedures for someone on the ground to receive and manage donated items.

Mentorship is a major issue as representation is lacking for many individuals, especially those living in remote villages who feel disconnected. There is considerable work to be done in the area of awareness on varied topics with small niche groups. People from coastal, far-flung areas will feel they have a “window in the wall,” knowing that the mentor in the Diaspora is from that particular community. Through mentoring, everyone could have access to the same resources. Mentoring also allows for the dispersal of information succinctly, so that everyone can be aware of national issues as a collective.

These initiatives can go a long way in nurturing disaffected youth and surmounting the lack of resources in certain communities. Organic partnerships through mentorship will allow for people to return and give quick seminars during the course of regular visits home. The Diaspora are goodwill ambassadors through their work with church groups, civil society, professional and cultural groups, etc.

**Actions:**

- a) Target the youth Diaspora, pairing them with beacons in society for business, tourism and other projects, in order to pass on heritage, culture, history and instil patriotism through inter-generational volunteering. This will also assist in removing cynicism about contributing among the youth.
- b) Engage the youth of the Diaspora through study abroad programmes, internships and camps, leading the Diaspora in guided activities to have exposure to culture in the homeland first-hand.
- c) Link university students in the Diaspora with local university students for civic-minded projects that promote eco-tourism, employing the youth as guides in tourism sites or in libraries across the country through NALIS. Cultural exchange programmes connect youth in the Diaspora with their heritage. This would tie in with volunteer service and disaster relief - areas that require volunteering.
- d) Promote online volunteering. Establish a process where there is a high degree of accountability, using technology to mentor people in disenfranchised communities. Select at-risk youth for exposure to the transfer of unique, technical skills, social development issues, equity, coping skills, conflict resolution and positive values.

- e) Promote the alignment of donations, equipment and professional services in keeping with national priorities.
- f) Provide and develop financial instruments between the Diaspora and the government so that overseas nationals can contribute to funding projects at national and community levels.
- g) Capitalise on models of mentoring that are already being utilised, replicating them in a way that lessen the feelings of disconnect between people in the communities who are successful and those in the Diaspora.
- h) Facilitate projects in relation to Diaspora members' personal experiences with their home communities (Hometown Associations-HTA) inclusive of waivers to have goods and equipment shipped overseas and expedited clearance for charitable donations from the Diaspora.
- i) Implement small projects involving the Diaspora to ensure quick results, such as having health professionals in the Diaspora volunteer for short periods, do lectures, facilitate workshops, etc. which can play a transformative role in changing people's lives, particularly in rural communities.
- j) Employ growth strategies for networking, using virtual platforms to have global conversations that can bridge the fact that people are scattered and make them more efficient, informing them of societal issues that affect them, helping them to mobilise and educating them on their rights.
- k) Employ public service announcements to do digital story-telling, showcasing the talents and success of our nationals abroad to be aired on public television. The Elite Athletes Programme should also be greater leveraged using local athletes who have had success on a global scale.<sup>13</sup>
- l) Create business incubators in tandem with mentorship. Provide support to groups on the ground for small business development through interactive business courses, so that people can create.
- m) Sensitise people in the homeland to the Diaspora to ensure their continuous presence in training, mentoring, volunteering etc. and not in a sporadic manner.
- n) Create an environment that fosters philanthropy from the Diaspora, such as tax benefits and opening U.S. bank accounts (not-for-profit tax-exempt 501(C)3 organisation) rather than a local U.S. account.
- o) Deploy diplomatic staff to develop and cultivate relationships with major charitable foundations that are funding initiatives in developing countries, specifically the

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<sup>13</sup> e.g. Keshorn Walcott to promote Brand Toco.

Caribbean, in order to place focus on the development needs of Trinidad and Tobago across the spectrum.

## 12. Improved Delivery of Public Services

There needs to be a drastic improvement in the access to and delivery of public services for all citizens. Vision 2030 recognises “ensuring effective and efficient public service delivery, implementation of development interventions and measurement of results” as a major challenge. The Diaspora can play a huge role in the area of public service improvement, tied in to an entire programme based on the nation’s watchwords: Discipline, Production and Tolerance.

The Diaspora can assist by sharing their experiences and certain core values to help develop skills in the homeland. Ordinary working skills are required to be able to function at a better level of efficiency. However, the current system does not permit for nationals either resident or visiting to access services with reasonably timed responses. In fact, the objective should be to provide the same level of service to nationals whether they are resident or living abroad and to make systems more efficient to ensure ease of doing business at home for all citizenry. There has to be greater flexibility in facilitating foreign-based nationals’ ability to get documents renewed in a shorter time-frame. This type of outreach must be available in our infrastructure. The current services cater mainly to people resident in the country and make few allowances for overseas nationals. Operations are therefore archaic and analogue, dependent on originals and hard copies, as documents are not sufficiently digitised or scanned.

Government departments are still not equipped with the latest technology and this in large part, affects efficiency. The Diaspora can play a facilitatory role in making it easy to implement better technology, employing simpler concepts. The Diaspora can become involved in the evaluation of streamlining systems in transport, civil service, health, education and other areas, moving the society from inertia to innovation, as well as raising the bar around competence.

### **Actions:**

- a) Put infrastructure in place to cater to nationals abroad who have a short period of time to do business in the homeland with staff dedicated to Diaspora transactions.
- b) Streamline the way in which services are delivered to citizens that take into account the need for timeliness, transparency and clarity about people’s needs and expectations.
- c) Offer more online services for renewal and first-time applications with full e-payment facilities.
- d) Ensure that the system for the certificate of character is fully digitised to avoid nationals in remote jurisdictions having to use the service the U.S. government provides and international couriers for fingerprints to be sent to Trinidad and Tobago.

- e) Utilise the Diaspora to assist in fixing basic things first, implementing better and simpler systems both online and in person with streamlined, accurate, clear information that expedites the process.
- f) Outline the services the line ministries offer, service charges, administrative procedures and documentation required with precision and accuracy.
- g) Explore the possibility of having nationals abroad contribute to the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) with a view to saving the local pension scheme from bankruptcy.
- h) Lessen bureaucracy and adapt systems that function in host countries, minimising manual transactions through increased digitisation.
- i) Simplify the paperwork and lessen bureaucracy to have documents processed, integrating technology quickly with secure transactions so that any public sector reform can accommodate the Diaspora to access the technology wherever they reside.
- j) Provide seamless systems for renewing of national passports, inclusive of payment methods as some countries no longer accept bank drafts. Online payment facilities must take into account special jurisdictions such as China that require online payment using either WeChat or AliPay only.
- k) Improve customer training for the civil service with input from experts in the homeland and the Diaspora.
- l) Issue a special Diaspora Identity card to nationals which would give them access to bus services at a reduced fee, NEDCO benefits, real estate services such as identifying factory or office space for setting up business, banking services, etc.
- m) Introduce waivers of import duties on goods, machinery, materials and equipment as donations to registered civil society groups in the homeland.
- n) Waive VAT for initial capital investments up to the time of commencement of operations for business start-ups.
- o) Enable online donations to streamline the process for the Diaspora to contribute to disaster relief using reputable channels. Fast-track and streamline the Single Economic Window.
- p) Decentralise information on the respective Embassies' websites, with links to the respective pages for further information such as the Board of Inland Revenue (BIR), taxes, Registrar General's Office, etc.
- q) Incorporate members of the Diaspora in consultations on legislative reform and policy process. Most of the areas under current reform affect them either directly or indirectly: e.g. Amendments to the Companies' Act, Amendments to the Non-Profit Organisation Act, Cybercrime, the Income Tax Amendment Bill, Financial Companies' Amendment Bill, to name just a few.



### 13. Crime and Violence

Combatting crime should be approached at an embryonic stage with a focus on at-risk youth and single-parent homes, to prevent young males from engaging in criminal activity. There are many members of the Diaspora who have such expertise abroad, specialised in cross-cultural communication, frequently doing workshops targeting disadvantaged youth. Adapting the initiatives overseas to a Trinidad and Tobago context will result in Change, Transformation and Transition. The Diaspora can offer an exchange of ideas with different perspectives (Youth with Purpose = Potential).

#### **Actions:**

- a) Utilise members of the Diaspora with experience in crime-fighting and crime reduction techniques in the hostlands, who can adapt these strategies to the local context.
- b) Utilise members of the Diaspora with knowledge of how to build role models into the system, to assist disadvantaged youth in becoming productive members of society, addressing the crisis in leadership, as well as teaching them more self-reliance.
- c) Establish different, creative programmes for youth that keep them engaged, with assistance from the Diaspora in facilitation and financial support.
- d) Source and utilise people in the Diaspora who can consult in gang and youth violence, crime and violence prevention, domestic violence, educating gang members and deportees and assisting them in reinserting themselves back into society. The cultural ideology that supports violence needs to be changed.
- e) Collaborate with the Diaspora on areas that affect both communities at home and abroad, finding joint solutions and policies in areas such as cybercrime, human trafficking, corruption, gang violence and drugs as a joint project in at-risk areas.

#### **Communication Strategy**

The correct channels need to be provided in order to find the appropriate mechanisms to engage and collaborate more effectively with the Diaspora. There is currently no one central place where nationals in the Diaspora can obtain information relevant to them and this remains a huge challenge. People in far-reaching areas need to be incorporated and engaged. There must be exchange with a two-way flow of ideas that inherently opens up avenues for collaboration. The Diaspora pathway needs to be as uncomplicated as possible. There must be clear communication lines in the strategy, so that information can flow smoothly. The Diaspora lamented a lack of consistent support from Embassies and government ministries, therefore improved communication strategies are needed.

## **Actions:**

- a) Utilise virtual platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook groups such as 'Trinis Abroad' to broaden the base, streamline discussions and disseminate information vital to the Diaspora.
- b) Encourage Diaspora associations and groups to register with overseas missions to facilitate dialogue and to be able to corral the Diaspora more easily.
- c) Ensure that communication is established in a professional manner, respecting protocols and eliminating mediocracy.
- d) Allow for cross-fertilisation to take place in the exchange of ideas and practices, while addressing cultural differences to avoid frustration and prevent conflict.
- e) Introduce dedicated newsletters in hard and soft copy at the Overseas Missions, mentioning projects being undertaken, building awareness and making connections, for an exchange of ideas.

## **Engagement Strategy**

The Diaspora policy signals the GoRTT's commitment to broadening the inclusion of the Diaspora formally in nation-building. Without recognition and established gateways to engage with the homeland it would be more difficult for the Diaspora to connect with the homeland. There is an extreme willingness on the part of the Diaspora to give back to the country, however there needs to be a concerted effort to combat resistance on the ground to foreign-based nationals. This is a critical aspect of capitalising on the spirit of goodwill that exists in the Diaspora to mobilise people very easily and seize the opportunities to utilise the tremendous capacity, interests and resources the Diaspora possesses. The policy is intended to formalise ad-hoc engagement strategies and connect people so that they know they are allies.

In order to achieve the activities and actions in the thematic areas outlined in the sections above, there are some enabling factors and initiatives that must be employed that will result in the implementation of ideas with joint steering committees in targeted areas. The government needs to be a facilitator of a platform, not too heavily involved with bureaucratic structures to allow the process to develop organically. The role of the GoRTT is to act as a pathway, bring people together and create opportunity.

## **Relevant Initiatives**

The policy signals the GoRTT's intent, as well as serves to formalise existing activities and ad-hoc arrangements in support of the integration of the non-resident population into national development. The following are relevant initiatives:

- The symbolic as well as tangible **recognition** of outstanding overseas Trinidad and Tobago nationals during the **annual national awards**.
- **Meetings with the Diaspora by government officials** during the course of official overseas travel in coordination with the Overseas Diplomatic Missions to address concerns and receive suggestions and comments from residents abroad, as well as to keep them informed of developments in the homeland.
- The introduction of a flagship event in the form of a **Diaspora Forum** in Trinidad and Tobago to be held every two years to maintain conversations between people in the Diaspora and people at home.
- The establishment of a governing head for all Diaspora bodies connected under one umbrella: **The Federation of Trinidad and Tobago Organisations**.
- **Reform for Trinidad and Tobago Overseas Diplomatic Networks** - The overseas missions have a leadership role in the execution and implementation of the policy and need a strong coordinated approach.
- A dedicated **Website or Diaspora Portal** which provides relevant, updated information to the Diaspora community wherever they may be located.
- A **database of nationals abroad, including a skills bank** and a comprehensive **Diaspora mapping exercise**, by divisions and areas of interest, with pertinent, solid information for use by both the homeland as well as entities in the Diaspora with technical assistance from the IOM.
- The creation of **Diaspora Focal Points** in each overseas mission as well as within the various Diaspora Associations and Organisations who will come together in a Diaspora Council to have their views represented. There shall also be Diaspora Focal Points in each ministry in Trinidad and Tobago
- The creation of a **Diaspora Policy Unit (DPU)** within the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs to coordinate the activities and relationship with Diaspora groups and organisations worldwide.
- A **Diaspora Division** established in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) will be tasked as the major implementing agency for the National Diaspora Policy. The implementation plan gives an indication of how the engagement strategy will be executed by itemising priority policy areas, as well as principal strategies and measures, outlining roles and responsibilities, including supporting agencies and bodies, stating whether any baseline data are available and indicating intended outputs and outcomes.

### Meetings with the Diaspora by Government Officials

Sitting Ministers from Trinidad and Tobago and other high-ranking officials should avail themselves of the opportunity to meet with the Diaspora more frequently while on official state

business<sup>14</sup>. These dialogues could be hosted by the overseas diplomatic network at a centralised venue to ensure maximum participation to inform the Diaspora on matters of state in the homeland and include Q&A sessions. The presence of Ministers at functions addressing the communities overseas would attract more involvement on the part of the Diaspora in homeland affairs. These engagement sessions in metropolitan cities with government representations, in addition to socialising and meeting other nationals, broaden the context for engagement in the Diaspora.

### **Diaspora Forum or Conference**

A Diaspora conference can bring two parts of a whole together. The Forum should include a set agenda, with identifiable goals and objectives. Influencers from the Diaspora and at home can facilitate the conference, serving as a bridge. A wide range of interest groups needs to be engaged, such as cultural groups, medical groups, educational bodies, the business and private sector, exporters, scientists, hoteliers, civil society and the overseas missions can spearhead meetings with these groups that will help in the branding, cultural and creative development process, as well as lead to overall growth and development.

In preparation for the Diaspora Forum, a series of smaller events bringing together people in the same area could meet organically around similar interests, in targeted industries, with a strong focus on innovation and entrepreneurship before staging a larger event. A Diaspora Trade Expo is important for opening up diaspora markets. The relationship should be symbiotic:- opening doors to goods and services from Trinidad and Tobago, looking at investment opportunities, etc.

### **The Federation of Trinidad and Tobago Organisations**

Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora groups have traditionally been disconnected, operating in isolation one from another. These organisations are already active on the ground but need to be coordinated and managed in a structured way. The Federation of Trinidad and Tobago Organisations is an umbrella group that once connected the various associations. Such a Federation has the potential to organise conferences, set goals, identify problems and solutions, share information and ideas to assist in the mobilisation of the Diaspora. Overseas missions through structured engagement via an alliance of Diaspora organisations could facilitate meetings with the various Diaspora networks in the Federation and manage conflict, engaging all the groups equally. With more structured support from the Missions, there could also be collaboration on projects or initiatives.

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<sup>14</sup> Government officials from various administrations have met with nationals in the Diaspora, however it needs to be a more frequent initiative. Virtual meetings can be organised due to a reduction in travel and post-pandemic.s

Given the fact that more established Diaspora organisations have an ageing membership, the Federation provides an opportunity to engage youth. The engagement strategy targeting a younger demographic is important to also revitalise Diaspora groups that have a longer existence, by rehabilitating them and creating new initiatives, using more effective communication strategies through virtual platforms and social media. A day of cultural engagement in various jurisdictions where there are sizeable Trinidad and Tobago communities, with a strong focus on the youth Diaspora will serve as a basis to solidify connections to the homeland and garner interest in making contributions.

By revitalising the Federation, once it functions in a cohesive, vibrant manner, it will allow for Diaspora groups to have more structure, thereby making them more efficient. Diaspora groups will be encouraged to register their information with their nearest diplomatic representation to ensure effective communication and to promote and participate fully in events in the community. There will be set parameters for organisations to operate, such as reporting changes in terms of the composition of the Executive to the respective Consulate or Embassy for inclusion in the virtual interface.

Alumni associations should also be utilised for outreach to members of the Diaspora in far-reaching areas and to tap into events in Diasporic communities. They are already organised through various chapters across a great geographical spread. These associations should also be listed along with Carnival Organising Committees and any other cultural/civic or religious groups seeking the interests of Trinidad and Tobago.

### **A Diaspora Portal**

Another key initiative is a Diaspora portal<sup>15</sup> that can provide all relevant information to Trinidad and Tobago communities abroad, particularly for those desirous of doing business in the homeland or to engage people at home by highlighting events in Diaspora communities. The Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation will have a critical role to play in this process. It is imperative that the website contain the following relevant information: a full list of services available to the Diaspora online, the minimum requirements, cost, payment procedures, how long the process will take for first-time applications or renewal of key documents. The more services are offered electronically, the less recourse nationals will have to physically go into overseas missions.

Another critical aspect of the portal's utility is a getting-to-know segment and short videos, highlighting the achievements and resources available in the Diaspora. Through this platform,

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<sup>15</sup> Informants at the stakeholder workshops suggested the domain name TTDiaspora.com

members could send greetings back home via short video messages and submissions on the day of National Awards, Independence Day, Republic Day and other days of national importance.

The website interface must be user-friendly and information must be presented in a clear, simplified manner. This would greatly influence how information is distributed and disseminated. A chat box or call centre would also further facilitate interaction with people online.

Many Trinbagonians in the Diaspora have family in the homeland and are desirous of supporting local businesses. The portal could also function as a directory of goods and services, with facilities for e-payment, so that the Diaspora is cognisant of local businesses they can support. There should be linkages to reciprocal websites, particularly for tourism, trade and investment.

### **A Comprehensive Diaspora Mapping Exercise and Database, including a Skills Bank**

Currently, there is neither a comprehensive database of professional, skilled and semi-skilled Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora, nor an official online or offline platform where individuals, Diaspora associations and businesses can communicate, network, form partnerships, exchange ideas, share expertise and best practice, as well as support one another.

A lack of interactive platforms denies the Diaspora the opportunity to participate in development plans at home. The digital platform would promote dialogue and action on economic development in Trinidad and Tobago. The network, once established, would play a significant role in contributing to growth in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as consolidate the country's global reputation.

A database of resources is required to access data on the skills, expertise and resources of organisations, and individuals who are influential in the Diaspora so that they can be better leveraged. The database could enhance diaspora interaction and with a skills bank, through filtered information, listing people's area of expertise, in addition to details on their requirements to return to Trinidad and Tobago (incentives, remuneration, resource availability), and in what capacity (short-term, long-term contract, mentor, visiting professional, etc).

A comprehensive mapping exercise with involvement from the overseas missions will permit the GoRTT to know what sort of services the Diaspora accesses, wherever they may be located. Diaspora mapping is essential to capture the different levels and categories of people in the Diaspora, such as the professionals and academics, or skilled nationals in the Upper Stratum.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Term by Cesari (2002) referring to the highly skilled.

A skills database for nationals living abroad, would also be useful in the event of a national emergency to be able to source nationals abroad with the requisite skills to assist the homeland. A primary concern shall be populating the database with the technical assistance of the IOM. Improved resources and active engagement can extend the database which would help in locating people to be able to draw upon them as a resource.

The Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development in Trinidad and Tobago could be a conduit for a skills bank, targeting returning nationals. Additional assistance could be provided through the Central Statistical Office (CSO) under the Ministry of Planning and Development. A partnership can be created between the Ministry of Education (Scholarship Division) and the Ministry of Labour in order to create a digital database of scholarship winners and target these skills. Also partnerships with Ministries and state agencies in charge of documenting foreign-based nationals will be required in order to create a digital database of skills.

In the long-term, data collection methods on nationals abroad for inclusion in the Housing and Population Census in the National Census should be strengthened. Partnering with institutions of higher learning could also assist in filling data collection gaps, e.g. UWI, to ensure greater use of human resources available. Creating common groups and collecting formal data on nationals living in Europe, would have to conform to the Global Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This is an EU regulation that carries penalties and special regulations on how data are gathered and various protection requirements.

### **Diaspora Policy Unit (DPU)**

A Diaspora Policy Unit (DPU) functioning within the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs (MFCA) shall coordinate the activities and relationship with Diaspora groups and organisations worldwide by liaising directly with the overseas diplomatic network. The DPU will be used in tandem with the main implementing agency, the Diaspora Division, to be established in the Office of the Prime Minister. The DPU would require dedicated staff to ensure that the Unit serves as a conduit of information between the Diaspora and the MFCA through its Embassies and Consulates. The principal staffing requirements include a Unit Head, Research Staff and a Liaison Officer.

Some of the key roles of the unit include:

- Liaising directly with the Diaspora Division in the OPM for the overall execution on the National Diaspora Policy;
- Liaising directly with overseas Diplomatic and Consular Missions as well as with established Diaspora associations for the channelling of information to Trinidadians and Tobagonians residing abroad;
- Liaising directly with Diaspora Focal Points in other government ministries, serving as an intermediary between government officials and the Diaspora;

- Building networks between the Diaspora and Trinidad and Tobago in areas that will stimulate socio-economic growth;
- Assisting returnees with the resettlement process by providing relevant and up-to-date information;
- Assisting visiting nationals with administrative and other problems while sojourning in the homeland.

This Division can seek to establish a network of Diaspora Focal Points in each Ministry that can advise on technical matters relating to the areas under the respective Ministry's portfolio.

### **Reform for Trinidad and Tobago Overseas Diplomatic Network**

The Diplomatic Network has to be the central hub that serves as the fulcrum to engage the Diaspora at all levels. Missions have to be central in supporting the Diaspora Organisations, as well as become a primary dialogue mechanism and serve as a connecting point. The role of the country's overseas diplomatic representation will therefore have to be expanded.

In order to guarantee the successful execution of the National Diaspora Policy (NDP), one of the key lynchpins of the implementation process lies in reform of the Overseas Diplomatic Network. This would entail the GoRTT's commitment to expanding the role of its Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates beyond the remit of the provision of consular services to include a wide range of activities related to the implementation of the NDP, elaborated below:

#### **OUTREACH - Actions:**

- a) The Overseas Diplomatic Network has a crucial role to play in maintaining a healthy relationship between the homeland and the Diaspora. In this regard, the organising of social functions and attendance at cultural, sporting, business or other gatherings in Trinidadian and Tobagonian communities by diplomatic heads are vital to nurturing the homeland-Diaspora relationship.
- b) These events, hosted by the Overseas Missions could assist in the insertion of newly-arrived Trinidadians and Tobagonians, by creating relationships, networking and providing a hub or point of contact. These social platforms could provide an incentive to nationals to register and feel connected to the homeland while immersed in Trinbagonian culture and showcasing food and beverages from the home country.
- c) In addition to socio-cultural events, more outreach is needed to the very people the Missions are required to serve, ensuring a rich, beneficial, intellectual exchange of ideas, building a collective brain trust that should be shared with the Diaspora based on the information the Diplomatic Network already possesses.
- d) Key speakers and facilitators should be invited to regularly hold conversations, inspirational talks, lectures, substantive workshops and organise webinars, e.g. financial



planning seminars for nationals in general, teaching the Diaspora about the tax system in the respective jurisdictions, informing them about sending money back home, or even on boosting credit in the countries in which they reside, etc.

- e) Increase opportunities for structured dialogue among Diaspora members and Missions to discuss matters critical to Diaspora integration and welfare, including changes to legislation in the homeland and the passing of bills which will impact them directly or their families left behind.
- f) Ensure through Diaspora-friendly outreach programmes that nationals abroad systematically register with diplomatic representations and not just in time of emergency or when they require assistance.
- g) Increase outreach to nationals in outlying countries where there are fewer Trinbagonians, particularly for assistance in the areas of education, health, science and technology, as well as trade and investment, to help build more administrative and technical capacity in certain areas.
- h) Increase the use of technology to enable virtual interface between Diaspora and government representatives on a regular basis. Have an online presence for virtual meetings.
- i) Produce targeted information and news for communities in the Diaspora through traditional print media and virtual platforms to cater to all demographics.
- j) Work with Diaspora groups in the Federation of Trinidad and Tobago Organisations to identify well-known leaders and key points of contact in the community to get measures implemented.
- k) Ensure that there are cultural attachés who provide required concierge services. Diplomatic Missions are usually very involved in the arts. Trade in services is also very important, requiring people with expertise. Commercial or trade attachés with expanded roles, can help facilitate services export, once formalised structures are put in place.
- l) Provide more active representation based on nationals' needs according to the jurisdiction. Facilitate and integrate the financial services in use in the Far East to serve nationals in the Diaspora using WeChat or Alipay, the two mobile financial services used in China. In fact, the Embassy in Beijing should create an official online WeChat account to integrate the services already available to nationals for wire transfers and accessing foreign exchange to avoid physical displacement.

#### **RESOURCES - Actions:**

In order to ensure that the Overseas Diplomatic Network functions in a Diaspora-centred manner, the following issues must be priority:

- a) Staff shortages and appointments must be addressed. Proper staffing is required to oversee and sustain new initiatives as part of the outreach. Existing staff should not be

co-opted to execute actions identified above, in addition to performing their current duties.

- b) Limitations in human resource staffing must be overcome, particularly as each Overseas Mission should have a Diaspora Focal Point to liaise directly with Diaspora groups and individuals, in addition to the DPU at the MFCA. Staff shortages make it difficult to do international promotions, branding and marketing development.
- c) Missions need to be given the financial resources, the leeway and technical capability to help and provide support to Diaspora individuals, groups and business-owners. The Missions require a more formal structure that has the power to execute, to move quickly when there is an opportunity and additional expertise to operate at a more optimum level. Different protocols are required in order to respond to potential business opportunities in tourism, trade and investment, by changing the current operating paradigm.
- d) There is a need to look at the current latitude that the Missions have and revise existing systems. There must be an alternative for budgetary issues, such as getting approvals to spend small sums of money.
- e) More rigorous training, using a whole of government approach for all Missions staff is required to ensure that they can better engage members of the public in the Diaspora and that they are equipped with relevant, reliable, updated information. There should be in-house training and succession planning for members of the missions who leave to share institutional knowledge.
- f) Sensitivity training is also necessary to define and refine the scope of what the Missions should provide.
- g) Finally, mandatory Diaspora training should be required as part of pre-posting training in order to adequately serve nationals abroad.

#### **ORGANISATION - Actions:**

The Overseas Diplomatic Network must undergo drastic reform in order to operationalise the NDP. This includes expanding the ability of the Diplomatic Missions to have the authority to act wherever opportunities are presented. The hub of power must be replicated to the other missions.

- a) There must be a significant reduction of bureaucracy and a simplification of operating systems to maximise efficiency in engaging the Diaspora both in the homeland at the MFCA and through the Missions in the Diaspora. Opportunities are currently lost because of bureaucratic hurdles.
- b) In order to seize opportunities in real time, individual Missions should have their own social media pages/newsletters, with a Diaspora-friendly focus. Page content should be more engaging and not only administrative in focus.

- c) Consular policy needs to be strengthened so that Missions can deal with medical emergencies when they arise, with assistance from professional associations and groups in the Diaspora.
- d) Diaspora Focal Points will interact with each other and the focal points from identified Diaspora Associations as part of a Diaspora Council for engagement strategies at the national level.

## Immigration Reform

Certain aspects of immigration reform need to be embedded into the NDP to ensure its successful implementation. These include legislative reform, training and appointment procedures, and the general delivery of service to the public. With regard to immigration law, the Immigration Act, revised in 1974 and 1976 is outdated. It does not take into account new trends. Citizenship policies also need to be reviewed to eliminate discrimination of nationals who acquire citizenship by descent as opposed to citizenship by birth.

There must be a review of criteria for recruitment and appointments at the Immigration Department. A much greater emphasis must be placed on sensitivity training. Part of the reason why this is lacking, resides in the current approach to recruitment as well as the level of training. There has been no formal training for officers in the past two-three years. Immigration Officers must already be in the public service with the requisite skills and criteria in order to be appointed. This is seen as a promotional tool, previously subject to an interview and screening from both the Public Service Commission and Immigration. Changes in procedure have negatively impacted the public image of immigration officers and the reception nationals are subjected to at points of entry. The initial screening process which has been stopped has resulted in a change in attitude and behaviour in the officers recruited. Procedures for appointment need to be revisited to ensure that the six-week intensive training programme is mandatory and that there is not solely reliance on learning the laws and policies of the land. A different level of qualifications for Immigration Officers should be introduced. Entry level requirements should include a first degree and customer service and other training should be streamlined as part of the strategy to improve the tourism product.

Conflict management training should be an additional requirement. Officers need to be fully informed, well-trained in dealing with the travelling public and should have the requisite supervisory support. Currently there is no comprehensive approach to documenting the list of problems and challenges most often encountered, categorising them into addressable areas. Skillsets should be matched to various levels, so that there would be a triage for officers better suited to enforcement while others may be identified for customer interface. There needs to be a retraining of the mind and an adjustment of attitude. Empathy and communication strategies must be adaptable based on various customer segments. Effective Customer Service training

programmes such as ‘Service Begins With Me’ provided training to the public sector with mixed groups across the various ministries. There should be more immersion, looking at trends and providing training for the officers accordingly. This is an area where the Diaspora could assist, in adapting training programmes and customer service training to suit our local context.

**Actions:**

- a) Reduce passport renewal wait times for nationals overseas by introducing new procedures.
- b) Issue a Diaspora Identity Card to nationals residing abroad to facilitate and fast-track entry at Immigration check points.
- c) Make machine readable passport renewal forms more accessible and user-friendly in terms of format.
- d) Provide training in customer service for Immigration Officers so that they can identify with the customers/public.
- e) Reintroduce infomercials/tutorials, with simulations showing the public how to download forms and access the passport renewal system so that persons abroad can understand the process.
- f) Address data collection issues by introducing a centralised unit for data, research and policy development.
- g) Ensure that website information is updated and maintained as part of the mandate for the national plan of digitisation.

### **Implementation Strategy**

The implementation of the policy is informed by collected recommendations from stakeholders, good practices in engagement strategies and alignment with cross-cutting issues and sustainable development imperatives applicable to Trinidad and Tobago. Its successful implementation is premised on concerted efforts of all the stakeholders and entities working in tandem as outlined in the policy.

### **Implementation Agency**

A government agency at the helm is needed to manage the relationship between the Diaspora and local stakeholders that implement the National Diaspora Policy. It is proposed that a Diaspora Division be established in the Office of the Prime Minister to operationalise the NDP. It will serve as a facilitatory mechanism to create and sustain an efficient and effective system for communication, monitoring and analysis.

The NDP must be more than a ministerial policy, set up by Parliamentary Act. For institutional support, it shall therefore be subject to Cabinet approval and passed in both Houses of

Parliament. In order to secure broad non-partisan public process, it should be embedded institutionally. In this regard, the establishment of the Diaspora Division in the OPM, will give the policy more dynamism and credibility. A division, as opposed to a unit, will ensure better resource allocations with proper recruitment and requisite training for staff.

### **Institutional Arrangements**

Whilst the MFCA was tasked with oversight for the formation of the National Diaspora Policy, the Ministry of Planning and Development shall be the designated ministry for the implementation of the policy, if the NDP is meant to feed directly into Vision 2030 and other relevant national policies and strategies. The Ministry of Planning and Development<sup>17</sup> is a natural fit for operationalising the NDP, since it is the lead ministry for national development based on the following 4 (four) pillars:

- 1) Economic development
- 2) Social development
- 3) Spatial development and
- 4) Environmental development.

These four overarching areas are included in the NDP.

The MFCA will have a pivotal role to play in the implementation of the NDP, as it is the lead ministry with responsibility for the Diaspora. It will therefore be critical to serving as a conduit for engaging overseas nationals through its Diplomatic Missions abroad. On this basis, a Diaspora Policy Unit (DPU) shall be created within the MFCA. Each government ministry shall have a Diaspora Focal point to facilitate initiatives in the work programme associated with the NDP.

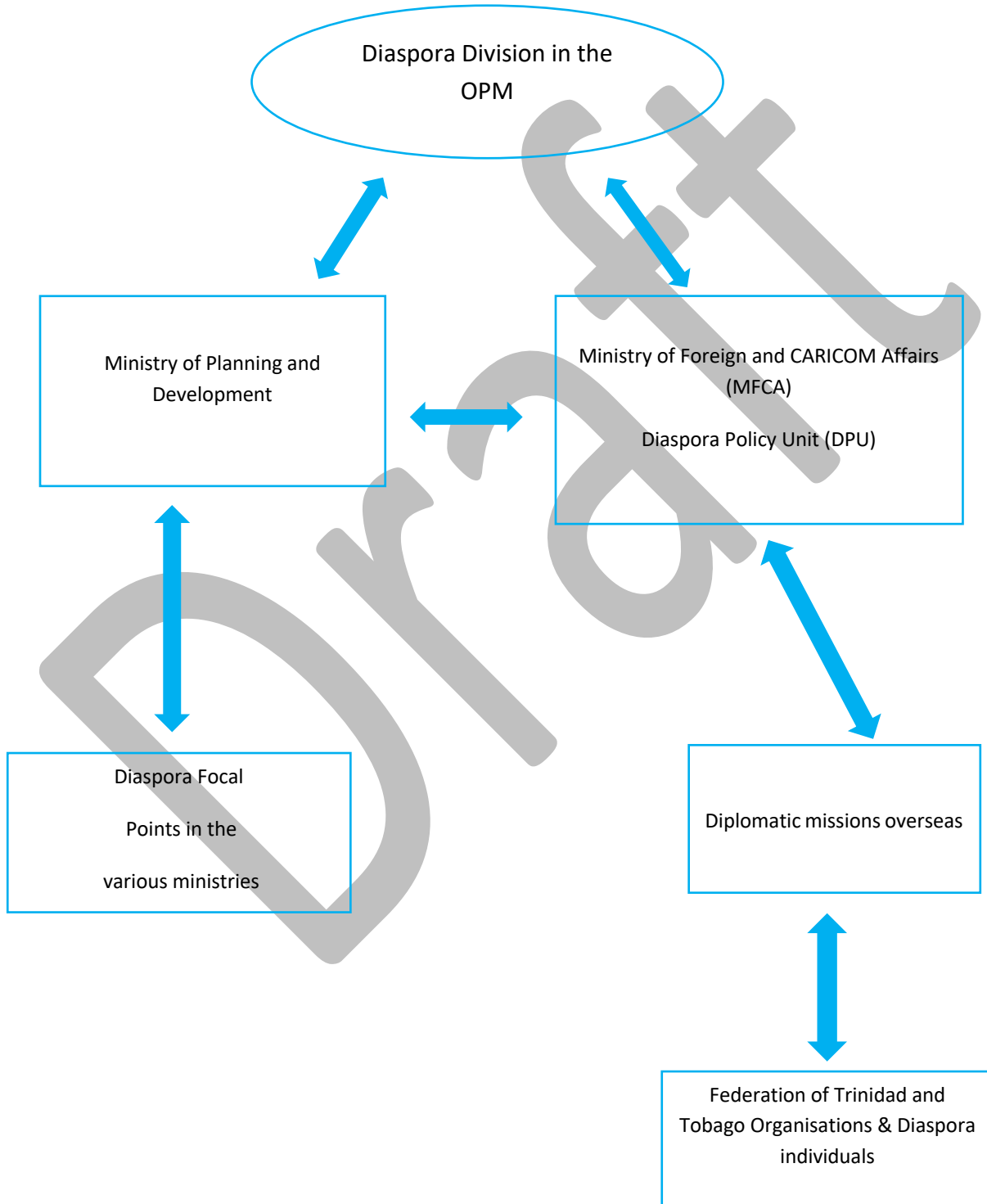
The DPU will liaise with its Network of Diplomatic Missions Overseas. Diaspora associations and groups registered with the Missions abroad will be represented by an umbrella organisation, the Federation of Trinidad and Tobago Organisations.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.planning.gov.tt/content/about>

The coordination and implementation structure of the NDP is as follows:

Fig. 2 Institutional Framework for Implementation of the NDP



The NDP shall be operationalised in 3 (phases) over a period of 5 (five) years.

PHASES	ACTIVITIES	TIME-FRAME
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing the Diaspora Division in the OPM</li> <li>• Establishing the DPU in the MFCA</li> <li>• Designating Diaspora Focal Points in the respective ministries</li> <li>• Operationalising the Federation of Trinidad and Tobago Organisations</li> <li>• Identifying activities and setting the work programme in alignment with national priorities (Vision 2030 and Roadmap to Recovery Report) in selected thematic areas in the NDP</li> <li>• Training for DPU staff, Diaspora Focal Points across ministries and overseas diplomatic missions staff</li> </ul>	Year One
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a Diaspora portal</li> <li>• Establish a skills database</li> <li>• Pilot projects ongoing</li> <li>• Begin planning for Diaspora Forum</li> <li>• Mid-year Review</li> </ul>	Years Two-Three
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot projects ongoing</li> <li>• Hold Diaspora Forum</li> <li>• Diaspora projects end in the final year</li> </ul>	Years Four-Five

The actions under the 13 (thirteen) thematic areas are extremely broad but in the current environment can be prioritised in alignment with the most critical areas identified by the Roadmap to Recovery Report. It provides for engagement with the Diaspora, given the precarious socio-economic conditions that prevail as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Some of the initiatives in the aforementioned report can be expanded to include Diaspora involvement for more medium to long-term sustainability and operationalised through the Diaspora Division. To narrow the preliminary scope of activities by the Diaspora Division, the areas of overlap in both reports shall be given priority. Activities in the thematic areas in the NDP will be selected according to those which meet the following criteria:

- 1) Expanding the Scope and Focus of Social Protection Programmes with the accent on social protection for the most vulnerable groups (at-risk children, youth and women);
- 2) Business creation-generating sustainable employment, with new investment opportunities emanating from the Diaspora;
- 3) Digitisation and improvement in the delivery of public and social services;
- 4) Deepening the involvement of Civil Society Organisations in the Delivery of Social Protection Programmes;
- 5) Agriculture: Increasing Production to Reduce Dependence on Imported Food and Inputs;
- 6) Sustaining Economic Activity in Energy and Energy-Related Industries;
- 7) Boosting Local Tourism.

### **Monitoring and Evaluating**

The Ministry of Planning and Development, shall, on a regular basis, monitor progress of the implementation of the NDP. The Ministry shall facilitate development of indicators for the evaluation of activities of the priority areas elaborated in the Implementation Plan.

### **Review of the Policy**

The Ministry of Planning and Development shall ensure that the policy be both responsive and reflexive to rapidly-evolving situations, in particular to Covid-19. The Ministry is well situated to ensure collaboration in areas of overlap in the implementation of activities identified in the Roadmap for Recovery Report to avoid duplication of efforts. The policy shall be reviewed every 5 (five) years, with a mid-term review after a two and a half year period during the initial phase of implementation.

The Implementation Plan will follow the guidelines from the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual (July 2011). The Implementation Plan outlines how the draft diaspora policy will be operationalised.



Strategic Programme	Priority Policy Area 1. Formalise Relationship with the Diaspora and Increase Outreach						
Expected Impact	Increased interaction and involvement with overseas communities resulting in greater socio-economic contributions						
	Principal Strategies & Measures	Performance Indicator (Outcomes)	Performance Indicator (Outputs)	Baseline Data	Lead Organisation	Support	
O1. To facilitate better management of the Diaspora	<p><b>S1. Creation of a Diaspora Policy Unit (DPU) within the MFCA</b></p> <p>Allow for direct engagement with the Diaspora through the Overseas Missions</p>	Increased efficiency in responding to the needs of the Diaspora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Liaison with the Diaspora Division</li> </ul>	No baseline data available as this has not been in focus to date	Ministry of Planning and Development, followed by the MFCA	Diaspora Division	
O2. Creation of an Implementing Agency to execute National Diaspora Policy	<p><b>S2. Diaspora Division is established within the Office of the Prime Minister</b></p>	Implement, Monitor and Evaluate prescribed policy actions and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review process every two years.</li> <li>- Identify Diaspora Focal Points in each ministry to ensure a whole of government approach to implementing the National Diaspora Policy</li> </ul>	No precedent for a Division of this nature	Office of the Prime Minister		

Strategic Programme	<b>Priority Policy Area 1. Formalise Relationship with the Diaspora and Increase Outreach</b>						
Expected Impact	Increased interaction and involvement with overseas communities resulting in greater socio-economic contributions						
	<b>Principal Strategies &amp; Measures</b>	<b>Performance Indicator (Outcomes)</b>	<b>Performance Indicator (Outputs)</b>	<b>Baseline Data</b>	<b>Lead Organisation</b>	<b>Support</b>	
<b>O3. To formally recognise the Diaspora through enhanced engagement with Overseas Missions</b>	<b>S3. Operationalise the Federation of Trinidad and Tobago Organisations</b>  Collaborate with Diaspora associations registered with overseas missions, bringing the various groups under one umbrella	A structured mechanism is created to promote dialogue between the GoRTT and the Diaspora with an enhanced role for the Overseas Missions	- Diaspora Portal and MFCA website to include listing of associations and groups by jurisdiction	Combine information from Overseas Missions Alumni Associations, cultural and other groups in preparation for comprehensive diaspora mapping exercise	Diaspora Division and MFCA-Diaspora Policy Unit	ExporTT	
<b>O4. To provide a forum for members of the Diaspora to interact and contribute to development in the homeland</b>	<b>S4. Diaspora Forum hosted in Trinidad and Tobago</b>  Begin with smaller events bringing local and foreign-based stakeholders together in Trade, Tourism, Health, Culture, Education and Energy	A structured mechanism is created to facilitate joint collaboration in work on developmental challenges and derive solutions in identified targeted areas	- Individual meetings in the targeted areas take place in the homeland at various periods throughout the year to form a work programme that feeds into larger Diaspora Forum	Build on existing methods previously utilised by Diaspora Organisations, as well as a Trade Expo Model such as the TIC Convention under the Ministry of Trade and Industry	Diaspora Division and MFCA-Diaspora Policy Unit	Relevant line Ministries and state agencies such as InvesTT, ExporTT, CreativeTT, Tourism bodies, the private sector and Business Chambers	

	in preparation for a larger event						
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Strategic Programme	Priority Policy Area 2. Facilitate the Development of a central online hub that connects all the Diaspora groups with the government/Creation of a skills bank and comprehensive Diaspora mapping						
Expected Impact	Improved communication between the Diaspora and the public and private sectors						
Objective	Principal Strategies & Measures	Performance Indicator (Outcomes)	Performance Indicator (Outputs)	Baseline Data	Lead Organisation	Support	
O5. To provide relevant, reliable, up-to-date information to the Diaspora community	S1. Develop a specialised website or portal that connects all institutions offering Diaspora-related services (TTDiaspora.com)	Lobby with public and private institutions to provide updated information to the Diaspora on their products and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A user-friendly portal with relevant information and links to online services are provided.</li> <li>- Short videos can highlight success stories in the Diaspora, as well as offer infomercials/tutorials on how to apply for documents online</li> </ul>	No current online platform offers all this information, but the MFCA website is a starting point	MFCA- through its website and IT Department, DPU, Diaspora Division, Overseas Missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation and Ministry of Planning and Development, ttConnect</li> </ul>	

Strategic Programme	Priority Policy Area 2. Facilitate the Development of a central online hub that connects all the Diaspora groups with the government/Creation of a skills bank and comprehensive Diaspora mapping						
Expected Impact	Improved communication between the Diaspora and the public and private sectors						
Objective	Principal Strategies & Measures	Performance Indicator (Outcomes)	Performance Indicator (Outputs)	Baseline Data	Lead Organisation	Support	
O6. To increase knowledge of where nationals overseas are located and the level of skills they possess in various fields	<b>S2. Creation of a skills bank and Comprehensive Diaspora mapping exercise</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage the IOM with the technical capacity to collect and manage data</li> <li>- Enhance networking between Diaspora professionals, skilled personnel and their homeland counterparts</li> </ul>	Institute a talent register/network for nationals in the Diaspora, so that their skills can be drawn upon for business opportunities, consultancies, emergencies, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diaspora Skills Map and Engagement</li> <li>- A database is created with a listing of the Diaspora's areas of expertise for use by entities in the homeland</li> <li>- Data are collected and profiles are compiled of highly-skilled professionals and business and other associations</li> </ul>	Limited information exists without any central repository	IOM with MFCA and Overseas Missions	Diaspora Organisations, Alumni Associations, Sporting and Cultural groups, Carnival Organising Committees, Business and Professional Groups, Social Media Platforms e.g. Trinis Abroad and other similar digital platforms	

Strategic Programme	Priority Policy Area 3. Diaspora Direct Investment and Mobilisation of Diaspora Savings						
Expected Impact	Ensure creation of a conducive environment to encourage Diaspora Direct Investment						
Objective	Principal Strategies & Measures	Performance Indicator (Outcomes)	Performance Indicator (Outputs)	Baseline Data	Lead Organisation	Support	
<b>O8. To promote and attract Foreign Direct Investments from the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora</b>	<b>S1. Undertake reforms on land ownership and Citizenship Rights</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop incentives for Trinidad and Tobago investors from abroad</li> <li>- Conduct awareness campaigns on business opportunities available in Trinidad and Tobago</li> </ul>	<p>Focus of possible areas for trade and investment is refined by leveraging the Diaspora</p> <p>A Diaspora Fund for economic development (like a UTC foreign investment fund) can have a diverse portfolio and accrue interest for the benefit of national/Diaspora programmes and activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discriminatory issues regarding citizenship and land ownership are addressed.</li> <li>- Establishment of a public-private partnership Diaspora fund for investment projects</li> <li>- Diaspora investors enter into joint ventures with local business operators</li> </ul>	<p>Precedence with InvestTT and ExportTT mechanisms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MFCA and line Ministries such as Legal Affairs, Ministry of National Security Private Sector, Diaspora Associations</li> </ul>	<p>InvestTT and ExportTT, Banking sector</p>	

Strategic Programme	Priority Policy Area 4. Brain Circulation, Knowledge, Skills and Virtual Transfer					
Expected Impact	Promote formation of and networking of Professional Associations including Scientific Knowledge Networks for domestic and Diaspora Communities					
Objective	Principal Strategies & Measures	Performance Indicator (Outcomes)	Performance Indicator (Outputs)	Baseline Data	Lead Organisation	Support
O11. To combat brain drain by creating brain gain	S1. Organise Professional Networks using the Trinidad and Tobago Federation of Organisations as a platform for mobilisation	Professional networks identified and registered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint councils are formed with counterparts in the homeland</li> <li>- Engagement in projects and programmes that feed into National Development Strategy</li> <li>- Exchange programmes and partnerships formed</li> </ul>	- No networks in existence	DPU-MFCA, Diaspora Division, Overseas Missions, Trinidad and Tobago Federation of Organisations	Line Ministries

Strategic Programme	Priority Policy Area 4. Brain Circulation, Knowledge, Skills and Virtual Transfer					
Expected Impact	Promote formation of and networking of Professional Associations including Scientific Knowledge Networks for domestic and Diaspora Communities					
Objective	Principal Strategies & Measures	Performance Indicator (Outcomes)	Performance Indicator (Outputs)	Baseline Data	Lead Organisation	Support
<b>O 12.To encourage and support return migration of highly skilled professionals</b>	<b>S 2. Develop and strengthen existing initiatives to attract and encourage temporary and permanent return migration of highly skilled professionals</b>	Opportunities for engagement of the highly skilled professionals developed	- Number of highly skilled professionals attracted	- Ministry of Health has done work in this area	MFCA and respective line ministries, Overseas Missions	Diaspora Associations



Strategic Programme	Priority Policy Area 5. Financial Remittances					
Expected Impact	Increase financial remittances by ensuring transaction costs are reduced					
Objective	Principal Strategies & Measures	Performance Indicator (Outcomes)	Performance Indicator (Outputs)	Baseline Data	Lead Organisation	Support
<b>O12. To ensure that barriers to enter into remittance business are reduced in order to encourage competition and reduce transaction costs</b>	<b>S1. Monetary reforms and exploration of non-traditional avenues for remittances in consultation with stakeholders</b>	<b>Monetary reforms are undertaken</b>	- Revised monetary policies	- Limited industry data collection and analysis mechanism exists	- Ministry of Finance with Central Bank and other financial institutions, Diaspora bodies	Academia-Department of Economics (UWI)
<b>O13. To encourage the Diaspora to invest in cost effective money transfer</b>	<b>S2. Ensure that Foreign Exchange regulations promote innovative financial products that encourage the Diaspora to invest in cost effective money transfer business operations</b>	- Foreign Exchange regulations reformed - Diaspora Investment/business in money transfer supported	- Number of reforms undertaken - Number of investments/businesses in money transfers made		- Ministry of Finance with Central Bank and other financial institutions, Diaspora bodies	Academia-Department of Economics (UWI)

Strategic Programme	Priority Policy Area 6. Supporting the Diaspora					
Expected Impact	Improve awareness among Trinidadians and Tobagonians in the Diaspora on the availability of consular services and the role of Missions abroad					
Objective	Principal Strategies & Measures	Performance Indicator (Outcomes)	Performance Indicator (Outputs)	Baseline Data	Lead Organisation	Support
<b>O14. To encourage the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora to make better use of consular services through the existing Diplomatic Network abroad</b>	<b>S1. Improve awareness of consular service among members of the Diaspora</b> - Improve Outreach to Diaspora	- Guidelines on consular service provided.	- Consular service guidelines provided. - Regular newsletters and information briefs provided - Incorporate use of Diaspora Portal to disseminate info to Diaspora - Updated MFCA website and greater use of social media to connect with Diaspora	Communication strategy is applied and enhanced.	MFCA-DPU, Overseas Missions	Federation of Trinidad and Tobago Organisations

Strategic Programme	Priority Policy Area 7. Ensure that Trinidad and Tobago Missions are empowered to effectively support Diaspora needs					
Expected Impact	Diaspora needs are supported and communication/engagement is greatly enhanced					
Objective	Principal Strategies & Measures	Performance Indicator (Outcomes)	Performance Indicator (Outputs)	Baseline Data	Lead Organisation	Support
O14. To effectively respond to the needs and challenges facing the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora	S1. Address staff shortages and provide enhanced technical and financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better service provided to Diaspora</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Missions are fully staffed.</li> <li>- Funds are allocated to support the Diaspora in activities and programmes.</li> <li>- The DPU is created in the MFCA.</li> </ul>	Review of functions and output/performance should be done.	MFCA-DPU, Overseas Missions	

Strategic Programme	<b>Priority Policy Area 8. Encourage Diaspora Philanthropy and Diaspora Volunteerism</b>					
Expected Impact	Diaspora contributes to socio-economic development through social remittances, Hometown Associations, volunteerism and charitable work					
Objective	Principal Strategies & Measures	Performance Indicator (Outcomes)	Performance Indicator (Outputs)	Baseline Data	Lead Organisation	Support
<b>O14. To promote the spirit of volunteerism and philanthropy among the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora</b>	<b>S1. Creative initiatives and volunteer programmes for Diaspora engagement Development incentives that would attract the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage the youth in the Diaspora to become involved in projects in the Homeland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partnerships are formed between NGOs on the ground and individuals and groups in the Diaspora.</li> <li>- Hometown Associations are formed.</li> <li>- The remit of Alumni Associations is expanded.</li> <li>- More NGOs are registered in the Homeland.</li> </ul>	List of NGOs exists and legislation is being reviewed	MFCA-DPU, Overseas Missions, Diaspora Associations and other groups in the Diaspora	Civil Society, Focal point in the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

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