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DIASPORA-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS: THE ROLE OF ICT

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ABSTRACT: While a solid body of research exists on the positive economic impact of Diasporas, less attention has been paid concerning the potential role of Diasporas as meaningful change agents in the social, cultural and intellectual aspects of Development in a nation. This paper examines the successful use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and other Knowledge Management (KM) techniques by some Diasporas. ICT and KM are not only tools used to bring together members of a Diaspora, but can act as mechanisms that in turn have impact upon the political, social, cultural and economic fabric of the "mother" nation.

Despite their promise, most development agencies have somewhat overlooked the potential role well-organized Diasporas could play as development partners. However, a few types of donor programs offer potential models to effectively leverage Diaspora participation, including those that focus on nurturing NGOs, and creating successful partnerships with private voluntary organizations (PVOs) and private sector institutions. To demonstrate this potential, we explore some small demonstration projects and initiatives that show or could demonstrate the full potential of Diasporas as "transformational" knowledge management agents in Development.

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"Harnessing the potential of the diaspora is especially vital … [in particular,] ICTs are instrumental in providing opportunities for migrants to become involved in the development process of their countries of origin. They help migrants to develop common agendas and identities, even across large geographical distances, and thereby contribute to the formation of strong and active diasporas. Subsequently, migrants are now in a better position to become involved in the development process of their countries of origin than ever before."[1]

Introduction

Diaspora groups have been engaged in the development of their home countries for many years. Myriad activities have been initiated by Diasporas, resulting in impacts (both positive and negative) on socio-economic and political dynamics within their homelands (Mohamoud, 2006, pg. 2). These groups have been essential contributors and respond swiftly and effectively to the emerging needs of their homeland counterparts, through philanthropic remittances, emergency response following natural disasters, conflict, economic collapse, etc., traditional technical assistance, business investments and trade, Diaspora bonds,[2] advocacy efforts, or diplomacy. In recent years, burgeoning globalization, changes in migration patterns, and advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) have brought about even greater engagement, including increased foreign direct investment, creation of web-based professional, social, and political networks, advocacy initiatives, and the like. As a result, Diasporas today have an even greater capability of organizing themselves into networks that can become strategically important within the development arena.

This paper recommends that donor agencies, PVOs, NGOs, and other international groups further mobilize themselves *with* Diaspora groups in order to gain knowledge on the ground from this untapped resource, and in effect, create a developmental "confluence of thought"[3] that ultimately yields a synergistic sum that is greater than its parts. Thus, we advocate engaging in a cooperative relationship with Diasporas as a way to build upon the wealth of existing Diaspora initiatives. Ultimately, a mechanism is needed by which communication and information about the other can exist and flow freely, and we suggest the establishment of a formal dialogue group between the two, whereby each has the opportunity to better realize their mutually beneficial goals.

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[1] Excerpt from IOM's WSIS concept paper, *International Migration, Development and the Information Society*, published in 2005. http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/pc2/contributions/co8.html.

[2] Diaspora bonds are a debt instrument that can be issued by a developing country to raise external development financing from its Diaspora.

[3] Pierre Teilhard De Chardin (1881-1955) – renowned French philosopher, Jesuit priest, and paleontologist – asserted that individual isolation has evolved into a coalescence of elements, from which the notion of *Confluence of Thought* emerged. Teilhard De Chardin is often credited with anticipating the complex technological connection of human thought now evident in global communications and, in particular, the Internet.

The myriad ICT-based tools available – including computers and the Internet, television, radio, mobile phones, etc. – are an organic means by which to facilitate this process, affording Diasporas the ability to make critical contributions to the development of their homelands. ICT can bring about an efficient, robust private-public framework that facilitates productive linkages between Diasporas and their home countries. Rapid and massive leaps forward in ICT afford dispersed Diasporic populations the capacity to exert far greater influence on their homelands than ever before. As a result, Diasporas should be recognized as a significant engine of development, as they have much more to offer their countries of origin than just remittances – their knowledge, skills, investments, and social/professional networks can be tremendously influential and beneficial in advancing the development of their homelands' social, economic, political, and religious sectors.

The "Diaspora Option"

Individuals in a Diaspora are often considered to be consolidated into a somewhat cohesive group, despite the fact that many typically do not hold a single homogenous identity. In theory, the groups are a manifestation of numerous identities – ethnic, political, religious, generational, and/or otherwise – that coalesces and, due to an overarching affiliation to its homeland, integrate into homogenous Diasporic identities (Ogden, 2008, p. 4). Differentiation within the groups, however, appears to be the norm – for instance, in terms of political affiliation, economic status, etc. As a result, Diasporic communities are multifaceted. Different groupings within a Diaspora are known to differ in their relationships with (and impact they have upon) the homeland (Davies, 2007, pg. 64). While most concur with the ultimate goal of supporting the interests of their homeland, Diasporas do not always agree on how to best approach this goal.

Despite the contextual nature of Diasporic identities, these groups remain a constructive, yet underutilized, resource within the international development arena. The so-called "Diaspora Option" – also called the "Diaspora Approach" or co-development – is the utilization of expatriate individuals and groups as catalysts in the implementation of development programs in their home countries, and has become a growing trend.

Over the years, Diasporas have played a traditional, albeit consistent role in contributing to their homelands' economies through increasingly large levels of remittances. Most recently, they also have begun to represent a unique human resource that comprises specific knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm that can be organized productively to assist with a variety of development initiatives back home. In addition to contributing to their home countries' economic development (through the provision of financial and/or material resources), Diasporas constitute a wealth of skilled and qualified manpower that can be tapped into for other areas of development – i.e., forging partnerships to address

issues surrounding health, education, civil society, democracy and governance, conflict mitigation, etc.

Diasporas Re-Packaging the "Development Message"

The myriad Diaspora groups established around the world have come to appreciate the expanded role they can play in helping to develop their homelands, beyond simply sending remittances. While mobilizing financial resources is an important Diaspora-development connection, an even more important factor is the knowledge and skills transfers from expatriates that are valuable in facilitating development. This can be achieved more easily today due in large part to advances in ICT – i.e., through online professional networks that link Diaspora professionals with counterparts in their countries of origin.

Additionally, members of the Diaspora are in the position of simultaneously valuing and understanding two cultures (home and host countries), making them ideally suited to offer an alternative, and perhaps more effective way of communicating the development message. They understand the local context and are able to identify specific challenges, as well as know how to adopt strategies to avoid them. They are culturally hybridized (Brinkerhoff, 2003, pg. 2) and their transnational roots enable them to serve as a potentially important link between the two cultures, as well as to assemble considerable resources. This places Diaspora groups into a strategically important position in terms of advancing their homelands – socially, economically, and politically. They are a powerful force that can mobilize tangible foreign assistance efforts – a force that cannot be ignored by mainstream development actors.

Nature of Diaspora Assistance

Existing literature indicates that successful Diaspora involvement in development is more parochial in nature than regional or national. The establishment of strong community ties has long been popular in Diasporas' contributions to their homelands. This connection is based primarily on collective remittances that go towards specific community-based development projects – such as purchasing books for the local schools, equipment for the hospital, or post-disaster emergency needs. Hometown Associations (HTAs) have become a prominent feature in the Diaspora-development nexus. HTAs focus development efforts primarily based on members' geographic roots.

Substantial programming opportunities exist for donor organizations to work with HTAs to promote collective remittances in order to further promote engagement in the development of their homelands. There are countless Diaspora associations in place – including HTAs, and other similar groups that are formed around specific categories, such as business, religion, education, culture, etc.

While Diaspora groups do have a significant role to play in the social, economic, and political development of their home countries, their efforts at times may be

hindered. The groups themselves could lack the organizational skills and resources necessary to successfully administer assistance in their homelands. As well, they are traditionally small in size, with a tendency towards transient membership, and may suffer from unpredictable funding sources.

In addition, a number of Diaspora groups in existence today are not legal entities, which can further complicate the issue of funding – in particular, prospective financial backing from multilateral and/or bilateral donor agencies. Typical funding models initiated by such donors are fairly clear-cut when the Diaspora group is an official body. Unofficial groups, however, may not meet eligibility requirements. Even authorized groups might get extracted from the funding process because they do not have proven experience in development work or the capacity to manage funds. This type of funding environment could require the establishment of a grant program that specifically targets the Diaspora, taking into account its special needs.

Opportunities for Beneficial Collaboration

Because the concept of Diaspora itself is fluid, groups often evolve spontaneously as a result of shortcomings "on the ground" – i.e., they form as a way to respond to the social, economic and/or political needs that are left unmet by both internal and external development initiatives. Some groups are considered "mature" in that they have formalized themselves as NGOs or foundations, while others remain more informal. A number of Diasporas maintain fairly heterogeneous identities, while others are harmonized. The divergence is salient, and development partners are advised to remain cognizant of the incongruous goals and agendas that may exist when working with Diaspora groups. Where development needs arise, for instance, corrosive Diaspora politics may materialize. It was reported that Diaspora aid to Gujarat (western India) following the 2001 earthquake was used in support of anti-Muslim riots (Vertovec, 2005).

Since Diaspora groups can be unpredictable – in that they tend to structure themselves initially in a motivated way, but for a number of reasons may lose their momentum after some time – public and private entities, such as multilateral and bilateral donors, PVOs, NGOs, etc. are in a position to provide resources and guidance to help Diasporas develop themselves as established networks that grow into more permanent institutions. By facilitating new ideas and increasing the Diasporas' internal capabilities, partners can ultimately help keep the groups' virtuous circle in motion.

Questions remain regarding the mechanisms available – in both home and host countries – to facilitate meaningful and sustainable engagement. If the Diaspora Option is to continue evolving into an appreciable asset, gaps in practice and policies must be addressed. Donor organizations, such as USAID, are in a strong position to help. The combined strengths of both the Diaspora and donor groups

can bring about synergistically beneficial cooperation, with both entities fulfilling mutual development goals.

Several targeted measures that host country governments, development agencies, PVOs, and NGOs can take to advance Diaspora engagement in developing nations include:

1) scaling up research efforts to better understand how Diaspora groups can be more effectively involved, including systemic investigations on non-financial influences, gender differences in remittance behavior, and other issues related to Diaspora and development;
2) engaging in formal and informal discussions between Diasporas and mainstream development agencies (together with implementing partners) in order to further promote Diaspora involvement in foreign assistance initiatives;
3) endorsing financial support to development-oriented Diaspora groups; and
4) fostering institution building between Diasporas and home country governments.

Collaborative efforts, such as public-private partnerships, are a useful idea because they can leverage Diaspora groups' existing skill sets to maximize donor assistance dollars. In 2004, for instance, USAID/El Salvador entered into a donor-Diaspora partnership called ALCANCE (Alianza de Comunidades Apoyando la Niñez y su Continuación en la Educación),[4] which brings together 21 HTAs, the Pan-American Development Foundation (PADF), the NGO World Vision, a Salvadoran educational organization, local HTA counterparts, and financing from two banks. The goal is to: 1) improve education among poor, rural primary schoolchildren; 2) leverage immigrant resources; and 3) develop sustainable mechanisms for transnational support for rural education in El Salvador. USAID's experience with ALCANCE has shown that partnering with the Diaspora (in this case, through HTAs) is a practical way of increasing funds available for social projects.

Also, given the high cost of outreach and communications[5] between Diasporas and their homelands, public and private partners are in a good position to lend support through capacity building initiatives and/or logistical support that enable these groups to advance their communication and outreach strategies (Silva, 2003, pg. 57). Finally, a number of Diaspora groups may not have experience dealing with donor expectations, such as proposal development, due diligence, and reporting, and may need technical assistance to strengthen their ability to respond to donor requirements.

[4] A description of ALCANCE can be found on page 15.
[5] While advances in ICT have lowered these costs, difficulties remain. In some cases, Diaspora groups continue to have problems retaining access to home country government officials. In other cases, the groups have developed mistrust of their government and/or its representatives.

Exploring the Role of ICT

"No one can deny that a network (a world network) of economic and psychic affiliations is being woven at ever increasing speed which envelops and constantly penetrates more deeply within each of us. With every day that passes it becomes a little more impossible for us to act or think otherwise than collectively."

Pierre Teilhard De Chardin
The Formation of the Noosphere[6]
In *The Future of Man* (1964)

A considerable lack of information in many key areas is the norm in developing nations, which can inhibit progress. As a result, ICT can and should be seen as a means of consolidating and reinforcing Diaspora involvement in the development process. With advancements in ICT, a number of Diaspora organizations have been testing new forms of interaction in order to take advantage of the wealth of human resources that exists, and as a result are able to facilitate discussions on the various assistance initiatives that could work in their countries of origin.

Whereas in the past these organizations may have emphasized more conventional support, such as providing resources to schools and hospitals, they are progressively utilizing improved communications – for instance, the Internet, radio and television, and mobile phones – to develop dynamic initiatives that go beyond predictable measures. The ubiquitous nature of ICT has created an opportunity for consistent and thorough knowledge sharing between the Diaspora and home country counterparts, in particular as it pertains to local development.

As a whole, Diaspora groups frequently play a critical role in accelerating technology exchange and foreign direct investment in their home economies. For some, there is non-financial intrinsic motivation. In addition to utilizing ICT to enhance remittance services, Diasporas are helping to bridge the digital divide in their countries of origin by incorporating technology transfer into social, economic, and political assistance activities. Some examples include:

Society and Culture:

- establishing virtual forums – mediated by ICTs – of Diaspora experts who advise home country decision makers on a variety of topics;
- creating online discussion groups, blogs, and web casts to ensure a Diaspora's own cultural integration/reintegration into home societies, as well as to facilitate participation in the decision-making process for home community development;

[6] In 1947, Teilhard de Chardin described the *noosphere* in his book *The Future of Man* as a type of social 'collective consciousness' that emerges from the interaction of human minds. Some consider the Internet, which has the ability to connect seemingly unrelated information, to be "the mechanical apparatus" of Teilhard's *noosphere*. For instance, the European Union has been referred to as a *noospheric* institution, because it connects people together beyond national boundaries. In practice, as well, its web site is *noospheric*, as it enables legal, economic and electronic interconnections.

- using the Internet as a transnational sphere where Diasporas can produce and debate narratives of history, culture, democracy and identity. Diasporas have used the Internet to mobilize demonstrators, revamp political processes, amass funds, debate issues, rearticulate values, and ultimately influence their home governments;
- producing ethnic (Internet) radio and/or television programs that make Diasporas "present" in their home communities. Such discourse can be influential in the formation of political and economic development;
- donating free Internet connection time and text messaging to further enhance virtual communications between Diaspora groups and their home country counterparts;

Science and Technology:

- serving as catalysts for improving the utilization of ICTs for development in their home countries – for instance, influencing home country investment decisions in technologies that may enhance economic development. As well, encouraging public-private partnerships to fast-track the development of an ICT infrastructure;
- forging institutional research partnerships. Scientific Diaspora networks, for example, use the Internet as a meeting space, linking universities and research institutions in the North with those in the South;
- initiating technology start-ups;

Economic Growth:

- addressing the need for job creation and the provision of job opportunities through telework and/or business outsourcing opportunities;
- employing Internet technology to aid home country entrepreneurs in marketing products abroad;
- establishing telecenters as an important physical meeting place where home country groups can gather and make connections with Diaspora and other international solidarity communities;
- investing in ICT to help small-scale, local farmers diversity crops, learn new growing techniques, and facilitate access to markets;

Gender/Youth

- leveraging the knowledge, expertise and resources of the Diaspora to contribute to the eradication of feminized poverty through ICT;
- helping to create environments conducive to the development of higher-level ICT-based skills and ICT-based economic activities among youth;
- providing new and/or used ICT equipment to secondary school computer laboratories;

Humanitarian Assistance:

- using ICT to formulate a coordinated response to reduce the impact of home country disasters (manmade or otherwise);

- organizing online networks that contribute towards homeland peacebuilding, such as e-mail lists and web site forums that connect communities and encourage ongoing conversations between citizens directly involved in a conflict and those in the Diaspora.
- fostering online activism that distributes stories and images of violence, discrimination, and/or human rights abuses through e-mail, blogs, web sites, and newsgroups worldwide.

Human Resources and Skills Transfer:

- coordinating resources to develop online Diaspora skills banks, such as ChileGlobal.[7] Home governments also can benefit from using ICT-based interventions to implement migration policies that harmonizes labor supply and demand (i.e., through online databases), or to strengthen ties with the Diaspora in order to engage them more effectively in development initiatives.

One exemplary case of a Diaspora utilizing ICT to benefit its home country is that of India. Its U.S.-based Diaspora has instigated significant investments back home from multinational companies in the information technology sector.[8] This has not only enhanced the number of high-skilled jobs in India (and led to the creation and growth of the Indian software industry), but also has strengthened the country's exports, thereby helping to improve its overall economic growth (Lowell, 2004, pg. 20). Another is UNIFEM's Digital Diaspora Initiative,[9] which undertakes projects that empower African women economically through capacity building in the use of ICTs, by harnessing the expertise of African ICT entrepreneurs in the Diaspora.

ICT is also being used to implement human capital programs vis-à-vis web-based skills directories that facilitate the involvement of accomplished professionals from Diasporas into the development cooperation sector (Fontaine, n.d., pg. 14). Such databases also serve to promote collaboration between Diaspora organizations and donor agencies by way of joint pilot projects. USAID's Diaspora Skills Transfer Program for Southern Sudan,[10] for instance, uses the Sudanese North American Diaspora Database (SNADD)[11] as one way of recruiting volunteer professionals to address critical human resource shortages in areas of health and education. Such databases also complement human capital needs of government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector to promote "brain gain" programs for expatriates to return permanently to their home countries, and "brain circulation" for those who only want to return temporarily.

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[7] http://www.chileglobal.org/. ChileGlobal is an international network of Chilean business owners and top level executives living abroad, who have an interest in contributing to Chile's economic development.
[8] This includes Intel, Oracle, Sun Microsystems, Texas Instruments, and IBM.
[9] http://www.unifem.org/prfiles/4/1_KAMPALA_Declaration.pdf
[10] http://cit.aed.org/forecast_sudan.htm
[11] http://www.geekcorps.org/category/programs/snadd/

ICT and Cultural Dynamics

In addition to more 'traditional' development efforts, the advancement of ICT is helping Diasporas to become more involved in cultural activities that benefit both themselves and their homelands. A difficult aspect of being part of a Diaspora is the sense of loss surrounding cultural, ethnic, religious roots. In response to this, a number of social and/or religious web sites have been created as a way to re-establish spatial bonds between Diaspora members and their countries of origin. In the case of *Virtual Jerusalem*, for example, prayers from the Diaspora can be sent via e-mail to Jerusalem's Western Wall, which has become a pilgrimage site for Jews.[12] Similarly, Hindus in the Diaspora have access to a number of online *puja* services to show reverence to their deities.[13] Saranam.com, for instance, is a web-based Hindu ritual service that allows believers to order a special *puja* in the temple of their choice.

In addition to enabling Diasporas to maintain their religious roots, ICT-based tools such as the Internet, cell phones, etc. have revitalized certain religions outside of the homeland by opening up advanced means of communication – the Internet, for example, enables adherents to the Santeria religion (Lucumi) to discuss ritualistic matters via online forums that supplement in-person exchanges between Santeria priests and followers. Some web sites initiated by Diasporas start out with a social and/or religious agenda and end up expanding into more powerful gateways. Thamel.com[14] launched a ritual service that enabled Nepalese in the Diaspora to purchase *Khasi* (a ceremonial goat) for the Dashain celebration. It quickly grew into a major information portal that connects Nepalese throughout the world, including news reports, financial services, and a new business model called "Home Market Services," which pursues business development opportunities between the export and homeland markets.

Future Agenda for ICT and Diasporas

In his 1955 book, "The Phenomenon of Man," Teilhard de Chardin predicted the "globalization" of research conducted by research students "numbered in the hundreds of thousands and … functionally linked together in a vast organic system that will remain in the future indispensable to the life of the community." There is no better example of the manifestation of this phenomenon predicted by de Chardin in the 1950's than the use of web-based technologies today by some Diasporas as critical vehicles to transfer knowledge and share information.

A review of the literature indicates that some of the most successful Diaspora groups (e.g., Nepal's Thamel.com, Mobilizing Ethiopians Living Abroad for the

[12] There is a practice of placing slips of paper containing written prayers into the crevices of the Wall. Each week, *Virtual Jerusalem* staffers take print-outs of the e-mail prayers to the Wall.
[13] Hindus base the decision of where to perform their *puja* on where the ritual will be strongest, which is in the original Indian temple of the specific deity.
[14] http://www.thamel.com

Development of Ethiopia,[15] ArmeniaDiaspora.com,[16] etc.) have learned to leverage ICT, in particular Internet tools, in their development activities. This recognition has motivated the creation of successful portals dedicated to the nurturing of emerging Diasporas. An example of this is the Digital Diaspora Networks,[17] funded by the UN in collaboration with other institutions, and the World Bank's Mobilizing the African Diaspora for Development Initiatives portal.[18] A careful examination of the subtext within these two portals, however, is the realization that they are "institutional" websites - not "organic" - and lack the energy and vibrancy of such sites as Thamel.com.

We are positing the creation of a Meta portal to serve as a virtual "commons" for mature Diasporas to engage with each other. It also could enable established Diasporas to serve as mentors and "nurturing" agents for emerging Diasporas, which could perhaps fill the existing gap. The proposed portal would be run by Diasporas for Diasporas, and would include such features as Web 2.0 functionalities like wikis and blogs for sharing information, web-based teleconferencing, and the capability to host web sites for small emerging Diasporas. It would also include templates and tools to assist Diasporas in solving "last mile" challenges to reach remote locations in the homeland with poor infrastructure.

Such a portal would also serve as a market place for Diasporas to establish business alliances with other Diasporas, as well as to explore business opportunities with private sector entities - particularly in solving last-mile connectivity challenges. Furthermore, the portal would be an ideal forum for development agencies to identify potential partners for specific development activities based on a target location, nation, region, or sector. By creating a federation of professional associations that is nurtured by Diasporas (e.g., India and Ghana), a vast pool of global SMEs could be established. This type of an amalgamation would be a powerful source of expertise that could be leveraged to accelerate technology transfer in some cases, mentoring, and perhaps tackle a subset of those "wicked" type problems many poor nations are facing while lacking the proper support. An online collaboration of Diasporas can be established to support activities in both home and host countries – including coordination of community aid, defending socio-cultural traditions, offering web-mediated communications (knowledge sharing), building political discourse, and the like. As a KM resource, a Meta portal could also facilitate distance-learning opportunities for expatriates to act as teachers and mentors in their countries of origin.

Diasporas would be motivated to join the proposed portal based on the "parochial" focus they have on their respective homeland, in combination with a

[15] http://www.ethiopiandiaspora.org
[16] http://www.armeniadiaspora.com/
[17] http://www.unicttaskforce.org/stakeholders/ddn.html
[18] http://go.worldbank.org/HT1YT23NS0

strong common bond with their host nation (i.e., the policies, social attitudes, economic conditions, laws and regulations). Greater "virtual" representation of Diaspora groups not only makes sense economically, but also could potentially create greater cross-communication among different facets of Diaspora communities. This, in turn, may allow for greater representation and participation in development activities from many different elements in an extended Diaspora.

Furthermore, the proposed Diaspora Meta portal could serve as a global expertise locator system, represented in Diagram 1 below, where volunteers from around the would be willing to share their expertise and "know how," to respond to any ad-hoc query posted to them via emails, blogs, text messages, voice messages and even short wave radio. This virtual help desk would operate around the clock, 24/7. Volunteers from the respective Diaspora communities would serve as intermediaries between the pools of volunteer experts and individuals from host nations seeking answers – in many cases where the expert is an outsider to that particular Diaspora.

Another role the proposed portal would play is as a clearinghouse and the source of technical support to assist Diasporas and other institutions in adopting and deploying transformative technologies. In particular, it could play a critical role in fomenting the diffusion of mobile phone applications and e-Health. For instance, one function of the portal could allow a mobile phone user to use text messaging in order to post a blog seeking help, or post a query to a database.[19]

When applicable, the Meta portal could also play the role of a global Internet bank, supporting the deployment of mobile phone banking when applicable and fomenting partnerships among particular Diasporas and a new generation of social entrepreneurs.

Thus, the proposed Diaspora Meta portal becomes in a sense the "virtual global village," a perfect manifestation of Teilhard De Chardin's visionary *noosphere*, where social networking on a global scale contributes to improve human condition.[20]

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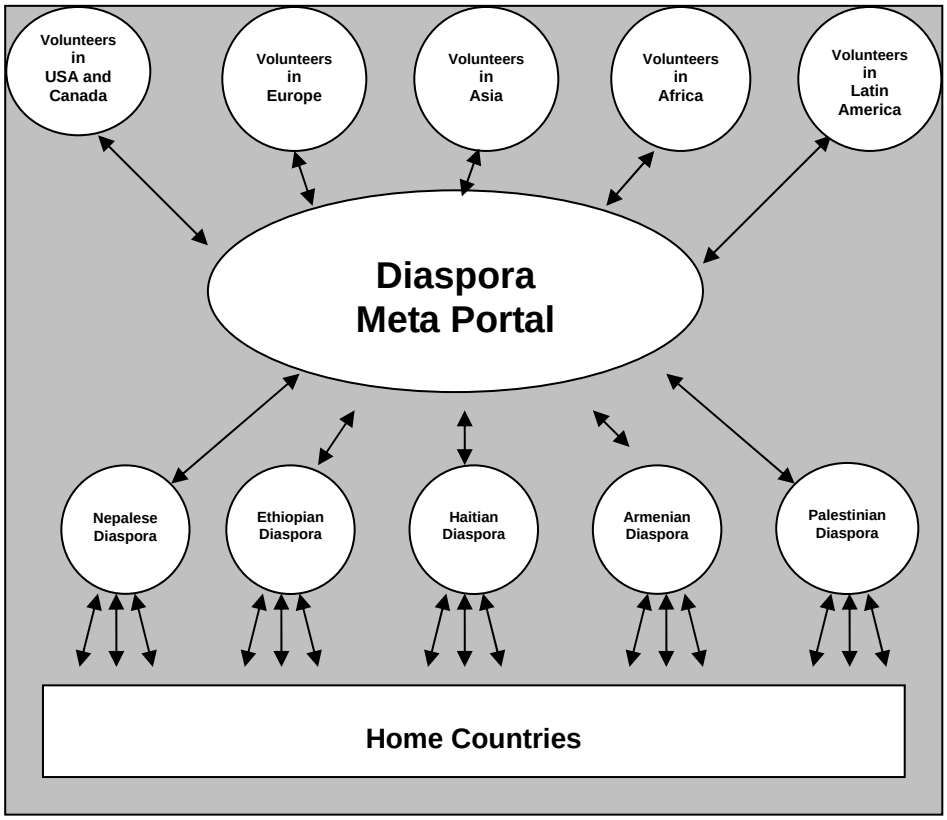
[19] The idea proposed here was inspired by Dr. Allen Hammond's lecture at the USAID Summer Seminar Series session entitled "The Global Development Commons," at which he presented "Leveraging Technology for Development: A Partnership Approach" (August 14, 2008). His view is that mobile technology is having a tremendous impact on the world's poor, in particular with regards to e-Health and e-Banking applications. Dr. Hammond is a current member of Ashoka's Leadership Group, former Vice President of World Resources Institute, and co-author of economic study *The Next Four Billion*.

[20] Teilhard de Chardin maintained that the noosphere is growing towards even greater integration and unification, culminating in the Omega Point, which he envisioned as the maximum level of complexity and consciousness to which the universe seems to be evolving (and which he saw as the goal of history).

Diagram 1: Global Expertise Locator System



Challenges to Using ICT

While ICT-based Diaspora development work can be effective in mobilizing the technological, entrepreneurial and professional expertise and resources of Diaspora communities in host countries, ICT itself is not a magic bullet. Obstacles exist that may hinder effectual involvement with Diasporas' countries of origin. The introduction of Internet-based discussion groups, blogs, and web casts does constitute a significant tool for the participation of Diasporas in their home communities and facilitate their (re)integration into that society, but lack of access to reliable and/or affordable ICT infrastructure, online language barriers, and deficiencies in ICT skills on the home country side are substantial impediments. As such, it is important that technology employed within the Diaspora-development nexus correspond with local circumstances.

Leveraging ICT in the service of development objectives in the national and regional context also requires considerable investment in new resources (or upgrade of existing resources), as well as the creation and maintenance of a local base of human capital. Both take a significant commitment on both sides – in financial terms and time. Due to their being non-territorialized entities, Diasporas should consider moving towards ICT system convergence as a

precondition for implementing an interactive online environment (Turner, Henry, and Gueye, 2003, pg. 21).

More importantly, donors and other international organizations, such as the United Nations and the World Bank, should redouble their efforts to solve the "last mile" problem, and in partnership with the private sector assure that even in the most remote locations of the globe there is access to the Internet. Internet access was not considered a critical success factor for development until recently – and the present high cost of energy, which makes transportation prohibitive in some cases, makes access to Internet even more critical. Together with high transportation costs, the need for distance medicine, distance learning, and distance transfer of development knowledge will grow exponentially.

Without proper sustainable channels of communications (radio, TV, Internet) to nurture the sharing and transfer of information and knowledge, the billions of dollars being spent today on fighting AIDS, other diseases, famine, illiteracy, poverty and in salvaging the environment are, in a sense, being dissipated. Without a constant flow of information and knowledge to nurture these development initiatives, they will wither and die.

Consequently, we must strive for the implementation of a "global network" on a large scale by leveraging any available technology – from satellites, to wireless, to power lines, to short wave radio, to unused TV frequencies, to telephone lines and even researching new ones to assure connectivity. It is only through the linkage of intellectual objects with people (ensuring an exchange of ideas) that information, knowledge and wisdom can be integrated and actualized. Social Networking, at its best, becomes a transformational agent, and hence has the potential to become the catalyst for true development in all its dimensions.

Thus, it is of the utmost importance that we encourage investments in ICT by all sectors, since the "network" in a sense has become the central nervous system of a nation. The degree to which a nation is developed depends on the degree of sophistication of its networks. Hence, development agencies, in partnership with Diasporas, should and must play a critical role in the nurturing of such networks.

Illustrative Survey of Diaspora-Development Activities, Networks and Research Centers

Bilateral and Multilateral Examples:

USAID

USAID recognizes the importance of Diasporas in the international development process, in particular how ICT tools can enhance activities. Though its partnerships with Diaspora groups are still nascent, and few in number, there are several projects that highlight the Agency's work:

- **TOFA.AF** (http://tofa.af/)

  Launched in March 2008, TOFA.AF is an online business that connects Afghan Diaspora to Afghanistan via the Internet and facilitates electronic funds transfer with personal and trustworthy deliveries all around the country. By logging into the TOFA.AF website, a relative living in the U.S. can select items ranging from school supplies to livestock as a gift for someone in Afghanistan. The TOFA.AF team then procures the item in Afghanistan and delivers the gift directly to the family member. As a final step, TOFA.AF takes a video of the delivery and sends it back to the relative living abroad. USAID, through its small and medium enterprise development efforts, provided initial funding for the website and continues to provide assistance towards the training initiative.

- **Fund for Inner City Sustainable Transformation (FIST)**

  In 2007, USAID began a partnership with Jamaica's Diaspora community to launch a microfinance loan fund for Jamaicans living in inner cities. As of November 2007, approximately $100,000 had been raised from Diaspora interests in the U.S. for the proposed Fund for Inner City Sustainable Transformation (FIST). The Agency's role is limited to facilitating the development of FIST, which has yet to be formally established. The structuring and management of the fund will be the responsibility of the Diaspora community.

- **Lebanon ICT Trade Mission to the U.S.**

  With funding from USAID, the Lebanon ICT Trade Mission was established in December 2007. The primary objective was to give Lebanese ICT companies the ability to better understand the U.S. market and to develop U.S. market entry plans. It also provided Lebanese firms with potential business opportunities in the American ICT market and facilitated introductions to potential business partners in that market – including a Diaspora networking event.

- **Diaspora Skills Transfer Program for Southern Sudan** (http://cit.aed.org/forecast_sudan.htm)

  The Diaspora Skills Transfer Program for Southern Sudan, which was scheduled to close in 2007, promoted volunteerism among the Diaspora. It enabled skilled, educated Sudanese living outside Sudan to return to assist the development of human and institutional capacity in health and education. Volunteers served for 1 to 12 months in sites throughout Southern Sudan in

an effort to build local capacity to sustain long-term reconstruction and service delivery.

- **USAID/Armenia**

USAID/Armenia's strategy paper (2009-2013) highlights Diaspora as a special partner category for development in Armenia. The strategy places emphasis on working with the Diaspora in ways that are optimal for achieving U.S. Government interests while also furthering the goals of dedicated development partners. USAID has worked with the Armenian Diaspora for a number of years and recognizes the contributions that Diaspora organizations and businesses can make towards the revitalization of their homeland. After the devastating earthquake in 1988, for instance, a number of Diaspora groups joined USAID in recovery efforts. (http://armenia.usaid.gov/upload/file/USAIDArmenia2009-2013StrategyENGLISH.pdf)

- **Silicon Armenia** (http://uite.org/cms/index.php)

Armentech, with support from USAID and the World Bank, launched a high-tech web portal Silicon Armenia, which was designed as an Internet-based platform to support cooperation between Armenian IT businesses around the world. The portal was developed in cooperation with the local association of IT firms (UITE) and it hosts the profiles for about 100 Armenian IT companies, provides members with the information on jobs, training, and tender opportunities, as well as with the updates on sectoral and macroeconomic trends.

- **Star Radio – Liberia** (http://www.starradio.org.lr/content/view/481/27/)

In 1997, USAID provided funds to create Star Radio, an independent news and radio station in Liberia. In addition to operating programs on FM and other frequencies, Star Radio also was relayed on the Internet, which allowed Liberians in the Diaspora to engage. In 2000, the Charles Taylor-led government banned Star Radio, and USAID (together with other donors) retrieved all broadcast equipment and materials in order to salvage them. In 2005, Star Radio was again broadcasting over the airwaves, following Taylor's departure. Since then, USAID sponsored the station's relocation to a new studio, a move that cuts overhead costs by half (http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/transition_initiatives/country/liberia/topic0707.html).

- **Alianza de Comunidades Apoyando la Niñez y su Continuación en la Educación (ALCANCE)**

USAID/El Salvador, together with the Minister of Education launched ALCANCE, an innovative partnership to promote remittances for education in El Salvador. The program seeks to better identify the reasons that rural schoolchildren drop out of school and partially remedies those causes through a scholarship program supported by Salvadoran immigrant communities in the United States and the Salvadoran private sector. The program is managed by PADF, working with Salvadoran home town communities in the U.S., World Vision, the Salvadoran Foundation for Educational Development (FEPADE), and Banco Agrícola. The program

provides up to 2,000 small scholarships consisting of school materials and other necessities for attending school for children most in need and will provide training and other support to local schools to improve student retention in 40 rural communities in four departments.

- **Serbia Local Government Reform Program (SLGRP)** (http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/press/success/sister_city_relationship.html)

The establishment of a Sister City relationship between the City of Belgrade in Serbia and Chicago in the U.S., which has a strong Serbian Diaspora, was a top priority when USAID first began working in the country in February 2005.

- **Agribusiness Productivity**

In 2002, USAID in collaboration with PADF initiated an 18-month program to strengthen the capacity of immigrant associations to engage in income generating agribusiness activities supported through coordinated efforts among USAID, PADF, HTAs in the U.S., local NGOs, and private sector organizations. Pilot projects were established in Mexico, El Salvador, and Haiti. In El Salvador, for instance, USAID and its implementing partner teamed up with the United Salvadoran-American Civic Committee (USACC) HTA, the Confederación de Federaciones de la Reforma Agraria Salvadorena (CONFRAS), and a local cooperative to produce, process, and market organic fruits and vegetables for the domestic and export markets.

Department for International Development (DfID)

- **Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)** (http://www.dfid.gov.uk/news/files/support-dispora-volunteers.asp)

In March 2008, the British International Development Secretary announced the country's commitment of £3 million over three years to support an initiative to encourage people from Diaspora communities to get involved in volunteering to help fight poverty in developing countries. The funding, from the DFID, will support and help develop an initiative run by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), an independent volunteer agency.

- **Send Money Home Program** (http://www.sendmoneyhome.org/)

In March 2005, DFID launched the 'Send Money Home' for Somalis program, which houses a dedicated page on the free, independent money transfer price comparison website. The program helps Somalis find the best deal for sending their remittances home.

United Nations

- **Diaspora Knowledge Networks (DKN)** (http://www.unesco.org/shs/migration/diaspora)

UNESCO's program on International Migration seeks to strengthen the capacity, sustainability and effectiveness of Diaspora networks as a means of promoting "brain gain" through the use of new ICTs. As part of this, UNESCO established the DKN project in 2005 to Diasporas assist in the development of their home countries. Through its web site (http://www.dk-network.org/)

DKN offers an information infrastructure that enables individuals and Diaspora groups to interact with each other and with their countries of origin. "Offer and demand" space is reserved for people/groups who want to cooperate in projects and/or offer services.

- **Digital Diaspora Network – Africa** (no longer active)

DDN-A was designed to tap the value of Diaspora communities in service to Africa. Established in 2002, it was a collaborative effort among the United Nations ICT Task Force, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), The United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP), Digital Partners, and Gruppo CERFE. Examples of DDN-A supported projects in Africa included: 1) E-Academy in Tanzania, which addressed the high cost and inadequate quality of education in Tanzania via the creation of an on-line e-learning initiative that makes teaching materials developed by the "best brains" in the country available in the local Kiswahili language; and 2) the Youth For Technology Foundation's TechPreneurship Program for Rural Women in Nigeria, which addressed the failure of women-owned businesses due to lack of knowledge of implementing sustainable business models and access to resources.

- **Digital Diaspora Network – Latin America and Caribbean** (http://www.unicttaskforce.org/ddnc/)

Based on the success of the Digital Diaspora Network — Africa (DDN-A), the UN ICT Task Force, in 2003 UNDP and UNFIP organized a conference on closing the digital divide for the Caribbean, at which the Digital Diaspora Network for the Caribbean was launched. The DDN–C embarked on an initiative to contribute to the development process in the Caribbean. To achieve its objectives, the initiative sought to use networking and partnering strategies to build and mobilize a competent community of interest and to identify resources to facilitate the development and implementation of Caribbean ICT – based projects.

- **Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN)** (http://www.unv.org/en/how-to-volunteer/unv-volunteers/expatriate-professionals.html)

The TOKTEN project makes it possible for professionals from developing countries living abroad to return to their home countries in order to provide technical short-term assistance. In Lebanon (http://www.toktenlebanon.org/), for instance, TOKTEN provides opportunities for linkages between the large number of highly skilled Lebanese professionals that migrated and settled abroad and home country professional who need advanced skills and high level capabilities. Two other countries with TOKTEN projects in place are Rwanda (http://www.toktenrwanda.org/index.php3) and Palestine (http://www.toktenpalestine.org/).

- **Piloting Solutions for Alleviating Brain Drain in South East Europe** (http://www.unesco.org/education/studyingabroad/highlights/brain_drain.shtml)

This UNESCO project was in response to impacts felt by South Eastern European (SEE) countries after the devastating war and break-up of the

former Yugoslavia. Loss of talent led to an impoverishment of national capacities at a crucial time for reconstruction and development. The Brain Drain project, as it was called, developed a public online database where members could search to find other professionals with similar backgrounds and fields of interest.

- **UNIFEM's Digital Diaspora Initiative – Connecting for E-Quality** (http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/wsis/documents/Connecting4EQuality.pdf)

UNIFEM recognizes the importance of ICT in increasing options and opportunities for women's economic and political empowerment. Through its Connecting for E-Quality initiative, UNIFEM mobilizes the business expertise and financial resources of the ICT-based African Diaspora to promote women's economic security. This includes forming consortium Diaspora teams to provide assistance, utilizing a Diaspora talent bank to facilitate technology transfer and match skills with needs, enhancing government policies, and ultimately, improving market access and infrastructure development. In Rwanda, for instance, Digital Diaspora trainers shared their expertise and technical know-how with women organizations throughout the country.

The World Bank

- **Mobilizing the African Diaspora for Development Initiative** (http://go.worldbank.org/HT1YT23NS0)

This World Bank initiative is in response to the African Union (AU) Executive Council directive (May 2003) to actively engage the African Diaspora in the development efforts of the continent. A High Level Seminar on the African Diaspora was held in February 2008 under the auspices of the Joint African Institute (JAI) of the African Development Bank (AfDB), World Bank and the IMF. The goal was to promote Diaspora-led investments as viable sources of financing for enhanced growth and development in Africa. As well, in November 2007, WB officials, members of Washington's diplomatic community and representatives from African Diaspora organizations in the U.S. and Canada, and African American and Caribbean organizations, gathered to discuss increased efforts by the World Bank Group to engage the African Diaspora in aiding development in Sub-Saharan Africa in concert with the AU's strategy.

- **D-MADE** (http://www.dmade.org/)

Launched in 2007, the Development Marketplace for the African Diaspora in Europe (D-MADE) is a grant mechanism opportunity to help finance entrepreneurial projects that are designed by Africans. D-MADE further supports the development of Africa (a Development Marketplace for the Diaspora in the Americas is also under way) by allowing entrepreneurs from the African Diaspora in Europe to participate in the development of their countries. The first D-MADE ended in June 2008 and awarded nearly $1 million to sixteen investment projects. The winning projects will be implemented in eleven African countries: Mali (4), Cote d'Ivoire (2) Benin (2)

and one each for Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

- **Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA)** (http://www.iom.int/MIDA/)

MIDA is a capacity-building program that mobilizes competencies acquired by African nationals abroad for the benefit of Africa's development – i.e., contributing to economic development using ICT to transfer skills.

- **Diaspora Database** (http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/1810)

This database is a tool that can be used by governments, civil society and the private sector, to assess and employ the available knowledge and socio-professional resources of the African Diaspora who are willing to contribute to the development of their country of origin. In an effort to identify and support African women who wish to engage in the development of their countries of origin, IOM created a Database for African Women in the Diaspora (http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/1904), which serves as a special component to the general database.

Diaspora Networks

African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) (http://www.afford-uk.org/)
Formed in 1994, AFFORD's mission is to expand and enhance the contribution that Africans in the Diaspora make to Africa's development. In addition to being a consultancy that assists companies and organizations in engaging with the African Diaspora, AFFORD also implements projects and programs such as Supporting Entrepreneurs and Enterprise Development in Africa (SEEDA), which mobilizes the Diaspora and other partners to support and invest in sustainable enterprises, particularly SMEs, that will generate wealth and jobs and respond to the jobs crisis in Africa. AFFORD is also a think tank that produces knowledge, expertise, and policies on migration and development issues (remittances, brain circulation, identity), particularly as these issues affect Africa and her global Diaspora. One of its latest policy proposals is RemitAid – a campaign that advocates Remittance Tax Relief (RTR) for International Development. (http://www.afford-uk.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=38&Itemid=57).

African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) (http://www.diaspora-centre.org/)
Established in the Netherlands in 2006, ADPC is an independent organization that provides a platform to enable African Diaspora in Europe to connect more closely with the continent as a collective force, pool their resources and proactively undertake initiatives for the promotion of peace, better governance and brain gain in Africa. ADPC pursues its goals by facilitating the effective harnessing of the considerable, and largely untapped, social capital of the huge African Diaspora population in Europe for the promotion of peace, better governance and brain gain in Africa.

AfricaRecruit (http://www.africarecruit.com/index.htm)
Launched in 2002, the AfricaRecruit program recognizes that African Diaspora groups and individuals have increasingly become a powerful force for development for their countries of origin. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) established AfricaRecruit as a joint venture with the Commonwealth Business Council. The primary purpose of this initiative is to interest Africans living abroad in job opportunities in Africa and to provide consultancy services to African governments and initiatives. Its web site provides an enabling environment that facilitates the process of engagement with various stakeholders on building and sustaining capacity in Africa.

ArmeniaDiaspora.com (http://www.armeniadiaspora.com/)
This web site offers news about current events and the relations between Armenians around the world. It also includes a large database of web resources.

Association of Nigerians Abroad (ANA) (http://www.ananet.org/)
ANA was formed out of NaijaNet to work towards improving the social, technological, educational, economic, and democratic goals of Nigeria.

Association of Thai Professionals in America and Canada (ATPAC)
(http://www.atpac.org/atpac_2003/index.htm)
Founded in 1991 as a non-profit organization, ATPAC promotes the advancement of scientific knowledge, technology and education in Thailand. It has carried out more than 100 collaborative projects and activities with organizations in-country.

Brain Gain Network (http://www.bgn.org/bgn/)
Established in 1992, the Brain Gain Network is an online networking and productivity tool that connects talented professionals and students interested in helping to increase the global competitiveness of the Philippine high-technology economy.

Dominica Academy of Arts and Sciences (DAAS) (http://www.da-academy.org/)
The primary mission of the DAAS is to gather the resources of overseas Dominicans in its skills directory, and promote specific research and development projects, which benefit the island. This entity also publishes an online Diaspora newsmagazine (http://www.thedominican.net/). In December 2001, several hundred Dominican Diaspora students, scientists, entrepreneurs, lawyers, political leaders and others met for the first 'Dominica Diaspora in the Development Process' conference. This event resulted in the idea of establishing a Diaspora bank to channel more Diaspora resources to economic development purposes in the Dominican Republic. The bank would have targeted indigenous small business enterprises, thus spurring employment within the local community. Unfortunately, the idea was shot down by a high level government

official. A Policy Paper on Dominica-Diaspora Relations is available at: http://www.da-academy.org/draft_policy.html.

El Programa Talento Venezolano en al Exterior (Program of Venezuelan Talents Abroad)
(http://talven.org/portal/)
TALVEN's mission is to identify and establish contacts with professional members of Venezuela's Diaspora in order to involve them in diverse programs that benefit their home country.

Ethiopian Diaspora (http://ethiopiandiaspora.org/)
This web site is a source of information for Ethiopians living abroad, with funding from the Italian government and the International Organization of Migration.

The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE) (http://www.bangalore.tie.org/)
TiE began in 1992 as a small Indian-ethnic organization comprised of individuals eager to contribute to the cause of entrepreneurship among the Diaspora's Indus people in California's Silicon Valley. TiE now has over 8,000 members in 40 chapters worldwide and hundreds of successful TiE-inspired startups, many directly benefiting India's economy.

Kenya
After the country's December 2007 elections, a record number of Kenyans living abroad began buying mobile phone credits from home country operators to send to family and friends stranded in various parts of the country due to insecurity on the roads and general uncertainty.
(http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=76108)

Rwanda Diaspora Global Network (http://www.rdgn-canada.org/)
RDGN is a non-profit umbrella organization that brings together a number of associations of the Rwandan Diaspora all over the world. In addition to promoting solidarity among the Diaspora, its primary goal is to establish a strong network of organizations that will help to rebuild Rwanda.

The South African Network of Skills Abroad (SANSA) (http://sansa.nrf.ac.za/)
SANSA functions as a virtual Community of Practice, with the main objective of facilitating the development and utilization of networks for knowledge sharing, learning and transfer between SANSA members, as well as the broader South African community.

The Southern Diaspora Research and Development Center (SDRDC)
Established in 1997, SDRDC facilitates opportunities for people of African descent from the U.S., Panama, Latin America and the Caribbean as a way of participating in Sustainable Economic Development issues. Its objectives are to engage groups of high-level professionals in various technical and scientific fields of expertise, including management personnel who are committed to the design

and planning of different projects for development. The Center also promotes a bottom-up approach for broad advocacy for sustainable development through research, feasibility studies and impact analysis, and actively supports initiatives through networks of community-based organizations, academic institutions and People's Universities, governments, private sector through information management facilities.

Thamel.com (http://www.thamel.com)
Launched in 2000, Thamel.com is a business development company integrating Internet-based tools to promote socially, culturally and economically sustainable business ventures in Nepal. The portal is a collaborative commerce platform for over 500 Nepalese businesses, ranging from multi-million dollars enterprises to street vendors in Katmandu. The most lucrative and well known of its five business divisions is the Gift Shoppe, an online portal which sells gifts to the Nepalese Diaspora that are then procured and delivered locally to family and friends still living in Nepal. The company is unique in that it combines e-commerce, remittance, and business development services, which demonstrates how the power of ICT and Diasporas can create opportunities.

United Macedonian Diaspora (http://www.umdiaspora.org/)
UMD is an international NGO that seeks to foster unity among Macedonians and Macedonian communities worldwide, with a focus on history, spiritual and cultural heritage, advocacy, education, and charitable programming. In August 2007, UMD partnered with a USAID implementer, AED, to promote a Diaspora fundraising initiative on behalf of public education in the country. Macedonia rock star, Tose Proeski, performed in the capital city of Skopje in support of USAID's 5-year Primary Education Project.

Videoletters.net (http://www.videoletters.net/) (no longer active)
The service captured video messages from former neighbors and friends and broadcasted them via public access channels throughout the countries of the Former Yugoslavia, allowing those who lost contact in the wars to reconnect.

The Western Hemisphere African Diaspora Network (WHADN)
(http://www.whadn.org/)
WHADN encourages and facilitates the utilization of the collective talents and resources of the African Diaspora in the Americas and Caribbean to advance the collective interests of Africans on the continent and throughout the Diaspora. It accomplishes this through joint projects between the WHADN and the African Union.

University and Other Programs:

The George Washington University - GW Diaspora Research Program
(http://www.gwu.edu/~elliott/researchcenters/diaspora.cfm)
The GW Diaspora Program is dedicated to the integrated study of the transnational social fields constituted by immigrant communities that remain

simultaneously active in social, economic, cultural or political processes in their countries of origin and with compatriots worldwide. Primary focal areas concentrate on identity, policy, and development. The program's purpose is to pursue strategic, collaborative, and interdisciplinary research, service, and training.

University of Bradford (England) – Irish Diaspora Research Unit
(http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/diaspora/)
This academic research unit comprises the scholarly, inter-disciplinary study of Irish Diaspora, with emphasis on its social, linguistic, economic, cultural and political causes and consequences.

Tel Aviv University – The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center
(http://www1.tau.ac.il/humanities/ggcenter/)
Founded in 1964, the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center is dedicated to the research of the history of the Jewish people and its culture in all Diasporas and eras.

The Australian National University – European Diaspora Research Network
(http://www.anu.edu.au/NEC/EDRN/)
Partially funded by the European Commission, the European Diaspora Research Network (EDRN) was established by the National Europe Centre at The Australian National University in Canberra. It brings together scholars interested in the study of European Diaspora communities in Australia with those researching processes of European enlargement and the institutional consolidation of the European Union.

The Australian National University – Centre for the Study of the Chinese Southern Diaspora (http://rspas.anu.edu.au/cscsd/)
The Centre for the Study of the Chinese Southern Diaspora is the only centre in the southern hemisphere for research on people of Chinese descent in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. The Centre seeks to stimulate and encourage scholarship that reflects the diversity of and intercourse among areas, cultures and political economies in the region, and contributes critically to the field of knowledge.

New York University – The Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD) (http://www.aswadiaspora.org/index.html)
ASWAD is comprised on international scholars that seek to further understanding of the African Diaspora. Through the examination of history, dance, anthropology, literature, women's studies, education, geology, political science, sociology, language, art, music, film, theater, biology, photography, etc., the group shares research both within and across disciplinary and other conventional boundaries.

Howard University – South African Research and Archival Project
(http://sarap.howard.edu/intro/welcome.htm)
The South African Research and Archival Project was designed to identify, locate, inventory and disseminate information pertaining to the involvement of Americans in the liberation struggle of South Africans, especially during the anti-apartheid movement.

Medgar Evers College, The City University of New York – The Caribbean Research Center
(http://www.mec.cuny.edu/spcd1/caddi/)
The Caribbean Research Center seeks to heighten awareness of the various issues which impact the lives and experiences of Caribbean immigrants in the United States by conducting research on economic, social, cultural and educational factors germane to Caribbean immigrants.

City University of New York (CUNY) – The Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean
(http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/iradac/index.htm)
The Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean (IRADAC) was established in 1994 by The City College (CCNY) and The Graduate School and University Center (GSUC) of the City University of New York to strengthen the University's capacity to address the African Presence in the Americas through scholarly research and public programs, for the betterment of the lay public and as well the academic community.

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