

KEY POINTS

- With the amalgamation of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) into a new Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD), new opportunities will emerge for a coherent approach to diaspora engagement initiatives that combine the existing policy directions under a single umbrella.
- DFATD should work with diasporas in Canada to facilitate and improve engagement with the sending regions. This engagement can occur through current programs, as well as the creation of a new pilot project requiring cooperation between the different policy approaches.
- Engagement should vary according to the different levels of formal government diasporic engagement of the sending countries, as countries with weak government engagement will require policy approaches distinct from countries with strong government engagement.

EFFECTIVELY ENGAGING DIASPORAS UNDER THE NEW CANADIAN DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

On March 21, 2013, it was announced that CIDA would merge with DFAIT to create the new DFATD. Questions remain about how this will affect Canadian overseas development assistance (ODA) and foreign policy. According to the government, this will mean continuing the transition of CIDA's policies toward more efficient and accountable aid programs and stronger alignment with Canadian diplomatic principles and objectives (CIDA, 2013a). Leahy (2013) argues that this amalgamation will not only reinforce these priorities, but will also set a new focus on trade and commercial interests by targeting countries that can provide investment opportunities for Canada. However, some fear that this merger will result in a shift from the demand-driven focus on social development programs under CIDA to more supply-oriented economic policies.¹

It is important to consider how this merger will influence the way Canada engages with diaspora communities to promote and benefit from economic and social development in emigrant-sending regions. The Harper government has already established a connection with the Haitian, Sudanese and Vietnamese diaspora communities in Canada,

¹ Discussion with Manmohan Agarwal, CIGI Senior Fellow, March 6, 2013.

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allowing it to advance its economic interests while simultaneously fostering the provision of assistance to these countries (Carment and Samy, 2013). CIDA has also demonstrated support for diaspora-driven initiatives promoting development abroad, for example, by engaging with projects that emphasize the importance of translocal actors and networks of organizations in Canada (Simon Fraser University, 2011).

DEFINING DIASPORAS AND DIASPORIC ENGAGEMENT

Diasporas can be defined in several different ways. For the purpose of this brief, a diaspora is a “[community] of individuals residing and working outside their country of origin” (Merz, Chen and Geithner, 2007: 2). These groups can include temporary migrants, first-generation permanent emigrants and descendants of emigrants (Gamlen, 2011).

Diasporic engagement can be defined as informal or formal. Informal engagement refers to the social, financial and cultural ties that individuals maintain with their countries of origin (Merz, Chen and Geithner, 2007). In contrast, formal diasporic engagement refers to state policies to engage with their diasporas in both origin and destination countries. This perspective recognizes diaspora members as agents of development abroad working on behalf of their countries of origin (Waldinger, 2009). As well as strictly representing the government of the country of origin, members of the diaspora can also work as intermediaries between sending and receiving governments in various capacities, such as helping to facilitate foreign investment and trade (Agunias and Newland, 2012).

METHODOLOGY AND TYPOLOGY

This policy brief presents distinct policy recommendations for engaging with diasporas in Canada, according to various levels of government engagement from the origin countries. The nature of diasporic engagement was determined using a typology of engagement levels: weak, intermediate and strong. Web-based research focussed on locating official government websites for various countries, looking specifically for a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a Ministry of International Cooperation, a Ministry of Overseas Affairs or a combination of these key words. It is important to note that although Web presence is not the only factor that determines how, or if, governments engage with their diasporas, for the purposes of our analysis, official state Web presence was deemed an important proxy indicator of formal state efforts to engage with a globally dispersed diasporic population. According to Ionescu (2013), the Internet has been “instrumental” in the expansion of the role of the diaspora as it allows for transnational connections between people anywhere in the world (Scholte, 2005). There has been an observable increase over the past decade in the use of the Internet by diaspora individuals and groups as it facilitates remittance transfers, promotes communication between and among diasporas, and enhances the formation of diasporic identities (Crush et al., 2012).

Table 1 shows CIDA’s countries of focus for ODA as ranked by the typology. This indicates that the governments of most countries of focus do not readily engage with their diaspora to advance development.

Table 1: CIDA’s Countries of Focus as Ranked by Typology

CIDA countries of focus in Africa, Asia and Latin America	Level of government engagement based on Web presence	Size of diaspora in Canada
Africa		
Ethiopia	Weak	19,715*
Ghana	Weak to intermediate	17,072
Mali	Weak to intermediate	868
Mozambique	Insufficient information	911
Senegal	Intermediate to strong	1,866
Sudan	Weak to intermediate	7,491
Tanzania	Intermediate	19,765*
Asia		
Afghanistan	Weak	36,165*
Bangladesh	Weak to intermediate	33,230*
Indonesia	Weak	10,663
Pakistan	Weak	133,280*
Vietnam	Weak	160,170*
Latin America		
Bolivia	Weak	2,606
Colombia	Weak to intermediate	39,145*
Haiti	Weak to intermediate	63,350*
Honduras	Weak	4,576
Peru	Weak to intermediate	22,080*

Note: Numbers are approximations based on country of birth information. Those demarcated with an asterisk originate from Statistics Canada. Ranks are based on Web presence, relative to countries in the specific geographic regions.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2009 and Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, 2013.

WEAK GOVERNMENT DIASPORIC ENGAGEMENT

Countries with weak diasporic engagement policies generally do not have a specific government agency dedicated to the diaspora, instead often offering only basic consular services. Due to the lack of governmental policy strategies and formal financial instruments, the diaspora relies on informal transnational networks and personal modes of engagement, such as the transfer of informal remittances to contribute to the basic needs of their families and communities. Considering the political

and economic challenges of many developing countries, state engagement with the diaspora is generally not a priority. In countries that demonstrate weak government engagement, CIDA focusses its aid efforts on the implementation of ODA programs to achieve development. Engagement with the diaspora in Canada through matching fund programs or other schemes can contribute to furthering development through grass roots and community non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in these sending countries.

STRONG GOVERNMENT DIASPORIC ENGAGEMENT

In contrast, countries with strong government engagement often have specialized departments dedicated to working with the diaspora. They have policies and formal financial instruments in place to engage with the diaspora as valuable investors in the development of the country of origin. These instruments include investment procedures, formal deposit accounts, remittance facilitation programs, and social programs financed by the diaspora and implemented in conjunction with the government (Chanoine, Giel and Simão, forthcoming 2013). The diaspora from countries with strong government engagement have often established successful businesses in Canada, and maintained favourable ties with state actors and businesses in their countries of origin. DFAIT’s policies can target ways to formalize these ties and use them to strengthen trade and investment connections abroad. Table 2 gives examples of countries that are considered to have intermediate to strong government diasporic engagement.

Table 2: Countries with Strong Government Diasporic Engagement as Ranked by Typology

Other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America	Level of government engagement based on Web presence	Size of diaspora in Canada
Africa		
South Africa	Intermediate to strong	38,305*
Morocco	Strong	39,055*
Asia		
India	Strong	443,690*
Iran	Intermediate to strong	92,090*
China	Strong	466,940*
Latin America		
Mexico	Strong	49,925*
Uruguay	Intermediate to strong	6,325

Note: Numbers are approximations based on country of birth information. Those demarcated with an asterisk originate from Statistics Canada. Ranks are based on Web presence, relative to countries in the specific geographic regions.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2009 and Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, 2013.

EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

CIDA’S CURRENT WORK

Currently, CIDA (2013a) has a variety of development programs that could benefit from working with diaspora groups in Canada, as outlined below:

- The Partners for Development Program attempts to use the expertise of Canadians by funding commendable development program proposals targeting poverty reduction and alleviation. The selection of proposals depends on several principles, such as sound governance, coherence with Canadian federal policy and development effectiveness. Most importantly, this program engages with “knowledge partners” who contribute by identifying innovative development methods and practices and providing

evidence-based research in order to increase development effectiveness (CIDA, 2013b).

- CIDA's Global Citizens Program focusses on encouraging Canadians to partake in international development projects centred on youth participation, education and public awareness. This program encourages the engagement of youth in Canada and abroad to promote discussion between Canadians and young leaders in developing countries to share knowledge and expertise on development issues and challenges (CIDA, 2011).
- The Global Initiatives Program implements and funds international initiatives focussed on maternal and child mortality, diseases and malnutrition, and education. These health, nutrition and education programs are implemented jointly with a variety of organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Micronutrient Initiative and the United Nations Children Fund (CIDA, 2012).

DFAIT'S CURRENT WORK

DFAIT (2013a) has a variety of international trade funding programs that could benefit from working with diasporas in Canada, as outlined below:

- The Global Commerce Support Program aims to increase Canada's ability to compete in the global economy through the implementation of three different programs with different purposes influencing their funding. In particular, the Going Global Innovation Program is especially applicable to engaging with diaspora groups. This program assists those supporting Canadian researchers to develop partnerships with key players in other nations to foster collaboration within research and development (DFAIT, 2013b).

- Another existing program that would allow the Canadian government to engage with the diasporas in Canada is the International Science and Technology Partnerships Program. This program supports bilateral projects with countries such as India, China and Brazil, which "have the potential for commercialization of research and development," and attempts to further partnerships through "bilateral science and technology networking" (DFAIT, 2013c).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS IN LIGHT OF THE MERGER

Some believe that this merger presents opportunities for both the Canadian government and the emigrant-sending nations by allowing "development to become more central to Canadian foreign policy and international affairs" (Berthiaume, 2013). The government claims that the merger will result in "enhanced policy coherence" in the areas of foreign affairs, trade and development (Schwartz, 2013), while others believe it could result in a lack of policy coherence, which would lead to a myriad of problems. Some critics state that there is a risk of demand-driven social development becoming subordinate to trade and economic interest (Robinson and Barder, 2013). Conversely, the Canadian government claims that it will remain committed to aid while simultaneously boosting foreign policy objectives (Mackrael, 2013). There is also concern that this amalgamation may result in a further decrease in the funding given for ODA, the disappearance of CIDA's development policies in favour of private-public partnerships and the promotion of trade as a priority (Laverdière, 2013). However, looking at CIDA's record, Canada's current aid spending lies at roughly half of the UN target of 0.7 percent of gross national income (Schwartz, 2013). The government argues that the new department may provide a way to use funding more

efficiently and deliver more effective ODA, as it will prevent the duplication of resources (Blanchfield, 2013).

CIDA presently has a positive image abroad, one of longevity and positive contributions, which gives Canada credibility as a “compassionate donor nation” (Wyld, 2013b). However, there is a concern among critics about how the prioritization of economic interests will affect this reputation. In contrast, Canadian Minister of International Cooperation Julian Fantino claims that developing countries are increasingly using natural resources as “a key economic driver to create jobs and provide governments with revenue” (Wyld, 2013a). Therefore, the government considers that aid-receiving countries will not view this merger as negatively as critics believe, since they benefit from a shift toward economic growth and development.

Alternatively, others claim that the expansion of Canadian mining companies abroad will not bring such positive results. The mining industry is believed to bring questionable contributions for receiving countries due to “unsustainable, short term, and destructive” services (Leahy, 2013), and solely benefit the donor country and its private sector (Schwartz, 2013).

Critics fear that since not all emigrant-sending countries have instruments in place to create trade and economic relationships with Canada, these nations may suffer if there is a significant shift in the focus of delivered programs. However, by targeting countries with different levels of diasporic engagement by using the practices of both departments, DFATD will be able to reach more countries with customized approaches. This will allow the government to promote “development-friendly policies across the wide range of issues which affect poor countries” (Robinson and Barder, 2013). An example of this balanced aid is the sustained promotion of trade ties to

countries with strong government engagement through DFAIT while CIDA promotes diasporic engagement instruments, such as remittances matching grants to enable development. If handled appropriately, the restructuring of this department can be an opportunity for the Canadian government to deliver effective ODA programs in some countries while simultaneously strengthening trade ties with other nations (Stein, 2013).

POTENTIAL REPERCUSSIONS FOR COUNTRIES RECEIVING CANADIAN AID

CIDA currently funds projects in more than 30 countries while also implementing programs through WHO and the World Food Program. With the latest budget cuts, CIDA was set to decrease funding for programs in at least 14 countries (Levitz, 2013). There is a fear that countries receiving Canadian aid may suffer further cuts if the assistance goals in these countries do not align with Canada’s trade and foreign policy interests (Schwartz, 2013). This would include many of the nations with weaker government engagement as they lack formal financial instruments and connections with diaspora in Canada. This brief shares recommendations that will enable Canadian ODA to continue to be consistent while attending to a new set of economic interests. The diasporic groups will play a key role in facilitating this process.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DFATD

The following seven recommendations state how DFATD should work with the different diaspora groups in Canada to encourage their participation in the development of mutually beneficial programs. The methods of engaging and leveraging the diaspora members will differ according to the strength of formal government diasporic engagement in the sending countries.

DFATD should engage with diaspora members in new and innovative ways.

- DFATD should develop evidence-based policy initiatives on diasporic engagement and not simply follow the lead of other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries whose programs might not be appropriate to the Canadian context. In order to develop such policies, a knowledge base through a systematic program of research — such as that undertaken by the Southern African Migration Project and CIGI for the Southern African diaspora in Canada (Crush et al, 2013) — is required to assess the informal diaspora activities of different diaspora groups and evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs (ibid.).
- Since both remittances and aid are equally crucial for many developing countries, DFATD should implement a pilot project that matches collective remittances with aid. It should be structured as a matching program in which all contributions, up to a maximum dollar value set by the government, made by the diaspora in Canada to specific types of programs in countries of origin will be matched by DFATD.² It should encourage diaspora groups to set up schemes in their countries of origin, and upon verification of these schemes DFATD can begin matching contributions. A program such as this will encourage ground-up action and bypass international organizations and state bureaucracy.

DFATD should engage with diaspora members to improve relevant CIDA programs.

² This program can use a similar structure and design to that of the “Investing in Haitian Progress,” a 1:1 matching program supported by the United States Agency for International Development and the Pan American Development Foundation, in partnership with more than 350 Haitian diasporic associations (Pan American Development Foundation, 2013).

- Within the Partners for Development Program, DFATD should contact prominent members of the diaspora communities with weak government engagement and encourage them to submit proposals for programs using their knowledge and expertise. Members of the diaspora can also be used as “knowledge partners” to identify innovative development methods and practices or to act as a channel to access other in-country partners.
- Within the Global Citizens Program, DFATD should offer opportunities targeting youth from diaspora communities with weak government engagement in Canada to participate in international programs. Such programs encourage discussion and knowledge sharing on development issues with young leaders in developing countries to enhance cultural ties and to offer insight from their own experiences and family histories.
- Within the Global Initiatives Program, DFATD should engage with diaspora members from countries with weak government engagement to gain a more comprehensive idea of the specific development needs in their countries of origin. Many members of the diaspora better understand country-specific needs because of their individual experiences or through informal transnational communications with those in their countries of origin.

DFATD should engage with diaspora members to improve relevant DFAIT programs.

- Within the Going Global Innovation portion of the Global Commerce Support Program, DFATD should use the expertise and connections of prominent business actors in diaspora communities in Canada to help pursue and develop partnerships with key players in nations that display strong government

engagement. This will enhance collaboration within research and development and build more varied and extensive connections.

- Within the International Science and Technology Partnerships Program, DFATD should use the expertise and connections of prominent academic and business leaders in diaspora communities from countries with strong government engagement with the aim to create transnational networks aimed at creating bilateral projects. An example of this is the U.S.-Brazil Science and Technology Cooperation initiative, which encourages joint partnerships, knowledge sharing, the provision of research grants and other activities in a wide range of topics (The White House, 2012).

CONCLUSION

In light of the amalgamation of CIDA and DFAIT, the policy approaches of the two departments need to be respected and different policy approaches should be pursued according to the strength of formal government diasporic engagement present in different emigrant-sending nations. This engagement can occur through current CIDA and DFAIT programs, as well as through the creation of programs involving both departments. Whether this merger is successful in integrating the two departments will dictate how DFATD is able to engage with diasporic groups within Canada. It will also indicate how well DFATD is able to achieve sustainable ODA as well as to foster trade and commercial objectives. This brief has in-depth recommendations for DFATD on how to maintain Canada's legitimacy as an ODA donor while still pursuing its business interests by using diasporic groups as key actors in the attainment of both goals.

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AUTHORS' NOTE

This paper was written prior to the merge of CIDA and DFAIT into DFATD. To maintain clarity in cited sources and website materials, we have kept CIDA and DFAIT as two separate entities.

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