

The Potential Role of the Diaspora in the Development of Suriname



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Abstract

Suriname is a small country in South America, with sizable diaspora, primarily in the Netherlands. The Surinamese diaspora engagement has the potential to provide a solution for some of Suriname's immediate needs. However, Suriname's diaspora engagement policy and strategy is still in its infancy. This research takes the first steps by mapping the diaspora and documenting factors influencing engagement and support levels. The research tools used are a survey, interviews, a focus group discussion, and a literature review.

This research answers the question: 'What role can the Surinamese diaspora play in Suriname's development efforts?' by answering the questions 'What attributes, experiences, and expertise can be found among the Surinamese diaspora that can be utilized to contribute to development efforts in Suriname? As well as, 'What is the current level of engagement of the Surinamese diaspora?' And finally, 'What role does the Surinamese diaspora see itself playing in Suriname's development efforts?'

Results show that the diaspora has a diverse array of skills and expertise, which they are mostly willing to utilize for Suriname's benefit. The majority of the diaspora has engaged in sending remittances, both financial and non-financial to family and friends in Suriname. The largest group of the diaspora has no engagement with official diaspora organizations. There is a distrust between the diaspora, the Surinamese people and government. Respondents mentioned challenges such as high crime rates, governmental corruption, and a lower quality of life, specifically concerning safety and healthcare quality. These concerns prevent the diaspora from returning to, advocating for or investing funds in Suriname.

While, the government has already taken the first steps, they must continue by engaging in dialogue and taking action steps, such as following through on promises to fighting corruption and making structural changes, to gain the diaspora's trust.

The government's initiative give hope that an effective diaspora engagement policy will eventually be developed and implemented.

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List of abbreviations

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARREX	CARICOM Rapid Alert System for Exchange of Information on Dangerous (non-food) Goods
CIMSuPro	CARICOM Interactive Marketplace and Suspension Procedure
CPPNB	Community Public Procurement Notice Board
CSME	Caricom Single Market and Economy
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EUI	European University Institute
Global-INK	Global Indian Network of Knowledge
GOS	Government of Suriname
HBO	Higher professional education (Hoger Beroepsonderwijs)
ICM	India Centre for Migration
ICOE	Indian Council of Overseas Employment
IDF	The India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MOIA	Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs
MOOP	The Migrating out of Poverty (MOOP) Research Programme Consortium
MPI	Migration Policy Institute
NAKS	The African Culture of Suriname (Na Afrikan Kulturu fu Sranan)
NDP	National Development Plan
NDP	National Democratic Party (Suriname)
NRI	Non-resident Indian
OCRS	Online Companies Registry System
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
OIC	Overseas Indian Centres
OIFC	Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre
OWRC	Overseas Workers Resource Centre
PIO	Person of Indian origin
PSA	Persons of Surinamese Descent
PUM	Program Dispatching Managers
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain
USA	United States of America
VNG	Association of Dutch Municipalities

1. Introduction

This thesis presents an analysis of the entire Surinamese diaspora and its potential contribution to the development of Suriname. For this research, the word ‘development’ refers to the strengthening of Suriname’s economy and the improvement of the quality of life for all in Suriname, while protecting Suriname’s natural resources.

Suriname is a small country on the northeast coast of South America. It is a former colony of the Netherlands that gained independence in 1975 and is the only country in South America where Dutch is the official language. The estimated population is approximately 575,991 (The World Bank, 2020). Suriname is on the South American continent, sharing its borders with French Guiana (east), Guyana (west), Brazil (south), and the Atlantic Ocean (north). Suriname is, however, considered to be part of the Caribbean (Caribbean Atlas, 2013).

The Government of Suriname (GOS) is the largest employer in Suriname, employing approximately 40% of the population (Centrale Bank van Suriname, 2013). This has led to a large government that is weighed down by un(der)skilled workers. Suriname’s economy is mainly dependent upon commodities such as gold, bauxite, oil, and crops (such as rice and bananas) (Landenweb, n.d.). In recent years, the economy of Suriname has been seriously compromised due in part to the worldwide drop in commodity prices and the closure of a major aluminium company in 2015. The decrease in government revenues from the mining sector (mainly through lower revenues from direct taxes), coupled with increased public spending, doubled the fiscal deficit and the public debt between 2014 and 2016 (Riveros, 2021).

Suriname is in need of assistance in the form of knowledge, skills, expertise, and experienced experts. Yet, it lacks the financial resources to attract this talent and must find alternative, creative ways of generating this support. While diaspora engagement has become increasingly important in the Caribbean, in Suriname, it is still in its infancy. Diaspora engagement strategies could provide a solution (at least partial) as the diaspora could potentially possess the expertise and experience needed. However, while the Surinamese government initiated specific programs to map the diaspora and start the dialogue towards establishing an official diaspora engagement policy, the initiatives were never completed, and their status is unclear. This research attempts to take the first steps toward mapping the diaspora and documenting factors influencing engagement and support levels.

Knowledge Gap

Although much research is done on the importance of remittances and its impact on development, little of this research focuses on the Caribbean diaspora and its investment potential in the region. Even fewer research is done on the Surinamese diaspora and its potential to assist Suriname in its development effort. Globally and regionally, there is increased recognition of the need for effective diaspora engagement strategies that go beyond only considering remittances but instead tap into the full scope of possibilities offered by the diaspora (Minto-Coy, 2015). Currently, the Surinamese government has no established Diaspora Engagement Policy or strategy (Orozco, 2020).

Problem Statement

The assumption is that the government of Suriname will not focus only on financial investments but instead focus on developing and implementing an all-encompassing diaspora engagement strategy that includes an exchange of knowledge, expertise, and skills. To create the most successful strategy it should be clear who the diaspora is (to ensure targeted communication), what they can offer (to create realistic programs), if they are willing to support (to understand how the messaging should be created), and to know to what they will require in return (to ensure the sustainability of the relationship built) (Hercog, 2013). According to the website of the Surinamese government and the various Diaspora Institutes, Suriname does not currently possess this information (Orozco, 2020)

Research Objective

In this research, the first steps are taken to start the process of developing an effective diaspora engagement strategy. These first steps include a mapping of the entire Surinamese diaspora, an analysis of factors that influence the levels of diaspora engagement and support to be provided to Suriname, as well as, insights into what role the diaspora sees itself playing in the development of Suriname. The research question and sub-questions were developed with this objective in mind.

Research Question

What role can the Surinamese diaspora play in Suriname's development efforts?

Sub-questions

- What attributes, experiences and expertise can be found among the Surinamese diaspora that can be utilized to contribute to development efforts in Suriname?
- What is the current level of engagement of the Surinamese diaspora?
- What role does the Surinamese diaspora see itself playing in Suriname's development efforts?

Outline of thesis

Following the introduction, the *Theoretical Background* chapter elaborates on the topics diaspora and diaspora engagement. This includes the potential benefits of the diaspora in the development of the home country, the available literature and data on the topic, as well as diaspora engagement benefits, policies and strategies.

Chapter 3 places these topics in the *geographical context* relevant for this paper. This includes the Caribbean as the region in which Suriname exists. The Caribbean diaspora is further explored, as well as Suriname and the Surinamese diaspora, with the focus on composition of the diaspora and the diaspora engagement policies and strategies.

Chapter 4 explores the *Methodologies* used, reflecting the mixed methods utilized to gather data relevant to the topic at hand.

This data is presented and analysed in chapters 5 (*Mapping of the Surinamese diaspora*), 6 (*Engagement and Support of the Diaspora with Suriname*), and 7 (*the Role of the Surinamese Diaspora*). These chapters present not only the findings but compare and contrast them with data found in the literature review.

Chapter 8 includes *Discussion and Recommendations* based on a final analysis, while the thesis concludes with chapter 9: *Final Conclusion*.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The UN Migration Agency (IOM) defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state, away from their habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is. (United Nations, n.d.). Note that one can refer to internal and external migration when discussing migration. Internal migration refers to migration within a country, usually from rural to urban areas. In contrast, external migration can be intra-regional or extra-regional migration, the migration to a different country within or outside the immediate region of the home country. (Chikanda, 2015)

Diaspora versus Migration

What is the difference between diaspora and migration? Diaspora refers to a group of migrants who share a common heritage, and is scattered around the globe. They are a group of people from one country who have migrated to at least two other countries, keep in touch with their home country, have a shared memory of their home country, and can be easily identified based on some common characteristics. In comparison, migration refers to persons moving to different areas in search of settlement. The critical difference is that diaspora refers to a group of people with strong ties to their home country and origins, while migration does not (Erkuş, 2017).

Diaspora Engagement, Policy and Support

Diaspora engagement policy refers to a set of measures created and implemented by a country's government to develop and sustain a relationship with their diaspora living abroad. These measures should ensure and protect the rights of diaspora members while reinforcing their sense of belonging and national identity. Furthermore, the policy should foster and facilitate social and economic contributions made by the diaspora supporting the country's development (Diaspora engagement policies, n.d.).

This paper will maintain the 'diaspora engagement policy' definition mentioned above. However, diaspora engagement by the respondents refers to the connection, communication, or relationship between respondents and other diaspora members, diaspora organizations, and the official Diaspora Institutes. Additionally, 'support' refers to the act of donating funds or

goods to benefit vulnerable populations in Suriname. This can be done via direct remittances to family or friends or via donations to charitable causes in Suriname.

Diaspora and Development

The term diaspora was initially coined to refer to the Jewish community, which was exiled and began to wander following the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC. Cohen (2008) refers to the history of the Jewish diaspora to expand on the fact that the reality for any diaspora group is complex and results from mixing and sharing ideas with other cultures. The diaspora reality is not a simple tale of victimhood.

Diaspora can refer to a variety of different groups such as political refugees and migrant workers. Based on historical reasons for migration, there are currently five types of diasporas recognized (Hosein, 2015).

Table 1 - Types of Diasporas

Victim diaspora (populations forced into exile such as the Jewish, African, and Armenian diasporas)
Labour diaspora (mass migration in search of work and economic opportunities such as the Indian and Turkish diasporas)
Trade diaspora (migrations seeking to open trade routes and links such as the Chinese and Lebanese diasporas)
Imperial diaspora (migration among those keen to serve and maintain empires such as the British and French diasporas)
Cultural or reterritorialized diaspora (those who move through a process of chain migration ¹ such as the Caribbean, the Sindhis, and the Parsis diasporas)

(Hosein, 2015)

According to Cohen (2008), the global diaspora has common features, such as; they dispersed from an original home country, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions. Alternatively, they left in search of better opportunities, referring to work, increased standard of living, professional recognition, trade, or for some imperialistic ambition. The group shares a collective memory and vision, often fuelled by myths, of the home country, which

¹ Chain migration refers to the occurrence when individuals (usually men) migrate first, establish themselves, and then send money back home in order to have others join them – usually in the form of family reunification. This group is also referred to as transnational diaspora in some literature, which is described as a group of people that has roots in a land other than in which it currently resides and whose social, economic, and political network traverses the borders of nations and spans the globe (Azuma, 2018).

can include (but is not limited to) myths about its location, the suffering there, its history, and achievements made there. For some, these memories may be figments of their imagination. There is an idealization of this imagined ancestral home, and the group is collectively committed to restoring it to its former glory with a focus on safety and prosperity. There is frequently the development of a movement to ‘return home’ even though the majority of the group is satisfied with only intermittent visits home. The group develops a strong ethnic identity sustained over time based on the sense of being distinctive, having a shared history, a common cultural and religious heritage, and, therefore, a common fate. There is frequently (at least in the beginning) a troubled relationship with the communities in the receiving country, a lack of acceptance, and the feeling of dread that another calamity might befall the group. The group may feel alienated and insulated, believing that the host country has never entirely accepted them. They frequently struggle with being identified as foreigners by the host country, this applies to the 2nd and 3rd generations to a lesser degree. The group has a certain sense of empathy and responsibility for others of the same ethnicity who have settled in other receiving countries. Yet, diaspora groups have a distinctive, enriching life in receiving countries. Diasporas have unique cultures formed by their contact with their host countries and their attachments to their home countries. Global diasporas defy the notion of considering peoples in more simple terms, such as race, ethnicity and religion, and instead show the reality of an adaptive, collaborative and vibrant group of people (Blackman, 2022). This expansive list of shared features forms a basis for analysing the different types of global diaspora, but does by no means account for all diasporas.

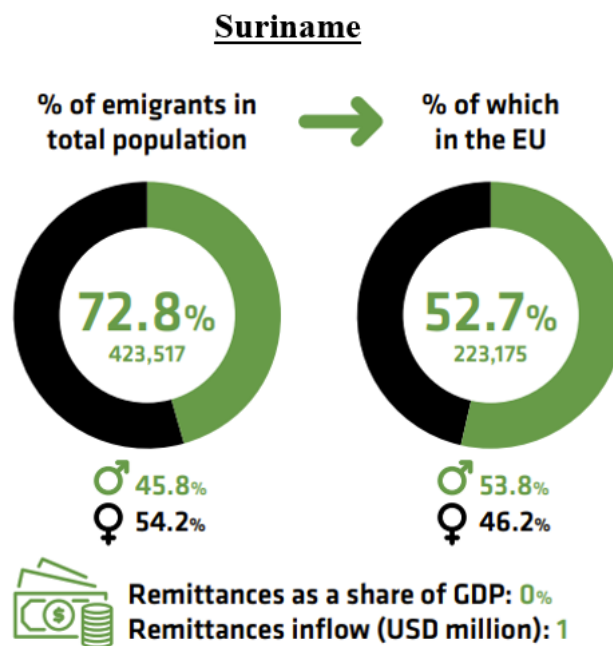
It is important to note that currently, more than in past years, the diaspora is composed of a mix of peoples who arrived at different moments in time, through different channels, via different means, and who have different legal statutes. These people were often already divided while living in their home countries; this results in continued challenges with coherence and shared ideas about what must/should/can be done in terms of the development of the home country (van Hear, 2004).

Remittances

Migration brings with it costs and benefits to the migrants, the home country and the receiving country (Hosein, 2010). The diaspora can make valuable contributions that can directly impact social, economic and political spheres; unfortunately, these contributions are often overlooked or underestimated, even though these investments have the potential to

stimulate economic growth and development. When discussing diaspora contributions, more often than not, the discussion centres around remittances. Remittances are understood to be that which is sent home by the migrants to assist their community back home. This can take the form of money or goods, but also immaterial things such as ideals and ideologies. Remittances play an important role and offer mutual benefit to the development of both the destination and the countries of origin. Remittances are naturally associated with the proportion of financial support sent to families or friends back in the country or community of origin and can be seen as an essential element of migration (Carling, 2008). The remittances and diaspora investments do not necessarily have to be only financial in nature; they can also take the form of an exchange of knowledge, skills, expertise and ideologies. Technical know-how, entrepreneurial investments, trade, investment in diplomacy, reforms, strong institutions and public relations for the home country at an international level are all forms of positive diaspora investment (Hosein, 2010).

Figure 1 - Suriname Overview Migration/ Remittances



(Orozco, 2021)

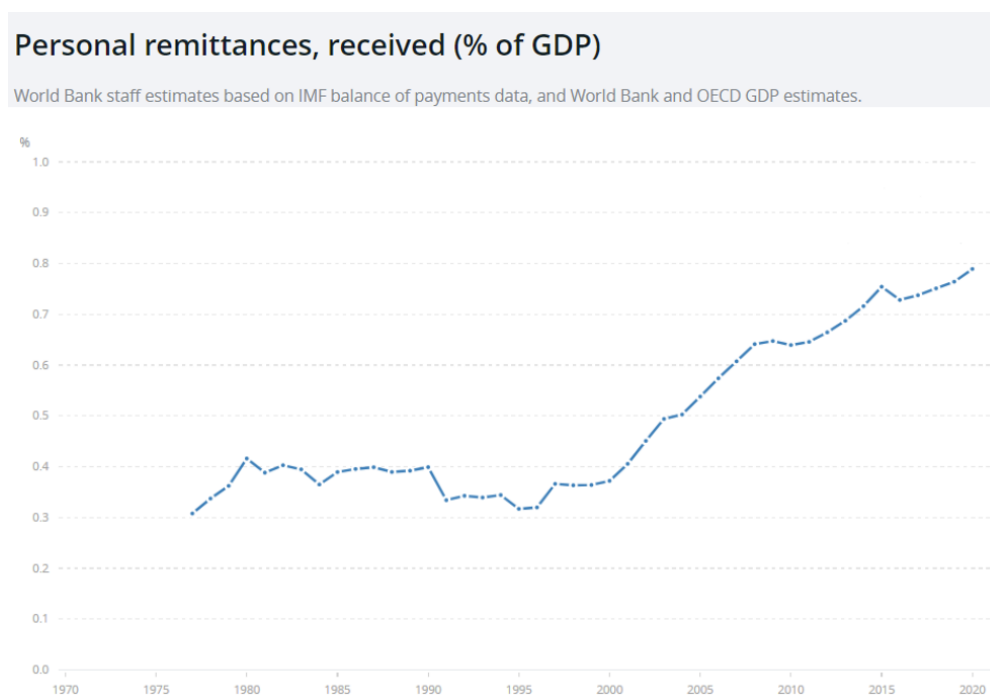
According to de Haas (2012), the debate regarding migration and development, as well as the development and implementation of diaspora engagement strategies and policies, has been around for several years. During the post-war years, migration was seen as an adverse event, focusing on the diaspora contributing to issues such as brain drain. It was also regarded as the result of a failure of development and as a tool for extracting wealth and talent from the

Global South (Chikanda, 2015). During the turn of the century, there was a turn-around in this way of thinking, taking a more positive view towards migration. The discussion turned from draining the home country to contributing and adding value to the development of the home country by the diaspora. In some communities, migrants were no longer seen as traitors and deserters, but as ‘heroes of development’ whose actions were transformative for the receiving societies.

This, in part, was due to the first reports on the magnitude of migrant remittances and their contribution to stimulating economic growth. (Chikanda, 2015). According to Ratha (2013), remittances received from the diaspora are one of the largest sources of external funding received in developing countries. Data shows that in 2020, USD 702 billion in international remittances were sent globally. During the Covid-19 pandemic, international remittance transfer declined slightly by 2.4%, much less than was predicted (20%.) This decline occurred in only certain countries, while in others there was a slight increase in remittances received during this period. (IOM, 2021)

Remittance inflow also occurs in countries in the global north. France and Germany are within the top ten countries regarding remittance inflow. However, remittances are less critical to their economies and make up less than 1% of the GDP in each country respectively (Statista, 2021).

Figure 2 - Personal Remittances Received Globally



(World Bank, n.d.)

Recognizing the value of the diaspora and the importance of engaging with it, several countries are currently developing and adopting policies to actively attract the resources of the diaspora communities in order to stimulate development. These diaspora engagement policies range from protecting the rights of migrants through international agreements, to programs that strengthen the diaspora's sense of national identity and belonging. These programs include scholarships, language lessons, and cultural sessions. All are aimed at promoting investments to increase the well-being of the home country (Vezzoli, 2010). Given the potential and value of the diaspora's contributions, it is essential that effective diaspora engagement policies and programs are put into place. These should include, but not be limited to, easing the transfer of funds, skills, and expertise while recognizing the diaspora for its contributions.

Development of the Home Country

As noted, the diaspora can contribute significantly to the development of its home country through remittances. The level of remittances can vary greatly and depends on several factors. Before the 1970s, the evaluation of the levels of remittances concluded that this was largely due to the conspicuous consumption of the diaspora member and their family. Currently, there are more positive views that have determined that the levels are due to a variety of factors, such as the conditions of sending secure remittances especially internationally. These conditions focus primarily on the high transaction costs associated with sending remittances. Given the scale of international remittances, many countries are actively working towards solutions to ease the transfer of funds by reducing transaction fees, as well as, assisting the recipients with receiving the funding. This is an important aspect considering that the location of the recipients' homes may be quite a long distance from the location where the funds are distributed, especially in more remote communities. Additional factors are the availability of cash currency, and the safety of having a large amount of cash. Possible solutions suggested include increasing electronic banking options via user-friendly methods such as mobile phones. Assessments of the ways in which remittances are used emphasize the need for these (de Haan, 2010).

According to Carling (2008), the determinants and variables of levels of remittances are highly dynamic and situation-specific; they are therefore less studied. Some studies of levels of remittances prefer to focus on a smaller (national, regional, community level) rather than a global level, to increase accuracy. Studies have been done to determine the relationship

between remittances and determinant variables in several countries. The first research (regarding the determinants of levels of remittances) can be traced back to Lucas and Stark (1985), whose research was published in their paper ‘Motivations to remit: Evidence from Botswana.’ They determined that there are several motivations to remit; ranging from pure altruism (concern for the well-being and social welfare of the family/friends/community at home), to self-interest (potential future benefits), to payments for contractual agreements (insurance, risk sharing, exchange or loan agreements). These models attempt to explain the factors which motivate the decision to send remittances back home. However, the models do not address the levels of remittances (except, if they are a pre-arranged amount to make payments as mentioned above).

The various assessments all seek to understand the impact of migration, the conditions for remittances, and the impact of these remittances on development and poverty reduction, as well as, highlighting the need to be sensitive to the complexity inherent in migration and development.

Factors That Motivate Support

Several studies (Carling (2008), Ezeoha (2013), Yoshino (2020), and Mannan (2014)) have been done into the factors which influence whether someone in the diaspora sends support in the form of financial or social remittances to their home country. These factors include the conditions in the home country and how these affect the living conditions of family and friends in the home country. The migrant’s income must also be sufficient to be able to send support. The conclusion, therefore, is that with an increase in income, there will be an increase in support sent. (McCracken, Ramlogan-Sobson & Stack, 2017; Durand et al., 1996; Sana, 2005). The assumption can be made that those with a higher educational level would also have a higher income, and can therefore support more. However, research by Ghosh (2006) has shown inconsistent findings when looking at educational levels and the amount of support. This may be due to the fact that higher-educated individuals are more likely to migrate with family members, which may have a negative effect on how much support can be sent home.

Another factor influencing the diaspora’s behaviour is the individual’s age. Unheim and Rowlands (2012) and Rodriguez (1996) found that support can increase with age. However, this trend reverses at a certain age; Merkle and Zimmermann (1992) found that this increase

reduces as the individual sending support ages. Research done by Menjivar et al. (1998) indicates that the age where support starts to decrease lies between 40 and 45.

When considering the gender of the diaspora member, there are conflicting findings. Some researchers find that women remit less than men (Durand, 1996), while others show the opposite result (Lucas & Stark, 1985; De la Cruz, 1995).

Diaspora Engagement Strategy/Policy

Although not all governments have realized the value of the diaspora and the importance of developing and maintaining good relations with this group, some governments and institutions have already done just that and are benefiting from it. Here are some examples: the diaspora in Ethiopia is investing heavily in agriculture, education, tourism, real estate, information technology, and entrepreneurship in their home country (Hosein, 2010). China has also utilized the unique opportunities presented by having a diaspora spread across the globe. China has become the ‘world’s factory,’ mass producing all types of products that are then shipped to countries worldwide where the Chinese diaspora utilizes or sells these products. Members of the Chinese diaspora contribute through activities such as: “utilizing the advantage of their professional bodies; holding concurrent positions in China and overseas; engaging in cooperative research in China and abroad; returning to China to teach and conduct academic and technical exchanges; setting up an enterprise in China; conducting inspections and consultation; and engaging in intermediary services, such as running conference, importing technology or foreign funds, or helping Chinese firms find export markets” (Siar, 2018). Not only countries, but also organizations have created programs and developed systems through which the diaspora can invest through the transfer of expertise and skills, for example, the United Nations Development Program maintains the Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate National program, which has been utilized, to some success, in both Turkey and the Philippines (ESCWA, 2015).

India’s Diaspora Engagement

India’s current status as a leader in information technology was achieved with the investments and assistance of the Indian diaspora (Hercog, 2013). The Indian diaspora invested largely through knowledge transfer and support in the form of new business ventures and mentorships. Additionally, the diaspora provided access to expert labour, new markets, and access to their expansive networks. The diaspora functioned as a middle-man, linking

and creating relationships with international companies with the skills, knowledge, and funding to invest in India. They advocated for their home country, attracting investors and entrepreneurs, while also sharing market information about both the home and host country with prospective entrepreneurs and firms. They also shared specific information regarding lessons learned and best practices regarding more bureaucratic elements such as import and operational regulations, consumer demands, and competitive intelligence. “

There are close ties between the Indian diaspora in the Netherlands and India due to the programs of the Indian government's diaspora engagement policies. The Netherlands hosts Europe's second largest Indian diaspora group (the first being in the UK). It currently hosts approximately 58,460 persons of Indian origin; this number does not include the 160,000 to 170,000 persons who are of Surinamese descent and also share an Indian heritage (Ramesar, 2021). In 2009, the Indian diaspora in the Netherlands was 16,470; this steadily increased with an annual immigration from India of approximately 600 to 700 persons. This increase continued with the annual immigration of 1200 in 2005, 3300 in 2008, 4000 in 2012 to 8600 in 2017 (CBS, 2019). The Surinamese Indian diaspora also benefits from the Indian government's diaspora program, as they are considered to be part of the Indian diaspora (Sinha, 2003). Suriname's president, Chan Santokhi, frequently mentions India when speaking on the importance of diaspora engagement and the valuable contributions this group can make (Waterkant, 2018). Respondents, of both the survey and interviews of this study, have also mentioned India as an example which can be used as a blueprint given the absence of a full-fledged Surinamese strategy.

What lessons can Suriname learn from India's initiatives? Historically, India's official position was that all those who emigrated were deserters, betraying their country and harmful to the country's interest (Hercog, 2013). These expatriates were seen as having forfeited their Indian citizenship and identity by leaving and should therefore expect no support from their home country. The government's official stance was that the Indian diaspora needs to identify with and integrate into the mainstream life of their new home country. President Nehru, especially, believed that a person could only identify with one place, which in this case, should be the place where the diaspora resided. A significant shift came in 1998 when the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the elections, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee became Prime Minister of India. While the diaspora had often been referred to as non-required Indians, they were now seen as a source of national pride. In 2000, the Indian

government convened a committee on the Indian diaspora which was given the mandate to map the Indian diaspora. This High-Level Committee produced a report which included a list of policy recommendations from which numerous current policies are derived. India classifies its diaspora into two categories, namely PIO - Person of Indian Origin and NRI - Non-Resident Indian. These categories apply to anyone of Indian origin up to four generations removed. By far the most significant achievement and the primary recommendation of this committee is the fact that Diaspora Engagement is now an essential part of India's foreign policy agenda.

Another key recommendation led to the establishment of the MOIA in May of 2004; this ministry was initially called the Ministry of Non-Resident Indians' Affairs but was later renamed the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. It is one of the smallest ministries in the Indian government. The MOIA was created to serve as a one-stop agency for all matters related to the Indian diaspora, a focal point for the diaspora, immigrant organizations, trade and industry interests, as well as any organization that has a stake in diaspora affairs. It is responsible for and provides all coordination for policies, developments and institutions related to all diaspora affairs. According to Hercog (2013), the secretary of MOIA describes it as standing for converting international migration into an orderly and safe process by facilitating legal migration and curbing irregular migration in all forms. The Indian government signalled its long-term dedication to the diaspora by establishing the MOIA and dedicating sufficient time and resources to its operations. Several departments were created within the MOIA that are responsible for achieving specific goals, such as, the Diaspora Services Division, the Emigration Policy Division (deals with legislative reforms for improving emigration management), the Financial Services Division (promotes and enables trade and investments by the diaspora), and the Management Services Division.

Additionally, overseas offices operate as platforms for economic engagements of the Indian diaspora with India. Among other activities, they organize regular 'Investment and Interactive Meets.' These offices are at locations such as Washington, DC., Abu Dhabi, and Kuala Lumpur. These offices network, organize events, provide assistance and provide consular services to the diaspora at a more sophisticated level than the services offered in embassies. Their mandate is to provide field information on any matters relating to overseas Indians. Indian embassies continue to support the diaspora in countries that do not have one of these centres (Singh, 2012).

The obstacles to the sending of financial remittances, such as transaction fees, safety concerns, and logistical challenges, were also faced in India. During the early 1990s, India

saw an increase in financial remittances, even without specific economic policy reforms, due to a liberalized exchange rate regime and account convertibility regarding currency utilized. According to the World Bank, remittances further increased steadily from 14.27 billion USD in 2001 to 62.53 billion USD in 2011 to 83.15 billion USD in 2020 (World Bank, n.d.). The government encouraged these increases by making changes to facilitate the ease of transferring funds; such as linking money transfer companies abroad with agencies in India and enforcing the utilization of beneficial currency exchange rates. Other factors which encouraged increases were the reduced use of informal channels, which leads to increased ease and security and, therefore frequency of transfers, a positive change in the earnings of the Indian diaspora and the general improvement of the Indian economy, which encourages more investments. Furthermore, in developing and implementing their diaspora engagement strategies, the Indian government prioritized deposit schemes. At that time, the government desperately needed an injection of foreign currency, thus they introduced incentives such as high-interest rates for foreign currency deposits/savings, as well as exchange rate guarantees on all foreign currency transactions. Additionally, foreign currency deposits were made exempt from income and wealth taxes, with no ceiling to the amount that could be deposited. To further encourage the Indian diaspora, the government also introduced the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, showing a dedication to transparency (Hercog, 2013).

The government also signed several bilateral cooperation agreements with the main destination countries. They are actively involved in regional and global initiatives regarding migration issues. In order to gain the support of the diaspora, several programmes were created and funded by the Indian government, which teach the national language, history, and cultural aspects (such as dance and music), as well as state-sponsored conferences and conventions. These activities are aimed at stimulating the shared identity, and succeeded in creating a communal belonging among diaspora members and raising consciousness in India of the international nature of the Indian nation.

In India, itself, the government created programmes to encourage the mind shift from viewing migrants as negative to positive. Two specific examples are: the creation of the Day of Non-resident Indians, which occurs on January 9th each year and celebrates the contribution of the Indian diaspora in the development of India. This date was chosen because it commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi to India on January 9, 1915, after living in South Africa for several years. Furthermore, the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award was created. The President of India presents this award annually to an NRI,

POI, organization or institution established and run by either an NRI or POI, which has made a significant contribution in one of the following fields (MEA, n.d.) (Hercog, 2013).

In January 2010, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh expressed the great pride he felt at the achievements of the Indian diaspora, applauding the overseas Indians as having made and continuing to make significant contributions to the image of India to the world at large. The diaspora engagement strategy did not only create a sense of belonging and responsibility amongst the diaspora, but also extended to considerations of political rights, such as dual citizenship, special membership concessions, special voting accommodations (at the embassy or via the post), parliamentary representation, the ability to run for office, civil and social rights, welfare protection and tourism services (Hercog, 2013).

3. Geographical Framework

Caribbean Diaspora

The re-discovery of the Caribbean in 1492, by Christopher Columbus, was the catalyst for large migratory movements of people, which have left their mark on today's Caribbean (and the world). The Caribbean is a region that was created by migratory flows of people either forcibly through slavery or semi-voluntarily as indentured labourers. This inflow of people has left an indelible mark on this region's demographic composition. Currently, the Caribbean has one of the largest net migration rates and has evolved from being a net importer of labour to a net exporter. External migration from the Caribbean has continued to increase over the years, with significant levels of migration occurring in countries such as Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname, and St. Lucia (Hosein, 2010).

The Caribbean can be defined as a crossroads between the Central American coastal areas and a common socio-historical heritage (Caribbean Atlas, 2013). Others define the Caribbean according to race, referring to it as 'Central Afro-American; the part of Central America where slaves were imported to be put to work on the plantations, resulting in a large mixed-race population. The Caribbean region is sometimes also defined as the wider 'Plantation America,' referring to the plethora of sugar cane plantations that significantly impacted the region's economic, social, cultural and political importance. During the 18th century, Suriname was one of the largest sugar cane producing states, competing with Jamaica in terms of wealth generated by the European sugar cane production companies in the West Indies (Minto-Coy, 2015). According to Hall (1990), the Caribbean diaspora can be categorized as a cultural diaspora held together by a common culture and identity. He shares that the Caribbean culture is the result of the violent mixture of indigenous people from Quisqueya, Xaymaca, Borinquén and Cuba, European immigrants who invaded these territories and African slaves brought to work on the sugar plantations and sugar mills.

Suriname

While Suriname is geographically not an island or in the Caribbean, it shares a common culture and history with the Caribbean and is therefore considered part of the Caribbean. As is true of the larger Caribbean, Suriname also has diverse population; composed of Hindustani (which is the local term for the East Indians who migrated to Suriname from India) at 27.4%, the Maroons (enslaved Africans who escaped to the interior) at 21.7%, Creoles (enslaved Africans who were freed at emancipation, many of whom have a mixed

heritage) at 15.7%, the Javanese (Indonesians from the island of Java who migrated as indentured labourers) at 13.7%, and the remaining 21.6% is composed of those who identify themselves as mixed, other or refused to specify (CIA, 2022).

Presently, Suriname is experiencing an economic crisis with a declining economic growth of 5% (2012) to -10.4% (2016) (The World Factbook, 2022). Also, the Surinamese currency (SRD) was devalued by 20% in 2011, while taxes were raised in an attempt to reduce the budget deficit. By December 2016, the SRD had lost 46% of its value against the US dollar, while domestic prices had risen 22%. The decline in metrics led the Fitch Ratings to downgrade the sovereign debt rating to RD (Restricted Default) in 2021. Data estimate a poverty rate of 26.2% in the capital city, Paramaribo, in 2017 (the latest available data) and 47.9% in the rural areas outside Paramaribo. It is therefore to be expected that the government has challenges providing basic services. Current economic pressures have led to higher unemployment rates at 7.6% for the general workforce and, alarmingly, 15.86 among youth. The economic pressures and unemployment rates have led to increased criminal activities and subsequently also to increased migration rates (Riveros, 2021).

Starting in 2020, Suriname has located several large oil reserves off its coast. These discoveries are considered to be the key to recovering from the current economic crisis. However, Suriname lacks the expertise to properly utilize this potential new source of income for the country's development. It is therefore looking to its diaspora for assistance, not only in the need for investment funding but also for skills, knowledge and expertise to efficiently exploit this new resource (Riveros, 2021).

Migration from Suriname

The traditional emigration destinations for the Surinamese have long been to the Netherlands, and its cohorts, Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire, and Sint Maarten. Historically, the largest migration from Suriname has always been to the Netherlands. In the 19th century, upper class society sent its children to the Netherlands to attain a Dutch education. In the 1950s and 1960s, these students were joined by those from middle class families. However, in the 1970s the character of migrants changed, as more of the lower class started migrating to the Netherlands, sometimes straight from their rural communities, in search of a better life. These migrants were searching for a better life, through work instead of education. The 1970s was also a period of violent riots, as rioters burned down a school and the tax office. For weeks, thousands demonstrated in a conflict between the trade unions and the government. The

police were forced to utilize tear gas and water cannons to subdue the rioters (Bovenkerk, 1981). It is estimated that half of Suriname’s population left between this period and 1980. Many claimed a fear of ethnic violence, perhaps spurred on by the riots in 1973, while others left in order to retain their Dutch citizenship (Bovenkerk, 1981).

In her thesis, Runs (2006) defined three distinct periods of emigration.

Table 2 - Periods of Emigration from Suriname (1975 - 2005)

Periods of Emigration from Suriname (1975 - 2005)
Colonial migration after the First World War, lasting until 1975.
Post-colonial migration, from 1975–1987: this period overlaps the military regime in Suriname that lasted from 1980–1987, and ended in 1987 when a democratic government was chosen.
Post-military migration, the period from 1987 to 2005.

(Runs, 2006)

While migration from Suriname has continued steadily, the current economic crisis has led to increased migration to various destinations, however the Netherlands remains the preferred destination. This is also where the largest Surinamese diaspora group is located. The estimated Surinamese diaspora groups at various locations are as follows:

Table 3 - Surinamese Diaspora Locations

Country	Estimated Surinamese Diaspora
Netherlands	2354,814³
French Guiana	26,000
France	28,000
United States	21,000
Guyana	3000
Aruba	1000
Canada	1000
Curacao	1,000
St. Maarten	1000
Belgium	5,000

(CBS, 2022) (MPI, 2022)

In the Netherlands, the Surinamese diaspora is concentrated in several big cities: in Amsterdam two-thirds of the Surinamese diaspora are of Afro descent, while in the Hague

³ [According to the Central Bureau of Statistics in the Netherlands there are 176,019 first generation immigrants and 184,191 persons of Surinamese descent currently residing in the Netherlands \(CBS, 2022\)](#)

three-fourths of the Surinamese are of Hindustani descent. In Rotterdam and Utrecht, those of Surinamese Hindustani descent are slightly higher than the average in the Netherlands (Oudhof, 2011).

Brain Drain

In Suriname, migration continues to be seen as a negative event and is frequently blamed for the lack of expertise with which Suriname is currently dealing. This ‘brain drain’ is a reality for Suriname. Although there is a relative balance in migration with equal numbers emigrating and immigration, the type of migrant is not equal. Higher educated person seeking to further their studies and skilled professionals are the primary immigrants, while low-skilled workers are the primary emigrants. A significant share of those leaving Suriname to further their studies, does not return after graduation. There is also an active recruitment process by Dutch institutions seeking mid-level professionals such as nurses and teachers. This does not only extend to the Netherlands, but also its territories in the Caribbean. These effects have been recorded in Suriname starting in the 1950’s and are currently still felt (Dulam, 2011). Migration, in these cases, is frequently fuelled by attractive higher wages and career opportunities abroad, as well as, an escape from frustrating policies, such as nepotism and patronage workplace politics that favour background and network over diplomas and capabilities (Social Solutions, 2015).

Diaspora Engagement Policy - Suriname

During Surinamese turbulent history, the government has either ignored the diaspora or expressed negative opinions about this group of Surinamese (Bovenkerk, 1981). However, in 2010, then President Bouterse made several statements acknowledging the potential benefits from the contributions that the diaspora could make (Starnieus, 2010, November 26). He called on all Surinamese diaspora to return home, assuring them that they would be received with open arms. Those who were part of the diaspora were on the wrong side of history, according to Bouterse, and while they should not expect either financial or material rewards for returning home, they should still consider returning as they were critically needed in Suriname. The old policies needed to change, and instead of shunning this group, Surinamese must learn to accept them with warmth and empathy, helping these lost sheep return home, where they belong. (Starnieus, 2010, November 26)

By 2012, the first steps were taken to identify the diaspora as part of the national economic development strategies, while also setting a baseline to engage with this group. In 2012, the diaspora was officially recognized as essential to migration policy. The Surinamese government reached out to the IOM for assistance with national development strategies and setting a baseline for engaging with the diaspora. Additional legislative changes were made as ‘good faith’ first steps to encouraging diaspora engagement.

Table 4 - Overview of the Policy and Legislative Framework

Overview of the policy and legislative framework
<p>2014 – Persons of Surinamese Descent Act (PSA, Personen van Surinaamse Afkomst) defines the Surinamese descent to include persons with at least one parent or grandparent born in Suriname and creates the status of PSA beneficiary for all those who do not have Surinamese nationality but are of Surinamese descent. PSA beneficiaries must apply for the status in order to activate it and receive the associated work and residency benefits. This status does not provide the same rights as dual citizenship.</p>
<p>2014 – Amendments to the 1975 Law on Surinamese Nationality and Residence (WSI) facilitate the acquisition of Surinamese nationality and reduce legislative gaps that contribute to statelessness among children of Surinamese descent born abroad. It also confers mothers of Surinamese descent to pass on Surinamese nationality to children born outside Suriname, a right which was previously limited to fathers.</p>
<p>2012 – 2016 National Development Plan establishes five areas of intervention: good governance, economic diversification, social development, education and natural resource management. It recognizes the role of the diaspora in the implementation of the plan.</p>
<p>2017 – 2020 National Strategic Plan 2017 - 2021 (Ontwikkelingsplan 2017 - 2021) broadly recognizes that the diaspora presents opportunities for Suriname's long-term development strategy. It mentions the historic relationship with the United States and the Netherland, as well as, the diaspora relationship with countries and economies it deems influential such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, China and the African continent.</p>

(Orozco, 2020)

The GOS, with the assistance from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), created the Diaspora Unite Suriname Project. The goals of this project were to map the diaspora and engage with diaspora entrepreneurs to attract investment. Unfortunately, these

initiatives never materialized, and it is unclear whether they are yet to be initiated or have been cancelled. Furthermore, the diaspora is briefly mentioned in the National Development Plan 2017 – 2021, while no mention is made of any diaspora engagement initiatives.

The value of the Surinamese diaspora should not be underestimated. It is expressed primarily through the remittances (financial and material) sent to their family, friends, and communities in Suriname; these are not insignificant. In 2020, the remittances were estimated to be 124,028,649 USD, which is 4.3% of that year's GDP (World Bank, n.d.).

In 2020, a new government, led by President Santokhi, was elected in Suriname. Since his election in May 2020, President Santokhi has repeatedly stated the importance of a good relationship with the Netherlands, not only the government of the Netherlands but also the Surinamese diaspora residing there. President Santokhi has re-affirmed the importance of the diaspora, indicating that the diaspora possesses knowledge and experiences which are valuable assets to Suriname. According to President Santokhi, a diaspora engagement policy, based on the principles of supply and demand, will be created in cooperation with the diaspora. President Santokhi is actively working towards strengthening ties with the Surinamese diaspora in the Netherlands, focusing on engaging the diaspora in the Netherlands in order to entice them to make (financial) investments in the development of Suriname. Newspaper *'Het Parool'* reported in September 2021 that the President is returning to Suriname with a suitcase full of promises of support (Meershoek, 2021). Noteworthy is that the majority of his efforts are aimed at the diaspora in the Netherlands. While waiting for the completion of the development of the diaspora engagement policy, he has requested that the diaspora start raising awareness within their network regarding investment opportunities in Suriname. This includes not only entrepreneurial opportunities, but also the opportunity to develop the tourism industry by attracting more tourists. The official stance of the Surinamese government is that the diaspora is ideally placed to be Suriname's corps of ambassadors. Specifically, assistance was also requested with regards to sharing the knowledge regarding the technology necessary for distance learning as the pandemic continues, emphasizing the need for Suriname to modernize, for example, by offering distance learning. Furthermore, the government encourages the diaspora to consider moving some or part of their business to Suriname in order to access a cheap labour force with excellent Dutch language skills. This would contribute to job creation and the further

development of Suriname. The mentioned opportunities range from call centres to online businesses and services (Surinameonline.net, 2020).

The current government will need to consider the several potential obstacles in the development and implementation of a diaspora engagement policy. Firstly, the legislative efforts to allow for dual citizenship were never completed. Apparently, the previous government approved the amendment of naturalization legislation to facilitate the acquisition of Surinamese nationality but did not allow for dual citizenship. This means that any diaspora who wishes to regain their Surinamese nationality would need to abandon the foreign citizenship, something that is unlikely to occur. Additionally, the migration policy, which included a significant role for the diaspora, remains in draft form. The National Development Plan (NDP) 2017 – 2021, unlike the previous NDP (2011 – 2016), only briefly mentions the diaspora. It does mention the need for the creation of a migration policy, but does not suggest incorporating a diaspora engagement policy. The government has stated its intention to evaluate the current PSA Act, with the purpose of adapting it according to its own priorities and policies.

The World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report (2020) ranks Suriname at the bottom of the list of 190 countries in terms of ease of starting a business (at 182) or getting the credit necessary to receive funding (at 181). This bureaucracy extends to any international organization wishing to contribute to Suriname, either financially or material. The logistics involved with opening bank accounts, transferring funds, accessing and exchanging funds, sending shipments of donations, etc. are discouraging to potential investors (Orozco, 2020).

Diaspora Institute Suriname (DIS)

Under President Santokhi direction, the efforts at developing a diaspora engagement strategy were resumed and several steps have been taken. The first of these is the creation of a new institution, the Diaspora Institute Suriname (DIS). It is unclear what has become of the Diaspora Unite Suriname Project, whether the DIS is replacing this project, or whether this is meant to be a completely different institution, and seen as a fresh start. The newly established DIS is to be an independent agency, not tied to any specific government to ensure its longevity and transparency. All actions necessary to ensure this status legally are currently being evaluated and taken.

Furthermore, the DIS will become the one-stop shop for all the coordination, facilitation and guidance with regard to the diaspora. It will allow the diaspora to actively participate in the

social and economic activities in Suriname, and make a valuable contribution during the development process of the diaspora engagement strategy and policy. It will be invaluable to Suriname's achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁴, alleviating poverty, and, together, ensuring well-being and prosperity in Suriname (Surinameonline.net, 2020). The Diaspora Institute Suriname was officially announced on November 18, 2020, and fully operational as of January 2021.

The Diaspora Institute Suriname has the slogan: "*Facilitating Surinamese diaspora, connecting them with Suriname through direct communication and engaging each other with development and activity programs.*" It further lists its vision: "*to be a reliable professional organization in facilitating the Surinamese diaspora for its contribution to build a prosperous and sustainable future for Suriname*, and its mission: *Facilitate. Connect. Serve.*" Its goal is: "*Diaspora Institute Suriname is an entity that organizes and structures cooperation with the diaspora worldwide. Our goals for the coming years are clear. We want to connect as many diaspora groups as possible with local projects, people and initiatives and vice versa*" (DIS, n.d.). While the work is being done for the institute to become fully operational, a registration of diaspora and local partners has started through the DIS website. Unfortunately, the institute's website shows no further activities. For this research, an attempt was made to contact the DIS and schedule an interview, unfortunately this was unsuccessful (Diaspora.sr, 2020).

Diaspora Institute Netherlands (DIN)

In contrast to the DIS, the Diaspora Institute Netherlands (DIN) appears to be making progress toward its stated goals. The Diaspora Institute Netherlands, the direct counterpart of the Diaspora Institute Suriname, was officially launched on September 11, 2021, by President Santokhi. The DIN has several goals including "*Promoting the relationships between organizations, companies, institutes and individuals established in Suriname and the Netherlands in order to contribute to the development of Suriname. Providing building blocks for the diaspora policy with the government of Suriname, partly in collaboration with DIS. And performing all further acts that are related to the foregoing in the broadest sense or that may be conducive thereto*" (DIN, 2021)

⁴ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. (UN DESA, n.d.)

It is described as being “the body in the Netherlands that stimulates and facilitates the relationship between organizations, companies, institutes and persons established in Suriname and the Netherlands, in order to contribute to the development of Suriname. In addition, the institute provides building blocks for the diaspora policy of the government of Suriname, partly in collaboration with the Diaspora Institute in Suriname”.

The DIN achieves its goals by (among others) supporting the diaspora policy of the government of Suriname towards relevant political, administrative and social organizations; exploring and identifying the knowledge potential available in the Netherlands that can be useful for the development of Suriname and building or promoting networks between people of Surinamese descent and with residents of Suriname and representatives of the Surinamese government.

The DIN has published an evaluation of work done from its inception in 2021 to the date of publication in March 2022. The organization had spent time organizing and creating a task and responsibility structure after several round table brainstorming sessions.

This structure highlights the priorities set by the DIN, in coordination with the DIS to improve alignment while reducing redundancies in activities. The priorities are aligned with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are included in the current NDP (2022 – 2026), and are centred around technology, institutional cooperation, mining, agricultural industry, capacity strengthening and medical collaboration (DIN, 2022).

Figure 3 - Diaspora Institute Netherlands Priorities

Knowledge and Skills		Technology and Data	Mining	Institutional	Agro-Industrial	Diaspora Engagement Policy
Society		AI	Oil	Audit Office	Agriculture	
Education		Cogn. Systems	Gold	Central Bureau for Citizen Affairs	Animal Husbandry	
Care	Medical	M-Commerce	Bauxite	Ministries	Water Management	
Art/ Culture/ Sport		Data ethics	Energy	Central Country Accountants Office		

(DIN, 2021)

The brainstorming sessions strengthened synergy, allowed input from multiple stakeholders, created a network of existing knowledge and skills, and resulted in agreements between respondents and stakeholders. The DIN is also actively looking for other organizations to partner with, it has had exploratory meetings with the Diaspora Fund and Capital to discuss possibilities where the Diaspora Fund contributes capital while the DIN contributes expertise and experience. Additional meetings were held with representatives from the IOM and the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG).

The DIN is also currently working on several project proposals aimed at increasing production in Suriname, creating employment opportunities, engaging small business owners, and raising the capacity at institutional levels in Suriname.

Part of the evaluation was a ‘future steps’ section that explored the challenges faced by Suriname. These challenges include the large national debt, the lack of funding, and the loss or lack of institutional capacity. It further explores the possibility that the agreements with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)⁵, will bring challenges such as mandatory immediate structural changes, specific poverty tackling measures, restructuring the government apparatus, promoting productivity, and creating employment structural changes.

The DIN asserts that it is ready to take action and start the process, but cautions that “everything starts with mutual trust and clear, good agreements about cooperation at different levels.” An appropriate sentiment since close cooperation between the DIN and DIS will be required to increase the probability of success of their activities.

CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME)

Being part of the Caribbean means that Suriname is also part of the CARICOM (Caribbean Community). The CARICOM identifies itself as an integration movement in the developing world. It is a grouping of 15 member states and five associates members which works to “create a community that is integrated, inclusive and resilient; driven by knowledge, excellence, innovation and productivity; a Community where every citizen is secure and has the opportunity to realise his or her potential with guaranteed human rights and social justice; and contributes to, and shares in, its economic, social and cultural prosperity; a Community which is a unified and competitive force in the global arena” (CARICOM.org, 2022).

⁵ *Suriname and the IMF Reach Staff-Level Agreement on the Second Review of the Extended Arrangement Under the Extended Fund Facility* (Elnagar, 2022, May 17)

The CARICOM members are all relatively small in terms of population and geographical size, while also diverse in terms of population and geography. They have similar cultures and are at similar levels of economic and social development. They also share similarities in the challenges they face, whether this is the proximity to the major markets in North and South America or the fact that most need to make the transition from an economy based on agriculture or mining to a service-driven economy focused on tourism and financial services. Additionally, they share the challenge of frequent natural disasters and being vulnerable to external shocks due to lacking economies of scale. All CARICOM members have an equal say regardless of size or economic status to ensure that all members can contribute to shaping the Caribbean Community equally. The CARICOM member states are Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago (CARICOM.org, 2022).

One of CARICOM's initiatives is the establishment of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, which will be beneficial for all its member states. This initiative will establish several initiatives, namely the Free Movement of Goods, Free Movement of People, Free Movement of Capital, Right to Establish, and specific Consumer Rights. The establishment of these initiatives will be beneficial to the migration policies of all CARICOM member states.

According to the CARICOM website, the Right to Free Movement of People is essential to creating an even closer union among the CARICOM member states. CARICOM states: "Under the CSME, the Free Movement of Persons across the region entails the removal of work permits for the University Graduates, Media Workers, Sports Persons, Musicians, Artists, Managers, Supervisors, and other service providers. With the CSME, these persons will be able to travel to Member States with only a travel permit and, in some cases, an Inter-Caribbean Travel document complete with a photograph, for example, a CARICOM passport. Mechanisms will be established for the recognised degrees, diplomas, and certificates from certain institutions. Additionally, the provisions to harmonise and transfer social security gains will benefit those who qualify. Currently, only workers in certain categories can move freely to other CARICOM member states, and enjoy the same benefits and rights with regard to the condition of work and employment as those given to national workers. The selection of categories will be expanded as the initiative is implemented further.

Freedom of movement includes the freedom to leave and re-enter any Member State of their choosing and access property either for residential or business purposes. A self-employed

person from a CARICOM member state has the right to engage in non-wage-earning activities of a commercial, industrial agricultural, or artisanal nature. Such nationals may create and manage economic enterprises, including any type of organization that they own or control for the production of or trade in goods or the provision of services. Nationals exercising this right may move to another Member State on a permanent basis. Affiliated with the Right of Establishment is the right to move the technical, supervisory and managerial staff of certain entities, as well as their spouses and immediate dependent family members. Several procedures have been approved for the treatment of persons wishing to establish business enterprises in other member states. A CARICOM National entering another Member State with a Skills Certificate issued by another Member State must be granted a definite entry of six months and has the right to work immediately. A CARICOM National entering with a Skills Certificate issued by the receiving country must be granted an indefinite entry” (CARICOM.org, n.d.).

Part of the CSME is also the Free Movement of Capital. This initiative could be beneficial when considering the transfer of remittances from among the member states. It focuses on creating the ability to transfer money to another country (through bank notes, electronic transfers, etc.) without obtaining prior authorisation. No new restrictions can be added, and the restrictions that already exist will be removed. Envisaged under the CSME are the easy convertibility of the region’s currencies and the coordination of exchange and interest rate policies.

During the latest CARICOM meeting on July 12, 2022, the CSME initiative was discussed as heads of Government expressed disappointment at the frequent delays in the implementation of the CSME and requested that immediate action be taken to move the process along. During the discussion on the freedom of movement for workers, an agreement was reached on the definitions and qualifications of household domestics, agricultural workers and private security officers. Additionally, the ministries responsible were mandated to convene meetings before the end of July 2022 to establish the steps which need to be taken to implement the principle of mutual recognition for any company incorporated within the CARICOM member states. The discussion also expanded to online solutions which have been created for the efficient delivery of services in the region; specifically, the Labour Market Information System (LMIS), Online Companies Registry System (OCRS), the Community Public Procurement Notice Board (CPPNB), the CARICOM Rapid Alert System for Exchange of Information on Dangerous (non-food) Goods (CARREX) and the CARICOM Interactive Marketplace and Suspension Procedure (CIMSuPro) (CARICOM.org, 2022).

All these initiatives will have an impact on Suriname in the form of potentially increased migration and remittances. Through these initiatives, Surinamese may take the opportunities to work in the region, creating a more affluent regional diaspora which send more remittances home. Also, locals from other CARICOM member states may choose to come to Suriname to work in the new (possibly lucrative) oil industry. In preparation of the implementation of the CSME, Suriname has made large investments in its technical and vocation education, in order to bring the quality of the education and recognition of the Surinamese diplomas up to regional standards. Since 2014, Suriname has taken loans from the Caribbean Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank in the total amount of USD 92 million, intending to improve the Technical and Vocational Education in Suriname (Bureau voor de Staatsschuld Suriname, n.d.). These projects include the construction of state-of-the-art classrooms across the country, adapting the curriculum, and training instructors.

4. Methodology

This research utilized the mixed methods approach of data gathering in order to answer the question *What role can the Surinamese diaspora play in Suriname’s development efforts?*

This question will be further expanded upon by considering the following sub-questions:

- What attributes, experiences and expertise can be found among the Surinamese diaspora that can be utilized to contribute to development efforts in Suriname?
- What is the current level of engagement of the Surinamese diaspora?
- What role does the Surinamese diaspora see itself playing in Suriname’s development efforts?

Table 5 - Research Questions/ Methods/ Variables

<u>Sub-questions</u>
1. What attributes, experiences and expertise can be found among the Surinamese diaspora which can be utilized to contribute to development efforts in Suriname?
<u>Independent Variables</u>
Composition of Surinamese diaspora
<u>Dependent Variables</u>
Language
Gender
Age
Origin
Departure Reason
Connection to Suriname
Education
Employment
2. What is the current level of engagement of the Surinamese diaspora?
<u>Independent Variables</u>
Diaspora Engagement
Support sent to Suriname
<u>Dependent Variables</u>
Gender
Age
Education Level
Location
Connection to Suriname

3. What role does the Surinamese diaspora see itself playing in Suriname's development efforts?
<u>Independent Variables</u>
Role of diaspora
<u>Dependent Variables</u>
Obstacles
Opportunities

Operationalization

Data will be gathered on the composition of the Surinamese diaspora, recording attributes, such as age, gender, education level, employment status, the reason for leaving Suriname, and current location, as well as recording the professional experiences and expertise the diaspora could potentially offer by utilizing a survey.

Additionally, both the data gathered via the survey and in-depth interviews will provide an insight into at what level and frequency the diaspora assists Suriname. The level of engagement will be measured by the types of assistance (funding or goods), the frequency at which aid is sent to Suriname, and the way in which this is done. Additionally, the data will also provide insights into how engaged the respondent is with diaspora organizations where they live. The way in which the respondent engages with others in the diaspora and diaspora organizations and institutes will be used to extrapolate the level of engagement. Respondents who, for example, only engage via social media are categorized as engaging ‘occasionally.’ ‘Occasional’ engagement is seen as not important to the respondent. In comparison, the respondent who serves on the board of a diaspora organization is categorized as being ‘very involved’ as this indicates a level of dedication and personal investment. The categories used to measure the level of engagement are occasional, very engaged, or not engaged at all. Furthermore, the data will indicate what role the diaspora sees itself playing in the development of Suriname; and what obstacles they anticipate or have experienced. The interviews also provided more insights into the reasons for some of the challenges faced and potential ways in which these can be overcome.

Methods

Survey

The primary method of data gathering was a survey containing twenty-three questions. The survey was shared extensively in the Surinamese diaspora community. The survey was

created using the Qualtrics software, provided by Utrecht University, and shared via a link and a QR code. It was available in both Dutch and English to make it easier for second and third generation diaspora members who may be more comfortable in English. The survey was initially shared via WhatsApp, Facebook, and emails to contacts (professional acquaintances, friends, family, ex-colleagues, current fellow students, etc.) In order to avoid selection bias, the survey was sent to persons of all ethnicities, socioeconomic and religious backgrounds. Further, the survey was shared with persons located in as wide a variety of locations as possible, for example, Australia, Singapore, and Guyana. The survey was also posted on social media, namely Facebook and Instagram, with the request to share the survey with all who qualified or may know people who qualified as Surinamese diaspora and would be interested in participating. The survey was also sent to a variety of Suriname-focused organizations (see a sample of organizations contacted below) with the request to complete the survey, share it with members/friends/family, and possibly be interviewed for this study.

Table 6 - Diaspora Organizations Contacted

Name	
Cogesur	Vereniging Surinaamse Nederlanders
Stichting Asha	Fayalobi
Diaspora Events Stichting	Suriname Moravian Fellowship, Corp.
Diaspora Instituut Nederland	Surinamers in Amerika (Surinamese in the USA)
Duurzame Ontwikkeling Nederland Suriname	Sranan Dey NY
Kenniskring Nederland-Suriname	Suriname American Network Inc.
Platform Surinaamse Diaspora	Diaspora Instituut Suriname
Stichting Collectief Overzee Suriname	Diaspora Suriname Internationaal
Stichting NAKS Nederland	Surinamers in Amerika (Surinamese in the USA)
Stichting Vriendschapsbanden Nederland Suriname	Surinamers in Nederland en Suriname.
Surinaams Inspraak Orgaan	Diaspora VHP vrouwen
Vereniging Ons Suriname	Suriname Students Association

Furthermore, a flyer was created, which was shared with over fifty Suriname-focused businesses to display for their customers to encourage participation. The survey was published on the 19th of April and closed on the 30th of June with a total of 348 completed surveys.

Interviews

Emails were also sent to board members and management of diaspora organizations, persons with a particular interest in the diaspora (such as the VHP Women Netherlands), diaspora experts, and members of the diaspora in less common countries such as the United Kingdom, Singapore and the USA requesting an interview.

Focus Group

As an extension of the in-depth interviews, a group discussion was organized for Surinamese students currently studying in the Netherlands and Belgium.

Literature review

A literature review of academic papers, news articles, social media posts and blogs was completed to gather additional data. Particular emphasis was placed on gathering data regarding the diaspora, historical and current approaches to diaspora engagement, and migration waves. Searches were done regarding this information in general, and specific to the Caribbean and Suriname. Additionally, an emphasis was placed on research which identified specific factors that influence the levels of engagement by the diaspora.

Online versions of Surinamese news sources were utilized to research and analyse historical approaches to the engagement of the diaspora. This information was limited due to the fact that the largest newspaper (De Ware Tijd) no longer provides online access to its archives.

Risks and limitations

The following risks and limitations have been identified:

There was an anticipated risk of selection bias. This risk was mitigated by sharing the survey with organizations and on social media pages of all Surinamese-focused groups found.

Additionally, those who participate may be the most vocal of the group who are eager and enthusiastic regarding the fact that they have someone who wants to hear their thoughts. It is conceivable that those who have strong negative emotions will be more vocal and eager to participate than those who have neutral or positive emotions regarding Suriname and the diaspora's contributions to Suriname.

All the interviews were done in Dutch, and most of the surveys were also completed in Dutch. There is a small chance that there may have been some errors in the translation of the data.

All the interviews and the focus group session were done online utilizing Teams due to pandemic concerns and to optimize time and reduce costs. This could potentially have an impact on the interviewees and their comfort level. However, it appeared that most interviewees were comfortable, for example, one refused to turn on her camera because she was in bed, while another was on his lunch break at the office and took his time eating and drinking comfortably. Doing the interviews online also made interviews at longer distances possible, as was the case with the interviewees in Suriname, the UK and the USA.

The survey was completed by 348 respondents, however not all responded to all questions. Some respondents opted to leave some questions, especially the open questions, blank or answered with N/A or NVT (not applicable).

The study is done only with Surinamese diaspora, therefore it will not be possible to verify statements made by the diaspora regarding the attitudes and beliefs held by Surinamese living in Suriname.

Finally, the sample size may be insufficient in size for making a meaningful analysis.

5. Mapping the Surinamese Diaspora

This study has a total of 364 respondents: 348 survey respondents, 12 interviewees, and four focus group participants. According to the sample size calculator, provided by the Qualtrics software⁶, for a population of 400,000 a sample size of 271 respondents is sufficient for a confidence level of 90% with a 5% margin of error. If the confidence level is increased to 95%, with a margin of error of 5%, the sample size should be 384.

The response to the survey was enthusiastic. Respondents shared the survey with members of their networks, both in-person and online. This snowball effect does mean that there may be a selection bias based on the respondent's interpretation of who should participate.

The survey did not ask the respondent to identify according to ethnicity or race. In hindsight, given the divided state of the Surinamese diaspora, this is a shortcoming that somewhat impacts the ability to analyse the gathered data.

The twelve in-depth structured interviews were held with various individuals living in the Netherlands, the USA and Suriname. This group consisted of persons who were specifically approached with a request to participate in an interview and persons who sent emails after completing the survey and wished to participate further via an interview. Persons who were former diaspora were purposely sought out for interviews to learn about their experiences re-integrating into Surinamese society. All the interviews were conducted via Teams and lasted between 40 minutes and two hours. All the interviews were done in Dutch, although interviewees often lapsed into Sranan Tongo or English while speaking.

Table 7 - Interviewees

Interviewees	
A Surinamese Ph.D. student in the UK	A newly arrived diaspora member
A prominent diaspora figure in the Netherlands	A successful businessman in both Suriname and the Netherlands
The president of a non-profit organization which frequently sends support to Suriname	A former diaspora member who lived in both the USA and the Netherlands
The president of the Netherlands arm of a prominent political party	The secretary of a prominent Surinamese diaspora organization in the USA
A Surinamese psychologist former diaspora member	A retired social worker with work experience in the Netherlands and
The secretary of a prominent non-profit organization that operated solely in Suriname with funding from the Netherlands	A teacher who immigrated to Curacao as a youth and now lives in the Netherlands.

⁶ <https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/calculating-sample-size/>

The focus group consisted of four students who had all grown up and completed secondary schooling in Suriname.

Table 8 - Focus Group Participants

Focus Group	Studying in	Citizenship	Future plans
MA Media and Business	Netherlands	Born in the Netherlands	Plans to return to Suriname after graduation
BSc Veterinary Medicine	Belgium	Born in the Netherlands	Plans to support Suriname’s development efforts on project basis (not via personal remittances), not return to live in Suriname full-time
MSc Pharmaceutical Science	Netherlands	Born in Suriname	Hopes to support Suriname’s development efforts on project basis, and support family and friends via remittances, but not return to live in Suriname full-time
MSc Biology	Belgium	Born in Suriname	Hopes to support Suriname’s development efforts on project basis, and support family and friends via remittances, but not return to live in Suriname full-time

All the respondents were guaranteed anonymity. During the interviews and the focus group discussion, the Teams meetings were recorded, and later converted to audio-only for transcribing purposes. All mention of personal information such as names was removed from the transcripts.

Findings and Analysis

The GOS wishes to engage with the Surinamese diaspora, believing that the diaspora is the key to helping Suriname out of its current economic crisis. While researching the Surinamese diaspora, it is clear that there is not much data available about Suriname’s diaspora. The majority of the articles appear to study the immigration waves from and the effects of brain drain on Suriname. For this research, therefore, the first step was to gather as much data as possible to create a mapping of the composition of the diaspora, listing attributes and characteristics such as age, gender, education level, employment status, the reason for leaving Suriname, and current location, professional expertise, as well as, the interest and willingness to assist Suriname’s development efforts either via remittances to family and friends or in a more top-down manner via government programs.

Language

To achieve this goal, a survey was utilized, which was completed by 348 individuals. Most respondents (79%) choose to take the survey in Dutch versus English.

Table 9 - Language Used

Language	Responses	%
NL	275	79.0%
EN	73	21.0%
Total	348	

This seems logical as Dutch is the official language of Suriname; also, approximately 80% of the total diaspora lives in the Netherlands (MPI, 2022). This is confirmed by the data, which showed that 78.9% of respondents are in the Netherlands. In comparison, the remaining 21.1% was divided between the USA, Curacao, St. Maarten, and various other locations, such as Aruba, Belgium, the UK and Portugal.

Gender

The majority of the survey respondents were female (59.8%), while 38.2% identified as male, and 2% of respondents identified as ‘other’ or refused to answer.

This reflects the composition of the Surinamese diaspora in the Netherlands, where there are more women than men. According to the CBS, this happened gradually as more women migrated to the Netherlands over time. (CBS, 2015)

Age

The majority of respondents are between the ages of 46 and 60, followed by an almost equal distribution of respondents in the age groups of 60+ and between the ages of 31 to 45. This should be good news for any diaspora engagement plans, as persons within these age brackets are within the highest earnings potential according to Stahl (2021) in her article in Forbes magazine. Additionally, according to Cutler (2021), older adults are more likely to choose to help social projects by making more significant donations and focusing on their own country over more generalized or international charities.

Origin

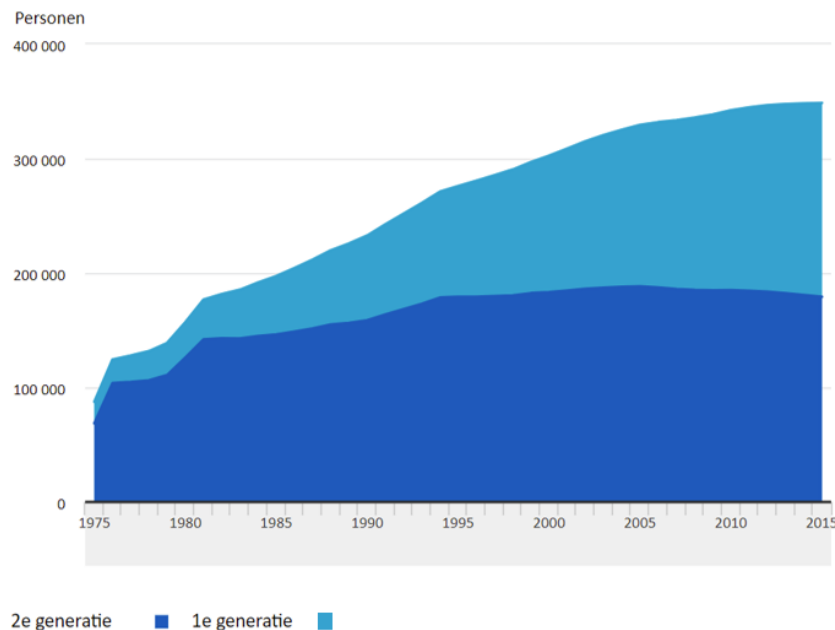
Half of those who participated were born in Suriname, while the other half are either second or third generation Surinamese diaspora.

Table 10 - Origin

Origin	Responses	%
I was born in Suriname	232	50.1%
One or both of my parents were born in Suriname	153	33.0%
One or more of my grand-parents were born in Suriname	71	15.3%
Other	7	1.5%

According to the data from the Central Bureau of Statistics in the Netherlands, this is a fair representation. They report that 176,019 members of the Surinamese diaspora in the Netherlands are first generation, while 184,191 were born in the Netherlands (CBS, 2015).

Figure 4: Surinamese Diaspora in the Netherlands (1975 – 2015)⁷



(CBS, 2015)

Departure Reason

Regarding the reasons for leaving Suriname, most respondents gave various reasons, 34.9% of these reasons could be categorized as ‘looking for a better future.’ Several respondents mentioned the political instability. Safety concerns due to the political instability experienced immediately before Suriname’s independence in 1975, after the military coup in 1980, and

⁷ Personen = Persons/ Generatie = Generation

the turbulent times after the 1982 December murders⁸ were all mentioned as reasons for leaving Suriname.

Table 11 - Departure Reason

Departure reason	Responses	%
For a better future	30	34.9%
Other	23	26.7%
Political Instability	17	19.8%
As child with parents	6	7.0%
To Work	5	5.8%
To Study	4	4.7%
Family reunification	1	1.2%

Several older respondents were quite adamant that they had to flee the country or were forced out of the country out of fear for violent from the Afro population. Those who made these statements were all in the 60+ age group, and showed in their comments that a racial bias remains. They were also the most outspoken in their disdain for Surinamese treatment of the diaspora and the mentality of those currently living in Suriname. Respondents expanded on this theme by explaining that they (the first generation of migrants who arrived in the Netherlands during the 1970s and 1980s) worked 16-hour days at the lowest paying jobs, frequently working one full-time job and then having an additional part-time job as a cleaner or some such position. The group faced numerous challenges; for example, being discriminated against, unprepared for the cold weather, and unfamiliar with the Netherlands. Respondents emphasized that the diaspora suffered while those in Suriname (then and now) napped in hammocks under mango trees with a glass of whiskey in hand. Outrage was expressed regarding the fact that when the diaspora members go to Suriname or try to help, they face prejudices: they are told “you are not Surinamese” and “you don’t belong here”, but still “these people want me to give them money.”

Connection to Suriname

The majority of respondents (73.0%) still visit Suriname regularly and 89.7% of respondents reported having regular contact with both immediate and distant family members.

⁸ Refers to the murder on December 8, 1982, of thirteen civilians and two military officials who opposed the military rule in Suriname.

Table 12 - Follow Suriname News

Stay up-to-date on happenings in Suriname	%
Yes, I follow what is happening in Suriname but focus mainly on social happenings.	12.4%
Yes, I follow via the news for social, political and other happenings in Suriname.	30.2%
Yes, I follow Surinamese news regularly for updates on political and other happenings.	35.9%
No.	21.6%

The majority of respondents appear to be proud of their Surinamese heritage, 39.9% declaring themselves 100% Surinamese, while 44.5% feel that they are not only Surinamese but “citizens of the world.” This is also reflected in the fact that 78.4% of respondents actively follow Suriname happenings via news or social media.

Education

The highest completed education for 39.4% of the respondents is HBO (higher professional education – a degree in a tertiary vocational qualification), while 37.1% completed a university degree outside of Suriname. Only 1.7% completed a university degree in Suriname. Additionally, 64% of the respondents in the USA have a completed university degree, compared to 29% of those in the Netherlands, indicating a lot of potential expertise, knowledge, and skills among this group. In Curacao, 47% have completed an HBO degree, and fifty-five percent of those residing at the ‘other’ locations also completed HBO degrees.

Table 13 - Completed Education by Location

Highest Education	The Netherlands	The United States of America	Curacao	St Maarten	Other
MBO	16.1%	6.1%	5.9%	20.0%	5.0%
VWO	4.4%	0.0%	5.9%	20.0%	10.0%
HBO	41.0%	15.2%	47.1%	0.0%	25.0%
University in Suriname	1.5%	3.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%
University not in Suriname	29.3%	63.6%	29.4%	20.0%	55.0%
Other	7.7%	12.1%	11.8%	20.0%	5.0%

Employment

Most respondents (61.2%) are working full-time, while 15.2% are retired, 8% are studying, and 15.6% choose the option ‘other.’ Regarding what specific skills or expertise the

respondents bring to the table, there is quite an extensive range, with 22% being in the financial or business sector and 12% (each) in the medical and education fields. Respondents who chose ‘other’ included a variety of occupations such as agriculture, graphic design, and being a civil servant.

Table 14 - Expertise

Expertise	Responses	%
Financial/Business	78	22.4%
Other	53	15.2%
Medical	43	12.4%
Education	41	11.8%
Administrative	30	8.6%
Not working	28	8.0%
ICT	23	6.6%
Police/Justice	26	7.5%
Technical	18	5.2%
Retired	8	2.3%

The results indicate that 24% of those in Curacao, 20% in St. Maarten, and 25% at ‘other’ locations specialize in the Education sector. Of those in the Netherlands, 24% work in the financial or business sectors; at the same time, 21% of those in the US work in the medical field, and 40% of those in St. Maarten work in the technology sector.

Table 15 - Expertise by Location

Expertise	The Netherlands	The United States of America	Curacao	St Maarten	Other
Administrative	8.8%	12.1%	5.9%	20.0%	0.0%
Education	10.6%	6.1%	23.5%	20.0%	25.0%
Financial/Business	23.8%	18.2%	17.6%	0.0%	20.0%
ICT	6.2%	12.1%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%
Medical	11.7%	21.2%	11.8%	0.0%	10.0%
Not working	8.1%	6.1%	11.8%	0.0%	10.0%
Other	16.8%	0.0%	11.8%	20.0%	20.0%
Police/Justice	8.4%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%
Retired	2.6%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Technical	2.9%	15.2%	17.6%	40.0%	0.0%

A wide diversity of knowledge, expertise and skills combined with continued interest and connection with Suriname gives hope for the success of a diaspora engagement policy.

6. Engagement and Support

Findings and Analysis

The majority of respondents (73.0%) report having travelled to Suriname within the last ten years, and 89.7% report being in regular contact with family and friends. However, few (25.5%) respondents report being involved with diaspora groups. Respondents were asked in the survey whether they were involved with any diaspora organization and given the space in a text box to respond. The responses were coded into four categories: very involved, occasionally, unknown and none.

Table 16 - Coding Diaspora Engagement

Very involved = this included all who indicated having started, being a member of, or active involvement with an organization or group. All who mentioned involved via religious channels were also included here as it shows the motivation and desire to be involved.
Occasionally = this included all who reported involvement primarily through social media, who indicated that the involvement was not substantial or primarily through work, as this indicates that the motivation for involvement is less personal and potentially more a passing desire to be involved.
Unknown = this included responses which were unclear, some involvement but unclear what and how intense.
None = no involvement.

Though there are strong ties with Suriname, the majority of the respondents (74.5%) reported not being actively involved with any diaspora groups. Of those who are very involved, some mentioned organizations with specific religious or ethnic target audiences, such as the Marron community in general, and the Aucans community specifically. Also, the Hindu religion, and NAKS, which is an abbreviation for Na Afrikan Kulturu fu Sranan (The African Culture of Suriname) were mentioned. Several other diaspora organizations were named, such as Bay Area and SANI in the USA, and in the Netherlands, ChietSana Foundation, Hart voor Suriname (Heart for Suriname), Surispora, the Johan Ferrier fonds, and the Diaspora Institute Netherlands.

Factors That May Influence Engagement

As previously mentioned, several studies have been done looking into the factors which influence whether someone in the diaspora sends support home whether this be financial or social remittances. These factors include conditions in the home country, living conditions and quality of life of family and friends in the home country. The migrant's income must also be sufficient to be able to send support. The conducted survey did not gather data on the diaspora's income; however, the assumption can be made that those who are more educated have higher levels of skills and, therefore, higher incomes. There are however, inconsistent findings when comparing educational levels and the amount of support (Ghosh, 2006). Given this information, respondents' educational level, diaspora engagement, and support sent back to Suriname were compared.

Education

According to the data, the respondent's education level has no effect on their involvement with diaspora organizations. For all education levels recorded, the majority of respondents reported not having any involvement with diaspora organizations.

Table 17 - Diaspora Engagement by Education Level

Engagement	MBO	VWO	HBO	University in Suriname	University outside Suriname	Other
Very involved	10.9%	21.4%	9.1%	0.0%	10.0%	7.1%
Unknown	8.7%	0.0%	5.8%	0.0%	7.3%	0.0%
Occasionally	19.6%	14.3%	9.9%	0.0%	7.3%	21.4%
None	60.9%	64.3%	75.2%	100.0%	75.5%	71.4%

When comparing education level to support sent, the lower levels of education recorded (MBO and VWO) actually report the highest level of support sent. This also applies to those who choose 'Other' as a response to the question of the highest completed education; 62.1% report having sent both money and goods. Of those who completed an MBO degree, 53.1% sent money and goods. At the same time, the majority (62.5%) of those who have completed a VWO degree reported the same.

Those who completed the university in Suriname are equally divided between sending money only, goods only, and sending money and goods. For those who completed the university outside of Suriname, those who sent money and goods (38.1%) are almost equal to those who

sent no support at all (33.1%). It is possible that the data concurs with the findings mentioned above, which stated that higher educated people migrate with family, reducing the amount of support they can send. However, these are all respondents who achieved their highest level of education abroad, so they most likely migrated as students and then stayed abroad, which means they most likely did not immigrate with family (whom they were responsible for taking care of).

Table 18 - Support Sent by Education Level

Support Sent	MBO	VWO	HBO	University in Suriname	University outside Suriname	Other
Yes, I have sent money.	22.4%	0.0%	11.5%	33.3%	13.6%	6.9%
Yes, I have sent goods (food, clothes, gifts, etc.)	10.2%	25.0%	17.7%	33.3%	15.3%	3.4%
Yes, I have sent both money and goods.	53.1%	62.5%	46.2%	33.3%	38.1%	62.1%
No.	14.3%	12.5%	24.6%	0.0%	33.1%	27.6%

Age

Another factor influencing the diaspora's behaviour is the individual's age. Research done by Unheim (2012) and Rodriguez (1996) found that support can increase with age. However, Merkle and Zimmermann (1992) found the amount of support sent decreases as the individual sending ages. Menjivar (1998) estimates that this happens between the ages of 40 and 45.

The data gathered showed no difference in the relationship between age and diaspora engagement. The vast majority of the respondents do not engage with diaspora organizations regardless of their age. The highest level of engagement can be found in the 60+ age group, where 17.2% are very involved, and 16.3% are occasionally involved. Still, even in this age group, the majority (60.5%) are not involved, while for 7.9%, the engagement level is unknown.

Table 19 - Diaspora Engagement by Age Group

Age Groups	Total	18-30	31-45	46-60	60+
Very involved	10.7%	7.9%	12.2%	7.1%	17.2%
Occasionally involved	11.0%	7.9%	5.4%	11.8%	16.3%
None	73.2%	78.9%	78.4%	77.2%	60.5%
Unknown	4.9%	5.3%	4.1%	3.9%	7.9%

When comparing age groups to support sent to Suriname, 58.6% of the 46 - 60 age group sent money and goods. For the 60+ age group 46.7% reports sending both money and goods. For

the age group between 18 – 30, the majority (42.9%) has not sent any support, while 36.1% of the age group between 31 – 45 has sent both money and goods. The data reflects the trend of support increasing as the individual ages, with a reversal after a certain age. The data gathered shows this age falls between the ages of 46 – 60.

Table 20 - Support Sent by Age Group

Support sent	18 - 30	31 - 45	46 - 60	60+
Yes, I have sent money.	4.8%	13.3%	10.5%	21.1%
Yes, I have sent goods (food, clothes, gifts, etc.)	26.2%	21.7%	10.5%	11.1%
Yes, I have sent both money and goods.	26.2%	36.1%	58.6%	46.7%
No.	42.9%	28.9%	20.3%	21.1%

Gender

When considering the gender of the diaspora member, the literature shows different results; some find that women remit less than men, while others show that men remit less than women (Durand, 1996/ Lucas & Stark, 1985). The data gathered shows that female respondents are slightly more involved with diaspora organizations than male respondents – at 75.6% vs. 69.4%. Of those who choose ‘Other’ for gender, 100% of respondents are not involved.

Table 21 - Diaspora Engagement by Gender

Diaspora Engagement	Male	Female	Other	Do not want to say
Very involved	69.4%	75.6%	0.0%	60.0%
Unknown	12.9%	10.9%	0.0%	20.0%
Occasionally	6.5%	4.7%	0.0%	20.0%
None	11.3%	8.8%	100.0%	0.0%

Regarding those who have sent support, most females (47.8%) indicated having sent both money and goods, while 45.5% of males stated the same. Of those who did not want to identify with a gender, 60% sent money, while 50% of the ‘Other’ group sent goods only. This group was equally divided between those who sent goods and those who had not sent any support at all.

Table 22 - Support Sent by Gender

Gender	Male	Female	Other	Do not want to say.
Yes, I have sent money	16.7%	10.1%	0.0%	60.0%
Yes, I have sent goods (food, clothes, gifts, etc.)	13.6%	16.4%	50.0%	0.0%
Yes, I have sent both money and goods	45.5%	47.8%	0.0%	20.0%
No	24.2%	25.6%	50.0%	20.0%

Location

Engagement with diaspora organizations and support sent by respondents was also compared with location. Since most respondents live in the Netherlands, 84.8% of respondents who engage with diaspora organizations are located there. Of those in the USA, 26.5% also occasionally engaged with diaspora organizations. The remaining locations showed low to no involvement with diaspora organizations.

Table 23 - Diaspora Engagement by Location

Location	The Netherlands	The United States of America	Curacao	St. Maarten	Other
Very involved	84.8%	9.1%	3.0%	0.0%	3.0%
Occasionally	67.6%	26.5%	2.9%	0.0%	2.9%
None	78.1%	8.4%	5.1%	1.7%	6.8%
Unknown	70.0%	5.0%	15.0%	5.0%	5.0%

When considering support sent by location, the majority of respondents at all locations, except for 'Other,' report sending money and goods. The most significant percentage is in Curacao, where 70.6% of respondents indicated that they've sent both. For the location 'Other,' 55% report having sent no support, 35% sent both money and goods, and 10% sent only money.

Table 24 - Support Sent by Location

Support sent	The Netherlands	The United States of America	Curacao	St Maarten	Other
Yes, I have sent money	12.8%	21.2%	0.0%	40.0%	10.0%
Yes, I have sent goods (food, clothes, gifts, etc.)	16.5%	18.2%	5.9%	20.0%	0.0%
Yes, I have sent both money and goods	46.5%	39.4%	70.6%	40.0%	35.0%
No	24.2%	21.2%	23.5%	0.0%	55.0%

Level of Engagement

Those who reported having no involvement with diaspora organizations were given space in an open question to explain further. Some, such as respondents in Portugal and St. Maarten, responded that regretfully there were no diaspora groups in their area. While others indicated a lack of connectivity, stating "...I do not identify with these groups" and "...I feel no connection."

There were also several critiques against the term 'diaspora' specifically, stating "I do not need to be called diaspora and pretend to be high society. I am active within my own abilities in the Netherlands as well as in Suriname regardless of colour, religion or ethnicity."

There were also critiques regarding the diaspora organizations in general; respondents made statements such as and "No, not really active because people are often too negative," and "No, I think they are way too divided. Afro-Surinamese with only Afro-Surinamese, Hindustani-Surinamese with only Hindustani Surinamese, etc."

This critique of a divide among the diaspora (and therefore the diaspora organizations) was repeated by several respondents. This is not entirely unexpected – the majority of the Surinamese diaspora arrived in the Netherlands during certain periods in time. Approximately 40,000 immigrants left right before Suriname's independence, fleeing Suriname in fear of ethnic violence after independence. Subsequent groups left in 1979 and 1980, when Surinamese could still choose to retain Dutch citizenship, provided they lived in the Netherlands (Andere Tijden, 2022). Given the racial tension between the East Indian and Creole (Afro) Surinamese groups, it is no wonder that they also choose to live apart in the Netherlands. This segregation was helped by specific segregation policies adopted by communities in the Netherlands, such as the 'spreidingsbeleid' (separation policy) utilized by the municipality of Amsterdam. (Heilbron, 2017) Currently, a large part of the Surinamese diaspora continues to live largely divided by ethnicity in the Netherlands; consequently, it would make sense for the diaspora organizations to reflect this divide.

Not being involved with an official diaspora organization does not affect the amount of support provided to family and friends in Suriname, as most respondents (46%) reported sending financial and non-financial support to family and friends in Suriname. Although, most do not do so on a regular schedule.

Table 25 - Frequency Support Sent to Suriname

Frequency of support	%
I send support (financial or other), but not on a structured schedule.	44.5%
I do not send support (financial or other).	27.3%
I send support (financial or other) on a frequent basis (more than once yearly).	26.1%

As with the diaspora involvement, only a few respondents reported working with non-profits or other organizations to send support to Suriname.

Table 26 - Support Sent via Organization

Support sent via an organization	%
No.	44.3%
Yes, I have sent both money and goods.	19.5%
Yes, I have sent money.	19.5%
Yes, I have sent goods (food, clothes, gifts, etc.)	16.7%

Additionally, the majority of respondents have no financial ties to Suriname in the form of property (real estate) or business investments, which means that their connection is mainly through family, friends and self-identification.

Table 27 - Own Property/ Investments in Suriname

Own property or have investments in Suriname	%
No.	75.3%
Yes, I own property.	22.7%
Yes, I own property and have business investments in Suriname.	1.1%
Yes, I have investments in business(es).	0.9%
Yes, I own business(es) in Suriname.	0.0%

This is a characteristic that the GOS should take into consideration by focusing initially on those who do have the financial ties with Suriname. They could survey this group and see what is needed to improve their experience and beneficial. Once a good relationship is established, this could be the first group of Surinamese diaspora ambassadors utilizing their network to attract more investors. This is an opportunity to increase the chance of developing an effective and successful diaspora engagement policy.

7. The Role of the Diaspora

Findings and Analysis

Contribution Willing to Make

Question 20 stated ‘*President Santokhi has asked the Surinamese diaspora in the Netherlands to actively start supporting Suriname's development efforts. If offered a job by the government to work in Suriname on these development efforts, would you be willing to (please indicate all that apply).*’ All respondents responded positively to this question, indicating a willingness to provide assistance in one way or another.

Table 28 - Contribution Willing to Make

Contribution Willing to Make	%
Work for the Surinamese government only as a consultant (whether on location or remotely).	19.6%
Work with Surinamese private sector.	16.2%
I would not be willing to help the Suriname government in its development efforts.	12.0%
Move to Suriname to work if guaranteed a job.	11.4%
Work for the Surinamese government (whether on location or remotely).	11.2%
Work with Surinamese governmental agencies.	11.1%
Go to Suriname temporarily as a volunteer.	10.4%
I would not be willing to do any of the above, but I would be willing do something else.	8.1%

Those who indicated that they would be willing to do something else proposed taking on the role of advisor (35.7%), while a small percentage of respondents proposed establishing their own business, and making a social contribution. Approximately 20% was unsure how to help.

Specific Role

When asked what specific role the diaspora could play in supporting Suriname, most responses referred to expertise (skills, knowledge, and experience) that the diaspora could bring to Suriname. Since this was an open question, there were a variety of responses. Several respondents stated that the Surinamese people do not want their involvement. At the same time, 10.6% had no idea and could give no suggestions.

Table 29 - Role of the Diaspora

Role of diaspora	%
Catalyst	30.3%
Expertise	18.7%
None	17.3%
Unknown	11.0%
Negotiator/ promotion	10.7%
Financial and expertise	6.9%
Other	3.7%
Support/Advisor	0.9%
Financial, as tourists	0.6%

It is important to note that there are several critical pre-requisites which must be satisfied before the respondents would be willing to work for or with the GOS, or just generally in Suriname. Most responses focused on transparency, reducing or eradicating corruption, and receiving a salary sufficient to maintain their certain lifestyle. The respondents who indicated 'other' in their responses further expanded with such demands as a professional working environment, safe and comfortable housing, safe and secure living conditions, quality health care, quality education for their children, not being subjected to excessive bureaucratic policies and working from home (not in Suriname). These responses reflect the impression of the diaspora members' concerns regarding living conditions in Suriname.

These pre-requisites are conditions which Suriname will not yet be able to comply with given its current economic crisis. Providing these items exclusively for the diaspora in a bid to have them return to Suriname will only create more hostility between the diaspora and the local Surinamese, as Suriname is not able to provide these basic needs for its population (Riveros, 2021).

Biggest Obstacle to Development

This can also be seen in the responses to the question 'what the biggest obstacle is for Suriname in her development efforts. Responses centred around a lack of transparency and corruption as the biggest challenge faced by Suriname. Also named were the high international debt, nepotism, theft, drugs, high crime rates, lack of capacity, lack of professionalism, and incompetent government structures. Interestingly some respondents felt that the biggest obstacle was the refusal of the Netherlands government to help. In contrast, others felt that the dependency and attachment to the Netherlands were the most significant obstacles.

Table 30 - Most Significant Obstacles

Biggest obstacle	%
Corruption/Nepotism	38.0%
The people/ Mentality	22.6%
Other	18.9%
Governmental structures	10.4%
Unprofessionalism	4.4%
Lack of capacity	4.0%
None	1.0%
Crime	0.7%

Mindset

The (perceived negative) mindset of the Surinamese people, in Suriname, was also frequently mentioned as an obstacle. Several examples were provided to illustrate this perceived mindset.

Table 31 - Mindset

Surinamese are lazy, slow, arrogant, and unwilling to accept help
Backwards mentality
Surinamese are not ambitious
Civil servants are stupid and refuse to change
Discrimination/ division/ racism
Egotistical greed
Meddling
The slowness of Suriname

Respondents also stated that they “do not feel welcome” when trying to assist Suriname via an exchange of knowledge and expertise. There were several complaints ranging from "they (Surinamese people) already know everything and refuse to listen" to “they are afraid that we will make them look bad.” While others explained that historically Surinamese were taught to hold everything close to their chest and not to share. This belief explains why, although Surinamese may already have some of the expertise and knowledge that the foreign experts bring, they will not offer this information unless specifically asked. One interviewee explained that "... they see this as a small triumph along the lines of *these foreigners think they know so much, but they don't know everything.*"

As mentioned previously, one of the limitations of this research relates to the fact that those living in Suriname did not participate, it is therefore not possible to know how accurate these statements are. However, these statements do indicate the mindset of the diaspora, which is important when developing a diaspora engagement policy.

Culture

Several respondents stated that the work culture in Suriname is such that employees are afraid of being made to look bad and losing their jobs. This leads to employees sabotaging the efforts of the consultants/advisors/trainers when trying to share their expertise and knowledge. One respondent explained that culturally speaking, Surinamese are passive-aggressive, and will avoid conflict at all costs. This was interpreted as not being solution-oriented by some respondents. Additionally, respondents indicated that appearances are over-emphasized so that even if training respondents have questions, they will not ask them for fear of appearing foolish or stupid.

The difference in culture between the Surinamese diaspora and the Surinamese in Suriname is greatly underestimated by all was the opinion of one respondent. "You see that people who are preparing to do business in China, or even closer by in Spain, put a lot of effort into learning about the culture in general and specifically the business culture. If they're going to work with the government they pay attention to the specific culture among the civil servants, because there is a specific culture, even among the civil servants in the Netherlands. But when they go to Suriname to do business, no one prepares, they just show up and expect to know it all already, and inevitably it goes wrong," stated a respondent who runs businesses in both the Netherlands and Suriname, and who now lives in Suriname. The respondent emphasized a need for flexibility and understanding of the noticeable cultural differences between the Netherlands and Suriname. The cultural differences between groups in Suriname itself are also underestimated. The respondent was referring to both ethnicity and differing geographical locations; also emphasizing the difference in culture and customs between those who live in the interior (several different tribes of Marrons and indigenous Amerindians) and those who live in the city (and districts).

Historical Aspects

Interestingly, some survey respondents and several interviewees believe that the key to understanding the cause for some of these obstacles can be found in Suriname's history. Several theories were mentioned, but the most significant point was that of the generational

trauma suffered through slavery and indentured servitude that still carries through to the current generations. One suggestion was that this is reflected as a permanent low self-esteem, where everything coming from the Global North will always be seen as superior, and anything created by those in the Global South will be inferior. On an individual level, this extends to the self; therefore, nothing made in or by Surinamese will ever be as good as that produced by the white man. The legacy of slavery was mentioned frequently, referring to the need of the Afro population in Suriname to have stability, which the respondent mentioned can be seen as a lack of ambition. While in contrast, the East Indian population can be seen as more ambitious and entrepreneurial. The respondent continued with the assertion that these are the people who voluntarily took a major chance by travelling for months on a ship to a new and completely unknown country, in the hopes of making a better life for themselves and their families, and something they continue to do to this day.

Other suggestions were that that the Surinamese resent the Dutch, and other Europeans, for the years of slavery and colonialism. So, any Surinamese who, instead of staying and helping, even if that means suffering, leaves to live among the colonizers, is a traitor. This belief is emphasized when those Suriname return to take the place of the colonizer by trying to put the local population down and telling them what to do; this is how the Surinamese perceive the diaspora members who travel to Suriname to train, coach or teach. Respondents further explained that this can be seen in the disdain Surinamese feel for those who speak with a Dutch accent, especially if the diaspora member was born in and grew up in Suriname. Respondents mentioned being mocked by the Dutch as a new arrival for their Surinamese accent, and now by the Surinamese for their Dutch accent.

Respondents referred to the resentment felt against those Surinamese who left Suriname for the Netherlands, especially given that the Netherlands has the reputation of being the land of 'milk and honey.' This myth of a perfect Netherlands, in the respondent's opinion, is encouraged by the diaspora in their communications with, and during visits to Suriname. Vacationing diaspora members are accused of flaunting euros and wealth, never letting on the challenges of life in the Netherlands, such as 16-hour work days, small living spaces, or showing any unhappiness with life in the Netherlands.

Another theory compares Suriname's development to that of the development of a typical human; the idea being that Suriname is currently experiencing puberty. The respondents

explained that Suriname is acting like a teenager would, this includes identity struggles, obsessing over appearances, awkward behaviour, switching between being overconfident and having poor self-esteem, immature and erratic behaviour, and finding fault with the parents (in this case, the Netherlands), etc.

While it is indeed important to look at possible generational trauma, it is also important to note that cultural and historical aspects may also impact the Surinamese's behaviour. One must not forget to also look at the psychological impact and possible trauma experienced by those who migrated. There are several reasons why the Surinamese diaspora chose to leave Suriname; some left willingly, some gladly, while some were forced to flee abject poverty, violence and intimidation. Some respondents indicated that they or their (grand)parents 'fled' the country before its independence in 1975. These migrants, and those who fled the violence of the 1980s, potentially experienced considerable trauma leading to their migration. This feeling of being forced to leave one's home and family can lead to mental health problems and psychological distress. Research has shown that these challenges can persist for years after resettlement. Additionally, this post-traumatic stress affects not only the individual but also the extended family. It can have long-term effects on the health and psychosocial well-being of the next generations (Sangalang, 2016).

8. Discussion, Recommendations and Final Conclusion

This research gathered data to gain insights into the composition of the diaspora and what they could possibly contribute to Suriname's development. Additional information was collected regarding what the diaspora itself thinks of the role it can play in Suriname's development. This data uncovered several obstacles and challenges faced in the process of diaspora engagement. Lastly, this study assembled information regarding the Diaspora Engagement Policy development and strategies, and the status of Suriname's initiatives.

Brain gain

The first step toward turning brain drain into brain gain (or brain regain) requires gathering more data. There is currently no available data regarding the number of students leaving to study abroad, nor is there data on the number of students who return and when they return (immediately after graduation or after gaining valuable work experience) (Dulam, 2011).

While gathering this data, the researchers should also focus on gaining insights into the motivations of the students leaving versus those staying in Suriname and those returning to Suriname.

There are specific possible steps that can be taken to reduce the number of students leaving to study abroad, such as having the local university (Anton de Kom University) gain accreditation for its programs to meet Caribbean and EU standards. Expanding the programs offered, especially in the post-graduate range, without compromising the quality of the education provided is also essential.

The diaspora could be a valuable asset in this process; for example, the university could attract qualified diaspora to fill the posts of instructors on a semester or part-time basis. The instructor could spend their summer semesters in Suriname, teaching, coaching, mentoring, and training, generally sharing their knowledge and expertise. This may be an attractive proposition for a professor or teacher to spend time in Suriname without the commitment of moving there permanently. The GOS can make provisions to ease this process, while the university can ensure safe and appropriate housing. Given that the instructor would stay for a shorter amount of time, the provided housing does not need to be extravagant but comfortable and safe. Additionally, the university can consider attracting retired professionals to assist the university as instructors for a reduced salary or as volunteers receiving a stipend. The university could partner with an organization such as Program Dispatching Managers (PUM)⁹

⁹ <https://www.pum.nl/en>

to ease this process. Attracting this group of diaspora members will be more sustainable for Suriname, as the costs of a salary or stipend will be lower for a retiree or a volunteer. Suriname is currently investing heavily in the technical and vocational education curriculum in the hopes of bringing the Surinamese educational diplomas and certificates up regional standards. The projects initiated involve the construction of state-of-the-art classrooms (Bureau voor de Staatsschuld Suriname, n.d.). In recent years, large oil reserves have been found off the coast of Guyana and Suriname that need to be extracted (Riveros, 2021) (ExxonMobil, 2022). Suriname is perfectly positioned to utilize the technical education investments in such a way as to become the training location for all oil industry workers in the region, as well as attracting experts to teach, train and work in the newly to-be-established sector. The CARICOM CSME initiatives¹⁰ will be a definite asset in this endeavour, as regional experts will be able to move to and work in Suriname more easily.

Regional Diaspora Engagement

The CARICOM offers an excellent opportunity to build a diaspora community within the Caribbean that may view the Surinamese government more positively due to the government's creation of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities (CARICOM, 2022). It will benefit Suriname to have a regional diaspora that shows goodwill toward Suriname, is well-educated, and has the financial resources to be able and willing to invest in the home country. As noted previously, the Surinamese diaspora in the Netherlands consistently underestimates the cultural differences. These genuine differences could also partially explain the difficulties in the relationships between the diaspora and the Surinamese in Suriname. It is a mistake to underestimate the fundamental differences between European and Caribbean societies; therefore, the Surinamese government should shift its focus to the diaspora in the region. There is a lot of 'history' between Suriname and the Netherlands that can trigger animosities unintentionally (Laarman, 2013); this obstacle can be circumvented by dealing with diaspora who live in the Caribbean region. This diaspora group, which has adapted to a culture similar to the Surinamese culture, will be able to communicate and create goodwill more effectively. This will make the process easier, effective, and efficient while positively contributing to Suriname.

¹⁰ <https://caricom.org/>

Diaspora Organizations

Research suggests that the actual impact on development by diaspora organizations is relatively small (Nijenhuis, 2015), which begs the question, *'How valuable is it to have these diaspora organizations and to have the diaspora actively engaged with them?'*

The primary role the diaspora organizations play is to keep the community connected; however, given the comments made by the respondents, it would seem that the Surinamese diaspora organizations are not able to unify this community.

Diaspora organizations have the potential to be a catalyst within their community. Currently, the Surinamese diaspora organizations are embedded in the diaspora community, even mimicking how the community is divided along ethnic lines. They have a significant potential for building a stronger civil society through partnerships by raising awareness, being a 'role model,' and providing consistent support and assistance (Nijenhuis, 2015). So, the answer to the question of whether the diaspora organizations are necessary and whether it is essential to be engaged with them is *'yes, based on their potential to be relevant and valuable stakeholders in the development of Suriname.'*

Developing A Diaspora Engagement Policy

India's diaspora engagement policies and strategy are utilized as an example of how to garner the potential of the diaspora effectively. The key to success in their approach appears to be making a serious commitment by establishing a ministry with the appropriate departments and offices. The endeavour was adequately staffed, with skilled, non-partisan members, and properly financed to run effectively and efficiently. Steps were taken to gain the trust of the diaspora by implementing legislatures that encouraged transparency and discouraged corruption, for example, the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. The government not only promised, but actually made structural changes, showing itself to be a trustworthy partner (Hercog, 2013). Also, it is imperative to acknowledge the hardships and struggles endured by the diaspora. The government showed the diaspora that they were seen, appreciated, valued, and seen as more than just a source of 'free money. The Day of Non-resident Indians and the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award are great examples of how this was accomplished.

The Surinamese government could learn from the example set, the lessons learned, and the innovative steps taken by the Indian government. Noteworthy is that the diaspora engagement policy developed does not focus solely on financial investments, but rather on developing and

implementing an all-encompassing diaspora engagement strategy that includes an exchange of knowledge, expertise, and skills (Singh, 2012).

Gaining Trust

This study found that the majority of respondents had no financial ties to Suriname. As mentioned before, it may therefore be beneficial for the GOS to survey the group that does have financial ties, and find out what their experiences have been, how they can be improved and generally engage this group in the development of the diaspora engagement strategy and policy.

Another findings is the particular resentment in the older generations living in the Netherlands towards the Surinamese who stayed in Suriname. Several respondents believe that they suffered as a result of their migration, both in terms of racism and lack of economic opportunity, and they believe that those who did not migrate did not suffer. This group thus believes that they do not owe Suriname anything for having suffered.

The comments and responses made by respondents of the survey, interviews, and the focus group included challenges for the GOS to overcome to ensure increased feasibility and effectiveness in the engagement strategy. These are challenges that the GOS must endeavour to overcome, as aid sent via official channels is perceived as the most effective (De La Cruz, 1995). However, the Surinamese diaspora lacks trust in the official channels. Respondents stated that they do not trust the government; they feel rampant corruption and nepotism make development impossible or, at a minimum, significantly stagnated. Furthermore, there are concerns regarding the living conditions in Suriname, specifically the quality of health care and increasing criminality. Some expressed concerns about traveling to Suriname as a tourist, stating they are concerned something may happen. This means that the diaspora will not be advocating for Suriname to potential investors or tourists, and neither will the diaspora be willing to invest their funds in Suriname.

The government has already taken the first steps in establishing the Diaspora Institutes and establishing the PSA status. Close cooperation between the DIN and DIS will be required if any planned activities are to be successful. The DIS should therefore be the first institution with which the DIN works to raise capacity.

The following steps will be for the government to continue working toward gaining the diaspora's trust by following through on promises of fighting corruption and actively

preventing/ correcting cases of nepotism¹¹. The government must demonstrate that they are willing to make the required structural changes, which will require taking broad over-arching impactful steps.

Any effective diaspora engagement strategy should also propose action steps to address the concerns raised by the diaspora. These concerns include transaction fees, difficulties obtaining cash in Suriname (banking challenges), excessive red tape, and bureaucracy involved with logistical steps such as opening bank accounts and importing and exporting products. Several respondents also commented on the need to extend the rights of the diaspora to make Suriname an attractive investment area, specifically the right to own property, the right to vote, parliamentary representation, civil rights, and social protection. Political stability is also necessary to attract investments, as is a stable and low crime rate, access to quality housing, and good health care (Vezzoli, 2010). Some respondents commented on worries regarding the quality of education available in Suriname and stated this as a reason for not returning to live in Suriname as they wanted better for their children. These aspects are important for the diaspora in its proposed role of Ambassador and Advocate for Suriname. However, the diaspora's contribution is needed to create these conditions for everyone. The GOS attempting to provide these items exclusively for the diaspora in a bid to have them return to Suriname, will only make the economic crisis and hostilities between the diaspora and the local Surinamese worse. This should be seen as another indication why it is better to focus on diaspora not living at an European standard of living, but one living in the region, at a regional standard of living. A standard of living that is easier to duplicate in Suriname.

Noteworthy is that the paper 'Why Returnees Generally do not turn out to be "Agents of Change", the case of Suriname,' by Bovenkerk (1981), reported many of the same comments and complaints made by the respondents of this research. The attitude of the Surinamese, and the perceived arrogance of the diaspora were mentioned several times.

As mentioned previously, one of the limitations of this research is that these statements can not be verified, as Surinamese living in Suriname did not participate in this study.

Additionally, as mentioned before, it is possible that those with strong negative emotions have been more vocal. If this is not the case, the large amount of negative comments begs the

¹¹ *It appears that the government is taking these steps as the VP has announced that his brother will resign from specific posts. (Suriname Herald Redactie, 2022) (Waterkant.net, 2022)*

question whether the diaspora is ready to be included in any of Suriname's strategic development planning. If the negative statements are correct, then it would appear that in the last forty-one years not much has changed. Noteworthy is that the comments in this study were not made exclusively by those in the 60+ age group, but also in the younger age groups. It is unclear whether the 2nd generation is repeating what they were told by their elders, or whether these are personal experiences. It would benefit the diaspora engagement policy development process to have a study done into the attitudes of the Surinamese (in Suriname) toward the diaspora. The government could use that data, combined with these older studies, to develop a strategy on breaking the repeating cycle of hostility between these two groups of people. To start the reconciliation and healing process between them, open and honest communication is required. A positive relationship is essential to having effective cooperation between both sides. The government can encourage and facilitate this by creating the right circumstances and environments. The first steps in this healing process should be the dispelling of misleading myths, such as the tale of the life of luxury and leisure in the Netherlands, the land of milk and honey. Also, the misconception of the Surinamese person lying in a hammock all day holding up their hand instead of working hard. Both groups have had hardships; after all, the diaspora did not leave their homes because life in Suriname is one long nap in a hammock.

When creating the committee to develop the diaspora engagement strategy and policy, the government must ensure that the presence of experts from not only the expected fields, such as economics, politics, and diplomacy, but also psychology, anthropology, sociology, and communication (among others).

Finally, to answer the questions: What role can the Surinamese diaspora play in Suriname's development efforts? The role the diaspora can and will play in the development of Suriname can only be determined by the Surinamese people. All those who come from Suriname are part of the greater Surinamese family, not just those who remain in Suriname but also those living abroad. Respondents offered suggestions about what the diaspora, in general and what they specifically, could bring to Suriname. Some examples are "*Bring expertise and networks*" and "*Bring knowledge and skills.*" As well as "*The opportunity to combine the expertise of the diaspora with that of the Surinamese;*" "*function as a bridge between Dutch Surinamese and the Surinamese who want to make progress.*" "*Improve communication and share knowledge of the Netherlands.*" One respondent stated, "*Keep trying and keep doing what is right*" and "*Business to business, inspire new way of thinking.*"

Hopefully, with guidance, skilled leadership, open communication, and a good amount of empathy, all the Surinamese will find a way to work together towards the betterment of Suriname.

9. Personal Positionality

Finally, the topic of this thesis is personal and part of my life experiences. I was born in Suriname. I left Suriname at the age of eighteen for the USA to further my studies. I stayed there for almost eighteen years, studying, working, and traveling the country. In the USA, I first experienced racism, discrimination and segregation. Coming from Suriname, with its diverse cultures and ethnicities, this was a shocking experience. Like many in the diaspora, I, too, craved to assist Suriname in becoming more developed. I returned to Suriname in 2009 and worked there for eleven years in the non-profit and development sector. I, too, experienced much the same as expressed by the respondents of this study, for example, the criticism of being a ‘fake’ Surinamese and having my advice be dismissed with the words “you just don’t understand how we work here.” While in Suriname, I worked primarily with international organizations and institutions, frequently liaising with international consultants and experts. So, I also experienced the other side of the coin; the apparent arrogance of the diaspora who is ‘coming to save’ Suriname or who is coming to share ‘real’ knowledge. I am once again part of the diaspora, but this time a different diaspora group. I had never lived in the Netherlands and was unfamiliar with life here. I assumed that the Surinamese in the Netherlands were more or less the same as those in Suriname. I, too, underestimated the cultural differences between the two groups. I did not fully appreciate the struggles and challenges Surinamese migrants to the Netherlands faced, and what effect this may still have on them and their children. When I left to study in the USA, I was young and eagerly going on an adventure. I did not appreciate the sacrifice one must make when migrating to escape poverty or seek a better life. I do remember my mother lamenting that the “curse of third world mothers is being forced to send your children away” for them to have a better life. How much pain and what struggles are captured by those words? “There, but for the grace of God, go I” is a quote that holds the key to creating empathy between the Surinamese groups (in Suriname and abroad). Both groups can look back and know that if not for a particular sequence of events, they would be in the shoes of those in the other group. We share a common history, lingua franca, home and culture (just different flavours of the same thing); it must be possible to forgo animosity and work together toward improving that which we all love, Suriname.

This thesis will be shared with both the Diaspora Institutes in the Netherlands and Suriname with the hopes that the information will be helpful and aid in some small way by suggesting

options not previously considered. After all, the Surinamese diaspora is a valuable resource that will make a difference in the development of Suriname at some point in some way.

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Appendices

Survey

Suriname Diaspora

In this research study, I am trying to understand the make-up of the Surinamese diaspora, and its potential contribution to the development of Suriname. For purposes of this study, the Surinamese diaspora means any person, who identifies as Surinamese, but lives at least six months out of the year outside of Suriname. If you wish to participate, please fill out this online questionnaire. Your participation is entirely voluntary, which means you can withdraw your participation and consent at any time, without giving a reason. The research data collected will be used to complete my thesis to graduate from the International Development Studies program at the Utrecht University. The collected data is collected, which means it cannot be traced back to you. In the final question, there is an option for you to include your contact information in case you would you like more information or to participate in interviews related to this study.

- Yes, I consent to participating in the research study as described above. (1)
- No, I will not be participating in the research study as described above. (2)

Q1 Which gender do you identify with?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Other (3) _____
- Do not want to say. (4)

Q2 Background Information:

What age group do you belong to?

- 18 - 30 (1)
- 31 - 45 (2)
- 46 - 60 (3)
- 60+ (4)

Q3 Are you currently:

- Working full-time (6)
- Working part-time (not a student) (7)
- Studying (please include field and level of study) (8)

-
- Retired (9)
 - Other (please explain) (10) _____

Q4 Are you of Surinamese descent?

- I was born in Suriname (1)
- One of both of my parents were born in Suriname (2)
- One or more of my grand-parents were born in Suriname (3)
- Other (please explain) (4) _____

Q5 Where do you currently live?

- The Netherlands (1)
- The United States of America (or one of its territories) (2)

- o Curacao (3)
- o St Maarten (4)
- o Other (please explain) (5) _____

Q6 Why did you or your (grand)parents leave Suriname?

- o To study (1)
- o For work (2)
- o To reunite with family already abroad (3)
- o Other (please explain) (4) _____

Q7 Have you ever lived in Suriname?

- o Yes (please state from which year to which year) (1)

- o No. (2)
- o Other (please explain) (3) _____

Q8 When was the last time you visited Suriname? And what was the reason for your visit?

Q9 What is your highest completed education?

- o MBO (1)
- o VWO (2)
- o HBO (3)
- o University in Suriname (4)
- o University not in Suriname (5)
- o Other (please explain) (6) _____

Q10 What is your current job or expertise?

Q11 Do you consider yourself Surinamese - please note this is not a question asking what citizenship you currently hold, but rather how you see yourself.

- o Yes, I am 100% Surinamese (1)
- o No, I do not consider myself Surinamese (2)
- o I see myself as more than Surinamese only (3)
- o Other (please explain) (4) _____

Q12 Do you still have family or friends in Suriname with whom you are in regular contact?

- o Yes, my immediate family (siblings/parents/children/partner). (1)
- o Yes, more distant family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) (2)
- o Yes, I have friends whom I am in regular contact with. (3)
- o Yes, I have family and friends whom I am in regular contact with. (4)
- o No, I have no family or friends whom I am in regular contact with. (5)

Q13 Are you actively involved with any Surinamese (diaspora) groups? Please elaborate

Q14 If you have family in Suriname, have you ever sent them support?

- o Yes, I have sent money. (1)

- o Yes, I have sent goods (food, clothes, gifts, etc.) (2)
- o Yes, I have sent both money and goods. (3)
- o No. (4)

Q15 How often have you sent support to your family or friends in Suriname?

- o I send support (financial or other) on a frequent basis (more than once yearly). (1)
- o I send support (financial or other), but not on a structured schedule. (2)
- o I do not send support (financial or other). (3)

Q16 Have you ever supported nonprofits or organizations which help people in Suriname? These can be based in Suriname or abroad.

- o Yes, I have sent money. (1)
- o Yes, I have sent goods (food, clothes, gifts, etc.) (2)
- o Yes, I have sent both money and goods. (3)
- o No. (4)

Q17 Do you frequently support nonprofits or organizations which help people in Suriname?

- o Yes, I support (financially or other) on a frequent structured basis. (1)
- o Yes, I support (financially or other) but not on a frequent structured basis. (2)
- o No, I do not support (financially or other). (3)

Q18 Do you own any property in Suriname or have any investments in business(es) in Suriname?

- o Yes, I own property. (1)
- o Yes, I have investments in business(es). (2)
- o Yes, I own business(es) in Suriname. (3)
- o Yes, I own property and have business investments in Suriname. (4)
- o No. (5)

Q19 Do you stay up-to-date with social, political or other happenings in Suriname?

- o Yes, I follow Surinamese news regularly for updates on political and other happenings. (1)
- o Yes, I follow what is happening in Suriname but focus mainly on social happenings. (2)
- o Yes, I follow via the news for social, political and other happenings in Suriname. (4)
- o No. (5)

Q20 President Santokhi has asked the Surinamese diaspora in the Netherlands to actively start supporting Suriname's development efforts. If offered a job by the government to work in Suriname on these development efforts would you be willing to (please indicate all that apply):

- Move to Suriname to work if guaranteed a job. (1)
- Work for the Surinamese government (whether on location or remotely). (2)
- Work for the Surinamese government only as a consultant (whether on location or remotely). (3)
- Work with Surinamese private sector. (4)
- Work with Surinamese governmental agencies. (5)
- Go to Suriname temporarily as a volunteer. (6)
- I would not be willing to do any of the above, but I would be willing do something else. Please explain (7) _____
- I would not be willing to help the Suriname government in its development efforts. (8)

Q21 What guarantees would you require from the Surinamese government before you would be willing to work for or with them (either remotely, on location, permanently or temporarily)?

Choose all that apply.

- Transparency - a serious dedication to eradicating corruption. (1)
- A salary sufficient to maintain the lifestyle you are accustomed to. (2)
- Other (please explain) (3) _____
- I would not be willing to work for or with the Surinamese government. (4)

Q22 What do you see as the biggest obstacle in Suriname's development efforts?

Q23 What role do you see the diaspora playing in Suriname's road to development?

Q24 Any additional comments or issues which you feel were not addressed?

Interview Guide

English

Introduction

This research is being conducted to understand make-up of the Surinamese diaspora, and its potential contribution to the development of Suriname.

The questions I will ask are related to your opinion, experiences and motivations. Please note - there are no right or wrong answers. I will be interviewing other members of the Surinamese diaspora in order to get a better understanding of what make-up the diaspora has, how the diaspora views Suriname's development and what role it sees itself play in that development. In order to reduce the change of mistakes, this interview will be recorded, and I will be taking some notes. All the data gathered will only be used for this research and will not be shared with anyone besides myself and my supervisor at the Utrecht University. Also, your name will not be used to ensure your anonymity. Do you have any questions?

Do you understand what was explained and consent to participating in this interview?

Opening Questions

- 1 Background:
Please tell me about yourself?
(Probes: age, work status, education completed, born in Suriname)
- 2 What is your connection with Suriname?
(Probes: Surinamese descent? How personal/parents/grandparents? Family in Suriname? Business/investments/property owner?)
- 3 When and why did you (your family) leave Suriname?
(Probes: to study, job opportunity, family reunion, safety - if left during '80's, if not lived there ask when last visited/ reason for last visit)
- 4 Do you stay up-to-date on what is happening in Suriname?
(Probes: read the news, follow on social media, follow social, political, foreign affairs other happenings.)

Key Questions

- 5 Do you still have family or friends in Suriname with whom you are in regular contact?
(Probes: who? Why? How regular?)
- 6 If yes, have you ever supported your family or friends in Suriname?
(Probes: financial remittances, goods sent, gifts sent, other forms? Why the form chosen?)
- 7 Have you ever supported an organisation or specific activity meant to help those in Suriname?

(Probes: NGO in NL/VN/SXM/SU, personal activity, family action, funds or goods or in-kind support? Why this specific organization/activity? Also, specific region/group which prefer to assist? And why?)

- 8** President Santokhi has asked the Surinamese diaspora in the Netherlands to actively start supporting Suriname's development efforts. What role do you see the diaspora having in relation to Suriname's development?

(Probes: financial investments, purchasing property - inflow of foreign currency, moving back to Suriname).

- 9** Imagine that the government has asked you to share your professional expertise with Surinamese companies/governmental agencies, would you agree? How would propose this happens?

(Probes: temporary contract, permanent contract, volunteer, consultant, advisor - important to explain reasoning why this form/type/opinion.)

- 10** Under what circumstances would you be willing to move back to Suriname?

(Probes: retired, guarantee of salary sufficient to maintain lifestyle, once sufficient savings? Important to explain reasoning why this opinion.)

Closing questions

- 11** What do you see as the biggest obstacle in Suriname's development efforts?

(Probes: culturally, political, economical, geographical. Do you contribute now? Do something now? Why? How frequently? Why this way? Why this form? Etc.)

- 12** What do you see as Suriname's biggest advantage in becoming more developed?

(Probes: culturally, politically, geographically.)

Do you have any additional comments or issues which you feel were not addressed but should have been?

Thank you for your participation!



“President Santokhi vraagt actie van diasporagemeenschap

De president van Suriname, Chan Santokhi, vraagt dat de surinaamse diaspora om betrokken te raken in het oplossen van de financiële crisis in Suriname.”

Bent u een deel van de surinaamse diaspora? Wat denkt u zelf van deze uitspraak van de president? Hoe ziet u de rol van de surinaamse diaspora?

Deel uw mening in mijn onderzoek.

Mijn naam is Carol Nijbroek en ik ben een student in het Masters Programma *International Development Studies* op de Utrecht Universiteit.

Voor mijn afstudeeronderzoek kijk ik naar de samenstelling van de Surinaamse diaspora en haar potentiële bijdrage aan de ontwikkeling van Suriname. Deelname is geheel vrijwillig en anoniem.

U kunt de survey vinden via deze link:

https://survey.uu.nl/ife/form/SV_6Gvk2E0vmBmlp2K

Of door deze QR code te scannen:



Doe mee en laat uw mening horen!

Grantangi!!