Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development

A HANDBOOK FOR POLICYMAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS IN HOME AND HOST COUNTRIES

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Chapter 5: Reducing Barriers

Creating a conducive atmosphere is a critical first step toward diaspora engagement. As already noted, members of diasporas were instrumental in bringing development closer to home long before the introduction of formal "diaspora and development" programs. These connections occur spontaneously and are driven by a wide range of motivations, from the purely altruistic to the profit oriented, but they share one thing in common: they happen with little or no government intervention and even in the face of government resistance.

One option for policymakers, then, is to encourage spontaneous engagement. But how is this done? Policymakers' best bet is to put in place a legislative and regulatory framework that promotes diaspora involvement. Such a framework should create a web of privileges and obligations designed for a highly mobile population with multiple affinities.

This chapter focuses on six sets of laws and regulations that governments have adopted to meet this goal. Many have been introduced since the year 2000. All aim to eliminate regulatory and legislative provisions that either restrict or discourage members of diasporas from traveling between home and host countries or from fully participating in their origin countries' polity, society, and economy.

Creating a conducive framework is generally not tied to a specific development goal. It may, nonetheless, have a significant developmental impact, in part by gaining diaspora members' trust and therefore encouraging their contributions to development.

A Menu of Viable Options: A Checklist

1. Flexible citizenship laws and residency and visa requirements
   - Allow for dual or multiple citizenship
   - Flexible residence and visa requirements
2. Grant political rights
   - Allow overseas voting
   - Allow diasporas to run for public office while maintaining residence abroad
   - Reserve congressional seats for diaspora representatives
3. Special property rights
   - Allow diasporas to purchase land and other properties that are off-limits to foreigners
4. Tax incentives
   - Exempt customs duties and fees on the importation of household goods of returnees
   - Reduce income tax rates for returning citizens who have worked abroad for a certain number of years
   - Exempt diaspora investments such as providing lower tariffs on imported raw materials and equipment
   - Offer tax deductions on charitable contributions
5. Portable benefits
   - Offer portable benefits, particularly relating to pensions and medical and life insurance
   - Conclude social security agreements bilaterally or as part of regional agreements
6. General laws recognizing the diaspora
   - Introduce legislation that officially recognizes members of the diaspora or emigration in general as integral part of the national development plan.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

1. Elicit local buy-in, first and foremost
2. Identify loopholes and gaps in coverage, since the devil is often in the details.
3. Outreach and information dissemination is key
4. Monitor the implementation of the laws and regulations to correctly identify challenging areas.

1 Six Actions to Facilitate Diaspora Engagement

A. Flexible Citizenship Laws and Residency and Visa Requirements

Many countries have passed some form of flexible citizenship law, enabling emigrants and their descendants to acquire dual or multiple citizenships. The number of countries allowing most of their citizens to hold dual citizenship has more than doubled in the past 20 years. For example, ten countries in Latin America — Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay — have such provisions.

Even destination countries that were previously quite strict about exclusive nationality, such as the United States and Germany, are starting to show some leniency, mainly in extending naturalization privileges to diasporas within their borders. For instance, Germany adopted a new nationality law in 2001 that opened up German citizenship to its minority populations, by introducing a modified version of birthright citizenship. The United States gives low priority to enforcing the formal requirement of renunciation of prior citizenship upon naturalization.

Interestingly, some developing countries recognize dual membership selectively. Guatemala has dual-citizenship agreements with other Central American countries, and several Latin American countries have them with Spain. Similarly, India approves dual citizenship to nonresident Indians living in wealthy, industrialized countries but denies it to Indians working in poorer or less developed countries.

Several countries — including China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Greece — have no provision for expatriation; thus, persons born in China are still considered Chinese citizens if they take another nationality, regardless of whether they desire or claim dual citizenship.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, dual citizenship is not accepted under the Syrian Nationality Act, but it is a recognized and practiced institution.[163]

A few other countries are expanding their dual-citizenship provisions. The Ministry for Haitians Abroad, a ministry-level institution created to engage members of the Haitian diaspora, successfully lobbied Haiti's legislature to approve in March 2011 a constitutional amendment allowing dual nationality, although it had yet to be implemented at this writing.[164]

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Constitution and the Law on Citizenship both have provisions allowing dual citizenship as long as the host country has signed a bilateral agreement. The government has until January 2013 to secure a deal with key destination countries. However, this deadline may be pushed back, or the limitation may be deleted, depending on the results of an ongoing analysis commissioned by the government.[165]

Residence and visa arrangements to facilitate diasporas' access to their home countries have also been adopted. For example, the Philippines' balikbayan program grants former citizens and their immediate families visa-free entry and stay for a period of one year.[166] And an increasing number of countries are issuing special registration and identification cards that allow members of the diaspora who are not citizens to enjoy privileges similar to those of citizens. As Box 1 shows, these registration cards not only provide proof of identity and facilitate data collection but also reinforce the value of consular services while abroad.

Box 1: Quasi-Citizenship via Registration

A number of origin countries offer special registration and identification cards that offer diaspora members benefits and privileges that are typically reserved for citizens. Kingsley Aikins and Nicola White highlighted efforts in India, Poland, Pakistan, Ethiopia, and Ireland.

In 2005 India introduced the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) program, targeted to foreign nationals who have held or been eligible for Indian citizenship in the past (except for citizens of Pakistan or Bangladesh) and their children or grandchildren. Although OCI holders do not receive an Indian passport and have no voting rights, they enjoy various benefits such as multiple-entry, multipurpose, lifelong visas to visit India. The program distributed 168,000 OCI visas in the first three years and over 575,000 since.

Poland offers the “Poles card” (Karta Polska) to individuals abroad with at least a “passive understanding” of the Polish language and documented proof of Polish roots or “a connection with Polish culture.” The Karta Polska is distributed at consulates and allows holders to work in Poland without applying for a work permit; set up a company on the same basis as citizens of Poland; study, undertake a doctorate, or participate in other forms of education; and participate in research and development work. Interestingly, the holder also retains the right to various types of benefits from access to scholarships and health care services to stiff discounts on public transportation and free admission to state museums.

Likewise, Pakistan’s National Database and Registration Authority issues the Pakistan Overseas Card (POC)to its diaspora members. POC holders are allowed visa-free entry into Pakistan, can stay indefinitely in the country, and are exempted from foreigner registration requirements. They can also purchase and sell property, open and operate bank accounts, and need not apply for a Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC). The National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP), on the other hand, is issued to Pakistani workers, emigrants, citizens, or Pakistanis holding dual nationality. All nonresident Pakistani nationals who have lived abroad for more than six months are required to get a NICOP. Holders of NICOPs are entitled to visa-free entry into Pakistan, protection of the government of Pakistan in any foreign country or state, and membership in the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF).

In 2002, in Ethiopia, the government issued a proclamation allowing for “foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin” to procure special identity cards that entitle them to various rights and privileges that other foreigners do not. These include visa-free entry, residence and employment rights, the right to own immovable property in Ethiopia, and the right to access public services. Under the proclamation a foreign national of Ethiopian origin is defined broadly as follows: “a foreign national, other than a person who forfeited Ethiopian nationality and acquired Eritrean nationality, who had been an Ethiopian national before acquiring a foreign nationality; or at least one of whose parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents was an Ethiopian national.”

More recently, the Irish government announced plans in 2010 to register 70 million people of Irish descent around the world who do not qualify for citizenship. A Certificate of Irish Heritage will be issued by a third-party business working with the Irish government. The card may allow discounts on many services in Ireland, including airfare, hotel accommodation, and a range of other tourism-related amenities although details of how it will be administered is still unclear.

Source: Kingsley Aikins and Nicola White, *Global Diaspora Strategies Toolkit*, (Dublin:Diaspora Matters, 2011).

Governments of destination countries have also taken steps to liberalize some residency requirements. In the United States, the Return of Talent Act of 2003, sponsored by then-senator Joseph Biden, allowed legal migrant residents coming from countries engaged in postconflict reconstruction to return temporarily without breaking the five-year residency requirement needed to apply for US citizenship.[167]

Policies that make it easy for members of the diaspora to travel between their country of origin and country of settlement can positively influence the decision to engage in the homeland. Offering multiple reentry permits and long-term visas to transnational entrepreneurs encourages them to actively supervise their investments. Likewise, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which has extensive experience with programs facilitating permanent and temporary return among the highly skilled, has found in many settings that migrants opt to take only short-term assignments overseas for fear of losing residence rights in their country of settlement. IOM finds that return programs, even those involving temporary stays, chiefly attract migrants who have acquired citizenship in the host country.[168]

As Cindy Horst and her colleagues observe, especially among diasporas arising from postconflict situations, “While temporary return for professional purposes is often an interesting option for those who have obtained citizenship and are interested in finding ways of contributing to their country of origin, this is not necessarily the case for those without legal security in the country of settlement.”[169]

B. Political Rights

Many countries grant political rights to citizens while they are overseas, the foremost of which is the right to vote. A 2007 review by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) identified 115 states and territories with legal provisions for overseas voting. As Table 1 shows, external voting provisions are most common in Europe but are also found in every region of the globe.

Table 1: Countries with External Voting Provisions, by Region

Region	Country/Territory
Africa (28)	Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Zimbabwe
Americas (16)	Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Falkland Islands, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, United States, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Asia (20)	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic , Malaysia, Oman, Philippines, Singapore, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Yemen
Western, Central and Eastern Europe (41)	Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Gibraltar, Greece, Guernsey, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jersey, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Isle of Man, Republic of Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom
Pacific (10)	Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Pitcairn Islands, Vanuatu
Total	**115**

Source: International IDEA, *Voting from Abroad: The International IDEA Handbook* (Stockholm: Trydells Tryckeri, 2006).

Since the IDEA review, a few more countries have adopted overseas voting rights, including Eritrea, Burundi, and Burkina Faso,[170] as well as Lebanon and Morocco.[171] Uruguay may soon join this list since this provision was being reviewed by its parliament at the time of writing.[172]

In some countries, such as the Dominican Republic, expatriates can run for office even if their primary residence is abroad. Some countries go so far as to reserve congressional seats to represent the diaspora. Colombia, for example, allows the expatriate community to elect representatives to the Colombian legislature. International IDEA reports ten more countries with diaspora representatives in their legislatures: Algeria, Angola, Cape Verde, Croatia, Ecuador, France, Italy, Mozambique, Panama, and Portugal.

C. Special Property Rights

According special property rights is another increasingly popular means to fully engage diasporas, especially in post-Communist countries where the right to private property was not recognized in the Communist era and restitution of expropriated property has subsequently been undertaken. Many countries place limits on foreign nationals' ownership of real estate and property. In Mexico, for instance, foreigners cannot directly purchase homes in certain areas — mainly coastal and indigenous zones of the country. Foreigners are also not allowed to purchase land in the Philippines, but they can purchase condominium units. In India and China, resident foreigners can purchase homes but have to get permission from government authorities.[173]

These limitations on foreign property ownership curtail the options that are available to members of the diaspora who have surrendered their citizenship and to their descendants. In some countries, however, special laws have been adopted to give privileges to naturalized former citizens and those in the second and sometimes third generations. In India, for instance, anyone who has ever held an Indian passport or whose father or grandfather was a citizen of India can acquire unlimited residential and commercial land. Individuals born in the Philippines and/or to a parent who was still a citizen at the time of his/her birth can purchase either residential or commercial land in the Philippines up to a total of 500 square meters or agricultural land of up to 1,000 square meters.[174] Eritrea similarly offers access to land and housing for expatriates.[175]

D. Tax Incentives

An increasing number of governments have introduced a tax exemption on diasporas' belongings imported from abroad, particularly for those who want to return on a permanent basis. For instance, Mali provides exemption of customs duties and fees on the import of household goods for all Malian migrants who return permanently to Mali, including students who return after their studies abroad.[176] Mexico, Colombia, Burundi, Ecuador, Guatemala, Comoros, the Philippines, and Uruguay also offer similar benefits, not only for household goods but also for cars.[177]

A few governments are offering reduced income tax rates for returning citizens who have worked abroad for a certain number of years. For instance, Malaysia's Talent Corporation hopes to "attract and retain the necessary skilled human capital" through its Returning Expert Program (REP). On top of tax exemptions for household and car imports, REP also guarantees a flat tax rate of 15 percent on employment income for five years. Returnees, however, have to work within sectors that government planners consider as national key economic areas (NKEAs).[178]

Some countries have introduced tax exemptions on investments. Lowering tariffs on raw materials and equipment imported into the country of origin can help diaspora entrepreneurs begin transnational businesses. The Malian Investment Code, for instance, offers a number of initiatives to encourage investments from foreigners and Malians residing abroad, such as exemption of duties and taxes on the import of equipment and construction material needed for investment projects, exemption of company tax and corporate tax, and license and fiscal advantages during implementation of investment projects.[179]

Similarly, foreign investors and Senegalese nationals residing abroad who would like to engage in corporate activity in Senegal enjoy fiscal advantages in the project setup period (three years) and the exploratory phase of an enterprise or project (up to a maximum of five to eight years) and get discounts on or exemptions from certain state taxes. Law No. 2008-47 includes fiscal incentives relating to the creation of mutual savings and microcredit, which can be of particular interest to Senegalese nationals living abroad.[180]

Other countries that have introduced some form of tax exemptions on investments include Ethiopia, Colombia, Burundi, Ecuador, and Burkina Faso.[181] A review by the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and IOM also identified special provisions in Morocco and Niger.[182] In the survey conducted for this handbook, Bosnia and Herzegovina reported that it has requested tax exemptions for the diaspora through its newly adopted development strategy, while the government of Switzerland may adopt similar provisions in the future.[183]

Some countries also offer tax deductions for charitable contributions to encourage philanthropy. These include Mexico, the United States, Ethiopia, Seychelles, and Burundi.[184] The United States, where charitable contributions have been tax deductible since 1917, has been particularly successful in promoting philanthropy using its tax policy, especially in the wake of natural disasters. For example, the US Congress approved legislation that gave special tax treatment for charitable contributions to relief-and-recovery efforts in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake by extending the deadline for contributions that could be claimed as tax deductions in the year of the crisis.

There is a clear consensus that public policy must tread lightly in promoting specific private causes but rather should establish conditions that encourage philanthropy in general. A Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of programs to encourage philanthropy among the diaspora highlighted tax breaks as “perhaps the most effective policy tool available.”[185]

E. Portable Benefits

Recently, countries have also offered portable benefits to their diasporas, particularly those relating to pensions and medical and life insurance. The majority of migrants face obstacles in carrying their pension and health care benefits with them when they move, since bilateral or multilateral social security agreements cover only 20 to 25 percent of international migrants.[186] The lack of portability is believed to discourage more engagement with countries of origin, primarily by inhibiting temporary and, especially, permanent return. (This is especially important for migrants contemplating retirement). IOM has also found that the loss of social and health entitlements discourages migrants from participating in programs facilitating return.

A few countries have successfully managed to protect their migrants by negotiating bilateral social security agreements. For example, the majority of migrants from Morocco (89 percent), Algeria (87 percent), and Turkey (68 percent) work in destination countries that offer them full portability of benefits.[187]

Bosnia and Herzegovina has concluded bilateral agreements with host countries on social security, pensions, and health care benefits. In particular, the Department for Diaspora works with other government institutions directly in charge of pension and health care benefits, primarily by collecting and sharing information on how to access these rights.[188]

In Morocco the Mutuelle des Marocains à L'Etranger (MUMADE), created in 2009, "provides a legal framework that ensures medical coverage of Moroccans abroad who have returned temporarily and/or permanently to Morocco from a country of destination with which no bilateral agreement exists."[189] Mexico's Health Department also offers health insurance through the Seguro de Salud para la familia en Mexico program.[190]

Similarly, in Burkina Faso, the social security fund has set up measures to facilitate the collection of overseas nationals' retirement money in Burkina Faso. Agreements have been signed with several countries including France and Côte d'Ivoire; negotiations with Italy are ongoing.[191] Other countries with provisions for social security portability include the United States, Spain, Burundi, Estonia, Ecuador, Portugal, Comoros, Uruguay, and Seychelles.[192]

In addition, there are also regional agreements such as among members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR), which have made efforts to grant nondiscriminatory access to social services and make benefits portable for intraregional migrants. CARICOM has almost 3.4 million migrants, of whom 12 percent move under arrangements that guarantee complete portability.

F. General Laws

Some governments have officially recognized their diasporas — and, in some cases, migration in general — as an integral part of their national development plans. For instance, Mali's National Population Policy (Politique Nationale de Population) of 1991, revised in 2004, discusses the importance of integrating international migration into the national development strategy.[193] Likewise, the Rural Development Strategy of Niger (Stratégie de développement rural au Niger) elaborates on the important role migrants' financial resources can play in local development. Migrants are also recognized in Niger's Action Plan of the Rural Development Strategy and the Accelerated Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2008 to 2010.[194]

This official recognition is an important step since it unequivocally shows to the diaspora that they are regarded as critical actors in the development of their country of origin. Indeed, for the government of Uruguay, Migration Law 18.250, a law that officially recognizes the "inalienable right of migrants and their families" is a "successful initiative" since "it shows to the diaspora the importance of the migration issue for the government."[195]

2 Challenges and Lessons Learned

Enacting rules and regulations that are conducive to diaspora engagement is a critical first step but far from the only one. There is often a disconnect between what government planners envision on paper and what is implemented on the ground. To maximize the effectiveness of these rules and regulations, governments should consider the following lessons of experience.

A. Elicit Local Buy-In, First and Foremost

Although clearly beneficial to members of diasporas, special privileges of the types described in this chapter may be perceived as unfair to local populations. Local buy-in is important for the political sustainability of programs. For instance, if overseas voting turnout is low in countries that have reserved seats in the legislature for external electoral districts, fewer votes will determine the outcome of the election for a parliamentary seat compared to internal constituencies. In other words, overseas voting may give external votes more weight.[196]

Local buy-in is also important because implementing diaspora privileges costs taxpayers money, either in forgone income or additional expenses for implementing programs. Eritrea, for instance, has eliminated tax exemptions for overseas investors, which were meant to encourage the import of various materials.[197] Similarly, Botswana is considering abolishing its external voting provisions as a result of the low turnout rates among external voters and high costs associated with the arrangements.

Indeed, budgetary limitations constrain available options. As International IDEA highlights in its analysis of implementing overseas voting, advances in technology have allowed for incorporating tens or hundreds of thousands of potential voters, but "it is clear that the design and operation of such a mechanism would be very costly and even beyond the means of many of the emerging or restored democracies."[198]

B. Identify Loopholes and Gaps in Coverage: Often, the Devil Is in the Details

It is also important to ensure that the regulations and protocols put in place to implement a law do not have loopholes and gaps that exclude intended beneficiaries. For instance, International IDEA finds that countries' success on implementing external voting can vary greatly and depends on various factors such as who is eligible to participate, how eligible electors can register, and what arrangements are made for votes to be cast.[199] As Table 2 shows, some countries require citizens to vote in person, which may disadvantage some groups, especially the poor who cannot afford transport, the undocumented who cannot easily move around, and those who live far from embassies or consulates.

Table 2: External Voting Procedures, By Country

Procedures	Number of Cases	Country/Territory
Personal voting only	54	Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Finland, Georgia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic , Republic of Moldova, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Peru, Pitcairn Islands, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Yemen
Postal voting only	25	Austria, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Denmark, Falkland Islands, Fiji, Germany, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Ireland, Italy, Jersey, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Isle of Man, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Norway, Panama, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Zimbabwe
Proxy voting only	4	Mauritius, Nauru, Togo, Vanuatu
Mixed procedures	27	Algeria, Australia, Belgium, Benin, Chad, Cook Islands, Estonia, France, Gabon, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mali, Micronesia (Federated States of), Netherlands, New Zealand, Palau, Philippines, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom
Not yet implemented or not available	4	Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Greece, Nicaragua, Oman
Total	**114**	

Note: The United States is not included in this table since the procedures for external voting vary by state.
Source: International IDEA, *Voting from Abroad: The International IDEA Handbook* (Stockholm: Trydells Tryckeri, 2006).

C. Focus on Outreach and Information Dissemination

Making benefits available is only half the battle; making members aware that such benefits exist is an even bigger challenge. In offering special privileges, governments need to show that there is demand for them. Otherwise, it is very difficult to make the case for special provisions.

For instance, in the Philippines, Secretary Mely Nicolas of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) highlights the difficulty of implementing provisions for dual or multiple citizenship, simply due to what she sees as "lack of correct information among the Filipino communities abroad."[200] Providing adequate and correct information is especially difficult for countries, such as the Philippines, with huge and dispersed diasporas. Similarly, according to the government of Uruguay, implementing overseas voting was difficult "because the population did not have enough information about the elections" in the first place.[201]

D. Monitor the Implementation of Laws and Regulations to Identify and Address Challenging Areas

It is also important for governments to avoid paper schemes and ensure that the implementation of laws and regulations are closely monitored. For example, in countries with external voting provisions, rates of registration and turnout rates abroad are almost always lower compared to within the home country. This is true even in countries like Brazil, where voting is compulsory for citizens who are temporarily or permanently abroad and yet only about 5 percent of eligible external voters participate. The same can be said in the case of Mexico. Despite the large number of Mexicans living in the United States, the registration rate was unexpectedly low.[202]

What may be interpreted as diasporas' lack of interest in participating in the political process may be, in fact, due to administrative, financial, or institutional constraints. Lower participation rates may be attributed, for instance, to the limited number and inaccessibility of polling stations. Documentation requirements and restrictions or preconditions may also make participation difficult or cumbersome to overseas voters. For instance, in the Philippines, regulations require external voters to state intention to to return to the Philippines within a specified timeframe.[203]

Some governments have chosen to closely monitor the implementation of the rules and regulations put in place. Uruguay, for instance, created a Migration Board to monitor the progress of the law regulating 18.250.[204] Mexico has worked with IDEA, an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide, not only to understand and better analyze Mexico's experience with overseas voting but also to compare it with other countries.[205]