INDIASPORA

INDIA & ITS DIASPORA: PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

Supporting India's Journey to 2047

Painting by Jeena Raghavan

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March 2026
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from Indiaspora 5
Executive Summary 6
Introduction 7
Understanding the Indian Diaspora 8
Sentiment of Indian Diaspora 16
Business 24
Philanthropy 31
Academia & Research 38
Government 44
Culture & Society 52
Recommendations for the Path Ahead 57
Diaspora Vision for 2047 73
Appendix 79
Acknowledgements 83
Authors 84

LETTER FROM INDIASPORA

Dear Friends,

As India approaches its centenary of independence, we stand at a moment of profound possibility. The India of 2047 is being imagined and built today, and the global Indian diaspora, of over 30 million, stands ready, not as spectators, but as genuine partners in this historic journey.

The question is no longer whether the diaspora has something to contribute, but how. Diaspora philanthropy has surged, business leaders are investing in India's innovation ecosystem, and a new generation is discovering meaningful connections to their heritage. The intent exists. What has been missing is a comprehensive understanding of how this contribution can be structured, scaled, and sustained.

The Indian diaspora is more than a demographic, as the report proves; it is a living bridge, connecting markets, ideas, cultures, and aspirations across continents. In an era of a multipolar world, we are uniquely placed to support and help realize India's global vision. We are the human connectors in a world that increasingly values distributed networks over concentrated power.

This report does not catalog past achievements; it documents a profound truth: millions of Indians worldwide want to be part of what India is building. We have heard it in our Forums and Summits—people want to contribute. But intention without invitation often remains dormant. For the diaspora to be a true two-way living bridge, India needs to see the diaspora as partners with knowledge, networks, and resources, and the diaspora needs pathways to make their impact real.

Indiaspora believes in multilayered diaspora engagement that meets people where they are. For 14 years, Indiaspora has convened business leaders, policy experts, philanthropic visionaries, healthcare and legal experts, tech leaders, climate scientists and many more. We understand the current energy and momentum, and how to harness it for meaningful, sustained impact.

To the diaspora: your intentions matter, but action matters more. Engage through philanthropy, mentorship, knowledge-sharing, or investment; your contributions will help shape India's next chapter. To the Government of India and Indian institutions: the diaspora is ready to partner in substantive ways. We bring expertise, global networks, and a deep personal stake in India's success. Engage with us as collaborators in a shared project.

We stand at a threshold. India's journey to 2047 will be written by those who choose to participate. Indiaspora is committed to ensuring the global Indian diaspora is not merely a witness to this transformation but an active architect of it. The bridge is built, let us walk across it together.

With optimism and purpose,

M. Rangaswami

MR Rangaswami

Founder and Chairman, Indiaspora

SJoshipura

Sanjeev Joshipura

Executive Director, Indiaspora

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over decades, the Indian diaspora shaped and strengthened ties with the country in multiple ways. This report highlights their contributions to India today and opportunities to strengthen these connections as India approaches its centenary in 2047.

A Diaspora at Scale and Maturity

At 35 million people across 200+ countries, the Indian diaspora is the largest in human history. It spans recent migrants as well as communities several generations away from India, each shaped by distinct histories of mobility and connection. At the same time, diaspora members are increasingly embedded within global systems, expanding the ways in which the diaspora interacts with India.

Evolving Forms of Engagement

Today, diaspora contributions to India span three dimensions. On capital, the Indian diaspora earns upwards of USD 730 billion annually from formal employment, with a meaningful share returning to India for investments and family support. At USD 138 billion, India's remittances are the highest in the world, proven resilient through macroeconomic uncertainty and reflects a diaspora that is increasingly skilled. On capability, the diaspora drives knowledge exchange, technology collaboration, and expertise transfer. And on credibility, diaspora leaders bring their understanding of India into global public and private institutions.

Readiness to Engage

Indiaspora survey findings reveal strong diaspora appetite for contribution to India across business, philanthropy, academia, and government. Respondents were optimistic about their ability to drive change, with 60% motivated by a desire to reconnect with their roots, followed by family ties and the opportunity to create meaningful impact. Yet this willingness sometimes runs ahead of participation, held back by administrative friction, legal complexity, and limited visibility into where and how to contribute.

Generational Pathways

Generational change is reshaping diaspora participation. Younger generations often possess strong professional capabilities and global networks, yet their connection to India is shaped less by inherited sentiment and more by opportunities for meaningful participation. Structured exposure, professional exchanges, and collaborative platforms will be increasingly important to sustain these ties.

Enabling Sustained Impact

The report advances a dual set of recommendations to strengthen enabling conditions and improve continuity of contribution. For India, the focus is on strengthening identity-based connection, increasing exposure to opportunities for meaningful participation, and creating credible avenues for contribution aligned with national priorities. For the diaspora, the emphasis is on moving toward more coordinated institution-linked involvement, grounded in partnership, and alignment with India's development goals.

INTRODUCTION

Each January in India, the skies above Gujarat come alive with kites. As Uttarayan unfolds in Ahmedabad, rooftops and open grounds turn into places of shared celebration. The International Kite Festival has grown from this local tradition into a global gathering, drawing kite flyers from across India and from nearly 50 countries around the world. For many in the diaspora, taking part in Uttarayan is a way to reconnect with their cultural roots and shared community rhythms in India. These moments of return and participation reflect a deeper truth: the Indian diaspora remains bound to India not only by memory and identity, but by active engagement that continues to evolve with the country itself.

The festival also shows how the diaspora remains connected to India in practical ways. Artisans across the value chain, from manja (thread) makers in Surat to kite makers in Ahmedabad, now see steady demand from the US, UK, and Canada, driven by diaspora communities celebrating Uttarayan. Some Indians overseas have gone further, purchasing and restoring heritage homes and channeling private capital into the conservation of the historic city of Ahmedabad, which is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage city. Beyond the visible lift from diaspora tourism, Uttarayan has begun to serve as a setting for public diplomacy. In 2026, during the festival, Prime Minister Modi and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz spoke about how the Indian origin expatriate population creates enduring people to people ties between the two countries.

What begins as cultural participation often extends into meaningful contributions in business, philanthropy, academia & research, and government, reflecting the many ways the diaspora actively shapes India today. With the centenary of India's independence approaching in 2047, this is an ideal moment to reflect on the diaspora's contributions and imagine the possibilities for deeper collaboration in the years ahead.

This report draws on publicly available data, analysis and case studies to highlight existing forms of contribution, while looking ahead to emerging possibilities. We also draw on perspectives from original primary research, including a focused survey of more than 200 diaspora members across 24 countries, inputs from 50 Indian nonprofits, and conversations with nearly 40 leaders across 12 countries.

Finally, the report concludes on a personal and human note, with select diaspora leaders articulating their personal aspirations for a confident, inclusive, and globally engaged India@100 (India at 100 years of independence in 2047). They also share their intentions to contribute to that vision in various ways, such as investing capital and building institutions, mentoring entrepreneurs, advancing research, strengthening social impact, and forging global partnerships. Taken together, these shared aspirations and personal commitments reflect a diaspora that is engaged and ready to support India's journey toward 2047.

Chapter 1

UNDERSTANDING THE INDIAN DIASPORA

The Biggest Diaspora in Human History

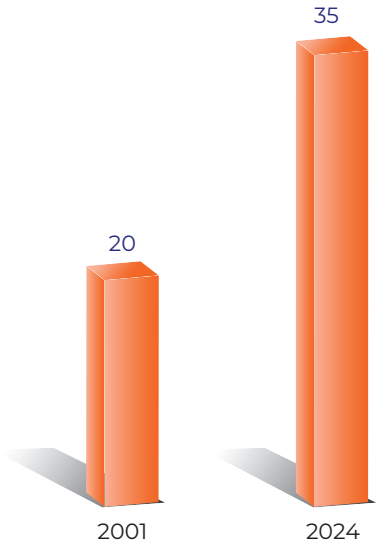
Few countries have reshaped their global footprint as rapidly as India. With a diaspora[1] exceeding 35 million people[2], India now maintains the world's largest overseas community. This population has nearly tripled since 1990[3], rising faster than many other large migrant-origin populations and surpassing those of countries such as China, Mexico, and Russia.

While early migration was largely confined to neighbouring regions and colonial-era hubs, subsequent waves shifted the diaspora's character. Massive labour migration to the Gulf forged deep ties to Middle Eastern economies, while a later influx of skilled professionals and students embedded Indian influence across North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia. This layered history has produced a diaspora that is truly global in reach, spanning more than 200 countries[4].

Given this global reach, the Indian diaspora is often compared to historically influential diasporas such as the Jewish, Irish, and Italian communities, which have long shaped economic, political and cultural ties across borders. Like these communities, the Indian diaspora contributes through capital flows, skills transfer, and enduring people-to-people ties that link home and host countries. At the same time, the Indian diaspora is far from a monolith. It encompasses a wide spectrum of linguistic, religious, and regional identities, as well as varied professional trajectories.

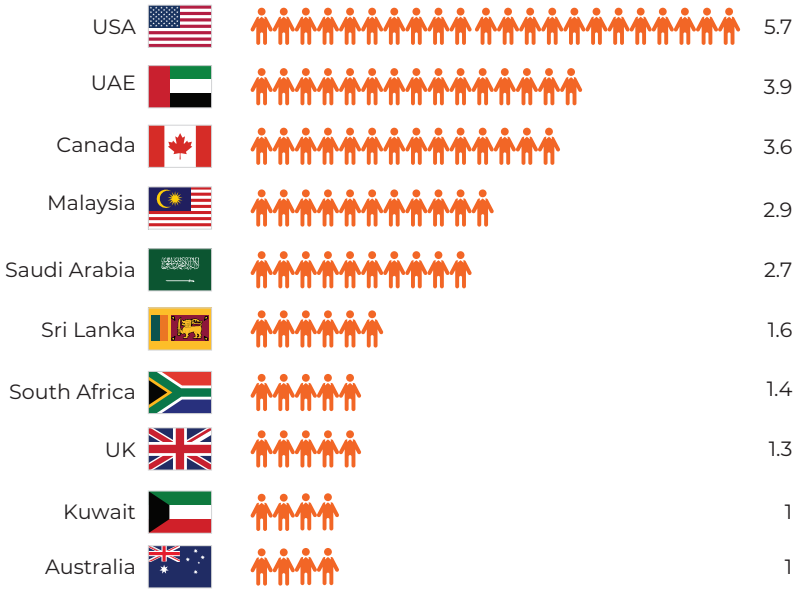
[1] All people of Indian origin living outside of India, including Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origins (PIOs) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs)
[2] Ministry of External Affairs
[3] UN International Migrant Stock 2024
[4] Ministry of External Affairs

TOTAL INDIAN DIASPORA POPULATION (mn)



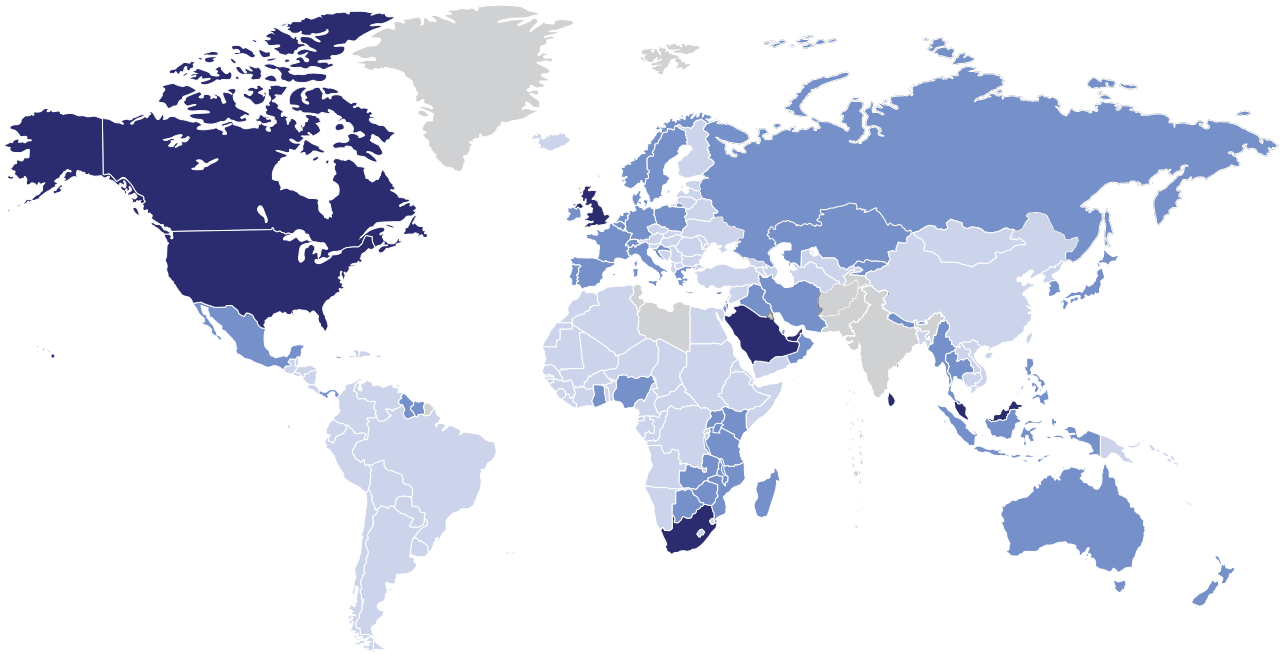
Source: Ministry of External Affairs reports from 2001 to 2024

HALF OF THE OVERSEAS INDIANS RESIDE IN JUST 10 COUNTRIES (mn)



Source: Answer to Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 3277

INDIAN DIASPORA CAN BE FOUND IN MORE THAN 200 COUNTRIES



Diaspora Population: High (> 1,000,000) Medium (10,000 – 1,000,000) Low (< 10,000) Not Applicable or No Data

Source: Ministry of External Affairs

The Three Pillars of Diaspora Strength

In this report, we will cover how the Indian diaspora has evolved into a 'living bridge', serving as an important asset for the country, and contributing in three major ways:

Capital refers to the financial flows and investments that diaspora communities channel back to India, from household remittances to venture capital and FDI.

CAPITAL

CAPABILITY

Capability highlights the skills, knowledge, and innovation that diaspora professionals bring, especially in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Credibility reflects the global reputation and standing of diaspora professionals, which can help build trust and understanding in collaborations involving India.

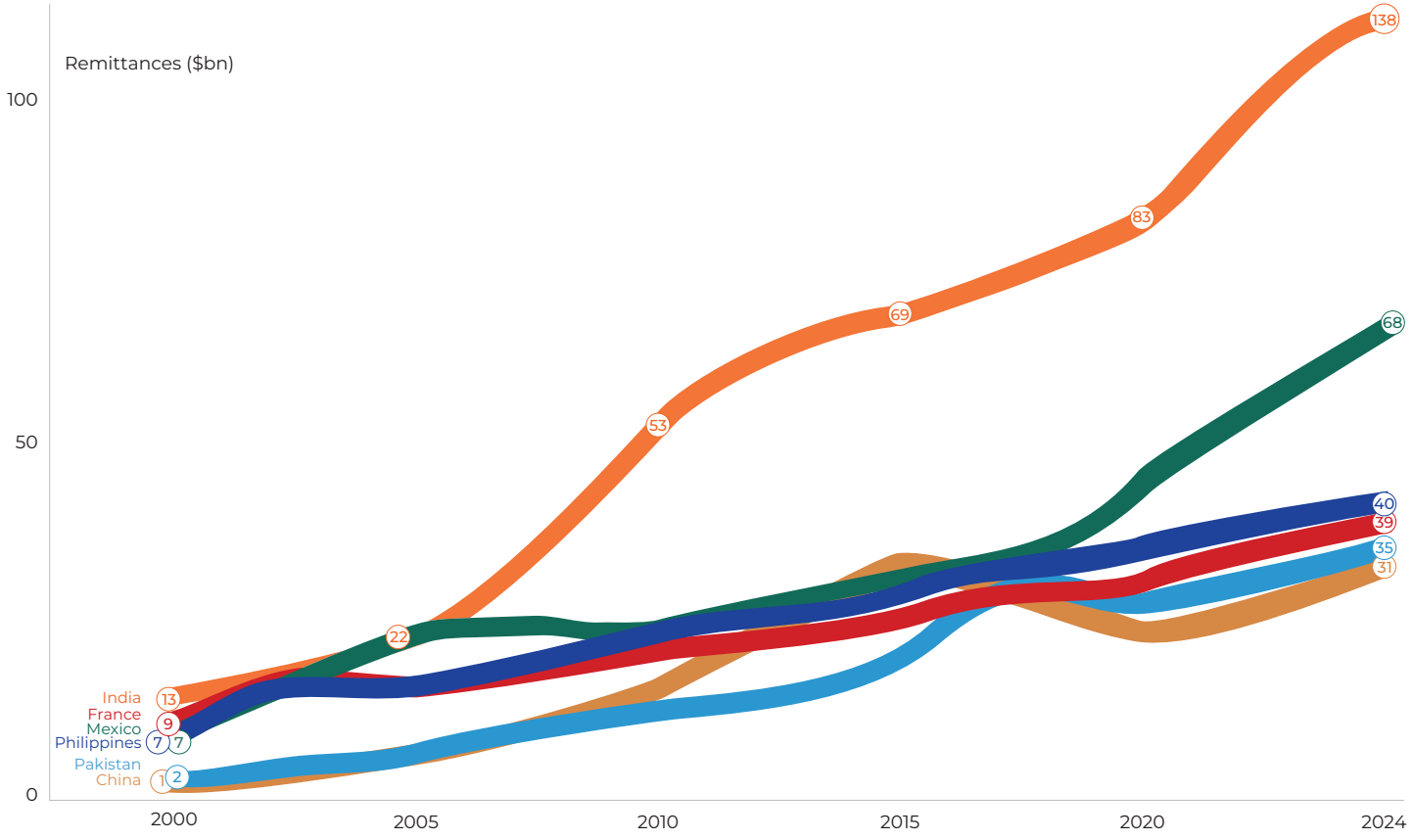
CREDIBILITY

CAPITAL: Partnering in India's Growth

The diaspora has evolved into a financially influential community with growing capacity to shape global capital flows. Our analysis aggregates employment and income data on the Indian diaspora across countries worldwide. On a conservative basis, **the global Indian diaspora earns approximately USD 730 billion[5] annually** from formal employment. This estimate excludes business income, stock options, and property holdings, meaning the overall economic footprint is larger than reflected here.

A meaningful share of this income flows back into India through remittances to families. India is the world's largest recipient of remittances, with inflows nearly doubling between 2015 and 2024. Today, the total remittances of USD 138 billion[6] finance nearly half[7] of India's merchandise trade deficit and provide a steady source of macroeconomic stability, particularly during periods of global or domestic uncertainty.

In the 3 seconds it takes to read this sentence, $13,088 in remittances flow from overseas Indians to their homeland.[8]



Source: World Bank

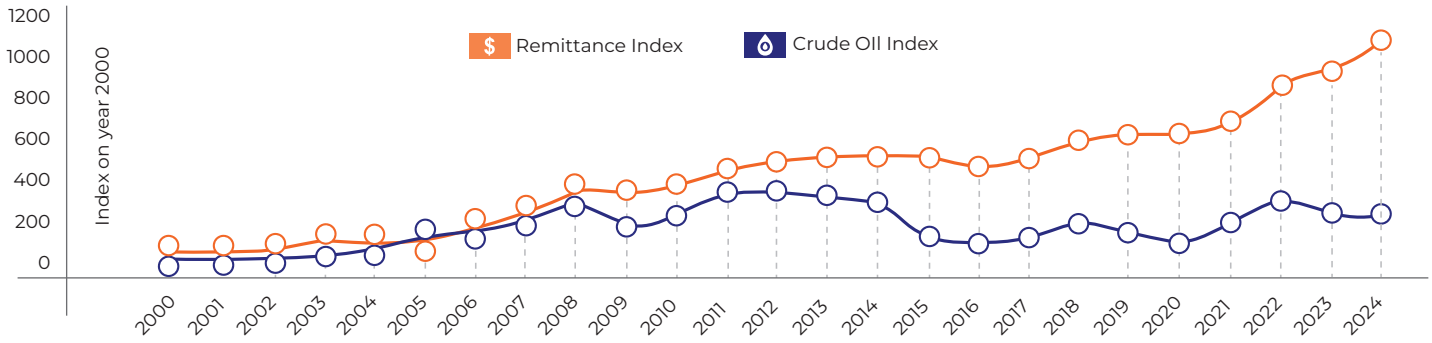
[5] Refer to Appendix I: Methodology of estimating annual income of Indian diaspora

[6] World Bank

[7] Changing Dynamics of India's Remittances - Insights from the Sixth Round of India's Remittances Survey

[8] Calculations based on annual remittances of $138 billion

REMITTANCES FROM INDIAN DIASPORA ARE LESS VOLATILE

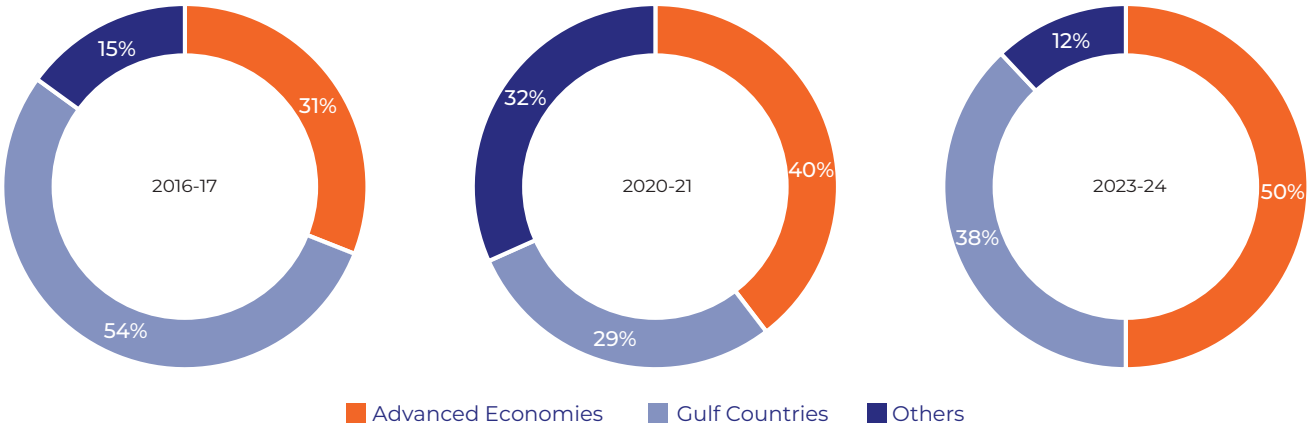


Source: Analysis of World Bank, FRED data

The sources of remittances to India have evolved sharply over time. What was once dominated by flows from the Gulf is now increasingly driven by advanced economies such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. This reflects the expanding geographic spread of the Indian diaspora and the rise of more skilled, higher earning migrants across multiple regions. India today benefits from a broader and more diversified set of remittance corridors that support households while also strengthening the wider economy.

Remittances play a direct role in the upward economic mobility of families in India. Take the example of Kerala. With just 3% of India's population, it receives about 20% of all inward remittances to the country.[9] This migrant income is directed towards renovation of houses or shops (16%), repaying bank loans (14%) or spent on children's education (10%).[10] These spending patterns show that remittances are not merely consumption support, but a driver of housing improvement, debt reduction, and human capital investment.

ADVANCED ECONOMIES NOW DRIVE INDIA'S REMITTANCE GROWTH



Source: RBI Bulletins
Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding

[9] Changing Dynamics of India's Remittances – Insights from the Sixth Round of India's Remittances Survey, RBI Bulletin
[10] Kerala Migration Survey 2023 Report

CAPABILITY: Contributing Expertise & Skill

After remittances, the most defining contribution of the diaspora may be its extraordinary concentration of talent.

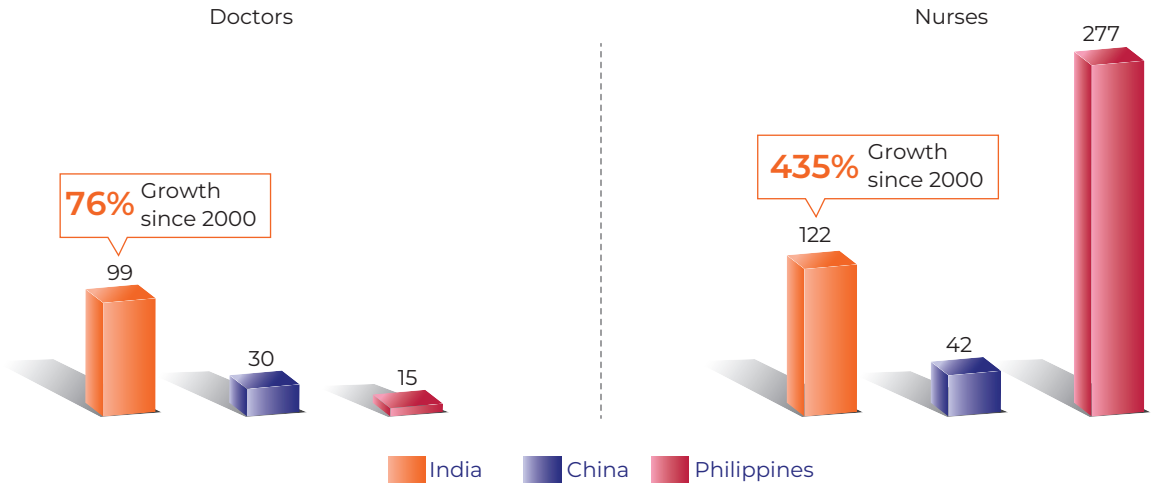
Lifeline of Global Healthcare

Across advanced and emerging economies, Indian-origin doctors and nurses are propping up health systems that would otherwise struggle to cope. Countries facing aging populations, workforce shortages, and post-pandemic strain rely heavily on these professionals to sustain frontline care. Indian-origin clinicians staff emergency departments, anchor primary care systems, and increasingly hold senior medical and administrative positions. This impact is particularly visible in the U.S., where Indian American physicians now represent one in ten physicians in the country.[11]

Indian-origin clinicians are not only keeping hospitals running, but they are also helping to redesign how global health works behind the scenes. As can be seen in the recent elevation of Dr. Srinivas "Bobby" Mukkamala as president of the American Medical Association and Dr. Mumtaz Patel as president of the UK's Royal College of Physicians, Indian-origin doctors now sit at the apex of medical decision-making in two of the world's most influential health systems. The same pattern shows up in the field of global health and pharma, where Indian-origin expert Anil Soni leads the WHO Foundation as its inaugural CEO and physician-executives like Dr. Vasant Narasimhan at Novartis and Dr. Reshma Kewalramani at Vertex Pharmaceuticals now oversee multi-billion-dollar pipelines in oncology, rare diseases, and gene therapies for patients worldwide.

FIRST-GENERATION MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS IN OECD COUNTRIES

OECD Countries Total 2020-21 (Thousands)



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) International Migration Outlook 2025
Note: The chart refers to migrant doctors and nurses only, and does not include next generation Indian-origin medical professionals

[11] Indiaspora US Impact Report

Key Source of STEM Talent Worldwide

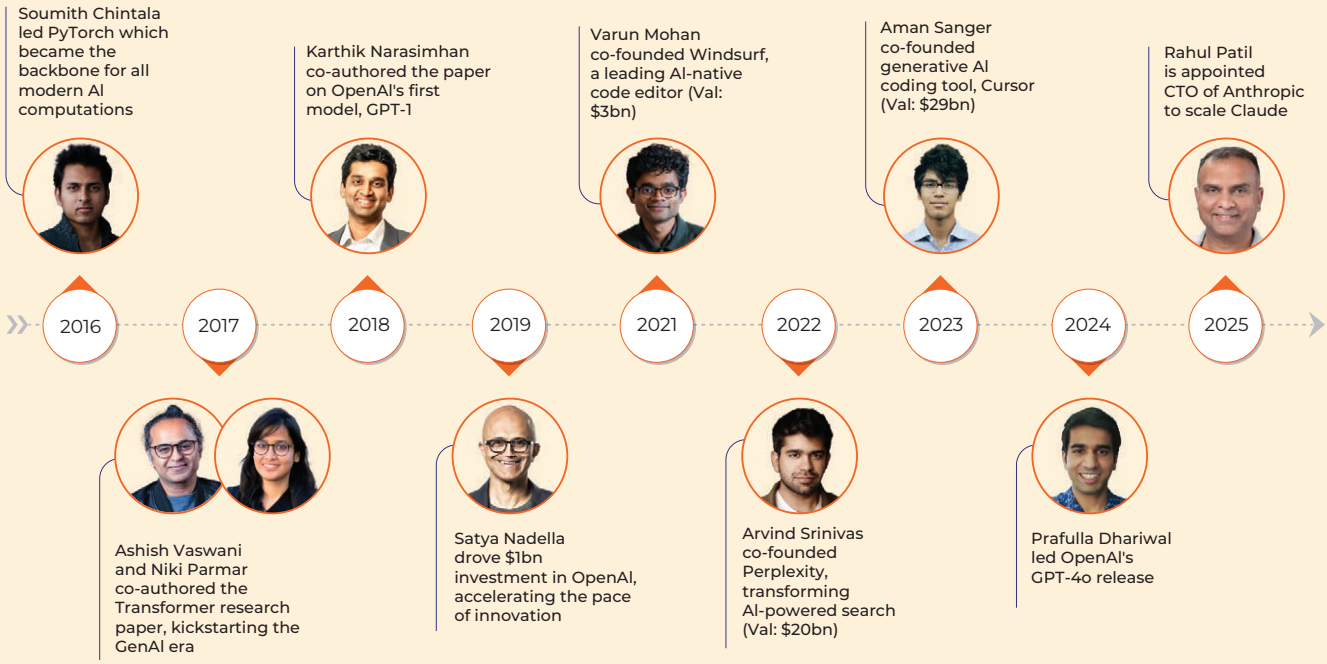
Indian students are also quietly becoming one of the most important contributors to Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) talent pipelines for host countries. For instance, in Germany, Indians are now the largest international student cohort, with recent data indicating that roughly three-quarters of Indian students pursue STEM-related courses. Similar patterns are visible in other major destinations such as the US and UK, where Indian students consistently cluster in science, technology and engineering programmes.

The deep STEM tilt in student choices is already visible in the scientific establishment, where Indian-origin researchers are punching far above their weight in global impact.

Case Study: Architects of the AI Revolution

Within the domain of generative artificial intelligence, Indian-origin researchers and engineers are disproportionately represented in both the labs that built the foundational models and the companies now commercialising them. The landmark "Attention Is All You Need" paper that created the Transformer architecture behind today's large language models had eight authors, two of them of Indian origin. Google DeepMind, OpenAI, Microsoft, Meta and other frontier labs are thick with Indian names.

INDIAN DIASPORA DROVE THE GENERATIVE AI REVOLUTION



Source: Indiaspora Analysis of News Reports

CREDIBILITY: Bridging Global Networks

The final pillar, Credibility, reflects the global reputation and standing of diaspora professionals, which can help build trust and understanding in collaborations involving India. Diaspora members have often acted as informal bridges, interpreting India to the world, and bringing global best practices back to India. These bridges are not institutionalized or centrally coordinated, yet their cumulative impact has been profound.

Indian-origin leaders are increasingly represented at the highest levels of global corporations and startups. In large public markets, CEOs of Indian origin lead some of the world's most valuable Fortune 500 firms. At the same time, entrepreneurs of Indian origin have co-founded more unicorns outside their home country than any other nationality, with over a hundred offshore unicorns in addition to several dozen in India itself.[12]

On the government side, diaspora leaders serve across roughly 30 countries as heads of state and government, cabinet ministers, ambassadors, central bank chiefs, and senior civil servants, guiding economies that together generate tens of trillions of dollars in GDP.

Together, these government and corporate leaders contribute contextual understanding and continuity, helping translate priorities and execution realities once formal trade, regulatory, and commercial engagement channels are active.

Indra Nooyi

Former Chairman & CEO, PepsiCo

The Indian diaspora is a strategic asset for India. If this global Indian experience can be leveraged, India's momentum can be sustained and even accelerated.

Faizal Kottikollon

Founder & Chairman, KEF Holdings

No matter where we build our lives, India remains close to our hearts and present in our thinking, shaping how we engage with its growth and aspirations.

Raja Krishnamoorthi

United States Congressman for Illinois' 8th District

The story of the Indian diaspora is defined by a quiet commitment to service and a deep desire to build stronger communities. Whether it's in a local neighborhood or on a national stage, the community is guided by the values of its shared heritage. I see a future where the bridge the diaspora built between India and the world is made up of people who simply want to see both their homes thrive together.

[12] Hurun's Global Unicorn Index 2024

Chapter 2

SENTIMENT OF INDIAN DIASPORA

Prof. Mohanbir Sawhney

Clinical Professor of Marketing, Kellog School of Management, Northwestern University

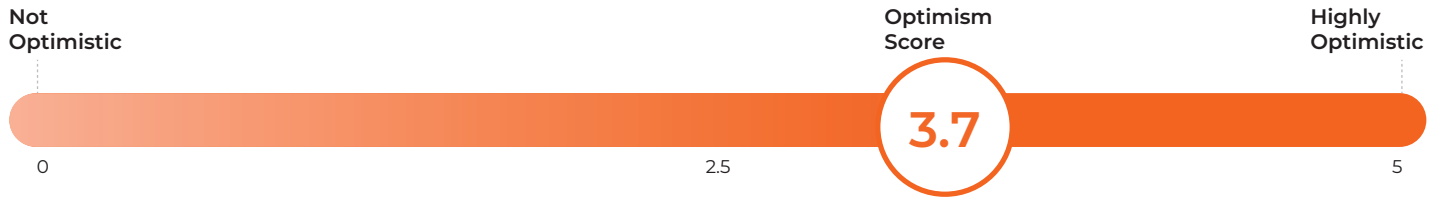
The Indian diaspora has reached an unprecedented level of accomplishment. Its capabilities, networks, and capital have matured to a point where meaningful contributions to India are now possible. At the same time, India has evolved rapidly. Top talent can build globally competitive, multi-billion-dollar companies at home. This convergence has created a natural moment for deeper engagement.

Over the past two decades, both India and its diaspora have transformed in scale, ambition and global integration. At this stage of the evolution, we sought to understand how members of the Indian diaspora are engaging with India today. We surveyed over 200 voices from across 24 countries to capture their sentiment and patterns of participation in India's ongoing growth. We recognise that the sample is skewed toward diaspora members in professional and managerial roles, and therefore does not adequately reflect the experiences of large segments of overseas Indians employed in blue collar and migrant labour markets. The findings should be read as directional signals from the professional diaspora rather than a comprehensive representation of the full socioeconomic spectrum of the global Indian community.

As the country prepares for India@100 with ambitious national goals, our survey[13] shows that the diaspora is eager to play an active role in shaping its future. On average, respondents reported a solid optimism score of 3.7 out of 5 regarding their ability to contribute.

[13] The survey is the source for all charts and graphs shown in this chapter. For more details, refer to Appendix II.

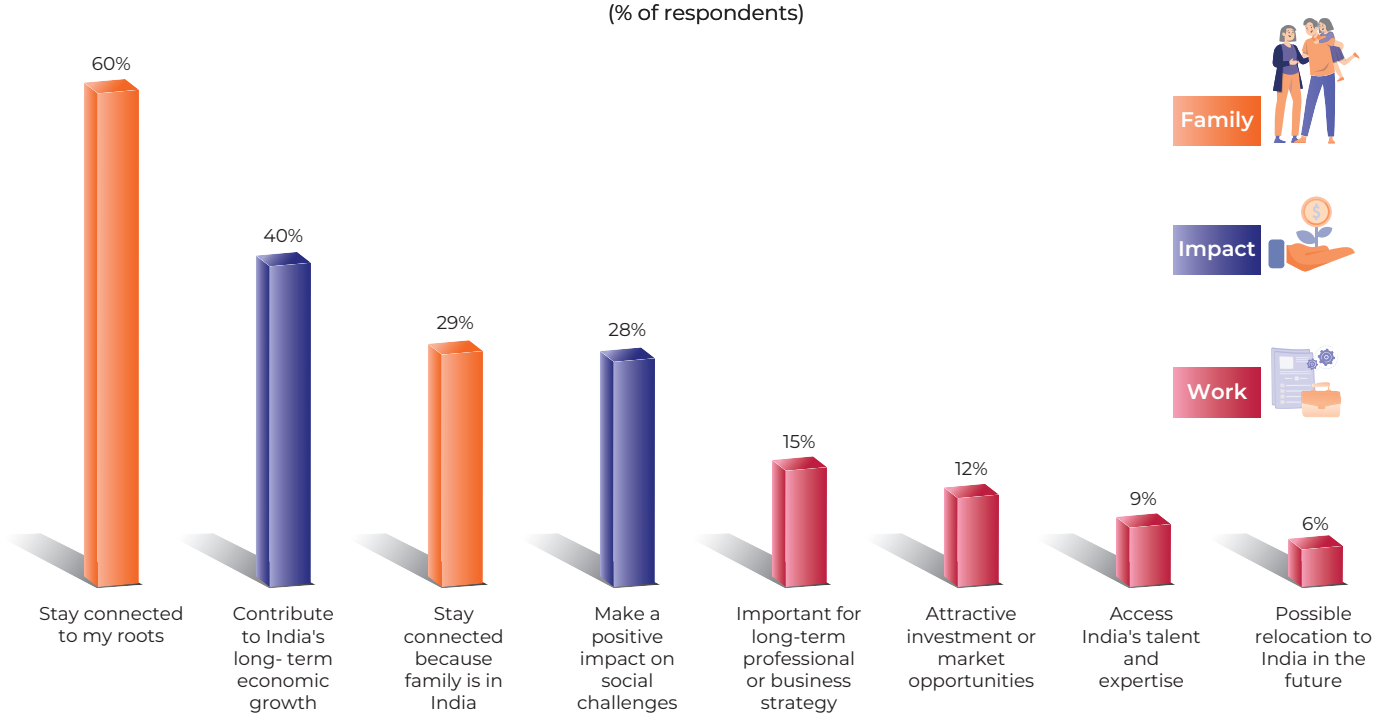
DIASPORA OPTIMISM ABOUT THEIR ABILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO INDIA'S GROWTH



The primary motivation for the diaspora to engage with India is family ties. **60% of survey respondents report seeking ways to stay connected to their roots**, across all generations of immigrants. These enduring personal linkages present a valuable opportunity to drive more sustained involvement. The second key driver is a desire to create impact, supporting both India's long-term economic trajectory and addressing social challenges such as education, healthcare, and poverty. In addition, many members of the diaspora participate for investment, career, or business opportunities.

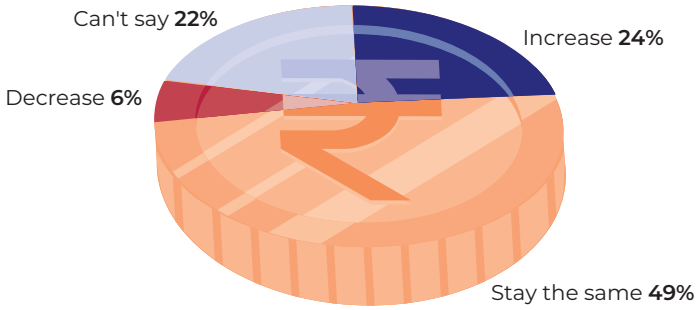
MOTIVATIONS DRIVING DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIA

(% of respondents)



Understanding financial flows to India reveals a strong and sustained commitment from the diaspora. More than 70% percent of diaspora respondents expect their remittances to India to either remain stable or increase.

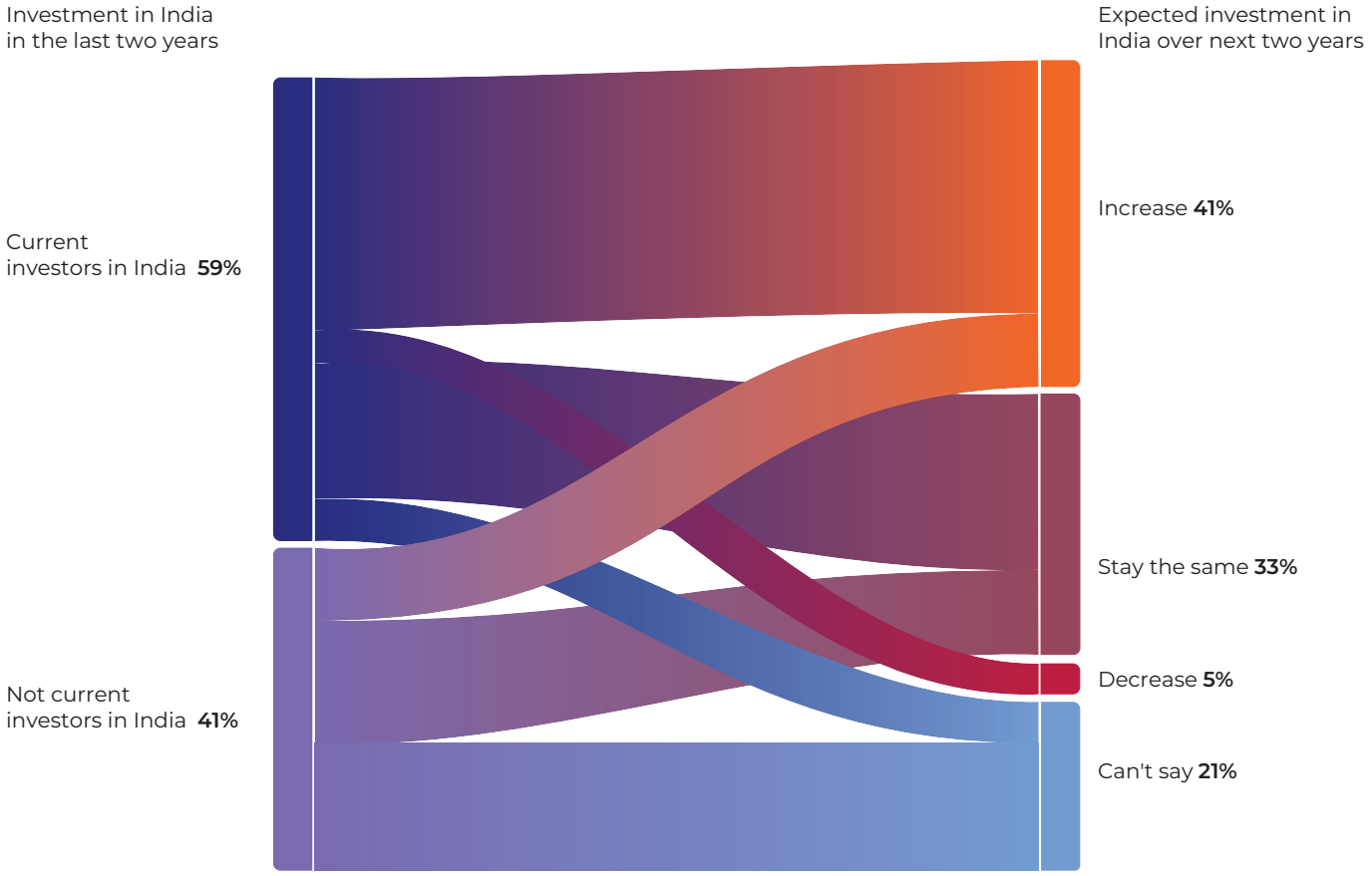
HOW DIASPORA EXPECT THEIR INDIA REMITTANCES TO CHANGE OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS



Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding

Investment engagement is also high, with close to 60% of survey respondents currently invested in India across real estate, public markets, private funds, fixed income, and alternative or other financial instruments. **More than 80 percent of these current investors expect to continue investing in India** over the next two years. Notably, even among those not currently invested, approximatey 20% indicated an intention to start in the near horizon, pointing to continued momentum in diaspora capital flows.

HOW DIASPORA EXPECT THEIR INDIA INVESTMENTS TO CHANGE OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS



Deep Dive into Engagement Pathways between India and its Diaspora

There are four key pathways through which the diaspora engages with India. The numbers mentioned below are the percentage of survey respondents engaged in the pathway.

BUSINESS

55%

Participation through large corporates, startups, investments, and Global Capability Centres (GCCs), contributing capital, expertise, and market access.

PHILANTHROPY

67%

Volunteering time and skills, and making donations to support India's social impact and nonprofit sector.

ACADEMIA & RESEARCH

40%

Advancing education, research, and knowledge creation within the country through teaching, collaboration, and institutional partnerships.

GOVERNMENT

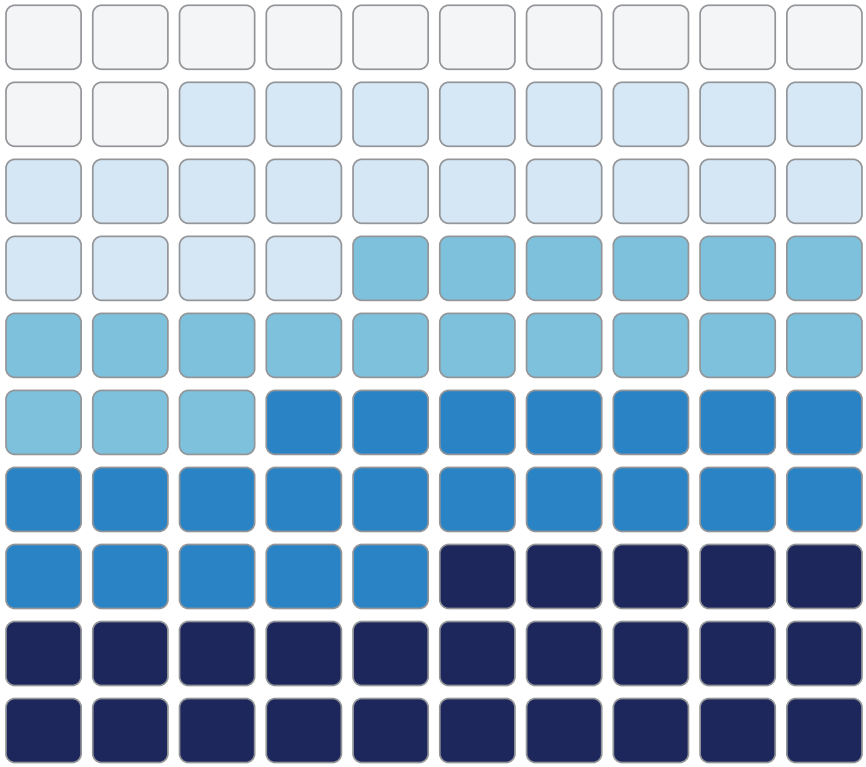
42%

Supporting the creation of government policy, enabling trade and bilateral or multilateral agreements, and contributing to global standards and regulatory frameworks.

Survey respondents reported meaningful involvement across the full set of engagement pathways. More than 45% expressed interest or active involvement in at least three pathways, suggesting that diaspora connections with India are often broad based and span multiple channels rather than being confined to one.

BREADTH OF ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN DIASPORA AND INDIA

(% of respondents)



12% are not engaged across any pathways

22% are engaged in one pathway

19% are engaged across two pathways

22% are engaged across three pathways

25% are engaged across all four pathways

Rajan Navani

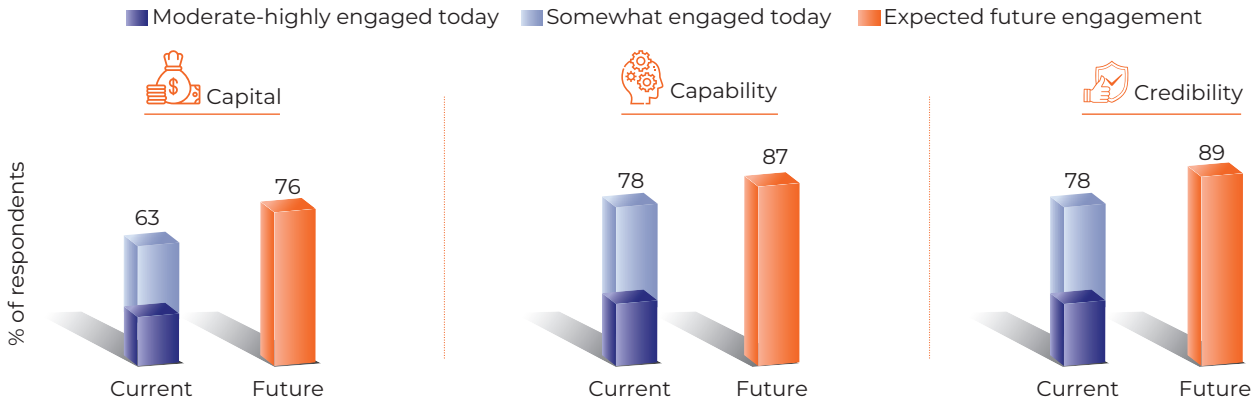
Chairman and MD, Jetline Group of Companies

There is no single script for how the diaspora engages with India. Some will build companies here, some will invest capital, some will engage with policy and governance, some will engage in philanthropy and share skills or time, and some will send the next generation back to rediscover and add value to the country. All these are powerful ways of being part of India's story.

PATHWAY I: BUSINESS

The Indian diaspora collaborates with businesses in India in a multitude of ways. This takes the form of shared expertise and co-development of skills, as well as enabling market entry through partnerships, customer access and global networks. Looking ahead, many respondents expressed a clear positive sentiment toward deeper involvement with India over the next two years. Among respondents who are already highly engaged, more than 60% expect to further increase their participation.

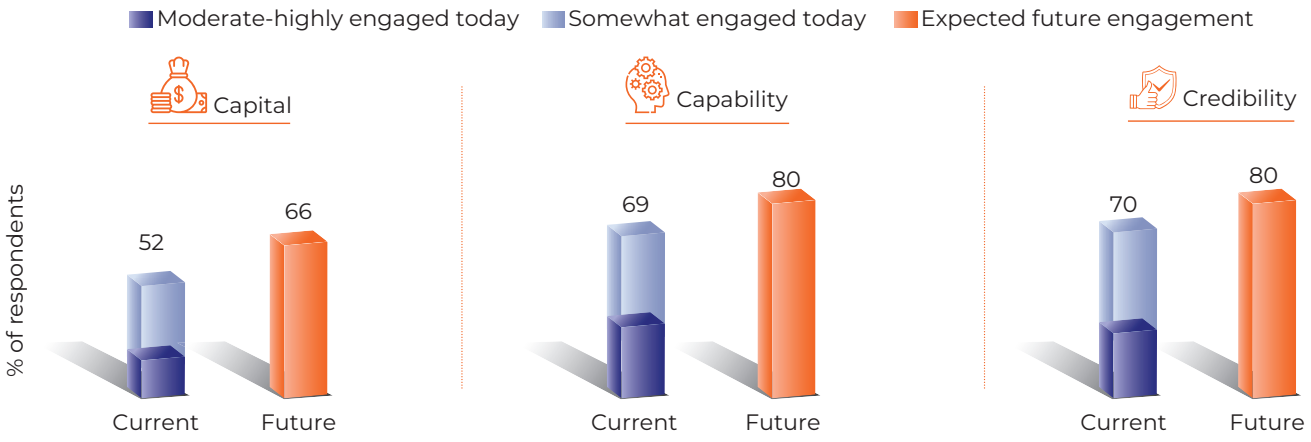
DIASPORA INTERACTION WITH ESTABLISHED CORPORATES IN INDIA



Note: Percentage calculated based on respondents interested in a given pathway, not full survey sample

In the evolving entrepreneurial landscape, diaspora engagement has transitioned into a robust bi-directional exchange that connects global talent with local innovation. Survey results indicate that diaspora respondents are most active in the areas of capability and credibility, through mentorship, board service as well as facilitating strategic access to international markets and accelerators. Commitment could deepen, with more than 65% of moderate-to-highly involved respondents planning to increase their participation by 2028. Additionally, the diaspora remains highly involved in the angel and venture capital segments.

DIASPORA INTERACTION WITH STARTUPS IN INDIA

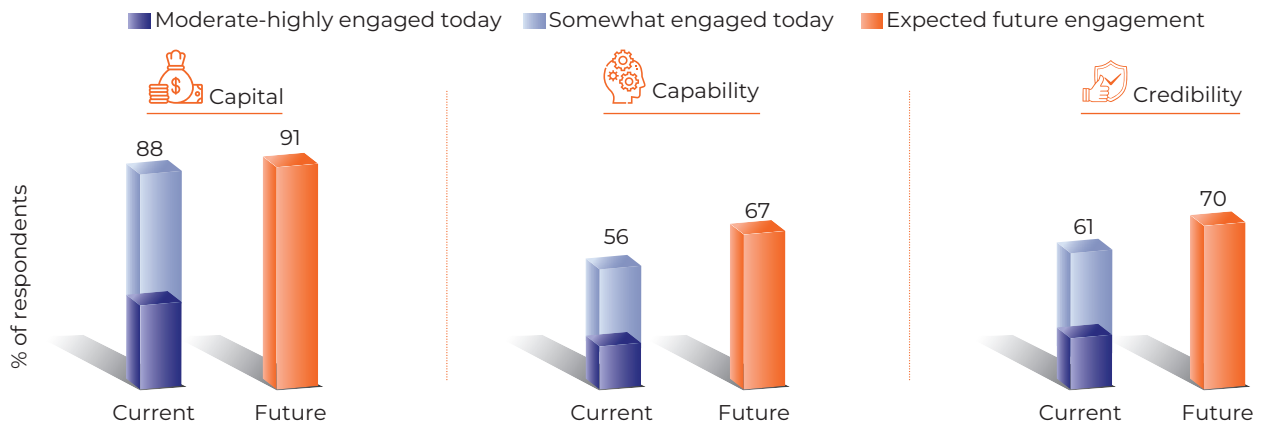


Note: Percentage calculated based on respondents interested in a given pathway, not full survey sample

PATHWAY II: PHILANTHROPY

Philanthropy stands out as the only pathway where capital contributions far exceed other mechanisms. Among respondents interested in this space, 87 percent are already current donors to the Indian sector. A clear split appears in giving patterns: among occasional donors, only a quarter report plans to increase their giving over the next two years, while 50 percent of moderate-heavy donors indicate higher levels of capital contribution growth. Beyond funding, respondents also give back through non-financial routes, including mentoring and advising, taking on board roles, and enabling access by connecting organizations to new networks and growth opportunities.

DIASPORA INTERACTION WITH PHILANTHROPY IN INDIA

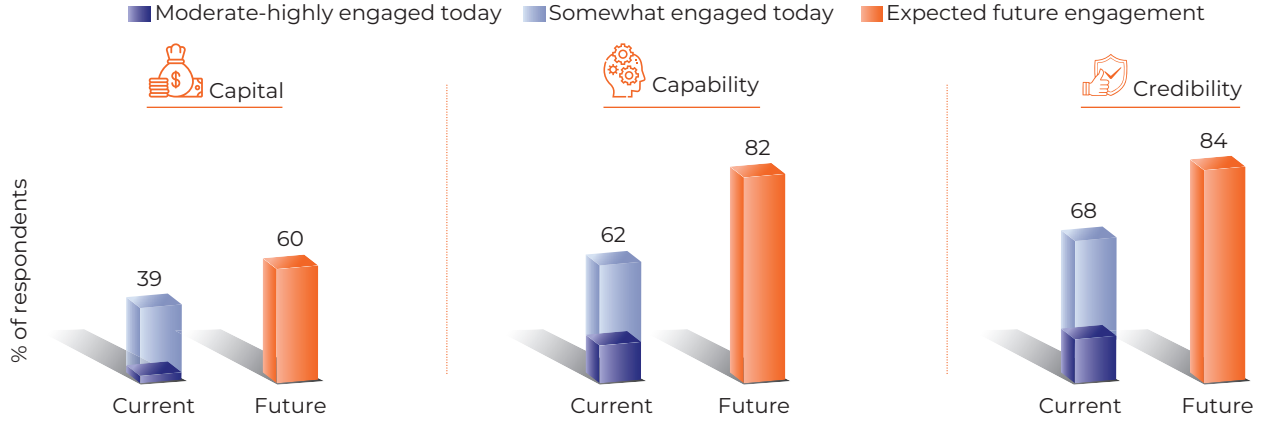


Note: Percentage calculated based on respondents interested in a given pathway, not full survey sample

PATHWAY III: ACADEMIA & RESEARCH

Among diaspora respondents interested in India's academia & research sector, engagement is particularly high in capability building and in bringing their professional credibility to collaborations involving India. This includes mentoring, upskilling, advising, and facilitating research collaborations. Looking ahead, respondents express a strong intent to increase their involvement over the next two years, highlighting a mutually reinforcing opportunity to deepen diaspora participation while strengthening India's research ecosystem and global linkages. By comparison, engagement through capital-based mechanisms such as research grants or funding teaching programs remains more limited, with less than 40 percent of the interested respondents currently active.

DIASPORA INTERACTION WITH ACADEMIA & RESEARCH IN INDIA

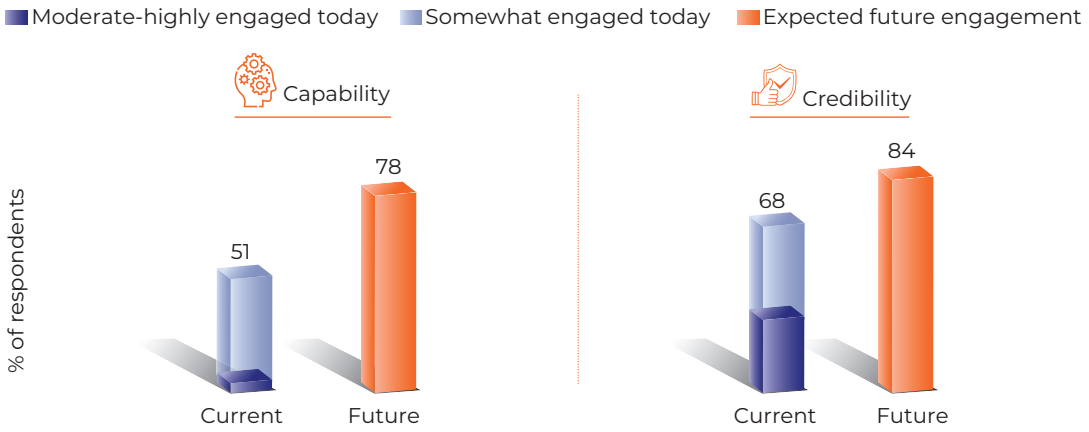


Note: Percentage calculated based on respondents interested in a given pathway, not full survey sample

PATHWAY IV: GOVERNMENT

The diaspora shows strong intent to engage with India at a systemic level. In fact, intent runs 25% higher than current involvement in bringing expertise to policy capability. This demonstrates that the diaspora hopes to collaborate with India for its long-term vision. At the same time, the diaspora is involved in strengthening India's relationships with their home countries and contributing to discussions on global forums, helping build alignment and long-term cooperation.

DIASPORA INTERACTION WITH INDIA'S GOVERNMENT



Note: Percentage calculated based on respondents interested in a given pathway, not full survey sample

India and its diaspora are meeting each other at a new point of readiness. This moment reflects a coming of age on both sides that opens the door to deeper, more ambitious forms of collaboration.

Chapter 3

BUSINESS

The Indian diaspora has been actively shaping India's integration into the global economy for decades. During the liberalization of the 1990s, Indian-origin executives were often among the earliest advocates for investing in India, helping international companies establish operations, navigate regulatory complexities, and build confidence in the Indian market. Many served as informal intermediaries, translating global business expectations into local execution, and reducing perceived risk for foreign investors. These early efforts laid the groundwork for sustained diaspora-led investment and long-term corporate engagement with India.

"Diaspora leaders bring contextual intelligence that materially deepens engagement. During the late-1990s reform period, as India opened up and a second wave of U.S. businesses began coming to the country, I observed that American delegations routinely sought Indian Americans who understood local realities and could translate intent into traction.

The same dynamic played out in the US-India CEO Forum, which was at its strongest when diaspora CEOs were in the room: discussions were more candid, more sustained, and more action-oriented. Unlike non-diaspora CEOs, who may think about India only episodically, diaspora leaders are naturally inclined to think about India more frequently, and can therefore drive more consequential conversations."

Richard Rossow
Chair on India and Emerging Asia Economics, CSIS

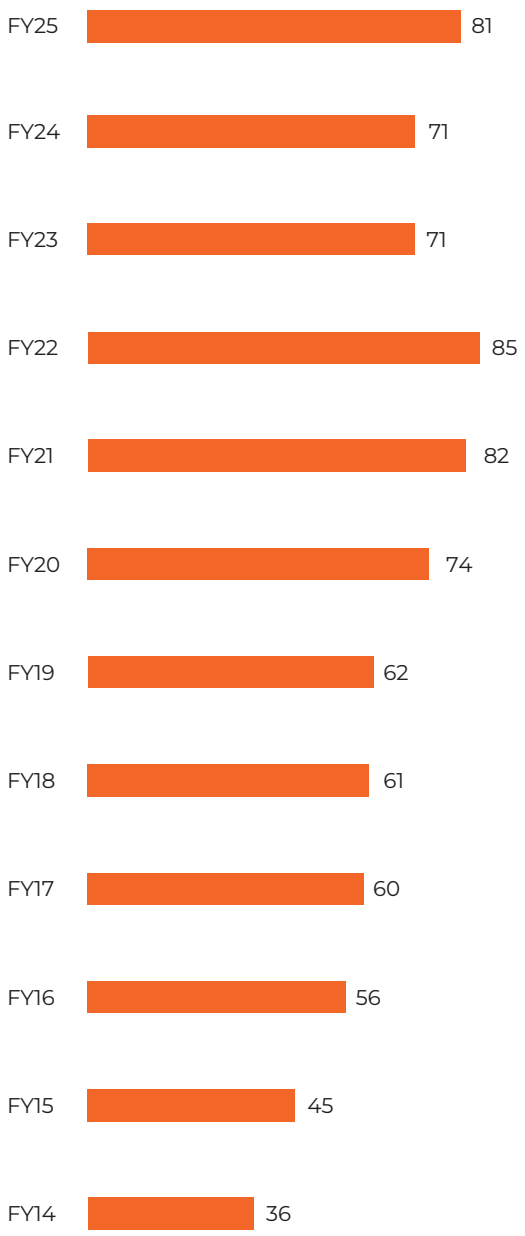
Dr. Dinesh Keskar
Retired Senior Vice President, Boeing

I led the team that sold six 747-400s to Air India at a time when there was a lot of skepticism about whether international companies could transparently and effectively navigate India's complex environment. My deep understanding of both the US and Indian systems, ability to build trust with local stakeholders and persistence proved essential. This level of insider understanding, and cultural fluency could only have been provided by an Indian-origin leader. Once we closed our first major deal, it changed perceptions at the highest levels and opened doors for further investment.

CAPITAL

India's FDI inflows have climbed steadily from USD 36 billion in FY14 to USD 81 billion in FY25. With more than USD one trillion in cumulative inflows since 2000, foreign investment has become a cornerstone of India's growth model, supporting expansion across services, manufacturing, infrastructure, and digital sectors. While FDI data does not directly track diaspora origins, Indian-origin leaders are visible in some of the largest business commitments shaping India's enterprise landscape.

TOTAL FDI INFLOW TO INDIA ($bn)



DIASPORA-LED COMPANIES HAVE DRIVEN MAJOR FDI DEALS FOR A DECADE

Satya Nadella, Microsoft
$3bn cloud/AI infrastructure, followed by Microsoft's largest Asia investment ($17.5bn)

Sanjay Mehrotra, Micron
$825mn investment in $2.5bn project to develop semiconductor test & assembly facility

Sanjiv Lamba, Linde
Investments in green hydrogen capabilities in India over 3 years

CS Venkatakrishnan, Barclays
$400mn capital infusion for banking & wealth business in India

Revathi Advaithi, Flex
Invested in telecom product factories, qualifying for India's PLI scheme

Vas Narasimhan, Novartis
Launched company's first innovation hub in Asia in Hyderabad

Lakshmi Mittal, ArcelorMittal
$5.7bn acquisition of Essar Steel in partnership with Nippon Steel

Ajay Banga, Mastercard
Committed $800mn for acquisitions in addition to existing $4.5bn

Prem Watsa, Fairfax Financial
$600mn investments in Bangalore Airport and Sanmar Chemical

Ivan Menezes, Diageo
Total $3bn invested to acquire control of United Spirits

Dinesh Paliwal, Harman Intl.
Started first manufacturing facility in India

Indra Nooyi, PepsiCo
$5.5bn in manufacturing, delivery infrastructure, innovation & agriculture

Sat Pal Khattar
Chairman,
Khattar Holdings

My early involvement with HDFC Bank began with a simple committment: to invest in India directly. That decision shaped the rest of my journey, I have remained invested ever since to support further opportunities in India.

Nisha Jagtiani
Group Director and Board Member,
Landmark Group

Choosing India was not a strategic afterthought. It was deeply personal to both my parents. They always knew we wanted to build a business in India, and that connection guided every decision we made.

Diaspora investors often participate early, drawing on familiarity with India's operating context and global capital markets. Dhruva Jaishankar, Executive Director of ORF America pointed out, "Diaspora is a bellwether for investment sentiment – if Indians abroad are confident in investing in the Indian economy then others would follow. It helps others to buy into the India story." In some cases, diaspora professionals also serve as informational intermediaries, helping global investors better understand execution realities once investment interest is established.

Sanjeev Gandhi
Managing Director and CEO, Orica

I suggested forming an advisory council of Indian-origin business leaders which could prove highly effective in helping Australian companies understand and engage with India when the Centre for Australia-India Relations was being set up. It has since become one of the Centre's successful platforms for helping Australian businesses navigate India and invest with greater confidence.

Tej Gujadhur
Chairperson,
Mauritius Revenue Authority

I am a fifth-generation Indian. My great-great-grandfather arrived in Mauritius as a milkman. That history shapes how I think about the Indian diaspora today: people who build lives abroad while staying connected to India. In my own work, I have supported more than 60 Indian origin business leaders in making investments in India.

Beyond large-scale capital inflows, the Indian diaspora are now deeply involved in exercising foreign investment decision-making for Indian startups across the full stack. Greater than 75% of overseas angel investors in India are from the diaspora. Because early-stage investing relies heavily on networks, Indian startups often use warm diaspora connections to gain access. Beyond capital, many diaspora angels draw on their understanding of operating across countries to provide strategic guidance to these founders. Over the past five years, Indian-origin angels from 56 countries have offered Indian startups their first check, highlighting the global reach and strength of these networks. As Sridar Iyengar, Former TiE Global President noted: "The Indian startup ecosystem is remarkably robust, with more people aspiring to be entrepreneurs than perhaps even Silicon Valley. By seeking guidance from diaspora advisors, the entrepreneur shows initiative and a commitment to credibility, helping reassure customers and investors. My own commitment goes beyond lending my name or just providing funding; I actively engage with founders to understand their journey and help them build for the long run".

INDIAN DIASPORA SHAPING INDIA'S INVESTMENT STACK

PE

- Anuj Ranjan, Brookfield PE, UK
- Vik Sawhney, Blackstone, USA
- Dilhan Pillay, Temasek, Singapore
- Saurabh Agarwal, Warburg Pincus, Singapore

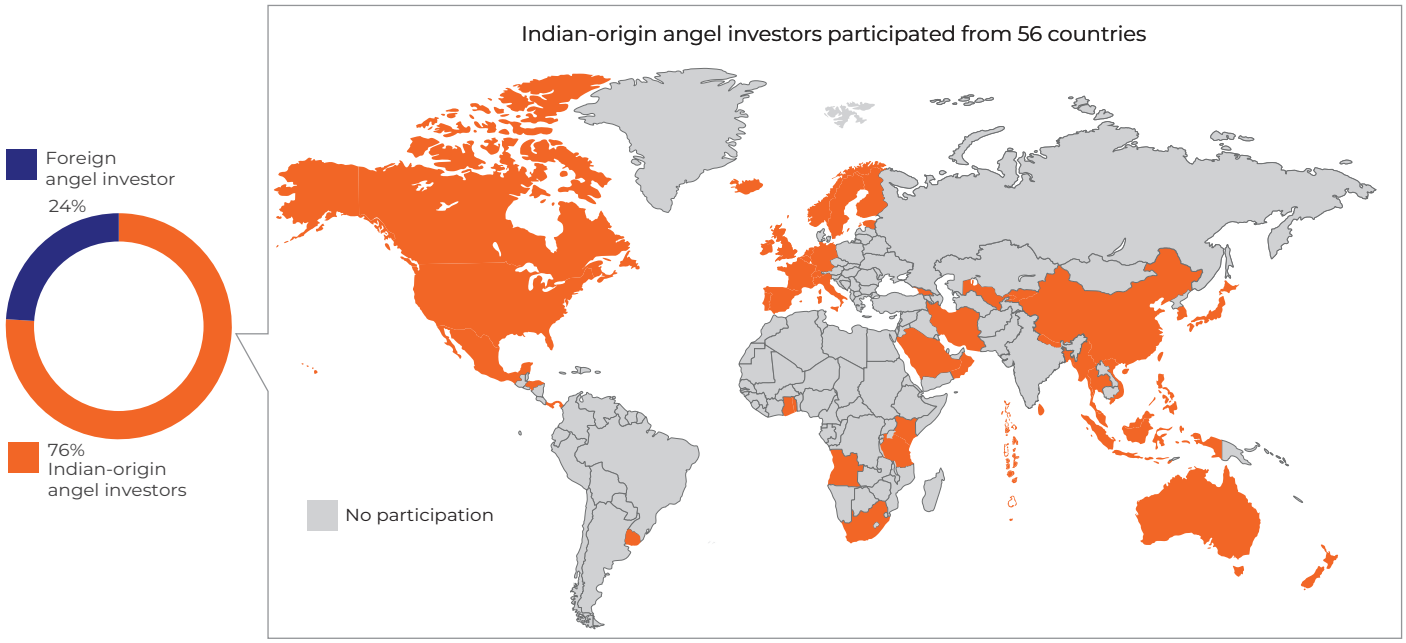
Venture Capital

- Vinod Khosla, Khosla Ventures, USA
- Hemant Taneja, General Catalyst, USA
- Amit Anand, Jungle Ventures, Singapore
- Sumer Juneja, Softbank, UK

Angel Investors

- Manu Rekhi, USA
- Naval Ravikant, USA
- Gokul Rajaram, USA
- Arjun Purkayastha, Hong Kong
- Ranjan Sen, Germany
- Sweta Rau, Singapore

OVERSEAS ANGEL INVESTMENT IN INDIAN STARTUPS



Source: Analysis of YNOS and public information

Debjit Chaudhuri
Business Ambassador, City of Frankfurt

My investment in Indian startups is not driven only by shared heritage, but by the genuine strength and potential I see in these ventures. I focus on supporting startups with 'India for the world' models, and my role extends well beyond providing capital. I am actively involved in mentoring, building capabilities, and opening doors, so founders have the support and networks they need to succeed globally.

Venture Capital funds led by Indian diaspora have played a critical role for the Indian startup ecosystem across three dimensions. First, they provide conviction capital for ambitious India first outcomes. Flipkart, the most successful case study in Indian startup history, illustrates this clearly, with Indian diaspora investors involved from the first institutional checks through late-stage funding and ultimately the exit to Walmart, spanning capital pools in the US, UK, and Singapore and sustaining belief in India scale markets across the company's full lifecycle.

Second, they act as bridge capital for global first companies built from India, actively supporting dual headquarter (HQ) or dual footprint models where engineering remains in India while go-to-market (GTM) teams are based in the US or Europe. This model has powered SaaS leaders such as Freshworks, Postman, BrowserStack, and Druva, and is now becoming standard for AI startups, backed by diaspora led funds comfortable with cross border execution and global customer access.

Third, diaspora capital functions as catalytic capital in underserved but strategically important sectors for India's long-term trajectory. For example, in 2025, 8 US and India VC funds created a deep-tech alliance committing USD one billion of funding for startups in India over the next 5 years.[14] The group includes Celesta Capital, Accel, Blume Ventures, Gaja Capital, Ideaspring Capital, Premji Invest, Tenacity Ventures, and Venture Catalysts.

CAPABILITY

The Indian diaspora plays a critical role in enabling a two-way capability exchange between India and the world. One of the most powerful forms of this exchange happens at the board level. Diaspora members bring experience from global markets and institutions to shape decisions on strategy, governance, and risk. They introduce proven governance practices and a global operating mindset. This helps Indian companies scale with credibility and discipline.

Sridar Iyengar
Former Board Member of ICICI Bank, ICICI Ventures, Infosys Technologies, Dr. Reddy Laboratories, Murugappa Group, Club Mahindra Holidays

Diaspora members can bring a valuable global perspective for Indian companies looking to expand internationally. The most effective boards are those that balance international expertise with local execution, ensuring decisions benefit all stakeholders.

[14] TechCrunch, US and Indian VCs just formed a $1bn+ alliance to fund India's deep tech startups, Sept 2025

Mallika Janakiraman
Board of Milky Mist and NDDB Foundation for Nutrition

Serving as an Independent Director on the Board of Milky Mist has been one of the most fulfilling chapters of my professional journey. It has offered me the opportunity to contribute to a pioneering enterprise in India's dairy sector while continuing to learn, grow, and give back in meaningful ways.

My honorary position on the Board of the National Dairy Development Board's Foundation for Nutrition has enabled me to remain closely connected to India's broader development story, even after making New Zealand my home. More recently, joining the Asian Business Advisory Board of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce has strengthened this bridge between India and New Zealand, two communities that have profoundly influenced my outlook and values.

As multinational firms commit billions to India, they are simultaneously relocating mission-critical functions to India-based Global Capability Centers (GCCs), making India integral to the continuity and performance of their operations. The diaspora's role in bridging trust, talent, and institutional familiarity has helped accelerate this transition. The scale and spread of this network underline how central India has become to global business, with India commanding an estimated 55 percent share of the global GCC market. As of FY2024, India has more than 1,700 GCCs in India generating about USD 64.6 billion in annual revenue and is projected to approach USD 100 billion by 2030[15].

Once positioned as cost-efficient back offices, India's GCCs are now embedded at the core of global strategy and decision-making. Sanjeev Gandhi, Managing Director and CEO of Orica echoed the sentiment, "India has moved well beyond a cost-arbitrage story into a destination for value-added global work. Our Hyderabad center undertakes advanced engineering, software design, and global data analytics – capabilities that sit higher up the value chain and deliver greater value. It now delivers global outcomes, supports operations across more than 100 countries, and operates as a profit center."

Sachinn Verma
CEO, Oreta

In the technology business, your people are your supply chain. We have a 80-person team in India, who provide really critical skills for our operations. It's not a case of trying to save money, we are in India because it has the right talent.

After assessing multiple cities, I chose to open the office in Chandigarh because I was born there and have a good understanding of how the place operates. It becomes easier to paint your vision and create the right environment when you understand how the Indian value system works.

[15] Nasscom Community, How AI and India's Next-Gen Workforce Are Transforming GCCs Into Global Innovation Engines, Nov 2025

CREDIBILITY

The Indian diaspora enables direct access to global markets by establishing operational footholds in international trading hubs, sometimes bypassing traditional middlemen. A prime example is the Gujarati diaspora's expansion into Antwerp, Belgium, during the 1960s and 70s, which opened a dedicated corridor for the Surat diamond industry. By securing seats in the world's primary 'rough' diamond auctions and global trading bourses, diaspora members gained first-hand intelligence on market demand and supply. They utilized this position to "homesource" smaller, lower-value stones to Surat that was perfectly suited for India's skilled workforce. This strategic placement in the global value chain allowed the diaspora to provide Surat with steady raw materials and the credibility needed to sell back to international retailers, eventually leading Surat to process 95% of the world's natural diamonds. Profits made by the diaspora in these international hubs were reinvested directly back into Surat to upgrade machinery and set up large-scale, technologically advanced polishing units like Venus Jewel or SRK Exports.

Indian technology startups often gain early international market traction through diaspora networks embedded within overseas companies, providing trusted entry points for initial B2B adoption. On the consumer side, diaspora communities also serve as early adopters, helping startups validate products before expanding to wider markets. For example, MakeMyTrip faced a domestic market initially skeptical of online travel. So, founder Deep Kalra focused exclusively on NRIs travelling back to India for nearly five years[16] before relaunching in India, using diaspora adoption to build credibility and refine operations. Similarly, HealthifyMe entered Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern markets by first engaging Indian-origin users already familiar with their India-specific food guidance. This foothold allowed the company to then invest in localizing the app to non-Indian users. As a result, nearly 20% of HealthifyMe's revenue now comes from these international markets[17].

Manu Rekhi

Managing Director, Inventus Capital Partners

Between 2016-19, we ran an experimental program called Startup Bridge India to see if we could replicate Israel's model for supporting founders. We brought 39 companies from India with no US presence, and within two years, six became unicorns while 19 others increased revenue tenfold. The experiment proved the model works. With greater collaboration from other VCs and policymakers, as well as capital, we can scale this model to support many more Indian founders and drive meaningful impact for the startup ecosystem.

[16] Mint, MakeMyTrip's bootstrapping period was very educative: Deep Kalra, Jul 2015

[17] YourStory, HealthifyMe posts 1.2X jump in revenue while slightly narrowing losses, Oct 2023

Chapter 4

PHILANTHROPY

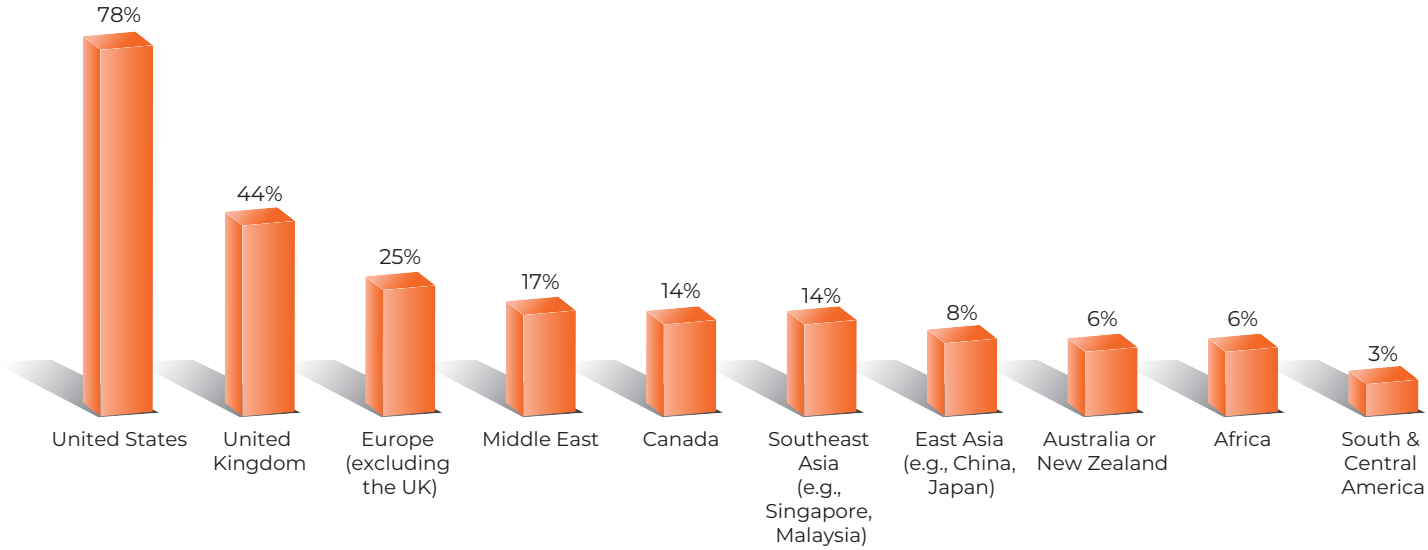
India is undergoing a one-of-a-kind social impact transformation. Over the past decade, the country has lifted more than 240 million people[18] out of extreme poverty, representing one of the largest absolute poverty reductions recorded globally. This progress has been accompanied by advances across multiple Sustainable Development Goals, enabled by innovative delivery mechanisms that operate at population scale while reaching the last mile. The Indian diaspora has consistently sought to engage with this transformation, driven by deep personal ties to India, growing confidence in the country's ability to deliver at scale and the opportunity to apply global expertise with outsized impact.

To better understand the diaspora's role in the Indian social sector, we surveyed 50+ non-profits representing diverse geographic footprints and budgetary scales.[19] The survey is not intended to be representative, but provides a view into how nonprofits are interacting with the Indian diaspora. We found that most respondents already engage with the global diaspora, primarily through established corridors in the U.S. and the U.K.

[18] NITI Aayog: 24.82 crore Indians escape Multidimensional Poverty in last 9 years

[19] Survey demographics in APPENDIX III

INDIAN NONPROFITS ENGAGEMENT WITH DIASPORA REGION-WISE



Source: Indiaspora survey of NGOs 2025-26
Note: Only non-profits that have engaged Indian diaspora in the past, not full survey sample

CAPITAL

The diaspora's financial engagement has evolved into a more sophisticated institutional force, spanning both individual and institutional giving. Today, more than half of the world's 40 largest philanthropic institutions include Indian-origin senior leaders. Together, these institutions provide over USD 500 million annually to Indian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Our NGO survey finds that a majority of respondents leverage diaspora networks abroad to access institutional philanthropic funding.

"There is a significant latent demand among the Indian diaspora to give to India. Even with minimal marketing, we see strong interest in our diaspora-eligible campaigns."

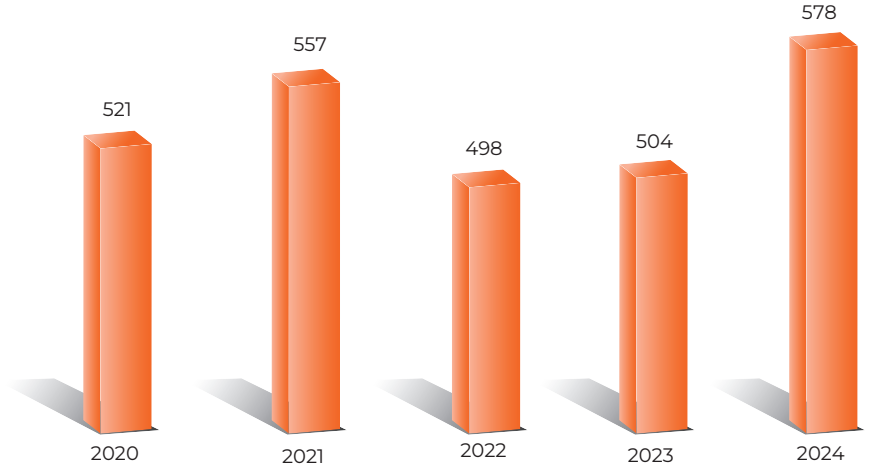
Sumit Tayal
CEO, Give

Nina Amin
Former KPMG UK Partner

As the Indian diaspora in the UK has grown more successful, it has also become more philanthropic. Many have set up their own foundations, and a growing number of Indian charities now come to the UK to raise funds, especially for education and healthcare back in India.

SNAPSHOT OF PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS

Private philanthropic disbursement in India by the largest global foundations ($mn)



>50% of the world's largest foundations have Indian diaspora in decision-making positions

Samir Patel, UK
CEO, Comic Relief

Ankur Vora, USA
CSO, Gates Foundation

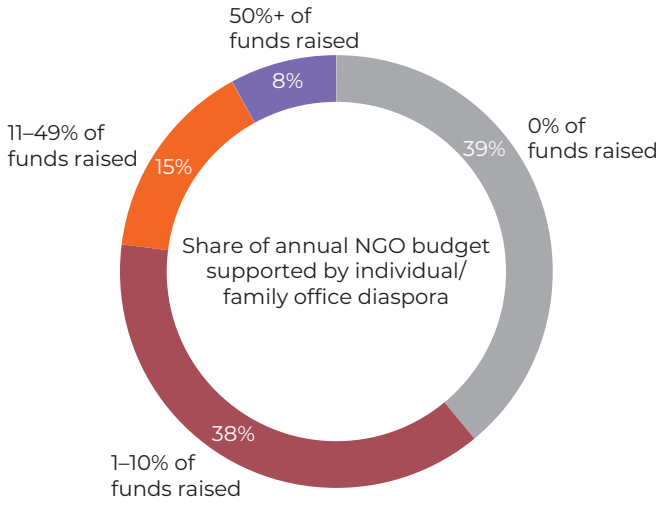
Dr. Rajiv J. Shah, USA
President, The Rockefeller Foundation

Nalini Tarakeshwar, UK
Deputy CEO, UBS Optimus Foundation

Source: OECD project level information for over 40 of the largest philanthropic foundations

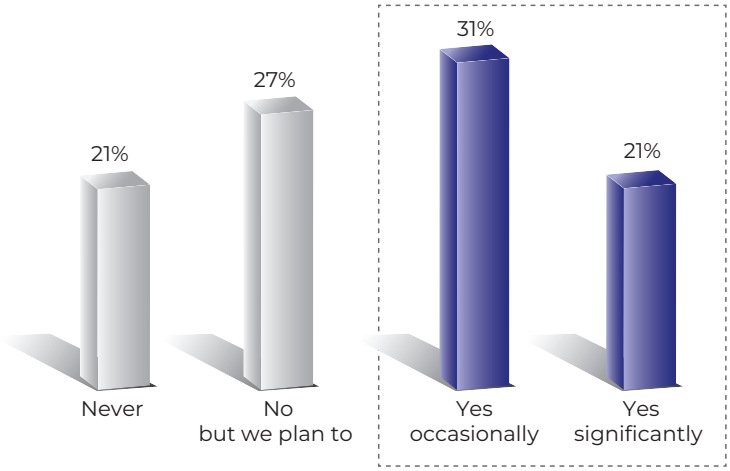
DIASPORA FUNDING CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN SOCIAL SECTOR

Individual Funding



Institutional Funding

% of NGOs that leverage Indian diaspora connections with philanthropic foundations



Source: Indiaspora survey of NGOs 2025-26

Our survey shows that nearly a quarter of respondents raise more than 10 percent of their annual budget from individual diaspora contributors. Diaspora donors in wealthier countries recognize the purchasing power advantage of giving to India, where the same dollar translates into much higher on the ground impact. They are also motivated by their enduring ties with their home country. Indiaspora's 2025 study shows a sharp rise in Indian American giving, with donations as a share of income increasing from about 1-2 percent in 2018 to 4-5 percent by 2024. Importantly, an estimated 40-60 percent of these donors directed their giving toward causes in India, reflecting sustained ties to the country and a desire to contribute to its development.

For example, Indiaspora's helped raise USD nine million from 2,691 donors in 2025 that would help support 36 nonprofits in India.[20] Beyond these formal institutional contributions, diaspora giving also takes the form of informal support, where individuals directly uplift their local communities or provide immediate assistance to people around them.

"At the India Philanthropy Alliance, we no longer see overseas philanthropy to India as a static amount; instead, it is a growing pie."

Alex Counts
Executive Director, Indian Philanthropy Association

Indian diaspora in global leadership roles are also positioned to shape how their multinational firms align their India operations with the CSR mandates. Nisha Jagtiani, Group Director and Board Member of Landmark Group highlighted the work of Landmark Cares, "We have significant awareness campaigns regarding diabetes for the last 16 years in the GCC. In India it is geared towards primary healthcare and has reached 121,000 people till date. We are scaling our impact across three areas: improving the wellbeing of migrant workers across our 550 plus factories in India, supporting access to entitlements in industrial belt communities, and investing in skill development development of front-line retail."

Case Study: Innovating with funding methodologies

British Asian Trust (BAT) was founded by diaspora business leaders and His Majesty King Charles with the clear mission: *"To unlock the potential of disadvantaged people in South Asia by maximising the impact and support from the South Asian diaspora."* BAT was an early adopter of a new approach to development funding in India. Instead of focusing on inputs, such as building schools, they prioritized verified social impact outcomes, such as improved learning rates.

BAT's work stands out because it took outcomes-based financing in India from an idea to real implementation. The Quality Education India Development Impact Bond (QEI DIB), launched in 2018, showed that paying for learning outcomes could work at scale, reaching over 200,000 primary school students[21] and delivering learning gains more than twice those of similar programmes, even during COVID disruptions. BAT then applied the same approach to skilling through the Skill Impact Bond, the first outcomes-based bond in India delivered in formal partnership with government, with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and the National Skill Development Corporation as outcome partners. A USD 14 million outcome fund was mobilised to support upto 50,000 young people.[22] Together, these two bonds set a precedent for how diaspora-led institutions can redesign education and workforce financing in India.

[20] India Philanthropy Alliance
[21] Brookings Intitution's Center for Universal Education November 2022 Report
[22] NSDC Skill Impact Bond

"Many of the world's most ambitious, innovative, and impactful nonprofits are in India, yet too few people recognize this. Working in a country of 1.4 billion people frequently requires organizations to grapple with how to build depth and scale at the same time – often on shoestring budgets. Pulling this off requires extraordinary imagination, networks across government, the private sector, and civil society, operational strength, and deep community roots. The Indian diaspora has been an important participant in this story: crowding in new forms of capital, including innovative finance; carrying lessons from India to the world; and embedding its talent, capital, and leadership directly within India's social innovation ecosystem."

Swetha Totapally
Partner and Regional Director, Dalberg Asia Pacific

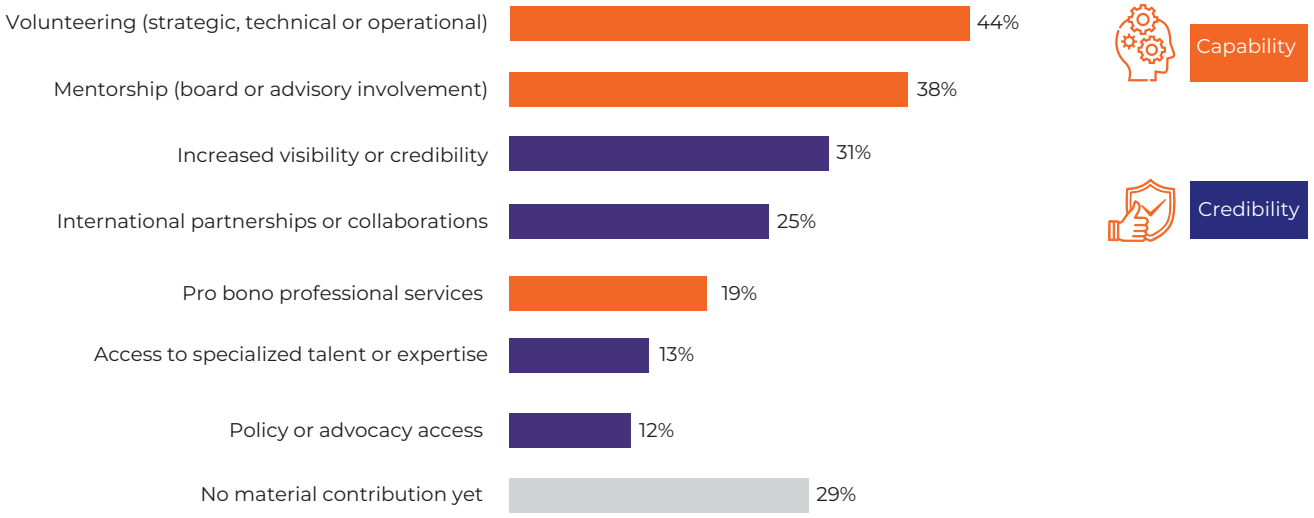
CAPABILITY & CREDIBILITY

Beyond funding, the Indian diaspora plays a meaningful capability building role for the Indian social sector by transferring global expertise, systems, and standards. Lord Karan Bilimoria, Member of the UK House of Lords, provides a clear example: "The UK-India Round Table was a remarkably productive forum, with senior figures from business, academia, and culture on both sides. At one of its meetings, we were debating how to improve schooling in India, particularly in deprived areas, and I proposed adapting the UK's Teach First model, where outstanding graduates teach for two years in tough state schools. That idea became Teach For India. Anu Aga immediately stepped up as the first sponsor, Jim O'Neill at Goldman Sachs came in as another early backer, and the programme has since grown into one of India's most successful education initiatives."

Diaspora members serve as board members and advisors for leading organizations such as Akshaya Patra and Teach For India, strengthening governance and strategic planning. While professionals in technology and data have supported nonprofits like Pratham and Educate Girls in building stronger monitoring and evaluation systems. Doctors, public health experts, and finance and legal professionals based overseas also advise Indian nonprofits on clinical protocols, compliance, and reporting, helping them professionalize faster and scale more effectively.

FORMS OF DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT, BEYOND CAPITAL

Percentage of Nonprofits that have Leveraged Diaspora Support



Source: Indiaspora survey of NGOs 2025-26

Diaspora connections play a critical role in taking India's outstanding philanthropic solutions from local impact to global recognition and adoption. They are able to intuitively recognize the value of Indian solutions because they understand India's challenges well and use their global networks to help scale them for the world.

Take the example of the Jaipur Foot, a locally invented solution developed by Dr. Sethi, a surgery lecturer, in collaboration with a local craftsman, Pandit Sharma. It was elevated to global scale through diaspora leadership and access. Unlike conventional prosthetics that are expensive and ill-suited for Global South conditions, the Jaipur Foot was lightweight and low cost. It radically improved accessibility for amputees. The invention was institutionalized at scale when returning diaspora leader Dr. D R Mehta helped establish BMVSS as a nonprofit platform. He leveraged diaspora connections at Stanford and MIT to get their world class engineering talent to refine it further while preserving its affordability. It received world-wide recognition, including being featured by TIME magazine. To date, more than 2.2 million beneficiaries have used the Jaipur Foot across 44 countries.[23]

Shantini Naidoo
CEO,
St. Vincent's Curran Foundation

For me, the Australia–India relationship is genuinely a two-way street. We have so much to offer each other, and the learning flows in both directions. When the St Vincent's Health delegation visited Apollo and spent time with Sangeeta Reddy and her team, it was such a clear reminder of that. The innovation happening in India, especially in healthcare and AI, is extraordinary, and the scale at which India works creates opportunities that countries like Australia simply do not have. There is enormous potential for collaborative medical research and for joint development of healthcare innovation that can improve outcomes for patients around the world.

Case Study: Innovating With AI For Social Good

The Indian diaspora has been a backbone of the emerging AI for Good ecosystem in India, pooling advanced technical expertise, global research networks, and responsible AI practices to support Indian nonprofits and social enterprises. For example:

a) **Karya AI:** Karya's mission is to leverage the AI revolution to create dignified earning and learning opportunities for low-income communities across the world. In India, Karya's smartphone-based digital work platform has enabled over 140,000 people to build language datasets and evaluate AI models while earning fair wages. With pilots in Kenya, Indonesia and Ethiopia and partnerships with leading AI labs, we are advancing language technologies for underrepresented communities. By combining dignified digital work with frontier AI innovation, Karya is building a new AI economy that is equitable, inclusive, and community-driven.

"We have been a massive beneficiary of the Indian diaspora. The diaspora has helped open doors to major donors, offering deep strategic advice and mentorship, creating trusted platforms like Indiaspora's forums where we could share our work, and continually connecting us into networks in big tech, academia, and philanthropy."

Manu Chopra
Co-Founder and CEO, Karya

[23] Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (BMVSS) is more popularly known as the Jaipur Foot foundation.

b) **Wadhwani AI:** Founded by Romesh Wadhwani and Sunil Wadhwani, the institute channels Silicon Valley rigor into solving India's hardest real-world problems. It attracts top tier talent to deploy advanced AI in low resourced settings, working hand in hand with governments and public institutions across health, agriculture, and education. The scale of impact is substantial. In healthcare alone, it supports over 2.5 lakh teleconsultations every day, runs daily disease surveillance across more than 120 conditions for rapid response, and its AI driven screening detects over 14 percent more tuberculosis cases than standard methods.

c) **Patrick J McGovern Foundation:** Led by Indian American Vilas Dhar, the foundation focuses on building the technology backbone required for a more equitable future. Rather than funding isolated applications, it acts as a technical and policy anchor for the Indian social sector, enabling organizations to move from being passive consumers of technology to architects of their own digital futures. Alongside grant funding, the foundation provides hands on data science and engineering expertise, helping nonprofits build the internal capabilities needed to design and scale technology driven solutions sustainably.

Case Study: Diaspora Coordination To Mobilize Oxygen For India

In the spring of 2021, as India's second COVID-19 wave crashed over the country with 400,000 daily cases, many hospitals were gasping for oxygen. Halfway across the world, the Indian-American diaspora became increasingly concerned for their friends and family in India.

Indian origin leaders pledged millions for oxygen and equipment. Dr. Ashish Jha, Dean of Brown University's School of Public Health, penned op-eds, and tweeted urgent appeals, while organizations like the Federation of Indian Associations dispatched supplies to Mumbai and Delhi. AAPI raised funds for concentrators and therapeutics, while professional groups coordinated telehealth consultations linking US experts with Indian frontline workers.

Oxygen support followed swiftly: the US shipped 1,100 large cylinders, dozens of generation units, and over 25,000 concentrators via USAID and partners like FedEx, with CDC and USAID experts deployed to coordinate on-ground delivery amid India's surging cases.

Reflecting on their experience, Girish Muckai, Former CEO of IIT Madras Foundation also shared that, "During the Delta wave, it was clear we couldn't just sit and watch what was happening in India. Within 48 hours of launching an appeal, we had raised about USD 1 million, within a week USD 2 million, and in roughly two weeks around USD 3 million—initially largely from IIT Madras alumni, and then extended to other Tamil and regional groups. Alumni working in companies like GE Healthcare used their networks to quickly locate oxygen equipment around the world, and we shipped large volumes into cities like Chennai and Hyderabad where our alumni were coordinating COVID response. It was a vivid example of how, when there is a clear need, the diaspora can mobilize not just money, but also logistics, expertise, and on-the-ground execution at remarkable speed."

Chapter 5

ACADEMIA & RESEARCH

India's trajectory in the global knowledge economy has been transformative. The country has jumped over 40 spots since 2015 on the Global Innovation Index, currently ranking 38th in 2025.[24] This rise stands as a testament to its evolving academic and research ecosystem. Premier Indian institutions like the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institute of Management (IIMs) have become globally recognized incubators for elite talent. This success has spilled over borders, with Indian experts now forming a critical backbone of higher education worldwide. In the United States alone, there are approximately 22,000 Indian-origin faculty members[25], while the UK employs over 4,500 academic staff of Indian nationality.[26] This presence extends beyond numbers into leadership, with Indian-origin academics holding dean or chancellor positions in 70% of the top 50 US universities.[27] Now is the perfect time for increased collaboration, leveraging this diaspora to shape, fund, and scale India's education and research systems.

Capital

India's premier technical institutions have converted diaspora capital into a structured and repeatable funding ecosystem. Alumni giving is no longer ad hoc. It is organised through dedicated US-based nonprofit foundations set up by institutions such as IIT Bombay, IIT Madras, IIT Delhi, Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS) and Indian Institute of Science (IISc) to mobilise local donor networks efficiently. For example, 47% of IIT Bombay's individual donations in 2025 originated from overseas.[28] These foundations channel capital towards construction of hostels and academic buildings alongside support for student fellowships. Collectively, diaspora contributions across premier campuses now run into several hundred million dollars over the past decade. More recently, institutions are shifting away from one time gifts towards long horizon commitments with the creation of formal structures, such as the IIT Delhi Endowment Fund. These vehicles

[24] WIPO GII 2025 results
[25] Indiaspora US Impact Report
[26] Universities UK (UUK)
[27] Indiaspora US Impact Report
[28] Office of Dean, Alumni & Corporate Relations IIT Bombay Annual Report 2024-2025

pool alumni capital into perpetual investment funds designed to generate stable and independent revenue for research and education over decades.

A growing share of diaspora funding to the IITs, IISc and BITs is now directed toward advanced research. Several large individual legacy gifts have created dedicated research schools, including the Wadhwani School of Data Science and AI at IIT Madras, the Yardi School of Artificial Intelligence at IIT Delhi, and the Gangwal School of Medical Sciences and Technology at IIT Kanpur. Diaspora leadership at global companies has also helped channel corporate research funding to Indian institutions. For example, FedEx committed USD 10 million to IIT Bombay and IIT Madras to support research in supply chain logistics.

New universities have also emerged through a combination of domestic and diaspora-led support. As Sat Pal Khattar, Chairman of Khattar Holdings said, "When Ashoka University was being set up, I resonated with its ambition to strengthen the study of social sciences and arts in India at world standards. I chose to support the University early as a Founder and Friend by committing to a donation. It has been deeply rewarding to see the progress of the University as it takes shape to become a leading educational institution."

CONTRIBUTION TO IITs FROM US

IIT Delhi
$65mn pledged by 425 donors

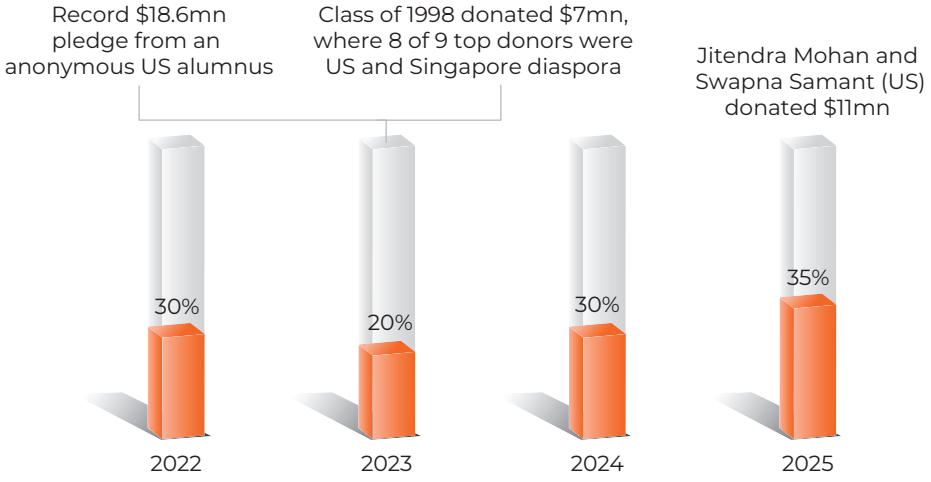
IIT Kanpur
$44mn raised in 25 years

IIT Madras
The Foundation holds assets of $21mn

IIT Bombay
$40mn raised in over 10 years

Sources: Annual reports, filings and press releases

DEEP-DIVE: IIT BOMBAY HAS A STEADY DIASPORA DONOR BASE



Share of IIT Bombay donations from overseas (individuals and corporates)

When we created the IIT Madras Foundation, the vision was to build a $100 million endowment, but we never saw it as just a fundraising exercise. From day one, we focused on what I call the three T's – time (volunteering, or engagement), talent (expertise, network, leadership), and treasure (financial contributions).

By engaging alumni deeply in all three, we were able to build a credible governance framework, attract major individual and corporate donors across the diaspora, and unlock resources that gave IIT Madras far more flexibility than traditional government funding alone. The success of this approach has effectively become a template that other IITs have leveraged in building their own alumni foundations.

Girish Muckai
Former CEO, IIT Madras Foundation

While private philanthropy drives scientific discovery in many developed nations, Indian science remains heavily dependent on government expenditure. As a result, domestic research often favours safe bets over the experimental leaps required for breakthrough innovation. The Indian diaspora helps challenge this status quo by demonstrating the value of high-risk, rapid grant-making. For instance, Venki Ramakrishnan, the UK-based scientist who won the 2009 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, recognized the urgent need for a philanthropic body in India that could approve fail-fast grants without bureaucratic delays. He collaborated with Purdue University Professor Ramaswamy Subramanian to launch the Ignite Life Science Foundation, which has catalysed domestic capital for over 40 life sciences projects since 2020. Similarly, US-based economist Shruti Rajagopalan manages Emergent Ventures India with a talent-first philosophy. Her grant program bypasses institutional requirements to provide quick support for moonshot ideas from aerospace to theoretical physics.

CAPABILITY

The Indian diaspora has played a formative role in reshaping India's higher education landscape with a focus on global competitiveness. For example, the Indian School of Business was founded in 2001 with strong diaspora support, leveraging global networks and expertise to build a world-class management institute. Through partnerships with Wharton School and Kellogg School of Management, ISB adopted a visiting professorship model in which 200 plus international academics, many from the Indian diaspora, teach annually. This enabled the introduction of Western pedagogy in India, including the case study method with strong industry relevance. More recently, Plaksha University was founded in 2021 by over 100 Indian and diaspora technology entrepreneurs, business leaders and academics from Hong Kong, London, New York, Silicon Valley, Singapore, and Tokyo, with a vision to reimagine technology education in India around solving globally consequential problems.

The Indian government has introduced programmes to create structured engagement between the diaspora and India's academic ecosystem. The VAIBHAV Fellowship, for example, seeks to strengthen India's research capacity by enabling diaspora researchers to spend up to 2 months in India over three years, fostering ongoing collaboration rather than one-off visits. Similarly, the Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) programme brings international academics, many of Indian origin, to teach short intensive courses across IITs, National Institutes of Technology (NITs), Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs), and central and state universities. More than 41,000 lecture hours have been delivered till date, reaching 72,000 plus Indian students.[29] Complementing these government frameworks, independent diaspora societies also drive targeted skill building. For example, the British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (BAPIO) focuses on the skill development of Indian healthcare practitioners by partnering with hospitals and state governments to offer clinical training in critical specialties like radiology, obstetrics, and emergency care.

The diaspora also plays a role in experimenting with cross-border research operating models. This is brought to life in the experiences of Prof. Pradeep Khosla and Dr. Amita Gupta.

[29] GIAN Phase I-III

Prof. Pradeep Khosla

Chancellor,
UC San Diego

When we designed the Tata Institute for Genetics and Society, the goal was clear: India shouldn't just be a back office for the biotech revolution, it should be creating intellectual property.

I suggested structuring the $70 million institute half in India and half in San Diego so that Indian researchers could be trained at the frontier, then take that capability back. Mr. Tata agreed and his guidance was clear: put the money into people, not buildings. That mindset of building capability first has guided every step of the institute.

Dr. Amita Gupta

Founder, Johns Hopkins Gupta-Klinsky India Institute, Dr. Florence Sabin Professor, and Director of Division of Infectious Diseases

We run a bidirectional research exchange between India and the US. Researchers from Johns Hopkins, both of Indian origin and beyond, conduct immersive field studies in India, and the on-ground experience often reshapes how they think about research and their careers. In parallel, students from India spend time at Johns Hopkins learning how to rigorously design and execute research studies. Through this work, I have mentored more than 40 junior scientists.

CREDIBILITY

With the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, India signalled a decisive shift toward taking its higher education system global. At its core was the idea that overseas engagement could deepen academic collaboration and exchange. Over time, this approach aims to position Indian universities as recognisable global brands.

A key element of this approach has been prioritising countries with large Indian diaspora populations as natural destinations for overseas expansion. IIT Delhi's Abu Dhabi campus, launched in 2024, and IIM Ahmedabad's Dubai campus launched in 2025, are expanding India's global education footprint, with the diaspora helping raise awareness and attract students across the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

"During early public consultations for the IIT Delhi campus in Abu Dhabi, auditoriums were packed well beyond capacity, which told us the IIT brand was very well accepted by diaspora parents. In the case of the IIM Ahmedabad campus in Dubai, the alumni network of IIMs played a very direct role, connecting us to senior corporate leaders and helping shape the kind of courses that were actually needed".

Sunjay Sudhir

Former Indian Ambassador,
UAE

Country	Institution	Status
UAE	IIT-Delhi IIM-Ahmedabad	Active since 2024 Active since 2025
Zanzibar	IIT-Madras (2023)	Active since 2023
Sri Lanka	IIT-Madras	Proposed
Malaysia	IIT Kharagpur	Proposed
Japan	IIT-Bombay	Joint Research Centre from 2026

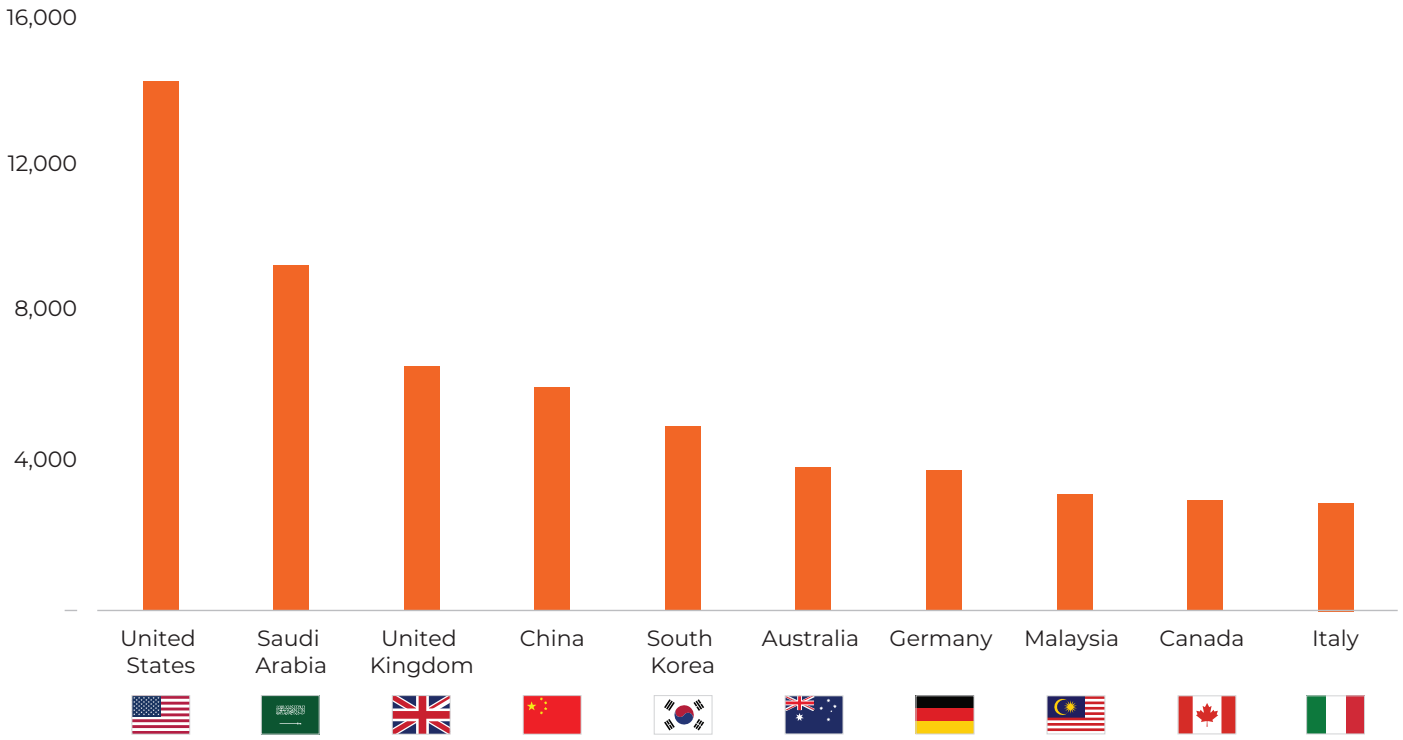
Source: Press Releases

With the growing network of Indian academic institutions, research output is increasingly being amplified through diaspora networks. Today, nearly one in five Indian research publications with an international collaborator is routed through members of the Indian diaspora. The number of India-diaspora collaborative publications has nearly tripled from around 4,000 in 2015 to around 11,000 in 2023.[30] For example, first generation immigrants often retain deep academic trust with former batchmates, lowering friction in initiating and sustaining collaboration. India should actively nurture this people first pathway to accelerate high quality research outputs. Lord Karan Bilimoria, former Chancellor of the University of Birmingham highlighted the benefits, noting: "Our work on UK–India cross-border research shows that when academics in both countries collaborate, the field-weighted impact is roughly three times higher than if they work on their own. At Birmingham, for example, joint projects with Punjab University had impact levels not incomparable to our Birmingham–Harvard collaborations, which shows how powerful UK–India research partnerships can be."

[30] Indiaspora US Impact Report

INTERNATIONAL CO-AUTHORED RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS WITH INDIA (2023)

Diaspora networks drive approx. **20% of India's cross-border research.**



Source: Analysis of NSF (National Science Foundation), The SCImago Journal & Country Rank (SJCR), Indiaspora US Impact Report

Victor Thomas
President and CEO, Canada-India Business Council

People talk about brain drain, but India has too many amazing brains to drain. The real opportunity lies in forging a brain chain between Canada and India. We should reimagine collaboration as a single, distributed research system that's less about a few headline deals, and more focused on meaningful researcher-to-researcher links. By matching Canada's research capacity with India's scale of talent and data, we can co-create projects that are commercially viable and socially meaningful. The Indian diaspora is uniquely positioned to bring those strengths together in a way that's genuinely consequential.

Chapter 6

GOVERNMENT

India's recent growth story has been shaped as much by policy reform as by execution at scale. From digital public infrastructure to strategic industries and global integration, India's policy choices have helped unlock new markets, attract investment, and build national capability. As these ambitions have expanded in complexity and global interconnectedness, engagement with the Indian diaspora has evolved into a more structured form of collaboration.

Ambassador Lavina Ramkissoon

African Union Technology Diplomat

The Indian diaspora bridge is a strategic bridge – one rooted in over 175 years of shared history with Africa and now deeply embedded across government, technology, and business ecosystems. With this unique diplomacy, access and trust, India is well positioned to serve as a catalytic conduit for next-generation South-South co-operation. The opportunity before us is not incremental – it is collective advancement through aligned leadership, innovation and shared prosperity.

This engagement has three broad avenues. In some areas, globally experienced Indians contribute to strengthening state capability through advisory roles that support policy design and implementation. In others, the diaspora helps enable cross-border coordination, translating Indian policy objectives into partnerships, access, and execution across borders. A third avenue is at the level of global rule-setting, where Indian-origin leaders contribute to standards, norms, and institutional decisions that shape India's external operating environment. Across all three avenues, diaspora engagement complements India's own talent, institutions, and policy capacity.

AVENUE I: Strengthening national capability through global experience

Over the past decade, India's policy agenda has expanded into areas that demand both scale and technical sophistication, from digital public infrastructure and advanced manufacturing to space, semiconductors, and emerging technologies. In building these frameworks, Indian ministries and institutions have increasingly turned to Indian-origin professionals with global, hands-on experience in these areas. Their role has been practical rather than prescriptive, helping Indian teams think through architecture, risk, sequencing, and execution challenges. This exchange has allowed domestic policymakers to move faster and with greater confidence, while ensuring that policy ownership, accountability, and execution remain firmly rooted within India.

Prof. Tarun Khanna
Jorge Paulo Lemann Professor, Harvard Business School

I led the Expert Commission on Innovation and Entrepreneurship, under the auspices of NITI Aayog and with support from the PMO. Over a nine month, fully public process, we gathered inputs from entrepreneurs, financiers, scientists, policymakers, educators, and university leaders. This work culminated in the Atal Innovation Mission, which today supports hundreds of incubators and tens of thousands of Tinkering Labs in schools across India.

You also see significant diaspora engagement in the Tinkering Labs. Global companies like Intel and Microsoft and many people who've been exposed to the West, and then returned or straddle both worlds, are actively involved in supporting these efforts.

Internationally respected Indian-origin technologists have contributed to shaping strategy and execution. Prof. Pradeep Khosla, Chancellor of UC San Diego said, "The Indian government has been active about leveraging Indian diaspora capability. I serve on two national boards: Indian Semiconductor Mission and National Quantum Mission. These are visionary and vital for India's security purposes." Other figures such as Vinod Dham, widely known as the "Father of the Pentium" chip, Prof. A. Paulraj, whose work underpins modern wireless and 5G systems, and Prof. Rao Tummala, regarded as the "Father of Modern Packaging", have brought decades of hands-on experience to India's institutional efforts. As Prof. Tummala has observed, "It's my giving back. India gave me the best education possible at the right time."[31] Their engagement reflects a broader pattern in which returning and globally mobile talent works alongside India's own technical leadership to strengthen policy design in areas of national importance.

[31] Spectrum IEEE, 5 questions for Rao Tummala, Aug 2024

EXAMPLES OF INDIAN DIASPORA IN ADVISORY ROLES TO THE GOVERNMENT

Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India

The Prime Minister's Science, Technology And Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC)

Prof. Manjul Bhargava

Prof. Subhash Kak

NITI Frontier Tech Hub | NITI Aayog

Future of Green Economy

Vijay Kannan

Future of Blue Economy

Rizwan Soomar

Future of Services

Balkrishan Kalra

Mohit Joshi

Future of Bio Economy

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan

Dr. P.M. Murali

इंडिया सेमीकंडक्टर मिशन
India Semiconductor Mission
Catalyzing India's Semiconductor Ecosystem

Vinod Dham

Ajit Manocha

Prabhu Raja

Vivek Jain

Sriram Viswanathan

Harit Doshi

Dr. Barun Dutta

Prof. A. Paulraj

Prof. Pradeep Khosla

Prof. Rao Tummala

Prof. Madhavan Swaminathan

Note: Not comprehensive
Source: Publicly available information

AVENUE II: Enabling cross-border partnerships

Research shows that diaspora networks are correlated with stronger bilateral economic ties, lowering informational and cultural frictions that can otherwise inhibit trade and cooperation.[32] With over 15 free trade agreements (FTAs) signed, including recent deals with the UK, Oman, and the EU, and agreements with New Zealand, Israel, the GCC, and Canada in the pipeline, India is rapidly expanding its global trade footprint. At the same time, Indian-origin leaders have risen to prominent government positions across several countries, including heads of state, heads of government, and senior ministers responsible for foreign affairs, trade, and economic policy.

Lord Karan Bilimoria

Member of the House of Lords, UK

In Parliament, I am co-chair of the India All Party Parliamentary Group, and before that I was co-chair of the India Trade and Investment Parliamentary Group, so putting the UK and India together has been part of my life now for about 23 years.

The UK-India FTA was driven by both governments, but the Indian diaspora played a major role throughout, keeping up constant input, leading delegations, engaging negotiators on both sides, and helping to sustain momentum over several years.

[32] Orefice, Working Paper No. 15334

The growing presence of Indian-origin leaders[33] in partner governments can contribute to stable, informed engagement environments, within which formal trade negotiations and economic cooperation are pursued through established institutional channels.

INDIAN-ORIGIN HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT WORLDWIDE

Guyana

President

Mohamed Irfaan Ali

Mauritius

President

Dharambeer Gokhool

Prime Minister

Navinchandra Ramgoolam

Singapore

President

Tharman Shanmugaratnam

Trinidad & Tobago

President

Christine Carla Kangaloo

Prime Minister

Kamla Susheila Persad-Bissessar

Note: As of January 2026
Source: Publicly available information

EXAMPLES OF INDIAN ORIGIN GOVERNMENT LEADERS AND ADVISORS INVOLVED IN TRADE NEGOTATIONS

Canada		**Maninder Sidhu** As Minister of International Trade, he is leading efforts to revitalize and expand trade with India, including negotiations toward a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).
		Anita Anand As Minister of Foreign Affairs, she has stated that Canada and India will move quickly to advance a trade deal.
Singapore		**Vivian Balakrishnan** Singapore's Foreign Minister has consistently advanced India-Singapore economic ties, reinforcing Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) through high-level engagement and pushing collaboration in emerging sectors.
New Zealand		**Priyanca Radhakrishnan** As New Zealand's first Indian-origin Minister, she played a visible role in advancing the India-New Zealand FTA including participating in high-level trade delegations to India.
Oman		**Pankaj Khimji** As advisor for Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, he served as Oman's Chief Negotiator in the Oman-India CEPA negotiations.
Switzerland		**Niklaus-Samuel Gugger** Serving as a member of the Foreign Policy Committee, Vice-President of the EPP Switzerland, and a member of the Council of Europe, he played a key role in the conclusion of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).
United Kingdom		**Harjinder Kang** Appointed as the UK's Trade Commissioner for South Asia and British Deputy High Commissioner for Western India, he previously served as the UK's Chief Negotiator for the UK-India Free Trade Agreement.

[33] Indiaspora's 2024 Government Leaders List recognizes more than 300 leaders of the Indian diaspora who have ascended to the highest ranks of government across the globe

Antonio Costa, President of the European Council and former Prime Minister of Portugal, has Indian roots through his Goan father and has long been a champion of strong India–EU relations. At the signing of the India-European Free Trade Agreement in January 2026, he underscored, his Indian heritage by showing his OCI card and stating: "I'm the President of the European Council, but I'm also an overseas Indian citizen...the connection between Europe and India is something personal to me."[34]

Beyond trade, diaspora engagement has also helped create the political trust and diplomatic continuity needed for major strategic agreements.

Case Study: Advancing Civil Nuclear Cooperation

Indian-American organizations engaged in sustained public advocacy and outreach around the Indo-US civil nuclear agreement, contributing to awareness and dialogue alongside formal diplomatic negotiations led by both governments. The 2008 India–U.S. Civil Nuclear Agreement, ended India's nuclear isolation and enabled access to global nuclear fuel and technology. Scholarly and policy analyses of the deal, including accounts from the Brookings Institution and former U.S. officials involved in the negotiations, recognise that this diaspora-driven trust-building and policy translation complemented formal diplomacy, smoothing Congressional approval and helping unlock an agreement that reshaped India's access to global nuclear technology and fuel markets without diluting domestic ownership of the outcome.

Dhruva Jaishankar
Executive Director, ORF America

"The one clear instance where the Indian diaspora really did move the needle was the Indo-US civil nuclear agreement. It was a specific piece of legislation that had to clear both the House and Senate, and it effectively became a litmus test of how seriously a member of Congress took the India relationship. Because it was so concrete and so visible, it allowed the diaspora to organize, lobby, and demonstrate its influence in a way we really hadn't seen before."

[34] News Reports

While the nuclear deal unfolded over years of negotiation, the COVID-19 response demanded rapid, operational coordination across borders. Here too, diaspora networks helped connect policy intent with on-the-ground execution in a moment of global crisis.

Case Study: Securing Global Vaccine Supply Chain

During the peak of India's COVID-19 crisis in 2021, the Indian American diaspora mobilized quickly to highlight the urgent shortages of vaccine filters, raw materials, and technical know-how needed for Covishield production.[35] On April 25, 2021, President Biden announced a comprehensive aid package worth over USD 100 million to enable India to produce more than 20 million Covishield doses at the Serum Institute, alongside therapeutics, ventilators, and 15 million N95 masks. Through the US International Development Finance Corporation, a USD 50 million financing agreement with India's Biological E. Ltd. was also finalized to expand capacity to produce the vaccines. This episode illustrates how diaspora networks helped surface operational bottlenecks, mobilize attention, and support coordination during a crisis, alongside government-to-government engagement and public decision-making.

Trust has been the common thread across India's civil nuclear partnership and pandemic supply chains. That same trust, carried through diaspora networks, is now enabling the international uptake of India's digital public infrastructure (DPI), led by Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

Case Study: Scaling India's Digital Public Infrastructure

Over the past decade, India has built two of the world's most consequential digital public platforms: Aadhaar, the largest biometric digital identity system globally, and UPI, now the world's most heavily used real-time payment network. Together, they underpin daily transactions for hundreds of millions of citizens, enable instant, low-cost payments at population scale, and have dramatically reduced friction in welfare delivery, banking, and commerce. In fact, a World Bank G20 report found that India's digital public systems delivered 47 years' worth of financial inclusion progress in just six years.[36]

Aadhaar and UPI were fundamentally India-led programs, conceived and executed by domestic institutions with strong political and bureaucratic ownership. Their architects nonetheless drew selectively on experts with global exposure to ensure these systems could operate securely and reliably at unprecedented scale.

UIDAI is now evaluating how to upgrade its tech stack and has put together a committee that will shape the new "Aadhar Vision 2032" framework. This committee draws on global experts such as Dheeraj Pandey (Co-founder and CEO of DevRev), Navin Budhiraja (CTO, Vianai Systems) and Anil Jain (Professor at Michigan State University).

[35] Politico, How Indian Americans got the President's ear, May 2021
[36] Press release by Prime Minister's Office, Sept 2023

"I took what you'd call the classic route: seven years in Boston, into a well-funded startup, a green card in hand. But in 2003, I decided to come back to India to expand our product engineering. Later mid-2009, I had the privilege to join the Aadhaar founding team, under Nandan Nilekani, a partnership that has lasted until today helping architect most of the country's digital infrastructure.

Along the way, there were moments where people from outside India contributed in meaningful ways. For instance, during Aadhar (while working on Aadhar), Raj Mashruwala took a year away from Palo Alto to base himself in India and work on biometric design. He became our bridge to global fingerprinting and biometric experts such as Professor Anil Jain from Michigan State University and others.

Similarly, with UPI's expansion, our first cross-border link was between India and Singapore. This was fully supported by officials at the Monetary Authority of Singapore — Ravi Menon, then Managing Director, and Sopnendu Mohanty, then Chief Fintech Officer—making the idea of cross border interoperability possible.

And today, you see Indian-origin professors at places like Yale, Cambridge, Princeton, Harvard, MIT, Stanford, and Oxford doing serious research on India's DPI and its impact, helping bring global academic attention to the DPI journey."

Pramod Verma
Former Chief Architect,
Aadhar & India Stack

NRI usage has also been an important demand-side driver of UPI's global spread, especially for remittances and everyday payments. Indian migrants are among the world's largest remittance senders, and their preference for low-cost, instant, account-to-account transfers has made UPI-linked corridors commercially and politically attractive to host countries. Sunjay Sudhir, Former Indian Ambassador to the UAE said, "In the UAE, where approximately 4.5 million Indians reside and nearly 5.5 million visit annually, diaspora demand has supported UPI adoption. Around 90% of point-of-sale machines now accept UPI, enabling use across malls, museums, and taxi services."

Diaspora usage contributed to early demand in certain corridors, alongside regulatory, commercial, and bilateral considerations that ultimately shaped adoption decisions by host countries. Today, UPI extends beyond India, with countries including Singapore, Bhutan, the UAE, Mauritius, France, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Namibia, Peru, Trinidad & Tobago, and Qatar adopting or partnering with the platform. With the RBI aiming to expand UPI to 20 countries and reach one billion users by FY29, diaspora communities can help accelerate adoption and strengthen India's role in shaping inclusive, interoperable payment systems globally.

AVENUE III: Embedding India-relevant insight into global institutions

Global rules, standards, and institutional norms increasingly influence how economies access capital, technology, and markets. Indian-origin professionals participate in these global institutions as part of broader, multilateral processes, bringing perspectives informed by their professional experience and exposure to India's development context.

Indian-origin experts contribute to advisory processes within international bodies, alongside peers from many countries, offering technical input that informs deliberation and consensus-building. For instance, in 2023, a new global advisory body was announced by UN Secretary-General to support the international community's efforts to govern artificial intelligence. Amandeep Singh Gill, UN-Secretary General's Envoy on Technology, Nazneen Rajani, CEO at Collinear, and Vilas Dhar, President of the USD 1.5 billion Patrick J. McGovern Foundation serve on this board.

DIASPORA LEADERSHIP PRESENCE IN MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS

THE WORLD BANK

Ajay Banga
President
(2023-Present)

Indermit Gill
Chief Economist and SVP
for Development Economics
(2022-Present)

Lakshmi Shyam-Sunder
Former Vice President and
Group Chief Risk Officer
(2014-24)

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

Gita Gopinath
Former First Deputy MD (2022-2025)
Former Chief Economist (2019-2022)

Raghuram Rajan
Former Chief Economist and Director
of Research (2003-2006)

World Health Organization

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan
Chief Scientist (2019-2023)

Note: As of January 2026
Source: Publicly available information

Chapter 7

CULTURE & SOCIETY

Some of the most enduring and least formally measured contributions of Indian diaspora lie in culture and society. They have quietly become a force multiplier, modernizing creative and sports industries, acting as patrons of the arts, protecting Indian heritage in a global marketplace, and collaborating with creators, institutions, and communities both in India and abroad.

While it is impossible to capture every example, the following highlight a few areas where the diaspora has had tangible, lasting impact - helping preserve traditions, expand markets, and create opportunities for Indian talent to thrive globally.

Art

In the late 1990s, Indian art remained difficult for international buyers to access, while many artists and estates in India operated in a market with limited price transparency and reach. This gap was addressed in 2000 when Dinesh and Minal Vazirani, Indian-origin entrepreneurs who met in San Francisco, founded Saffronart as a platform linking Indian artists and estates to global collectors. A digital-first auction platform focused on modern and contemporary Indian art, the model later became the subject of a Harvard Business School case study. By opening Indian artworks to global bidding, Saffronart introduced transparent price benchmarks and contributed to a more professional and resilient domestic art market in India.

Cultural heritage

In 2014, a small group of diaspora volunteers began systematically tracking Indian idols and antiquities appearing in overseas museums, auction houses, and private collections. This effort gave rise to the India Pride Project, co-founded by Singapore-based activists S. Vijay Kumar and Anuraag Saxena. By working alongside journalists, diplomats, and law enforcement agencies, and combining open-source research with detailed documentation of provenance, the India Pride Project has helped the Government of India recover over 600 stolen antiquities since 2014, a sharp increase compared to previous decades.[35]

Complementing this grassroots approach, diaspora legal expertise has also been instrumental in high stakes restitution cases. A prominent example is the role played by London-based solicitor Sarosh Zaiwalla, whose firm stepped in just weeks before trial in a landmark UK restitution case and helped India and the State of Tamil Nadu win the landmark case that enabled the stolen Nataraja idol to be returned to its temple.

[35] India Today, Looted and smuggled, how India is bringing Gods and glory home, July 2024

Sarosh Zaiwalla

Senior Partner & Founder, Zaiwalla & Co

International law can sometimes feel abstract, but cases involving cultural heritage are deeply human. They remind us that institutions exist to serve history and justice. As a member of the Indian diaspora, assisting in the return of that heritage was a moment of quiet pride.

Entertainment

Long before Indian films found global streaming platforms, the diaspora helped turn overseas audiences into a second home market for Indian cinema. That early demand evolved into deeper roles in financing, distribution, and platform strategy, expanding how Indian films travel globally and how value flows back to creators based in India.

This influence can be seen in executives such as Bela Bajaria, an Indian-origin executive who, as Chief Content Officer at Netflix, has played a central role in shaping the company's global content strategy. Under her leadership, Netflix invested across multiple Indian languages, positioning regional stories as globally exportable content rather than niche programming. This approach has given regional production houses predictable commissioning, global visibility, and long-term intellectual property value, strengthening local film industries across India, and allowing diverse Indian voices to reach the world on their own terms.

Music

The diaspora often helps Indian music reach global audiences. Nearly 50% of royalties earned by Indian artists on Spotify[36] come from overseas markets with high diaspora concentrations. Interestingly, 65% of the top 30 most exported songs from India are by independent artists across Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil, and Telugu.

These global connections create tangible impact in institutions as well. At Berklee College of Music, Indian-origin faculty member Annette Philip integrated Indian classical and contemporary music into the mainstream curriculum and performance programs. She founded Berklee Indian Ensemble, which earned a 2023 Grammy nomination and became a viral phenomenon with over 300 million views (accounting for 76 percent of Berklee's total YouTube viewership).

Building on the Ensemble's success, the Berklee India Exchange (BIX) brought leading Indian artists and composers, including A.R. Rahman, into collaboration with Berklee faculty and students through residencies, workshops, and performances in India. The program has also distributed over USD two million in scholarships, creating structured pathways for Indian musicians to engage with world-class training and professional networks. Extending this model, the Global Music Institute in Noida, founded by Berklee alumni Tarun and Aditya Balani, partnered formally with Berklee to co-develop curriculum and provide Indian students access to Berklee-aligned programs and faculty.

Fashion

The Indian diaspora has played a key role in strengthening India's fashion ecosystem, from expanding global markets to reviving traditional craft skills. Consider Anokhi, founded in 1970 by British-Indian John Singh and his wife, Faith, when Rajasthan's hand-block printing industry was in steep decline. They worked closely with local artisans such as block carvers, printers, dyers, embroiderers and bead workers to develop

[36] Newsroom Spotify, Indian Artists Are Reaching More Global Fans Than Ever Before (and the Data Proves It), April 2025

clothing collections rooted in traditional techniques but styled for contemporary tastes, later expanding into decorative soft furnishings that appealed to both Indian and overseas buyers. This approach helped revive craft traditions, create sustained livelihoods for artisans and introduce international audiences to India's artisanal textile heritage. In 2005, building on this legacy, the family established the Anokhi Museum of Hand Printing in a restored 16th-century haveli near Amber, Jaipur. The building's renovation received a UNESCO Cultural Heritage Conservation Award, and the museum now preserves and interprets the history, techniques and products of block printing.

Food

The Indian diaspora has made a mark on global gastronomy, with several Indian-origin chefs earning Michelin stars abroad, including Vineet Bhatia, Atul Kochhar, Garima Arora, and Vikas Khanna. Beyond awards, they actively contribute to India's culinary scene. Vikas Khanna serves as a long-standing judge on MasterChef India, mentoring emerging chefs and introducing professional techniques, plating standards, and global culinary perspectives. His work inspires young chefs to think globally while honoring local traditions.

Diaspora chefs also bring international fine-dining standards and mentorship back to India. Atul Kochhar, after years of Michelin-starred success in London, returned to reimagine regional dishes, mentor kitchen teams, and create new culinary experiences. Through media appearances, residencies, and collaborations, diaspora chefs transfer skills, raise professional standards, and expand India's culinary presence globally, strengthening both the craft and the ecosystem.

Sport

Sport has become a powerful platform through which the Indian diaspora connects with both India and the wider world. It brings together personal participation, community building, and strategic investment to create visible and lasting impact. India's new National Sports Policy, Khelo Bharat Niti, signals a shift toward encouraging OCIs to represent the country in international competition. Beyond formal representation, diaspora leadership is also shaping cross border sporting ecosystems in ways that deepen long term ties.

Take, for example, Sudip Chakraborty, Head of Cultural Diplomacy at the Australia India Institute and Ambassador for Australian Rules Football, who paved the way for a two way sporting exchange between the two countries. He helped introduce Australian football to India, a sport that previously had no presence or infrastructure there. Beginning with grassroots programs that trained young talent, the initiative eventually expanded into a national competition supported by and affiliated to the Australian Government and the Australian Football League (AFL), creating international pathways for Indian players. He later helped introduce traditional Indian sports such as Kabaddi to Australia, including the formation of Australia's first Kabaddi team for the 2016 World Cup. Since then, Australia has even hosted major tournaments, including the recent Pro Kabaddi league (PKL) Melbourne Raid. Together, these efforts show how diaspora leadership can turn sport into sustained cultural diplomacy rather than symbolic exchange.

Sudip Chakraborty

Head of Cultural Diplomacy, Australia India Institute

Sport has been the most powerful bridge between Australia and India. It creates equality, it builds confidence, and it gives people opportunities that go far beyond the field. I have seen young Indians travel overseas for the first time because of Australian football, and I have seen Australians discover Indian heritage sports such as Kabaddi and Kho Kho. The AFL league CEO's decision to make India his first overseas visit signals how seriously the partnership is now taken.

What excites me is the exchange of knowledge in sports science and sports management between India and Australia. If we can bring those best practices into India's grassroots and administration, it will lift the entire sporting ecosystem, not just the elite level.

Additionally, the diaspora shapes how a sport is narrated, broadcast, and understood globally, including in arenas such as cricket commentary, where diasporic voices help frame India's sporting story for audiences at home and abroad.

Lisa Sthalekar

Former Captain, Australian Women's National Cricket Team, ICC & IPL commentator

India was the first to give women a real shot at commentating on men's cricket through the IPL, and it was a huge sense of responsibility. Since then, I've tried to pass on what I've learned to other women, whether they're former players or journalists who love the game.

In my role as mentor for the UP Warriors cricket team, I also see myself as a cultural bridge, helping overseas players navigate Indian customs and encouraging Indian players to engage confidently with their international teammates.

Members of the Indian diaspora are also increasingly becoming direct investors in sports clubs and teams around the world. This reflects both personal passion and a belief in sport's ability to create community impact, economic value, and deeper cultural connections. Diaspora investors bring capital, strategic networks, and long-term commitment to clubs, supporting everything from co-ownership and board leadership to youth development and inclusion initiatives, particularly in team sports that resonate with both local and diaspora communities. Debjit Chaudhuri, Business Ambassador to the City of Frankfurt said, "My investment in sports comes from personal passion. I've invested in the FC Bengaluru football club. Supporting sports has been rewarding, especially working with our girls' team. We focus on giving underprivileged girls the chance to play and encouraging their families to support their ambitions."

The diaspora's support extends from individual clubs to international tournaments and professional leagues. A key example of this is Major League Cricket (MLC), which has been backed by Indian origin business leaders and tech CEOs including Satya Nadella of Microsoft, Shantanu Narayen of Adobe, and venture capitalists Anand Rajaraman and Venky Harinarayan.[37] In its foundational fundraising rounds, MLC secured USD 120 million, providing both the capital and credibility needed to grow professional cricket in the U.S.

[37] Major League Cricket, ACE announces full founding investor group for MLC, Dec 2020

This foundation was tested during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup hosted in the U.S., which drew tens of thousands of in-stadium spectators, including a sell-out crowd of around 34,000 at Nassau County, along with strong global broadcast viewership. Attendance was driven in large part by the Indian diaspora, showing that demand extended beyond domestic leagues and could support major international events. Together with the early success of MLC and the proven viewership of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, there was growing confidence that cricket could be included in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

By acting as collaborators, ambassadors, and advocates, the diaspora extends India's influence across borders, turning culture into a source of soft power. Their contributions enrich domestic institutions, connect local talent to global networks, and leave a lasting impact on how India is seen and celebrated worldwide.

Sanjeev Joshipura
Executive Director,
Indiaspora

India's cultural influence is spreading across the world, in new countries and across different walks of life. By 2047, I envision it being among the top 10 nations in global soft power, heralded far and wide for its exports of ideas, values and cultural impact.

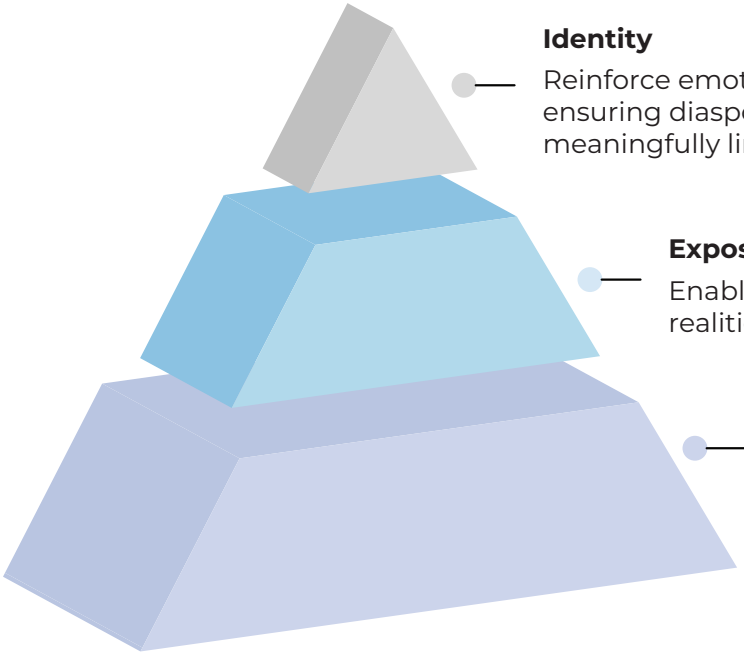
Chapter 8

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PATH AHEAD

Keeping India's 2047 vision in focus, this chapter offers recommendations for two audiences: for India to deepen diaspora engagement, and for the diaspora to support this long-term goal.

Recommendations for India to boost diaspora engagement to meet India@100 goals

There are three core levers to increasing diaspora engagement with India:



Identity

Reinforce emotional connection with India by ensuring diaspora communities are recognised and meaningfully linked to the country

Exposure

Enable first hand understanding of India's realities and opportunities

Contribution

Support follow-through from interest to action by reducing friction points for diaspora participation across business, philanthropy, academia & research, and government

This report focuses on select system level recommendations that can create enabling conditions for the global Indian community as a whole. There are many other important, targeted recommendations advocating for Indian migrant workers that have been suggested by reputable organizations including Brookings Institution, International Labour Organization (ILO), World Bank, and India's Ministry of External Affairs, which will not be repeated here.

Identity

What if... India streamlined OCI rules to make long-term diaspora engagement predictable and purposeful?

A harmonised framework for residency, tax, and compliance rules, combined with Aadhaar-based biometric linkage, could enable OCI holders to spend extended periods in India with certainty, participate fully in research, entrepreneurship, and institutional development, and strengthen intergenerational social and economic ties.

Complexity of residency norms currently make it harder for overseas Indians to assess their tax status during visits to India and the resulting unpredictability may deter longer stays. By providing certainty around obligations, India could encourage its diaspora to engage more deeply.

"Uncertainty around tax residency, PoEM (Place of Effective Management) rules, and weak treaty protection pushes members of the global Indian community to "play it safe" by cutting short their stays and holding back deep-tech investments in India. This not only dampens tourism and domestic spending but also keeps one of India's most valuable assets—its global talent—on the sidelines of the country's economic, social, and civic life.

Clearer, more flexible stay thresholds would signal a genuine welcome, giving diaspora professionals the confidence to live and work in India for meaningful stretches, back high-risk, high-impact ventures, mentor founders, and build lasting partnerships with institutions and communities."

Nishith Desai
Founder & Managing Partner, Nishith Desai Associates

Further, as India's systems increasingly rely on digital authentication, extending the functional scope of Aadhaar to OCI holders, or introducing a parallel identifier linked to OCI status regardless of the 182-day residency requirement, would allow seamless access to banking, healthcare, taxation, and essential services. This would recognize enduring connection even where continuous residence is not possible. Pramod Verma, Chief Architect of Aadhar & India Stack said, "Aadhaar is designed as a resident ID. If you are an Indian resident, whether you are an Indian or foreign citizen, you can get Aadhaar. So, there is no fundamental reason why we can't extend it to OCI and diaspora Indians as long as we amend the rules appropriately. In fact, the moment they all can fully experience India's digital public infrastructure such as Aadhaar, Digilocker, UPI, and DigiYatra, that itself becomes India's best marketing tool."

Such measures could transform episodic visits into sustained engagement, allowing India to retain and channel global talent toward frontier technologies, innovation ecosystems, and strategic sectors critical to India@100.

What if... dual citizenship could unlock global talent while safeguarding India's national interests?

India's relationship with its overseas citizens has always evolved cautiously, shaped by both opportunity and restraint. A carefully designed dual citizenship framework could allow long-term OCI holders to formalize their civic affiliation with India while ensuring that national security, strategic interests, and legal obligations are fully protected.

For India, a tailored approach could strengthen long-term commitment, reduce friction in investment and professional engagement, and reinforce intergenerational ties while clearly defining rights and responsibilities. Framed not as a symbolic gesture but as an enabling instrument, dual citizenship could signal confidence in the diaspora as long-term partners in India's development, aligning identity, credibility and continuity with India's 2047 ambitions.

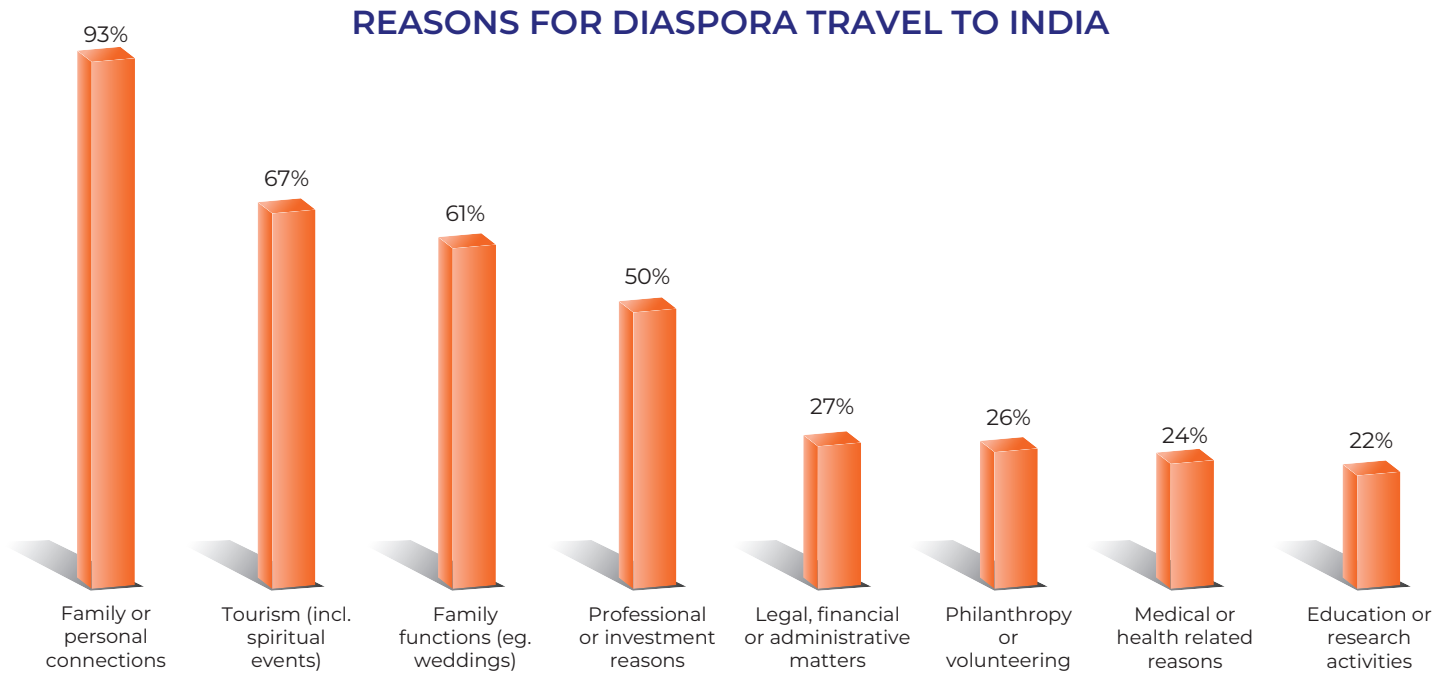
Avi Bhojani
Group CEO,
BPG Group

The issue of dual citizenship is a serious one. We have an opportunity to ensure senior stakeholders and their families remain connected to India through their passport. The more we recognize the Indian diaspora, the more we own success as brand India.

Exposure

What if... tourism was designed to deepen diaspora's enduring connection to their roots?

Travel patterns offer a useful perspective into how the diaspora engages with India. Nearly all survey respondents reported having traveled to India before, with over 90% citing family connections or family events such as weddings as the reason for travel. Tourism emerged as the second most cited motivation, including cultural events, spiritual or religious travel, and sightseeing. This indicates a clear willingness among the diaspora to spend discretionarily in India beyond family obligations, pointing to strong potential for growth in diaspora-driven tourism. Lisa Sthalekar, former captain of the Australian women's national cricket team said, "I really fell back in love with India when I returned on tour in 2004 after many years away. Going back regularly since then, often for months at a time, has transformed that into a deep, lasting bond with the country. I believe the diaspora needs to travel to India and experience it on the ground. This has even led me to start a women's cricket tour company so that fans abroad could come to India, watch the game they love and build their own relationship with the country."



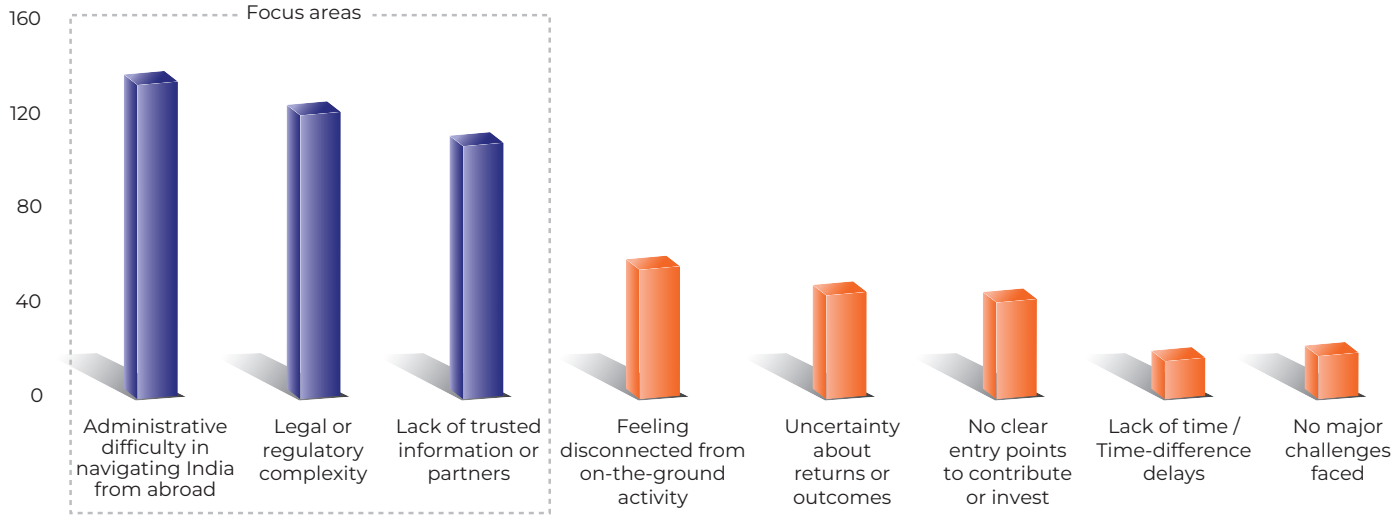
Source: Sentiment of diaspora survey

One way to unlock this potential is by reimagining existing diaspora engagement mechanisms as drivers of tourism. For instance, the Ministry of External Affairs' Tracing the Roots programme currently helps members of the Indian diaspora identify their ancestral villages through archival records. We propose transforming this initiative through three deliberate shifts. First, reposition the process itself as an immersive journey of self-discovery rather than a one-time administrative service, using narrative driven and interactive tools to allow individuals to meaningfully engage with their ancestral history. Second, once ancestral locations are identified, the results can be converted into a virtual tourism opportunity for India, beginning with guided digital walkthroughs of ancestral settlements and surrounding cultural landscapes. Third, this virtual engagement can be designed as a bridge to physical travel, seamlessly connecting diaspora participants to curated heritage itineraries and on-ground experiences.

Medical tourism is an incredible opportunity for India, given its robust healthcare infrastructure which operates at much lower cost and with shorter waiting time periods. Nearly 70 percent of medical tourism visas are currently issued to patients from Bangladesh, creating concentration risk amid shifting geopolitical dynamics. India should proactively diversify by targeting diaspora dense geographies such as Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa, as well as countries like the UK and Canada where long wait times strain public health systems. India could establish a formal network of Indian diaspora healthcare professionals that provide travel referrals and manage post-operative care abroad.

Contribution

KEY CHALLENGES, IF ADDRESSED, WOULD INCREASE DIASPORA CONTRIBUTION



Source: Sentiment of diaspora survey

We surveyed members of the diaspora to understand the barriers to contributing to India. Respondents consistently pointed to friction points while navigating the current system, including administrative hurdles and legal and regulatory complexity. Beyond these structural constraints, physical distance from India makes it harder for respondents to contribute, with many citing a lack of trusted partners and limited visibility into on-ground realities.

> *What if... India created a relaxed exchange-control regime specifically for OCI and NRI investors?*

India could introduce a differentiated foreign exchange framework that recognizes NRI and OCI investors not as conventional foreign investors, but as stakeholders with enduring economic and emotional ties to the country. The objective would be to simplify or eliminate all the procedural hassles. It will acknowledge that the diaspora represents a distinct category of capital.

Exchange control policy could explicitly distinguish between anonymous foreign portfolio flows and identifiable diaspora capital with transparent ownership. A tiered regime that relaxes filings, extends compliance windows, and caps the exemption at a defined threshold amount would still preserve safeguards for large inflows while enabling smaller diaspora investments to flow without fear of inadvertent violations. Such a framework would send a strong signal of trust. By designing exchange rules that are facilitative rather than defensive for its diaspora (while retaining enforcement against bad actors) India could unlock more sustained diaspora investment without compromising regulatory objectives. This aligns with the government's own intent to revamp the Foreign Exchange Management Rules (FEMA), making it easier to attract the Indian diaspora to invest.

Vaibhav Parikh

Head – US Operations and Leader Private Equity and Mergers & Acquisitions, Nishith Desai Associates

The diaspora wants to be part of India's growth story. There is a real opportunity to design exchange control rules that both protect national interests and encourage that participation. Since the government has announced that they are reviewing FEMA rules, they can simplify it substantially specifically for diaspora. If we recognize diaspora capital as long-term and aligned with India, the framework can reflect that confidence.

India could also explore complementary initiatives such as diaspora-focused Special Economic Zones or dedicated investment platforms that simplify regulatory pathways and help aggregate diaspora capital for strategic sectors.

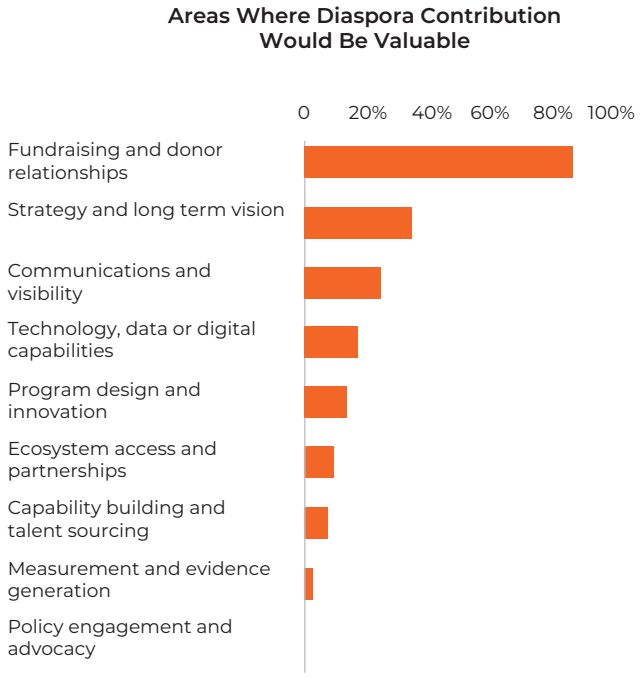
Ambassador (ret.) Atul Keshap

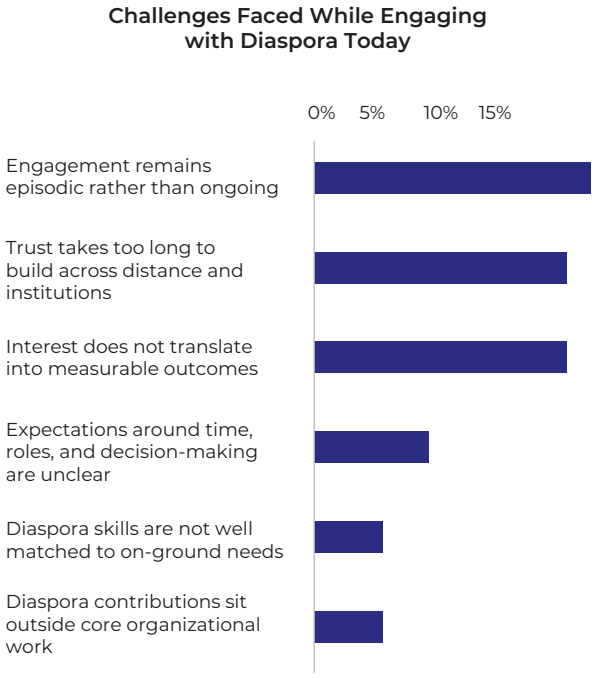
President, US-India Business Council

Increased diaspora investment in India can be further enhanced by building on efforts to provide stable, long-term pathways for capital deployment. This can be achieved through professionally managed funds and by further reducing friction across the investment lifecycle, including regulatory clarity and capital repatriation. Initiatives such as GIFT City show the Government of India's commitment to developing a globally competitive financial ecosystem aligned with international standards and capable of supporting investment in priority sectors such as advanced manufacturing, digital infrastructure, clean energy, and AI. When structured thoughtfully, diaspora investment can function as a constructive cycle, with returns supporting innovation, capital formation, and supply-chain resilience in the United States, while contributing to India's sustained growth and deeper integration into the global economy.

What if... India's social impact sector had trust built in, unlocking a new wave of diaspora philanthropic giving?

INDIAN NGOS PERSPECTIVE ON DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT





Source: Indiaspora survey of NGOs 2025-26

To address critical social issues in India, NGOs are increasingly looking toward the diaspora for more consistent and long-term fundraising engagement. However, a significant trust gap exists today. Diaspora stakeholders sometimes face difficulty verifying if their philanthropic contributions actually reach the intended beneficiaries on the ground. As a result, diaspora engagement remains episodic and trust-building with their diaspora donors is a slow process, hampering their ability to scale. The good news is that India already has the technological and regulatory rails to close this trust gap.

Vikram Khanna

Associate Editor,
The Straits Times

The diaspora wants clear tracking of philanthropic outcomes. This should include information about total money raised, number of projects funded, beneficiaries impacted and possible policy results. This would improve accountability.

"My wife, Archana, and I started our giving journey early when we had little. That early start, built perspective and commitment. Giving is like a muscle. If you start early, it stays with you for life. The diaspora has a similar opportunity today. They are blessed with talent, networks and access that can make things happen. Many of them have reasonable wealth. There are enough trusted partners on the ground – both NGOs and philanthropists. Therefore, pathways exist if they want to engage and make meaningful impact."

Amit Chandra
Co-founder, A.T.E. Chandra Foundation and Chairperson, Bain Capital India

A dedicated diaspora giving platform could leverage the e-RUPI voucher system to enable precision giving fully compliant with the existing Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) framework. The e-RUPI is a pre-paid digital voucher that a beneficiary gets on his phone in the form of an SMS or QR code that can be redeemed at designated centres. Built on the widely trusted UPI infrastructure, diaspora contributions to NGOs could be converted into prepaid, non-transferable digital vouchers. Beneficiaries would receive a QR code or SMS token that can be redeemed only at a pharmacy, hospital, or educational institution. There is no requirement for beneficiaries to have a bank account, smartphone or even understanding of the UPI app. This design sharply constrains misuse by ensuring funds can be spent only for their intended purpose, giving the diaspora confidence of the impact of their dollar spent.

India could consider introducing a calibrated channel under the FCRA that allows vetted individual diaspora donors such as OCI holders and NRIs to contribute capped amounts to non-FCRA registered nonprofits in pre-defined non-sensitive sectors. Given that OCI holders have already undergone formal KYC and government vetting, small contributions could move through a simplified reporting mechanism, while larger donations would remain subject to standard FCRA approval. Eligibility would be restricted to individual donors, excluding foreign foundations and institutional grant makers. This would preserve regulatory safeguards while reducing compliance friction for grassroots organisations seeking modest diaspora support.

The social sector is the area where much of the Indian diaspora most actively seeks to engage with India. It serves as a natural pathway to strengthen their connection with the country, often becoming the foundation for deeper involvement across other fields over time.

What if... India created corridors for friction-less cross border research collaborations?

India's research and innovation landscape presents a clear opportunity for diaspora contribution. Many bring highly specialized knowledge and technical expertise from abroad, and are interested in applying it in the Indian context. However, regulatory processes can sometimes slow participation.

To unlock this potential, India could establish a 'global diaspora innovation corridor' aligned with its long-term technological ambitions. The corridor would focus on removing collaboration frictions in priority domains such as AI, quantum computing, semiconductors, energy, and critical minerals. Appropriate safeguards would remain in place, with research that has potential dual-use or defence applications continuing to require strict oversight.

For example, OCI members are currently required to obtain pre-approval before conducting any research in India, which can slow the initiation of work. We could shift to a system where Indian diaspora researchers notify authorities within 90 days of starting work, rather than wait for permission, for nationally prioritized and non-sensitive areas.

Similarly, current FCRA regulations prohibit academic institutions from sub-granting foreign funds, a constraint that complicates large multi-institution scientific collaborations. India could introduce a green channel under which designated top-tier academic institutions are exempt from FCRA restrictions for funding received in national priority technology areas.

Finally, existing "Permanent Establishment" rules create uncertainty for foreign universities sending faculty to India, as non-commercial research activity may still trigger commercial tax treatment. Providing clear legal safe harbour for university faculty and laboratories engaged solely in non-commercial R&D would offer the certainty required to enable sustained cross-border collaboration.

At a time when global competition for critical technologies is intensifying, India has a unique opportunity today to attract its top-tier diaspora talent. A trust and verify framework would lower entry barriers for diaspora participation while preserving national oversight through time-bound reporting and enforcement.

To fully realize the potential of health research and its beneficial impact on people and populations, we need strategies and investments that actively support collaboration, policies that make it easier for Indian and diaspora researchers, Indian and global institutions, to work together, share expertise, share data, build capacity, and sustain long-term partnerships.

When the right policy environment and investments are in place, research becomes a powerful and enduring ecosystem rather than a series of isolated projects. Partnerships between diaspora researchers and Indian institutions and researchers have already led to meaningful advances in diseases, such as diabetes, and they point to an even greater opportunity ahead: to translate rigorous research into scalable solutions that improve lives of billions across generations.

Dr. K.M. Venkat Narayan

Executive Director, Emory Global Diabetes Research Center

Recommendations for the diaspora to contribute to India@100 goals

The diaspora's engagement with India's journey to 2047 can begin at different points and deepen over time. The recommendations in this section are framed not as mandates, but as areas of reflection across five levels of influence.

1. Starting with Self

Grounding contribution in perspective

India is evolving at a pace that often outstrips perceptions held abroad. Deep affection does not automatically translate into a current understanding of its realities. As Victor Thomas, President and CEO, Canada-India Business Council noted, "Many in the diaspora love India deeply, but they often hold on to the India they left, not the India that exists today." Effective engagement therefore begins with consciously updating one's lens, grounded in the reality of India today while understanding the significance of its trajectory.

That grounding requires moving beyond curated visits and familiar circles. Sridar Iyengar, Former TiE Global President and Co-Founder of 360Plus Foundation reflected that diaspora members should ask whether their time in India is spent "in a bubble" or in genuine engagement with diverse challenges and lived experiences. "It's important to first understand the real problems on the ground, rather than imposing answers shaped by their own experiences. Humility and a willingness to listen are essential for making meaningful contributions," he added." Listening before proposing strengthens credibility and creates space for a reciprocal exchange, where the diaspora can also learn from India's innovations.

- ☐ To what extent is your understanding of India shaped by present realities rather than past experience?
- ☐ Whose voices most influence how you frame problems and opportunities in India?
- ☐ In what ways are you building reciprocal learning into your engagement with India?

2. Extending to Family

Strengthening intergenerational ties to India

Sustained diaspora engagement rarely happens by accident. It is often shaped within families, where values about identity, responsibility and belonging are formed early. Family can be the first multiplier of engagement, turning individual interest into enduring commitment across generations. When conversations about India extend into philanthropy, education and career choices, connection is renewed intentionally rather than inherited passively.

As Nina Amin, Former KPMG UK Partner observed, "If we want the next generation to feel genuinely connected to India, they need to spend real time there through exchanges, apprenticeships, study or short stints working with charities or companies. Celebrating Diwali abroad is nice, but it's living in India, even for six months or a year, that really builds understanding and a sense of belonging." Sat Pal Khattar, Chairman of Khattar Holdings highlighted that connection is often transmitted through values rather than geography: "Our family has always believed that if you make money in a country, you have a responsibility to give something back. Even though my children were not born in and have never lived in India, they feel a strong attachment to it. I hope our contributions to India will continue well beyond my lifetime."

- ☐ What experiences would make India personally meaningful, rather than conceptually important, to your family?
- ☐ How are you modeling commitment to India in ways the next generation can observe and internalize?
- ☐ How are you making engagement with India relevant to the aspirations of the next generation?
- ☐ How can India be framed not only as heritage, but as horizon, representing a source of inspiration and opportunity for your family?

3. Organizing Community

Coordinating locally for collective impact

Individual efforts gain leverage when diaspora members organize locally. Diaspora networks, whether professional associations, alumni circles or informal groups, can become platforms for sharing experience, surfacing proven models and translating insight into practical playbooks that others can adapt.

Prof. Mohanbir Sawhney, Clinical Professor of Marketing at Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, reflected on the power of collective leverage: "When you organize the diaspora as a single community, the collective impact is far greater than what individuals can achieve alone. The same principle should guide how we think about diaspora contributions to India."

Baljinder Sharma, Convenor of India Africa Entrepreneurs Forum illustrated this through experience: "Across Africa, the Indian diaspora has long had the networks, relationships, and entrepreneurial energy, but without the right international forums those connections never fully translated into impact for India. When you create community platforms like the India–Africa Entrepreneurs Forum, you finally connect a powerful, often neglected diaspora, back to India in a meaningful, coordinated way. This has the potential to unleash huge social and commercial capital for the benefit of India and Indians abroad."

- ☐ Where are you operating individually when collective alignment could multiply impact?
- ☐ What playbooks, lessons or models from your experience could be codified and shared through community networks?
- ☐ What conversations are missing in your community that, if convened, could shift the scale of engagement with India?

4. Engaging Your Country of Residence

Shaping policy, perceptions and partnerships

Engagement within their country of residence is one of the diaspora's most immediate levers of influence. Embedded across business, civic and policy institutions, diaspora members can organize around shared priorities and translate them into clear, coordinated and actionable proposals for domestic policymakers. The opportunity is to move from diffuse individual voices to structured engagement that reflects the community's collective interests. As Richard Rossow, Chair on India and Emerging Asia Economics at Center for Strategic & International Studies noted: "Washington doesn't really view the diaspora as a collective group." Dhruva Jaishankar, Executive Director of the Observer Research Foundation America echoed this concern, observing, "I often hear policymakers say: Indian American constituents don't have an ask of me. There isn't a clear, unified request on the table."

On the business side, the leverage is more immediate. As Manu Rekhi, Managing Director at Inventus Capital Partners put it, "What Indian founders often lack isn't talent or ideas, it's access to customers. The diaspora can change that overnight by opening doors to capital and enterprise customers." Similarly, Sachinn Verma, CEO of Oreta emphasized the practical role diaspora networks play in market entry: "For an Indian startup landing in Australia or the Gulf, the first customer, the first warm introduction, the first bit of honest feedback almost always comes from the diaspora. We are the ones who can open the first doors, translate the pitch for local buyers, and stop good Indian companies from dying at the border."

Beyond market and policy access, diaspora influence begins with soft power. For many around the world, India is first encountered through culture across art, wellness, yoga, cinema, food, music, and dance. As ambassadors, the diaspora provides the context that moves audiences beyond surface consumption, fostering a deeper understanding of India. The community can also uphold high standards of excellence in representing Indian heritage, strengthening its global perception.

In the end, the diaspora's influence in its country of residence will be measured not by its visibility, but by its ability to align voice, access and narrative into sustained collective leverage.

- ☐ What issues affecting our community remain diffuse because we have not organized around them?
- ☐ What would a more intentional approach to mentoring or connecting look like in my context?
- ☐ What assumptions about India circulate in my networks, and do I challenge them when necessary?

5. Enabling Cross-Border Impact with India

Bridging talent, capital and opportunity

Diaspora members can amplify their impact by moving beyond episodic engagement toward structured, long-term partnerships in India. This includes designing outcome-oriented philanthropic initiatives, exploring pooled investment vehicles such as a diaspora venture fund or coordinated angel platform to channel informed capital into priority sectors, and backing research and academic collaborations that build institutional capability at scale. As Rajan Navani, Chairman and MD of Jetline Group of Companies noted, “Today this collaboration happens, but only in a very sporadic way. The real opportunity is to institutionalize collaboration of diaspora experts with India. Platforms like CII, Indiaspora, and the India at 100 Foundation can help anchor that collaboration, but it must ultimately go beyond any one institution and become a long-term framework for how India and its global diaspora work together.”

Institutional structures, however, depend on individual participation. Sustained knowledge transfer requires diaspora professionals to step forward, contribute expertise, and remain engaged over time across domains ranging from frontier sectors such as deep-tech innovation to foundational challenges like urban planning and climate resilience. As Mallika Janakiraman, who serves on the boards of Milky Mist and NDDB Foundation for Nutrition emphasized, “You may not always have a seat at the table, but you must still have a voice at the table. Even if you feel a little out of place when you stand up to ask a question, if it is a pertinent point you should say it. Be seen and be heard so that people can assess you, build trust with you and eventually invite you into roles where you can truly contribute.”

- ☐ Am I engaging with India episodically, or committing to long-term involvement?
- ☐ In which sectors does my professional background align with India’s long-term development priorities?
- ☐ Am I aligning with credible partners on the ground, or acting in isolation?

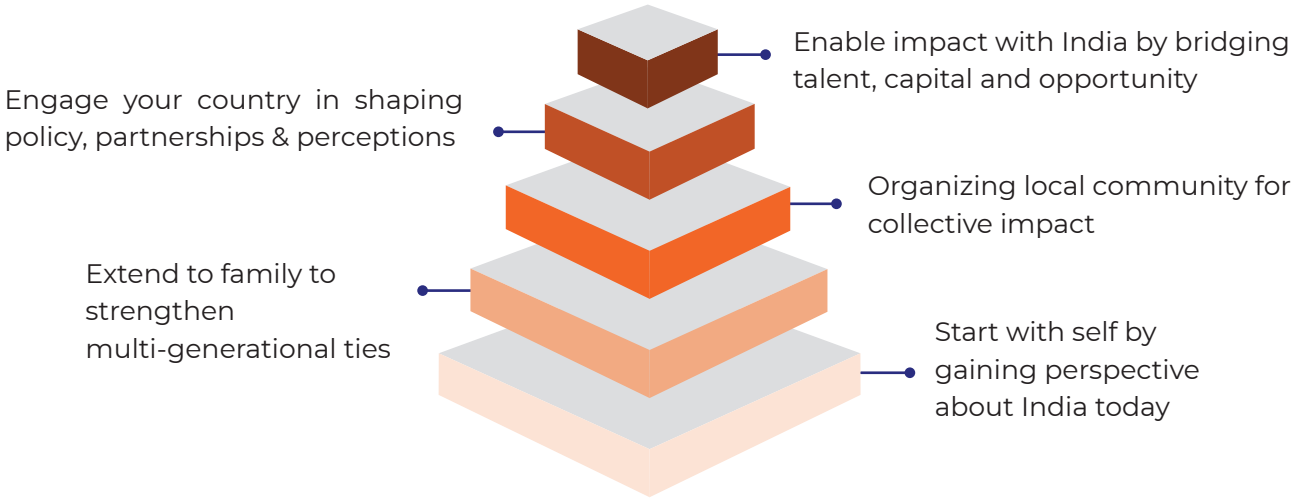
Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations for India to boost diaspora engagement to meet India@100 goals

What if... ?

- OCI rules were streamlined to make diaspora engagement predictable and purposeful?
- Dual citizenship could unlock global talent while safeguarding India's national interests?
- Tourism was designed to deepen diaspora's enduring connection to their roots?
- India created a relaxed exchange-control regime for OCI and NRI investors?
- India's social impact sector had trust built in, unlocking a new wave of diaspora philanthropic giving?
- India created corridors for friction-less cross border research collaborations?

Recommendations for the diaspora to contribute to India@100 goals



Chapter 9

DIASPORA VISION FOR 2047

Diaspora Aspiration For India@100

Source: Survey and interviews of diaspora leaders

Diaspora Personal Aspirations for 2047

*When I began competing internationally, India was still finding its voice on many global stages. Today, I see a generation that is **confident, ambitious, and unafraid to lead**. By 2047, that confidence will define India's place in the world, with the diaspora supporting that journey by opening doors and strengthening global partnerships.*

Vijay Amritraj
Hall of Fame Tennis Player

*Without a doubt, India will become the third largest economy in the world. To ensure living standards keep rising will take continuous **large scale reforms that help raise human skills** and create well-paying jobs.*

Gita Gopinath
Former Deputy Managing Director,
International Monetary Fund

*My aspiration for India at 100 is a **research ecosystem that produces world-class science**, keeps women in the pipeline into leadership, and fosters a culture of collaboration to solve global problems together.*

Dr. Amita Gupta
Founder, Johns Hopkins Gupta-Klinsky India Institute
Dr. Florence Sabin Professor and Director of Division of Infectious Diseases

*India has made significant progress over the past decade – policy architecture, hard and soft infrastructure, consistently high GDP growth and meaningful improvement in social indicators like poverty and health. As the country embraces global opportunities in the next phase, the diaspora can be an important catalyst, furthering both inbound and outbound connectivity through **two-way flows of technology and capital**.*

Piyush Gupta
Former CEO, DBS Group

*My aspiration for 2047 is that India should provide **free AI doctors, AI tutors, and AI agronomists as three additional services available to all Indians**, Indian children, and Indian farmers respectively, as part of the Aadhaar stack, in addition to UPI services.*

Vinod Khosla
Founder, Khosla Ventures

*India's rich cultural heritage and leadership in digital transformation have laid a strong foundation for the future. By 2047, India can harness the transformative power of AI to emerge as a **global creative superpower**, setting new standards for ethical innovation, inclusive education, and sustainable development. With its unparalleled talent and bold vision, India can inspire the world by empowering billions and creating opportunities for all.*

Shantanu Narayen
Chair & CEO, Adobe

*By 2047, India has the opportunity to **set a new global standard for digital innovation, inclusive growth, and entrepreneurial ambition at scale**. The diaspora's role is to help accelerate that future by connecting India to the world's best ideas, talent, and capital. India@100 should be defined not just by economic strength, but by the opportunity it creates for all.*

Yamini Rangan
CEO, HubSpot

*At this year's AI Summit in Delhi, we saw how India can become the gateway to the Global South. By combining AI with platforms like UPI, Aadhaar, and other citizenship services, India can **create a template for inclusive digital transformation for a billion people**, and the global Indian diaspora can play a big role in making that a reality.*

MR Rangaswami
Founder, Indiaspora and Sand Hill Group

*India should aim to position itself as the **preferred and trusted partner to serve Africa's growing demand** across a range of sectors, including services, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, education, and automobile manufacturing.*

Baljinder Sharma
Convenor of India Africa Entrepreneurs Forum

*India is no longer just adopting clean technologies; it is deploying them at an unprecedented scale. Connecting India's domestic ambitions with the diaspora's capacity for technological and financial innovation creates an **unmatched engine for sustainable economic growth**.*

Dr. Varun Sivaram
Founder & CEO, Emerald AI

*Exploring my Indian heritage has reinforced for me how dynamic the country is today. It leaves me optimistic about how India's rise, and the relationships nurtured by its diaspora, can **shape a more connected world**.*

Leo Varadkar
Former Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Ireland

*We think India is the single best country to invest in as it embarks on its journey towards its 100th anniversary. Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India has become business friendly and has the potential of **growing GDP at 10% annually.***

Prem Watsa
Founder, Chairman & CEO, Fairfax Financial Holdings

Diaspora Personal Intentions for 2047

*I want to help India do for its global brand what we did with the Dubai Shopping Festival: create bold, world class platforms that **highlight India's soft power**, celebrate our success and deepen the cultural and emotional ties of the Indian diaspora with India.*

Avi Bhojani
Group CEO, BPG Group

*India's Olympic ambitions will ultimately depend on the strength of its sporting ecosystem. Drawing on experience from the UK and Australia, I would like to contribute to **building administrative and grassroots capacity that supports athletes** over the long term.*

Sudip Chakraborty
Head of Cultural Diplomacy, Australia India Institute

*I will continue **investing** in the Indian startup ecosystem and engage in supporting local causes in education and sports.*

Debjit Chaudhuri
Business Ambassador, City of Frankfurt

*As India enters its next phase of growth, I want to **showcase our India platform to demonstrate to global decision-makers the sophistication and value** being created in India—particularly in advanced engineering and digital capabilities.*

Sanjeev Gandhi
Managing Director and CEO, Orica

India remains my ultimate sense of home and belonging, a foundation that has stayed with me throughout my global career. I cherish my grandfather's ship records as a symbol of our roots and am committed to securing OCI status for my family to cement our enduring bond with the country. This journey is about honouring our heritage while building a permanent, official bridge back to India for the generations to follow.

*Supporting India, for me, means **offering women entrepreneurs real mentorship** that strengthens their emotional resilience as much as their business skills. I want to help them develop a vision not just for their businesses, but for themselves.*

Pria Hassan
Founder & Executive Chairwoman, WOA Group

*Through Landmark Cares, my commitment to India is to improve **worker wellbeing**, build skills and employability in the retail sector, and strengthen basic infrastructure so the women and communities in our supply chain can thrive.*

Nisha Jagtiani
Group Director and Board Member, Landmark Group

*For me, every day is about working toward 2047. I want to make India proud by strengthening **women's health** and the first 1000 days of life, which is the window to program a healthy future generation. If we can improve women's health so they lose fewer days of work, it becomes an engine for economic productivity and sustainability.*

Mallika Janakiraman
Board of Milky Mist and NDDB Foundation for Nutrition

*I visit my college in India every year and have donated to improve its infrastructure. My goal is to ensure that today's students have access to modern facilities and opportunities that weren't available in my era. I'm encouraging others to join me, so we can collectively **enhance the educational environment** and give back to the place that shaped us.*

Dr. Dinesh Keskar
Retired Senior Vice President, Boeing

*I would like my personal contribution for India@100 to be focused on **giving towards underserved areas** such as mental health, as well as mentoring students on economics and journalism.*

Vikram Khanna
Associate Editor, The Straits Times

*The Indian diaspora plays an important role in deepening economic ties and actively engage in **expanding trade and investment**. Trade agreements represent a significant economic opportunity to support India's rapid growth and increasing expertise in key sectors, making it an attractive location for businesses looking to grow and invest in one of the world's fastest expanding markets.*

For example, the UK- India trade agreement will open up opportunities across a wide range of sectors and is forecasted to boost trade by £25.5 billion a year. I look forward to working with government, businesses and investors to see this agreement implemented, and the subsequent benefits it will deliver for businesses in both the UK and India.

Bina Mehta
Chair, KPMG in the UK

*Helping India **strengthen strategic fundraising** and put the right structures in place to support a more sustainable culture of philanthropy is where I believe I can add the most value.*

Shanthini Naidoo
CEO, St. Vincent's Curran Foundation

*As India assumes a more decisive global role, I am positioned to help **strengthen its strategic bridge to Africa** through established diplomatic access within the African Union and key global platforms. My focus is on enabling transparent political alignment, disciplined capital pathways, people-centered economic growth, and deeper technological integration – advancing a modern India-Africa partnership built on trust, innovation, and shared global leadership.*

Ambassador Lavina Ramkissoon
African Union Technology Diplomat

*India has achieved an economic growth miracle in the last 12 years driven by many large-scale, diverse, national and regional growth initiatives by government and industry. India has the leadership, momentum, self-confidence, technology and talent to achieve its awe-inspiring target of $30 trillion GDP in 2047 but it will take accelerated commitment and investment in **entrepreneurship, SME (small and medium entrepreneur) growth, skilling and innovation** to make it happen. These are the four major initiatives of Wadhwani Foundation and my foundation is fully committed to investing in and being an important contributor to India's success in Viksit Bharat 2047.*

Romesh Wadhwani
Chairman, Wadhwani Foundation

APPENDIX

I. Methodology for estimating annual income of Indian diaspora

We estimated the total annual income earned by the Indian diaspora to better understand its earning power globally. This bottoms-up estimate multiplies the total number of employed diaspora members by the average income earned for the year 2024. Wherever possible, we relied on foreign government data sources, OECD, ILO, World Bank as well as Indian government and embassy data, to strengthen the robustness of the estimates. Our approach has been deliberately conservative throughout.

Ten countries were prioritized for deep-dive analysis based on significant Indian diaspora populations or high remittance volumes to India. Our deep-dive focused on the U.S., Canada, UAE, UK, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Kuwait and South Africa.

Employed diaspora by country:

- For non-Gulf countries, we applied Indian-ethnicity specific employment-to-population ratios or a combination of labour force participation with employment rates
- For Gulf countries, we used actual counts of the employed diaspora based on official Indian government records and host-nation administrative data

Average income of Indian diaspora by country:

- For non-Gulf countries, we standardized annual earnings using Indian ethnicity-specific census data as follows:
  - Household Income: Divided by the average number of earners per household to derive individual income
  - Hourly Wage: Multiplied by the 2024 national average for annual working hours
  - Weekly Income: Multiplied by 52 weeks to reach an annualized total
- For Gulf countries, we relied on national estimates from government or private sources of non-native populations due to limited publicly available disaggregated data

Depending on the year of the census, we adjusted figures using the relevant wage inflation rates from foreign government sources and applied the corresponding exchange rate to convert values into USD.

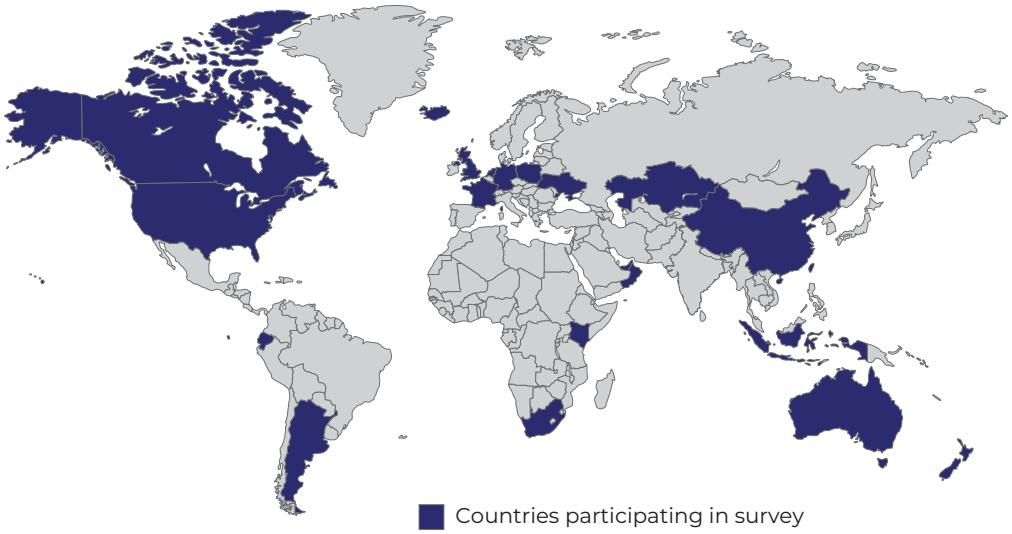
For the remaining 192 countries, manually researching statistics proved impractical, hence it was aggregated with the help of Anthropic AI. Where possible, diaspora-specific census income information was leveraged. Else, national averages from OECD, ILO or World Bank estimates were used as proxies. National averages for employment-to-population ratio was applied to working age estimates of Indian diaspora by country.

II. Sentiment of Indian diaspora survey demographics

The survey should not be treated as statistically rigorous, but as a tool to give us directional findings into the sentiment of the Indian diaspora. As of Jan 29th 2026, the survey had 391 responses with 209 complete responses. Below are the demographic splits of survey respondents:

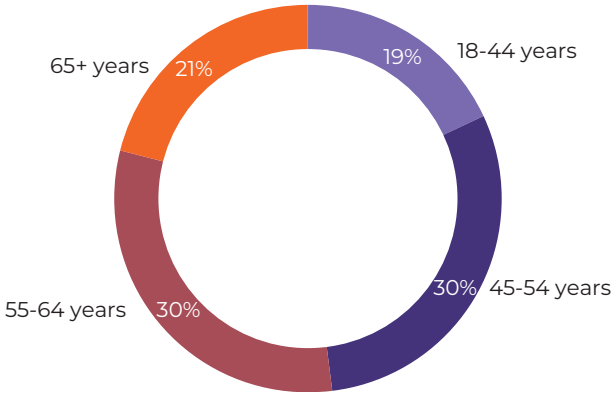
- **Geographical spread:** A concerted effort was made to reach survey respondents across 24 countries to reflect the depth and variety of the Indian diaspora. The majority of responses came from the United States (51%), followed by UAE (12%), Mauritius, UK, Australia, Singapore, Kenya, Oman, South Africa, Canada, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. Responses were also received from Argentina, China, Ecuador, France, Germany, Iceland, Indonesia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Poland and Switzerland.

GLOBAL PARTICIPATION ACROSS CONTINENTS



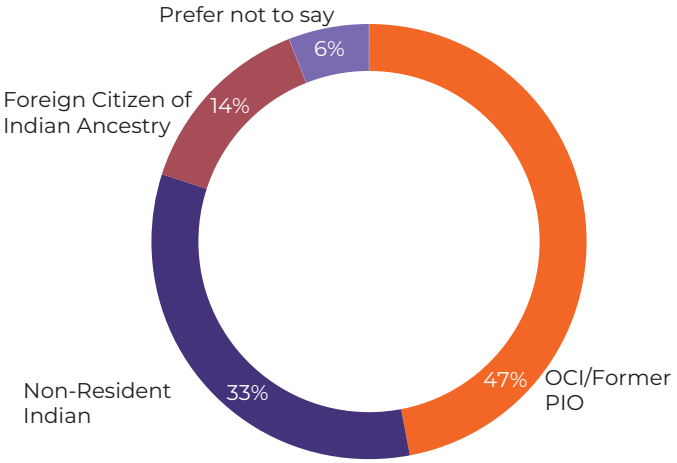
- **Age distribution:** To reflect diaspora aspirations and capabilities, the survey included respondents from all age groups evenly. Participation from those aged 18–44 was especially important to capture the long-term sustainability of diaspora engagement with India.

BALANCED AGE REPRESENTATION

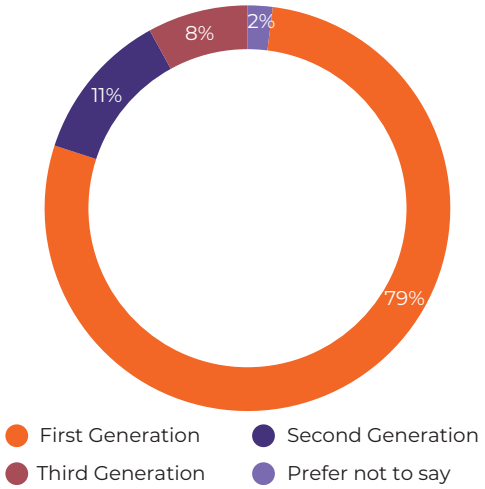


- **Citizenship profile:** Survey responses were mostly foreign passport holders, with more than 45% holding OCI cards. Respondents skewed towards those identified as first-generation, reflecting a strong representation of individuals with direct ties to India but residing abroad.

CITIZENSHIP OF RESPONDENTS



GENERATIONAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

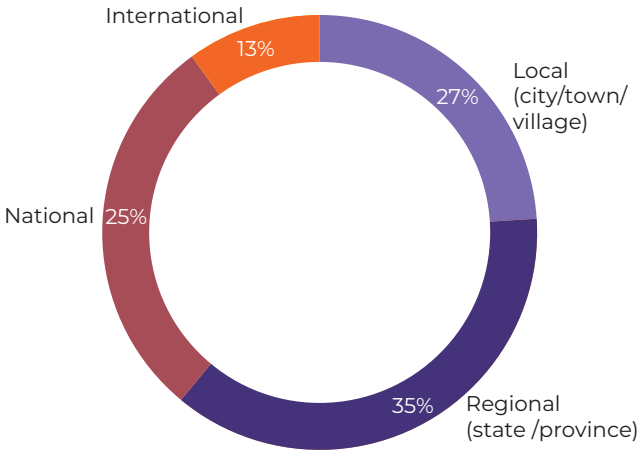


III. Diaspora support for Indian nonprofits survey demographics

The survey should not be treated as a definitive sample, but rather as a way to understand how nonprofits are interfacing with Indian diaspora. As of Jan 29th 2026, the survey had 74 responses with 38 complete responses. Below are the demographic splits of survey respondents:

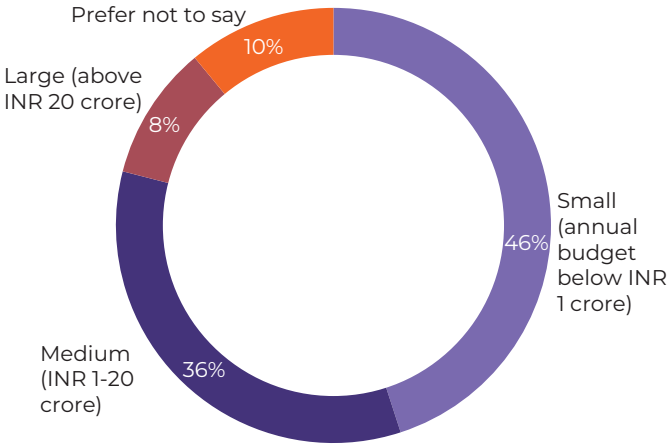
- **Geographical scope:** The survey captured nonprofits operating at various scales. While nearly a quarter maintained a national presence, the largest category consisted of regional and local organizations.

VARIED GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE OF NONPROFITS



- **Annual budget:** The survey was skewed towards small and medium-sized nonprofits, that operate on budgets under INR 20 crore (in the range of USD two milliion).

RESPONDENTS WERE MOSTLY SMALL-MEDIUM SIZED



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MR Rangaswami is an entrepreneur, investor, corporate eco-strategy expert, community builder and philanthropist. Recognized as a software business expert, he participated in the rapid expansion of the Silicon Valley software industry during his tenure as an executive at both large and small software companies. In 2012, he founded Indiaspora, a nonprofit community of powerful global Indian leaders from diverse backgrounds and professions who are committed to inspiring the diaspora to be a force for good.

Sanjeev Joshipura serves as Indiaspora's Executive Director since January 2018 and served as Director since July 2016. Immediately prior to that, he was active in the US-India corridor in a public policy and business capacity, via his own consulting firm. Sanjeev was born and raised in India and migrated to North America in 2000. In the corporate realm, Sanjeev has worked at Fortune 500 multinational organizations in different industries, in the areas of strategy, finance and project management

Sreekumar Nair is the CEO-India and Senior Vice President – Global East of Indiaspora. He joined Indiaspora in March 2022 and is responsible for its India operations. Prior to this, he worked for 25 years in the International Department of CII, India's premier business association which works closely with government on policy issues, and with the industry in enhancing efficiency and building competitiveness.