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## **Examining the Extent of Implementation of Diaspora Diplomacy Strategies in Australia: A Perspective from Kenya**

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# Examining the Extent of Implementation of Diaspora Diplomacy Strategies in Australia: A Perspective from Kenya

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## Abstract

Diaspora diplomacy has been employed by Kenya to mobilize the contributions of its overseas citizens; yet, questions remain regarding the extent to which these diplomatic strategies are implemented and their impact on remittance flows. This study sought to examine the extent of implementation of diaspora diplomacy strategies. This study was underpinned by Network Theory and employed a descriptive survey design within a positivist paradigm to collect empirical data from diaspora members. The target population comprised 22,446 individuals, including officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Kenya Mission in Australia, diaspora associations, and Kenyan diaspora residents in Australia. A total sample of 484 respondents was selected using random, census, purposive, and stratified sampling techniques. Data was collected using structured questionnaires distributed via digital platforms and interview guide. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS, where descriptive statistics and linear regression were conducted to test the relationships between the study variables. The results were presented in frequency tables in terms of means, standard deviations and regression model. Findings revealed that key strategies such as dual citizenship facilitation, digitized consular services, diaspora events, and structured diaspora associations were positively and significantly associated with increased remittance flows. The study concludes that diaspora diplomacy plays an important role in promoting remittance flows from Kenyans in Australia but is hindered by structural and institutional limitations. In view of the findings, the study recommends that the government of Kenya should consider the decentralization of consular services, formal partnerships with diaspora associations, negotiation of bilateral labor and taxation agreements, and enhanced digital service delivery.

**Keywords:** *Diaspora Diplomacy, Kenya–Australia Relations, Remittance Flows, Consular Services, Diaspora Associations.*

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## 1.0 Introduction

The phenomenon of diaspora diplomacy, which embodies how diaspora communities leverage diplomatic channels to propel the interests of their home nations, has captured increased attention consistent with the United Nations' Sustainable Growth Goals (SDGs). Amidst the backdrop of globalization enhancing migration, diaspora populations have carved out a significant niche in influencing diplomatic relations. They not only initiate diplomatic mobilizations that can sway policy directions but also channel remittance flows, a vital artery for economic growth, between their countries of origin and residence. This dual role is particularly impactful for policymakers in the Global South<sup>1</sup>, underscoring the multifaceted contributions of diasporas to both diplomatic and economic spheres. Diaspora Diplomacy Strategy is an innovative mobilization approach that leverages the potential of a country's diaspora to contribute to its home country's growth, beyond the traditional financial remittances<sup>2</sup>. This strategy involves the engagement and participation of the diaspora in the diplomatic and growth efforts of their home country, utilizing their skills, resources, and networks abroad<sup>3</sup>. Key elements include outreach programs aimed at connecting with the diaspora community, remittance promotion initiatives that encourage the flow of funds back home, and collaboration with financial institutions to facilitate these processes. Such strategies are designed to harness the goodwill, expertise, and financial power of the diaspora, turning them into active agents of growth and diplomacy<sup>2</sup>.

In the African context, the emphasis on diaspora mobilization strategies to enhance remittance flows carries immense significance. Countries like Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Kenya have recognized the pivotal role of their substantial diaspora populations and implemented initiatives to harness their potential. The Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund and the Nigerian Diaspora Direct Investment Summit exemplify efforts to facilitate diaspora investments and channel expertise. Well-organized diaspora networks and targeted outreach initiatives enable African nations to leverage the financial resources, skills, and connections of their diaspora, markedly contributing to economic enhancement through increased remittances, investments, knowledge transfer, and diaspora-driven entrepreneurship.

The role of the Diaspora Diplomacy Strategy and remittance flows has been pivotal in shaping Kenya's economic landscape. Recognizing the Kenyan diaspora as a significant asset, the government and various stakeholders have actively engaged in strategies to mobilize this group for national growth<sup>2</sup>. As a result, Kenya established the State Department for Diaspora Affairs and Diaspora Diplomacy Unit to strengthen ties with its global diaspora community targeting particularly increased remittances and promote their engagement in national growth<sup>12</sup>. Efforts have included the creation of platforms for dialogue between the diaspora and the government, investment opportunities specifically tailored for Kenyan expatriates, and policies aimed at easing the transfer of remittances<sup>3</sup>. These steps are part of a broader trend towards leveraging the diaspora for their skills, networks, and capital, with remittances from Kenyans abroad becoming a crucial

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<sup>1</sup> Orozco, Manuel. "Transnational Economic Development as Diaspora Diplomacy." In *Routledge International Handbook of Diaspora Diplomacy*, pp. 142-155. Routledge, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Shrestha, Rajendra. "Economic diplomacy for development partnership." *Journal of Foreign Affairs* 1, no. 1 (2021): 59-78.

<sup>3</sup> Vanore, Michaella. "Diasporas as Actors of Economic Diplomacy." In *Routledge International Handbook of Diaspora Diplomacy*, pp. 156-168. Routledge, 2022

source of foreign exchange, often surpassing earnings from traditional exports<sup>4</sup>. The impact of these remittances is diverse, supporting families, driving small business growth, and contributing to critical sectors such as real estate and education<sup>4</sup>. As part of this mobilization strategy, Kenya has also witnessed the establishment of diaspora-focused financial products and services, aimed at facilitating investment in national growth projects<sup>5</sup>. This strategic approach not only enhances the growth and flow of remittances but also strengthens the diaspora's connection to their homeland, fostering a sense of belonging and commitment to Kenya's prosperity<sup>6</sup>.

The Kenyan diaspora, particularly in regions like Australia, exemplifies how targeted mobilization strategies can augment the flow of remittances back to Kenya, with potential positive repercussions on the national economy<sup>7</sup>. The Kenyan government's initiatives, such as the Diaspora Diplomacy Unit, aim to strengthen ties with the diaspora community and facilitate their engagement in national growth through channels like the Kenya Diaspora Investment Conference. Indicators like participation in diaspora-centric events, remittance volumes, and diaspora-driven investments serve as tangible measures of these strategies' effectiveness. Furthermore, the Kenyan scenario aligns with global insights that underscore the multifaceted impact of remittances, ranging from bolstering household incomes to fostering broader economic growth through increased consumption, investment, and entrepreneurship. However, akin to global and regional narratives, the Kenyan context also reveals the complexity and variability of remittances' impact, highlighting the need for nuanced, context-aware approaches in harnessing these financial flows for sustainable economic growth.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Empirical studies have also established that diaspora communities significantly contribute to national growth through remittances, investments, and knowledge transfer. However, existing research on diaspora contributions has largely focused on traditional migration destinations such as the US, UK, and Gulf countries, creating a contextual gap regarding the Kenyan diaspora in Australia, whose remittance behavior remains under-explored. Despite the large Kenya diaspora in Australia, the extent to which they contribute to remittances remains unclear, with limited attention given to Kenya's diaspora in this region.

Moreover, while some studies highlight the benefits of remittances at the household level, such as in Kericho County, they do not critically evaluate the role of diaspora diplomacy strategies in facilitating these remittance flows, indicating a conceptual gap. Methodologically, most existing studies rely on either broad macroeconomic analysis or local-level case studies without integrating policy-level engagement mechanisms, creating a methodological gap in understanding the direct

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<sup>4</sup> Muzapu, Rangarirai, and Taona Havadi. "Boosting diaspora remittances as a key source of investment capital: The case of Zimbabwe." *Management* 11, no. 2 (2021): 27-37.

<sup>5</sup> Carment, David, Samuel MacIsaac, Milana Nikolko, and Dani Belo. "Diaspora networks, fragile states: Conflict and cooperation." In *Routledge International Handbook of Diaspora Diplomacy*, pp. 255-271. Routledge, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Kessy, Ambrose T., and Hildebrand E. Shayo. "Tanzania's diaspora engagement: The need for a paradigm shift in diaspora engagement and investment policies." *Research in Globalization* 5 (2022): 100095.

<sup>7</sup> Achitsa, Annabella Analo Mutsiambo. "Remittance-Development Nexus: The Policy and Political Narratives of Migrant Remittances in Kenya." PhD diss., Central European University, 2020

influence of state-led diaspora diplomacy on economic outcomes. This study sought to address these gaps by focusing specifically on Kenya's diaspora in Australia, evaluating the effectiveness of Kenya's diaspora diplomacy strategies, and linking them empirically to remittance flows. This study aimed at presenting analysis of how Kenya has been able to optimize its diaspora engagement strategies to increase remittances from its citizens abroad and in particular, Australia.

## 1.2 Research Question

To what extent has the diaspora diplomacy strategy been implemented in Australia?

## 1.3 Objective

To examine the extent of the implementation of diaspora diplomacy strategies in Australia.

## 2.0 Literature review

### 2.1 Theoretical Literature

This study was anchored on Network Theory. The theory was developed by Wellman and Granovetter (Year). Network Theory states that, social structures should be understood as networks of relationships, rather than as groups or hierarchical systems. Network Theory emphasizes the importance of the pattern and strength of ties (connections) between individuals, organizations, or entities, suggesting that outcomes such as access to resources, information flow, and influence are shaped more by network position and linkages than by internal characteristics. This theory provides an analytical framework to understand the dynamics of social networks in facilitating migration patterns and the movement of capital across borders<sup>16</sup>. Network Theory explores the patterns and impacts of connections among individuals, groups, or entities and offers an insightful perspective on the dynamics of diaspora communities and their remittance behaviors. As outlined by Heywood, theories present a structured set of concepts that facilitate the formulation of testable hypotheses, making Network Theory an apt framework for this investigation<sup>8</sup>.

Network Theory allowed for the analysis of how diaspora networks influence individual decisions to migrate, send remittances, and participate in homeland growth initiatives<sup>9</sup>. The theory posits that these networks not only provide support and resources to migrants but also play a crucial role in shaping migration patterns, remittance flows, and ultimately, socio-economic outcomes in the migrants' countries of origin. By applying Network Theory, the study aims to shed light on how the strength, structure, and resources within diaspora networks contribute to enhanced remittance flows in Kenya, underlining the significance of social capital and interconnectedness in enhancing the growth impact of diaspora engagement.

The theory assumes that the strength or weak ties within a social network plays a crucial role in providing individuals access to resources, information, and opportunities, which can be pivotal in influencing their contributions for economic growth in their home countries. Critics of Network Theory argue that it might overemphasize the positive aspects of networks while underestimating the complexities and potential negative outcomes, such as the reinforcement of inequalities or the creation of insular communities that do not integrate into wider societal structures<sup>10</sup>. In the context

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<sup>8</sup> Sang, Victor, and Felix Kiruthu. "The Effects of Diaspora Remittances on Household Agro Farming in Kericho County, Kenya." *Journal of Public Policy and Governance* 4, no. 1 (2024): 1-13.

<sup>9</sup> Castells, M. (2011). Network theory| A network theory of power. *International journal of communication*, 5, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Crawford, T. Hugh. "Actor-network theory." In *Oxford research encyclopedia of literature*. 2020.

of this study, Network Theory was considered relevant to this study as it explained the importance of social connections among the Kenyan diaspora in Australia in mobilizing diaspora diplomacy and facilitating remittance flows. These networks are instrumental in creating channels through which diaspora members can contribute to increased remittances flows which is critical, and aligns with the study's focus on leveraging diaspora capabilities for Kenya's economic growth.

## 2.2 Empirical Literature

The intricate interplay between diaspora communities and their homeland's economic and geopolitical strategies underscores a multifaceted relationship. A study focused on China, a significant source of emigration and an emerging global power, explores this complexity by examining the nation's approach to diaspora engagement amidst geopolitical changes. Utilizing historical data, policy analysis, and interviews, the research argues that China's diaspora policies have evolved, particularly since the 2010s, transitioning from a focus on domestic economic support and national unity to a broader strategy aimed at enhancing China's soft power internationally. This shift has led to a reorientation towards diaspora institutions with extensive overseas networks and adaptable operational experiences, over traditional state agencies concerned with domestic policy. The study<sup>11</sup> highlights the diversity within China's diaspora bureaucracy, revealing variations in interests, orientations, and philosophies across different state entities. These differences influence the diaspora institutions' roles and significance in China's changing geopolitical agenda. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of diaspora politics, suggesting a more complex interaction between emigrant communities and homeland states that extends beyond the traditional views of asymmetric interdependence, illustrating how an ambitious homeland state like China seeks to redefine its position in the global order through strategic engagement with its diaspora.

A conceptual and analytical study by<sup>12</sup> provides more detailed understanding of the existing literature on diaspora diplomacy strategies by introducing the role of emotions and identity in shaping diaspora-state relations. The research develops an innovative theoretical framework that integrates four core dimensions: identity and belonging within the diaspora, transnational connections, the influence of media and digital platforms, and the distinction between diaspora as a category of analysis versus practice. Drawing from<sup>21</sup> semi-structured interviews with Romanian diaspora organization leaders in the United Kingdom, the study reveals that emotional attachments such as feelings of pride, exclusion, nostalgia, and distrust are central to how diaspora actors define their roles, articulate their affiliations to both host and home states, and frame their involvement in diplomatic discourses. The study also identifies how digital media platforms have reconfigured the means through which diaspora engagement and diplomacy are expressed, negotiated, and sometimes disrupted. The findings challenge the conventional state-centric view of diaspora diplomacy by emphasizing the agency of diaspora actors themselves particularly their capacity to construct identity narratives, mobilize around cultural and emotional themes, and navigate shifting

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<sup>11</sup> Kastoryano, Riva. "Transnationalism: Theory and experience." In *Contested Concepts in Migration Studies*, pp. 243-258. Routledge, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Dolea, A. (2024). Diaspora diplomacy, emotions, and disruption: A conceptual and analytical framework. *CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy*. Available at [https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/default/files/Diaspora%20Diplomacy, 2.](https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/default/files/Diaspora%20Diplomacy_2.))

political landscapes. This study contributes to the understanding of diaspora diplomacy as not merely a top-down government outreach, but a dynamic and emotionally mediated practice involving multiple actors and platforms. The work underscores the importance of incorporating emotional and discursive elements into diaspora diplomacy research and policy making, especially in contexts where identity and belonging are deeply contested or evolving. It is particularly relevant to the current study, which explores how diaspora diplomacy strategies are being executed among Kenyan communities globally.

A comparative study by<sup>13</sup> examines the latest advancements in diaspora engagement policies and outreach practices within the Baltic and Nordic states. Diaspora diplomacy, as conceptualized in this article, involves the strategic use of Foreign Service or other governmental branches to foster a systematic and mutually beneficial relationship between the homeland government, diaspora communities in their countries of residence, and various interest groups in both locations. The research reviews the diaspora initiatives of eight countries and incorporates interviews with officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in the Baltic and Nordic regions. These discussions provide valuable insights into how diasporas are perceived by their homelands, whether they are considered a resource, and the potential future directions for diaspora-homeland relations. This study<sup>22</sup> expands the understanding of diaspora diplomacy by highlighting the diverse approaches and perceptions across different geopolitical contexts, offering a broader perspective on how states engage with their diaspora communities for mutual growth.

The perception of politically active diaspora groups has traditionally been contentious within the realm of diaspora diplomacy. Historically, such groups have often been viewed as foreign agents, utilized by their countries of origin to influence the foreign policies of their host nations, generally casting a negative light on their impact on host nations foreign policies. However, recent scholarly work<sup>22</sup> seeks to redefine this perspective by examining the role of political diaspora groups within the United States through a broader historical lens and within the context of a networked society. This research challenges the conventional view by demonstrating that diaspora groups can play a constructive role in shaping foreign policy objectives, revealing emergent mechanisms for state mobilization of diaspora for foreign policy aims. By focusing on select case studies, this study unveils the evolving dynamics of U.S. diaspora relations and highlights the potential opportunities for positive engagement. The conclusions drawn, including several policy recommendations, underscore the need to reassess the role of diaspora groups in foreign policy, moving beyond the traditional view of diasporas as mere external agents to recognizing their potential as valuable partners in achieving foreign policy goals<sup>22</sup>.

Across the region, numerous studies have highlighted how diaspora communities contribute to national growth most notably by sending remittances, attracting foreign direct investment, and sharing skills and expertise gained abroad. However, the strategic potential of the diaspora in the realm of foreign policy, especially for Nigeria, presents an under-explored avenue. A focused examination<sup>22</sup> on this subject suggests that the Nigerian diaspora if effectively engaged, could emerge as a pivotal force in advancing Nigeria's foreign policy objectives. The premise is that diaspora diplomacy could cultivate loyalty to the homeland, which in turn, could be leveraged to amplify Nigeria's political influence internationally by promoting specific national narratives.

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<sup>13</sup> Nowicka, Magdalena. "(Dis) connecting migration: transnationalism and nationalism beyond connectivity." *Comparative Migration Studies* 8, no. 1 (2020): 20.

Adopting a qualitative and analytical approach, this chapter relies on a wealth of secondary sources to dissect the interconnection between the diaspora and foreign policy dynamics. It unveils that active government interaction with diaspora communities can enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of foreign policies, especially when such policies are crafted in collaboration with diaspora entities. This collaborative approach not only fosters more informed policy making but also strengthens international relations. Echoing Joseph Nye's advocacy for soft power in foreign policy, the chapter positions the diaspora alongside culture, education, and economic strategies as a soft power tool, encapsulating economic, cultural, political, and social dimensions. Concluding on a policy-oriented note, the chapter urges a re-evaluation of Nigeria's foreign policy framework to better protect the rights and welfare of Nigerians globally, aiming to mitigate diaspora disengagement from the nation's external affairs<sup>23</sup>.

Further, <sup>14</sup>acknowledges the African Union's recognition of the African diaspora as a crucial partner in the continent's economic growth endeavors. This recognition is evident in the migration policy framework and plan of action (2018-2030), which prioritizes diaspora engagement to enhance their involvement in Africa's economic growth and their countries of origin. Notably, some African nations, including Kenya, have integrated diaspora diplomacy into their foreign policy strategies. The late Prof. Pius Adesanmi's collaboration with African Heads of Mission in Ottawa, Canada, exemplifies the significance of diaspora engagement. Through various academic forums, Prof. Adesanmi facilitated discussions among the African diaspora on pertinent global issues, showcasing his role as a prominent figure in diaspora diplomacy. This section lays the foundation for a thorough examination of diaspora diplomacy's rationale, Prof. Adesanmi's contributions, potential collaboration opportunities between the African diaspora and African Heads of Missions, and the challenges and benefits associated with diaspora diplomacy.

Further, amidst a backdrop of dwindling Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows, a phenomenon not unique to but significantly impacting Zimbabwe, the diaspora community emerges as a critical yet under-leveraged asset in bridging the foreign investment gap. A detailed examination<sup>30</sup> of the Zimbabwean context reveals a pressing need to more effectively harness diaspora remittances, which, despite their recent upsurge, remain an underutilized source of investment capital. Through a comprehensive research methodology that includes questionnaires and interviews with a purposive sample of 150 respondents, this study underscores the untapped economic potential of the Zimbabwean diaspora. Findings indicate that the economic benefits of investments from Zimbabweans living abroad are yet to be fully actualized. To address this gap, the paper proposes a suite of strategies aimed at unlocking the full potential of diaspora remittances. Key among these recommendations are initiatives to build trust within the diaspora community, heightened awareness of investment opportunities, and proactive engagement with diaspora networks. These measures are posited as essential steps for the Zimbabwean government to enhance the contribution of its diaspora to national growth<sup>15</sup>.

Locally, amidst the pressing need for economic growth in the 21st century, particularly in less developed nations, the role of diaspora diplomacy emerges as a pivotal area of study. <sup>23</sup> focused on this dynamic, with a specific emphasis on Kenya, aiming to dissect the impact of diaspora

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<sup>14</sup> Kerubo, Jane. "Diaspora diplomacy: opportunities and challenges for African countries." *Nokoko* 9 (2021): 36-52.

<sup>15</sup> Sahoo, Malayaranjan, Sanhita Sucharita, and Narayan Sethi. "Does remittance inflow influence human development in south Asian countries? An empirical insight." *Business Strategy & Development* 3, no. 4 (2020): 578-589.

engagement on economic progress. Despite the critical role diasporas can play, the study reveals that remittance flows to Africa remain significantly low. This research seeks to unearth strategies for enhancing these financial flows from the African diaspora, notably from Kenyans living abroad, to bolster economic growth back home. Employing a case study approach and gathering qualitative data from key personnel within Kenya's Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the study highlights the untapped potential of diaspora diplomacy. Findings suggest that effective engagement with the Kenyan diaspora could lead to substantial economic benefits, including increased remittances, investment opportunities, and the leveraging of diaspora expertise for national growth. The government's efforts, particularly through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to integrate the diaspora into Kenya's growth agenda are noted, with recommendations for further enhancing these initiatives through improved dialogue, investment-friendly policies, diaspora voting rights, and enhanced consular services<sup>23</sup>.

In recent years, diplomacy has increasingly adopted a relational approach, emphasizing how diplomats leverage social media to engage and build rapport with international audiences. One emerging aspect of this trend is the growing focus on diasporas, which are now seen by many governments as vital partners in driving economic progress back home. This study examines how the embassies of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Rwanda are using social media platforms to connect and communicate with their diaspora communities<sup>16</sup>. This study presents a conceptual framework for digital diaspora diplomacy centered on three key pillars: building relationships, strengthening community ties, and leveraging those connections. Analyzing 830 Facebook posts from 2016 to 2020, the research reveals that the embassies actively interact with their online audiences, respond to negative feedback, publicize in-person events, and disseminate information relevant to diaspora communities. Consequently, African embassies have the potential to harness diaspora connections to enhance their nations' socio-economic well-being.

The findings suggest that effective diaspora diplomacy holds immense potential for nations to leverage diaspora resources and networks for mutual growth and global influence. Across various case studies, it becomes evident that engaging with diaspora communities can unlock significant economic benefits, such as increased remittance flows, access to investment opportunities, and the utilization of diaspora expertise to drive national growth agendas. Moreover, the strategic utilization of social media platforms for digital diaspora diplomacy emerges as a promising avenue for enhancing communication and engagement between governments and diaspora populations. By actively interacting with Diasporas through social media channels, governments can address their needs, disseminate relevant information, and foster a sense of belonging and participation among diaspora communities. This not only strengthens ties between nations and their diasporas but also contributes to socio-economic growth by tapping into the collective resources and knowledge of diaspora networks. Overall, the literature underscores the trans-formative potential of diaspora diplomacy as a strategic tool for advancing national interests, promoting mutual growth, and fostering stronger, more resilient partnerships between nations and their diasporas.

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<sup>16</sup> Manor, Ilan, and Geraldine Asiwome Adiku. "From 'traitors' to 'saviours': A longitudinal analysis of Ethiopian, Kenyan and Rwandan embassies' practice of digital diaspora diplomacy." *South African Journal of International Affairs* 28, no. 3 (2021): 403-427.

### 3.0 Research Methodology

Research design denotes a structured plan guiding the entire research process to ensure systematic data collection and analysis<sup>17</sup>. <sup>18</sup>Describes research design as a logical framework linking research questions to evidence through controlled analysis. Research design is important in ensuring the validity, reliability, and clarity of research outcomes.<sup>19</sup> This study adopted a descriptive survey design, which was effective in illustrating the characteristics and dynamics of a specific phenomenon in this case, the impact of diaspora diplomacy on remittance flows. Descriptive research, by its nature, provides a detailed snapshot of the situation, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the variables involved.

This study was carried out in Australia. Selecting Australia as the focal point of this study was strategic due to its substantial Kenya diaspora community, which is integral to remittance flows and diaspora-led growth efforts in Kenya. This concentration of Kenyan nationals offers a unique opportunity to delve into the intricacies of diaspora contributions through remittances to Kenya's economic growth. Furthermore, engaging with officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the region provided critical insights into the policies and strategies crafted to harness diaspora resources especially remittance flows. These interactions are pivotal for understanding the governmental framework and challenges in mobilizing the diaspora remittance flows for economic advancement.

The target population for this study comprised officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (State department of the diaspora affairs, Kenya mission in Australia), Diaspora associations and Kenyan diaspora residing in Australia. This selection is strategic, as officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are pivotal in shaping and implementing diaspora diplomacy policies and therefore possess critical insights into the governmental strategies aimed at mobilizing diaspora resources such as remittance flows for economic growth. Simultaneously, Kenya diaspora in Australia represent a vital segment of the diaspora community, directly involved in remittance flows and potentially engaged in diaspora-led growth initiatives. The study aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of both the policy framework, the implementation of the policies, and the impact of the diaspora diplomacy strategies on the remittance flows. Hence, ensuring a holistic view of the dynamics at play in leveraging diaspora engagement for enhanced remittance flows by focusing on these groups.

Stratified and simple random sampling was used to reach Kenyan diaspora in various states in Australia, leveraging the interconnected nature of social networks within the diaspora community to identify and recruit respondents. This methods were found to be effective in accessing populations in the well-structured associations, allowing the study to tap into the rich, diverse experiences of Kenyan diaspora (Businessmen ,Professionals ,Employees and Students), who are actively engaged in remitting funds and contributing to Kenya's growth from abroad. Meanwhile, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to select officials from the leadership of Kenyan Diaspora associations, Kenya High Commission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ensuring that participants possess specific knowledge, or are in key positions relevant to diaspora diplomacy

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<sup>17</sup> Dannels, S. A. (2018). Research design. In *The reviewer's guide to quantitative methods in the social sciences* (pp. 402-416). Routledge

<sup>18</sup> Abbott, M. L., & McKinney, J. (2012). *Understanding and applying research design*. John Wiley & Sons

<sup>19</sup> Myers, J. L., Well, A. D., & Lorch Jr, R. F. (2013). *Research design and statistical analysis*. Routledge.

and economic growth initiatives. This targeted approach enabled the study to gather in-depth, expert insights into the policies, strategies, and perspectives that shape diaspora engagement at the governmental level, providing a balanced view of both the policy framework and the impact of diaspora diplomacy strategy on the remittance flows.

Given the small number of officials from the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs (15), staff at the Kenya Mission in Australia (29), and the leaders of diaspora associations (54), the study adopted a census approach for these three categories. This means that all individuals in these groups were included in the study. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that only those directly involved in diaspora policy, coordination, or growth activities were selected for participation. However, the Kenyan diaspora population residing in Australia (22,348) was too large for a full census. Therefore, the study used Yamane's (1967) simplified formula to determine a representative sample size from this group. At a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the sample size was calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)} = \frac{22,348}{1 + 22,348(0.0025)} = \frac{22,348}{57.87} \approx 386$$

Accordingly, 386 Kenyan diaspora residents were included in the study giving a total sample size of 484 respondents.

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, including Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with officials, questionnaires for Kenyan diaspora in Australia, and secondary data analysis. KIIs delved into diaspora diplomacy's intricacies and its impact on remittance flows, while questionnaires quantified remittance flows, diaspora engagements and the constraints in the entire process<sup>41</sup>. Interviews were administered to the sampled respondents in MFDA (15), Kenya Mission in Australia (29) and the leadership of the Kenyan diaspora (54) associations in various states in Australia. On the other hand, questionnaires were administered to the sampled Kenyan diaspora (386). This triangulation ensured a comprehensive analysis of the study.

The study used SPSS to analyze quantitative data from the Kenyan diaspora in Australia, examining variables like the effect of diaspora diplomacy strategies on remittance flows. Qualitatively, interviews and document analyses identified key themes related to diaspora engagement, remittance flows and more so the challenges faced in the process. Triangulation cross-validated findings, ensuring robust insights into the diaspora's remittance contributions. Top of Form Prior authorization was obtained from relevant authorities, including the University of Nairobi and NACOSTI. Before conducting interviews, the study's objectives and procedures were clearly explained to participants, who were approached respectfully and given the option to participate voluntarily. The importance and potential benefits of the study was communicated to participants, emphasizing their autonomy in decision-making.

#### 4.0 Findings and Discussion

Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements related to Kenya's diaspora diplomacy strategies in Australia. The responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Table 1 presents the results.

**Table 1: Descriptive Analysis on Implementation of Diaspora Diplomacy Strategies**

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Effective provision of mobile consular services have been facilitated.	9.3	13.4	22.7	35.1	19.6	3.42	1.20
Distressed Kenyans have been evacuated by the State Department/Kenya mission.	8.2	12.4	29.9	30.9	18.6	3.39	1.17
A baseline survey has been conducted to establish diaspora desks.	10.3	14.4	24.7	30.9	19.6	3.36	1.22
Diaspora were invited for the 2023 diaspora homecoming convention.	6.2	10.3	23.7	38.1	21.6	3.59	1.12
Awareness of bilateral labor agreements signed with Australia.	12.4	18.6	25.8	27.8	15.5	3.15	1.23
Access and use of digitized diaspora government services.	7.2	9.3	19.6	38.1	25.8	3.66	1.14
Effective sensitization on investment opportunities in Kenya.	9.3	14.4	20.6	35.1	20.6	3.44	1.20
Inclusion of diaspora in stakeholder consultations on remittances.	11.3	17.5	26.8	27.8	16.5	3.20	1.21
Awareness of CBK's online investment application.	14.4	19.6	22.7	28.9	14.4	3.09	1.25
Reduced transaction cost on remitting money to Kenya.	10.3	16.5	21.6	34.0	17.5	3.32	1.21
All Kenyan diaspora registered with Kenya Mission in Canberra.	22.7	30.9	18.6	17.5	10.3	2.62	1.26
Involvement of diaspora in planning and budgeting of programs.	18.6	21.6	22.7	24.7	12.4	2.91	1.28
Collaboration in research and capacity building.	13.4	20.6	27.8	25.8	12.4	3.03	1.22
Mental health support services for distressed diaspora.	15.5	22.7	24.7	23.7	13.4	2.97	1.26
Awareness of diaspora portal and Kazi Majuu	10.3	13.4	20.6	32.0	23.7	3.46	1.22

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platform.							
Engagement of diaspora associations in facilitation efforts.	8.2	12.4	23.7	36.1	19.6	3.46	1.14
Registration as dual citizens in large numbers.	5.2	10.3	18.6	39.2	26.8	3.72	1.08
Harnessing of diaspora skills and expertise.	7.2	11.3	21.6	36.1	23.7	3.58	1.15

Descriptive results in Table 1 depicts that majority of the respondents (54.7%) agreed that mobile consular services had been effectively facilitated by the Kenya Mission, while (22.7%) were neutral and (22.7%) disagreed. The mean score was 3.42 (SD = 1.20), suggesting moderate satisfaction with outreach services. This indicated that while access had improved, consistency in delivery across regions may still need strengthening. Additionally, approximately a half (49.5%) of the respondents acknowledged that distressed Kenyans had been evacuated during crises, although (29.9%) remained neutral, likely due to lack of personal exposure. The mean of 3.39 (SD = 1.17) showed that the diaspora recognized emergency diplomatic interventions, even though awareness could be enhanced through structured communication during crisis events.

Regarding the conduct of baseline surveys to establish diaspora desks, a half (50.5%) of respondents agreed, whereas (24.7%) were undecided. With a mean of 3.36 (SD = 1.22), the findings indicated limited visibility of this initiative on the ground, implying a need for follow-up feedback sessions and reporting. Furthermore, more than half (59.7%) of Kenyan in Australia reported that they were invited to the December 2023 Diaspora Homecoming Convention, while (23.7%) remained neutral. The relatively high mean of 3.59 (SD = 1.12) reflect successful diplomatic outreach for flagship events. This suggests that such high-profile gatherings are effective tools for diaspora engagement and should be scaled to more regions.

In contrast, a smaller proportion (43.3%) indicated awareness of bilateral labor agreements or MOUs between Kenya and Australia, while (31.0%) expressed disagreement and (25.8%) were neutral. The mean of 3.15 (SD = 1.23) pointed to a communication gap in publicizing formal bilateral frameworks. This underscored the need for the diaspora to be made more aware of policy negotiations that directly impact their employment prospects. Majority (63.9%) agreed that they had accessed and used digitized government services, reflecting a mean of 3.66 (SD = 1.14). This suggests growing digital adoption and trust in government e-platforms, which can be leveraged further for diaspora data management and consular services delivery.

In terms of investment opportunity sensitization, 55.7% of the respondents agreed it had been effective, although (23.7%) were undecided. The mean score of 3.44 (SD = 1.20) indicated that while outreach efforts were underway, impact could be enhanced through collaboration with diaspora associations and tailored financial literacy programs. On the inclusion of diaspora in remittance consultations, only 44.3% agreed while 28.8% disagreed and 26.8% were neutral. The mean score of 3.20 (SD = 1.21) pointing towards minimal involvement in shaping financial reforms or remittance policy, suggesting that structured stakeholder engagement frameworks are yet to be fully established.

Awareness of the CBK's online investment application was relatively low, with only (43.3%) indicating agreement and (34.0%) expressing disagreement. The mean of 3.09 (SD = 1.25)

reflected insufficient outreach regarding this digital platform. This represents a missed opportunity to harness diaspora capital for local financial markets. On remittance transaction costs, a majority (51.5%) felt that costs had been reduced, though (21.6%) were neutral and (26.8%) disagreed. With a mean of 3.32 (SD = 1.21), the data showed modest improvement in cost efficiency. Wider partnerships with competitive financial service providers may further reduce costs and boost remittance flows. Concerning registration with the Kenya Mission in Canberra, a majority (53.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that all diaspora in Australia were registered. The low mean of 2.62 (SD = 1.26) underscored poor diplomatic database coverage, pointing to an urgent need for proactive registration drives and awareness initiatives.

Only 37.1% reported involvement in planning and budgeting by the Kenya Mission, while (40.2%) disagreed and (22.7%) were neutral. The mean of 2.91 (SD = 1.28) reflected a perception of marginalization in program design. Addressing this requires transparent mechanisms for participatory diaspora governance. With respect to research collaboration, just 38.2% of respondents acknowledged such efforts, while (34.0%) disagreed. The mean of 3.03 (SD = 1.22) suggested limited institutional partnerships with diaspora scholars and professionals, despite their expertise. This calls for strategic alignment between diaspora knowledge networks and Kenya's research ecosystem.

Support services for mental health and distress cases were not widely acknowledged, with only (37.1%) agreeing and (38.2%) expressing disagreement. The mean of 2.97 (SD = 1.26) pointed to a serious gap in psychosocial support for diaspora communities, especially in times of crisis or trauma. Awareness of the diaspora portal and the Kazi Majuu platform was fairly strong, with (55.7%) of respondents expressing agreement. The mean of 3.46 (SD = 1.22) indicated potential for scaling up diaspora-targeted job platforms, provided user engagement is consistently supported. Slightly more than a half (55.7%) of the participants agreed that diaspora associations had been regularly engaged by the State Department and Kenya Mission. The mean of 3.46 (SD = 1.14) indicating moderate institutional collaboration, suggesting that diaspora associations are viable channels for mobilization and feedback.

Dual citizenship registration emerged as the highest-rated area, with (66.0%) confirming high registration levels. The mean of 3.72 (SD = 1.08) suggested that legal dual nationality was well-utilized, enabling diaspora members to contribute more freely to both nations' economies. Finally, 59.8% of respondents agreed that the State Department was harnessing diaspora skills and expertise. The mean score of 3.58 (SD = 1.15) indicated that the diaspora's professional capital was being increasingly recognized, though formal frameworks for utilization were still evolving. These findings are consistent with the outcome of a study by<sup>20</sup> who acknowledged the African Union's recognition of the African diaspora as a crucial partner in the continent's growth endeavors. This recognition was evident in the migration policy framework and plan of action (2018-2030), which prioritizes diaspora engagement to enhance their involvement in Africa's growth and their countries of origin. Notably, some African nations, including Kenya, have integrated diaspora diplomacy into their foreign policy strategies. The late Prof. Pius Adesanmi's collaboration with African Heads of Mission in Ottawa, Canada, exemplifies the significance of diaspora engagement. Through various academic forums, Prof. Adesanmi facilitated discussions among the African diaspora on pertinent global issues, showcasing his role as a prominent figure in diaspora

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<sup>20</sup> Kerubo, Jane. "Diaspora diplomacy: opportunities and challenges for African countries." *Nokoko* 9 (2021): 36-52.

diplomacy.

### Thematic Analysis

The study further conducted interviews with Kenyan diaspora residents living in Australia, to gain deeper insights into their engagement with Kenya and the challenges they faced. Respondents represented diverse professional backgrounds, including IT consultants, healthcare workers, educationists, self-employed entrepreneurs, and skilled trades persons. Many interviewees had lived in Australia for over a decade and actively maintained connections with their homeland, either through remittances, investments, or regular visits. During the interviews, respondents were asked to describe the income-generating activities they had pursued in Kenya within the last six months.

The interviews revealed that most participants had engaged in some form of economic activity in Kenya. These included real estate ventures such as purchasing land in satellite towns like Ruiru, Kitengela, and Juja, often for growth or resale. Several respondents mentioned leasing agricultural land to local family members for horticultural and dairy farming. Others had funded businesses run by relatives, including retail kiosks, hardware shops, boda boda fleets, and water delivery services. A few respondents reported having supported tech start-ups or e-commerce platforms operated remotely from Australia. Respondent 1 noted that:

*“I recently financed a greenhouse project in Limuru through my cousin. The returns aren’t huge yet, but it gives me a foothold back home.”*

Participants were then asked to describe the overall nature of their interaction with Kenya, their motherland, and how it could be improved. Many described their relationship with Kenya as deeply emotional and culturally rooted, but institutionally frustrating. While social ties with family and friends were strong, bureaucratic barriers, poor service delivery at embassies, and lack of transparency in public institutions discouraged deeper involvement. Several respondents expressed disappointment with the perceived lack of responsiveness from the Kenyan Mission in Canberra. Respondent 3 stated that:

*“I want to help more, but dealing with the embassy is discouraging... you rarely get answers or updates unless you follow up several times.”*

Suggestions for improvement included creating an efficient, user-friendly diaspora web portal, increasing town hall meetings with embassy officials, providing regular investment bulletins, and simplifying procedures for document authentication and dual citizenship services. Respondents also recommended creating diaspora desks at the county level to support decentralized investment and mentorship opportunities.

On the future prospects for Kenya and the Kenyan diaspora in Australia, many interviewees expressed cautious optimism. They believed the diaspora had immense potential to contribute to Kenya’s growth through knowledge transfer, remittances, and joint ventures. However, most emphasized the need for structural reforms in governance, financial accountability, and diaspora engagement. The concept of a diaspora bond, tax incentives for diaspora investments, and a centralized database for diaspora skills were mentioned frequently. Respondent 5 reported that:

*“We’re ready to build Kenya from afar, but there must be systems that protect our interests. Without trust and structure, it’s hard to commit long-term.”*

Several interviewees envisioned growth in collaborative sectors such as renewable energy, agri-

tech, education, and diaspora tourism. Others hoped that second-generation migrants would be encouraged to engage more with Kenya through cultural exchange programs and entrepreneurial initiatives backed by the government.

Finally, respondents were invited to elaborate on any additional issues not captured in the questionnaire. A number of them raised concerns about emotional disconnect, especially among their children who had grown up in Australia and lacked direct exposure to Kenyan culture. Some interviewees also voiced fears about property rights in Kenya, citing cases of land fraud and exploitation by relatives or corrupt local officials. Respondent 8 indicated that:

*“Even when you invest, you worry someone will grab your land or mismanage your project it makes you think twice.”*

Others proposed the creation of a Ministry of Diaspora Affairs to consolidate policies and streamline services. They also advocated for diaspora voting rights and greater inclusion in national growth planning. Respondent 3 explained that:

*“We’re not just ATM machines we’re Kenyans. Give us a voice, not just a place in the remittance line.”*

The findings from these interviews revealed strong emotional commitment of the diaspora to Kenya’s growth, but also exposed deep systemic gaps that hinder full participation. Addressing these gaps through policy reforms, targeted diaspora services, and trust-building initiatives would unlock greater remittance flows and long-term investment in Kenya’s growth trajectory.

In addition, during interviews with government officials and high commission staff, they were asked: How would you describe the extent of implementation of diaspora diplomacy strategies targeting the Kenyan diaspora in Australia between 2008 and 2024? Respondents generally indicated that diaspora diplomacy was underdeveloped in the earlier years, with minimal structured engagement. Several rated the implementation at a 3 on a scale of 1 to 10 for the years before 2015. Respondent 13 stated:

*“Initially, efforts were fragmented. There was no clear diaspora strategy tailored to Australia. Engagements were ad hoc, largely reactive, and lacked a dedicated framework to harness diaspora contributions.”*

Respondents noted that the launch of Kenya’s diaspora policy and the creation of the State Department for Diaspora Affairs helped strengthen institutional focus after 2015. The Kenya High Commission in Canberra expanded its outreach, began mapping diaspora networks, and initiated virtual town halls. Nonetheless, many respondents pointed out that sustained diplomatic presence and structured investment initiatives remained limited. Respondent 11 asserted that:

*“While structures like the Diaspora Investment Fund and digital platforms like e-Citizen have increased transparency and engagement, Australia remains under-served compared to regions like North America or the Gulf.”*

Another question posed was: "What are the main ways through which the Kenya Mission in Australia supports or influences diaspora remittance flows?" Respondents identified several diplomatic tools: financial literacy webinars, consular services that ease documentation, diaspora business forums, and campaigns encouraging formal remittance channels. Some pointed to initiatives such as e-passport drives and dual citizenship processing as examples of trust-building. Respondent 10 remarked:

*“When diaspora members feel seen and valued by their government, they are more likely to remit formally and invest long-term. Our outreach has contributed to increased visibility of official remittance channels, especially during the COVID-19 period.”*

Despite these efforts, respondents acknowledged that gaps remain in engaging the highly skilled Kenyan population in Australia. Many professionals remit irregularly and lack information on targeted investment platforms. Respondent 9 indicate that:

*“There is a huge pool of Kenyan professionals in Australia, including in health, academia, and IT. But beyond cultural events and ID processing, few programs actually target this group’s financial potential.”*

Interviewees were also asked: "What challenges hinder the effective implementation of diaspora diplomacy strategies in Australia?" Common responses included under-funding, limited staff at the High Commission, and lack of diaspora segmentation. Several respondents highlighted that the mission covers multiple countries, stretching its capacity. Respondent 5 explained that:

*“We are often playing catch-up. Australia is geographically distant and doesn’t always feature prominently in regional diaspora strategy planning. We need more localized research and dedicated funding to strengthen engagement.”*

In addition, regulatory differences between Kenya and Australia make financial integration challenging. Respondents cited difficulties in launching diaspora-targeted bonds and investment vehicles due to compliance and dual taxation issues. Respondent 8 said that:

*“Some of our diaspora want to invest in Kenya, but they are deterred by lack of clear frameworks, inconsistent tax treaties, and concerns over land and property fraud back home.”*

Lastly, officials were asked:

"In your opinion, what has been the overall impact of diaspora diplomacy on remittance trends from Australia to Kenya?"

Most respondents agreed that while remittance volumes have grown significantly, especially post-2020, the role of diaspora diplomacy has only been modest. Respondent 1 explained that:

*“The increase in remittances is driven more by personal obligation, growth in diaspora income, and improved fintech, than by structured diplomacy. Nonetheless, diplomacy can enhance these flows if better resourced.”*

Some respondents emphasized that targeted diaspora diplomacy such as mobilizing professionals, streamlining investment, and showcasing success stories has untapped potential. Respondent 6 remarked:

*“If diaspora diplomacy can move from ceremonial events to economic partnerships, we will see more remittances being directed to productive sectors, not just consumption.”*

## **5.0 Conclusion**

Diaspora diplomacy serves as an important mechanism for creating sustained socio-economic linkages between the Kenyan government and its diaspora population in Australia. However, the effectiveness of these strategies depends largely on structured implementation, accessibility of services, and responsive engagement. Where implemented with consistency such as through digital

platforms, dual citizenship facilitation, and flagship events, diplomacy yields measurable benefits in terms of remittance volumes and diaspora participation. Nonetheless, the overall reach and depth of the strategies remain uneven, indicating a need for recalibration and more strategic targeting of diaspora-rich regions like Queensland and Victoria.

Furthermore, the study concludes that diaspora associations and professional networks remain underdeveloped in Kenya's diplomatic and growth efforts. These groups possess both organizational capacity and social capital that, if mobilized, have the ability to serve as reliable conduits for remittance pooling, investment coordination, and policy feedback. Yet, the absence of formalized partnerships between government agencies and these associations undermines collective initiatives and isolates individual diaspora members in their attempts to contribute. Institutionalizing diaspora association involvement would enhance inclusivity and scale up the impact of remittance-backed growth.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

In view of the findings, this study recommends that the Government of Kenya, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its diplomatic mission in Australia should expand and decentralize the delivery of consular services. Priority should be given to establishing mobile consular units and satellite service centers in high-density diaspora states such as Queensland and Victoria. These units should be properly equipped to provide document processing, dual citizenship registration, and diaspora desk services to enhance convenience, inclusivity, and visibility of government presence in regions with large Kenyan populations. The study recommends the formalization of structured partnerships between the Kenyan Mission and diaspora associations in Australia. These partnerships should be institutionalized through signed memorandum of understanding (MOUs) that define collaborative roles in mobilization, investment coordination, feedback collection, and participation in policy consultations. The study also recommends empowering diaspora associations as formal stakeholders in Kenya's growth processes which will be key in improving accountability, create trusted investment pathways, and create a deeper diaspora ownership in national programs.

Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the National Treasury and Central Bank of Kenya should strive to prioritize the negotiation and operationalization of bilateral agreements with Australia. Such agreements should cover labor mobility frameworks, double taxation avoidance, and investment protection protocols. These instruments are necessary to provide legal, financial, and regulatory assurances to diaspora members seeking to remit, invest, or work between the two countries. Implementing such agreements will enhance Kenya's ability to harness diaspora capital more sustainably. To improve digital access and service delivery, the study recommends scaling up and integrating diaspora-specific digital platforms, including the diaspora portal and Kazi Majuu platform. These platforms should offer end-to-end e-services such as application tracking, investment advisory, diaspora bond subscriptions, and access to public procurement opportunities. User experience must be enhanced through simplified interfaces, multilingual options, real-time assistance, and mobile optimization. Improved digital infrastructure will close communication gaps and increase participation in formal channels of engagement.

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