

Diaspora Country Index Introduces New Readiness Framework for Mobilizing Diaspora Capital for Global South Development

DCI's Diaspora Bond Readiness Index draws lessons from Ethiopia's Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam to help countries assess the foundations needed before seeking diaspora investment



Diaspora Country Index (DCI)

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The Diaspora Country Index (DCI) is advancing a new framework for how countries across the Global South approach diaspora financing, starting with a simple premise: readiness must come before capital.

Through its Diaspora Bond Readiness Index and new case study on Ethiopia's Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), DCI is developing a practical approach to help governments assess whether the policies, institutions, financial conditions, diaspora relationships, and accountability mechanisms needed for diaspora investment are in place.

The initiative comes as governments across the Global South face growing pressure to finance infrastructure and economic development while traditional Official Development Assistance faces significant constraints.

"Countries should not begin by asking how much money their diaspora will invest," said Nii Simmonds, Founder and Executive Director of the Diaspora Country Index. *"They should begin by asking whether they have built the institutions, relationships, trust, financial structures, and participation channels required for sustained diaspora engagement. Our work is designed to help countries answer that question."*

Readiness Before Capital

DCI's Diaspora Bond Readiness Index assesses all 54 African countries using three initial indicators: diaspora engagement policy, sovereign credit standing, and diaspora remittances as a share of GDP.

The August 2026 index identifies Benin, Botswana, Ghana, Madagascar, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Africa within DCI's High readiness category. Ethiopia currently scores 4 out of 6, placing the country within the Medium readiness category.

The index is designed as an early-stage benchmark rather than an endorsement of bond issuance. Individual countries and projects require deeper assessment of legal structures, market access, investor

protections, project economics, implementation capacity, and other risks.

DCI sees the index as the starting point for a broader readiness framework connecting measurement with action.

From Bonds of Trust to Bonds of Finance

For DCI, diaspora finance begins with relationships.

Governments seeking diaspora investment need sustained engagement with communities abroad, credible projects, transparent institutions, clear participation terms, accessible information, investor protections, and mechanisms for accountability.

DCI refers to this progression as moving from bonds of trust to bonds of finance.

The objective is to help countries build the readiness infrastructure required to engage diaspora communities as investors, professionals, researchers, entrepreneurs, technical experts, and long-term development partners.

GERD Offers an Important Case Study

Ethiopia's Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam provides a significant example of diaspora participation in a major African infrastructure project.

Construction began in 2011, and Ethiopia inaugurated GERD in September 2025. Reuters reported the total project cost at approximately \$5 billion. Ethiopia relied heavily on domestic mobilization to support the project. Government accounts identify bond sales, donations, SMS campaigns, and community fundraising among the channels used to raise resources.

The Ethiopian diaspora participated within this broader financing effort. Ethiopian officials also reported diaspora contributions through expertise, advocacy, and international engagement.

DCI does not present diaspora bonds as the primary source of GERD financing. Instead, the case demonstrates how a country connected a major national development priority with organized participation from citizens at home and communities abroad.

The experience also offers an important caution.

Ethiopian Electric Power marketed GERD-related bonds to members of the Ethiopian community in the United States. In 2016, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission announced a settlement related to unregistered bond sales, with the utility agreeing to return funds with interest.

For DCI, the lesson is clear: mobilizing diaspora interest is only one part of readiness. Governments must address securities regulation, disclosure requirements, investor protection, market access, financial reporting, and accountability before offering investment products abroad.

A New Development Finance Framework for the Global South

DCI believes the GERD experience points toward a broader opportunity.

Countries across Africa and the wider Global South face major financing needs in energy, transportation, agriculture, healthcare, housing, digital infrastructure, industrial development, climate resilience, and advanced manufacturing.

Diaspora communities represent one potential source of capital, expertise, networks, and market knowledge.

Yet successful mobilization requires more than launching a bond or fundraising campaign.

DCI's emerging framework focuses on helping countries assess and strengthen the conditions that support participation, including institutional leadership, diaspora engagement, project definition, financial credibility, regulatory preparedness, accountability, communication, and routes for professional participation.

The long-term objective is to move from ranking readiness toward helping countries improve readiness.

"We see an opportunity to develop a new layer of development infrastructure for the Global South," Simmonds said. "The question is not simply whether diaspora capital exists. The question is whether countries are prepared to engage it responsibly, transparently, and at scale."

From Benchmarking to Action

DCI plans to build on its indices through country assessments, case studies, frameworks, toolkits, research partnerships, and engagement with governments, development finance institutions, philanthropies, universities, diaspora organizations, and other development partners.

The approach reflects DCI's wider mission of benchmarking and building diaspora readiness infrastructure for Global South economic transformation.

The Diaspora Bond Readiness Index is available at:

<https://diasporacountryindex.org/diaspora-bonds-readiness-index/>

DCI's GERD case study, "Ethiopia's GERD: Lessons for Diaspora Participation in Infrastructure Finance," is available at:

<https://diasporacountryindex.org/our-work/case-studies/gerd-diaspora-financing/>

About Diaspora Country Index

Diaspora Country Index (DCI) is an independent, non-partisan platform focused on benchmarking and building diaspora readiness infrastructure for Global South economic transformation.

DCI develops indices, research, case studies, frameworks, and partnerships designed to help countries strengthen the institutional foundations needed to engage diaspora talent, expertise, networks, and capital.

DCI's current work includes the Diaspora Bond Readiness Index, Diaspora Climate Readiness Index, and research examining practical models for diaspora participation in economic development.

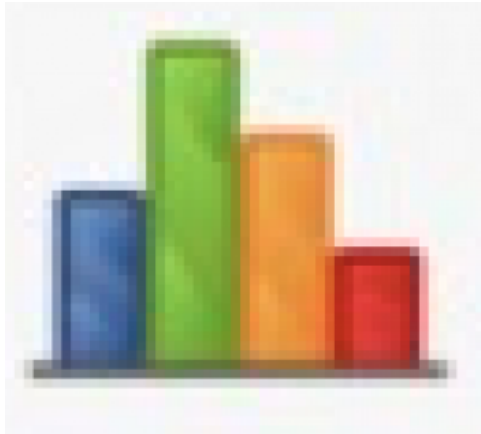
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