

**Tracing the Diaspora's Involvement in the Development  
of a Nation: The Case of Dominica**

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## Contents

I. Introduction .....	3
II. The History of Dominica's Migration Movement .....	4
III. The Modern Diaspora Movement.....	6
A. Remittances and its Impact .....	6
B. Dominica's Brain Drain .....	10
C. Organizing the Diaspora for National Development.....	13
IV. Conclusion .....	18
V. References.....	19
Figures	
1. Dominica: Net Migration Rate, 1985 - 2005 .....	5
2. Dominica: Total Migration by Major Destinations 1965 -2005 .....	6
3. Dominica: Cash and In-Kind Remittances 1991 - 2004 .....	7
4. Dominica: Remittances, FDI, and Official Transfers .....	8
5. Dominica: Percent of Labor Force that has Migrated to the USA, 1965 - 2000 .....	10
6. Top-20 Skilled Emigration Countries, 2000 .....	12
Tables	
1. Dominica: Remittances Transfers Exports FDI and GDP 1991-2004 .....	9
2. Emigration Loss Due to High-Skilled Migration .....	13

## I. INTRODUCTION

Dominica is ranked among the top five countries in the world with the highest rates of net migration having lost most of its population over the past thirty years. It is considered to be the only such country in the world in the recent past to experience negative population growth on account of voluntary migration. So widespread is the phenomenon, it is estimated that every household on the island has at least one family member who have migrated. Dominicans often view migration as a right of passage, with a vast number leaving to seek to further their studies, while others have done so in search of employment opportunities or to join family members.

As early as the nineteenth century, Dominicans left the country in search of employment opportunities, but it was only after the Second World War that the pace of migration truly quickened. Three distinct migratory periods have since been identified: 1959 - 1962 where the majority of the migrants went to the United Kingdom and the United States Virgin Islands; 1981 – 1993 featuring the migration of entire families to the United States, Canada, and the French Caribbean territories; and 1996 - 2005 where the majority of those emigrating went to Canada and the United States.

Building on a sound primary and secondary education system in the country, a large number of those migrating have gone on to distinguish themselves in their adopted homelands in areas as diverse as business, medicine, information technology, and law. Over the years, these Diaspora Dominicans have played a consistent role both on an individual and group basis in contributing to the local economy. Traditionally, this support has involved the provision of financial and material resources to family and friends, the setting up of businesses, and promoting and preserving Dominica's rich cultural heritage. Undoubtedly, the large levels of remittances that have been sent to the country has helped improve Dominica's development prospects, mitigated against adverse external shocks, maintained macroeconomic stability, and reduced poverty.

Empirical research on migration has largely focused on the impact of remittances and the effect of the brain drain on source countries. This paper, in addition to examining these effects will also look at the tremendous impact on Dominica's development prospects that the Diaspora have brought to bear. The most recent wave of migration has created tremendous opportunities, which if properly managed, can do a great deal to reverse the damaging effects of the 'brain drain' and contribute significantly towards the development of Dominica. Mishra (2006) suggested that countries should seek to increase the benefits of emigration by adopting a "Diaspora Approach" in which the Diaspora is used to build networks for trade, tourism and investment promotion; harness its knowledge, skills, and assets; and attract higher and more efficient forms of remittances.

Indeed, within the Dominican Diaspora, there has been, in the recent past, a focus on forging new partnerships across the various countries, and a commitment to the noble task of Nation building. Increasingly, Diaspora Dominicans are appreciating their common destiny regardless of geographical location, realizing their potential, and are beginning to understand and appreciate the expanded role that they can play in helping make a difference in their homeland.

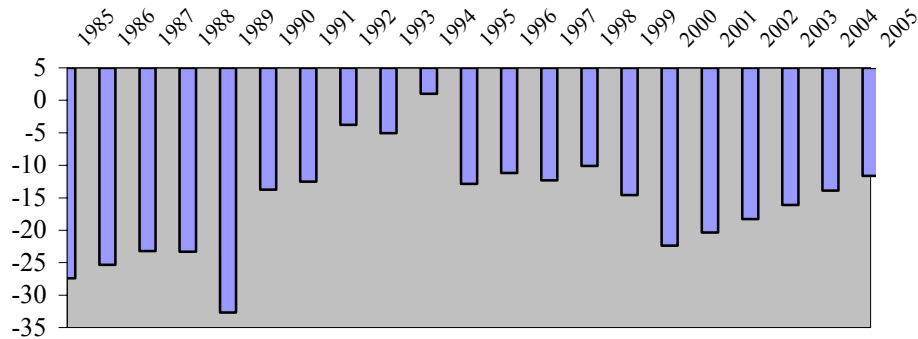
Several new initiatives undertaken by the Dominica Diaspora in the recent past provides a glimpse of the opportunities that exist and also hints at the direction that the Diaspora is headed in bringing a larger focus to the efforts at Nation building. While these initiatives are still new, they also serve to reinforce the traditional role of the Dominican Diaspora and give added perspective to its involvement. Among these initiatives are efforts aimed at harnessing the tremendous human potential, which exists within the Diaspora including through the launching of the Dominica Academy of Arts and Sciences, with its stated goal of creating a database of skilled and professional Dominicans, the Dominica Sustainable Energy Corporation (DSEC), and theDominican.net. There is a realization within the Dominica Diaspora that small independent efforts toward a common goal can succeed in turning a country around. These efforts are proving effective as new ways are found to utilize the Diaspora's considerable resources on helping to develop a nation.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section II examines the history of Dominica's migration movement; Section III explores the country's modern Diaspora movement with a focus on its impact on the development process and Section IV presents the paper's conclusion.

## **II. THE HISTORY OF DOMINICA'S MIGRATION MOVEMENT**

Dominica is ranked among the top five countries in the world having the highest rates of net migration, with a record high in 1989 of -32.7 per thousand of the population (Figure 1). Over the last hundred years, Dominicans have migrated in ever increasing numbers in search of employment opportunities, as was the case in the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and more recently in pursuit of higher education. In the 1800s many went to work in mines in Venezuela and French Guinea, and in the early 1900s on building the Panama Canal while others migrated to Aruba and Curacao. However, it was during the period from 1959 – 1962 that the country recorded an unprecedented wave of migration to the United Kingdom. During that three-year period, an estimated 14 percent of the population migrated to that country. At the time, the majority of emigrants were drawn from the rural areas and left with

Figure 1. Dominica: Net Migration Rate, 1985 - 2005  
(migrant(s)/1,000 population)



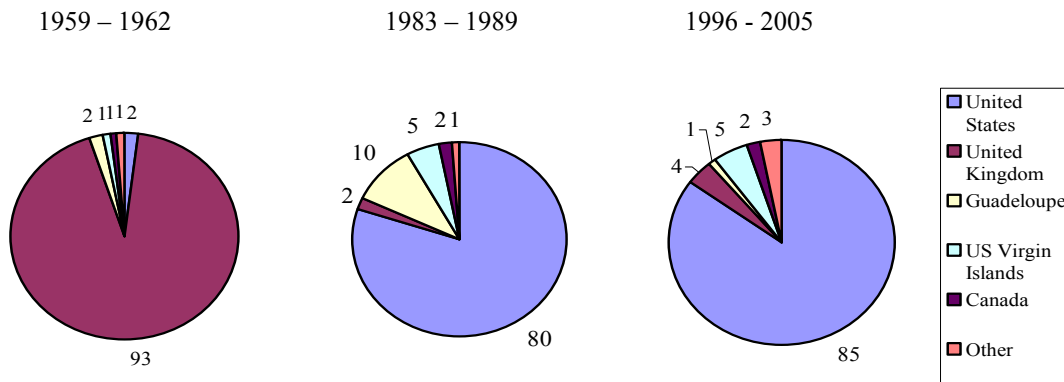
Sources: Central Statistics Office and CIA World Fact book.

hopes of starting a new life for themselves. The exodus only came to an end after the British authorities imposed immigration restrictions from the Caribbean in 1964.

The second major migration wave took place between 1983 -1992 when an estimated 25 percent of Dominica's mean population migrated, with about 80 percent going to the United States. During that period, approximately 8 percent of the population was granted immigrant United States visas and another 35 percent were issued with non-immigrant visas. Other migrants went to Canada, the United States Virgin Islands and the French Caribbean Islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique (Figure 2). An interesting feature of migration during this period was the large number of persons holding degrees as well as an influx of students going to universities in the United States.

Many of the migrants chose to go to the United States because it was relatively easy to secure visas and to access universities in that country. It is estimated that a sizeable number of those issued with non-immigrant United States visas remained in the country even after their expiration. Because the relatively more advanced economies of the French Caribbean were just minutes away from Dominica, they proved to be attractive countries of choice for migrants. Jobs were relatively easy to come by and the Dominicans also had very little problems in assimilating because of the shared common 'Creole' language. As such many of the migrants settled particularly in Guadeloupe, and the flow of official migration only slowed when the French authorities moved to impose visa restrictions in the late 1980s. Even so, illegal migration continued.

Figure 2. Dominica: Total Migration by Major Destinations 1965 – 2005  
(in percent)



Sources: Dominica census data and author's calculations.

The third major migration wave started in 1996 and continues to the present. Over the past ten years, an estimated 35 percent of the mean population migrated resulting in a net reduction of the overall population, as the migration rate exceeded the rate of natural increase of the population. A slowing economy and a correspondingly high rate of youth unemployment, estimated as much as 40 percent, combined with relatively easy entry into the United States and Canada are considered to be the main factors contributing to the exodus. Dominica's population in 2005 was estimated to be at least 10 percent lower compared to its 1990 level. In the latest migration wave, the overwhelming number of migrants was either skilled or recent graduates from secondary schools who went on to universities in the United States. Less than one percent of university graduates receiving their training in the United States, return to Dominica upon graduation. Recent efforts at organizing this tremendous skill set to focus on Dominica's development have drawn extensively from the most recent migration period.

### III. THE MODERN DIASPORA MOVEMENT

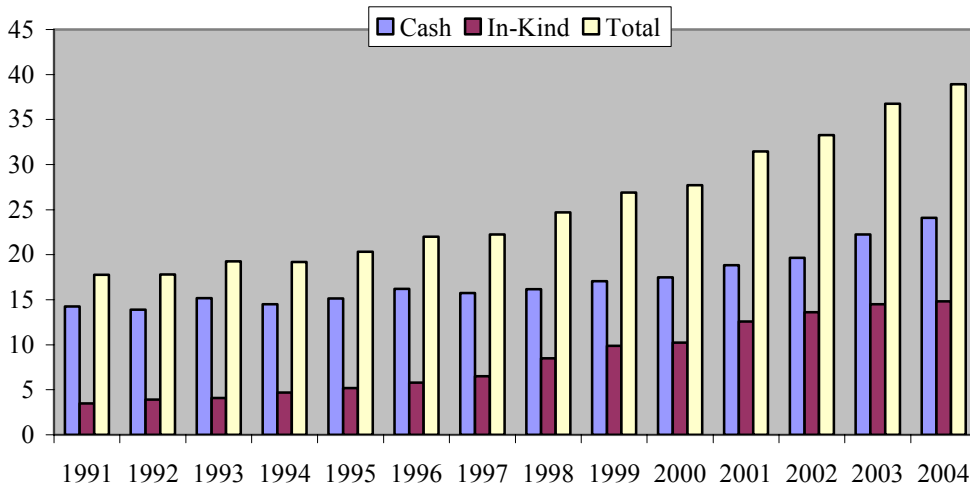
#### A. Remittances and its Impact on Dominica's Economy

It is a well established fact that migrating populations with families in the home countries traditionally send support in the form of remittances in cash and in kind. Indeed, quite a lot of research has gone into trying to estimate the levels of such assistance as well as its impact on recipient economies, particularly developing countries, given its relative importance to other foreign aid flows. For instance, Giuliano and Ruiz-Arranz (2005) found that migrant remittances can substitute for a lack of financial development in developing economies and hence promote economic growth via investment. The World Bank estimates that in 2004 over US \$150 billion were sent back to developing countries by the Diaspora with the Caribbean accounting for around \$40 billion.

A recent World Bank study<sup>1</sup> sought to determine the effects of migration, and identify migration policies, regulations and institutional reforms that will lead to superior development outcomes. The International Migration and Development Research Program was divided into a number of focus areas including: (i) the impact of migration and remittances on development indicators, including poverty and inequality, investment etc.; (ii) the brain drain; (iii) temporary migration including under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS); and (iv) the links between migration, trade, and Foreign Direct Investment.

Since 2001, the level of remittances to Dominica has more than doubled, keeping pace with the expanding migrant population. Interestingly, a significant amount of the remittances coming from the French Caribbean and the US Virgin islands are in-kind (consumer products, groceries etc.) (Figure 3). Dominica ranks among the world's top twenty recipients of remittances relative to GDP, and it currently constitutes the major source of external financing. As indicated in Figure 3, the level of remittances has consistently exceeded foreign direct investment and official government transfers and has more recently equaled export receipts. Clearly, the flow of formal remittances from the Diaspora to Dominica continues to exhibit an accelerating rate of growth.

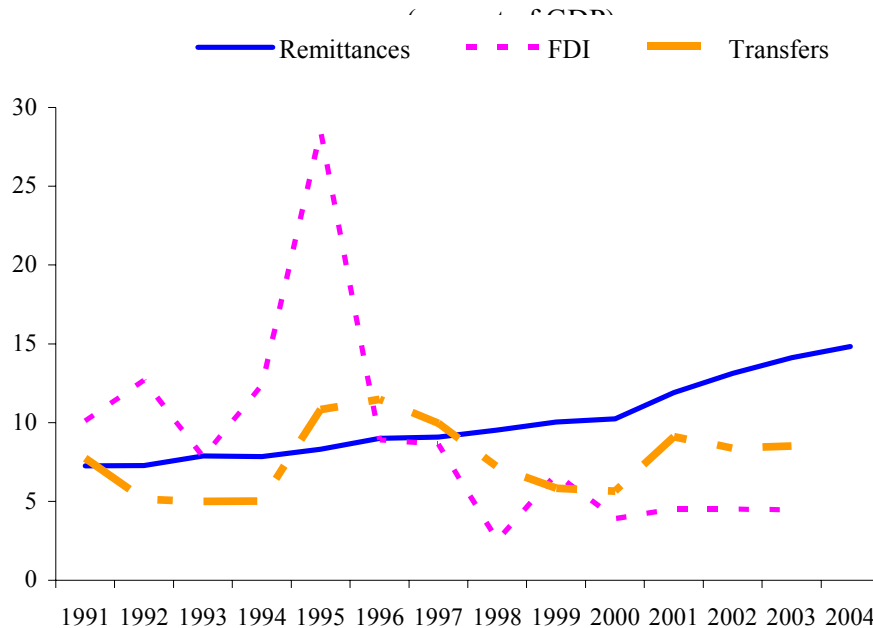
Figure 3. Dominica: Cash and In-Kind Remittances 1991 - 2004  
(in millions of US dollars)



Sources: Dominica Central Statistics Office and author's calculations.

<sup>1</sup> In International Migration Remittances and The Brain Drain edited by Çağlar Özden and Maurice Schiff.

Figure 4. Dominica: Remittances, FDI, and Official Transfers



Sources: IMF, *Balance of Payments Statistics* and Central Statistics Office.

Between 1991 and 2004, remittances increased from 7 percent to 14 percent of GDP, while FDI declined from 10 percent to 4.5 percent of GDP, official government transfers increased marginally from 7.7 percent, to 8.5 percent of GDP, and export earnings fell from a high of 37 percent to 15 percent of GDP. In 2003, the level of remittances exceeded export earnings for the first time. The declining export levels are linked to the demise of the banana industry, and anecdotal evidence points to an increased level of remittances as the economic situation worsens on the island (Figure 4 and Table 1).

Undoubtedly, remittances have helped improve Dominica's development prospects, mitigated against adverse external shocks, and maintained macroeconomic stability. In that regard, a crucial and important development effect of the Diaspora on the country has been its direct impact on income and poverty levels. Families who would not otherwise have been able to achieve a given level of consumption have successfully maintained certain lifestyles based solely on the income received from remittances. The inflow of remittances has also served to mitigate the adverse effects of the country's high rates of unemployment. In addition, there has been increased investment in physical and human capital as remittances have served to increase spending on education, health and nutrition.<sup>2</sup> Recent construction

<sup>2</sup> Studies conducted in Latin America for instance shows that remittances increase schooling and reduces the drop-out rate.



booms in Dominica have been fueled in large part by emigrants returning from the emigration wave of the 1960s. More than forty years after migrating to the United Kingdom, a substantial number of the immigrants having reached retirement age and are returning to build homes and spend retirement in their country of birth.

Table 1. Dominica: Remittances Transfers Exports FDI & GDP 1991 - 2004  
(In millions of USD)

	Private Remittances	FDI	Government Transfers	Export Revenue	GDP
1991	17.8	15.2	11.7	55.6	150.7
1992	17.8	20.4	8.2	54.6	161.1
1993	19.3	13.2	8.4	48.8	168.8
1994	19.2	22.6	9.2	47.1	182.8
1995	20.3	54.1	20.6	49.3	190.1
1996	22.0	17.8	23.0	51.3	200.3
1997	22.3	21.1	24.3	52.3	244.8
1998	24.7	6.5	18.6	62.0	259.2
1999	26.8	18.0	15.6	55.7	267.4
2000	27.7	10.6	15.3	53.5	270.9
2001	31.5	11.9	24.0	43.4	264.1
2002	33.3	11.4	21.2	41.8	253.5
2003	36.7	11.6	22.1	39.0	260.3
2004	40.2	10.8	24.1	43.5	265.6

Sources: IMF, *Balance of Payments Statistics* and Central Statistics Office

The literature has looked at the conditions under which the financial sector infrastructure, and in particular transaction costs, influences the propensity to remit. Several authors such as King and Levine (1993) and Beck, Levine, and Loayza (2000) have stressed the link between a fully functioning financial market and promotion of economic growth. However, Giuliano and Ruiz-Arranz (2005) find that agents compensate for the lack of development of local financial markets using remittances to ease liquidity constraints, channel resources towards productive investments, and hence promote economic growth. This is certainly the case for Dominica where a substantial amount of the cash returned by migrants are kept in local bank accounts and have thus benefited the local banking system. Further, evidence coming from Dominica also shows that contrary to the common perception that remittances are largely for consumption purposes, a sizable amount goes to financing private investment.

Dustmann and Kirchamp (2001) find that the savings of returning migrants may be an important source of start-up capital for micro enterprises. In the case of Dominica, more than 60 percent of the small business start-ups are reported to draw on remittances from the Diaspora or are as a result of the savings of emigrants returning to Dominica. Remittances have therefore served to alleviate credit constraints on the poor, and improve the allocation of capital. The level of remittances is expected to continue in the foreseeable future as waves of

upwardly mobile, highly educated migrants, the majority schooled in the developed countries, join the less skilled in continuing to establish residence in the developed countries.

### **B. Dominica's Brain Drain**

Over the years, Dominica has joined a number of other Caribbean countries that has lost scores of its brightest and best to emigration. Starting in the mid-seventies, large numbers of students just out of secondary schools began to leave for studies abroad. Most of these studies were financed by local banks providing student loans and private family support. In addition, successive governments have provided hundreds of scholarships and other incentives to facilitate study abroad.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of those receiving such scholarships have not returned to the country. Although the government usually requires the students to be bonded, most have opted to repay the bond in lieu of return or have simply ignored its repayment. While no definitive studies have been undertaken to determine the cost over time to the country, it is clear that the continued subsidization of education in that manner has been at huge costs to the country.<sup>4</sup>

Students returning with university degrees to Dominica often complain that there is limited opportunity to harness their newly acquired skills. For the most part, the government is the largest employer in the country and for many years it has restricted new employment. At the same time, the private sector has not been sufficiently developed to accommodate large numbers of individuals holding degrees. Thus, taking advantage of a relatively hassle free process for immigration to the United States, Great Britain and Canada, the overwhelming majority of persons holding degrees have simply migrated to these countries. In fact, Docquier and Marfouq (2005) have found that Dominica had the fifth highest rate of migration from the Caribbean of persons having a tertiary education (Figure 5).

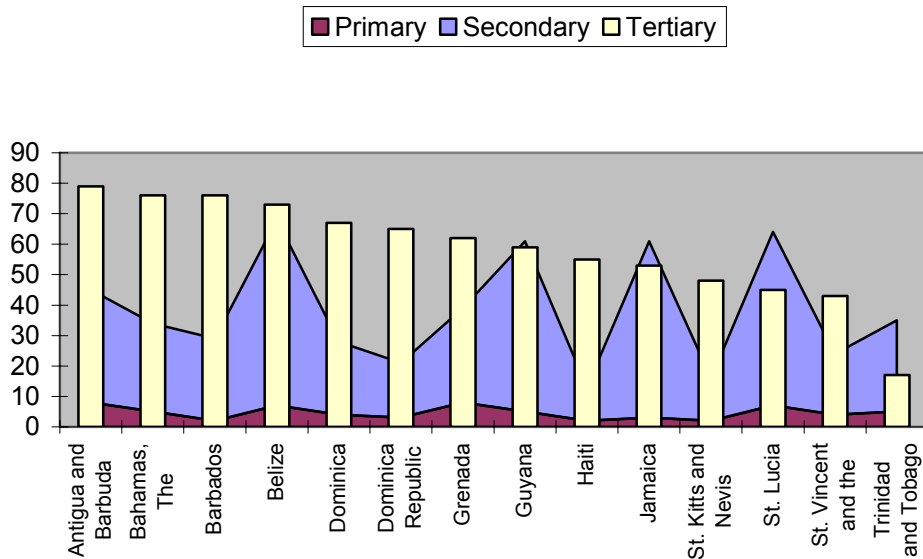
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<sup>3</sup> The majority of students have pursued studies in the United States, Great Britain and Canada, but hundreds have also been trained at Cuban universities and others have studied in India, other Commonwealth countries, Europe and Japan.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, each year the top student in the country receives a government scholarship referred to as the Island Scholarship. There are no restrictions on where the student could study. Most opt for the costlier private universities in the United States or Great Britain running into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, and they are neither bonded nor required to return to the country upon completion of their studies.

Figure 5. Percent of Labor Force that has Migrated to the United States, 1965 - 2000

(Restricting age at immigration to 16 or more years)



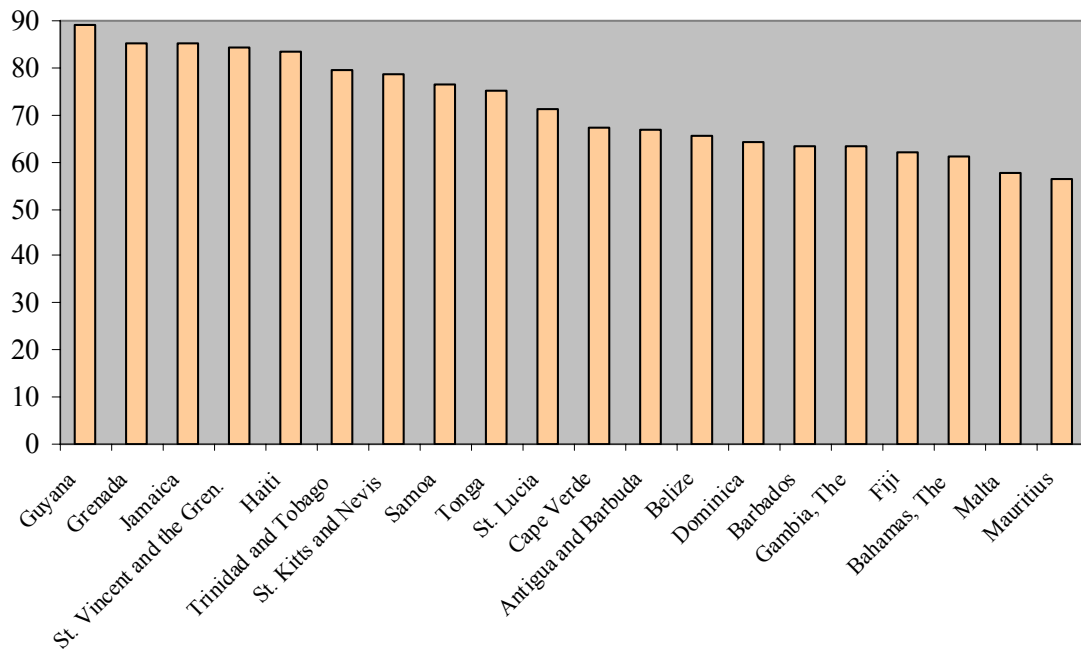
Sources: Docquier and Marfouq (2005) and author's calculations.

Early literature on the effects of the brain drain supports the view that when skilled labor migrates, the effect is damaging for those who remain in the country (Grubel and Scott 1966; Bhagwati and Hamada 1974; Kwok and Leland 1982). It is argued that the economy suffers if the migrants' contribution to that economy is greater than their marginal product, an effect that is compounded if the education of the skilled emigrants was partly funded by taxes on residents. Building on this, several authors (Miyagiwa 1991; Haque and Kim 1995) have reformulated the negative effects of the brain drain in an endogenous growth framework. However, more recent studies focus on the fact that migration may in fact foster human capital formation and growth in the sending country (Stark, Helmenstein, and Prskawetz 1998; Beine, Docquier, and Rapoport 2001). The authors argue that more people at home may enroll in domestic education since the prospects of migration through education opportunities increases the expected return of human capital. In the end, the increased acquisition of education contributes positively to growth and economic performance in that country. With respect to Dominica, students seeing the success of those who have migrated and hold degrees, often use that as an incentive to invest more heavily in their own secondary education. In their view, education offers a unique opportunity for migration and the chance at a better life.

While it is well known that the brain drain leads to a loss of productivity and taxes, and impacts sometimes negatively on the provision of key public services, such as education and health; historically, it has been difficult to empirically assess the full extent of its effect on

countries. However, recent efforts have been focused on deriving estimates of the emigration rates of skilled emigrants from developing countries. Carrington and Detragiache (1998, 1999) developed such estimates for 61 developing countries based on U.S. Census data, OECD data on immigration per country of origin, and Barro and Lee (2000) data describing the skill structure in sending countries. Docquier and Marfouk (2000) (Figure 6) also published data in which Dominica is ranked among the top twenty countries in the world having the highest rate of skilled emigration. The data confirms the trend noted earlier and

Figure 6. Top-20 Skilled Emigration Countries, 2000



Source: Docquier and Marfouq

points to the potentially damaging effect to the country of losing so many skilled persons.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In that respect, Dominica is not unlike many other Caribbean countries. These countries accounted for 13 of the top 20 countries in the world for emigration rates of skilled persons (7 of the top 10). A majority of the Caribbean countries have lost more than half of their labor force with a tertiary education, and more than 30 percent with secondary education.

A more recent effort in determining the effect of the brain drain on developing countries was done by Mishra (2005), in which the author calculated the ‘augmented emigration loss’ for several Caribbean countries. According to the author, the loss from the emigration of highly skilled workers confers a positive externality thus increasing the overall loss due to migration. This emigration loss<sup>6</sup> was then compared to the measurable benefit of remittances to the home country. In the case of Dominica, the benefit from remittances far exceeded the emigration loss (Table 2). However, when the estimated cost of education expenditure was added to emigration loss, combined, it exceeded the benefit of remittances to the home country.

	Emigration Loss e=0.3	Emigration Loss e=0.4	Remittances (as a percent of GDP) Average 1980-2002
Antigua and Barbuda	2.0	2.7	3.0
Bahamas, The	1.7	2.3	
Barbados	1.8	2.4	2.3
Belize	1.9	2.6	4.7
Dominica	1.9	2.5	8.4
Dominica Republic	0.2	0.3	5.3
Grenada	3.3	4.3	11.0
Guyana	3.6	4.7	1.9
Haiti	3.1	4.2	10.1
Jamaica	3.3	4.3	7.4
St. Kitts and Nevis	2.8	3.7	6.9
St. Lucia	2.3	3.0	4.0
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	3.2	4.3	7.2
Suriname	1.0	1.4	0.5
Trinidad and Tobago	2.8	3.8	0.3
Average	2.3	3.1	5.2

Source: Mishra (2006)

Note: e denotes the elasticity of factor price of labor (i.e., percentage change in wages resulting from a 1 percent change in the size of the labor force).

Clearly, the potentially damaging impact of such a large migration of skilled persons from Dominica has been mitigated to some extent by the readiness of the migrants to contribute,

<sup>6</sup> Emigration loss measures the welfare loss due to movement of labor. It arises because the cost of employing the inframarginal workers who migrate is less than the value of their marginal product. The surplus on these workers is therefore lost due to emigration, which imposes a cost on those who have stayed behind.

not only through remittances, but rather through a concerted effort to give of their time, skills and training to the development effort of their homeland. This desire is borne out by a fierce patriotism that is as natural as the desire to migrate in search of better opportunities. It is often manifested by the great interest in participating in different Diaspora groups and the willingness to be considered ‘Dominican’ even after having been away for several years. More recently, that patriotic favor has taken on an added dimension with the ease of communication, particularly via the internet, which has facilitated the coming together of disparate Dominican Diaspora groups across the globe.

### **C. Organizing the Diaspora for National Development**

Migration patterns for Dominicans show that the majority have moved to the larger population centers in their adopted countries. For instance, most migrants to the United States have moved to New York, Miami and Boston. In the case of Canada, migration has been largely to Toronto and in the United Kingdom to London. Having large numbers of Dominicans in an essentially localized area have provided the opportunity for organization. In all of these large population centers, there are several Dominican Diaspora organizations focused on coordinating support to their home country.<sup>7</sup>

With the rapid advancement in communication including through the internet, Diaspora organizations moved quickly to coordinate and harness the skill set that existed throughout the different Dominican migrant populations. Christian (2002) catalogues the rise of the national development consciousness among Dominican overseas communities. According to the author, the education reforms in Dominica during 1961 – 79, the upsurge of black nationalist and liberation politics in the 1970s; the growth of the internet; the increased access to college education in the United States by Dominicans in the 1980s and the advent of Dominican specific websites all contributed to a new dynamism in Diaspora Dominican involvement in development initiatives on the island.

Foremost among those efforts was the setting up in 2000 of a database of skilled persons within the Diaspora under the umbrella of the Dominica Academy of Arts and Sciences (DAAS), and a year later an on-line Diaspora newsmagazine, theDominican.net.<sup>8</sup> The primary mission of the DAAS is to gather the resources of overseas Dominicans in its skills directory, and promote specific research and development projects, which benefit the island. In addition, the Dominica Energy Sustainable Corporation (DSEC) was formed to promote the use of environmentally friendly energy generating processes, and the National Development Fund was offered as a means of streamlining financial assistance.

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<sup>7</sup> These ‘Dominican Associations’ as they are often referred to usually engages in fund raisers and relies upon donations to send cash and in-kind assistance to Dominica.

<sup>8</sup> The Dominican.net was founded in January 2001 by the author of this paper. It is focused on Dominican economic and social issues as well as the role of the Diaspora in development.

The early organizations such as those formed in London focused almost exclusively on providing support to public institutions like hospitals and schools. They also responded generously when there were natural disasters. Although there have been no definitive studies on this issue, it is widely believed that the Diaspora's role following the onslaught of hurricanes have served to mitigate the loss from those disasters. Typically at that time, support in the form of cash and transfers to families and institutions increases to compensate for local loss.

Christian (2002) notes that the Dominican Diaspora in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century seemed increasingly fixated on: (i) good governance on the island; (ii) economic activity which favor local control of the means of production; (iii) the right to vote for Diaspora Dominicans; (iv) integrity legislation to outlaw corruption in public office; (v) increased investment by the Diaspora and government incentives to spur the same; (vi) protection of Dominica's natural environment; and (vii) the building of a technologically advanced economy on the island. He observes further that the Diaspora internet sites focus on specific projects, which advance the causes noted above.

In the recent past, there has been a deliberate attempt by Diaspora organizations to go beyond simply sending remittances to Dominica and tap into the wealth of human resource that exists within the Diaspora. There is good reason for this as increasingly these highly educated and upwardly mobile migrants possess the requisite skills that can be used to further the development process in their country. On December 8, 2001, several hundred Dominican Diaspora students, scientists, entrepreneurs, lawyers, political leaders and others met in New York city for the first ever 'Dominica Diaspora in the Development Process' conference.<sup>9</sup> At the time the conference was viewed as rallying the Diaspora resources for the noble task of nation building. This would be accomplished by harnessing the intellectual capital and linking it to provide enterprise in banking, aviation, tourism, information technology, and agriculture among others in a quest for economic independence and self reliance in the homeland.

At the end of the conference, attendees issued a declaration that called on the Dominica government to:

- provide better incentives to lure more Diaspora investors and retirees to Dominica including through the provision of incentive packages for migrants to spend their retirement years in the country;
- make use of the human resources compiled within the DAAS database in the crafting of public policy and to help overcome the dearth of technical capacity on the island;

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<sup>9</sup> A detailed analysis of the conference can be found in "The History of a Nationalist Movement: Education and Ideology" edited by Gabriel Christian and published in "In Search of Eden: Essays of Dominican History".

- extend their support to the various Diaspora initiatives including to the DSEC, the Diaspora bank, the Dominica Cadet Corps, and health tourism development; and
- partner with the private sector and the Diaspora movement in the common goal of national development.

The conference was hailed as a success not least because it was able to, for the first time; bring together the Dominican Diaspora in a way that allowed it to completely focus its efforts on Dominica's development. It also set the stage for the setting up of the Dominica Sustainable Energy Corporation (DSEC) that was tasked with promoting alternative natural sources of energy that would help reduce Dominica's dependence on imported fossil fuel. Since its inception, DSEC has gone on to undertake a series of wind studies that has resulted in the identification of various locations on the island suitable for the setting up of wind farms. Late last year, the company initiated discussions with government that would permit the building of the first wind farm on the island. DSEC has also been instrumental in pushing for the end of the monopoly of electricity generation and is actively involved in helping to guide discussions on relevant legislation. In addition to its effort in pursuing wind energy generation, DSEC has also moved to explore opportunities for exploring Dominica's vast geothermal potential.

Another important decision coming out of the conference was the need to set up a Diaspora bank that would focus on channeling more of the Diaspora resources to economic development purposes on the island. The bank would be targeted to serve particularly small business enterprises with a view to empowering indigenous business owners, thus spurring employment within the local community. Within a year of the conference, the required resources for starting the bank was identified and an application made to the relevant authorities in Dominica. The principals are awaiting the issuing of a license to begin operations.

Two years after the New York conference, another Diaspora conference was held in Dominica. This time the emphasis was on strengthening the ties between the Diaspora and residents in the home country, and on issues of education, and crime prevention. Participants outlined the way forward for the Diaspora movement and sought ways to formalize relationships with local businesses and other resource persons. A key feature of the conference was the presentations by Diaspora experts in education and crime prevention and how these could contribute further to Dominica's development. The success of both conferences confirmed the role of the Diaspora as a movement for economic advancement and social change in Dominica.

From the very beginning of its existence, the DAAS has sought to serve as an umbrella organization for the disparate Dominica Diaspora groups by promoting the notion of shared efforts towards the common goal of nation building. Another important aspect of the DAAS organization has been the formation of various committees charged with performing specific functions. For instance, there are the economic development, agriculture, health and education committees. These committees are encouraged to include resident Dominicans



among their membership and to develop specific programs within their particular area of expertise.

The Diaspora's involvement in Dominica sometimes extends far beyond issues of economic development.<sup>10</sup> One interesting indication of this fact was that when the government of Dominica began to explore the possibility of the setting up of a tertiary institution on the island, the Dominica State College (DSC), it turned to the Diaspora movement to provide the required expertise. Several Dominican migrants who had served in management positions at universities in the United States were recruited to develop the concept, structure curriculum and launch the college. In the end, the college was established at considerably reduced cost to the government because the experts provided their services free of charge. Another aspect of this involvement was the revival of the Dominica Cadet Corps,<sup>11</sup> and the staging of a soccer tournament and youth camp in the summer of 2005 in Dominica. Under the auspices of the DAAS and traditional Diaspora organizations in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, scores of young men, mainly children of migrants, were brought to Dominica to compete in soccer with local youth. It also provided an opportunity for many of the young people to visit the country of their parents and begin to build their own ties with their parents homeland.

In January 2004, the government of Dominica requested that the DAAS prepare a Diaspora Policy Paper.<sup>12</sup> Within a few months, the document was prepared after extensive consultations within the Diaspora. The paper provides a detailed analysis of the role of the Diaspora in Dominica's development, and outlines the future direction for its involvement. It urged government to enact legislation that would formalize the relationship between the Diaspora and the country and work towards implementation of its various recommendations; some of which include the:

- establishment of an inter-ministerial Secretariat in Dominica to be responsible for managing and promoting the issues related to Diaspora Affairs;
- formation of a Committee of persons drawn from the Diaspora, the local community and a representative from Overseas Missions to present applicable measures for action by Government;

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<sup>10</sup> Following an earthquake in Dominica in November, 2004, the DAAS was able to draw from its database several structural engineers who offered their services at no cost to government over a few days to check the structural integrity of buildings in the area hit by the quake.

<sup>11</sup> The Dominica Cadet Corps provides semi-military training to young people and enforces discipline. After being defunct for over twenty-five years, it was revived through the initiative of Washington attorney Gabriel Christian who was also a founding member of the DAAS.

<sup>12</sup> The Diaspora Policy Paper is available at <http://da-academy.org>.

- promotion of a national discussion at home and abroad on the Role of the Diaspora (including returning migrants) in the national development agenda;
- preparation of a series of papers on issues of concern to Dominicans at home and in the Diaspora, including but not limited to: trade, tourism and investment promotion; an agenda for health services; youth unemployment and crime; and volunteerism and the Public Service;
- promotion of direct Diaspora Investments in various sectors of the economy; undertake a concerted program of defining Dominica by its unique features, history, folk and national heroes, myths and legends, culture and other attributes that together foment and strengthen the links between an ancestral home and its sons and daughters abroad;
- assist public and private efforts of exchanges between resident Dominicans and those abroad in student exchanges, educational tours, cultural and sports (including a program of accrediting children of the Diaspora to represent Dominica at international sporting and cultural meets); and
- develop a program of coordination and liaison between Dominica and other regional governments pursuing similar efforts of empowering their overseas Diaspora to act (lobby) in concert overseas in matters of common interest.

The government intends to use the findings and recommendations of the Diaspora Policy Paper as the basis for formulating policy on key issues concerning the Diaspora and as a way of further integrating its efforts in the development of Dominica.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The Dominica Diaspora movement continues to focus on issues of economic growth promotion, good governance, capacity building within the country, and conflict prevention and mitigation. By developing partnerships with government and the private sector in the home country, its efforts can continue to expand and redound to the benefit of the country. This partnership, as has been demonstrated, can also lead to the designing of policies to ensure that the potential welfare gains from the Diaspora are not wasted. A successful design of such policies requires a careful analysis of migration patterns and detailed information, which can only come through much research and analysis, and help inform policy decision-making. In addition, it could help Diaspora organizations in reversing the negative effects of the brain drain, assist them in building a more systematic approach to harnessing Diaspora potential, involving using the Diaspora to build networks for trade, culture and investment promotion, and tourism, and help in influencing migration policies in the developed countries, which continue to be largely protectionist.

For the foreseeable future, the Dominican Diaspora is expected to continue to provide the human resource, which is so critical in the development process. These are persons who are familiar with the country and its cultural and social nuances, and who can play pivotal roles in its development. Diaspora organizations for their part need to be better organized and actively recruit from among their ranks. The government should continue to take the lead in

providing some focus, and the enabling environment within which the organizations can function. Finally, multilateral financial institutions and other donors working together with government should be encouraged to devote more resources to help strengthen and encourage a movement that has the potential for strengthening the economic fortunes of Dominica.

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