

FROM BRAIN DRAIN TO STRATEGIC HUMAN CAPITAL

Professional Indonesian Diaspora in the Netherlands as a Competitive Advantage for Resilient National Development

A White Paper Written by the Indonesian Professionals' Association
in the Netherlands

August 2025

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MISSION, STRATEGY AND MEMBERSHIP FOOTPRINT



The Indonesian Professionals Association in the Netherlands (IPA NL) was established in 2021 as a grassroots response to the very gap highlighted above – the absence of a community platform for Indonesian talent in the Netherlands to develop themselves and expand their professional network and careers in the Netherlands, as well as to connect with opportunities related to Indonesia. In just a few years, IPA NL has grown from a small informal network into an association with a clear mission and an expanding membership base.

We are part of **Global Indonesia Professionals' Association** (GIPA) aims to promote business and investment links overseas through highly talented Indonesian professionals and executives - a true partner for Indonesia's economic diplomacy and human capital development.

IPA NL Goals

The association aims to support Indonesians in the Netherlands at every stage of their career – from fresh graduates adjusting to the Dutch work culture, to mid-career professionals seeking mentorship, to senior experts looking to give back. Underlying this mission is the belief that career advancement and national contribution can go hand-in-hand for diaspora professionals.

The association's vision emphasizes bridging Indonesia and the Netherlands. In essence, IPA NL sees itself as a connector – linking its members not only to each other but also to stakeholders in both countries (companies, government bodies, universities).



Our Vision

IPA NL aims to connect businesses and opportunities between the Netherlands and Indonesia through our extensive association of committed professionals in various industries.



Our Mission

To develop a community of Indonesian professionals in the Netherlands. We aim to encourage growth, provide insights, and a networking platform for professional and personal development of our members.



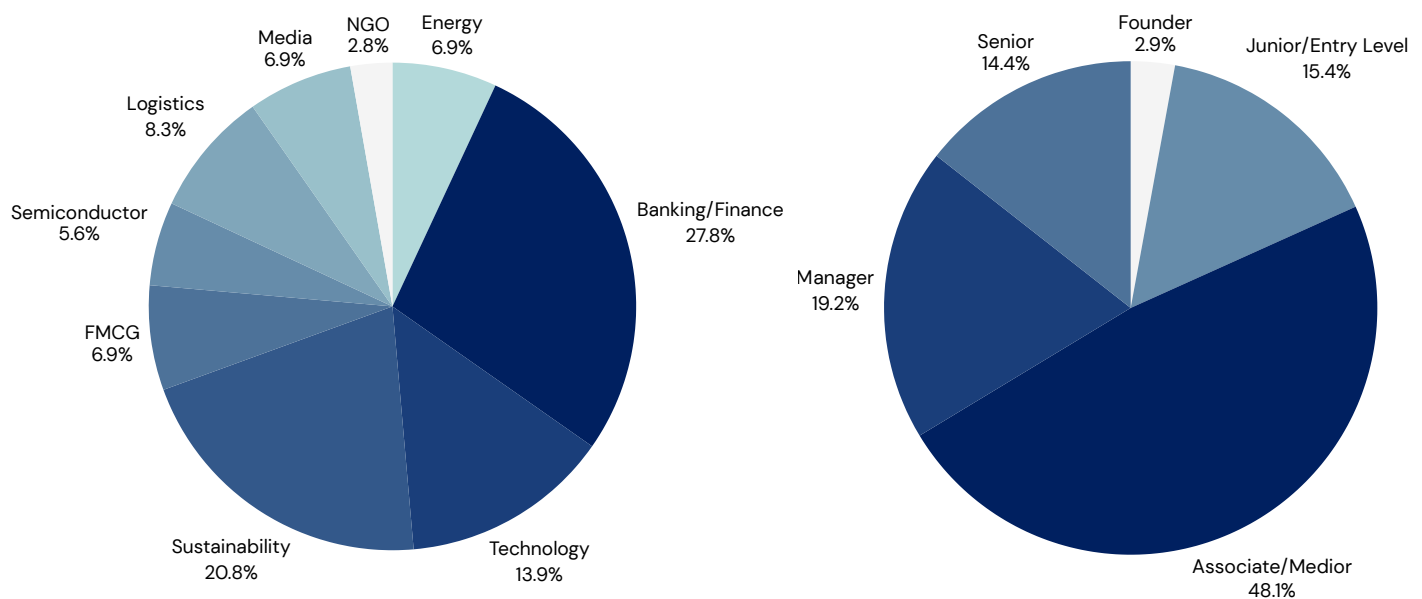
IPA NL represents Indonesian professionals in the Netherlands in eight key industry groups

- Financial Services
- Infrastructure, Energy and Resources
- Technology
- Professional Services
- Public Sectors and International Organizations
- Industrial, Products and Logistics
- Health and Life Sciences
- Creative, Communication and Media

MEMBERS PROFILE



IPA NL's activities to date have focused on **community-building and professional development**: monthly networking meetups, industry-focused panel discussions (for example, a fintech seminar where Indonesians in Amsterdam shared insights with others), **collaborative events with the Indonesian Embassy in the Netherlands**, and social gatherings that strengthen camaraderie. Through these efforts, IPA NL is cultivating what can be seen as a diaspora knowledge network. Although still volunteer-driven and modest in scale, the association aspires to do more. It **envisioned being a liaison for policy input** (sharing diaspora perspectives with Indonesian policymakers), a **facilitator for business connections** (helping Dutch companies interested in Indonesia or vice versa to find the right Indonesian experts), and a **champion for diaspora-related policy change** (advocating, for instance, for greater dual citizenship flexibility or recognition of overseas Indonesian qualifications).



ORGANIZATION PROFILE

350+ Members across the country

5 Top Industry/ Fields

- Finance
- IT/Tech
- Sustainability
- Marketing
- Legal

4 years of operation and counting

Deloitte.

ASML

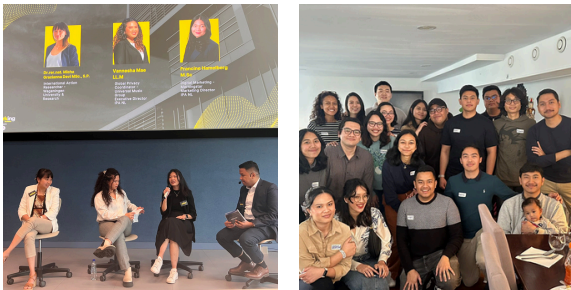
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Knowledge Sharing

Providing a platform for Indonesian professionals in our network to share their knowledge and initiate discussions. From CV and interview preparation, kicking off a career in the Netherlands, industry updates, to starting a business.



Networking Socials

Through social gatherings, IPA NL aims to build a strong community by providing the platform for Indonesian professionals alike to connect with each other and for students who are seeking to establish a career in the Netherlands.



Senior Stakeholders Partnerships

A trusted partner for government bodies and businesses seeking to connect with Indonesian professionals in the Netherlands. By fostering strategic collaborations, we facilitate meaningful dialogue, networking opportunities, and tailored events that bridge communities and promote knowledge exchange. Our platform enables impactful engagement, helping stakeholders tap into the expertise and potential of the Indonesian diaspora for mutual growth and cooperation.





OUR EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Indonesia is experiencing a renewed wave of emigration.^[1] This trend reflects young Indonesians' aspiration for better career opportunities abroad.^[2] Left unchecked, this brain drain represents lost talent and a missed opportunity for national development. However, this white paper argues that the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands – rather than being viewed simply as a loss – can be transformed into a national human capital for Indonesia. By strategically engaging these overseas professionals, Indonesia can convert brain drain into “brain circulation,” wherein skills and ideas flow back to the home country.

The Netherlands hosts a vibrant community of Indonesian diaspora due to historical ties and ongoing migration. Approximately 16,000 Indonesian citizens reside in the Netherlands per Indonesian Embassy records in 2020,^[3] alongside an estimated 360,000 Indonesian-born Dutch citizens, as well as descendants with Indonesian heritage totalling to an estimated 1.5-2 million of Indonesian descent rooted in colonial-era migration. This diaspora includes highly educated researchers, engineers, entrepreneurs, digital experts, and other professionals embedded in key Dutch industries. Many maintain strong emotional and intellectual ties to Indonesia and are eager to contribute to its development – yet formal mechanisms to leverage their expertise remain limited. At present, Indonesia lacks a comprehensive diaspora engagement strategy, unlike countries such as India or China that treat their diasporas as strategic partners in development.^[4] The Indonesian government has made some initiatives (for example, issuing a diaspora card known as Kartu Masyarakat Indonesia di Luar Negeri in 2017).^[5] However, the Indonesian diaspora is aspiring for more practical and deeper collaboration. No legal provisions (such as dual citizenship or permanent overseas voting rights) have been enacted to integrate the diaspora, leaving many feeling like outsiders to national progress.

Purpose & Approach

The purpose of this white paper is to propose a paradigm shift: to recognize and activate the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands as a valuable extension of the nation's human capital.

Research Basis

To ground this analysis, we conducted desk research, analyzed IPA NL membership data, and held interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with diaspora members. These methods helped identify both the barriers to engagement and the opportunities for mutual benefit.

For the purposes of this paper, the term **diaspora refers to Indonesian professionals based in the Netherlands working across eight key industry clusters:** financial services; infrastructure; energy and resources; technology; professional services; public sector and international organizations; industrial products and logistics; healthcare and life sciences; and creative, communication and media industries.

[1] [MacroTrends LLC, Indonesia net migration \(1960–2024\)](#).

[2] [Modern Diplomacy, “Escaping Uncertainty: The Rising Trend of Indonesian Young Adults Moving Abroad,” February 16, 2025](#).

[3] [Utomo, A. F., et al., \(2020\), Connecting with minority group Indonesians in the Netherlands, Wiley.](#)

[4] [Masuda Isaeva, “Toward Effective Diaspora Engagement: Developing a Comprehensive Taxonomy for Diaspora Policies,” International Journal of Science and Research 13, no. 9 \(2024\): 1309–1313.](#)

[5] [Expat Indo, \(2017, August 26\), KMILN: The Indonesian Overseas Card](#)

Structure of the Paper

Drawing on these findings, the paper is structured as follows:

1. **Introduction** – context and rationale for reframing the diaspora as a strategic human capital.
2. **Challenges to Engagement** – legal, institutional, structural, and emotional barriers.
3. **Case Studies** – sector-specific examples in agrifood, digital economy, and high-tech manufacturing.
4. **Recommendations & Roadmap** – short-, medium-, and long-term actions to institutionalize diaspora contributions to Indonesia's economy, innovation ecosystem, and bilateral cooperation with the Netherlands.

Key findings include:

1. **Untapped Asset:** The Indonesian professional diaspora in the Netherlands is an **untapped strategic opportunity** for trade, investment, knowledge transfer, and diplomacy. Currently, their contributions are ad-hoc and underutilized due to lack of outreach and integration mechanisms. Both Indonesia and the Netherlands stand to gain from engaging this talent pool.
2. **Barriers to Engagement:** Diaspora voices highlighted multiple barriers – legal restrictions (no dual nationality, complex bureaucracy), institutional inertia (no dedicated diaspora focal point), structural fragmentation among diaspora groups, and emotional disillusionment. These must be addressed through policy reforms and bridge-building initiatives.
3. **Sectoral Opportunities:** Case studies in **Agrifood & Sustainability, Digital Economy & Cybersecurity, and High-Tech Manufacturing & Semiconductors** illustrate how diaspora expertise aligns with bilateral priorities. For example, the Netherlands' world-class agricultural and renewable energy know-how can help Indonesia address food security and climate goals while Indonesian tech professionals in Dutch companies can support Indonesia's booming digital economy and cybersecurity capacity. We highlight ongoing initiatives (such as a 2025 Netherlands - Southeast Asia Semiconductor Short Talent Programme) and recommend ways to involve diaspora specialists in these efforts.

Actionable recommendations

The paper calls for:

1. **Institutionalisation** – Establish a dedicated diaspora engagement unit and embed diaspora contributions in the next RPJMN.
2. **Legal & Policy Reform** – Explore dual citizenship or an Overseas Citizen (OCI)-type scheme.
3. **Incentives** – Create targeted investment and mentorship incentives for diaspora engagement.
4. **Empowered Intermediaries** – Strengthen organisations like IPA NL to act as formal policy and investment bridges, including expert advisory pools for ministries and investors.
5. **Flagship Initiatives** – Launch an Indonesia-Netherlands Talent Bridge for short-term assignments, a Diaspora Investment Promotion platform, and formal diaspora representation in bilateral forums.

In summary, **Indonesia cannot afford to view its talented diaspora as a loss.** With the right policies and platforms, these global Indonesians can become co-creators of national progress – contributing financial capital, technical know-how, global networks, and cross-cultural savvy. This white paper advocates for the establishment of the **inward role of diaspora** in a structured and institutionalized way of engagement that makes diaspora members key stakeholders in Indonesia's development journey in addition to the existing outward role of the diaspora as a culture and trade ambassadors. Bridging this gap will not only advance Indonesia's strategic interests (from achieving Sustainable Development Goals to boosting innovation) but also fulfill the diaspora's own aspirations to give back to their homeland. The time is ripe to turn the "brain drain" into a **brain gain**.

1.1. Rationale and Reframing: From Brain Drain to Strategic Advantage

Indonesia is at a turning point in how it engages with its global citizens. Increasing numbers of young, educated, and globally oriented Indonesians are pursuing opportunities abroad in search of education and employment. This outward movement has sparked concern over “**brain drain**”, a perceived exodus of Indonesia’s best and brightest talent. Yet the challenge is not emigration itself, but how Indonesia responds. While some countries view diaspora as a loss, others have successfully turned mobility into a strategic advantage. India’s diaspora-fueled IT boom, Ireland’s dedicated Minister for Diaspora Affairs,^[8] and China’s targeted knowledge networks^[9] are examples of how global citizens can become co-creators of national transformation, not merely remittance machines. These countries have shifted their view on diaspora from passive contributors to playing vital roles in knowledge transfer, innovation, and investment.

Indonesia, by contrast, **has yet to develop a comprehensive policy or institutional framework to engage its global citizens meaningfully**. Much diaspora engagement remains centred on outward-facing roles such as cultural diplomacy, ceremonial events, or serving as goodwill ambassadors, rather than embedding diaspora professionals in strategic, systemic, and sustained contributions to national development. This paper calls for a paradigm shift: one that repositions Indonesia’s diaspora as a strategic human capital, not a passive add-on. This paper argues that there must be a change in the narrative. Indonesian diaspora should be seen as an extension of the nation’s capacity beyond borders. In this spirit, we focus on a particularly strategic node: **Indonesian professionals in the Netherlands**. The goal is not just to stop the outflow, but to create circuits of return intellectually, strategically, and collaboratively.

1.2. Country Focus: The Netherlands as a Strategic Diaspora Node

The Netherlands is home to a unique segment of Indonesia’s global diaspora. Historical ties, educational exchanges, and economic cooperation have created a distinctive ecosystem of Indonesian professionals in the Netherlands. The Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands – while smaller in absolute number compared to those in Malaysia or the Middle East – is uniquely positioned in terms of education and skillset. If engaged, they could serve as bridge-builders in priority sectors, advocates for Indonesia’s interests, and even as investors and innovators contributing to Indonesia’s development from afar.

[6] [Agroberichten Buitenland, November 2024](#)

[7] [Nuffic, 2025](#)

[8] [Government of Ireland - Diaspora Strategy 2020-2025](#)

[9] [UNESCO - China's Diaspora Engagement and Knowledge Networks](#)

The Netherlands holds a special place in the Indonesian diaspora story. Due to colonial-era migrations and post-independence movements, the Netherlands today is home to one of the largest communities of people of Indonesian origin outside Indonesia. This includes the Indo-Dutch (Indische) community – descendants of mixed Indonesian–European heritage, which numbered around 1.5 to 2 million in the Netherlands as of the early 2000. Geographically, **Indonesian diaspora professionals are concentrated in Dutch economic hubs: the Randstad area (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht)** hosts the majority, with additional clusters in **university towns like Delft, Wageningen, and Groningen known for attracting Indonesian scholars**. According to IPA NL data, these individuals are active in at least eight high-value sectors. They possess not only technical skills, but also bicultural fluency and cross-border networks, assets that are especially valuable in an era of globally integrated development challenges. Culturally, the diaspora is served by both formal organizations and informal networks – from student associations (PPI) to the Indonesian Diaspora Network chapters and community groups. The Indonesian Embassy in The Hague also plays a convening role for cultural events and diaspora gatherings (e.g., Independence Day celebrations, business seminars). However, what is **not yet in place is a structured platform to integrate these individuals into Indonesia’s policy and development agenda**.

The professional diaspora’s expertise remains largely excluded from Indonesia’s formal development diplomacy. This is especially puzzling given that Dutch international cooperation policies emphasize **inclusive partnerships, innovation ecosystems, and diaspora engagement**. The Netherlands has a long-standing commitment to collaborative development, with platforms like *Knowledge Platform Development Policies*^[10] and *NLWorks*^[11] explicitly promoting public-private-international linkages. However, these platforms rarely include Indonesian diaspora professionals, even in sectors where they are already contributing to the Dutch economy and innovation landscape. As many interviewees expressed, “We are the experts—but no one asks for our input.” Without clear entry points or institutional invitations, this talent pool remains in limbo: willing but underutilized. Indonesia’s bilateral partnerships with the Netherlands (e.g., in water management, cybersecurity, and agrifood) do not always involve diaspora professionals, despite their dual-context expertise. **The result is a “missed connection” between Indonesia’s development ambitions and its most globally embedded talent pool.**

This presents a powerful opportunity: to bridge Indonesia’s national development agendas with Dutch cooperation frameworks, using the Indonesian professional diaspora as a connective tissue. Indonesian diaspora are bridges that could combine both local wisdom and knowledge and expertise gained from international exposure. Doing so would not only strengthen bilateral ties but also reposition the diaspora as a key player in co-developing resilient, future-facing solutions.

1.3. Problem Definition: Strategic Human Capital Left Untapped

Despite the diaspora’s growing size, capability, and willingness to contribute, Indonesia’s current engagement remains ad hoc and under-institutionalized. There is **no formal mechanism to integrate diaspora expertise into national planning, bilateral cooperation, or sectoral innovation ecosystems**.^[12]

[10] [Knowledge Platform Development Policies - Netherlands MFA](#)

[11] [NLWorks](#)

[12] [Diaspora for Development \(D4D\), Country Fact Sheet: Indonesia, July 2020](#)

This gap is particularly evident in the case of the professional Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands. Although these individuals are embedded in high-value sectors such as tech, agrifood, energy, health, and public policy and maintain strong emotional and intellectual connections to Indonesia, they remain sidelined in both policy design and program implementation. The expertise they hold is often acknowledged informally but rarely solicited or embedded in formal mechanisms.

Current engagements still tend to revolve around invitations to cultural events, ceremonial speeches, or social visits. While these are important for community cohesion, they fall short of realizing the full potential of the diaspora as co-builders of development. Crucially, in bilateral collaborations between Indonesia and the Netherlands – such as in water management or trade – the Indonesian diaspora is rarely positioned as a knowledge partner, even in areas where they have demonstrable technical and contextual advantage.

This disconnect results in:

- **Policy mismatch:** National development strategies overlook valuable insights from diaspora professionals with deep knowledge of both Indonesian systems and global best practices.
- **Missed investment and trade opportunities:** The absence of diaspora-inclusive frameworks means Indonesia fails to leverage potential business linkages, innovation spillovers, and cross-border capital flows.
- **Underutilized innovation potential:** Diaspora-led initiatives often situated at the cutting edge of their sectors are left unsupported or operate outside national priorities.
- **Aid dependency:** Indonesia remains reliant on donor-driven models instead of mobilizing the intellectual, financial, and institutional capital of its own global citizens.
- **Loss of social capital:** Second-generation diaspora members, especially those born or raised abroad, feel culturally and politically disconnected, reducing their incentive to stay engaged with Indonesia's future.
- **Alienation of transnational talent:** The lack of institutional entry points leaves highly skilled professionals in limbo. They are willing to contribute, but structurally excluded.

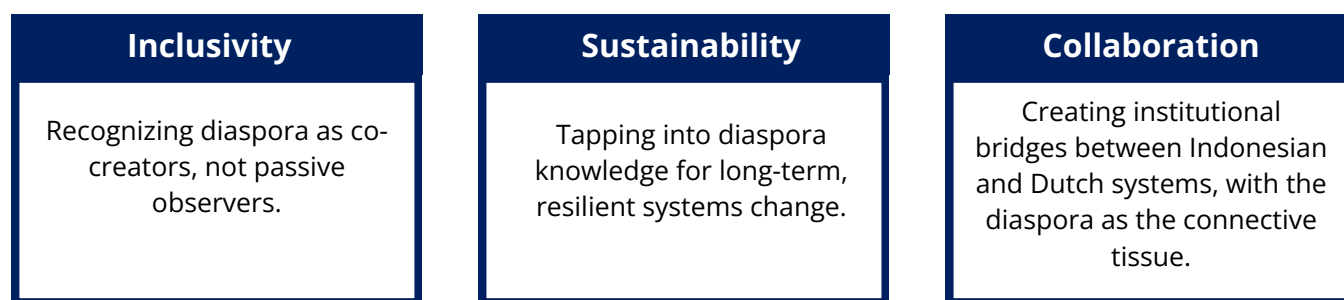
In short, the opportunity lies not merely in recognizing the presence of a diaspora, but **in building the formal mechanisms and institutional trust needed to engage them meaningfully**, through advisory roles in policy design, integration into bilateral trade and innovation programs, and structured pathways for diaspora-led investment and knowledge transfer. By doing so, Indonesia can harness a globally dispersed, highly skilled constituency to co-create a more equitable, participatory, and sovereign development future.

1.4. Rationale and Purpose

This white paper is a strategic intervention, initiated and produced by IPA NL, a diaspora-led platform formed in response to the emerging opportunity of diaspora potential.

We believe that diaspora engagement should be strategic, structured, and sustained. IPA NL exists to advocate for an **inclusive and participatory development model**, one that empowers Indonesian professionals abroad to serve as intellectual partners, innovation catalysts, and policy interlocutors for Indonesia's future.

This paper is grounded in IPA NL's core principles:



Through this paper, we aim to:

- ➔ **Propose structured engagement mechanisms** that activate diaspora expertise across sectors that are embedded in institutional frameworks and not reliant on individual goodwill
- ➔ **Support bilateral collaboration** that centers shared value and diaspora-enabled cooperation, and focused on development outcomes not just cultural diplomacy
- ➔ **Provide recommendations to policymakers, stakeholders, and development platforms** to recognize and act on the untapped potential of the Indonesian professional diaspora in a consistent and integrated manner, beyond political cycles and one-off events.

1.5. Research Questions and Objectives

This paper is driven by a central question:

“How can the Indonesian government, in collaboration with diaspora and bilateral actors, transform its diaspora from a perceived brain drain into a strategic force for sustainable national development?”

To address this, we explore the following sub-questions:

- What is the profile and potential of the Indonesian professional diaspora in the Netherlands?
- What key barriers prevent their meaningful engagement in Indonesia's development?
- What practical models and mechanisms can integrate diaspora expertise into bilateral and national development strategies?

Research Objectives

- To map the current profile and potential of the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands.
- To analyze the institutional gaps that prevent their meaningful inclusion in development planning.
- To propose a set of engagement models, policies, and programmatic pathways for structured collaboration.
- To position diaspora professionals not as complementary extras, but as critical actors in Indonesia's sovereign, sustainable development future.

By shifting the narrative from *brain drain* to *connect and co-create*, this paper positions Indonesia's global professionals not as a loss, but as a competitive advantage waiting to be realized.

2.1. Diaspora Profile and Global Context

The Indonesian diaspora is not a new phenomenon, but the profile of those leaving in the last two decades has shifted.^[13] Increasingly, those departing are **young, highly educated, multilingual, and professionally mobile**. They are embedded in knowledge economies, rather than predominantly in manual labour markets, and they often migrate through education-to-employment pathways.

Globally, diasporas have been recognized as critical partners in national development. India's tech boom was fuelled by returnees from Silicon Valley.^[14] Ireland institutionalised diaspora policy under a dedicated ministry. China built science parks that cater specifically to returning diaspora entrepreneurs. These models demonstrate the shift from viewing migration as loss to treating mobility **as an asset in global economic competition**.

The Netherlands as a Strategic Node

The Netherlands is a relatively small host country for Indonesians compared to Malaysia or the Middle East, but it holds disproportionate strategic value due to:

- Historical ties from the colonial era and post-independence migration.
- Its position in EU trade and innovation ecosystems.
- Its high concentration of universities, research hubs, and corporate HQs.

The Indonesian professional diaspora in the Netherlands reflects these strengths: engineers at ASML, fintech developers in Amsterdam's start-up scene, cybersecurity specialists in The Hague, agrifood researchers in Wageningen, and policy experts embedded in EU-linked institutions. This makes them uniquely positioned to act as bicultural connectors between Indonesia and European markets, technologies, and policymaking. The large community of Indonesian professionals in the Netherlands, when regarded as a strategic asset, can serve to further strengthen and complement the already robust bilateral relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia.

2.2. Barriers and Challenges to Diaspora Engagement

2.2.1. Legal and Regulatory Barriers

- **No dual citizenship:** Indonesia's nationality law prohibits dual citizenship for adults, forcing skilled Indonesians overseas to choose between retaining their passport and advancing their careers abroad. Many who naturalise in other countries lose rights to property ownership, ease of investment, and certain forms of political participation. Comparable countries such as India and the Philippines have introduced Overseas Citizenship schemes to maintain connections with their nationals, while Indonesia's own proposal for dual nationality (floated in 2024) remains unimplemented.^[15]

[13] [OECD, A Review of Indonesian Emigrants \(Paris: OECD Publishing, 2022\)](#).

[14] [Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Know India Programme"](#)

[15] [Reuters, "Indonesia May Offer Dual Citizenship to Attract Overseas Workers, Minister Says," April 30, 2024.](#)

- **Complex bureaucracy:** legal procedures for investments, joint ventures, or property ownership in Indonesia remain time-consuming, opaque, and unpredictable. According to the World Bank's Doing Business 2020 report,^[16] Indonesia ranks poorly in areas like contract enforcement and property registration, discouraging diaspora entrepreneurs from formalising their engagements.
- **Overseas voting and representation gaps:** While Indonesians abroad can vote in national elections via embassies or postal ballots, logistical challenges, inconsistent voter roll management, and limited outreach hinder participation.^[17] Crucially, political inclusion is largely episodic, ending once elections conclude, with no formal representation for diaspora voices in parliamentary or policy processes.

"We can offer real, grounded, context-specific expertise—but no one's calling us," — FGD participant, technology sector

2.2.1. Legal and Regulatory Barriers

- **No dedicated diaspora focal point:** Diaspora engagement is often ad-hoc and dependent on individual champions within ministries or embassies. Without a central coordinating body or unit, momentum is easily lost when personnel change.^[18]
- **Fragmented ownership:** Multiple ministries including Foreign Affairs, Manpower, Trade, and Bappenas hold partial responsibility for diaspora matters, but inter-ministerial coordination is limited. Opportunities exist to align diaspora strategies with Indonesia's RPJMN development plan, but institutional silos undermine this potential.^[19]
- **Short-termism:** Current engagement initiatives tend to be one-off cultural events or conferences rather than multi-year programmes with clear objectives, budgets, and evaluation mechanisms. This short-term approach misses the opportunity to build sustained trust and working relationships with diaspora professionals.

2.2.3. Structural Barriers

- **Siloed networks:** Diaspora professionals are rarely invited to join sector-specific bilateral working groups or technical advisory panels, even in fields where they have demonstrable expertise. This exclusion limits the flow of context-specific insights into policymaking and programme design.
- **Lack of integration into trade/innovation platforms:** Dutch mechanisms such as *NLWorks* and the *Topsectoren* ^[20] model promote public-private partnerships and innovation ecosystems, yet diaspora participation is minimal despite relevant sectoral expertise. This results in missed opportunities for cross-border innovation transfer.
- **Disconnect between skill supply and national demand:** No comprehensive database or mapping of diaspora expertise exists to match skills with Indonesia's development priorities. Without such a tool, opportunities for targeted collaboration — for example, in renewable energy, agrifood, or cybersecurity — are left untapped.

[16] World Bank. *Doing Business 2020: Indonesia Country Profile*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2020

[17] Lowy Institute. "Indonesians Abroad Exercise Their Right to Vote." April 12, 2019.

[18] IOM. *Engaging Diasporas for Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2012

[19] Horst, Cindy. "The Governance of Diaspora Engagement." *International Migration* 56, no. 1 (2018): 181–196

[20] Government of the Netherlands. "Top Sectors Policy."

2.2.4. Emotional and Social Barriers

- **Perceived exclusion:** Many diaspora members feel that the current initiatives, such as the KMILN diaspora card, are not matched by substantive inclusion in decision-making or programme design. This perception discourages sustained engagement.
- **Second-generation detachment:** Diaspora members born or raised abroad may have limited Indonesian language skills or familiarity with local bureaucratic norms, creating barriers to participation. Without targeted outreach, this cohort risks disengagement over time.^[21]
- **Distrust of government processes:** Previous negative experiences with bureaucracy — including inconsistent rules, unclear regulations, or perceived corruption — have led some diaspora professionals to avoid formal engagement channels altogether.

2.2.5. Economic and Practical Barriers

- **Limited financial incentives:** Current investment and tax frameworks offer few benefits for diaspora-led ventures or knowledge transfer initiatives. Without competitive incentives, Indonesia struggles to attract diaspora capital compared to regional peers.^[22]
- **No clear career pathways:** There are limited opportunities for diaspora professionals to contribute to Indonesia's public sector, academia, or private sector without sacrificing overseas careers. Temporary fellowships or secondments could address this gap but are largely absent.^[23]
- **Funding gaps:** Many diaspora-led research collaborations or pilot projects lack seed funding, making it difficult to translate ideas into scalable initiatives. Public-private co-funding mechanisms could unlock significant innovation potential.

2.3. Summary of Gaps

The combination of these barriers results in:



Missed opportunities for Indonesia to tap global expertise.



Underrepresentation of diaspora voices in policy and bilateral cooperation



Erosion of diaspora goodwill over time

[21] Akcapar, Sebnem Koser, and Bruce S. Jansson. "The Impact of Homeland Engagement on Diaspora Identity." *Global Networks* 18, no. 3 (2018): 437–454.

[22] UNCTAD. *Policy Guide on Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees*. Geneva: United Nations, 2018.

[23] ERIA. *Labour Migration Policies in Indonesia: Protection, Skills Development, and Reintegration*. Jakarta: Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, 2020.

SECTORAL INDONESIA - THE NETHERLANDS CASE STUDY: OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIASPORA SUPPORTED COLLABORATION



In this section, we spotlight three sectors that are high priorities for both Indonesia and the Netherlands, examining how diaspora engagement can make a difference in each. These case studies serve as practical illustrations of the broader strategies discussed. For each sector, we outline: **why it is relevant** to Indonesia's development and the bilateral relationship, **current initiatives or cooperation** in place, **barriers** specific to that sector, and **potential roles and recommendations for diaspora to strengthen outcomes**. The sectors chosen – **(a) Agrifood & Sustainability, (b) Digital Economy, Fintech & Cybersecurity, (c) High-Tech Manufacturing & Semiconductors** – correspond to areas where many Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands have expertise (as evidenced by the IPA NL membership and interview input) and where there is clear alignment with Indonesia's strategic interests.

3.1. Agrifood and Sustainability

3.1.1 Relevance to Bilateral Priorities

Agriculture and sustainability are at the heart of Indonesia - The Netherlands cooperation. Indonesia, with its vast agricultural sector and environmental challenges (deforestation, food security issues), has much to gain from sustainable practices. The Netherlands, despite its small size, is famously the **world's second-largest agricultural exporter** by value, owing to advanced technology in horticulture, greenhouse farming, and logistics. Sustainable agriculture and climate resilience are shared concerns – Indonesia is focusing on improving food security and farmers' livelihoods, while the Netherlands leads in sustainable tech and circular economy models.

3.1.2. Barriers and Issues

- **Investment and Implementation Obstacles:** Some Dutch companies keen on investing in Indonesian agriculture have faced obstacles – these include bureaucratic red tape, land acquisition issues, or difficulty finding local partners.^[24] Projects can stall because of local regulatory complexities or lack of on-the-ground support to navigate them.
- **Knowledge Transfer Gaps:** An MoU signals commitment, meaningful impact emerges only when that commitment translates to tangible steps to bring knowledge to farmers. Often, pilot projects remain limited in scale. Indonesian agricultural extension services might not fully absorb or disseminate Dutch techniques. Bridging the gap between high-tech greenhouse methods and the realities of smallholder farmers in Indonesia is challenging without sustained training and adaptation.
- **Sustainability Standards:** Indonesia faces new environmental regulations from trading partners (like the EU's deforestation-free certification requirements for commodities). Ensuring Indonesian palm oil, coffee, timber, etc., meet sustainability standards is a big task. There's a need for expertise in traceability, certification, and compliance (areas where the Netherlands/Europe have experience).^[25]

[24] OECD. (2022). *Agricultural Policies in Indonesia*

[25] Wageningen University & Research. (2022). *Sustainable Agriculture Partnerships with Indonesia*

- **Human Capital:** There is a shortage of Indonesian agritech specialists and greenhouse technicians to carry forward innovations.^[26] Education curricula in agriculture may be outdated, not integrating the latest sustainable practices or tech.
- **Coordination:** Multiple Indonesian ministries and levels of government are involved (Agriculture, Environment/Forestry, provincial governments) which can cause fragmentation in implementing bilateral projects. The diaspora angle historically has been missing – many programs do not explicitly include diaspora experts who could facilitate coordination.^[27]

3.1.3. Diaspora Contributions and Opportunities

The Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands includes professionals in agronomy, sustainability consulting, supply chain management, and researchers in fields like food science and environmental science. Here's how they can bolster agrifood collaboration:

- **Technical Advisors and Liaisons:** Indonesian experts working in Dutch agricultural firms or research institutes can act as bridges in implementing the MoU initiatives. For example, if a greenhouse project is planned in Indonesia, having a diaspora agronomist as part of the project team (either on-site or remotely) can improve communication and tailor the approach to local context. They can translate Dutch technical jargon into Indonesian practical guidance and ensure that knowledge transfer sticks. The diaspora can also help identify pilot sites or suitable local partners through their networks back home, smoothing the path for Dutch entities. Essentially, they serve as bicultural project managers or advisors.
- **Agritech Knowledge Exchange:** Diaspora professionals could spearhead workshops or training programs for Indonesian agricultural students and young farmers, focusing on topics like hydroponics, precision farming, sustainable fisheries (where the Dutch excel). For instance, an Indonesian working at a Dutch seed technology company could run a series of webinars or on-site trainings on seed breeding techniques for Indonesian researchers. Under a structured program (potentially part of the MoU action plan), diaspora experts can volunteer a few weeks at Indonesian agricultural universities or model farms to demonstrate technique.
- **Supporting Sustainable Certification:** There are Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands working in fields of environmental certification, fair trade, etc. These individuals can assist Indonesian commodity producers to navigate EU market requirements. They could form a *Diaspora Green Task Force* to directly work with Indonesian producer associations (palm oil, coffee, rubber) on compliance strategies for regulations like the EU Deforestation Regulation. By doing so, they help secure market access for Indonesian products and promote environmental best practices. This might involve on-site audits or creating easy guidelines in Indonesian for local farmers based on EU rules – a clear value-add.
- **Diaspora Entrepreneurship in Agrifood:** Some diaspora members might be keen to invest in or start agribusiness ventures linking Indonesia and the Netherlands. For example, a diaspora entrepreneur could set up a social enterprise exporting Indonesian organic spices to Europe, ensuring farmers are trained in organic farming. They can bring Dutch processing or packaging know-how. One real example is a few Indonesian alumni of Dutch universities who have started agri-startups in Indonesia (like agri e-commerce platforms). These kinds of efforts could be scaled up with mentorship and possibly co-investment from diaspora peers in NL.

[26] [Indonesia Agritech Market Outlook, Trace Data Research](#)

[27] [IOM. \(2012\). Engaging Diasporas for Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries.](#)

- **Research Collaboration in Sustainability:** Many global issues in sustainability (climate-smart agriculture, peatland restoration, marine sustainability) are relevant to Indonesia. Diaspora scientists in Dutch institutions (like Wageningen University, a world leader in agricultural research) are natural partners for Indonesian research institutes. Joint projects can be fostered, and diaspora can help Indonesian institutions in proposal writing to access international research grants. Already, there have been collaborations on, e.g., sustainable palm oil and agroforestry. Expanding these with more diaspora involvement can accelerate solutions for Indonesia's sustainability challenges.
- **Cultural and Language Advantages:** Beyond technical work, diaspora have cultural familiarity that can sometimes overcome trust barriers local farmers or officials might have towards foreign experts. An Indonesian Dutch-educated expert can converse in the local language/dialect with farmers and also explain their needs to Dutch colleagues, facilitating a two-way exchange. This cultural brokerage can be crucial in community-based projects or when trying to change mindsets (like convincing farmers to adopt environmentally friendly methods or convincing local officials to allow a new pilot project).

3.1.4. Recommendations

- **Embed diaspora experts into bilateral agrifood programs:** as official team members or consultants. For every project under the 2025 MoU, aim to include at least one Indonesian diaspora professional (from NL or Europe) in the planning or execution team. The Ministries can coordinate with IPA NL to source suitable candidates.
- **Develop a “Young Farmers Exchange”:** a program to bring Indonesian young farmers or agri-students to the Netherlands for hands-on training, with diaspora mentoring them during their stay. In parallel, send diaspora (and Dutch) agronomists to demonstration farms in Indonesia. This two-way exchange builds capacity and relationships.
- **Diaspora-led workshops on sustainability standards:** Organize annual workshops in Indonesia's commodity-producing regions (e.g., Sumatra for palm oil, Sulawesi for cocoa) led by diaspora who work in sustainability/certification in Europe. They can educate and prepare local stakeholders for international market compliance. These could be done in partnership with Indonesian agencies like BPDP (palm oil fund) or cooperatives.
- **Incubate agritech startups with diaspora support:** Create an “Indonesian Agritech in the Netherlands” incubation track. If the Netherlands has startup incubators (e.g., YES!Delft, or Wageningen's StartHub) interested in emerging markets, diaspora can nominate Indonesian startups to join a cohort in NL, benefiting from Dutch expertise. The diaspora in tech and agriculture can mentor these startups, possibly leading to investments or partnerships.
- **Leverage water & climate diaspora expertise:** The agrifood sector in Indonesia is closely tied to water management (something the Dutch are heavily involved in). Indonesian diaspora working in Dutch water agencies or environmental consultancies could be assigned to projects on irrigation improvement, flood-resistant farming, etc. Essentially, break the silos by using diaspora who understand integrated approaches.

By implementing these, Indonesia could see faster adoption of sustainable agri-tech, better market resilience for its products, and strengthened food security. It also elevates the diaspora's role from observers to active contributors in feeding and greening the nation.

3.2. Digital Economy, Fintech and Cybersecurity

3.2.1. Relevance to Bilateral Priorities

Indonesia's digital economy is on track to become one of the fastest-growing in the world, projected to exceed USD 130 billion by 2025.^[28] Fueled by a young, tech-savvy population and rapid adoption of mobile internet, sectors such as e-commerce, fintech, ride-hailing, and digital services are transforming consumer behavior and business models alike. The government has positioned the digital economy as a **pillar for post-industrial growth**, with initiatives like the Making Indonesia 4.0 roadmap and the Indonesia Digital Roadmap 2021–2024 identifying digital transformation, cybersecurity, and fintech innovation as national priorities.

Meanwhile, the Netherlands is a European leader in digital infrastructure, financial technology innovation, and cybersecurity policy. Amsterdam is ranked among the top fintech hubs globally,^[29] home to firms specialising in digital payments, blockchain, and insurtech. The Hague hosts Europol's European Cybercrime Centre and multiple cyber policy think tanks, making it a centre for global cyber governance discussions. As an EU member state, the Netherlands also shapes data governance and privacy standards (GDPR) that influence global markets.

The complementarity is clear: Indonesia offers scale, dynamism, and market potential; the Netherlands offers regulatory sophistication, infrastructure, and cutting-edge expertise. Yet despite multiple bilateral cooperation channels – such as the Indonesia–Netherlands Comprehensive Partnership – the role of the Indonesian professional diaspora in linking these digital ecosystems remains limited.

3.2.2. Barriers and Issues

- **Cybersecurity maturity gap:** Indonesia's cybersecurity framework, while improving, remains fragmented. The National Cyber and Encryption Agency (BSSN) has only recently begun to integrate sector-specific strategies,^[30] and cooperation with the private sector is still developing. Many bilateral cyber initiatives with the Netherlands are limited to one-off workshops or high-level MoUs, without embedding diaspora experts into operational delivery.^[31]
- **Fragmented fintech regulation:** Multiple Indonesian regulators – OJK, Bank Indonesia, and Kominfo – hold overlapping mandates over fintech, creating compliance complexity. Diaspora fintech entrepreneurs report difficulty aligning products with Indonesian regulations, while also meeting EU standards for cross-border digital transactions.

"If you build for both the EU and Indonesia, you're designing for two completely different planets," — FGD participant, fintech founder in Amsterdam.

[28] [Google, Temasek, & Bain. \(2022\). e-Economy SEA 2022.](#)

[29] [Findexable. \(2023\). Global Fintech Rankings 2023](#)

[30] [BSSN. \(2023\). Indonesia Cybersecurity Strategy Update](#)

[31] [ENISA. \(2022\). Cybersecurity in the EU and ASEAN: Cooperation Opportunities.](#)

- **Skills shortage:** The demand for cybersecurity analysts, compliance specialists, and blockchain developers in Indonesia far outpaces supply.^[32] Education pipelines for digital skills are underdeveloped, and diaspora talent is rarely tapped to address this gap in a structured way.
- **Data sovereignty and privacy compliance:** Reconciling the EU's GDPR with Indonesia's PDP Law is complex, particularly for start-ups aiming to operate in both markets. The absence of specialised advisors with bicultural legal and technical knowledge slows market entry.
- **Underrepresentation in bilateral digital forums:** Despite their dual-context expertise, Indonesian digital professionals in the Netherlands are seldom included in Dutch-funded innovation programs, EU-ASEAN digital dialogues, or multi-stakeholder cyber governance platforms.

3.2.3. Diaspora Contributions and Opportunities

- **Cyber-bridge roles:** Indonesian professionals embedded in Dutch cyber policy bodies, security firms, or fintech companies can act as cultural and technical translators between the two systems. For example, an Indonesian cybersecurity analyst at a Hague-based think tank could help Indonesian ministries adapt EU-tested protocols for public-sector data security.
- **Regulatory harmonisation:** Diaspora compliance specialists could support Indonesian fintech start-ups in designing products that meet both local and EU requirements, positioning them for cross-border expansion. An IPA NL digital regulation working group could be established to offer pro bono advisory clinics for Indonesian start-ups entering European markets.
- **Capacity building:** Diaspora-led coding bootcamps, cyber awareness programs for SMEs, and mentorship schemes could fast-track Indonesia's talent pipeline. For example, a diaspora blockchain developer in Amsterdam could run online masterclasses for Indonesian university students, linked to hackathons co-hosted with Dutch tech hubs.
- **Joint R&D:** Diaspora researchers could broker collaborations between Dutch digital labs and Indonesian universities, particularly in applied AI, fintech security, and privacy-preserving technologies. Existing Dutch programs like Holland FinTech could be leveraged to incubate joint ventures.
- **Diaspora entrepreneurship:** Some diaspora fintech founders in the Netherlands are already piloting products with Indonesian partners – from payment gateways for diaspora remittances to blockchain-based commodity traceability platforms. Scaling these with targeted investment incentives could multiply impact.

3.2.4. Recommendations

- **Establish a Digital Economy & Cybersecurity Diaspora Task Force** under IPA NL, with formal linkages to OJK, Kominfo, and BSSN, to coordinate expertise for bilateral projects.
- **Fund diaspora-led sandbox pilots** for fintech and cybersecurity solutions in Indonesia, co-designed with Dutch partners and aligned with regulatory sandboxes in both countries.
- **Two-way talent exchange programs:** Place Indonesian cyber officers and fintech regulators in Dutch institutions for hands-on learning, while embedding diaspora experts into Indonesian agencies for fixed terms.
- **Cross-border compliance clinics:** Regular webinars and advisory sessions to help Indonesian start-ups navigate EU and Indonesian regulations.
- **Integrate diaspora into bilateral digital policy dialogues**, ensuring their insights inform long-term cooperation strategies.

[32] World Bank, (2021), *Digital Skills in Indonesia*.

3.3. High-Tech Manufacturing and Semiconductors

3.3.1. Relevance to Bilateral Priorities

High-tech manufacturing, particularly semiconductors, is central to Indonesia's ambition to industrialise and integrate into global supply chains.^[33] The government has identified electronics, precision engineering, and semiconductor manufacturing as priority sectors under Making Indonesia 4.0. This aligns with global trends: supply chain disruptions during the pandemic and geopolitical tensions have accelerated efforts to diversify production beyond traditional hubs.^[34]

The Netherlands is home to **ASML**, the world's leading supplier of photolithography systems essential for semiconductor fabrication, as well as a dense network of advanced manufacturing firms and R&D centers. Dutch institutions also excel in robotics, precision machinery, and materials science.^[35] These strengths are directly relevant to Indonesia's push for downstream industrial development in areas such as electric vehicles, renewable energy components, and consumer electronics.

Despite this strategic alignment, Indonesian–Dutch collaboration in semiconductors remains nascent, with limited integration of **more than 100 diaspora professionals** who already operate within the Dutch high-tech ecosystem.

3.3.2. Barriers and Issues

- **Talent pipeline gaps:** Indonesia lacks a sufficient pool of specialised semiconductor engineers. University curricula in electronics and materials science are outdated, and industry-academia collaboration is limited. Diaspora engineers report difficulty finding structured pathways to mentor or collaborate with Indonesian institutions.
- **Fragmented national strategy:** While there are policy statements on semiconductor development, there is no cohesive roadmap with clearly defined roles for international partners or the diaspora. Coordination between ministries (Industry, Trade, Research, Bappenas) remains patchy.^[36]
- **Infrastructure readiness:** Manufacturing facilities require stable power, cleanroom environments, and precision logistics, which are areas where Indonesia's current capacity varies widely across regions.
- **Limited private-sector incentives:** Multinationals are hesitant to invest in local R&D without a skilled workforce and predictable policy environment. Diaspora entrepreneurs in hardware start-ups find it challenging to set up production or prototyping facilities in Indonesia.
- **Underutilised linkages with Dutch manufacturing clusters:** Dutch industry platforms like High Tech NL rarely include Indonesian stakeholders or diaspora engineers in joint initiatives, despite overlapping interests.

[33] Ministry of Industry, Republic of Indonesia. (2018). *Making Indonesia 4.0*.

[34] OECD. (2023). *Vulnerabilities in the Semiconductor Supply Chain*.

[35] High Tech NL. (2023). *About the Dutch High-Tech Systems & Materials sector*.

[36] ERIA. (2022). *Industrial Policy for Indonesia's Manufacturing Competitiveness*.

3.3.3. Diaspora Contributions and Opportunities

- **Mentorship and skills transfer:** Indonesian engineers at ASML, Philips, and other Dutch high-tech firms could mentor students and junior engineers in Indonesia through structured programs. This could include virtual lab demonstrations, online coursework, and in-person internships.
- **Curriculum co-design:** Diaspora specialists could co-develop semiconductor engineering courses with Indonesian universities, integrating practical modules on chip design, manufacturing processes, and supply chain management.
- **Bilateral talent exchange:** Short-term placements for Indonesian engineers in Dutch facilities could provide hands-on exposure to advanced manufacturing environments, while diaspora engineers could spend sabbaticals in Indonesian universities or industrial parks.
- **Supply chain integration:** Diaspora professionals in logistics, procurement, and industrial policy could help Indonesian suppliers meet the quality and compliance standards required for entry into global semiconductor value chains.
- **Diaspora-led start-ups:** Some diaspora entrepreneurs are developing niche hardware products or industrial IoT solutions in the Netherlands. With the right incentives, these could be piloted or manufactured in Indonesia, creating high-value jobs and technology spillovers.

3.3.4. Recommendations

- **Launch the Indonesia-Netherlands Semiconductor Talent Bridge:** a multi-year exchange and training program linking universities, industry, and diaspora experts.
- **Integrate diaspora advisory roles** into the development of Indonesia's national semiconductor roadmap, ensuring alignment with global market demands.
- **Incentivise diaspora-led manufacturing start-ups** through tax breaks, co-investment schemes, and access to industrial park facilities.
- **Establish joint R&D centres** in Indonesia focused on semiconductor materials, chip design, and testing, with Dutch and diaspora technical leadership.
- **Leverage Dutch cluster participation:** Facilitate Indonesian membership in platforms like High Tech NL, with diaspora acting as entry points

CALL TO ACTION: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT, DIASPORA, AND BILATERAL PLATFORM



The findings of this white paper point to a simple truth: the Indonesian professional diaspora in the Netherlands is not a footnote to our national story – it is a **strategic, underleveraged pillar** for our future. We are not short on talent. We are not short on goodwill. What we lack is **structure, intentionality, and political will** to weave these global citizens into the fabric of national development. The longer this gap remains, the more opportunities we forfeit – in trade, innovation, influence, and the very cohesion of our transnational community. The next step for Indonesia is clear: **embed our diaspora as co-creators, not spectators, in the nation’s most urgent and ambitious projects.**

This is not a theoretical proposition. The case studies in agrifood, digital economy, and high-tech manufacturing demonstrate **immediately actionable entry points**. The same is true in other sectors. What’s missing is an architecture that ensures these opportunities are not left to chance or individual goodwill, but **institutionalised into how Indonesia plans, executes, and measures development.**

4.1. For the Government of Indonesia

Institutionalise diaspora engagement

- Establish a permanent diaspora engagement unit under Bappenas or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a mandate to map, connect, and integrate diaspora expertise into national development plans.
- Create a National Diaspora Advisory Council with sectoral working groups, ensuring direct policy input from diaspora professionals.

Legal and Policy Reforms

- Revisit dual citizenship or an Overseas Citizen (OCI)-type scheme to reduce the “either/or” dilemma that discourages long-term diaspora commitment.
- Expand voting rights and representation mechanisms to give diaspora a sustained voice in policymaking, not just during election cycles.

Programmatic Integration

- Embed diaspora expertise in sectoral roadmaps, from agriculture to semiconductors, as knowledge partners with defined deliverables.
- Mandate diaspora inclusion in bilateral cooperation projects where relevant expertise exists.

Resource allocation

- Create a dedicated budget line for diaspora-led pilot projects, co-funded by Indonesian ministries and partner governments.

4.2. For the Government of The Netherlands

Bilateral inclusion

Ensure Indonesian diaspora experts are included in Dutch-led bilateral cooperation platforms such as NLWorks, Topsectoren, and Dutch-funded innovation programs in Indonesia.

Mobility facilitation

Expand visa pathways and residency arrangements to allow diaspora professionals to undertake short- and medium-term assignments in Indonesia without disrupting their careers in the Netherlands or their timelines of acquiring permanent residence in the Netherlands.

Joint investment in talent pipelines

Co-fund exchange programs, research collaborations, and start-up incubators that leverage the strengths of both countries' innovation ecosystems.

4.3. For IPA NL and Diaspora Organisations

Expert pools and rapid response capacity

- Maintain an annually updated sectoral database of diaspora expertise, mapped against Indonesia's national priorities.
- Offer a "diaspora on demand" mechanism for ministries, universities, and companies to quickly identify and connect with qualified professionals.

Public advocacy

Act as a unified voice to lobby for structural reforms in Jakarta, using data and case studies to demonstrate diaspora value.

Capacity building within the diaspora

Provide professional development, leadership training, and cross-cultural communication skills to equip members for policy and advisory roles.

4.3. For Bilateral and Multilateral Platforms

Integrate diaspora as trusted brokers

In sensitive sectors – from water governance to trade negotiation – leverage diaspora professionals as intermediaries who can bridge cultural and political gaps.

Fund joint hubs

Establish Indonesia–Netherlands research and innovation hubs, co-led by diaspora experts, with a mandate to produce applied solutions and train the next generation of professionals.

Link global networks

Position Indonesian diaspora professionals as nodes in wider EU–ASEAN and global diaspora networks, amplifying Indonesia's visibility and influence.

4.3. The Imperative

The window of opportunity will not remain open forever. The youngest wave of diaspora professionals – many in their 20s and early 30s – are building lives abroad. Without meaningful engagement, their connection to Indonesia will weaken. Competing nations are already courting their global citizens with attractive return schemes, advisory roles, and investment incentives. Every untapped diaspora expert is a missed export deal, a delayed technology transfer, a lost voice in shaping international norms that affect us.

The time to act is now.

We close this paper with a call for courage and commitment: courage to see our diaspora not as people who “left,” but as people who are still here, part of us, wherever they live. Commitment to building the channels, policies, and trust that will make this partnership not just possible, but inevitable.

If we succeed, the Indonesian professional diaspora in the Netherlands will cease to be a story of brain drain. It will become a story of brain circulation, brain gain, and national resilience – one in which every global Indonesian has a place, a purpose, and a pathway to contribute.



Methodological Approach

This white paper uses a qualitative, exploratory approach grounded in thematic analysis. The selection of sectors—agrifood, cybersecurity, high-tech manufacturing, and global supply chains—was based on three intersecting criteria:

- **Policy alignment:** These sectors are priorities within both the Indonesian and Dutch economic and development agendas.^[37]
- **Mutual benefit potential:** They represent high-value areas for bilateral cooperation, including talent mobility, innovation, and trade.
- **Diaspora relevance:** Interviewees are active in these sectors and are well-positioned to bridge gaps between Indonesian and Dutch systems.

We conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Indonesian professionals based in the Netherlands. Selection was purposive, targeting individuals with significant professional experience and demonstrated interest in contributing to Indonesia's development.

Anonymised Informant Table

Informant Code	Sector/Domain	Key Themes Contributed
Informant A	Agrifood & Certification	Sustainability, traceability, EU standards, SME support
Informant B	Cybersecurity & Compliance	Government maturity, data privacy, SME training, Institutional gaps
Informant C	Semiconductors & Tech	Value chains, national roadmap, R&D, diaspora mentoring
Informant D	Global Supply Chains	Procurement, trade policy, benchmarking, female mentorship
Informant E	Systems Engineering	Tech Integration, organizational learning, bilateral R&D

Interviews were transcribed, thematically coded, and synthesized to identify recurring barriers, opportunities, and policy recommendations related to diaspora engagement.

Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) with Indonesian Professionals

In addition to interviews, three rounds of focus group discussions (FGDs) were planned, each comprising 3–5 participants from varied professional sectors. The objective was to broaden our understanding of the lived experiences, challenges, and aspirations of Indonesian professionals across career stages.

Rationale for FGDs:

- To capture collective insights that might not emerge in one-on-one interviews.
- To explore patterns of shared concern or opportunity across diverse fields.
- To test resonance and refine preliminary findings from individual interviews.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Minimum of 5–8 years of professional experience in the Netherlands.
- Engagement in sectors relevant to bilateral cooperation or Indonesian development.

Key Thematic Areas & Discussion Prompts:

1. Professional Background & Industry Engagement

- Can you briefly introduce yourself and your professional background?
- In which industry do you work, and what has your career trajectory been like in the Netherlands?
- How do you perceive the role of the Indonesian diaspora in Dutch industries?

2. Diaspora Engagement & Barriers

- Have you ever been approached or engaged by Indonesian institutions (government, private sector, embassies, etc.) regarding national development?
- What are the key barriers that prevent Indonesian professionals in the Netherlands from contributing to Indonesia's development?
- Do you feel a strong connection to Indonesia in your professional work? If so, in what ways?

3. Policy & Institutional Gaps

- What policies or institutional mechanisms do you think are missing to better leverage Indonesian professionals abroad?
- Have you encountered any initiatives that attempt to integrate the Indonesian diaspora into policymaking or trade efforts?

4. Potential Solutions & Interest in Engagement

- If there were structured opportunities to contribute to Indonesia's development (policy, business, research, etc.), would you be interested?
- What types of engagement models do you think would be most effective (e.g., advisory roles, investment incentives, joint research)?
- What role should organizations like IPA NL play in bridging this gap?

Responses from FGDs were used to validate and enrich insights from individual interviews, ensuring both depth and breadth in our qualitative data.

[37] [Netherlands and You \(2025\)](#).



ipa.thenetherlands@gmail.com



[@ipa.nl](https://www.instagram.com/ipa.nl)



Indonesian Professionals Association the Netherlands