

Introduction

The Somali Diaspora makes a major contribution to the Somali economy and livelihoods through remittances, humanitarian assistance and participation in recovery and reconstruction efforts. Without this support, the economy of the country would have collapsed long ago. Nevertheless, the scale of assistance from the Somali Diaspora and the manner in which their support is delivered on the ground is little understood by the international development community.

Introduction

- Somalia's population is commonly estimated at 7.4 million, of whom more than one million are thought to live abroad, implying that some 14% of Somalia's population is now living outside the country as a diaspora community, a proportion so large as to justify describing Somalia as "*a truly globalised nation.*" (Menkhaus, 2009)

Introduction

- There are considerable difficulties in collecting reliable and statistically comparable data about the migratory movements that have produced the Somali diaspora.
- Somali migrant groups have different characteristics in terms of age, qualification and level of integration into the host societies.
- Depending on the time period and reasons for migration, Somali migrants can be broadly classified into five groups:

Some Characteristics of the Somali Diaspora

1. **Seamen:** from the port cities of the Red Sea, who left Somalia long before independence, and were men with limited formal education and skills.
2. **Remnants of the Somali Gulf labor force:** established itself in the Gulf countries during the 1970s and 1980s but were unable to return to Somalia due to political instability.
3. **Relatively privileged:** Somalis who had been studying outside Somalia, the diplomatic corps of the Somali state and their families and other Somalis who happened to be outside the country in 1990 at the time of the state collapse.

Some Characteristics of the Somali Diaspora

4. **Refugees:** who escaped from civil conflict and fled to refugee camps in the neighboring countries.
 - The first such exodus was out of Somaliland into Ethiopia at the time of the destruction of Hargeisa in 1988. Mass movement of Somali refugees into Kenya occurred in the early 1990s, during the period of intense conflict in Mogadishu and in response to widespread pillage and famine in Southern Somalia

5. **Relatives:** left behind who later benefited from family reunion programmes and joined their relatives who had settled in the western countries. Still, more came through networks established outside the country.

Engagement of Somali diaspora

- Some remain firmly attached to Somalia and are steadfast in providing help to the relatives left behind by either arranging sponsorship to bring them to the west or sending money back to support them in Somalia. This group is the centripetal force that constantly maintains and reinforces the bonds with the homeland through marriage, philanthropy and business undertakings.
- Those born or largely raised abroad are crucial for the role that Somali migrants might play in the long-term future of Somalia. Their role could be highly significant in the post-conflict transition to peace and development.

Political Engagement

- The Somaliland Diaspora has always been an active element in the equation of state building and the restructuring of the political system of the country.
- A clear illustration is the number of Somalis from the diaspora holding leadership positions in political institutions. Ten Ministers in a cabinet of 29 are returnees. Two of the three political parties in Somaliland are also led by returnees. The head of one of the two legislative chambers – the *Guurti* – is a diaspora returnee, along with 30 members of the 82-member House of Representatives.
- In Puntland, collaboration between the diaspora, local civic actors and the traditional leadership succeeded in establishing relative stability and the growth of their own governance structures.
- The Arta process of 2000 provided the first real opportunity for the diaspora from Puntland and the Southern regions to play a meaningful role in Somali national politics. At the same time, civic actors began to assert their role in the political discourse of the country. The civic actors in general and the diaspora in particular were highly visible in the parliament, cabinet and top leadership of the state.
- The first Prime Minister of the Transitional National Government (TNG) was a Diaspora politician and so were several members in the parliament and cabinet. The Diaspora appeared to be a driving force in steering the country's politics away from the monopoly of the armed groups and helping to empower the unarmed civic actors.

Remittances

- Whatever their demographic, gender and qualification differences, the Somali diaspora is a major contributor to the livelihoods of Somalis and to recovery and development in general. In 2004, the worldwide Somali diaspora was estimated to send remittances worth between \$750 million and \$1 billion to Somalia each year (UNDP, 2002), making the country the fourth most remittance dependent country in the world.
- Remittances represent about 23% of the Somali household income (UNDP/World Bank 2003) but are unevenly distributed across the country. People living in towns are more likely to have relatives living abroad and benefit disproportionately from diaspora assistance.
- A household survey in Hargeisa found up to 25% of households claiming remittances as their sole source of income. They were used to cover living expenses and to pay for education and health services (Lindley 2007). Another study found that 40% of Somali households benefited from money sent by the diaspora. In addition, 80% of the start-up capital for the SMEs in Somalia benefit from this money (Chalmers and Hassan, 2008).

Economic Development

- Diaspora investment into local economies, establishing small and medium enterprises, either individually or as a group from the diaspora, or part investment and part leading the business at executive level.
 - 30% – 40% of the shareholders of a major local business are from the diaspora. Besides investment, most of these major companies are also managed and led by diaspora.
- Diaspora business investment is spread over a wide range including small-scale industries, telecommunication, construction, remittances and trade.
- All have created employment opportunities, improving the livelihoods of many families, providing affordable services, generating revenue for the government and introducing new ways of doing business as a culture of good practices.
 - Examples include modern real estate facilities in the cities, the Coca Cola factory in Mogadishu, Hargeisa and the burgeoning ICT industry managed by telecommunication companies operating throughout Somalia
- Somali diaspora investment is particularly important since they alone have been willing to risk investment in a climate of great uncertainty and economic risk. Diaspora engagement in economic recovery has provided a foundation for political reconstruction in many regions of Somalia.

Humanitarian and Emergency Assistance

- Somali business has played a key role in mobilizing humanitarian assistance at times of crisis.
 - Somali websites, FM radios and TVs established as business operations by the diaspora are outlets that expose and portray the suffering of the less fortunate Somalis that have no relatives or friends in the diaspora but still need assistance.
- Diaspora humanitarian emergency aid resulted from the combined effort and influence of local and diaspora media outlets.
 - Media outlets received and dispersed cash handouts sent by the diaspora to unknown victims they had seen or heard about from the websites and radios.
- Diaspora support to local organizations peaks when humanitarian crises overwhelm the resources of local organizations, for example during droughts, floods or to address medical needs of victims of violent conflict. Diaspora contributions are highly visible in such contexts.
 - Drought of 2006 in the southern regions of Somalia received US\$ 600,000 after a campaign to raise awareness among Somalis of the situation of the victims in drought-affected regions.
- More than US\$ 100,000 raised in a 4-hour radio fundraising programme organized by SIMAD and HornAfrik Media Inc in collaboration with three major telecommunication companies in Mogadishu.

Service Delivery

- Somali diaspora has also played a strong positive role in seeking to **address multiple development deficits** of present day Somalia. Diaspora organizations have supported or established service delivery facilities and many are organised to provide regular funding flows to pay salaries in schools or hospitals.
 - For example, the support of (UK-based) Nomad International to the accident and emergency department of Hargeisa Hospital; Mooragaabey support to education in Bay and Bakool regions; reopening of Banadir Hospital in Mogadishu
- The scale and complexity of such development assistance can vary.
 - *Bur Saalax* education project in Puntland is a boarding school established by diaspora, where more than 320 children are given education, shelter and food. Besides building the facility (classrooms, dormitories, offices, etc.), the diaspora spends more than US\$ 9,000 every month for the maintenance of the project, in addition to contributions in kind from UN agencies such as WFP and UNICEF.
- The Somali diaspora also contributes ideas, skills and new ways of doing things.
 - Establishing/running institutions providing public services, such as Hayatt Hospital and Arafat Specialist Hospital in Mogadishu; te East Africa University and Dayax Islamic Bank in Bosasso and Amoud University.
 - Diaspora have demonstrated a sustained commitment to supporting the emerging higher education institutions. Contributing to the university libraries, university computer laboratories, and above all capacity building of the university staff is a landmark achievement of the Diaspora.

Migration for Development in Africa: MIDA Somali

- The platform known in IOM parlance as **Migration for Development in Africa** is holistic approach to development programming that provides durable solutions for governments in need by using the country's diaspora as the primary instrument. This platform is so flexible that it works well at all levels of government.
- The MIDA has 4 components.
 1. QUESTS-MIDA (24 participants in Somali, 4 women, 21 men)
 2. Capacity Building for Somalia (CBS), 18 experts
 3. Transition Initiative for Stabilization, 9 participants
 4. MIDA FINNSOM Health, 20 Healthcare Professionals

Human Resources

- Diaspora is especially relevant to economies in transition on account of its potential to address shortages of key skills and resources, which can accelerate the dynamics of the transition.
- The MIDA project of IOM Somalia was developed to encourage Somali diaspora to serve their country with their expertise in the development and governance sectors to accelerate the recovery process of Somalia.
- Diaspora has been supported in the transfer of knowledge and skills through the MIDA project of IOM, contributing necessary expertise in both public and private local institutions.
 - In 2007, the number of QUESTS 27 placements of diaspora experts in different institutions was 50, while in 2008 the number increased to 82 placements. More than 100 institutions that support the Somali people benefited from the MIDA-QUESTS project in capacity building, supporting policy formulation and institutional development in general.
 - In addition, the MIDA- QUESTS project is a good attempt to reverse the brain drain of Somalia.

Social remittances

- The concept of “social remittances” refers to the potential for skills and knowledge, or human capital, to flow from the diaspora to Somalia. The value of social remittances depends on Somali communities establishing themselves successfully overseas and building their own skills and capability.
- As this occurred, it could be expected that the nature of economic remittances would evolve with a shift from gifts for purely personal consumption to more community and development-minded assistance. Such a change represented a change in diaspora attitudes from reactive to proactive support and could entail a willingness to think of assistance “beyond the community”, including the needs of the poor and marginalised.
- Other developments, including a “Renaissance in Education” occurred under exclusively Somali ownership and the Somali run universities inside the country were probably the most effective institutions in the country.
- There was acknowledgement that the diaspora had more to offer than just their cash; they possessed management skills and institutional experience that could be better harnessed for development.
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Many thanks

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