

*Ulf Johansson Dahre (ed.)*

# The Role of Diasporas in Peace, Democracy and Development in the Horn of Africa

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Shortly before the 2006 Horn of Africa conference, our dear colleague, Mr. Samson Araya from the Eritrean Association in Lund, suddenly and sadly passed away. We want to express our warmest condolences to all members of the Araya family wherever they live and all the Eritrean community in Lund. Mr. Samson Araya used to participate in our conferences on the Horn of Africa peace-building and inspired us with his enthusiasm and experience of the Horn of Africa. He will be greatly missed and remembered!

Somalia International Rehabilitation Centre (SIRC) profoundly thanks the sponsors of the conference: City of Lund, Folke Bernadotte Academy, Lund University, Olof Palmes International Center, ABF, Folkuniversitetet, Socialdemokraterna, Vänsterpartiet, and Aalborg University. We thank too all those (scholars, civics, practitioners, diplomats, politicians), who presented valuable papers and statements, moderators of the conference workshops namely Prof. Arne Ardeberg, Prof. Ole Elegström, and Associate Prof. Benny Carlsson from Lund University and co-organizers of the conference (Sudanese, Eritrean, Ethiopian and Djibouti associations in Lund)

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Finally, we thank everybody who participated in the conference.

Lund in April 2007  
The Conference Organizers



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# Introduction: Transnationalism and migration

The 5<sup>th</sup> annual *Somalia International Rehabilitation Centre* (SIRC) Conference of the Horn of Africa focused on “The Role of Diasporas in Peace, Democracy and Development”. The conference was held in Lund, Sweden, August 19-20, 2006. The content of this volume reflects some of the views and proceedings presented at the conference.

It is a well known fact that a large portion of the citizens of the countries of the Horn of Africa have left the region for Europe, North America, the Middle East and elsewhere. The aim of the conference was to explore causes and consequences of the Horn of Africa transnationalism and its social, economic and politic impact on the countries in the region. Questions posed centred around issues such as the positive and negative aspects of transnationalism, conflicts and the long-term political social, economic and cultural consequences of those connections.

The conference was interdisciplinary including African studies, Anthropology, Human Rights, Sociology, Political Science, and Economic History and views from several NGOs. The report is divided into four parts. The first part deals with general issues in relation to the Horn, such as, human rights, the situation of women, and conflicts. The second part deals with transnational issues concerning various countries on the Horn of Africa both in home and host countries. The third part deals specifically with Somalia from different perspectives, including the situation on the ground, conflict and reconciliation, media and the transnational Somali communities in the northern U.S.A. The fourth part of the report contains the specific recommendations from the workshops. The report is concluded by professor Arne Ardeberg, proposing the establishment of a Permanent Forum on the Horn of Africa at the University of Lund.

The concepts of transnationalism and transnational social spaces originate from globalization and migration research (Basch et al, 1992). Beside the extension of markets and the intensification of trade and financial flows, globalisation processes are strongly related to cross-border migration. The global networks of people, their motives for migration and its effects on political economic, social and cultural structures form a growing field of research. But transnationalism is not a new social phenomena even if it is sometimes portrayed as such. For comparative reason we can see that the total number of migrants today are about 3 percent of the world population, compared to the situation a hundred years ago when migration flows amounted to

10 percent of the world population (Dicken, 2007:447). Still, in today's world we can see that the number of people living outside their country of birth or citizenship amount to tens or hundred of millions. In 2005, there were 185 million documented migrants in the world (Dicken, 2007:447). And this is a conservative estimate as much migration is illegal and therefore undocumented. The distances over which migration occurs are enormously varied. It often takes place between neighbouring countries, but the major part of the migration is long-distance or intercontinental. From Africa the biggest migration flows are from Eastern Africa, but there are also considerable movement within and from the Horn of Africa.

One result of the international migration is the creation of transnational communities. These communities are complex networks between their places of origin and places of settlement, which creates what some observers call "transnational social spaces" that are kept together by financial remittances and social affiliations with ethnic ties. These communities play an important role in channelling migrant flows, investment patterns, politics, and creating different forms of business entrepreneurship both in their new countries and in their places of origin. The financial remittances of the transnational communities make an important contribution, not only to families or local communities, but also to the home country's overall financial position and foreign exchange situation (World Bank, 2005).

Transnationalism therefore focuses on the fact that migrants maintain contact with people and institutions in their places of origin. This has been observed in numerous studies since the 1920s-1930s. However, the early observations tended to focus on how migrants adopted themselves to a new environment or were socially excluded. Studies during the last decades, have put a greater emphasis on how migrants maintain attachments to families, communities, traditions and institutions that are not linked to the state in which they now are living.

Transnationalism is upheld by travel and communication technologies, but is not caused by the technological and transport possibilities as such. The causes of transnationalism can instead be found in changing economic, political and social circumstances both in sending and receiving countries. Migrants have developed political organizations in relation to both sending and receiving countries. Some observers argue that transnationalism represents a new analytic optic which makes visible the scope and flows of persons, goods, information and symbols triggered by an international labour migration.

The growth of studies on transnationalism is linked to globalisation processes. Due to territorial extensions of exchange relation in economic, political, social and cultural systems and the development of a "global network" there are considerable discussions about the conditions of the state. The globalisation discourse about the change of the state is subject to many different arguments. Whether these interpretations are right or misleading, the globalisation discourse tells us a lot about new qualities and quantities of social and cultural relations between actors and places in different states. And even more important, it may tell us a lot of powerful political ideologies that are promoting these relations in correspondence with the organisation of the global market. In this sense globalisation is in line with the European project

of modernity, especially if we take into account the specific territoriality of the concept of the nation state and sovereignty as a characteristic element. Looking back to the state formation processes the project of modernity was closely linked to a process that may be called “translocalism”:

...Nations needed states to forge the ‘Locals’ into nationals, to melt local dialects into a national language, to replace local rhythms of rites and celebrations with unified national calendars of commemorative festivities (Baumann, 1998).

Though there are differences between the European nation states and the colonial and post-colonial state formations in the Horn of Africa one may argue that the recent growth of academic interest in transnational studies is created and accelerated by the perceptions of limits to the capacity of nation states to organize social relations. Baumann, for instance, realizes that translocalism globalisation processes forge the nationals into a new global order which limits self-regulation in economic and political terms in favour of international regimes and neo-imperial relations. Varieties of this argument are often used as a working hypothesis in the following chapters of this report. However, this kind of arguing makes a presupposition that is far from self-evident. It presupposes that the state has the power to organize and harmonize human collectivities within distinct territories. As we are going to see in the coming articles, that is seldom the case.

Transnationalism is often defined as:

...the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders...An essential element is the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies (Basch et. al, 1992:6).

This frequently used quotation leads to at least two interrelated questions: on the one hand the question of involvement in home and host societies, and on the other hand, the question of meaning of border crossing. Migration research has often approached these questions in one or more of the following theoretical models:

1. One early model assumed that people migrate from a homogenous society A (the home country) to another homogenous society B (the host country) in a one-way direction. After arrival processes of acculturation set in, which may lead to assimilation or to a diaspora situation, sometimes or perhaps combined with spatial segregation.

2. Another model, that can be called the transnational model, assumes that the migrants are still present and active in their home societies. Transmigrants are not only influencing the host society but are characterized by economic, social and cultural activities which change the regions of origin in a substantial way. Financial flows as remittances are one of the most discussed indicators of this model.

3. The third model, which extends the second, includes more of global links in order to search for deeper causes of migration processes. Both regions, the home and host societies are linked through different global networks to the world system. This

world-system approach is searching for causes and consequences of migration in the never-ending game of world economic and political hegemony. Causes of migration and transnationalism can thus be found in the expansion and contractions of the world-system (Friedman, 2004: 85).

Within this simplified distinction between different theoretical models of the interaction between the home and host countries type 2 and 3 illustrate a migration pattern based on ongoing connections between two or more regions. In this sense, transnationalism is characterized by a multi-local perspective. But this perspective has also problems because it is difficult to find a delimitation of localities. There are ambiguities about borders and boundaries. Boundaries are often seen as dividing lines between discrete spatial units as in the case of the first model. From a more general perspective boundaries are defined by social activities and may be precisely defined or fuzzy, depending on the nature of the social activity. Political boundaries are drawn to delimit the territory of the state and to mark the limits of the state's claim to jurisdiction and sovereignty. The complexity rises further if we use the term boundary in relation to cultural, economic, linguistic or religious aspects. In most cases clearly demarcated boundaries between these are difficult to define. Against this background we all understand that to define the problems of transnationalism and border-crossing is a quite difficult task. Nevertheless, the participants at the conference all tried to make an effort to sort out the current dilemmas of the Horn of Africa transnationalism.

Trying to analyse the causes and consequences of migration within the concept of transnationalism means to extend the limits of the concepts in various directions. The articles discuss different concepts and themes in an attempt to form understandings of various processes of the Horn of Africa and what kind of social, economic, political and cultural forces that shapes those processes.

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*Larry Andow*

# Opening remarks

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Mayor of Lund, it is an honour for me, to welcome you all to the 5<sup>th</sup> Conference on the Horn of Africa in our City.

We are all very concerned and worried about the situation in Africa's Horn. We hope that the conflicts can be solved in a humane and peaceful way. We must secure a safe life for millions of people. We all have an obligation to try to contribute to promote peace, human rights, health and education in the area. Therefore this conference is extremely important.

It is also a pleasure for me to welcome you to Lund. I hope you will find time to explore our nice City. I can assure you that Lund is worth your attention.

Lund is one of the oldest cities in the Nordic Countries – more than 1.000 years old!

We have about 35.000 students at the university in a city with 100.000 inhabitants. That gives our city a fresh and young look.

This combination of old and young gives Lund a special atmosphere: “The Spirit of Lund”. I am convinced that you will feel it during your visit!

I hope you during your stay will have the possibility to walk in our city centre, to visit the Cathedral and get a little taste of Lund.

I hope you will like our city – and that you will return in the future. You are always welcome here!

Lund is very often referred to as “The City of Ideas”. It is a multicultural city full of life.

It is a wonderful place to discover, live in and meet in. Here you can with success exchange thoughts, ideas and knowledge.

International well-known companies like Tetra Pak, Ericsson, Gambro and Alfa-Laval are situated here.

The Research Park Ideon has generated over 500 companies, mainly within information technology, telecommunications and biotechnology.

For an international Conference, such as yours, I think Lund can offer very good conditions.

We appreciate very much your presence and we hope you will have successful discussions.

I will personally, with the greatest interest, follow your discussions and conclusions.

And I will have the privilege and honour to invite a delegation from you to a reception this evening.

Good luck with your Conference, welcome to Lund and enjoy your visit in our city!

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# Introductory Statement

Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

*On behalf* of the organizers, including Horn of African scholars, local Horn of African associations in Lund and Somalia International Rehabilitation Centre (SIRC), I would like to thank each one of you for accepting our invitation and for your participation at the conference. It is with great interest we are looking forward to hearing your contributions during our fifth consecutive conference here in Lund.

*The Horn of Africa conferences* are a result of the need to address and tackle important issues for creating a better future for the people in the Horn of Africa. It should be our obligation to assist, in our best capacity, whether it is practically or intellectually, to stimulate a peaceful development in this region. As organizers, we are proud to acknowledge that these conferences are gaining recognition as a venue for stakeholders from within and outside of Horn of Africa. With this comes expectations, which we as organizers will meet to our best ability to ensure that these conferences are utmostly relevant to both the region's needs and participants at the conference.

*Last time* we met here, "The Reconstruction of Good Governance in the Horn of Africa" was the theme of the conference. The theme stimulated a number of contributions on failed states, and inspired us to think about what exactly failed and how we can reconstruct states to a functioning and decent level of good governance, rule of law and respect for human rights. Among many contributors, there seemed to be a fairly agreed understanding of the underlying factors of a failed state. To mention a few as pointed out in the proceedings from last year's conference: bad governance, lack of rule of law, continual conflicts, poverty, weak political and economic institutions, weak and corrupt political leadership. "So, where do we start?", as Christopher Clampham asked rhetorically last year.

*Today and tomorrow*, we are gathered here in Lund around the theme of "The Role of Diaspora in Democracy, Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa". We are here to explore ideas and to share our experiences to critically examine how to enable positive contributions of the Diaspora to improve the quality of private and public life in the Horn of Africa.

*We are also here* to gain knowledge and better understand how Horn of Africa societies as well as the Diaspora can act progressively and effectively in favor of peace-building, democracy, good governance, rule of law and development and effect long-term institutional change in the Horn of Africa. We want to understand the role of the Diasporas in the democratization process in the society of origin. Contrary to

what is quite often presented in the mass media and in the literature on the Diasporas and the society of origin, the role of the Diasporas is double-edged. *On one hand*, it plays a major role in the socio-economic development of the society of origin through remittances and investment. *On the other hand*, there is a tremendous brain drain from the Horn of Africa countries, which is a consequence of all the underlying factors of a failed state. This has led to forced migration of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of citizens into refugee camps and beyond. It is known that a large section of the skilled and highly educated citizens of the Horn countries have left and are in Europe, North America, the Middle East and elsewhere in the world.

*What is less explored* in the literature is the role the Diaspora plays in the development, peace-building and sustaining of democratic ideas. The central question is how to best and most effectively utilize the Diaspora resources for the countries of origin and their host countries. Thus, we hope to learn about some successful Diaspora interventions that could provide progressive lessons for the region.

This conference expects to:

- Provide new ideas and insights on how the diasporas should contribute to peace, stability, development, democracy and respect for human rights, nation-state and national institution building efforts.
- Provide a discussion on how the diasporas should restrain from becoming a source of division, war and instability.
- Provide a discussion on how the diasporas could channel their intellectual and material resources in the wellbeing of their societies of origin.
- Provide a discussion on how diasporas can bridge relations, using their transnationalism, between host societies and societies of origin to promote peace, stability, socio-economic development, equitable distribution of global resources, democracy and humanity.

As in previous years, the contributions to the conference will be compiled into a report, which will be made available to the public.

Furthermore, during the conference art, handcraft and literature from the Horn of Africa will be exhibited.

Finally, first of all the organizers want to thank the City of Lund and the Mayor of the City, Larry Andow for your immense support. Furthermore, we would like to thank:

- Folke Bernadotte Academy
- Lund University
- Aalborg University
- Folkuniversitetet in Lund
- Olof Palmes International Centre
- ABF Lundabygden
- The Social Democratic Party

Your support is greatly appreciated.

I hope you will find opportunities to build new relationships and make old ones stronger, and let's nurture the road we have embarked on to reach our objective of a peaceful Horn of Africa.

Many thanks!

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# Statement

First I would like to thank the organisers for inviting me to speak here today. Welcome the opportunity to assess the presently dire situation in the Horn of Africa: it is encouraging that you will “critically examine” (as the programme states) how best to draw on the human resources among the diaspora in the peace-building and development of the Horn.

This Conference is timely indeed as these days, good news from the Horn of Africa is far apart and hard to come by.

For example, this week's *The Economist* carries a special report on the Horn of Africa with the telling title: *The path to ruin*. This path should not be acceptable. Combined efforts are required to change the route in a more promising direction.

Violent conflict, political intransigence, neglect and marginalisation, humanitarian crises, forced displacement, overgrazing and environmental degradation, competition over scarce water points, abundance of small arms, failed international response – these are general features typical of the public image of the Horn of Africa.

Talking war and misery may be easier than articulating peace, political vision and constructive engagement. Listening to the political rhetoric from the Horn, most of it is about the threatening behaviour or devious intentions of a perceived enemy or opponent. Rare are the voices calling for constructive dialogue in search of a common ground to build peace and foster reconciliation.

In the international diplomatic community we have been late in responding, erroneous in understanding and weak in consistency and coordination. Too much of interference is mixed with too remote a distance from the compelling problems.

Meetings like this Conference here in Lund, bringing together scholars, policy-makers and practitioners are extremely important to deepen our understanding of the underlying complexities of the conflict-ridden environment in the Horn and to approach the challenges and opportunities from different perspectives.

Certainly, the perceptions of what is good or bad in the past months' events in Mogadishu with the ascendance to power of the Islamic Courts vary a great deal. We have to listen to and understand those perceptions.

From the Swedish side, we are convinced that the removal of weapons from the daily life in Somalia and forging a genuine reconciliation can only be achieved through dialogue. These talks should not be isolated to one single occasion, but be a process of building civic involvement in rebuilding Somalia, politically, socially and economically.

The Transitional Federal Charter, that guides the present interim governance period up to 2009, may have its shortcomings, but it also contains enough groundwork for constructive dialogue among the Somalia stakeholders on the future construct of this law-less nation since 15 years back.

The diaspora has an important role to play to convince Somalis from all walks of life to engage in dialogue as a priority political project to build a safer future. What Somalia needs is a government of national unity and unity comes from talking, listening and enlightened leadership.

Security is a number one concern in Somalia. This is the country hosting more armed militia groups than any other in the world. Too often, dialogue and security are posted as irreconcilable opposites. I would like to believe that dialogue actually paves the way to a safer security.

One area where the diaspora can play a significant role in Somalia concerns the urgent need to establish an administrative capacity for public services and government functions – at federal, regional and local levels. Building a civil service system in Somalia is long overdue.

Wherever one looks in the Horn, Ethiopia and Eritrea are the two countries most often and consistently involved, whether openly or more discreetly. The unsettled border conflict between the two countries seems to play out also in other terrains – Somalia being one. Getting the demarcation of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border started is therefore of broader interest for peace in the region. The joint Boundary Commission is scheduled to meet next week and it may be a crucial meeting and an indication of the genuine willingness of the parties to see a solution to the long-running conflict.

Right now, in Sudan, the alarm clock is ringing loud and clear. Despite the elaborate Darfur Peace Agreement from May, the security and humanitarian situation is worsening by the day. Half a million people in Darfur have been cut off from food relief because of security threats. Humanitarian workers are targeted by virtually all armed groups and prevented from reaching out to those in need.

The killing, raping, looting and destruction have returned to Darfur despite a peace agreement. The implementation of the DPA does not go well despite the presence of some 7000 troops from the AU. The AU Mission in Darfur is not equipped or resourced to fulfil its tasks. IDPs and other civilians are lacking protection. Khartoum continues to oppose UN peace-keepers in Darfur at the same time as the infamous Janjaweed are still at large and new rebel alliances emerge and fuel fighting.

Security permitting, it is urgent to launch the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultations for confidence building. Again – local level and multi-stakeholder dialogue is essential for peace to be formed, nurtured and sustained. The way these processes are organised and facilitated often are as important as the content of the dialogue. The diaspora and researchers have important contributions to make on this score.

In about a week's time, Sweden is hosting the third meeting of the International Contact Group on Somalia. I will listen very carefully today on any issues that could be brought from this Lund forum of concerned individuals to the deliberations of the Contact group meeting.

PART I

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General Political, Social  
and Cultural Issues of  
the Horn of Africa



I would like to quote another expert, Mr Adam Kahane, to explain the advantages of this approach. He wrote in the Preface of *Destino Colombia Process*: "the technique of scenario development is a tool that stimulates debate about the future, facilitates conversation about what is taking place in the world around us and helps us make decisions about what we ought to do or avoid doing. It offers a very useful approach to strategic planning, and describes what must be done to accomplish a desired result"

This anticipative approach has been experienced in South Africa, in Colombia and in Guatemala to facilitate the rebuilding of post-conflict societies. It shows its usefulness in "knitting together social fabric, seeking reconciliation and creating a common vision in fragmented societies" as observed by an expert of the Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiations in Geneva.

## The purposes and objectives of our initiative

The main objective of this Centre is to think about the common future of our peoples and contribute towards the search for, and agreement of mutually accepted alternatives to the problems of our region. Our proposal is of course in line with the preoccupations of the IGAD, African Union and NEPAD to develop early warning, prevention, and sustainable policies at the regional level. It aims at helping to shape the direction and destiny of our region from the common will of its citizens.

The specific objectives of the Centre are:

- to contribute to building a strong consensus on a long-term vision favouring stability, sustainable development and regional integration
- to create a "think tank" dynamic to reflect and exchange on specific issues concerning our region
- to produce studies and analyses that may contribute to the formulation of proactive policies responding to the new challenges of our region
- to organise periodic training sessions in the field of intercultural dialogue and regional integration gathering various stakeholders
- to encourage universities and research institutions to develop focused studies on the main trends in the region, anticipative and scenario-building approaches
- Status and autonomy of the Centre

The credibility of this type of Centre lies in its independence, that it will have to prove in the choice of issues to debate, and in the objectivity of the studies that it will conduct.

The studies and analyses conducted and encouraged by the Centre will be action oriented. Their main objective will consist of influencing policies and engaging strategies of action fostering participative development, pacific cooperation and mutually beneficial integration of the countries of the Horn of Africa.

This autonomy and independence of the Centre are crucial given the rarity of institutes in the Horn of Africa responding to the exigency of such credibility. To that end, an Ethical Code of Conduct will be elaborated in order to ensure the independence of the Centre.

The Centre will function as an open exchange network on an international scale and will regroup intellectuals and professionals from the countries of IGAD, as well as those from the Diaspora.

## Programme of activities

In the first phase, the Centre will establish a three-year programme including the following activities:

- organization of 2 seminars per year on particular issues to be defined by the governing body.
- completion of 2 or 3 studies/analyses by consultants every year on crucial issues for the sub-region or for specific countries within the sub-region.
- publication of a quarterly Web journal in French and English (also available in a printed version).
- publication of the results of studies and the proceedings of experts' meetings.
- update of the website and the set-up of databases (human resources, studies, bibliographies, meetings, etc) and documentation.
- follow-up of contacts and cooperation with other organizations and forums, participation in meetings and conferences organised by other similar institutions.

This initiative has raised the interest of UNESCO, which has provided the necessary budget for its launching activities. It also raised the interest of other Institutions such as the Secretariat of IGAD and the Regional Bureau of Heinrich Boll Foundation.

The budget provided by UNESCO has served to launch a feasibility study on the creation in our region of a Centre of Anticipative Studies and Regional Integration in the Horn of Africa.

This study has been undertaken in the region during this summer by a Somali consultant, Mr Mustafa Ismael who was supposed to present to you the findings. Unfortunately, he was not able to attend the conference.

In the absence of the consultant, let me give you a brief information on this study that UNESCO has commissioned in order to assess the utility and feasibility of such a Centre in our region.

The main objectives of the study were to:

- 2) Assess the activities and impact of regional organisations dealing with regional integration and cooperation in the Horn of Africa: degree of integration, achievements and shortcomings, impact on human security, peace and regional stability, relevance of research and the role of intellectuals in the process of regional integration
- 3) Assess the existing institutions, centres or structures for geopolitical and prospective research in the sub-region: analysis of research and policy advocacy capacities (constraints, strengths and weaknesses), contributions and priority areas of activities (programmes evaluation), resources, recent trends and opportunities
- 4) identify professionals in Africa and in the rest of the world and resource persons within African Studies Associations
- 5) Study the feasibility of a Centre specialised in anticipative reflection and scenario-building methodologies on the Horn of Africa: mission statement, mandate, objective, code of conduct, expected results of the Centre, organisational and administrative structure, legal status, bye laws, methodological approaches, priority areas of activities, programmes and budgets, strategy for partnership and fundraising, outcomes

The study confirmed the necessity of such a Centre and its complementarity with the missions and activities of the existing research structures and institutions.

The study also showed that the establishment of yet another research Centre in the region can only be justified if a capable and committed core group with far sight, clear vision and a strong sense of mission assume the responsibilities. In the initial phase, this group will need the support of a committed and patient donor that is prepared to provide the necessary freedom from pressures and constraints who generally endanger such initiative. Equally important is the fairness of the collaborators, the host country and regional governments to avoid undue influences.

The study proposed to involve the Greater Horn of Africa and include in the project all the countries that are members of IGAD.

The study recommended that in the preparation phase the initiators should adopt a low profile in their contact with regional governmental authorities. In the initial phase, the project should be discussed at a professional level with scholars, intellectuals and concerned non-governmental partners. It is stressed that it is important for the project to be perceived as an initiative emanating from the intellectuals of the region. This ownership is paramount for the credibility of the project.

The study also recommended that a step-by-step approach should be adopted to better manage the usual obstacles in an institution-building process. It particularly recommended a two-phased approach in which stakeholders can have sufficient time to built confidence and make the appropriate choices and decisions.

The study proposed to establish this Centre in a country where everybody can feel secure and comfortable and has identified Djibouti, Headquarter of IGAD, as a potential site.

The first phase, which should last about 2-3 years, consists of establishing a Forum of Intellectuals of the Greater Horn of Africa. The main aim of this light and informal structure will be to organise each year 2 meetings on specific issues on the region. Before each meeting, a series of focused studies related to the themes defined, should be undertaken in order to give deep insight on the issues and offer different perspectives. These studies will serve to professionalise and feed the debates.

During this phase a Website will be also be created to publish the results of the studies, the proceedings of the Forum and the recommendations formulated towards policy-makers

This trial period aims to facilitate capacity-building in the management of contradictory points of view and consolidation of consensus on certain regional issues of common interest. It is important at this stage to avoid any formalisation of the process.

It is proposed to establish on Ad Hoc basis a small Coordination Unit of 2 qualified and committed professionals living in the region to provide the necessary administrative support to the Forum during this first period.

Based on the lessons drawn from the experience with the Forum of Intellectuals during this first phase of 2-3 years, the Steering Committee of the project will then discuss the possibilities and modalities for the establishment of a permanent Centre of Anticipative Studies and Regional Integration in the Horn.

The study proposed to organise a preparatory meeting in Djibouti in December 2004 gathering 2 intellectuals from each of the 7 IGAD countries to discuss in detail all the issues. This meeting will more particularly discuss the following issues:

- elaboration of an Ethical Code of Conduct
- Organisation and coordination of the Forum of Intellectuals
- definition of themes to be discussed during the coming meetings of the Forum
- UNESCO has already committed to fund the preparatory meeting as well the first regular meeting of the Forum. The Regional Bureau of the Heinrich Boll Foundation has also committed to provide funds other meetings of the Forum.

I would like to thank the organisers of this conference who have given me the opportunity to share with you this initiative. Of course, your contribution and participation in this project will be very welcome. I am at your disposal for any further information on this initiative. I thank for your attention.

# Women of the Horn in Diaspora: From Victims to Powerful Actors

For more than two decades the number of people from the Horn of Africa seeking refuge, abroad, has increased dramatically. Several conditions such as armed conflicts, lack of democracy and widespread human rights abuses in these countries have generated substantial refugee flows to neighbouring countries such as Kenya and Tanzania as well as to remote destinations such as Europe, the USA, Canada and Australia. All have contributed to the emergence of new Diaspora populations.

These new Diaspora populations have faced many problems and challenges. This paper highlights problems and obstacles facing women of the Horn in Diaspora. These problems include the hostile environment towards refugees that has been perpetuated by the right wing media in the West. The paper also explores challenges facing women of the Horn in Diaspora and how they managed to tackle them. It also looks at the positive role that they play to build up their countries and to promote peace, security, human rights and development.

## Problems

Generally Diaspora population, notably asylum seekers and refugees, face many problems before they settle in. Women in particular face huge problems during their displacement process and even after they have settled in.

In Diaspora women find themselves in a relatively alien environment without a relative or kinship support. Some of them feel less empowered due to language barriers, loneliness, unemployment and racism. Refugee Action, an independent charity that works with refugees to build new lives in the UK has documented different stories about women asylum seekers and refugees from the Horn of Africa and elsewhere who have undergone many problems including lack of safety, particularly after the Home office introduced its

Dispersal policy.<sup>1</sup> (Refugee Action 2004). The dispersal policy was meant to reduce pressure on London boroughs and the Southeast, therefore, asylum seekers were sent to northern cities such as Hull, Glasgow and Sunderland. In these cities it seemed that many people were not tolerant of other races and culture. In Sunderland, for example, more than 100 'racial incidents' have been reported in there after an Iranian asylum seeker was killed. Later the Home Office stopped dispersing asylum-seekers to Sunderland (Women's Asylum News 2002: 7). In such a hostile environment women asylum seekers feel vulnerable and unsafe. A study by (Dumper 2002: 6) reveals that sending women's asylum seekers to areas that have many incidents of racial harassment increases women's vulnerability and makes them feel unsafe. Her study shows that nearly 83% of women asylum seekers rarely go out due to fear of racial attacks.

Women asylum seekers and refugees also feel unsafe when they are accommodated in mixed sex hostels because such accommodation exposes them to high risk of sexual abuse (Women Asylum News 2002). In particular, women victims of rape and torture feel terrified by sharing accommodation with males (Refugee Media Action Group 2006).

These problems have become a concern for many pro-asylum organisations and a number of attempts have been made to tackle them. One example is a programme run by Refugee.

## The media

In recent years asylum has been the subject of the media. Refugee Action (Refugee Action 2005) in the UK has pointed out that the media coverage on asylum in the UK is negative and misinformed. This misrepresentation of asylum has been exploited by the right wing activists who campaign against asylum. Anti-asylum campaigners often refer to asylum seekers as 'bogus asylum seekers'. All create a hostile environment against asylum seekers and refugees and increases racial attacks on them.

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1 This policy was introduced by the Home Office in 1999. It was meant to send or disperse asylum seekers to different regions. A new department, called the National Asylum Support Services (NASS) was set up to coordinate the dispersal arrangement.

Action and St. Peter Church in Nottingham. This programme aims to provide a space for women in Diaspora to reunite, socialise and to discuss barriers facing them in their new settlement. The programme also provides help in different areas such as housing, schooling, training, employment and legal advice to women asylum seekers and refugees (Refugee Action 2004).

Moreover, many women asylum seekers and refugees from the Horn of Africa have worked there as volunteers. They hold different qualifications, possess rich experience and speak different languages. Their expertise is crucial in assisting new comers who seek help before settling down. This is a positive contribution which illustrates positive images of women from the Horn in Diaspora. It is also a challenge to the negative images shown by the right wing media discussed below.

Yet, the media ignores the other side of the story. The enormous contribution that women asylum seekers and refugees make to social, economic and cultural life in the UK (Refuge Action 2005) as well as to their homelands in terms of development, conflict resolution and peace and building.

## Positive contributions

Experiences of women in Diaspora, in particular women asylum seekers and refugees show positive contributions to their homelands. These include their financial contributions to their relatives and communities at home, building their own women's organisations abroad, being active members of community-based organisations in exile and challenging the patriarchal system that perpetuates women's subordination.

## Financial contribution/remittances

It has been argued that remittances have reached \$100 billion in 2000. This is regarded as a large proportion of world financial flows. About 60% of the global remittances went to developing countries (Van Hear 2003).

However, literature on remittances tends to focus more on labour migrants, ignoring refugees' contribution. However, refugees do send remittances to their homelands using similar channels within the international finance system as labour migrants to move money freely (Thomson 2005: 14).

It has been acknowledge that refugees and other migrants have a positive economic influence on the homeland by sending remittances to their relatives and communities. Yet not much has been done to investigate such experiences.

Remittances from Diaspora to their families are used for family needs, health care, education, and housing and to pay debt. In other words, to promote welfare of families and communities. In Sudan, for example, many families rely heavily on remittances sent from abroad to meet their basic needs and as well as to pay for funeral, wedding and '*Eids*' (religious celebrations) expenses.

Many people in Diaspora prefer to send money using informal channels because they are quicker and cheap. Moreover, as is the case in Sudan and Somalia many people do not trust banking system. Therefore, sending money with friends is perceived as easy, more reliable and trusty than using banks. It also has no taxation fee to pay.

## Women's Organisations

In Diaspora women from the Horn have formed their own organisations such as Nuba Mountains Women Group in London (Alrasheed 2006: 14), Southern Sudanese Women Group in London, Sudanese Women's Group in Brighton and Hove and Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace in Nairobi. These women's organisations are involved in many activities such as training on gender issues, conflict resolution and peace building.

In the United Kingdom, notably in the East Midlands (Nottingham and Leicester) Somali women have challenged the male-dominated perception which portrays women as housewives with little contribution to the public arena. They have developed a web of social relations and formed their women's only organisations to discuss issues affecting their new lives in exile including their gender roles. In this sense these women's only project could be seen as an informal forum developed by women to help them challenge their social exclusion and to empower them.

In the city of London Ethiopian and Eritrean women have improved their entrepreneur skills and become engaged in different small business activities such as restaurants and cafes to generate income to help them to support themselves and to improve their living standard as well as to send remittances to their families and communities in their homeland. Thus, challenging the economic exclusion that many women in Diaspora are exposed to and also giving them financial independence and economic power. Moreover, gaining economic power could lead to decision-making power at household level. Thus, challenging the patriarchal system that perpetuates male's domination.

In Sweden, where a large population of Somali people have settled, many Somali women have gone home for a few months to offer their expertise. They have engaged in different community activities such as capacity building programmes for women's NGOs, training and teaching and income generating activities (Personal communication, Sweden, August 2006).

Women's organisations in exile also network with different organisations particularly those which work for peace to share information and also to promote the role of women in peace processes and peace reconstruction. They also lobby the international community for support and help in reconstructing war-torn areas in their countries.

## Community organisations

It is well known that in Diaspora community organisations flourish. These organisations are established to provide different services and support to its members. An example of these community organisations is Diaspora, a South Sudanese organisation

based in the UK. One aim of this organisation is to promote positive images of asylum seekers and refugees and to achieve integration and social inclusion. The organisation is involved in a wide range of activities such as challenging discrimination as well as facilitating access to legal services (Diaspora 2006). The organisation also runs a project aiming to use skills and education gained by the Southern Sudanese Diaspora while they were abroad to improve health and education facilities in Southern Sudan (Diaspora 2006).

*Galia* (community group) is another form of community organisation among Sudanese people. The *Galia* acts as an effective forum for cultural, literacy and community information. In *Galia* Sudanese women are active members and are involved in a wide ranges of social and cultural activities. Moreover, they have taken a leadership role in these *Galia* as is the case in Birmingham and Glasgow where women have become Chairperson of *Galia* demonstrating a leadership capacity in a male-dominated sphere.

## Conflict resolution and peace building

Women of the Horn of Africa have realised the heavy cost of armed conflicts. In exile they have mobilised and organised themselves to promote conflict resolution and peace building and formed their own peace building organisations. For instance, Sudanese Women's Association in Nairobi (SWAN) has set up its agenda for peace and engaged in many activities related to conflict resolutions and peace reconstruction such as women's human rights, political participation as well as psychosocial trauma management. The organisation also provides training for women and equips them with skills needed for the development of their country.

## Changes in gender roles and gender relations

It seems that life in exile, particularly in the West, has led to changes in gender roles and gender relations. Research done by Benesova (undated) on Sudanese Diaspora in North East Florida shows how gender roles have been affected by the new life in the USA. The study looks at Nuer people of Southern Sudan who, traditionally, have well defined gender roles embedded in their culture. However, these traditional gender roles are not necessary practiced among Nuer people in the Diaspora. In Diaspora Nuer male superiority is challenged. They are no longer the sole breadwinners of their families. By contrast, women have set up in new gender roles and become more

independent. This might cause tension at the household level and stress to males who resist change.

Another study by Hassan (2002) reveals how Somali women in the UK rejected their traditional culture that gives husbands authority over their wives. A traditional power relation at the household level that allows husbands to control their wives is no longer accepted in the UK. A Somali woman narrates "Men should learn how to cook, do the laundry and change the nappies" (Hassan 2002), a new male role which used to be a female role in Somali. This led to an increase in marriage breakdown. However, women have become shapers of their lives.

On the other hand men seem not happy with the new culture that they need to understand and to respond to positively. They put religion to stop women taking new roles. Men "are using religion as a scapegoat when they say that women are abandoning Islam. This is the way this country is, and we should adapt to it", said a female interviewee (Hassan 2002).

The above Sudanese and Somali experience was not exclusive to them as other women of the Horn in the UK and the USA have similar experiences. However, it seems that little has been written to document them.

## Conclusion

Women from the Horn in Diaspora, notably, women asylum seekers and refugees face many problems such as loneliness, racism and isolation. However, women have come together to challenge these obstacles and to empower themselves. They have also been able to make enormous contributions to development, conflict resolutions and peace building in their countries of origin.

Women in Diaspora have also explored new opportunities open for them and become economically independent and able to contribute financially to their relatives and communities at home by sending remittances.

At community-based organisations women in Diaspora have become engaged in different cultural and social activities. Furthermore, they have launched their own organisations and developed active forums to influence peace, democracy and human rights in their homelands, as well as lobbying the international community to respond positively to peace reconstruction process in their homelands. In other words, they have become active actors rather than powerless victims.

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# Diasporas and Conflict

How do diasporas and conflicts affect each other? No simple and straightforward reply can be given to this question; too much depends on how the question is formulated and on other circumstances. Let me there start with some clarifications.

## 1. Varieties of "conflict"

One way of using the word "conflict" that is fairly widespread in mass media is to make it tantamount to "armed conflict" or at least to parties trying to harm each other in some way, such as economic sanctions (which can be far more deadly than wars, especially for civilians).

In a broader sense of "conflict", to describe a conflict we still need to describe behaviour, but also the attitudes of the parties to each other as well as the contradictions that exist between what the parties are trying to achieve: their "goals", "interests" or whatever term is used to signify what the conflict is about. A possible reason for the focus on behaviour is that it is easiest to observe, report about and – on TV – to depict. To describe attitudes accurately may call for costly opinion polls, long field work, etc., none of which may be able to a journalist asked to report within hours. The same thing goes for contradictions, which calls for a sophisticated sifting through the propaganda of the parties about their own goals and the goals of the opposite party, both of which are often seriously misrepresented, whether by conscious lying, wishful thinking or deeper and perhaps unconscious processes. Yet whoever tries to understand a conflict, not to speak about assisting somehow in mitigating or transforming it, on the basis of reports about behaviour only, is likely to fail, often radically. All these elements, as well as their interrelations, are needed, so it is normally necessary to dig much deeper than normal journalism normally does. This should not be read as a generalising criticism of journalists, but rather as a comment on the system within which they operate and earn their daily bread. Some of them manage to present a more qualified picture of a conflict nevertheless; others do not even try, but just reproduce the propaganda of one of the parties.

We also need to make another kind of distinction, this time among different kinds of armed conflicts. Some classifications are based on quantity. In the scholarly literature, the threshold for calling something a "war" is often set at 1,000 casualties per

year, while what lies between that and 25 casualties is called "minor armed conflict", with "militarised conflict" used for even smaller ones. For various political and propagandistic reasons, what we hear from politicians and in mass media may sometimes deviate from these standards: President Clinton denied being at war with Yugoslavia, President Bush refers to the situation in Iraq as a threatening civil war rather than an actual civil war. Western mass media has tended to follow their verbiage, with some honourable exceptions. In order to count as a war or a minor armed conflict, there has to be at least two parties that are states or organisations similar to states (controlling territory, recruiting armed forces, having decision making procedures, collecting taxes and providing some services, etc.). One consequence of this is that when the government engages in genocide but there is no organised resistance it does not count as "war", that in Rwanda with between a half and a million victims being the most drastic example in recent decades. Genocides may also disappear in statistics (of wars, that is), by being included in the total casualty figures of even larger wars, like World War I (Armenians), World War II (Roma and Sinti, Jews, Poles, Russians, etc.) and others.

Those cases that satisfy the two above criteria (plus one on duration) are then classified into "international", where two or more states fight each other, and "domestic" ones that take place inside the boundaries of a single country. The former kind has remained relatively constant in numbers since World War II, whereas the latter has multiplied several times and now accounts for some 90 per cent of all wars and minor armed conflicts. It has become increasingly difficult to draw a clear boundary between the two types, however, as exemplified by Congo with its government forces, regional militias and various military units from neighbouring countries, for which their governments may or may not have or openly take any responsibility. It has also become increasingly popular for governments that are warring parties by having troops in other countries to call these "peacekeepers" whether or not there is any mandate in international law for them.

Yet even though sharp boundaries cannot be drawn, the distinction is an important one, since there is much evidence that domestic and international wars and armed conflicts have different causalities, dynamics, etc, in important respects. For instance, if we look at democracy, we find three quite different patterns. If we look at pairs of states, it comes close to a natural law, at least so far, that democracies do not fight each other: some studies show no exception at all, others at most very few and marginal ones. But this cannot be because democracies are more peaceful than other states. They are not: if we look at the single state level, many studies have arrived at the same result: democracies are on average neither more peaceful, nor more warlike than others.

It is therefore a tricky and risky matter to extrapolate results on international wars to domestic ones – but it is equally tricky and risky to extrapolate knowledge about how individuals and small groups behave to the level of domestic wars. Each level has its own causal patterns, dynamics, etc., which have to be studied at that level. Unfortunately, the study of domestic wars lies considerably behind that of international conflicts on the one hand and the micro level on the other hand. This may also be

assumed to be true for relations between diasporas and conflicts: that they depend on what kind of conflicts we are discussing. In addition, they must be assumed to depend on what types of diasporas we analyse.

## 2. Types of diasporas

Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary gives the following wider definition of "diaspora" (the more narrow one limits the meaning to Jews):

"the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland <the black *diaspora* to northern cities> **b**: people settled far from their ancestral homelands <African *diaspora*> **c**: the place where these people live."

The question is now how much we should modify this for our present use. Let us focus on b). For the purpose of analysis we must supplement this by looking more closely at the terms "people", "settled", "far from" and "ancestral homeland".

### 2.1 The notion of "people"

There are three main ways of defining "people" or "nation": by citizenship, by objective criteria and by self-image. The traditional French definition of nation makes it the totality of citizens or denizens in a state. If we simplify a bit, in order to find out somebody's nationality, you look at his or her passport. This is also the traditional usage in, e.g. UK or US, where "nationality" tends to appear as a synonym for "citizenship".

Whatever merits this kind of definition may have in other purposes, it is largely useless for analytical purposes. One reason for this is that the concept becomes superfluous, an unnecessary addition to the concept of state. Another is that there seems to be an underlying assumption that this kind of identity, by citizenship, is the most important or most fundamental one. Whatever truth this may have in normative discussions, it does not seem to be generally empirically true. Some people indeed think so and behave accordingly, others do not, regarding their class, gender, religion, etc. as more fundamental, and this may or may not define a contradiction with state-based identity. When the competing identity is, e.g., religious or ethnonational, there is often a contradiction, expressed in secessionist or autonomist movements.

That brings us to the second main type of definition, more often found in traditional German thinking, by which a "Volk" (people or nation) is characterised by a "Kulturgemeinschaft" (cultural community). When the tradition started more than two centuries ago, the assumption was often that language was the essential basis of

such a cultural community, but in broader thinking religion or other cultural features may also play that role. An additional assumption was soon often made in this kind of thinking: a nation calls for a state if it does not already have one, and this sometimes went on to demanding that the boundaries of states ought to be made to coincide with the boundaries between nations.

This kind of definition and thinking was underlying much of nineteenth century (and later) nationalism, first in Europe and then more universally. Such nationalism could be aimed at unifying states where the same nation was predominant (Germany, Italy) or (re)creating states for minorities that were local majorities, from Norway and Finland in the north to Bulgaria and Greece in the south and from Ireland in the west to Ukraine in the east. After World War I, the principle of national self-determination, voiced in different ways by President Wilson and Lenin, was given some influence in drawing boundaries in Europe, even if it was not accepted as a principle: the drawing could then be based – among other things – on statistics of language or religion.

For analytical purposes, this kind of definition has the advantage that it often comes close to how human beings and groups of them actually think and behave. Yet one limitation is that many others regard their citizenship as more important than their nationality by this definition. A more fundamental problem is that there is no single dimension that can be taken as defining "nationality". In some cases, such as Northern Ireland or parts of former Yugoslavia, nationalist movements see having different religions as more important than having (virtually) the same language. Other nationalisms, however, are primarily based on language, e.g. Flemish, Catalan or Albanian. And others again are heavily based on (beliefs about) history, territory, etc. With this kind of people, to find out where a person belongs we must observe, e.g. what language s/he speaks best or prefers to speak or what congregation s/he belongs to – but what to observe depends on what specific people we consider.

The third kind of definition is based on the notion of "nation" as "imagined community". It should be noted that such a community becomes no less real for being imagined. In this case we have to ask a person what people s/he belongs to. Objectively observable things, such as passports, speech or rituals may make a membership probable, sometimes very probable, but does not prove it: there are always exceptions, sometimes very many. Persons with the same passport may have different religions, different languages and identify with different imagined communities. Persons with the same mother tongue may have different passports, religions and imagined community memberships. And so forth.

Yet the advantage with defining "nation" as an imagined community is that a nation thus defined is a more homogeneous group than if defined by passport, mother tongue, etc.. It therefore permits us to predict more about what a person belonging to it will think or do, but we may also bear possible complications in mind. Other members of the group s/he identifies with may not think that the person really belongs (since the birth of Israel there has been a legal/political battle on who is to count as Jew). Others may include a person into a group s/he does not identify with

(the Nuremberg race laws in Hitler's Germany defined as Jews many persons who did not see themselves as Jews – and some of them then began to do so).

For the purpose of studying diasporas the third definition nevertheless seems to be the best one, since it guarantees us that what is counted as a diaspora is also likely to be a community that is active in some way rather than a mere category with no, or merely accidental, internal interaction.

## **2.2 When are you a diaspora member?**

This question is about how we should interpret the word "settled". At one end, we have a person who has recently arrived in a new country and, say, has a temporary residence permit; at the other end we have one whose ancestors came to this country several generations ago. Where should we draw a limit? The best answer to this is that this is not a matter of time but of identification. The person may see the new country as merely a temporary host or as the country where s/he will stay forever. In the former case, the thinking may be more or less illusory among, e.g., labour migrants or political refugees: the person thinks s/he will move back and in some ways behaves as if s/he will, but does not actually do so, and it eventually becomes obvious, at least to others, that s/he never will.

The best solution seems to be to follow what is also a frequent scholarly usage and avoid any imposed time limit, rather making it an empirical question how attitudes and actions are affected by the length of stay in the host country. There is another decision to make, however: whether to base ascription of membership in a diaspora on objective facts (date of arrival, residence, passport, etc.) or on subjective identification. For analytical purposes the latter is best, so we may operate with that as "actual diaspora" and reserve "potential diaspora" for those who satisfy some objective criteria that can be checked with various public registers. It then becomes empirical questions whether the potential becomes actual (some migrants never think of themselves as diaspora, giving their loyalty entirely to the host country) and how long it then remains (some groups cultivate their diaspora identity for generations after the immigration, others do not.)

## **2.3 How far from home – and where is home?**

The dictionary definition includes "far away" but says nothing about how far. From an analytical point of view, there do not seem to be strong reasons to distinguish different categories of exiles on solely geographical grounds, but rather accept that Lebanese diaspora can be found in Turkey as well as Ghana and Jewish in Egypt as well as in Canada. Possible effects of geographical location should be made empirical questions rather than built into definitions.

The final phrase, "from ancestral homelands", may also raise more problems than it solves. It is better to use "perceived ancestral homelands", since the issue as to what

was whose when is often a controversial one between, e.g., Jews and Palestinians, Hungarians and Romanians, Serbs and Albanians, Amharas and Somalis – the full list is very long indeed. In many of these cases, the issue is even controversial among serious scholars or depends very much on exactly how the issue is formulated. In addition, it is as true here as elsewhere that people act on the basis of what they believe, not on what is actually the case according to scholars (who may support or contradict the belief, or abstain from judgment).

### 3. The creation of diasporas

Let us now use the distinctions made in the previous section to look at the different ways in which diasporas can be created, transformed or disappear. One obvious condition for a person becoming a potential diaspora member is – tautologically – migration (sometimes by his or her ancestors) from a state A to a state B. This may be due to push factors in A, such as international or domestic war, autocratic rule, poverty and unemployment, discrimination of some religious, ethnonational or other group the migrant belongs to (sometimes the state A even has an active policy to make them disappear, whether by voluntary migration or expulsion, forced conversion or even genocide). It may also be due to pull factors in state B: wealth, employment opportunities, political system (liberty, non-discrimination, etc.) or an active immigration policy with easy residence permits and citizenship, benefits and land grants, etc.) and the presence in B of many immigrants from A. In some cases, the same factor can simultaneously be read as a push factor in A and a pull factor in B.

Since there are many possible combinations of push and pull factors, we must also expect many kinds of potential as well as actual diaspora members. Under what circumstances do potential diaspora members also form an active diaspora that engages in some kinds of collective actions? Under what circumstances does such a diaspora define itself in terms of the state they came from? When does it do so in terms of some micro region, political faction and/or religious or ethnonational subgroup in A? When will macro regional or even more widely transcending identities (Scandinavian or Francophone, Jewish or Moslem, Palestinian or Kurdish) predominate over identification with state A?

Another set of questions concerns the types of collective action an actual diaspora engages in. They may consist in mutual aid within the diaspora, in political and other actions to defend or improve the conditions of that diaspora (and perhaps others as well) or improve things in B more generally. They may also consist in actions aimed at affecting conditions in the state A that the diaspora comes from: improving its economy or strengthening a mafia, promote or subvert democracy, strengthen it as a state or promote secession from it, and so forth. Some diasporas engage exclusively in collective action in their host country, others exclusively at their country of origin, and others again combine both types of actions.

In the present context, it is obviously impossible even to begin to answer all these questions. Some general hypothesis must be enough, focusing especially on what makes diasporas engage in their country of (most recent) origin and what kind of engagement we may expect. For example, the stronger the relative weight of pull factors and the easier integration into the host country has been, the less likely are we to get a diaspora whose members give particular weight to precisely that group membership in relation to others: it tends to be groups that are in various ways discriminated against in the host country that form active diasporas (which may then live on even after the removal of the discrimination. At the individual level, the more an immigrant sees his or her existence in the host country as temporary, the more likely s/he is to become active in a diaspora trying to affect the country of origin (or some smaller region in it or wider region around it).

Some groups can then be identified as particularly likely to engage in diasporas trying to affect their country of origin. Students belong there: with a few historical exceptions, e.g., some periods in South Korea and Iran, most students return to their country of origin and also expect to do so. Labour migrants is another group, at least as long as they still think that they will return. Refugees from hardships that are expected to be temporary, such as dictatorship, war and other forms of collective violence, will often expect to return once the situation has improved (and in the cases when the expectation is illusory, this may take long time to realise).

## 4. Conflicts affect diasporas

Conflicts may thus affect diasporas in direct and indirect ways. Direct ways include fleeing or getting expelled from present or anticipated war zones, escaping conscription into one of the warring forces, etc. Indirect ways include cases where areas get so impoverished by various economic effects of the war, including environmental degradation, or by a vast influx of refugees that migration is seen as the only way to survive. In both cases, the great majority of refugees move to neighbouring countries even though a minor part of them may stay all over the world. We have many present or recent conflicts that have created or widened existing diasporas: Former Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes area, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, El Salvador, just to mention a few major cases, which also illustrate the considerable variety in how refugees are dispersed, what political, etc. sympathies they have and what influence, if any, that they are able to mobilise in their country of origin and in their host country.

As a special category we have domestic conflicts where an existing diaspora in the country is victimised. In some cases this is a diaspora from a neighbouring country whose relationships with the host country have changed in such a way that the diaspora is suddenly regarded as suspect, whether or not there is any "objective" foundation for this. In some cases, a group has moved (or been moved) in during colonial

rule and managed to establish itself as an economic middle group that gets victimised after independence: Chinese in South East Asia, Indians and Pakistanis in Fiji, East Africa and Guyana, Lebanese in West Africa, Jews in many countries.

How diasporas are created and what positions they take depends, among other things, on the nature of the conflicts that may have contributed to creating them. Refugees from an international war that country A is involved in may become strongly patriotic in some cases and equally hostile in other cases, e.g. when they belong to an ethnonational group that is a minority in A but a majority in a country that A is at war with. Refugees from a domestic war may identify themselves with the country and its government, with a political opposition trying to take over power in the country, or with a regional and/or ethnonational group seeking secession (Irish, Jews, etc. yesterday; Tamils, Kurds, Palestinians and others today). Conflicts that the country of origin gets involved in may unite the diaspora in another (rallying around the flag, even though this is often no longer their first flag). They may also do the very opposite, e.g. in conflicts with strong ethnonational elements. When the conflicts in Former Yugoslavia became more visible and eventually violent, the Yugoslav clubs elsewhere disintegrated into Croat, Serb and other organisations.

## 5. Diasporas may affect conflicts in many different ways

In relation to a conflict in a country, the diaspora(s) coming from it may do many things, including nothing: they may or may not be intended to affect the conflict, and intended actions may be successful, counterproductive or entirely ineffective. First, actions may consist in financial remittances to that country. Second, they may express political involvement there. Third, they may be part of a more civic involvement there. Fourth, they may consist in lobbying in the host country. Let us now look more closely at these varieties.

### 5.1 Remittances and investments from diaspora

Remittances from (potential or actual) diasporas to recipients in the country is a normal thing even in peace time. For many labour migrants, making such remittances may be the primary purpose of staying abroad. Even students and other groups with limited resources may make considerable sacrifices to support their relatives. Such remittances are very important sources of hard currency in several countries, e.g. Former Yugoslavia after 1965. When the so-called oil crisis in 1973 decreased employment opportunities in Western Europe, remittances also decreased, which brought the country to borrow a lot, which in its turn had catastrophic effects when it became dependent on the International Monetary Fund and therefore moved closer and closer to the eventual civil war.

In other cases, the main type of remittances are investments rather than support, and this is sometimes also a very important source. When the Lebanese reconstruction blossomed in the 1990ies after the successful Taif agreement, this was to a large extent due to investments from the Lebanese in Western Europe, West Africa and North America; and this contributed considerably to healing the wounds after the long civil war, which was also demonstrated during the Israeli aggression in 2006: the Lebanese largely stood together against it. Whatever the intentions, remittances and investments also tend to be beneficial with respect to conflict, since the better off a country is economically, the lower is the risk for domestic violent conflict.

Sometimes, mitigating conflict is one aim of remittances, especially when these go to building up civil society in the country of origin. This cannot be generalised however. Diaspora organisations – among other NGOs – are sometimes figureheads for parts of the state machinery in the host country, which may be more interested in getting influence than in promoting peace (or manages to to make itself believe that the former aim will support the latter). No other state need be involved, however, for remittances to promote conflict. If the diasporas from Lebanon, Former Yugoslavia and elsewhere played a positive role in some periods, the opposite was true in other periods when remittances rather went to conflicting parties. Serb, Croat and Moslem exile organisations contributed greatly to supporting their own groups in Former Yugoslavia, including militias and their illegal procurement of arms from all over the world. Kosovo/a Albanians all over Western Europe were taxed (theoretically making voluntary contributions) by the leadership there, the control over these funds was an object of conflict, even political murders, among that leadership, with the most violence-oriented one, the UCK, as eventual winner, which paved the way for the escalation of that conflict. Some exile organisations are "more Catholic than the pope".

## **5.2 Political involvement in the country of origin**

In this case, too, there are no easy generalisations available. Diasporas may play almost any role in relation to conflicts in their countries of origin, depending, among other things, on the relative weights of political (left/right, etc.), ethnonational and religious, regional and other elements – including sheer greed – in these conflicts. Diasporas may sympathize with both the state and its government, especially when the conflict is with a neighbouring state or the government is fighting some small groups that are seen as extremist by most or all of the diaspora. They may be positive to the state but negative to the regime, especially when a large part of the diaspora consists of refugees from that regime. Such refugees sometimes have the attitude "right or wrong, my country!" in case of its conflicts with neighbouring states, such as the Ethio-Somali conflict, where refugees often stood by their state of origin even when hating the regime in that state.

In other cases, diaspora members have the advantage before their fellows in their country of origin that they have more experience of other parts of the world and see a wider spectrum of mass media than their fellows there, where TV and newspapers

are often biased and propagandistic. This may give a better understanding of the conflict and more open eyes for other transformation possibilities than those seen inside the warring parties, which may add some creativity and new alternatives. When a war is going on between two states or between different parties inside one state, it is quite rare for members of diasporas to go as far as to physical violence against each other even when they take part in the propaganda war in favour of the state or group they sympathize with. There are also examples of at least part of the diaspora transcending cleavages between conflict parties and trying to assist or promote conflict transformation and reconciliation. Some people inside and outside Former Yugoslavia identified themselves as "Yugoslavs" rather than Serbs, Croats, Moslems, etc. – or later as "Bosnians" rather than Serbs, Croats or Bosniacs (which was now the new name of the Moslems) – and the peace movements in the different republics managed to keep some contact even when the wars were raging, even though they did not manage to find a common standpoint beyond the preference for dialogue before war. Groups from the Horn of Africa have tried to promote reconciliation both inside and between the states they come from. Such attempts call for tenacity and a long term perspective: in the short run, the predominant heavy partisanship in the area of conflict tends to outweigh relatively feeble attempts in the opposite direction from outside. Sooner or later, however, the time may be ripe due to disillusionment, war-weariness, etc., and a window of opportunity opens itself for negotiations and agreements: and diaspora groups may contribute to the time getting ripe a bit earlier, to the opportunities actually being seized by the parties, and with constructive proposals to inject into the negotiations. Support for civil society in the country of origin may be one way of mediating this kind of influence from abroad.

This is the positive picture of diaspora influence: there is also a negative one. Diaspora support may also go to the parts of civil society that are polarising their society, to extreme and even violent ethnonational parties and organisations – in some cases these even have their headquarters, financial centres, etc. among the diasporas. Once more, diasporas may have quite different kinds of influence, sometimes simultaneously, and there do not seem to be any simple generalisations that cover all cases: this has to be studied case by case and calls for knowledge about the country of origin as well as the host country.

### **5.3 Lobbying and influence in host countries**

Conflicts in or of the country of origin may be a matter of indifference to the potential diaspora: persons from there who give first priority to integrating into their host country and who do not see any need for collective actions to achieve this. They have little or no interest in standing up in their host country as spokesmen for a state or a group that they have left for good.

Actual diasporas are in a different situation and often wish to exert influence in their host country to affect its sympathies and policies concerning conflicts far abroad to which the diasporas have links. To what extent they succeed in this and

what policies they promote depends on the characters of the host country, the country of origin and the diaspora itself.

There is a rich variety of host countries, taking into account degree of democracy, formal and real freedom of expression; right wing or centrist or left wing predominance; possible colonial past; isolationism or interventionism in foreign policy orientation; international influence of various kinds, and so forth. In some cases, the effects are obvious: it is generally easier to lobby in a democracy with a high degree of real freedom of expression than it is elsewhere, to lobby for a state or group with the same orientation as the host country and to lobby for support to somebody or something in an interventionist host country. Even here, there are exceptions, e.g. when geopolitical considerations dominate over ideological ones, as illustrated by the agility with which USA and USSR switched sides between Ethiopia and Somalia.

Other cases are more difficult to predict, e.g. the effects of having a colonial past or of being a great or a minor power. Real freedom of expression may be at least as important as the formal one. When a diaspora group is regarded as suspect – with or without justification – by the elite of the host country, there will be mighty gatekeepers in the way of access to mass media even if there is no formal censorship. The same is true if a competing diaspora group has managed to get heavy influence in the host country.

The effects of the country of origin depend on realities as well as images. It is easier to lobby in a simple two-party conflict than in a more complex one, for which reason such simplifications are often made (and often create great harm, since two-party conflicts and conflicts with three or more parties have quite different conflict logic). In our state-centered world, it is easier to lobby in favour of (or against) a state than other kinds of organisation. It is easier to lobby for a present (and often even former) ally of the host country than the opposite. It becomes more difficult to lobby for or against anybody if the host country is largely or completely unknown, and also if it or even its region have an image, well-founded or not, as "a permanent trouble spot", "ancient ethnic hatreds", etc.

Some diasporas have had very little success in influencing their host country, others have managed to get quite powerful, such as the Irish diaspora in the United States, the Jewish or pro-Israeli lobby in the United States and elsewhere, the Croat diaspora in Germany, Sweden and elsewhere, the Armenian diaspora in France, and so forth. Sometimes sheer bulk counts: tens of millions of US citizens see themselves as Irish-Americans. Sometimes other resources count, such as the considerable political and information power of the pro-Israeli groups in USA. Sometimes it is a matter of skill: both pro-Israeli and pro-Croat groups had political subgroups who cultivated good relations with their political sister organisations in host countries, thus generating a broad political consensus there in favour of their cause. In this respect, the Serbs were largely beaten in the West even before the wars started and this was completed in USA when skilled PR firms managed to make American Jews disregard the antisemitic statements and genocide denials of President Tudjman. In the West, it took the Palestinians decades to come even close to matching the pro-Israeli, to some extent in Western Europe and even a little extent in USA.

What the diaspora groups lobby for or against varies greatly. At one extreme end, they sometimes lobby for the host country going to war against their enemies, sometimes under the name of "peacekeeping" or "peace enforcement". The opposite end is exemplified by lobbying for their host country, its regional organisations or the UN appearing in support of dialogue, reconciliation and reconstruction. Different parts of a diaspora may do different things. One part of the Irish diaspora in USA directly supported the IRA in Northern Ireland, whereas the majority rather supported getting USA to contribute to a negotiated solution and peace agreement between all parties in UK, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

We can see a similar variety among different African diasporas abroad. Some sympathise with their country of origin, but not with its regime, e.g. campaigning in different ways against bad government there, lobbying for conditionalities on foreign aid and loans, etc. Others are lobbying for one of the parties in civil wars, whether government or opposition forces – or for their country of origin in armed conflict with or in another state, or being the victim of that. And others still have more positive aims and a higher level of identification, in solidarity with Africa as a whole, or with some sub-region: the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes area, Southern Africa, Western Africa. It is among them we should look for a brighter future.

## 6. Coda: diasporas and conflicts

As you can see, the present paper provides little of simple and clear-cut answers as to how diasporas and conflicts are related, the most frequent one being, "it all depends". I would maintain that this is because by and large they do not exist: we have to ask more questions about what it depends on and what we need to know in order to find that out. The paper is therefore primarily an attempt to map more questions in the hope that dealing with them will improve our understanding of the relations and of how to promote the more positive kind of influence that diasporas may be able to have, and in some cases have even demonstrated ability to achieve.

PART 2

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The Transnationalism  
and Diasporas of  
the Horn of Africa



# Defending Human Rights in the Horn of Africa: Opportunities for the Refugee Diasporas

Thank you again to the organizers for inviting me again to speak at this fifth annual conference on the Horn of Africa. I am here representing Amnesty International, an independent global human rights membership organization founded 45 years ago which campaigns without any political partiality on the whole range of human rights worldwide. My own position is Researcher on the Horn of Africa, covering Somalia, Somaliland, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Djibouti.

At last year's conference, which was an almost civil society gathering, I spoke about human rights in the Horn of Africa. This year, the focus turns to the diasporas from the countries of the Horn, most of whom have been or are refugees fleeing from human rights violations and conflict. Much could be said here about the protection of their rights in their countries of asylum or new citizenship, but that is not the subject of this conference. This conference is about how the diasporas, far from your countries of origin, can contribute to peace, reconciliation, human rights, democracy, the rule of law, good governance and sustainable development in the Horn.

The refugee diasporas from the Horn of Africa over the last 20-30 years are in fact often very closely involved with the situation in the Horn, often to the minute, through family ties, hundreds of websites and mobile phone connections even to the remotest areas, sometimes travel to and fro, and active political and economic links back home. There are hundreds of diaspora community organizations who have found their way through increasingly difficult asylum procedures. They have established themselves in sometimes culturally unfamiliar environments, varying between the welcoming and the xenophobic. Most work on welfare and identity issues in the wider society. Many also look back to their homeland, to which they may at some time be able to return safely. Their financial remittances to their families who are still there make them significant stakeholders in those national economies.

There is a wide range of such associations in the countries of asylum. They often reflect the political, sectarian, ethnic or clan divisions of their country of origin, some pro-government, others pro-opposition. Some exile opposition groups advocate armed struggle, others have opted for non-violent political strategies. Some diasporas have formed trans-national coalitions to mobilize people to play a more important role in their home country.

The internet has become an important forum of global diaspora connections. Diasporas as well as exile political groups, have set up numerous internet websites, in English, Arabic, Somali, Amharic and Tigrinya, for example, alongside other websites of internal political groups, NGOs and governments.

There are thus many important opportunities for the diaspora to promote peace and reconciliation, democratization and development, and support human rights defenders “on the front line”. Many diaspora activists have contributed vital documentary research and exposure of human rights violations, especially where access to the country or a conflict zone is difficult and outside researchers are banned. But the diaspora can also fuel conflict in their homeland, for example by spreading the politics of intolerance or financing armed groups or warlords.

## A human rights defenders conference in Africa

First, I want to tell you about a conference of human rights defenders from the Horn and East Africa which was held last year in Uganda. Human rights defenders are men and women human rights activists who are at risk of violations, mostly by their own government’s security forces but also sometimes by opposition groups. They investigate, report and lobby on human rights issues of all kinds – civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights, including women’s rights and minority rights.

Human rights defenders have the support of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which affirms the legitimate role of national human rights defenders. The Declaration also supports their right to work with and be supported by international human rights groups. The argument by some governments that human rights activism from outside the country, whether by the diaspora or an outside group, is an “interference in internal affairs”, is totally unacceptable in international human rights law.

This human rights defenders conference in Uganda was organised by Amnesty International and a new human rights defenders project headed by a Somali human rights defender, Hassan Shire Sheikh, a refugee from Somalia and activist there for many years with the Dr Ismail Jumaale Human Rights Organization. It brought together 43 human rights defenders from every country in the sub-region, to share their experiences, exchange ideas and build a network to support each other.

They came from countries which had experienced human rights abuses going back many years in the context of single-party rule, military dictatorship, the struggle for democracy and fair elections, internal armed conflict and in the extreme case of Somalia, the long-term collapse of the state and violence by warlords. All had been at risk of killing, torture, arbitrary detention, unfair trial, kidnapping, physical and verbal abuse, and specific gender-driven harassment of women’s NGOs or women activists in other organizations.

Unfortunately two of the Ethiopian delegates became refugees while they were at the conference – they had suddenly become “wanted persons” at home on account of their peaceful human rights monitoring and media freedom work, and would have been put on trial for treason if they had gone back to Ethiopia. They are now continuing their human rights defence work in exile.

One inspiring aspect of the conference (whose report is on our website<sup>1</sup>) was the solidarity among the participants, even though some of their countries had been at war with each other (Ethiopia and Eritrea) or were politically opposed (Somalia and Somaliland). They all shared a common commitment to defend human rights and each other, and a common belief in the universality of human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the international and African human rights instruments.

Now, to set the scene for this conference and point to the tasks of human rights defenders in the diaspora – because that is what I am asking you to do, to become human rights defenders in relation to your homelands, I will first describe briefly the human rights situation and the inter-locking pattern of conflict in the Horn, and then proceed to suggest what the diasporas can positively contribute.

## Eritrea

There is no political space for independent NGOs or human rights defenders to function inside Eritrea. The government allows no dissent or freedom of opinion or belief. The entire private press has been shut down since 2001. Thousands of peaceful critics of President Issayas Afewerki and his government are detained indefinitely, arbitrarily and incommunicado without charge or trial, in harsh conditions, and sometimes virtually “disappeared”. They include former government and liberation movement leaders, journalists, evangelical Christians, Muslims suspected of links with Islamic armed opposition groups, conscientious objectors and military draft evaders who were caught, as well as hundreds of parents of those who had not been caught. Many of these detainees have been tortured, including asylum seekers forcibly returned from Malta and Libya.

The Eritrean government refuses to discuss human rights. It has delayed any moves to political freedom or democracy to implement the Constitution, supposedly on the grounds that the border dispute with Ethiopia after the 1998-2000 war remains unsettled. Eritrea meanwhile reportedly hosts and supports armed opposition groups from Sudan and Ethiopia, and has been accused of breaking the UN arms embargo on Somalia, mostly recently by allegedly sending weapons to the Union of Islamic

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1 East Africa and the Horn of Africa: “Defending the defenders”, a Human Rights Defenders Conference, July 2006, AI Index: AFR 04/001/2006.

Courts in Somalia. For most of these interlocking conflicts in the region, there are no peace processes evident.

## Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, human rights violations have also been linked to violations of the right to freedom of expression and association and freedom of the media, as well as abuses committed by the security forces in the long-running internal conflicts in the Oromia and Somali Regions, as well as more recently in the Gambela and Amhara regions. Ethiopia's third elections since the Dergue regime was overthrown in 1991 were held on 15 May 2005, with the opposition gaining one-third of seats in the new parliament but disputing the results. Government forces shot dead at least 85 and reportedly many more demonstrators in June and November 2005 in Addis Ababa. Currently, opposition party leaders, journalists, civil society activists and human rights defenders are on trial for treason and instigating violence, facing possible death sentences. They are, in Amnesty International's view, prisoners of conscience who may not receive a fair trial. Thousands of other opponents remain detained without trial. Ethiopia (as well as Sudan) hosts the Eritrean armed opposition and has given military support to the Transitional Federal Government in Somalia, contrary to the UN arms embargo.

Some human rights defenders manage to operate in Ethiopia but under many constraints. The principal human rights organization is the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO). The government refuses to have any dialogue with it. It has published over 100 reports since 1991. Its staff and board members and some voluntary supporters have been harassed, intimidated and smeared with false accusations. Its founder, and former chair, Professor Mesfin Woldemariam, is one of those on trial for treason.

Human rights work by Oromos has always led to harsh reprisals, detentions and torture on suspicion of supporting the armed opposition Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Leaders of the Mecha Tulema Association, an Oromo community association founded in the 1960s, have been on trial for over two years, falsely accused of conspiracy to armed opposition.

Among other human rights activists, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) does valuable work in the area of women's rights, especially in providing legal assistance to vulnerable and poor women seeking to assert their rights, and campaigning against female genital mutilation (FGM) and other harmful traditional practices. Yet even it has problems with the authorities if it seems to be criticising them.

The role of the media in defending human rights is highlighted in Ethiopia by the heavy repression of the non-state media. Private newspapers are allowed in Ethiopia and are often critical of the government. But in the past dozen years, well over 100

journalists have been detained and imprisoned after trial, some of them several times, often on account of reporting human rights abuses and criticising the government. 14 are on trial in the current treason trial, and a draft new Press Law threatens to be even more restrictive. The support of international media organizations, however, has provided some limited protection for the private press.

## Somalia and Somaliland

Both Somalia and Somaliland have active and vigorous networks of civil society activists and human rights defenders, despite the high risks. Somalia has not yet come out of its 15 years of state collapse. The internationally-supported Transitional Federal Government (TFG), which was formed after the Kenyan peace talks, has been set up inside Somalia but has little authority outside the city of Baidoa, where the transitional parliament also meets. The militias of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) defeated the Mogadishu warlords in July 2006 and now control Mogadishu and surrounding areas. It remains to be seen whether there will be conflict or cooperation with the TFG, with which the UIC has major political differences.

The Transitional Federal Charter (or constitution) of Somalia recognizes the rights of human rights defenders. Human rights defenders in Somalia have achieved public support and recognition of human rights values but have been under constant threat of violence from militias of the warlords and Islamic courts. They have not dared to name the perpetrators of arbitrary killings, kidnapping or rape, for fear of reprisal. A prominent Swedish human rights photographer, Martin Adler, was assassinated in Mogadishu in June by unidentified assailants.

In Somaliland, which is not internationally recognized but has been de facto independent for 15 years, with peace and a government formed after multi-party elections, human rights defenders have been much safer but even so, some have been briefly arrested and threatened.

In Somalia, the private press has played a special role in informing the public and commenting on political developments in the absence of state institutions of information. As with the large number of exile-based Somali websites, some media are not politically independent, but many journalists have worked vigorously to establish and defend media freedom. Yet numerous journalists in Somalia (including Puntland and also in Somaliland) have been threatened, ill-treated or detained, sometimes on account of defending human rights. They have now established mechanisms to defend each other and report media rights violations, particularly through the new National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ).

# Sudan

In Sudan, the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement for the south has brought former rebel leaders and exile politicians into the government and political mainstream, with a high degree of regional autonomy for the south and a referendum to take place in 2011 regarding secession from Sudan. Some refugees and internally displaced persons are starting to return.

Yet the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Darfur is unresolved and indeed has spread to eastern Chad. A peace agreement was signed in May 2006 by the Government of Sudan and one faction of the Darfur armed opposition groups but it has not had much impact. Gross human rights violations, including mass killing of civilians and ethnic-targeted destruction of people's livelihoods, are still being committed by the government's security forces and the government-created and supported Janjawid armed groups in Darfur, as well as in the extension of this conflict to eastern Chad. Human rights violations have also been committed by armed opposition groups.

Sudanese human rights defenders, including members of development and women's NGOs, lawyers and journalists, are still experiencing arbitrary detention, short-term arrests, lengthy interrogations and harassment by the security services. Criticism of the government or reporting on human rights violations, especially in the humanitarian and human rights crisis in Darfur, is vigorously suppressed. An exile human rights group, the Sudan Organization Against Torture (SOAT), publishes human rights reports which human rights defenders inside the country cannot, but even so, this does not prevent staff and volunteers of internal human rights groups from being arrested.

## Human rights defenders in the diaspora

What can members of the diasporas from the Horn of Africa do, individually or in their organizations or in partnership with international NGOs, to generate improvements in human rights, and contribute to peace, democratization, development and reconstruction in the Horn? I suggest the following:

- Incorporate in the diaspora organization the objective of promoting universal human rights in their countries of origin or original homeland, and supporting positive discussions on their website
- Monitor and report on human rights in the homeland
- Raise human rights concerns with the governments in the Horn, as well as political groups in exile or inside the country

- Develop working links in the country of residence with international and national human rights groups who are or could be engaged with human rights issues in the Horn
- Press for accountability and “no impunity” for perpetrators of human rights violations by those formerly or currently in power, ensuring that these key issues for future respect for human rights are not missed out in processes of peace talks and reconciliation
- Press the international community to contribute generously to reconstruction and equitable development, which can lead to creating conditions of safe return for refugees when there is adequate protection of human rights by responsible and accountable authorities, and possibilities of sustainable livelihood.

## Conclusion

Let me conclude by expressing the sincere hope that these issues will be taken up by speakers, panel chairs and participants at this conference. I hope too that you all go away from the conference more committed and better equipped to defend human rights in the countries to which you and your children may eventually return safely.



# Diaspora Contribution to Innovative Sectors: The Horn of Africa's Experience

## Abstract

How does Innovation Take Place in Africa: The Micro and Meso Level (Clusters, Sectors)? What are the current roles of Diaspora in acquiring and diffusing knowledge in Africa?

The costs and benefits of migration of highly skilled workers are debated. From the perspective of the global economy, mobility of skilled workers can generate benefits by improving knowledge flows and satisfying demand for skills. In host countries, the contribution of foreign skilled workers to economic growth, and in particular, to research, innovation and entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized.\* However, to the *sending* country, particularly if the country is a *developing* country, migration of highly skilled workers often results in a net brain-drain, causing significant economic development challenges for that country.

It is debated how developing countries can best reverse the brain-drain to a brain-gain. One option is to facilitate return migration, another to leverage the diaspora. Some claim that these options are only temporary solutions, and that what really needs doing is improving the conditions at home to prevent brain-drain from happening. The appropriate provision of education and training is vital to enabling a country to leverage knowledge for economic development. The skills students learn must be aligned with the needs of the productive sector; and in a rapid changing environment, opportunities for learning must be provided throughout the course of life.

The African Diaspora – Diaspora most often defined as the dispersion of a people, language, or culture that was formerly concentrated in one place – has become increasingly recognised as a growing force for development in their countries of origin. In 2001, remittances to developing countries stood at \$72.3 billion, 42% of total Foreign Direct Investment. As of 2003, however, over \$300 billion was estimated to have been sent from developed to developing countries with Africa accounting for 15% (\$45billion) of the annual global remittances.

There are essentially three main ways in which Diaspora can nurture the knowledge base in their home countries: 1) By returning home with new knowledge gained elsewhere (e.g. Taiwan). This rarely happens on a large scale without professional and financial incentives provided by the government. The home country must be able to provide the infrastructure and career opportunities necessary to meet the aspirations workers may have developed during their stay abroad. 2) Through foreign direct investment (e.g. Chinese diaspora). 3) By acting as mediators between foreign and local partners (e.g. India).

## I. Introduction

All the very valid concern about brain drain from developing countries notwithstanding, the paper argues for and demonstrates the possibility of win-win positive dynamics benefiting both sending countries and migrants themselves. Such a virtuous cycle is illustrated by India and greater China, where it is more relevant to talk about ‘brain circulation’ and ‘brain exchange’ rather than habitual ‘brain drain’ (see A. L. Saxenian). But even in cases of low-skilled migration, such as migration from Mexico, one can find evidence of mutually beneficial gains.

It should be clear that the concept of “innovation” encompasses not only “technological innovation”, i.e. the diffusion of new products and services of a technological nature into the economy, but equally it includes non-technological forms of innovation, such as “organization” innovations.

The overall context in which innovation in developing countries takes place is dominated by two global drivers. The first one is the intensification of the globalization process. Spurred by the revolution in telecommunications, this globalization manifests itself, among other things, by the importance of trade within the global economy. It has also reduced significantly time and distance throughout the world, linking the most remote to the most vibrant areas. The second global driver is the intensive ongoing technological change stimulated by tremendous scientific advances made in the foundations of life, matter, energy and time.

Innovation climates in developing countries are first hampered by weaknesses of other key elements of knowledge-based economies as defined in the WBI four pillar framework, namely levels of educational attainment, the business environment and the information infrastructure.

As a consequence of this overall problematic environment, innovation systems (defined as the set of organizations (firms, universities, public laboratories, etc.) and their linkages through which innovation processes develop) in developing countries are poorly constructed and are very fragmented. On the enterprise side, generally a large number of micro-enterprises operate in the informal economy, and a more or less important number of foreign-based firms, which tend, however, to be disconnected from the rest of the economy.

On the knowledge side, there is generally a limited research community, operating usually in an ivory tower, and a university system poorly connected to local realities, particularly to labor market needs and opportunities. Particularly problematic are the lack of technological support services and infrastructure (metrology, quality control, standards, etc).

Public sector institutions tend to be numerous, including those supporting the promotion of enterprise development, export, foreign investment, etc. In this often over-crowded support system, it is not easy to establish new, efficient organizations for the promotion of innovation.

Up to one-third of R&D professionals from the developing world reside in the OECD area. This brain drain represents a significant challenge for developing countries seeking to upgrade their knowledge bases. However, the migration of skills can be slowed through the return of expatriates to their country of origin, as demonstrated by the examples of Israel, Greater China, and more recently India and Mexico, whose diaspora communities have been mobilized to transfer, teach, and upgrade the vital technical and managerial skills needed in their countries.

It is in fact estimated that for some African countries, remittances account for as much as 27% of the GDP, and is the second largest source behind Foreign Direct Investment of external funding for developing countries. With what is thought to be over 5 million Africans in the Diaspora, economic migration is an effective global strategy that has evolved to combat household poverty, but can now be further harnessed for both national and regional wealth for Africa as a whole.

A new UN report reckons that Africans hold 40% of their financial portfolios overseas. Were Africa able to attract this money back, its private capital stock would increase by about two-thirds.”

The Horn of Africa is one of the most important and strategic areas of Africa and the global economy. It is a bridge between Africa and the Middle East, as well as a gateway to the oilfields of the Persian Gulf. It is a culturally and historically rich region of the world with great natural resource potential. Specifically, the Region is endowed with rivers, lakes, forests, livestock, and high agricultural potential including untapped potential of petroleum, gold, salt, hydro-power and natural gas. The Horn is also a region of diverse ethnicity, languages, and religious practices.

The history of the countries of the Horn since the end of colonialism in the region has largely been one of violent repression and insurgency. Succession by peaceful election has been the exception. A relevant feature is the formation and disintegration of centralised states. Centralising states, affected by the lack of human stability which can lead to their fragmentation and demise, also contribute to the escalation of the crisis. The Horn of Africa is in a part of the African continent in which struggles over economic and political power often take the form of ethnic conflict. This portion of the continent is underdeveloped and the socio-economic systems of the countries in it are often rooted in exploitative relations. Ethnic identities in this region, although they are ‘beneficial’ for those ethnic groups that are in power, tend to be used to consolidate and serve the interests of the dominant ethnic groups. The contemporary destruction of the legitimacy and accountability of many of the states

in the region results in part from the authoritarian state, strategic interests and lack of vision.

Where does all this leave the Horn of Africa with its pronounced propensity for conflict and displacement of people? It is clear that Africa has few resources to help the region with this problem. It is also clear that authoritarian statism has been the rule rather than the exception during the past four decades in the Horn of Africa and is further fostered by international and regional interests.

The issues of international migration, economic growth and development are linked in a number of ways. First, as explained in the previous chapter, deficits in development, especially an absence of jobs and sustainable livelihoods, are amongst the most important reasons why people migrate from their own country. Second, international migration contributes to the development of countries of destination by filling gaps in the labour market, by providing essential skills and by bringing social, cultural and intellectual dynamism to the societies that migrants have joined. A third linkage, and the focus of this chapter, is the impact of migration on growth, development and poverty reduction in countries of origin.

Firstly, it would appear fundamental to regard the relationship between migration and development as a reciprocal relationship. After all, migration is both a constituent part of development processes and an independent factor affecting development in migrant sending and receiving societies. It also seems important to establish an explicit link between the traditionally separated domains of development and immigration policies pursued by migrant receiving counties, as the latter significantly affect the mobility and economic behaviour of migrants.

Since the relation between migration and development is most concretely manifested at the individual, household and community levels, the scope for specific policies to increase the development potential of migration is limited by definition.

The paper will try to answer the following questions:

- How can African countries tap into global knowledge more effectively by improving their investment climate?
- What are the current roles of FDI and the Diaspora in acquiring and diffusing knowledge in Africa?
- How can universities be organized to better serve the innovation needs of the surrounding communities?
- What is the role of government in supporting innovation in Africa? What assistance is needed?
- How can the linkages between universities, public labs and the business sector be strengthened to spur more innovation?
- What is the role of indigenous knowledge in development? How to make better use of it?
- What innovations are needed to meet the basic needs of local communities? How do these develop?
- How can centers of expertise help in linking innovators with the technical, commercial, and other resources, needed for spurring innovative activities?

The objectives of this paper are, first, to review the nexus between diaspora and innovation of strategic sectors, second, to emphasize the transnational economics and related issues in Horn of Africa context, and third, to make some policy recommendations.

## II. Theoretical Frameworks

Of all the mutual impacts between countries – trade, aid, foreign investment, communication, transport, etc. – migration perhaps has the potential to have the most significant and lasting impacts. Migration can transform the individuals who move, the societies they move into and even the societies they leave behind.

Transnational theorizing began its development in the early 1990s, when a group of US-based anthropologists found that the migrants with whom they worked had developed transnational practices that conventional migration theories did not adequately capture (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994). They argued that traditional migration theory, informed by and developed in service of the nationstate (Kearney 1991), treated migrants as individuals who either departed (emigrants) or arrived (immigrants). Subsequent proponents of a transnational perspective argued that migrants often interact and identify with multiple nation-states and/or communities, and that their practices contribute to the development of transnational communities (Levitt 2001), or new types of social formations within a transnational social space (Faist 2000).

This *de facto* transnationalisation of migrants' lives has also challenged assimilationist models of migrant integration, as well as the modernist political construct of the nation state and citizenship.

While the advance of globalisation has highlighted the need for a new development paradigm focused on individuals and based on the concept of sustainable human development, knowledge, in the form of education and scientific or technological investigation, has increasingly become a key catalyst in the struggle against poverty and the desire to improve peoples' quality of life.

### II.A. Brain Drain in Africa: Facts and Figures

According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Africa has already lost one third of its human capital and is continuing to lose its skilled personnel at an increase rate, with an estimated 20,000 doctors, university lecturers, engineers and other professionals leaving the continent annually since 1990.

According to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), there are currently over 300,000 highly qualified Africans in the Diaspora, 30,000 of which have Ph.Ds. At the same time, Africa spends US\$4 billion per year (representing 35% of total of-

cial development aid to the continent) to employ some 100,000 Western experts performing functions generically described as technical assistance. For example, 90% of private firms in Gabon are managed by expatriates.

Africa as a whole counts only 20,000 scientists (3.6% percent of the world total) and its share in the world's scientific output has fallen from 0.5% to 0.3% as it continues to suffer the brain drain of scientists, engineers and technologists. The problem of brain drain has reached quite disturbing proportions in certain African countries, with Ethiopia ranked as first in terms of loss human capital, followed by Nigeria and Ghana.

Over the past 10-15 years, about 50% of Ethiopians who went abroad for training did not return after completing their studies. According, to the IOM, Ethiopia lost about 74.6% of its human capital from various institutions between 1980 and 1991.

Basically, African countries are funding the education of their nationals only to see them end up contributing to the growth of developed countries with little or no return on their investment. In Kenya, for example, it costs about US\$40,000 to train a doctor and US\$10,000-15,000 to educate a university student for 4 years.

A recent survey of the African Diaspora carried out has shown the following (Africa Recruit, 2004):

- 75-80% of those surveyed did the majority of their schooling in Africa
- Most had very little work experience in Africa before leaving the continent
- A majority intend to return back to Africa in 0-7years
- Those who do not intend to return left because of insecurity and political reasons.
- A majority of those surveyed live in Europe and North America
- A majority of those surveyed send money home to family averaging at US\$200 a month
- The money sent to family was mainly for consumption and personal responsibilities, and usually sent by hand or international money transfer.

### III. The Economics of Transnational Diaspora

Migration can also have positive economic impacts on countries of origin. The money that migrants send home (remittances) can contribute significantly to the recipients' welfare as well the receiving country's economic well-being. Where migrants return home, either permanently or for short periods, with new skills that they put to good use, they and their communities can benefit. Even when they don't return in

person, members of a Diaspora can contribute to the development of their erstwhile homes through trade, investment, networking, and skills transfer.

Traditionally, brain drain was considered to be a loss for the South, but over the last few years it has ceased to be perceived as entirely negative. The recent focus has been on the ability of migrants to advance development in their countries of origin through the flow of financial remittances, which are still the most visible outcome of international migration (Adams, 2003), as well as through social remittances consisting of regular transfers of knowledge, abilities, experiences, attitudes and other forms of human, social and financial capital (Ammassari and Black, 2001). As such, migrants have become agents of development for technological progress, economic growth, social development and environmental well-being (OECD, 1995).

There has been an increase in the international movement of highly skilled workers since the early 1990s as a result of growing global demand for specialists, the advance of globalisation and the extraordinary developments in information and communication technology (ILO, 2004).

It is important to acknowledge the impressive and dynamic scholarship on the economic effects of migration, as well as some of the theoretical advances made by different scholars in this field. In what follows, I briefly review some of the central themes and debates that characterize recent scholarship on migrants' remittances, transnational entrepreneurship, and community development support.

### **III.A. Remittances**

Remittances represent the social ties of solidarity, reciprocity, and obligation that bind migrants and their kin and friends across state-controlled national borders. This long-distance, intimate "bound solidarity" (Portes, 1995, 1997), which initially has a very narrow scope of action, as individual migrants' intent is mainly to benefit kin and friends, has become a macroeconomic factor that spawns vast effects in the countries of origin.

### **III.B. Migrants' Entrepreneurship**

Scholars have widely substantiated that the vast bulk of migrants' remittances are spent on consumption (basic family subsistence, housing, and purchase of durable and non-durable goods for household use), while a small proportion is actually devoted to productive investment. Recent research, however, has documented the existence of a vast array of transnational entrepreneurial activities undertaken by migrants.

### III.C. Support to Local Community Development

A third kind of economic transaction, with a broader initial social scope, includes the collective transfer of resources to support local community development projects, philanthropic endeavors, and post-disaster relief and reconstruction efforts in the country of origin.

### III.D. Highly Skilled Migrants

Evidence of large numbers of highly-skilled people emigrating from the developing world is not hard to find:

- nearly one in ten tertiary-educated adults born in the developing world resided in North America, Australia or Western Europe (Lowell *et al.* 2004:9);
- between a third and half of the developing world's science and technology personnel live in the developed world;
- about 40 per cent of all African professionals have left the continent's shores in the postcolonial period (Africa Recruit 2003);
- by the end of the 1990s, Indians working in the US on working visas accounted for 30 per cent of the Indian software labour force (Commander *et al.* 2003);
- Jamaica loses about 20 per cent of its specialist nurses annually to mainly the US or the UK (Wyss 2004); and
- the proportions of tertiary educated people amongst emigrants from some developing countries is vastly higher than those in the resident population (Figure 1 shows, for example, that 79.8 per cent of emigrants from India have a tertiary education while only 2.5 per cent of the overall Indian population have a tertiary education).

## IV. The Diaspora Option Strategy

Strategies used in the past to attempt to reverse the brain drain include retention and the return of skilled migrants to their countries of origin. However, many African countries have acknowledged that efforts to stem the emigration of highly skilled people or to attract them back to the home country are not always effective.

The Diaspora option (or, "Virtual Circulation") which encourages highly skilled expatriates to contribute their experience to the development of their country without necessarily physically relocating emerged in the 1990s as a more realistic strategy

to alleviate the consequences of brain drain. There are some 41 expatriate knowledge networks in the world with the explicit purpose of interconnecting the expatriates themselves and with their country of origin, 6 of which are linked to countries of Africa, including the Association of Kenyan Abroad; the Moroccan Association of Researchers and Scholars Abroad; the Association of Nigerians Abroad; the South African Network of Skills Abroad (SANSA) and the Tunisian Scientific Consortium.

Thus, in July 2001, the Organisation for African Unity – the forerunner to the African Union (AU) – adopted a resolution urging member States to “develop strategies for utilizing the scientific and technological know-how and skills of the African Diaspora” for the development of the continent. The AU went one step further by calling for the Diaspora to be considered the sixth region of Africa, after North, South, East, West and Central Africa. Heads of States who met for the African Union extraordinary summit in February 2003 agreed to amend the organisation’s charter to “encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of the continent”.

## **II.A. A traditional focus: brain drain**

The brain drain concept is based on the theory of human capital and involves the free circulation of HRST in search of the best opportunities in the most optimal conditions (Iredale, 2001). It is defined as significant levels of HRST emigrants locating to foreign countries on a permanent or temporary basis without there being a positive net effect on the country of origin, through, for instance, technology transfer, trade or investment (Lowell and Findlay, 2001). According to Lowell (2003), two conditions are necessary if the term brain drain is to be applied to a country of origin: firstly, there should be a significant loss of the country’s highly skilled population and secondly, this loss must result in net adverse economic consequences. According to Adams (2003), brain drain occurs when a country loses more than 10 percent of its tertiary-level educated population to emigration.

## **II.B. Change of paradigm: brain gain, brain exchange and brain circulation**

Moving beyond an understanding and explanation of the brain drain phenomenon, the past few years have seen a new interest in proposing and establishing national policies that permit the flow of knowledge, experiences and other elements within science, innovation and the creation of new knowledge.

## II.C. Alternative mechanisms to brain drain

We also need to understand the circumstances under which highly skilled expatriates have been able to contribute to the development of their countries of origin and to identify ways in which highly skilled expatriates have had a positive impact, if any, on development and poverty reduction in the countries of origin through a systematic use of knowledge, experiences and resources (for example, through their participation in the creation of micro-enterprises, employment generation, scientific and technical cooperation, implementation of community development projects, creation of scientific and technological centres, attraction of investment for research and experimental development, etc. ).

The main mechanisms are the following:

- **Creation of scientific diaspora networks:** *Scientific diasporas* are based on networks in which HRST dynamically maintain and advance academic, scientific and entrepreneurial ties with the countries of origin, principally through new communication and information technologies, promoting a circulation of knowledge, abilities and resources.
- **Investment in research and experimental development (RED):** some countries have developed important scientific and technological centres in the countries of origin using the resources of expatriate high skills.
- **North-South Research Partnership Programmes:** North-South partnership programmes encourage the participation of researchers from developing countries in research programmes and temporary exchanges which give high skilled persons from the South access to the knowledge, infrastructure and equipment of the North (Hurni, Lys and Maselli, 2001; RAWOO, 2001; Maselli, 2002).

## V. The Role of the African Diaspora

With respect to international migration of the African people, two broad patterns can be identified: emigration of skilled professionals to destinations outside the continent, and intra regional migration flows. The IOM (2003) estimates that approximately 3.8 million African immigrants were living in the developed countries, of which OECD countries are the largest recipients. The largest recipients of African emigrants are France, United States, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany. From the perspective of African countries, the largest migrant sending countries were concentrated in North Africa, most notably Morocco, with roughly 1.3 million immigrants in the OECD countries followed by Algeria and Tunisia. In sub-Saharan Africa the largest sending countries were Ghana, Senegal, Somalia and Nigeria.

Apart from the traditional migration patterns as elucidated above, new migration patterns have also emerged in recent times. Perhaps the most noticeable pattern involves the movement of people from Africa to Australia, New Zealand and the Gulf States – the latter involving emigration of semiskilled and unskilled workers from Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia (IOM 2003). With respect to the socio-economic profiles of the African diaspora, it is worth emphasizing that a significant proportion of African migrants have high levels of skills and educational attainment. According to Docquiere and Marfouk (2004), for example 59 %, 43 %, 42 % and 36 % of immigrants from Somalia, Ghana, Nigeria and Mozambique have attained tertiary education in 2000. The educational profiles for the Anglophone West Africans in the United Kingdom are comparable to those of other highly educated groups such as Indians (Chikezie 2002). The same is true of the African diaspora in the United States. Sub-Saharan Africans had the highest percentage of people with at least a bachelor's degree of all the foreign-born immigrants in the United States (US Bureau of Census 2000).

Although international migration may have negative effects on labour sending countries in the short-run, it may induce some beneficial effects in the long run. These include remittances, return migration and transfer of skills, and transnational networks that facilitate trade and capital flows.

Empirical evidence shows that the African diaspora can contribute to private sector development by transferring financial resources (remittances and financial capital) as well as skills and knowledge. This is particularly important since, for many African countries, lack of finance and human capital are critical factors constraining private sector development.

More disconcertingly, notwithstanding the low human capital development, African countries continue to experience massive emigration of highly skilled professionals—a phenomenon known as brain drain. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2003), at least 35 per cent of university graduates from 21 African countries reside abroad. Furthermore, more than 80,000 skilled professional Africans leave the continent each year, including 23,000 university graduates and 50,000 at the executive and professional level (Global Coalition for Africa 2005). These professionals are involved in various occupations such as teaching, education, research, finance and investment etc. Thus, the African diaspora represents an immense brain bank and financial asset into which African countries can tap to promote private sector development.

However, despite the enormous wealth that the Africa diaspora possesses, African countries have been unable to fully take advantage of their diaspora to promote development. Equally, members of the African diaspora have not been as actively involved in their home countries' development as diasporas from other countries (Adepoju 2004). But the situation is beginning to change as African countries are now slowly beginning to court their diaspora communities.<sup>4</sup> This largely reflects the recognition of the potential contributions that the African Diaspora can make to the development process on the continent.

The African Diaspora has some comparative advantages. It has acquired technical skills that many in the continent do not have; they know what works in the country they live in and what does not. They know how to influence Governments, the private sector and NGO's in the country they live in. Some are successful entrepreneurs or associated with large firms.

Consequently, the time is right for the African Diaspora to make concrete contributions to Africa's development in the following ways:

- **i.** Engage the Private Sector as partners for African development in helping to:
  - build its export potential as well as diversify such exports;
  - build technical and commercial expertise locally;
  - develop local, national, sub-regional and global markets;
  - dispel the myth of Africa as an unstable continent and increase private sector investment in trade, manufacturing and heavy industries;
  - create employment, especially for the youth.
- **ii** Assisting Africa in promoting major increase in FDI:
  - building and strengthening enabling industries in Africa: banking, stock markets and infrastructure;
  - making personal and corporate contributions to and increasing advocacy for increased investment in Africa.
- **iii** Stepping Up Advocacy in Addressing Old and New Challenges:
  - Debt Relief/Cancellation;
  - HIV/AIDS Pandemic.
- **iv** Being pro-active in helping to build Africa's human and technical resources and capabilities by:
  - supporting educational and technical training programmes in Africa by involving industries or corporations in which the Diaspora has major interests or corporations have community programmes, encourage them to widen their horizon to include Africa;
  - working through international NGOs to support projects in Africa which are in alignment with NEPAD priorities;
  - encouraging the development of exchange programmes with voluntary services, especially in the technical and scientific fields in African countries.

## V.A. Innovative Sectors in Horn of Africa

In the most general sense innovation refers to the adoption of new products, services, processes and organizational methods, or adaptations of existing ones based on new knowledge.

Most economists agree that technical progress, brought about by innovation, is the main driver of economic growth. Thus, creative entrepreneurship is essential for every economy. Firms need to produce new goods of higher quality, and at the same time reduce costs of production through cheaper production technologies and better management. Consequently not only does innovation play a crucial anchoring role for the private sector but it is a critical ingredient for high and sustained levels of economic growth.

Capacity to innovate is quite low in most African countries, both in the private and in the public sector. Thus the ability to adopt new technologies and adapt them to local conditions will be a crucial first step to increase productivity which is a precondition for growth and decent employment.

Innovation is not restricted to high-tech applications. Innovation that leads to higher efficiency and better quality goods is also essential in such sectors as food processing and textiles to enable them to survive rising competition. The largest share of innovations in Africa takes place in the form of incremental applied and informal improvements made in small and medium enterprises. Hence African governments need to improve the environment and create more incentive to increase the level of innovation in these enterprises.

Yet, the knowledge-based economy is not restricted to high-tech firms and industries but innovation is also crucial for everyday products, such as food (UNCTAD, 2005).

Furthermore, the positive effects of innovation are not limited to the private sector but can also contribute directly to human development. For example medical innovation can improve basic health, and higher agricultural production is linked to better seeds and water use as well as less environmental stress.

Networks are crucial for the innovation process. The flow of new knowledge from its creators (locally or foreign) to its users has to be supported by governments. Important actors in these innovation networks are the education sector (especially technical and managerial education), research institutions and private firms. Innovations known as National Innovation Systems (NIS), play a central role in the innovation process. The primary function of a NIS is the establishment of an appropriate incentives regime to correct market and institutional failures in capturing technological knowledge and learning. The NIS also involves the institutional context and strategic policy planning for the economy's long-term competitiveness (UNCTAD, 2005). Therefore, the ability of companies to innovate depends crucially on the NIS in which they operate. Most African countries do not have a coherent innovation policy in place.

Each country must develop an innovation strategy based on its specific reality and situation. The private sector should be involved in designing the innovation strategy. For most African countries improvements in the educational system, the initiation of interactions between the private sector and research institutions, the provision of risk capital for innovative firms and the improvement of infrastructure for quality controls should feature high on the agenda. A country's ability to innovate depends largely on its technological capabilities and the information and skills- technical,

managerial and institutional – that allow capable researchers to produce new technologies, while at the same time allowing productive enterprises to access, utilize, and commercialize technology efficiently as well as increased productivity.

The global environment, in which the process of innovation occurs, has changed rapidly. It has become cheaper and easier to gain access to scientific and technological knowledge, especially through the Internet. The local innovation capacity of African countries is thus heavily dependent on their ability to access the global pool of existing knowledge through cross-border interactions. For the majority of African countries the benefits will come from the diffusion of knowledge and its translation into goods and services through adaptation, predominantly from thousands of small technological improvements in small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

It is, therefore, important to examine the current environment for innovation in Africa and outline the challenges it faces in order to make policy recommendations to improve it. These are the main objectives in this paper.

Most African countries enter the global technology market today as late developers, with considerable cost and risk involved in absorbing existing complex technologies, and facing numerous coordination problems. To improve on the technological competence, the productive sector in African countries has to be able to master imported technologies, adapt them to local conditions, improve them and finally use them as a base for creating local innovations. Of special importance for most African economies is the agricultural productivity transition, which involves advances in knowledge and technology. This transition from very low yields per hectare compared to other regions could help to reduce malnutrition, land degradation and deforestation (UNECA 2002).

To develop innovation countries need to allocate an adequate level of resources to research and development (R&D). This is not the case in many African countries. South Africa and Uganda are currently the only African nations with a share of R&D expenditures to GDP close to the average of 0.9 per cent for all developing countries. Partly this can be explained by the low technology nature of most African industry (e.g. food products, textiles and footwear) (UNCTAD, 2005). Likewise the gap in human capital – another essential ingredient for innovation – between OECD countries and African countries is significant, with OECD countries having twelve times the per capita number of scientists and engineers working in R&D. The human capital also varies greatly between African countries. The highest shares of research personnel are working in Tunisia, Guinea, Sudan, Mauritius and South Africa (see Figure 1).

To improve the functioning of NIS in Africa scarce resources must be mobilized, more efficiently used and better linked. Governments can contribute to enhancing the capacity of firms to adapt or create innovations in a variety of ways. These include the provision of direct incentives for technology learning and upgrading such as tax holidays and R&D grants, the provision of information on new technologies, the improvement of skills and the provision of appropriate infrastructure and regulatory frameworks. To assist domestic firms to develop dynamic comparative advantages

high quality information not only on technologies but also on potential markets is needed.

## VI. Challenges

Implementing successful policies that foster local innovations faces numerous challenges in the African context, including the lack of a large university-educated skilled labour force, high-quality laboratories and scientific equipment, liquid and efficient financial markets, strong private sector initiative and developed markets, as well as managerial and marketing capacity.

To start the innovation process firms need to build linkages with outsiders who possess the necessary technologies and skills. The sources of external knowledge range from equipment and input suppliers, universities and research institutes to private business associations. *Reverse engineering*, i.e. taking apart and reproducing the imported product or process, and adapting it to local conditions, is usually the first stage of technological catch-up, after which own product development and eventually own technological innovation follow. To enable firms to adapt new technologies and create innovations a strong secondary and higher education system, capable of supplying growing research and industrial needs with trained professionals is absolutely essential. To foster local innovations not only technical expertise is required but also strong managerial skills. Therefore, curricula in technical subjects should also include some basic understanding of accounting and finance to enable graduates to start their own business. In order to make curricula more relevant and praxisoriented more interaction between institutions of tertiary education and the private sector is also crucial.

A primary concern of higher education provision in Africa is the existing mismatch between the skills imparted through the education system, and those demanded by the private sector. Curricula have minimal relevance to the needs of industry, resulting in high unemployment even among fresh college graduates (UNECA, 2005b). An internal environment characterized by the lack of profitable opportunities has led to the mass emigration of the few skilled professionals. Africa's brain drain – the unprecedented and significant loss of knowledge and human capital – poses significant and wellknown problems to the continent. Although remittances from the highly qualified émigrés are important to the economies of their countries of origin (see Diaspora section), their emigration has had significant negative growth effect and negative externalities in Africa. If these people return, they may become agents of change and facilitators of technological transfers to their countries of origin. If they do not return, as is often the case, their loss can become total and problematic for the continent.

Another challenge for innovative firms is the requirement to meet different standards in all export markets. Reliable metrology systems and testing laboratories are

needed for the accreditation of African products and processes (UNCTAD, 2005). However, most African standards institutions suffer from a number of shortcomings such as old and outdated equipment and a too high proportion of administrative staff as compared to scientific and technical staff.

## Optimising diasporic potentials

The involvement of migrant communities, or ‘diasporas’ more generally, in the life of their erstwhile homes goes well beyond financial flows. Diasporas can be the source of ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flows between countries (something Levitt (1996:3) describes as ‘social remittances’). Similarly, migrants can transfer knowledge and skills (sometimes called ‘technological remittances’) or even political identities and practices (which Golding (2004: 805) calls ‘political remittances’).

## Challenges ahead

It might be useful at this stage to outline some of the major challenges facing researchers and policy-makers in this area. This is by no means an exhaustive list; it is simply an attempt to flag up some key themes that need exploring.

- **Anticipating future flows:** Demographic transition in developed countries throws the question of migration and development into sharp relief, and highlights most clearly the importance of mutuality in this area.
- **Promoting versus restricting mobility:** A key choice facing policy-makers in designing such policies is whether to promote or restrict mobility.

For policy-makers, one of the critical decisions in this area is what sort of framework and institutions can best address the challenges of optimising the impact of migration on development and poverty reduction. The most obvious answer is that we need global approaches to tackling them. There is much scope for creative approaches in this area, especially given that migration is one of the few areas of international public policy in which all (migrants themselves, sending countries and receiving countries) stand to gain if managed appropriately.

- **Who pays?** Assuming that extra funds are needed, at the very least, to address brain strain or, more ambitiously, to fund a formal apparatus for research and policy on migration and development, the question of who pays arises.

Here, at least three key questions emerge:

- Who pays – migrants themselves, their employers in host countries, the host government, or some combination of these three?

- Who benefits – the migrant’s country of origin or at-risk developing countries in general?
- sending country governments or non-governmental organisations; particular sectors of the sending country’s economy (e. g. education)?
- What channels are used – direct transfers to sending countries or indirect administration of funds collected by host country or intermediary institutions?

## VII. Policy Recommendations

Specifically countries should consider at least some of the following measures to improve the environment for innovations:

- **Improvement in education at all levels.** As knowledge changes fast the focus has to be on learning how to learn. This includes improved apprenticeship systems, support for on the job training within firms, and developing managerial skills. To strengthen the capacity of the tertiary education system it is necessary to introduce competitive allocation procedures, transparency and peer review, research evaluation and accountability for results.
- **Creation of innovation networks.** As a precondition, research institutions need to be strengthened in order to make them viable partners for innovating firms. Then they could provide meaningful consultancy services.
- **Provision of start-up finance.** Through the provision of venture capital, start-ups or existing firms are provided with equity instead of loans and enables them to cope better with the risk of innovations. Public-private partnerships between commercial investment funds and grant-financed technical service providers could fill the existing gap in Africa.
- **Better infrastructure for advanced products.** To enable firms to use new technologies it is not only essential that traditional infrastructure, especially electricity and communication is in place, it is equally crucial for firms to have high quality access to laboratories and standards institutions. Certification through the International Standardization Organisation (ISO) will signal high quality especially to foreign buyers.
- **Institutionalizing the diaspora linkage.**
- **Strengthening good governance.**
- **Encouraging return migration.**
- **Encouraging the flow of remittances through official channels.**
- **Priority for technical and vocational education:** addressing the need of the world of work and providing for both learners who would require specific skills

for direct entry into productive life as well as general technical education for those for whom technical and vocational education (TVE) would be a preparation for further formal education.

- The notion of **centres of excellence**, at national, subregional, and regional levels to be revived (and forcefully pursued). The issue of women participation in higher education to be treated as a special area of priority.
- Above all, the **knowledge generation mission of universities**, through research, should be given due prominence, through improved funding for facilities, and all forms of institutional and personal capacity development.
- To ensure Africa full membership of today's **knowledge society**, it would be necessary to devote, at least, 0.4% of GNP to research. This is the absolute minimum needed to raise the present ratio of one researcher to 4,000 persons to the required standard of one researcher per 1,000 persons.
- Assisting in the creation and reinforcing of scientific associations and NGOs in the African continent.

## Conclusion, Policy Implications and Recommendations

- Recommendation 1. Identify brain strain 'hotspots'
- Recommendation 2. Multilateral efforts to slow the flow from 'hotspots'
- Recommendation 3. Bolster training and retention in 'hotspot' sectors
- Recommendation 4. Promote circular migration
- Recommendation 5. Lower the cost of remittances
- Recommendation 6. Use remittances to strengthen financial systems
- Recommendation 7. Maximise development impacts of remittances
- Recommendation 8. Encourage collective remittances
- Recommendation 9. Facilitate diaspora trade and investment
- Recommendation 10. Consolidate knowledge networks

Networks of highly-skilled workers have been suggested as being one way of addressing brain strain. Meyer (1999) calls this the 'diaspora option' and examines several networks between nationals working mainly in science or engineering.

Given these parameters, two policy options emerge:

- **Remote control:** Asymmetric information between remitter and recipient often means that remitters cannot control whether their money is being spent most productively (Chami *et al.* 2003:4).
- **Matching funds:** One way to do this would be through governments in remittances-receiving countries (or even the governments of the countries where migrants work) promising ‘matching-funds’ to induce migrants to spend some of their remittances on productive or worthwhile areas.

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# The Eritrean Diaspora: Myth and Reality

## Introduction

The contribution of the Eritrean diaspora to the country of origin is most of the time presented as solely positive. In broad terms this understanding might be true. Undeniably, seen in the material and intellectual aspect, the Eritrean diaspora has been a vital pool from which the Eritrean struggle as well as the post-independence reconstruction and defence of sovereignty of the country during the second war with Ethiopia has greatly benefited. Referring to the latter expressions like the diaspora funded the war has become commonplace perception. Nevertheless, the diaspora also plays negative roles. An apparent example is that the diaspora impact in widening socio-cultural divisions (ethnic, religious, regional, linguistic) has increasingly become palpable. This palpability has dramatically increased in the last few years. It also, adopting uncritically, the neo-liberal driven conditionality principle, particularly, as recent developments show, is involved in isolating the country, consequences of which are of long-lasting structural damage to the society.

Seen from a historical perspective the early diasporic flight of Eritreans took two routes, which underlie cultural background, and in turn, eventually had cultural effects on the country of origin. These routes were the Middle East, taken by Moslem lowlanders, and West, taken by Christian highlanders. When the liberation movement was divided into competing fronts it also affected the diaspora. While most of those who emigrated to the Middle East supported the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), the majority of those who emigrated to the West gave support to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). This division of the diaspora continues until this day affecting the society back at home too.

The aim of the paper is to discuss and analyse the myth and reality pivoting around the contribution of Eritrean diaspora to the country of origin. Firstly, it will interrogate why comparatively speaking, the Eritrean diaspora have strong passionate attachment to their country of origin, shed light on the possible factors behind this strong emotional attachment. Secondly, it will shed light on the commonplace myth of a united Eritrean diaspora extremely devoted to the country of origin under all circumstances. Thirdly, concomitantly, it will interrogate the untold story of the negative role the diaspora plays-aggravating socio-cultural (ethnic, religious, regional) di-

visions, and the untamed politics of opposition. And finally, come up with suggestions of how the diaspora Eritrea community could play constructive roles in the reconstruction, democratization and development of the country.

## Historical backdrop

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) through its Resolution 390A(v) of 1950 imposed federation on the Eritrean people that tied them with Ethiopia. Exactly ten years later, 1962, the Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie, arbitrarily abrogated the federal arrangement and Eritrea was annexed, constituting the fourteenth province of Ethiopia. It did not take long for the Ethiopian state to begin dismantling the provision of the Federation. Any attempt at resistance by Eritreans was dealt with decisively. Even though they were against the Federation once it was introduced, Eritreans strove to preserve it, believing that it represented symbolically their unique Eritrean identity and autonomy. Those Eritreans who opposed erosion of the Federation and annexation of Eritrea were systematically persecuted and driven out of the country. While many of the Moslems emigrated to the Sudan, Egypt and Middle East; the overwhelming majority of the Christians emigrated to Ethiopia and the West. This period and migration constituted the incipience of the history of the diaspora Eritreans. The religio-geographical division the migration pattern assumed was to have a consequence to the political division during the liberation struggle. Of course, the influence was of reciprocal nature leading to interdependence. This reciprocity was expressed in that the liberation movement would influence the diaspora community through organising affiliated mass organisations and the diaspora community in turn influence the liberation movement by legitimising it.

When the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) launched armed struggle for independence, it drew its members from the Moslem communities. The majority of those activists originated from their diasporic places the Sudan, Egypt and the Middle East. Individuals from the diaspora, in Cairo, Egypt, met in 1960 and decided to launch an armed struggle for independence. Accordingly in the following year, September 1961, an armed wing was formed (Bereketeab 2000). The overwhelming members of the Eritrean Liberation Army (ELA), the military wing of the ELF consisted of Moslems from the lowland of Eritrea. The main focus of activities of the political leadership of the ELF was also circumvented in the Arab world and presented the Eritrean struggle as Islamic and Arab which gave the impression that the liberation movement was a sectarian Moslem movement. Internally also the image of the ELF, in the first decade, was construed as such that while Moslems perceived it as their own, Christians were very apprehensive.

When a split took place, in 1970, the Eritrean Popular Liberation Forces (EPLF) drew support mainly from those Christians who emigrated to the West. The Association of Eritrean Students in North America and Association of Eritrean Women in

North America became a lifeline of the emergent EPLF. They provided crucially needed material support such as money, medicine and clothes. In the propaganda area also these associations played a decisive role.

The wanton bombing and burning of villages thought to be harbouring guerrillas, exterminating animals based on the principle to kill the fish drain the water, which was introduced in Eritrea in the late 1960s by the Ethiopian state forced thousands of Eritrean Moslems to flee to Sudan (Ammar 1992). The majority of these supported the ELF, and after independence remained in the Sudan on the ground that their organisation was not allowed to return to Eritrea (Kibreab 1997?).

Beginning from the mid-1970s the war of independence intensified as a result of which mass migration to all corners of the world took place. This time it shifted to the highland and it became the turn of the Tigrinya Christians to flee the country. When the Dergue recaptured the towns that were liberated by the fronts, tens of thousands marched for life in exile, swelling the size of diaspora community. The 1980-1981 civil war between the ELF and EPLF that brought the demise of the ELF led to the emigration of thousands of ELF fighters to Europe and North America. Many of these ELF fighters continued their struggle against the EPLF from the diaspora. Now the various factions of ELF themselves turned into diasporic political oppositions. Politics of revenge and hatred guided their diasporic opposition. Following the outbreak of the second war with Ethiopia (1998-2000) another flight of Eritrean youngsters commenced. The recent exodus, which is mainly in response to the forcible recruitment in the national service and fear of the imminent war with Ethiopia, is of a different character. It consists of a young generation who were children when Eritrea became independent. Hence their political commitment and engagement in the diaspora politics of Eritrea seems to be, unlike their predecessors very tenuous and lack their passionate engagement.

The early diaspora were already politicised because they fled from a colonial power and it became self-evident to continue their opposition from a diasporic space. Hence they either formed mass organisations or joined existing ones. The liberation fronts also realising the need for mobilising and organising the diaspora community, spared no time in forming branches of mass organisations where-ever there were Eritreans. In its first national congress, in 1971, the ELF endorsed a resolution that enforced the formation of mass organisations affiliated to it. Already student and women's associations, in Egypt, Syria and Iraq were operating. These associations were later transformed into the General Union of Eritrean Students (GUES) and General Union of Eritrean Women (GUEW). Workers and youth unions were added later to those mass organizations affiliated to ELF. When the ELF was defeated in 1981 its mass organisations disintegrated, taking sides with the various factions that emerged subsequently. The EPLF also established its own mass organisations. In 1989, the diaspora branches were told to dissolve themselves, which led to great disappointment (Connell 2005, Koser 2003: 113). After independence, particularly, following the outbreak of the second war with Ethiopia, the PFDJ tried to revive them, but in a different form.

## Forgotten, ignored and marginalised: Eritrean struggle depended on its diaspora

When the UNGA abdicated its responsibility on Eritrea, and the OAU, prisoner of its own principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of its members states, turned a blind eyes to the plight of Eritreans, and when the Super Powers dictated by their geo-political strategic interests alternated in siding with their enemy Ethiopia; an unequivocal message was conveyed to Eritreans. The message was you are alone, no one cares about you, you can only depend on your own sources. This act of ignoring and marginalising created a social-psychology pregnated with a sense of ferocious national determination and independence. As one observer notes; “This independence came from the Eritreans’ long history of being ignored by the rest of the world. The indifference and neglect they had suffered had left them with a ferocious sense of individuality” (Hill 2002: 5). The realisation of this alone-ness brought out a resolute will of maximization of their resources. One of these resources was the diaspora Eritrean community. The efficient and rational use of the diaspora presupposed mobilisation and organisation of the diaspora community. Accordingly several mass organisations were established in different cities of the world as mentioned above.

The mass organisations’ high devotion and commitment was exemplary and engendered the envy of societies that were not only in a similar situation to that of Eritrea but also societies that were aspiring to march along the route of development and eagerly wished that their diaspora communities will show strong commitment and engagement in the development endeavours of their country of origin. As Koser (2003: 122) notes, “These features are quite unusual in the African context, and make direct parallels with the Eritrean case difficult to draw”. The immense various capitals at the disposal of the diaspora community include; Social capital: skill, knowledge; economic capital: financial, cultural capital: language, civilization: These various types of capital are indispensable for bringing about social transformation in developing societies.

Now back to the indispensable contribution of the Eritrean diaspora to the effort of the independence struggle. The contribution of the Eritrean diaspora to the liberation struggle was of profound signification, without exaggeration it could be said it was one of the central factors that eventually decided the victory. The commitment of the diaspora community took a variety of forms. One of these forms was financial. The financial contribution varied from regular monthly fees to street collections. Festivals were also organised to serve as platforms for money collection. Ferocious competition between the liberation fronts to win the support of the diaspora communities supplied fuel to the frequency of organising festivities. Since the fronts increasingly became dependent on the financial contribution of the diaspora they had to devise a variety of methods through which the size of the contribution was bolstered in accordance with the growing demands of the liberation struggle. The growing maximisation of the contribution of the diaspora was particularly reflected on the sacri-

fices made by women. House working women, particularly, in countries like Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Italy were seen contributing including their jewellery. Professionals, particularly, medical professionals organised field trips where they gave service of their expertise. Many also, after completing their education, joined the struggle. Without the diplomatic role the diaspora community played, it would have been impossible to achieve the diplomatic recognition the Eritrean struggle finally received.

Nevertheless there was a downside to the involvement of the diaspora communities in the independence struggle. The diaspora branches of the mass organisations also contributed to deepening the division and multiplication of the liberation fronts. Their political, material and moral support was channelled in a sectarian way to their respective mother organisations (the liberation fronts). They were unable to transcend the politics of organisations and form a united Eritrean diaspora whose loyalty and commitment was to the Eritrean struggle in general, not to its tools (the particular liberation fronts). They rather continued to split along the lines of split inside the national liberation struggle. Hence one of the weak spots of the national liberation struggle in the diplomatic sphere was the lack of unified offensive waged by a unified diaspora community. The split in the diaspora community was thus used in the diplomatic arena as a rationale for not supporting the aspiration of the Eritrean people. Indeed, it served to portray the liberation struggle as reactionary, divided along religion, ethnicity and tribe, and by no way representing and serving the interest and aspiration of the Eritrean people.

## The post-liberation state and the diaspora

The split of the diaspora during the liberation struggle also continued to affect the relation of a section of the diaspora community to the emerging post-liberation state. Members of the various ELF factions felt left out and marginalized because their respective organisations were not recognised and permitted to return as legal oppositions. To mark their disapproval of the EPLF government, these diaspora members refused to visit the country and abstained from making any contribution to the reconstruction of the nation. Some of them even refused to take part in the referendum and process of constitution drafting. Neither did they pay the two percent income tax imposed by the government on the diaspora community.

Of course the relations of the mass organisation affiliated to the EPLF also changed its nature. As it was mentioned above, on the eve of independence, the branches of mass organisations in the diaspora were dissolved. Following independence thus the relation of the Eritrean diaspora assumed a different form. In the political sphere, the priorities of the emerging state dictated the nature and scope of the relation.

Consequently, links between the diaspora and the new state have developed in two new ways. The first has been political. The most obvious example of a political link

was participation in the 1993 Referendum for Independence, in which, ...the vast majority of Eritreans in the diaspora eligible to vote did so. After the referendum, overseas nationals were also closely involved with the drafting of Eritrea's Constitution, and its ratification in 1997. The diaspora had formal representation in the Assembly of the Constitutional Committee, amounting to six out of the total members (Koser 2003: 113-114).

What does not appear in the above citation is that, in a way perpetuating the myth of unified Eritrean diaspora perennially standing on the side of their nation, many of the followers of the various faction of the ELF refused to partake in the referendum as well as the constitution drafting process. This diaspora group boycotted the series of seminars convened by the Government on the Constitution drafting to involve and get views of the diaspora. This section of the diaspora community never accepted the legality of the referendum or the constitution. Therefore, even in the limited political space opened for them, described by Khalid Koser in the above citation, this group of diaspora were unwilling to make use of it. The politics of organisations resembled the politics of religion. As if members of the organisations joined them, in the first place, for the sake of the organisation per se, not that the organisations were tools for national objectives, every one seems to be of the position 'my organisation good or bad'. As one does not have critical relation to one's religion (one doesn't question, analyse, research one's religion) one does not question one's organisation.

In an attempt to resuscitate its pre-independence mass organisation the PFDJ Government, particularly following the outbreak of the second war with Ethiopia showed great effort to mobilise and organise the diaspora communities. Instead of reviving the traditional mass organisations however, the focus centred on forming community associations and relief associations like Eritrean Development Fund in the USA and Citizens for Peace in Canada (Koser 2003: 114). Community associations, supposed to be apolitical and embracing all Eritreans irrespective of their political affiliation were infiltrated and finally forced to split into government supporters and opposition supporters.

The second type of relation rested on the economic sphere. Since independence every adult Eritrean in the diaspora is expected to pay two percent of their income (Koser 2003: 114). This compulsory contribution has generated a mixed feeling among Eritrean diaspora. Khalid Koser (2003: 114) erroneously notes, "not even those in open opposition to the current Government ... seem to resent paying ". To the contrary of what Koser asserts members of the opposition groups, since they question the legitimacy not only of two percent income tax but even the PFDJ Government never paid. Of course there were individual members of the opposition who for one or another reason paid at least for some years. Until the outbreak of the second war the remittances from the Eritrean diaspora was estimated to be about three hundred million US Dollars annually, representing a major percent of the country's GNP.

With particular focus on the war, *Bidho* committees were formed in various cities of the world, where there were Eritreans. Through Bidho committees' financial contribution were sought. In addition to the two percent therefore various forms of con-

tribution were devised. With slight variation, contingent on circumstances of the specific host country, a one-time sum was collected. For instance 1000 dollars (SEK10 000-in Sweden), £500 (in UK), DM1000 (in Germany), were collected in 1999. Another form of eliciting funds was the issuing of bonds which began in 1999. By mid-July of the same year it was estimated about US\$ 55 million worth of bonds were purchased by Eritrean diaspora residing in North America, Europe and Middle East (Koser 2003:115). There were also other forms of contribution like the *drar ser-awit* (Lunch of the army).

Indeed the outbreak of the second war was a watershed in the re-mobilisation of the Eritrean diaspora both in political and economic terms which gave rise to expressions like “the Eritrean diaspora funded the war” becoming commonplace. In addition to the financial support (described above) the diaspora communities also tried to influence the international community to put pressure on Ethiopia to cease its aggression and later to accept the decision of the EEBC (Eritrean Ethiopian Boundary Commission) regarding the border. There were several scenes of demonstrations, petition writing and sit-down actions in various Western capital cities. Here also there was deviation. Although many members of the opposition participated in campaigns, many were engaged in counter campaigns accusing the Eritrean Government of being the source of all the conflicts.

The Ethiopian aggression of May 2000 was a turning point not only in the relation between the post-liberation state and the diaspora but also in the unity of the ruling party (PFDJ). The swift penetration and occupation of undisputed Eritrean territory (about one third was penetrated in a very short time) choked Eritreans within and without the country. This resulted in the split of the ruling party. This split directly affected the diaspora communities. Now the members and supporters of the EPLF/PFDJ in the diaspora were split, some of them siding with the dissidents and others remaining loyal to the Government.

Another negative consequence of the second war, in terms of diaspora engagement in the business of country of origin, was the polarisation of conflict and differences. Before the second war there were grey spaces between the Government and opposition. Those who were located in this grey space, even though they considered themselves as moderate opponents of the Government gave themselves space of manoeuvrability. It was perhaps in reference to this group that Khalid Koser (2003:114) noted that, “not even those in open opposition to the current Government ... seemed to resent paying”. As a direct consequence of the polarisation it appears that this grey space was either obliterated or eroded. Compared to the pre-war, the space occupied by opposition groups has successively increased (though not still to the degree of threatening the Government). Two factors could have played to this increment. The first is that a considerable section of the EPLF/PFDJ supporters moved to the opposition space. Secondly many of the grey space occupants also moved to the core opposition space. One of the alarming consequences, to the Government, of all this is that the financial support that was flowing to the post-liberation state coffer has successively debilitated. To compensate this the Government resorted to requesting more contribution from its supporters. But this excessive request for money, in turn,

seems to have alienated the Eritrean Government from many of its supporters. They felt that they were being exploited by the Government (Koser 2003: 119-121). Indeed, the expression 'milk cow' in reference to how the Government perceives the role of the diaspora has to been repeatedly employed by the disgruntled diaspora.

According to the head of Macro-policy (in an interview I did in 2003), however, the remittance has not decreased. Indeed, the official stressed, the remittances sent by the Eritrean diaspora to their families have increased. The reason for this increase is perhaps the drought and economic hardship the society is facing.

## The politics of opposition and the diaspora: The destructive aspect

The boundary between opposition organisations and civil society associations has increasingly been blurred. A sharp distinction between the categories becomes difficult in terms of definition and constitution as well as function and objective. If we take societal change and development objectives as bedrock of the existence of the third sector, then both opposition organisations and civil society (CS) occupy centre stage. Here political opposition could either function as a significant force of change or contribute to the development of civil society organisations (CSOs) by opening alternative space. Nevertheless, at least theoretically, there is a profound distinction. While the immediate objective of political organisation is ascending to state power, civil society is inclined to safeguard their own interest against power holders or power aspirant political groups.

### **Political Organisation Based Opposition**

Here it would be of interest to make a distinction between categories of opposition that are remnants of the liberation struggle era and the recent ones. This is necessary because it will enable us to understand the difference in the driving motives characterising these oppositions. Many of the old opposition are factions of the ELF. The new ones are ethnic organisations (RSADO-Afar and DMLK-Kunama), widely believed to be creation of the TPLF (Bereketeab 2004: 228), and one that split from the PFDJ, in the aftermath of the second war, the Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP). One distinguishing feature is that many of the old organisations are driven by the urge for revenge, to do what the EPLF has done to them. The politics of revenge is driven by a short-term outcome. Instead of attempting to find fundamental solutions for profound problems of substance, in prolonged struggle, aimed at societal transformation, it directs its energies on the object of its revenge and consequently focuses on merely overthrowing power holders.

The underlying urge for this politics of revenge is based on two reasons. First, during the liberation the EPLF defeated and removed the ELF from Eritrea. Second, the EPLF refused to allow the different ELF factions to return home and operate as legal opposition parties. The offer by the EPLF government to return to the country as individuals was rejected and they continued their opposition from overseas although they were dwindling. Their fortune seemed to turn around in tandem with the second war with Ethiopia (Koser 2003: 119). In 1999, in the middle of the 1998-2000 war, ten groups and an individual convened in Khartoum to set-up what they called Eritrean Alliance of National Forces (EANF). The formation of the EANF is widely believed to be the result of pressure by neighbouring states, Ethiopia and Sudan. In the propaganda war between the regimes in Asmara and Addis Ababa, the EANF prescribed to the Ethiopian position and accused the Eritrean regime of aggression against Ethiopian, of belligerence and rejection of any peaceful solution thereby exonerating the Ethiopian regime from any wrong doing<sup>1</sup>. They went to the extent of asserting that Ethiopia has no claim whatsoever on Eritrean territory, or any ill intentions towards Eritrea, which constituted a great propaganda victory to the regime in Addis Ababa. In glorifying Ethiopia's performance in the war the ELF-RC wrote,

Ethiopia has the phenomenal history of rising to the occasion in time of adversity, which EPLF leaders have seriously miscalculated... Very soon, the Ethiopian Air Force established full control of the skies by hitting several targets inside Eritrea with impunity, among them the Sawa Military Training Centre and seaport of Massawa, causing considerable damage. Surprisingly, nothing was heard about the much-talked about and seemingly invincible and sophisticated Eritrean MIG-29 jets... Otherwise, it was quite obvious to many that there was hardly anything comparable between Ethiopia's accumulated air power and experience of more than fifty years and that of Eritrea's rag tag Air Force composed of hastily assembled Yikealos<sup>2</sup>.

This would hardly harness the credibility of the opposition as a constructive force of change, but rather would cement the perception that it is driven by politics of revenge. The EANF's aligning with the Ethiopian regime in the propaganda campaign against the regime in Asmara considerably isolated them from the people, and therefore, they were not able to capitalise on the situation and mobilise popular support outside their traditional support base.

Their isolation from the people coupled with their mediocre performance aroused complete apathy toward them. Even the supportive neighbouring countries began to lose hope, thus, call for reform began to resonate. The neighbouring countries, particularly, Ethiopia grew restless and wanted tangible results. In October 2002, 13 groups met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and renamed the EANF to Eritrean National

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1 On various occasions the late chairman of the ELF-RC and the leader of the EPM, Adhanom, and others stated that the Ethiopian regime has given them their word that they respect Eritrean territorial integrity and have no claim on Eritrea. Yet, four years later the border has not been demarcated due to Ethiopia's refusal to abide by the agreement it signed, in defiance of the international community, so how does this concur with what the opposition leaders claim of Ethiopia's intentions?

2 The Eritrean Newsletter, Issue no. 86, April/May 2001, pp.16 and 18. <http://www.Meskerem.net/enla86.htm>

Alliance (ENA). Apparently the reorganisation was not aimed at a change of policies that would have brought them closer to people. Ethiopia was accused of interference and imposition of the new leadership of the ENA – particularly the choice of Mr. Hurui Tedla Bairu. According to ION it also urged the ENA to wage armed struggle against the regime in Asmara. Perhaps highly indicative of this, in a statement issued immediately after the Addis Ababa meeting, the controversial secretary-general, Hurui T Bairu, announced that their main aim is to overthrow the regime in Asmara. The leadership of ENA did not shy to proudly declare that the overthrowing of the government would take place with the help and active involvement of the neighbouring countries – Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen<sup>3</sup>. These are neighbouring countries that have recently formed an axis with the intention of toppling the Eritrean government. The coincidence of EANF convening its fifth conference with formation of the tripartite axis (Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen) gave rise to further suspicion regarding the independence of the ENA. Further damaging its already tainted image was the split within the ENA, particularly that which occurred within the ELF-RC. It became increasingly clear that the ENA has lost relevance to the change and democratisation in Eritrea.

The fifth meeting of the EANF terminally exposed the short-sighted and tactical nature of the alliance giving rise to the perception that what is holding them together is merely their common hatred toward the regime and their quest for ascending to power in Asmara. The power struggle that unfolded in Addis Ababa within the Alliance regarding the post of the secretary-general was indicative of the fragility of the aggregation as well as lack of common substantial and principled programme.

The ELF-RC accused its partners of succumbing to external pressure for allowing a newcomer and unqualified person to assume the position of secretary-general of the Alliance and withdrew from the election of leadership process. In a tit-for-tat action, the newly elected secretariat of ENA suspended membership of the ELF-RC in the Alliance. This development plunged the ELF-RC into profound crisis that was eventually resolved through split, further eroding the credibility of the Alliance in particular and the opposition in general.

In 2005, apparently, in responding to pressure from the tripartite axis the ENA convened in Khartoum and reconstituted itself assuming the name of Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA). This time sixteen groups were involved, however, immedi-

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3 In an interview with IRINNEWS on 29 October, 2002, the new secretary-general of ENA, Hurui T Bairu, spoke about money coming from the neighbouring countries to be used in overthrowing the regime in Asmara. In a meeting with Eritreans in Port Sudan, Hurui was reported to have said that the time has come for power to be transferred to real citizens of Eritrea, referring to the new Abdella Idris-Hurui T Bairu alliance. Hurui seems to still live in disillusionment. Indeed, 2002 is not 1971 where Hurui was brought to power by the leadership of the ELF to represent and lure Kebessa Tigrinya-speakers participation and thereby replace Isaias. The Idris Mohammed Adem-Hurui T Bairu alliance collapsed in 1975 when Hurui was discarded because it was thought that he had over-lived his usefulness, by then the participation of the Tigrinya-speakers in the ELF had reached beyond the critical mass the ELF leadership could absorb. Some thirty years later an attempt was made to resuscitate the old ribbon in the alliance of Abdella Idris-Hurui T Bairu where the latter would replace Isaias as representative of the Tigrinya Christians.

ately reconfiguration of groups- splits and reassembling took place that further exposed the impotency of the ENA opposition camp.

In democracy the characteristic features of democratic forces is to respect and listen to voices of the people. Any political force that acts against or neglects the voice of the people, hence, suffers of democratic credentials. An example of this deficiency of democratic credentials of the opposition is its relation with the regime in Addis Ababa. The overwhelming majority of Eritreans believe the second war with Ethiopia concerns the sovereignty of Eritrea. The refusal of demarcation by Ethiopia confirms their belief. Accordingly, any Eritrean force that sides with Ethiopia is perceived as legitimising the country's hostile stance toward Eritrea. Yet, in spite of this popular belief the opposition continues to flirt with the regime in Ethiopia.

Further driven by the urge of wrenching political power some groups are redefining the social contract of the Eritrean society. A contract that was signed when they rejected the division of the country in the 1940s; when they accepted federation as a united people; and finally when they embarked on armed struggle for liberation. All the ethno-linguistic groups paid the price they paid for the independence of Eritrea under the firm conviction that they are a society, a people with a legitimate right to self-determination that culminates in a formation of a sovereign state. Now, marginal groups based in the diaspora in breach of those contracts binding Eritreans are engaged in a concerted effort to arbitrarily and at whim redefine and reconstitute the Eritrean society.

These attempts include portraying the Eritrean society as comprised of loose nationalities and concomitantly advocating for self-determination of the nationalities. Others draw a picture depicting the Eritrean society as consisting of two sections: Moslem-lowlanders and Christian-highlanders, and advocate for a two unit federal state, one representing Moslems and another Christians. Yet another group based on a fictitious pre-colonial history and identity of "Northern Sahil", "Southern Sahil", and "Kebesa" advocate for the formation of a three unit federation. All this demonstrates that the opposition, so far, failed to function as a force of societal changes. This failure could to a great extent be attributed to the politics of revenge that is driving them. It could also be attributed to, as E. Gyimah-Boadi (1996) depicts, the politics of ethnicity, religion and sub-national identity that in effect creates division in society.

The diaspora political opposition is also a failure in that it could not provide space for the creation of genuine CSOs. In a similar way to that of the government the political opposition has suffocated CS. Insofar as it is driven by a vision of politics of revenge, and insofar as it is driven by a single motto-"everything to destroy the PFDJ government"-it would not allow diversity and multiplicity. Hence CSOs are expected to fall in line.

## Civil society based opposition

The fiasco of the second war, 1998-2000, and particularly the third Ethiopian offensive split the PFJD leadership. This in turn gave a widespread disaffection of members and sympathisers of the party in the diaspora. One of the unintentional consequences of the war seems to be the spread of CSOs within the diaspora Eritrean communities. Given the fact that development of CSOs inside Eritrea has faced obstacles, the mushrooming of CSOs in the diaspora could be seen as a welcome development. It not only opened an alternative space for an active and autonomous associational life, but also making use of its immense material and intellectual resources began to exert significant weight on the polity at home. Taking into consideration the crucial role the diaspora played during the liberation struggle, in post-liberation national reconstruction efforts and the second war with Ethiopia, it is beyond any one's imagination how the government could ignore the diaspora community.

Yet, it has to be also recognised that the role of the diaspora is not only positive and constructive. It could also play an extremely negative and destructive role. The double-edged role and paradoxicality of the diaspora could be explicated using multiple factors. Personal and transnationally located identity formation could underlie this paradoxical role.

The diaspora in general and the Eritrean diaspora in particular are perched on two branches of a "political tree" manifesting transnationalism. The occupants of the space of transnationality, if not legally to a great extent emotionally harbour divided identity. This duality of citizenry, as expressed in transnationalism, engenders not only division of loyalty and identity, but also of social action derived from dislocation of identity. They do not feel at home in the host society, neither do they feel at home in the country of origin. This split of mental habitat expressed in the perennial lingering wish of returning home (in reality however unable to do so) has its effect on the engagement in the country of origin politics.

It is not rare that diaspora political activists take extreme positions regarding political developments in the country of origin. One of the reasons for this extreme position is believed to be that the piecemeal incremental changes and improvements which might have significant meaning for the populations in the country of origin may not bring significant change in the life and expectations of the diaspora communities. They expect big and quick improvements, which always drive them to the politics of frustration and disillusionment. Probably it is this impatience that drives emergent CSOs to immediately convert to political opposition.

The diaspora CS could be extremely powerful and at the same time weak and extremely dangerous. Their power lies on the resources in their possession. These resources include economic, knowledge, and recently also unlimited access to the electronic media. The electronic media has become an indispensable political power. It can be used both ways. Its power rests not only on the rapid, cheap, and great capacity of massive dispersion of information but also on its extreme anonymity. The rigorous accountability, responsibility, neutrality, objectivity and verifiability demands enforced on research and researchers are not applicable to it. Another disadvantage

of electronic media with regard to accountability is that many people use pennames that exonerate them from taking any responsibility for the information they convey. If one is not accountable for the information one disseminates it is possible that one spreads whatever information, or rather disinformation intended to achieve certain narrow objectives. Therefore the Internet is a powerful force for change or destabilisation, it has a double-edged role. If its utility is not handled in a responsible manner it could have extremely damaging effects on vulnerable societies like the one of Eritrea.

The double-edged characters of diaspora CSOs are expressed in two ways. On the one hand, as described above, they could be voices of change, democratisation, human rights, and play a crucial role in the socio-economic development of the nation. On the other, they could also play destructive roles. Often their yardstick of assessing situations in country of origin is the host society and expectations are set out accordingly. They have a misguided perception of their capacity to make an impact on the politics of the country of origin, they forget that they are struggling through the remote control. When their efforts fail to bring quick results they get desperate and resort to destructive means, a sign of their weakness and peril. Some of the efforts that have negative effects on the Eritrean society are the method of struggle some of them choose.

The diaspora CSOs' engagement in the campaigns and lobbying directed towards governments and donor organisations against provisions of aid to the current Eritrean government is a good example. Different web sites owned by Eritrean diaspora devote great time for campaigns against the regime in Asmara trying to influence international donors either to halt any aid or make it conditional. This fits well into the policy of conditionality of donor agencies. Eritrean Public Forum in Canada and Network of Eritrean Civil Societies in Europe (NECS-Europe) are some examples of diaspora CSOs relentlessly campaigning to isolate the regime. Eritrean Public Forum in Canada issued some time ago an appeal to aid organisations that their aid is not reaching the needy, and instead they should use alternative routes than that of the Government. In its recent appeal to the European Unions the NECS-Europe, for instance, making linkage between democratisation and demarcation noted, "Pressurizing Ethiopia further may be taken by the major democracies as backing the agenda of what is generally being considered as a rogue regime...The border settlement should in no way end up in the further consolidation of the dictatorship which, to many serious observers, is the hidden agenda of the regime"<sup>4</sup>. This is a typical example of the failure to differentiate between people and government.

This illustrates too priority differences. For the people inside the country demarcation means the arrested economic development could begin to move forward, the youth who are tied to the unlimited national service could be demobilised, the continued fear of war breaking out again could be abated. In short demarcation is of immediate importance that by no means should be conditionally connected to anything. The diaspora on the other hand are more interested in democratisation because

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4 Network of Eritrean Civil Societies in Europe (NECS-Europe), Urgent Appeal to the European Institutions. 9 December 2005

it would mean that they would be able to visit the home country freely, even they might return permanently. Democratisation means elimination of the current government, which they see as a prerequisite for visiting or returning to the country. Many seem to fear that if demarcation takes place before democratisation it will prolong the life span of the regime (some of them even hope that obduracy of the border conflict may lure Ethiopia to get rid of the regime), hence delaying their possibility of going home.

The issue of conditionality, both in terms of donation and the border issue alluded to here by the two CSOs, hurts the people more than the regime. The people in Eritrea want more than anything else the border to be demarcated and to get along with their life. Cutting aid, both in short-term and long-term, hurts the people. Its short-term effect is that it exposes them to hunger, disease, illiteracy and poverty. Its long-term effect is it hampers capacity building, institutionalisation, local governance and empowerment.

Further, it is not rare that the diaspora communities harbour archaic sentiments and feelings of religious, regional, clannish and sectarian nature, sometimes unexpected even at the standard of the society at home. What is perhaps interesting to note, with regard to the evolution of CSOs based on secular, civic and transcending broad interests, is the mushrooming of the diaspora CSOs immediately after the September 18, 2001 incarceration of senior officials of the government and PFDJ. It seems that many of these CSOs were driven by narrow sectarianism and regionalism. There was clear indication that by selectively picking personalities in those incarcerated interpreted the measures taken by the Government as directed against their religion, or region, or ethnic, or tribe. The rationale of their organisation thus is intended to highlight the perceived subjection of their group to mistreatment by the Government. The damage this kind of perception causes is that it is easily transferred to the society in Eritrea where with great certainty it impacts negatively on the social fabric. Information is conveyed within minutes, it is received and translated without any attempt of verification of its authenticity. In short therefore the double-edged role of diaspora is complicating the possibility of development of a genuine CS sphere.

### **How the diaspora can help the country of origin**

The Eritrean diaspora possesses immense capital (resources): Economic, cultural and social which is indispensable for the development and democratisation of Eritrea. In terms of social capital the number of educated Eritreans in the diaspora is beyond the needs and capacity the nation could possibly absorb. If conditions are conducive and the diaspora are willing to return to serve their country of origin there is a lot they can do. Education and health are two of the apolitical spheres where the diaspora community could make a great contribution. There is a dearth of schools, school-books and materials, clinics and medical supplies that the diaspora could fill. The economic capital is equally great, although the physical return to the country of origin for most of the diaspora community seems to be wishful thinking, investment in

different areas is the most realistic thing they can do. Physical and institutional capacity building at grassroots as well as national levels is also an area where the contribution of the diaspora would be decisive. In the humanitarian, or human rights aspect, however, the role of the diaspora community has proved to be controversial. Even though there is a lot to contribute in this area the inclination to neo-liberally prescribed version of human rights certainly will lead to confrontation with the state in the country of origin. When it comes to politics the involvement of the diaspora in country of origin is also far from friction free. It is contingent on the future status of the diaspora, whether they accept their permanent diasporic life or return for good. In order to be able to help the country of origin certain changes within the diaspora community have to take place.

They need to undertake a perennial mental journey. It is not enough to build a system of opinion through short visits, anecdotes narrated by those who returned after short visit, like 'a friend of a friend who was told by an American friend of a friend told me type' (a la Tesfatsion Medhanie), or outdated knowledge-accumulated before the diasporic journey took place. A perennial mental journey means having understanding, perception and interpretation of those who are physically grounded-never took the diasporic journey or are grounded on the space of country of origin, the stayers. This equips one with reality-anchored insight, a first hand experience of the continuously changing social reality, consequently enables one to have a balanced and reasonable response.

Secondly, they should not think in terms of creating environment that is friendly to their needs, an environment that enables them to make a pilgrimage now and then, to visit their relatives, their birth places and reincarnate old memories. This renders diaspora relation to country of origin instrumentalist where support and actions are dictated by diaspora centred self-interest.

Thirdly, they should not prescribe to the neo-liberal informed conditionality and demand-unless certain conditions are fulfilled we withhold our support. Their support to their people should be unconditional and long term oriented. This by no means implies rendering uncritical support; they need to be critical supporters. Yet, they have to be able to differentiate between the neo-liberally prescribed conditionality and a reality anchored capacity and ability of their society. They have also to be able to differentiate between the people and government.

How do they channel their support to their people at home? In the current situation this might not be easy, but their engagement should not a short term one. The first step should be to ensure the unity of the diaspora. One of the hazardous features of the Eritrean diaspora has been its disunity. Particularly ethnic, religious, regional based divisions are besetting the diaspora community whose reflections are certainly to be felt on the society of country of origin. United they would be able to form genuine civil society associations which makes it easier to open channels and mechanisms through which supports would be routed.

A united and realistically thinking and acting Eritrean diaspora community have a lot to contribute to socio-economic development, health, research, technology, de-

mocratisation. In the political area also they would be able to function as peace brokers among various opposition groups and with the government.

## Concluding remarks

The Eritrean diaspora has been at a crossroads for too long. Many floated with the idea that the moment independence is realised they would not spend a day but return to the country of origin. Independence came, yet new ideas of filling the purse before finally taking the journey home emerged. Recently also the second war with Ethiopia and the subsequent socio-economic and political crisis are referred to as the reason for not being able to return. All this shows the difficulties faced to return home. The hopes and dreams were based on unrealistic expectations. This in turn has given way to indecisiveness. Insofar as they fail to realise that they are to stay in their new diasporic habitat their relation with the state of country of origin is going to be based on unrealistic foundations. In addition as long as they are living in limbo, of not knowing whether they are temporarily or permanently diasporic, they will not be able to build their life in their new diasporic habitat.

The image built of Eritreans as unified and in support of their nation in all circumstances is a myth. No doubt there is a strong emotional attachment with the country of origin but it is far from united and stable. There could be given some factors that gave rise to the strong emotional affiliation. The isolation, marginalisation and ignoring by the international community and particularly the superpowers inculcated in the Eritrean psych a sense of vigorous independence and resolute will to go it alone which demanded great sacrifices. This explains the passionate involvement of the Eritrean diaspora in the affairs of country of origin, which is unique in the African continent.

Nevertheless, even though strong passionate attachment characterises their stance to their country of origin, yet their passionate support is channelled through divided manners. The route pursued and end destination in the diasporic exodus has contributed to this division, at the same time it had the tendency of cementing the religious-cultural distance and space. Those who pursued the diasporic route of Sudan to Middle East, at the early stage of the diasporic journey, saw that their Islamic and Arabic culture was reinforced, which in turn motivated them to give their support to the organisation which they believed represented their faith and culture, notably the ELF. On the other hand it could be said that the opposite process took place on those who took the diasporic route to Ethiopia, Europe and North America. This category of diaspora, at least at the early stage of the diasporic journey, being Christians and Tigrinya speakers, most probably experienced that their Christian identity was reinforced, hence, gave support to the organisations they thought represented them, notably the EPLF.

This variability in identity formation and political affiliation not only keeps them apart in their diasporic space but also they work actively to transfer the contents of the differential diasporic space to the country of origin. This in turn is sought to ensure comparative dominant position of their imagined political representativity in the polity of country of origin. They calculate that they can return only when this comparative dominance is secured. In addition to this socio-cultural differentiability emanating from country of origin, there is also a socio-culture element acquired and grafted in the diasporic personality through socialisation and internalisation. This socio-cultural grafting produces split personality-divided between host society and society of origin-which complicates more the already existing problem.

The paradoxality and ambiguity emanating partly from transnationality of identity and partly due to the concomitant contradictory meanings and accommodations of this transnationality of identity creates split identity. Transnationality of identity produces split identity not least in the legalistic meaning in the form of duality of citizenship. This duality of citizenship is accompanied by binary rights and duties that further complicate the interaction between the state of country of origin and the state of host society (e.g. the issue of a journalist, Dawit Isaac, who holds dual citizenship).

At socio-cultural level also this duality of identity conveys contradictory meanings and accommodations. The social space of the country of origin, for instance, although socially and culturally it has appealing qualities, however, in reality it lacks accommodative material provisions. Even in terms of socio-cultural perspective the changes in the diasporic personality constitute anomaly where he or she becomes a misfit.

The social space of host state also, even though its material accomodativity is appealing, its socio-cultural rejectionist proclivities become factors of unsettled life. All this produces a divided personality, mentally in the country of origin and physically in the host country. This in turn creates a frustrated personality whose frustration is expressed in the passionate and emotional involvement in the business of the country of origin, which quite often entails unreasonable demands and expectations.

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# The Eritrean Diaspora, the War of Independence, Post-Conflict (Re)-construction and Democratisation

## Introduction

The purposes of the paper are to: (i) present a brief description of the emergence and consolidation of the Eritrean diaspora in a historical perspective; (ii) analyse and evaluate the role played by the Eritrean diaspora during the war of independence and in post-conflict (re)-construction; and (iii) evaluate and explain the role of the diaspora in democratisation.

## The emergence and consolidation of the Eritrean global diaspora

Eritrea is located in the arid and semi-arid parts of Africa. As a result, mobility within and outside the country, necessitated by the need to take advantage of variations in the environment, has always been an integral part of the country's social and economic history. The people that inhabited present day Eritrea, therefore, migrated seasonally to different parts of northeast Africa and the Middle East in search of arable land, pasture, water, and employment. The history of Eritrean diaspora is not, therefore, a colonial or post-colonial phenomenon. In the pre-colonial period, individuals from what later came to be known as Eritrea travelled to Europe as students of theology, assistants of travellers and scholars' interpreters. During the colonial period, many Eritreans travelled to Europe and the Middle East in pursuit of theological studies – Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam. Wolbert Smidt, for example, states:

...Eritreans returning from Europe in the 19th century often occupied key intellectual or political positions in pre-colonial and colonial Eritrea... They also frequently maintained their contacts with Europeans, and sometimes helped keep European interest in the Horn of Africa alive. Finally, they conveyed to those who stayed behind an image of Europe that helped nourish a desire among their descendants and younger compatriots to also pursue education and other experiences in the West (2005: 1-2).

It is interesting to note that the roles played by the diaspora pioneers in the 19th century Eritrea were not substantially different from the roles played by modern Eritrean diasporic communities. Firstly, the pioneers served as conduit for European knowledge and experiences and, therefore, were accorded key intellectual and political positions in their communities of origin and secondly, they served as a link between their communities and Europe which on the one hand, kept alive European interests in the Horn of Africa and on the other, engendered a desire among young and ambitious members of their communities to emigrate to Europe in search of educational, employment and other opportunities.

Whilst it is important to bear in mind that the formations of Eritrean diasporic or transnational communities pre-date the nationalist movement of the 1940s and 1950s, the creation and expansion of the modern Eritrean diaspora is inextricably linked to the political resistance against foreign occupation and the war of independence. When the unionist Eritrean government at the behest of the Ethiopian Emperor and his agents in Asmara systematically dismantled the symbols of Eritrean sovereignty, such as the Eritrean flag, the seal and the national languages – Arabic and Tigrinya – (Killion 1997; Ammar 1997; Gebre-Medhin 1989; Habte Selassie 1980; 1989; Ogbazghi 1991) and arbitrarily detained thousands of nationalists (Pool 1982; Markakis 1990), hundreds of Eritreans fled the country in search of safety and to continue the struggle through different means.

Over time, Kassala, Port Sudan and Cairo became the major hubs of Eritrean diaspora. For example, the Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) was created by dissident members of the Eritrean diaspora in Port Sudan (Markakis 1990; Kibreab 2006). The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was also created by members of the Eritrean diaspora in Cairo (Sherman 1980; Elrich 1983; Markakis 1990; Kibreab 2006). In short, the Eritrean armed struggle was a result of collaborative efforts between the diaspora groups in Sudan and Cairo.

With the escalation of the war of independence and Ethiopia's scorched earth policy of pacification of the civilian population in the second half of the 1960s, tens of thousands of Eritrean lowlanders fled to Sudan in search of international protection (Kibreab 1987a). With the escalation of the war of independence in the early 1970s, the whole country was affected and as a result, people fled from all parts of the country in search of international protection (see Kibreab 1987a; 1987b; 1990; 1994; 1995; 1996a; 1996b; 1996c; 2000; 2004; 2005). Since then, Sudanese towns and cities, such as Kassala, Port Sudan, Khartoum, Kashm el Girba, New Halfa, Gedaref and Wad Medeni have become the main hubs of Eritrean transnational communities. These communities are linked by complex global webs of social networks that on the one hand, sustain livelihood systems through remittances, transfer of ideas,

information and consumer goods and on the other, fuel powerful obsession to migrate to the prosperous North – Europe, North America and Australia – to join relatives and friends and more importantly to benefit from the perceived opulence that permeates life in such societies.

With the exception of the minority of Eritreans who left the country before the 1960s and those who left as scholarship students in the 1960s, the overwhelming majority of members of the transnational Eritrean communities in the Middle East, the Gulf States, North America, Europe, and Australia had either lived in Sudan as refugees or used the country as a stepping stone to reach their present destinations (Kibreab 1992; 1996c; 2005).

During the war of independence, nearly half of the Eritrean refugees in Sudan were placed in spatially segregated sites – namely, land-based and wage-earning settlements, as well as camps known as reception centres (Kibreab 1987a; 1996c; 2005). Over time, the latter have become institutionalised. Before May 1991, all Eritrean refugees fled the country due to the war of independence. It was hoped therefore, that the country's independence would encourage most of the refugees to return home in response to the fundamental political changes that occurred in the country. Although a large number of Eritrean refugees have returned from Sudan, there are still many of the pre-independence refugees that have stayed put instead of returning to Eritrea. On the surface, their failure to 'vote with their feet' homewards may appear anomalous. In fact, the anomaly is not only limited to the behaviour of those who chose to stay put in spite of the elimination of the factors that prompted their displacement, but independence has also failed to stem the flow of large numbers of post-independence refugees to Sudan, Ethiopia and from there to Europe.

Although the failure of some of the pre-independence refugees in Sudan to return in response to the political changes that took place in Eritrea and the continuous exodus of post-independence refugees are inextricably linked to the government's cavalier attitude towards human rights and democracy, the decision of the refugees concerning repatriation and flight can only be understood in the context of the global webs of social networks that interconnect Eritreans at home, in Sudan, Ethiopia, the rest of Africa, the Middle East, the Gulf States, Europe, North America and Australia.

These global social networks are greatly enhanced by the revolution in communication and transportation technology. In the 1980s and most of the 1990s, Eritrean refugees in Sudan queued for days or even weeks to contact their relatives and friends abroad. These days, the large majority of the urban refugees in Sudan, Egypt, Kenya, South Africa, etc. own mobile phones and e-mail accounts and are in touch with their relatives, friends, siblings, offspring and neighbours on a daily basis world-wide. Not only do these dense global networks serve as conduit for the transfer of information, cash, consumer goods, values and tastes, but more importantly they engender powerful hopes, aspirations, expectations and goals among those who have already left for the neighbouring countries and those who seek to leave Eritrea. These goals and expectations are realisable by further emigration rather than repatriation or staying put in Eritrea. Not only do these new goals, aspirations and expectations, no mat-

ter how unrealistic, effect changes and transformations in the way the people concerned perceive themselves but also in the meanings and values they attribute to homes and spatially bounded communities. That is the main reason most of the refugees in Sudan and many of the young people in Eritrea are in the grip of a compulsive fever of migration.

## The magnitude of the Eritrean diaspora

Although a sizeable proportion of the Eritrean population lives in exile, accurate statistics are hard to come by. As a result, most of the available data are indicative rather than conclusive.

**Table 1** *Eritreans in diaspora by region (2004)*

Region	Number
Europe	90,000
Middle East	70,000
North America	80,000
Sudan	120,000
Australia	?
The rest of the world and Ethiopia	170,000
Total	510,000

Source: Government of Eritrea in Fessehatzion (2005).

The production of refugee statistics is not a neutral exercise. Refugee numbers are produced for different purposes and their numbers tend to vary depending on who produces them. The data in Table 1 are based on government sources and therefore should be treated with caution. For example, although the figure of 120,000 Eritreans in Sudan might have been accurate in 2004, since then a large number have arrived fleeing from the open-ended national service and the Warsai-Yikaalo Campaign which have degenerated into compulsory labour.<sup>1</sup> The figures of 90,000 and 70,000

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1 All Eritreans between 18 and 40 years are required to participate in national service comprising six months military training and 12 months civic duty – participation in national reconstruction. Although the first legislation on national service was enacted in 1991, the national service was launched in 1994. The first two rounds were demobilised. However, they were remobilised when the borderwar against Ethiopia broke out in May 1998. All those who re-enlisted in 1998 and those who were recruited since then have been demobilised. In May 2002, the Head of State introduced the so-called Warsai-Yikaalo Campaign which forced all participants in the national service to remain in the armed forces and to work for the government and the businesses of the ruling party – People's Front for Justice and Democracy (PFDJ). The national service has over time degenerated into compulsory labour in which all Eritreans between the 18 and 51 are forced to work for the government and the ruling party without remuneration.

of diaspora Eritreans in Europe and the Middle East, respectively also seem to underestimate the number of Eritreans living in the two regions.

## The Eritrean diaspora and the war of independence

Although members of the Eritrean diaspora have always been heterogeneous and at times fragmented, they were all committed to the project of Eritrean independence. However, in spite of their commitment to a common public cause – independence – the level of their contributions to the war of independence varied depending on whether they supported the EPLF or the ELF. The financial and material contributions of the transnational organisations that were affiliated to the ELF were much less than the EPLF mass organisations. This was probably because the ELF unlike the EPLF had external supporters and was, therefore, less dependent on its mass organisations.

The Eritrean war of independence unlike the other African anti-colonial wars was not recognised by the UN and the OAU and, therefore, the national liberation fronts, especially the EPLF were financially dependent on the Eritrean diaspora. Except during the first four years, the EPLF was to a large extent dependent on contributions made by its supporters in the diaspora. In the early 1970s, three Eritrean diaspora organisations emerged in the Middle East, Europe and North America. These were the Eritrean General Students' Union (GUES), Eritreans for Liberation in North America (EFLNA) and Eritreans for Liberation in Europe (EFLE). Even though the GUES maintained a veneer of autonomy, it was from the outset affiliated to the ELF. Although the EFLNA and the EFLE mobilised massive material and political support for the EPLF, in the beginning, they were not formally affiliated to the Front. This was not because of the EPLF leadership's respect for autonomy of civil diasporic organisations, but rather to shield them from the influence of its Foreign Mission, which was until March 1976, headed by the energetic Osman Saleh Sabbe. Osman Saleh Sabbe was in favour of affiliation of the diaspora organisations to the EPLF, but the field leadership preferred to see that the EFLNA and EFLE maintained a thin cover of temporary formal autonomy.

In March 1976, the EPLF leadership accused the head of its Foreign Mission, Osman Saleh Sabbe, of conspiring behind its back to form a united Front with the ELF and after an acrimonious confrontation severed its relations completely. Sabbe withheld all financial and logistical assistance in an attempt to pressurise the leadership of the EPLF to submission. When the flow of external resources dried up suddenly, the EPLF leadership made a u-turn and appealed to the leaderships of EFLNA and EFLE to be affiliated to the Front and to substantially increase their financial contributions.

In response, many of the activists in North America and Europe quit their studies to engage in different full-time jobs to raise funds for the cash-strapped EPLF. Many members of the diaspora also lived in groups in over-crowded apartments in order to

save money to support the EPLF (Redeker Hepner 2005: 57). Some even reportedly lived on pet food to save money for the struggle. For example, on average, the EFLNA raised over US \$200,000 per annum (equivalent to US \$1,137,527 today) and sent to the EPLF. The total number of active members of the EFLNA was only about 500 and the average individual contribution per annum was US \$4,000 ((Redeker Hepner 2005: 57).

The EFLE had between three and four thousand members throughout Europe. There were hundreds of Eritrean domestic immigrant workers in Italy who contributed substantial proportions of their incomes to the EPLF. Most Eritrean workers throughout Europe contributed between 10 and 20 percent of their annual incomes. Students also contributed ten percent of their loans, grants or scholarships. In Sweden, on top of the regular annual contributions, students contributed one month's income of their summer holiday earnings. Workers also made one month's additional contribution per annum.

All EFLE's branches throughout Europe engaged in street collection and organised cultural events to raise money for the EPLF. Every year, huge jamborees were organised in Bologna (Italy) where Eritreans from all over the world met to celebrate, network and raise money for the EPLF. Huge makeshift hotels, bars, restaurants and cafes used to be built where thousands of visitors stayed, ate, drank, sold, bought and exchanged different Eritrean and exotic artefacts. Every year, hundreds of thousands of dollars if not millions were raised and sent directly to the EPLF.

In 1978, the EPLF established different mass organisations – Association of Eritrean women, Association of Eritrean Students, and Association of Eritrean Workers. In view of the fact that a large number of Eritrean immigrant workers were concentrated in the Gulf States, the Association of Eritrean Workers there played a key role in raising substantial amount of money to the EPLF. Although there are no studies that measure the extent to which the outcome of the war of independence was influenced by the financial contributions of the Eritrean transnational organisations, there is no doubt that the financial and manpower contributions, as well as political mobilisation of the transnational communities were some of the decisive factors that determined the outcome of the war of independence.

## Eritrean diaspora and post-conflict (re)-construction<sup>2</sup>

In the burgeoning literature on post-conflict (re)-construction, diaspora groups are presented as being able to play a constructive or a destructive role in their countries of origin. Some diaspora groups may use their financial resources to exacerbate conflicts and political unrests (Ostegaard-Nielsen 2006; Assal 2006; World Bank 2005; Lyons 2004; Mahmoud 2005; 2006). Abdullah Mahmoud, for example, observes:

...it is now becoming apparent that diaspora groupings, thanks to inexpensive transportation and rapid communication, are exerting increasing influence on the politics of their homelands, sometimes with destructive consequences... The location enables them to mobilise substantial financial resources, extensive transnational networks, powerful international forces, and political connections that span the globe, and through which they could make a difference to the situation in the homeland for the better or for worse in different respects (2006: 2).

As we shall see later, the roles diaspora groups play in the politics or anti-politics of their countries of origin, cannot be taken for granted. This is a function of the nature of the government in place. For example, whilst the data in the following tables show that the Eritrean diaspora have been making substantial financial contributions, their influence on the politics or anti-politics of the post-independence condition has been as good as zero. Notwithstanding this, the Eritrean diaspora have made huge financial contributions to the government. This does not, however, mean that their contributions were invested in (re)-constructing the war-torn social, economic and physical infrastructures of the country. The manner in which diasporas' financial contributions are invested is to a large extent a function of war and peace. Because of the border war, most of the financial contributions made by the Eritrean diaspora have most probably ended up in the weapon markets of the countries of the former Soviet Union.

As seen earlier, the Eritrean diaspora is heterogenous (Woldemikael 2005) and the role they have been playing in the post-conflict (re)-construction cannot be generalised. The level of their contribution is to a large extent influenced by the extent to which they feel included or excluded. Once the external enemy was thrown out of the country, most Eritreans expected to see a transitional government of national unity that would pave the way for transition to democracy. To the dismay of most Eritreans, the leadership of the EPLF opted for the divisive logic of 'the winner takes all and the vanquished receives nothing.' The exclusion of the ELF and its various

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2 The idea of re-constructing post-conflict societies implies that a return to the past is both possible and desirable. In reality a return to the past is neither possible nor desirable. In post-conflict societies, re-construction of the past would mean re-creating the situation that produced the violent conflict. This is obviously undesirable. Re-construction of the past is also impossible because everything undergoes change and transformation. War and violent conflict have the capacity to telescope the otherwise protracted process of social change. In the particular case of Eritrea, there was nothing to be re-constructed. Everything had to be constructed from scratch. Even though the common terminology used in the post-conflict literature is 're-construction,' the proper term is construction rather than re-construction.

factions from power sharing has therefore discouraged many willing members of the Eritrean diaspora from participating in the process of national (re)-construction. The level of diaspora contributions in Table 6 would have most probably been far greater had the EPLF/PFDJ leadership opted for the politics of inclusion rather than the anti-politics of exclusion.

Except in countries endowed with precious mineral resources, such as oil, gold, diamonds, etc., in many developing societies, remittance represents the single most important source of foreign exchange. A World Bank study, for example, shows that remittance to developing countries increased by US \$10 billion reaching US \$126 billion in 2004 (World Bank 2005). The study also showed that 15 percent of all remittances sent to the developing countries in 2002 went to African countries representing 1.3 percent of total GDP. The data in the World Bank's study refer only to amounts transferred through formal channels. Remittances that flow through informal channels are often assumed to be much greater than what official records indicate. In fact, most countries in sub-Saharan Africa do not keep records of remittances.

*Table 2 Top remittance-receiving countries in Africa, 2000*

Countries	Population in millions	Remittances in millions	GDP	Remittance per capita	Remittance per capita as % of GNI per capita	Remittance per capita as % of GDP per capita
Egypt	66.4	2,899	83,440	43.67	3.0	3.4
Morocco	29.7	2,571	43,722	86.57	7.4	5.9
Nigeria	132.8	1,834	34,722	13.81	4.6	5.6
Algeria	31.3	840	52,328	26.83	1.6	1.6
Tunisia	9.8	811	26,392	82.78	4.2	3.1
Ghana	20.3	680	8,687	33.50	12.5	7.8
Kenya	31.3	577	10,098	18.33	5.1	5.7
Botswana	1.7	435	7,023	255.88	8.5	6.2
Ethiopia	67.2	362	8,326	5.41	5.4	4.4
Sudan	32.8	357	14,956	10.88	2.9	2.4
Namibia	2.0	280	4,373	140.00	9.0	6.4
Eritrea	4.3	206	687	47.90	26.6	30.0

Source: World Bank, African Development Indicators, 2004 in Fessehatzion 2005.

The data in Table 2 show the twelve largest remittance-receiving countries in Africa. The data refer only to amounts transferred through formal channels. Some estimates suggest that the amounts transferred informally may be three times more than what official records indicate (Fessehatzion 2005: 167). The data in Table 2 show that although in terms of remittances received, Eritrea ranks twelfth in Africa, it ranks fifth in terms of remittances received per capita and first in proportion of total GDP. No other African economy is as dependent on remittances as is the Eritrean economy (30 percent of GDP). This must of course, be seen in the context of the small size of the

Eritrean national economy. Remittances also represented about 27 percent per capita income of Eritreans.

**Table 3** *Remittances and ODA as percent of GDP, 1993-2002*

Year	Remittance as % of GDP	ODA as % of GDP
1993	35.0	14.3
1994	48.3	29.6
1995	36.6	25.4
1996	38.0	23.0
1997	50.9	18.0
1998	27.0	22.5
1999	34.6	20.4
2000	32.0	27.5
2001	26.0	39.7
2002	30.0	35.9
1995-2002 average	34.4	26.5

Source: World Bank, African Development Indicators, 2004 in Fessehatzion, 2005.

The data in Table 3 show that remittances exceeded the amount of Official Development Assistance Eritrea received between 1993 and 2000. The only exceptions were 2001 and 2002 in which the total amount of official development assistance received by the country exceeded remittance.

**Table 4** *Resource flows to Eritrea, 1993-2002 (in current US dollars in millions)*

Year	Population (millions)	Remittances in US \$	Foreign direct investment	ODA	Exports
1993	3.39	165	n. a	67	36
1994	3.48	276	n. a.	157	65
1995	3.57	215	n. a.	149	81
1996	3.67	244	37	159	95
1997	3.77	352	39	123	54
1998	3.88	190	30	167	28
1999	3.99	244	83	149	20
2000	4.10	196	28	176	37
2001	4.20	175	12	281	20
2002	4.30	206	20	230	54

Source: World Bank, African Development Indicators, 2004 in Fessehatzion 2005.

The data in Table 4 show that the amount of remittances Eritrea received between 1993 and 2002 far exceeds all other forms of flows, including foreign direct investment, official development assistance and exports.

**Table 5** *Per capita remittances and remittances as a percentage of other flows (in current US dollars in millions)*

Years	Remittance/ population	Remittance % of FDI	Remittance % of ODA	Remittance % of exports
1993	48.6	n. a.	246	458
1994	79.3	n. a.	175	424
1995	60.2	n.a.	144	265
1996	66.5	659	153	256
1997	93.4	902	286	651
1998	49.0	633	113	678
1999	61.2	293	163	1,220
2000	49.0	603	111	529
2001	41.7	1,458	62	875
2002	47.2	1,030	89	381

Source: World Bank, African Development Indicators, 2004 in Fessehatzion, 2005

The data in tables 4 and 5 show that remittance has been the single most important source of foreign exchange throughout the post-independence period. With the exception of the years 2001 and 2002, remittance exceeded ODA.

**Table 6** *Revenue collection from diaspora by source, 1997-2003 (in millions current US dollars)*

Source	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Average
Diaspora tax	1.2	5.9	6.5	4.1	6.8	6.5	10.4	5.9
Constructions	6.8	35.2	43.8	27.4	15.4	14.6	25.6	24.0
Land purchases				29.2			47.5	38.4
Eritrea bond			21.3	13.5	1.7			12.2
Segen construction							22.5	22.5
Other contracts						30.0	50.0	40.0
Total	8.0	41.1	71.6	74.2.	23.9	50.1	156.0	

Source: Government of Eritrea in Fessehatzion, 2005.

Eritrea is one of the few countries in the world that levies diaspora income tax of 2 percent. This is levied on all Eritrean transnational communities regardless of citizenship. As the data in Table 6 show, the diaspora tax averaged US 5.9 million per annum between 1997 and 2003. Although the legality of imposing tax on the diaspora, including on citizens of other states is questionable, during the euphoric years, with the exception of supporters of the political organisations that were banned from the country, most Eritreans happily paid the tax. However, as the human rights performance of the government deteriorated, a considerable proportion of the Eritrean diaspora became reluctant to pay the 2% tax voluntarily.

As the 2% diaspora tax represents a substantial source of foreign exchange, the government resorts to different means to enforce it. All government services, including those which are supposed to be intrinsic to citizenship rights are dependent on payment of the 2% diaspora tax. These include the right to:

- i. obtain an Eritrean passport;
- ii. renew an expired Eritrean passport;<sup>3</sup>
- iii. obtain Eritrean ID card;
- iv. obtain documentation – marriage, death and birth certificates;
- v. buy,<sup>4</sup> sell, inherit<sup>5</sup> and transfer movable and immovable property throughout Eritrea;
- vi. obtain land for house construction in one's village of origin;<sup>6</sup>
- vii. send consumer goods, such as sugar, clothing, edible oil, wheat flour, etc. to one's families;<sup>7</sup>
- viii. claim one's unaccompanied luggage on arrival;<sup>8</sup>
- ix. travel to Eritrea with US passport. Due to the recent tense relationship between the Eritrean and the US governments, the latter has stopped issuing visas to senior Eritrean government officials. As a retaliation, the Eritrean government has stopped issuing visas to all US citizens, including members of the Eritrean diaspora. Members of the latter wishing to visit Eritrea can only do so using an Eritrean ID card by making good: the 2% tax retroactively, i.e. from 1992, the contributions made by Eritreans in the US to the border war efforts;

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3 In countries, such as Italy where there is a large concentration of Eritrean immigrants, this leads to loss of residence permit which is stamped in the immigrants' passports. This also limits freedom of movement of the person concerned.

4 Most Eritreans in the diaspora dream of building or purchasing a house in Eritrea. The government is aware of this and that is why it uses this as means of enforcing the 2% diaspora tax.

5 This also affects siblings of inheritors. If parents bequeath their wealth to their children and if one or more than one is in the diaspora, no transfer of wealth can take place unless those in diaspora pay the 2% tax and the other obligations.

6 All Eritreans are entitled to own a piece of land in their villages of origin for house construction by virtue of belonging to a spatially bounded community. It is by building a house in their villages of origin, most Eritreans feel rooted.

7 Since the war of independence, more than two-third of the Eritrean people have been dependent on food aid. This was due to the combined effects of war, misplaced policy and drought. In May 2005, the Eritrean government enacted a law on NGOs that restricted their activities, as well imposed tax/duties on all imported aid goods. Soon after, the government ordered USAID which was the major food aid provider to cease its activities. Two months earlier, i.e. in May 2005, USAID had pledged to meet more than 100% of Eritrea's total annual food requirement. To make things worse, in September 2005, the government arbitrarily decided to reduce the number of food aid recipients from 1.3 million to 72,000 under the pretext of its misconceived policy of self-reliance. As a result, more than 20 percent of the population is malnourished and this represents 5 percent higher than the World Health Organisation's threshold of a crisis situation. The government has also been unleashing a fierce assault on the private sector. All these measures in combination with severe scarcity of foreign exchange, have created a situation of severe scarcity of commodities in the country. In order to avert the threat of starvation, diaspora Eritreans began sending commodities to their families and relatives. The government saw this as an opportunity and has made it conditional upon payment of the 2% diaspora tax.

8 Most diaspora Eritreans travel home with excess luggage. It is cheaper to send excess luggage unaccompanied and the government is aware of this. Those who have not paid the 2% tax cannot collect such luggage.

the 'one dollar a day' paid between 1999 and 2000, as well as by buying 'Eritrea bond' issued during the border war.<sup>9</sup>

Construction is the second channel through which the Eritrean government collects revenues from the transnational communities. The construction and other firms owned by the ruling party have *de facto* monopoly rights over land, property development and labour. This is because, firstly, all land is owned by the state.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, only firms owned by the ruling party are authorised to import and distribute construction materials. Thirdly, all Eritreans between 18 and 51 years, except the disabled, former combatants and mothers are participating in the open-ended national service and the Warsai-Yikaalo Campaign where they work for the government and the firms of the ruling party without remuneration. Private developers are starved of foreign currency, construction materials and labour. Since May 2006, the government has also suspended all licences issued to contractors, civil engineers, and architects. Only the firms owned by the ruling party are allowed to carry on their business as usual.

In view of the fact that the government owns all land and most Eritreans in the diaspora cherish home ownership in their country, the government collects substantial amounts of revenues from the sale of land. During the border war (1998-2000), diaspora Eritreans purchased bonds worth US \$36.5 million and made contributions of US \$106.4 million. The total contribution to the war effort reached US \$142.9 million (Fessehazion 2005: 173).

The role played by diaspora Eritreans in the post-conflict situation is not limited to material contributions. Many professionals from different parts of the world returned to Eritrea to serve their newly born state without any expectation to be remunerated. Germany, for example, embarked on an ambitious and costly return programme in which Eritrean professionals residing in Germany were provided with handsome incentives to return home to contribute to (re)-construction of their country. However, the EPLF leadership, true to its tradition of anti-intellectualism, and fearful of 'outside' influence, erected every possible barrier to kill the powerful enthusiasm of many of the professionals who returned from all parts of the world to serve their people. Most of them returned to where they came from disillusioned and with their morale resources sapped. This was further exacerbated by the EPLF elite ex-combatants' fear of competition from diaspora professionals. 'Where were you when the stones were burning?' was a common cliché regurgitated by many former combatants. The corollary of this regurgitation was, 'you ran away when the country was burning and when it needed your service and now you have the audacity to come

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9 Not only may this impose heavy financial burden on those who want to visit their families and country, but also those who are reluctant to travel to Eritrea on Eritrean ID cards for fear of being arrested are unlikely to visit their families. Although no foreign passports provide full guarantee against arbitrary detention in Eritrea due to the fact that the government considers any person born to an Eritrean mother or father as Eritrean regardless of the desire of the person concerned, some Eritreans used to feel safer travelling to Eritrea with the passports of their newly found countries.

10 According to Proclamation 58/1994, all land is owned by the State. Eritrean nationals can only possess life-long rights of usufruct over cultivable land.

back when the fire is extinguished to harvest the crop you did not sow.’ A very few stayed put and assimilated themselves into the value systems of the former combatants by surrendering their professional standards and sense of morality and justice. Some even became the spokesmen of the tyrannical regime.

It was not only the professionals who returned home who faced insuperable obstacles. The large majority of the diaspora entrepreneurs who returned to invest in their country were also met with fierce animosity and suspicion. In the course of ten years’ fieldwork inside and outside Eritrea, I met many diaspora Eritreans whose investment projects were deliberately undermined by the government. Many of them left the country utterly disenchanted and frustrated. Many of them have also lost their lifelong savings. Just to mention one example of many frustrated ideas and failed business enterprises, let us briefly look at the case of the Erit-Swede Development Corporation. In 1994, two hundred Eritreans, about 150 of them from Sweden, pulled their savings together and bought a jute plant which went bankrupt a few months after it was assembled in Morgongava – Upplands. The representatives of the group transported the whole plant to Eritrea and assembled it in Dekemhare by themselves with a minimum help from a Swedish engineer. The total cost of the plant was 4.5 million Swedish Kronor.

The enterprise did not last long for a number of reasons. Firstly, its request for a loan from the Eritrean Development Bank was turned down without an explanation. Secondly, all the trained technicians (40 of them) and the manual workers were recruited to national service without any regard to the consequences for the factory. The management’s appeal to the government fell on a deaf ear. Thirdly, the government refused to supply locally produced cement which was more suitable to the particular need of the factory. Fourthly, according to one of the managers, the government engaged in a negative campaign of vilification which had a detrimental impact on the viability of the factory. In 1998, the plant ceased its operation.

The case of Erit-Swede Development Corporation is a tip of the iceberg. I have met many Eritrean businessmen who returned to Eritrea with great enthusiasm to participate in the country’s post-conflict (re)-construction but were told directly or indirectly that they were not welcome. The question that arises is why would a government do such a thing? Firstly, rhetoric notwithstanding, the former EPLF and now PFDJ remains strongly opposed to a free market economy. A high-ranking government official, for example, told the author, “We did not fight for thirty years to empower the bourgeoisie or the middle class. We fought to empower the masses.”<sup>11</sup> In his view, the disempowerment of the bourgeoisie and middle class is *sine qua non* for the empowerment of the masses. If the private sector grows, PFDJ bosses think that the middle class might consolidate its grip on the economy and consequently

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11 The interview was conducted in August 2002 in Asmara when the Head of State and the Minister of Trade and Industry were fiercely attacking the private sector for being the cause of the high rate of inflation, unemployment and economic crisis. See Isaias Afwerki, *Hadas Eritra*, 11 May 2002; Isaias Afwerki, *Hadas Eritra*, 22 August 2002; *Kale Meteyik Mis Dr Giorgis Teclemichael* (Interview with the Minister of Trade and Industry, Eritrean Television). Excerpts of the interview were published in *Hadas Eritra*, 22 and 23 August 2002. The material here is obtained from the latter. See also *Hadas Eritra*, 22 August 2002.

become a powerbroker. Nothing could be more threatening to PFDJ's monopoly of economic and political power than the development and consolidation of an autonomous middle class which could over time develop into a fully-fledged bourgeoisie with a bourgeois culture, taste for politics, lifestyle and even ambition for power. Although the roles of the state and the bourgeoisie in industrialisation and development is a moot point in the economic history literature,<sup>12</sup> there seems to be general agreement that the market and consequently the middle class and the bourgeoisie are the motive forces of democratic politics. PFDJ leaders are well aware of this 'danger' and seem to be determined to leave no stone unturned to avert the perceived potential threat to their unfettered reign.

As Charles Lindblom states: "The association between liberal constitutional polyarchy and market is clearly no historical accident. Polyarchies were established to win and protect certain liberties: private property, free enterprise, free contract, and occupational choice. ..." (1977: 164). The Eritrean government and the ruling party are aware of the relationship between the market and democratic rights. Their incessant interventions in the market are not an end in themselves but are rather the means by which they suppress private property, free enterprise and free contract, in the absence of which liberal democracy is inconceivable. Lindblom further states:

In our time the connection between the market and the particular liberties prized in the liberal tradition is still intimate. If you and I as ordinary citizens are to be free to choose our own occupations, we need a labour market, rather than an authoritative system of conscription. If we are to be free to travel, and do not want to ask a government official's permission, we must be able to buy tickets on the market. If we are to be free to read, we must be able to buy books. The liberal notion of freedom was freedom from government's many interventions, and for that kind of freedom markets are indeed indispensable (1977: 164).

The suppression of the market and consequently of the private sector and the entrepreneurial class is therefore a means by which the Eritrean government attempts to exercise unfettered hegemonic control over every aspect of Eritrean society.

Secondly, not only does the ruling party exercise unfettered hegemonic political control, but it also exercises nearly absolute monopoly over most economic activities within the formal sector, including international and domestic trade. The government has also abolished the labour market not only by suppressing the private sector but also by recruiting all citizens between 18 and 51 years, save former combatants and medically disabled people, to the army under the guise of the open-ended national service and its concomitant the Warsai-Yikaalo Campaign (WYC). The participants of the national service and the WYC are required to work for the government and the businesses of the ruling party without remuneration. In the Eritrean government's view, a market economy and the consequent development of the private sector would mean increased competition which could limit the profitability of the PFDJ firms. Without strangulating the private sector, the government's ambition of hegemonic control of Eritrean society would be defeated. The Eritrean government's anti-

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12 For an elaborate critical review of the literature see Rueschemeyer, D, Stephens, E.H. and Stephens, J.D, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992)

free market and anti-private sector stance only make sense when viewed in this perspective (Kibreab forthcoming 1 and 2).

## Eritrean diaspora and democratisation

We saw in the preceding parts of the paper that the Eritrean diaspora played a key role in the war of independence. We also saw their remittances and contributions to the post-independence situation represent the largest source of foreign exchange. Theoretically, it may be safe to infer that this would give the Eritrean diaspora an important leverage to influence not only the policies of the government but also the nature of governance in place. The fact that the Eritrean government is one of the few autocratic regimes in the post-cold war world is subject to no controversy. The post-independence condition is marked by an absolute dearth of basic human rights, rule of law, due process and freedom of expression, association, and movement (see Amnesty International 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; Kibreab 2006). The degree of violations of human rights in the country have gone to the extent of depriving citizens even the basic human right of feeding for themselves and their families. In a country where the average life expectancy is 53 years, hitherto citizens up to 51 years have been forcibly recruited into forced labour under the guise of national service and the WYC. This has brought the national economy and most households to their knees. This is exacerbated by the government's decision to phase out food aid in a country in which over 66 percent of the population lives in absolute poverty (UNICEF 2004). Those who try to evade or abscond from national service and the WYC are subjected to inhuman treatment (Amnesty International 2004; Human Rights Watch 2006; US State Department 2006). Many lives are also lost in the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea in an attempt to find safe haven in Europe. An unknown number are also languishing in Libyan detention centres.

Post-independence Eritrea, contrary to the wishes and aspirations of the Eritrean people, is under the grip of a oneparty dictatorship. This is an indication of the fact that the Eritrean diaspora is either colluding with the dictatorial regime or has dismally failed to counteract the emergence and consolidation of dictatorship. As mentioned earlier, inasmuch as the Eritrean diaspora is not homogenous, it comprises both collaborators and opponents of dictatorship. Unlike the collaborators of the regime who speak with a single voice, not only are the opponents of the regime weak and fragmented but some of them are also fighting for unachievable and sectarian ends. Thenetbeneficiaryofthisdivisionandsectarianismhasbeenthe dictatorship in Asmara.

The case of the Eritrean diaspora shows that whether transnational groupings are able to wield positive or negative influence on politics of their homelands is to a large extent a function of the nature of the government in place. Notwithstanding the fact that the Eritrean diaspora played a key role during the war of independence and in the post-war situation, the government has effectively reduced the diaspora to a

toothless cash cow. During the war of independence, Eritreans fought single-handedly against sub-Saharan Africa's strongest army. In the view of the large majority of Eritreans, including intellectuals in the diaspora, the need to fight against a vicious external enemy necessitated the subordination of everything, including citizens' moral conscience and sense of justice to the war of independence. Anyone who questioned the excesses of the leaderships, their dictatorial proclivities or their lack of respect for the sanctity of human life and basic human rights of dissidents or the 'other' was accused of treason and dealt with severely. The Eritrean diaspora, especially the intellectuals played a key role not only in the construction of the 'Other' but also directly or indirectly in the suppression of the 'Other.' Temporary suppression of human rights and unquestioning compliance with the 'party line' were considered as a necessary condition for the success of the revolution.. Most Eritreans were in the grip of compulsive nationalism. This blunted their sense of justice and their sensitivity to the suffering of the 'Other' (Kibreab 2006). The end was supposed to justify the means.

What people failed to realise was that firstly, it is impossible to achieve noble ends through evil means and secondly, once evil means – violation of human rights – are tolerated or overlooked, no matter for what purpose, they develop into a culture of impunity in which the perpetrators concerned take it as God-given right to inflict suffering in the name of the 'common good' on those who challenge their authority (Kibreab 2006). Throughout the war of independence, the issue of human rights was relegated to the background or even considered as an unaffordable luxury and look at the state the country is in. Not surprisingly, by the time Eritrea achieved its independence, the leaders of the revolution had already developed a cavalier attitude towards human rights, justice and the rule of law. They were accustomed to behaving with contempt as reflected, *inter alia*, in their contemptible treatment of the G15<sup>13</sup> and the thousands of other citizens that have been languishing in incommunicado detention without being charged, some of them, for more than a decade. It is not surprising, therefore, to see the President being incensed when he is asked, including by his former comrade-in-arms to account for his follies.

Although this is no consolation to those who suffer injustice on a daily basis at the hands of the government that came to power promising to relegate to the dustbin of history involuntary disappearances, arbitrary detention and to deliver justice, fairness, equality, accountability and democracy, the tragedies and betrayals that have been unfolding in Eritrea are not unique. Hitherto there has never been any political organisation that seized power by force that on the one hand, renounced the use of force against the very people it purported to liberate and on the other, relinquished power voluntarily. An important lesson that can be drawn from history is that any

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13 The G15 refers to a group of 15 high-ranking government, party and army officials who sent an open letter to the members of the PFDJ after the President ignored their repeated demand to call the long overdue meetings of the National Assembly, the Executive Committee and the Central Council of the ruling party. The G15 accused the President of ruling by decree. The open letter was circulated in May 2001. Eleven members of the G15 were detained on 18 September 2001. Three were abroad and one withdrew his support to the G15. If they still alive, the G11 have been held incommunicado since then without being charged.

political organisation that seizes power by force is intrinsically incapable of establishing democracy and freedom. This has been the case with the French, American and Russian revolutions, as well as with all governments of national liberation fronts. When waging a revolution, all revolutionaries demonise their predecessors only to emulate them faithfully once in power.

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# The Sudanese Diaspora in Sweden: Challenges and Prospects for Contribution to Democratization and Reconstruction Effort in Sudan

## Introduction

As far as I am aware, there has yet been no research done on Sudanese diaspora in Sweden by a specialist in the field. And, although the question of diaspora is not part of my academic field, the small size of the Sudanese community in Sweden and its relatively recent presence in the country makes it possible to speak, with some certainty, of the issues intended for discussion in this paper. The paper, therefore, is not based on empirical data or informed by a specific theory, rather it is a set of observations and reflections informed, on one hand by recent literature and discussions on Sudanese diaspora elsewhere – (Sudanese diaspora was among the main themes of the Seventh International Sudan Studies Conference held at Bergen University, Norway, 6-8 April 2006; this author was among the participants) – and, on the other, by personal experience as a member of the Sudanese community in Sweden for many years.

Generally speaking, research on Sudanese diasporas in different countries is a recent academic pursuit taken up by Sudanese and non-Sudanese specialists in the field of Social Sciences. Even during the 1970s, when economic decline forced thousands of Sudanese to migrate to oil-rich Arab countries for work, they were described as *mughtaribeen* (sing. *Mughtarib*), an Arabic term describing a person who temporarily stayed away from homeland or home village, rather than perceived as diaspora which indicates a specific legal status in the host country, modes of life and a myriad of problems and issues that the first term does not encompass.

The Sudanese diaspora became visible in the aftermath of the Islamist military coup of 1989 when thousands of Sudanese fled the country and resettled as refugees in England, United States, Canada, Australia, East Africa, and Egypt. It follows that the description of Sudanese diaspora has now acquired full conceptual legitimacy, so

to speak, as it is now being described and analyzed within the broader conceptual framework structured by specialists with regard to the diasporic phenomenon. This happened because of the size of the Sudanese migrants in certain Western countries, particularly the United States, Britain and Canada and the concomitant social and cultural problems, added to this their political impact and engagement with the Sudanese question.

## Characteristics of Sudanese diaspora in Sweden

As mentioned above, the Sudanese community in Sweden is very small. We don't have reliable statistics, but the number can be put at six or seven hundred maximum. The community can be categorized into four groups:

1. The old-timers who came to the country before 1989, and it is a very small group, many of them came either for work or study.
2. Migrants who arrived in Sweden after 1989 as asylum seekers. Some of them came directly from Sudan, others through a third country.
3. Migrants who joined these two groups from the Gulf Arab countries and Saudi Arabia, and the majority of them are medical doctors. They decided to leave those countries because of the deteriorating economic situation there after the first Gulf war and, encouraged by facilities for research at the Swedish medical establishments, they wanted to promote their profession by gaining higher degrees.
4. Students and researchers who came to Sweden on scholarships and decided to stay.

Although this Sudanese community is so small, vertical approach shows certain variations in terms of ethnic, professional, educational and political backgrounds. This might help understand the complexity of challenges facing the community and the potential for reconstruction efforts offered by its members.

Ethnically, the great majority is made up of Arabic-speaking northern Sudanese from the central Nile valley. Members of this group have better chances for mobility than rural people due to economic and educational merits, and thus can have access to various contact networks and can also afford travel expenses. A very small number of non-Arabic-speaking Sudanese joined them in the 1990s. I am using the designations of "Arabic-speaking" and "non-Arabic speaking" instead of the misleading Arab-African dichotomy used by some to describe the general Sudanese ethnic composition.

Like Sudanese diasporas in other countries, the great majority is graduates and professionals. This can generally be explained by the fact that the Sudanese middle class was the main target of the Islamist regime immediately after the coup. The civil

service throughout the country was purged and employees and professionals were dismissed in their thousands. That was a pre-emptive move by the Islamists to prevent any resistance to the regime, particularly in the form of civil disobedience, which two times was led by professional organizations and Trade Unions and brought down the Abbud and Nimeiri military regimes in 1964 and 1985 respectively.

In Uppsala, where I have precise statistics, there are eighty Sudanese including the children. Out of forty two adults thirty five of them are university graduates (the majority from Sudanese universities) and professionals, twelve of them are PhD holders (eleven gained their PhD from Uppsala University, two of them from the Humanities, the rest either medical doctors or from natural science field). The remaining seven adults are holders of Sudan High Secondary School Certificate.

Politically, there is no unified political affiliation with respect to Sudanese political spectrum, although the vast majority is anti-government.

## Challenges

Looking at the challenges facing members of the Sudanese community in Sweden, it is possible to speak of three types of them.

**First**, the legal challenge: this concerns granting permanent residence, and a very small number of Sudanese is still waiting for the final decision by the immigration office. In fact we don't know exactly the authorities' policy with regard to the Sudanese case at present. I would imagine the perplexity surrounding this policy given the fluid situation in Sudan. The political situation is very precarious and unpredictable, the peace agreements of Naifasha (2004) and Abuja (2006) did not stop the killing in the South and in Dar Fur. The situation in the east, the far north and even in the capital is very tense.

**Second**, is the economic and social conditions of members of the Sudanese community, and the statistics I have of Uppsala community are telling. At this moment out of the thirty five university graduates and professionals only one can be said to have a full-time job, another is research associate with teaching hours, four are temporarily enrolled in projects in their fields at Uppsala University. Three are working on their doctoral thesis, the rest either have marginal jobs or jobs far less than their qualifications, or are working outside Sweden while their families stay in the country. The example of Uppsala reflects in the most part the conditions of the rest of the Sudanese in Sweden.

In this respect, scholars use the concept of "simultaneous incorporation" to describe such economic and social conditions. It means that the migrant is not actually totally integrated in the economic and social systems of the host country, and that

the migrant has to sacrifice his or her previous professional career and social status and accept, permanently or temporarily, whatever marginal job available so as to survive, but also to compensate the loss of the original profession and social status by the economic gains. Indeed this situation requires of the migrant a certain degree of psychological balance, social adaptability and tolerance. And I would say many Sudanese here are having it this way.

**Third**, is the socio-cultural challenge. Certainly economic security is not the end of the journey. As a matter of fact, migrants bear with them their cultural traditions, values and norms wherever they go and, through time, develop a new mode of life. In this regard, we may speak of some important features which describe the social and cultural life of the Sudanese community in Sweden.

One feature is that the vast majority is home-oriented, they eventually want to return although there is no dateline.

A second feature is that many Sudanese live in a state of unpredictability and jamming because the ingredients for making a decision are not available; nothing is clear or certain back home or here.

A third feature is that the Sudanese community shows what is known in diaspora studies as "transnational space", or "transnational social field", a situation where migrants establish a network of relations that include the home country and perhaps other countries. Sudanese in Sweden maintain various forms of contact, the most important of which is the regular visits to the country, and sending what they can afford of remittance or other material assistance to relatives, and also trying to make the necessary provisions at home in the event of final return if they could.

Moreover, the cultural, intellectual and political ties with Sudan are maintained through individual and collective activities, whereby these activities also play an important role in coping with cultural and social challenges.

For example, attempts to set up social and political organizations began in the early 1990s with the increase in numbers of Sudanese. The Uppsala community is relatively successful in being more coherent and having a communal way of social life, thanks to the size of Uppsala town and its academic nature.

However, it was only very recently that two organizations were established, the Sudanese Society in Uppsala formed in 2002 and the Sudanese Association in Stockholm formed in 2005 and were officially registered by the authorities. Stockholm's association is in fact the last in a series of organizations that appeared and disappeared at different times. Central to the objectives of Uppsala society is to promote relations between the Sudanese community and the Swedish society, such as regular participation in Swedish cultural occasions, something that goes with the Swedish policy of integration. Another objective is to cope with the thorny problem of identity by maintaining the "Sudanese" of its members through social and cultural programmes, such as publication of a journal called *Azza* (a name that symbolizes Sudan), a class for teaching Arabic to youngsters, a football team, tours inside Sweden, and regular celebrations of Sudanese national and religious occasions.

## Contribution to democratization and reconstruction efforts in Sudan

Turning to the community's contribution to democratization and reconstruction effort in Sudan, I tend to be very realistic. In the first place, any attempt in this direction must be guided by a specific political standpoint, and this in turn requires setting up a platform with specified political principles.

Since the mid-1990s until now, attempts to establish a branch of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which was formed as an umbrella for the Sudanese opposition inside and outside Sudan have failed for a number of reasons:

**First**, practicing political activism in Sweden was a new experience for the newly resettled Sudanese migrants.

**Second**, political activism requires dedication and investment of time and energy, something that even politically motivated individuals would need to spend on securing the basic needs for resettlement.

**Third**, many did not want to engage in political campaigns against the Sudanese regime for fear of facing troubles back home if they happen to travel to the country for one reason or another.

**Four**, Differences in opinion and political background are also important reasons in hampering establishment of this political body.

However, in 1995 a few members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) based in Eskilstuna formed a society named Save Sudan with the main objective of sending humanitarian aid to war-hit zones in Sudan. A plan was made to stage a big campaign to collect clothes, but the idea was cancelled because of lack of funds to send them, and the society itself disappeared shortly after its formation.

Even in the early 1990s an attempt was made to set up a branch of Sudan Human Rights Organization (SHRO), but differences among its members led to the disappearance of the organization.

But, still in the absence of a political body that could have brought together political activists, some politically committed individuals are actively participating in discussions on the net concerning the future of the country and other related intellectual topics.

With regard to contributions by the Sudanese community here to reconstruction efforts, I think we should not overestimate them due to a number of factors:

**One factor** is that the size of the Sudanese community in Sweden is very small, and is not a coherent and bounded group with the kind of organization that could easily mobilize its effort, or even move around lobbying the Swedish institutions for the Su-

danese cause. What is being offered is remittances and other forms of material assistance such as medicine sent by individuals to their relatives. The Sudanese Society in Uppsala was able to facilitate the travel to the country of a volunteer Swedish medical doctor who worked for a certain period in one of the hospitals in the capital. Also, the Sudanese Swedish Society, an old society with a number of active Swedish members has been running a small construction project involving building a primary school in the small town of Bara in western Sudan, and provided it with a small solar panel for supplying electricity, and also assisted in raising a small farm near the school to help provide it with vegetables. The project was meant to be taken over by the local people and developed into a larger scheme, but it didn't work well because the whole economic and political circumstances in the region were not conducive.

**A second factor** is that the economic capacity of the community is very poor. This is clear when we look at the kind of jobs the majority of Sudanese in Sweden have.

**A third factor** is that, as far as Sudan is concerned, the Swedish political environment is not encouraging. Compared with Norway, for example, Sweden is not involved in the Sudanese question, and has no long-established economic, political, or academic relations with the country. Such relations usually facilitate contact and generate ideas when there are specific common interests and concerns.

**A very important fourth factor** is that, apart from the economic limitations of the Sudanese diaspora in Sweden, reconstruction process requires in the first place political stability and a clear programme for development, but this is not the case with Sudan. The country is not yet a post-war country. As mentioned above, the Naifasha and Abuja peace agreements did not stop the killing or solve the problems, the situation in almost all parts of the country is tense and restive, and the possibility of confrontation between the Islamist-led government and the international community over the deployment of international peace-keeping force intended to replace the AU peace-keeping force in Dar Fur is real.

Therefore, until we have a post-war Sudan and a stable political system any talk of contribution to reconstruction effort is unrealistic. However, it is only possible to speak of potential contributions to rebuilding the country in the form of future physical return of members of the community, who would bring with them advanced knowledge and expertise, and this again depends on the political situation of the country. Fortunately, as mentioned above, the majority of Sudanese diaspora in Sweden is home-oriented.

# Ethiopian Advocacy Groups in USA after the May Elections- Lobbying the American Legislature

## Introduction

Having given up on reforming the regime democratically in the wake of the disillusionment and disappointment with May 2005 Elections, the Ethiopian Diaspora in the general and the opposition affiliated Advocacy Groups in U.S. in particular are engaged in an activity most of the renowned Diaspora pressure groups perceive as the culmination of their advocacy activity; namely that of influencing the American foreign policy against the government in their homeland country. They are in the process of lobbying the American policy makers (legislature) to change their policy towards the Ethiopian regime. Recently they made history when the House of Representatives Foreign Relations Committee unanimously recommended the passage of H.R.5680 (Bill) known as The Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Advancement Act of 2006.

The unrelenting battle between these Advocacy Groups who are fighting to lobby for the enactment of this bill into law and the Ethiopian government's Diplomatic Missions', support groups' and paid lobbyists' determination to water-down, neutralize or defeat the bill exhibits all hallmarks of American effective advocacy efforts in influencing decision making in Washington. It includes all grass roots advocacy activities such as grass roots mobilization, public relations, direct mailing, faxing, Internet campaigns and coalitions-building among constituent interest groups with the aid of paid lobby firms. On other side, the advocacy efforts are also marred by accusations and counter-accusations and demonization of the opponents reminiscent of ethnic fractionalization of Ethiopian politics at home.

50 % of one million Ethiopian migrants in Diaspora are believed to live in USA and Canada according to the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington. The migration to and settlement of Ethiopians in USA is a recent phenomena. Their political interest, protest activism and engagement in Ethiopia's political affairs are an even more recent development. Their legislature advocacy is even a very recent example of their com-

mitment and growing political engagement. In the last 3 decades the Ethiopian Diaspora has organized itself in cultural, religious and political organizations in different States. This paper will not trace the activities of all those Ethiopian Diaspora organizations in USA. Rather, I will concentrate on their specific type of advocacy that of lobbying the legislature taking the case of the HR 5680 as an example. I will try to examine their putting pressure on the Ethiopian government through the only constituency that the ruling party in Ethiopia cares for; namely the international community; a term, frequently used as a euphemism for the only super power. Scrutinize and examine the role their promoting interests and passions to expose the human rights record of the government will play in helping democratization, human rights and at home. “*Can we – Ethiopians and Ethiopian Americans – make a difference in our homeland while living, working and struggling in America?*” Asked his audience one of the lawyers of Ethiopian American Civil Advocacy (EACA). That is a worthy examining question that each and every Diaspora must put to itself. Will the vocal, aggressive and confrontational approach of a civil society help sustain democracy at home, another question? We will try to look closely into the impediments, pitfalls, challenges and opportunities of Ethiopian Diaspora politics in this difficult transitional period in the history of the country from the perspective of the role of Diaspora civil society organizations in the democratization process in their country of origin.

## Ethiopian diaspora – History of immigration and political engagement in USA

There are an estimated one million Ethiopian migrants dispersed in the four corners of the world; from Willington in New Zealand to Calgary in Canada. According to the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington an estimated 500, 000 (50%) of them are believed to have settled in USA and Canada. The number of Ethiopian immigrants in USA in 1974, the year of the downfall of Emperor Haile Sellassie and the demise of his imperial order was only 276 while in 1995 only 21 years later it was 5, 960 . It is an increase of 2000%. The migration to and settlement of Ethiopians in USA in such great numbers is a recent phenomena that keeps multiplying rapidly from year to year. Last year 1,303 Ethiopian migrants settled in Minnesota State alone. This is a figure that is given by Minnesota State authority while Ethiopian Community leaders claim that more than 7,000 Ethiopians settled in Minnesota last year. The State and Ethiopian Community leaders’ figures concerning the number of Ethiopian settlers in the Minnesota State are far apart, as you see. So, one can safely say that both the USA as well as their State distribution figure cannot be more than approximations. It is not unaccountable that Amharic became recently one of the official languages in Washington D.C. It is simple. Almost half of the Ethiopians in USA are

settled in this city and its surroundings. Besides, Los Angeles, Dallas, Atlanta and Seattle are recognized as centres of Ethiopian settlements.

A very small number of Ethiopian students began to arrive in USA as early as the beginning of 1950s. But the real influx of Ethiopian migration is set in motion in 1980's. At this juncture Ethiopians started to come to escape civil war and famine in their home land, in a remarkable magnitude. Particularly in the wake of the infamous Red Terror campaign of the Derge in late 1970's Ethiopians began seek sanctuary and refuge in the neighbouring countries. Quite a significant number of those were resettled in USA from the refugee camps in the neighbouring countries such as Sudan and Kenya in UNHCR resettlement Programme. There are other ways that opened the doors to USA influx, the most important being DV lottery. In the last two decades Ethiopians had one of the highest quotas among African countries to obtain permanent legal residency through the American Green Card Lottery Program, known as Diversity Visa. Year after year thousands settled on the basis of this program. In 2007, alone 6, 871 Ethiopian newcomers got a green card. For comparison only Nigeria with 9, 849 and Egypt with 7,229 came before Ethiopia. One could safely assume this figure as a yearly average for the last decade. On top of this, there were a few who made it to America through various visas such as family member, employment, investment and "special immigrant" arrangements.

During the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1936 the task of mobilizing support for the Ethiopian cause and people fell on the shoulders of Afro-American Pan-Africanists. Then the number of Ethiopian students in America could be counted with the fingers of one hand. Most of us remember among them the names of Malaku Beyan and Bishahwured Habte Wold who went back home to join the anti-Italian resistance. The latter was executed in 1937 by the Italian occupants as we remember from our history books.

As more and more Ethiopian students left for US to study in the early 1960's the Ethiopian Students Movement became one of the most active foreign student gatherings in America.

But the engagement of general Ethiopian Diaspora in their country's affairs is a recent development. Even now, it is only a miniscule proportion, some put it as low as 1 % of Ethiopian Diaspora, that are engaged in politics and protesting for justice in their homeland. Their legislature advocacy which is the subject of this paper is a very recent example of this commitment and growing political activism. Becoming more and more aware of their identity and the realities of their home country in the last three decades the Ethiopian migrants in different states began to organize themselves in various religious, cultural, and political associations.

But their linkage and engagement in the affairs of their former country heightened in the last two decades. Although this political activism had its ups and downs they began to institutionalize their protest movements on the eve and after the coming to power of the now ruling party EPRDF in 1991. One cannot help but witness an upsurge in the magnitude of their political engagement after this take over. Their relationship with homeland and concern for the homeland as political party support groups started to grow and function. Their protests began to take more and more an

institutionalized form and their militancy gradually heightened and developed to a degree unknown before.

But the real mushrooming of Ethiopian civil society associations and advocacy groups started seriously and in earnest after the 2005 May Elections and the crack down on the opposition parties. The fiasco of the May Elections is the milestone, after which the real confrontational course was struck. Quite a number of Ethiopians in Diaspora are among the 131 opposition party leaders, journalists and civic society people on trial for attempted genocide. It includes journalists working for foreign radios such as Deutchewelle in Germany and Voice of America (VOA). The government is even now collecting public protest petitions against these two international radios in Bonn and Washington. There were other enough reasons for the anger of the Ethiopian Diaspora against the regime at home. The Government not only cracked down on the opposition, but also made changes in Addis Ababa Council by taking a bulk income and revenues away from revenue transfer; made restrictions on tabling law bill in the Parliament ; created splinter groups for all the political parties and created its own civic societies, nipping almost all civil society activities in the bud.

It was largely those uncalled-for arbitrary measures that forced the Diaspora to lose hope of any reform or the democratization and good governance in their country of origin. Interaction of the Ethiopian Diaspora with the ruling EPRDF government in the last 15 years was never free from friction, but the events in the summer of 2005 were instrumental in ushering in an era of confrontational defiance and hostility, to say the least. Having given up on reforming the regime democratically after the disillusionment and disappointment with May 2005 Election's debacle, the Ethiopian Diaspora in general and the opposition affiliated Advocacy Groups in U.S. in particular began to engage in trying to influence the American foreign policy towards Ethiopia's ruling party by lobbying the American law makers. Introducing a bill called HR 5680 to House of Representatives International Committee was the most conspicuous and successful culmination of this lobbying activity.

The government on its side never regarded the Ethiopian Diaspora as stake holders in the affairs of their former country. It was always more interested in their remittances, investment, homeland tourism, but hardly recognized the expatriates as a group that has a vested interest in the affairs of Ethiopia. Growing more vocal, assertive, aggressive and confrontational they began to try to hurt the ruling party "where it hurts most" by trying to stop the flow of the foreign aid in general and the direct budgetary support in particular.

The American-Ethiopians have a long way to go to muster and display the organizational capacity of the known Diaspora groups in American such as the Jewish, the Cuban, the Irish lobbies to wrestle recognition, but they are winning confidence day by day in what they can achieve as Ethiopians while residing and working in America. They are learning from their nascent experience that they also can influence US Foreign policy, if they pull their resources together. Although their political awareness and engagement as we have noticed is new their desire to change the U.S. foreign policy in the favour of their people's rights and for justice in their original home-

land seems unquestionably serious. From the London Peace Conference in 1991 that brought to power the ruling party, the Ethiopian public in general and the Ethiopian Diaspora in USA in particular, kept expecting the help and intervention of the American administration to bring the derailed democratization process back to track.

To counter and counterbalance this development the Ethiopian Government is responding with its own policy initiatives. The central theme of this policy is very simple. It aims at enticing the Diaspora by giving them the necessary privileges at home and exposing the radical ones among them, as unrepresentative and minuscule. It is with this new policy in mind that it plans to upgrade the Directorate of Expatriates to a ministry of Diaspora at home. The battlement for the enactment of a bill known as The Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Advancement Act of 2006 typifies this tug-of-war between the two far away from home.

## The battle for the enactment of HR 4233(5680)

### **Government arguments vs. advocacy groups arguments**

Today's HR 5680, is a rejuvenated version of a draft which was known at the beginning as HR 4423 that was co-sponsored by Congressmen Christopher Smith and Donald Payne after the killings of November 2005 and the imprisonment of the Ethiopian elected opposition leaders in a massive crackdown on opposition that started immediately after the debacle of May 2005 Elections. The bill which has passed the House of Representatives International Relations Committee recently will go to voting in Congress most probably in early September. I have to add "most probably", because the battle to push for the immediate enactment of the bill by the Advocacy Groups on one hand and the trial to water it down or neutralize or even completely defeat it on the other hand by the Ethiopian Government respectively is raging on unabated, in a last ditch engagement. Most probably the fight will continue until the voting on the bill in September.

Principally, this tug-of-war is a battle of gaining access to the ears of the American legislature. The real cannons in these battles are nothing but persuasive, tenable and sound arguments recapitulated in the language of American legislative advocacy. To this end, both parties avail themselves of the services of the known lobbying firms. Although the campaign is marked by extreme intensity of passions and convictions, it is being waged with the help of American civilized legislative lobbying techniques, arguments and tricks by both sides. The legislative dynamics and proceedings are being complicated day by day by the recent events in the Horn of Africa and the spectre of Islamists' take over in neighbouring Somalia. The arguments, lately being marshalled by both sides, to drive their point home is inductive of their anxiety about the developments in Somalia and its implications for Ethiopia's partnership with America in its Global War on terrorism. Lately, this is becoming the focal point of the lobbying,

for the two opposing parties. But there are plenty of other arguments for, as well as against the enactment of the draft bill. That is why the fight on the enactment of the draft epitomizes Ethiopian Advocacy Groups trial “of making a difference at home, while residing and working in America” as one lobbyist asserted.

Let us begin by looking at the government side’s arguments. But, before doing that, let us take note of the perceptions and expectations of the Ethiopian public and Ethiopian Diaspora of American foreign policy objectives. On the eve of the London Peace Conference 1991 after stating democracy as a US foreign policy objective in Ethiopia, Herman Cohen, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs at the time warned the new rulers with his famous postulate of “No Democracy, No Aid”. This is a promise that inspires and exalts the emotions and aspirations of the Ethiopian Diaspora; a promise to which most Ethiopians at home as well in Diaspora attached their expectations as well as aspirations for good governance in their home land. They seem never to get tired of reminding the American administration about the failure on delivering on this promise. Others go as far as asserting that it was the Americans that facilitated and supported the EPRDF to take the reins of power in Addis Ababa in the summer of 1991. To remind the American Administration of this undelivered promise seems to be an introduction to any lobbying activity. The Ethiopian Diaspora loves to cite President Bush’s Doctrine in the wake of his declaration of his global war on terrorism. The Advocacy Groups point to the logical connection of this Doctrine both on issues of fighting Global Terrorism and the right political democratic participation at home. They summon his promise “that all who fight for democracy can count on America’s help” as another declaration of intention and pledge that has never been fulfilled.

Although, at one point earlier, some American law makers such as Senator Harry Johnston tried to mediate between Meles Zenawi’s regime and the opposition, they never exerted enough pressure on the Ethiopian government to hold fair and just elections. The Americans according to the Ethiopian opposition are giving unre-served support to the ruling party under the pretext of an alliance on counter-terrorism, with complete disregard to the election results of May 15, 2005 where the opposition was robbed of its victory.

At once, the Ethiopian Diaspora organized in different associations began to lobby the legislature to influence the American public in general and the law makers in particular. The real fight between the two groups takes the form of the typical grass root congressional advocacy efforts. Both sides are making use of the advice of lobbying firms. Both sides are conducting grassroots political campaigns, educational public relations and media campaigns in the best style of American legislative lobbying. They are educating members of the Congress and the public in general by talking, faxing and ringing their Congressmen in their respective constituency. They are making use of the modern electronic digital cyberspace, not possible earlier, to augment their organizational capacity. Of course, they are mobilizing, demonstrating and raising funds. The different Task Forces organized to push for the enactment of HR5680 are building coalitions. They are pushing the local councils to pass a declaration as the

Ethiopians in Takoma Park, Maryland recently did when they persuaded the local city council to pass a resolution urging Congress to enact HR 5680.

The Government side aided by the paid lobbying firms such as DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary and spearheaded by the Ethiopian Diplomatic missions in Washington and New York are pointing out factual errors in the papers in the arguments of the opponent camp. They accuse the Diaspora Advocacy Groups and their lobbyists of tendentiousness manifested in an intentional and controversial bias in all the arguments. One of their arguments is directed to the henchmen behind the advocacy lobbying. The government side not only accused the supporters of the opposition of being “the extremists in the Ethiopian opposition who have persistently and flatly rejected all forms of political engagement”, but also of representing the Amhara ethnic group of diehards who dream of restoring the old Imperial Order. At another moment they accuse them of representing the deposed former military junta (Derg) of Mengistu Haile Mariam. According to the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington 60 % of the Ethiopian settlers in America belong to the Amhara ethnic group, the majority of them coming specifically from the Northern Province of Gonder. The Ethiopian ruling party tries as much as possible to discredit the supporters of the bill as unrepresentative of the Ethiopian population. In short, the whole exercise is according to government supporters nothing but a conspiracy of a few “Amhara elites, Derg officials, fringe elements and extremists who lost power and privilege when EPRDF seized power in 1991”.

On the other side, the Advocacy Groups Para-diplomacy is marshalling its arguments in equally persuasive legalistic formulations, some times with the help of paid lobbying firms. But the most important element in both sides’ arguments in winning the support of the congressmen seems to concentrate on the trial of “deconstruction” of the opponent’s arguments. The opposition begins the “deconstruction” process by focusing particularly on deconstructing the claim that the bill undermines the fight against terrorism in the Horn. The arguments on the side of the Ethiopian advocacy groups that are spearheading the fight to pass this bill are focused on educating members of Congress on the present situation in Ethiopia by emphasizing that this is about human rights and democracy and not about security and global war on terrorism as the Ethiopian authorities wants them to believe. Their course of reasoning has to do with this. Government’s argument that the bill “will prohibit security assistance to Ethiopia at the time when the volatility in Somalia and instability in the broader Horn of Africa region demand robust security cooperation between Ethiopia and United States” holds no water they keep arguing. On the contrary, the bill will enhance the joint anti-terrorism efforts by carving a solid exception for peace keeping and counter terrorism contest the Advocacy lawyers.

Besides, the bill according to their reasoning will facilitate and promote:

1. Human rights and democracy, secure the release of political prisoners, promote free and independent press and strengthen U.S. anti-terrorism efforts
2. Accelerate economic development, enhance the capabilities of local, regional and national legislative institutions

3. Establish mechanism to enable local and international human rights groups to operate freely and increase the independence of judiciary. Besides, The Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Advancement Act of 2006 if it is enacted includes an authorization of \$20 million over two years to assist political prisoners, indigenous Ethiopian human rights organizations, independent media, civil society and to promote legal training.

The Advocacy Group tries to give concrete evidence of state terrorism under Meles 15 years of misrule and the gross human rights violations after the May 15, 2005 elections by quoting American human rights organizations, State Department, Amnesty International, Human Right Watch and Genocide Watch Annual Reports. Statements given in public testimonies and hearings by American Senators and diplomats who visited are an essential part of their public relations strategy. The central message always being that HR 5680 is about Human Rights violations in Ethiopia and NOT about the War on Global Terrorism in that part of Africa.

One can only understand their focus on the deconstructing of the Ethiopian Government's arguments that has reduced lately the reason for not enacting the bill to the fear of Islamic Radicalism in the Horn. In their view the bill will jeopardise the security alliance on the global war on terrorism in the Horn of Africa, particularly after the advance of the Islamists in Somalia. They are referring to the recent victory of the Supreme Islamic Courts Council (SICC) in Somalia.

They point out that the West and especially America gave Ethiopia over \$21 billion in international aid over 15 years without guaranteeing democracy. On the contrary, political repression intensified, per capita income went down. In spite of all this, the donors have not arrived at the conclusion that there is no substitute for democracy and good governance in Ethiopia. The opposition accuses the ruling party not only of stealing the votes of the electorate in the last elections, but also of representing the minority Tigrai ethnic minority.

The advocacy groups provide their grass roots activists with necessary documents and manuals such as questions for regime lobbyists, officials and supporters visiting or communicating with Congressional Offices. They carry with them also a list of prisoners of conscience and Somalia Crisis Talking Points paper in order to enable their activists to discuss the oppression in Ethiopia, the jailing of political leaders, journalists, union activists. Ethiopian American Civic Advocacy (EACA) and Task Force HR 4433 with other coalition partners and grass root activists hammer out support for HR 5680 by insisting that it is intended to promote democracy, human rights, freedom of the press and economic development in Ethiopia. The bill which was sponsored by two Senators in the beginning continues to gather momentum as there are now more than 24 co-sponsor Senators behind it. In spite of this apparent success the struggle to enact it into law it is still an uphill lobbying battle whose results will only be known in time of the voting. The Advocacy Groups recognize that they must reckon with the tactics of the lobbying firms of delaying flooring the bill for vote.

The government in Ethiopia is not only using the spectre of fear of Jihadists in Somalia and the unrepresentative ethnic nature of their opponents. They are trying

to disprove the one ethnic base of the regime, a charge repeated by their opponents. It seems that it was to counter this allegation that they sent two diplomats who belong to the Amhara ethnic group to head the Embassies in Washington and New York. The government plans to upgrade the Directorate of Expatriates to Ministry of Diaspora. In a 52 page policy initiative they outlined how to build their own Diaspora constituency by enticing them with different privileges such as dual citizenship, investment and real estate facilities in their homeland. The policy equally envisages penalizing the supporters of the opposition by exposing them and sometimes criminalizing them.

## Pitfalls, challenges and opportunities of diaspora politics

We have followed the evolution of the political engagement and activism of the Ethiopian Diaspora in America in the last two decades. We traced the contours and magnitude of their protest movement. We tried to examine their recent engagement in the lobbying of the American law makers to enact the HR draft bill known as the 5680 as an example of Diaspora engagement for justice in their land of origin. The tug-of-war between them and the ruling party's lobbyists and supporters is still going on. In spite of the most refined modern methods and techniques and the grass root lobbying systems we have witnessed also the accusations and counteraccusations characteristic of ethnicized politics at home hurled at each other. It is not difficult to discern not only organizational, but also conceptual problems intrinsic to Diaspora as a civil society organization in general and others specifically inherent to Ethiopian immigrant organizations. In conclusion, without trying to go deep into the theoretical problematic of the nature of civil societies and their role in a transitional period, we have to examine briefly the challenges and pitfalls of Diaspora politics.

The relationship between the ruling party and the opposition affiliated advocacy groups, as we have observed, is not accommodating, to say the least. At times it is rather confrontational, as we were able to discern, above. Both sides not only do not recognise the stock holding of the other partner, but even go to the extent of delegitimizing the other side. In the light of such accusations and counter-accusations of delegitimization and demonization it is not difficult to see the impossibility of civil society taking root in Ethiopian society. The civil society's role and contribution depends on a large extent on their accommodating each other in the democratization process. Delegitimizing each other will contribute neither to the growth of vibrant Diasporic groups nor to democratization at home. The government cannot accuse the Advocacy Groups of being too pushy, unrepresentative, aggressive and uncivil when it trades with the other side the same allegations in public. “---only a democratic state can create a democratic civil society; only a democratic civil society sustain a democratic state” (Nelson Kasfir: 123:1998)

“A civil society must contain state power and legitimate it at the same time” if it is to conquer a political space postulate the experts such as Nelson Kasfir who analyse the role of African civil society in the democratization process. As we have observed above the Ethiopian partners seem to do any thing, but accommodating each other. Non accommodating interaction will make wrestling of an autonomous space to resist the state’s totalizing efforts more difficult, if not impossible according to the theoretical postulates.

Without acquiescing in ruling party’s injustices as their counter parts at home are forced to do , even organizations confronting dictatorial governments must also observe certain the civic restraints and codes of conduct. This could be different from the restraints expected to be adhered to fully consolidated democracies. It is out of question, that different stages of transition require different mode of accommodation.

“Aggressive civil society organizations may cripple democracy rather than sustain it” (Kasfir: 135: 1998) maintains Kasfir who wrote extensively on the subject of democracy and civil societies in Africa. Diaspora’s strength cannot stem only from their ability to pressurize international community to put in return pressure on their countries of origin, but rather force the government to relinquish, often very reluctantly, little political space. In the case of Ethiopia it seems not be the case. This poses unquestionably one of the pitfalls as well as the challenges of civil societies in Ethiopia.

Confusion between the roles of civil society organizations and the political parties is one of the impediments to development of vibrant civil society. This impediment seems more actual in the case of Ethiopia, especially after the May Elections. We are not denying that, contrary to common posturing, it is undeniable that the numerous civil society organizations are in fact political vehicles and to the extent that they are political actors, which compete for political space. Different groups in the Diaspora are taking over themselves the task of political leadership particularly after the leadership at home was forced under ground in the wake of the May 2006 elections. Lately, They seem to have proceeded from supporting the political parties into replacing them. A good example is the 12-member Kinjit International Leadership which is based in America.

Both the Ethiopian government and the opposition groups consider their Diaspora expatriates as their own constituency upon which they attempt to wield some influence. But, these endeavours are complicated by the ethnic nature of the Ethiopian political landscape which becomes more apparent day by day. Not only the exclusive ethnic base of the ruling party that depends on one ethnic group, but also the dictatorial character of the regime skew the Diaspora in favour of the opposition. It is also an undeniable fact that the majority of the immigrants in general belong to certain groups especially the Amharas.

In spite of the insurgent political activism that we are witnessing lately in Ethio-America Diaspora estrangement from realities at home, is still a reality. One has to keep in mind that only a very minuscule proportion of the Ethiopians in Diaspora are politically active. Some dare to put this figure as low as 1%.

## Conclusions

“Can we – Ethiopians and Ethiopian Americans – make a difference in our homeland while living, working and struggling in America? asks Al Mariam and answers himself by asserting “--- we can, and in fact, are making a world of difference today.” He is articulating the position of the Ethiopian American Civil Advocacy (EACA) a group that spearheads the lobbying movement . We have tried to probe both organizational as well as conceptual problems of the Ethiopian Diaspora in America as a specific type of civil society organization in Diaspora at particular time of the democratization process in their home land. We tried to probe a particular type of their lobbying the American legislature. We tried to do this by the fight to enact the HR 5680 bill.

To conclude this paper, I am afraid I have to quote prof. Alemayehu Gebre Mariam from Ethiopian American Civil Advocacy (EACA) again whe.when referring to Ethiopian Diaspora asserts “We are the sleeping giant beginning to awaken!” They seem to have taken the role of being “the voice of the voiceless”; and this voice is becoming louder every day. As we have seen they succeeded in institutionalizing their protest movements by establishing political associations and political party support groups With effective advocacy and credible arguments, uniting different groups. With different agendas in a common purpose, coalition-building among constituent interest groups , and mobilizing a grassroots movement for the first time in Diaspora History, Ethiopian Americans are posed to use the American legislative process to advance the cause of human rights and democracy in their homeland. It seems that a new breed and generation of Ethiopian Americans are emerging. “I am not speaking as an Ethiopian, not as an American, but as an Ethiopian American” states one of their lawyers. Ethiopian Diaspora is proving to be a formidable opponent to the government in power.

Will they play a supportive role in making Ethiopia more democratic, more transparent and more accountable is a question that has to be answered and a challenge that must be tackled.

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PART 3

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# Focus on Somalia



# The Current Situational Leadership of Somali Politicians in Southern Somalia

The subject of leadership has always been fascinating to mankind and has been the subject of investigation by social scientists and men of practical affairs.

If there is one subject of which much is written, and little known, it is the subject of leadership.

This intriguing phenomenon has probably been written about, formally researched, and informally discussed more than any other single topic. Yet, despite all the attention that has been given to it, very little conclusive evidence has come out of the many studies.

Our knowledge of the nature of the leadership styles of the Somali politicians remains quite limited and much of what has been done in the field of political understanding of the Somali politicians has been restricted to non-Somali Scholars.

Through the examination of leadership styles of the Somali Politicians in Southern Somalia, it is hoped that some contribution can be added to the scant body of knowledge about the situational leadership in the political setting in Somalia.

The leadership role of Somali Politicians in Southern Somalia is of great importance to the Somali Nation as whole, since there is a great demand for more and more clean, nationalist and honest politicians' control over the leadership and the management of the Somali nation and its people.

Somali Politics is a part of the political process and is not a system or a discipline that is totally independent of other world political systems. Southern Somali Politicians need to develop and create an interdisciplinary behavior and attitude towards the political administration of Somalia.

The current Somali politicians must learn how to function effectively as leaders and administrators within the spectrum of the entire Somali Political hierarchic structure which now as some scholars claim does not exist at all, particularly in the Southern Somali regions.

Wayne Dannehl poses his concerns on the issues and said in his book (1979) in this manner: "Because the political system of Somalia is a part of the political way of behavior of the Somali Community, the study of Somali Political administration is applicable to the administration of Somalia and its people".

When Somali Traditional Leaders (Ugas) and Somali Political Leaders (Warlords +TNG) at Eldoret -Kenya for the Somali Reconciliation Conference were discussing Administrative Leadership, I am quoting one of the Somali Uga's Theory on "Excellence and Leadership" about two years ago in the following way:

It is true that no exact recipe for the development of leaders exists. Some think that certain persons are born leaders and most of us would accept the fact that there are some innate characteristics that the majority of leaders possess. There are those who believe that circumstances and fate combine to bring certain individuals into leadership role and this too may contain an element of truth. Thrust into crises and emergencies, leaders have continued to emerge. Yet throughout the world we find planned programs for the development of leaders. Princes are groomed to become Kings, future youth leaders are studying sociology and psychology and Somali Warlords (Political Leaders) are considering presidents and the best ministerial posts in every Somali Government established outside of the country (overseas).

The current Somali political leadership lacks the democratic way of leadership which encourages the group discussions and group involvement in decision making.

Most of the Somali political leaders exercise the worst type of leadership style which is the Laissez-faire type of leadership. The Laissez-faire leader holds on to his or her position in the belief that non-interference in the conduct of others will, in the long run, pay dividends. This type of leadership lacks self-confidence. Often, too, a leader of this type believes that a hands-off policy is a democratic virtue. Perhaps the biggest danger in this type of leadership is satisfaction with status quo.

The current situational Leadership of Somalia is in a situation that most of the scholars are defining as a chaotic and very critical uncertainty.

# Somali Reconciliation Conferences: What Went Wrong?

## Introduction

Since 1991 there have been 15 major national and an uncountable number of regional and clan reconciliation conferences, most of which took place outside of Somalia. Ethiopia hosted four, three in Addis Ababa in 1992-93 and one in Sodere, in January, 1997, a hot spring resort about 100 kilometers southeast of Addis Ababa. Djibouti hosted three, two in June-July, 1991, and in May 2000 in Arta a summer resort near Djibouti. Sudan is hosting the Khartoum conference which started in July, 2006.

What strikes one the most are the similarities in the way these peace and reconciliation conferences were conducted. Each of them attempted to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive peace and each supposedly represented the entire nation. Most were hosted by a friendly neighboring country, supported by the Somali public, the United Nations UN, the international organizations and the nongovernmental organizations or NGOs. Key participants included representatives of armed factions, collaborators of faction 'leaders,' and former civilian politicians and army officers who clearly helped put the country in the position where it is today. At the start of each meeting, there were great expectation and hopes that there would be no more missed opportunities for peace. But these conferences were all doomed to fail leaving Somalia without a functioning government.

The time has come to reconsider the basic ingredients of peace and reconciliation. According to Somali tradition, "Ol nebeda ku dombooyty," every war gives way to peace. "Dagaal wiilbaa ku dhinta ee kuma dhasho," war results in the death of a son, but not in the birth of one. "Nebeda naas la nuughy leh," it is only peace that can give you milk. To make peace the following are required:

### **1. Trustworthy participants**

For stateless societies recovering from periods of massive atrocities, reconciliation efforts can easily be doomed by disputes over who has the right to represent whom in

the peace talks. It is necessary, therefore, to ask what would it take, and what do the current or imagined institutions, need to do, to help Somalis come to terms with the past to help heal the victims, the bystanders, and even the perpetrators of violence? What could build a nation capable of preventing future massacres and the rise of new regimes of torture? The most effective way is to embrace the rule of law and to set up a tribunal. Somali victims are entitled to full justice, namely trials of perpetrators and adequate punishment for those found guilty. There must be due process.

The 1994 Rwandan massacre trials in Arusha, Tanzania, in December 2003, almost a decade after the massacre, convicted many Rwandans of genocide and crimes against humanity. The prosecutors called the verdicts an historic victory of good against evil, and Rwandans started to pursue their life regularly, and to forgive and forget. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission TRC of 1995 is another good example of positive recovery of a society from a past horrific, deeply divided community to a future founded on a peaceful coexistence for all South Africans irrespective of color, race, class, belief or gender. Imagine World War II without the Nuremberg trials, what would have been the fate of Europe?

Somalia has not conducted its own tribunals of reconciliation, but the door is still open. Such a procedure has the added advantage of identifying or “short listing” the number of potential participants in any future peace negotiations and gives the public a clear conscience as they choose future leaders. The United Nations and friendly nations should assist Somalia to implement this process.

## **2. Impartial or disinterested negotiators**

According to a Somali saying “Habar lang fadaw mal ha ku weidiyaw”, ask not for the hand of a bride from one who want her himself. So far most conference participants have been those who viewed the meetings more as a vehicle for enhancing their own status or that of their clans than for advancing the cause of peace. Many of them went to the gatherings without an invitation, and they managed not to miss a single meeting. For participants, it was for the “dhaadhac” daw; per diems, travel expenses and hotel accommodations generously paid by the UN, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development IGAD and other International Nongovernmental Organizations INGOs, that counted to regularly attend the reconciliation conferences. Indeed, the 275 members (parliamentarians) of the current Transitional Federal Government TFG would not convene in Baidoa in February, 2006, unless the UN Development Program UNDP promised to pay each parliamentarian a monthly allowance of \$1,800 and other per diems for chairing a committee or international travels. The longer the duration of the conference the more “dhaadhac” involved, and thus, the more participants competed. Of the 15 Somali National Reconciliation Conferences from 1991 to 2002, the first, known as the Djibouti I, lasted for only one week 5-11, June, 1991, and only leaders of four faction groups participated, whereas the 15<sup>th</sup> known as the Mbegathi, Kenya lasted for over two years (2002-2004) and attracted more than twenty factions. Most participants were also jockeying for political

positions i.e. President, Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Parliament, Cabinet member or at least as an MP.

Participants in the future of Somali peace and reconciliation conference should be composed of individuals with no vested interest in holding political office and should be invited by a plenary committee.

### **3. The need for some alternative ideas**

For decades the political rules in Somalia have been set by the rulers, first a dictator, then a series of warlords or Islamicists. In both cases, to maintain their power, these rulers eliminated competition and restricted participation, since any enlargement would likely have disturbed the prevailing status quo. Future peace and reconciliation conferences needs new players willing to accept new entrants. The political reforms required for the future Somalia should not be conditioned or imposed by external donors. The country needs cultural and economic adjustments before it is ready for sustainable ideologies.

### **4. Reinterpretation of sovereignty**

Since Somalia currently does not fit the meaning of “sovereign state” in modern political parlance and has no official standing in the global world order, all that exists is a patchwork of regional authorities in different stages of lawlessness, anarchy and chaos. The Northwestern region declared itself an independent state on May, 18, 1991 as Somaliland Republic, the Southwestern regions as the Reverine State in 1995, and the Northeastern region proclaimed itself Puntland State in 1997. From 2004, there is also the government of national unity known as the TFG based in Baidoa and their rival the Union of Islamic Courts UIC based in Mogadishu. All of the above authorities are clan-based and none was able to bring Somalia unity. All transitional mechanisms recognized by the international community and supported by the Somali public are doomed to fail.

It may be necessary to reconsider the possibility of “tutelage,” if that term is reinterpreted to mean “temporary custodial care” by the UN for a state that has given up or lost its sovereign nationhood. If the current Transitional Federal Government TFG fails to bring about governance for Somalia, the UN may be obliged to develop a mechanism for intervening in situations where a state’s fundamental institutions have collapsed –not with the aim of institutionalizing foreign control but with the goal of creating stronger domestic institutions. The Somali people may even be ready to welcome such temporary recommitment to the UN.

## Some success stories

And yet while Somali peace and reconciliation conferences have so far not managed to achieve their ultimate goals, they have not all been abject failures.

### 1. Regional autonomy

The Addis Ababa Peace Conference of March 1993 promulgated an idea of fundamental importance, the proposition of regional autonomy. The Somali people have been moving toward that form of governance for the past thirteen years, and there is still a chance for its success. The regional factional conferences of 1994, such as the Cairo accord, the Nairobi Declaration, and the Somali National Alliance SNA Mogadishu Conference brought about alliances of factions to forge perhaps such regional authorities. The Cairo Accord was signed by leaders of 12 factions, dubbed as group 12 (G 12), and the Nairobi Declaration was initially signed by the SNA but later welcomed by the signatories of the G 12. The Mogadishu Conference was undertaken exclusively by the SNA, which declared an interim “national” government. Similar experiences took place earlier in Somaliland, which proclaimed itself a republic in 1991 but has not gained international recognition, and later Puntland, which became an “autonomous” region in 1997.

The Digil and Mirifle people also established, in March 1995, the Supreme Governing Council SGC, a bicameral council as an autonomous legislative body for the Reewin people called the Reverine State, which was overthrown by Mohamed Farah Aideed seven months later. The Reewin land covers former Upper Juba, Lower Juba and Banadir regions. The Reewin (Rahanweyn) Resistance Army RRA also established a regional administration over what it called the “liberated” territories of Bokool and Bay in 1998 and 1999 respectively. This could also be considered an accomplishment in governance, though one not widely accepted because the concept of Somali occupation of a Somali territory was not comprehensible and was not an issue previously addressed in Somali politics.

It was after Aideed’s occupation of Baidoa in 17 September 1995 that some Somalis started questioning the right of invading clans to govern. In fact, there were many regions that had been occupied by new clans in Somalia, including the Lower Shabelle occupied by Harbar Gedir, Lower Juba by Majerteen, Middle Juba by Ogaden, Gedo by Marehan. These regions were historically Digil and Mirifle. Here local people during the occupation found themselves negotiating not with comparable representatives with whom they share long common experience and social contracts, but with young, armed militiamen whose interest and actions placed them outside the pale of the Somali customary law. The RRA, by liberating the Bokool and Bay from Habar Gedir militias, opened up a Pandora’s Box, as they promised to continue the liberation movement until the last piece of the Digil and Mirifle land was freed. If regional authority based on local participation was the goal, then those RRA

actions could be considered movements in the right direction despite the general stagnation of Somali reconstruction efforts.

## **2. Clan size and power**

Another important accomplishment is the Sodere Accord of 1997, where for the first time Somali clans agreed about their relative size, power and territorial rights. The Sodere participants agreed that there are four major equal clans: the Reewin known also as Digil and Mirifle, the Issaq later called Dir, the Hawiye and the Darood. The conference also recognized another segment of the Somali society which included minority groups not identified with one of the above clans i.e. the Banadiris and the Somali Bantus just to mention some. After Sodere, the question of clan composition of any future Somali “conference” should not be a problem.

## **3. Empowerment of women**

In Djibouti 2000, the gathering agreed that 12 percent of the seats of the Transitional National Parliament TNP be reserved for women which is a significant accomplishment too, because women were conventionally excluded from the Somali political scene. Both the “Heer”, Somali customary law, and the “Sharia”, Islamic law strongly support women’s rights, but later clan authorities and religious practice stripped women of their basic human rights and excluded them from playing a significant role in politics. Since women rarely held leadership positions and, until recently, had only a marginal influence on politics, the 12 percent is a step forward to build upon further recognition for women.

## **4. Multiculturalism**

Finally, the Mbegathi Peace and Reconciliation Conference of Kenya in 2003, acknowledged with sizeable majority the consideration of two Somali languages Maay and Maxaatiri as the official languages of the Somali society. The Transitional Federal Charter of 2003 stated in Article 7: “The official languages of the Somali Republic shall be Somali (Maay and Maxaatiri) and Arabic. Who is not delighted to see, after decades of silence, a more complete discussion of the roles of women, minorities and alienated or marginalized cultures in shaping the history of Somalia? A multicultural approach to the past is long overdue. This is a challenge to the long-held view of Somalia’s homogeneity and monolingualism, but on the other hand it gives a more accurate account of Somalia’s history and culture.

# Conclusion

Now the issue focuses on how Somalia can do better. Only by tackling the obstacles outlined here can Somalia expect to move forward on the slow road to reconciliation and renewal. To conclude, I will emphasize some of the most important challenges Somalia is facing.

First, Somalia needs to redefine the term “occupation.” Today in the country – as I highlighted earlier- there are clans occupying other clans. Someone has to speak up for the voiceless, otherwise peace will remain remote.

Second, it is necessary to bring the war criminals to justice. It took Liberia many years to nail Charles Taylor. After Taylor was indicted, the British and French were able to restore peace in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast where Charles Taylor earlier precipitated mayhem, chaos and anarchy. The international community must ban Somali warlords from coming to their countries – stop issuing visas – and freeze and shut down their bank accounts. It is never too late. We can do it now.

Further, the rule of self-determination must be applied. We should not be obsessed with what form of government Somalia should adopt. Be it unitary, federation of regional states, or should it be split into many independent states.

Finally, there is a need to indigenize the ethos of the reconciliation process. Future conferences should take place in Somalia. I believe if some of the “reconciliation” conferences had taken place in Somalia the outcome would have been more promising and the chances for peace would have been higher. Somalia must draft its own constitutions based on its needs and experiences under “Geedka hoostiisa” the tree not the hotel. The time has come to employ and empower the “Heer” customary laws and promote the tolerant form of Islam.

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<sup>1</sup> This piece is partially published in *African renaissance* Vol. 3 No. 5, Sept. /Oct., 2006, pp. 26-32. However, it has been updated, particularly in relation to the current Khartoum Conference between the Transitional federal Government TFG and the Union of Islamic Courts UIC.

<sup>2</sup> The Khartoum Conference is sponsored by the League of Arab States to negotiate between the UIC on one hand and the TFG on the other. It seems that cutting a deal in reconciliation is much higher than all earlier attempts, for protagonists are small in number and Somalis as well as the international community are tired of failed reconciliation processes. However, the signs of deadlock are on the horizon and the syndromes of familiar are in the making.

<sup>3</sup> For insightful understanding of the Somali tradition towards war and peace see Somalia Delegation, International Committee of the Red Cross. *Spared From The Spear: Traditional Somali Behaviour in Warfare*. Nairobi: International Committee of the Red Cross and Somalia red Crescent Society, 1997

<sup>4</sup> The Rwandan genocide of 1994 was a war between the Hutu and the Tutsi tribes where close to a million Tutsi were found with their hands and feet chopped off by machetes. The international community was indifferent at the time of the genocide, but with the UN setting up the Arusha trials the process of building democracy and culture of peace and human rights was enhanced.

<sup>5</sup> The TRC was set up by the government of national unity in 1995 to help deal with what happened under apartheid era. The commission after so many years of fact findings concluded to grant amnesty in respect of acts and provide reparations to victims and hope the sufferers to come to terms with the past and finally lay to rest the trauma and pain associated with it. Crisis Group Africa Report No. 116, *Can The Somali Crisis Be Contained?* August, 10, 2006, pp. 7-8.

- <sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that throughout the period, not only the number of factions and representatives was increasing but also the number of parliamentarians was growing astronomically. In 1993, the Addis Ababa Conference, the number of the Transitional National Council TNC agreed upon as the transitional authority was 74, whereas, the Arta or the Djibouti III Reconciliation Conference of 2000, numbers jumped into 245 MPs, and the Mbegathi Conference of 2002, the agreed members of the TFG became 275. For further details see Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, *Historical Dictionary of Somalia, New Edition*. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003), pp. 25-26, 41-42, and 76-77.
- <sup>7</sup> Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, *Historical Dictionary*, op. cit., p. 225.
- <sup>8</sup> See Draft Version 7.0, The Transitional Federal Charter of the Somali Republic, Nairobi: August, 2003.



# Reconfiguring the State in Somalia: Current Progress and Challenges

“Our main request for the so-called Somali political and warlord elites is that they stop the constant internal meaningless disagreement among themselves, and at the same time refrain from manipulating us Somali people and particularly youth to fight their useless wars”

– Statement by a youth group in Somalia, July 2005, in response to the question of their expectations to the current Somali leadership<sup>1</sup>.

## Introduction

Somalia is an ancient country with classic history and relationship with ancient China, India and Egypt. Inhabitants of this Horn of African nation were not only engaged in commercial activities but equally in diplomatic exchanges and undertakings long before Europeans conducted external relations and expansion. For instance, the great Egyptian Queen and ruler, Ma'at-ka-Ra Hatshepsut (1473-1458 BC)<sup>2</sup>, sent senior envoys to the land of Punt, the ancient name of Somalia. Similar mutual cooperation and protocols took place between the Somalis and the Persians and other ancient civilisations. This indicates that historically this beautiful East African nation was in the past more respected, and interacted dynamically with other nations than has been the case in recent years where Somalia unfortunately became synonymous with modern human tragedy in terms of extreme poverty, warlordism and underdevelopment. The UN considers Somalia to be the second poorest country on earth. Those who usually like to blame strangers for any internal failure insist that the humiliating division of Somalia during the colonisation process followed by decades of cold war militarism and domination not only humiliated and subordinated the Somalis but transformed the character and the self-comprehension of Somalis. More realistic observers refer to the absence of internal unified Somali political leadership that could operate beyond the ethnic convention in rising to the task of imagining

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on an empirical observation trip by the author to Somalia where he in a follow  
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thekeep.org/~kunoichi/kunoichi/themestream/hatshepsut.html>

and eventually constructing a progressive nation and state as the main problem. Furthermore, the colonial reasoning appears rather vague as in fact the country never experienced colonisation in practice. For instance, the powerful British Empire never succeeded in totally bringing Somalis under its rule. From their first day of landing on Somali shores in the Red Sea, Britain met fierce resistance from a coalition of religious and pastoral Somalis. This did not keep some Somalis from arguing that the absence of meaningful colonial contribution to the field of education and infrastructure may explain why Somalis, in Western terms, are less advanced than for instance countries like Ghana and Malaysia with professional and political elites largely schooled in the West. Whatever historical explanations for the recent socio-political debacle, the question of imagining a viable Somalia state is getting ever more interesting and complex. Unanswered questions include what type of state mechanism do the Somalis want to create? And who is creating and contributing to this endeavour?

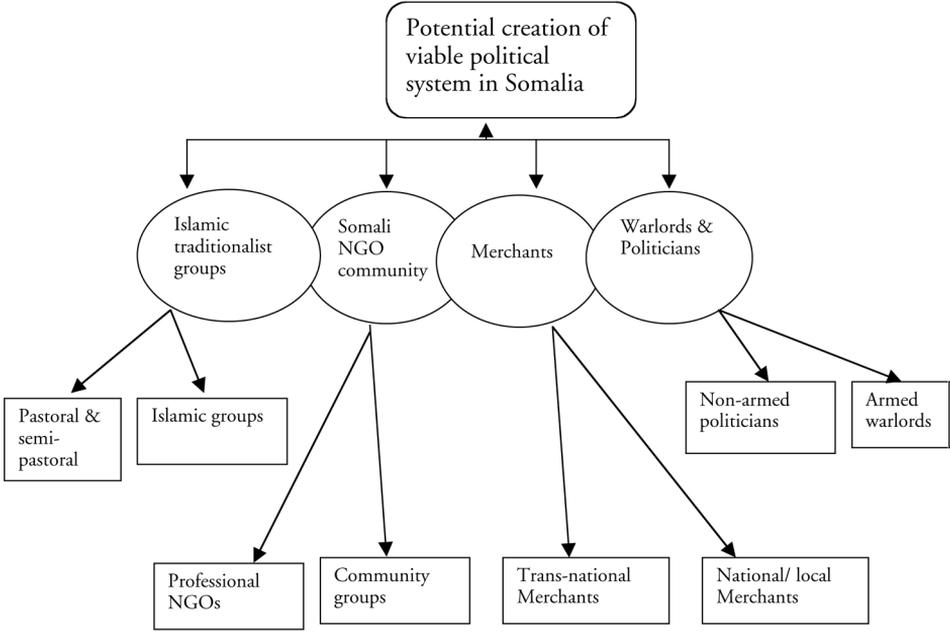


Figure 1 *The current socio-political structure of Somalia*

Somalia remains the only country in the world where a functioning government and state do not exist. The country has no single unifying authority that could exercise internal and external legitimacy and sovereignty. Instead, there are multiple complementary and sometimes fiercely competing authorities and sub-authorities. Three main institutions compete for internal legitimacy and power. The first represents a combined group of traditional pastoralists and Islamic components. This group enjoys relatively large popular legitimacy as they are endogenously rooted and capable of organising Somalis through clan and religious lines. The group attracts the support of most Somalis, except some urbanised-secularised communities. The obvious alli-

ance and successful cooperation between traditional pastoralists and Islamic groups also created the relative peace and calm that prevails in most of Somalia (Puntland and Somaliland) except Mogadishu where secularised urban communities, warlords and their supporters represent the majority.

The second powerful group are the Merchants. This capitalised and globalised powerful faction is largely based in urban areas and its members are financiers of all major economic and political conducts in the country. In periods they appear to be in alliance with traditional Islamic groups. In times of political manoeuvring and speculation, they prefer to finance warlords and mafia style adventures. The Somali merchants are increasingly becoming integrated into the global capitalist market. They have access to both Western and Asian financial markets. Some of them educate their children in Asian and Western universities and in times of sickness and medical checkups they immediately fly to exclusive private hospitals in the West.

The third group are the predatory political and military warlords. Their main aim is to enrich themselves at the expense of other organised groups and the wider Somali people. The remaining less powerful groups could be categorised as Somali professional NGOs that increased in numbers after the state collapse. In today's Somalia there exist no effective geographical, regional and district boundaries. People and goods move unrestricted and regional boundaries (such as Somaliland and Puntland) do not exist in practice. Instead tribal/clan dominations are clearly identifiable as people know where their particular clan resides and where its grassing areas and camels are. Apart from collecting taxes that never return to the public in the form of governmental services, the regional authorities are almost passive in development and reconstruction activities.

## The traditional Islamic alliance

Somalis maintain centuries-old traditional pre-Islamic customary practice of governance; exercising authority and mediating inter personal and intercommunity conflicts. This is based on Xeer (customary law) where serious challenges on the safety and well-being of the community are dealt with and collectively solved by the elders and wise men of the community. Women were normally excluded in directly participating in this type of decision-making process, though women are said to exercise tremendous power through their husbands, brothers or sons. With the introduction of Islam in Somalia, the traditional approach was modified and supplemented with aspects of providing justice and well-being for minority groups and an obligatory charity for all who are in need. Though Somalis are overwhelmingly attributed Muslims, their proper knowledge of the religion and its content is a recent development. As the modern written word is a recent breakthrough, in a predominantly oral culture, the Somalis still hang on with cultural and traditional performances and lifest-

yles that predate Islam. For instance the clan system which is the prime source of identity for most Somalis predates and has less significance in an Islamic context.

Islamic groups, in close cooperation with pastoralists and semi-pastoralists, represent a significant social and political strength in many parts of Somalia. With mosques and religious gatherings as their staging ground, religious communities are interconnected with pastoral constituencies and their vast properties consisting of livestock and land in rural areas. This is the oldest surviving political alliance structure in Somalia. Nomads and their clans provide the economic and manpower strength and religious preachers provide the ideology and the working framework. Tensions nonetheless occur when ordinary people, in challenging conflict situations, have to choose allegiance between clan and ideology. Another clashing point emerges in connection with the diverse interpretation of competing schools of Islamic thought that occasionally suggest and promote highly controversial subjective ideas. The vision of this Islamic pastoral group is one day to witness an effective Somali Islamic state that rules the country in accordance with the Islamic principles. In addition, they believe that Islamic teachings and ordinary traditional Somali life do not necessarily contradict but complement each other. In practical terms, the group undertakes numerous social, charity and political activities. To mention some, they mediate inter-clan conflicts, they operate and run massive charity operations, especially in periods of droughts and regional catastrophes. They build and sustain traditional religious schools and adopt clinics for caring for the elderly and sick people. In cooperation with merchants, they are engaged in the opening of small businesses and commercial activities for young men and their families. Apart from small factions in Mogadishu, most Islamic traditional groups are not visibly armed, but maintain light weapons at home for personal defence. They vigorously oppose any debate or proposal of introducing western democratic styles or authoritarian dictatorship models into Somalia. They appear self-confident in their believe in predestination. For similar reasons, they categorically reject the requesting and depending on external aid, especially from the West. They believe the country is rich to feed itself, if resources are managed and distributed properly. With relation to other groupings they believe in cooperation rather than confrontation, at the same time they seem not to be ready for compromise on principal issues.

Geography (Location)	Eastern Africa, bordering the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, east of Ethiopia
Geography (Area)	637,657 sq. Km
Population	8,600,000 (est. July 2005)
Population growth	3.3 (est. 2005)
Fertility	6.6 (est. 2005)
Live expectancy	50 (est. 2005)
Religion	Sunni Muslim
Literacy	40% (Est. 2005)
Languages	Somali (official), Arabic, English and Italian
Source: www.dmeg.dk	

## Somali professional NGO community

The NGO group, a rather recent development in Somalia, consists of professional NGOs, teachers, engineers, women and youth groups. In addition, after the collapse of the Somali state, many humanitarian NGOs, inspired by the West, emerged and filled the gap of providing relief assistance for needy and vulnerable Somalis. Somali NGOs are financed through several UN agencies and other international NGOs. They do not enjoy wider international recognition as NGOs, especially those from the 3<sup>rd</sup> world and are not considered an independent negotiating factor in international politics. Normally NGOs are organised within the dominant international system of state framework. Almost all Somali NGOs are therefore struggling to acquire recognition and respect from a local community that considers the NGOs to be Western invention and probably an extension of foreign governments. As the sources of their economic and moral backings are in the West, they confront declining legitimacy among their people. This might probably explain why various NGOs that focus on human rights and gender issues are failing in the country, while those that work with employment, environmental and practical livelihood issues sometimes succeed. One such organisation is Horn Relief (HR). With its operational head offices in Nairobi and Bosaaso (Puntland), this organisation is one of the few Somali NGOs that takes into serious consideration the needs and priorities of ordinary people. For over a decade the organisation has built trust with local community groups in trying to improve the living conditions for pastoral and semi-pastoral communities and their families. The organisation's female director had in 2002 won an international environmental award in campaigning and educating rural communities from uprooting valuable centuries-old trees and forests for energy, export and food cooking<sup>3</sup>. Some of the ideas of HR might appear to be Western oriented. And it is no secret that this organisation receives funds from Western organisations such as Novib-Oxfam Netherlands, but their practical approach to local issues is obviously indigenous. Applying participatory appreciative empowerment models, they consult and include all those who have a stake in the process. At the same time they convince people to assume responsibility in their local affairs and development. One of their main successful twin projects of preventing environmental degradation while constructing schools and roads, are the activities cash for work and cash for relief. In successive relief and drought vulnerability reduction programmes, HR mobilises the unemployed to do something the community could benefit from such as constructing rock dams and road rehabilitation conducts. In parallel to this they provide humanitarian assistance by distributing cash to elders, the sick and the handicap groups. Initiatives of youth participatory groups where the youth debate and exchange are also valuable exercises that maintain and foster proper decision-making processes at the local community level. The organisation achieved a lot of positive results but also confronts serious challenges such as funding limitations as the UN agencies do not provide proper financial support, and the latent tension with regard to the locals that remain suspicious of any institution that is funded or maintained by the West. Horn

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3 <http://www.hornrelief.org/GoldmanPrize.html>

relief could get support from organisations like Hadeed Development Organisation (HDO) which, with its national and international (Diaspora) branches, tries to build bridges between communities abroad and in the country. HDO's main objectives are to attract financial resources exclusively drawn from hard working Diaspora groups to reconstruct educational institutions and provide support for deprived communities in the country. With this approach HDO avoids the possible accusation of receiving Western funds to promote local humiliation and dependency. In addition HR also gets support from organisations like Daryeel Women Organisation (DAWO) that established the first ever private library in Puntland. DAWO also campaigns for better opportunities and equality for women. The idea of Somali women being subordinated and oppressed by men is hotly debated in Somalia. Some Western-inspired groups suggest that women are indeed subordinated and neglected in Somalia similar to numerous other African and Arabian countries. Others insist that Somali women enjoy more freedom than many other women in many parts of the world. In general women have a greater social role than for instance in Arabia, local Somalis insist. In Somalia, honour killing and segregation of sexes do not exist. Divorced women are free to return their families if they want. One young man complained that young men have to pay a lot of dowry for getting married. Clans in rural Somalia might go to war, with many men possibly dying, if women from their clans are disgraced or violated.

Nonetheless, the reality is that many women are excluded from the political power sharing, which has led Somali feminists and women activists to suggest that a stable political system and peace would have prevailed if Somalis had included more women in decision-making processes. In today's Somalia, it is possible to find families prioritising to send male children to school rather than their female sisters. The dominant argument is that ordinary families cannot afford sending all children to school, and that girls will sooner or later get married and get support from their husbands.

Much more dangerous though are the highly immoral activities conducted by freelance international gangs and their Somali smugglers by exporting young Somali girls for slavery in the Arabian Gulf. Young innocent Somalis and Ethiopians from the Horn of Africa end up in an enslavement condition in major cities like Dubai and Jeddah in the Arabian Peninsula. These innocent girls are abused systematically and governmental and nongovernmental organisations, for one reason or the other, prefer to remain silent on their plight. International and national criminal gangs exploit the poverty and needy condition of these innocent girls and their families back home.

Within and around the NGOs there are two major groups that are worth mentioning. The first are women groups or associations. They are not organised professionally such as in having managerial board etc. but they are functioning as a group, especially when they are engaged in public demonstrations or in campaigns to clean up cities and provide vaccinations or food for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly. Another group are youth urban groups that are not organised professionally

either, but through for instance football tournaments and competitions provide free time activities and sense of identity for the youngsters

## Warlords and political elites

Somali warlords are internationally notorious for their ruthlessness and lack of mercy for the vulnerable. For the past 14 years most of them spent time destroying their country and people. They consider themselves to be legitimate leaders that fight for justice and prosperity for what they call their supporters. Nonetheless, none has ever seen a minor justice they created and no-one knows who are the people they are referring to as their supporters. Earlier, they used to appeal to their kin and clans for military mobilisation, more recently they are known to apply mafia methods to recruit and manipulate the notorious technicals. Their main economic source is the countless roadblocks in the capital, Mogadishu, where they threaten ordinary people and merchants either to pay money or lose their lives. One tragic story happened recently in a city 30 km south of Mogadishu where a farmer who grows vegetables in his small farm transported his goods to the main market in Mogadishu. Early every morning before he departs, he prepares the amount of road block charge he will pay for the warlord militia. One day he commenced his journey, expecting that there would be 10 road blocks. After paying the last one, to his sudden shock he discovered an extra road block that appeared overnight. He asked the gunman in charge that he did not prepare himself for this extra road block, and promised to bring the charge next day. Unaffected by the plea, the gunman ordered him to get out of the car and immediately gunned him down in front of terrified and helpless fellow passengers. This tragic history illustrates the strange relationship between warlords, their militia and ordinary defenceless civilians.

Even more tragic is that these warlords, more or less, enjoy indirect international support. The money they acquire through this illegal murderous way makes its way to Europe. In addition some ruthless warlords have more than once travelled for hospitalisation in the Arabian Gulf, England, Switzerland and Italy, while their children get education in Western countries and Asia.

In parallel with the intimidation, threat and victimisation of ordinary civilians by armed warlords, there are warlord politicians that are not armed. They are found among all regions in Somalia (among the leadership in Puntland, Somaliland and the newly trans-national government). They are Somali politicians that are the remains of the state collapse. Some of them have been in politics since the country obtained its independence in 1960, others have been in the opposition for generations, and some are self-appointed politicians who saw political and economic opportunity in the current uncertain situation. These different groups often share no long-term visions or consistent political approach, but their sole aim seems to be an attempt to personally gain from the insufficient external aid Somalia, from time to

time, receives and how to manipulate armed warlords and other groups in the country. An insider in the current Transitional Federal Government who participated in several so-called ministerial meetings said that the sole agenda of the government meetings concentrated on how much money the government received from Arabian and Western donors and how much the president of the transitional government and his prime minister acquired while touring abroad, and if distributed how much should each minister get in cash. Apparently there is no vision and no political working program to stabilise the country and to create reconciliatory environment.

## Somali merchants

Merchants in Somalia could be roughly divided into two main groupings. The first are the Trans-national merchants. This group is more globalised and internationalised. They have commercial and trade ties with most of the world and their money is saved in big commercial cities like Dubai. They fly frequently and made major trade deals occasionally with sovereign countries.

The second are the national traders. As local entrepreneurs, they overtake diverse goods imported by trans-national merchants and resell to ordinary Somalis. They are local merchants who make deals and transfers within the country. Local merchants are less involved in high politics and due to economic restrictions they have limited chances of influencing other powerful groupings. One such local merchant figure is the manager of the newly constructed Las Qoray Tuna factory. The once prestigious Soviet-built factory was looted and destroyed during the civil war by warlord gangs. Not far from the site of the factory a modern factory was built by a returnee from exile who, with the support of Diaspora groups in the USA and UAE started a productive factory that produces tons of tuna fish for both national and international markets. The factory employs about 400 people and has great significance for the local and regional economy. At the same time the factory is a standing proof of the productive cooperation between Diaspora groups and merchants that invest in development back home.

One of the major problems with Somali merchants, especially the trans-national group, is that they often engage in politics by corrupting their way through everything, just to accumulate power. In addition they import more than they export, thereby damaging the country's economic balance. Their import of foreign goods is not diversified. Wherever you go, you find pasta, Japanese cars and building materials everywhere. They deposit the money extracted from the country on foreign bank accounts in the Arabian Gulf and in the West. They do not pay their reasonable share of taxes or its corresponding Islamic Zaka. Dirty and immoral merchants engage in destructive business and exploitation in connection with charcoal export, frequent importation of dangerous toxic chemical waste, which creates serious environmental destruction with long-term implications for both humans and livestock alike.

## The significance of diaspora remittances

Somalis dispersed in most parts of the world transfer money to their families and relatives on a monthly or quarterly basis. This financial input is, through Hawaala (traditional transfer system), immediately felt on the streets of many towns and villages in Somalia. In many ways, Diaspora and expatriate remittance keeps the country running and surviving despite the lack of governmental public services. Fortunate families with relatives residing in more prosperous parts of the world receive an average of between 100- 200 USD per month. The largest part of this money is spent on daily consumption by families and relatives. A greater share of it might go to the chewing of Qat, resulting in the money moving out of the country to neighbouring countries like Kenya and Ethiopia. This is an issue that concerns many community groups in the country in particularly finding ways to combat this type of drug. Some of the families who receive remittances from abroad try their utmost to manage their income properly by, for instance, investing in the education of their children. The majority of Somalis spend remittance income on daily consumption and do not speculate on the future.

In contrast a group of young middle-class Somalis and returnees from abroad recently started considering the potential of applying Diaspora remittance income for development and sustainable reconstruction projects that benefit not only the individual community but also the country as a whole. Building light industries were among the initiatives undertaken. For instance during the summer of 2005, Diaspora communities in Sweden collected and transferred funds aimed at assisting national reconciliation in removing roadblocks in the capital Mogadishu. Other communities in the UK and the US started financing hospitals and successful higher education institutions like Amoud University in Somaliland. The main challenges confronting Diaspora assistance and involvement in Somalia, apart from the fragmentation and local orientation, are the lack of viable national institutions that can accommodate and organise the Diaspora efforts. In other words, there is a need for a national strategy on how to capitalise the significant input by the Somali Diaspora that is increasingly becoming vital for the country's economy and well-being

## Prospect and recommendations

Traditionalist Islamic groups represent the core of the Somali people as religious components and pastoralists are fundamentally integrated part of the socio-political structure. Similarly endogenous NGOs, humanitarian organisations with roots in the country, despite their engagement and contacts with international NGOs, are also more or less accepted and tolerated by the Somalis. Loosely organised women groups and youth associations contribute to various aspects of today's Somalia.

The only components that do not contribute positively to the political and social processes in the country are the warlords and political elites. Most people in Somalia are aware that the biggest obstacle for peace and prosperity in Somalia is the warlords and their political friends and rivals. They are found in Puntland, Somaliland, and with the Transitional National Government in Mogadishu and Jowhar. Their main aim is to enrich themselves at any cost at the expense of the rest of Somalis. Those who are not armed and could or hold guard or observe illegal road blocks try to appeal for support from the bewildered donor community based in Nairobi.

Some Somali observers have concluded that some UN agencies and Western embassies do whatever they can to keep Somalia underdeveloped and conflict-torn. Meanwhile ordinary Somalis are learning to cope with the impact of prolonged civil war. The civil war, though devastating and tragic, might in the long term be good for the Somali self-rehabilitation. From inhabitants of isolated local communities to large urban areas, Somalis are finally maturing to the task of creating a viable suitable system for their country. For instance no single warlord or so-called politician, although they might disturb public order by introducing road blocks or by threatening and intimidating defenceless civilians, is any longer capable of mobilising major conflict. Other more legitimate community institutions are not willing to support their efforts.

Another serious challenge in the coming months and years is the attitude, and possible action by the international community. In its focus on combating international terrorism, the West might prematurely embrace and finance Somali warlords and political opportunists on the presumed expectation that they will create a stable top-down state and strong government. Let us not forget that all warlords committed serious crimes, some genocide, and enjoy no legitimacy among genuine representatives of the Somali people or the wider public. Traditional, religious and Western inspired NGO groups have been engaged in a decade-long slow but effective reconstruction of post-civil war Somalia. This bottom-up oriented process of social inclusion and empowerment should be supported and encouraged.

What most Somalis probably desire is that the international community should refrain from interfering in Somali's internal affairs. One of the most productive, purely internal, Somali endeavours and negotiations resulted in the creation of the autonomous and relatively peaceful regions, Puntland and Somaliland. Fourteen consecutive so-called peace processes organised, and financed by external regional and international powers to reinvent the top-down centralised Somali state failed woefully on each occasion. It is therefore time to let Somalis manage their own affairs. If the international community wants to interfere, the starting point should be a complete dissociation from the warlords, by for instance, freezing their assets, imposing flight restrictions and supporting a Somali tribunal in the international court at The Hague.

# The Sudan and Somalia Peace Process: The Role of Women

## Introduction

Peace actors include a strange mixture of people trained in a variety of disciplines that range from almost the most rigorous mathematics on the one side to the most poetic humanities on the other. Amongst them are scientists who solve important problems that shed light on nature's deepest puzzles as effectively as ever, despite enormous complexities encountered. Similarly, negotiators in peace processes demystify conflict/peace by drawing on information, knowledge and wisdom – both old and new from right across space and cultures. Naturally, cultural dynamics pose challenges that often span from exclusion of women and youth to 'the other,' thus requiring expanded problem-solving capabilities from each community. In this regard a physical location is as crucial as the process of communication itself. During communication, negotiators gauge the atmosphere and decide when to compromise; how to compromise; why to compromise; and when to introduce another perspective. Of course there are a whole range of other dynamics including utilization of availed positions. Choice of a venue is as crucial as the dialogue because it gives the process credibility or the lack of it. Thus the choice of Kenya as a host country for both Sudan and Somali peace talks was deemed credible by all stakeholders.

## The ethics of female inclusion

Traditional African thought system did not favour the development, well-being and human rights of women. Perpetuation of patriarchal societies in the modern age constitutes ample evidence of the ancient conspiracy against women that deprived them of human rights so that even within a family, women have very little authority. It is widely believed by men that they are lawfully in society to decide the destiny of women and must consent on decisions and choices they make. The great success they have had in nurturing this state of affairs has led to little or no resistance in exercising their power. As long as there is no prolonged conflict, this authority is accepted as

legitimate and influences women in such a way that obedience becomes natural and identical with their own convictions. In conflict, this authority is somewhat eroded; more so as women take on added responsibilities in the absence of men. Normally, they would gain more power as happened in Europe after the two world wars. However research by Sahl and El-Bushra (2005) shows that in their study, this did not happen. Be that as it may, one cannot ignore the fact that some degree of power was gained by individuals in their own environment who went on to advocate for participation in political decision-making processes. For centuries, perception of other women was through male eyes and to a great extent, it created an invisible barrier. Only dialogue in which all parties were engaged could break this wall of separation. However, lack of information on power relations was a severe handicap, and knowledge was needed. This was again hampered first by suspicion among themselves; and secondly by suspicion of those entrusted with the responsibility of dissemination. These were well-schooled and highly informed women, on principles of peace building and negotiations.

Giving in to the temptations of these suspicions was easy but risky to the creation of a new 'ideology' through which they could express their aspirations and define their political objectives. Without exception, their interests and success lay in a coalition with the 'other' in a demographic block that would advance their goals. Motivated by the desire for peace, they organized peace-building initiatives at village levels and then reached out to the 'other' village to share their experiences. Because of interference from control mechanisms and values of dependency by patriarchy, it was a laboriously slow process. Men were equally suspicious of women talking to 'the other' and often came to listen to the proceedings. Unfortunately, they quickly took over the initiatives. Without the passion of women to keep the process going; and coupled with the lack of negotiating skills, some differences would lead to war and conflict. To avoid this, women met in secret where men would not be present. On several occasions, they took the advantage of meeting at water wells restricted to them. Sometimes they met on the pretext of fetching firewood. Unfortunately, in some areas wells became a target for rival militia to abduct and rape women and they were abandoned. To keep safe, women were encouraged to meet at a specific compound while men kept watch for any marauding elements. Doing chores together enhanced their peace-building initiatives. At weddings, Muslim women lingered in the women's tent on the pretext of performing the older woman's duty of advising the bride on nuptials.

The new set-up attracted the attention of relief organizations such as Oxfam, CARE International, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), Red Cross etc. who trained women in peace-building skills. Other government organizations like the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) came on board and strengthened capacity in peace-building mechanisms among women in Diaspora. Interaction with groups from different parts of the world increased their skills and sustained interest in the achievement of their goal. As their capacity increased, some noticed windows they could squeeze into as opposed to 'smashing into' them. One such window was, 'the clan window.' Somali women realized that all four major clans at the table were

represented by men (who naturally would not represent women issues), so they lobbied for women as a fifth clan. At the official start of the talks women came in as a legitimate fifth clan with equal power to the other four.

Sudanese women did not have this provision and in fact were completely left out of the 2002 Machakos Protocol in Kenya. With support from Urgent Action Fund and other donors, they traveled to Machakos town where the discussions were taking place. After they quietly entered the compound, they sang at the top of their voices (as they danced), rendering discussion in the conference room almost impossible. Perhaps for the sake of quiet, a mediator emerged and women politely laid the memorandum of their inclusion at his feet. However, they would not go away and their leaders were finally allowed as observers. It was a defining moment for all parties because the Government of Sudan (GOS) and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) were forced to examine and determine a comprehensive protocol on inclusion of women for the next round of talks.

Around the same period, a proliferation of Sudanese non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with an agenda on the various aspects of the conflict began in earnest. These include; Sudan Women's Voice for Peace and Sudan's Women's Association that focused on women advocating for peace and taking charge of refugees. With support from donors, women and youth were trained in the art of conflict resolution and conflict management. The Dutch government aid agency SNV brought together women from the north and south that belonged to different political parties to dialogue as one block. On resumption of talks in early 2003, the sheer extent of the support in terms of both resource quantity and time from the international community signaled a new era.

But in time, women were to discover that men have different perceptions on equality of political power-sharing. For women, it was representation at all levels; for men, it was allowing them to share their views but not necessarily incorporating them in the main agenda. In fact certain men felt that the demand for equal representation implied that women were victims of society and yet the peace process was not a human rights issue. There were accusations that individual women were serving only their personal interests and their questioning social rules would only lead to destabilization of communities. Of course it is expected, that any significant change in the class structure means redistribution of power -and that includes political power; and given that individuals who feel powerless to change society, due to the omnipotence of the government will gravitate toward whatever issue is of the single most importance to them. It would be therefore safe to say that men could not see 'the others' point. Also, it may have been the conviction that it is possible to change only a part of the system, but not the system itself. Perhaps it was simply that men may not have been ready for the changes and challenges that women posed.

## Time as a factor in dialoguing

At the largely male-dominated negotiating table, lack of background information on a subject or the inability to understand the different domains of experience, sometimes led to unpredictable actions; forcing mediators to call to question the appropriateness of phrases used, while encouraging selection of plausible variants. Sometimes language and its interpretation was completely unacceptable and the talks would break down for as long as a year or more. Women used the 'breaks' as self monitors to pay closer attention to relevant social cues that would enable them to work out their own differences and forge a formidable alliance.

The Sudan talks of 1994 September talks broke down and did not resume until 1997. The initiative gained momentum which led to the signing of the Machakos Protocol in July 2002.

For Somalia, an earlier agreement in Djibouti known as the Arta Accord resulted in the Transitional Government led by Salat. It did not gain the wider international recognition and a new process was initiated in Kenya in 2001 and concluded in January 2004.

Conflict had developed in the Sudan because political misallocation of resources was perceived as the structural source of deprivation. Invariably, political power sharing was placed high on the agenda turning the peace process into a de facto political process. It proved a daunting task because the assumption that individual values can be accommodated by political institutions was challenged by the fact that values are continually emerging in society. Women's changing perception of needs and awareness of societal resources encouraged them to articulate demands for political representation at all levels. They argued that affirmative action was a legitimate right in harmony with their social and economic participation. Legitimizing created a problematic situation due to inequality of power in content of position. The earlier declaration of Sudan as a Sharia State meant that Islamic laws were the backbone of all social activities; and its imposition was tantamount to rejecting the religious, cultural and linguistic diversity of the country. It was therefore necessary to identify and integrate stakeholders in order to avoid a stalemate or another break down as had happened earlier. In the north were mainly political parties, professional associations, trade unions, religious groups, women's organizations, and a range of other civil society groups. In the south, were militia factions (which had increased in number as the conflict continued), traditional leaders, the church, women's organizations, and other members of the civil society. Given that conformity and allegiance to established authority as well as resistance to change are social predispositions of the underprivileged, women had not envisaged the centrality of policy. In addition, collective beliefs in them tended to express the interests of this authority without plausible interpretation to their own reality. Only policy with its ability to structure procedure and even formulate binding decisions would be a stabilizing influence. Thus all women in Sudan, irrespective of race and religion challenged the GOS on its reasons for the continuation of the war. In very ordinary language, they said they were tired of

losing husbands and sons in the conflicts; they wanted education for their sons who would be responsible husbands and fathers; they didn't want their daughters to have to take on heavy responsibilities in the absence of husbands, as was the present situation. The educated with their elaborated language code and flexible person-oriented socialization techniques drove the point further which struck a cord with international observers. It was obvious that support for the war among women was eroded which meant pushing any type of dialogue to a level where concessions and agreements had to remain in focus. It led to the current initiative that began in Kenya in October 2002 and resulted in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on January 9th 2005.

In striving for recognition Somali women raised policy issues on health and education for all – a fundamental requirement that men would not scuttle around. Some male delegates wanted to know women's position on female genital mutilation (FGM). Aware of this trend of thought they maintained that it was a simple surgery that could be undertaken by qualified female medical personnel at home. This in turn would reduce high levels of infections and side effects; hence the need to incorporate women's health and reconstruction in the negotiations. Such was the skill of women in downplaying contentious cultural practices (which men would have trivialized) that it left no doubt in the minds of all that they understood issues and were committed to the attainment of peace. In so doing they continued to maintain their social identification with the community at large - an important factor in legitimization. At the same time they achieved another space which they used to take part in the main agenda on political power-sharing. Here they raised substantive issues on female representation in all areas of government.

In both countries, rape of women was used as a weapon of war and they realized that this could only be dealt with if there was a judiciary in place and in which they were adequately represented. Behind the scenes, women at the Somali Dialogue engaged a few male delegates around the values of females in the judiciary. (Somalia is a Moslem country and the issues of arbitration are more or less based on Sharia Law.) One man communicated his most rudimental thoughts; female judges were essential because female Members of Parliament needed change of company in the Chamber; yet another was chauvinistic; female judges would discipline female MPs who talked too much because if men did so, they may be accused of having other interests. No matter how sexist this may sound, it nevertheless enhanced debate on emerging needs of women. Scholars then took up the issue in the main plenary and argued that girls needed role models in all sectors of society including the judiciary, engineering and even architecture, adding that the world had changed. By setting these standards of action, the scholars' dimension cemented an ideology that would hopefully translate this social aspiration into a cohesive structure.

Attitudes in the Sudan Talks were not very much different in terms of content; so women used the challenges to constantly update themselves. The Dutch government had on several occasions facilitated meetings between women in the north and the south in order to narrow the divide. As they shared their fears and frustrations, there developed a common bond of solidarity that would serve them well at the main talks.

Senior women in the GOS supported fellow women, by giving them tips on language preferred by senior government officials, when supporting or disagreeing with a position. If they did this well, it would give them a window of opportunity that could be expanded and enhance their positions.

Over time they also acquired knowledge on legal procedures that would guarantee their participation and contribution. Female lawyers, diplomats and politicians from Kenya lent their support through interpretation and dissemination of information. Balancing of 'weapons of knowledge' now at their disposal but within a restricted space was a delicate matter. Language codes and socialization patterns had obscured perceptions of their needs and it was imperative that they avoid any distorting semantics that would trivialize them as well as their ideas. Inadequate grasp of political vocabulary left them with no choice but to lobby sympathetic men to introduce the question of suppression of women's political representation whether intentional or unintentional. Only when they were sure that they could articulate their thoughts with confidence and conviction did they do so. In short, the recognition of certain needs and their relative importance required cognitive skills and political awareness.

The contentious issues of resettlement would ordinarily mean the return of all displaced people back into their villages (including those where oil exploitation and other minerals were being undertaken); the return of abducted children by Muharaleen (Arab and Arabized Africans that kidnap African children into slavery); and the return of political dissidents of the GOS. The proposal in the main agenda simply asked for reception centers that have adequate shelter, food and medicines; and finally transportation of individuals to their own villages. Women argued that returnees would be traumatized and they wanted schools and hospitals established as well, in order to cater for everyone's reintegration into society. This fundamentally linked basic health and education to reconstruction of the country. This time there was unanimous backing from all including religious leaders, traditional leaders and the international community. Time therefore ceased to be a consumer product determining life style as seen in the West, but rather a factor that allowed the interplay of various social forces in the Sudan and Somali peace processes.

Finally, in Sudan, it was agreed that Sharia law would not apply to non-Muslims. In addition, after six years, the south could choose unity or separation through a referendum.

## Conclusion

It would be naïve to suggest that women gained all that they asked for. In fact where they did extremely well, they received a maximum of 30% in representation. Consequently, it remains necessary for them to restructure their expectations in a pragmatic manner. It is a difficult path because if not well conceived, certain foundations that

brought them recognition could easily be eroded and endanger their collective bargaining power.

As for patriarchy, it was most obvious during the signing and swearing-in ceremony of the Somali Transitional Government (TNG) on January 29th 2004. Despite international presence, seating of women was behind the men irrespective of their posts. It seems that women's inclusion at the front on such occasions was still not acceptable.

At the official signing of the Sudanese Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on January 9th 2005, one would imagine that politicians and bureaucrats would have learnt some lessons from the Somali experience but alas that was not the case. There were absolutely no seats reserved for women delegates. They decided to take matters into their own hands and occupied seats reserved for diplomats accredited to Nairobi. With no indication of relinquishing their seats, and the police unwilling to shift a large group of happily singing women, the Protocol Office brought in more chairs for the diplomatic corps.

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# The Migration and Development Nexus in Africa – Contributions from the Somali Diaspora and experiences from IOM

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Discussing the nexus between migration and development and, more specifically, the role of the diaspora in the development of the Horn of Africa is not only a useful but also a timely exercise in light of the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development, organized by the United Nations in New York in September 2006. The High Level Dialogue is the first time ever the world body's general assembly will discuss migration and its interconnections with development.

This text discusses the theoretical and practical challenges, but also opportunities revolving around the nexus between migration and development. It examines the linkages between both issues with specific reference to the situation in Somalia and provides examples of the work of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Africa that show the causal linkages between migration and development, putting the nexus into practice.

IOM is the leading intergovernmental agency dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration by serving the policy and programme needs of governments and migrants. Among many other activities, IOM advocates the integration of migration into development planning and programmes and actively encourages linkages with diasporas through knowledge and skills transfer programmes, temporary and virtual return or remittance facilitation. With the substantial increase of IOM member states from Sub-Saharan Africa and increasing mobility among Africans, the developmental effects, consequences and benefits of migration have moved to the top of IOM's policy and operational agenda in recent years.

## A) Migration and development

The close relationship between migration and economic and social development in the countries of origin and destination of migrants has been recognized for some time now. It has been underlined as early as in 1951, in the founding document of the International Organization for Migration.

Today, there is a widely accepted agreement about the two-way positive and negative connection between migration and development: migration can be both a cause and a result of underdevelopment, while underdevelopment can be either alleviated or exacerbated by migration; the African continent – and particularly the Horn of Africa – provides numerous examples illustrating this dichotomy (Weiss, 2001).

As such, migration in Africa cannot be categorically seen as either an obstacle to development or a strategy for its achievement (IOM, 2006). Actions to eradicate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can address some of the structural causes of migration, and migration can positively influence the achievement of the MDGs (EU Council, 2006) and African countries' Poverty Reduction Strategies.

In recent years, the growing scale, changing routings and the complexity of international migration have led to a steady increase in human mobility in Sub-Saharan Africa. In parallel to this increase, there has been a rising interest in how these effects can be understood and optimized. The challenge is how to ensure that migration does not hurt the poorest countries or, better still, how to ensure that migration actually benefits those countries while remaining attractive for the richer destination countries.

Working on the operational, programmatic, but also policy aspects of the migration and development nexus in most African countries – often in partnership with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations – IOM has observed an interesting paradigm shift regarding the link between migration and development over the last 20 years.

From a predominantly negative approach that emphasized the need to eradicate the root causes of migration, brain drain, rural exodus or the depletion of labour force, there is now a greater interest among all stakeholders in the positive effects of migration for development. This more positive approach considers the economic, social and cultural contributions of migrants and the alleviation of demographic and labour market pressures in both African countries of origin and countries of destination in the industrialized world.

The demographic decline in many industrialized countries contrasts sharply with the demographic explosion in Africa. Shrinking labour forces in developed countries are leading, even now, to imbalances in supply and demand in certain economic sectors, such as health care and education, services and construction. Many developed countries cannot cope anymore with an oversupply of labour relative to local or national employment opportunities.

Africa's international migration patterns have evolved in recent years into a complex and dynamic phenomenon fuelled by both "push" and "pull" factors and the demands of globalization. The brain drain phenomenon, while not new, has intensified. As trade barriers come down and developed countries adapt their immigration legislation to attract a highly skilled workforce and compensate local skills shortages in certain sectors, emigration of all categories of professionals will increase. Shrinking and ageing populations have led many industrialized countries to intensify the recruitment of well trained and educated workers and professionals from poorer countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Aggressive and targeted international recruitment initiatives can be seen in several countries such as Ghana and South Africa. As a result, a considerable part of the investment in training and education in Africa is never recovered (IOM, 2005).

The development of policy and programme interventions that will help to realize the full potential of international migration in Africa is a huge task, as:

A1) it will require devising measures to harness the development potential that emigration from Africa can bring while, at the same time, ensuring that the exodus of highly skilled workers does not damage development outcomes and guaranteeing that migration remains a positive force also for countries of destination;

A2) it will require determining how to make migrant remittances more effective as a tool for poverty reduction and economic development;

A3) it calls for new and better ways to facilitate the involvement of migrant diasporas in the development of their home countries.

## A1) Skilled people flows

Without doubt, the most frequently discussed development impact of international migration in Africa and elsewhere in the developed world is brain drain. It refers to situations in which the emigration of skilled workers has adverse economic impacts. Nearly 10% of all tertiary educated adults born in the developing world and some 50% of the developing world's science and technology personnel now live in the developed world (Lowell et al., 2004), including an increasing number of women.

However, whether these flows are always detrimental to a country of origin depends on what school of thought one adopts. Since the 1960's, proponents of a "zero-sum analysis" approach believe that having lower numbers of educated individuals in a country lowers the average level of education leading to wage deflation for unskilled workers and a lower likelihood of attracting FDI (foreign direct investment).

Another more recent school of thought rejects the notion that skilled migration has detrimental consequences for less developed countries. It argues that the prospect of migration itself may lead to greater incentives for workers to become skilled, encouraging brain gain. Even when overseas, migrants can be of benefit to their home countries through remittances and the creation of trade and business networks. Once

they have returned, migrants are a potential source of growth through diffusion of knowledge and technology, so-called brain circulation.

In sum, while there are potential costs, movement of the skilled can often provide benefits for all involved. Moreover, migration does not always involve one-way or permanent flows as there are increasing numbers of returning and circulating migrants – a migratory pattern particularly interesting in the context of Somalia and other countries in the Horn of Africa.

## A2) Money flows

Remittances from migrant workers to developing countries are large and rising, i.e. some US\$ 167 billion in 2005, up 73% from 2001 (World Bank, 2005). For developing countries, remittances are now double the size of net official financing and are rising relative to FDI (World Bank, 2004). Informal channels of remittances might well add at least 50% to these official estimates.

Remittances have numerous benefits for the development process. They are a source of income and foreign exchange for many countries. For those developing countries confronted with a persistent labour market slack, the opportunity to encourage remittance flows as a result of the export of labour abroad is a welcome development strategy. Remittances are less volatile than private capital flows that tend to move pro-cyclically, and may even rise during recessions, helping to stimulate vulnerable economies (Ratha, 2004).

An important problem related to remittances is the usually high transfer costs, although there are variations depending on origin and destination country and the amounts involved. The question of how to make more productive use of remittances has now become a major issue international organizations and policymakers have started to reflect upon.

## A3) Diaspora flows

Migrant communities or diasporas can play an important role in the economic, social and political development of their countries of origin. Diasporas can be a source of ideas, and social capital that flows between countries (i.e. social remittances). Similarly, migrants can transfer knowledge and skills (i.e. technological remittances), or even political beliefs and practices (i.e. political remittances). The contacts and networks that diasporas retain with their host countries can act as an important channel for enhancing the positive impacts of emigration on the country of origin.

However, concrete benefits of the diasporas and instruments used to channel these benefits are context-specific. To a large extent, the differences in diaspora involvement reflect differences in home country economies more than they reflect differences in migration modalities. In the context of low-income countries, it is likely that the obstacles to investment such as poor infrastructure, inadequate legal frameworks and deficient human capital, will discourage diasporas from investing in their home country. In this respect, the chronic instability and insecurity in countries such as Somalia present a specific challenge.

For policymakers, further systematic evidence of the role played by diasporas in contributing to development back home is needed – again, this is especially important in the context of Somalia as the lack of public sector services has enabled the private commercial sector, sustained by the diaspora, to take on the provision of many basic services to the public. This applies especially to diaspora-induced capital flows and transnational networks.

## B) IOM's MIDA Programme

One of the most successful operational examples illustrating the linkages between migration and development is IOM's Migration for Development in Africa Programme (MIDA) which has been implemented in more than twenty Sub-Saharan African countries.

Thousands of African professionals including medical doctors, nurses, accountants, engineers, managers and teachers leave their home country each year to pursue better prospects in other countries – both on and off the continent. This constant drain poses a serious impediment to sustainable development, particularly when it affects priority development sectors (e.g. health, education, water and sanitation) in countries that have limited ability to attract and retain qualified workers. The outward movement of human resources can lead to the deterioration of basic social services, slow the development of the private sector and heighten the dependency of the African economies on costly foreign expertise.

Launched in 2001, IOM's MIDA programme responds to the growing needs of African countries to harness contributions from their own diaspora for development. Representatives of more than 25 African countries convened in Libreville, Gabon in April 2001 to discuss human resource requirements in sectors lacking qualified human resources. They requested IOM's assistance in formulating and identifying a programme based on the lessons learned from IOM's earlier Return and Reintegration for Qualified African Nationals Programme, which was implemented successfully in the late 1980's and 1990's.

The July 2001 OAU summit in Lusaka commissioned IOM to initiate activities that would enable African countries to match the skills and resources available in host countries with shortcomings in human resource supply identified by governments in

countries of origin. This institutional recognition has paved the way for the implementation of certain components of the Cotonou Agreement between the European Union and ACP (Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific) countries.

In a novel approach to brain drain, the underlying principle of MIDA is that regular migrants do not wish to give up employment and social protection rights acquired in their host country even if they are keen to help development in their own country, albeit by means other than permanent return. Technically, MIDA is based on a precise identification of needs by sector and employment level in African countries. Information about qualified African migrants interested in participating in the programme is included in a real time relational database and IOM and partners in both the country of origin and the country of destination concerned are able to identify the best profile for each employment opportunity.

Possible forms of participation range from repeated short stays to complete a project in conjunction with locally available human resources, to skill transfers through consultation by distance-teaching using electronic media or video, to fund-raising for micro-enterprises, to a local development project, to support for private sector ventures or approaches to increase the effectiveness of remittances flows. The use of information technologies yields considerable economies of scale when compared with programmes that entail the definitive return of the migrant and his/her family.

To implement MIDA programmes, authorities in beneficiary countries appoint a national correspondent to liaise with various local entities concerned (ministries, universities, enterprises, associations, etc.), as well as authorities in the partner country and IOM. Likewise, in the host country, a coordinator is appointed to work with representatives of the administration, diaspora associations and the embassy of the beneficiary country. As the central outreach element, an intensive information campaign is held among diaspora associations.

Many African countries have made MIDA a national priority (such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda). Commitment illustrated through the inclusion of MIDA in National Indicative Programmes and Poverty Reduction Strategies has made it possible to approach development partners genuinely interested in supporting programmes in line with the expectations of African countries. For countries of origin in Sub-Saharan Africa, MIDA represents a possibility to derive concrete benefit from the global labour migration flows by tapping, in a systemic way, into the skills, funds and mobility that very often characterize the diaspora.

There are numerous examples of successfully implemented MIDA projects: Ethiopian expatriates in Italy are mobilized through an online database matching needs with diaspora skills; Ghanaian migrants in Italy promote agro-business enterprises for rural development through micro-credit programmes; Guinean women receive training in the creation and management of micro-enterprises through knowledge transfer and the provision of micro-credit loans from the Guinean diaspora; under the auspices of the East African Community (EAC), an assessment of skills needs in priority sectors helps to channel remittances for investment and virtual skills transfer in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda; women's associations in the Great Lakes countries

Rwanda and Burundi receive training from representatives of the diaspora in Belgium to promote their active role in generating employment and income as a contribution to the peace-building process, etc.

## C) Somalia: realities at home and abroad

### C1) The situation in Somalia

Somalia is one of the world's poorest countries. Most of the statistical indicators are catastrophic. According to the World Bank's standard measure, almost half of its population lives in extreme poverty – that is on less than US\$ 1 per day.

UNDP's global Human Development Report 2005 states that life expectancy at birth in Somalia from 2000 to 2005 stood at 46 years, with a rate for live births of 225 per 1,000 inhabitants in 2003. In 2002, barely 29% of the population had access to an improved water source (UNDP, 2005). While the adult literacy rate for 2001 was 17%, the registered primary school enrolment was some 14%, however, even less children are believed to attend lessons on a regular basis (UNDP, 2005). Approximately 90% of Somalia's school facilities have been destroyed by recurrent conflict, and some of the remaining premises are occupied by internally displaced persons (IDPs). The quality of available education is also poor as only 40% of the teachers are trained and many have not even completed primary education (NRC, 2004).

With very little foreign direct investment in Somalia, non-existent bank loan mechanisms and the absence of substantial official development aid, remittances have become the country's most important lifeline over the last years. For instance, in the Somaliland region, up to 60% of the local economy is made up of remittances from the diaspora. In 2002, remittances to Somalia amounted to US\$ 750 million compared to US\$ 174 million in aid from the international donor community.

However, many indicators are merely indicative as access to and collection of information is hampered by loss of earlier data and security concerns. Somalia continues to be divided in terms of its politics, security and economics, with some areas of the country experiencing political developments and economic recovery (such as in Somaliland and, to a lesser degree, in Puntland) and other areas (in Central and Southern Somalia) continuing to be plagued by recurrent crisis, insecurity and humanitarian emergencies.

The rise of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in Mogadishu and areas throughout the southern part of Somalia since summer 2006 is a reminder of the chronically unpredictable situation in the country. While many observers have pointed to the restoration of some level of stability and security in the notoriously unsafe urban area of Mogadishu since the warlords were driven out of the city by ICU troops, advances of Ethiopian forces towards Mogadishu in autumn – backed by the Transitional Fe-

deral Government based in Jawhar – and calls by ICU leaders to oppose the “foreign invaders” do not augur well for the future.

The ongoing crisis situation had, and still has, very serious repercussions on the mobility of the Somalis: flight, forced displacement and emigration characterize the migratory situation of Somalia over the last 15 years or so. Following the downfall of the Socialist government under Siad Barre in 1991, many Somalis fled the country and still live outside of Somalia today.

The Somali diaspora is one of the most important of any of Africa’s countries. Roughly 12% of all Somalis (i.e. over 1 million persons) are residing outside of their country of birth, depriving Somalia of human resources so vital for the rebuilding and rehabilitation of the country.

## **C2) The Somali diaspora**

Like many other African diasporas, the Somali diaspora is actively supporting their home land not only by sending remittances to their families and investing in local business, but also as lobbyists or representatives of Somali interests abroad.

The Somali diaspora is scattered all over the world: in neighbouring Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia as much as in Australia, the United States or Canada. Many other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe host sizeable Somali diasporas. The most important European host countries in terms of size are Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom as well as the Nordic countries.

The diaspora is very well interconnected through a number of internet sites administered from different countries. Information regarding the situation back home and news on political, economic or social events in Somalia is disseminated speedily to reach, in real time, even the most remote Somali groups all over the globe.

A substantial number of Somalis from the Somalia diaspora have been returning over the past few years to assess whether they can live and work in Somalia again. This applies especially to the Somaliland region which has experienced a long period of stability and economic growth. A number of these returnees have taken up positions in government, aid agencies, non-government organizations, health care, education and business, and are actively putting their energy and resources into reconstruction and development of their homeland (Nyberg Sorensen, 2004). Others, although less when compared to Somaliland, have returned to their homes in the Puntland region or Central and Southern Somalia. One of the most prominent features of Somali mobility is circular migration, characterized by frequent shuttling between the host country and the homeland (often for the duration of holidays).

In the Nordic countries more than 75,000 persons from Somalia represent the single most important African country of origin. Both Sweden and Norway each host at least between 26000 and 28000 Somali immigrants or citizens with Somali background. The number of naturalizations of Somalis has been increasing over the last three years.

However, the legal status of Somalis in the Nordic region is extremely diversified including citizens or permanent residence permit holders as much as asylum seekers or irregular migrants whose numbers, by definition, escape official accounting. The socio-economic and professional background of Somalis in the Nordic region is wide-ranging as well, encompassing non-qualified immigrants, university degree holders and professional experts.

While in Denmark and Norway asylum applications by Somali citizens have been decreasing in recent years, Finland and Sweden have registered an increase in applications in 2006, as compared to previous years.

Even though Somali immigrants represent an important portion of the overall immigrant population in the Nordic countries, they are often not well integrated in the labour market. In the EU overall, unemployment levels among immigrants are in general twice as high as those among citizens. One of the major impediments to the labour market integration of the Somali diaspora is the poor academic performance of the second generation. This translates into higher unemployment and welfare dependency among Somali immigrants as compared to non-migrants.

The figures below show the numbers of Somalis in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland, broken down by “asylum seekers” (2003 to 2006), “immigrants” (2004 to 2006), and “citizens with Somali background” (2004 to 2006).

## Data on Somalis in the Nordic Countries<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1** *Somalis Asylum Seekers in Nordic Countries*

Country	2003	2004	2005	2006
Sweden	3069	905	422	719 (Jan-Sep)
Denmark	370	154	81	50 (Jan-Sep)
Norway	1601	957	668	521 (Jan-Aug)
Finland	91	253	321	82 (Jan-Sep)
Total	5131	2269	1492	1372

**Table 2** *Somali Immigrants in Nordic Countries*

Country	2004	2005	2006
Sweden	15294	16045	not available
Denmark	13099	11275	9753
Norway	15586	16765	18 015
Finland	4689	4704	not available
Total	48668	48789	

1 Source: Statistics Sweden <http://www.scb.se/>; Statistics Denmark <http://www.statbank.dk/>; Statistics Norway <http://www.ssb.no/>; Statistics Finland [http://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk\\_vaesto\\_en.html#Foreigners](http://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_vaesto_en.html#Foreigners) and UVI <http://www.uvi.fi/download.asp?id=Turvapaikanhakijat+2004%2D2006;1184;E2F51DE5-BB72-4570-8A5C-F64D912A5F5F>

**Table 3 Somali-Nordic Citizens in Nordic Countries**

Country	2004	2005	2006
Sweden	8979	9599	not available
Denmark	4307	5719	6816
Norway	9861	10541	not available
Finland	not available	not available	not available
Total	22967	25859	

### **C3) Fact Finding in Northern Somalia**

Responding to developments in Somalia which, with the creation of the TFG, hinted at least initially towards increased stability as well as requests for return and reintegration assistance by representatives of the Somali diaspora in Sweden, the Swedish authorities requested IOM to assess the feasibility of a MIDA project from Sweden to Somalia and to formulate recommendations.

This project permitted the establishment of a preliminary MIDA network of stakeholders in Sweden, Kenya and Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland). Background information on the Somali diaspora in Sweden was collected to assess the interest of and needs regarding return to Somalia, taking into consideration the different socio-economic and professional backgrounds of the diaspora. In 2005, two fact-finding missions to Somalia were organized to document human resource needs and requirements in the country and identify counterparts and mechanisms for a sustainable MIDA Somalia. These fact-finding missions confirmed the chronic lack of qualified personnel in most sectors of the economy but particularly in health, education and the provision of other basic services.

Based on observations *in situ* and feedback from numerous international, national and local actors in Puntland and Somaliland, the fact-finding mission concluded that the main obstacles for establishing a fully functional return and reintegration programme were limited absorptive capacities of local communities and economies and lack of adequate water, sanitation, health and education services. Limited access to sustainable employment continues to hamper the labour market. State collapse and warfare resulted in what structural adjustment had failed to bring about, namely the total privatization of all public services, leading to unplanned and savage liberalization which, in turn, created massive socio-economic inequalities.

While insecurity is no longer a concern in Northern Somalia (although Puntland is still heavily endowed with light weapons and “technicals” i.e. heavy machine guns mounted on pick-up trucks), it remains the biggest impediment to any sustainable development action in Central and Southern Somalia. Given that a great number of people from the Somali diaspora in the Nordic States originate from other regions than the North, this obviously remains a major obstacle to return and reintegration operations in the face of reluctance – if not open hostility – on the part of Somaliland and (to a lesser degree) Puntland authorities to accept back “non-locals”.

The main opportunities for return and reintegration operations lie in the vibrant interest in reconstructing the country. Through remittances leading to construction activities and flourishing retail businesses, the diaspora remains very actively and visibly involved in the economic empowerment of local communities.

The two-fact finding missions clearly established a commitment on the part of authorities to receive Somali nationals back as long as they return on a voluntary basis. The return of qualified nationals would be feasible if tailor-made reception and reintegration activities were provided and offered not only at individual but also at community level, taking into consideration the particular circumstances of each case (i.e. age, gender, health status, ethnic/clan background, family situation, educational/vocational background), so as to ensure sustainability.

IOM's expertise in migration and development led us to emphasize that for a MIDA Somalia programme to be successful, a carefully established MIDA return and reintegration programme should include two components:

*a) Individual component*

Assistance should meet basic requirements for the absorption of returning individuals – through accommodation, access to social services and the creation of social and economic opportunities enabling the returnee to generate income upon return (i.e. micro-credit facilities, grant facilities, vocational training, coaching for the identification of business opportunities, development of business plans, etc.). Most counterparts repeated the obvious: "A returnee's first and only concern upon return is how to generate income and avoid being a burden to the host society".

*b) Community component*

Assistance should ensure that returns do not jeopardize the recovery efforts of the receiving communities with already over-stretched absorptive capacities; community-based projects will contribute to address basic needs at the receiving end and ensure that both the communities and the returnees remain beneficiaries through the entire reintegration process. Activities should focus on health, education, access to water and sanitation. Two elements to strengthen absorptive capacities and eradicate differences between those returning and the local population should be envisaged: a) financial, i.e. micro-credit schemes; b) "in kind" support, i.e. small community development projects and targeted training opportunities offered to selected community members.

A quote frequently heard was: "Every returnee is a loss to the community in terms of remittances – the community must therefore see other benefits deriving from the returnee upon his/her return". Some interlocutors also expressed a passionate rejection of forced returns, which are politically unsavory, socially unacceptable and economically difficult in the present context due to major resident IDP caseloads and a shortage of resources. Puntland authorities informed that no less than 50% of the 2.5 million people living in Puntland are IDPs. It is however interesting to note that, as

compared to Somaliland, authorities in Puntland are more open to receive returnees originating from parts of the country other than just Puntland.

Government authorities in both Somaliland and Puntland argued in favour of improved international assistance provided to returnees. At present, the authorities' response to returnees remains ad hoc and is contingent upon very limited or non-existent local capacities. It was therefore recommended that a potential future MIDA Somalia programme should include a strong capacity-building component helping the public and private sectors to strengthen their human resource bases. Finally, the fact-finding missions recommended the incorporation of migration management in the formulation of Development Plans and PSPs.

However, as lawlessness remains problematic, corruption endemic, rifts in the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) more evident and the international community's approach somewhat hesitant, IOM projects that Central and Southern Somalia will remain unstable in the foreseeable future and recommends an initial MIDA focus only on Somaliland and Puntland.

## D) MIDA for Somalia?

Corroborated by statistical indicators, feedback from interlocutors in Somalia during the fact-finding missions and interviews with representatives of the Somali diaspora in the Nordic countries, Somalia badly needs expertise from abroad for its reconstruction and development. To a high degree, this expertise is already available among skilled and highly skilled Somalis abroad, particularly in the Nordic States. For the time being, definitive return back home is a very unlikely option for many Somalis, especially those with a recognized legal status in their host countries.

An inclusion of a Somalia programme into IOM's MIDA portfolio favouring brain circulation and enhancing the financial and professional assets of the diaspora for productive use at home might be appropriate and timely so as to enhance the link between migration and development. At this stage, a restricted MIDA Somalia programme focusing on the Somaliland and Puntland regions only would be most appropriate due to the security and feasibility considerations already mentioned.

A MIDA Somalia programme would strengthen the human resource base of the country (and especially of the Puntland and Somaliland regions) by assisting Somali professionals to return temporarily. A MIDA Somalia programme would need to assess the human resource needs and shortages in Somalia in cooperation with local, regional and national (if identified and available) stakeholders, including representatives from civil society as well as prospective employers in both the public and private sectors. In parallel, an inventory of expertise of human resources in the Nordic diaspora should be undertaken. Labour market gaps identified in Somalia would be matched with available resources among the Nordic diaspora.

The diaspora would be mobilized through information and outreach activities about the needs and gaps in Somalia as well as the mechanisms and benefits of a return programme. Outreach to the Somali diaspora would be crucial so as to lay the ground for proper matching of demand and supply. A MIDA Somalia programme would draw on Somali diaspora organizations and networks and make use of their extensive networks so as to spread the word and disseminate information. MIDA would enable the return of those candidates selected for chosen positions according to their skills and availability. In addition, MIDA would incorporate a training component for members of local communities in Somalia by the returnees. Returnees would be offered reintegration support as well as a transportation grant and salary supplements.

A MIDA Somalia programme would also help to mainstream migration into official development policies where available and applicable. Returns of qualified and highly qualified Somali nationals from the diaspora could be integrated into national development planning and poverty reduction strategies, first at regional level and, at a later stage pending stability and security in Somalia, at national level. Through targeted capacity building, MIDA would assist authorities to develop sound strategies and objectives to enhance migration management for socio-economic development.

A MIDA Somalia programme would be implemented through a five-step approach:

1. Identify gaps in Somalia's human resource base in close coordination with the Government of Puntland, the Government of Somaliland and civil society organizations.
2. Organize outreach campaigns through IOM offices in host countries of the diaspora in order to identify professionals willing to return home on a temporary basis.
3. Establish a database to match human resource requirements in Somaliland and Puntland with qualified members of the diaspora, and train Somaliland and Puntland officials in its use and maintenance.
4. Select diaspora members for temporary return, in close coordination with the participating governments, civil society organizations (CSOs) and an established Steering Committee. The returnee will provide technical assistance and training to representatives from government and CSO.
5. Facilitate returns from the Nordic States and monitor compliance with terms of reference for professionals from the diaspora.

In general, country-specific MIDA projects are financed by diaspora host countries. While in the past the Nordic countries have been financing projects related to diaspora involvement in Somalia, continued interest on the part of the Nordic countries to fund a MIDA Somalia programme would need to be assessed in light of recent political and security developments in Somalia. Furthermore, a MIDA Somalia programme would not be feasible without the active interest and practical involvement of the diaspora in the Nordic countries.

In the current context of Somalia, the link between migration and development needs to be strengthened through a MIDA Somalia programme that fills the gap of qualified human resources back home and takes advantage of a diaspora who are eager to contribute their skills and qualifications to rebuild Somalia.

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*Benny Carlson*

# Hard Workers and Daring Entrepreneurs: Impressions from the Somali Enclave in Minneapolis

Individuals from different refugee groups experience very different fortunes in the labor market, which can be seen from figures on employment and income. In order to explain these variations one can focus on studying “characteristics” of these individuals like age, sex marital status, number of children, education, employment experience, and year of immigration. Even after such factors have been taken into consideration there remain substantial average differences between different refugee groups. There could of course be networks and strategies among groups that have an impact but are hard to detect. But it might also very well happen that groups based on nationality or ethnicity in a rather easy-going way get accompanied by rumors as being more or less functional in the labor market, rumors that through stereotyping and routine tend to be self-fulfilling.

Somalis constitute a refugee group with very low employment in Sweden and they have probably been accompanied by an unwanted companion in the shape of a self-fulfilling rumor. How could one question such a companion? What if there somewhere else in the world existed a place where Somalis were regarded as hard-working and entrepreneurial people, where they were organizing their own way of life and giving expression to optimism and belief in the future? Is there such a place? Yes, so it seems.

A couple of years ago a Somali student, Faisal Mussa, directed my attention towards the “vibrant” Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. In the fall of 2005 I visited this enclave to form my own opinion of it, with the help of a local “guide”, Said Mohamed. I have given an account of my observations in a small book in Swedish, *Somalier i Minneapolis – en dynamisk affär* (Somalis in Minneapolis – a dynamic deal, Zufi 2006), and in this article I will summarize some main featu-

res.<sup>1</sup> Two questions will be at the forefront: To what extent could “self-selection” among Somali refugees respectively the host environment explain that Somalis have fared better in Minnesota than in Sweden? To what extent could advantages (and disadvantages) of an enclave economy explain the outcome for Somalis in Minneapolis?

## Employment and entrepreneurship

The Somali groups in Minnesota and Sweden are approximately of the same size, about 20 000 individuals. The majority of Somalis in Minnesota live in an area around Cedar and Riverside Avenues, not far from downtown Minneapolis, an area that one century ago was dominated by Swedish immigrants and which subsequently has been a gateway area for a number of immigrant groups like the Lebanese, Vietnamese and Hmong (see e.g. Gillespie Lewis 2002 and 2004, Lanegran 2001, Wilhide 2003).

It is no easy task to compare employment, entrepreneurship and other features of the Somali groups in Minnesota and Sweden. U.S. statistics do not offer nearly as much information on immigrant groups as do Swedish. The statistics I have had access to are from the 2000 Census and are consequently not very up-to-date.<sup>2</sup> Since the Somali refugee immigration is of late date – it started a couple of years into the 1990s – one can assume that every year that passes is of importance for the group’s possibility to get a foothold in its new environment.

Anyway, in the year 2000 employment within the Somali population over age 16 in Minnesota was 47 per cent. If one tries to calculate this figure for the population 20 – 64 years of age one ends up somewhere between 55 and 60 per cent. In Sweden employment among Somalis over age 16 was 23 per cent in 2003 and 28 per cent in age 20 – 64. It therefore seems safe to conclude that employment among Somalis is twice as high in Minnesota as in Sweden. In Minnesota most Somalis are employed in production and transportation (36 per cent), sales and office occupations (26 per cent) and service occupations (22 per cent). In Sweden most of them are to be found within the health and care sector (35 per cent).

How about entrepreneurship? According to estimates made by the African Development Center (ADC) in Minneapolis there were in early 2004 about 550 Somali businesses in Minnesota and in the fall of 2005 this number had increased to about

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1 I spent one week in Minneapolis and talked to three employment officers, two business advisors, six entrepreneurs, one landlord, one community leader, one religious leader, three (non-Somali) university officials, and a couple of people “in the street”. The booklet highlights a number of personal stories, but in this article I will refrain from telling that kind of story and formulate my impressions in more general terms.

2 The statistics on Somalis in Minnesota have been provided by Barbara J. Ronningen at Minnesota State Demographic Center. See also Ronningen (2004). The figures from Sweden are culled from two databases, STATIV at the Swedish Integration Board and RAMS at Statistics Sweden.

800. This indicates that 6 or 7 per cent of Somalis age 20 – 64 are entrepreneurs and that their numbers are growing rapidly. There are in Minneapolis several Somali shopping malls with hundreds of shops offering everything that a Somali person might need. In all of Sweden there were in 2003 only 38 Somali entrepreneurs registered, which corresponds to only one third of a per cent of the adult Somali population!

It is hard to imagine that such dramatic differences in employment and entrepreneurship in two countries could be explained by “self-selection” among refugees at their origin (on self-selection, see Chiswick 2000). If that were the case the flood of refugees from Somalia must have been separated into two streams of *very* different substance with regard to education and ambitions. But when you talk to refugees they often claim that they could make no simple choices concerning what country to go to. Furthermore, the condition of available statistics makes it difficult to compare educational levels among Somalis in Minnesota and Sweden. The differences do not, however, stand out as very large. Possibly the share of people with university education is somewhat higher in Minnesota.

## Ethnic enclave economy – in general

What is an ethnic enclave? An enclave is a “magnet” that attracts certain people. Thus it is “pull” factors that make people settle in an enclave, in contrast to a ghetto where “push” factors dominate. Reasons for the rise of an enclave could be that jobs happen to be plentiful, that some space happens to be “vacant”, since some other group is moving out. The enclave gets self-perpetuating when pioneers help new-comers find jobs and apartments, when businessmen find customers and customers find the goods and services they want. In general, people in an enclave can find some kind of security and “be themselves”. (Abrahamson 2001)

An ethnic enclave economy is thus an economy dominated by an ethnic group and concentrated to a certain territory. According to Light and Gold (2000, p. 102) an ethnic economy could be described as a tangle of “kinship and marriage systems, relationships of trust, ethnic-derived social capital, cultural assumptions, religion, native language fluency, a middleman heritage, entrepreneurial values and attitudes, rotating credit associations, relative satisfaction arising from nonacculturation to prevailing labor and living standards, reactive solidarities, multiplex social networks, employer paternalism, an ideology of ethnic solidarity, and a generous pool of unemployed and disadvantaged coethnic workers”.

Thomas Muller (1993, p. 132) gives the following concise definition of an ethnic enclave economy:

The economic viability of enclaves, regardless of ethnicity, depends on four conditions. First, capital must be possessed or accumulated within the enclave. Second, there must be a core of in-

dividuals with substantial business and financial skills. A labor force willing to work at lower wages, or under conditions that would not be acceptable outside the enclave, is essential. Finally, local merchants and professionals must depend on their fellow ethnics for a substantial share of their business.

Relations between employer and employee in ethnic enclaves remind us, according to some pundits, more of the guild system than of a modern capitalist enterprise. Even if labor market regulations and minimum wages are not respected, young people are willing to work for their fellow countrymen since they want to learn the trade and be “masters” themselves one day. The conditions in an enclave therefore resemble conditions in the dual labor market but the difference is that the enclave offers a way up or out.

An enclave also has its disadvantages. People are isolated from the surrounding society and learn the language of the host country at a slower pace and there is a tendency towards “cannibalistic competition” since many businessmen are dependent on the same suppliers, financiers, workers and consumers and sell the same type of goods with the same techniques (Light & Gold 2000, p. 127; see also Edin, Fredriksson & Åslund 2003).

## Ethnic enclave economy – in Minneapolis

Anyone visiting the Somalis in Minneapolis will be impressed by their industriousness, entrepreneurial thrift and belief in the future. At least among Somali community leaders, businessmen and employment officers there is an attitude that finds expression in sayings as “you work hard and you earn something”. Most Somalis in Minneapolis have come there through some other environment in Europe, Canada or the U.S. and the general opinion is that Minnesota offers the best preconditions: a broadminded environment with (according to U.S. standards) generous social service, a well-established infrastructure for receiving refugees, a well-reputed educational system, a strong labor market and a business-friendly climate. (A selection in the “secondary migration” of Somalis thus seems to exist due to the attraction of an enticing environment.) The pioneers among Somalis seem to have been attracted by primarily two things: abundant supply of jobs in the food industry and abundant supply of cheap housing in the old “Swedish” quarters of Minneapolis.

Somalis in Minneapolis have, through being concentrated into a few neighborhoods, reached a “critical mass” which attracts individuals with entrepreneurial ambitions to go there to supply goods and services according to the needs and demands of their own group. These goods and services consist, as anyone walking through a Somali shopping mall can see for himself, of such things as cafeterias, dry-cleaners, tailors, bookshops, computer stores, hairdressers and shops with clothes and hygiene products of all kinds. Somali restaurants and food stores are common, as are Somali

taxi drivers. There are Somali travel and insurance agencies and “multi-service centers”, helping people with their income tax returns, green card applications and travel documents. As of lately some Somalis have been building or buying gas stations.

The Somali shopping malls have come into being thanks to two Palestinian brothers who own three malls. Two of these malls, owned by Sabri Properties, contain almost 200 businesses in all. There are different opinions on whether rents are high or low but it seems apparent that those who want to start a business get a chance to do so on an affordable scale, in small premises, at the same time as they can reach a large number of customers, all the Somalis who visit the malls. The malls also fulfill an important social need. They are small cities within the city, where people meet, eat and spend their evenings together.

The lively business activity is however not without problems. Hussein Samatar, driving force behind the African Development Center (ADC), has in an article on “Experiences of Somali Entrepreneurs in the Twin Cities” (Minneapolis and St Paul) in the journal *Bildhaan* 2004 pointed to a number of hazards: A naive belief in entrepreneurship as a fast road to wealth, a habit of raising capital from family and friends without discussion about the rate of return or conditions of repayment, scanty knowledge of products, over-establishment within certain niches (grocery stores, restaurants, clothing stores), subsidizing businesses through personal savings, labor income and the work of unpaid family members, avoiding banks (in order not to have anything to do with interest) and book-keeping, which might lead to trouble with the Internal Revenue Service.

## Female entrepreneurship

Women meet more obstacles on the road towards entrepreneurship than men do. Many of them have experiences of business activity from Somalia and many prefer to have their own businesses rather than being employed since their clothing and prayers are not always appreciated in American places of work. Their activities are however less successful and expansive than those of men. Men participate in networks and learn from each other. Women have more need for education and information.

One of the most important questions for women is how to finance their businesses. Here the Somali equivalent of the rotating savings and credit association (ROSCA), the *hagbad*, enters into the picture. It can work like this: Ten women form an association and save one thousand dollars each. Thereafter one of the women takes a credit of ten thousand dollars to start a business and thus it keeps on until all ten have been able to use a credit. In what order the women get their credit depends upon the urgency of their needs or is decided through lottery.

## Needs and services

On top of the economic base the Somalis, as so many other immigrant groups, have erected superstructures consisting of non-profit organizations, often housed at community centers, which, with help of grants from public authorities, foundations or private companies, care for the social and cultural needs of their fellow countrymen. This includes for example refugee social services, employment service, health information, assistance for those who want to form a business or take part in political life. This "model" for meeting social needs is of course totally different from the models of Sweden and Continental Europe, where the multifaceted needs of innumerable refugee groups from around the world are to be investigated into and met by officials, who are mostly natives of the host country and employees of the public sector.

Assessments of the needs and problems of Somalis in Minnesota have pointed to such things as American employers' reluctance to let Somali women wear their traditional clothes at the workplace, difficulties in finding apartments big and cheap enough for big and "extended" families, Somalis' reluctance to send their children to American child care centers, and difficulties with English proficiency. The reports however also talk of Somalis' eagerness to educate themselves and to take English classes. (See Robillos 2001 and Rode 1999.)

Language is usually portrayed as the "key" to a new society. Has it been easier for Somalis to find their way into America (compared to Sweden) due to beforehand knowledge of the English language? Yes, to a certain extent. Some Somalis with university education from their home country have knowledge of English, others have learned to speak English in refugee camps in Kenya. An inquiry from year 2000 showed that Somalis in Minnesota were two or three times more prone than other comparable groups (Russians, Hmong and Mexicans) to report an ability to speak and talk English well, more prone to read English newspapers and to take classes in English (see Fennelly & Palasz 2003 and *Speaking for themselves* 2000). It therefore seems as if the Somalis have had some beforehand knowledge of the English language at the same time as they are very motivated to take English classes (this is sometimes explained by multilingual practices in their native country – Arabic in religious studies and English, Italian or French at the universities).

## Some conclusions and comparisons

The answer to the question whether qualities within the immigrant population or within the receiving environment can explain the lively economic activity of the Somali enclave in Minneapolis must probably be – both. It is a question of reciprocity. From the beginning the environment has offered a fertile ground for an enclave economy. This enclave has turned into a magnet which attracts a certain type of people, not least people with entrepreneurial ambitions. One Somali entrepreneur claims that the "cream" among Somalis ended up in the U.S. and that the "cream" among Somalis in the U.S. ended up in Minnesota. There was perhaps not much "self-se-

lection” to begin with, but over time there has apparently been some sort of selection. This selection must however be attributed to the “fertility” of different host environments. Minnesota offered an attractive environment that triggered off an influx of “hard workers and daring entrepreneurs”.

When making comparisons with Sweden one must have in mind that Somalis who arrived in the U.S. in the early 1990s were drawn into an economy going into an ever higher gear while those who arrived in Sweden plunged into the middle of an employment crisis of a magnitude not seen since the 1930s. On the other hand, the terror attacks in 2001 put a brake on the Somali advancement in the U.S. “We are only half as successful as we would have been without September 11”, says one Somali entrepreneur in Minneapolis. The Somalis have gotten more cautious and do not invest as boldly in America as before.

When Somalis in Minneapolis make comparisons with Europe and Sweden these are seldom flattering. A Somali businessman says: “European societies are closed and you have to explain each step you want to take. In America you can take a leap forward without explaining it to anyone. Europeans pursue a policy for losers.” A Somali restaurant owner who visited Stockholm tells of how a fellow countryman there described his situation: “You are like a fly trapped under a glass turned upside-down. You can feel that your dreams are being smothered.” This restaurant owner formulates his view of life in the U.S. like this: “You can become what you want – the lowest of the lowest or the highest of the highest. Nobody tries to crush your dreams.”

If we try to sort out some impressions from the Somali enclave in Minneapolis with the help of our short survey of literature on ethnic enclaves, the following could be said:

Most entrepreneurs in Minneapolis raise capital within networks of family, kin and friends. They generally avoid financial institutions such as banks. Some, mostly women, raise capital through rotating savings and credit associations.

Entrepreneurs often have business experiences from back home or from refugee camps but some apparently are not very well acquainted with financing, products or markets.

Employees are probably most often family members or fellow countrymen. Most entrepreneurs, however, appear to be working for themselves, without employees, and therefore parallels with the guild system seem to be less relevant.

Entrepreneurs generally focus on the basic needs and demands within the Somali group, although some of them talk about the importance of addressing more sophisticated needs and reaching out to a broader set of customers in the near future.

It is rather apparent that the many and lively Somali businesses in Minneapolis can be attributed to the rise of an ethnic enclave. However, the literature on enclaves also point to certain draw-backs. Can these be seen in Minneapolis?

- If an entrepreneur finds a profitable niche he will usually have followers and consequently tough competition. In some niches like stores for food and clothing and restaurants you could probably argue that there is “cannibalistic competition”.

- A certain inward-looking isolation from the rest of society could also exist, not so much among entrepreneurs and community leaders as perhaps among the “broad masses”. The most obvious sign of such isolation would be generally weak English language proficiency. However, in everything that is written or said, the message is that Somalis are enthusiastic about taking English classes and that they have a better command of the English language than other comparable immigrant groups.

In Europe the enclave phenomenon is regarded with a mixture of hope and fear, mostly the latter. Are enclaves not communities that refuse to open up towards the rest of society? It is of course difficult to give an opinion about this in general. But the long American experience is that immigrants of common background first tend to cling together and thereafter, when they have got a firm foothold in their new environment, to be drawn towards the “mainstream”, although this process could take quite some time. Entrepreneurs expand their businesses to attract customers from other groups, those who earn enough money move out into the suburbs and economic success generally gives people self-confidence so that they need no longer uphold a common frontier against the rest of society. This scenario seems to be on its way also in the Somali enclave in Minneapolis, where businessmen talk about expanding into new groups of customers and about moving out of the enclave and where one often meets a pragmatic cultural outlook: we can unite the best from American and Somali cultures! This pragmatism obviously rests upon the self-confidence that the group has conquered through work and enterprise.

## Final words

Life for Somalis in Minneapolis is not easy. Many are still poor and big chunks of the money they make are funneled to relatives and family in refugee camps or back home in Somalia. But many Somalis seem to have a firm belief in the future and to be convinced that they are moving out of poverty. The “Minneapolis model” can hardly be transplanted to another environment but there could be a few things to learn from it in other quarters of the world, e.g. in Sweden, at least if you are not satisfied with the old (and recently resurrected) understanding that the Swedish model is “best in show” when it comes to integration of immigrants. When will we in a report on Somalis in Sweden read a sentence like the following one from an American report?

[...] Somalis have a strong sense of family and community. Helping each other out in times of need is a principal tenet of Muslim faith. Many Somalis in Minnesota work two or three jobs so they can send money to their relatives back home or in refugee camps. They also open their homes and provide shelter to others, and they volunteer in the community by offering transportation and translation help. Somalis are hard-working, assertive, daring, resilient, and able to adapt easily to new environments. (Robillos 2001, pp. 68-69)

Finally, a question which is difficult for me to answer, since it was not what I had uppermost in my mind when I went to Minneapolis: What role does and can the Somali “diaspora” in Minnesota play in the future development of Somalia? Well, first there are all the savings going from emigrants to their native country, which can be used for consumption or investments. It has been reported in the local press (DePass & Powell 2000) that many Somali families send between 40 and 75 per cent of their earnings back home! Second, there is an ongoing stream of business transactions between Minnesota and Somalia which implies mutual gains and transfer of business knowledge. Third, some of the people I talked to in Minneapolis, even if they have good positions and/or are making good money, nourish a dream of going back to Somalia to help re-build the country, do business or take part in “the political game”, hopefully with good knowledge of how to play this game according to the rules of democracy.

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*Carol Auld*

# Shape-Shifting Mediascapes: Social Change and Diasporic Media Online

This essay proposes an examination, analysis and interpretation of a select number of electronic media texts online created by world diasporic communities, with a focus on Somali Canadian news sites. The essay will employ discourse analysis to examine specific case studies in the use and impact of the internet in diasporic media production as mediascapes influencing social change. The issues these new forms of electronic media present for transforming pre-existing worlds of communication and conduct will be analyzed and documented. This essay will examine specifically how these new forms of electronic media compel the transformation of everyday discourse as resources for experiments in self-making for all kinds of people as an everyday social project, engaged with issues of daily life. There is currently a lack of research done in the arena of diasporic media internationally and this work is intended to open up and document case studies as examples of these important public spheres of dialogue and the type of influence and impact they are having on current existing social orders.

## Flash back to 1990

The world wide web and the internet was touted, in the early 1990s, with a heady, utopian optimism as *the* vehicle of the 21st century for democratizing communications worldwide.

Although the internet emerged as technology from the US military-industrial complex, artists, activists and community groups quickly found that anyone with access to a computer and internet connection could quickly become a publisher. The means of production were in the hands of anyone who could gain access to these new high tech tools. Early questions about what the internet really was, how it worked and what purpose it served settled quite quickly as new sites of activism spouted throughout the world simultaneously with the business rush to create a world-wide online shopping destination.

The UNESCO Report, “Many Voices, One World,” in 1980 addressed the so-called New World Information Order, although commission members expressed doubt that anything could be done to address the issues of inequity and balance in the anarchic world of online information. The current and continuing US domination of control of domain names (to cite one example) and the emergence of many of the online tools from US-controlled high technology companies, was indicative of what Edward Said describes as:

“The twinning of power and legitimacy...is characteristic of classical imperial hegemony...Where it differs in the American century is the quantum leap in the reach of cultural authority, thanks in large measure to the unprecedented growth in the apparatus for the diffusion and control of information. ....the media are central to the domestic culture....we now have an international media presence that insinuates itself, frequently at a level below conscious awareness, over a fantastically wide range.”

He goes on to cite writers such as Anthony Smith in *The Geopolitics of Information*:

“The threat to independence in the late twentieth century from the new electronics could be greater than was colonialism itself. We are beginning to learn that decolonization and the growth of supra-nationalism were not the termination of imperial relationships but merely the extending of a geo-political web which has been spinning more since the Renaissance. The new media have the power to penetrate more deeply into a “receiving” culture than any previous manifestation of Western technology. The results could be immense havoc, an intensification of the social contradictions within developing societies today.”

The business “spin” promoting new online technologies promised a new flow, increased leisure time, a talk of freedom that inspired much of the discourse about how the internet could change the world. Organizing events, tasks for daily work, sharing information and the “how to’s” of digital technologies became something that inspired a certain technological idealism that permeated the push to embrace (buy) any and all of these new tools as quickly as they could be developed and downloaded. Being able to view and download audio and video clips, once only the licensed and officially sanctioned territory of television and radio, opened up new venues of dissemination of content to a worldwide audience.

The lines became drawn more clearly immediately after the dot-com crash of 2001. The corporate world, having invested millions of dollars into various kinds of online and web development projects, stepped back from their online speculative real estate game – and in a number of cases, these new firms declared bankruptcy. Many of the initial forays into web world com modification (gaming, databases, brochureware, web-integrated technologies for everyday activities such as shopping, banking and entertainment) failed, leaving investors out of pocket. Many individuals who thought that the web gold rush would be a financial solution to compensate for lack of a pension plan later in life found themselves relieved of their investments as companies such as Nortel’s stock sunk.

The crash subsided the utopian rhetoric embraced by the business world about the internet – momentarily. While the corporate world returned to their boardrooms to

devise new strategies for future business case development, another, parallel reality was emerging.

## Flash forward to 2006

Unprecedented flows of migration/immigration, the creation and implementation of major transnational trade deals – GATT, NAFTA, WTO, World Bank polices govern and shape all aspects of everyday life. Where are the interventions that provide a counterpoint to the relentless hegemonic rhetoric of business that pervades/shapes/influences points of view in the public sphere? Where are the counter spheres and how do they operate? What does the “digital divide” really mean when looking at the situations that exist in developing world economies and cultures, particularly in regions where many people can’t even read and write? Do people in these countries really need the internet more than they need anti-viral drugs to treat HIV/AIDS, health care, education, access to clean water or the development of a viable economy?

Without collapsing into the technological determinism a la Negroponte as a rationale for “being digital”, the strategy of using online communications by individuals, groups and organizations to connect, share, strategize and mobilize through a labyrinth of connections and networks has exploded, frequently highlighting the issues of the digital divide in the context of the realities of the developing world. Grassroots organizations and activists have figured out how to make IT work for them through producing sites of resistance and dialogue, dissemination that reflect a parallel reality to the machinations of the corporate world – and publish those voices uncensored.

The transnational media corporations have converged into a global networked conglomerate composed of 5 major US networks, owning both the content and infrastructure of mainstream Western news outlets. As CNN, Fox, ABC, CBS and others beam corporate mainstream media all over the world via satellite for television, print and radio; and although this corporate 5 also have a major financial stake in many of the networks for internet transmission, the use of other nodes on the network known as the internet allow fissures in the mediascape to appear in an uncensored and non-commercialized form.

New content management systems programmed with open source tools integrate the theory and practice of demystifying technology and removing control of the content from the transnational corporate multinational profit machines. Artists, activists, NGOs community groups are able to publish and distribute their work without having to go through any official or institutional intermediaries.

Positively, these sites of alternative and community-based media, by documenting, collecting, archiving, and reinterpreting materials can help to overcome the instantaneous amnesia perpetuated by mainstream media, where current daily news, culture and historical events are always reduced to 30-second soundbytes. Communities who do not see their lives, stories or struggles reflected in the mainstream “elec-

tronic hearth” of television are creating their own as a response to these content deficiencies. Databases can serve as alternative memory banks of this “parallel reality” (as long as someone also remembers to back it up or keep a print copy for when these technologies cease to be usable or accessible through corporate planned obsolescence). These sites serve to document and write history through the eyes and perspectives of those living it from their own experiential reality.

## Postmodern Media Communities

In *Cultures of Vision*, Ron Burnett writes about new uses of electronic technologies to create what he calls “postmodern media communities”. He uses this term as a point of departure to look at questions of difference, community political and cultural activity to weave a what he refers to as a “bricolage of ethnographic surrealism.” The true innovators are the individuals, groups and organizations that are using the internet, with its networked fragmentary formation, to link together fragments of often extremely complex issues in ways that create new understandings and knowledge.

In 1994, I participated in a community economic development forum in Toronto, where I met Mahad Yusuf, the founder and executive director of Somali Immigrant Aid Organization. A refugee himself, Yusuf quickly became a social activist upon arriving in Canada, setting up nine Somali organizations in the GTA area to deal with the burgeoning influx of Somali refugees. The Canadian government was not able to effectively address the needs of these newcomers, due to the language barrier and lack of familiarity with Somali culture, so Yusuf stepped up to the task, mobilizing the community by setting up a collective network of organizations to assist new immigrants and refugees. This meeting represented my entry point into the Somali community in Toronto and it has been my privilege to meet and work with many dynamic people in this community, enabling me to gain a more intimate knowledge of their struggles, challenges and the rich culture they bring to Canada.

Our subsequent meetings and conversations led to the development of a project for Industry Canada’s SchoolNet Digital Collection – *A Sense of Belonging – Somali Settlement and Experiences in Canada*. In this project, I facilitated, organized and worked with Somali youth to produce an online project interviewing community members about their experiences of life in Canada. The project, produced in 1998, was supposed to be online for 5 years. To this date, Industry Canada still has the site up, despite the fact that changes in web development has meant that some of the technologies used at the time are now outdated. The organization, which had been having difficulties communicating the realities of their values and culture to Canadian social workers, immigration officials and funders, utilized this modest project to open up the lines of communication and understanding with Canadians who knew little about Somalis, their culture or history. Having this material online enabled the

organization to help double their funding base within 3 years and provide continuing employment for members of the community.

A recent follow-up project is the new online magazine, *Somali-Canadians Today*, a project that was the result of the community's expressed need for a local vehicle to open up Somali news and culture – particularly about the ongoing peace process – to a wider audience. Produced with initial funds from the Department of Canadian Heritage and Canadian Culture Online, this project enables community members to build skills, share information and document the stories, success and struggles by community correspondents documenting, collecting and archiving the work the community has engaged in over the past 15 years in Canada. With an navigational interface in both Somali and English, community members can upload material in whatever language best suits the situation or context. For community members participating in the project, it offers the opportunity of “developmental power” ....presenting “the opportunity for members of the public to use and develop their capacities”. (Downing, 2001) Somalis are a collective society, a collective culture, rather than an individualistic one. This way of life is something intrinsic to their social organization and to core tenets of Islam. As an example of what Clemencia Rodriguez refers to as “citizens’ media” this site is a work in progress.

## Somalis in Canada and abroad, the peace process and online news – some background information

Somalis officially became refugees under the UN Convention refugee definition in the early 1990s, when a small group of warlords overthrew the Siad Barre government, igniting a civil war and forcing millions of people to flee the country.

Siad Barre was a man influenced and shaped by Soviet Marxist-Leninism. Barre felt deeply indebted to women, as a result of having been raised in a family of 9 women. This transferred into his politics when he became leader of Somalia, and introduced programs and laws to implement gender equality in Somalia. Women were to be educated and many became doctors, (not nurses) serving in the country's medical system. There was a sizable contingent of women in his government who shaped the cultural and educational policies at the time, resulting in more women receiving education and being placed in positions of influence within his government. His dedication to gender equality was unrelenting – to the extent that when Imams in Mogadishu refused to accept and spoke against the legislating of equality for women – he had them executed.

Somalis started to arrive in Canada – often having escaped from terrifying and traumatic situations – in the late 1980s, with the heaviest migrations to Canada beginning in 1991. Canada – and the world – was in the throes of the IT boom and many Somalis turned to training in high tech schools (technology and banking) to

gain the skills required to work in these digital workspaces. For those unaccustomed to city life, this represented a significant cultural leap – from working in a nomadic culture, tending camels or fishing – to the corporate cubicles of predominantly English-speaking North American office towers. Migrations to North America, Europe, Australia, the Middle East and other industrialized parts of the world, meant that these nomads had to quickly shift/change their work and language skills to gain employment in the “new knowledge-based economy.” This physical dispersal shaped new reconstituted identities – in Canada, a hyphenated identity, as shaped by government policy of multiculturalism.

There are approximately 3 million people in Somalia at the moment and approximately 5 million Somalis in the diaspora, many of whom are still refugees. Canada has settled the largest number of Somali refugees in the world (estimated to be over 200,000) and many now have Canadian citizenship as a result of the advocacy and immigration processing work completed by Somali-Canadian NGOs.

A proliferation of Somali media vehicles have sprung up both within the country and internationally, all with an online component. Many of these websites are propaganda machines, run by the various clan factions/warlords controlling different parts of the country, frequently financed by outside interests jockeying for power and control in the region.

Post-colonialism and the overthrow of the Siad Barre regime in 1991 has left a fractured country composed of 18 different provinces run by clans and sub-clans. Each region has a different online news site. The alliances between these groups are in a state of continual flux, depending on circumstances that change daily. Gangs of militias roam throughout different regions of the country, controlling roadblocks and in the south, controlling the only open port on the Red Sea at Kismaayo. Adding to their problems is the impact of the Tsumani in December of 2004, which washed up nuclear waste from the bottom of the sea floor onto the beaches of Mogadishu. The recent attempt by Somalis to hijack a cruise ship in the Red Sea is indicative of both the level of desperation in a country that operates in an environment that anarchists would consider a form of utopia, but one that often endangers the lives of the people who live there, those who have not been able to leave. The new government has refused to impose an arms embargo – Somalia is known as the arms capital of Africa, with ammunition of any description sold on the open markets in Mogadishu.

## A developing world country with developed world technologies in operation

Despite being a developing world country with a largely rural and nomadic population, Somalis are using new technologies prolifically. An explosion of radio, television, newspapers and websites have been spawned both within the country and in-

ternationally. Websites quickly become successful businesses in a country where unemployment is high.

In Canada, many Somali-Canadians are unable to gain employment in the mainstream corporate world, due to lack of recognition of their credentials and language difficulties. Starting a news website is considered a viable business endeavor. Both in Canada and Somalia, advertising is the main form of revenue for these sites. Scanning any one of these websites, one will see advertising for a number of services, including car rentals, banking and money transfers, printing services, jewellery, Somali music and online dating services (which proliferate, despite the fact that dating is forbidden under Islam).

Daily news from the region is of critical importance to the community and followed avidly because of the impact of events on families still living there. Website competition is fierce and Somalis are keen and active web users, with new sites constantly springing up. Despite the lack of a government, Somalia is one of the most wired countries in Africa at the moment. Over 70% of Somalis have access to the internet – a figure unheard of in most parts of Africa or the developing world.

## The Somali language and the Internet

The Somali language existed only in an oral form until 1972, when academics and intellectuals in the country agreed on how to create the written form. Unlike their East African neighbours, educators settled on Latin as the script through which to shape their language – Italians, the French and the English had been among the original colonizers of the region, so the choice of Latin was based partially on this historical fact. This proved to be propitious in the age of digital publishing, since typefaces on the internet and in computer technologies have tended to be developed initially – or only – in English. This accounts for part of the reason, I think, that Somalis are among the most active users of the internet and new digital technologies in Africa, despite the absence of governmental infrastructure within the country itself.

In Somalia today, internet cafes populate the region. People do not have a functioning government administration, schools, hospitals, or a passport, but they will have a cell phone and internet access. Even if they do not have access to a computer, cell phone technology provides their link to the internet.

The proliferation of Somali news websites is extensive. An examination of news site links on one of the main Somali websites – *Hiraan Online*, run out of Ottawa, Canada, reveals more than 150 websites in the diaspora plus links to Islamic sites, which focus on issues of religion. It's not just the internet, but satellite radio stations, newspapers and television abound, linked to these sites. Although most of these sites are entirely in Somali, a number of sites also have some material in Arabic, Italian, French and English reflecting the multilingual abilities of Somalis.

There is fierce competition for daily news to be the first the latest-breaking stories about the latest maneuvers of the new government. These sites are also used to communicate with Canadian and other foreign government officials about the appropriate responses to the continually changing political situation in Somalia. With the advent of a new government comes the attendant world financial support for helping to assist a country rebuild after the civil war and collapse of the country's infrastructure. Somali-Canadians have used their power and influence to ensure that funds are not released to the current government at this point in time, pending a significant change in the situation, particularly with respect to the ongoing sale of armaments.

The Somalian communities in Toronto and Ottawa have been two of the main political lobbying forces responsible for shaping Canadian federal government response to the current situation in Somalia. Somali news sites are used to communicate key critical information about their community locally and in Somalia to Canadian government officials, funders, social service workers. By using these sites to document the complexities of the issues impacting the community, they are able to influence changes in the areas where members of their community are most deeply impacted – in Canada, housing, employment, struggles with the cultural differences in the North American educational system. In Somalia, the issues relate to development aid, practical assistance such as building wells, the impact of the Tsumani, famine, issues of reform of child soldiers, land mines and HIV/AIDS.

The BBC has a news site in the Somali language but there are frequently issues with accuracy due to unfamiliarity with the real situations as they exists on a community level. "They don't know what is going on in these communities," says Abdi Jama, a recent refugee from one of the Somali refugee camps in Kenya, "so their news is not an accurate representation of the facts."

Humour is also at play in the content of Somali websites – Somalitoons is a popular Somali-Canadian site and online TV show, and showcases a variety of Somali proverbs set to multimedia; as well as cartoons depicting the Somali experience in Canada.

Somali Canadians also have their own banking system which is linked throughout the world. In the aftermath of 9/11, a number of money-transfer agencies were targeted as money-laundering agencies for Al Qaeda and Somalis, as Muslims, were caught up in George Bush's impossible "War on Terror". El Barrakat, located in Ottawa and Philadelphia, had its assets seized and an employee (not the owner) was charged with channeling funds to terrorists.

As Muslims, the Western world banking system's policy of charging interest is considered a violation of Islamic law. Dahabshill Money Transfer & Exchange (registered in the Netherlands) has become the number one financial institution for Somalis in the diaspora and there are many others who are attempting to copy their success in this area.

# Somali artists and new media

## **Amin Amir**

Amin Amir, who currently resides in Lachine, Quebec, is considered the most popular and influential Somali satirical cartoonist, runs a site where more than 75 news and business sites are linked. “I want to educate the Somali people about what is really happening with their government,” he says, “....and my art is the way to do that”. Amin’s cartoons are published both online and in Somali newspapers throughout the world. He uses satire as a device to tell stories about the latest daily news about Somalia. He takes on issues such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), still practiced in Somali culture, an ongoing issue for Somali activists and health educators in Canada and abroad. His weekly cartoons are eagerly awaited and received and generate continuous debate in the community.

## **Ayaan Hirsi Ali**

Somali/Dutch politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali is considered the most controversial Somali female Member of Parliament at the moment, uses both film and the internet as vehicles for opening up issues that are always controversial and explosive within her community. One doesn’t have to google too far on the internet (just type in “Ayaan Hirsi Ali”) to witness the explosive nature of debates about her and her work on the blogs.

As writer/director of “Submission”, co-produced with filmmaker Theo Van Gogh’s (Van Gogh’s nephew) she engaged directly and head-on with issues considered taboo within Somali culture. After refusing an arranged marriage to a distant cousin, she escaped to Germany, then travelled to Holland, where she studied political science. At 37, she has become one of the most prominent Somali women activists by getting elected to the Dutch Parliament. Originally she joined a social democratic party in Holland, but quit when they refused to deal with the issues of culture, Islamic fundamentalism and gender, moving over to become a member of the right-leaning Liberal VVD Party.

Her personal rage over her own experience with FGM has led her to campaign vigorously to withdraw Dutch government funding of political Islamist organizations and bookstores, where fundamentalist literature is routinely found. Islamic clerics have issued a fatwa on her and she has continuous 24-7 police protection as a result, at a level previously only afforded to heads of state in the Netherlands.

In early 2004, Van Gogh was brutally murdered one morning travelling to work on his bicycle, with a lengthy letter left on his body, which included the phrase, “This is for you, Ayaan Hirsi Ali”. Mohammed Bouyeri was charged and convicted of first degree murder in 2005 and is currently serving a life sentence in a Dutch prison.

The film "Submission" featured Ayaan reading text from the Koran, with another actress, naked under a sheer black veil with passages from the Koran written on her body. The film is a powerful indictment against the domestic abuse of Muslim women. Initially presented on Dutch television, it was later distributed on the Internet. The reaction to the film was explosive amongst parts of the Somali community (and other Muslim groups). It was rumoured that Ayaan Hirsi Ali herself was naked in the film; that she was committing a violation against Islamic law by giving a visual representation of passages from the Koran; and that she was using passages of the Koran out of context and thus committing blasphemy. Despite the death threats issued against her and the murder of Van Gogh, Hirsi Ali vowed to continue:

"I will go on with my work here in parliament. I will attend all the meetings, I will control our government. And, beyond that, I will keep on writing articles, I will keep on writing scripts for not just Submission Part II but Part III and so on. I will do anything in my power to keep the oppression of women on the agenda."

Hiraan Hirsi Ali recently lectured in July of 2005 at the University of Toronto campus as part of a panel discussion titled, "Political Islam and the International Campaign to Stop Sharia Law". Her film "Submission" was screened in public to a Canadian audience for the first time. The hall – packed to capacity with both audience members and undercover RCMP officers – gave her a standing ovation as she stood up to open up debate about issues and questions people had about her work and Islam. Of course, the issue of her film "Submission" was the first question, asked by a Muslim woman in the audience, who immediately challenged her on her interpretation of the passage in the Koran.

"Do you speak Arabic?" she asks Hirsi Ali sharply.

"No," responds Hirsi Ali.

"Well, if you spoke Arabic you would know that Islamic law says 'leave,' not 'beat,' the wife," says the woman at the mic, addressing a section of the code that most scholars interpret as giving a husband the right to beat his disobedient wife.

"Then why," asks Hirsi Ali, "does it not also say that women may 'leave' their husbands?"

Submission II, Hirsi Ali's second film, takes on the subject of gays and Islam, and is scheduled to be released sometime in 2006.

## Qabyo – changing relationships with men in the diaspora

Being a patriarchal society, gender issues are enormous in this culture. Women who fled the country as refugees have become educated in other parts of the world and are challenging and changing their relationships to Somali men. (Dini, 2004) These discussions have just started to open up in the past 10 years in North America and the diaspora and although the debates are often highly contentious and emotional, there is also a Somali “spin” on gender issues from the women that pose an original creative response with more humour than the work of Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

Nkrumah, a popular Somali-Canadian singer/poet/storyteller, played the role of a wife in the film “Qabyo” (Incomplete) in which a scene between a woman and her husband has generated lively community response and debate about gender roles. “I want you to cook, I want you to clean house, I want you to help look after the children,” she tells her husband, as she readies to leave the house. “Where are you going?” he asks her. “To a community meeting,” she tells him. Somali women arrive in Canada, take a look around and decide yes, they want to get an education, not just stay at home and raise children, they want to participate actively in community life and they want men to help share the work of home and raising children.

Domestic violence, FGM and the emergence of highly educated and powerful Somali women are challenging the status quo of male supremacy in this culture. (Dini, 2004)

Somali women are emerging as educators, peace activists and community leaders in the peace process in significant ways and leading major international development initiatives (Abdulkadir, 2004). As cultural animators and poets, women represent some of the most powerful voices of peace and resistance to the pathologies of civil war that have plagued this “failed state” and are poised to take their rightful place in a central role in a new government, when one is formed that truly incorporates all the civil society players.

The current situation and debates about Somalia are taking place in a counter public spheres of communities worldwide, dialogue which makes its way from neighbourhood coffee shops, community meetings and conferences to online news vehicles, in which debates (although often in highly inflammatory prose) frame the issues surrounding the progress of the new government. The current government that emerged out of the 14th Peace and Reconciliation talks, which concluded in Eldoret, Kenya in August, 2003 has received a less than enthusiastic reception worldwide. The educator and intellectual and President of the Interim government, Abdulkassim Salat Hassan was widely touted as the next President of Somalia. An introverted intellectual and academic, Hassan was known to spend much of his time following the international news on satellite television, while simultaneously working to bring together the warring factions in Somalia. However, what Somalians didn't figure into their electoral calculations was the interference of Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, whose henchmen paid bribes to the warlord contingent from the southern regions to ensure that Abdullahi Yusuf, a major warlord, won the presidency.

The issues surrounding the uses of these new technologies with respect to new emerging nation states and the development of new civil societies – in the Somalian situation and other post-colonial, post-war developing world societies – could serve to merely perpetuate existing inequities and conflicts, as the number of the Somali news propaganda sites clearly show. Or they could simultaneously be the depository and record of changes in the practice of a community deeply wedded to the richness of their oral culture struggling to survive and find a sense of belonging as displaced citizens. The goal and dream of rebuilding Somalia, using whatever resources, skills and training they have gathered from their diasporic experiences, and to create a civil society based on equality and development, is a vision that every Somali refugee carries within them. It's something that all Somalis want to see in their lifetime and the impassioned debates taking place on new sites around the world clearly highlight this as a central concern.

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**Amin Amir Arts** – Montreal, Quebec  
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Dahabshill  
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Free download and view – **Submission 1** by Ayaan Hirsi Ali  
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PART 4

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# Workshop recommendations



# Workshop 1

## Unifying Diaspora Voices for Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, and Justice in the Horn of Africa

### **Amira Osman Recommendations**

1. More research is needed to tackle constraints facing women asylum seekers and refugees, from the Horn of Africa, in the West
2. Women from the Horn in Diaspora should empower themselves in order to face challenges associated with life in exile
3. Women from the Horn in Diaspora should strengthen their networking systems and promote their contributions to the social, economic and political development of their homeland
4. More training for women organisations in Diaspora on peace building should be conducted
5. Women from the Horn in Diaspora should appeal to the international community to support post-conflict reconstruction processes in their homeland
6. Changes in gender roles and gender relations and their consequences on Diaspora populations from the Horn should be addressed seriously

### **Redie Bereketgab Recommendations**

The paper tries to address three questions:

- (i) What factors contributed to the strong attachment of the Eritrean diaspora with their country of origin?
- (ii) How much was the contribution of the Eritrean diaspora to the Eritrean nation?
- (iii) How true is the commonplace perception of the Eritrean diaspora standing on the side of the Eritrean nation in all circumstances?

Concerning the first question, contributing factors to the strong attachment two factors are posited:

1. the subjection of Eritreans to neglect, ignoring and marginalisation by the international community. This was demonstrated in
  - the decision by the UN against the will of Eritreans to federate them with Ethiopia
  - the silence of the UN and Superpowers when the federation was arbitrarily violated by Ethiopia.
  - the international communities' silence throughout the thirty-years armed struggle for independence
2. the astronomical sacrifices the Eritrean people paid to undo those injustices

Concerning the second question, the contribution of the Eritrean diaspora:

- the contribution of the Eritrean diaspora to the liberation struggle is exemplary, indeed it was a decisive factor in the final victory
- it played a crucial role in the post-liberation reconstruction and defense of the nation in the second war with Ethiopia.

Concerning the third question, the perception of the Eritrean diaspora always standing on the side of the Eritrean nation:

- the Eritrean diaspora was always divided along religio-geographical lines, which was reinforced by the diasporic route it pursued. Those who took the Sudan-Middle East route found that their religio-cultural identity (Islam-lowland) confirmed thus supported the ELF which they thought represented their interest, and those who pursued the Ethiopia-West route found that their Christian-highland identity confirmed and concomitantly supported the EPLF. Hence their support was given to the organisations instead of the nation. (This was so particularly in the early years of the struggle).
- a divided diaspora could not exert pressure on the liberation organisation to unite, on the contrary it reinforced the division with the rank of the liberation struggle.
- following independence those who supported the victorious organisation felt welcome to the liberated country, while those who supported the vanquished were estranged thereby continuing the liberation struggle period division.
- this is affecting the society at home negatively.

The paper also discusses the crucial role of the diaspora in democratisation, socio-economic development, and stability of the country of origin provided certain conditions are fulfilled.

### **Ella O. Chimbiru recommendations**

It would be naïve to suggest that women gained all that they asked for. In fact where they did extremely well, they received a maximum of 30% in representation. Consequently, it remains necessary for them to restructure their expectations in a pragmatic manner. It is a difficult path because if not well conceived, certain foundations that brought them recognition could easily be eroded and endanger their collective bargaining power.

As for patriarchy, it was most obvious during the signing and swearing in ceremony of the Somali Transitional Government (TNG) on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2004. Despite international presence, seating of women was behind the men irrespective of their posts. It seems that women's inclusion at the front on such occasions was still not acceptable.

At the official signing of the Sudanese Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on January 9<sup>th</sup> 2005, one would imagine that politicians and bureaucrats would have learnt some lessons from the Somali experience but alas that was not the case. There

were absolutely no seats reserved for women delegates. They decided to take matters into their hands and occupied seats reserved for diplomats accredited to Nairobi. With no indication of relinquishing their seats, and the police unwilling to shift a large group of happily singing women, the Protocol Office brought in more chairs for the diplomatic corps.

## Workshop 2

### Health and Socio-Economic Effects of Kath Use: What is the Solution?

#### **Nasir Warfa Recommendations**

Therefore, it is not possible to establish from the current available evidence whether khat use is a risk factor for psychological problems. In conclusion, in spite of years of international and national efforts to address the mental health consequences of Khat use, our understanding of the psychiatric implications of khat use remains confused, contradictory and poor (e.g. reviewed by Warfa et al 2006).

Therefore, the hypothesis that khat use can lead to the development of mental health problems should be vigorously tested through the appropriate research designs, for example, prospective studies. In the mean time, the health and social care needs of khat users and their communities need some attention, with a particular focus on the need to set up specialist khat clinics accessible to people with khat misuse and mental illness.

#### **Mohamed Abusabib Recommendations**

With regard to contribution by the Sudanese community here to reconstruction efforts, I think we should not overestimate it due to a number of factors:

**One factor** is that the size of the Sudanese community in Sweden is very small, and is not a coherent and bounded group with the kind of organization that could easily mobilize its effort, or even move around lobbying the Swedish institutions for the Sudanese cause. What is being offered is remittances and other forms of material assistance such as medicine sent by individuals to their relatives. Sudanese Society in Uppsala was able to facilitate the travel to the country of a volunteer Swedish medical doctor who worked for a certain period in one of the hospitals in the capital. Also, the Sudanese Swedish Society, an old society with a number of active Swedish members has been running a small construction project involving building a primary school in the small town of Bara in western Sudan, and provided it with a small solar

panel for supplying electricity, and also assisted in raising a small farm near the school to help providing it with vegetables. The project was meant to be taken over by the local people and developed into a larger scheme, but it didn't work well because the whole economic and political circumstances in the region were not conducive.

**A second factor** is that the economic capacity of the community is very poor. This is clear when we look at the kind of jobs the majority of Sudanese in Sweden have.

**A third factor** is that, as far as Sudan is concerned, Swedish political environment is not encouraging. Compared with Norway, for example, Sweden is not involved in the Sudanese question, and has no long-established economic, political, or academic relations with the country. Such relations usually facilitate contact and generate ideas when there are specific common interests and concerns.

**A very important fourth factor** is that, apart from the economic limitation of Sudanese diaspora in Sweden, reconstruction process requires in the first place political stability and a clear programme for development, but this is not the case with Sudan. The country is not yet a post-war country. As mentioned above, the Naifasha and Abuja peace agreements did not stop the killing or solve the problems, the situation in almost all parts of the country is tense and restive, and the possibility of confrontation between the Islamist-led government and the international community over the deployment of international peace keeping force intended to replace the AU peace keeping force in Dar Fur is real.

Therefore, until we have a post-war Sudan and a stable political system any talk of contribution to reconstruction effort is unrealistic. However, it is only possible to speak of potential contribution to rebuilding the country in the form of future physical return of members of the community who would bring with them advanced knowledge and expertise, and this again depends on the political situation of the country. Fortunately, as mentioned above, the majority of Sudanese diasporas in Sweden is home-oriented.

*Arne Ardeberg*

# Closing Remarks: Proposal for a Permanent Horn of Africa Forum in Lund

Dear Ladies & Gentlemen,

The Horn-of-Africa Conferences in Lund provide a unique platform for peaceful, enlightened and progressive discussions among parties representing the countries, regions and interest groups of the region. The academic setting, the high number of scholars from the Horn of Africa as well as from the Nordic and other countries, the many returning participants, the frequent attendance of regional Horn-of-Africa representatives and the excellent arrangements in a neutral ambience have made the conferences an invaluable institution for exchange of ideas and increased mutual understanding between parties otherwise without regular contacts, thereby fostering peaceful exchange of opinions and ideas. Without any doubt, the Horn-of-Africa Conferences in Lund have been established as an invaluable peace promoter.

At the same time, however successful in itself, the Lund Horn-of-Africa Conference platform cannot provide a continuous forum for representatives of the region in trouble. Thus, while highly promising initiatives and actions regularly result from the yearly conferences, the long time in between these events has all too often seen conflicts occurring without a working neutral meeting place for representatives of the parties in dispute. A corresponding standing, continuously open and accessible forum for dialogue seems an obvious complement and a most valuable contribution to the work for peaceful settlements of the many conflicts in the Horn of Africa.

It is hereby proposed to create a Lund Horn-of-Africa Forum, hosted by Lund University. The neutral academic setting in a place distant from the scene of conflicts and with an interest in the region carried by a strong wish to contribute to a peaceful and prosperous future for all involved seem to provide a platform with good possibilities to prove attractive as an institution for respectful negotiations in a spirit contributing to mutual understanding and peace building. As a result, all regional parties in conflict would at all times have a place and an institution to refer to and to receive support from in order to embark on peaceful negotiations and conflict settlement.

Further, the creation of a Lund Horn-of-Africa Forum would highly increase possibilities to attract more help and support than presently available. A number of Swedish and other neutral actors now engaged could be more regularly attached to

and involved in the work for peace in the Horn of Africa at the same time as further actors could be attracted to participate. In a wider scope, seeming highly realistic and interesting, national and international agencies could be engaged, supporting the Horn-of-Africa peace project in various ways.

A Lund Horn-of-Africa Forum should permanently be prepared for involvement in the interest of peaceful solutions. It should receive reports, complaints and proposals from and regarding the region. It should act as a permanent host institute of negotiations. It should be able to call on mediation support and provide other assistance promoting positive solutions to conflicts. It should act as a common attractor of international support and assistance. It should provide a much needed continuity between the yearly Horn-of-Africa conferences, thereby further improving their value for peace in the Horn of Africa.

The Lund Horn-of-Africa Forum should have a standing commission always and at short notice prepared for action. The participants of the commission should be selected with as wide a support from all actors in the Horn of Africa as possible but also so as to be as much as possible practically available for prompt action. Tentatively, it is proposed to act in favour of a commission profiting from direct membership of the wide academic Diaspora with close connections to Lund and local reference actors in the various parts of the Horn of Africa. It may be of value to have the commission chaired by somebody of absolute neutral standing and with the confidence of supporting parties.

Thank you!

**Note:** The conference participants unanimously endorsed the proposal presented by Lund University.

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# Appendix I

*Nasir Warfa*

## Mental health effects of khat use: what is the solution?

### Abstract

This presentation aims to provide an overview of a rapid review of research into the detrimental mental health effects of khat use. Over the last two decades, there has been an ongoing national and international debate concerning the impact of Khat use on mental health. Internationally, it is estimated that around 10 million consumers chew khat each year, mainly in the Horn of Africa. New patterns of excessive khat use, new consumer groups (including children) are reported in the literature. Moreover, there is a widespread confusion and controversy of whether Khat use can lead to the development of mental disorders or if the psychiatric conditions observed among some Khat user groups are triggered off or compounded by other external factors such as extreme stressful life events. In the light of this urgency, this presentation aims to stimulate some debate about the adverse psychological effects of khat use, with a particular focus on Somalis living in Europe and in Somalia. It will also examine the extent to which the use of Khat can be detrimental to mental wellbeing.

### Introduction

Epidemiological data on substance use amongst refugee communities is limited although refugees are at greater risk of exposure to the main risk factors for drug misuse including high rates of unemployment, homelessness, isolation and cultural shock (Craig et al 2006). In the Somali community, there have been ongoing debates as to

the extent to which the use of “khat” is widespread among the community and whether the perceived widespread consumption of khat is associated with the increasing psychological problems of khat users. (eg, reviewed by Warfa et al 2006). Khat (*Catha edulis*) is a plant whose twigs are chewed for their stimulant effects. The stimulant effects of khat leaves were found to be similar to those following amphetamine ingestion (eg reviewed by Warfa et al 2006), and hence the association between khat use and psychological problems is made. For example, Griffiths et al (1997) reported some associations between psychological problems and khat use among a group of 207 Somali users in the UK. Loss of appetite (74%), mood swings (72%), feelings of anxiety (47%), problems with sleeping (90%), irritability (35%) and depression (44%) were observed as the after-effects of khat use (Griffiths et al 1997). From our recent systematic review (see Warfa et al 2006), only the clinical case studies reported a causative association between excessive khat use and psychosis or psychiatric symptoms. However, the use of some case studies for reporting a causal relationship between khat use and mental illness is questionable because case reports cannot provide definitive evidence for causal associations between two or more variables. Again, while some of the reviewed cross-sectional and case-control studies suggest that there may be an interaction between khat use (be it excessive, chronic or moderate use) and acute psychiatric disorders, such findings are contradicted by the evidence coming from other cross-sectional studies. Therefore, it is not possible to establish from the current available evidence whether khat use is a risk factor for psychological problems. In conclusion, in spite of years of international and national efforts to address the mental health consequences of khat use, our understanding of the psychiatric implications of khat use remains confused, contradictory and poor (e.g. reviewed by Warfa et al 2006). Thus, the hypothesis that khat use can lead to the development of mental health problems should be vigorously tested through the appropriate research designs, for example, prospective studies. In the mean time, the health and social care needs of khat users and their communities need some attention, with a particular focus on the need to set up specialist khat clinics accessible to people with khat misuse and mental illness.

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# Appendix II

*Mammo Muchie*

## Post Election Crises in Ethiopia: Challenges to the Democratic transition in Ethiopia and wider Africa

The wind of democratization and multiparty elections that promised to alter the political landscape of many African countries in the 1990s has receded amid the rise of dominant one party states and post election crises. Recent events in countries such as Ethiopia and Uganda, whose strongmen were once hailed as members of the “new breed of African leaders”, are the latest in the patterns of exaggerated expectations followed by heavy disappointments. Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia had launched a massive crackdown on the opposition, their supporters and civil society in response to the strong showing by the opposition parties during the May 2005 elections. Consequently, over one hundred people, mostly peaceful demonstrators, have been killed by security forces while many more are maimed and tens of thousands of young people are incarcerated in makeshift detention camps. Mr. Zenawi has also charged over 120 detainees for ‘treason and genocide’. The detainees consist of nearly all the leaders of the main opposition party of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) and MPs, the Mayor-elect of Addis Ababa, independent journalists, leaders of civic organizations and scores of dissidents, including dozens from the Ethiopian Diaspora.

The recent election in Uganda was marred by the fact that Mr. Yoweri Museveni changed the constitution in order to make himself eligible to run. In Nigeria the incumbent tried to change the constitution to give himself a third term and he failed. In Uganda the incumbent succeeded to change the constitution, and did not refrain from using heavy handed tactics against his adversaries. The charge of ‘treason and rape’ levelled by the Museveni Government against one of the main opposition lead-

ers, Dr. Kizza Besigye echoes very much the Meles Zenawi tactic against the opposition in Ethiopia. The opposition leader in Uganda has declared the election illegal and is prepared to contest the outcome, though it looks as if the incumbent has succeeded to come victorious. Elsewhere in Africa there have been election crises of one form or another from Cote d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic, Mauritania, Togo, Nigeria, Angola and Zambia. Egypt also had an election that was marred by violence and allegations of unfair voting practice. These countries have experienced post-electoral violence as a consequence of the inability to run free and fair elections.

In all the cases there seems to be an emergent trend where invariably the incumbent party is the initiator of democratic mal-practice rather than the promoter of democratic transition. One does not need to look far to find the main culprit of improper activity is the power-holder unwilling to vacate through the free votes and choices of citizens.

An in-depth look into the dilemmas of democratic transition in Ethiopia, the challenges, opportunities and the way forward is critical given an entire elected opposition leadership continues to be locked up. The AU has been silent on the Ethiopian election. The EU parliament passed a resolution recommending stoppage of budget support and other target smart sanctions on the incumbent leadership which refuses to talk to the opposition despite offers of mediation from the European Union and others. The US Congress is still not ready to take strong action against the Meles Zenawi regime despite fulsome knowledge of its brutalities and gross human rights violations.

How can democratisation be institutionalised in the context of a double challenge: international interventions and domestic disunity in African countries?