



Working Paper No. 7

**Diasporas and their Role in the
Homeland Conflicts and Peacebuilding:
The Case of Somali Diaspora**

Mahdi Abdi Abdile¹

November 2010

¹ Mr Mahdi Abdile (mahdi.abdile@helsinki.fi) is PhD candidate at the University of Helsinki, Finland working on Somali diaspora in Africa. The author would like to express his gratitude to the many women and men who participated in this research. He is extremely indebted to Dr. Pekka Virtanen Coordinator of the Diaspeace Research Program for their support and advice. Dr. Virtanen also read several drafts including this final version and critiqued the ideas and assertion. Professor Liisa Laakso, Dr. Petri Hautaniemi, Dr. Marja Tiilikainen, Mr. Markus Höhne and Miss Päivi Pirkkalainen have all reviewed and commented on different drafts of this paper and the author is sincerely grateful for their comments and critique.

DIASPEACE Working Papers are published by the research project *Diasporas for Peace: Patterns, Trends and Potential of Long-distance Diaspora Involvement in Conflict Settings. Case Studies from the Horn of Africa (DIASPEACE)*, which is a three-year research project funded by the *European Commission* under the *7th Framework Programme*. The project seeks to generate policy-relevant, evidence-based knowledge on how exiled populations from conflict regions play into the dynamics of conflict and peace in their countries of origin. It has an empirical focus on diaspora networks operating in Europe, which extend their transnational activities to the Horn of Africa. The project is coordinated by the *University of Jyväskylä* involving six partners from Europe and two from the Horn of Africa and will conduct field research in both Europe and Africa. All published papers have been refereed by at least two experts in the field.

WEB: www.diaspeace.org

ISSN: 1798-1689

ISBN: 978-951-39-4151-2



Contents

1. Preface
2. Introduction
3. Methods and data
4. Political, economic and social restrictions in the home country towards diaspora involvement
5. Linking the host country and the home country
6. Why the first and second generation diaspora have different attitudes towards homeland engagement?
7. Diaspora contributions compared: The negative role of diaspora
8. The positive role of diaspora
9. Challenges to diaspora involvement
10. Conclusions

References

1. Preface

I began collecting data for this paper almost two years ago at a time when the role of the Somali diaspora was intensely debated both within and outside the country. In these debates the potential contribution of Somali diaspora is presented in two forms. Firstly, within and outside the academic circles, the role of Somali diaspora is described as potential contributors to the ongoing conflict in Somalia and as spoilers. There are several reasons for this assertion. Proponents of this argument see the enormous size of remittances sent by the Somali diaspora to their country of origin coupled with the lack of oversight and absence of monitoring capabilities of these remittances both at the sending and receiving ends. Hawala system used for sending such money can also easily be used and manipulated by warlords, clan militias', pirates and terrorists. Once such money gets in the hands of warlords or terrorists it can be used for waging wars or terrorists activities. There are also growing fears in the Western capitals about the increasing radicalization of some section of the Somali diaspora. These fears grew as evidence emerged of young Somali men in the West going to Somalia to fight for Al Shabaab. Western security official are concerned that these young men would return to their homes in the west to spread terror or stage terrorist attacks. Secondly, in recent years, there has been an attempt to offer a more balanced view of the role of Somali diaspora. This view takes into account both the potentially negative role diaspora could play but also the growing recognition both within and outside the academic world about the potential contribution of the Somali diaspora not only in peacebuilding but also development and reconstruction in their country of origin.

The purpose of writing this paper is firstly, to test the hypothesis that the role of Somali diaspora is both good and evil; that is they are both contributors to conflict and peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts in their country of origin. The paper is also part of my PhD thesis which seeks to study the traditional mechanisms of resolving conflicts and the role of key groups such as traditional elders, religious leaders and diaspora. It's also part of my contribution to the Diaspeace researcher project.

Activist, researcher and practitioner were some of the roles I played as I conducted this research. Initially, like many other members of the Somali diaspora community in Finland, my role was purely to lobby the Finnish government and Finland based NGO's to become more

involved in Somalia. However, my relationship with the NGO world and the advocacy work I have been involved with on my personal capacity might have complicated my role as a researcher.

Throughout the field research, I have played several roles. On the one hand I was affiliated to the University of Helsinki and the PhD research I was undertaking before and during the field study. I was also a member of the Diaspeace research team. My role in the Diaspeace project was to study the peacebuilding role of diaspora from the Horn of Africa in their countries of origin. More specifically I was given the task of conducting field research looking on the involvement of the Somali diaspora community. On the other hand, I also was working for the same NGO that I have been lobbying and encouraging to get engaged in Somalia. I began to work for Finn Church Aid (FCA) as a consultant and later on became their advisor to Somalia, a position I hold until today. My role was to oversee the implementation of the Peace Initiative Program (PIP) on behalf of the FCA. At the time, PIP was one of the very few diaspora-led peacebuilding initiatives operational in Puntland, Somaliland and South Central Somalia and found myself studying the same project I was called upon to manage and thus, had to formulate ways to devise both an organizational role and a research role.

2. Introduction

There has been intense debate surrounding the origin and changing use of the term diaspora in the past decade or so. Finding a universally acceptable definition of the concept and who should be included in such definition is among the issues intensively debated by scholars. The word diaspora is said to originate *“from the Greek words speiro (to sow) and the preposition dia (over) ... signifying expansion through outward migration and settlement”* (Cohen 2001, 3642). The concept ancient usage found in the Bible (Deuteronomy 28:25) was historically reserved for explaining the Jews’ experience as forcibly scattered people but the term is now ever more associated *“... with the suffering and forcible displacement of groups with similar experience ‘to the ancient Jews’”* (Cohen 2001, 3642) who now live far from its homeland Lehmann (1998). It’s also employed as a metaphor to signify a global condition of mobility, in which migrants are frequently seen as at the core (Schulz and Hammer 2003).

William Safran (1991, 83-4) defines diaspora as a group or groups that meet the following characteristics: “[communities] *dispersed from a specific original ‘centre’ to two or more ‘peripheral’, or foreign, regions...[who] regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return*”. However, Cohen’s (1997) analysis of diaspora suggests a departure from the traditional notion of victimhood that often accompanies ‘diaspora’. Cohen seems to differentiate ‘traditional’ causes of diasporic communities symbolized by wars and ‘modern’ causes such as droughts and hunger. He argues that being “*dragged off in manacles... being expelled, or being coerced to leave by force of arms are qualitatively different phenomena than the forces of overpopulation, land hunger, poverty, or unsympathetic political regimes*” (Cohen 1997, 26-27).

Drawing on Safran’s list of diaspora characteristics, Cohen (1997) expands the diaspora concept to include nine common features:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements;
4. an idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5. the development of a return movement that gains collective approbation;
6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;
7. a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8. a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement, and;
9. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism .

The list is comprehensive, but as we shall demonstrate, when discussing the experience of the current Somali diaspora it is difficult if not impossible for these criteria to capture the experiences of worldwide diaspora. The case of Somali diaspora is emblematic of the complex issues of which diaspora generate; and although commonly associated with the large-scale dispersion following the collapse of the Somali state in 1991, diasporic experience dates back to the late pre-colonial era.¹ When discussing the Somali diasporic experience, the majority of recent studies on Somali diaspora tend to focus more on the new threats they pose and less on their possible positive contributions to their homeland. However, such a banal conclusion does not capture the full picture of the potential role the Somali could play.

One key challenge of this research was the lack of data on Somali migration predating the colonial era (and to some extent post-colonial period). The lack of such historical data on group movements within and outside the modern nation's borders limits the analytical scope of the research. Available data on Somali diaspora are very recent and tend to put more emphasis on issues of Somalis in the West or those in refugee camps in neighboring countries (e.g. the studies featuring in Farah, Muchie and Gundel 2007). For instance, little data is available on the large Somali communities in the Middle East and their history. The lack of such current and historical data leads scholars to certain distortions and emphasizes on negatives like the disasters driving Somalis to seek asylum abroad and the threat of radical Islamism.

The arrival of Somalis in the West in 1970s and 1990s and in light of the fact that children born in the diaspora constitute a growing constituent, generation differences seem to be emerging. The assumption made in this paper is that there are two core constituents or groups within the Somali diaspora in the West. The first group is led by the colonial era seamen who settled in British port cities like Cardiff, London and Liverpool. This group includes the economic migrants of the 1970s who went to the Middle East, and those forced abroad by the civil war. In this study, I refer to this group as the first generation. The second group comprises those born in the diaspora, or those born in Somalia but who relocated abroad with their families in their teens or toddler age. I will refer to this group and their children as the second generation. The

¹ In this article the term Somali diaspora refers to the estimated 1-2 million Somali who were either born in Somalia or born to Somali families. Following the civil and the subsequent fall of the Somali government in the 1990's hundreds of thousands of Somalis found themselves in refugee camps in the neighboring countries (the near diaspora), and others have found resident in as far regions as the Middle East, Europe, North America, Australia and beyond known to academics as the distance diaspora.

importance of this division to this study will be highlighted in later sections but two points are worth mentioning here. The first point here is that there are variations in perception between the second and first generation Somalis' engagement in the home country. Secondly, the two groups differ in their desire to help and contribute in the home country or their ancestral homeland.

In order to better understand the relationship between the diaspora and the homeland and explore the attitude and perceptions towards the diaspora engagement, the study examined the views of a number of relevant actors to the role of Somali diaspora. These actors included diaspora returnees, local administrative staff, and religious and traditional leaders who were working with PIP staff.

To address this issue, the study examined the roles and contribution of Somalis of the diaspora in their country of origin. Beginning with the assumption that the diaspora has a peacebuilding² role to play but can also be spoilers, this study seeks to answer several research questions: 1) what roles do Somali diaspora play in peacebuilding and conflicts; 2) what reasons explain the choice to intervene or to not to intervene in peacebuilding activities and/or to support other development work in Somalia, and; 3) what is the nature of their involvement when they do intervene? In order to answer these questions, two types of case studies were selected. The first case study involves a peace building program initiated and implemented by Somalis in the diaspora. The second comprises two examples of returnee engagement that aggravated long-standing inter-clan conflicts.

The study is divided into several sections. The first section following the methodological observations immediately below provides background on the Somali diaspora, discusses political, economic and social limitations in the home country constraining diaspora involvement in their homeland. It also examines the Somali diaspora's links with the homeland and how they relate to those left behind. Discussion focuses on the questions why the second

² Here I use "peacebuilding" loosely to imply activities which include building and enhancing the capacity of institutions (both governmental and non-governmental), short and long-term development and conflict transformation.

and first generation Somali diaspora have different attitudes towards homeland engagement. The third section centers on the roles of diaspora (both negative and positive) and provides a case study to analyze their engagement. The final section focuses on the opportunities and challenges facing the Somali diaspora.

3. Methods and data

In early 2007, four men (including myself) and a woman from the Finnish diaspora community met with the Finn Church Aid (FCA) director to ask why the FCA, the largest non-governmental development organization in Finland was not working in Somalia at a time when the Somali people were in their greatest need. One of the diaspora delegates asked the director whether the FCA's lack of involvement had to do with the fact that Somalia is a Muslim country and the people who are suffering are Muslims. The meeting led to several follow-up meetings, and a peace building program known as the Peace Initiative Program (PIP) was initiated. In the past three years since we first met with the FCA director, the FCA has increased and harmonized its humanitarian aid and peacebuilding programmes in Somalia. Twenty staff, including six expatriates, are currently working for the PIP program, which is funded by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The PIP initiative aims to help resolve and prevent inter-clan conflicts in Somaliland, Puntland, and central Somalia with some ad-hoc activities in Mogadishu.

For this study, I interviewed some of the PIP staff, together with two other groups of Somali diaspora professionals who have returned to Somaliland and Puntland. The second group of professionals consisted of a group of health professionals from Finland who worked in a International Organization for Migration (IOM) funded project. The professionals were conducting a short-term assignment of between two weeks and six months. Whereas the PIP expatriate staff members are formally employed, the IOM professionals work on a voluntary basis. This means that, for example, a doctor or a nurse in diaspora will take a leave of absence from his permanent employment and volunteer to work in Somaliland or Puntland.

The third group of people who were interviewed included government representatives such as local administrative staff, representatives of the three main Somaliland political parties (UCID,

UDUB, KULMIYE)³; employees of national and international organizations (IOM, FCA, UNDP, Interpeace); founders of the International Horn University; employees of two private companies (Telesom and Telecom), and religious leaders. The study also included individuals who were working in South and Central Somalia, but who had relocated to Somaliland due to security concerns.

All interview participants were current or former members of the Somali diaspora in Britain, Sweden, Finland, Norway, North America, Australia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE); some were permanent returnees, while others had come for a short or more extended period of time and were either born in the diaspora (3 interviewees) or have lived in the diaspora for 15 to 35 years. About 70 per cent of the informants hold European, North American or Australian passports. Although some considered their return to be permanent or semi-permanent, they were still registered as residents in the respective host countries; some 30 per cent were from the United Arab Emirates.

The background of the participants varied in terms of gender, age, education, and profession. The informants ranged between 28 and 64 years of age, and included 14 females and 26 males. There were 19 with bachelor degrees, 12 with masters, five with doctorates, three high school certificate holders and one with no formal education. Most had work experience prior to their return.

During the fieldwork, I held four focus group discussions of 4-7 people each with the diaspora returnees who were working in different sectors. I then complemented the focus group discussions with 40 (14 women and 26 men) follow-up in-depth individual interviews with key informants (see Table 1). All names have been changed in order to protect the security and privacy of the interviewees, who preferred their identity withheld. The interviews were conducted in Somali during the period between January 2009 and January 2010, mostly in Somaliland but also in Puntland. The fieldwork data was tape recorded, transcribed in Somali and translated into English. The majority of the interviews took place in public places such as restaurants and hotels. A few interviews were conducted at the interviewees' homes or places

³ UDUB (*Ururka dimuqraadiga ummadda bahawday*), KULMIYE (*KULMIYE Nabad, Midnimo iyo horumar*) and UCID (*Ururka Caddaalada iyo Daryeelka*) were the three largest parties in the Somaliland Parliament after the 2005 elections, gaining 39%, 34% and 27% of the votes, respectively.

of work. One key criteria for selecting the interviewees was that they have worked and gained experience in their respective countries of settlement and are currently working or have worked in the home country. Some of the interview participants were people that I had already met in the diaspora or while working earlier in Somalia. A few were recommended by other diaspora or by the current interviewees. In total, I collected 108 hours of interviews.

Table 1. Background data for the three groups of interviewees.

Case study	Age	number of years spent abroad	Level of education	Type of work	Gender
Peace Initiative Program (5)	28-40	2 born in the Diaspora 3 spent 18-20 years in the Diaspora	3 Bachelor 2 Masters	Peace Building	2 Females 3 Males
Somali diaspora professionals (12)	29-47	All spent 15-23 years in the Diaspora	5 Bachelors 4 Master's 3 Doctorates	Health	3 Females 9 Males
Other key informants (23)	32-64	1 born in the Diaspora 2 spent 17-35 years in the Diaspora	11 Bachelors 6 Masters 2 Doctorates 3 High school Certificate 1 No formal education	Social science, Engineering, Health, Laborers	9 Females 14 Males

4. Political, economic and social restrictions in the home country towards diaspora involvement

Fieldwork data shows that although Somali national and regional governments have through the past 20 years encouraged diaspora involvement, diaspora's ability to freely interact with

their homeland is subject to some government restrictions that limit diaspora involvement. Data collected indicate that - with the exception of Somaliland - initially diaspora did not receive enthusiastic reception in national or regional political processes and until recently they were sidelined or given lukewarm reception in the many peace processes. There were several reasons why diaspora were excluded or have excluded themselves, at least at the beginning of the 1990s. First, in the 1990s, the political elite who served under Siad Barre or were long-term opposition figures, such as Abdullahi Yusuf and Somaliland's first President Mohamed Egal, or warlords such as General Aidid, were quite dominant and drew almost exclusively the attention of both their clans and the international community. Secondly, most of the Somali diaspora were quite new in their host countries, and thus their main preoccupation was to establish themselves in the exile. Additionally, many did not have travel documents or enough money to pay for participation in the usually protracted Somali peace conferences. Furthermore, in the 1990s the status of the Somali diaspora was quite different from today: they were at first seen as individuals who would send money home and not actors who could set agendas for peace and the political processes. Thirdly, with the exception of Somaliland, in the 1990s the political environment of Somalia's was dominated by warlords and clan militias who controlled most of Somalia and most members of the Somali diaspora did not want to associate themselves with the brutal warlords and clan militia rule. Fourthly, there were no incentives for meaningful political participation of the diaspora. Somali diaspora holding non-Somali passports even have to pay the same fee for their entry and exit visas as non-Somalis. Even those who did find reasons to participate in the political process found themselves struggling against government practices and policies, which restricted their participation.

On the private level, the Somali returning from the diaspora to their country of origin appear to be well received by their communities. They are seen as people who can contribute positively to the development of their communities. On the public level, however, there are a number of challenges faced by the diaspora returnees. There is competition between the older political elite and the members of diaspora who aspire to enter into politics. The old political elite are quite fearful of being made redundant by the experienced and educated diaspora who might have access to money and connections both outside and inside of the country. For example, during the fieldwork I was told a story involving the former Somaliland President Egal and two

of his political rivals. According to the story, in 1997 the former was afraid of losing the presidency to two politically influential diaspora returnees, Saleban Mohamud Adan and Abdillahi Omar (the latter is the father of the well-know Somali Journalist Raghe Abdillahi Omar). The president therefore introduced a number of conditions that restricted and eventually disqualified the diaspora candidates from participating in the presidential election. At the time, the Somaliland constitution was in the process of being formalized and the country was governed under a National Charter, which had been enacted in the 1993 Borama conference. Both Mr. Saleban and Omar came from highly respected and influential families, and both of them posed a political threat to President Egal.

At the time, there were no specific rules or conditions in the National Charter about the procedure for electing the president, and the Guurti (the House of Elders) was the main body responsible for overseeing the election. According to some informants, in order to ensure his control over the electoral process President Egal nominated members to the Electoral Commission with the understanding o that in return they would come up with certain rules and conditions on the eligibility of presidential candidates. These rules and conditions were later incorporated into the National Constitution. Thus, Article 82 of the Constitution (The conditions for eligibility for election as President or Vice-President) states that *“to be elected as President or Vice-President...” the candidates “...must be a citizen of Somaliland by birth, and, notwithstanding residence as a refugee in another country, must not hold any other citizenship.”* Additionally, the rules stipulate that candidates *“...must be apprised of the realities of the country, having been resident in the country for a period of at least two years before the date when the election is scheduled to take place.”*

Both these conditions automatically disqualified Mr. Omar from running for presidency, as he had a British passport and had just returned from the diaspora. A third condition, which was meant to exclude Mr. Saleban’s from running, stated that the candidate’s spouse *“must be a Muslim”*. At the time, Mr. Salebaan was said to be married to an English non-Muslim person. These conditions were included in the National constitutions and remain in force even today. Similar restrictions can also be found in the Constitution of the Transitional Federal Government, although there are diaspora ministers in the TFG and many of the parliamentarians are from the diaspora. Moreover, although the above mentioned restrictions

still exist, participation of the diaspora in the political, economic and social sphere seems to be improving.

5. Linking the host country and the home country

The fieldwork data shows that Somalis in the diaspora interact differently with the home country. The first generation Somalis feel compelled to get involved in the country of origin, but their engagement is usually biased and often directed towards their own clan areas or regions. In times of war, contributing to one's clan to maintain its dominant status or to help off-set the balance of power in favor of one's own clan against previously dominant clans is seen a Somali's duty. Well-established connections to the homeland are required to maintain one's position. For many first generation Somalis the homeland linkage is the most critical determinant of their identity, and this leads them to maintain strong ties with Somalia. For instance, first generation Somalis are unlikely to miss the BBC Somali Service news and commentaries, and if they do miss it they will go around and enquire *"BBC maanta maxaay sheegtay?"* (What did the BBC say today?)

BBC Somali Service has been one of the key information channels that connect the Somali diaspora to the homeland. With a wide and diverse audience, BBC is also a potential channel for peace building, which is a common concern to most Somalis. Several other key issues help the first generation Somali diaspora to remain connected to their home country. The difficulties in adapting to the host countries – such as cultural barriers, high unemployment, fear that their descendents will lose their Somali culture and identity, and the frustrations and despair associated with their state of social exclusion – have encouraged first generation to preserve close connection with their country of origin (Danso 2001, 3). One interview participant underscored this point:

"I think many among the older Somalis feel responsible for the fact that their children have adopted so many non-Somali ways and feel it is their duty to try to keep the Somali culture strong...and ensure the connection to the homeland is constant and strong. However, the pressure on young people to stay true to their Somali roots can seem like a

cultural tug-of-war and this can have a huge negative impact on the life of young Somalis living outside Somalia.”⁴

Besides the issues mentioned above, the first generation’s close connections to the homelands serves several other purposes. Firstly, their regular contacts with clan members and friends keep them up to date with what is happening in the country of origin. This allows them to remain politically relevant in the home country. Secondly, such contacts allow them to act as go-betweens for clan elders and political leaders inside the home country and the members of the diaspora — and this insures they continue to be a focal point in the networks spanning the diaspora and leaders in Somalia. Thirdly, their connections both in the diaspora and inside Somalia have generated interest in the donor communities. The lack of security inside the country has made international travel to and from Somalia precarious, and this has forced the donor countries to increasingly rely on contacts in the diaspora for information on what is happening in the country, and issues affecting the implementation of programs. ⁵

6. Why the first and second generation diaspora have different attitudes towards homeland engagement?

As the interviews below show, it can be argued that the first generation Somalis are more politically involved than the second generation. Yet, their involvement cannot be characterized as positive or negative, as it depends very much on the circumstances in which the engagement occurs. One thing that clearly emerged from the interviews I had with first generation Somalis is that most of them thought it was obligatory to assist their clans during conflicts with other clans. As one interviewee pointed out *“when I receive a call for help from my clan elders and they tell me there has been a fight between our clan and another clan and they need help assistance, I feel it’s obligatory for me to answer that call. I am far from the fighting while other clan members are putting their lives on the line for me, so the least I can do is to help with financial so that they can buy food.”⁶*

⁴ Mohamed, a Somali father of six from Sweden, interviewed 27 November, 2009.

⁵ This is why some major donor organizations in Somalia (Mercy Corps Somalia, Norwegian Refugee Council, and IOM) are now headed by members of the Somali diaspora.

⁶ Bashir a diaspora from Norway. Interviewed June, 2009.

However, the first generation is quick to question assistance that transcends clan issues. A Finnish diaspora noted that *“If I raise money for lets say, drought appeal in Mogadishu, I don’t know if the money will be used by clan militias or not and because I am not 100 per cent sure where the money will go, I rather send it to my family or relatives. That way I am sure the money will be well spent, besides, there is a need everywhere, so it doesn’t matter where you send the money to.”*⁷

The second generation’s interventions in Somalia are more targeted and less tied to clans. The members of the second generation who took part in the interviews emphasized the collective needs and suffering of the Somali people. They did not feel it was necessary to blindly support their clans and thought it would be better for them to find solution to the inter-clan conflicts rather than support a particular clan. Apart from helping and contributing to the collective welfare of the Somali people, there often are also personal motives for their intervention. Most said that gaining work experience contributed to their interest to return. *“I just graduated from university and wanted to gain work experience. I thought Somalia was the ideal place for me because I could do two things at the same time. Firstly, I wanted to help my people who have gone through great suffering and secondly, I wanted to gain work experience.”*⁸

Whereas clan identity and politics are the entry points for the first generation, second generation involvement seems to combine the desire to help the home country with personal interest, such as career development. However, this doesn’t mean that clan identity does not matter for the second generation, or that they are apolitical. The majority of the second generation Somalis interviewed were educated, ambitious, and wanted to establish a stable foundation for themselves. The connection to their parent’s homeland exists, but it is often attenuated or very remote. For the second generation, their parents’ birthplace or homeland is somewhat imaginary, and home is associated with a variety of places. While the first generation is happy to consider themselves as part and parcel of the Somali diaspora, most second generation diaspora found the concept of diaspora delimits their experience and makes them aliens in the eyes of the host community. One of the interviewees protested by pointing out that *“there is something foreign and negative about the concept of diaspora. When you label*

⁷ Abdi, a diaspora from Finland, Interviewed November 2009.

⁸ Mohamud, a diaspora from Australia. Interviewed November 2009.

someone as diaspora you are telling him or her that you are foreigner and that you don't belong to the host country. It makes you feel you are different and outsider".⁹

Many of the young Somalis I interviewed think of themselves as British Somalis or Somali-Swedes or simply British or Swedish — and not Somalis in the diaspora. Samatar, a thirty-five year old Somali-American, complained that the concept of diaspora reminded him of the pictures of women and children fleeing from conflicts and people in refugee camps in Africa. *"I don't have these experiences"* he said ¹⁰. These young people are identifying themselves with roots that are not defined by one particular place or experience but by multiple homelands. Nasra, a 25-year old woman from the UK, argued that *"in terms of ethnicity I see myself as Somali but having grown up in the UK, culturally and in terms of nationality I view myself as being a mixture of British and Somali"*.¹¹

Such contrasts between the first and second generation help us understand the different motives at work, and why some members of the Somali diaspora may or may not intervene in the politics of their country of origin. Generally speaking, Somali diaspora contributions to the home country come in the form of direct or indirect assistance. These include a commitment to send remittances to families and relatives, and support for humanitarian and peacebuilding projects.

7. Diaspora contributions compared: The negative role of diaspora

In the absence of a strong government coupled with a large Somali diaspora abroad, and insurgent movements which exert a significant attraction for certain individuals, it is not surprising that current debates on the role of Somali diaspora center on whether their contribution to the homeland is positive or negative. As Mohamed, a lifetime member of the Somali National Movement (SNM) and one of my oldest informants explained, Somali diaspora have previously played a crucial supporting role for the insurgent movement:

"I spent 28 years in (UAE) before I came back to Somaliland... I was a lifetime member of the Somali National Movement (SNM). The UAE tolerated our activities and as a

⁹ Essa, a diaspora from Sweden, interviewed December 2009.

¹⁰ Samatar, a diaspora from America, interviewed July 2009.

¹¹ Nasra, a diaspora from the UK, interviewed, February 2010.

result, we had many activities supporting the SNM. For 15 years, I was a political chairman for the Somaliland diaspora in the UAE. We collected money, organized political meetings and arms for the SNM... we had regular contacts with SNM commanders in the field, who use to update us on the political situation. SNM was very much dependent on the diaspora... SNM and the diaspora were like car and petrol. For a car to move it needs petrol, for SNM to do anything they needed the diaspora.”¹²

Diaspora support for insurgencies and opposition movements can come in many forms: arms and money, as well as political support through fundraising, publicity, and propaganda. When asked for the main support the Somali diaspora seemed to be providing, Hersi, a diaspora man from the UAE, took the SNM as an example and explained:

“When SNM entered the country on May, 27th and May 31st 1988, we decided that the best way we can take part in the struggle was through financial contribution. Men and women from all over the world used to contribute... some even contributing to their complete monthly salary at times. There were some who used to get about \$7,000 per month and contributed their whole salaries. We used to send medicine, cars and medical equipments. As chairman, I remember when the contribution was one million USD, in one month. Our role was to collect contributions and send the money or what we bought to the homeland.”¹³

Such support can help insurgent movements and opposition groups to better recruit and fund their activities. For example, the Somali diaspora have played a role in helping the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), Hisbul-Islam, and Al-Shabaab with financial assistance, fighters, and continue to act as political representatives. These groups’ ability to appeal to members of the Somali diaspora and their representations may have helped them raise their profile, given them diplomatic advantage, improved their recruiting base, and made them operationally more effective.

However, as the recent arrests of Australian and Danish nationals of Somali origin in Australia and Denmark indicate, Western policy makers view the potential for recruiting members of

¹² Mohamed, a former diaspora from the UAE, interviewed September 2009.

¹³ Hersi, a diaspora from the UAE, interviewed September 2009.

Somali diaspora into groups such as Al-Shabaab as a major security problem. In addition to the Western nations' concerns, regional governments in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia are also worried about the threats emanating from Al-Shabaab. It is argued that Al-Shabaab and other insurgent groups could not have sustained their current level of hostility without outside support, and that the diaspora's involvement is also fueling the power struggle between the government and the opposition groups.

Jama, a Somali from Finland who supports one of insurgent groups in Somalia offered a glimpse into the opportunistic stance of some diaspora groups:

“During the Asmara meeting when ARS was formed, and also during the current Djibouti negotiations, we met regularly, presented our point of views to the ARS negotiating team. Our aim was to show them that while we support them, we wanted to be consulted and our ideas and perspectives are conveyed to the mediators... During the Asmara negotiations, they listened to us but in Djibouti, we felt they have betrayed and abandoned us... that is why we are not supporting Sheikh Sharif's government. Our ideas are now closer to Hisbul-Islam. We will not raise money or lobby for Sharif government anymore and we will oppose them.”¹⁴

The Somali diaspora has the skills and experience to positively contribute to their country of origin. Among them are highly skilled professionals who could contribute to the humanitarian, peace building, and developmental efforts with a primary focus on conflict resolution, health, and education; and through the formation of non-profit organizations throughout Somalia. They also have the necessary contacts in their countries of residence to fundraise and lobby for the home country, to organize public and private events in support of regional and national governments, and to help publicize humanitarian and human right problems in the home country.

¹⁴ Jama, a former diaspora from Finland, interviewed July 2009. ARS is abbreviation for the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia.

Two case studies

The Somali diaspora's engagement is, however, not always positive, and their involvement has both intended and unintended consequences. During a period of 15 months between December 2008 and April 2010, I followed two diaspora intervention programmes that have led to conflicts. The two brief examples appearing below illustrate the negative roles played by the Somali diaspora returnees, and how they can directly aggravate existing frictions. Both examples indicate the complexities of Somali conflicts and the blending of tribalism, personal rivalries and the role of natural resources (notably water and grazing land) in the Somali conflict.

While conducting a conflict mapping study in Eastern Somaliland in early 2009, a friend of mine who works for the Peace Initiative Program (PIP) brought to my attention two conflicts that were taking place in the region. Both cases involved members of the Somali diaspora. As we shall see below, the direct contribution of one of the returnees to an already tense and volatile situation was clearly intended to expand his clan's territory. The other case illustrates the unintended consequences of a well-intended project. The two conflicts were interesting also because the PIP program has taken both cases as part of their conflict resolutions intervention. Both those fueling the two conflicts and those trying to resolve them are members of the Somali diaspora, and this makes for a good case study, which demonstrates both the negative and the positive involvement of the Somali diaspora in homeland affairs. The two conflicts involve two Somali returnees: a Dhulbahante man from the UK, and a Sa'ad Yonis man from the United States. Both of them lived in the diaspora for decades, and during their absence the country has changed dramatically.

The Galgal case

Some years ago the Dhulbahante man sent money to Somaliland and asked his relatives to build a house and a borehole in his home town Galgal in Eastern Somaliland. Galgal is an expanse of dry land with a few wells that is inhabited by the Dhulbahante, a sub-clan of the Darood Harti clan, and the Habarjecllo, who are a sub-clan of the Isaq clan. It should be mentioned here that the Harti, the dominant clan of Puntland, and the Isaq, the main clan of Somaliland are party to a long-running border dispute. Many of the disputes in Galgal arise over the ownership of settlements and water sources, and Galgal is the site of many past

conflicts between these two clans. One of the most famous battles between the two clans took place in 1952 over the ownership of a water well. Thirteen people were killed and many more wounded. Since then, the Dhulbahante have always sought to establish their authority and claim Galgal as theirs; the Habarjeclo clan favors co-ownership of the area. After the 1952 fighting, the British colonial administration passed a decree banning the construction of any buildings or wells in Galgal. The ruling also stipulated that the existing wells were to be shared between the two clans. After independence the Somali government continued to enforce the colonial administration's decision. No incidents were reported for 56 years, until the decision by the Dhulbahante man to build the house re-ignited the hostility, pitting his clan against the Habarjeclo. The Habarjeclo saw this as a Dhulbahante attempt to reinforce their historical claim to the town.

Tradition dictates that the first clan to dig a well or construct a house in a location has the right to claim ownership of the area, but in Galgal the Dhulbahante and Habarjeclo are unable to agree on who owns the existing water wells and who were the first to settle Galgal. Anticipating a hostile reaction to the house construction project, the Dhulbahante brought their militias to secure the site and to ensure successful completion of the project.

The Habarjeclo responded by launching an attack to prevent the construction, but their efforts proved unsuccessful. Having failed to prevent the construction, a local man from the Habarjeclo clan began to work on a well not far from where the Dhulbahante man was building his house. Successful completion of the well would have automatically strengthened the Habarjeclo's historical position that the town belongs to both clans. However, the Habarjeclo man was unable to complete the project due to lack of funding. It is reported that the man migrated to Europe, where he is raising money to ensure Habarjeclo clan co-ownership of Galgal.

The Oog case

While the stand-off between the Dhulbahante and Habarjeclo militias continues in Galgal, a similar conflict was developing in Oog, a town located between Burao and Lasanod in the Sool region inhabited jointly by the Sa'ad Yonis sub-clan of the Habar Yonis and a Habarjeclo sub-clan, the Mohamed Abokor. In the course of establishing an agricultural project in Oog, the Sa'ad Yonis man from the United States unknowingly fenced off an area of disputed grazing land outside Oog. Given the lack of food in Somaliland, one might consider an agricultural

project like this as a blessing and not a source of clan antagonism. But water and grazing land ownership remain a major source of conflict between and within clans; if such conflicts are not resolved quickly they can easily degenerate into a circle of revenge killings.

Construction of water wells, dams, and establishment of farms — especially in disputed grazing lands — require careful negotiations and consensus by all clans that inhabit the area. It is unclear whether or not the diaspora man from the United States knew that the area he surveyed and identified was in fact a disputed clan border. What is known is that in 2008 the man returned to Oog with excavators and a plan to establish a farming business, and that without consulting the locals, he proceeded to fence a large area with the intention of establishing a maize and sorghum farm.

The Mohamed Abokor naturally objected to the initiative and immediately mobilized their militia and threatened to prevent him from going ahead with the project. They argued that the farm is situated in a disputed area between the two clans and is a grazing land shared by both clans. Over the decades, the site has been a centre of numerous claims and counter-claims by both clans over the control of the grazing land areas. Constant disputes and competition characterize the relationship between the clans, and the control of Oog and its surroundings areas continues to be a source of tension and conflict. However, local people – and especially the Sa’ad Yonis – argue that the man just wanted to produce food for his people, and that he was unaware of the deep-seated rivalry and competition between the two clans. Yet, the man was originally from the area and was able to build several houses for himself in Oog before he returned. This is an indication that he could not have been totally ignorant of the existing clan tensions and disputes.

Moreover, the Mohamed Abokor felt that the farming initiative was an attempt by the Sa’ad Yonis to expand their territorial claim over the disputed area, and as a result of mobilization by the Mohamed Abokor, the Sa’ad Yonis responded by mobilizing their own militia in support of the US diaspora man’s project and to assert his right to establish farming in the area.

Although well intended, the project revived the deep and bitter hatred between the two sub-clans and became a new flash point reactivating the simmering hostility between two clans who share a long border. The clans are also traditional political rivals, each supporting one of

Somaliland's two main political parties, UDUB and Kulmiye. This is in addition to the fact that for many decades, fencing grasslands for commercial or personal use has been a problem in Oog area, and local pastoralists have long resisted such commercialization for fear of losing pasturelands. The tension between the two clans is high and the Sa'ad Yonis man from the US is reportedly lobbying the Somaliland government to issue a farming license in an attempt to legalize his claim over the disputed land.

In the case of Galgal, the returnee from the diaspora knowingly inflamed the situation on the ground, but intervention by the PIP helped defuse the conflict. In the Oog example, the returnee clearly remained cognizant of basic opportunities to invest in his home area, but his 'local knowledge' of the dynamics on the ground had atrophied during his years in exile.

8. The positive role of diaspora

The role of diaspora as peacemakers is less-publicized in the current diaspora debate. As the case studies show the Somali diaspora has a potential role to contribute to peacebuilding and conflict resolution, good governance, strengthening local capacities for peacebuilding, supporting mediation between warring communities, and lobbying the international community to help resolve the violent conflict in their country of origin. When debating the linkage between diaspora and violent conflicts, the focus tends to be on providing funds for insurgent and opposition groups, political support through publicity, and lobbying for militants and insurgent groups, and recruitment for the latter (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, 3). As the Galgal and Oog cases demonstrate, the diaspora's involvement can be destructive, while the Somali diaspora's potential for positive involvement remains largely untapped. Unfortunately, the absence of unified and organized corps of Somalis in the diaspora combines with a lack of resources and political will to engage the conflicting parties, makes tapping on the Somali diaspora's potential a major challenge. However, the PIP case study below shows that systematic engagement of highly skilled diaspora in peace building activities can be successful.

The Peace Initiatives Program

The PIP is one of the few diaspora-initiated peace-building programs in Somalia; its core mission is to respond effectively to inter-clan conflicts through collaboration with religious, traditional

and regional leaders and use direct and indirect methods of conflict resolution. The program started in 2007 as a pilot project. In 2009 the PIP started working on eight inter-clan conflicts (five in Somaliland and three in Puntland), two of which have already been successfully mediated.

The program starts by identifying and selecting ongoing conflicts where it can engage. The work begins with analysis of the conflict, the issues, and contact with the parties involved. This is followed by organizing separate meetings with the conflicting parties designed to ease tensions and mistrust between the parties. The peace workers then help set up a mediating and facilitating group composed of religious and traditional leaders acceptable to the warring parties. The list of facilitators and mediators usually comes from the opposing parties. The PIP then invites the leaders of the warring parties to a joint workshops dealing with methods of conflict resolutions, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. Such seminars and workshops allow the leaders of the conflicting parties to informally network; participants sleep in the same hotel where they eat and pray together. At times, when the courses of the conflicts are complex and the parties do not want to share the same space, PIP staff and religious and traditional leaders recruited by PIP meet the warring parties separately. Most of the diaspora members working with the Program have no formal training in peacebuilding techniques, but they do have the all-important capacity to develop practical techniques based on their local knowledge and the use of religious and Somali customary law (*Xeer*) to solve conflicts.

The PIP engagement in Galgal and Oog

In early 2009, PIP started a conflict mapping initiative and concluded that both Dhulbahante and Habarjeclo on the one hand and Mohamed Abokor and Sa'ad Yonis were raising money to strengthen their respective claims to ownership of Galgal and the disputed grazing land which was to be turned into maize and sorghum farm in Oog. *"It's clear that both Dhulbahante and Habarjeclo in Galgal and Mohamed Abokor and Sa'ad Yonis in Oog are arming their own militias and collecting money from clan members in the diaspora. It is a pity that members of our Somali diaspora community are collecting money from fellow clan members in the diaspora for the continuation of conflict in Galgal. This is unfortunate because those who are contributing to this*

conflict have themselves fled overseas because of the conflict, where they continue waging war from their comfort zone”, explained Salim, a PIP staff member.¹⁵

As a result of the conflict mapping, the PIP decided to mediate the Galgal and Oog conflicts. During the course of the past one and a half years, the PIP team has brought together a mediating team composed of religious and clan elders and local administration officials from the two opposing clans. In Galgal, the Dhulbahante clan submitted a proposal urging the Habarjeclo clan to cede ownership of Galgal to the Dhulbahante clan. The Habarjeclo elders rejected the proposal. However, with the help of the PIP, clan elders and religious leaders, the parties have agreed to demilitarize Galgal and Oog and to stop any construction until a final agreement is reached. The parties also appointed a monitoring and implementation team and planned to meet again in May 2010. Although there are no breakthroughs yet, the PIP was given the mandate to facilitate mediations and a series of mediation meetings are scheduled to take place in 2010. The PIP have also organized conflict and mediation training for the mediating team, and several mediation and conflict resolution interventions for the mediation team are scheduled to take place in 2010.

While the Somali diaspora subsumes the capacity to make a significant contribution to rebuilding the war-torn country, the two case studies clearly demonstrate that the potential impact of individuals and groups is contingent and depends upon their awareness of traditional social protocols and local politics. Additionally, the PIP case shows that organized interventions have to partner with traditional leaders to be effective. For Somalis, proper grasp of their society’s group dynamics will remain the key prerequisite for participation in grass-roots affairs for the foreseeable future

This also highlights the role of the Somali diaspora members as agent of change in their communities. In the case of PIP, their influence and the potential impact of their peace building role seems to derive from their societal knowledge, which also conditions how returnees are perceived within their communities. For the most part, the domestic opinion of the Somali diaspora is positive; this imbues the Somali diaspora with the legitimacy critical to engage in peace building. Unlike non-Somali experts whose presence is considered temporary, members

¹⁵ Salim, interviewed October 2009.

of Somali diaspora are members of their communities who have a stake in their daily struggles. Such ready acceptance is also due to the fact that the majority of Somalis outside the country have lost loved ones, or know of someone who has been killed, raped, or witnessed atrocities in the civil war. This gives them the moral authority to speak against the continuation of the conflict: as one member of the Somali diaspora observed, they have the experience, skills and the commitment to *“turn the tide of conflict and mistrust between conflicting communities upside down”*.¹⁶

The past 20 years have witnessed intractable conflict, humanitarian crises, and human rights abuses. The cyclical violence and unrelenting tension makes Somalia a difficult place to work. Members of the diaspora under study have left their comfort zones in Europe to help restore peace in their communities with full knowledge that they risk their lives. If their motivation for working in Somalia varies, their commitment to help find a durable solution to the violence and the continuing humanitarian crises has enabled them to transcend the risks to their personal safety.

9. Challenges to diaspora involvement

The fieldwork data also indicates that there are numerous challenges that could potentially limit diaspora engagement in Somalia. Research shows that diaspora’s ability to interact with their original homeland is subject to limitations. Interviewees reiterated that security was a major challenge faced by the diaspora. Even in relatively peaceful areas such as Somaliland and Puntland, there are restrictions on expatriates’ (such as the PIP team) movements within main towns such Hargeisa and Bosaso; the restrictions are even tougher when traveling outside main towns where security guards are needed. Especially those diaspora working for international organizations (IOs) in Somaliland and Puntland have to follow strict security guidelines. In Somaliland there is a strict requirement that at least one security car with an armed Special Protection Unit (SPU) car has to accompany diaspora expatriates visiting program areas. In Puntland two SPU cars are required. Since the number plate of IO cars is different (red), there are fears that diaspora members working for IOs can be an easy target. Some INGO’s operating in Somaliland and Puntland have also a requirement that the organization’s and sometimes also

¹⁶ Abdul, interviewed November 2009.

the donor's logos must be placed on their cars. Such high visibility increases the risk of becoming a target, and the PIP team – whose programme area is situated far from the main populated centers – has reported two security related cases.

The other main risk relates to programming. Fieldwork data indicates that peace building, advocacy and human right related work are at greater risk of being targeted than livelihood programmes:

“When you are implementing human rights, advocacy or peace building programmes, people tend to question your motives. It’s even more complex when you are mediating inter-clan conflicts... and the picture becomes even messier if the root causes of the conflict you are trying to mediate are many, such as the Oog conflict, where in addition to inter-clan rivalries there is a political dimension. If you want to be successful in your mediation, you have to behave neutral to all parties involved.”¹⁷

Although some restrictions exist, it can be argued that the situation has changed and the region is more conducive to diaspora engagement than before. Since the strong men that served under Siad Barre or in the opposition, and the warlords who dominated much of South-Central Somalia have either passed away or lost influence, educated and experienced diaspora members seem to be gaining ground. Local and international attitudes are slowly changing and diaspora are today represented in all levels of government, in the opposition and in the civil service.

Another embedded challenge derives from the fact that the Somali are deeply divided along clan-lines. The wounds of Somalia's inter-clan conflict are still fresh, and the bitter memories are still standing in the way of the Somali diaspora's wish to unite and speak with one voice. This problem is aggravated by the fact that a sizable number of Somalis in the diaspora have personally experienced the civil war and thus retain memories of clan atrocities, making it difficult for them to trust other clans. Suspicion, hatred, and rivalries between clan members in Somalia continue to affect Somalis in the diaspora in a manner making it difficult for them to plant the seeds of any viable diaspora networks or institutions. As a result, there are few lobbies or pressure groups that can effectively organize, address, and work on behalf of peace

¹⁷ Osman, a PIP staff member from Finland, interviewed January 2010.

either in the host or the home country. The Somali are yet to form effective diaspora pressure groups along the lines of the Irish-American, Jewish, Armenian and other diaspora communities' lobbies that empower activists to mobilize and increase the voice of the respective diasporas. Therefore, if they are to play a more positive role in the conflict in Somalia, the Somali diaspora needs to find ways and means to overcome their divisions, mobilize their potential, and unite their voices.¹⁸

A large section of the Somali population benefits from remittances from the diaspora, estimated to be one billion USD annually (Pérouse de Montclos 2003). Despite sending a huge amount of remittances, the financial contribution of the diaspora is not complemented with unified lobbying and publicity efforts, which are potentially so important for influencing their leaders in the home country and the policy makers in the host countries.

The negative perceptions associated with diaspora are another problem. My discussion with Raqia, a diaspora from the US highlighted the difficulties facing diaspora in adjusting and blending with the mainstream. She told me that:

*"...the irony is that the Somalis here started to criticize my weak Somali connection. I said to myself: why they are criticizing me while people here are killing each other. They all have this romanticized notion of Somalia, even my dad wanted to come back for a long time ... When I went back to the States, I was very frustrated and angry about the situation and things that I witnessed and I wanted to do something. I started reading about the war. When I was growing up, we use to talk about clans, politics, and the war in Somalia at home but I never understood it. Coming here three years ago, was a culture shock....I do not have any other way to describe it. But the culture shock is now behind me, and I have come to see what I can do to help. I have some relatives and extended family members here and I have been supporting them, sending them money since I met them three years ago. But while sending a few hundred dollars every month really helps individual families, I wanted to do more. I am a nurse and with my skills I can reach and help more people. That is why I am here."*¹⁹

¹⁸ See also Hopkins 2006, 368.

¹⁹ Raqia, a diaspora from the US, interviewed February and March 2010.

Raqia's story is similar to the stories of other young Somalis who have come back to their homeland to learn more about their culture and identities while also contributing something. Some of them returned after a long stay in the diaspora, for others it was their first time. For those who chose to return, fitting in has not been easy. In an online interview Salma Ali, a twenty-two years-old woman from Cardiff, recalled her experience when she returned to Somaliland after sixteen years in the UK: *“People immediately see you’re different. They think we walk too fast... no matter how much we try to dress traditionally; they can tell we’re from abroad. You can’t blend in, so you get teased but not in a nasty way... we get called the “in-betweens.”*²⁰

Another interviewee added that: *“Being a Somali of the diaspora is a bit like being displaced, you do not really feel as though you truly belong anywhere. You are not quite accepted fully by the host country: even if you're born there you would still be viewed as a foreigner. Similarly, you are also not fully accepted by Somalis back home”.*²¹ Combined, all these factors limit the power of the Somali diaspora to actively engage in peace building efforts. Despite these limitations, diaspora’s ability to influence political leaders in their homeland remains strong. The study of Terrence Lyons (2004, 10-12) shows that diasporas possess enormous resources and are able to greatly influence political leaders in the home country:

“Exiles often have greater access to the media and the time, resources, and freedom to articulate and circulate a political agenda than actors in the conflicted homeland. The cost of refusing to accept a compromise is often low (if the diaspora members are well-established in the host countries) and the rewards from demonstrating steadfast commitment to the cause is high (both in personal/psychological terms but also as a mechanism of social mobilization)... If a diaspora group shifts its support from the most militant leaders and organizations engaged in the homeland conflict towards a position that supports the leaders and movements seeking peace, then an important factor that makes conflicts more difficult to resolve can be reduced... Diasporas have the potential

²⁰ Salma’s interview was not part of the interviews I conducted. It is a separate interview conducted by Abbie Wightwick for Wales Online in 2009.

²¹ Ismail, a Canadian diaspora, interviewed June 2009.

to be source of ideas and support for peace making as well as forces making conflicts more protracted”.

A case in point is the Somali diaspora and its relation with the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). The diaspora overwhelmingly supported the ICU — before this gave way to disagreement between Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed’s government and sections of the Somali diaspora on the implementation of the 2008 Djibouti agreement. The disagreement between the diaspora and government deepened when the government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Kenya on the demarcation of sea borders between the two countries. The Somali diaspora argued that the Somali government had betrayed its mandate by giving away land to Kenya. Already suspicious of the Djibouti agreement, the Somali diaspora have since characterized the deal with Kenya as an illegitimate if not illegal land transfer.

One should, however, also be mindful of treating diasporas as a uniform phenomenon. As Abdullah Mohamoud (2005, 2, 4) notes, *“contrary to the dominant perception, the ‘meddling’ of the diasporas in the politics of their home countries is not always negative. The simple fact that the diasporas are not monolithic entities means that diverse political views and strategies of engagement are brought to the politics of their homelands”*. As noted above, the active involvement of the Somali diaspora has exerted positive impacts in some parts of Somaliland by providing critical support for the process of restoring order and political stability.

10. Conclusions

Members of the Somali diaspora can make and have been making significant contributions to developments in their home country. Drawing on the interviews with the Somali diaspora, a number of conclusions can be made. As the Galgal and Oog cases illustrate, diaspora can play a negative role. Their involvement can trigger new conflicts or re-ignite old tensions. But they can also play positive role. The role played by the PIP staff demonstrates their potential for constructive engagement. The PIP involvement shows not only that there is a willingness on the part of the diaspora to engage in peacebuilding activities; they also have the expertise (both local and international knowledge) to manage and resolve conflicts. The systematic involvement of PIP, not as an individual effort but as an organized group of professionals from the diaspora, seems to indicate a working model for future diaspora engagement in peace

building. Nevertheless, diaspora's peace building activities are restricted by a number of issues. Lack of security was considered to be the main challenge faced by the diaspora. Somalia's civil war has divided the country into clan enclaves and due to the continuing clan rivalries and hostilities it is difficult to establish or verify diaspora engagement in areas outside the main cities, such as Hargeisa, Bosaso, and Buro. The situation was even more difficult in the South-Central region, which was inaccessible. Additionally, the lack of credible incentives to attract diaspora participation, coupled with political restrictions such as the requirement that the spouse of a potential presidential candidate must be a Muslim and the candidate must have resided in the country for at least two years were clearly intended to limit the diaspora's engagement in politics.

Moreover, the generation gap translates into differing priorities for the first and the second generation in the diaspora, who seek to influence the homeland politics in different ways. Some of the tentative conclusions offered here show that the first generation diaspora feel a sense of loss, isolation and threat by the cultural values of the host countries, and remain dedicated to an eventual return to the home country. For the second generation diaspora, things are not as simple or straight forward. They described themselves as having diverse roots and hybrid identities. Almost all those interviewed reported a combined sense of loyalties to their parents' homeland and to their homes in Britain, Canada, the US, and Finland, making their sense of loyalty more complex and their stance on the issues straddling their multi-national birthright more complicated and nuanced.

Therefore, the social bases of identity construction will continue to be a factor both at home and abroad. At one time observers had good reason to expect that Somalis in the diaspora will be the critical actors and the best basis for transcending the nation's clan fragmentation. As the data presented here indicates, this hypothesis cannot, however, be taken for granted. For the Somalis of the diaspora who have successfully adjusted to conditions in their new homes or have grown up accepting the benefits of their dual nationality, this remains a realistic objective. But the same cannot be said for others, whose experience makes them sympathetic to the radical Islamist version of Somali nationalism.

References

- Cohen, Robin (1997). *Global diasporas: An introduction*. London: UCL Press
- Cohen, Robin (2001). Diaspora. In Neil Smelser and Paul Baltes (eds), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. Elsevier Ltd.
- Danso, Ransford (2001). From 'there' to 'here': An investigation of the initial settlement experiences of Ethiopian and Somali refugees in Toronto, *GeoJournal* 55.
- Hopkins, Gail (2006). Somali community organizations in London and Toronto: Collaboration and effectiveness, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19 (3).
- Farah, Osman, Mammo Muchie and Joakim Gundel, (eds) (2007). *Somalia: Diaspora and State Reconstruction In The Horn Of Africa*. London: Adonis & Abbey Publishers Ltd.
- Lehmann, Sophia (1998). In search of a mother tongue: Locating home in diaspora. *MELUS* 23 (3).
- Lyons, Terrence (2004). *Engaging diaspora to promote conflict resolution: Transforming hawks into doves*. Arlington: Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University. www.tamilnation.org/conflictresolution/lyons.pdf
- Mohamoud, Abdullah A. (2005). Untapped potential for peacebuilding in the homelands. People Building Peace II. <http://www.peoplebuildingpeace.org/thestories/article.php?typ=theme&id=108&pid=25>
- Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine (2003). A refugee diaspora: When Somalis go west. In Koser, K. (ed.) *New African Diaspora*. London: Routledge.
- Safran, William (1991). Diasporas in modern societies: Myths of homeland and return, *Diaspora* 1 (1).
- Samatar, Abdi Ismail (1989). *The state and rural transformation in Northern Somalia, 1884-1986*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Schulz, Helena and Juliane Hammer (2003). *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of identities and politics of homeland*. London: Routledge.
- Wightwick, Abbie (2009). Having two countries is the best. *WalesOnline*, South Wales Echo, 18 May, 2009.
- Østergaard-Nielsen, Eva, (2003). *Transnational politics: Turks and Kurds in Germany*. London: Routledge.