

Chapter 11

Knowledge and Skills Transfer as Peace– Building Mechanisms: A Study of the Somali Diaspora

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ABSTRACT

Somalia has been involved in a prolonged war that commenced in the 1990s, and millions of her citizens have fled their homeland in search of protection and safety in other countries, particularly in the West. This chapter therefore examined the Somali diasporas with particular focus on their levels of knowledge and skills transfer as contributions to peace and nation building in their homeland. It also examined how their engagement on issues such as transnational networking, remittances, investments in the economy and education, media development, advocacy, politics and governance, as well as humanitarian endeavors have helped build capacities in the country. The chapter highlights the opportunities and challenges faced by Somali diasporas, especially the uncertain security atmosphere in the country.

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INTRODUCTION

Somalis have been fleeing and seeking refuge and protection in the West, since the outbreak of civil war in their country in the 1990s. Many of these refugees and their children have gained enormous skills and expertise in their host countries, especially in those in the European Union, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Incidentally, some of these Somalis in the diaspora are now returning to their homeland and contributing to nation-building, although a greater percentage of them still reside abroad. Some of the returnees provide needed expertise in education, business, humanitarian and technology that are not available in the country, with the overall aim of rebuilding the war-ravaged nation.

This chapter essentially explores the knowledge, expertise and skills transfer mechanisms through which Somalis in the diaspora, and those who have already returned home, can contribute to the development of their conflict-affected homeland. In this regard, the chapter will highlight the activities of some organizations engaged in rebuilding Somali, such the UK-based Global Somali Diaspora (GSD), and the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS) based in Somalia.

The overall objectives in this chapter are to:

- Examine forms of diaspora's knowledge and skills transfer and their different impacts on recovery, peacebuilding, and development.
- Explore the impact of diaspora's intergenerational and circumstantial differences (voluntary or involuntary) on their role in peacebuilding and development in the long term.
- Understand the importance of Somali diaspora's contribution to peace building and development through knowledge, skills and capacity transfer.
- Identify patterns of projects, and programs undertaken by Somali diaspora and how these activities contribute to peace building and social development.

In this chapter, "Somali diaspora" refers to Somalis living outside Somalia and the Horn of Africa region, particularly those living Western countries (Ismail, 2011).

Conceptualising Diaspora: An Examination of Literature

Diaspora is a complex term without a generally agreeable definition among scholars. It has multiple definitions, "based on contexts, origins and the differing natures of diasporas" (Osman, 2017, p. 35). Safran (1991, p. 83-84) conceptualized it as

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