

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

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This research study focuses on peacebuilding engagements of Somalia diaspora. The researcher has studied the activities of about 40 Somali diaspora returnees from Britain, Sweden, Finland, Norway, North America, Australia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) who have permanently returned or went to Somaliland/Puntland for short or extended assignments. These returnees are part of a bigger number of educated and skilled diaspora members who have returned to Somaliland and Puntland to assist on peacebuilding and development efforts. Beginning with the assumption that the diaspora has a peacebuilding[1]: 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 in the homeland by Somali diaspora. The second comprises two examples of diaspora returnee's interventions that aggravated long-standing intra and inter-clan conflicts. role to play but can also be wreckers, this study seeks to answer several research questions

A key finding of this study is that there are variations in perception between the second and first generation Somalis' engagement in the homeland. The two groups differs not only the types of interventions they could undertake but also the reasons and nature of engagement in the home country or their ancestral homeland. For the first generation the homeland linkage is the most critical determinant of their identity, yet, their involvement cannot be characterized as positive or negative, as it depends very much on the circumstances in which the engagement occurs. 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 delimiting their experience and makes them aliens in the eyes of the host community.

Another finding of the study is that the level of diaspora peacebuilding engagement depends on the degree to which Somalis feel they have integrated and levels of satisfaction with the conditions in the host country. 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 individuals, organizations, government departments and political parties in Puntland and Somaliland who have directly or indirectly benefited from diaspora engagements.

[1] 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.