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A close-up photograph of a person's face, focusing on the eye and hand. The person has dark skin and a dark eye. A hand with light skin is visible, with fingers gently touching the person's face. The image is partially obscured by white geometric shapes that create a dynamic, abstract composition.

## **Somali Diaspora Groups in Sweden**

– Engagement in Development and Relief Work in the Horn of Africa

# Somali Diaspora Groups in Sweden

– Engagement in Development and Relief  
Work in the Horn of Africa

Nauja Kleist

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# Preface

Somalia is “a truly globalized nation” with about 1.5 million people (15 percent of the Somali population) living outside the Somali region. The Somali diaspora is actively engaged in transnational activities such as sending of remittances to family and kin. As a country Somalia is struggling with continuous security, development and humanitarian challenges. These difficulties make Somalia a significant recipient of international development aid and humanitarian aid. Today the Somali diaspora has been targeted as a recipient group, both as part of general NGO-funding mechanisms for development for special diaspora support initiatives, such as the Forum Syd’s Somalia Diaspora Programme in Sweden. In this work the Somali diaspora networks have emerged as new development actors and potential partners for development aid agencies.

The aim of this report is to examine Somali-Swedish diaspora engagement in development and relief work, with a focus on what drives, motivates, challenges and supports it. An equally important objective is to provide a general understanding about possibilities and pitfalls when involving diaspora groups – migrants, refugees and their descendants – in development assistance, relief and conflict-resolution activities.

The author of the study is Nauja Kleist, Senior Researcher and Ph.D. in sociology, Danish Institute for International Studies, Denmark. She works with international migration and has studied Somali diaspora mobilization in Sweden, Denmark and the UK.

External reviewers of the report have been Marta Bivand Erdal, Ph.D in Human Geography and Professor at PRIO, Norway and Charlotte Melander, Ph.D in Social Work, Gothenburg University, Sweden. The work on this report has been followed by Annika Sundén, member of Delmis Board of Directors, and Associate Professor in economics and Chief Analyst at the Swedish Employment Service. Annika previously held the position as Chief Economist at the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

At Delmi, the Delegation Secretaries Caroline Tovatt, Ph.D and Constanza Vera-Larrucea, Ph.D have contributed to the review. As usual in the Delmi context, the authors are responsible for the content, results and policy recommendations of the report.

It is our hope that the report will provide an inspiration for discussions as well as for future research about involving diaspora groups in international development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

Stockholm, April 2018

Joakim Palme,  
Delmi Chair

Kristof Tamas,  
Head of Delmi Secretariat

# Summary

This report examines Somali-Swedish diaspora engagement in development and relief. It analyses what drives, motivates, challenges, constrains and supports such involvement, including the working relationship between diaspora actors and the Swedish development industry. With about 95,000 persons of Somali descent living in Sweden, there is a high level of transnational engagement and a large number of Somali-Swedish associations, making Sweden an interesting case country. Furthermore, Somalia is a significant partner country for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), including two diaspora support programmes that offer co-funding for diaspora activities: the Somalia Diaspora Programme (SDP) and the Swedish-Somali Business Programme (SSBP), both administered by the civil society platform Forum Syd.

Based on interviews with Somali-Swedish diaspora actors and SIDA and Forum Syd development professionals, the report focuses on perceptions and practices as they are articulated from different positions in Sweden. It approaches diaspora engagement in a heuristic way, with attention to global dispersal as well as to ambivalent narratives of identification and belonging. Indeed, one of the findings of the study is that there are potential overlaps between diaspora actors, the development industry, and local (return) populations in the Somali region, rather than “the diaspora” as an easily identifiable and heterogeneous group.

The report shows that Somali-Swedish diaspora engagement is characterized by diversity and flexibility, reflecting a strong civil society engagement in both Sweden and the Somali region, often simultaneously. Development actors range from households to numerous registered associations, as well as global networks, mosques, businesses and individual initiatives. Development activities focus on health, education, sustainable livelihoods and environment, gender equality, human rights and democracy, and drought relief.

Many interlocutors are involved in several types of engagement, as development and relief activities are additional to individual remittances, which constitute a primary obligation for most adult Somali-Swedes. Indeed, some diaspora actors are active at three levels: as entrepreneurs who organize projects, as capacity developers who are engaged in knowledge transfer, and as sources and conveyors of resources. This intensity goes hand in hand with the underlying motivations for involvement: a sense of moral obligation and urgency, embedded in established social and economic support networks as well as Islamic charity practices. Political and professional ambitions may play a motivating role as well.

Given the scope of SIDA involvement in the Somali region and the intensity of diaspora engagement, there are mutual opportunities and interests shared by Somali-Swedish diaspora actors and the development industry. Goodwill towards Sweden and opportunities for diaspora influence in the Somali region in regard to lobbying and “street-level diplomacy” promoting Swedish interests and values were highlighted by both groups. Yet diaspora engagement is also characterized by tensions and differentiated positions. First, regarding whether Swedish development priorities are the most appropriate in the Somali region; second, widespread criticism of extensive application, accounting and reporting procedures in diaspora support programmes.

Based on this analysis, the report makes the following policy recommendations:

- Acknowledge the contributions, diversity and heterogeneity of Somali-Swedish engagement in development and relief and avoid one-size-fits-all models.
- Intensify policy consultation and dialogue, taking into consideration that collaboration constitutes potential opportunities for development agencies and diaspora actors alike.
- Build on the existing engagement of diaspora groups and recognize that development contributions may go hand in hand with other obligations and priorities.
- Upscale diaspora support initiatives with a focus on long-term engagement, faster decision-making processes and simpler application and re-

porting procedures.

- Introduce a higher degree of flexibility in institutional diaspora support programmes and consider combining a rights-based approach with support for reconstruction, service delivery and humanitarian activities.
- Further transnational mobility as a means of knowledge transfer. Consider (partial) coverage of salaries of diaspora professionals when they engage in long-term capacity development in the Somali region.
- Reach out to new actors. While important, registered associations are not the only diaspora actor, and the role of unregistered networks using social media for resource mobilization, as well as of individual entrepreneurs and businesspersons, is likely to grow.



# Sammanfattning

I denna rapport granskas den svensksomaliska diasporans engagemang för utveckling och katastrofhjälp i Somalia. I rapporten analyseras vad som driver, motiverar, utmanar, hindrar och stöder detta engagemang, däribland samarbetet mellan diasporaaktörer och den svenska utvecklingsindustrin. I Sverige bor det omkring 95 000 personer av somaliskt ursprung. Det finns ett stort gränsöverskridande intresse för att bidra och många svensksomaliska föreningar, vilket gör Sverige till ett intressant fall att studera. Dessutom är Somalia ett viktigt partnerland för Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbete (Sida), som bland annat har två stödprogram som erbjuder medfinansiering av diasporagruppernas verksamhet, Somalia Diaspora Programme (SDP) och Swedish-Somali Business Programme (SSBP). Båda administreras av Forum Syd, som är en plattform för det civila samhället.

Rapporten bygger på intervjuer med aktörer inom den svensksomaliska diasporan och utvecklingsarbetare från Sida och Forum Syd. Fokus ligger på de olika uppfattningar och metoder som förs fram från olika håll i Sverige. I rapporten undersöks diasporans engagemang ur ett heuristiskt perspektiv, som lyfter fram den globala spridningen av nätverk och ambivalenta berättelser om identifiering och tillhörighet. En av slutsatserna i studien är att det finns potentiella överlappningar mellan diasporaaktörer, utvecklingsindustrin och lokala (återvändande) befolkningsgrupper i den somaliska regionen, snarare än "diasporan" som en lätt identifierbar och heterogen grupp.

Rapporten visar att den svensksomaliska diasporans engagemang kännetecknas av mångfald och flexibilitet, vilket återspeglar ett starkt engagemang från det civila samhället i både Sverige och den somaliska regionen, ofta samtidigt. Utvecklingsaktörerna är alltifrån hushåll och individuella initiativ, till otaliga registrerade föreningar, globala nätverk, moskéer och företag. Utvecklingsinsatserna är inriktade på hälsa, utbildning, hållbara försörjningsmöjligheter, miljö, jämställdhet

mellan kvinnor och män, mänskliga rättigheter och demokrati, samt katastrofhjälp vid torka.

Många av de intervjuade personerna är inblandade i flera typer av insatser, eftersom utvecklings- och katastrofhjälpinsatser sker vid sidan om de individuella remitteringar som utgör en grundläggande skyldighet för de flesta vuxna svensksomalier. Några av diasporans aktörer verkar på tre nivåer: som entreprenörer som organiserar projekt, som kapacitetsutvecklare som arbetar med kunskapsöverföring och som källor till och förmedlare av resurser. Detta intensiva arbete går hand i hand med de motiv som ligger till grund för insatserna: en känsla av moralisk skyldighet och angelägenhet som genomsyrar etablerade sociala och ekonomiska stödnätverk samt islamisk välgörenhetspraxis. Andra motiv kan vara politiska och professionella ambitioner.

Med tanke på Sidas omfattande arbete i den somaliska regionen och diasporans intensiva arbete har svensksomaliska diasporaaktörer och utvecklingsindustrin ömsesidiga möjligheter och intressen. Båda grupper lyfte fram goodwill gentemot Sverige och diasporans möjlighet till inflytande i den somaliska regionen i form av lobbyverksamhet och diplomati på gatunivå som främjar svenska intressen och värderingar. Trots det kännetecknas diasporans arbete även av spänningar och meningsskiljaktigheter. Det handlar för det första om huruvida de svenska utvecklingsprioriteringarna är de mest lämpade i den somaliska regionen och för det andra om att det finns en utbredd kritik mot de omfattande ansöknings-, redovisnings- och rapporteringsförfaranden som förekommer inom de program som ska stödja diasporans verksamhet.

Baserat på denna analys presenteras i rapporten följande policyrekommendationer:

- Erkänn de svensksomaliska insatsernas bidrag, mångfald och olikheter i samband med utvecklings- och katastrofhjälpinsatser och undvik stelbenta standardmodeller.
- Öka de politiska samråden och den politiska dialogen, med tanke på att samarbete kan innebära möjligheter för både utvecklingsorgan och diasporaaktörer.

- Bygg vidare på diasporagruppernas befintliga arbete och inse att utvecklingsinsatser kan gå hand i hand med andra skyldigheter och prioriteringar.
- Skala upp initiativen för stöd till diasporagruppernas arbete med fokus på långsiktigt engagemang, snabbare beslutsfattande och enklare ansöknings- och rapporteringsförfaranden.
- Öka flexibiliteten i institutionella program till stöd för diasporagruppernas arbete och överväg att kombinera en rättighetsbaserad strategi med stöd till återuppbyggnad, samhällsservice och humanitära insatser.
- Främja gränsöverskridande rörlighet som ett sätt att sprida kunskap. Överväg att (delvis) finansiera diasporaarbetarnas löner när de arbetar med långsiktig kapacitetsutveckling i den somaliska regionen.
- Nå ut till nya aktörer. Även om registrerade föreningar är viktiga är de inte de enda diasporaaktörerna och oregistrerade nätverk som använder sig av sociala medier för att samla in resurser och enskilda entreprenörer och affärspersoner kommer sannolikt att få allt större betydelse.

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# Acronyms

ABF	Arbetarnas bildningsförbund (Workers' Educational Association)
AFFORD	African Foundation for Development
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
CIVSAM	SIDA's Unit for Support to Civil Society
DEMAC	Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographic Information System
GNI	Gross National Income
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
POS	Political Opportunity Structures
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDP	Somalia Diaspora Programme
SFG	Somali Federal Government
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIRC	Somali International Rehabilitation Centre
SSBP	Swedish-Somali Business Programme
TB	Tuberculosis
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

# 1. Introduction

Our idea was to start a farming cooperative in the area. At first, we talked with the old men, as you do there. We didn't want to spend our money on a hotel, so we went to sit under a big tree. Then women came, younger men came, children came; we were all seated under that tree. We informed them about cooperatives and that they should choose their own leaders for the board. Afterwards we supported their meetings, teaching them and giving them ideas. They still have the cooperative.

## Diaspora contributions to development

In 2014, a Somali-Swedish delegation spent some time in a rural Somali village to promote sustainable development. Recalling how they gathered under a big tree, planting the seeds of cooperative farming, so to speak, still filled the chairman of the association with joy. Now sitting in a café in Kista Galleria, a large shopping centre in a suburb of Stockholm, he shared his views on how his association can support environment protection in the Somali region, the various challenges and opportunities it entails, and his visions for the future. He was, in other words, talking about diaspora engagement.<sup>1</sup>

In a time of protracted conflicts, diaspora engagement in development and relief is as important as ever. Though often contested, diaspora groups – migrants, refugees and their descendants – have been recognized as development actors in policy circles since the early 2000s (Sørensen, van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen 2002). Most attention has been paid to remittances sent to developing countries, whose volume is triple that of official development assistance (ODA). However, disaster relief and development projects, including the circulation of skills, ideas and know-how, are significant contributions as well. The above example of discussing the

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1. The author is grateful to Abdirashid Mohamed Abdi for research assistance and to all interlocutors for their time, help and kindness



benefits of a Swedish-style farming cooperative while sitting under a big tree in a Somali village is an evocative one, with its embeddedness in both Scandinavian and Somali traditions of organization. Certainly, not all ideas work out according to plan and not all encounters between diaspora groups and local populations take place in the shadow of a big tree. Nevertheless, diaspora groups have emerged as development and humanitarian actors in their own right, not least from war-torn and post-conflict countries. Their engagement is not likely to diminish in the coming years, quite the contrary. It is therefore important to gain an insight into the dynamics of such involvement.

This report examines Somali-Swedish diaspora engagement in development and relief, with a focus on what drives, motivates, challenges, constrains and supports it. With about 1.5 million people or 15 per cent of the Somali population living outside the Somali region, Somalis are “a truly globalized nation” (UNDP Somalia 2009, 3), with a high level of transnational activities. This includes the sending of remittances to family and kin, estimated to reach USD 1.3–1.5 billion in 2014 (Halane 2015) and described as a lifeline for Somali society. Collective engagement is significant as well, with the involvement of various types of Somali diaspora associations, informal networks, business people, return migrants, including politicians, among others (Hammond et al. 2011; Hansen 2007; Horst 2013, 2015).

While most Somalis in Western countries live in the UK, US and Canada, Sweden is home to 63,853 persons born in Somalia (Statistiska Centralbyrån 2016a), or more than 95,000 persons of Somali descent if descendants and naturalized citizens are included. This is the highest number of Somalis in Scandinavia. As in many other countries of Somali settlement, the level of transnational engagement is high, as is the number of Somali associations (Carlson et al. 2014; Danström, Kleist and Sørensen 2015; Horst et al. 2013; Pirkkalainen, Mezzetti and Guglielmo 2013). What is more, Somalia is one of the significant recipient countries for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian aid through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). A relatively small part of this assistance is channelled through Forum Syd, a Swedish civil society platform that runs the Somalia Diaspora Programme, specifically targeting Somali-Swedish diaspora as-

sociations through capacity-building and co-funding of development projects in the Somali region. Sweden thus provides an interesting case for studying the dynamics of diaspora engagement in a context where there is a significant diaspora group and large-scale aid to their country of origin.

## Research questions

The present study provides an analysis of how Somali diaspora actors based in Sweden engage in development and relief in the Somali region, their collaboration with Swedish development cooperation assistance, and the opportunities and challenges involved, as perceived from diaspora perspectives and Swedish development circles, respectively. It answers the following research questions:

1. How and to what extent do Somali diaspora actors based in Sweden engage in development, reconstruction and relief activities in the Somali region?
2. What motivates and shapes their engagement?
3. What is the working relationship between Somali diaspora engagement in development and institutionalized diaspora support programmes?
4. What are the prospects and pitfalls?

These questions are examined in a qualitative study based on interviews, observation, document analysis and Internet searches, focusing on perceptions and practices as they are articulated and perceived from different positions in Sweden. The aim is a better understanding of the interactions, opportunities and challenges in diaspora engagement, arrived at by unpacking and disaggregating practices and perceptions of development involvement. The study thereby contributes to the growing literature on refugee and diaspora engagement in development and the relationship to the development industry (e.g. Brinkerhoff 2011; Erdal 2015; Sinatti and Horst 2015). In addition to studies on Somali diaspora mobilization, the findings have relevance for other instances of diaspora engagement, as well as for diaspora support programmes and initiatives, in particular those focusing on post-conflict areas.

The report is organized in the following way: the methodological approach and empirical data are presented in the remaining part of this introduction. Chapter 2 presents Somali diaspora history and settlement in Sweden, including Swedish development cooperation assistance and institutional support for diaspora engagement. A mapping of Somali-Swedish diaspora actors is presented in chapter 3, followed by analysis of development activities in chapter 4. Chapter 5 examines the motivations of diaspora engagement and the working relationship between Somali-Swedish actors and the Swedish development industry. Conclusions, policy recommendations and suggestions for further research are set out in chapter 6.

## Approach and definitions

The underlying theoretical framework of the report consists of insights from theories on diaspora, transnational social fields, and political opportunity structures in a transnational perspective. These theories frame the analysis and prompt attention to both analytical and empirical questions, as outlined below. As the Somali region is characterized by contested sovereignty and state-formation, the section starts by clarifying the terminology employed.

### Terminology of polities and affiliations

The report takes a neutral stance concerning the question of the Federal Republic of Somalia vis-à-vis the self-declared but not internationally recognized Republic of Somaliland. Therefore, the term Somali region is employed to refer to the territory that corresponds to that of the Somali Republic of 1 July 1960. The term Somalia is used when referring to events taking place prior to state collapse in 1991, or to official designations, for instance in relation to aid or statistics. Otherwise the report employs the names of polities used by the interlocutors or in documents, including the south-central zone, which refers to the Somali regions south of Puntland. The term Somali refers to persons who were or are citizens of Somalia and their descendants, regardless of their contemporary citizenship or place of residence; the category of Somali-Swedish refers to persons of Somali origin living in Sweden. Neither term is a description – let alone prescription – of loyalty, political position or diaspora engagement.

## The concept of diaspora

The term diaspora has become widely employed to refer to groups of dispersed migrants and their descendants who maintain a sense of belonging with their erstwhile or ancestral homeland and with compatriots living elsewhere. Theoretically, diaspora derives from Greek and means “the scattering of seeds” or to sow over (Cohen 1997), originally referring to the Jewish expulsion from Jerusalem. Studies on diaspora highlight transnational practices and homeland orientation, sometimes in combination with a desire to return (Brubaker 2005; Olsson 2016; Van Hear 1998). This overall understanding of diasporas has been appropriated in policy circles and by migrant groups as a means of (self-)identification, often going hand in hand with expectations about altruistic homeland engagement, hence presupposing an automatic link between dispersion, ethnicity and belonging. Such assumptions have been criticized for being generalized and overlooking internal differences and positionality, in particular gender and social class (e.g. Anthias 1998). Likewise, other studies have examined how the diaspora term is articulated as a particular position with a focus on the underpinning assumptions, rather than a neutral identity category (Axel 2004; Kleist 2008a; Turner and Kleist 2013; Werbner 2002).

In this study, a heuristic approach to diaspora is employed, drawing upon the most important insights from both strands. The term diaspora engagement refers to involvement revolving around practices and narratives of connection and belonging to an erstwhile or ancestral homeland or home region, as well as to compatriots living in other localities. This definition emphasizes two aspects: first, potential global dispersal and multiple connections rather than a dyadic relationship between a country of residence and an erstwhile homeland. Second, the importance of often ambivalent and contentious narratives and perceptions of identification and belonging. It is thus an approach that focuses on transnational processes, practices and perceptions (cf. Olsson 2016), rather than notions of a fixed and predetermined culture and identity. In consequence, the study refers to diaspora groups to highlight different positions, senses of belonging and modes of engagement, rather than “the diaspora” with its connotations of a homogeneous entity. While attention to positionality is important no matter which overall group is studied, it is particu-

larly relevant when studying groups whose displacement has taken place over a long period of time, partly as a result of civil war and protracted conflict, and with ongoing political contestations and fragmentation – as in the Somali case.

## Transnational social fields and multi-sited embeddedness

A focus on diaspora engagement thus begs attention to practices and positions in and between different social-economic, cultural and political contexts. Here a transnational social field perspective is useful. Further developing Bourdieu's notion of a social field, Levitt and Schiller have defined this concept as "a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed" (2004, 1009). Social fields can be national and transnational, where the latter encompass actors living in several states. Levitt and Schiller thus remind us to pay attention to the (potentially) differentiated positions in a transnational social field and the challenges they may entail, highlighting how migrants and refugees might "occupy different gender, racial, and class positions within different states at the same time" (2004, 1015). Hence it is important to include a focus on the different contexts as well, here the Somali region, Sweden and wider diasporic networks.

Yet few migrant transnational practices take place between states as such, but rather between localities. A translocal perspective (Brickell and Datta 2011) is therefore pertinent, accentuating the role of specific localities and of multi-sited embeddedness (Horst 2017a). Examining return movements of young Norwegian-Somalis and Somali-Americans to the Somali region, Cindy Horst has coined this concept to address multi-sited senses of belonging and practices of citizenship. In an analysis of diaspora engagement in development, the emphasis on embeddedness is important as well, calling for attention to the modes of connectivity to and incorporation in specific localities and contexts.

## Political opportunities and constraints

Finally, the report employs the concept of political opportunity structure (POS).

Inspiration from literature on social movements and POS has become widespread in studies of migrant and diaspora engagement (e.g. Chadbury and Moss 2016; Pirkkalainen, Mezzetti and Guglielmo 2013; Sökefeld 2006). Following Sydney Tarrow, POS is defined as “consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent or national – signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements” (1996, 54). To link POS with the considerations above, political opportunities and constraints take part in shaping the transnational field in the ways they enable, nurture or constrain certain kinds of practices and positions, including those categorized as diaspora engagement.

Studies of POS have been criticized for being vague and having limited analytical sharpness, covering too many factors. In this report, the analysis of POS is therefore delimited to consistent signals of encouragement or discouragement for diaspora engagement in development and relief activities. Policy initiatives that offer concrete or symbolic support to diaspora engagement therefore constitute important opportunity structures. These can be in the form of migration–development as a policy priority, general NGO-support funding schemes to which diaspora associations can apply, or special diaspora initiatives, where development cooperation agencies or NGOs offer (co-)funding, upscaling or capacity development of diaspora activities.

## Data collection and analysis

The empirical material used in this report consists of in-depth interviews with representatives of Somali-Swedish associations and other diaspora actors, policy- and grant-makers working with diaspora engagement, and researchers and other resource persons. In addition to interviews, the report draws on documents, websites, reports and statistics, as well as observation at a dialogue meeting on development and diaspora engagement in Somalia, organized by the Somali National Association in Sweden. All interviews and observation were conducted between March and August 2017.

The data comprise altogether 38 interviews. 24 semi-structured interviews with 19 male and 8 female Somali-Swedish diaspora actors on their engagement in development activities or – in a few cases – their ambitions to become so engaged. In all, 18 different associations were included, 10 of which had received Forum Syd support. Most interviews were one-on-one, though a few included two or more interlocutors. They were carried out in English, Swedish/Danish, and in a few cases in Somali with the help of an interpreter, and took place in public spaces, such as cafes, libraries or offices, typically lasting between 45 minutes and an hour, in a few cases up to 1.5 hours. The large majority of interviews were conducted in the Stockholm area, supplemented with three interviews in Borlänge and Lund. The reason for focusing on Stockholm is twofold. First, the biggest concentration of Somali-Swedish associations is found in the capital area (Mekonin and Omar 2014, 34); second, due to time limitations, it was more conducive to establish contacts and rapport in one city. However, contacts were established through several gatekeepers and entry points to avoid dependency on one particular group or perspective.

To shed light on institutional perspectives, eight interviews were conducted with current or former policy- and grant-makers working at Forum Syd, SIDA headquarters in Stockholm, or the Somalia section of the Swedish Embassy in Nairobi – the latter via a videoconference. Finally, six expert interviews were held with researchers and observers who are or have been involved in or who closely follow Somali diaspora engagement. Both groups of interlocutors include persons of different national backgrounds, including Somali-Swedes, demonstrating how a clear-cut distinction between diaspora actors, development professionals and external observers is not necessarily helpful.

Interviews were recorded (or in a few instances documented with extensive notes), subsequently transcribed by a professional transcription firm, and then coded to identify patterns on which the analysis is based and to select examples and quotations that illustrate these patterns. In some cases, interview findings were supplemented with documents from association websites, reports, and searches on [allabolag.se](http://allabolag.se), where the names and years of registration of all registered associations in Sweden can be found.

## Positionality and delimitation

As stated in the theoretical framework, attention to positionality is crucial to avoid generalization and to shed light on positions in (transnational) social fields – or in other words, to clarify the delimitation and representativeness of the study. The main sampling criterion for all three groups of interlocutors was experiences of or insights into Somali-Swedish engagement in development and relief at the collective level, rather than general representativeness. Additional criteria for the Somali-Swedish interlocutors were diversity in terms of origin and political loyalty, as well as gender and age. While the “origin” criterion was met, with interlocutors from all over the Somali region, most of the interlocutors were men between their 30s and 50s, being board members in associations and/or founders of other kinds of initiatives. Furthermore, the majority of them were working and had studied in Sweden, the Horn of Africa, the US, Russia or other places. While a few were employed as project coordinators within their respective associations, most of them worked in the state or municipal sectors, were university students or had university degrees, though a couple of them were unemployed at the time of the interview. Compared to the overall profile of Somali-Swedes, they are thus well integrated in terms of education and employment.

This has several implications. It emphasizes that the analysis in this report is specific rather than an analysis of Somali-Swedish transnational practices in general. The voices heard are primarily of those who run and initiate such engagement, rather than a representative segment of the Somali-Swedish population. In consequence, the report does not go into detail on the question of the relationship between transnational engagement and integration (see Erdal 2013; Erdal and Oeppen 2013 for such an analysis), nor does it offer an evaluation of the effectiveness of diaspora engagement and diaspora support initiatives in the Somali region. While important from a policy perspective, such an analysis would miss the diversity of diaspora engagement, in particular if it took its departure in predefined notions of what development is and should be. It would also require field studies in the Somali region, which it was not possible to undertake in this study, due to time and financial limitations.



## Anonymization

Finally, a note about anonymization and validation. The report has incorporated insights from two peer reviewers as well as from Delmi, Forum Syd, SIDA and others, enriching and nuancing the final version. Following the advice of Delmi and several interlocutors, no personal names are shared in the report, though the names of associations or other initiatives are mentioned in some cases when the interlocutors have approved it or comments have been made in public settings or the media. Case examples and quotations were shared with the interlocutors prior to publication of the report to check details and ensure a sufficient level of anonymization. In addition to fine-tuning anonymization, this procedure generated important new information on several cases and issues.

## 2. Multi-sited contexts – diasporic formations and transnational practices

To understand the emergence and consolidation of Somali-Swedish diaspora engagement requires attention to the history of the Somali region, the Swedish reception context and SIDA involvement. These contexts are presented and analysed below. They reflect how the changing geopolitical positions of the Somali region have shaped the Somali conflict and migration patterns, while also highlighting the role of long-standing social, cultural and economic practices of transnational mobility and exchange, and finally, opportunity structures and constraints in Sweden.

### Somali migration history<sup>1</sup>

Nomadic pastoralism and trade have been important livelihoods in the Somali-speaking region for centuries. The introduction of first colonial and later national borders divided livelihoods and family networks across different states. Following the Berlin conference in 1884–85, the Somali-inhabited region was divided between the empires of Great Britain, Italy, France and Abyssinia (Ethiopia). On the one hand, the establishment of borders meant that much nomadic pastoralism and trade turned into international migration; on the other hand, incorporation into colonial empires implied avenues of international mobility through trade, seafaring and service in the colonial armies and merchant navy, with Somali settlement in seaports in the UK and elsewhere in the empires (Farah 2000, 4). Other movements include labour migration to the Gulf countries from the 1950s and educational migration of students and civil servants to the (former) colonial powers and political allies.

The Republic of Somalia was founded on 1 July 1960, uniting the former British and Italian colonies.<sup>2</sup> In 1969, Major General Siyad Barre seized power in a coup and declared scientific socialism. Because of its strategic location during the cold war, Somalia received substantial foreign aid and militarization, first from the USSR and from 1978, when the USSR ceased its alliance, from the US. While Barre prohibited references to clan genealogies, officially burying the clan in 1971, the President increasingly manipulated clan affiliations and concentrated power in the hands of the clan lineages of himself and his close family. Meanwhile, political dissatisfaction and unrest grew, with the first Somali asylum seekers appearing from the beginning of the 1970s, armed opposition from the late 1970s, and the exodus of a large number of educated people during the 1980s.

## Civil war and mass displacement

In 1988, Siyad Barre bombed the major cities in the north-western part of the country. More than 600,000 people fled to Ethiopia, from where some moved on to other African, Middle Eastern, Asian or Western countries. During the next two years, civil war spread to the whole country and in January 1991 Siyad Barre was ousted from Mogadishu. Violence, killings, rape and looting followed. Power struggles between warlords and rebel groups, in combination with drought, led to humanitarian crises, especially in the southern and central parts of Somalia, with half a million fatalities due to violence and hunger by the end of 1992. About two million Somalis became internally displaced and large numbers of people fled to areas where their clan families dominated, reflecting how clan affiliation had become a central element in both persecution and protection. Hence, the civil war also resulted in a higher degree of merger between clan affiliation and place of residence than prior to the conflict.<sup>3</sup> As many as 1.5 million people fled the country in this period (Bradbury 1997), mainly to Ethiopia, Kenya, Yemen and Djibouti.

With the gradual termination of the cold war, Western countries withdrew economic support, credits and aid.<sup>4</sup> After 9/11 2001, the Somali region regained strategic importance, this time with a focus on securitization and the prevention of violent extremism (Menkhaus 2014). The development between 1991 and the present has been characterized by sectarian conflict, violent extremism, instability, militar-

ization, environmental degradation and humanitarian catastrophes, though there are significant differences between regions and over time. The north-western part of Somalia – former British Somaliland – declared itself unilaterally independent in May 1992 as the Republic of Somaliland. A reconciliation conference followed and a parliamentary system was introduced. Somaliland has been relatively stable and has gone through three presidential and parliamentary elections, the latest in November 2017, but has not been recognized by any country. In 1998, the north-eastern region declared itself autonomous under the name of Puntland, but remained a part of the (at the time future) federal state. Puntland has been more stable than the south-central parts of the Somali region, though it too has been affected by instability and piracy, especially between 2008 and 2012.

## Failed state, terrorism and state (re-)building

Reflecting conflict and state collapse, Somalia has been ranked consistently as one of the most failed states in the world<sup>5</sup> – between 2008 and 2013 as the most failed state. The failed US-led UN intervention Operation Restore Hope was abandoned in 1994, and the south-central zone in particular has suffered from fighting between warlords and militias. A range of peace conferences and attempts to establish governments have taken place, resulting in the establishment of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004. In 2006 the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) defeated the warlords in Mogadishu and most of the south-central zone, introducing strict Islamist rule. The movement was later defeated by TFG forces, backed by Ethiopian troops. From 2007, African Union troops have been present in the south-central zone in a regional peacekeeping force (AMISOM), with the mandate of supporting the TFG and later the Somali Federal Government.

In 2009, al-Shabaab took over Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab – the military wing of ICU – instituted Taliban-style sharia practices, initially with the aim of turning Somalia into a caliphate and building a greater Somalia, later committed to global jihad. Al-Shabaab pulled out of Mogadishu in 2011 and lost hold of other major towns in 2012. The same year a formal parliament came into power in Mogadishu, elected a president, and the Somali Federal Government (SFG) was established, divided into six federal states<sup>6</sup>. Parliamentary elections were held in 2016 among about 14,000

clan elders, and in 2017 the parliament elected the former Prime Minister Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, nicknamed Farmajo,<sup>7</sup> as President. Farmajo has studied and worked in the US, holding Somali and US citizenship. The Prime Minister, Hassan Ali Khayre, came to Norway as a refugee in the late 1980s and also holds dual citizenship.

Recent political developments have spurred cautious optimism among observers, politicians and Somalis themselves, but the situation remains highly unstable and unpredictable. Though al-Shabaab has lost its foothold in the Somali region, it is still active, with suicide bombs and mass killings of hundreds of people within the Somali region and in East Africa. Indeed, the terrorist attack in Mogadishu in October 2017, in which more than 300 people lost their lives, is widely blamed on al-Shabaab. Likewise, humanitarian catastrophes such as droughts and flooding have caused huge displacement movements and fatalities. The drought between 2011 and 2012 cost about 260,000 people their lives (New York Times 2013). Drought returned in 2015, affecting millions of people, and Farmajo declared a national disaster in February 2017. The Somali region remains one of the poorest in the world, with 73 per cent of the population living below the poverty line, destroyed and insufficient infrastructure, a life expectancy rate of 50 years, and less than four years of average schooling (UNDP Somalia 2012, 25, 181–184). Nomadic and rural Somalis are the most affected. The loss of lives during the conflict is unknown, but estimated to be up to 1.5 million people between 1991 and 2011 (ibid., 18) – roughly the same as the estimated size of the globally dispersed Somali diaspora groups (Hammond et al. 2011; UNDP Somalia 2012).

## Global diaspora formations – dispersed families and remittances

After more than two decades of civil war, political instability and conflict, violent extremism and humanitarian catastrophes, Somalis are now living all over the world. While the number of asylum seekers culminated in the early and mid 1990s, conflict- and drought-related displacement has been ongoing ever since. The vast majority of the roughly 875,500 Somali refugees currently registered by the UNHCR

live in refugee camps in Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen (UNHCR 2017). However, a significant number of Somali refugees have moved onwards for protection, whether through resettlement, independent asylum migration or family reunification. Today Somalis live in virtually every corner of the world, from China to Sweden. Many if not most Somali families have been dispersed during displacement, with family members living on several continents. Apart from the countries mentioned above, Canada, the United Arab Emirates, the US, the UK and Sweden are important settlement countries.

Somali migrants have been reported to send money to their families for many decades (Farah 2000; Lewis 1994), and mobile livelihoods and dispersed family networks are well-established survival strategies (Horst 2006). Remittances are and have been instrumental in the survival of Somali families during (post-)conflict, poverty and humanitarian catastrophes. Recent remittance estimates range from USD 1.4 billion (World Bank 2016) to USD 2.3 billion (UNDP Somalia 2012), accounting for between 23 and 45 per cent of GDP and dwarfing humanitarian aid. Remittances are used for food security, health, education, housing and private sector investment, constituting a lifeline for survival (Paul et al. 2015). Indeed, Somalis are known to be exceptional remittance senders (Carling, Erdal and Horst 2012). Remittances are typically sent through the so-called *xawilaad* (hawala) system, which facilitates rapid transfer of money from across the world to across the Somali region (Lindley 2009). The system was developed in the 1980s in the Gulf countries, based on trust and identification along clan lineages, and has been increasingly formalized since the 2000s. Following the events of 9/11 2001, several remittance companies have been shut down, due to suspicion of money transfer to terrorists.<sup>8</sup> Such disruptions have huge impacts on recipients, who may depend partially or entirely on remittances. While most remittances are sent by Somalis living in Western and Gulf countries to their family members in the Horn of Africa, they may also be sent to family members living outside the Horn.

Assistance in cash or kind targeting “the community” rather than the individual family is significant as well. Such engagement includes political involvement and conflict resolution (Ismail 2011); emergency assistance in response to natural dis-

asters (DEMAC 2017; Hammond 2013); business and entrepreneurship (Hansen 2007); and, not least, projects in the fields of service delivery, civil society support, environmental protection and good governance (e.g. Danstrøm, Kleist and Sørensen 2015; Hammond et al. 2011; Kleist 2008b; Tilikainen and Mohamed 2013). Somalis living outside the Horn are thus involved in changing, rebuilding and developing the Somali region in various ways through a plethora of transnational practices, longer or shorter return trips, or long-distance or “remote-control” activities (Horst 2013). However, Somali diaspora engagement in development remains contested in the international community and among Somalis themselves. Such contestation ranges from fear of financial and logistic support to terrorism to local scepticism concerning returnees and diaspora visions of (what may be seen as) transfer of a Western mentality or, simply, being out of touch with local realities (Abdi 2017; Abdile and Pirkkalainen 2011; Kleist 2010). As we shall later see, Somali-Swedish diaspora actors also face such tensions in their engagement.

## The clan system – a contested principle of organization<sup>9</sup>

An often-noted dimension of Somali society and social relations is the clan system. Clan refers to the segmentary and patrilineal lineage system, which structures kinship in descent groups following the father’s line of relatives (Lewis 1994). According to this scheme, most Somalis are born into a lineage: the child is given a first name and keeps his or her father’s and grandfather’s first names as family names. Neither women nor men change their names when they marry. Somali clan lineages are divided into two overall branches: the Sab and the Samale, both descending from the same ancestor. The Sab lineages comprise the sedentary Digil and Rahanweyn clan families, mainly living in the southern parts, whereas Samale include the clan families of Dir, Isaaq, Hawiye and Darod, who are – or used to be – pastoral nomads scattered throughout the Somali-speaking region (Lewis 2002; Mansur and Ahmed 1995). These clan families branch out in sub-clan families, specifying the individual’s lineage several generations back.

The kinship system has been described as a stable structure, while the different allegiances are highly unstable, flexible and fluid, structuring solidarity as well

as divisions (Lewis 2002). However, the meaning, value and impact of the lineage system are and have been disputed. Though the clan system was officially banned by Siyad Barre and widely considered unsophisticated and an expression of a country-bumpkin mentality among the urban population, clan affiliation could mean the difference between life and death during the civil war. Clan remains a central societal structure in the Somali region today, reflected in political and social organization, such as the 4.5 clan power sharing model in the TFG and SFG. With the global dispersion of Somalis across the globe, clan networks have become global as well, functioning as informal transnational safety network systems, based on reciprocity, expectations of solidarity and obligations to help, though they may also spur inter-clan divisions and rivalries (Melander 2009). Nevertheless, the role of clan in Somali diaspora groups is much debated, with positions ranging from claims that clan plays a limited role or no role at all – especially among the younger generations – to emphasis on its continued, if highly contested, role. Existing research on Somalis in Sweden echoes the importance of kin networks, including clan, as well as its controversial status (Johnsdotter 2002; Melander 2009; Mohme 2016).

## The Swedish context

Historically Sweden has been an emigration country, with large population movements to the Americas and Australia between 1850 and 1910, where almost one million Swedes emigrated. It was only from 1930 that there were more immigrants arriving in the country than emigrants leaving it. Until the 1980s, there was relatively little immigration from outside Europe. This changed when refugees from Chile, Iran and Lebanon started reaching Sweden, as well as refugees from Poland and Turkey (Dahlstedt 2003; Statistiska Centralbyrån 2017). The biggest groups in the 1990s were refugees from the war in former Yugoslavia and the war between Iran and Iraq; in the 2000s, most refugees came from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia or Eritrea, or were stateless people, with annual increases in the number of asylum seekers between 2012 and 2015 (Statistiska Centralbyrån 2016b). In addition to refugees, immigration also grew after Sweden entered the EU in 1995. Likewise, the number of EU citizens increased when Sweden became part of Schengen in 2001, as did emigration of Swedish nationals to other EU countries – including a number of naturalized Somali citizens relocating to the UK (Mohme 2014; Osman 2012).



In 2016, 17 per cent of the Swedish population was born outside Sweden (Carlson and Hatti 2016, 225), with Finns, Syrians, Iraqis and Poles as the largest groups. Immigration, integration and multiculturalism constitute increasingly contested topics, not least in the wake of the refugee situation in Europe in 2015 when, after Hungary, Sweden accepted more asylum seekers per capita than any other European country (BBC 2016). This implies that migration has become a central topic in political and public debate.

## Somalis in Sweden

In contrast to the UK, Italy and the US, as colonial powers and political allies, Sweden does not have a long history of engagement with Somalia, but has mainly been engaged through development cooperation and humanitarian assistance – and as a destination country for Somali migration. The first Somalis came to Sweden as labour migrants in the 1950s and were joined by students after the independence of Somalia in 1960. Some of these early migrants stayed in Sweden after finishing at university, working as professionals. Their number was very limited before the early 1990s and the outbreak of civil war. Since then, the Somali-Swedish population has been growing steadily through asylum and family reunification, with a particularly marked increase between 2007 and 2015. In 2016, there were 63,853 Somalia-born persons living in Sweden and 32,107 descendants<sup>10</sup>. In all, 41,335 Somalis have been naturalized and now hold Swedish citizenship. Sweden now constitutes a significant settlement country for persons of Somali descent and is by far the largest hub in Scandinavia. However, it is also a recent hub: about 70 per cent of the Somali-Swedish population (born outside Sweden) have lived for a maximum of ten years in the country. Until 20 July 2016, all asylum seekers who had been recognized as refugees or granted some other protection status received a permanent residence permit. After this date, recognized refugees have received a temporary residence permit valid for three years and persons in need of subsidiary protection for 13 months (Migrationsverket 2016).

It is no understatement that the Somali region and Sweden constitute two very different contexts in almost every respect. While the state collapsed in Somalia in

1991 and state institutions remain absent or extremely fragile – or what Menkhaus (2014) has termed a functional failed state with reference to Somaliland – the universal Swedish welfare state is extensive, with the explicit aim of taking care of people from cradle to grave (Carlson et al. 2014, 22). A high level of trust in the government, official emphasis on gender equality as a cornerstone of Swedish society, and state support for disengagement of “the individual from ‘dependence’ upon family, relatives, religious institutions etc.” (Carlson and Hatti 2016, 226) are other important characteristics. The contrast with the Somali region could hardly be more pronounced.

Somali-Swedes constitute a very heterogeneous group in terms of their background from the Somali region and their education, ranging from highly skilled professionals working as university professors and medical doctors to unemployed persons on social welfare. According to several interlocutors, many of the Somali-Swedish working as professionals today arrived in the 1990s or before that, while more recent arrivals often have no or little schooling (cf. Carlson et al. 2014, 70). Almost 70 per cent of Somalia-born persons in Sweden have only gone to primary school or have an unknown level of education; about ten per cent have tertiary education (ibid., 67).<sup>11</sup> In 2010, the employment rate of Somalia-born persons between 20 and 64 years old was 28 per cent for men and 18 per cent for women (ibid., 77). The employment rate is higher in Stockholm than in other big cities and highest for those holding tertiary education (ibid., 79–80). While the biggest concentrations of Somali-Swedes are found in Stockholm and Gothenburg and the surrounding areas, Somali-Swedes live all over the country. Discrimination, lack of acceptance and negative media exposure are highlighted in the literature on Somalis in Sweden (Carlson et al. 2014; Melander 2009; Mohme 2016; Scuzzarello 2015) and were also articulated by some interlocutors as a recurring experience and part of their daily life. Such situations are documented in other Scandinavian countries as well (Fangen 2006; Horst et al. 2013; Kleist 2006; Stenum and Farah 2014). Like Somalis elsewhere in the world, Somali-Swedes send remittances to the Somali region. The amount sent from Sweden is estimated to amount to USD 60 million per year (Ephrem in Hermele 2015, 23), or almost SEK 500 million.

## Somali-Swedish voluntary associations

Civil society engagement through voluntary associations – *ideella föreningar* – concerns practically all dimensions of life in Sweden and other Nordic countries. Voluntary associations are widely regarded as pertinent for social, political and cultural participation in Swedish society and as a means of integration for immigrants (Dahlstedt 2003). Or, as reflected in the title of a Statistics Sweden report on associational life in Sweden, as general welfare production, social capital and democracy training (Vogel et al. 2003). Associations should have an explicit aim stated in their by-laws, be organized in democratic ways with an annual meeting and an elected board, and be potentially open to all interested members (Förening.se 2017). Registration is not mandatory for associations without income-generating activities, but associations wanting an organization number can obtain this through registration with the Swedish tax authorities. Registered associations may apply for funding for their activities from a range of private and public funds and organizations, such as Allmänna arvsfonden (Johnsdotter 2010), public authorities (Carlson et al. 2014) or Forum Syd's Somalia Diaspora Programme.

The Swedish model of supporting civil society engagement through registered associations thus constitutes a significant opportunity structure<sup>12</sup> and one that is widely embraced by the Somali-Swedish group. There are more than an estimated 800 registered Somali-Swedish associations (Andersson and Svensson 2014, 19),<sup>13</sup> although the number of active associations is uncertain, estimated by observers and associational key persons to be around 500–600. Basic information about registered associations, such as their name, year of registration and postal address, can be found online via, for instance, [www.allabolag.se](http://www.allabolag.se). Information about nationality or ethnicity is not registered in Sweden, however, and the exact number of Somali-Swedish associations active in relief and development is therefore unknown. What can be established is that they most likely number several hundred and that they are located all over Sweden, with a concentration in Stockholm and other large cities. Hence, as in other Scandinavian countries (Horst et al. 2013; Kleist 2007; Pirkkalainen, Mezzetti and Guglielmo 2013), Somali-Swedes have adopted associations as a way of organizing themselves, whether focusing on life in Sweden

or development and relief in the Somali region (Carlson et al. 2014; Johnsdotter 2010). In the latter case, SIDA involvement in the Somali region constitutes another important context.

## SIDA development cooperation assistance to the Somali region

SIDA is governed by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and has as its main objective the reduction of poverty in the world. Established in 1965, SIDA focused in its early decades on building schools, hospitals, power plants, factories etc. This modality gradually changed, and in the 1990s SIDA started using the terms development cooperation and partner countries to reflect an emphasis on development on the beneficiaries' terms (SIDA 2017). A rights-based approach was adopted in 2006 as one of the two main principles of global development, the other being the perspectives of the poor (Government of Sweden 2006). The latest policy framework – i.e. the operationalization of the overall policy – was presented in December 2016 (Government of Sweden 2016), emphasizing alignment with the SDG 30 agenda.

While SIDA and its predecessors have been active on the Horn of Africa since the 1950s (SIDA 2017), development cooperation with Somalia took off in the 1980s, but was cancelled between 1991 and 2002 because of the civil war and state collapse. Humanitarian assistance continued throughout the period (SIDA 2015). Humanitarian aid made up the biggest share of Swedish assistance until 2013, when the Swedish government boosted development cooperation assistance to the Somali region with the adoption of the SIDA Somalia strategy for 2013–2017 and its SEK 1.5 billion maximum budget frame (OpenAid.se 2017b). The aim of the strategy is to “strengthen opportunities for poor people to withstand and manage new crises, to support the fragile democracy, to strengthen the respect for human rights and to increase employment opportunities” (SIDA 2013, 1). Women and youth constitute important target groups. The strategy is expected to generate results within the following three areas, corresponding to overall SIDA priorities (Government of Sweden 2014): human security and livelihoods; health and gender equality; democracy and human rights. In addition, job creation has become a priority.

Today Sweden is one of the major donors to Somalia after the US and UK, and Somalia is one of SIDA's most important partner countries. In 2016, Somalia was the fourth biggest recipient of Swedish development cooperation assistance, after Afghanistan, Tanzania and Mozambique (Openaid.se 2017c), receiving SEK 544 million in 2016, of which humanitarian assistance constituted SEK 184 million (SIDA 2016b).<sup>14</sup> Development cooperation is administered by the Somalia section of the Swedish Embassy in Nairobi, which had grown from four to fourteen employees by August 2017, of whom four are Somali-Swedes.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, at the dialogue meeting on development in Stockholm in August 2017, one of the SIDA employees characterized Sweden as a heavyweight in Somalia.

This alleged Swedish heavyweight status relates both to contributions to development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and to the Somali-Swedish diaspora presence and engagement in the Somali region. The head of SIDA development cooperation in Somalia further explained that Somali diaspora groups are pertinent for development in the country and are engaged at all levels in Somali society, promoting Swedish values and societal models.<sup>16</sup> The importance of diaspora engagement is also explicit in the Somalia strategy, which states that "it is important to use the skills among the Somali diaspora around the world". Likewise, the strategy highlights the importance of support for "initiatives that result in more people from the Somali diaspora contributing to meet needs of Somali authorities, institutions, companies and in Somali society at large" (SIDA 2013, 3). A SIDA strategy report from 2015 further emphasizes the added value of Somali-Swedish diaspora groups as development actors in the Somali region (SIDA 2016a). However, it should be added that diaspora engagement is not featured in SIDA's 2016 annual review, indicating that, though considered important, it is not at the top of SIDA's agenda.

SIDA support for diaspora engagement not only extends to Somali-Swedish groups,<sup>17</sup> though this is by far the most important instance of it. At the general level, diaspora engagement is articulated in relation to the broader theme of migration and development, which is one of the eight directions for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance (Government of Sweden 2016). While this theme has been on SIDA's agenda since 2010, migration and development have

received increased political attention within the last few years, due to the large number of refugee arrivals in Sweden from 2015 and the importance of migration in the 2030 agenda (SIDA 2016c). The role of diaspora groups in development is also mentioned in the 2016 policy framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance:

Members of diasporas in Sweden and in the world are increasingly seen as agents of development with significant economic influence. Sweden will support the transfer of funds, knowledge and ideas by migrants and diaspora groups to their countries of origin. (Government of Sweden 2016, 36)

SIDA supports diaspora engagement in development and relief through three programmes: the Somalia Diaspora Programme (SDP), administered by Forum Syd; the Swedish-Somali Business Programme (SSBP), also administered by Forum Syd in collaboration with Business Sweden; and an IOM-MIDA capacity development programme that targets Somali diaspora experts more generally (IOM 2016). As the last-mentioned programme has received very little interest from Somali-Swedes (SIDA 2015), it is not elaborated on here.

## The Forum Syd Somalia Diaspora Programme

Forum Syd is a development cooperation organization with about 140 member organizations, making it the largest civil society platform in Sweden. It was founded in 1995 and works with civil society support with a focus on democracy and human rights, sustainable development and gender equality. The organization conducts development cooperation programmes, advocacy work, capacity development and e-learning courses, and runs two sub-granting programmes, including a large civil society sub-granting programme (CIVSAM). Forum Syd works with a rights-based approach to create and bring change for and through poor people, increasing their capacity to claim their rights rather than being passive recipients of aid.

The SDP was established as a pilot programme between May 2012 and April 2014 and was extended to run between 2015 and 2017, as part of the SIDA Somalia

strategy, with a SEK 45 million budget (SIDA 2015). Forum Syd was selected after a tendering process. The SDP targets Somali-Swedish diaspora associations, offering courses in proposal writing, project management, matched funding and, since 2016, collaboration with a country office based in Hargeisa, also established and operating with SDP funds. Its aim is “to support and realise awareness building, knowledge and understanding of claiming human rights, civil society strengthening, gender equality, and sustainable use of natural resources” (Forum Syd 2017b). Women and youth are particular target groups. During the pilot phase, 20 projects received support out of 56 applications, being allocated SEK 3.2 million for projects all over the Somali region (Andersson and Svensson 2014, 14). An evaluation of the pilot project showed positive results, in particular in relation to strengthening “the role of diaspora as agents of development cooperation with Somalia, by making more significant use of their knowledge, skills and capacities” (ibid., 3), while the objective of increased diaspora engagement was deemed difficult to assess.

To be eligible for SDP support, the applicant must be a Somali-Swedish voluntary association with non-profit goals that is registered and based in Sweden, that works for human rights and/or democratic social development, and that can co-finance the project with 5 per cent of the budget amount. Swedish associations working with migration and with Somali-Swedish members can apply as well. Established collaboration with a local partner organization is also a grant requirement. The proposed projects must be in alignment with Forum Syd priorities or focus on livelihoods. In all cases, a rights-based approach must be adopted.

Forum Syd operates with five categories of support, each with additional eligibility criteria to the ones mentioned above:

**Table 1: SDP eligibility criteria<sup>18</sup>**

Amount	Eligibility criteria
All applications	Associations must be registered and based in Sweden, promote democratic development and/or human rights, and have a non-profit purpose.
Up to SEK 100,000	Associations must have existed for at least two fiscal years.
Up to SEK 270,000	Associations must have existed for at least two fiscal years and have obtained an approved development project funded by Forum Syd or another grant-maker.
Up to SEK 500,000	Associations must have existed for at least two fiscal years and have obtained an approved development project funded by Forum Syd or another grant-maker worth SEK 100,000+.
SEK 500,000+	Associations must have existed for at least two fiscal years and have obtained an approved development project funded by Forum Syd or another grant-maker worth SEK 270,000+.
SEK 1 million+	Associations must have existed for at least two fiscal years and have obtained an approved development project funded by Forum Syd or another grant-maker worth SEK 500,000+. Internal governance and control must be of a high quality and external audit applies.

SDP proposals must include a human-rights analysis, a goal and risk matrix, according to Forum Syd's theory of change, as well as a detailed plan of activities and a budget. Extensive guidelines can be found online in Swedish and English. A final report must be submitted no later than three months after the end of the project. Projects may last up to three years, though most SDP projects have run for one year, especially those with funding below SEK 500,000. There is no public overview of SDP-funded projects, but according to Forum Syd, by the end of 2017, 58 associations had received SDP funding, with an acceptance rate of 38 per cent. About two-thirds of the recipients had received small grants up to SEK 270,000, 11 projects had received up to SEK 500,000, four had received more than SEK 500,000 and another four more than SEK 1 million in grants. Forum Syd has 15 weeks to complete its review of and reach decisions on project applications, although this time frame may be extended if additional information is needed. Somali-Swedish associations may apply through CIVSAM as well, and in some cases Forum Syd has moved proposals for larger funds to this sub-granting scheme. At the time of writing, the SDP had been prolonged until the end of 2018.



## The Swedish-Somali Business Programme (SSBP)

The SSBP is established in collaboration with Business Sweden. The programme started in July 2016 and will run for three years. The SSBP rationale is to increase the development potential of remittances sent to the Somali region, as they are seen as having “the potential to be used more catalytically and contribute to even more investments and work opportunities if they are [...] woven together with sustainable and innovative business solutions” (ssbp.nu). The programme is divided into two modules, the first offering SEK 35,000 to explore a business idea for three months and the second offering up to SEK 250,000 to develop a business idea for twelve months. The business proposals have to be for-profit, with an emphasis on corporate social responsibility and the creation of sustainable livelihoods. In contrast to the SDP, associations cannot apply, but the SSBP is open to registered small and medium-sized companies with an interest in investing in Somalia, no matter where in the world they are located – provided that they can attend mandatory training in Stockholm. As of September 2017, twenty-one module 1 and nine module 2 business projects had received funding, focusing on a wide range of topics from beauty products to solar energy and waste management. The businesses are located all over the Somali region, though most are concentrated in Somaliland, Mogadishu and Puntland. The recipients and their projects are listed on the SSBP website.

## Mainstreaming versus special diaspora initiatives

While the SDP and the SSBP are relatively recent initiatives, Forum Syd has engaged with Somali-Swedish associations since its inception. During the 2000s, the main kinds of support were service delivery, such as building clinics and schools, and funding one-year stays for Somali-Swedish professionals, such as doctors and nurses, in the Somali region.<sup>19</sup> At the time, such engagement was not perceived in diaspora terms, however:

No one talked about the diaspora. The discussion was whether we should call them invandrarföreningar [immigrant associations]. And for us as an organization working with rights issues, we do not discriminate. I mean, they were regarded like any other Swedish organization.

Even today, they can apply like any other organization registered in Sweden, being part of civil society in Sweden. The issue of the diaspora started in 2008 and 2009.

Forum Syd thus has a long history of development cooperation in the Somali region. Its collaboration with Somali-Swedish associations started with a mainstreaming approach, where they could – and still can – apply for matched funding on a par with other Swedish civil society organizations which work with development processes. Such an approach to diaspora associations is common among sub-granting organizations (Kleist 2014). A special diaspora initiative like the SDP, in contrast, reflects an understanding of an, at least potential, special advantage and strategic value in engaging the diaspora group in question. Such initiatives tend to be pilot or relatively short-term programmes and target larger migrant or refugee groups from partner countries receiving significant development cooperation assistance and/or humanitarian aid (*ibid.*, 59). While a mainstreaming approach may be the expression of a non-discriminatory (and ad hoc) approach, it may also reflect the position that diaspora associations are not seen as contributing sufficiently to fulfilling the objectives of the sub-granting organization.<sup>20</sup>

This demonstrates several tendencies. First, that the category of diaspora has been appropriated in development professional and donor circles, with the implication that diaspora groups are increasingly seen as agents of development and change, including a growing interest in diaspora humanitarianism.<sup>21</sup> However, it also shows how the value attributed to diaspora development is not automatic, but rather subject to considerable contestation among development professionals. Scepticism exists concerning the effectiveness and legitimacy of diaspora actors, including whether they maintain a neutral stance vis-à-vis local politics, social relations and, in the Somali case, clan interests (Horst 2013; Kleist 2014; Sinatti and Horst 2015; Turner and Kleist 2013) – a scepticism also voiced by policy- and grant-makers in interviews for this study. Or, to put it in more theoretical terms, it is contested whether the multi-sited embeddedness of diaspora actors is an advantage or disadvantage in development processes – and whether such embeddedness merits special support. However, as will be shown in the following chapters, diaspora engagement in development goes well beyond activities supported by development cooperation grants.

## Endnotes chapter 2

1. This is a very abbreviated version of the complex history of the Somali region. See Abdi (2015); Lewis (2002, 2004); Menkhaus (2014) for more extended historical accounts; for an overall timeline, see BBC (2017). If not otherwise noted, the first four paragraphs of this section draw on Kleist (2004).
2. The British Protectorate of Somaliland had gained its independence four days before with the name of Somaliland, while Italian Somaliland had become a UN Trusteeship in 1950, changing its name to Somalia in 1954. The three other Somali colonial states either became part of Kenya (the Northern Frontier District, 1963), remained part of Ethiopia (the Ogaden and Haud areas), or, in the case of French Somaliland, became independent as Djibouti in 1977.
3. In Somali, this tension is subsumed in the couplet U dhashay – Ku dhashay, which can be translated as “born to a family clan and born in a place/region” (Barnes 2006, 487).
4. See Somalia UNDP (2012, 186) for an overview of development aid to Somalia between 1991 to 2011.
5. In the annual Failed States Index, see <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/>
6. Puntland, Galmudug, Jubaland, South West State, Hirshabelle and Somaliland. The latter, however, does not recognize being part of the federal state, but considers itself an independent republic.
7. The name is derived from the Italian word for cheese, formaggio.
8. An example is Al-Barakat, which was listed as a terrorist entity by the US in 2001. The firm was later cleared of the allegations and was relaunched in 2014. In 2013 Barclays Bank threatened to shut down the accounts of Somali money transfer companies, including Dahabshiil, the largest in Africa. A settlement was reached in 2014.
9. This section is based on Kleist (2007, 88–93).
10. Persons born in Sweden with one or two parents originating in Somalia. Numbers derived from statistikdatabasen.scb.se, accessed March 2017.
11. These and other statistics from Open Society Foundation’s Malmö report (Carlson et al. 2014) refer to the situation in 2010. The level of tertiary education is slightly higher in Stockholm and Malmö than the overall Somali-Swedish average.
12. In contrast to the UK, US and Canada, there are very few – if any – Somali service organizations in Sweden, as social services are the domain of public authorities and organizations (Carlson et al. 2014, 112).
13. A search on [www.allabolag.se](http://www.allabolag.se) for somaliska alone generated 660 hits, referring to registered associations all over Sweden, and this search only covered registered entities that included this word in their name.
14. Openaid.se reports SEK 224 million in humanitarian aid and arrives at a figure of SEK 550 million altogether (OpenAid.se 2017a).
15. Head of SIDA development cooperation in Somalia at the diaspora dialogue meeting, August 2017, Kista.
16. In an interview with the daily newspaper Nerikes Allehanda (Ströman 2017).
17. A search on [openaid.se](http://openaid.se) showed that SEK 800,000 was granted for the development of an ICT corridor to promote entrepreneurship between Sweden and Ethiopia, 2012–2014 (OpenAid.se 2017a).

18. Based on Forum Syd (2017a) and personal communication with Forum Syd staff.

19. Interview, Forum Syd, 22 March 2017, Stockholm.

20. An example is the Danish civil society organization Civil Society in Development (CISU), which decided to discontinue its special diaspora initiative in 2010. The Danish Refugee Council subsequently took over and developed the DRC Diaspora Programme, targeting Somali and Afghan diaspora associations (see Kleist 2014). For more information on the DRC Diaspora Programme, see <https://drc.ngo/relief-work/diaspora-programme>.

21. An example is Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination (DEMAC), a consortium consisting of AFFORD, UK; the Danish Refugee Council, DK; and Berghof Foundation, Germany. For more information, see [www.demac.org](http://www.demac.org)

### 3. Somali-Swedish diaspora actors – a mapping

Based on extensive research inside and outside the Somali region, Hammond et al. (2011, 5) identify ten potentially overlapping categories of Somali diaspora development actors: individual households, local NGOs based in the diaspora, clan-based or home-town associations, professional associations, transnational associations, mosques, private investors and shareholders in private businesses, members of boards of trustees, women's groups and youth groups.

Somali-Swedish diaspora groups offer a similar diversity of engagement, though four main types of actors stand out: individual households sending remittances to their family and kin, various kinds of registered associations, diasporic networks, and mosques. In addition, businesses and individual entrepreneurs are important. As the focus of this report is on contributions to development and relief beyond the household level, individual households are not included here, but their importance as everyday development actors should be kept in mind.

Table 2 outlines the main types of actors, their characteristics, focus and membership base. The typology is constructed on the basis of the empirical sample, interviews and Internet searches. As will become clear, there are possible overlaps between these categories. Note also that the typology does not include actors focusing exclusively on Sweden, although it should be observed that many diaspora actors have activities in both Sweden and the Somali region, and sometimes elsewhere. Examples of the different types of actors and their activities are provided in the case boxes in this and the following chapter.

**Table 2: Typology of Somali-Swedish actors in development and relief**

Actor	Characteristics	Focus	Membership base
Relief association	Registered and based in Sweden	Development and relief, often in a particular area	Somali-Swedish majority
Women's association	Registered and based in Sweden	Development and relief in a women's/ gender perspective	Somali-Swedish majority
Umbrella organization	Registered and based in Sweden	Coordination of associations, possible development focus	Somali-Swedish majority
NGO	Registered and based in Sweden, interest-based	Development and relief in a particular field of interest	Somali-Swedish leadership, interest-based membership
Diasporic network	Not registered, transnational extension	Development of home region / clan interests	Somali members in different localities worldwide
Mosque	Registered faith-based organization, based in Sweden	Teach and practise Islam, including Islamic charity	Somali-Swedes and other Muslims
Businesses	For-profit, partly based in Sweden	Job creation or social entrepreneurship	Somali-Swedish (co-) founder/owner
Individual entrepreneur	Individually organized, (partly) based in Sweden	Development and relief, "non-traditional" partners/funding	Somali leadership, not necessarily member-based

## A diversity of actors and engagements

The diversity of Somali-Swedish engagement in development and relief is not only reflected in the various modes of organization and engagement, but also in the types of actors involved. There are some overall tendencies though, as outlined below.

### Gender and generation

Many associations and other kinds of "public" diaspora engagement are dominated by men who have lived in Sweden for many years. Several of the prominent

diaspora actors arrived in Sweden on student exchange programmes from the 1980s or as refugees during the 1990s. Given that about 70 per cent of the (unnaturalized) Somali-Swedish population arrived after 2007, it is perhaps not surprising that many key persons are among those who have lived in Sweden for more than ten years – though there are also examples of Somali-Swedes who got involved in development activities just a few years after their arrival. That said, two aspects should be kept in mind.

First, although more men than women are visibly active, Somali-Swedish women are transnationally engaged as well – in associations and in other types of engagement, including individual contributions, such as remittances and donations to collections (e.g. Horst 2017b; Lindley 2009; Melander 2009). Likewise, many interlocutors emphasized the importance of women's engagement, often with a call for more information and training targeting women. While women's associations play a role in such processes, the Somali National Association in Sweden, for instance, emphasized that gender equality is an important priority both within its own organization and for its member associations, which are encouraged to have an equal number of male and female board members.

Second, there seems to be a generational change taking place or on the way in many associations, in which younger Somali-Swedes who have grown up in Sweden, arriving either as children or as young adults, are taking over board and leadership positions. A number of the interlocutors interviewed who were in their 30s or early 40s positioned themselves as having different perspectives than the retiring generation. However, many interlocutors, no matter their gender and age, brought up the future diaspora engagement of children and youth who have never lived in the Somali region as an upcoming challenge, worried that they will not continue with the same type of transnational activities.

## Education and employment

As already mentioned in the introduction, most of the Somali-Swedish interlocutors have pursued tertiary education and work as professionals. This makes them a minority when compared with the Somali-Swedish population as a whole, being

among the most integrated according to these two criteria. The fact that most of the interlocutors were board members, founders or coordinators of diaspora engagement activities indicates that there is a positive correlation between leadership and coordination of transnational development activities, on the one hand, and higher education and employment, on the other. A similar trend is found in other studies on collective transnational engagement (Danström, Kleist and Sørensen 2015; Erdal 2013; Erdal and Oeppen 2013; Hammond 2013; Kleist 2007). However, as Erdal and Oeppen point out, such a correlation is not automatic (2013). It is indeed possible that it does not apply to “ordinary” members of associations or networks – or remitters for that matter – who are not engaged in coordinating activities.

## Regional and clan affiliation

The Somali population in Sweden have origins in the entire Somali region, reflected in a diversity of geographical target areas of development and relief activities. Hence, there does not seem to be one main receiving area or polity. This tendency is also confirmed by Forum Syd, though projects located in Somaliland tend to receive more funding than those targeting areas with an unstable security situation, where access and accountability living up to Forum Syd criteria may be difficult to achieve. To some extent, such a “peace dividend”, as Forum Syd termed it, was also reflected in the interviews, in the sense that several projects in the south-central zone were interrupted or pulled back from the late 2000s because of al-Shabaab. Certainly, conducting a gender equality or human rights project in al-Shabaab-dominated areas would be extremely difficult and dangerous.

The issue of area affiliation also refers to the question of clan. As mentioned in chapter 2, the civil war resulted in a certain degree of coincidence between area and clan affiliation, which may be reflected in diaspora engagement as well. However, with the exception of diasporic network members, no interlocutors brought up clan affiliation as central to their own engagement, and a search on allabolag.se for some of the major Somali clan families did not yield any results either. In contrast, Somali-Danish association representatives have articulated clan as an explicit principle of organization in some associations (Kleist 2007, 167–171). This difference



may reflect the possibility that clan affiliation is less central – or legitimate – among Somali-Swedes and/or that it has become less important over time, given that the interviews in Denmark were conducted in 2003 and 2004.

However, due to post-conflict and instability in large parts of the Somali region, trustworthy contacts and connections on the ground – multi-sited embeddedness – are pertinent to conducting successful and sustainable activities, with the implication that clan affiliation may be important for reasons of connectivity and security, as a practical concern so to speak. That said, several interlocutors mentioned that there is a lot of gossip and teasing concerning clan, and that seemingly innocent questions like “where do you come from?” or “what is your community?” may be scarcely hidden clan queries. Yet again, a couple of interlocutors explained how the location of their engagement is based on needs and emergencies, rather than own attachment, and several strongly disassociated themselves from any clan logic. In the words of a young man: “If they worship the clans, then let them create a clan they can worship in Sweden, the Swedish clan.”

## Registered voluntary associations

The most numerous type of Somali-Swedish development actor consists of registered voluntary associations. This should be no surprise, given the large number of associations in Sweden and their importance as an opportunity structure for civil society engagement. Many of the interlocutors described their involvement in exactly these terms: as civil society engagement, whether referring to Sweden or the Somali region. Indeed, many associations and activists were active in both regards or aimed to expand their activities in this way. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarification, Somali-Swedish development associations are defined according to the following criteria:

- Registration in Sweden
- Engagement in development and relief in the Somali region
- A collective target group beyond individual households and families
- Somali-Swedish leadership and a majority of Somali-Swedish members

The main types of associations include relief associations, women’s associations,

umbrella organizations and NGOs. Such associations are typically registered and organized with a board, by-laws, an annual meeting and membership fees, like other civil society organizations in Sweden. The distinction between these types of associations thus refers to different purposes and modes of organization; it is not clear-cut, and there may be overlaps. Most associations are run by unpaid associational activists in their free time, through a few have salaried project coordinators and other staff.

The membership size of the associations included in the sample ranges from 30 to around 300. Several interlocutors distinguished between active members – who pay their fees and are actively involved – and a wider pool of people who show up for events and may contribute to collections, often numbering several hundred people. The associations were established between 1989 and 2011, most of them in the 1990s. Hence, most of them had at least ten and in some cases more than twenty years of experience. Certainly, this tendency could mirror a sampling bias, resulting from gatekeepers suggesting well-established associations and key persons. However, it also reflects the tendency of long-term diaspora engagement, as articulated by several interlocutors. Finally, it indicates that collective transnational development engagement takes time to develop, especially if it goes beyond transferring resources. Indeed, with a few exceptions, most associations had a history of an initial focus on social and integration-related activities in Sweden, which were then extended to adjoining activities to support development and relief in the Somali region.

## Translocal relief associations

The largest group of Somali-Swedish development associations consists of those focusing on development and relief in a specific area in the Somali region which the (majority of) members originate from, are affiliated with or express their loyalty towards, such as a town, region, (federal) state or polity, or more broadly the Horn of Africa. They thus have a certain affinity with home-town associations, known from other African or Latin American contexts (Caglar 2006; Mazzucato and Kabki 2009; Orozco 2006), though the geographical focus is rarely a specific town. Their purpos-

es tend to be quite broad, with an overall focus on development and humanitarian contributions, allowing for flexibility and expansion of activities, although some associations concentrate on specific themes like education, health, environment etc. Relief associations range from smaller associations, with a predominantly local membership base (e.g. in a particular Swedish town or region), to larger ones with members all over Sweden and in some cases transnationally as well. They tend to organize activities in both Sweden and the Somali region and have a membership base that is exclusively or primarily Somali.

### Box 1: Capacity development of the tax system in Somaliland

Somali Relief Agency was established in 1989 and is one of the oldest Somali associations in Sweden. As the name indicates, the association has been engaged in relief and development from the beginning. It currently has around 100 members, mainly living in the Stockholm area. Over the years, Somali Relief Agency has worked on a broad variety of projects, including women empowerment and youth entrepreneurship, as well as a range of activities focusing on integration in Swedish society. The latest project focuses on capacity development of the tax system in Somaliland. One of the founders, himself a tax expert, explained the rationale like this:

If a country wants to develop, it should have some sort of income. Somaliland and other parts of Africa cannot only rely on aid from other countries; they have to rely on themselves and try to collect income taxes in the VAT system and they have to implement new regulations.

Somali Relief Agency has received Forum Syd funding for a capacity-building project, in which its tax expert travels to Somaliland at least twice a year for a month or more to teach workshops on value added tax (VAT), legislation, taxpayer registration, income taxes, auditing and IT systems.

Despite the geographical focus,<sup>1</sup> many Somali-Swedish relief associations employ names with broad and/or non-political connotations, such as Red Sea, *solidaritet*

(solidarity in Swedish) or simply Somali or *somaliska* (Somali in Swedish)<sup>2</sup>. As already mentioned, there may be a coincidence between area and clan affiliation, but no interlocutors mentioned clan as central to their association. Rather, the tendency not to signal area or clan affiliation through the name indicates an (at least potential) dissociation from a political and/or clan-defined focus and orientation. In practice, though, the political involvement of associations and interlocutors varied considerably. Furthermore, though translocal relief associations may start out with activities in a particular area, many gradually expanded their geographical focus or had the ambition to do so. Hence, the focus on a locality should be considered a point of departure rather than a delimitation.

## Women's associations

Women's associations were widely articulated as important actors among the Somali-Swedish interlocutors and among development professionals in Sweden, given the heavy male dominance in some relief associations and in the Somali-Swedish associational landscape more generally. Though membership of a women's association is defined by gender, actual activities may include men and boys as well. Some women's associations include women from all over the Somali region and are based on the members' settlement location in Sweden, such as Stockholm or other towns. Like other associations, women's associations may have activities in both Sweden and the Somali region. Finally, given the Swedish emphasis on gender equality, women's associations may be seen as playing a role in promoting women's rights and gender equality more generally – in Sweden as in the Somali region.

## Umbrella organizations

While there are fewer umbrella organizations than other kinds of Somali-Swedish development associations, they are important to mention because of their particular role in the associational landscape. Umbrella organizations are generally attributed a higher degree of representativeness and legitimacy in the eyes of their members and of development professionals, who often find the large number of Somali-Swedish associations bewildering or call for more unified voices (cf. Horst

et al. 2010; Kleist and Vammen 2012). However, their role is sometimes questioned by non-member associations, indicating that expectations of absolute representativeness are problematic. None of the representatives of the umbrella organizations included in the sample voiced such claims though.

Two prominent Somali-Swedish umbrella organizations are Somaliska Riksförbundet i Sverige (Somali National Association in Sweden) and Somalilands Riksförbund (Somaliland National Association in Sweden). Interlocutors also mentioned umbrella organizations at the federal state level, such as Puntland and Jubaland. In addition to this, a search on [allabolag.se](http://allabolag.se) generated hits for youth and women's umbrella organizations as well as umbrella organizations based on location in Sweden, like *Somaliska Paraplyorganisationen i Skåne* (Somali Umbrella Organization in Scania). A number of translocal relief associations expressed an ambition to transform into umbrella organizations in the hope of achieving a united voice and hence more impact, and I heard about both successful and unsuccessful attempts to establish such organizations.

In contrast to most other Somali-Swedish associations, the names of umbrella organizations often refer to the (federal) state level and may convey an explicit political dimension. While their purposes mainly focus on promoting the lives and rights of Somali-Swedes, they may also be involved in development activities in the Somali region<sup>3</sup> and/or organizing or facilitating them. An example of the latter is a dialogue meeting on Swedish development cooperation in Somalia, organized by the Somali National Association in Sweden with SIDA participation from the Somalia section of the Swedish Embassy in Nairobi and SIDA's Africa Office in Stockholm. The meeting took place in Kista in Stockholm, with an audience of about 80 people.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, umbrella organizations for diaspora organizations in Europe are another tendency. Several interlocutors were active in pan-European umbrella organizations organized around (federal) state affiliation, such as the Puntland European Diaspora Associations Network (PEDAN),<sup>5</sup> though it was not clear whether these organizations are directly involved in development and relief. It is likely that diasporic umbrella organizations may play a (future) role in development and relief.

## NGOs

As the name implies, “NGOs” refers to non-government organizations, with the implication that all Somali-Swedish development associations in the sample could be categorized as such. This is included as a separate category here to highlight associations that are organized around particular interests – e.g. the environment – rather than area or group affiliation (however broadly defined), and with a membership base that goes beyond Somali-Swedes.

## Mosques

Faith-based Islamic organizations and mosques constitute another important arena for development and relief. Like remittances, contributions submitted through Islamic charity globally surpass ODA several times.<sup>7</sup> Such contributions include the religious tax, zakat, which amounts to at least 2.5 per cent of an individual's annual financial surplus, as well as voluntary alms, religious endowment and sacrifice (Borchgrevink and Erdal 2017; IRIN 2012). Contributions to charity and relief are thus inherent Islamic practices, whether channelled through a mosque, an organization or between individuals, and they may take place at transnational or translocal levels. As proposed by Borchgrevink and Erdal (2017), the role of religion may be explicit or implicit and work through formal or informal structures. Formal frameworks include Muslim NGOs, where the role of religion is explicit, and diaspora development associations, where Islam may play an implicit but motivating role in involvement and contributions to fundraising, but is not an explicit principle of organization. Informal frameworks for transnational charity engagement could be donations made in Quran study groups or through ad hoc fundraising initiatives (ibid.).

While the interviews for this study did not focus on the role of Islam, most Somali-Swedish interlocutors highlighted mosques and Islamic organizations as key players in development and relief for the Somali region, especially in relation to emergencies. Practically all major fundraising initiatives mentioned in relation to the 2016–2017 drought were carried out either through or in collaboration with

mosques. Mosques were widely referred to as neutral arenas in terms of Somali politics and clan affiliation, and several interlocutors explained how such differences are put aside in mosque collections, which tend to have a very broad appeal. Furthermore, imams and sheikhs are important opinion leaders, and getting the support of the mosque can mean a big difference in terms of backing and diffusion of ideas and activities – indeed one man characterized mosques as “an arena where messages are passed through”, working as a “louder microphone”. Another explained how mosques helped spread the word about his association:

One thing that I want to mention is that in the diaspora, we engage the mosques. That’s very, very important. They usually have Friday prayers where many people gather. We went to many mosques and asked, “Can you put a little bit of our topic in your sermon?” And then, later, I met somebody who had one of our car stickers and he told me that he heard it from the mosque ... People listen to them.

This example thus adds another dimension to the role of religion in diaspora engagement, that of promoting and supporting existing initiatives. However, as demonstrated by the case below, mosques may not necessarily take on an explicit development role.

## Box 2: Emergency relief collections in a mosque

This Islamic organization runs a mosque in Stockholm, attended by many Somali-Swedes.<sup>1</sup> In addition to its religious functions, it is active in anti-radicalization work in Swedish society and collaborates with the Swedish authorities on this topic. Representatives from the mosque highlighted how they focus on life in Sweden and seek to avoid being caught up in Somali politics and conflicts. When asked about their engagement in the Somali region, they explained:

We do little or nothing in Somalia. Some major sheikhs advised us that “You live in Sweden and you do not need to engage in what takes place in Somalia. What is more important for you is to engage in whatever happens in Sweden, that is the country that you are living in.” But we take some steps, we help people when drought or natural calamities occur in the whole of Somalia. We collect money from people here in Sweden and give the money to entrusted and accepted organizations in Sweden. They send the money to committees in Somalia.

This mosque thus emphasizes its primary focus on Swedish society and its distance from (what it sees as) particularistic engagement in the Somali region, signalling its position as a neutral collector and conveyor of resources, rather than direct development engagement. It thus offers an arena to facilitate diaspora development and relief.

## Businesses

The role of Somali diaspora investment in the private sector is well established in the literature (e.g. Hammond et al. 2011; Hansen 2007; Newland and Plaza 2013), involving, for instance, the establishment of businesses, hotels, or service delivery, including private schools or clinics. Though Somali entrepreneurship is widespread in places like South Africa and Minnesota (Abdi 2015; Steinberg 2015), only 0.6 per cent of Somali-Swedes between 16 and 64 years old were self-employed in 2010 (Carlson, Magnusson and Rönqvist 2012, 27). Nevertheless, business and social



entrepreneurship have emerged as an arena for diaspora engagement in development. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Somali-Swedish businesses have been able to apply for support from Forum Syd's Swedish-Somali Business Programme (SSBP) since July 2016. In the first application round, 30 projects received funding. Puntland Invest is one of them.

### Box 3: A Swedish-style slaughterhouse in Puntland

Puntland Invest is a social enterprise that will establish a high-quality slaughterhouse in Puntland to provide sustainable livelihoods for local small-scale farmers, especially women. The enterprise was founded in 2015 in Garowe, officially registered in Sweden in 2016, and received an SSBP grant in March 2017. The CEO and co-founder explained how the enterprise will improve Somali livestock exports by providing high-quality butchering, meat-processing and cold storage, drawing on Swedish know-how and standards of hygiene. According to the CEO, there is a prospect of a growing middle class in the area who will demand – and be able to pay for – high-quality meat products, making the slaughterhouse a sustainable business. In the long term, this and other enterprises may open up business opportunities for Swedish companies as well, making it a good investment of Swedish taxpayers' money. The slaughterhouse is to open on 1 March 2018, with 19 employees in the first phase and an expected expansion to 26 and 50 employees, respectively, in the second and third phases.

## Diasporic networks

While the interlocutors did not articulate clan as an explicit principle of organization in registered associations, it plays a central role in some diasporic networks. In contrast to associations, such networks are not registered in Sweden, have a looser and less formal organization, and do not necessarily meet the formal requirements of having an elected board, annual meetings, member lists etc., but are more

flexible and ad hoc in their organization and activities. Trust in members and local partners plays a central role, with less emphasis on paperwork and reporting. As their membership base often covers several countries and continents, including the Somali region, they are truly diasporic in the sense of global dispersal and home area affiliation.

#### **Box 4: A global network building boarding schools**

Organized around a well-known sub-clan and focusing on a Somaliland town, this network has members around the world, including Europe, North America and the Horn of Africa. Most of the network members are well established in their different countries of settlement and have the capacity to contribute. The network is not registered in Sweden and works primarily through WhatsApp, with virtual member meetings every Sunday. According to one of its active members in Sweden, the network collected USD 1 million over a period of five to six years and subsequently built a boarding school in the Somaliland town it focuses on. Somali-Swedish members alone contributed USD 20,000. The network is planning another project in the field of education and health and is also partly involved in political mobilization in support of political parties in Somaliland. The member explained the purpose and rationale of the network like this:

Our region comprises different clans, but there is a majority sub-clan. We who come from this area, we asked ourselves what can we do for the people living there? We don't have the capacity to build schools everywhere. Charity begins at home ... We don't say this should be a school for this particular clan, but that the schools should be established within the geographic area of the sub-clan. So if somebody sends his child there, nobody says anything. It's a regional logic rather than a clan logic.

Clan and regional belonging may thus overlap, especially in the case of larger clan families. The example thus accentuates how clan may constitute a mobilizing factor, but also that it is not the only one.

Several interlocutors explained how they or their respective associations are active or are expected to be involved in diasporic networks, alongside their engagement in a registered association. These networks can be organized around a specific sub-sub-sub clan lineage, or at the more overall clan family level, as in the example above. Due to their sometimes global membership base, such networks may organize and handle large funds and projects with budgets of several million Swedish kronor, such as the establishment of – or contributions to – schools and hospitals. However, as unregistered networks they are not eligible for Forum Syd support.

## Individual initiatives

Finally, development projects initiated and organized by individual entrepreneurs with external partners constitute an important but seemingly not very common diaspora actor in the Swedish context. In contrast to most other diaspora development projects, such initiatives mainly collaborate with international or Swedish organizations, institutes and professionals rather than Somali-Swedish associations or Forum Syd. It should be noted that many associations depend on committed individuals (Danstrøm, Kleist and Sørensen 2015; Kleist 2007); the difference here is the mode of organization and the choice of partners and collaborators. Tech Water Trust is an example.

### Box 5: Schools and water provision supported by Lions Club and ABF

Tech Water Trust aims to provide water, education and health facilities in a rural part of Puntland. The trust was founded by a Somali-Swedish full-time politician and activist based in Borlänge in the county of Dalarna after visiting his home area in 2007 – for the first time since the early 1990s. He subsequently undertook field studies in the area in 2008 and 2011, the last time in the company of a senior hydrologist to prospect groundwater for potential bore-hole drilling. These studies turned out to be promising. Since then Tech Water Trust has planned an ambitious water provision project in the area, with the aim of drilling four boreholes. In 2017, Lions Club Sweden initially accepted a SEK 6 million budget for the project, but the final decision had not been made at the time of writing. The Borlänge Nedansiljan branch of ABF – the Workers' Educational Association – has supported the project from the beginning. Tech Water Trust has also renovated an existing school and built a new one in the area, also supported by ABF and Lions Club.

Initiatives such as this one are difficult to pin down in a particular category. Though focusing on a particular area in the Somali region, it does not constitute a translocal relief association in terms of registration and membership. Its collaboration with Lions Club International and ABF is also quite different from the Forum Syd Somalia Diaspora Programme. Yet, while atypical, such initiatives are important to include as well, as they point to other modes of diaspora engagement in development.

### Endnotes chapter 3

1. Only two registered associations in the sample had names referring to a specific town and region; all other associational names encountered either referred to the (federal) state level – like Puntland, Jubaland or Somaliland – or did not have names with geographical denotations.
2. The last-mentioned word retrieved 661 hits on allabolag.se, by far the largest number of hits for any keyword, followed by Somali with 144 hits. Search conducted on 25 July 2017.
3. For instance, the Somaliland National Association in Sweden has undertaken several development projects.
4. The meeting took place on 24 August 2017. See Ismail (2017) for a description of the event.

5. <http://pedan.eu/>

6. 2012 estimates range from USD 200 million to USD 1 trillion at the global level (IRIN 2012); in 2015, these contributions were estimated to total almost USD 2 trillion (Noor and Pickup 2017).

7. Interview conducted by Abdirashid Mohamed Abdi.

## 4. Activities in development and relief

As indicated in the previous chapter, Somali-Swedish development actors are engaged in a wide range of activities. The typology below outlines six overall focus areas, based on the interviews, documents and Forum Syd priorities. Note that it is an indicative rather than a definitive typology. This implies that the activities are common or existing types, rather than an exhaustive list. “Actors” refers to entities that either are, have been or are likely to be engaged in these areas. The category “all” refers to the entire list of diaspora actors, as presented in the previous chapter, with the qualification that, since there is relatively little information on mosques, their participation is somewhat uncertain beyond organizing fundraising. “Funding” indicates the most typical funding opportunities. Finally, note that the distinction between focus areas is not always clear-cut. Whereas, for instance, building a school evidently constitutes an educational activity, a higher level of schooling may also lead to better health prospects and promote gender equality.

**Table 3: Typology of diaspora engagement in development and relief**

Focus	Activities	Actors	Funding
Health	Build/renovate hospitals, clinics Pay salaries Send used equipment Capacity-building and awareness	All	Member fees/donations Diasporic fundraising Public and private donors (Forum Syd – SDP)
Education	Build/renovate schools Pay salaries Send used equipment Capacity-building and awareness	All	Member fees/donations Diasporic fundraising Public and private donors (Forum Syd – SDP)
Drought response	Provision and transport of water Donations to drought committees Drill boreholes Crisis mapping	All Mosques play a central role	Fundraising in mosques, at events, via social media and diasporic networks Public and private donors Member fees/donations
Sustainable livelihoods	Environment protection Job creation and skills training Capacity-building and awareness	Relief associations NGOs Businesses	Forum Syd – SDP and SSBP Member fees/donations Public and private donors
Gender equality	Capacity-building and initiatives on: Reproductive health and FGM Women's and girls' rights	Relief associations Women's associations NGOs	Forum Syd – SDP Member fees/donations Public and private donors
Human rights and democracy	Capacity-building and initiatives on: Democracy and good governance Civil society development Peace and conflict resolution Youth and minority rights	Relief associations NGOs	Forum Syd – SDP Member fees/donations Public and private donors

The typology demonstrates that there are significant similarities and differences across the focus areas in relation to the modes of engagement and funding, as well

as the types of diaspora actors involved in particular areas. Below, the different areas and activities are presented in more detail.

## Health

Contributing to better health facilities in the Somali region is a key concern for the Somali-Swedish interlocutors, due to the extensive health problems after decades of (post-)conflict, humanitarian catastrophes and poverty. The interlocutors generally identified three sets of problems: lack of facilities, such as clinics and hospitals; low capacity and low quality where available; and massive health problems, including reproductive health. Organizing – or contributing to – the establishment or reconstruction of clinics and hospitals is the most common activity, along with payment of health personnel salaries and shipment of used hospital equipment. Professional involvement occurs as well. A variety of associations and actors are involved in such activities, including registered associations and diasporic networks. Forum Syd funding may occur if the health dimension is related to one of Forum Syd's priority areas, e.g. gender equality.

### Box 6: A maternity hospital in the south-central zone

This relief association was established in 2008 as a burial and self-help association for Somali-Swedes originating from a particular region in the south-central zone. A few years later, the association extended its activities to development in this and two other regions, with a particular focus on health and water. In collaboration with a diasporic network of persons originating from these regions, it has supported the establishment of a maternity hospital which opened in 2016. The association has also sent used hospital equipment via the Swedish Salvation Army, financing the transport of equipment and of an accompanying member. So far, funding for activities has been generated through diasporic collections and member fees, but the association has the ambition to apply for SDP matched funding in the future.



## Education

Another pervasive concern is education, reflecting a high illiteracy rate and poor level of education in the Somali region. Much as in the case of health, the interlocutors identified their main concerns as a lack of educational facilities, especially in rural areas, and low quality where available, except for expensive private schools. Registered associations, diasporic networks and individual initiatives organize and/or contribute financially to the construction, establishment or maintenance of schools and payment of teachers' salaries. Such activities are self-funded through various kinds of fundraising activities where diasporic networks play a central role. However, activities with educational components have also received Forum Syd SDP support, and Forum Syd reported that it had supported the construction of schools in the past. In addition, other donors are sometimes brought in as well, as the Tech Water Trust example illustrated.

## Sustainable livelihoods

This category includes initiatives for environment protection and (re-)construction of or support for livelihoods and food security in sustainable ways, training in livelihood skills, establishment of fishing or farming cooperatives, and energy provision. Whereas many interlocutors, no matter their type of engagement, emphasized the importance of sustainable livelihoods and environmental protection for the development and reconstruction of the Somali region, all the livelihood projects in the sample had received funding via Forum Syd. Swe-Golis – an environment protection NGO – is one example.

### Box 7: Tree nurseries and chemicals inspection

Established in 2007, Swe-Golis's aim is to combat environmental degradation in Somaliland, with a membership base consisting of Somali-Swedish and Swedish professionals, comprising biologists, science teachers and environmentalists. A few years after it was set up, the association decided to establish tree nurseries and engage in sustainable development awareness raising in Somaliland, in collaboration with their local partner organization called *Golis* (goose in Somali). In 2013, Swe-Golis received a SEK 150,000 SDP grant. One of the board members recalled: "So we were sitting here in Stockholm and we're planning to plant 15,000 trees. It is very easy to sit down here and say, 'Okay, we'll plant 15,000 trees.' It was a hell of a job. We went there and people were looking for water to drink, so how can we explain to them that we want to plant trees?" However, through their local partner organization and a retired Somali-Swedish teacher who returned to live in Somaliland, Swe-Golis managed to establish several tree nurseries. Their current project focuses on chemical waste management and education of chemicals inspectors. While their first Somali-Swedish members all originated from Somaliland, the membership base has now expanded to include Somalis from other regions, as well as Kenyan members.

## Gender equality

Examples of activities that focus on gender equality include reproductive and sexual health initiatives, shelter and protection for battered women, strengthening women's livelihoods, and inclusion of women in governance and decision-making processes and institutions. As in the case of sustainable livelihoods, all projects mentioned by the interlocutors were conducted by registered associations or through social enterprises, supported by SDP or SSBP grants. In contrast to the earlier-mentioned focus areas, gender equality is a contested issue among some interlocutors. While many – men and women alike – emphasized gender equality as a personal value, some questioned its priority in contexts characterized by poverty,

post-conflict, and lack of access to basic resources. In the eyes of this group, basic needs should be fulfilled before it makes sense to address gender issues. Others, however, were ardent activists for gender equality, insisting that promotion of women's and girls' rights is a necessity for development in the Somali region.

### Box 8: Empowering women in Stockholm and Mogadishu

Named after a famous Somali heroine, the Hawo Tako women's association was established in 1997 by a group of Somali women to advocate for their rights and to inform Swedish society about this new group of citizens. The association was engaged in development in Somalia from its early days, wanting to establish an educational centre for women in Mogadishu. However, due to conflict and extremist groups, they had to put their plans on hold. One of the founders did not forget the idea, however.

I went back to Somalia and I met with young girls with small children, who had been divorced, mistreated or raped. I thought maybe I could start a Kvinnojour (women's shelter) in Somalia, but we cannot work exactly the way we used to work in Sweden. Even in Sweden, there are threats from men who call and look for their wives or relatives. How can we establish a shelter in Somalia, when we have problems here? But then I came back to Sweden and I thought, "No, I should work on this."

Despite challenges and scepticism, Hawo Tako eventually managed to obtain support to establish a centre for abused women from a well-funded charitable organization based in Mogadishu. In 2016, they received an SDP grant and the centre became a reality, with 400 women turning up for help. Since its inception, the association has received interest from Kenyan women's associations that would like to establish similar initiatives. Meanwhile, Hawo Tako has extended its activities in Stockholm, with a range of social and educational activities, and is thus working in Stockholm as well as in Mogadishu.

While an explicit focus on gender equality is primarily found in projects receiving SDP grants, attention to gender may also be incorporated in other ways. Hiring female trainers, having female board members, supporting a maternity hospital, and focusing on schooling for boys and girls alike were initiatives mentioned by the interlocutors as examples of their engagement. This shows that the contestation of gender equality as a development priority does not reflect a sharp dividing line between so-called Somali and Swedish values, as more conservative voices in both Western countries and the Somali region may claim. Rather, it indicates that there is disagreement concerning what gender equality entails and how to approach it (cf. Horst 2017b).

## Human rights and democracy

The area of human rights and democracy includes a broad range of activities, from conflict resolution, peace-building conferences and advocacy for the rights and political inclusion of youth and minorities to institutional capacity-building and good governance. This is perhaps the fuzziest focus area, in that such activities often have a long-term perspective and may involve a certain degree of interpretation. As in the case of sustainable livelihoods and gender equality, projects focusing explicitly on human rights were almost exclusively carried out by registered associations that had received Forum Syd support. Though less ardently debated than gender equality, this topic is also characterized by a certain ambivalence among some interlocutors, who maintained that the promotion of human rights is premature when people's basic needs are not met, while others emphasized human rights as a prerequisite for development.

## Box 9: Peacebuilding in the Horn of Africa

The Somali International Rehabilitation Centre (SIRC) is an example of an NGO active in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. SIRC was founded in 2000 in Lund, where it still has its secretariat. It organized its first peacebuilding conference in 2002, focusing on the Horn of Africa, because, as one of the founders explained, “we realized that Somalia’s problems were not confined to Somalia alone, but were linked to conflicts and underdevelopment in the rest of the Horn of Africa”. SIRC has so far organized 12 international conferences with high-level participation from international agencies, organizations and universities, focusing on the strengthening of democracy and peacebuilding in the Horn of Africa. Lund University constitutes an important partner, but SIRC has also collaborated with and received funding from Forum Syd, SIDA, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Folke Bernadotte Academy, the city of Lund, Olof Palme International Centre, and several educational associations. The conference proceedings have subsequently been published and are available online.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to peacebuilding conferences, SIRC has organized development and relief activities in the Somali region since 2003, with a particular focus on food security and civil society capacity development. Between 2015 and 2017, SIRC conducted a human rights capacity training project in Somaliland; a newly funded project focuses on human rights and democratic governance in five regional states and in Mogadishu with a particular focus on marginalized groups, running from 2018 to 2020. Somali diaspora professionals in Sweden as well as local professionals in Somalia will take part as trainers.

## Drought response

Finally, humanitarian drought response constitutes an important activity. In response to the humanitarian disaster following the extensive drought that culminated between February and April 2017, and previous droughts in 2014 and 2011, a wide range of diaspora actors have been involved in organizing and/or contributing to fundraising events and drought relief (see DEMAC 2017 for an analysis of the Somali diaspora drought response in 2016). Involved diaspora actors include registered associations, networks, individual activists and mosques. Social media have also been important in mobilizing contributions. The president of an association explained: “For every like on Facebook, I will pay USD 0.20, and for every comment USD 0.50 ... So last time, I sent them USD 400.” Other means of fundraising include concerts or collections in mosques, sometimes going hand in hand with electronic collections via Swish. Finally, international organizations like Save the Children or Lions Club have contributed as well.

While some contributions are directed towards the area of origin of the actors involved, contributions to drought response were widely reported to go beyond regional affiliations and political convictions (cf. Hammond 2013). A nationwide collection organized by an association in collaboration with mosques in Rinkeby, Gothenburg and Malmö collected SEK 600,000 within two weeks. One of the persons involved explained:

When an emergency occurs, we talk to other Somali actors. We have unwritten traditional rules. ... If something happens, we join our efforts even if we are from different areas. We assemble those who are active and say, “There’s a crisis, what can we do?” The people are generous. They see, they hear, they know that people are starving. The governments are different but people have a strong bond. ... When there’s a catastrophe, we block politics.

The main type of drought relief is to send funds to a trusted institution, committee or individual who organizes the response on the ground, such as buying and transporting water or drilling boreholes. In most cases, Somali-Swedes engage as fund-

raisers or conveyors of funds. According to SIDA employees at the Somalia section of the Swedish Embassy in Nairobi, the fast and massive response of Somalis living around the world to the 2017 drought was among the crucial factors in avoiding a repetition of the catastrophe of the 2011 drought. Whereas 260,000 lost their lives in the 2011 drought, the number of fatalities in 2017 numbered about 5,000, despite the latter being the worst drought in living memory. In addition to fundraising, the Abaaraha crisis mapping system should be highlighted as a significant drought relief initiative.

### Box 10: Abaaraha.org – Mapping the crisis

*Abaaraha*, meaning drought in Somali, is an online crisis mapping system in which urgent needs, deaths, malnutrition and IDP/feeding centres are mapped in order to promote and coordinate rapid responses. The site is based on phone calls, e-mails, tweets and online inputs from people on the ground, in the diaspora, organizations, and through social media alerts, including Viber and WhatsApp. The *Abaaraha* team assesses all information for accuracy and relevance before it appears online. The system was established by five Somali-Swedish tech developers and social activists in response to the drought, and was launched on 16 March 2017. Based on open-source software, the platform cost less than SEK 12,000 to develop, according to Team *Abaaraha*,<sup>2</sup> and took less than a week from idea to launch (Omvärlden 2017). Since its inception, the *Abaaraha* crisis mapping system has caught international attention and has been featured in international media. Likewise, team members have presented the system at the international GIS day at Yale University, US, and at the One Young World Summit in Bogotá, Colombia.

## Overall tendencies – flexible engagement

The analysis undertaken here of diaspora engagement activities in development and relief demonstrates a tendency to cross-sectoral and flexible development engagement, rather than sticking to one particular theme. It also highlights that all

types of activities draw upon different sources of funding, including member fees and donations, different donors, and – in some cases – matched funding through the SDP and SSBP. Nevertheless, there are striking differences in the modes of engagement.

Health, education and water provision were widely articulated by the interlocutors as key dimensions in the development and reconstruction of the Somali region, with the lack of facilities and (qualified) personnel highlighted as key issues to address. Indeed, many activities involve supporting, establishing or reconstructing health, education and water provision facilities in the Somali region, and such projects are undertaken by registered associations and diasporic networks alike, with or without matched funding. Activities with an explicit focus on sustainable livelihoods, gender equality and human rights, in contrast, are almost exclusively carried out by registered associations receiving matched funding or grants from the SDP or SSBP. Finally, drought relief was widely referred to as the most widespread and urgent area for diaspora engagement among all types of Somali-Swedish development actors, but falls outside Forum Syd's priority areas for diaspora support.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the analysis shows that Somali-Swedish development actors take on three, often overlapping, positions, no matter the type of activity. First, as entrepreneurs, who organize self- or co-funded projects, whether supported by diasporic networks, Forum Syd, or organizations like Lions Clubs or ABF. Many of the interlocutors, to varying degrees, play an entrepreneurial role, reflecting their positions as founders, board members and coordinators of associations, businesses and other initiatives. Second, as capacity developers engaged in knowledge transfer and capacity training, in particular through shorter or longer – sometimes permanent return – trips to the Somali region. This dimension is especially pertinent among those who are engaged within their field of professional expertise, though capacity development may also concern more general organizational processes, for instance in relation to democracy or civil society. Third, as sources and conveyors of resources. Here, diaspora actors engage by providing or organizing resources, such as collecting money for a particular project in the Somali region run by another entity, or for an organization based in Sweden that forwards the resources. This is the most widespread position, as virtually all interlocutors contribute to fundraising



or resource provision by paying membership fees, donating to collections and sending remittances. At the collective level, this is particularly relevant for projects not receiving Forum Syd support, for diasporic networks and for mosques.

## Endnotes chapter 4

1. See [http://sirclund.se/wp/?page\\_id=54](http://sirclund.se/wp/?page_id=54). Since 2007, the proceedings have been published by various departments at Lund University in collaboration with SIRC.
2. Comment by one of the Abaaraha developers at the development dialogue meeting, 24 August 2017, Kista.
3. Forum Syd launched a drought response programme in Somaliland and Puntland in August 2017 in collaboration with local Somali organizations.

## 5. Motivations, opportunities and tensions

With the large number of Somalis living in Sweden and their various forms of transnational engagement on the one hand, and the significant proportion of SIDA development cooperation and humanitarian assistance to Somalia on the other, there are multi-stranded activities linking Sweden, the Somali region and elsewhere in the diaspora. This overall transnational social field is characterized by mutual opportunities as well as tensions and constraints between different positions and perspectives, creating a sometimes complicated working relationship between diaspora actors and development professionals, as analysed below. First, with a focus on Somali-Swedish motivations for diaspora engagement, followed by an examination of perceptions of the modes and priorities of development among diaspora actors and members of the Swedish development industry.

### Motivations for engagement

Two overall sets of motivations for diaspora engagement can be identified: a sense of moral obligation and political and career ambitions (cf. Danstrøm, Kleist and Sørensen 2015). These sets of motivations may well overlap: acting out of a sense of urgency can go hand in hand with personal aspirations.

#### A sense of moral obligation

No matter their mode of engagement, political loyalties or erstwhile origin, the interlocutors expressed a sense of moral obligation, compassion and urgency to relieve poverty, suffering and disaster in the Somali region (cf. Horst 2017a; Kleist 2008a; Werbner 2002). This sense of commitment and obligation was often expressed in cultural and religious terms, such as the importance of charity and com-

passion in Islam (Borchgrevink and Erdal 2017). Likewise, it goes hand in hand with established patterns of social and economic reciprocity and support along kinship lines, such as the sending of remittances and other kinds of support. Many adult Somali-Swedes are involved in such practices, as are Somalis living elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, contributions to collections for drought relief and other kinds of disaster response were widely articulated as a practice where affiliation to particular areas has less or no importance, being based instead on a sense of urgency and solidarity, even for people with very limited economic means. In the words of one man:

Even people with big remittance responsibilities are engaged in donations. They have to be. It's about contributing small amounts of money when they can. Pay maybe 20 dollars. Somehow, people manage to do it. It's very difficult.

Contributions to disaster relief thus seem to be in line with remittances, as a responsibility that should be met if at all possible (cf. Hammond 2013), where the former can be seen as expressing a generalized humanitarian – and religious – obligation and the latter a personal one. However, as many Somalis themselves experienced physical suffering during the civil war or have family or friends who are or have been affected, the distinction between the general and the personal dimensions may not always be clear-cut.

Engagement in development and relief at the collective level is additional to such responsibilities; it does not replace them. This “additional” sense of moral obligation is sometimes connected to particular places, sometimes to particular needs. Furthermore, it may be linked to processes of recognition: being recognized by one's peers as a person who makes a difference in other people's lives, whether in the Swedish or the Somali context (Kleist 2007, 2010; Melander 2009). This may reflect the fact that inclusion in Swedish society is experienced as difficult – for instance, in terms of fulfilling professional or political ambitions – whereas associations constitute a more open arena for using competencies. However, the fact that many of the Somali-Swedish interlocutors work as professionals in their respective fields suggests that recognition and the desire to make a difference reflect a more general dimension of collective engagement and human life (Fraser and Honneth 2003).

Talking about their motivations, many interlocutors highlighted how a realization of their ability to do something was an important factor in becoming active. An associate professor in international health recalled how she got involved with a Somali-Swedish NGO working with health issues after recognizing a pattern in tuberculosis (TB) outbreaks and the location of TB centres.

I learned about a new collaboration between different activists, locals, the Somali diaspora and the WHO. They showed me a map of TB centres and said, “We have a centre here and here, everywhere.” But the middle region, the south Mudug area, was missing. I said, “What is happening here?” I came back and I contacted the young men who used to ask me to join their NGO and told them, “By the way, if you’re working in that area, the TB occurrence is high over there.” They asked me what changed my mind and I said, “The pattern changed my mind; I don’t care who you are or where you come from.” So then I started to get involved, and we set up a TB centre and we started working ... It’s like you have an obligation to give back, it’s like we’re expected to.

As an expert in international health, this woman engaged at the professional level, explaining her engagement as motivated by urgent needs, rather than belonging to a particular locality. In other cases, the sense of urgency and moral obligation go hand in hand with home area affiliation. One man explained how he became active after encountering poverty and suffering in the place he left as a young child.

I had been studying in many countries around the world before settling in Sweden. Once I went back home and, seeing how people live, I felt pity; I have European style, you know, and I just cried. But then I was thinking that we could do a lot of things as an organization. Because there are opportunities in Sweden, there is funding for organizations and there are other organizations willing to support us as diaspora to do something. I was thinking, there’s nobody else; who can it be rather than us?

Here, too, the motivation for engagement is linked to a sense of urgency, as well as a realization of the ability to do something. In this case, opportunities in Sweden are pertinent, such as possible funding and backing from other associations. While

this accentuates the importance of political opportunity structures in shaping diaspora engagement and its manifestations, the examples also show that opportunities alone are not enough to drive it. Rather, it is opportunities in combination with the recognition of an urgent need and a sense of obligation to do something about it – or the ambition to do so.

## Personal ambitions and opportunities

Fulfilment of personal ambitions was another overall motivation for diaspora engagement that several interlocutors brought up in the interviews, especially in relation to politics. Several explained that diaspora engagement is a way of achieving status and positioning oneself in the political landscape in the Somali region, especially if aspiring to a political career. Given that a significant proportion of Somali politicians have lived abroad, this does not seem like an unreasonable suggestion. Yet, in contrast to a sense of moral obligation, nobody explained their own engagement in these terms, but rather emphasized how their activities go hand in hand with certain ambitions or that political engagement and connections facilitate and buttress development processes in the Somali region.

Connections between political and diaspora engagement do indeed emerge when we look at actual practices. Several of the interlocutors were or had been active in Swedish politics, alongside their transnational engagement, and some of them held or had held diplomatic posts for Somaliland or Puntland. Others had been approached by Somali politicians with offers of political or advisory positions but had declined for various reasons, while others had explicit but as yet unfulfilled political ambitions. One person had run for the presidential elections in 2016, and several younger interlocutors saw a future in Somali politics some years ahead, highlighting their good connections and well-known family names.

These examples demonstrate that political and development engagement may indeed be closely connected and that involvement in one of these spheres may enhance the other and vice versa. On the one hand, there are persistent calls for diaspora engagement from governments in the Somali region, such as in the national development plans of the Federal Republic of Somalia and of Somaliland (Federal

Government of Somalia 2017; Republic of Somaliland 2017). “Bringing projects” may enhance credibility and status in the local population and among politicians. On the other hand, political connections facilitate or may be necessary for projects aimed at strengthening peacebuilding, human rights or democracy. Indeed, actual political involvement can be an effective way of bringing change. That said, several interlocutors emphasized the non-political nature of their projects, explaining that political ambitions sometimes impede development engagement or create local resistance.

In addition to political ambitions, some interlocutors articulated ambitions for a career in an international organization or in the NGO world. Again, a similar kind of logic is in place: diaspora involvement may boost one’s CV, and knowledge of organizations and development work may provide valuable experience and insights for diaspora engagement. Such ambitions seemed to be less controversial than political ones and were mentioned as an additional motivation by some interlocutors, especially university students and graduates.

Motivations for involvement thus span from a sense of moral obligation, a desire to make a difference, to personal ambitions. Opportunities to turn such motivations into action are important as well – whether those opportunities are funding and/or professional qualifications. Another important factor is SIDA involvement in the Somali region.

## Sweden as a heavyweight in the Somali region?

Somali-Swedish diaspora actors and SIDA development professionals alike highlighted Sweden’s presence in and contributions to the Somali region – even as a heavyweight, as previously mentioned, in terms of contributions and influence. From a SIDA perspective, this “heavyweight” status refers to the quality and scope of strategic engagement in SIDA’s priority sectors, but also to its volume, as Sweden is a major donor to the Somali region. Importantly for this study, the Swedish presence in the Somali region also includes four Somali-Swedish embassy staff mem-

bers, of whom three are SIDA employees on mission for Sweden. In addition to their professional skills and insights, this carries symbolic value. As pointed out by one of them, their presence at the embassy and at formal events “with all the flags and all the names of country representation” extends the meaning of who and what represents Sweden. She described the surprise of many local Somalis who look in vain for the Swedish representative – often expected to be a white man – when they realize that “Sweden is right in front of them” in the shape of a Somali-Swedish woman.

Other interlocutors also referred to Somali-Swedish diaspora groups and returnees as simply Swedish, reflecting an understanding that living in Sweden has resulted in a certain distinctiveness in terms of behaviour and values that is recognized in the Somali region. The president of the Somali National Association in Sweden expressed it in the following way:

The Swedish diaspora are highly looked upon from Somalia. We are very respected because we have used a lot of our own money to rebuild the nation. We don't ask for projects, we collect funds among ourselves and we send them back if something is needed. So we have goodwill from the Somalis in Somalia.

In such and similar statements, the “Swedish diaspora” is articulated as a respected and independent development actor that engages in plentiful and thoughtful contributions and activities. Such a positioning resonates with diaspora engagement policies at both country of settlement and country of origin level, with their emphasis on needs-based contributions and, especially in a country of origin perspective, the focus on rebuilding the nation. Talking about the Somali or Somaliland nation seemed quite unusual among the interlocutors, however. Nevertheless, most shared the image of being part of a highly committed and motivated diasporic citizenry, and several emphasized that their contributions can be of benefit to both Sweden and the Somali region. Sometimes in terms of opening up future markets for Swedish businesses, in other cases through the diffusion of Swedish societal models. Whether directly or indirectly, several interlocutors articulated that the Somali-Swedish group constitutes an actual or potential Swedish diplomatic presence in the Somali region, as (unofficial) ambassadors for Sweden.

Such “diaspora diplomacy” shifts the attention from lobbying by migrants in their country of settlement to the diplomatic potential of diaspora visitors and returnees in their country of origin. This includes “classic” lobbying conducted by Somali-Swedes with access to high-level politicians, businesspersons, clan leaders etc. in the Somali region. But everyday interactions with policymakers and public officials may be important as well in what could be termed street-level diplomacy,<sup>1</sup> where communicative and adaptive skills are pertinent in (slow) processes of change. According to a man from an area that was under al-Shabaab control for several years and only recently got its own government, Somali-Swedes can tell the newly minted Somali politicians about the importance of education and, he added, “we can tell them about ... *frihet*”. Using the Swedish word, this man (who spoke perfect English) seemingly connected freedom with life in Sweden. When in alignment with Swedish priorities and values, such interactions and ambitions constitute an obvious opportunity for SIDA and Swedish political interests more generally.

The extensive SIDA involvement in the Somali region and the emphasis on diaspora engagement also offer opportunities for Somali-Swedes in terms of pursuing professional careers, co-funding of activities, and recognition as development actors. Indeed, at the development dialogue meeting in Stockholm in August 2017, SIDA’s Africa Office conveyed the message to the participants that both the Swedish government and the SIDA office working on Somalia perceive the Somali-Swedish diaspora as an accountable development partner and that they will be consulted in the formulation of the new Somalia strategy. Hence, at the overall level, the working relationship between the development industry and diaspora engagement is characterized by mutual opportunities and interests, as well as by strategic positionality of Somali-Swedish diaspora actors in terms of access and influence.

That said, it would of course be naive to assume that no tensions and challenges exist in this relationship. Certainly, SIDA employees and Somali-Swedish diaspora actors alike were aware of contestation and constraints, especially in regard to perceptions of appropriate development priorities and administrative demands and constraints. Such tensions are not only found between development professionals and diaspora groups, but also reflect different Somali-Swedish positions.



## Contested development priorities

The most outspoken controversy is the question of what constitute the right development priorities and interventions in the Somali region and how they should be implemented. As mentioned above, SIDA's Somalia strategy focuses on human security and livelihoods, health and gender equality, democracy and human rights. The same priorities are found in Forum Syd's Somalia Diaspora Programme, with the addition of sustainable livelihoods and an explicit rights-based approach. While no interlocutors openly questioned the value and importance of these themes in themselves, their relevance to the Somali region was debated and contested.

A widespread concern among Somali-Swedish diaspora actors is that SIDA priorities are out of touch with realities on the ground in the Somali region, characterized by extreme poverty, environmental degradation and the aftermath of decades of state collapse or fragility, such as destroyed or never-existing infrastructure and service delivery – in particular in relation to health, education and water provision. Especially in the south-central parts, instability, violent extremism and terrorism can be added. In this situation, many interlocutors questioned the appropriateness of an approach focusing on human rights or gender equality. A typical statement was that “democracy is good, but if people have nothing to eat, you cannot talk about democracy. You need to cover their basic needs first.” Here the Swedish emphases on democracy – or human rights, gender equality or sometimes sustainable development – are seen as add-on values that do not reflect local needs and priorities and are therefore premature interventions. Furthermore, as several individuals explained, these issues require interpretation. As one interlocutor active in a relief association that focuses on health and education in the south-central zone put it:

I think that environment protection and human rights are crucial issues. But there are more crucial issues than that. If a person dies because of hunger, disease or war, that can be included as a violation of their fundamental human rights, because the person has the right to live, the right to education, the right to sleep peacefully. So there are different interpretative dimensions on what can be considered human rights. We may not say slogans like “send girls to school”; we say, “send all children to

school”, and of course girls are included. ... It’s like human rights can be X to them and Y to me. So this can be a challenge, really.

As this quote shows, questioning development priorities does not imply dismissing the importance of human rights or gender equality, but points to what some interlocutors understood as a one-sided interpretation of these issues. One of the problems, as seen from this perspective, is that certain norms need to be formulated in particular ways to be recognized as legitimate by development professionals and for diaspora actors to avoid categorization as against gender equality or human rights.

That said, many interlocutors emphasized the importance of Swedish values and models, often in relation to exactly the same themes: democracy, gender equality, human rights and sustainable development. Yet they still recognized the controversy. Several of the SDP grant recipients interviewed explained how they sometimes get negative reactions from local people who question why, for instance, they are planting trees when there is no drinking water. But, as several of them mentioned, such reactions do not imply that they agree or give up. As explained by a female activist who fights gender-based violence, “you need to stand up and believe in your idea”. Similarly, a man recalled some of the challenges in running an awareness-raising workshop with female activists, traditional speakers and the police department in Somaliland. Talking about gender violence generated critical responses from the male participants, who questioned the relevance of this topic:

All the men said like, “Why do you focus on those issues when we’ve got problems with poverty?” ... I have heard many times that I got some kind of Western mentality. That “you grew up there, you don’t know anything about this country. You were educated there, and then you just come here with your Western mentality and try to force it on us.” But if you want to get things to work, you have to keep moving.

Similar reactions were encountered all over the Somali region, especially in relation to gender but also as regards human rights and environment protection. SIDA employees from the Swedish Embassy in Nairobi also recognized the local scepticism towards diaspora returnees:

In the last 10 years the (diaspora) influx has increased quite a bit. There's lack of employment here and people feel that they're taking their jobs or things like that. It's a valid frustration, but at the same time the idea is for the diaspora to help and contribute to their communities by transferring skills ... Somali news pick these things up, asking where they are loyal to. "Are you loyal to Sweden, are you loyal to the UK, the US, or are you loyal to Somalia?" So there's a bit of suspicion about why they are here.

Local scepticism towards returnees is found in many instances of return migration or return visits (Abdi 2017; Eastmond 2006; Åkesson and Baaz 2015), reflecting questions about loyalty and struggles over resources – at the same time as there are parallels to anti-immigration movements, also questioning the presence and loyalty of migrants and refugees. However, it would be problematic to conclude that local scepticism suggests that *all* locals are against diaspora development interventions or that it is an indication of an unbridgeable fault line between diaspora actors and the local population. Not only is a clear-cut distinction between the categories of "locals" and "diaspora groups" tricky in the Somali region, where hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced during the last 25 years and many have returned or relocated. Expectations that tensions and conflicts concerning development interventions can be avoided in a context like the Somali region by employing particular approaches and procedures also seem somewhat optimistic. The point is not that approaches and procedures do not matter, but rather that the challenges of bringing change also apply to diaspora actors.

Despite debate over development priorities and interventions, almost all interlocutors agreed that development cooperation in the Somali region must include reconstruction activities and service delivery (cf. Erdal 2015) – whether or not combined with a rights-based approach. Whereas one dimension of reconstruction is linked to addressing basic needs, as mentioned above, another relates to obtaining influence and recognition in the Somali region – or in other words, to the diaspora diplomacy dimension. Many interlocutors explained how other donors and development actors gain influence and power by building health and educational facilities. "Imams have a lot of power because they still build schools", as one man stat-

ed. Another claimed that the Turkish government has gained more goodwill than Sweden, even though Turkey's involvement in Somalia is more recent.<sup>2</sup> The reason is that Turkey invests in more tangible development. In the words of one man:

The Swedish diaspora has worked for 26 years in Somalia. Our goodwill comes with hard work. But Turkey has been there since 2008, 2009, and still has greater goodwill than us. It comes from building houses, building hospitals and infrastructure, something you can actually see, feel and talk about. But the Swedish and Scandinavian way is more to invest a lot of money in a peacebuilding conference with 500 participants. You will educate those 500 people, but in order to get the real goodwill, you have to invest. Not only in the people but also in the area.

For this man, investing in people through capacity-building and civil society development must be combined with investing in physical infrastructure. In this perspective, a rights-based approach must go hand in hand with reconstruction in order to meet local needs and priorities, as well as to consolidate "goodwill". Failing to do so represents a strategic mistake and a lost opportunity for influence in the Somali region – for Sweden as well as for Somali-Swedish diaspora groups, whose relational positionality (Koinova 2017) vis-à-vis other actors in the field is weakened because of Swedish policies. This indicates that both local Somalis and diaspora groups articulate close linkages between the country of residence and "its" diaspora groups. It also shows how development engagement is perceived among some interlocutors as a multi-stranded phenomenon that includes political power and "goodwill".

This criticism of the absence of service delivery as a development priority was well known among SIDA and Forum Syd employees, as reflected in interviews and during the development dialogue meeting. As several policy- and grant-makers pointed out, the Swedish government determines SIDA's development priorities, including the policy emphasis on migration and development and the opportunity for diaspora support. The agenda is set, in other words, with little wiggle room for alternative approaches, in so far as SIDA support is involved. They also emphasized the importance of supporting civil society and human rights, democracy and gender equality as fundamental values and in line with the global 2030 agenda, as well

as the pertinence of long-term investments in a few selected sectors. In that way, Sweden can make a real difference. In such statements, development is articulated as a professional field where the priorities are defined by strategic considerations. Or, in the words of Sinatti and Horst, as change generated by the “planned activities of professional development actors” (2015, 139).

Nevertheless, some policy- and grant-makers agreed that a rights-based approach might involve challenges. One development professional called the area between service delivery and a rights-based approach a grey area, calling for a closer combination of rights issues with service delivery. Building a school may contribute to peacebuilding and could therefore be seen as part of a rights-based approach, but would not be in alignment with SIDA directives, according to this person. Forum Syd recognized this problematic when interacting with Somali-Swedish associations:

Some of them ask us, “Do you want us to work with human rights while people are dying?” But human rights are linked to people, even while they’re dying. It’s difficult ...

Other development professionals also emphasized that reconstruction may go hand in hand with a rights-based approach and that a service delivery component may be necessary in the Somali context. Forum Syd explained that this is indeed the case in some of the SDP or SSBP projects. Likewise, the perception of development cooperation and humanitarian aid as opposites was problematized by some development professionals, particularly in regard to post-conflict contexts, whereas others highlighted the importance of this distinction. Hence, an unequivocal contrast between the approaches of development professionals and diaspora actors, where the former are for a “pure” rights-based approach and the latter for “pure” service delivery, is exaggerated. Nevertheless, certain tensions do exist. While the overall, long-term aims of development in the Somali region seem to be shared among most interlocutors, the means of achieving these goals are more controversial. This reflects different understandings of what works and what is needed from different positions, with insights generated from multi-sited embeddedness seemingly carrying less weight in some development circles. It can be argued that a more flexible interpretation of a rights-based approach that combines elements of reconstruc-

tion and service delivery to a greater extent would have much resonance among Somali-Swedish diaspora actors, and perhaps also among some development professionals.

## Administrative stress and constraints

Most of the Somali-Swedish interlocutors expressed their appreciation of the opportunity for co-funding and capacity development through Forum Syd. Many had participated in courses and emphasized their interest in or actual plans to apply for funding, if they had not already done so. That said, the difficulty of and extensive time spent on administrative work were often characterized as challenging and sometimes as an impediment to involvement (cf. Danstrøm, Kleist and Sørensen 2015). “It is unnecessarily difficult”, one man said, continuing that “the application feels like it is in another world than the one we live in”. Others emphasized the problems of finding enough time when you have a full-time job, pointing to the dilemma of targeting voluntary associations with administrative demands geared to staffed NGOs. For some interlocutors, time constraints in combination with the priority areas and the relatively small size of grants did not add up. “It is time-wasting. It is also time-consuming; you leave your family and your work. If I’m going to spend time on something, I need to see results”, was the comment from the president of an association that had previously received a SDP grant, but had decided not to apply for another project.

A female activist pointed further to a possible gender aspect of this. According to her, the difficult and demanding administrative processes exacerbate gender inequality, as Somali-Swedish associations tend to be male-dominated, with the result that few women apply for Forum Syd grants. She explained:

A lady from SIDA wanted to meet Somali women, and she asked us why Somali women don’t apply for grants from Forum Syd. We told her that it’s very hard and that women need more information and education ... Women’s role in associational life is very important for people in Somalia and we, Somali diaspora women, can transfer our Swedish way of working in associations and of democracy.

Like many others, this woman called for a simplified application process with less difficult language, to reduce the time spent on applications and to enable a broader range of participants to apply. In addition, she recommended information meetings and courses for women only,<sup>3</sup> suggesting that patterns of gendered division of labour, where women do most of the housework and childcare while men dominate politics and associations, put women at a disadvantage, clashing with the institutional emphasis on gender equality in Forum Syd, SIDA and more generally in Swedish society. Though gendered patterns of associational engagement in Sweden may not be a concern of Swedish development cooperation assistance as such, this observation nevertheless suggests that the dynamics between integration and transnational engagement – and how these are shaped by existing initiatives – are a relevant consideration because of their effects on the achievement of overall development cooperation objectives.

The challenge of time and the necessity of perseverance, patience and long-term engagement were brought up by many interlocutors, whether they had received Forum Syd funding or not. Both development professionals and diaspora actors agreed that development is not a quick fix, but takes time to unfold and become sustainable. Speaking of the challenges of introducing democracy after years of conflict, extremism and instability, one man noted:

There is a culture and it needs time to change. If you tell them something today, they forget it. So you have to come back, so they adapt and understand what you're saying. Some people will enjoy what you're talking about. They will relax. But some people will say, "This is Somalia, you're in a different country now." So we have to wait and we have to keep pushing.

While this man was talking about self-funded activities, others explained how Forum Syd procedures and decision-making progress slowly, resulting in what they see as excessive waiting times for decisions and approvals. This can cause frustration among both Somali-Swedish associations and their partners. "I got an alert from the Supreme Court yesterday," one man said. "They called a friend of mine and asked, 'Where's the project?' They have waited for us almost half a year now." Others explained how delays in communication and decision-making make them

seem less serious development actors in the eyes of local institutions and people. Rather than one year, several people recommended that SDP projects should run for up to three years, with the possibility of an extension. As mentioned in chapter 2, this is already a possibility, but it mainly applies to the (relatively few) projects that receive grants above SEK 500,000.

The relatively modest size of most SDP grants was often raised as an issue in comparison with the time spent applying for and then reporting on them. Interlocutors also pointed to the fact that they cannot get their salaries covered. This constitutes a practical challenge when travelling to the Somali region for extended periods of time, especially for individuals whose development activities are related to their professional field of expertise. Several interlocutors had therefore combined their vacation with unpaid leave of absence from their workplaces in order to be able to carry out training programmes, noting that this is difficult to do for a long time due to the high cost of living in Sweden. Finally, interlocutors explained that the size of grants is often seen as insufficient by people in the Somali region, where NGOs and Islamic organizations bring in huge amounts of money. None of the SDP grant recipients interviewed expressed dissatisfaction about the grant size. Nevertheless, the challenge of relatively modest grants versus high local expectations was widely articulated. One interlocutor described this situation as a “project wall”:

People on the ground are used to NGOs that bring aid money from outside, and they usually bring a lot of money. They have offices; they have staff; people working with them. The first year we had the diaspora project was very difficult, because the first thing they see is that you have a project. It is like a wall and trying to break that wall is a very big challenge. They think that you come from Sweden so you must have a lot of money.

These examples show that the opportunities for diaspora support may clash with local expectations placed on NGOs and diaspora projects, as also reflected in the case of contestation over development priorities. Diaspora actors have to navigate often contrasting demands and expectations from grant-makers on the one hand and locals on the other. Managing such balancing acts is a pertinent aspect of diaspora engagement in development (cf. Erdal 2013).



## An uneasy working relationship

The working relationship between diaspora actors and the development industry is thus characterized by both mutual opportunities and a certain degree of mutual scepticism (cf. Erdal 2015; Turner and Kleist 2013). From a grant- and policy-maker perspective, critical statements about the inflexibility and bureaucracy of matched funding opportunities may reflect expectations that are neither realistic nor fair. Obtaining co-funding is not a right or an entitlement, but constitutes a means to do local development in the Somali region in alignment with overall SIDA and Forum Syd priorities. It is not funding for diaspora groups, as several policymakers remarked, but for development. Local expectations may be challenging but need to be dealt with, just as any other development actor would have to do. From a Somali-Swedish perspective, the SDP and SSBP (or other kinds of funding programmes) constitute potential opportunities to assist and bring change, whether driven by a sense of moral obligation, personal ambitions or both. While multi-sited embeddedness means that diaspora actors may be able to introduce or “translate” practices and perspectives from their country of settlement (or elsewhere) to local contexts, it also entails that they may be perceived simultaneously as insiders and outsiders. As outsiders when they encounter scepticism and are told that they have become “too Swedish”; as insiders when they face expectations to support certain groups or areas and to abide by local ways of doing things. Local connectivity thus implies that administrative constraints on development may be perceived as extremely out of touch with realities on the ground, exactly because of the expectations and scepticism that diaspora actors may face and the insights into local contexts that they possess. How they deal with such situations cannot be generalized, however, as some interlocutors explained that they perceive grant requirements as a manageable challenge, while others decided to give up on SDP engagement.

One central dimension of this tension concerns contrasting manifestations and perceptions of trust and accountability. On the one hand, SIDA and Forum Syd – and Swedish institutions more generally – place an emphasis on well-defined regulations and written accountability, where following guidelines is central. This is not necessarily an expression of mistrust in citizens but rather, perhaps, a way of

ensuring trust and of streamlining procedures. Indeed, according to Carlson and Hatti (2016), Swedes place a high level of trust in their government. Nevertheless, bureaucratic measures may sometimes result in an excess of paperwork, where control and adherence to instructions might appear more important than the underlying principles that guidelines are supposed to reflect. Indeed such challenges are well known in civil society circles and do not reflect a Swedish problematic as such, but rather the embracing of increased administrative control as a means of governing civil society engagement and funding.

On the other hand, Somali social and economic exchanges are widely based on trust in selected social relations, rather than in the state and in government institutions. Indeed, the proliferation and depth of various kinds of transnational engagement, including decades of remittance sending, constitute an example of how trust and solidarity are embedded in social networks. Such logics are especially pronounced in self-funded development and relief activities conducted by diasporic networks and associations that do not receive institutionalized funding. Here the tendency is for diaspora actors to endow local partners in the Somali region with the responsibility of administering and using the often quite significant resources that they have collected for pre-agreed development activities. These local partners will typically be selected because of their respectability and accountability locally and in the diaspora, consisting for example of elders' committees, businessmen or religious leaders. While this resembles Forum Syd's criterion of collaboration with a local partner organization, the emphasis here is not necessarily on written reporting but on trust – and repercussions should the trust be disappointed – enabling flexibility and speed in decision-making processes.

These logics can be summarized in the following way, highlighting two extreme positions: development as a professionalized policy field, and as a transnational social field where multi-sited embeddedness is central. The former is governed by administrative regulations and governmental directives to ensure relevance to strategic development priorities, with practices of written and impersonal accountability. The latter highlights local connectivity and flexibility, and relies on accountability that is embedded in selected trust relations. However, as shown throughout

this report, it would be a mistake to claim that diaspora engagement is a priori in opposition to the development industry. Rather, Somali-Swedish diaspora engagement spans the entire continuum, ranging from professional involvement to informal diasporic networks between Sweden, the Somali region and sometimes multiple other locations.

## Endnotes chapter 5

1. The term is inspired by Gale et al. (2017), who use it in relation to the implementation of public health policies.
2. Examples include the establishment of a Turkish military base in Mogadishu, which opened on 30 September 2017, as well as rapidly growing imports of Turkish goods (Reuters 2017).
3. Forum Syd conducted women-only meetings through the “women’s network roadshow” in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and Linköping in July and August 2017, providing information about the SSBP.

## 6. Conclusion and policy recommendations

This report has examined Somali-Swedish diaspora engagement in development and relief in the Somali region, with a focus on different types of actors and activities, on what shapes and motivates such engagement, and the working relationship between diaspora engagement and the development industry. In this final chapter, the main findings will be presented, followed by policy recommendations and suggestions for further research.

### Conclusion

An overall finding in this study is that Somali-Swedish diaspora engagement is characterized by diversity and flexibility, reflecting a strong civil society engagement in both Sweden and the Somali region, often simultaneously. Development actors range from households to numerous registered associations, especially relief associations, but also include informal diasporic networks spanning several continents, mosques, businesses and individual initiatives. Development activities focus on health, education, sustainable livelihoods and environment, gender equality, human rights and democracy, and drought relief. Importantly, one mode of engagement does not exclude another. Rather, contributions to development and relief processes beyond the household level are additional to the individual remittances and contributions to collections for drought relief that constitute primary obligations for many Somali-Swedes.

The fact that many Somali-Swedish interlocutors are engaged simultaneously in an association, a diasporic network and/or a business testifies to the intensity and flexibility of involvement of some interlocutors. Indeed, some diaspora development actors are active at three levels: as entrepreneurs who organize projects, as

capacity developers who are engaged in knowledge transfer, and as sources and conveyors of resources. This intensity goes hand in hand with the underlying motivations for involvement: a sense of moral obligation and urgency, embedded in established social and economic practices of translocal and transnational support networks, as well as Islamic charity practices; and political and professional engagement and ambitions, which may also play a motivating role.

The study identifies associations in Swedish society as an opportunity structure for Somali-Swedish civil society engagement more generally. This is reflected in the large number of registered associations, as well as in the fact that association status constitutes an eligibility criterion for co-funding from the Forum Syd Somali Diaspora Programme. In line with Forum Syd's development priorities, activities supported through the programme focus on gender equality, human rights and sustainable development. Many activities are funded through other means than the SDP (or the SSBP), however. Other sources of funding include collections in Sweden and through globally dispersed kin or regional networks, as well as grants from Swedish or international organizations. It is a striking tendency that activities which have not received SDP support focus on health, education or drought relief, rather than gender equality, human rights or sustainable livelihoods, though these themes may be indirectly addressed. This indicates that matched funding through the SDP is instrumental in facilitating such activities, but also that institutionalized diaspora support does not determine diaspora engagement in development and relief.

Sweden's "heavyweight" status in the Somali region through SIDA assistance to development cooperation and humanitarian aid constitutes another important context for diaspora engagement. Sweden allocates 1 per cent of its gross national income (GNI) to aid, and in 2016 Somalia was the fourth biggest recipient. Diaspora engagement is mentioned in SIDA's Somalia strategy for 2013–2017, and SIDA's Africa Office and the Somalia section at the Swedish Embassy in Nairobi accentuated its importance. Somali-Swedes emphasize the importance of SIDA engagement as well, highlighting goodwill towards Sweden and opportunities for diaspora influence in the Somali region in regard to lobbying and "street-level diplomacy"

promoting Swedish interests and values through development projects or return migration. This indicates potential mutual interests and opportunities for Swedish foreign policy and development interests and Somali-Swedish diaspora groups.

Despite acknowledgement of (some) mutual interests and opportunities, diaspora engagement is also characterized by tensions and differentiated positions, between the Swedish development industry and Somali-Swedish development actors, but also internally within the latter group. These tensions reflect two overall issues: first, whether SIDA and Forum Syd development priorities – especially human rights and gender equality – are the most appropriate in the Somali region in its current state. While most of the Somali-Swedish interlocutors emphasize that they embrace Swedish values and societal models, including these, some question their relevance in contexts of abject poverty and post-conflict, while others insist on their importance. No matter what their position, all interlocutors emphasized the importance of reconstruction and service delivery, whether in combination with a rights-based approach or not. Local expectations as to the size of funding, sometimes in combination with scepticism concerning diaspora actors' supposed Western or Swedish mentality, constitute another set of constraints and challenges. However, many interlocutors also highlighted successful interventions and partnerships, reminding us that talking about challenges does not equal a lack of local embeddedness and backing, but that development processes take time, patience and perseverance.

The second issue concerns the extensive application, accounting and reporting processes involved in SDP projects. Administrative stress was emphasized by interlocutors as constraining, given that most diaspora associations are run by volunteers, often holding full-time jobs. This constraint was voiced by many SDP grant recipients, though some also emphasized that they have gained useful skills through capacity development courses and the administrative processes.

To shed light on some of the tensions between the views and positions of diaspora actors and policy- and grant-makers, the report outlines an ideal-typical distinction between development as a professional field guided by strategic objectives and as a transnational social field revolving around practices and positions based on mul-

ti-sited embeddedness. However, it also shows that such a distinction is deceptive as an overall description of diaspora engagement. While it highlights certain modes of involvement, diaspora activities and practices span the entire continuum. There are overlaps between diaspora actors, the development industry, and local populations in the Somali region, showing that “the diaspora”, or even “diaspora groups”, refers to a blurred category rather than a distinct group of people. This calls for attention to a wide set of practices that go beyond engagement in what is recognized as development by policy- and grant-makers. Indeed, the presence of a substantial diaspora group that is transnationally engaged in a region of strategic interest for the country of settlement should call for sustained engagement with this group. Or put more directly: it can be argued that Sweden has a strategic interest in cultivating a strong relationship with Somali diaspora groups and their engagement in the Somali region, in terms of furthering development but also in relation to other political interests and priorities. Institutionalized diaspora support initiatives constitute one mode of cultivating that relationship and engagement.

## Policy recommendations

Based on the analysis undertaken, the final section of this report makes recommendations with a focus on strengthening or modifying existing practices, establishing new initiatives, and consideration of potentials and pitfalls. The overall recommendation is to acknowledge the contributions, diversity and heterogeneity of Somali-Swedish engagement in development and relief, with or without external funding. This means that one-size-fits-all models should be avoided and that attempts to identify a unified Somali-Swedish perspective or mode of engagement will most likely be misguided. Likewise, it should be kept in mind that Somali-Swedish contributions to development and relief do not replace other obligations and responsibilities in Sweden or the Somali region that they may have, implying that many Somali-Swedes are under considerable pressure.

More specifically, the following recommendations to policy- and grant-makers are proposed.<sup>1</sup>

## Policy consultation

Continue and intensify policy consultation and dialogue between SIDA, Forum Syd and other relevant agencies and diaspora actors when drawing up strategies and designing programmes, taking into consideration that collaboration between diaspora actors and SIDA or other development cooperation agencies offers potential opportunities for both parties. To ensure wide participation, it is further recommended that dialogue meetings should be widely announced and circulated, take place after working hours and in set-ups that are conducive to inclusive participation.

## Multi-sited embeddedness as a strength

Build on the existing engagements, passions and ambitions of diaspora groups. A consequence of regarding multi-sited embeddedness as a potential strength in diaspora engagement is that insisting on neutrality on the part of development actors may not be expedient in all cases. Development contributions often go hand in hand with other obligations and priorities, including personal kinship ties, religious convictions, and political or career ambitions. This does not (necessarily) make such contributions less valuable or efficient, but may strengthen them. Whether this is the case or not should be considered an empirical question rather than a predetermined one.

## Co-funding of diaspora activities in a long-term perspective

Continue and scale up diaspora support initiatives in ways that allow for long-term engagement. While co-funding and capacity development of diaspora activities can facilitate engagement in strategic development priorities, extensive administrative demands and short-term funding horizons may impede the potential of such activities, not least in terms of collaboration with local partners. Faster decision-making processes and simpler application and reporting procedures could bring a better balance between the time spent and the size of grants, as well as make co-funding



more accessible to a wider group of participants, including women's associations. Transparency of application procedures and funding decisions may counteract gossip and misunderstandings concerning priorities and decisions.

## Flexibility

Introduce a higher degree of flexibility in institutional diaspora support programmes. When relevant, the combination of a rights-based approach with support for reconstruction, service delivery and humanitarian activities that buttress SIDA development priorities concerning gender equality, democracy etc. would have wide resonance among Somali-Swedish diaspora actors and locally in the Somali region.

## Transnational mobility and professional knowledge transfer

Further transnational mobility as one of the central means of knowledge transfer through long- or short-term stays in the Somali region. Facilitating extended stays for diaspora professionals with relevant skills through (partial) coverage of salaries could be one way of enhancing this dimension, though it is important that diaspora professionals do not take over local jobs. Another is upgrading the importance of local language proficiency and contextual knowledge as qualifications when hiring in agencies or organizations that work with diaspora and development issues. Finally, support for innovative technological solutions constitutes an opportunity worth further consideration.

## New actors

Consider and reach out to new actors. While important, registered associations are not the only diaspora actors, and the future of transnational engagement that is based on volunteer work and a sense of moral obligation and transnational connectivity is widely raised as an upcoming challenge as the current diaspora actors withdraw and retire. It can therefore be considered a strategic priority to support other kinds of actors and activities, such as individual entrepreneurs and busi-

nesspersons. Initiatives that are not (only) located in Sweden, such as global or European umbrella organizations, could be considered as well. The results of the Somali-Swedish Business Programme will therefore be interesting to follow.

## Suggestions for further research

Finally, the report suggests areas for further research concerning diaspora engagement. These suggestions refer to issues that would have been interesting to include in the present report if there had been more time and space to further develop the analysis, as well as to topics that call for more research in themselves.

### Gender, generation and religion

While the roles of women and youth in diaspora engagement are often highlighted as important in the literature and among interlocutors, there is comparatively little knowledge about the role of gender and generation. This includes attention to the future of transnational engagement on the part of the generations who have not grown up in the Somali region and hence are not embedded in the same kind of transnational practices and networks or do not have the same knowledge of the Somali language and local contexts as the current diaspora actors. The parent generations worry in particular whether their children or grandchildren will feel obligated to send remittances to the same degree or organize themselves out of a sense of moral obligation – with the personal costs that this may entail. The role of religion at the personal and collective level, such as the role of mosques in development and relief activities, is another topic calling for more research.

### Multi-sited fieldwork

Taking diaspora seriously as an analytical category implies attention to multi-sited dispersion and translocal and transnational practices. A study of Somali-Swedish diaspora engagement in development and relief should therefore ideally include fieldwork in other sites of the transnational social field, not least in the Somali region, but also in other localities to which Somali-Swedish practices are linked. More

attention to the relationship between inclusion in Swedish society and transnational engagement would offer insights into what drives, facilitates or constrains diaspora engagement at the personal level, including attention to voices and positions that are not included in this report.

## The role of technology and social media

Last but not least, the role of technology in diaspora engagement calls for more research. Facebook, WhatsApp, SnapChat and other social media were mentioned by many interlocutors as important for resource mobilization, but also as means of exercising social pressure and control. Analysing technology would thus concern its implications for social practices, as well as how it entails new opportunities and practices in development and relief interventions. Here, cash programming and crisis mapping can be mentioned as increasingly important modalities in development and humanitarian interventions, and as areas in which diaspora actors – due to their transnational practices – possess important experiences and insights.

## Endnotes chapter 6

<sup>1</sup> See Hammond et al. (2011) for elaborated recommendations on engagement between the international community and Somali diaspora groups.

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# List of previous publications

Rapport och Policy Brief 2014:1, *Radikala högerpartier och attityder till invandring i Europa*, av Mikael Hjerm och Andrea Bohman.

Rapport och Policy Brief 2015:1, *Internationell migration och remitteringar i Etiopien*, av Lisa Andersson.

Kunskapsöversikt 2015:2, *Politiska remitteringar*, av Emma Lundgren Jörum och Åsa Lundgren.

Kunskapsöversikt 2015:3, *Integrationspolitik och arbetsmarknad*, av Patrick Joyce.

Kunskapsöversikt 2015:4, *Migration och företagens internationalisering*, av Andreas Hatzigeorgiou och Magnus Lodefalk.

Rapport och Policy Brief 2015:5, *Svenskt medborgarskap: reglering och förändring i ett skandinaviskt perspektiv*, av Mikael Spång.

Rapport och Policy Brief 2015:6, *Vem blir medborgare och vad händer sen? Naturalisering i Danmark, Norge och Sverige*, av Pieter Bevelander, Jonas Helgertz, Bernt Bratsberg och Anna Tegunimataka.

Kunskapsöversikt 2015:7, *Kategoriernas dilemman*, av Per Strömblad och Gunnar Myrberg.

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Rapport och Policy Brief 2015:9, *Arbetskraftsinvandring efter 2008 års reform*, av Catharina Calleman (red.) och Petra Herzfeld Olsson (red.).

Kunskapsöversikt 2016:1, *Alla tiders migration!*, av Dick Harrison.



Rapport och Policy Brief 2016:2, *Invandringens arbetsmarknadseffekter*, av Mattias Engdahl.

Rapport och Policy Brief 2016:3, *Irreguljär migration och Europas gränskontroller*, av Ruben Andersson.

Kunskapsöversikt 2016:4, *Diaspora – ett begrepp i utveckling*, av Erik Olsson.

Kunskapsöversikt 2016:5, *Migration within and from Africa*, av Aderanti Adepoju.

Rapport och Policy Brief 2016:6, *Invandring, mediebilder och radikala högerpopulistiska partier i Norden*, av Anders Hellström och Anna-Lena Lodenius.

Kunskapsöversikt 2016:7, *Invandring och företagande*, av Martin Klinthäll, Craig Mitchell, Tobias Schölin, Zoran Slavnić och Susanne Urban.

Rapport och Policy Brief 2016:8, *Invandringens effekter på Sveriges ekonomiska utveckling*, av Bo Malmberg, Thomas Wimarck, Jani Turunen och Linn Axelsson.

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Kunskapsöversikt 2017:2, *Hatbrott med främlingsfientliga och rasistiska motiv* av Berit Wigerfelt och Anders S Wigerfelt.

Avhandlingsnytt 2017:3, *Vägen till arbete. Utrikes föddas möte med den svenska arbetsmarknaden*, André Asplund, Caroline Tovatt och Sara Thalberg (redaktörer).

Policy Brief 2016:4, *Integration och tillit – långsiktiga konsekvenser av den stora invandringen till Norge*. Denna Policy Brief sammanfattar NOU 2017:2 om *”Integrasjon og tillit – Langsiktige konsekvenser av høy invandring”*.

Kunskapsöversikt: 2017:5, *Invandringens historia – från ”folkhemmet” till dagens Sverige* av Mikael Byström och Pär Frohnert.

Rapport och Policy Brief 2017:6, *Invandring i medierna – Hur rapporterade svenska tidningar åren 2010-2015?* av Jesper Strömbäck, Felicia Andersson och Evelina Nedlund.

Rapport och Policy Brief 2017:7, *Valdeltagande och representation – Om invandring och politisk integration i Sverige*. Pieter Bevelander och Mikael Spång (red.)

Rapport och Policy Brief 2017:8, *Responsibility Sharing for Refugees in the Middle East and North Africa: Perspectives from Policymakers, Stakeholders, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons*. Susan F. Martin, Rochelle Davis, Grace Benton & Zoya Waliany.

Rapport och Policy Brief 2017:9, *Reforming the Common European Asylum System: Responsibility-sharing and the harmonisation of asylum outcomes* Bernd Parusel and Jan Schneider.

Rapport och Policy Brief 2017:10, *A Fair Share: Refugees and Responsibility-Sharing* Alexander Betts, Cathryn Costello and Natascha Zaun.

This report examines Somali-Swedish diaspora engagement in development and relief. It analyses what drives, motivates, challenges, constrains and supports such involvement, including the working relationship between diaspora actors and the Swedish development industry. Based on interviews with Somali-Swedish diaspora actors and SIDA and Forum Syd development professionals, the report focuses on perceptions and practices as they are articulated from different positions in Sweden. One of the findings of the study is that there are potential overlaps between diaspora actors, the development industry, and local (return) populations in the Somali region, rather than “the diaspora” as an easily identifiable and heterogeneous group.

The report is written by Nauja Kleist, Senior Researcher and Ph.D. in sociology, Danish Institute for International Studies, Denmark. She works with international migration and has studied Somali diaspora mobilization in Sweden, Denmark and the UK.

The Migration Studies Delegation is an independent committee that initiates studies and supplies research results as a basis for future migration policy decisions and to contribute to public debate.



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