



THE RAPID ASSESSMENT OF SOMALI DIASPORA WOMEN

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1. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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The opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)/UN Migration. The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the report do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration, advance understanding of migration issues, encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

2. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BRMM	Better Regional Migration Management
CSO	Civil society organization
COO	Country of origin
EHOA	Eastern and Horn of Africa
FESTU	Federation of Somali Trade Unions
FSN	Finnish Somalia Network
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
LMIS	Labour market information system
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MIDA	Migration for Development in Africa
MIDA FINNSOM	Migration for Development in Africa Finland Somalia
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MOLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MOECHE	Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOFICA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
MOWHRD	Ministry of Women & Human Rights Development
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RMFM TWG	Regional Ministerial Forum on Migration Technical Working Group
RQAN	Return of Qualified African Nationals
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TOR	Terms of References
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evidence suggests that diaspora women are major financial, humanitarian, social and development contributors to their countries of origin. However, their contribution in humanitarian and development action is poorly documented and reported, and their potential has not been fully harnessed. This Rapid Assessment explores the role Somali diaspora women play in the health care and education sectors, and how they use their skills, knowledge, resources and networks to lead and support humanitarian and development efforts in their countries of origin. The report contributes to leveraging and enhancing the impact of their contributions, as well as to proposing/creating support structures and processes that are of a continuous nature.

The Rapid Assessment focuses on Somali diaspora women who have been predominantly working in the health care and education sectors in Finland¹, and who have participated in MIDA FINNSOM, one of IOM's longest running Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programs funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, and focusing on capacity-building in Somalia's health care and education sectors. Primary data was collected from interviews with relevant Somali ministries in Somalia, the Federation of Somali Trade Unions, Somali Chamber of Commerce, Somali MIDA diaspora in Mogadishu, Somali diaspora in Mogadishu, Somali MIDA diaspora in Hargeisa, MIDA FINNSOM representatives, Embassy of Finland, Nairobi, Somali diaspora in Finland, and the Finnish Somalia Network in Finland. The empirical findings were supported by relevant secondary data collected through a desk review, and through MIDA FINNSOM evaluation reports and other relevant IOM documents during the Rapid Assessment.

Key findings and recommendations include:

- Develop strategic changes at a national level by using the 2022? Somalia National Diaspora Policy as a framework in which to develop a targeted/results oriented detailed strategic plan for diaspora engagement and investment.
- Develop TVETs in collaboration with external for-profit organizations investing in facilities, specialist equipment and certification processes, and diaspora experts providing technical know-how, specialist expertise, and an understanding of the local context.
- Develop skills and competencies assessments to provide detailed understanding of what are the skills, knowhow, knowledge and experiences of diaspora members abroad and in Somalia, and which of these skills, knowhow, knowledge, and experiences are relevant and needed to the socio-economic, environmental, and technological development of Somalia.
- Strengthen gender mainstreaming activities that focus on the standard operating procedures of MIDA FINNSOM and other MIDA programs, in particular on the recruitment and selection processes, benefit structures such as child-care and education for accompanying children, and better health care benefits for women, and others.
- Develop greater collaboration and support structures across the Somali diaspora community led by IOM Finland and IOM Somalia with more frequent outreach activities and mentoring and sponsoring programs in Finland and Somalia.
- Revise contractual agreements with a particular emphasis on the duration of contracts and job security.
- Develop targeted pre-return and post arrival training that addresses the diverse needs of an increasingly diverse diaspora coming to Somalia, and exit strategies that emphasize the transition and sustainability of projects.
- Shift focus from individual missions to diaspora experts' led sustainable multi-stakeholder projects that ensure the availability of facilities, (specialist) equipment, in-house and outsourced qualified human resources support and assistance, relevant infrastructures, and partners amongst national and international NGOs and private-for-business organizations (e.g. technicians of specialized equipment, suppliers of equipment), and policy makers.

1. Some participating Somali diaspora women came from Canada, USA and UK, and some Somali diaspora women worked in industries such as restauration.

4. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The terms below are key terms used in relevant labor migration governance by International Organization for Migration (IOM)/UN Migration Agency, International Labour Organization (ILO), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Global Compact for Migration (GCM) ².

Countries of Origin: a country of nationality or of former habitual residence of a person or group of persons who have migrated abroad, irrespective of whether they migrate regularly or irregularly³

Countries of Destination: the destination for a person or a group of people, irrespective of whether they migrate regularly or irregularly⁴

Diaspora: Migrants or descendants of migrants whose identity and sense of belonging, either real or symbolic, have been shaped by their migration experience and background. They maintain links with their homelands, and to each other, based on a shared sense of history, identity, or mutual experiences in the destination country

Labour migration: movement of persons from one State to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment

Migration: the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State

Migrant worker: a person, who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which that person is not a national

Pre-departure orientation program: courses designed to help prospective migrants, including refugees, acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to facilitate their integration into the country of destination. They also address expectation and provide a safe and nonthreatening environment in which to answer migrants' questions and address concerns

Recruitment: includes the advertising, information dissemination, selection, transport, placement into employment and – for migrant workers – return to the country of origin where applicable. This applies to both jobseekers and those in an employment relationship

2. *International Organization for Migration. 2019*

3. *International Labour Organization 2019.*

4. *International Organization for Migration. 2020*

5. BACKGROUND

The regional gender and social protection rapid assessment conducted in 2022 as one of the activities under the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Better Regional Migration Management (BRMM) on Labour Mobility and Regional Integration for Safe, Orderly and Humane Labour Migration in East and Horn of Africa Program (EHOA) reported that labour migration has become a highly gendered phenomenon. Feminization of migration has taken place at a rapid pace with more women than ever leaving their countries of origin (CoOs) to seek employment, especially in the feminized service sectors. Despite increasing numbers of female migrants and progress made in terms of their independent migratory status, gender inequalities including, exploitation, sexual abuse, human trafficking and other gender-based violence still characterizes migration as a phenomenon intra and inter-regionally.

Evidence suggest that diaspora women (be it migrant workers/entrepreneurs/business persons, public servants) are major financial, humanitarian, social and development contributors to their countries of origin. For instance, through financial and non-financial/social remittances (intellectual capital, social capital, advocacy, political capital and voluntarism), diaspora women provide lifelines for their families and communities in the homeland, helping them cope better during crises. However, their contribution in humanitarian and development action is poorly documented and reported and their potential has not been fully harnessed. **Therefore, this Rapid Assessment intends to leverage/bolster the role of diaspora women in the public and private sectors and their humanitarian and development actions in times of crises and beyond; to leverage and enhance the impact of their contributions; as well as to propose/create a supporting structure/process that is of a continuous nature.**

There is evidence that the private sector (private foundations and for-profit businesses), in diaspora and others, is increasingly supporting humanitarian and development responses to large-scale emergencies and humanitarian crises. Contributions and impacts differ depending on industries, type of actor and size ranging from large Multinational Corporations (MNCs) to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and to micro-enterprises. Contributions include humanitarian and development capacity building, financing, logistics, technology, post-emergency recovery, and development reconstruction activities. The private sector provides specialized experts, from the diaspora and others, skill sets (e.g. supply chain management, information and communications technology), results driven knowhow and practices that improve the effectiveness of assistance, and (in the case of domestic companies) relevant local knowledge. Evidence from Kenya suggests that private sector engagement in humanitarian aid projects during disasters creates more and faster access to relief goods and funds, more efficient logistics, and better (digital) communication⁵. Private sector humanitarian and development activities are driven by philanthropic (e.g. donations, pro-bono services) and/or commercial motives (subcontracts with relief agencies, governments, or donors). Due to the rising number of disasters and crises, more private sector humanitarian and development initiatives will be needed. Key programs within the African context that are formalizing and implementing such humanitarian and development initiatives are IOM's Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programs. One of the longest running MIDA initiative is MIDA FINNSOM, a capacity-building program funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Since 2008, MIDA FINNSOM helps to mobilize competencies acquired by Somali nationals in Finland (and beyond) to contribute to Somalia's development in the health care and education sectors⁶.

Using Somalia as the focus of this Rapid Assessment the role Diaspora members play in such initiatives will be explored. **More specifically, this Rapid Assessment provides an understanding of Somali diaspora women predominantly working in the health care and education sectors in Finland⁷, and how they use their skills, knowledge, resources and networks to lead and support humanitarian and development efforts in times of crises in Somalia and beyond in EHOA.**

5. Nyambura et al. 2020

6. While many MIDA FINNSOM participants work in Finnish hospitals and educational institutions that are overseen by public authorities, there are MIDA FINNSOM participants from other countries and other industries (e.g. hospitality) in the private sector

7. Some participating Somali diaspora women came from Canada, USA and UK, and some Somali diaspora women worked in industries such as restauration.

6. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

6.1 Aim

The assignment is conducted under the scope of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its Better Regional Migration Management (BRMM) on Labour Mobility and Regional Integration for Safe, Orderly and Humane Labour Migration in East and Horn of Africa (EHOA).

This Rapid Assessment is aimed to contribute to the pillar/output 4 of the BRMM program *Migration governance in the EHOA region is more gender responsive*, to the RMFM TWG on *Gender, Diaspora and Private Sector engagement* and its sub-group on *Diaspora women in the private sector leading humanitarian and development action in times of crises and beyond*, and to the evidence base needed in the region to develop comprehensive policies and strategies to engage diaspora women in the development of their country of origin. This Rapid Assessment will also contribute towards effective implementation of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular migration (GCM objective 2, 18 and 19), Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5: Gender equality and Goal 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all, as well as Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goal), African Union`s Vision 2063, Regional Ministerial Forum on Migration (RMFM) objectives, and other relevant regional cooperation and development frameworks. This Rapid Assessment will also complement and feed into BRMM PHASE II Output 4.3 *Returning migrant workers and member of their families` vulnerabilities, protection needs, and social, economic, labour, and human rights are better met through enhanced, return and reintegration in the East and Horn of Africa*; and Activity 4.3.3: *Conduct regional survey on diaspora skill mapping targeting Somalia*.

6.2 Objectives

The key objectives of this Rapid Assessment include:

- Categorize key profiles of diaspora women in the public and private sectors engaged in humanitarian and development initiatives in times of crises and beyond in their countries of destination and origin⁸
- Map out the unique skills, knowledge, resources and strengths that diaspora women in the public and private sectors in countries of destination provide, and how they can be further leveraged to engage in humanitarian and development initiatives in times of crises and beyond in their countries of destination and origin.
- Identify good practices and existing knowledge of cross-sectoral collaboration and partnerships between diaspora women in the public and private sectors, governments, NGOs, academia and other stakeholders in countries of destination to maximize the impact of humanitarian and development efforts in times of crisis and beyond.
- Explore ways by which to bridge the gap between policy and practice, and ensure that the needs and perspectives of diaspora women and other migrants in countries of destination and origin are considered in humanitarian and development initiatives in times of crises and beyond.
- Propose an action plan to formulate partnerships between diaspora women leaders in the public and private sectors, local communities (business, no business), relevant organizations, CSOs/NGOs, Government and Academia in countries of destination and origin.

⁸ The report focuses on initiatives of Somali diaspora women in their countries of destination and origin because initiatives such as sending money and goods take place in countries of destination, while initiatives such as capacity development take place in the country of origin.

7. METHODOLOGY

For this Rapid Assignment a case study approach was chosen. The case group in this assignment was Somali diaspora women with the focus country of destination being Finland. The Somali diaspora in Finland is recognized as being well organized and active when it comes to its engagement and support in humanitarian and development efforts in times of crises in Somalia and beyond in EHOA. It was a group of Finnish-Somali diaspora health professionals who proposed to contribute toward the health sector in Somaliland to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland; which then led to the MIDA FINNSOM program focusing on education and healthcare in Somalia. This Rapid Assessment could be seen as a starting point based on which two key types of comparative case studies could be further developed.

- Case studies that focus on Somali diasporas in other countries of destination identifying and comparing country specific aspects and elements influencing the organization and functioning of a diaspora and its engagement and support in humanitarian and development efforts in times of crises and beyond.
- Case studies that focus on different diasporas in Finland identifying and comparing diaspora specific aspects and elements influencing their organization and functioning, and their engagement and support in humanitarian and development efforts in times of crises and beyond.

The procedure for collecting data was carefully and systematically designed to be a participatory process between the consultant and all the identified stakeholders of this Rapid Assessment.

7.1 Data collection process

A qualitative research approach was chosen allowing to generate the richness of empirical data critical for the assessment's overall aim. The key data collection method were semi structured in-depth interviews. Interviews in Mogadishu were conducted in person during a field trip May 16-19, 2023. Interviews in Finland, Hargeisa and Nairobi were conducted virtually between May 12 to June 9, 2023. All interviews were conducted by ensuring informed consent, protecting privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of respondents as per IOM principles and procedures. Interview participants were identified by IOM Regional Office for EHOA and IOM Somalia. Interviewees included 26 individuals from the following organizations and communities:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Somalia)
- Ministry of Education (Somalia)
- Ministry of Health (Somalia)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (Department of Diaspora) (Somalia)
- Federation of Somali Trade Unions
- Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development (Somalia)
- Somali Chamber of Commerce
- Somali MIDA Diaspora in Mogadishu
- Somali Diaspora in Mogadishu
- Somali MIDA Diaspora in Hargeisa
- MIDA FINNSOM Representatives, Embassy of Finland, Nairobi
- Somali Diaspora in Finland
- Finnish Somalia Network, Finland

The empirical findings were supported by relevant secondary data collected through a desk review, and through MIDA FINNSOM evaluation reports and other relevant IOM documents during the Rapid Assessment. The key sources included:

- IOM migration and labour migration frameworks, evaluation reports, policies, and programs related to diasporas in general and to the Somali diaspora in particular
- Somali governmental migration, diaspora and labour migration frameworks, policies, and programs related to diasporas in general and to the Somali diaspora in particular
- Finnish governmental migration and labour migration frameworks, policies, and programs related to diasporas in general and to the Somali diaspora in particular
- Information about the organization and functioning of the Somali diaspora in Finland, and the Somali women diaspora in the private and public sectors in particular
- Contextual factors that influence the organization and functioning of the Somali diaspora in Finland, and the Somali women diaspora in the private and public sectors in particular (e.g. education, training and development, diversity and inclusion, access to private sector activities, etc.)

7.2 Ethical considerations

Throughout the assignment the tenets of transparency, equity, equality and inclusiveness were ensured and respected. Informed consent was ensured, and privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were protected as per IOM principles and procedures. Mechanisms to guarantee gender and cultural sensitivity, respect for the autonomy of respondents and the principle of do no harm were also incorporated. To mitigate ethical issues, safety and security risks, the data collection tools and process were shared with IOM Regional Office for EHOA for input and approval.



Doctor examines her patients at the Migrant Response Centre (MRC) Hargeisa Photo: Claudia Rosel © IOM 2021

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE RAPID ASSESSMENT

Limitations of the assessment were few and included the slow process of getting responses by some of the key informants, connectivity problems in some virtual meetings, some scheduling and re-scheduling problems with key informants due to the short timeframe in which interviews had to be conducted, and the limited amount of relevant secondary data available for Somalia diaspora women in Finland.



Community Health workers sensitize the community on the health precautions to take at Horseed, Somalia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo: © IOM 2020

9. THE SOMALI DIASPORA IN FINLAND

9.1 Historical and socio-economic context

Somali migration to Finland began in the 1990s, when Somalis arrived in Finland as refugees fleeing the civil war in their home country. However, relationships between Somalia and Finland were established some time before the first Somali refugees arrived to Finland. Finland provided development assistance to Somalia during the 1980s, in particular by establishing the tuberculosis prevention program in Somalia. In 1986, Finland was the fourth biggest aid giver to Somalia after Italy, USA and the World Bank⁹.

Contacts and networks established through the development assistance between Somalia and Finland did offer a basis only for a small number of Somalis to migrate to Finland. The majority of Somalis started to flee to Finland via the former Soviet Union. This was due to the co-operation between the former Soviet Union and Somalia. This co-operation functioned on the basis of the Cold War Alliances. There were for example Somalis studying in the former Soviet Union, and when the war started, they functioned as links for Somalis who were seeking an asylum destination. When the Soviet Union went through its own turmoil and therefore was not able to host Somalis, 'Finland just happened to be the closest Western country for many'¹⁰. After 1992, more Somalis entered Finland through the chain migration and official family reunification programs¹¹. Somalis arriving in Finland from the beginning of the 1990's on have been the largest single ethnic group applying for asylum in Finland. Before their arrival, asylum seekers have been mainly just individuals, or small groups of people. Therefore, this period remains as a milestone in the Finnish history of immigration.

The number of Somali refugees increased significantly in the early 2000s, with the largest influx occurring in 2008. Since then, the number of Somali migrants has remained relatively stable¹². In 2020, there were approximately 15,827 people with Somali background living in Finland. They represent about 0.3% of the total population. Most Somali migrants are concentrated in the Helsinki region, where about 75% of the population of Somali origin lives¹³. Specifically, the neighborhoods of Kallio, Käpylä, and Kannelmäki in Helsinki have relatively high concentrations of Somali residents¹⁴.

Somali migrants in Finland face several economic challenges, including relatively high unemployment rates and low levels of education and skills. According to Statistics Finland, the unemployment rate among Somali migrants was 33.5% in 2020, which is significantly higher than the national average¹⁵. Many Somali migrants work in low-skilled jobs, such as cleaning and service work, and have difficulty finding employment in their chosen fields due to language barriers and lack of recognition of their qualifications¹⁶.

9.2 Somali women diaspora in the private and public sectors in Finland

Somali women in Finland can be found working in a variety of sectors. Some common sectors include social services, education, cleaning and maintenance, retail, and hospitality. Many Somali women have taken up roles as teachers, cleaners, or in customer service positions. Numerous Somali women work in the Finnish healthcare sector as caregivers, nurses, and doctors, as there has been a shortage of healthcare workers in Finland. When it comes to other sectors of work and types of employment in which Somali diaspora women are engaged, there is limited current data and relevant research available.

9. Pirkkalainen. 2005

10. Pirkkalainen, 2005

11. Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2002

12. Statistics Finland. 2022

13. Statistics Finland. 2022

14. Tiilikainen. 2013

15. Statistics Finland. 2022

16. OECD. 2020

According to a 2019 report by the Confederation of Finnish Industries, women in general make up only about one-third of entrepreneurs in Finland, and immigrant women are significantly underrepresented in entrepreneurship¹⁷. However, the report does not provide data on specific ethnic groups, including Somali women. Another study found that Somali women entrepreneurs in Finland operate small-scale businesses, often in the retail and service sectors¹⁸. However, many Somali women in Finland face multiple barriers entering the entrepreneurial sector including language barriers, lack of information and networks, and cultural and social norms that prioritize family obligations over business activities¹⁹.

9.3 Somali diaspora organizations and activities in Finland

The Somali diaspora in Finland is organized through a variety of community-based organizations and networks. The *Finnish Somali League* (Suomen somaliliitto) is the oldest and largest Somali community organization in Finland. It was founded in 1990 and aims to promote the interests of Somali Finns, and to facilitate their integration into Finnish society. The organization offers various services and activities, such as language courses, youth programs, and cultural events²⁰. The *Somali Women's Association* in Finland (Suomen somalialaisten naisten yhdistys) was founded in 1994 and focuses on promoting the rights and interests of Somali women in Finland. The organization offers various services and activities, such as counseling, education, and advocacy²¹. The *Somali Business Association* in Finland (Suomen somalialaisten yrittäjien liitto) was founded in 2014 and aims to support Somali entrepreneurs in Finland by providing networking opportunities, business advice, and advocacy²². The *Somali Youth Association* in Finland (Suomen somalialaisten nuorten yhdistys) was founded in 2005 and aims to provide support and opportunities for young Somali Finns. The organization offers various services and activities, such as sports programs, cultural events, and educational workshops²³. There are numerous other community-based organizations and networks that make up the Somali diaspora in Finland. They all play an important role in supporting Somali Finns and promoting their integration into Finnish society.

Other activities by the Somali diaspora in Finland and beyond are aimed at supporting Somalis in Somalia. One key activity is remittances send by Somali diaspora members to families and communities in Somalia. The World Bank estimates that the global remittance flows account for 25 percent of the country's GDP, reaching more than USD \$1.75 billion in 2020^{24,25}. Furthermore, some Somali entrepreneurs in Finland have established partnerships with businesses in Somalia, particularly in the areas of agriculture, fisheries, and manufacturing. These partnerships aim to promote economic development and create job opportunities for Somalis in Somalia²⁶. In times of crisis, the Somali diaspora in Finland provides humanitarian aid to Somalia. This includes both financial contributions as well as volunteer work, such as participating in medical missions or organizing relief efforts in response to natural disasters or other crises:

'I was always involved in supporting Somalia financially. But then I wanted to go physically. I have four children. I told them that I have a fifth child – it is Somalia'²⁷

17. Confederation of Finnish Industries. 2019

18. Harinen et al. 2014

19. Finnish Somali League (Suomen somaliliitto). 2023

20. Finnish Somali League (Suomen somaliliitto). 2023.

21. Somali Women's Association in Finland (Suomen somalialaisten naisten yhdistys)

22. Somali Business Association in Finland (Suomen somalialaisten yrittäjien liitto)

23. Somali Youth Association in Finland (Suomen somalialaisten nuorten yhdistys).

24. World Bank, 2020

25. Department for Diaspora Affairs. 2022

26. Somali Business Association in Finland (Suomen somalialaisten yrittäjien liitto)

27. Somali Pediatrician from Finland, Co-initiator of MIDA FINNSOM and participant in Phase 1 and 2)

The Somali diaspora in Finland has also been involved in various education and knowledge transfer initiatives in Somalia. For example, the Finnish Somali League (Suomen somaliliitto) has partnered with local organizations in Somalia to provide training and education programs in areas such as health care, education, and vocational training²⁸.

9.4 MIDA FINNSOM

MIDA FINNSOM is the key program that is focusing on education and healthcare in Somalia. This program first came about as an initiative from a group of Finnish-Somali diaspora health professionals interested in contributing toward the health sector in Somaliland. They brought the idea to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland in 2008, which then decided to fund the pilot project through IOM's MIDA framework.

Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) is a capacity-building program that helps to mobilize competencies acquired by African nationals abroad to contribute to African countries' development. The MIDA program was developed based on IOM's extensive experience from the Return of Qualified African Nationals (RQAN) project that began in 1983 covering a number of African countries. IOM launched its MIDA initiative in 2001.

In 2008, the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs in partnership with IOM Somalia launched MIDA FINNSOM. Since then, the Finnish government has been supporting MIDA FINNSOM for 15 years, without interruption. MIDA FINNSOM has been critical to the development cooperation Finland and Somalia have been fostering since 1980, to the support of Somalia's state building, and to the improvement of the position of women and girls (in particular women's sexual and reproductive health and rights)²⁹.

The MIDA FINNSOM program has been helping professionals of Somali origin to return temporarily to Somalia to build healthcare and education capacities in the country. MIDA FINNSOM's focus on improving the most vulnerable populations, especially women's and children's health, is in line with the priorities of Finland's country program for development cooperation in Somalia (2021 – 2024)³⁰. The engagement of Somali diaspora experts in the healthcare sector in Hargeisa and the six regions of Somaliland contributed to a significant decrease in maternal and infant mortality in the area. The Maternal Mortality Rate decreased from 721.9 to 289.5, and the Neonatal Mortality Rate decreased from 53.8 to 16.2³¹.

Since its inception in 2008 and until today, with the first deployed Somali diaspora experts in 2009, the project has been able to support the return of 202 qualified Somali diaspora experts, 79 local experts, and 101 interns. Most of the diaspora experts came from Finland. However, the program also welcomed Somali diaspora experts from outside Finland including Somalis from the Netherlands, UK, USA, Canada, Kenya and some other countries. Since 2008, other MIDA programs supported the return of 248 diaspora experts, and 70 local experts and interns combined. The MIDA FINNSOM model has contributed toward enhanced capacity building, policy development and enhanced quality of service delivery in the health, education and governance sectors across Somalia. It is seen as the flagship development program of IOM in EHOA region and globally on institutional capacity building through the return of qualified nationals (RQNs).

28. Finnish Somali League (Suomen somaliliitto)

29. Finland in Somalia. 2023

30. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. 2021

31. IOM.2020

10. SOMALI DIASPORA WOMEN AND THEIR ENGAGEMENTS IN SOMALIA

10.1 Profiles and activities of Somali diaspora women in their country of origin

10.1.1 Profiles of Somali diaspora women in their country of origin

Interviews with various governmental agencies in Somalia revealed that there is limited data available concerning Somali diaspora women in Finland, Somali diaspora women who returned temporarily to Somalia for work, and Somali diaspora women who settled down in Somalia after their engagements. This data shortage has been recognized by the Somali Department of Diaspora, and the latter has plans to start collecting data about these groups of Somali diaspora women and their profiles this year, and to create a platform with which this data will be centralized and shared with other governmental agencies and stakeholders in Somalia and beyond.

All interviewees agreed that more diaspora men than women have come back to Somalia. This observation is reflected by the MIDA FINNSOM gender distribution with 75 percent of participating Somali diaspora experts being men and 25 percent being women. The FINNSOM program target is for at least 40 percent women's participation. One of the key reasons why Somali women diaspora have been hesitant to return to their country of origin was that they did not want to expose their children to the security risks and the limited educational opportunities for their children in Somalia. Some Somali women diaspora also explained that Somali husbands do not like their wives to live alone in Somalia, in particular in places where there are no relatives.

Until recently, the majority of diaspora women coming back have been first generation migrants who fled the civil war in the early 1990s or left before 1990 for mainly educational purposes. According to the interviewees, the key reasons and motivations to return to their country of origin or to participate in the MIDA FINNSOM program were to help their communities, to rebuild the country, and to be able to look after family members in Somalia. Currently, there are also numerous younger diaspora women (second generation) coming to Somalia out of curiosity and to explore business opportunities. Most of these young women have never been in Somalia before, and in many cases, they do not speak Somali.

10.1.2 Activities of Somali diaspora women in Somalia, their country of origin

Somalian diaspora women who returned through MIDA FINNSOM programs have engaged predominantly in the healthcare and education sectors. Many of the younger Somali diaspora women who returned to Somalia by themselves usually engage in the hospitality sector including restaurants and small coffee shops, while some invest their resources in small clothing/retail outlets. The interviewees named the revival of traditional sectors of production such as agriculture, livestock and fishing as their future intervention areas. While these are sectors in which Somalis have worked for centuries, climate change and water scarcity will require a rethinking of how to operate these sectors (e.g. vertical agriculture). Numerous interviewees highlighted that there is a need to investment in the TVETs to fill this gap and to develop technical skills for professions such as plumbers, electricians, mechanics, carpenters, etc. Currently most of these technical skilled jobs are outsourced from other countries in the region. For example, the hospitality sector employs numerous Kenyans. Greater synergy amongst donors, Somali diaspora members and other stakeholders is also required to improve the development and coordination of such TVETs.

For example, for some time now, The Finnish Somalia Network (FSN) has overseen several TVET projects amongst its Somali diaspora associations and local partners focusing on plumbing, beauty,

tailoring, and electricity. New TVET projects of the 8 will also cover agriculture and the recycling of plastic. The projects are running between 2-4 years with training courses taking around five months each. However, none of the courses are aligned to national standards. While in Hargeisa local authorities have proposed to include TVET students in their national examination, there is no funding available in the FSN for the examination fees requested by the local authorities. FSN currently only monitors how many trainees complete their courses, and how many have received employment after their training. Most other operational aspects of the TVET projects are overseen by local partners of FSN and its diaspora association members.

Coordinating the different activities by Somali diasporas in Finland, Somalis in their country of origin, donors, governmental agencies in Somalia, and many other stakeholders from the private and public sectors could provide a more structured and formalized approach toward the development of certified, high quality TVETs throughout Somalia.

10.2 Key challenges for Somalia Diaspora women to engage in Somalia

10.2.1 Low living standards in Somalia

For many Somali diaspora women one of the key challenges not to return to Somalia and engage directly in their country of origin has been cultural and social norms that prioritize family obligations, and in particular the responsibility as a mother toward the upbringing of her children. The alternative is bringing the children with them to Somalia, which is most often not an option for Somalia diaspora women considering the security risks. They see bringing their children to Somalia as a risk due to Somalia's security context, and limited education opportunities, substandard healthcare and children facilities. Thus, many of the interviewed Somali diaspora women who returned to Somalia waited until their children were grown up before returning to Somalia.

10.2.2 Limited outreach and communication of MIDA FINNSOM capacity development program openings

Another key challenge for Somali diaspora women in Finland was that they were not always aware of capacity development program openings with MIDA FINNSOM. According to several interviewees outreach and communication of MIDA FINNSOM capacity development program openings to Somali diaspora associations and their members, in particular targeting women in Finland was limited or targeted to specific Somalia diaspora associations. According to the FSN, some Somali diaspora associations in Finland reported of not having been included in the communication channels and events that promote MIDA FINNSOM capacity development program openings with IOM Somalia. According to other interviewees,

'Another key inclusion issue is the outreach and communication with Somalian diaspora associations. In recent meetings between MIDA FINNSOM and Somalian diaspora members in Finland, concerns were raised about limited inclusive communication of employment opportunities with IOM Somalia and limited transparency when it comes to how employment opportunities are being created and communicated. A better understanding needs to be developed how and why some Somali diaspora associations are not included in the communication channels and in events that promote employment opportunities with IOM Somalia' [...] The new person at IOM Finland could focus on developing a better understanding of how and why some Somali diaspora associations are not included in the communication channels. It has been suggested that Clan dynamics could play a role in this. There is a need for more meetings between Somali diaspora in Finland and IOM Finland to discuss SOPs for greater trust building, and for ensuring inclusive communications.'

10.2.3 Limited gender mainstreaming of MIDA FINNSOM

Aside the communication problems of MIDA FINNSOM capacity development program openings, concerns have also been raised about gender mainstreaming aspects:

'More gender mainstreaming is needed [...] The key challenge is that IOM Somalia has no gender or disability expert. Ideally, such an expert could help advising on gender and disability in the employment process of Somali women in Finland, but also there is a need to have gender and disability related employment aspects to be considered and mainstreamed locally in Somalia.'

According to the MIDA FINNSOM IV evaluation report, future recruitment and on-boarding should aim to achieve at least 50% female representation. Between 2017-2020 the program deployed 30 percent female diaspora experts and 30 percent female national experts³².

10.2.4 Pre-return training

Gender mainstreaming is a particular concern in the pre-return training. According to some interviewees there is a need for

'enhancing and harmonizing the pre-departure³³ trainings for male and female migrant workers to include a gender-specific curriculum [...] Pre-departure training needs to be targeted. Men and women.'

The pre-return training could also require revisions in terms of the subject areas being addressed to ensure that returning Somali diaspora have all the contextual information to help them integrate faster in Somalia. Numerous diaspora women raised concerns about how the pre-departure training does not fully prepare diaspora members for what to expect in Somalia (e.g. cultural context, political situation, security). According to some interviewees

'when they [Somali diaspora women – the author] arrive in Somalia they feel scared – more socialization and cultural orientation needs to be done – IOM Somalia is in charge of this.'

Many diaspora members have not been back home for more than 20 years. The Somalia they have left and which they remember is very different from the Somalia to which they are coming back. All Somali diaspora interviewees agreed that when returning to Somalia they are immediately being recognized as diaspora members making it sometimes difficult to integrate and be accepted by local Somalis. Then there are 2nd generation diaspora members who have never been to Somalia before and often do not speak or write the local language. Often their expectations of Somalia also differ from the reality, and this can lead to a cultural shock for some of them.

10.2.5 Decentralized support structures for investments in Somalia

Somali women and men diaspora who have come to Somalia to invest and do business face difficulties to find centralized structures that support their investment interests and activities. While currently, diaspora members can contact Somalia's Department of Diaspora and its section on investment to get numerous information, interviewees have highlighted that not all information and procedures critical in the diaspora investment process are centralized in one governmental body or platform. Some interviewees would get advice from the Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU), while others visit the Ministry of Labour or the Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development for guidance.

32. IOM. 2020

33. The term pre-departure used by the interviewee refers to the term pre-return used throughout the report

10.3 Key changes needed for Somali diaspora women to engage in Somalia³⁴

10.3.1 Developing strategic changes at a national level

Using the Somalia National Diaspora Policy³⁵ as the starting point or basis, the government of Somalia could develop a detailed strategic plan for diaspora engagement and investment and integrate this plan in Somalia's National Development Plan 2020-2024³⁶, and in particular in its human capital development strategy. So far, most aspects related to Somalia's diaspora addressed in Somalia's National Development Plan 2020-2024 and its human capital development strategy and plan focus on Somali diasporas' remittances. The Somalia National Diaspora Policy outlines for example, the importance of establishing a diaspora advisory council, providing investment incentives, and strengthening appropriate regulatory environment and mechanisms³⁷. A more detailed strategic diaspora plan could include aspects related to the role Somalia's diaspora might play in Somalia's economic growth, resilience, skills transfer, humanitarian assistance, and development. Such a plan could provide the framework in which activities, tools, and methods could be developed which engage diaspora communities in transferring skills, knowledge, resources, technology, humanitarian assistance and ideas.

10.3.2 Investing in TVETs with external for-profit organizations and diaspora experts

While Somalia's National Development Plan 2020-2024 highlights the importance of TVET-based national internship programs, more details about the operationalization of such programs could be developed. Such a plan could also outline in greater detail how diaspora members can be engaged in TVET-based national internship programs. Several interviewees indicated that an involvement of diaspora experts in the development of TVETs would be enriched with the participation of for-profit organizations from outside Somalia. One such an example is the case of Suzuki that recently opened a showroom and workshop in Mogadishu. In similar initiatives Non-Somali for-profit organizations could invest in facilities in Somalia, and engage in know-how transfers through diaspora experts. The latter have the technical know-how, know the local context, and speak Somali. They can leverage skills and know-how to local women and youth and oversee company training certifications. This in turn, provides the for-profit organization with local experts who are less costly and – in the case of a car manufacturer such as Suzuki - ensure better maintenance of cars and lower costs of repairs covered by the company's warranty.

10.3.3 Investing in skills and competencies assessments

Any successful change is data driven. Engaging Somali diaspora in transferring skills, knowhow, knowledge, resources, technology, humanitarian assistance and ideas requires for stakeholders in Somalia to a) know what are the skills, knowhow, knowledge and experiences of diaspora members abroad and in Somalia, and b) which of these skills, knowhow, knowledge, and experiences are relevant to the socio-economic, environmental, and technological development of Somalia. Currently Somalia's Department of Diaspora is considering the collection of data of Somali diaspora members in Finland and their skills and competencies. The Department of Diaspora could develop a detailed work plan including a roadmap and timeframe for the data collection process. Such a plan could include as one of its key objectives the development of a global skills bank, where Diaspora members in Finland and beyond enter any certified skills and expertise. For the Somali government to demand on skills and competencies to be certified ensures that once transferred to the local workforce they are of high quality standards. This could have leap frogging effects that help Somalia to bypass traditional stages of development.

34. Several of the recommended changes apply to Somali diaspora women and men

35. Department for Diaspora Affairs. 2022

36. Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development

37. Department for Diaspora Affairs. 2022. 11-12

Simultaneously, the Somali government and its key stakeholders could develop a labor market information system (LMIS), and conduct a skill needs assessment across different sectors in Somalia. IOM Development Fund (IDF) has funded a regional program (2020 to 2022), targeting Uganda/Kenya and Somalia, assessing the current capacities of the countries on LMIS. In particular for Somalia the project aimed to identify gaps and challenges as in Somalia as labour migration data is not analyzed with a view to applying it to labour migration policy. The country requires a comprehensive system to identify current and future skills gaps.

A sophisticated LMIS can serve as a roadmap for the country's socio-economic and technological development. The LMIS can help to identify key sectors and industries in which to invest in the future, and helps to identify matching opportunities between diaspora experts and participants in the local labor market. Local job matching services could be in form of one-stop centers where youth and returned diaspora workers can register, obtain labor market information, practical skills training, and job matching services, orientation and socialization training. Matching opportunities could include diaspora members training local youth (in TVETs), diaspora experts training specialized skill sets to local youth, and diaspora members train the trainers. Making informed matching decisions based on thorough skills assessments of Somali diaspora members and a sophisticated LMIS can contribute to decreasing any negative tension between diaspora and local professionals

10.3.4 Investing in greater gender mainstreaming

More emphasis could be given to gender mainstreaming MIDA FINNSOM activities and those of other MIDA programs to increase the number of female MIDA FINNSOM participants to 50 percent as recommended in the MIDA FINNSOM IV evaluation report. Gender mainstreaming MIDA FINNSOM activities could include a revision of the recruitment and selection processes. According to one diaspora woman “younger, second generation diaspora women like herself are no longer organized or participate in diaspora associations. Thus, traditional recruitment sources such as diaspora associations might no longer be as relevant as in the past”. Revised benefit structures could include aspects such as child-care and education for accompanying children and better health care benefits for women.

The recruitment of a gender expert in IOM Somalia has been proposed by some interviewees. This person could not only advice on gender mainstreaming IOM Somalia's standard operating procedures, but also on any gender related employment aspects and gender inequalities within the Somali workforce to open up more opportunities for diaspora women. Simultaneously, MIDA FINNSOM stakeholders could consider the introduction of a quota system and affirmative actions for MIDA FINNSOM capacity development program openings.

10.3.5 Investing in greater collaboration and support structures across the Somali diaspora community

Interviewees have welcomed the appointment of an IOM coordinator in Finland whose responsibilities include a greater engagement with the Somali diaspora associations and their members in Finland. The same interviewees have highlighted the importance for this IOM coordinator to understand better the dynamics between different Somalia Diaspora Associations. This would be supported by IOM Finland engaging and reaching out more frequently in meetings with the Somali diaspora in Finland. More frequent meetings in which, for example, MIDA FINNSOM standard operating procedures and principles' are outlined, could create greater trust between the different Somali diaspora associations and IOM Finland/ Somalia, and ensure communications that are more inclusive.

The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, IOM Finland, and IOM Somalia could benefit more from the large MIDA FINNSOM Alumni in Finland and in Somalia. More structured and formalized mentoring networks amongst and across Somali women diaspora in Finland and Somalia could help attracting Somali women diaspora interested in engaging in Somalia, and support and guide Somali women diaspora who have

been selected for assignments in Somalia. At the same time, a sponsoring program could be initiated and formalized in which Somali women diaspora in positions of power and authority could advocate for other Somali women diaspora to engage more in Somalia. Equally, implementation of a MIDA FINSON type of intervention in other EHOA countries with large diasporas intra and inter-regionally, like Kenya/Uganda/Ethiopia and others, can leverage gender sensitive diaspora engagement in humanitarian and development approaches in a more holistic way.

10.3.6 Revising contractual agreements

Aside gender mainstreaming capacity development program contracts for Somali diaspora women, contractual elements could also be revised in terms of their duration. Similar to comments in the MIDA IV evaluations, interviewees explained that contracts should be longer than six months. Diaspora women coming for assignments to Somalia often need time to adjust to the local context – in particular, when they come with their families. Several interviewees mentioned that it took further time to install or change facilities to the standards they required to be operational. In many cases, Somali diaspora experts have no time left to ensure the sustainability of their assignments and thus assigned facilities and procedures need be in place, tested and operational prior to their arrival. Contract durations should be at least one year, if not longer, in order to allow for the necessary time needed for skills transfer and capacity development³⁸.

10.3.7 Developing targeted pre-return training and exit strategies

The profiles of Somali diaspora women who engage in Somalia are becoming more diverse. As outlined in Section 10.1.1, Somali diaspora women returning to Somalia are no longer only women who have left the country 20 or more years ago. There are now younger Somali diaspora women who are investing in Somalia without having ever been to the country of their parents, without speaking the language, and often with limited understanding of the cultural sensitivities and particularities. What most of these different women have in common is that their expectations rarely match the reality locally. Thus, when developing pre-departure training programs, their contents have to be tailored and customized to the target audiences (e.g. language training for 2nd and 3rd generation diaspora members).

Contracts are often considered too short to ensure the sustainability of the assignments. More emphasis could be given to the transition and sustainability of projects (see MIDA IV Evaluations) by developing clear exit strategies of diaspora members. This could mean closer monitoring of assignments and the achievement of objectives, developing contingency plans before an assignment, or shifting more responsibility to national experts earlier on (where possible).

10.3.8 Shifting focus from individual missions to multi-stakeholder projects

Much of the success and the sustainability of a Somali diaspora expert's assignment does not only depend on her/his skills and expertise, but also on the availability of facilities, (specialist) equipment, in-house and outsourced qualified human resources support and assistance, relevant infrastructures, and partners amongst national and international NGOs and private-for-business organizations (e.g. technicians of specialized equipment, suppliers of equipment), and policy makers. Not all of them are usually considered in an individual mission, making the latter potentially less effective and sustainable. A shift from individual missions to multi-stakeholder projects led by diaspora experts could be a more effective and sustainable alternative. For example, instead of recruiting a 'stand-alone' diaspora health care specialist for a one-year assignment to transfer specialist skills and know-how to local medical doctors, in a multi-stakeholder project the aim would be the creation of a specialist facility or institute.

This means the diaspora health care specialist would work together with various stakeholders inside and outside Somalia to ensure the availability of the necessary equipment and its continuous supply,

38. IOM, 2020

technicians who are able or being trained to maintain the equipment, medical staff, assistants (able or being trained), and any other financial or non-financial supports that ensure the sustainability of the project in the long-term.

10.4 Summary of key recommendations:

- Develop strategic changes at a national level by using the Somalia National Diaspora Policy as a framework in which to develop a targeted/results oriented detailed strategic plan for diaspora engagement and investment.
- Develop TVETs in collaboration with external for-profit organizations investing in facilities, specialist equipment and certification processes, and diaspora experts providing technical know-how, specialist expertise, and an understanding of the local context.
- Develop skills and competencies assessments to provide detailed understanding of what are the skills, knowhow, knowledge and experiences of diaspora members abroad and in Somalia, and which of these skills, knowhow, knowledge, and experiences are relevant and needed to the socio-economic, environmental, and technological development of Somalia.
- Strengthen gender mainstreaming activities that focus on the standard operating procedures of MIDA FINNSOM and other MIDA programs, in particular on the recruitment and selection processes, benefit structures such as child-care and education for accompanying children, and better health care benefits for women.
- Develop greater collaboration and support structures across the Somali diaspora community led by IOM Finland and IOM Somalia with more frequent outreach activities and mentoring and sponsoring programs in Finland and Somalia.
- Revise contractual agreements with a particular emphasis on the duration of contracts and job security.
- Develop targeted pre-return and post arrival training that addresses the diverse needs of an increasingly diverse diaspora coming to Somalia, and exit strategies that emphasis the transition and sustainability of projects.
- Shift focus from individual missions to diaspora experts' led sustainable multi-stakeholder projects that ensure the availability of facilities, (specialist) equipment, in-house and outsourced qualified human resources support and assistance, relevant infrastructures, and partners amongst national and international NGOs and private-for-business organizations (e.g. technicians of specialized equipment, suppliers of equipment), and policy makers.

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