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## **CIVIL SOCIETY, COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

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## **The Role of the Diaspora in the Civil Society Development of Somalia/Somaliland: Reflections on the Finland-based Somali Diaspora**

**PÄIVI PIRKKALAINEN**

### **1. Introduction**

Since the early 1990s and the end of the Cold War, civil society has been perceived as relevant for strengthening development and democracy (Lewis 2002: 569). It became a much used concept in development cooperation, linked to the discourse of ‘good governance’, in the hope of progressing democratisation and as an answer to poverty and marginalisation (Lewis 2002; Salamon/Sokolowski 2004). Recently, the idea of strengthening civil society as a path to sustainable democratic development has coincided with the discussion of migrants being potential agents of development in their countries of origin; this is a discourse articulated both in academia and in international and regional organisations such as the United Nations, the European Union and the African Union. The term ‘diaspora’, referring to people living outside of their country of origin, has become a buzzword in these instances (Horst et al. 2010; Turner/Kleist 2013; Sinatti/Horst 2014). Often, the concrete funding schemes supporting the diaspora’s role in development work are framed around the civil society sphere, as is the case with the collaboration between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) and the Somali diaspora. Somalis in Finland have actively set up voluntary associations through which they carry out development projects in their areas of origin, in the process placing the diaspora as an actor in the civil society of Somalia/Somaliland (Horst et al. 2010; Pirkkalainen 2013).

Despite this boost on the policy level, not much research exists on the role of the diaspora in civil society development that analyses different functions of civil society and the diaspora’s role in those functions. This

article explores how the diaspora ‘fits in’, and relates to the civil society in Somalia/Somaliland, particularly in the context of the collapse of the state, prolonged conflict and massive poverty. More specifically, this article assesses the role of the Finnish Somali diaspora from two perspectives: firstly, concerning civil society as an important means of service provision in the context of conflict-ridden areas and extreme poverty; and secondly, concerning civil society insofar as it contributes to democracy.

Firstly, the empirical data and methods, and then secondly the situation in Somalia – particularly in relation to its civil society – are presented. Thirdly, the Somali diaspora, in particular in Finland, and its engagements in Somalia are described. Fourthly, realities in the diaspora’s civil society engagement are analysed regarding three issues: the position of the diaspora in the civil society of Somalia/Somaliland, ways of contributing to civil society, and local perceptions of these engagements. Finally, some conclusions are drawn.

## **2. Empirical data and methods**

This article is based on empirical data collected for my PhD from multiple sites in Finland and Somaliland (cf. Marcus 1995; Falzon 2009) over a period of four years (2008–2011)<sup>1</sup>. The data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, observations and the gathering of relevant documents. In Finland I interviewed 42 Somalis who were active in voluntary associations. The majority of the interviewees (in total 38) were male, which reflects the fact that most Somali associations in Finland are male-led. The interviewees were between the ages of 23 and 66, well educated, and possessed Finnish citizenship. Most of them were employed in Finland and had lived in Finland since the early 1990s. I also included multiple perspectives in the empirical data, meaning that in addition to representatives of Somali associations I also talked with ‘key informants’, which involved conducting 17 interviews with representatives of the Finnish authorities from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior, as well as representatives of Finnish development NGOs working in Somalia/Somaliland.

The fieldwork in northern Somalia, in self-proclaimed Somaliland<sup>2</sup>, took place in January 2011. I spent a month in the capital city of Hargeisa interviewing Somalis who had returned to Somaliland from various countries, including Finland. I also visited development project sites of Finnish Somalis and interviewed the partner organisations of Finland-based Somali associations. In total I carried out 27 semi-structured interviews with Somalis (eight female, 19 male), and with three key informants of non-Somali origin representing international organisations. Six of the interviewees were Somalis from Finland. The rest of the interviewees were diaspora returnees or visitors from Canada, Sweden, Germany, the USA and Saudi Arabia, or locals. The interviewees were from 20 to over 60 years old, and had at least a BA degree level of education.

For the purposes of this article, analysis of the interviews was carried out through thematising the data: from the interviews, themes relating to civil society engagement, activities of associations, and perceptions of the role of the diaspora were collected and analysed.

### **3. Civil society in a fragile state**

Civil society by definition is often situated outside government control, being non-profit making, self-governing, voluntarily constituted, and outside family life (Salamon/Sokolowski 2004: 66; for a further debate see the articles by Datzberger and Borchgrevink in this issue). This kind of definition of the third sector model is based on the specific historical development of the concept, much influenced by Alexis de Tocqueville (1951 [1835, 1840]), who emphasised the role of associations in balancing the power of the state. Much of the current debate on civil society as a solution to different problems has built on this, by assuming that associations have mediating functions in markets and states, and “are thus key to a number of democratic potentials” (Warren 2001: 58). This perspective refers to the stance of seeing civil society as a form of “prescriptive universalism” (Lewis 2002: 575). It is in differentiated societies that associations are free from economic and political functions, but can have a mediating role in those spheres (Warren 2001: 59).

In the Somali case a few ‘problems’ arise when civil society is perceived from this ‘prescriptive universalist’ perspective. The first tricky issue concerning civil society relates to the state. Even if civil society by nature is distinct from the state, it has been argued that a strong civil society requires a strong state (Keane 1998: 68; Salamon/Sokolowski 2004: 70). In the absence of a strong Somali state, civil society actors play the role of service providers and thus are also important actors in development cooperation. On the other hand, when it comes to political forces in Somalia, the troubling aspect for the civil society actors is the existence of violent groups, such as the radical Islamists who target civil society actors (Menkhaus et al. 2010: 325).

The second issue relates to markets and civil society. By definition, civil society associations and their relations are coordinated not on the basis of money but rather on the basis of associative relations. However, in the Somali case, civil society organisations need to generate revenue in order to keep projects running. Moreover, especially in the 1990s, the rise of support for NGOs by funding institutions led to the situation where forming an NGO became a profitable business, leading to the “mushrooming of new ‘local NGOs’”, which were often clan- or sub-clan based, and which competed for funding (Menkhaus et al. 2010: 329). Many non-profit organisations have thus become indistinguishable from business for profit, and this ‘NGO business’ is sometimes perceived as elitist by locals (Tiilikainen/Mohamed 2013: 41).

The third issue concerns the voluntary nature of participation in civil society and pluralism in terms of arenas of participation, where there is also “the possibility of exit” (Warren 2001: 59). In the Somali case, much of the political and social life is organised along clan lines, which also characterise the civil society in the Somali context. This raises questions about the voluntary nature of participation: if one is born into a group, it is not a voluntary decision. Moreover, if relations within associations are mediated through clan relations involving trust and mutual dependency, civil society does not easily lead to pluralism or a democratic process in politics.

However, in order to use civil society as an analytical concept in non-western contexts, sensitivities to particular history and context have to be taken into account. In an African context the concept should not be limited to include only formal organisations, but also refer to activities taking place outside formal organisations, and should not focus only on

advocacy and rights, but also on self-help groups that get organised for personal and economic ends. It should also be widened to include kinship and involuntary membership relations (Lewis 2002; Maina 1998). In addition, consideration should be given to the historical processes that have shaped civil society, which in the African context would include taking into account the legacy of colonialism (*ibid.*).

In the Somali case the colonial period (from 1827 to 1960), during which France, Britain and Italy colonialised Somali regions, has left its imprint on politics. During the colonial times the repressive politics of the colonial powers and the limited capacity of local people to get organised led to very limited formal organising in civil society (Menkhaus et al. 2010: 328). Processes of formal organising became even more restricted during the decades of Siad Barre's regime (1969–1991), which was characterised by forms of oppression such as human rights abuses, widespread corruption and manipulation of clannism, control over people's associations, and lack of freedom of speech (Bradbury 2008: 37). The civil war, which started in 1988, led to the state's collapse in 1991 and has continued since then, is affecting much of the civil society in the Somali context. The early years of the 1990s in particular saw a massive out-migration from conflict areas, and increasing security challenges led to very limited formal local organising. The UN operations in the early 1990s changed the scene, as the UN needed local partners to assist with implementing humanitarian interventions. This led to a boost in the formation of NGOs, which however were often short-lived (Menkhaus et al. 2010: 329–330). From the mid-1990s until around 2006 many areas of south-central Somalia developed local governance structures, which in some areas were relatively peaceful. However, in parts of the country conflict continued. During this time, civil society, including actors such as Islamic NGOs and diaspora organisations, took an increasingly important role in service provision and at times in governance structures (Menkhaus et al. 2010: 331–333). In 2006 the umbrella group of different Islamic groups, called Islamic Court Union (ICU), took control of many parts of south-central areas and gained wide support. Later, however, the ICU lost this power, as it was defeated by the Transitional Federal Government forces (who in turn were supported by outside powers, such as Ethiopia). This eventually led to protracted violent attacks, a humanitarian catastrophe, new refugee flows, and the rise of



radical Islamist groups. From this period on, civil society associations and their leaders continued to be targeted, not only by hard-line Islamists, but also by the TFG forces, to the extent that by the summer of 2008 most of these leaders were either keeping a low profile or had fled the country (Menkhaus et al. 2010: 324-325). Conflict continued, and the humanitarian crisis deepened, and in 2011 a famine was declared in parts of Somalia. Positive political changes took place in 2012, when the first formal parliament in more than 20 years was formed and Hassan Sheikh Mohamed, a civil society activist, was elected as the new president. However, the continuing potency of Al-Shabab and several other issues persist and restrict the work of the government, as well as that of Somalia's civil society actors (Hammond 2013: 188-192).

Defined from this historical perspective, current civil society in the Somali context is composed of actors such as large development NGOs, small community-based organisations, informal self-help groups, professional associations, traditional clan elders, businesspeople and many Islamic organisations and charities (Menkhaus et al. 2010: 326). Diaspora members are also part of the civil society, sometimes returning to work in organisations or more commonly supporting development projects in their areas of origin. In the context of continuing conflict, a fragile state, and extreme poverty, all these civil society actors carry out an important role in providing services, and certainly function as counter-voices to conflicting parties by representing 'civility' and promoting the use of non-violent means to achieve their aims. Thus, civil society in a Somali context can be defined as those actors who do not use violence as a means of being heard, and civil society figures frequently distinguish themselves from warlords or radical Islamists who engage in violent conflict (Lewis 2002: 583-584).

#### **4. The Somali diaspora and development cooperation through voluntary associations in Finland**

There are over one million Somalis living outside the borders of Somalia. Migration history from Somalia dates back to colonial times when a number of people left for Italy and the UK to study and work (Griffiths 2002: 77-83). Later, during the 1970s and 1980s, many Somali men



migrated to the Gulf countries to work in the oil industry (Healy 2010: 379). The largest numbers of Somalis have fled the country because of the civil war, which started in 1988 and is still going on in parts of the country. Most Somalis who fled the war became internally displaced or settled in refugee camps in neighbouring countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia, where large camps still exist today (UNHCR 2011).

Since the late 1980s, Somalis have increasingly sought asylum in Western countries, and in the early 1990s they found their way to Finland through the former Soviet Union. In 2013 there were nearly 16,000 Somali mother tongue speakers in Finland, out of which almost 7,500 were Somali nationals (Statistics Finland 2014). In Finland, Somalis are the first and largest group of migrants coming from Africa and the third largest group of all foreign language speakers (Statistics Finland 2013).

The Somali diaspora worldwide actively engages in transnational activities towards the country of origin in various ways: sending remittances to family members, investing, and participating in politics and civil society affairs. Estimates on current remittance flows, including both private and collective remittances, range from US\$130 to 200 million annually (Hammond et al. 2011; Sheikh/Healy 2009; Lindley 2009). Remittances are a lifeline to many people in Somalia, and are mostly used for meeting basic needs. At times remittances are also invested in land, housing, and business development. Diaspora members are also politically engaged, taking up government positions or supporting and carrying out lobbying from abroad.

In the case of Finland, the Somali diaspora, in addition to private remittances and political engagement, has been active in setting up voluntary associations, which aim at contributing to development and humanitarian activities in the areas of origin. According to representatives of Somali diaspora associations in Finland, constructive political involvement in Somalia is rather difficult because of the prolonged conflict, and many people have instead engaged in homeland matters in the fields of development and humanitarian relief through the diaspora associations (see in the case of Somalis in Denmark Kleist 2007: 207). One Somali man active in an association registered in Finland and carrying out development projects in Northern part of Somalia stated: “We work at grassroots level. We tell people that you don’t have to believe everything that politicians and war

lords say; that you should look for information by yourself. I don't want to engage in politics, because I like to help people directly" (interviewed in Helsinki, 29 September 2010).

In fact, here the question of 'what is political' is relevant. Particularly in the contexts of conflicts, politics are often seen as violent, dirty and corrupt, and many diaspora members do not want to identify with violence and corruption. Therefore, the distinction between humanitarian activities and direct political activities is useful. According to the Somalis interviewed, the discourse on humanitarian activities, as opposed to politics, involves characteristics such as neutrality and non-violence. The use of this discourse of humanitarian activities by many diaspora members situates them within the civil society of Somalia/Somaliland, where one way of defining the various civil society actors is through the separation between violent and non-violent means of action (see previous section).

Diaspora Somalis feel the responsibility to contribute money, services, materials, skills and know-how, as there is a lack of basically everything in Somalia/Somaliland, as was described by a Somali man living in Finland, who has been involved in Somali politics and a community organisation in Finland: "Diaspora, if we don't send, people die. We try to help them. The diaspora is a resource, one of the most important resources for all of Somalia" (interviewed in Espoo on 20 October 2009).

In Finland there are various diaspora associations that are engaged in setting up different projects in Somalia/Somaliland, mainly in the fields of education, health, youth work, orphan and disabled support, women's empowerment, and the environment. Funding of these projects is mainly through money pooling and fund raising among members, which in many cases also take place transnationally (i.e. in association with members or supporters in several Western countries). Some projects by Somali associations have also managed to access funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), through the budget line of NGO support. According to the MFA, the first development project carried out by a Somali association received funding in 2000. In 2014, a total of 20 Finnish NGOs were carrying out 37 development cooperation projects in Somalia/Somaliland, with MFA funding. Sixteen of these NGOs had diaspora members on board or were fully operated by diaspora Somalis. These 16 NGOs carried out 22 different projects in various parts of Somalia/Somaliland<sup>3</sup>.

In addition to the service provision role of associations, representatives of Somali diaspora associations expressed their vision of helping to end the conflict, achieving peace and contributing to democracy. One active Somali man running an association in Finland and doing development work in Somalia stated that: “Civil society organisations have an important role in peace building [in Somalia], they need to ‘civilize’ people, and provide education. They have a role in waking people up to think. Because a dangerous thing is that during a prolonged war, bad things become normal. If you see people killing each other, it becomes normal. Human beings are quite strange sometimes, and how they adjust to the environment, so here there is a lot of work to do to wake people up” (interviewed in Helsinki on 19 September 2008).

In the context of ongoing conflicts and the fragile peace, development projects were often seen as having a peacebuilding aspect by the diaspora members. For example, those representatives of associations who were running school projects perceived their peacebuilding function as offering young people schooling, which would mean a meaningful daytime routine and having future prospects, and would thus reduce their risk of being recruited by the warring parties. Moreover, representatives of associations argued that they would like to contribute to Somalia/Somaliland by ‘teaching’ and training their local partners about organisation and particular issues such as accountability and transparency in project work; these were things that they had learned in Finland. This is in line with the official aim of MFA NGO funding, which, in addition to promoting the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), emphasises strengthening the developing countries’ own civil societies. The MFA NGO funding line also requires a local partner organisation to implement a funded project. The ultimate aim is that “the developing countries’ own organisations can better take care of such basic tasks as service provision, policy dialogue and information” (MFA 2013).

In the following part I will critically assess the position of the Somali diaspora in the civil society of Somalia/Somaliland, and interactions and relations between the diaspora Somalis, their associations, and actors in Somalia/Somaliland. These issues are analysed from the point of view of two possible functions of civil society: service provision and democratic development.

## 5. Realities of civil society engagement on the ground

When the members of the diaspora engage with civil society in the areas of origin, they are bound by very challenging structures. The prolonged conflict is a challenge for the diaspora to cope with and in fact a few Somali associations are not able to carry out long-term development projects in Somalia because of the poor security situation. In recent years, humanitarian actors and civil society figures have become targets of conflicting forces, and Al-Shabab has banned international humanitarian organisations from operating in areas it controls. This is how a Somali man involved in an organisation running a health project in Central part of Somalia, described the situation in 2010: “Those who suffer in the current conflict are those who have built the peace, supported education, universities and hospitals. This is what I represent: we support hospitals in Somalia. We, who do this work, are the victims of the crisis” (interviewed in Helsinki, 4 February 2010).

To complicate the picture, the changing nature of conflict in Somalia continuously affects the Somali diaspora associations’ ways of doing development work, and their access to specific areas in Somalia. In the regions with relative stability, such as Somaliland, the context for engagement is slightly different for the diaspora. However, these areas are not free from problems. Self-proclaimed Somaliland is an exceptional case because of the lack of international recognition. For that reason it cannot get any bilateral development aid from any states. Thus, many states contribute to development in the country via NGOs, making this field very important for the poor state and its people. In some cases with large international funding, NGOs can provide jobs, and thus the NGO sector has become increasingly competitive in the context of a general absence of paid jobs. However, it is also worth noting that setting up an association or organisation in Somaliland does not in itself secure any income. In some cases, people in associations finance their collective activities through engaging in businesses.

In order for diaspora associations to safely access conflict-ridden areas, and to carry out long-term activities in all areas, they need close networks and trusted relations with locals. Security and access were often mentioned as key challenges by respondents, and it was often explained that project sites were selected because of the clan relations offering safe access (Pirkka-

lainen 2009: 79-80). Such trusted relations are essential to ensure activities can go ahead, and to avoid being suspected, as was expressed by one Somali male running an association in Finland through which a school project has been set up in Southern Somalia: “In Somalia you have to have knowledge of the area you are working in. If I go to the area of another clan than my own, there might be suspicions about why I am there, and it may lead to misunderstandings. It is so much easier to work in your own clan’s area, and it’s so much safer” (interviewed in Helsinki, 23 October 2009).

The clan connections often provide access and trusted positions in certain areas for the diaspora members, but they do not always automatically provide legitimation to all kinds of diaspora activities. The type of engagement and action also affect whether the diaspora’s contributions are recognised or rejected by locals (Abdile/Pirkkalainen 2011: 57). Diaspora contributions<sup>4</sup> are an important resource, and when the diaspora set up critical services, such as health and education facilities, they are well perceived by locals, as they contribute to bringing in otherwise lacking essential services. Thus, the service provision role of the diaspora is often well recognised by locals. However, when the diaspora members return and take up positions in Somalia – in NGOs, politics or businesses – locals may have a more critical perception of them. The diaspora returning to the country is perceived, especially among unemployed and educated locals, as straining local resources and increasing competition for already scarce resources and positions, as was argued by a diaspora returnee from Canada to Northern Somalia, who is working for a government agency in Somaliland: “When people from the diaspora come up with great ideas, locals, many of whom are illiterate, might see it as a threat. In the public sector there are lot of diaspora returnees. Also, in the projects supported by the international community the diaspora come in and people graduating from local universities become the second choice” (interviewed in Hargeisa, 18 January 2011).

At times, diaspora returnees are perceived as being too westernised and thus culturally different; they are seen as being out of touch with reality, as not having experienced suffering from the dire conflict, and as thus imposing their own fantasies, thereby contributing to the conflict (Abdile/Pirkkalainen 2011: 59-62). In some cases, due to the lack of trust shown toward diaspora members and their motives, the new ideas and values



brought by the diaspora are critically perceived and sometimes rejected by locals. Especially criticised are ideas perceived as 'Western', such as gender equality.

It is a reality on the ground that the diaspora often engages in civil society in areas of Somalia by using the mediating sphere of a clan, and is thus able to engage in a specific location. In this situation the diaspora is certainly an important actor as a service provider, but the possibility for it to contribute to wider, structural and state-level democratic processes is very limited, as was described critically by a local Somali male working as a researcher in Hargeisa, Northern Somalia: "The diaspora has the same problems as Somalia has: clan lineages, personal interests, everyone is concerned about their own clans and own interests. Strategic and objective planning, a big plan for how the diaspora should contribute is lacking and it makes it difficult to contribute. Now there are these small projects and the diaspora gets tired" (interviewed in Hargeisa, 4 January 2011).

## **6. Conclusions**

Among funding institutions in development cooperation, there has been a growing belief in the contribution civil society can make to a sustainable peace, and to development and democratic processes. There has also been a growing enthusiasm concerning the diaspora's potential for developing the civil society of their countries of origin, and for being the bridge builders between the South and the North. This perspective is based on the specific normative understanding of the civil society as being a mediating sphere vis-a-vis the state and the market. In societies that have not followed a similar path to modern state formation as Western countries, this understanding of civil society is problematic. Thus, more nuanced approaches to civil society are needed in order to reveal challenges and critical aspects concerning a diaspora's role and potential in civil society development.

In the Somali context, i.e. in a country characterised by a fragile state, prolonged conflict and extreme poverty, civil society includes many different groups of people, as well as formal and informal groupings that do not engage in violent activities and thus stand out from, and oppose, the conflicting parties. The Finnish Somalis, who have been active in setting

up associations in Finland and in carrying out development projects in different parts of Somalia/Somaliland through them, perceive themselves as belonging to this sphere. The Finnish Somalis active in associations identify themselves as humanitarian actors at the grassroots level.

Those Somali associations that have accessed funding for development projects from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland NGO development cooperation budget line are bound by the Finnish development policy and the guidelines of the funding instrument. This NGO development cooperation budget line requires a local partner organisation in the field to implement the funded project, and thus aims at strengthening civil society in developing countries. However, due to the complex context in Somalia, the Finnish Somali diaspora are limited in what they can do regarding the development of civil society in Somalia/Somaliland.

The diaspora certainly is an important humanitarian actor in Somalia. Somali diaspora associations, by setting up projects in areas of health and education in particular, do contribute significantly to service provision, which in the case of Somalia is totally in the hands of civil society, due to the fragile and weak state.

Nevertheless, critical issues remain. Firstly, the diaspora in the current political situation in Somalia is limited in how it can contribute to democratic state-building processes. Because of the fragile and fragmented state and ongoing conflict in parts of the country, the diaspora can be active only in very specific locations. Often, the contacts and collaborations are formed through clan relations, which provide an important social and political structure in Somalia, and thus safe access to certain areas. This has led to the fragmentation and duplication of diaspora engagement: many small projects exist in several different areas, but they have not managed to build up large-scale structures or institutions. Secondly, the role of the diaspora in contributing to civil society in terms of peace-building and democratic development is challenging. The local legitimacy of the diaspora's engagements and activities is not automatic and their contributions can also be rejected. In general, locals consider the role of a service and resource provider as legitimate for the diaspora. If the diaspora members return to take positions, or try to bring ideas, values and norms learnt from the West, locals may not accept them. Poverty and unemployment exist in all parts of the country and in this context unemployed locals



may see the diaspora members as a threat, since they may take their jobs. Moreover, cultural gaps remain in cases where diaspora members have lived outside Somalia for decades. Sometimes, local people perceive the diaspora as being too westernised and do not easily trust it and its motives for becoming engaged. Thirdly, the situation in Somalia in recent years has been exacerbated by the rise of the radical Islamist group Al-shabab, which is very hostile towards what I have here called ‘civil society’. This is not only problematic security-wise for the diaspora members and their projects in Somalia, but also reflects on the situation of Somalis in the West. Because of the terrorist fear in the Western countries, ordinary Somalis have become targets of suspicious attitudes and surveillance. Western countries are increasingly cautious with regard to money transfers to the Horn of Africa, and various measures have been put in place restricting the remittance companies, for fear of money being sent to terrorist groups. This, coupled with the diaspora community’s own fear of not wanting to be labelled as terrorist supporters, may have significant implications for the volume and means of engagements. This, in turn, may endanger the essential role of the diaspora as a humanitarian actor and service provider at the grassroots level in Somalia/Somaliland.

- 1 I defended my PhD, entitled *Transnational Responsibilities and Multi-sited Strategies: Voluntary Associations of Somali Diaspora in Finland*, in December 2013.
- 2 The decision to gather the empirical data from Somaliland, and not from other parts of Somalia, was made based on the security of that region and thus its accessibility. In this article ‘Somalia’ is used to refer to the official borders of the Republic of Somalia. It is however acknowledged that currently there are different autonomous areas in Somalia, such as the self-proclaimed Somaliland and semi-autonomous Puntland. At times, when it is relevant to emphasise the relative stability of Somaliland, ‘Somalia/Somaliland’ or ‘Somaliland’ is used, referring to the region of North-West Somalia. The author however does not wish to take any stance on the political recognition of Somaliland.
- 3 Figures were provided by a staff member of the NGO development cooperation unit at the MFA in April 2014.
- 4 Often locals’ perceptions of the diaspora refer to Somali people in the West (and in some cases in Gulf countries), who are seen as wealthy and who are thus expected to contribute (see also Kleist 2007: 220-221).

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## Abstracts

The diaspora in different parts of Somalia, a country that has suffered from prolonged conflict, and state collapse since 1991, and in which widespread poverty is a reality, has an essential role in concretely helping people. There is also a growing enthusiasm about the diaspora's potential for developing the civil society in Somalia. However, in the case of Somalia the definition of civil society is difficult to establish since the context is characterised by complex political problems, state collapse and the fact that NGO development cooperation has become a booming business. In this context it is relevant to critically assess the role of the Somali diaspora in Somalia/Somaliland's civil society development. This article analyses in particular what kind of developmental potential the diaspora might have for civil society in the Somali context. The article is based on data collected using multi-sited and mixed methods in Finland and Somaliland in the period 2008–2011.

Die Diaspora spielt eine wesentliche Rolle in der Unterstützung von Menschen in verschiedenen Teilen Somalias – einem Land, das seit 1991 von einem andauernden Konflikt, dem Zusammenbruch des Staates und von Armut geprägt ist. In das Potenzial der Diaspora für die Entwicklung der Zivilgesellschaft werden in diesem Kontext zunehmend hohe Erwartungen gesetzt. Eine Definition von Zivilgesellschaft ist jedoch im Fall von Somalia aufgrund der komplexen politischen Probleme, dem Zusammenbruch des Staates sowie einer Situation, in der die Aktivitäten nichtstaatlicher Entwicklungsorganisationen ein blühendes Geschäft geworden sind, nicht einfach. In diesem Kontext ist es wichtig, die Rolle der Diaspora für die Entwicklung der Zivilgesellschaft in Somalia/Somaliland kritisch zu betrachten. Basieren auf Daten, die in Finnland und Somaliland zwischen 2008 und 2011 erhoben wurden, untersucht dieser Artikel die möglichen Entwicklungspotenziale der Diaspora für die Zivilgesellschaft.

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