

The Migration-Development Nexus: Somalia Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The humanitarian disaster in 1992 made the Somalis known throughout the world. The first image that appeared in the Western part of the world was the broadcast of the famine caused by the civil war. This was followed by the international intervention known as UNOSOM, when CNN covered the landing of the American intervention forces in December 1992. The next image was the fatal confrontation between UNOSOM and the local warlord, General Aideed, which resulted in the withdrawal of UNOSOM in 1995. During that period the West also came to know the Somalis more intimately as thousands of them had fled and spread to North America and North-western Europe. This encounter was not without problems, and raised issues such as how to integrate Somalis into society, and how and when they could be expected to return to Somalia. Today, this experience has spurred a new policy trend among Western governments that aims at directing aid to the “neighbouring” areas of refugee-generating conflicts to keep the refugees in their region. These debates are unfortunately often full of myths, and tend to suggest policies often lacking a substantial basis. Hence, this article is part of a project that attempts to shed some light on contemporary migration processes and the possible linkages between the diasporas and the social and economic development in their country of origin. The case study describes the main flows of migration in modern Somali history, and how the emerging Somali diaspora maintains links to their kin via inventive remittance systems. The possible impact of remittances on local development in Somalia is addressed in the paper, and it concludes that the linkages between aid and migration-related resource transfers are multidimensional and that development can lead to migration and vice versa.

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It also concludes that there is a dire need for more knowledge on the issue, which is reflected in the lack of data found for this specific case. The case shows that poverty is not the only factor for the Somali migration history. Rather, the main reason has been the intertwining of political conflict and the search for economic opportunity. Furthermore, the important effect of remittances on socio-economic development correlates with political stability, providing an environment for productive investments. It is also shown that remittances have been far more important for livelihood and survival in Somalia than development and humanitarian aid put together.

INTRODUCTION

The humanitarian disaster in 1992 made the Somalis known throughout the world. The first image that appeared in the Western part of the world was the broadcast of the famine caused by the civil war. This was followed by the international intervention known as UNOSOM, when CNN covered the landing of the American intervention forces in December 1992. The next image was the fatal confrontation between UNOSOM and the local warlord, General Aideed, which resulted in the withdrawal of UNOSOM in 1995. During that period the West also came to know the Somalis more intimately as thousands of them had fled and spread to North America and North-western Europe. This encounter was not without problems, and raised issues such as how to integrate Somalis into society, and how and when they could be expected to return to Somalia. Today, this experience has spurred a new policy trend among Western governments that aims at directing aid to the “neighbouring” areas of refugee-generating conflicts to keep the refugees in their region. These debates are unfortunately often full of myths, and tend to suggest policies often lacking a substantial basis. Hence, this article is part of a project that attempts to shed some light on contemporary migration processes and the possible linkages between the diasporas and the social and economic development in their country of origin. The case study describes the main flows of migration in modern Somali history, and how the emerging Somali diaspora maintains links to their kin via inventive remittance systems. The possible impact of remittances on local development in Somalia is addressed in the paper, and it concludes that the linkages between aid and migration-related resource transfers are multidimensional and that development can lead to migration and vice versa.

Four decades of political and violent conflict

The independent Somali Republic was formed when British Somaliland (north-west Somalia) and the Italian-administrated United Nations Trust Territory of Somalia merged in 1960. The new Republic embarked upon a parliamentary civilian political system along Western democratic lines. This soon proved ill-

adapted to the clan-based nature of Somali politics, and became corrupted as the business-elites competed for the spoils that came from preferential access to the state. Increased political competition for monopolizing state access, the economic effect of the Suez crisis by the end of 1960s, and the corruption of the political system led to a crisis in both economy and politics, reflecting the emergence of the dynamics of spoils politics, which later would culminate in state collapse in 1990. By placing state institutions in Mogadishu, development was concentrated there to the detriment of the northern towns and ports such as Hargeysa, Berbera, and Bossaso. Against a backdrop of growing popular discontent, General Mohamed Siyad Barre staged a bloodless coup d'état in October 1969.

After the military coup in 1969, Barre envisaged a “socialist” orientation, which proved to be merely nominal. Although few Somalis relished the prospect of military rule, the new regime was widely received as a welcome alternative to the disappointments of civilian rule. With the backing of the Soviet Union, Siyad Barre promised to preserve democracy and justice, and to eliminate corruption and clannism.¹ But, instead of doing away with clannism, his regime led to a subtle and manipulative exercise in corruption increasingly based on clan politics. In an attempt to divert the growing tensions, his regime revived the Pan-Somali vision of uniting all Somali people. Thus, in 1977 the army of Somalia attacked Ethiopia in order to conquer the Ogaden region. However, the Soviets sided with Ethiopia, and the Somali army was defeated. This conflict provoked the first massive refugee movement of Ogaden refugees from Ethiopia fleeing to Somalia (Waldron and Hasci, 1995: 4).

The military defeat in 1978 marked the beginning of an evolving crisis throughout the 1980s, which involved an economic downward spiral, political marginalization, repression, migration, and manipulation of external aid. The internal conflict culminated in full-scale war in 1988 as the Somali National Movement (SNM), representing the Isaaq clans of north-western Somalia, launched an all-out offensive against government forces in the towns of Hargeysa and Burco. The government responded by destroying Hargeysa, killing more than 50,000 people. From its bases in Ethiopia, the SNM offered a springboard for other guerrilla groups, especially the United Somali Congress (USC – affiliated with the Hawiye clans) and Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), in the South (Jimcale, et al., 1999). Thus, in January 1991, the USC pushed Siyad Barre out of Mogadishu, overthrowing his regime, while the SNM launched an offensive in the north-west leading to the self-proclaimed independent Republic of Somaliland in May 1991.

In January 1991, the State of the Republic of Somalia collapsed totally and has not been resurrected since. During 1991 and well into 1992, southern and central Somalia were ravaged by inter-clan warfare, banditry, and widespread famine, which claimed the lives of between 240,000 and 280,000 Somalis. The

humanitarian situation prompted a UN peace enforcement operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) in 1993-1995. While the famine ended during the UNOSOM intervention and refugees and internally displaced persons returned to some regions, a new state was not rebuilt. Instead, UNOSOM became embroiled in the conflict, culminating in open warfare with the USC/SNA faction in 1993. Thus, when UNOSOM departed from Somalia in March 1995, it left the country divided, without a central government, and with an economic infrastructure mostly in ruins. Furthermore, Somalia remained vulnerable in terms of physical and social security. In parts of southern and central Somalia the process of fragmentation continued with factions splintering into quarrelling sub-clan militias. In other parts, localized polities emerged, drawing on differing combinations of traditional, clan-based authorities, Islamic courts, and local business people. Only in the northern regions of the country (Somaliland and Puntland) did relatively stable legitimate and functional administrations emerge. A new Transitional National Government (TNG), however, was installed in August 2000 in Mogadishu, following a peace conference in Djibouti. But this administration has not yet managed to complete the peace process, and has not established its sovereignty throughout Somalia.

DEVELOPMENT, AID, AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT PATTERNS

During the first three years after independence Somalia relied on Italian and British subsidies that funded 31 per cent of the national budget (Marchal, 1996: 17). From 1960 to 1970 the level of foreign aid per capita was one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa. Development at that time followed the general pattern of third-world development planning, focusing on building infrastructure, which was thought to facilitate a “take-off” effect on the economy. This did not happen, but there was significant expansion, especially in the livestock trade and export.

From 1969 to 1989 Somalia became an archetypal “Cold War client state”, receiving most of its aid from the Soviet Union and the “East Bloc” during the 1970s, while the US took over this role during the 1980s. This meant that Siyad Barre with his “scientific socialism” could access Soviet aid, although this did not prevent Italy from re-engaging with investments, as well as development aid, in 1971. Barre’s regime of the first half of the 1970s introduced the first official Somali script, launched massive literacy campaigns, and embarked on an ambitious programme of self-help schemes and social development projects. But Soviet aid was characterized by major development projects entirely dependent on external aid. This period was also characterized by nationalizations and the emergence of many new parastatals. Only the nomadic pastoral sector, comprising 50 per cent of the indigenous economy, escaped state encroachment, as that would have antagonized the clans severely. Agriculture came under

cooperative development plans. Expenditure in this sector rose from 10 per cent to 29.1 per cent in 1974 (Marchal, 1996: 22), but the state farms eventually collapsed in the 1980s. During this period there was positive economic growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – 2.5 per cent annually until 1975. But this growth did not result from a new internally generated economic dynamic. Rather it was explained by the influx of development aid and external loans, later reflected in gradual degeneration of the industrial projects as most of the plants produced below 30 per cent of capacity (Marchal, 1996: 23). Growth in the 1970s could also be explained by the significant increase in migrant workers to the Gulf states (see Table 1), which occurred after the oil crisis in 1973 (see sections on migration and remittances below).

By the end of the 1970s, high military expenses, corruption, an increasing debt burden, and the collapse of the small industrial sector signalled the looming crisis of the 1980s. The inability to manage the increasing debt burden meant that Somalia could no longer attract foreign investment except development aid and remittances (Table 1), and GDP began to decrease an average of 3 per cent annually (Marchal, 1996: 23). Somalia was not the only country in Africa that was marked by financial and economic crisis during the 1980s. As elsewhere on the continent, if it wanted the flow of external credit and aid to be kept up, it had to submit itself to IMF structural adjustment programmes.

Some improvements were achieved with the IMF policies: inflation was tamed and the Somali shilling was devalued, leading to a brief increase in agricultural output from 1983 to 1985. But, these effects did not sufficiently compensate for the losses from the Saudi Arabian livestock ban in 1982, reducing annual export earnings by US\$79 million from 1982 to 1984.² Furthermore, manufacturing output declined, exports decreased, GDP per capita fell, and the Gross National Product (GNP) per capita between 1980 and 1989 declined by 1.7 per cent per year – officially (Marchal, 1996: 24). Economic liberalization proceeded very slowly, and the regime resisted IMF conditions (especially its demand to reduce the security budget), as its clientelist system needed to maintain control over exchange rates and banking.

A significant influx of resources came when the US took over Somalia as a client state after the Ogaden war, and began to pour into Somalia large amounts of military, development, and, as a result of the Ogaden refugee situation along the border with Ethiopia in the 1980s, emergency relief aid. Thus, aid to Somalia during the 1980s averaged US\$400 million annually (Marchal, 1996: 25). Massive amounts of foreign aid were diverted by the regime, whose cronies partly used it to illegally appropriate land in the fertile riverine and inter-riverine lands in southern Somalia (Menkhaus and Craven, 1996). The Somali authorities managed to manipulate the number of refugees, thus inflating the need and increasing the amount of humanitarian aid significantly (Waldron and Hasci, 1995: 26). Almost all the assistance to the

north ended up with the Ogaden refugees whose allegiance was important to the ruling clique. Business elites and others who were not loyal to the President or did not belong to his clan affiliations were discriminated against in terms of employment and business opportunities.

Thus, repressive economic practices turned into a downward spiral as they undermined the Somali economy, which became increasingly dependent on external transfers: development and humanitarian aid grants to the government, and migrant workers' remittances to the people. Corruption penetrated Somali society, all the way from the external donors and business people to the ordinary civil servant (Marchal, 1996: 25). Systems of extortion were developed, leading to a rapid growth of the second or informal economy. Despite the crisis in the formal economy, the informal economy thrived, keeping at least 80 per cent of the population above the poverty threshold (Marchal, 1996). This informal economy carried on after the formal economy collapsed together with the Somali state.

As Table 1 shows, Somalia has always ranked very low in terms of development. Before the civil war, GNP per capita was in fact declining despite increases in foreign aid. The figures for FDI were even negative during the 1980s indicating an unfavourable economic climate. As an indicator for the trend in foreign trade, income from goods and services declined significantly. However incomplete and unreliable, the table does suggest an increase in private transfers, especially workers' remittances, which reflects alternative survival strategies by Somalis.

Current social, economic, and human development indicators

Somalia does not appear in the usual rankings and statistics of the two leading publications on development statistics, which furthermore do not agree on the few data that they do provide. Thus, the *World Development Report 2000/2001* published by the World Bank estimates the population of Somalia to be 9.4 million, while the *Human Development Report* published by the United Nations suggests only 8.4 million. The most recent estimates, allowing for international migration, projects the population at 6.38 million in 2001 (UNDP Somalia, 2001). Neither of the two reports have any suggestions for the size of GDP per capita. According to the 1998 UNDP Somalia *Human Development Report* (UNDP Somalia, 1998), average life expectancy is 41-43 years;³ the mortality rate for children under five exceeds 25 per cent; adult literacy rates are 14-17 per cent; and parts of southern Somalia are periodically prone to severe food shortages. Table 2 shows all the available data on Somalia from the *Human Development Report 2001*, which differs slightly from the estimates of the *Somalia Human Development Report 1998*.

TABLE 1
DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS FOR SOMALIA

	GNP per capita (US\$)	Foreign direct investment (US\$ million)	Grants, technical cooperation (US\$ million)	Private transfers, including remittances (US\$ million)	Workers remittances (US\$ million)	Imports, goods and services (US\$ million)	Exports, goods and services (US\$ million)
1970	80	4.5	8.6	3.7	-	61.9	43.3
1975	140	6.7	95.5	2.7	-	271.5	115.2
1980	110	-0.8	274.0	57.3*	57.3	540.6	204.5
1985	120	-14.9	113.2	38.2*	21.7 (1983)	454.1	127.6
1988	130	-43.0	276.1	6.4	-	NA	58.4
1989	130	-41.0	255.4	NA	-	NA	67.7
1990	120	6.0	323.4	NA	-	NA	91.2
1997	176**	NA	NA	350**	-	NA	NA

Note: *The leap in remittances in 1980 is partly because official figures were not recorded before, and partly a reflection of the increase in migrant labour to the Gulf States. Subsequent fluctuations in figures are attributable to unreliable statistics, to avoidance of official transfer channels such as banks, and to the fact that migrant labourers in the Gulf States increasingly came under pressure as more competitive workers from South-East Asia began to arrive. **This figure is from the *Human Development Report: Somalia 1998*, the GNP figure is in real terms estimated to be 60 per cent of the pre-war level (UNDP Somalia, 1998).

Source: World Bank Data CD-Rom 1995.

TABLE 2
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT INDEX;
FIGURES FOR SOMALIA

Population (millions)	6.4-8.4
Fertility rate (per woman)	7.3
Life expectancy (years)	47.0
Infant mortality (per 1,000 births)	132
Under 5 mortality (per 1,000 births)	224
Total school enrolment ratio (%)	13.6
Undernourished (% of total population)	75

Sources: UNDP, 2001; UNDP Somalia, 2001.

POVERTY, CONFLICT, AND MIGRATION

The dispersal of the Somalis

Migration is at the heart of Somalia nomadic culture, which is characterized by a subsistence economy, trade to procure necessities not domestically produced, and transhumance to adapt to cycles of climate in search of “green pastures”. “Diya” paying groups act as social glue,⁴ and the political structure is segmented, horizontal, and very loosely connected (Marchal 1996: 11).

Somalis in both Somalia and Somaliland are usually described as an ethnically homogenous group. While this notion perhaps does apply for Somaliland in the north, it does not apply to southern Somalia where analysts often ignore the very large “minority” groups (Olesen, et al., 2000: 7). Most distinct of these are the so-called “Bantu” descendants of slaves who were imported from what is now Tanzania (Pérouse de Montclos, 1997: 12). Other distinct groups are the Bajuni and Baravani people who live along the eastern coasts of Somalia (Pérouse de Montclos, 1997: 9). In fact, even the large Rahanwein agropastoralist group constitute a heterogeneous community whose history and language differs significantly from the nomadic Somali clans (Pérouse de Montclos, 1997: 19). It is difficult to assess their number versus the dominant Somali clans, but in southern Somalia these groups were the prime victims of the conflict and the famine in 1992. The nomadic Somalis were dispersed by colonization into five areas: British, Italian, and French Somaliland respectively, as well as the Northern Frontier District of the British Kenyan Crown Colony, and the Ogaden region of the Ethiopian Empire. In 1960 the independent Somali Republic was formed as British and Italian Somaliland decided to merge as a first step toward

uniting all the Somalia peoples. The Northern Frontier District, however, remained in independent Kenya and the Ogaden region remained part of Ethiopia. French Somaliland eventually gained independence in 1977 as the Republic of Djibouti.

During the period of British colonialism, an early Somali diaspora emerged as seamen from British Somaliland who worked in the Merchant Navy settled in ports such as Cardiff and London. Today, the Somali diaspora (including UK citizens) in the UK is estimated at between 70,000 (Pérouse de Montclos, forthcoming: 2) and 100,000 (Ahmed, 2000), while the official number (which excludes pre-conflict Somalis in the UK) is 20,000, as Table 3 shows.

TABLE 3
OFFICIAL FIGURES ON THE SIZE OF THE
SOMALI DIASPORA, 2000

Country	Population
Netherlands	25,000
United Kingdom	20,000
Denmark	14,000
Sweden	12, 000
United States	25,000
Canada	30,000
Norway	4,000
Finland	5,300
Switzerland	5,400
Germany	8,400
Italy	20,000
Australia	2,000
Saudi Arabia	20,000
United Arab Emirates	25,000

Note: All figures include refugees.

Source: Pérouse de Montclos, forthcoming.

After independence, disgruntled by unmet promises, many disappointed supporters of the ruling Somali Youth League, especially from the north-western Isaaq clan, migrated abroad during the 1960s as they had lost their assets and were denied access to new resources. Later, from 1973, Somalia became a major labour exporter to the Arabic oil producing countries. Perhaps between 150,000 and 200,000 migrated in this way, about half of them coming from the Isaaq clans (Ahmed, 2000). By the end of the 1980s the number of migrant

workers going to the Gulf states had approximately reached 200,000; by 1987, the number of “Gulf migrants” was estimated at 375,000 (Ahmed, 2000). These migrants were often relatively well-educated people looking for better employment than they could find in Somalia (Marchal, 1996: 23).

The next major migration was related to the Ogaden war, as the humanitarian crisis it brought about provoked the first massive refugee movement, sending thousands of ethnic Somalis into Somalia from the Ethiopian Ogaden region (Waldron and Hasci, 1995: 4). By 1981 these refugees constituted about 20-40 per cent of the population of Somalia (Simons, 1995), although the number of refugees in this group was, in all probability, grossly exaggerated (Waldron and Hasci, 1995: 26). Most of them came from the Ogaden clan, creating considerable tension in regions where they were considered non-residents. From 1984 to 1991, this group of refugees was accompanied by more Ogaden refugees as well as fleeing Ethiopian Oromos (Waldron and Hasci, 1995: 17). Thus, before the civil war, Somalia hosted one of the largest refugee populations in Africa. In 1987, one in six persons in Somalia were registered as a refugee.

The eruption of the civil war in 1988 reversed this situation, and generated the third major movement – this time from Somalia into the Ethiopian Ogaden Region. More than 600,000 people fled to Ethiopia. This flow was first caused by the conflict between SNM and the Siad Barre regime, and was prompted by the bombing of Hargeysa in 1988. The escalation of the conflict in 1991, when the USC, with the support of SPM and SNM, ousted Siad Barre, produced further refugee flows. Thus, the largest mass flight of Somalis took place from early 1991 when more than 1 million are estimated to have fled fighting in southern Somalia to countries in the region and outside Africa. The better-off refugees went further abroad to Western countries such as Canada, US, UK, Italy, Holland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Australia (see Table 4). But, most of the refugees, and significantly the poorest, fled to the neighbouring countries, Kenya and Ethiopia, or elsewhere within Somalia as internally displaced persons (IDPs). Altogether, these flows were estimated to be between 1 and 2 million Somalis (see Table 5).

The largest war-related internal displacements from central and southern Somalia took place between 1991 and 1993. Prior to May 1992 the main cause of displacement was fighting and drought, while after May 1992 it was mainly food scarcity. In September 1992 there were estimated to be between 556,000 and 636,000 “visible” displaced people in camps, of which 50 per cent were in Mogadishu (UNDP Somalia, 2001). The real number of IDPs in Somalia was, and is, obscured by the fact that many of them went to their kin within their traditional clan territories. Since 1992 there have been smaller displacements caused by fighting. In late 1997 and early 1998, extensive flooding displaced people from central and southern Somalia. In 2001, fighting in the Gedo region temporarily displaced people into Kenya.

TABLE 4
SOMALI REFUGEE POPULATION BY
AFRICAN COUNTRY OF ASYLUM, 1999

Country	Population
Ethiopia	180,900
Kenya	141,100
Yemen	55,200
Djibouti	21,600
South Africa	4,700
Tanzania	3,300
Libya	2,900
Egypt	2,600

Source: UNHCR, 2000.

TABLE 5
SOMALI REFUGEE POPULATION BY
WESTERN COUNTRY OF ASYLUM, 1999

Country	Population
Netherlands	18,500
United Kingdom	18,100
Denmark	9,600
Sweden	7,700
United States	5,200
Canada	4,000
Norway	3,600
Finland	2,400
Switzerland	2,400

Source: UNHCR, 2000.

While the refugee flows are closely linked to the effects of armed conflict, migration to the Gulf states was related to the opportunities offered by rapid development in the oil producing countries, and was thus not directly poverty related. This migration was also related to the lack of job opportunities in Somalia. But in both cases it were those with capacities to migrate who did so. Thus, the refugees who were able to seek asylum in the West were in social status similar to those who migrated to the Gulf states in search of labour. Existing networks

of the limited number of Somalis who had migrated to Italy, UK and other places in Western Europe, and the US before the conflict were important in shaping who, how, and where the later and much larger numbers of refugees went. Table 6 summarizes the main migration flows out of Somalia.

TABLE 6
MAJOR SOMALI MIGRATION FLOWS

Time period	Migration flow
Colonial period	Somalis settle in the UK; less so in Italy; few in numbers.
1970s-1980s	Migrant workers to the Gulf states.
1978-1991	After the Ogaden war defeat in 1978, many refugees arrive in Somalia. First political refugees seek asylum abroad, but in small numbers.
1988-today	Hargeysa 1988, first refugee movement into Ethiopia; Mogadishu 1991, second refugee movement into Kenya, Ethiopia, North America, Europe, and Australia.

CURRENT INTERNAL DISPLACEMENTS,
REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION PATTERNS

Current refugee movements

People continued to leave southern Somalia in large numbers until 1995. Since then there has been a decline in refugee flows from Somalia and a gradual process of repatriation and reintegration. Yet, a quarter of a million (256,000) Somali refugees remain in camps in Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Yemen, and other neighbouring countries (as Table 4 shows); many more reside in these countries illegally and hence elude documentation. In addition, hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees are scattered across the globe, from North America and Europe to the Middle East and Australia. According to UNHCR, (see Table 7) the number of registered refugees from Somalia is around half a million people (UNHCR, 2000).

As Table 8 shows, the number of Somalis seeking asylum in Western Europe has in fact been increasing since 1996. Yet, it is difficult to assess whether this is due to continued or new instability or hardship in Somalia, or due to “unsuccessful” asylum seekers “trekking” to other countries (Pérouse de Montclos, forthcoming: 3). While some Somalis still seek to leave the country, they do so mainly as migrant workers or as part of family reunification programmes.

TABLE 7
TOTAL NUMBER OF SOMALI REFUGEES, 1987-1999

Year	Number (thousands)
1987	60.0
1988	350.7
1989	325.6
1990	455.2
1991	720.8
1992	788.2
1993	516.6
1994	535.9
1995	579.3
1996	573.0
1997	525.4
1998	480.8
1999	451.5

Source: UNHCR, 2000.

TABLE 8
SOMALI ASYLUM SEEKERS IN WESTERN EUROPE,
1990-1999

Year	Number of asylum seekers
1990	12,200
1991	11,100
1992	14,600
1993	13,300
1994	12,400
1995	11,800
1996	7,500
1997	8,500
1998	11,900
1999	14,000
Total	117,300

Source: UNHCR, 2000.

Current IDPs and other internal migration movements

The overall trend since 1993 has been one of diminishing internal displacement, as the war subsided and people either returned to their homes or “resettled” in different regions of Somalia. Furthermore, there has been a clear pattern of people from northern clans moving to the northern regions from the south, which has radically altered the demography of those regions.

Since 1995, Mogadishu and other major towns have gradually become more accessible to former residents. But there still remain many internally displaced. As violent conflict has declined and food deliveries have been reduced, camps for the displaced have also diminished. The vagaries of climate and economic hardship are now the main causes of population movement.

In 2000, there were estimated to be 300,000 internally displaced, including 40,000-50,000 newly displaced in 1999. These figures should be treated with some caution, as there has been no comprehensive study of IDPs since UNOSOM withdrew from Somalia. According to UNDP Somalia (2001), IDPs today constitute more than 60 per cent of those Somalis considered to be “food insecure”. The majority is from the poorest rural families or minority groups, and live on the peripheries of the urban centres.

Urban migration

Although the population of Somalia is predominantly rural, there are strong patterns of rural-urban migration (UNDP Somalia, 2001). For a time during the war this process was reversed as people fled the main towns and moved to areas that their clans came from. Consequently, the population of previously small regional towns such as Belet Weyne, Galkaiyo, Baidoa, and Bossasso rose dramatically as people fled fighting in Mogadishu, the Lower Juba, and the inter-riverine areas. Rapid urban migration has become a particular issue in Hargeysa, where the majority of returning Somali refugees from Ethiopia have chosen to settle (UNDP Somalia, 2001). The concentration of businesses and aid programmes in the administrative capitals attracts the rural population, Somalis returning from the diaspora, and economic migrants from Bay and Bakool regions. The Somali diaspora is also mainly an urban community, primarily formed on a family and clan basis (Pérouse de Montclos, forthcoming).

Resource transfers: remittances and other diaspora activities

Financial remittances from Somalis living outside the country are perhaps the outstanding feature of the Somali economy, for remittances have long been crucial to the economy. Today, the new diaspora in the West has assumed a very important role as a source of remittances to family members in Somalia or in refugee camps.

The first migrant workers who went to the Gulf states during the 1970s began to send back remittances, using the so-called *franco-valuta* system. People from the Isaaq clan in particular utilized this system, in which foreign exchange was transferred to traders who would import commodities for the Somali markets, and then give the cash to the families of the migrants. This system worked only because the traders had strong linkages to their clan lineages inside Somalia. This, together with the practice of migrants settling close to fellow clans-people, contributed to a strengthening of clan identity. The system was crucial for the provision of foreign exchange, and enabled families in Somalia to import consumer goods. Rough estimates suggest that around US\$300 million was remitted annually from the late 1970s and during the 1980s, equivalent to about 40 per cent of GNP (Marchal, 1996: 35).

The *franco-valuta* system was officially banned in 1982 because it increased the misuse of much needed foreign exchange, but also because it potentially undermined the power of the regime's own patron-client mechanisms (Marchal, 1996: 25). Yet, the ban had little effect as it only led to a new system. Thus, the Hawilad system evolved, which did not involve a trader, but still provided hard currency. The significance of these remittances grew as part of the emerging parallel economy in the 1980s, when they were estimated to be worth US\$370 million annually, of which 75 per cent came from workers in the Gulf countries (UNDP Somalia, 2001). The Hawilad system evolved during the 1980s and into the 1990s, where remittances were transferred to the armed guerrillas who eventually overthrew the Siyad Barre regime. Thus, to increase the efficiency of the Hawilad, the Dahab Shiil Company in the Ethiopian town of Dire Dawa found that mobile radio systems used by the SNM, combined with satellite telecommunication facilities, were very useful. This would later lead to the spread of efficient telecommunication companies in post-collapse Somalia. Today, there are several Hawilad companies with branches wherever in the world Somalis live, and scattered all over Somalia. Through this network, a Somali can transfer money to a family member inside Somalia within 24 hours. It is the most efficient, and safest, way of transferring money in Somalia, and even the international NGOs use it extensively. The companies do work across clans, but also maintain a certain clan bias. The Hawilad system became a strategic asset in the civil war economy, and is still the most important social safety net for most Somalis, evidenced by the effects of the US shutdown of the Baraakaat Company in connection with the "war against terrorism".

Who remits?

The source of remittances changed during the war. In the 1980s, it was primarily migrant workers in the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia who dominated, with 60 per cent of the total estimated remittance transfers. Outside the Arab states, it was only in the UK and Italy that a Somali diaspora of any significance in terms of remittances could be found. After the outbreak of civil war, conflict-related

refugee flows to Western Europe and Northern America changed the remittance pattern. Thus, a result of the civil war was the growth of the diaspora and the volume of remittances. One difference between the civil war related migrations and the previous labour migrants is that the former most often were families settling in host countries including women and children, while the migrant workers almost always were males seeking work who would usually return home (Ahmed, 2000). Somali exiles can seldom save more than \$100 a month per household (Pérouse de Montclos, forthcoming). They live mostly off welfare allowances that were intended to meet only their most basic needs.

Another difference is that with the civil conflict, the elite had fled the country, leaving the market to other social strata. A reflection of this change is that during the 1980s, two-thirds of the funds from the Somali communities abroad were used for trade, and the other third to assist families. Today these proportions are probably reversed (Pérouse de Montclos, forthcoming).

How much is remitted?

According to surveys made by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1985, the 165,000 to 200,000 Somalis living in the Middle East earned \$700 million dollars a year, of which approximately 30 per cent – \$280 to \$370 million dollars, according to estimates – was sent back to their native country. Annual remittances to Somalia in 1987 were estimated to be between US\$478 to \$540 million (Green and Jamal, 1987).

Estimates of the size of remittances to Somaliland and Somalia today vary significantly from study to study, and depend on how the estimates are made. Thus, they may vary from US\$140 million to US\$800 million (UNDP Somalia, 2001). According to the estimates by Pérouse de Montclos, the diaspora sends about US\$140 million annually to Somalia (Pérouse de Montclos, forthcoming). Because this figure does not take into account money remitted for investment, US\$500 million would be a more realistic, if conservative, estimate for total annual remittances to Somalia (UNDP Somalia, 2001). In any case, the estimated remittances exceeds the value of exports as well as international aid, estimated at US\$115 million in 2000, and it probably reaches more people than international aid (UNDP Somalia, 2001). The difference in all these assessments reflects the difficulties of investigating the issue, when the transfers are not registered, are informal, and statistics are not available.

Remittances in 1990 to Somaliland were estimated at US\$200-\$250 million (Marchal 1996: 35). The Somaliland Ministry of Planning estimated in 1997 that US\$93 million was transferred via remittance companies, which was in stark contrast to the USAID report estimating remittances to Somaliland at US \$4 million in 1998. According to a survey conducted by Ismail Ahmed, a mean household receipt of remittances per annum in Somaliland was US\$4,170 and its

share of household income was 64 per cent (Ahmed, 2000). If these estimates are correct, and there are about 120,000 recipient households throughout Somaliland, then the total value of the annual remittances is about US\$500 million, which would be about four times the value of livestock exports from Somaliland in a normal year. Remittances to southern Somalia are poorly documented. One study in the town of Belet Weyne, with a population of some 50,000, estimated that US\$200,000 was received in remittances monthly, averaging US\$4 per town resident (UNDP Somalia, 2001).

Remittances and development

Historically, remittances have been used to finance consumption. But recent observations show a new trend where remittance money is invested in small businesses or real estate. Today, however, it is clear that remittances have become a dominant feature of the Somali economy, and are crucial for household livelihoods. Although remittances have become the critical source of hard currency for the country, the precise value of this economy is difficult to calculate for several reasons. First, there is no reliable data on the size of the Somali diaspora. Second, the remittance companies are reluctant to report the amounts transferred. Finally, remittances are transferred in different forms and through different channels, as cash or goods in kind, through remittance companies, through merchants, or through relatives.

The structural effects on development of the remittances are limited. Thus, remittances were primarily used for consumption; to invest in real estate and housing; for marriage; for trade; and to obtain arms for clan militias. UNDP Somalia estimates that most remittances to households fall in the range of US\$50-\$200 per month, and find that the flow of remittances increase in times of economic stress, during droughts, or in response to inter-clan warfare. The positive aspect of increasing consumption through remittances in Somalia in the 1980s was that this did improve the real balance of payments and enabled imports of capital goods and raw materials for industrial production. The high level of consumption and imported goods, however, left only little surplus for capital-generating investments, while the demand on consumer goods increased inflation and pushed up wage levels. So, the immediate positive effects in terms of easing the effects of rising oil prices and increasing living standards turned into negative effects in the long run as they were spent on “non-productive” investments, which increased dependency and eroded incentives for production. Some positive effects did come out of increases in trade, but these did not have the same long-term effects, such as investment in a productive sector. On the other hand, Ahmed suggests that remittances in Somaliland in recent years have been used less for consumption and unproductive investments, but instead contributed significantly to the growth of a vibrant private sector (Ahmed, 2000). This process, however, is associated with loss of educated and skilled labour, and increased income

inequality. The booming sectors are also limited by the lack of credit schemes and saving facilities.

Social aspects of remittances

The latter point of unequal development is important, and is not sufficiently reflected in most of the available studies (including the present study) because the prime focus is on the ethnic Somali migrants proper and only their practices in terms of development effects. Thus, the existing studies often only concern the nomadic Somalis, and far less the agropastoralists Rahanwein and Digil people, Goshu, Bantus, and other “minorities” such as the Barawani/Bajuni cultures along the coast. All of these groups do not seem to have been in a position to travel outside Africa. But, they did seek refuge in IDP camps, and did migrate to the neighbouring countries from where this study has not been able to gather any data on their remittance, trade, or other practices.

Nevertheless, remittances do play the role of a social safety net, preventing economic collapse in the face of setbacks such as drought and recurring Saudi Arabian livestock bans. Studies of remittances to Hargeysa, Burco, and Bossaso calculated that remittances constitute nearly 40 per cent of the income of urban households (UNDP Somalia, 2001). Preliminary data from a survey conducted by the UNDP indicates that on average, remittances constitute 22 per cent of per capita household income (UNDP Somalia, 2001). It should be noted that the volume of remittances received by households depends a lot on the quality of telecommunications, the organization and the welfare of the community, and the distance between Hawilad relays and the beneficiaries of the transaction (Pérouse de Montclos, forthcoming).

Qaat

Another socio-economic factor that must be taken into consideration when development in Somalia is considered is the significant percentage of remittances used to finance the import of the mild drug *qaat*. No reliable figures exist how much is spent on *qaat*, but estimates put the annual amount at US\$50 million (UNDP Somalia, 2001).

Urban bias

The study by Ahmed found an urban bias in the distribution of remittances, showing that while the majority of households in Hargeysa received remittances, only 5 per cent of rural households did (Ahmed, 2000); pastoral households receive even less. For agropastoralist households, remittances from migrant workers in urban areas are more important than international ones, thus suggesting an indirect flow of international remittances to rural households. Remittances both reflect and serve to increase the economic

differentiation in society. According to UNDP Somalia, for historical, social, and political reasons, remittances are more common in urban rather than rural areas, and the main beneficiaries of remittances tend to be urban households with educated and skilled members in the diaspora (UNDP Somalia, 2001). Due to a history of better access to education, political privilege, or accident of geography, some social groups and clans have a higher percentage of their members in the diaspora than others. Migrant workers and refugees tend to come from better-off families who can afford to invest in sending a family member abroad. The rural poor and the internally displaced from groups who have fewer relatives abroad receive fewer remittances and are less well served by telecommunications. For example, in Hargeysa and Bossasso, there is clear evidence of significant differential access to remittances between urban residents and displaced populations and economic migrants from southern Somalia.

REPATRIATION

Repatriation since 1990 involved the three main flows outlined above: the refugees who fled the Ogaden in 1978; the exodus from Hargeysa in 1988-1989; and the flight from Mogadishu of non-Hawiye clans, and those who fled to Kenya during and after 1991.

According to Waldron and Hasci, there is virtually no trace in the literature of the fate of the Ogaden and Oromo refugees that came from Ethiopia in 1978 and during the 1980s (Waldron and Hasci, 1995: 69). Thus, the planned repatriation of the first group after the pact was signed between President Mengistu of Ethiopia and Siad Barre, in 1988 was, so to speak, overtaken by the events of the civil war. When the Hawiye clan-dominated USC faction pushed from the Ethiopian border toward Mogadishu, many of these refugees, who mostly belonged to the Ogaden clan, fled. Those who fled to Mogadishu probably had to flee again when Siad Barre was ousted and Mogadishu became effectively occupied by the Hawiye. The Ogaden and Marehan clans then fled to Kenya. Many of these refugees remain in Kenya, either in Nairobi or in the refugee camps along the border with Somalia.

The refugees from the second group have largely been repatriated thanks to relative stability in the unrecognized Republic of Somaliland. The number of Somali refugees in all the neighbouring countries has declined. Many have returned to Somalia, while others have obtained permanent resident rights in countries of asylum. The decline in Somali refugee numbers is (see Table 6), in part, due to improved security inside Somalia, the difficult and un-welcoming environments in refugee camps, and the tighter asylum policies in the West. But a small number still figure in the refugee camps on the Ethiopian side of the border. Efforts to assist Somali refugees to return home have been slowed by

severe economic pressures inside the country and by sporadic security concerns generated by chronic political tensions.

Today the main groups of concern are the remaining large numbers of refugees in Kenya and Ethiopia from the third group, the IDPs – especially from the large “minorities” of southern Somalia, and the more distant diaspora abroad, which stem from all of the clans. Repatriation today is only possible to areas inhabited by the repatriates’ own clans (Olesen, 1996; Olesen, 1998; Olesen and Svan, 1999). Local authorities often emphasize that repatriation of refugees should be accompanied by development- or income-generating projects (Olesen, 1996; Olesen, 1998; Olesen and Svan, 1999).

Agencies such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the EU-Somalia Unit, however, have recommended that repatriates be equipped with a small amount of money, sufficient to start a new life (Olesen, 1996; Olesen, 1998; Olesen and Svan, 1999). The number of internally displaced populations has also declined. Few of the remaining IDPs seem to be returning to their original homes because there is little economic incentive to do so. For others who were originally residents of Mogadishu, a significant proportion does not feel it is safe or viable to return there. Furthermore, if large numbers of former Mogadishu residents began to return, reconciliation would be challenged because it inevitably would raise the issues of property and land that occurred during the war.

The level of security and the absorptive capacity of the recipient communities also determine the pace of repatriation. Repatriation to areas where instability continues will be slower and certain Somali citizens from politically weak minority groups are unlikely to return in large numbers. The patterns of repatriation are also determined by the relationship between returning refugees and the host population. Unknown destiny, unclear asylum status, and unclear citizenship and residence in the country of asylum or residence make for a sense of uncertainty among the diaspora, which renders the prospect of repatriation unsettling. This may also inhibit long-term investments in Somalia’s development because the uncertainty of a future territorial connection makes more fluid forms of investment attractive to a form of “transhumance” rather than “sowing seeds” in a fixed location.

RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Human Development Index indicates (Table 2) that Somalia faces huge social and developmental challenges. Returnees and the diaspora may potentially play a crucial role for how Somalia may be reconstructed and developed in the future.

The diaspora of perhaps more than 1 million constitutes a huge potential human resource (UNDP Somalia, 2001). Already, the diaspora is an extremely important force in the Somali economy and in Somali politics, just as it also played a significant role in the civil war. Thus, the diaspora may play a crucial role in reaching the kind of political stability and security that is a precondition for building the kind of economic environment that promotes local production, as happened in the emerging polity of Somaliland. Political security, stability, and legitimacy are crucial factors for development, as well as the prospects for return of the diaspora and how remittances are used.

The large diaspora means that the Somali “nation” is no longer confined within territorial borders, but has been globalized, and the diaspora links Somalia into global economic networks. Remittances from the diaspora are a key part of the economy and critical to people’s livelihoods. The Hawilad remittance system is the structure that links the diaspora with families in Somalia. Somalis returning from the diaspora have brought new businesses, ideas, and technologies. Unfortunately, while many in the diaspora express a desire to return to Somalia, insecurity, poor social services, and employment opportunities dampen the incentives to do so. The huge number of Somalis returning to Somalia on vacation, going there to reconnoitre, is evidence of interest in return. Somalis maintain close links with their country of origin, a prospect that keeps alive the hope that this diaspora could play a structural role in the reconstruction of Somalia. But, it remains to be seen whether the second generation of Somali immigrants abroad will continue to remit money to relatives they do not know in a country they may never have visited (Pérouse de Montclos, forthcoming). The practice of remitting money also has important consequences on the diaspora, as they may represent 20 to 30 per cent of the households’ income. Elders may exert high pressure on their communities to send funds home. That is why some blame the remittance system for perpetuating a clan-based, segmented society. On the other hand, this development is mitigated by the tendency of Somali families in the West to change toward the Western nuclear type (Pérouse de Montclos, forthcoming).

Table 9 shows that remittances are more vital than trade and aid for the survival of Somalis in Somalia. If these remittances can be transformed into long-term productive capital investments, as Ahmed indicates is happening in Somaliland, then they will be far more valuable for economic development than development aid.

But just as important is the flow of “know how”. The opportunity for the diaspora to acquire education abroad is a potential asset if they return. Yet, the structure of pay levels and job opportunities work against this. This is perhaps an area where development aid could be used in the reconstruction of the future Somali politics, by providing salaries in a transitional period for well-educated Somalis who want to return.

TABLE 9
AVAILABLE ESTIMATES ON ANNUAL AID, TRADE, AND REMITTANCE
RELATED FLOWS TO SOMALIA, US\$ MILLIONS

Year	Aid	Livestock exports	Remittances
1970-1980	-	-	300
1985	113	-	280-370
1987	276***	-	478-540
1990	323	-	200-250*
1997	55	70	93*-350
1998	56	70	4**
1999	50	80	500*
2000	115	125	140-280

Notes: Livestock for 1998 and 1999 are figures from the Human Development Report 1998; *The figures are estimates for Somaliland only. The high figure for 1999 includes an estimate for investments and not only transfers to households; **This very low figure is recorded by an USAID study; ***Estimates vary, and some experts suggest that aid to Somalia during the 1980s was US\$400 million annually (Marchal, 1996: 25).

Sources: Combined figures from World Bank CD-rom, 1995; UNDP Somalia, 2001: Human Development Report Somalia, 1998; ILO; Bradbury and Coultan, 1998; and Pérouse de Montclos, forthcoming.

Another area where the international community could assist considerably is by facilitating Somali trade globally by removing structural trade barriers such as quality standards. The Somali livestock trade is an example where veterinary health assistance, together with an effort to link Somali traders with global traders, could be a way of decreasing the Somali vulnerability to Saudi livestock bans by accessing the global market.

It is also important that aid is not linked too narrowly and rigidly with repatriation of the Somali diaspora to Somalia. If aid is used to push repatriation, before the diaspora is ready for it, then they may well decide against and choose the socially most secure option – to stay abroad. On the other hand, if they are seen as potential catalysts for development in Somalia, a door is kept open for them to stay in their host countries, and they are provided with education, skills, and working experience – perhaps in long-term programmes aimed at starting businesses or education in Somalia. Then, there is a prospect for a constructive relationship between aid, development, and diaspora.

POLICY RELEVANT LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has attempted to describe the linkages between aid- and migration-related resource transfers as found in the existing literature on Somalia. As the

paper shows, the linkages can be multidimensional: development can lead to migration and vice versa, and can have both positive and negative effects on the other. The study is hampered by the lack of statistical data on Somalia. With these limitations in mind, the following tentative conclusions and recommendations can be drawn.

International migration in the context of Somali history has been driven by political factors, and thus is not only economic or poverty related. Poverty has only been an indirect factor. Rather, the main reason for migration has been the intertwining of political conflict and the search for economic opportunity.

Since independence, aid has mainly been used as an asset in the internal power struggles of Somalia, and has not produced the intended development. Remittances have been far more important for the survival of people than development and humanitarian aid put together.

Poverty- and refugee-related migration are less prone to have developmental effects in countries of origin, as women and children tend to settle in the country of destination for good, as opposed to single migrant labourers who also remit a larger amount of their income.

The patterns of refugee flight, asylum, and repatriation among Somalis illustrate very clearly the significance of familial ties and mutual cooperation in their clan-based society.

Remittance effects do increase consumption, and have limited investment effects as consumption is based on imports. On the other hand, under certain circumstances of political stability and trust in the political and economic environment, the Somali diaspora may invest in real estate, production, and trade. Thus, the effect of remittances on development correlates with political stability and the quality of enabling environment for productive investments.

Policies and studies should avoid socially imbalanced analysis, such as neglect of the minorities in southern Somalia.

More research is needed into issues such as: (a) the spending and potential accumulation patterns of remittances; (b) the potential significance of flows of values, such as norms, ideas, and know how from the diaspora to countries of origin; and (c) the resource flows between diasporas in the neighbouring countries and Somalia.

NOTES

1. Lineage identity is a central organizing force in Somali society, but not the only one. The Somali clan structure is not permanent. It has a fluid character that can, within certain limits, be socially reconstructed to fit current political realities. In the mythology, all clans stem from the Prophet Abu Ta'alib. The common ancestor of the nomadic clans is Samaale, who is father to the four main families of Dir, Hawiye, Isaaq, and Darod. These have further sub-divisions, such as the Ogaden and Marehan of the Darod, and the Habr Gedir and Abgal of the Hawiye. The agropastoralist Rahanwein, or Digil-Mirifle, groups became affiliated to this mythology in the course of history by linking their mythological forefather Saab to the prophet. Their structure is different than the "Samaale" group, and is divided by the "first generation", the so-called seven Digil clans, and the two second-generation Rahanwein groups of Mirifle Said (The eight) and Alemo Sagal (The nine). (UNDP Somalia, 1998; Pérouse de Montclos, 1997).
2. Saudi Arabia has regularly imposed livestock bans on Somalia. Most often health issues have been the reason given, but some sources say that in recent years the bans are related to Saudi commercial involvement in Australian and New Zealand sheep farms.
3. The World Bank projects life expectancy at birth at 48 years, while the UN says 46.9 years.
4. Diya means blood payment, which is the compensation that one clan pays to another for an offense committed by one of its members.

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MIGRATION ET DEVELOPPEMENT : LE CAS DE LA SOMALIE

La catastrophe humanitaire de 1992 a fait connaître les Somalis à toute la planète. En Occident, les premières images diffusées alors montraient les terribles effets de la famine due à la guerre civile. Puis, est venue l'intervention internationale (UNOSOM), en décembre de la même année, à l'occasion de laquelle la chaîne de télévision CNN a diffusé en direct le débarquement des forces armées américaines. Ultérieurement, le monde a pu suivre la confrontation entre un seigneur de guerre, le général Aidee, et l'UNOSOM, confrontation qui s'est soldée par le retrait de celle-ci en 1995. Pendant ces événements, les Occidentaux ont pu aussi voir de plus près des Somaliens, dont des milliers, fuyant leur pays, avaient gagné l'Amérique du Nord et l'Europe. Cette prise de contact, qui n'a pas été sans problème, a suscité divers questionnements en rapport notamment avec l'intégration sociale de ces réfugiés ou le moment et les modalités de leur retour chez eux. À ce jour, les gouvernements occidentaux, forts des enseignements de cette expérience, s'orientent vers une nouvelle doctrine : l'aide doit être dirigée vers des régions voisines des zones en proie aux troubles ou affrontements, de manière que les réfugiés y demeurent. Pourtant, ce sont souvent des considérations relevant de croyances infondées qui inspirent une telle doctrine et privent du même coup les politiques d'une véritable substance. Cet article s'inscrit donc dans le cadre d'un projet visant à éclairer les mécanismes migratoires contemporains ainsi que d'éventuels rapports entre les diasporas et l'état de développement socioéconomique de leurs pays d'origine. Dans la présente étude de cas, il est question d'une part des grands flux migratoires qu'a connus la Somalie aux temps modernes, et d'autre part de la façon dont les membres de la nouvelle diaspora somalienne entretiennent des liens avec ceux de leur clan par le truchement de systèmes d'envoi d'argent inédits. Après avoir en outre examiné les effets potentiels des envois d'argent sur le développement local en Somalie, l'auteur conclut au caractère réflexif des rapports entre l'aide et les transferts de ressources découlant des migrations. Le développement peut inciter aux migrations, mais l'inverse est tout aussi vrai.

L'article relève parallèlement que les connaissances dans ce domaine font sérieusement défaut, ce dont témoignent les données insuffisantes dont a dû se satisfaire l'étude du cas. Celle-ci montre néanmoins que c'est avant tout le lacs des conflits politiques et des occasions économiques qui rend compte de l'histoire des migrations en Somalie, et non la seule pauvreté. De plus, les envois d'argent, par leurs effets très notables sur le développement socioéconomique, favorisent la stabilité politique et la mise en place d'un environnement propice aux placements productifs. Il est à noter que ces envois contribuent beaucoup plus à la survie et à la subsistance en Somalie que l'aide humanitaire et l'aide au développement réunies.

EL NEXO ENTRE MIGRACIÓN Y DESARROLLO: ESTUDIO DEL CASO DE SOMALIA

El desastre humanitario de 1992 hizo que los somalíes llegaran a ser conocidos en el mundo entero. La primera imagen que apareció en la parte occidental del mundo fue la de la hambruna causada por la guerra civil. Después vino la intervención internacional que recibió el nombre de UNOSOM, cuando la CNN cubrió la llegada de las fuerzas de intervención americanas, en diciembre de 1992. La imagen siguiente fue la confrontación fatal entre UNOSOM y el señor de la guerra local, el General Aideed, lo que provocó la retirada de UNOSOM en 1995. Durante ese periodo, occidente pudo aprender más acerca de los somalíes al contemplar cómo miles de ellos huían y se dispersaban por América del Norte y Europa noroccidental. Este encuentro no dejó de plantear problemas, suscitando cuestiones como la de integrar a los somalíes en la sociedad y cómo y cuándo cabría esperar que pudieran regresar a Somalia. Esa experiencia ha favorecido la aparición de una nueva tendencia política entre los gobiernos occidentales, según la cual se trata de dirigir la ayuda a las zonas limítrofes al conflicto generador de refugiados de manera que éstos queden en su región. Pero por desgracia estos debates están con frecuencia plagados de mitos y tienden a proponer políticas con frecuencia desprovistas de una base sustancial. En consecuencia, este artículo forma parte de un proyecto con el que se trata de aclarar algo más los procesos migratorios contemporáneos y las posibles vinculaciones entre las diásporas y el desarrollo social y económico en el país de origen de éstas. El estudio del caso describen cuáles han sido los principales flujos de migración en la historia somalí moderna y cómo la diáspora somalí emergente mantiene vínculos con sus familiares mediante ingeniosos sistemas de remesas. En el artículo se examina el posible impacto de las remesas sobre el desarrollo local en Somalia y se llega a la conclusión de que los vínculos entre ayuda y transferencias de recursos relacionados con la migración son multidimensionales, y que el desarrollo puede conducir a la migración, y viceversa.

Llega asimismo a la conclusión de que es muy necesario conocer mejor este tema, ya que son muy escasos los datos hallados en relación con este caso concreto. Se muestra que la pobreza no es el único factor en la historia de las migraciones somalíes. La razón principal se encuentra más en los conflictos políticos intercurrentes que en la búsqueda de oportunidades económicas. Además, el importante efecto de las remesas sobre el desarrollo socioeconómico se correlaciona con la estabilidad política, creadora de un ambiente favorable a las inversiones productivas. Se observa asimismo que las remesas han sido mucho más importantes para el nivel de vida y la supervivencia en Somalia que el conjunto de la ayuda al desarrollo y humanitaria.