

Refugee Livelihoods Network (RLN) May 2005

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The case of Somalia

This newsletter focuses on the livelihoods of Somalis in Somalia, the region and the wider diaspora. The civil war in Somalia and the collapse of its state has uprooted an estimated 1.5 million Somalis from their country and created many internally displaced. Of those outside state borders, the large majority lives in neighboring countries; both in camps and urban centers. As ethnic Somalis can be found in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya, this often leads to a blurring of categories of refugees and local citizens. As different groups have different rights and obligations towards the state and the international community, this blurring may affect their livelihood opportunities. Besides the Somali refugees in the region, a much smaller but very active presence of Somalis can be found further abroad. These Somalis in the diaspora contribute to economic and political processes in the region, for example by sending large amounts of remittances and being involved in the peace process. It is interesting to see how this affects the livelihoods of Somalis in different places, and what programs have been set up both by Somalis as well as the international community to work towards sustainable livelihoods for stayees, IDPs, refugees and returnees.

Sound data collection is much needed in order to develop good practice, and it is reassuring to find various types of research being carried out on the livelihoods of Somalis around the world. The International Somali Studies Association brings together much of this work, and recently an e-mail network has been set up for those with research interests related to Somalia and Somalis. The aim of this network is to create a forum for exchange of knowledge and it is also used for broadcasting alerts, invitations for discussions, workshops, conferences etc. Subscription is possible by sending an e-mail to Peter Hansen at peter.hansen@anthro.ku.dk. For an overview of the 9th international conference of the International Somali Studies Association, click below. Various interesting papers are available under 'Programme'.

[Click here to go to Somali Studies Conference info](#)

Key publications and reports:

Livelihoods and protection: Displacement and vulnerable communities in Kismaayo, Southern Somalia - Simon Narbeth and Calum McLean, December 2003
This Humanitarian Policy Network paper is based on the findings of field research on livelihoods, protection and IDPs conducted in Kismaayo and the Lower Juba Valley in May 2003, under the auspices of OCHA-Somalia. The research aimed to obtain a clear understanding of the situation of IDPs and other vulnerable communities in Kismaayo, and of the operating environment; and to develop an operational plan to better protect and assist the internally displaced and other vulnerable groups. This paper begins with a brief description of the livelihoods and protection framework that informed the research, and the methodology the research employed. It then provides a brief overview of the findings and describes the concept of a phased operational plan.

The paper can be accessed here:

<http://www.odihpn.org/documents/networkpaper044.pdf>.

Conducive Conditions: Livelihood Interventions in Southern Somalia - Abigail Montani and Nisar Majid, December 2002

This ODI Working Paper considers interventions by two organisations, in light of the working paper theme of linking livelihood approaches with recent work in the area of political economy. Save the Children-UK (SC-UK) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) work in southern Somalia and aim to support livelihoods within a situation of chronic conflict and political instability (SCCPI). The paper describes the context in which the two organisations work in terms of the livelihood systems within southern Somalia, political economy themes as they relate to southern Somalia and programming possibilities in the area. The authors critically review two livelihood support programmes as case studies. These case studies aim to draw out the ways in which and to what extent the programmes of SC-UK and ICRC support livelihoods. How, and to what extent, the analysis of the political economy informs decision making by the two organisations is also explored.

[Click here to access this ODI Working Paper](#)

Anarchy and intervention. How does Somalia's private sector cope without government?

Tatiana Nenova & Tim Hardford, November 2004

Somalia has lacked a recognized government since 1991 – an unusually long time. In extremely difficult conditions the private sector has demonstrated its much-vaunted capability to manage and prosper. To cope with the absence of the rule of law, private enterprises have been using foreign jurisdictions or institutions to help with some tasks, while operating within networks of trust to strengthen property rights. Ultimately, by simplifying transactions, they are able to function independently of these international and local institutions. Somalia's private sector experience suggests that it may be easier than is commonly thought for basic systems of finance and some infrastructure services to function where government is extremely weak or absent.

<http://rru.worldbank.org/Documents/280-nenova-harford.pdf>

Migrant remittances as a development tool. The case of Somaliland - Peter Hansen

This paper examines the relationship between migration and development in the context of Somaliland, where an estimated 25 to 40 percent of the population receive regular remittances from abroad. As in many other parts of the developing world, remittances constitute an important contribution to the livelihood of Somali families throughout the Horn of Africa. Although substantial parts are spent on family consumption, constructing houses and the establishment of smaller businesses, it does appear that they are also being increasingly used to fund new organizations and development projects. Somali organizations established abroad invest in health and educational facilities such as hospitals, schools and university. With virtually no existing public services, both individual family remittances and collective donations by diaspora organizations are crucial for the survival and future of Somalis in Somaliland. The importance of remittances to the local economy and the impact of diaspora activities on local development are the main focus of this paper.

[Click here to view this IOM Working Paper](#)

Refugees in the region

Interesting research on Somali refugees in the region has been

carried out in for example Kenya and Egypt. Tiina Salmio (tiisal@utu.fi) analyses the environmental impact of the prolonged stay of Somali refugees in Kenya, and can be contacted in order to obtain articles such as 'The Governance of Environmental Problems in Refugee Operations' (2004). Elizabeth Campbell (harper_campbell@HOTMAIL.COM) completed her PhD entitled "Contemporary Protection Challenges in the Era of Globalization: the case of Nairobi". This study focuses on the urban refugee livelihoods of Somalis in Nairobi, Kenya. Empirical data on refugee trade networks and commercial enterprises reveals that most urban refugees are successful, self-sufficient entrepreneurs. In the best examples, urban refugees have even created work for local Kenyans. Despite urban refugees' entrepreneurial successes and their high levels of self-sufficiency, conditions for most refugees in Nairobi are extremely difficult. Urban refugees live largely without material assistance or legal protection from the Government or the UNHCR. Through revealing these difficulties and the positive social and economic impacts of refugees in Nairobi, this study challenges arguments against legalizing the status of urban refugees and lends support to the idea of local integration as a viable, durable solution to their situation of protracted exile.

Livelihood and diasporic identity constructions of Somali refugees in Cairo - Mulki Al-Sharmani, 2004

This UNHCR working paper examines two interlinked processes in the lives of Somali refugees in Cairo. Firstly, securing a livelihood by using a set of shared strategies and the ways in which these daily strategies involve the refugees' reconstruction of traditional collective identity constructs such as clan affiliation and Somali nationalism. And secondly, the creation of new and significant identity constructs based on shared diasporic experiences. These processes are interconnected because the question of sharing identity is part and parcel of individual and collective efforts of securing a livelihood and maximizing resources.

[Click here to access this UNHCR Working Paper](#)

Somalia Country Study. The Role of Remittances

Anna Lindley, January 2005

This study analyses the role of remittances for Somalis in various places. Since the civil war began, there have been large movements of people from Somalia to neighbouring countries and unprecedented levels of migration to Europe and North America. Remittances have assumed great importance in this context. Drawing a clear line between formal and informal remittance systems is often difficult, and the study distinguishes four types: hand delivery, trade-based systems, hawala-type networks and Somali remittance companies. These categories are not totally mutually exclusive: their interaction over time and space is also highlighted. Some of these systems are heavily institutionalised within the Somali economy and society. Moreover, many dedicated remittance companies are undergoing a process of formalization, as they increasingly interface in different ways with a variety of authorities in Somalia and with foreign governments. The study also explores the role of remittance inflows, and the systems that convey them, on macro-economy and governance and on livelihoods in Somalia.

[This COMPAS paper can be accessed here](#)

Roots, Rights and Responsibilities: Place-making and Repatriation among Somalis in Denmark and Somaliland

Mette Fink-Nielsen, Peter Hansen & Nauja Kleist, 2004.

How do Somalis residing in Denmark and repatriated Somalis in Somaliland understand the questions of repatriation, home and belonging? Which livelihood strategies and strategies of mobility do they deploy? How are the places of exile and homeland experienced? And why do some Somalis in exile return to Somaliland, while others remain abroad? In this article the authors analyse how Somalis in Denmark and Somaliland understand and practice their own possible or actual voluntary repatriation. They do not pretend to offer the final answers to the questions above, but present some analytical reflections focusing on the interplay between abstract ideas of place, processes of place-making and very concrete livelihood strategies, often transnational in nature. The article's main argument is that both questions of identity, emotions, and loyalties as well as questions of economy, responsibilities towards others and rights related to territorial entities, and citizenship are important for understanding the visions and practices involved in voluntary repatriation. This paper can be obtained by contacting Nauja Kleist (nkl@diis.dk).

Money and mobility: transnational livelihood strategies of the Somali diaspora – Cindy Horst, November 2004

This paper illustrates the importance of refugee remittances through a description of Somali remittance receivers in Kenyan refugee camps, and remittance senders in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The case of the Somali diaspora is unique in many ways. First of all, Somalis are traditionally nomadic and have a long history of migration combined with assistance networks over large distances. Secondly, due to the civil war these patterns have greatly intensified. Thirdly, the remittance transfer system used by Somalis, the xawilaad, is a Somali-controlled and largely informal system and thus very difficult to trace in formal figures. A fourth very interesting feature of the Somali case is that there has not been a government in Somalia for over a decade. Whereas the political implications of this fact are tremendous, the Somali informal economy has nevertheless been flourishing. Overseas remittances and the many investments made in for example infrastructure and communication by xawilaad companies have greatly contributed to this development. The main aim of this paper is to provide an introduction to remittance sending patterns within the Somali community from the perspective of both receivers as well as senders. Ethnographic material is presented in order to contribute to the discussion on how the impacts of remittances on broader aspects of development can be enhanced.

[Click here to read this GCIM paper](#)

Learning and Good Practice:

Somali families in Hillview. Assessing needs, setting priorities, building consensus.

The arrival of 1100 Somali refugees in Lewiston, Maine, a community of 37,000 residents, caused major upheaval in the town as well as within the Somali community. The media covered the issue, with upwards of 400 newspapers and magazine carrying stories and several TV documentaries and video productions being produced. In order to ease the arrival of the Somali community and avoid political and social tension, an Action Plan was created based on a participatory community-based needs assessment. Its aim was to pass ownership and

initiative to the Somali community for planning their own programs, focusing on strengthening capacities of Somali groups to look after their own needs. The approach was based on the three principles that firstly, local institutions possess considerable knowledge about their needs and accomplishments but this knowledge needs to be organized; secondly, local institutions have many resources – eg land, labour, skills, but these resources need to be mobilized; and thirdly, when a community organizes what it already knows and mobilizes what it already has, it can create consensus for a Community Action Plan and attract outside partners to join them in implementing the plan.

[Click here to access the report on this participatory process](#)

Somali-Scandinavian Association (SomScan)

In 1999 a number of Somali families residing in Sweden founded an association aiming at preparing repatriation and reintegration. The Somscan project is a transnational umbrella organisation, which stated aim is to rebuild and return to Somaliland through the collective acquisition of land and the establishment of a new 'Somali-Scandinavian' community. The network spread rapidly to Somalis in the UK, Denmark and Norway and Somscan now counts seven Somali associations from the four countries and includes a total number of 330 Somali families. The organisation's head office is placed in Copenhagen. In 2000 representatives of Somscan travelled to Somaliland in order to examine the possibilities of return. Following the trip the 330 families decided to buy a piece of land just outside Burao – the second largest town in Somaliland. The site is desolate with neither water nor electricity so the returnees have to start reconstruction from scratch. Somscan has established contact with the local authorities in the area and is working on water supply, after which electricity and building of houses and other facilities will follow. Somscan and the Danish Refugee Council have applied to the European Commission for funding for water drilling and rebuilding and increase of primary and secondary school capacity in the area.

[To learn more about SomScan and other projects for and by Somali refugees in Denmark, click here](#)