

Do sub-Saharan African Immigrants Transfer Social Capital Acquired in the Host Country to their Forebears?

Presenter: Jane Mwangi

Introduction



- Social capital transfers of SSA migrants residing within the SSA region are given less attention compared to financial and human capital transfers from outside the continent.
- Study highlights how Somali migrants in Kenya transfer the social capital they have accumulated and maintained in Kenya to sustain the Somali society in their homeland.
- With dysfunctional institutional structures in Somalia due to a protracted and unresolved conflict situation, social capital is crucial.

Social Capital Facilitating Somali Migration



- Migration of Somalis from Somalia/refugee camps is largely facilitated by transnational and kinship networks of Somalis in the diaspora - give financial and social support.
- The Somali diaspora maintains a web of interlinking networks between home, host and other diasporic locations.
- These networks are usually based on strong kinship and friendship ties, which are rooted in the Somali culture and religion.
- Cultural obligation that requires people with financial and material ability to help the needy.

Social Capital & Migration of Somalis to Kenya

- Kenya is a favourite destination for Somali migrants and hosts the largest Somali migrant population (both refugees and non-refugees).
- Apart from geographic proximity and traditional migration paths, the migration of Somalis to Kenya is also greatly influenced by social linkages, kinship ties, and community and religious networks.
- Strong bonds of brotherhood with Kenyan Somalis, with whom they share a sense of belonging and cultural and religious similarities, has been key in influencing the migration of Somalis to Kenya

Role of Social Networks in Settlement of Somali Migrants in Kenya

- Somalis in Kenya tend to settle with other Somalis for easier access to social and kinship networks that are essential for their survival.
- Somali networks and linkages in the diaspora offer emotional and material support important in settling in the new location.
- Networks give access to essentials like accommodation, livelihood opportunities and friendship and relationship arrangements.
- Eastleigh (a suburb of Nairobi) popularly called *Mogadishu Ndogo* (Little Mogadishu) accommodates the largest numbers of Somali migrants.
- Many Somalis are attracted to settle in Eastleigh by the aspirations of better education, finding a livelihood, or being able to support relatives in refugee camps or Somalia.

Vulnerability & Social Capital Accumulation

- Many Somalis in Kenya are undocumented migrants who come into the country or escape from refugee camps using unregulated migratory systems of middlemen and brokers.
- Such migrants are vulnerable, have minimal social, economic and political engagement and face myriad challenges related to integration and security.
- As a way of dealing with their vulnerability, the migrants are forced to mobilize and maintain social capital from transnational networks, of social, digital and economic interconnections, from both within and outside Kenya as a survival strategy.
- Somali migrants expand social networks to form wider and closer networks with other Somalis in Kenya, Somalia and the wider Somali diaspora globally.

Eastleigh as a Networking Centre

- Eastleigh is an important centre for Somali culture and social networking.
- It acts as a transnational economic centre and is the hub for Somalis' income generating activities in Kenya and.
- Eastleigh links the Somali community in Kenya to the worldwide Somali diaspora and other global networks of trade.
- The suburb offers an opportunity for the Somali community to have trade inter-linkages and connections with the world's most significant trade hubs like Dubai, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Guangzhou.

Transfer of Social Capital Back to Somalia I

- Transfer of social capital accumulated and maintained in by Somali migrants both in Kenya and other parts of the world plays a pivotal role in sustaining the Somali society.
- Social capital and networks acquired abroad play an important role in enhancing the participation of the Somali diaspora in socio-economic and political activities in their home country.
- Rapid technological evolution, which is crucial for transnational networks, has helped the Somali diaspora to cultivate and maintain critical lifelines.
- The absence of state interference has contributed to the rapid technological evolution all over Somalia

Transfer of Social Capital Back to Somalia II

Somali migrants mobilize social capital in their host country and then transfer it to their country of origin, boosting financial and human capital transfers in the process.

Financial and human capital transfers include:

- Remittances
- Investing in business
- Service provision and community development
- Lobbying and advocacy
- Political participation
- Skills and knowledge transfer through return migration

Social Capital and Remittance Transfers

- Remittances sent by the Somali diaspora are the lifeblood of the Somali economy & constitute the greatest share of diaspora's contribution to the sustenance of Somali society and reconstruction of Somalia.
- In conflict ridden Somalia, sending of remittances would have been very difficult without the well-known **informal financial system called *Hawalaad***.
- *Hawalaad* is comprised of a network of individuals and organizations both in the diaspora and Somalia that use informal methods to transfer money from the diaspora to Somalia.
- Societal networks and cultural norms are the building blocks of this money transfer system - *Hawalaad* system is based on trust and solidarity cultivated through cultural and ethnic networks of people who are not necessarily affiliated to each other through business.

Social Capital and Investing in Business

- In the absence of a stable government, the Somali diaspora rely on social networking as an important factor for building trust in business endeavours.
- Access to social, professional and transnational networks makes it possible for the Somali diaspora to run commercial enterprises in their home country with ease.
- Kenya is an important business centre for Somalia's business elite with important networks that are useful for establishing businesses in Somalia.
- Eastleigh Business Community (EBC), an association of local entrepreneurs in Eastleigh, is an important business network for Somali business people who may want to start a business in Somalia.

Social Capital and Service Provision and Community Development

- The Somali diaspora has many small fundraising networks globally that support service delivery and sustained development in Somalia.
- In the absence of public sector services, social and transnational networks of Somali diaspora come in handy to offer much needed basic services like healthcare, education, water and infrastructure.
- Diaspora associations also use their transnational networks home and abroad to link up with communities in Somalia and to fund community specific projects.

Social Capital and Lobbying and Advocacy

- The Somali diaspora in Kenya has been actively involved in many lobbying activities E.g. prevailed upon the transitional Federal Government in Somalia to retain the Somalia ambassador to Kenya Mohamed Ali Nur.
- Involved in various peace conferences held in Kenya to discuss peace.
- Diaspora networks are also involved in advocacy both in Kenya and in Somalia. E.g. Asha Hagi Elmi, a co-founder of Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC), advocates for a safe and sustainable Somalia that will ensure that women overcome marginalization, violence and poverty in their communities.
- There are numerous Somali civil society groups based in Kenya e.g. the Youth United for Social Mobilization (YUSOM), a non-governmental and non-profit organization, which works with Somali youth in Eastleigh, North Eastern Kenya and South- Central regions in Somalia.

Social Capital and Political Participation

- The Somali diaspora in Kenya have substantial influence on Somalia's political direction.
 - ✓ In April 2000, the Somali community in Kenya stood in solidarity with the Puntland Government when it withdrew support for the Djibouti Conference, complaining of exclusion, suppression and marginalisation of mainstream Somali communities as well as mismanagement of the peace process.
- Kenya is home to Somali political elite who have great influence in the governance of Somalia.
- In the past, Somali politicians have used Nairobi for their political activities
- There are also some Somali political parties with branches in Nairobi e.g. Tayo Somalia Political Party.

Social Capital and Skills and Knowledge Transfer through Return Migration

- Somali diaspora are motivated to return to Somalia to transfer the skills and knowledge acquired abroad.
- The return Somali diaspora is usually facilitated by social, family and professional networks in both the hostland and homeland, which enable circular migration between Somalia and the host country before and after return.
- Networks in host country are an important fall back plan for the returnee, offering the comfort that their evacuation can be facilitated in case the security situation in Somalia deteriorates.
- These networks are important in ensuring availability of job/business opportunities or political positions in Somalia - important motivations for return.

Conclusion

- Migrants' social capital transfers to their country of origin are as important as financial and human capital transfers,
- In politically unstable situations, migrants have to mobilize social capital to be able to send money or transfer human capital to their home country.
- Kinship and community ties and networks are the lifeline for the Somali people in the face of a prolonged and continuing conflict situation in Somalia that has led to mass migration and destruction of institutions and infrastructure.

Thank You