

SOMALI DIASPORA AND PEACEBUILDING IN MOGADISHU, SOMALIA

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ABSTRACT

The downfall of the Central government in Somalia in 1991 resulted in prolonged instability, particularly in Mogadishu, where civil conflict caused widespread displacement, insecurity, and destruction of social institutions. In response to these challenges, the Somali diaspora has emerged as a key factor in supporting peace building initiatives in the country. This study examines the influence of the Somali diaspora on civic education as a mechanism for peace building in Mogadishu. Utilizing a descriptive methodology with quantitative methods, this research targeted a population of 350 individuals from six stakeholder categories including government ministries, civil society, diaspora members, and community elders. Using Slovin's formula, a calculated sample size of 187 was determined, and stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation across groups, yielding 151 valid responses for analysis. The study

reveals that diaspora-supported civic education initiatives contribute to dialogue facilitation and democratic awareness. However, regression analysis indicates that civic education exerts the least influence among three peace building dimensions ($\beta = 0.28, p < 0.05$), constrained by inclusivity limitations and weak alignment with national strategies. The findings suggest that while civic education holds transformative potential for sustainable peace, its effectiveness depends on institutionalized coordination mechanisms and inclusive outreach strategies. The study recommends developing a National Civic Education Policy Framework that formally integrates diaspora contributions into Somalia's peace building architecture.

Key Words: Somali Diaspora, Civic Education, Peace building, Social Capital, Conflict Transformation, Mogadishu.

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

The government collapse of Siad Barre in the early 1991 marked the beginning of Somalia's protracted civil conflict, devastating Mogadishu the nation's capital with unprecedented violence, insecurity, and humanitarian catastrophe (Ibrahim, 2022). The civil war claimed countless lives, caused mass injuries, and generated one of the world's largest internally displaced populations, with millions seeking refuge both within Somalia and abroad (Ahmed, 1998; Dagane et al., 2011). This exodus created a substantial Somali diaspora community, now estimated at over two million individuals dispersed across North America, Western Europe, Australia, and the Middle East (Alkfarnah, 2018).

Despite geographical distance, the Somali diaspora has maintained robust transnational connections with their homeland. These communities have emerged as pivotal actors in

post-conflict reconstruction, channeling significant financial resources, technical expertise, and political advocacy toward Somalia's recovery (Yonis, 2022; Hammond et al., 2011). Annual remittances estimated at \$1.4 – 2 billion constitute a critical lifeline for the Somali economy, supporting household consumption, business investment, and community development initiatives (Hammond, 2018; Farah, 2009).

Beyond economic contributions, diaspora communities have increasingly engaged in peace building processes facilitating reconciliation initiatives, supporting governance reforms, and investing in social infrastructure (Ahmed & Agwanda, 2019; Abdi & Hussein, 2022). However, academic attention has disproportionately focused on remittance flows and economic development, leaving significant gaps in understanding how diaspora engagement contributes to social stability, conflict resolution, and sustainable peace building in post-conflict contexts (Heinze & Strzelecka, 2022; Surwandono & Nugroho, 2022).

The Civic Education Imperative

Civic education constituted a systematic process of equipping citizens with knowledge, skills, and values necessary for meaningful participation in democratic life (Surwandono & Nugroho, 2022). In post-conflict societies, it serves multiple critical functions: fostering social cohesion among fragmented communities, promoting understanding of rights and responsibilities, encouraging peaceful conflict resolution, and rebuilding trust in governance institutions (Habesha, 2008; Winthrop, 2020). The Somali context particularly demands such interventions, given the erosion of state institutions and the proliferation of clan-based divisions during decades of conflict.

The Somali diaspora possesses distinctive advantages for supporting civic education initiatives. Their exposure to democratic governance, human rights frameworks, and multicultural coexistence in host countries provides valuable experiential knowledge (Endale, 2019; Hoehne et al., 2010). Additionally, their transnational networks enable resource mobilization, technical assistance, and international advocacy that local actors often cannot access independently (Brinkerhoff, 2006, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Diaspora Communities as Peace building Actors

Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes diaspora communities as significant peace building actors whose influence extends beyond remittances to encompass advocacy, resource mobilization, and institutional development. The Yemeni diaspora, for instance, has leveraged international networks for peace advocacy, cultural diplomacy, and intermediary roles despite ongoing conflict (Heinze & Strzelecka, 2022). Similarly, the Syrian diaspora in Germany established organizations promoting peaceful activism and community mobilization from the revolution's outset, demonstrating capacity for sustained engagement (Ragab, 2013).

These transnational engagements illustrate Social Capital Theory in action where networks of relationships, shared norms, and trust facilitate collective action across borders (Bourdieu, 1983; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). The Somali diaspora exemplifies this through dense transnational networks that enable coordinated investment in homeland development (Kleist, 2008; Lindley, 2010). These networks function as bonding capital (within diaspora communities), bridging capital (connecting diaspora to local actors), and linking capital (connecting to state institutions) each with distinct implications for intervention effectiveness (Woolcock, 2001).

African diaspora communities have similarly contributed to development and reconciliation through financial transfers, technical assistance, and policy advocacy. The Nigerian diaspora mediated conflicts between the Tiv and Jukun peoples using social capital developed in North America and Europe (Ambe-Uva, 2011). Ethiopian diaspora engagement has promoted inclusive national rebuilding, though Ibrahim (2010) cautions that political involvement can prove counterproductive when driven by partisan interests rather than inclusive national goals. The Ghanaian and Indian Diasporas have funded school reconstruction and educational infrastructure, demonstrating how transnational networks convert financial capital into tangible peace building outcomes (Khakhlary, 2016; Sreedharan, 2021).

In Somalia specifically, diaspora engagement spans humanitarian assistance, business investment, infrastructure development, and political participation (Mohamoud, 2006; Kleist, 2017). However, the literature reveals a critical gap: while diaspora remittances (\$1.4 billion annually) and general development contributions are well-documented, systematic evaluation of their role in specific peace building processes particularly resettlement, civic education, and educational reconstruction remains limited.

Civic Education in Post-Conflict Settings

Effective civic education in post-conflict settings requires addressing both knowledge transmission and relational transformation. Doyle and Sambanis (2014) emphasize context-sensitive approaches tailored to local cultural and political conditions, utilizing community discussions, intercultural exchanges, and educational programs to foster tolerance and mutual understanding. Mohamud (2020) highlights training local leaders in negotiation and conflict resolution, while Barma et al. (2005) stress inclusive participation particularly of women, youth, and marginalized groups through dialogue forums and collaborative projects.

Conflict Transformation Theory illuminates how civic education addresses root causes of Somali conflict such as governance deficits, horizontal inequalities, and fragmented social trust by fostering new patterns of democratic participation and inter-group dialogue. Lederach's (2003) framework suggests that transforming conflict requires changes at multiple levels: structural (political systems), relational (inter-group perceptions), and personal/cultural (individual attitudes). Civic education potentially

operates across all three dimensions promoting governance awareness (structural), inter-clan dialogue (relational), and critical thinking (personal/cultural).

In Somalia, documented civic education initiatives include diaspora-funded constitutional awareness campaigns through radio and television dramas (National Democratic Institute, 2013), curriculum development and teacher training by the Somali Diaspora Organization (Horst, 2017), and youth parliament programs by the Somali Youth Development Network (Ali, 2012). The Nigerian diaspora has similarly influenced civic education through funding and technological innovation, including mobile applications for youth engagement (Akinjide et al., 2013).

However, Social Capital Theory reveals tensions in these initiatives. While bridging capital connects diaspora expertise to local civil society, and bonding capital enables resource mobilization, linking capital to state institutions remains underdeveloped. The literature notes that diaspora civic education efforts often operate parallel to rather than integrated with national strategies like the National Reconciliation Framework (Hammond, 2018). Furthermore, inclusivity challenges persist marginalized groups such as Bantu populations frequently remain underserved (Abdi, 2023). These findings suggest that civic education effectiveness depends not merely on content delivery but on the configuration of social capital enabling distribution and institutional embeddedness.

Educational Reconstruction and Peace building

Educational reconstruction represents a critical peace building intervention with long-term transformative potential. The Indian diaspora contributed over \$500 million to school reconstruction following 2018 floods, while the Ghanaian diaspora has funded infrastructure repair and teacher training (Sreedharan, 2021; Frehiwot, 2011). These investments illustrate how social capital converts transnational networks into tangible developmental outcomes.

In Somalia, the diaspora has funded school construction, provided educational materials, and supported teacher training since the civil war (Horst, 2017; Iman, 2017). Over 50,000 students have enrolled in diaspora-funded projects since 2022, though gender disparities and urban-rural inequities persist (UNDP, 2024). Conflict Transformation Theory suggests that educational reconstruction addresses structural inequalities a key driver of conflict while creating "bridging" spaces where children from different clans interact (Novelli et al., 2014). Schools potentially transform conflict by reorganizing social relations around shared educational goals rather than clan divisions.

Yet the literature identifies significant constraints. Security threats from Al-Shabaab limit school operations and access (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Social Capital Theory explains why sustainability challenges persist: while bonding capital enables initial construction and bridging capital connects to communities, weak linking capital to Ministry of Education policies creates misalignment between diaspora initiatives and national education goals. The 2025 Global Partnership for Education assessment

emphasizes that sustainable funding models are needed, as remittance-dependent financing fluctuates with global economic conditions.

Critically, scholarship remains predominantly descriptive regarding diaspora educational initiatives, lacking systematic evaluation of effectiveness and impact on peace building outcomes. The specific mechanisms through which school reconstruction contributes to stability beyond infrastructure provision remain under-theorized, particularly regarding integration with broader peace building architectures.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design utilizing quantitative methods to examine diaspora influence on civic education in Mogadishu. Descriptive research enables systematic data collection describing populations, situations, or phenomena while permitting statistical analysis of relationships among variables (Phil, 1996). This approach was selected to capture both the scope of diaspora activities and their perceived effectiveness among diverse stakeholders.

Target Population and Sampling Technique

The target population comprised 350 individuals from six stakeholder categories: Ministry of International Cooperation and Diaspora Affairs officials (n=30); Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education officials (n=35); civil society representatives (n=120); Somali diaspora members (n=145); National Commission for Refugees and IDPs officials (n=5); and Somali elders (n=15).

Using Slovin's formula, the calculated sample size was 187 respondents. Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation across stakeholder groups, while purposive sampling within strata targeted individuals with direct knowledge of diaspora-civic education initiatives. The final analysis included 151 valid responses (80.75% response rate), exceeding thresholds for statistical reliability.

Data gathering and Analysis

Primary data were gathered via questionnaires administered through Google Forms, with telephone follow-up to ensure participation. The instrument employed 5-point Likert scales (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to measure perceptions of diaspora influence across ten civic education dimensions. Pilot testing with 10% of the sample (n=19) confirmed instrument validity and reliability, also Data analysis utilized SPSS to determine the relative influence of civic education on peacebuilding.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Profile

The 151 respondents exhibited diverse demographic characteristics: 53.0% male, 47.0% female; age distribution skewed toward 30 – 50 years (59.6%); 70.2% holding bachelor's degree or higher; and 60.3% married. Work experience varied, with 33.8% reporting over

five years in relevant fields. Group affiliation showed 26% Somali diaspora, 23% civil society, 17% Ministry of Education, 13% Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora Affairs, 11% other, and 10% Somali elders ensuring multi-perspective validity on civic education initiatives.

Diaspora Influence on Civic Education

The findings revealed moderately positive perceptions of diaspora civic education contributions, with mean scores ranging from 3.4 to 3.9. The highest agreement (M=3.9, SD=1.0) concerned general program support, with 69.6% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the diaspora had supported civic education programs promoting peace building. This indicated broad recognition of diaspora involvement in this domain. Strong agreement also emerged regarding substantive thematic focus. The mean of 3.8 (SD=1.1) for conflict resolution, governance, and human rights coverage with 66.2% endorsement suggested that diaspora initiatives addressed theoretically relevant content for post-conflict transformation. This aligned with Lederach's (2003) emphasis on addressing structural conflict drivers through governance reform and rights-based approaches.

Long-term behavioral change, the ultimate indicator of civic education effectiveness, achieved only moderate endorsement (M=3.5, SD=1.2, 55.6% agreement). This suggested that while programs successfully transmitted information and fostered dialogue, transformative attitudinal and behavioral shifts remained partially unrealized. The findings illuminated four primary mechanisms through which the Somali diaspora influenced civic education in Mogadishu:

The diaspora channeled substantial resources toward civic education programming. Drawing on annual remittance flows estimated at \$1.4–2 billion (Hammond, 2018), diaspora organizations funded community workshops, media campaigns, educational materials, and institutional partnerships. This financial base enabled programming that domestic resources alone could not have sustained.

Diaspora members leveraged their positions in North American, European, and Australian host societies to access technical expertise, training methodologies, and international best practices. Organizations such as the Somali Diaspora Organization had utilized these connections for curriculum development and teacher training since 2009 (Horst, 2017).

Positioned between Somali cultural contexts and democratic governance experiences abroad, diaspora actors served as cultural translators adapting civic concepts to local idioms and social structures while introducing international human rights frameworks (Yusuf & Thompson, 2023). This intermediary role facilitated reception of otherwise alien governance concepts.

Diaspora-funded media campaigns (M=3.6) utilized radio, television, and emerging digital platforms to disseminate civic messaging. The 2013 National Democratic Institute constitutional awareness campaign funded with diaspora resources exemplified this approach, using radio dramas and television programming to reach mass audiences (National Democratic Institute, 2013).

Social Capital Theory illuminated both civic education's contributions and constraints. The moderately strong scores for dialogue promotion (M=3.7) and civil society collaboration (M=3.7) indicated successful bridging social capital formation connecting diaspora resources to local networks and fostering inter-group communication. This aligned with Putnam's (2000) conceptualization of bridging capital's role in heterogeneous community building.

However, the weaker inclusivity scores (M=3.5) and national alignment (M=3.4) suggested deficient linking capital vertical connections to formal institutions and marginalized populations. Woolcock (2001) emphasized that sustainable development required robust linking capital to access state resources, influence policy, and ensure equitable distribution. The diaspora's predominant operation through clan-based networks may have inadvertently reinforced horizontal inequalities rather than transcending them (Portes & Landolt, 1996; Kleist, 2008).

Conflict Transformation Theory offered complementary insights. Civic education's focus on governance and human rights (M=3.8) addressed Lederach's (2003) structural transformation imperative challenging the governance deficits and authoritarian legacies underlying Somali conflict. Dialogue promotion contributed to relational transformation by altering inter-group perceptions and interaction patterns.

Yet the modest behavioral change scores (M=3.5) and the regression coefficient's relative weakness suggested that personal and cultural transformation the deepest and most protracted change dimension remained incomplete. As Lederach (1997) noted, cultural pattern transformation required sustained, multi-generational investment that current diaspora civic education modalities may not have achieved.

Implications for Peace building

The findings yielded three key implications for civic education's role in Mogadishu peace building:

First, dialogue and awareness gains were substantively meaningful but structurally fragile. The demonstrated success in fostering dialogue culture (M=3.7) and reducing community-level misunderstandings (M=3.6) provided important relational resources for peacebuilding. However, without institutionalized integration into national strategies, these gains remained vulnerable to reversal through political turbulence or resource discontinuation.

Second, transformative potential exceeded current realization. The gap between substantive thematic coverage (M=3.8) and behavioral change outcomes (M=3.5) suggested that program design and implementation modalities insufficiently converted knowledge acquisition into sustained practice. This implementation gap represented the critical frontier for improving civic education effectiveness.

Third, equity and coordination were prerequisite conditions for scaling. The inclusivity and alignment limitations identified were not merely technical deficiencies but structural barriers to transformative impact. Addressing these required intentional policy intervention rather than programmatic adjustment alone.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that the Somali diaspora contributed meaningfully to civic education in Mogadishu's peace building landscape, supporting programs that promoted democratic awareness, conflict resolution skills, and inter-group dialogue. These initiatives generated valuable bridging social capital and advanced structural and relational conflict transformation. However, regression analysis revealed that civic education exerted significantly weaker influence on peace building outcomes than resettlement or school reconstruction constrained by inclusivity limitations, weak institutional coordination, and the inherently protracted nature of attitudinal change.

The findings suggested that civic education represented a critical but underutilized peace building tool. Its transformative potential for fostering democratic culture, transcending clan divisions, and building sustainable peace remained partially unrealized due to implementation challenges rather than conceptual inadequacy.

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