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## Brain Drain from Somalia: Potentials of the Educated Somalis Abroad

### A case study: Somali Activation Project in Frederiksberg, Denmark

International migration of well-educated people will always be a cost and a loss to the developing countries. This problem is called the brain drain problem. Migration of unskilled workers benefits poor countries because the migrated unskilled workers not only remit money home, but also sometimes return home as skilled labour, while brain drain is a great loss. Universities are very expensive to run and highly subsidised by governments. Many times, well-educated people represent a scarce resource in poor countries, which it is very difficult, costly and time-consuming to replace.

Never before has a well-educated labour force been of such importance in the development process as it is today. In this way, the brain drain is a critical factor in the attempts by the African governments or those of other developing countries to initiate or maintain a proper and substantial economic development process.

The brain drain debate deserves attention because of its important impact on the developing countries' social, health and educational systems as well as on the general development and growth process. Generally, the brain drain has not merely reduced the supply of professionals in developing countries, but even more seriously, brain drain has diverted the attention of scientists and other academics who are turned away from researching important local problems and goals such as: appropriate technology; low-cost preventive health care; construction of low-cost housing (hospitals, schools, and other service facilities) by using local raw materials, etc. This particular problem can be both external in terms of physical migration and internal in terms of intellectual migration. Thus, local problems and internal economic development are pushed aside in favour of personal intellectual achievements. Also political instability and unstable poor economies are referred to as causes of brain drain in the context of African countries, particularly in Somalia, as well as other developing countries.

The extent of the brain drain problems can be illuminated by the following statistics. Between 1960 and 1990 the migration of high level professional and technical manpower from developing countries to USA, Canada and United Kingdom amounted to over one million skilled workers. By the late 1980's, Africa had lost nearly one-third of its skilled workers. Sudan, for example lost 17% of its doctors, 20% of its university teachers and 30% of its engineers, (UNDP: Human Development Report, 1992). In Somalia the situation is even worse.

Over 70% of the educated Somalis are outside the country. The brain drain from Somalia is connected with the political instability and the poor economic conditions of the country. The process of migration of educated people from Somalia started during the dictatorial military regime in the mid seventies and was accentuated by the recent civil war in the early nineties.

More than 150,000 Somalis live in North America (Canada and USA), around 45,000 Somalis are in the UK. There are a good number of Somalis in Italy, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Australia and New Zealand. Nearly 56,000 thousand are in the Fenno-Scandinavian countries (Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark).

Together, the educated Somalis abroad and in the home country, can play an important

role to find peace and reconciliation for the current problems dividing so deeply the Somali people. There is no single person or a group of persons alone who may claim to have a magic solution for the current Somali nightmare.

The total number of the Somalis in Denmark is around 10,000, but the number of the educated among them is less than one percent. The Somali Resource Group in Denmark realised the importance of informing the Somalis about the different opportunities and chances in Denmark and started the following actions:

- to educate and guide the Somalis in Denmark in order to form the future skilled labour of Somalia. Hence, they can contribute actively in Denmark and in Somalia while promoting the Danish technology and know-how;
- to inform the Somali people about the natural resources of their country; commercially viable unexploited oil and gas prospects, undeveloped potential of the polymetallic ore deposits and industrial minerals and rocks and underdeveloped agricultural, livestock and marine resources;
- to prepare solutions to the problems of going back while contributing to the understanding of the two cultures and linking the two societies ( Somali-Danish);
- to raise the political awareness and maturity of the Somali people by educating them, so that they can contribute to finding a peaceful solution to the actual problems of Somalia.

This paper will now discuss a case study of the 'Somali activation project in Frederiksberg'. The project was initiated by the Somali professionals in Denmark and was implemented jointly by Frederiksberg county and Somali professionals in co-operation with the educational institution of AOF branch in Frederiksberg.

The project started with great enthusiasm in February 1996 with the enrolment of over 36 students in the first semester. Students were divided into groups according to their Danish language ability, educational background and their future plans. The scheduled course program starts twice a year and consists of the following basic subjects: Danish language, English, Computer, Mathematics, Physics, Sport, Social Science, Motivation Courses, Danish Law System, Job Seeking, and Future Plans.

The 'future plans' consist of whether the student would like to become skilled workers (mechanic, electrician, laboratory technician, paramedical technician and technicians in the fields of construction, telecommunication, transportation) or go into higher education (colleges and universities). The Danish language is the major subject of the course and besides teaching, a high priority is attached to the guidance and advising of the students for their future plans during the course program and afterwards.

Consequently, the project became an information centre for not only the Somali students attending the course program in the project, but also for a good number of Somalis not involved in the project.

The evaluation of the first year of the project showed the achievement of the following successful results:

- two students in higher education (agricultural school)
- four students in vocational schools (two in public transport and two in business college)
- two trainees in the field of auto mechanics
- two trainees in a pharmacological company
- three trainees in a child car institutions
- one trainee as civil servant in the public sector

## Education and Culture

The project would like to forward the following recommendations for the ongoing and future educational projects for Somalis:

- understand the previous Somali educational system and the mentality of Somalis;
- set up competitive educational programs for the Somalis before they lose their motivation;
- prepare their future in Denmark through continuous education in order to handle the problem of going back;
- establish a network of educated Somalis in Denmark and abroad and create a dialog between them;
- participate the rehabilitation of Somalia by doing basic and finalised research works in finding the appropriate technology for solving local problems such as; water management in urban and rural areas, health care, alternative energy and construction of the infrastructure like hospitals, schools, roads, bridges and other facilities by using the abundant local industrial minerals and rocks and related raw materials.