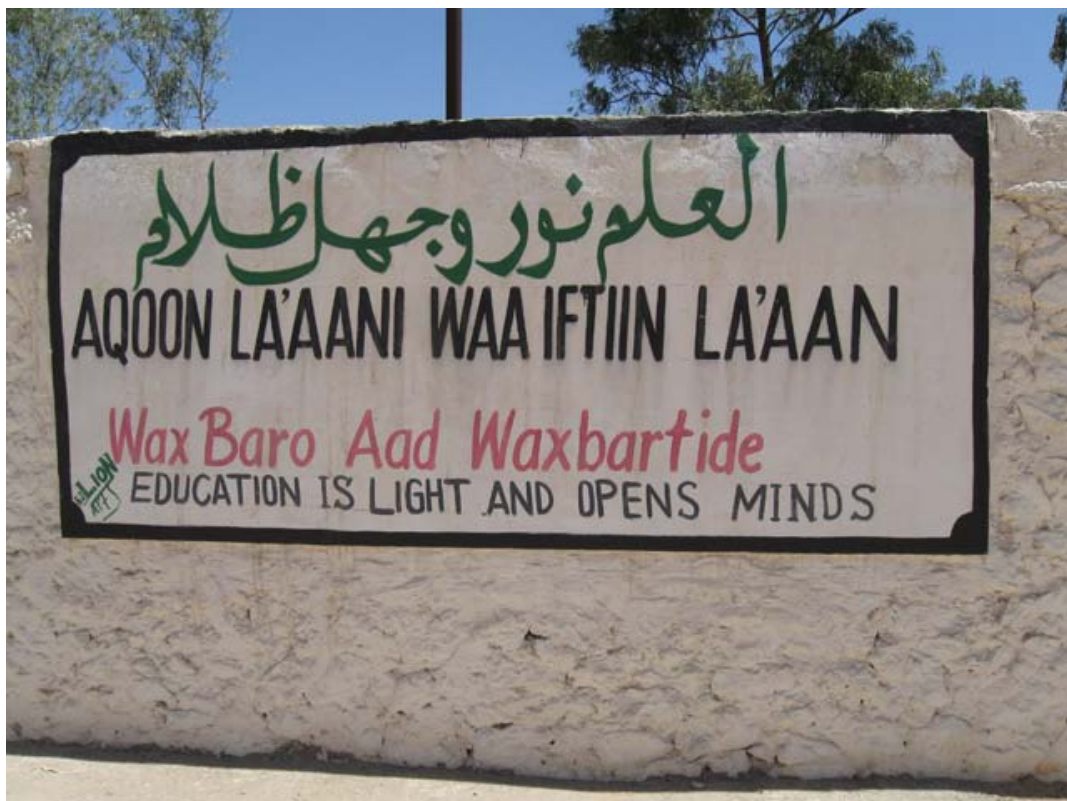




Working Paper No. 5

Diasporic engagement in the educational sector in post-conflict Somaliland: A contribution to peacebuilding?

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Abstract

This working paper provides a background to the rebuilding of the educational sector in Somaliland, which had been completely destroyed during the civil war, developed again from very modest beginnings in the early 1990s, and includes manifold offers up to tertiary education a decade later. Arguably, the educational boom in the country is part of the second phase of peacebuilding, which began around 1997 and still continues. It involves extensive diasporic investments in the form of economic and social remittances. The case-study section in the second half of the paper presents two universities founded by diaspora and local actors. These universities are located in quite different regions of Somaliland. *Jamacadda Geeska* (International Horn University) in Hargeysa, the capital of Somaliland, is embedded in an economically striving and peaceful environment. *Jamacadda Nugaal* (Nugaal University) in Laascaanood is located in a politically contested and economically underdeveloped area.¹ The differently located case studies have been chosen to outline a more nuanced picture of the relation between diasporic engagement in the educational – particularly the tertiary – sector and sustainable peace. The different conditions in the two places help to understand in how far ‘external factors’, such as politics of recognition (on the side of Somaliland) and long-distance-nationalism, influence this relation. The study concludes that, on the one hand, diasporic engagement in education up to the tertiary sector has a peacebuilding effect in so far as it provides opportunities for a peaceful and potentially prosperous future for many youngsters and facilitates the transnational exchange of ideas and visions related to social development and tolerance. On the other hand, however, follow-up prospects for most graduates are currently missing. The structural transformation from a war-torn to a peaceful society in Somaliland, to which the re-building of the educational sector can contribute, is endangered by unemployment, poverty, and a lack of government planning.

¹ Names of Somali places, institutions, and persons in this text generally follow the Somali orthography. The Latin ‘c’ stands for a sound close to the Arabic ‘ع’ (ayn); ‘x’ denotes ‘ح’ (ha), as in, e.g., Laascaanood or in Faarax. Exceptions are made only in the case of Mogadishu, which is so well established in English, and if Somali authors use anglicised versions of their names themselves.

1 Introduction²

This paper argues that the largely diaspora-driven (re-)construction of the educational sector up to the tertiary level in Somaliland can contribute to peacebuilding. Its contribution is mostly indirect, through providing the younger generation, which essentially is a civil-war and post-state-collapse generation, with chances for a peaceful and economically promising future. The case studies presented below and particularly the interviews with university students show, however, that the tertiary sector in Somaliland is currently about to reach a 'dead end'. There are many educational provisions but much too few job opportunities for graduates in the country. Clearly, education alone cannot consolidate peace in a post-conflict society in the long run. It has to be embedded in a wider political and economic context beneficial to its peacebuilding potential, which is currently missing in Somaliland. Thus, diasporic contributions to the educational sector helped to build peace in Somaliland since the second half of the 1990s. Now, in 2010, it is the government's turn to take on the issue and introduce economic and other policies that, first, create jobs, and second, structure education in a way that contributes to fulfilling the needs of the country's economy. Yet, this change from diaspora-driven to government-driven education is not in sight, despite some initial steps of the Ministry of Education to structure and regulate the educational developments in Somaliland. Human and financial resources are lacking in a country that is, first, not internationally recognised; second, engaged in an ongoing conflict with its neighbour (Puntland); and third, corruption-prone so that much of the government revenue is not properly accounted for.³

This paper is divided into four parts. The first part provides the conceptual background by discussing the relationship between education and peacebuilding and

² This study is part of the DIASPEACE-project financed by the EU under the 7th framework agreement. Institutional support and the finances for field research were provided by the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle/Saale, Germany. I wish to thank the Academy for Peace and Development in Hargeysa for having hosted me during my stay between December 2008 and May 2009. My informants, who have spent considerable time telling me about their views of and experiences with education before and after the Somali civil war, made this research possible. I am particularly grateful to the heads, staff, and students of *Jamacadda Geeska* and *Jamacadda Nugaal* for having accepted me at their universities. My thanks go also to Axmed Cabdullahi Du'aale, my research assistant, to Axmed Daakir, who facilitated my stay in Laascaanood, and to Aadan Ibrahim, who helped me with some translations for this paper. A much earlier version of this paper has been discussed by the participants of Prof. Richard Rottenburg's social anthropological research colloquium at the University of Halle/Saale, while a close-to-final version was read by Peter Buckland, Lee Cassanelli and Anna Lindley. I profited from all their comments and criticism. All remaining errors are mine.

³ On 26 June 2010 Axmed Siilaanyo, the candidate of the Kulmiye party, was elected new President of Somaliland. In an interview shortly after his election, Siilaanyo emphasised that fighting corruption was among the highest priorities of his government (IRIN 2 July 2010).

pointing to the main actors involved in the educational sector in Somaliland: the members of the diaspora. The second part outlines the particularities of education in the Somali context before and after the civil war. The third part deals with the political and legal context of the diasporic engagement in the educational sector. Together, these three parts form the background for the fourth and most substantial part, which presents the case studies: two diaspora-driven universities in two different regions of Somaliland. Comparing them leads to further insights about the role of ‘external’ (not education-related) factors concerning the relationship between education and peacebuilding.

2 Education, peacebuilding, and the diaspora

2.1 The relationship between education and peacebuilding

The relationship between education, peace, and conflict is complex.⁴ Education clearly has several ‘faces’: First, it can contribute to conflict escalation through teaching and perpetuating discrimination, racist and other stereotypes, dehumanising the ‘opponent’ in a multi-ethnic conflict setting, and so forth (Bush and Saltarelli 2000: 9-16). Education systems ‘tend to reproduce skills, values, attitudes, and social relations of dominant groups in society’ (World Bank 2005: 9). Distorted curricula and/or frustrated expectations of graduates and teachers may become sources of social tensions and violent conflict (ibid. 9-10; Rose and Greeley 2006: 9).⁵ Additionally, educational institutions, which in modern nation states are usually under government control, are prone to reproduce the official propaganda. Second, particularly in civil or guerrilla wars, schools and universities and their personnel are among the primary victims. They are attacked as representatives of the opponent, e.g., hated governments. Their buildings are looted and destroyed. Teachers and students are robbed, injured, (forcibly) recruited, and/or killed. It can take many years until the damage done to the educational infrastructure and the human resources involved is undone (World Bank 2005: 13-20). Prolonged violent conflict may produce a ‘lost’ generation of youths without any formal education (Abdullahi 2007: 16).

⁴ Education in this paper, if not indicated differently, refers to formal education in schools and universities.

⁵ In his account of the Sierra Leonean civil war in the 1990s, Paul Richards attached great significance to the concept of ‘excluded intellectuals’. He interpreted the frustrations of civil servants and particularly teachers in Sierra Leone as one ‘root cause’ for the war (Richards 1996).

Finally, education can help to overcome or prevent conflict if it provides space for communication across social, ethnic or other lines of division and teaches tolerance and respect for each other. Also the 'demilitarisation' of the mind and the provision of alternative historical reference points can contribute to long-term peacebuilding. This requires inspired and dedicated actors (teachers, students, politicians) who wish to make a change (Bush and Saltarelli 2000: 16-21).⁶

It has to be emphasised, however, that the link between education and peace respectively peacebuilding is rather indirect. Education can have beneficial economic effects by providing a skilled work force that may contribute to the increase of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (McMahon 1999: 108-109). According to World Bank (2005: 8) analysts, 'reducing poverty is a critical strategy for reducing the likelihood of civil war.' There may be various 'feedback effects' of education on economic growth, human rights, and political stability. McMahon (1999: 94) argued that '[e]ducated citizens with access to modern media communications are able to be better informed about what is going on, speak more articulately, and to some extent in co-operation with industrial interests to be more economically influential in strengthening their political rights. Human rights can often be a motivating force, and improvements in human rights can also follow as part of the process.' McMahon's argumentation is flawed in the sense that it privileges citizenship over other forms of political belonging, and industrial over other forms of economy. It also excludes eloquent articulations of personal and/or community interests in so-called traditional societies by people without access to modern media and education. Nonetheless, his point that education *can* have various feedback effects and, among other things, *may* be related to improvements of human rights, particularly in a world connected through modern media, is valid.

In sum, the educational sector can be a driving force behind the escalation of (violent) conflict, a prime victim of violent conflict, and a means to overcome violence and hatred. What role education plays depends on the social, economic and political environment in which education is embedded. Education does not exist in isolation, and the borders between classroom and society are permeable (Bush and Saltarelli 2000: 4).

⁶ The question, what kind of education contributes to peacebuilding is addressed below.

The relationship between education and peacebuilding has to be qualified further. It certainly plays a role what kind of education we are talking about. Mc Mahon seems to have a rather unspecific 'standard' modern education in mind (based on literacy and computer skills) when relating it to the ability to make use of modern media and gain information. There are, however, also 'peace education' and 'peacebuilding education'. According to Mitschke (2003: 33) peace education aims at fostering knowledge, abilities, and attitudes that are necessary to settle and/or prevent conflicts. Peacebuilding education is a wider concept and focuses on the structural or 'root' causes of conflicts. While peace education consists of a rather static set of tools, peacebuilding education emphasises process and change (ibid.). Peacebuilding education is more encompassing and plays a role beyond classrooms and schools (ibid. 35). Bush and Saltarelli (2000: 27) finally emphasise that peacebuilding education is a bottom-up process driven by those affected by conflict and violence, whereas peace education constitutes rather an external framework employed in a conflict setting by mostly 'northern' experts. Despite these differences both concepts are related. Peacebuilding education incorporates aspects of peace education such as conflict management skills and the cultivation of values supporting tolerance and nonviolence (Mitschke 2003: 35).

In the Somali context, which is the central focus of this paper, it is clear that peace or peacebuilding education is not (yet) in place. The Minister for Education of the Republic of Somaliland mentioned in a speech in Hargeysa in 2000 that his ministry was 'on the verge of adopting a program of "culture of peace" to be part and parcel of the lower and upper curriculum' (Ahmed Yusuf Dualeh 2000). However, when I did my field research in late 2008 and early 2009, none of the students I interviewed answered my question about education for peace in their school days in the affirmative. Below, I will consider whether some aspects of the diasporic pedagogical visions that inform one of the case studies presented in this paper (the one on *Jamacadda Geeska*) could qualify as peacebuilding education, at least in a wider sense.

Related to this discussion, it is important to clarify the concept of peacebuilding. In public and policy-driven discourses, peacebuilding is frequently used as a normative concept as if it were clear what 'peace' exactly is and, secondly, as if peace *per se* were always 'good'. Such a normative understanding of peacebuilding risks supporting the interests of those in power by emphasising

stability/*status quo* over reform/(social, political and/or economic) change. Reform and/or change may come along with upheavals, contestation and revolutions, but in the long run, they may contribute to the transformation of injustices that previously bred conflict. In this working paper, peacebuilding is therefore understood as (nonviolent) *activities that aim at the sustainable transformation of structural conflict factors and patterns* (Minutes of the WP3 Workshop).⁷ Structural conflict factors and patterns have to be identified in each local context separately. On a general level, they include, e.g., social inequality, religious, ethnic or clan antagonism, discrimination, political oppression, and so forth.

The effectiveness of education with regard to peacebuilding depends on a host of ‘external’ factors, such as: first, ‘sound policies and committed leadership’ at the local and national level; second, ‘adequate operational capacity at all levels’, including the capacities of communities and the incentives for students to participate; third, ‘financial resources’; fourth, a sound understanding of the situation at hand, which would guide curriculum development and investments into education; and finally, strategic planning and time (World Bank 2005: 29-30; Rose and Greeley 2006: 3,7-9).

Against the background of these complexities, Abdullahi’s (2007: 42) position that there ‘is no better long-term solution to armed conflicts than providing quality education to the community involved’ seems too enthusiastic. Rather, education systems ‘provide only *one* of the key institutional networks for peacebuilding, and what is possible and effective in building peace in the wider society conditions (and is conditioned by) what is possible and effective in schools’ (World Bank 2005: 85, italics added).

2.2 *Diasporic engagement*

We turn now to the question of who has been involved in peacebuilding and the (re-) construction of the education system after the civil war in Somaliland. The literature outlined above implicitly or explicitly takes it for granted that most of the work would be done by national and international institutions. In the case of Somaliland, however, the capacities of the government are extremely low. Since the country does not enjoy international recognition, international assistance is also limited. The

⁷ This definition ultimately goes back to Johan Galtung’s understanding of peace, as outlined, e.g., in Galtung (1996). It was introduced within the Diaspeace project by Cindy Horst.

educational sector is largely in the hands of private actors, most of them with relations to or a background in the diaspora. My argument that diaspora contributions actually are the main factor driving education in the country is based on the fact that money sent from abroad is not only used to build schools and universities and provide teaching materials, but also pays teachers and student fees, and frees particularly younger family members from income generating obligations so that they can pursue education.⁸ Additionally, diasporic actors who at least temporarily return, sometimes get involved as teachers, headmasters, university chancellors or in other positions. In short, superior wealth and education endow diasporic actors with important roles in the educational and other sectors in Somaliland (and Somalia) in the absence of effective state institutions and nation-wide, systematic and long-term development projects (Menkhaus 2009: 189).⁹

The details about the current debate on diasporas and diasporic engagement in general have been discussed elsewhere (Hoehne et al. 2010); suffice it to stress that diasporas are certainly not homogenous groups (Sökefeld 2006). In my view, the only precondition for diasporic engagement is that at 'a given moment in time the sense of connection to a homeland must be strong enough to resist forgetting, assimilating or distancing' (Shuval 2000: 43).¹⁰ A kind of local or national patriotism, together with the will to contribute to the 'betterment' of the situation at home, constitutes a strong motivation for diasporic engagement. This is part of what Vertovec (1997) called the 'diaspora consciousness' that emanates from the migrants' awareness of their precarious situation as guests and foreigners in the country of residence (ibid. 281-283). Still, 'hard-line' ideas and ethnic/tribal/clan chauvinism can also prevail among members of the diaspora who then, in the context of long-distance nationalism, contribute to conflict escalation rather than to peacebuilding (Anderson 1992; Anthias 1998: 367; Orjuela 2006).¹¹

⁸ Below I discuss the material contribution of diasporic actors in comparison to state institutions and international organisations and NGOs in Somaliland.

⁹ International assistance for Somalia and Somaliland consists mostly of emergency and humanitarian aid, or funding for the African Union (AU) 'peacekeeping' mission in Mogadishu. These projects are all short-term and confined to the pockets of the former Somali Republic that are deemed secure enough for aid operations.

¹⁰ Anthias (1998: 569) stresses that even the post-colonial perspective on diaspora as a potentially anti-essentialist, post-national concept (see e.g. Clifford 1994; Appadurai 1996) entails a notion of home (often associated with a 'fatherland') from where the members of the diaspora (or their ancestors) dispersed. In fact, without dispersion from 'home' the concept of diaspora makes hardly any sense. In this way, a primordial aspect is inbuilt in the diaspora identity.

¹¹ It has to be noted that long-distance nationalism comprises various forms of political engagement, such as voting, campaigning, lobbying, reform projects etc. of diasporic actors with regard to their 'home'. It therefore is not only related to the fostering of (violent) conflict (Glick-Schiller 2004).

The most common way of diasporic engagement is sending money to family members at home. These individual financial remittances contribute to household survival; often they also support the education of one or several family members (Lubkeman 2008: 54-55). Money collections in the diaspora are used to support larger projects back home, such as the building of schools, roads, or hospitals. Remitted money can of course also finance conflict and war (Maimbo 2006).¹² In many countries, the volume of individual financial remittances per year makes up a considerable part of the state budget. In the case of Somaliland, it exceeds the official state budget by far. Menkhaus (2009: 189) observed that '[e]conomically, the US\$500 million to US\$1 billion that the Somali diaspora remits annually to relatives in Somalia dwarfs all other sources of revenue in Somalia and essentially floats an otherwise dysfunctional economy.' The negative side of the diaspora money is that governments may take financial remittances as an excuse for neglecting the provision of services, while private persons are discouraged from searching for employment and taking responsibility for their own lives. Thus, financial remittances come with certain costs and can constitute a 'moral hazard' (Menkhaus 2009: 193).¹³

The other type of remittances is social remittances. They comprise the transfer of ideas, values, norms, and concepts (Levitt 1998). These may contribute to peacebuilding in the country of origin but can also foster conflicts, in case, for instance, the cultural values of diaspora members and people at home differ markedly. The political engagement of diaspora actors in the country of origin is a double-edged sword. It can have beneficial effects for peacebuilding and political stability, if sincere and skilled personalities invest and engage back home. But if diaspora actors pursue their individual interests on the costs of the local population and, once a political plan did not work out, simply return abroad on a foreign passport and leave the 'mess' behind in the country of origin, political engagement can become destructive (Ibrahim forthcoming).

The Somali context is a contemporary example for extensive diaspora engagement, which concerns conflict escalation and perpetuation as well as reconstruction and peacebuilding. There are a number of studies on the economic and

¹² The Somali National Movement (SNM), the guerrilla organisation that took control of much of north-western Somalia in 1991 and declared Somaliland's independence, was largely financed by diaspora money (Reno 2003: 24).

¹³ After she had heard about the important role of financial remittances for people in Somaliland, Regina Bendokat, a former World Bank economist commented that Somaliland was an externally funded welfare-state (personal communication Regina Bendokat, Freiburg, 13.09.2009).

political roles of Somali diasporic actors (Ahmed 2000; Gundel 2002; Kent, von Hippel and Bradbury 2004; Hansen 2007; Cassanelli 2007; Horst 2008; Kleist 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Abdulqadir 2009; Galipo 2009; Lindley 2009a, 2009b; Menkhaus 2009; Sheikh and Healy 2009). So far, however, the diasporic engagement in the educational sector in Somaliland and its potential contribution to peacebuilding in the local context has gained only limited attention (Abdi 1998; Morah 2000; Abdullahi 2007; Lindley 2008). This is somewhat astonishing, given the mushrooming of educational institutions up to the tertiary sector in Somaliland in the last few years (since *circa* 2000), which frequently involved members of the diaspora as innovators, investors or otherwise.

2.3 Methodology

The empirical data collection for this study took place in Somaliland between December 2008 and May 2009. In total, 42 individual interviews were conducted with students, heads, teachers, and other university staff, members of the administration at the national and the local level, civil society agents, poets, and ordinary people who were not directly involved in education at the time. Group interviews were held with six to eight students in Hargeysa and Laascaanood.¹⁴ My questions focussed on the local understandings of peacebuilding; the educational background of the interviewees and the developments of education in Somalia/Somaliland before and after the civil war and state collapse (depending on the age and the experiences of the respondents); the relation between education and sustainable peace in Somaliland; the role of members of the diaspora in Somaliland; and the perception of diasporic actors by locals without diaspora background and *vice versa*.

During my field research, I was based in the capital city Hargeysa, where I spent four months. I first explored the field in consultation with my assistant and colleagues from the Academy for Peace and Development (APD) in Hargeysa before I choose *Jamacadda Geeska* (International Horn University), a recently established private university, as one of my case studies. It seemed to be a particularly interesting institution, since it had been founded by diaspora Somalis from Finland and Pakistan. It had a clear religious orientation, but also engaged in secular education and organised several high profile cultural and social events in Hargeysa

¹⁴ I aimed at gender balance during the group interviews, but could not always succeed in mobilising as many female as male students. Of the 42 individual interviews, 10 were conducted with women.

during the time of my field research. The second case study became *Jamacadda Nugaal* (Nugaal University) in Laascaanood in the borderlands between Somaliland and Puntland. Here I spent only one week.¹⁵ Laascaanood is located in the periphery and, furthermore, in a contested zone (see Map I). Somaliland and Puntland had engaged repeatedly in military clashes over Laascaanood. In October 2007, Somaliland had taken control of the town. I had hoped to acquire some information about the role of the diaspora in the ongoing conflict.



¹⁵ Due to security regulations for foreigners in Somaliland, I was only allowed to leave the capital city with an armed escort. This burdened my research budget and hampered the ethnographic field research. In Laascaanood, my movements were restricted. Restrictions were much less in Hargeysa. My data on the situation in Laascaanood are nonetheless rich, since first, I had conducted extensive field research there in 2003 and 2004 and still had good relations to many local informants, and second, I had a chance to interview several of my key informants from Laascaanood during their visits to Hargeysa.

I also attended several lectures and cultural events organised by the International Horn University and the University of Hargeysa. In Burco (where I stopped briefly on my way to Laascaanood) and Laascaanood, I gave presentations on my project and answered the questions of students. Finally, I followed the daily political and other events through the local newspapers and discussions with my acquaintances. This helped me to embed the information acquired through interviews in the wider context of the developments in Somaliland in 2009.

3 Education in the Somali context before and after war and state collapse

This section develops the necessary background to the educational sector in the Somali context. It focuses on religious education as well as on the primary and secondary sector, since this is where, historically, education in the Somali peninsula started. The tertiary sector only began to play a role in post-colonial time. Also, after the state collapse it was the last sector of education to be rehabilitated.

3.1 Pre- and post-colonial education

Education in pre-colonial time was non-formal and mostly family based; its subjects were manners, family and clan history, and skills necessary for survival in the particular environment of the Somali peninsula, much of which was semi-arid and used by pastoral nomads and agro-pastoralists with only a few sedentary communities and urban centres (Banafunzi 1996; Abdullahi 2007: 25). This 'traditional' form of education was supplemented by Islamic teachings. Besides old Islamic centres, such as Harar and Mogadishu, itinerant Sheikhs were responsible for the basic religious education of the masses (Abdi 1998: 329).¹⁶

Colonial expansion reached the Horn in the late 19th century. Yet, it was not before the 1930s that the colonial powers, Great Britain in the northwest and Italy in the northeast and the south, began to establish a basic educational infrastructure. Somalis viewed colonial education, which they equated with Christian education, with suspicion (Kakwenzire 1986: 767; Abdullahi 2007: 28). Attempts to establish 'modern' schools in the British Protectorate reputedly provoked demonstrations and

¹⁶ The Horn of Africa had come under Islamic influence around the 10th century. It took several centuries until Islam reached the hinterlands.

violent attacks (Samatar 2001: 645-646; Cassanelli and Farah 2007: 93). In 1950, only a couple of elementary and two intermediate schools existed in British Somaliland. A Vocational Training Centre was opened in Amuud near the town of Boorama in 1952. Somaliland became independent on 26 June 1960 with two secondary schools, one in Sheikh and one in Amuud (Samatar 2001: 647; Cassanelli and Farah 2007: 93-94). The Italian part, which was officially administered under a UN trusteeship agreement between 1950 and 1960, was more advanced. Here, the basis for a modern educational system was set up, in preparation for independence on 1 July 1960. In 1953, the Institute for Social Science, Law and Economics was established in Mogadishu. It later became the University Institute, which provided the foundation for the Somali National University in post-colonial time (Abdullahi 2007: 30-31). It has to be noted that, in pre-colonial and colonial times, any educational system existing in the Somali peninsula privileged male students. Girls' and women's education was mostly limited to basic religious learning and household skills; higher religious or secular education was a male domain.¹⁷

The Somali Republic was founded through the union of Somaliland (the ex-British Protectorate) and (Italian) Somalia on 1 July 1960. The country's nationalist leadership saw modern education as an instrument for overcoming 'tribal' divisions within Somali society. Many city dwellers recognised mass education as 'best available venue for socio-economic advancement' (Abdi 1998: 332). The pastoral-nomads, however, who in the mid-20th century constituted the majority of the population, particularly in northern Somalia, remained suspicious of modern education.¹⁸ Yuusuf Shacir, a famous poet from Somaliland, who himself grew up in the countryside, asserted that until recently nomadic families sent only the 'useless' boys to the schools in the towns. Those who were not good for animal herding should learn in schools (Interview Yuusuf Shacir, Hargeysa, 7 April 2009).¹⁹

Education and literacy was boosted under the 'revolutionary' regime of Maxamed Siyad Barre (1969-91). In 1970, the Somali National University was founded in Mogadishu. In 1990, just before the state collapse, more than 4000

¹⁷ This only changed visibly after 1969, under the revolutionary regime of Siyad Barre (see below). Even then, the enrolment rate of girls and young women in institutions of secondary and tertiary education was much lower than the rate of male students.

¹⁸ The north and the southwest of the Somali peninsula was until around the 1950s predominantly inhabited by pastoral-nomads. In central and southern Somalia, agro-pastoralists and farmers resided. City dwellers, mostly merchants and craft-workers inhabited the ancient towns along the Benaadir coast.

¹⁹ Education for girls beyond basic Islamic learning was obviously not relevant at all in the nomadic context.

students were enrolled in the university that comprised 11 faculties, from education to medicine and journalism. In 1973 the Latin script was introduced for Somali. Subsequently, a large-scale literacy campaign raised general literacy. Primary school enrolment rose exponentially (Abdi 1998: 333-334).²⁰

These successes were undone in the 1980s, when the government fought militant opposition movements and resorted to the violent oppression of parts of the population. The resulting militarisation of the society and civil war that escalated in northern Somalia in 1988 had negative effects on education. School enrolment declined and most government spending went to defence and security (Abdi 1998: 334-335; Samatar 2001: 644). Morah (2000: 309) summarised:

Public sector primary education in Somalia was in deep trouble long before the collapse of the Siad Barre dictatorship and the Somali state in 1991. Its greatest strength was in the mid to late 1970s when primary school enrolment reached 55%, only to decline to about 33% in 1988. The devastating clan wars of the 1990s only dealt the final blow to an already collapsing public education system.

3.2 The effect of civil war and state collapse on education

During the civil war, the formal educational system was razed to the ground. Hargeysa and most urban centres in the northwest became warzones from 1988 onward. Mogadishu and the south followed in 1991. Public institutions, including schools, were looted and stripped of doors, roofs, and windows (Abdi 1998: 327; Samatar 2001: 649; Cassanelli and Farah 2007: 91). Teachers and students were killed, or they fled or joined the armed factions. Abdi (1998: 336) argued that the civil war introduced an informal system of education that perpetuated destruction by teaching a 'culture of thuggery, war-like attitudes toward life, clan and sometimes sub-clan fighting, and survival on the fringes of an otherwise disintegrated society.' In his view, the socialisation of Somalia's youth into violence provided an obstacle for ending the fighting. Many fighters preferred continued civil war to lasting peace since the latter was something they did not know and possibly feared (ibid.: 337).²¹

²⁰ The promotion of secular and 'revolutionary' education under the socialist regime did not trigger positive results everywhere. In some conservative Muslim communities the government system was perceived as intrusion and a deviation from the 'right path', which was to be an education firmly based on Islam. Banafunzi (1996: 340) observed that '[t]he 1970s and 1980s became the darkest decades in the history of education in Brava and elsewhere in Somalia.'

²¹ For an interesting sociological study on Mogadishu's war-affected youth, see Marchal (1993).

Despite the ongoing civil war in southern Somalia, the educational sector experienced some reconstruction. In 2010, Mogadishu, the destroyed capital of collapsed Somalia, has a dozen universities funded by the diaspora and mostly Islamic charities. Over the past two decades, secondary schools were established in many places all over southern and central Somalia, again, usually with help from abroad (Abdulqadir 2009: 13-18). This should not obscure the fact that the continued war and instability has a tremendously negative effect on education there.²² Lindley (2008: 403) stressed that the quality of primary schools varies across the Somali areas. It is the highest in peaceful Somaliland. The variations at all other educational levels up to the university between southern Somalia and Somaliland are similar. Continued civil war does not necessarily make education impossible, but it makes it more difficult for the students and teachers. In Laascaanood, I interviewed one staff member of the university who had graduated from Benaadir University in Mogadishu in 2008. He described how the whole university sometimes had to flee due to fighting. The most important teaching materials (books etc.) were taken along if possible (Interview, Cabdillahi Yuusuf Cawil, Laascaanood, 14 April 2009).

3.3 Post-war reconstruction in Somaliland

In contrast to southern Somalia, where civil war is continuing, a peaceful social and political order has been established in northern Somalia since 1991. The secession of the northwest as the Republic of Somaliland (within the borders of the former British Protectorate) in May 1991 marked the beginning of this extraordinary development.²³ Since Somaliland does not enjoy international recognition, it is not 'eligible' for large-scale international aid. Only a few humanitarian organisations and international NGOs began to work in the country in the mid 1990s. Thus, immediately after the state collapse people in Somaliland did not see much non-Somali involvement. Education had to start from scratch:

In Somaliland, prior to the outbreak of large-scale civil war in 1988, there were roughly 200 primary schools with about 34,300 pupils. By the end of the war years, most of the school buildings [lay] in ruins. A UN assessment in 1992 found that up to 15% of the schools had their walls demolished and timbers looted; 75% were without roofs and nearly 80% without doors, windows,

²² On 3 December 2009 a suicide bombing hit the Shamo Hotel in Mogadishu during a graduation ceremony for medical students of one of the local universities. Dozens of students were killed.

²³ I discussed the details of the political and social dynamics in northern Somalia since 1991 elsewhere (Hoehne 2009).

fixtures, etc. The few schools still reasonably intact were taken over by squatters and displaced persons. Effectively, there were no schools for Somaliland children to attend in the aftermath of the war (Morah 2000: 309).

The first educational institutions to start working again in Somaliland (and elsewhere in war-torn Somalia) were Koran schools (Morah 2000). This is in accordance with the remarkable resilience of educational systems in general. The World Bank analysts found that education during conflict almost never comes to a complete standstill for an extended period. At least some basic and/or primary education continues, 'albeit with reduced public support and a consequent deterioration in quality' (World Bank 2005: 22). In the Somali context, Islamic education has had a long tradition. Moreover, the flourishing of Koran schools in Somaliland after 1991 pointed to an ongoing Islamic 'revival'. Against the background of internecine war, often fought along clan and sub-clan lines, many Somalis considered Islam as a way out of personal and collective disaster.

Secular schooling began slowly. It was facilitated through private and community initiatives. The investments basically focussed on the clan-homelands of the respective diaspora groups. There were, however, also collective investments transcending clan-belonging (Samatar 2001: 647; Lindley 2008: 408-9; Abdulkadir 2009: 18-21).²⁴ Since school buildings had been destroyed or looted, schooling frequently took place either in school-houses without roofs, windows, and doors or 'under the tree'. Many of my younger informants remembered that sun, rain, and wind affected the schooling. They added that during their first years back in school in Somaliland in the early 1990s they sat on milk powder tins turned upside down; they had no textbooks and the teachers had no blackboards. The 'curriculum' consisted of what teachers could remember off their heads (Group interviews with students, Laascaanood, 14 April 2009; Hargeysa, 5 April 2009).

The first initiatives of social and political reconstruction were overshadowed by episodes of renewed civil war in the early 1990s. After the SNM had taken control of Somaliland, the movement was torn apart in power-struggles between its leading commanders, who mobilised their clans and sub-clans for support (Renders 2006). Male teenagers were recruited again for war; others had refused to demobilise and were still armed. Many people remained outside of the country and resided in

²⁴ It has to be noted that schools in small villages in very remote places are sometimes the only educational institution for a whole district. In the rainy season, when nomadic families gather around water points nearby, the number of students in village schools can rise dramatically.

refugee camps in Ethiopia. Those in Somaliland who wished to reintegrate in a peaceful society and had entered the few existing schools up to the secondary level were left without follow-up opportunities (Samatar 2001: 648). For many youngsters, looting and robbing became a way of life. Traditional authorities and community leaders worked through a series of local peace-conferences between 1991 and 1996 for peace and stability in Somaliland (Farah and Lewis 1993; Terlinden and Ibrahim 2008; Walls 2009). Once this had been achieved in 1997, it facilitated the further rebuilding of a peaceful social and political order. Clan militias were integrated into the country's national army or demobilised. Tellingly, the slogan for the demobilisation-campaign was *qoriga dhig, qalinka qaad* (put down the gun, take up the pen).

The first university of Somaliland, Amuud University, was opened near the town of Boorama in Awdal region in 1998. Apart from some book donations from an international NGO, the project had been developed by and realised with the resources of the local and the diaspora community related to Awdal region.²⁵ Members of the diaspora from all over north-western Somaliland contributed as well. Amuud was the very first Somali university outside of Mogadishu in the south.

The intention of the founders of this university had been 'to find an outlet for the many children in the region who had no real prospect of productive employment other than joining the roaming militias' (Samatar 2001: 648). The actors involved were very conscious about not making Amuud a clan-owned institution but a university for all Somalis (Samatar 2001: 648-650). The University of Hargeysa followed in 2000. This institution had also been initiated by the diaspora, and local as well as diasporic actors joined hands in its establishment. Two steering committees, one in London and one in Hargeysa, were set up in 1997. Fowsiya Yuusuf Xaaji Aadan (Fawzia Yuusuf Haji Adam), one of the key actors and later first chancellor of the University of Hargeysa, travelled back and forth for several years between the UK and Somaliland to improve interaction. She and Sa'ad Cali Shire (Saad Ali Shire), a Somali businessman and the second leading person involved in the university project, used their extensive personal networks in Somaliland and abroad to acquire land and a building from the government in Hargeysa and to attract donations of

²⁵ This region is predominantly inhabited by members of the Gadabuursi clan.

money and equipment.²⁶ The transnational coordination of the project was greatly facilitated through online conferences (MacGregor et al. 2008: 246-248). The motivation behind the engagement of Fowsiya and Sa'ad was twofold: they wished to provide the first generation of post-war secondary students in Somaliland with follow-up opportunities. This was coupled with considerations about the development potential of better educated local students for the local/national market (ibid. 244-245). These 'double concerns' about security and economy in the country of origin were typical for diaspora actors investing in education. Lindley (2008: 407) argued that '[r]emitters are often keen to try to ensure that their hard-earned remittances are used productively'. The money sent and the education provided should lead the way to employment and economic prosperity – of the family and the community. Moreover, she mentioned that, particularly in insecure places, schooling was and still is seen as a way to keep youngsters away from becoming militiamen (ibid.).

The foundation of the universities in Amuud and Hargeysa carried significance beyond the educational sector in Somaliland. These investments, like the building of the Ambassador Hotel near Hargeysa Airport (Ibrahim forthcoming), showed that the civil war was over and that the time had come to orient toward the future.²⁷ Arguably, both projects had also a psychological effect in showing local and diaspora actors what they were capable of achieving together. In the following decade, hundreds of new schools and more than a dozen universities were established in Somaliland.²⁸ The vast majority goes back to private initiatives, many of them related to the diaspora.

4 Political and legal context of the diasporic engagement in the educational sector

The establishment of universities in Somaliland is part of the second phase of more sustainable peacebuilding in the country that began in the second half of the 1990s. This phase is still ongoing in 2010. It involves local and diaspora entrepreneurs, who

²⁶ Both Fowsiya and Sa'ad had studied abroad, in the USA, and later settled in London, where they started their investment in education back home in Somaliland.

²⁷ Menkhaus (2009: 194) stressed that large and visible investments by the diaspora in various places of war-torn Somalia 'are important not only for the jobs they create but also for the sense of confidence they build locally that wealthy diaspora members believe in the future of the area enough to make a major fixed investment there.'

²⁸ For similar developments in the south see Abdullahi (2007).

invest in everything from private clinics and pharmacies to research centres, shops, restaurants, small factories, political parties, schools, and universities. It therefore supports long-term political, economic, and social transformation. Diaspora actors who return, at least temporarily, transfer skills and knowledge to local people and institutions, and simultaneously become transformed themselves, through the contact with the local society. Continuous remittance flows from the diaspora secure the daily survival of many families in Somaliland. In addition, diaspora entrepreneurs constantly search for profitable investments and/or job opportunities in their country of origin. For instance, many diaspora returnees work as experts with language and other skills in international development organisations (Hansen 2007: 137-140; Lindley 2008: 406; Menkhaus 2009: 194-5; Ibrahim forthcoming; Interview Cawil Maxamed Faarax, Hargeysa, 8 April 2009).

The connection between economic development and sustainable peace was underlined by most interviewees, many of them university students. They mentioned that peace in post-conflict Somaliland will last only if the younger generation has sufficient job opportunities. This position was frequently complemented by demands for 'justice'. Since 2007, the government and political elites of Somaliland are involved in a series of scandals and crises concerning corruption, freedom of speech, electoral laws and regulations, and so forth. Many interviewees argued that sustainable peace can only be fostered if the government and the political elites respect the laws of the country (Interviews Hargeysa, December 2008-May 2009). In Laascaanood, the capital of the Sool region in the contested borderlands between Somaliland and Puntland, people reflected mostly on the armed confrontation. Laascaanood had been captured by Somaliland troops (evicting the Puntland army) in fall 2007 (Hoehne 2007, 2009). Since then, the situation had calmed down. Still, some locals and most members of the diaspora of the Dhulbahante clan inhabiting Sool are against what they perceive as Somaliland 'occupation'. Puntland politicians vow to recapture the place. Interview partners therefore stressed that immediate peacebuilding has to include negotiations between the opposing sides at the national and the local level. Additionally, justice starts with the end of the isolation of the region. Only if international organisations are allowed to come and work in Laascaanood and its surroundings, and if these organisations open offices in town, can the marginality of the place be alleviated (Interviews Laascaanood, April 2009).

4.1 General regulations concerning the diaspora

The Somaliland state apparatus includes no particular office for 'Diaspora Affairs', unlike Ghana and Ethiopia, for instance (Nieswand 2009: 20; Dereje forthcoming). Officially, the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs²⁹ was responsible for the diaspora. In fact, however, the Director General (DG) of this ministry dealt with the issue. He stressed in an interview that the Somaliland government welcomed the investment of diaspora members, as they are perceived as assets (regarding their education and/or financial resources). If they wanted to implement a project, the government would provide them with the necessary land for free (Interview Cawil Maxamed Faarax, Hargeysa, 08.04.2009). But the government had no concrete policy toward the diaspora and diaspora-investments. There were some representatives of Somaliland abroad who functioned as contact persons. However, when a member of the diaspora wanted to do something at home, he/she was free to do so. Government officials certainly could give advice to investors, but nothing more (ibid.).

The Minister of Planning, who himself had spent many years abroad and worked for international organisations, maintained that members of the diaspora were not foreigners. They are citizens of Somaliland and have the same rights and duties as all other citizens; the same laws apply to their activities (Interview Cali Ibraahim Maxamed, Hargeysa 16 May 2009). The minister added that, depending on the field of investment, diaspora actors would have to register with the responsible government institution. All projects in the education sector certainly had to be discussed with the Ministry of Education (ibid.).

4.2 Educational policies

The current policy of the Ministry of Education is based on an 'Education Sector Strategic Plan 2007-2011' developed in 2006/2007. The document includes an overview over the educational sector and presents policies and strategies of the ministry. According to the ministry, the country currently is in a period of growth and stability (after it had been in a phase of recovery during the 1990s). Remittances from the diaspora, private investments, and NGO projects provide the basis for the current development (Ministry of Education 2007: 7). Government revenue in general is low, and expenses for education are minimal. The government budget for the Ministry of

²⁹ This is the official English title. This position is different from the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Education was 1.37 million US\$ or around 6% of the total government expenditure in 2006. Of that money, about 80% were used for the payment of salaries.³⁰ Circa 8% were allocated to the universities and other education institutions. The rest went into the operating costs of the ministry and the regional offices. It was estimated that UN agencies and NGOs added 8-14 million US\$ to the educational sector in 2006. The contribution by the diaspora communities to schools and universities could not be measured. Nonetheless, the government assumed that the external donors (meaning: UN organisations and international NGOs) 'are the main funders of the education sector (ibid. 34).

In my view, this assumption is doubtful. Against the background of more than 500 million US\$ remitted by the Somali diaspora in general per year, a good part of which goes to Somaliland, it seems that the contribution of diaspora actors to education could be much higher than government and donor spending together. The students' relatives abroad frequently provide for school and university fees, as well as for books and other learning materials. Financial remittances also free youngsters from income generation activities. If this is counted as part of funding the educational sector, then diasporic financial remittances certainly exceed the international support.³¹

Since government salaries are insufficient, teachers in public schools rely on additional income through fees.³² Some teachers, who are not on the government's payroll, are financed by local communities, diaspora initiatives, and/or NGOs (ibid.: 10). The precarious political position of Somaliland as a non-recognised state partly surrounded by hostile neighbours (Puntland and southern Somalia) results 'in levels of expenditure on security which limit the capacity of the Government to invest in other sectors' (ibid.: 7).³³ School enrolment rates and literacy rates are low.³⁴ The ministry of education blames this on widespread poverty, lacking infrastructure particularly in the countryside, and continued problems related to displacement and

³⁰ Approximately 37% of all civil servants of Somaliland, mostly teachers, are on the payroll of the ministry of education.

³¹ Lindley (personal communication, 29.07.2010) stressed that the majority of the *circa* 500 remittance recipients she had surveyed in 2005 had said they used some of their remittances for education; of the 175 remitters surveyed in London, half had made donations for education in the Somali regions in the last year, averaging around 150 US\$.

³² Fees in public schools are usually 1-3 US\$ per month.

³³ Around 60% of the budget are spent for security.

³⁴ Statistics are easily distorted, since no recent reliable census data exist for Somaliland and Somalia. The government in Hargeysa estimates that 3 million people reside in Somaliland, while UN institutions speak of about 1.7 million people. These gross discrepancies, of course, influence the school enrolment rates.

resettlement after the civil war (ibid.: 8). The Education Sector Strategic Plan 2007-2011 adds that '[u]nemployment is high, and is compounded by the extensive use of khat [*qaad*] by a large proportion of the population, which is both incapacitating and expensive' (ibid.). Yet, not only economic difficulties plague the educational sector. Hansen (2010) mentioned that many youngsters with nothing to do sign up for 'khat university' in the afternoons. They prefer chewing the mild stimulant to an education that most likely will not lead to a job anyway.³⁵

At the level of the government, education is organised according to the general system of decentralisation that is officially in place in Somaliland. There are six regional (one for each region) and more than 20 district education officers. Districts are given primary responsibility for service delivery. Higher education is the responsibility of the universities, which are considered private, even if some of them receive moderate government funding. The ministry plans to set up a Commission for Higher Education (ibid.: 9). Up to 2007, the main achievements of the ministry, in its own perspective, were: the rehabilitation of schools, the re-establishment of a teaching force, the development of a Somaliland curriculum up to the secondary level in most subjects (with the exception of history, due to the contested nature of this subject in the post-civil-war society), the introduction of an examination system, and the collection of statistical data. Most of these have been achieved through the support of donors and local and diaspora communities. The main constraints faced by the ministry in developing the educational sector are poor ministerial facilities (in the centre, the regions, and the districts); limited capacity of the staff; lack of clear policy development; reliance on external actors (UN and NGOs) for agenda setting; and uncoordinated activities of UN agencies and NGOs, which undermine the accountability of educational staff to the ministry. Additionally, there are large geographical disparities in service provision, and many services are delivered by private actors and/or NGOs (ibid.: 9-10). The poor physical infrastructure of the country inhibits communication and exchange between the centre, the regional capitals, and the districts.

For 2005/2006, the Ministry of Education provided the following data: there were over 516 primary schools, 58 of which private. The General Enrolment Ratio

³⁵ *Qaad* is a mild stimulant chewed by most Somali men. The *qaad* tree grows in the Ethiopian highlands. Its leaves, which contain several psychoactive substances, are harvested and imported into Somaliland on a daily basis. For more details on *qaad* trade and consumption, see Hansen (2010).

(GER) for primary schools was 38.6%; the GER for girls was 31.1%, for boys 46.1% (ibid.: 11-12). The number of secondary schools was 41, 13 of which private. The GER for secondary schools was not provided, but since the total number of secondary students was just around 14,000, compared with more than 130,000 in primary school, it must be very low. Only about 23% of all secondary school students were female (ibid.: 13-14). Regarding secondary education, the ministry confirmed that it is 'not yet at a stage where it can play its full role in producing young people who will help drive national economic growth' (ibid.: 15). Several universities provided training for primary school teachers. Only Amuud University had a secondary teacher education centre. Teacher training was supported by external donors within the framework of the 'Strengthening the Capacity of Teacher Training' (SCOTT) programme.

The ministry lists only four universities (Amuud, Golis, Hargeysa, and Burco) for 2006, with a total number of about 1,300 students, roughly 25% of whom were female. All four universities were considered private, but received small grants of 14-20,000 US\$ from the government. These covered only a small part of the costs of the universities. 'Other constraints include limited capacity, quality of staff and curricula, and the low competitiveness of graduates in the current job market. [...] Courses are developed based on academic courses outside of Somaliland rather than from identified labour market needs. It is difficult to attract qualified academics and the potential to undertake research is limited. Female enrolment is low' (ibid.: 15). My own observations suggest that the situation has not changed substantially since 2006. It is safe to assume that in 2009 the number of schools and students was slightly higher than the figures given by the ministry. Also, more universities and colleges were founded and the number of students in the tertiary sector grew.³⁶ Nonetheless, the structural conditions and patterns – lack of funding, capacity, and infrastructure; gender imbalance; externally driven development – have not changed.

The government is currently working up an education act. It has been drafted and submitted to the cabinet. In May 2009, it had not yet been passed on to the House of Representatives for discussion (Interview, Cali Cabdi Odawaa, Director General of the Ministry of Education, Hargeysa, 19 February 2009). This constitutes

³⁶ Hargeysa University alone was said to have had around 3000 students in 2009.

a considerable delay, since the act was originally planned to get into force in 2008 (Ministry of Education 2007: 26).

To sum up: there is no consistent policy of the Somaliland government toward the diaspora. The activities of diasporic actors are generally welcome, but the government does not systematically promote or monitor them (Lindley 2008: 409). Members of the diaspora are perceived as citizens, to whom the laws of Somaliland apply once they enter the country. Since 1991, the educational sector has developed largely unregulated. In 2006/2007, the Ministry of Education set out to coordinate and plan policies and projects. As the sector is seriously underfinanced, external donors and particularly diaspora communities play very significant roles in funding and developing the education system in Somaliland. Legal regulations that would most probably help coordination, standardisation, and long-term planning are pending.

The following section shows the concrete working of two universities founded by the diaspora. The universities are presented in their respective local context in two quite different regions of Somaliland. One context is the Somaliland's capital, which is economically striving and peaceful. The other is Laascaanood, the capital of the politically and militarily contested Sool region that suffers from economic marginalisation. These two locations arguably occupy two extreme ends of a continuum regarding security and stability in Somaliland.³⁷ They were chosen to outline a more nuanced picture of the relation between diasporic engagement in the educational sector (with a special focus on the tertiary sector) and sustainable peace. The different conditions in the two places also help to realise in how far 'external factors' influence this relation.

5 Case Study 1: *Jamacadda Geeska*/International Horn University (IHU)

Jamacadda Geeska is located in Hargeysa, the capital city of Somaliland. Due to the civil war more than 80% of the city (and many other towns in northwestern Somalia) lay in ruins in 1991. The region seceded from the rest of collapsing Somalia on 18 May 1991. While this independence has not yet been recognised by Somalia or any other country, people in Somaliland, together with the diaspora and some

³⁷ On the variations of political developments (including state control and security) in the different regions of Somaliland, see the highly innovative study of Terlinden (2008).

international organisations/NGOs, rebuilt their country from the ruins. Internal conflicts ravaged parts of Hargeysa, Burco, and Berbera until the mid-1990s. Since 1997, as outlined above, physical and political reconstruction progress.

5.1 Diaspora experiences: biographical notes

Jamacadda Geeska goes back to the initiative of four diaspora Somalis. Three of them resided in Finland and one in Pakistan between the early 1990s and the early 2000s.³⁸ Sheikh Almis Yahya Xaaji Ibraahim, the most charismatic of the founders, was born in northern Somalia in the late 1960s. As a young boy he moved to Mogadishu, where he began his Islamic education. He later continued to study at the famous Al Azhar University in Cairo. From there, he moved to Finland in 1993 in the context of a family reunion with his wife who had become refugee there after the Somali state collapse. Cali Cumar Boosir, another founder of *Jamacadda Geeska*, was born in Mogadishu in southern Somalia. His family moved to Abu Dhabi in the 1980s, where his father worked for a bank. In 1988, they returned to Mogadishu, from where Cali went to Finland in 1990 to study. The outbreak of the civil war in Mogadishu made him a refugee. Both Sheikh Almis and Cali found that the Finnish authorities valued the language and culture of the immigrants (Interviews, Cali Cumar Boosir, Hargeysa, 18 December 2008 and Sheikh Almis, Hargeysa, 07 December 2008). This facilitated their integration in the host country and offered them possibilities to work by engaging with the local Somali community. Besides his studies, Cali worked as a teacher for Somali and basic religious education for Somali kids in a small town called Pori. Sheikh Almis became a mediator in family disputes among the Somali and Islamic community in Helsinki. Both cooperated with the relevant Finnish ministries in their work.

Still, the two men experienced being in the diaspora differently. Cali was younger and, in his own perception, adapted easily. For Sheikh Almis, life in Finland came along with fundamental challenges. He confirmed that initially, in 1993, he had thought that ‘unbeliever is unbeliever, and Muslim is Muslim’. His idea had been that ‘the unbelievers had to be fought’. With time, he realised that the ‘unbelievers’ were also human beings (*ina adam*). They were neighbours, met at work, and chatted. His and their children played and went to school together. He went with colleagues on

³⁸ I was able to conduct longer interviews with three of them. The fourth founder was away on Hajj and afterwards otherwise busy during my stay.

trips to the countryside. He finally appreciated the way he and other Somalis, who had come to the country as refugees, had been received by the Finnish government and population.

They told us 'settle down here. We will give you some pocket money. Send your children to school. Medical care is for free. If you need medicine, just go to a Finnish doctor. You have the same rights as Finnish citizens in this regard.' This made me reflect. These were good people, not like I had thought (Interview, Sheikh Almis, Hargeysa, 7 December 2008).

There were also Somalis who continued to hold negative views about the Finnish 'unbelievers'. Sheikh Almis and others became interested in dialogue between the religions and in cooperation with the local society. They arranged meetings between Muslim and Christian clerics; once they invited a Rabbi. They looked for common positions and strategies regarding burning issues in their communities, such as abortion or drug abuse. The Ministry for Justice and the Ministry for Social Affairs were happy about this initiative. Sheikh Almis stressed that he and his group were interested in 'positive integration' (*falgal saxsan*). This was a 'two-way road':

Something comes *from* us [Somalis, Muslims] and something comes *to* us. [Integration] is not a one-way street. Something influences our lives; for instance the language has an impact. For them [the Finns], we are a new people, a new minority, and a Muslim group. Therefore, our presence in Finland has an effect on the Finns. If the influence would be one-sided, on us only, then it would not be integration but assimilation (Interview, Sheikh Almis, Hargeysa, 7 December 2008, emphasis mine).

Not all aspects of Sheikh Almis' and Cali's diaspora experiences in Finland were positive. Sheikh Almis mentioned occasional racism on the side of the host community. Cali remembered the manifold problems within the Somali community in Finland. These were mostly related to 'cultural' issues and family affairs concerning gender relations and the youth. Cali himself was well positioned to deal with upcoming problems. He knew Somali, Arabic, and Finnish well. He could talk with 'everybody' (including members of non-Somali Muslim communities in Finland). These communicative skills plus his knowledge about Islam secured him an important position in the Islamic Society, a Muslim organisation in Helsinki, where he had moved in the late 1990s. There he met Sheikh Almis, who was active in this

society. Sheikh Almis recounted the burden coming with what he had called 'positive integration'. He and likeminded Somalis had deliberately positioned themselves in-between the two extremes among the Somali diasporic community, and were attacked from both sides:

Those [who wanted to assimilate] used to call us 'backward'. They called us *wadaado* [traditional Somali sheikhs] and presented themselves as 'civilised', as those who enter society and are something better than us – as 'high class'. They used to insult us. The others [who refused to integrate] used to call us *gaalrac* [those who go with the unbelievers].

Muuse Muxumed Diriye, the third founder I interviewed, was born in northern Somalia in the second half of the 1970s and spent his youth in Somalia. Muuse left in the early 1990s to study in Pakistan. He stayed for eight years in Islamabad, where he also worked as a student assistant in a centre for policy and strategic studies. This work left a strong imprint on him, and he came to greatly value education, research, and knowledge. Muuse envisaged the acquisition of knowledge in two ways:

You can learn either by seeing with your eyes and through experiences in daily life, or by studying books and conducting research. I wanted to contribute to my country in the latter way, based on the experience that I got from there [Islamabad, Pakistan] (Interview, Muuse Muxumed Diriye, Hargeysa, 24 March 2009).

5.2 Motivations for the engagement

For Sheikh Almis and Cali, the idea to engage at home, in Somalia, developed in the early 2000s. Sheikh Almis' assessment of their engagement was informed by religious and psychological considerations:

We [founders] had the same idea why Somalia had collapsed. We knew that the reason for the state collapse was that the Somali person/personality had collapsed. His values, his convictions, his religion had collapsed. [The Somali person] became a living shadow. He is alive but lost the heritage of the ancestors. The people became uprooted. They had nothing more to believe in; they became like animals. Allah had already stated in the Quran that sometimes people just become like animals; they eat only. The first step for rebuilding Somalia is to rebuild the [Somali] person/personality. It was empty; something had to be filled in. The most important thing to fill the void is education. We have to start here (Interview, Sheikh Almis, 7 December 2008).

Cali confirmed that, around 2002, he and Sheikh Almis increasingly reflected on the problems of Somalia. The country appeared to them like a 'factory that produces refugees every day; they leave the country and come here [to Finland], and the problems [in the diaspora] increase' (Interview, Cali Cumar Boosir, Hargeysa, 18 December 2008). This bred the idea to engage at home and to do something to improve the situation there. They (Cali Sheikh Almis and others involved) imagined Somalis in Somalia as 'people in a boat without anchor and orientation. They just float' (ibid.). The task of the diaspora was, according to Cali, to give orientation to those who are lost. Education seemed to be the natural starting point for this endeavour. Cali perceived ignorance/lack of education as the basis/root cause of the problems currently existing in Somalia:

Only an educated person who has self-confidence can stand alone. Until a person reaches this level, he/she has to lean on something, either on the clan or on another person who gives advice. If the generation that grows up now is taught and understands something, then it can happen that they break with the past and say: 'We are a new people, we are a new generation and we wish to have our own future.' The previous generation brought about war and weapons; that's how they grew up. I see education as the only solution [for Somalia's problems]. But it will take a long time. Here is something we [as diaspora] can do (Interview, Cali Cumar Boosir, Hargeysa, 18 December 2008).

In Muuse's view, education and development were closely linked. He compared life in Somaliland with the situation in the other countries he had seen and found that abroad people had work, the roads were good and clean, and one had access to advanced health care, good education, and entertainment. 'When you live abroad and see how other people live and how their daily life is straight and fine, then you wish that your home country becomes like that' (ibid.). Muuse saw the foundation of a university as a basis for the future development of Somaliland. 'In order to develop, one needs people with knowledge who can lead the way; this is where we started' (Interview, Muuse Muxumed Diriye, Hargeysa, 24 March 2009).

Establishing a university is of course also an economic endeavour. In order to attract as many students as possible (who pay fees) the founders strived to open faculties that did not yet exist at the universities of Hargeysa and Amuud, such as a

faculty for economics, for Shari'a and law, and for computer sciences.³⁹ Muuse stressed that the beginning was hard. They lacked funds and economically the institution did not perform well. Only recently (after 2006) did the project become viable (Interview, Muuse Muxumed Diriye, Hargeysa, 24 March 2009). Besides economic competition, Sheikh Almis' programme for *Jamacadda Geeska* included a 'pedagogical revolution'. He referred to some verses of a poem called *Daba Huwan* by the famous Somali poet Maxamed Hadraawi. In this poem, Hadraawi criticised the educational system of the past as unfair, corrupt, and producing unscrupulous servants of the regime:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>Iskuuladu waa deyeyn</i> | Schools misguide |
| <i>Damiinnimaday dhigaan</i> | they teach dullness |
| <i>Dartay uma soo lug go'in</i> | they were not built for me |
| <i>Digtoor cadoway sideen</i> | hostile doctors graduated from them |
| <i>Digrii nacabay sideen</i> | with degrees in hatred |
| <i>Xaq bay garba duubayeen</i> | they were standing in the way of the law |
| <i>Diintay gibil saarayeen</i> | they were changing the religion |
| <i>Waxay dadayeen umuur</i> | they were hiding/influencing a case |
| <i>Dhibtedu dib iigu tiil</i> | that hangs over me |
| <i>Waxay doc faruurayeen</i> | they were hindering |
| <i>Dedaal abid soo taxnaa</i> | continuous efforts. |

Sheikh Almis explained that the previous system of education in Somalia had undermined the religious and cultural basis of the Somali. 'It had produced a generation of egoists without religion, without a sense for the nation, who just said "give me, I want to eat". So, we have seen what this system produced' (Interview, Sheikh Almis, Hargeysa, 7 December 2008). Obviously, Sheikh Almis wanted to make a difference with the foundation of a new university. He said that this poem by Hadraawi was obligatory reading for all students at *Jamacadda Geeska* (ibid.).

5.3 University organisation

The founders from Finland put their money together and started the first college (see below). Once the project began to work and there was visible success, money was also collected in the diaspora. No particular association was founded, but personal networks were used to mobilise donors. The location of Hargeysa was chosen since it was, first, peaceful; second, many people lived here; third, in Mogadishu, which

³⁹ Certainly, one could study business administration and accounting at Hargeysa University in 2004. Around 2004, a legal faculty was opened there as well, supported by UNDP.

could have been an alternative location, a number of well functioning universities already existed, despite the ongoing civil war there. Certainly, the fact that two of the four founders had family relations in Somaliland also played a role.



Figure 1. *Jamacadda Geeska*, Hargeysa, 2009 (© Hoehne).

The first investment of Sheikh Almis and the others was a college called Mercy Academy in 2004. It was located in some rented rooms in down-town Hargeysa. The college closed after about one year, in early 2006.⁴⁰ Subsequently, the project was reorganised and a new institution, *Jamacadda Geeska*, was established in Jigjiga Yar, a quarter at the eastern end of the city, in early 2007. The building the university rented was an impressive and brand new construction with three floors. Later on, *Jamacadda Geeska* bought some land nearby but had not yet started constructing its own campus, when I did my field research.

In 2009, around 300 students were enrolled in the university, roughly 40% of them women. The number of students had risen continuously since 2006. The

⁴⁰ The Mercy Academy was mentioned by Lindley (2008: 408) as one of the 'high-end' educational institutions in Somaliland. It cost 700 US\$ per year, and in return offered courses in business and IT that were accredited by a UK business association (ibid.). The high fees may have been one reason why it closed in 2006.

university offered three BA courses: economy and management, computer science/IT, and Shari'a and law. Each course took four years. The 'major' courses were complemented by some 'minor' courses in Arabic and sociology. These were compulsory for the students in the first two years. The first graduations are expected for summer 2010. The academic year was divided into two semesters of five months each. The fees per semester were between 150 US\$ and 250 US\$, depending on the subject (Shari'a and law being the cheapest). Applicants had to go through an admission exam. Every year, *Jamacadda Geeska* awarded the best among the newcomers with free tuition. Ten students in 2008 and 40 in 2009 won these scholarships. Most of the students at *Jamacadda Geeska* came from Somaliland, but there were also 20 students from outside the country. Nimco, the accountant of the university, mentioned that negotiations were currently underway with an Islamic organisation in an Arabic country on establishing scholarships for students from southern Somalia, Puntland, and Djibouti. While most students stayed with their families in Hargeysa, the university also offered dorm rooms (Interview Nimco, Hargeysa, 17 December 2008).

The university has 15 teachers, most of them part-time.⁴¹ The salary of the teachers depends on the subject and the number of hours taught, between 100 US\$ and 600 US\$ per month. Most teachers were local Somalis from Somaliland. Three teachers came from abroad – two from Kenya (they were Kenyan Somalis) and one from Uganda. The other staff of the university consisted of 18 persons, from watchmen to cleaners as well as the cook and the chancellor. Their salaries range between 80 US\$ and 500 US\$ per month. The accountant estimated that the total expenses of the university for 2007 were around 100,000 US\$. Nimco added that the expenses for 2008 were higher, since the number of students had increased. Roughly 50% of the running costs were covered by student fees; the rest was paid through money for services offered and projects implemented by the university (often in cooperation with international NGOs), support from Islamic institutions, and individual donations from the diaspora, mostly from Finland and the UK. The government of Somaliland did not support the university financially (ibid.).

⁴¹ The part-time teachers typically had other jobs in private schools or businesses. Mostly they worked in the mornings in their other jobs and in the afternoons at the university.

5.4 University life and outreach activities

The 'culture' of *Jamacadda Geeska* was strongly oriented toward Islamic religion. While Islam certainly plays an important role in all educational institutions in Somaliland, some particularities could be observed at *Jamacadda Geeska*. Most female students were dressed visibly 'conservative' and were carefully covered from head to toe. Some wore 'Arabic style' costumes, which often feature dark colours and black. This contrasted with the more light and colourful dresses of Somali women dominating outside of *Jamacadda Geeska* campus. Moreover, religious formulas and quotes from the Koran were extensively used by students and teachers in everyday conversations and public speeches.

Regarding special learning/teaching programmes, it is worth noting that guest lecturers were sometimes invited to speak at *Jamacadda Geeska*. In February 2009, for instance, I accompanied Kemal Dahir Cashuur, a member of a local 'low cast' group called Midgan, who had been invited to give a presentation during a sociology course. The general topic was social differences in Somali society, in particular: gender and race. Kemal engaged in a one hour discussion with the students. The discussion circulated about the question why Midgan were disenfranchised in contemporary Somali society, and the students as well as the guest lecturer spoke openly about stereotypes and everyday discrimination in Somaliland.

The university also comprised a research centre called 'Centre for Research and Community Development'. According to Muuse, this centre engaged in various projects related to peace and conflict research in Somaliland. Its staff consisted of senior university personnel and some student assistants. Muuse outlined the focus of the research at the centre was on traditional and religious leaders. He stressed that particularly religious leaders have great influence on the local society. Most Somalis regularly attend the Friday prayer; people take the Imam's sermons quite seriously. Here is where activities of *Jamacadda Geeska* and the research centre can start. The centre cooperates with religious leaders and engages them in discussions or practical projects related to peace. During my field research in early 2009, one case study of the centre was an ongoing conflict over land between two clans/sub-clans (Gadabuursi and Jibril Aboqor) residing in western Somaliland.

For this case we went to [a place called] Ceel Bardaale, where the conflict escalated. Our team consisted of Sheikh Ismaciil Deeq [a popular sheikh in Hargeysa], the dean of the faculty of Shari'a and law [of *Jamacadda Geeska*],

and me. The elders who were mediating between the two parties in conflict called us and said: 'We wish that the religious leaders take part in our mediation committee. When they talk to the people they listen. When we talk to them, it takes much longer.' [...] Thus, our task is to connect the elders who work for peace between the families/clans and the religious leaders whom the people respect and to whom they listen. If these two parties/institutions join hands in their work for peace then this is something new – a new model that can contribute to peacebuilding [*kobcinta nabadda*; literally: increasing the peace] (Interview, Muuse Muxumed Diriye, Hargeysa, 17 May 2009).

Muuse also mentioned some practical aspects of this specific research. First, field research had to be done. Second, they had to be able to follow up the developments over a longer period of time, since conflict settlement among Somalis is usually a time-consuming and unpredictable process. Students can be part of survey activities or, more generally, process data at the centre. 'The students participate in the activities, and we also encourage the other university students to participate [where possible] so that they gain important experiences' (ibid.).

In this particular project, the research centre at *Jamacadda Geeska* cooperates with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), an international NGO with various programmes in Somaliland (ibid.).⁴² Another project jointly conducted by *Jamacadda Geeska* and DRC had important implications for political and social stability in Somaliland, it focused on the dialogue between religious leaders and representatives of international NGOs in Somaliland.

We called upon the two sides to come together and to discuss some difficult topics. The reason is the frequent misunderstandings and conflicts between representatives of the international NGOs and local religious leaders. The former think that the Somali sheikhs spread wrong ideas and hinder development; the latter perceive some NGO projects as unacceptable interferences in Somali cultural and religious affairs. The hot topics concerned the role of women, family affairs, but also medical issues such as vaccination campaigns [against polio] that were rejected by religious leaders e.g. in Burco [a place in central Somaliland]. The sheikhs told the people that they would become infertile if they were vaccinated (ibid.).

Muuse explained that in the case of the vaccination campaign, Sheikh Almis and another religious authority from Hargeysa went to Burco, talked to the local sheikhs, and tried to convince them that their position was wrong. In other cases, however, Muuse indicated that he could understand the worries of the religious leaders. 'Sometimes the NGOs go to villages in the countryside with questionnaires and ask

⁴² DRC received funding for some of the peace/conflict-relevant projects from the Finnish government.

people very personal questions that deeply penetrate their private lives' (ibid.). The issue of women's rights was also problematic. 'They [the NGOs] talk about women's rights; but there are limits to these rights according to Islam. Of course this leads to long discussions' (ibid.).



Figure 2. Member of the student union of *Jamacadda Geeska* recites the Koran at the opening of *Habeenka Sugaanta Geela*, Hargeysa, 2009 (© Hoehne).

Jamacadda Geeska also engaged in the cultural sector. One particularly successful event organised by the university, which I attended, was 'The Night of Camel Poetry' (*habeenka sugaanta geela*). It was staged in the Maansoor Hotel, one of the biggest hotels in Hargeysa, on 8 April 2009 and featured several famous poets such as Maxamed Hadraawi and his brother Hurre as well as a local social anthropologist. It was opened with a Koran recitation, an address by members of the students' union, and a speech by Muuse, the Vice-Chancellor of the university.

Much of the poetry that followed circulated around the camel as the 'icon' of traditional northern Somali culture and economy. The event was sold out, and the audience consisted of roughly 300 mostly younger Somali men and women (many

students of *Jamacadda Geeska*), who sat separately on the two sides of the hall. The poetry was enormously entertaining and represented a Somali culture that was only peripherally touched by Islam. Expressions such as *aakhiro nin aan geel lahayn lagama amaaneyn* ('a man without camels is not welcome in the hereafter') seemed to be quite far from scriptural Islam, and some of the love poetry recited later in the evening definitively went far beyond the limits of conservative Islamic morality. The audience, however, followed carefully; people's reactions oscillated between hushed absorption and hearty laughter.



Figure 3. Students of *Jamacadda Geeska* together with the poets Hadraawi and Hurre at *Habeenka Sugaanta Geela*, Hargeysa, 2009 (© Hoehne).

The founders of *Jamacadda Geeska* stressed in the interviews that all aspects of their work were in accordance with the laws and regulations in Somaliland. The curriculum and the projects, in which the university engages through its research centre, have been communicated to and partly discussed with the relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Religion (Interview, Cali Cumar Boosir, Hargeysa, 18 December 2008). Muuse confirmed that the projects of the research centre were also discussed in advance with the

government of Somaliland. He added that as a university, they 'do not wish to enter into politics'. Still, it happens that their activities are misinterpreted.

Once, we held a focus group discussion in Boorama [a town in western Somaliland]. We brought local sheikhs, elders, and members of the civil society together. Some reporters came and wanted to cover the event. I told them that this is not necessary and that we do not want to have the media around. I said: 'We are just ordinary people sitting in a hotel. Please excuse us.' They [the reporters] translated this event completely wrongly. *Haatuf* [one of the independent daily newspapers of Somaliland] wrote the next day that it was suspected that *Jamacadda Geeska* held a meeting between elders coming from the south, from Somalia, and elders from Somaliland, with the aim to talk about the relations between Somalia and Somaliland (Interview, Muuse Muxumed Diriye, Hargeysa, 17 May 2009).⁴³

More often, however, the public follows the manifold outreach activities of the university benevolently. The *Somaliland Times*, the other big independent newspaper in Somaliland, reported on a conference of religious leaders from all over the Somali peninsula organised by *Jamacadda Geeska* in November 2007. Even President Daahir Rayaale Kahin visited the meeting (*Somaliland Times* 2007). The event was remarkable since it demonstrated the unity in Islam and the common interest in peace of all Somalis across the otherwise strong political divide between Somaliland and southern Somalia. The *Somaliland Times* also reported on the meeting between religious leaders and representatives of the NGOs/international community working in Somaliland as mentioned above (*Somaliland Times* 2009).

5.5 Students' perceptions

Safiiya⁴⁴ had started her tertiary education in IT at the college that had been founded by Sheikh Almis and the others in 2004. When this college closed because of financial problems in 2006 she had to search for opportunities to continue her education (which had already cost considerable money). She visited several of the other universities in Hargeysa (besides Hargeysa University, there are at least half a dozen other private universities in the city). Yet, none offered her a direct continuation of her studies. She even tried to go abroad, to England, but it did not work out. Finally, when the heads of the previous college opened *Jamacadda*

⁴³ This certainly is a very sensitive topic, given Somaliland's unilateral declaration of independence in 1991 and its ongoing struggle for international recognition.

⁴⁴ The names of some of the students in this section have been anonymised, for obvious reasons.

Geeska in early 2007, she decided to enrol there, despite her worries that this institution could collapse again. Safiiya was critical of some shortcomings of *Jamacadda Geeska*, such as the lack of an up-to-date computer lab with online facilities. She was also disturbed by the fact that some teachers worked at other universities besides *Jamacadda Geeska*, particularly at Amuud University, and therefore were frequently absent or changed their schedules, depending on the other work. While she was now at the end of her third year, she contemplated going to Sudan and finishing her studies in Khartoum. 'If you have a degree from outside the country [Somaliland] you find work much easier in Hargeysa. Otherwise, you need family support to find any work here' (Interview, Safiiya, Hargeysa, 23 April 2009). Despite her worries and criticism, Safiiya participated actively in the university life and at special events, e.g., the Night of Camel Poetry. Besides her studies, she just had begun to work in an office in Hargeysa (with some family support). She emphasised that unemployment is the main reason why young people from Somaliland, with or without a degree, leave the country by any means. Regarding the members of the diaspora, particularly the younger ones, who return to or visit Somaliland, she found that 'they have a different culture. Many became westernised. Some don't pray. If they are not close relatives, whom I can help [to understand the local culture], I am not interested in them' (ibid.). This last point was confirmed by other students of *Jamacadda Geeska*. They stressed that, economically, the diaspora helps people in Somaliland a lot. However, culturally, people inside the country and those abroad are different; this concerns particularly the younger generation (Group interview with students, Hargeysa, 5 April 2009).

Ayaan was in her first year of business administration. She was very positive and proud of *Jamacadda Geeska* and the education offered there – and even in Somaliland in general. She stressed that currently Somaliland is the only place in Somalia where peace reigns, and 'peace is the basis for education' (Interview Ayaan, Hargeysa, 8 May 2009). Similarly, Asma, a twenty-year-old IT student at *Jamacadda Geeska*, stressed that the educational sector in Somaliland worked well. She referred to the complete destruction of the infrastructure of Somaliland including schools around 1990 and to the current boom in good quality education at all levels. Asma greatly appreciated that members of the diaspora care about and invest in their homeland; 'this is an expression of national unity and patriotism' (Interview, Asma,

Hargeysa, 7 April 2009). In her eyes, education helped to stabilise peace. Like the founders of *Jamacadda Geeska*, she



Figure 4. Students' Union, *Jamacadda Geeska*, Hargeysa, 2008 (© *Jamacadda Geeska*).

maintained that only an educated person can value peace adequately; ignorance, however, was the basis for conflict.⁴⁵ Should Somaliland gain the rank of an independent state, she believed, the quality of education and the economic situation – and with it job opportunities for university graduates – would improve still further. At the moment, unemployment was a big problem, particularly for the youth (*ibid.*). This was confirmed during a group interview with ten students from *Jamacadda Gesska*. Some thought that international recognition could contribute to better economic development (Group interview with students, Hargeysa, 5 April 2009). Asma herself had a well-paid job. Besides her studies, she worked several hours per week in a kindergarten run by an international NGO.

⁴⁵ This statement reflects a rather elitist and not necessarily plausible position.

5.6 Summary

The foundation and programme of *Jamacadda Geeska*, particularly its outreach activities in the social and cultural sphere, strongly reflect the diaspora experiences of its founders and current heads. Sheikh Almis and Cali started reflecting on their ‘Somaliness’ in the diaspora and recognised their responsibility, as Muslims and Somalis, for the well-being of their people at home, in a war-torn society. Muuse chose to give something back to ‘his people’ of what he had learned abroad. His concern was to contribute to social development through empirical research on socially and politically relevant topics. All three obviously have had a chance to gain higher education abroad. More importantly, they also learned about cultural and religious differences in the diaspora, and that tolerance and dialogue, together with research and critical thinking, can help to solve problems or to bridge seemingly unbridgeable (cultural and/or political) divides.

The heads of the university were united in their ambition to help create a ‘new generation’ of Somalis who are equipped with moral values (based on Islamic religion) and the necessary knowledge to find their way through life and, most importantly, distinguish themselves from the pre-state-collapse generation, who had brought destruction to the country and the people. Muuse provided an instructive résumé of the university’s aims:

The university tries as much as possible to contribute to the development of the society. We are still far from where we would like to be. We have to proceed slowly/patiently. We would like to produce students who know about poetry, religion, and the sciences, who are complete and have a broad knowledge. If we teach our students only one subject, if they learn only to follow the text book, then they do not learn to think for themselves. We would like that at the end of the education our students know their culture and religion and are firm in their positions.

The success of this project is, of course, difficult to assess. It would require future research. At the moment, the students were certainly concerned first and foremost with their education and career opportunities. Nonetheless, the students I interviewed seemed to share the moral and religious orientations of the university heads. They also actively participated in the ‘special programmes’ and outreach activities of the university, which gave some students a chance to distinguish themselves.

Genealogical/clan identity seemed to be less important than religious identity in the case of most people involved with *Jamacadda Geeska*. The founders as well

as the students belonged to various clans and came from different parts of Somalia. This does not mean that the clan identity of Sheikh Almis as Isaaq/Habar Awal and the descent of Muuse from the Dir/Gadabuursi clan did not facilitate some activities of *Jamacadda Geeska* in Hargeysa and Somaliland, where Isaaq dominate and the President was Gadabuursi until June 2010. Still, these relations, if important at all, were, unlike moral and religious concerns, not stressed by the actors involved in the university.

Outside of the university, there were some negative voices suspecting *Jamacadda Geeska* of having a hidden Islamic agenda. According to my observations, there was no substance for such a suspicion beyond the fact that, as mentioned above, the university culture was ostensibly Islamic. Although this did stand out somewhat, it was in accordance with the rigidisation of Islam in Somaliland after the civil war.⁴⁶

6 Case Study 2: *Jamacadda Nuugaal/Nuugaal University*

Jamacadda Nugaal is located in Laascaanood, the capital of the Sool region. Laascaanood has not been destroyed in the civil war. Yet, after the fall of the government of Siyad Barre in Mogadishu in January 1991, thousands of refugees from the south who belonged to the local Dhulbahante clan by descent arrived in Laascaanood and surroundings, in their ancestral clan homeland.⁴⁷ Some of these refugees squatted in former government buildings, including the public schools of Laascaanood.

6.1 Rebuilding education in the periphery

Sulebaan Dheere was recognised as the man who opened the first primary and intermediary school in Laascaanood after the state collapse. The school was called Al Furqaan. Sulebaan himself originated from the Somali community in Aden, which

⁴⁶ After civil war and state collapse, many Somalis sought refuge in religion and already long before the advent of the currently infamous Islamist militants in the south, a 'rigidisation' of Islamic practice and belief took place all over the Somali peninsula. Reformist Islamic movements set foot in Somalia already in the 1970s, as a result of work-migration (Marchal 2004).

⁴⁷ The Somali civil war came along with 'clan cleansing', which means that those who did not flee abroad fled internally to the areas where their clan-relatives predominantly reside (Lewis 2002: 263).

was part of the British Empire then and is in Yemen today. He became a military officer in Somalia, received some education in Russia, and came to Laascaanood for the first time upon fleeing Mogadishu in 1991. He valued education greatly and was convinced that it could contribute to the stabilisation of the post-conflict society and keep youngsters out of trouble (Interviews, Sulebaan Dheere, Laascaanood, 16 April 2009; Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009).

Sulebaan recruited a number of teachers, many of whom had come as refugees from the south, and talked to the parents and students. With the support of the local community (mostly the parents), he rented several simple buildings and established the first combined primary and intermediary school after the war. Quickly, several hundred students enrolled; they had to be taught in shifts.

In the beginning, we had no money. We had no chairs or tables in the school. We simply put mats on the floor. Everybody sat there and learned. It is not compulsory to have chairs and tables to learn. Later, I found chairs for the teachers so that they could relax while the students wrote something (Interview Sulebaan Dheere, Laascaanood, 16 April 2009).

In those early days, neither international organisations/NGOs nor the diaspora helped the locals. Sulebaan argued that the Somalis who had fled abroad in the early 1990s were just refugees – they did not have much. The Dhulbahante who had already left Somalia long ago – for education and/or work – were too small in number to represent a potent ‘clan-diaspora’ (ibid.).⁴⁸

To proceed with schooling in Laascaanood, some money was collected through school fees. Since most people were poor, however, not all students could pay. Families with several school children only had to cover the fee for one or two of them. The others were taught for free. There also were not many books available. Some of the former Somali stock were for sale and Sulebaan and others bought what they could find (ibid.). Sulebaan Dheere was headmaster of the first primary and intermediary school in Laascaanood until 2001.⁴⁹

In the late 1990s, the school situation improved. More private schools opened. Locally influential people like Maxamed Buraale, Xaashi Cabdalle, Sheikh

⁴⁸ This points to the above mentioned fact that migration does not automatically create diasporas. Diaspora formation is a long-term process that depends, among other things, on the economic chances abroad.

⁴⁹ Subsequently, he worked as a prosecutor in court for the government of Somaliland. In early 2004, Puntland forces occupied Laascaanood. Between 2004 and fall 2007, Sulebaan was deputy of the Supreme Court of Puntland. After Somaliland had taken control of Laascaanood in late 2007, Sulebaan became head of the Court of Appeal in the Sool region – under the government in Hargeysa. This pragmatic adaptation to the political changes is typical for borderland elites in the region (Hoehne 2010).

Cabdinasir, Cabdi Cawad, and Axmed Cabdi Timir founded the Education Committee (*guddiga waxbarashadda*) for the Sool region.⁵⁰ They coordinated the education in Laascaanood and the region in the absence of effective state administration (Interview Sulebaan Dheere, Laascaanood, 16 April 2009; Interview Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009; Interview Axmed Daakir, Hargeysa, 3 May 2009). The members of this committee managed to establish good relations with the now grown and ‘ripened’ Dhulbahante diaspora. They asked for help concerning educational projects and received financial support from abroad (Interview, Sulebaan Dheere, Laascaanood, 16 April 2009; Interview Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009). The first secondary school after the state collapse was opened in Laascaanood around 2000. It had originally been established in the 1980s as a public secondary school. It had closed in 1991 and subsequently been occupied by Dhulbahante refugees from the south. ‘In every room lived a family. These people were very poor. There was even a butcher who slaughtered animals in the former school building’ (Interview, Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009). To reopen the school, the refugees had to be ‘bought out’. Every family was given 250 US\$ so that they could rent other housing. The diaspora helped with the money and also agreed to provide the teachers’ salaries. The whole endeavour succeeded and the new school was called Muuse Yuusuf, after the man who had campaigned for the first secondary school in town under the Barre government (in the 1980s). Besides the diaspora, some international organisations and the government in Hargeysa contributed to the project.

Over the years the number of students of the secondary school increased, and when Laascaanood came under Puntland’s administration in early 2004, Garoowe decided that the students’ fees were enough to cover the running costs of the school (Interviews, Sulebaan Dheere, Laascaanood, 16 April 2009; Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009).⁵¹ It is worth noting that throughout the 2000s, the actors involved in education in Laascaanood tried to relate to the authorities in

⁵⁰ Maxamed Buraale was a former Somali Minister under Siyad Barre. Xaashi Cabdalle had been an ambassador. Cabdi Cawad was a medical doctor. Axmed Cabdi Timir is an influential businessman. When I did my field research in Laascaanood in early 2009, this committee did not exist anymore and several of its founding members had died.

⁵¹ While this was not indicated directly in the interviews, it is probable that after the occupation of Laascaanood by Puntland forces a part of the diaspora contributions were used for security matters rather than for schooling. I personally spent time in Laascaanood in 2004 and heard many voices back then, and again in 2009, which had it that Puntland did not bring any real administration, but it ‘just brought military’. After the occupation it was also clear that a military reaction of Somaliland was to be expected.

Hargeysa and Garoowe to gain something. 'We are not politicians. Our aim is local development and education. We have our needs, and we try to use our chances with whoever supports us' (Interview, Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009). This pragmatic position should not distort the fact that the international organisations, which are important actors for local development in Somaliland, Puntland, and all over Somalia, were prevented from coming to Laascaanood. The place was qualified as instable by the governments in Hargeysa and Garoowe and *de facto* became a 'no-go area' for most non-locals.⁵²

In 2009, Laascaanood had three secondary schools and about 20 primary and intermediary schools. Most of them were private schools in the sense that they had not been founded by any government but by local people, sometimes in cooperation with the diaspora or other external donors. Ismaaciil who was employed by the Somaliland government and was responsible for the education in the district of Laascaanood, stressed that particularly in the more remote areas the diaspora had built schools. Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe added that the salaries of the teachers in these village schools were frequently paid by the diaspora. Since Somaliland had taken control of Laascaanood in fall 2007, all educational institutions in the area formally came under the administration of Hargeysa. The government of Somaliland currently pays the salary of around 140 teachers in the Sool region (Interviews, Ismaaciil Xassan Dirir, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009; Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009).⁵³

Approximately 10,000 students were enrolled in all school forms below the university level in the region in 2009. Twenty years ago, just after the civil war in the north, the number of students had been below 500. The number of female students had increased over the past decades (since before the state collapse), and at least up to the intermediary level, girls constitute between 30-50% of all students at present. This number shrinks dramatically, however, from secondary level onwards, because most girls have to help in the household and many marry already in their

⁵² This was the reason why I was forced to take an armed escort along to Laascaanood, which made ethnographic field research complicated.

⁵³ The Sool region, like most regions in Somaliland and the rest of Somalia (with the exception of some areas in the south), is sparsely populated. Most people reside in Laascaanood, which is the only urban centre in the region.

teenage years (Interviews Sulebaan Dheere, Laascaanood, 16 April 2009; Ismaaciil Xassan Dirir, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009).⁵⁴

6.2 Motivations for the engagement

The idea to set up a university in Laascaanood developed against the backdrop of what was already going on in the other regions of Somaliland and Puntland. The university project involved actors in the diaspora or with diaspora-experience (in Europe, the USA, and the Arab Peninsula) as well as those who had spent their lives in Somalia.

Initially, the impetus came from the diaspora. It was clear that Laascaanood did not have many resources [to support a university]. But as you know, many universities have been opened in various regions of Somalia. Hargeysa, Burco, Garoowe – all have their universities. That is where the feeling came from that we want to have our own university (Interview, Cabdirisaaq Lafoole, Laascaanood, 18 April 2009).

Another consideration at the community level was that certainly not many students from the Sool region could afford to travel and live in Hargeysa for their studies (Interview, university delegation,⁵⁵ Hargeysa, 10 February 2009).

Personal motivations also played a role. Cabdirisaaq Lafoole, the current Chancellor of *Jamacadda Nugaal* had graduated from the pedagogical faculty of the Somali National University at Lafoole, near Mogadishu.⁵⁶ When the civil war broke out in Mogadishu he fled to Kenya and finally to Uganda. There, he partly worked and partly studied at Makerere University. He received an MA in Agricultural Extension Education. Subsequently, he managed to go to the USA, where he lived for nine years and worked as an Employment and Training Counsellor. He moved back to Somalia in early 2007. Cabdirisaaq's wife and children reside in the UK, where he visits them once every few months. His engagement in the educational sector 'at home' derives partly from his diaspora experiences:

I received my basic education up to the first university degree in Somalia. The education was for free. When I now see that my people are without

⁵⁴ This pattern is similar all over Somaliland, and can certainly also be found in the rest of Somalia (Lindley 2008: 403). Nonetheless, it is most characteristic for 'remote' areas and the country side. In big cities such as Hargeysa and Mogadishu, more girls reach the upper levels of education, and the average marriage-age is slightly higher.

⁵⁵ In February, a delegation of *Jamacadda Nugaal* visited Hargeysa. It consisted of Cabdirisaaq Lafoole, Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, and Axmed Cabdi Timir.

⁵⁶ This was the background for his nickname. Nicknames are extremely common among Somali men.

government and without intellectual guidance I feel obliged to give something back. Moreover, when I lived outside of Somalia I saw how other countries developed. I felt that people in Somalia also should have such life chances. This compelled me to transfer some of the things I learned abroad to 'home'. One of the important things I had realised abroad was that people in Kenya and Uganda coexist peacefully, despite their ethnic differences. Also in the USA, Europeans, Africans, Hispanics, and so forth live and work together without much trouble. In my country, people fight each other – people who speak the same language, have the same religion, are of the same skin colour, and have the same culture. I want to teach them about the peace and unity I saw abroad. I would like to confer the idea of the English slogan: united we stand, divided we fall. Even Europe is united now, after the World Wars in the first half of the 20th century. There is the European Union. I wish to contribute to the peacefulness and unity of my people. Working for the university was something I could do, instead of staying abroad in Minnesota and just watching what is happening in Somalia. I believe that education can bring a change (Interview, university delegation, Hargeysa, 10 February 2009).

Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, the current Vice-Chancellor of *Jamacadda Nugaal*, had studied Physics and Maths at the Somali National University in Mogadishu. He had fled from the civil war in the south to Laascaanood. There he had been working as a teacher since the early 1990s. In 2005 he had completed a BA in Business Administration at the East African University in Boosaaso. He also had a second job as member of the Board of Directors in an electricity company in Laascaanood. Cabdinasir confirmed that, like Cabdirisaaq, he felt a debt. He had received all his education for free in Somalia before the state collapse. Since he had never left Somalia, he saw the children grow up without education after 1991 and realised that they would have a 'black future' if they did not learn in school:

They will take up guns and kill each other. In this way the civil war will never stop. Therefore, we have to cultivate peace and knowledge. This is why I started to engage in education in the 1990s. But soon I saw that the youngsters who finished secondary school need a follow-up opportunity. They cannot afford to go somewhere else for further education. They need it here [in Laascaanood]. Without this opportunity, those who finished school would throw themselves away, they would try to migrate illegally [which is very dangerous]. Yet, if the students have a chance to achieve something here, they will stay. We also have children. We hope that they will have a future. Education can help in this regard (Interview, university delegation, Hargeysa, 10 February 2009).

Axmed Cabdi Timir, one of the big businessmen in Laascaanood, who had contributed significantly to the establishment and running of *Jamacadda Nugaal* and

is a member of the university committee, stressed that he himself had graduated from the secondary school in Laascaanood before the war. Thus, he personally had an interest to reopen it. He also saw the university as an asset. Axmed stressed that for his own business it is better that people have some education and do not roam around as militias. Finally, he felt a religious obligation to help the people and mentioned that knowledge and education are highly respected in Islam.

Cabdinasir added that 'if you want to develop personally, you need to better the lives of all. If only some make progress and others don't, those who lag behind will hinder the others' (Interview, university delegation, Hargeysa, 10 February 2009). Axmed Daakir, the head of the Red Crescent in Laascaanood who had spent the last two decades in town and who was a member of the university board, mentioned: 'Those who used to walk around with guns and chew *qaad* all day, now learn how to use computers. Many youngsters go to school these days and the stress and tension in the market becomes less. In the past, Laascaanood had been full of gangsters; people were killed and things were looted every night' (Interview, Axmed Daakir, Hargeysa, 3 May 2009).⁵⁷

6.3 University organisation

Jamacadda Nugaal was founded in 2004. It started with little more than 40 students in three classes. Two classes focussed on business administration, one on Shari'a (Interview Ciise Ibraahim Muuse, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009). The initial budget consisted of contributions from the diaspora community (in the USA and Europe) and local businessmen in Laascaanood. Members of the Education Committee were involved as coordinators. Some of them became members of the university board.⁵⁸ The first years of the university were overshadowed by crisis. Roughly a year after the first Chancellor, Cabdikarim Cali Jaamac, had taken over, his close patrilineal cousin committed a murder within the local Dhulbahante community. To avoid becoming the target of a revenge-killing between sub-clans, the Chancellor had to flee Laascaanood overnight.⁵⁹ The university board elected Cabdiraxmaan Ilkocase

⁵⁷ The problem of the armed, uneducated, and unemployed young men was in fact a general problem all over Somaliland throughout the 1990s. In Hargeysa, they were called *dayday*; in Laascaanood their name was *jiri*.

⁵⁸ The university board had 15 members in 2009, who were intellectuals, businessmen, or civil society activists. Simultaneously, the members of the board represented the most important sub-divisions of the Dhulbahante clan.

⁵⁹ In blood feuds between sub-clans that are particularly bitter – as was the case here – the relatives of the victim seek to kill the most prestigious member of the group of the killer. The university chancellor clearly was on 'top of the list', as several interview partners (who belonged to different Dhulbahante sub-clans) emphasised.

as next Chancellor. Soon, Cabdiraxmaan got into dispute with the teachers and some board members over the curriculum. The affair escalated into a power struggle between the Chancellor and the rest of the university staff. It was transformed into a 'tribal' dispute when the Chancellor appealed to his sub-clan to support him and to consider the university 'theirs'. He locked the university building, backed by some of his close relatives, among them also students. The university board tried to negotiate with Cabdiraxmaan, but the negotiations failed. The majority of the students insisted that they continued their education, and finally the university board, without the Chancellor, rented a new building where the university could reopen.

Much of the previous investments into the university including chairs, tables, photocopy machines, and books (thousands of books had been donated by the diaspora and particularly by a man called Prof. Xayd, who resided in the USA) were lost or at least locked in the previous university building guarded by a particular sub-clan. The Puntland authorities that were controlling Laascaanood at the time did not intervene. Thus, in late 2006 *Jamacadda Nugaal* was on the verge to collapse. The university board asked Cabdirisaq Lafoole, a member of the Dhulbahante-diaspora, to take over the position of Chancellor. Cabdirisaq agreed, under the condition that he could do the job part-time. He had just started to work at the Teacher Education College in Garoowe (the capital of Puntland). Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe became Vice-Chancellor. He had already been a teacher at the university and previously had taught at the Al Furqan primary and intermediary school in town. The two men and their staff had to start from the scratch again. Due to a lack of finances, the Shari'a branch of the university was closed (Interviews, Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009; Cabdirisaq Lafoole, Laascaanood, 18 April 2009; Axmed Daakir, Hargeysa, 03 May 2009).

Since the second beginning in early 2007, the university had developed well. In 2009, it had around 100 students, about 10% of whom were female. It offered BAs in Business Administration and IT. *Jamacadda Nugaal* had a small computer lab and the library was under construction. It also organised short courses in English and computer training. The regular BA courses ran for four years and the first graduations were expected for September 2009.⁶⁰ The fee per semester for each course was around 120 US\$ (20 US\$ per month). It was striking that quite a few older people,

⁶⁰ In fact, 22 students of Business Administration graduated successfully from *Jamacadda Nugaal* in September 2009; four of them were women.

men and women, were among the students. They had concluded their previous education before the state collapse and now continued a kind of second education (Interviews Ciise Ibraahim Muuse, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009; Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009).



Figure 5. *Jamacadda Nugaal*, Laascaanood, 2009 (© Hoehne).

More than ten teachers worked at the university in early 2009. All of them belonged to the locally dominant Dhulbahante clan. Not all of them, however, lived permanently in Laascaanood. Several teachers commuted and spent only two days per week in town and at the university. The bulk of their work was elsewhere, in Garoowe. Two of the teachers had a diaspora background: the new Chancellor, Cabdirisaaq Lafoole, who had come from the USA, and the IT teacher, who had previously stayed in Sweden. The salary of the teachers depended on the hours they taught and, in some cases, their extra expenses for travelling; it varied between 500 and 800 US\$ per month. Ciise, the accountant estimated that the total costs of the university were around 10,000 US\$ per month, including salaries for all teachers and other staff, rent for the building (around 300 US\$) and office material (Interview, Ciise Ibraahim Muuse, 15 April 2009).

The fees of the students clearly covered only a small part of the monthly budget. Cabdinasir, the Vice-Chancellor, explained that occasional contributions from local businessmen, but also from big companies in Hargeysa, such as Telesom and Dahabshiil, added considerably to the finances of the university. Moreover, *Jamacadda Nugaal* received limited funding from the government of Somaliland since 2008. For the running year (2009), the Vice-Chancellor expected a sum of around 18,000 US\$ from Hargeysa. This shows that *Jamacadda Nugaal* is now part of Somaliland's administration. The university leadership is eager to strengthen its relationship with Hargeysa and several delegations have visited the capital in the last two years. One result was that President Daahir Rayaale Kahin (2002-2010) agreed, upon a proposal from the local administration in Laascaanood, to turn over a plot of state-owned land to *Jamacadda Nugaal* for a future campus. The land is located in the middle of Laascaanood and has been fenced off recently with a stone wall built by the university. Cabdinasir stressed that, for the construction of a real campus, *Jamacadda Nugaal* would need 150-300,000 US\$ depending on the size of the buildings. This money was (still) lacking.

A positive new development was the foundation of a University Committee (*guddiga jamacadda*) abroad, in Europe and the USA. This committee just had taken up some tasks, such as buying an overhead projector for the university (still to be shipped to northern Somalia). 'If this continues, it can become a way to rebuild and develop the area. The relationship with this committee abroad can also introduce new ideas and advice, besides some concrete economic investments' (Interview, Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009). By early 2010, *Jamacadda Nugaal* had become part of the externally funded SCOTT programme concerning teachers' training. Every university participating in this programme receives funds per trained teacher per month. Usually, dozens of teachers particularly from the countryside are trained for around two months per year at the partner university in their region. SCOTT thus creates additional income for universities (Telephone Interview, Cabdirisq Lafoole, 18 February 2010).



Figure 6. Graduation Ceremony, *Jamacadda Nugaal*, Laascaanood, 2009 (© *Jamacadda Nugaal*); left side: Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe and Cabdirisaaq Lafaole congratulating students; rights side: Axmed Daakir giving a speech.

6.4 Students' perspectives

The students I interviewed as a group presented a mixed assessment of the current educational situation up to the tertiary level in Laascaanood. They agreed that many schools opened over the past decade and appreciated the chances to study at a university in their hometown now. This was much cheaper than going to Hargeysa or Boosaaso. The older ones, who had seen the system under Siyad Barre, however, stressed that in the past the education had been better organised and free. Today, the curricula differ from institution to institution and people have to pay for the education. The older ones remembered that in the early 1990s many young men just walked around with guns and fought, looted, and killed. One senior student stressed that the members of diaspora engage positively in a number of local affairs. They support education, build houses for their relatives in the towns and villages, invest in some companies in Laascaanood (particularly telecommunication companies), and also become active when two groups fight each other. They pay for the cars and the fuel for the traditional authorities to meet and settle the conflict and contribute to the compensation sum (Somali: *mag*).⁶¹ Still, the political instability of the place and the disunity of the people [concerning politics] limits the potential for further development (Group Interview, Students Nugaal University, Laascaanood 14 April 2009).

⁶¹ On the other hand, some diasporic actors still engage in conflict escalation between Somaliland and Puntland over the control of Laascaanood; see below.



Figure 7. Graduation Ceremony, *Jamacadda Nugaal*, Laascaanood 2009 (© *Jamacadda Nugaal*).

Aamina, one of the senior students I interviewed on a separate occasion had been a professional nurse before the state collapse. She argued that in the early 1990s, before most youngsters in Laascaanood had a chance to go to school and university, many were trying to migrate illegally, e.g., across the Gulf of Aden to Yemen and then further. 'But now, we are lucky. The students can learn something in their hometown.' Aamina had been among the first students who entered *Jamacadda Nugaal* in 2004. She hoped to receive her certificate in Business Administration in 2009. She argued that large numbers of youths without education and jobs can be dangerous. 'Previously, we had elders who knew the culture and who could settle conflicts. [After the state collapse] many youngsters came to town who had no education and didn't know what to do. They just killed each other.' Besides her studies, Aamina was the head of a newly opened nursing school in Laascaanood. She stressed that she wanted to participate in the development of the Sool region. Her project had not yet received help from the diaspora. She criticised those living abroad that they assisted the local health sector only occasionally; continuous and

concerted engagement was missing (Interview, Aamina Xassan Xuseen, Laascaanood, 18 April 2009).⁶²

6.5 Effect of political instability on diasporic engagement

The political conflict between Somaliland and Puntland that plays out in Laascaanood and its surroundings has a marked effect on the development of the area. It was already mentioned above that international organisations hardly ever come to the town. Cabdinasir, the Vice-Chancellor of *Jamacadda Nugaal*, underlined that the instability also prevents diasporic engagement particularly in the economic sector:

If somebody wishes to establish a factory that costs a lot of money, he will first think about the security of the place of investment. Laascaanood is between Puntland and Somaliland, and war can happen any time. Therefore, people rather invest in Hargeysa or Boosaaso (Interview, Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009).

In fact, compared to Hargeysa, Burco, and other places in Somaliland, Laascaanood was economically 'barren'. Livestock and long-distance trade with southern Somalia and Puntland had previously been the backbone of the local economy. Yet, frequent droughts and the conflict between Somaliland and Puntland that hindered the transport of goods through the area undermined these modes of subsistence and income generation. Of course, the economic development of a place affects the educational sector, with regard to job opportunities for graduates. Clearly, most of the future graduates from *Jamacadda Nugaal* will have to look elsewhere for attractive jobs.

Another effect of the political conflict in the region is disunity among the clan community in the Sool region and in the diaspora. Cabdirisaq Abu Shaybe mentioned that even the Education Committee in Laascaanood finally fell apart due to internal misunderstandings and tensions related to the political situation. Many diasporic actors stopped their support for Laascaanood, including money sent to the university, in reaction to Somaliland's takeover. In their perspective, the town is currently under 'foreign occupation'. Those locals who remained or returned⁶³ were considered

⁶² The comparison of diasporic engagement in different fields, such as education, health care, services, and infrastructure building, would be an interesting future research project, to learn more about the preferences of diaspora actors.

⁶³ Thousands inhabitants of Laascaanood had fled in October 2007, when the fighting over the control of the town began. Afterwards, only some of the refugees returned. Those who were employed by the Puntland

'traitors' in the eyes of the nationalist diaspora, since they obviously made do with the new situation.

For those who stay in the diaspora, the fact that Somaliland currently is here [in Laascaanood] is much direr than for the locals. In general, the only point on which most people [Dhulbahante inside and outside the country] agree and about which they get emotional is that Somalia cannot be divided [meaning: the secession of Somaliland is not accepted]. Still, most people here in town are willing to cooperate with the Somaliland authorities with regard to peace and development. Only those who stay outside [in the diaspora] argue: 'we have been captured by force and our land and people have to be freed before we can think about development' (Interview, Cabdinasir Abu Shaybe, Laascaanood, 15 April 2009).

All people I interviewed in Laascaanood agreed that Somaliland actually brought peace and stability to the area. Hargeysa also gave a helping hand to the university and to the schools in the area and is currently trying to establish a functioning civil administration. Recently, Cabdiraxmaan Ilkocase, the former Chancellor of *Jamacadda Nugaal*, who had locked the university in 2006, was imprisoned for a short while. It was demanded that he and his supporters return the property of the university, including books, chairs, tables, and a photocopy machine (Interview, Axmed Daakir, Laascaanood, 3 May 2009). The big development projects, however, that would be related to the arrival of international organisations, did not yet materialise.⁶⁴ This disappointed many locals who had hoped for more from Hargeysa. Nonetheless, everybody agreed that the current situation was better than during Puntland's reign (2004-2007), when security in Laascaanood was bad, killings and revenge killings continued unabated, and not much was invested in civilian administration. 'Puntland just brought the military' was what locals already said in 2004 and repeated in retrospect in 2009.

With regard to diasporic engagement, *Jamacadda Nugaal* is actively searching for new sources of support. Not all Dhulbahante in Sool and the diaspora are categorically against cooperation with Somaliland. Cabdirisq Lafaole regularly travels abroad, particularly to the UK. There he combines family visits with

administration, but also businessmen who realised that the occupation is bad for the economy stayed away. In early 2009, a number of shops and houses in Laascaanood were visibly deserted.

⁶⁴ People in Laascaanood frequently voiced one particular concern that needed external intervention but so far had been left unattended: the bad quality of the ground water that had to be used for consumption by poorer families. Smaller but important projects like the local nursing school that had been opened by a small group of volunteers in 2008 were also hoping for support that was, however, still pending in early 2009 (Interview, Aamina Xassan Xuseen, Laascaanood, 18 April 2009).

campaigning for the university and updating the diaspora on the 'real' situation on the ground in Laascaanood. The argument of the university leadership is: first, whatever political positions people hold, they wish to have peace; and second, education is in the interest of all, regardless of their orientation toward Puntland or Somaliland.

6.6 Summary

The foundation and continued existence of *Jamacadda Nugaal* represents the climax of a long and tiresome process of rebuilding basic educational facilities in a marginal place that is characterised by political instability. In the process, diasporic actors played an important role, next to concerned members of the local elite, some of whom have never been abroad but established relations to the diaspora. Cabdirisaaq Lafoole, the current Chancellor of the university, mentioned that his diaspora experience had taught him about unity and respect among people in general, across ethnic and other divisions. This is what he wanted to convey to the people at home in Somalia.

While the reconstruction of education in Laascaanood had been a success in the eyes of all people I interviewed, it is clear that the ongoing conflict between Somaliland and Puntland over the control of the town and the Sool region has a negative impact on life in town in general and the educational sector in particular. The stop of remittances to Laascaanood after October 2007, when Somaliland took over, was a kind of 'punishment' of long-distance nationalists for their pragmatic relatives at home, who co-operated with the new power holders. The tragedy is that all people I talked to in Laascaanood in early 2009 emphasised that Somaliland brought peace and stability, while some diaspora actors push in the opposite direction: influential members of the Dhulbahante-diaspora met with 'Puntland-friendly' traditional authorities and political figures from the Sool region in Nairobi in late 2008 and early 2009 to discuss the further political developments. There were at least rumours that weapons for the recapture of Laascaanood had been purchased with diaspora money. It was said that some Dhulbahante in London, who had belonged to the state apparatus under Siyad Barre, were particularly active in this regard. The political instability also prevents international organisations from engaging in Laascaanood and its surroundings.

7 Education in difficult surroundings: comparing both case studies

Both *Jamacadda Geeska* and *Jamacadda Nugaal* are part of the currently ongoing second phase of peacebuilding in Somaliland, as outlined above. In a very general sense, their existence provides the post-civil-war generation with a chance for a peaceful and personally fulfilling future. Nonetheless, the points of departure in both cases are quite different. *Jamacadda Geeska* is located in the political and economic centre of Somaliland. Furthermore, almost all international organisations that work in Somaliland have their main offices here. This provides students in Hargeysa with many opportunities for trainings and jobs. In contrast, *Jamacadda Nugaal* is located in the absolute periphery. Even in good times, the economy of Laascaanood is based on pastoral-nomadism and transit trade. The long-standing conflict between Somaliland and Puntland over the town and the Sool region increases the marginality of the place.

The differences between centre and periphery also characterise the 'genealogical set-up' of the two universities. Genealogical belonging plays a minor role in *Jamacadda Geeska*. Two founders are from the north, two from the south. Common aims, religious orientations, and partly common diaspora experiences seem to provide the intellectual and ideological basis for the establishment of the university. The students come predominantly from the north, many from Hargeysa. But there are also students from other parts of Somalia. People at *Jamacadda Geeska* do not see it as an Isaaq-institution. It is 'internationally' oriented. In the case of *Jamacadda Nugaal*, genealogical identity is very important. It is basically a university run by Dhulbahante for Dhulbahante. It is strongly rooted in the local community and depends on the members of this clan in the diaspora. Its vision was to develop the region. All students are locals. Thus, *Jamacadda Nugaal* is a kind of self-help operation of people residing in-between, in the periphery between Somaliland and Puntland.

With regard to the foundation process of *Jamacadda Geeska* and *Jamacadda Nugaal*, the 'diaspora consciousness' of some of the central actors involved played a role. Vertovec (1997) stressed that the experience of dispersal, flight, and refuge, which often lies at the beginning of diasporic social formations, can condense to a 'diaspora consciousness'. This consciousness is shaped by the experiences during migration and in the country of residence. It includes loss and hope as defining

tension and frequently leads members of the diaspora to reflect on issues of human rights, social justice, and how to better the situation in the country of origin (ibid.: 281-283). The migration and diaspora experience of the three founders of *Jamacadda Geeska* who I managed to interview directly feed into their current engagement in the educational sector in Somaliland. In the case of *Jamacadda Nugaal*, the lessons learned abroad also strongly influenced the current Chancellor. However, *Jamacadda Nugaal* was, unlike *Jamacadda Geeska*, a joint project of locals and diasporic actors. It therefore was directly born out of the need of the local community, whereas *Jamacadda Geeska* started as a 'brain child' of those abroad. These differences in the foundation process are also reflected in the current working of the two universities. *Jamacadda Geeska* is engaged in a number of outreach activities that arguably have the potential to influence the wider society through cultural events and public discussions on sensitive issues. In a micro-sociological perspective, this can be seen as one step in the direction of building a 'new' Somali 'personality' as envisioned by Sheikh Almis and others (as outlined above). This qualifies as peacebuilding education, which, according to Bush and Saltarelli (2000: 29), involves the problematization of issues, the cultivation of critical thinking and the provision of alternatives, not only in the classroom but also beyond. In contrast, *Jamacadda Nugaal* is mostly concerned with its own economic survival and with the development of educational capacities in the local context of Laascaanood. There are no resources for outreach activities in the cultural or social sphere. Still, the vision to teach fellow Somalis about peaceful co-existence was voiced by the Chancellor. Practical steps into this direction, e.g., through holding public discussions on burning issues in Laascaanood, have yet to follow.

8 Conclusion

The recent studies of the World Bank (2005), Rose and Greeley (2006), Davies (2009), and others highlighted that external factors such as government policies, financial resources, administrative skills, transparency, professionalism, and the will of the community to participate shape the effectiveness of education with regard to peacebuilding. Education alone cannot lead to the sustainable transformation of structural conflict factors and patterns (which is the definition of peacebuilding

applied in this paper). This point was generally confirmed by the material presented in this study. However, the situation in Somaliland deviates in two important aspects from the mentioned literature, which usually focuses on the relationship between state institutions, social and political developments and education. First, diasporic actors did have the capacity to provide the necessary financial basis to make education work in war-torn Somaliland for more than a decade from the mid-1990s onwards *in the absence of effective state institutions and political initiatives in the educational sector*. Second, intensive diaspora investments in the wider economic sector in Somaliland *provided also job opportunities for graduates*. More recently, these job opportunities were supplemented by the employment offers of international aid organisations that opened offices, particularly in Hargeysa. Thus, the diaspora took the lead and filled the void left by the state institutions, and it was impressively successful. The combined diaspora investments in the educational and the economic sector directly contributed to peacebuilding in many locales of Somaliland from the second half of the 1990s onwards. Enrolment in schools and universities became an attractive option for many youngsters in the country and an alternative to the militias.⁶⁵

Arguably, engaging in education and economic development can also be seen as a vernacular, bottom-up modernisation project. Building schools and universities is, since the 19th century at least, usually a state-project. Doing so in the absence of an effective government is a highly ambitious, but also prestigious operation, for which fund-raising in the diaspora may be relatively easy.⁶⁶ Based on her research in Denmark Kleist (2009: 110) described already how Somali diaspora-activists in Denmark see themselves as ‘agents of modernity and change, contributing to social reconstruction and stability, and thereby, in the long run, to peace and democratization.’

Still, the situation of students in Somaliland in 2010 does not support the optimistic assumptions of Cassanelli and Farah (2007: 91) that ‘good education can help to reduce gender inequalities, child exploitation, and the likelihood of future violence in the wider society’. My study has shown that, while much more girls/young women are enrolled in educational institutions up to the tertiary level in Somaliland

⁶⁵ This goes even for southern Somalia, where the educational sector is booming, despite ongoing civil war (Horst 2008: 332-33). Learning conditions there, however, are quite different from the ones in Somaliland.

⁶⁶ Clearly, founding local universities involves regional, but, in some cases, at least, also ‘clan-pride’.

now than in the past, there is still a huge discrepancy between male and female enrolment. Particularly at the universities, there are considerably more male than female students. There are at least two main reasons for this: first, Somali women usually marry relatively early, roughly between 18 and 22 (in some more remote places, e.g., in the Sool region, even earlier). Second, there are much less qualified jobs for women than for men in government institutions and in the private sector. Only international NGOs seem to focus particularly on the employment of women in higher positions.

The biggest problem, however, is that the jobs created through diasporic investments in the local economy and even those offered by the government, the international organisations and the NGOs are by far not enough to absorb the steadily increasing number of secondary school and university graduates. This undermines Samatar's (2001: 654) argument that common and future-oriented projects such as the foundation of educational institutions mark the 'transition from peacemaking to development'. The economy did not develop as hoped for. In 2010, this leaves most graduates without the prospects they had envisioned when they embarked on the path of education a few years ago. Some of the factors that account for the economic stagnation are the lack of international recognition, the Saudi ban on Somali livestock (in place since 2000), the lack of political vision concerning 'national' socio-economic development, and the rampant corruption within the Somaliland government. The more university students graduate, the more the discrepancy between the hopes of the younger generation and the economic realities in the country grows. This is in fact a 'classic' problem of many developing countries and can lead to new (violent) conflicts (Babyesiza n.d.: 5).

This problem of underdevelopment is accelerated further in the periphery of Somaliland. If at all, lucrative jobs are found in government institutions and the international NGOs and UN organisations that work in Somaliland, all of which have their offices in Hargeysa. In contrast, Laascaanood's local economy is very poor and international organisations are completely absent due to the political and military tensions between Somaliland and Puntland. *Jamacadda Nugaal* graduates hardly find any well-paid job at home. They have to either move to one of the larger cities in northern Somalia (Hargeysa, Garoowe or Boosaasso) or try to go abroad in search of work.

The interviews with students in both locations, Hargeysa and Laascaanood, revealed that migration (legally or illegally) is increasingly seen as the only opportunity to enhance the life chances of the younger generation. The ambitious and financially well-equipped students, who are usually supported by relatives in the diaspora, continue their studies in one of the larger universities in the Horn, e.g., in Nairobi or Kampala. Once they received their MA (in Somaliland one can only study up to the BA level) they either return with better chances on the job market, or look for work abroad. Others choose illegal migration in the hope to finally become recognised as asylum seekers in Europe or North America and to build a new life there. This is, of course, a long term project; its success is uncertain. A considerable number of students die on the way every year.⁶⁷ The largest group of graduates accepts its fate in Somaliland and copes with unemployment or underemployment. Young men frequently succumb to the general fatigue of those spending much of their life time and resources chewing *qaad*, while young women may find 'refuge' and at least some social status, if not personal orientation, by marrying.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to end this paper on this somewhat disillusioning note. I agree with Samatar (2001: 642) that community-owned educational institutions have the potential to strengthen shared values and hopes. In the recent past, they were 'essential to establishing collective self-worth and rebuilding inclusive polity and identity' (ibid. 645). This was illustrated by the case studies in this paper. What is left now is that the government of Somaliland continues the good work in peacebuilding and development that was begun by local communities in cooperation with the diaspora. The framework conditions supporting the contributions of education to sustainable peace and development mentioned by the World Bank (2005) and Rose and Greenly (2006) and outlined above, such as sound politics and committed leadership, have to be systematically established. International organisations and NGOs may be able to help in this regard through targeted assistance.

⁶⁷ In 2008, the news that about 150 graduates from Amuud University drowned at sea on their way from Libya across the straits of Gibraltar shocked people in Somaliland (and elsewhere).

9 Recommendations

To the government of Somaliland

- Structure education nationwide in Somaliland; establish a legal framework through passing the educational law.
- Assess the needs of the local communities and guide diaspora assistance to fill the remaining gaps in the educational landscape.
- Develop curricula for schools and universities that are in accordance with the economic and other needs of Somaliland society.
- Bundle expertise and capacities in key subjects such as teachers training, medicine and veterinary medicine and establish and fund centres for the study of these subjects; provide stipends for excellent local students to study these subjects.

To the international organisations and NGOs

- Support the government of Somaliland in its efforts to systematise education in Somaliland and to guarantee opportunities for education all over the country, also in the peripheral regions.
- Open offices in the peripheral regions to give job opportunities to otherwise disenfranchised locals.
- Offer internships to students during their education.

To the universities

- Establish regular cooperation with government offices, hospitals, private businesses, international organisations and NGOs for internships for students during education.

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