

QUESTS-MIDA BULLETIN

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WE CAN'T CHANGE SOMALIA OVERNIGHT, BUT THE DIASPORA'S CONTRIBUTION IS ONE KEY TO A LASTING SOLUTION

“Somalia is in need of strategic planning if we want to see progress and lasting change” says Abdi Osman Jama from Helsinki/Finland, adding that “QUESTS-MIDA provides excellent opportunities for qualified Somalis like myself to contribute to this process”.

This is why Mr. Jama plans to take leave from his professional engagements and return to Somalia in 2010 as part of the QUESTS-MIDA project. His vision is to apply his skills and knowledge in strategic planning and leadership training in order to improve Somali public institutions' capacity to deliver services: “QUESTS-MIDA is important because it targets Somali institutions of government; if the public administration works efficiently, this creates a reliable foundation for a whole range of activities with an impact on the lives and well-being of all citizens.”

“Somalia needs strategic planning if we are to see any progress and lasting change”

Having left Somali some 19 years ago, Mr Jama lived in Qatar and Russia before settling in Finland, where he completed his university education with a BA course in engineering, followed by a MA degree in industrial management. At thirty-six years of age, he currently works as a lecturer and consultant in the field of enterprise architecture and development in Finland, as well

as in various international projects. One of the most important skills in his job, Mr Jama explains, is the ability to positively influence people's mind-sets to bring about change. He thinks that “this skill will be very helpful for capacity-building assignments in today's Somalia, which suffers from brain-drain and the lack of up-to-date knowledge in so many areas.”

“Somalia cannot change overnight, but positive contribution from the Diaspora Contribution can create a lasting impact”

In addition to his professional engagements, Mr Jama is also an active member of the Somali diaspora and supports civil society organizations in both Finland and Somalia, for example, by giving advice on organizational development and management performance improvement. Not least through this voluntary involvement in Somali affairs he has come to realize the vast potential of the diaspora's contribution to rebuilding Somalia: “Many of us Somalis in the diaspora have excellent qualifications and at the same time a great motivation to help people back home in Somalia. The combination of these two factors through projects such as QUESTS-MIDA means that we can make a real difference”.

THERE ARE BIG OPPORTUNITIES IN SOMALIA FOR THE DIASPORA COMMUNITY

Despite the challenges facing the Somalia, more Somalis in the Diaspora are embracing the concept of returning home and engaging in development projects that in turn go a long way in benefiting their societies.

Zahra Abtidon, a Somali woman from Italy and a Co-founder of the Gender Education Empowerment and Leadership Organization, believes that Somalis in the diaspora can contribute immensely to the development of Somalia, if only they are willing to try.

“The Diaspora is already supporting communities in Somalia in various ways but we can still do better. We come from well established families and efficient institutions abroad. We have gained so much additional knowledge and working expertise and with only a little support form the Somalis in small towns and cities abroad, we can work magic in Somalia”. Says Zahra.

Zahra is the CEO and Co-founder of Gender Education Empowerment and Leadership Organization (GEELO), an organization that works to promote girl child education and lobby for the rights of women in Somalia.

Having worked in Somalia for the past eight years Zahra carried out a needs assessment to identify the community’s point of need and identified a gap in agricultural production. She consequently mobilized for funding and established an agricultural project to boost agricultural production in the Hiraan region of South Central Somalia. Zahra points out that despite the love for agriculture, the people of Hiraan lack adequate agricultural inputs and lack of farming knowledge as the problem that was ailing agriculture in Hiraan. She partnered with FAO and is currently giving relevant agricultural training to farmers in Hiraan, providing them with seeds, pesticides and farming tools.

She continuously encourages the community to take advantage of the two rivers that flow across the villages in the Hiraan region to irrigate their crops. *“The challenge here is flooding when it rains and drought that*

dries up the rivers.”

The impact on the people of Hiraan she says is encouraging. *“The community is happy to see people that they know come back. They were very welcoming to me when they found out I was coming back to work with them. They are continuously struggling and this kind of gesture gives them a lot of hope.”*

Every working environment has its challenges and Zahra has learnt to overcome them. She describes the Somali community as being a little complicated. “Men who run NGOs may find my success a little bit intimidating,” she adds with laughter but a little jealousy hurts no one.

Finding qualified candidates for the available opportunities adds on to the challenge. Zahra often strives to open up the opportunities to qualified candidates from other regions outside Hiraan but his affects the work output because such candidates often don’t feel comfortable in a region that is not their own.

“The community is happy to see people that they know come back. They were very welcoming to me when they found out I was coming back to work with them.

Zahra attributes her success in Somalia to the willingness to learn. “I feel satisfied, like I am growing up somehow. I have learnt to listen to people more; I am much more exposed and have capacity to handle various kinds of challenges.” She says.

Her Message to the Somalis in the Diaspora is that, “You can do more when you come back to Somalia. Please come and try and from my experience, you will not regret that decision.”

QUESTS-MIDA ADVERTISES NEW VACANCIES IN PUNTLAND AND SOMALILAND

New Vacancies have been advertised on the QUESTS-MIDA website for Puntland and Somaliland. The vacancies are open to all qualified male and female Somali expatriates in the Diaspora.

These positions can be accessed from the QUESTS-MIDA website on www.quests-mida.org

**All applications must be submitted
online**

RECENT EVENTS

Entebbe II Somali Diaspora Conference

Date: 7 – 11 Dec 2009

Venue: Mombasa Continental Resort, Mombasa, Kenya

Details: This conference served to strengthen the cohesion and action of the Somali civil society. It brought together a wide range of leading civil society actors, including NGOs, the business sector, Diaspora and media, both from within Somalia and from the Diaspora.

The conference presented a space for Somali civil society and Diaspora opinion-makers to: (a) bring to the forefront a more unified voice of the civil society in a quest for national reconciliation in Somalia and (b) revitalize the reconciliation and nation-building roles of the Somali civil society and Diaspora. The conference also provided a neutral place for participants to reflect upon the current context, and the role of civil society in the development of Somalia.

There was a presentation on QUESTS-MIDA and thereafter a Question and Answer session followed during the final 2 days of the conference.

Seminar: The diaspora's role in development cooperation

Date: Fri 18 Dec 2009

Venue: Göteborg Folkets Hus, lokal Brännö, Gothenburg, Sweden

Details: The seminar was been organized by the Gothenburg Initiative and ForumSyd on the occasion of the International Migrants Day. The seminar focused on the migrants' role and their importance for poverty reduction and global development cooperation.