

QUESTS-MIDA E-Newsletter

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Introduction

2 010 was a year of accomplishments for QUESTS-MIDA, and this newsletter highlights some of them. The security situation in south-central Somalia has continued to pose challenges for recruitment for this troubled region of Somalia. Despite the challenges, we are happy to report that we have so far placed 25 experts (21 male, 4 female) in institutions, particularly in Puntland and Somaliland, where they are developing the capacity of staff in specific priority institutions.

These individuals have left their families, friends, and jobs because of their commitment to rebuilding their homeland, and more are in the process of

recruitment. QUESTS-MIDA is honored to facilitate and support the transfer of knowledge and skills from such committed individuals to recipient institutions in Somalia.

QUESTS-MIDA acknowledges that it has been difficult to send out personal messages to all the thousands of people who have contacted us, but slowly we do go through all the emails that we receive. Our New Year's resolution is to send out more regular project updates and to also keep going through all the emails we have received. Please understand that QUESTS-MIDA operates with a small staff, and we are committed to communicating with you.

"25 QUESTS-MIDA participants in Somalia (4 women, 21 men)"

"All applications must be submitted online"
www.quests-mida.org

QUESTS-MIDA Success Stories

H assan* is a native of the region of Puntland who has returned temporarily with the QUESTS-MIDA project to contribute his skills and expertise to the greater benefit of the people of Puntland. Hassan is passionate about environmental conservation and has extensive training in forestry and wildlife management. Although he was living in North America for 20 years, he had been closely monitoring the situation in Somalia, especially the environmental degradation that has been going on.

As many Somalis in the diaspora have done, Hassan chose to travel to his homeland and get a first-hand account of the situation. *Name has been changed to protect identity.

A few years ago, while visiting Puntland, he discovered that there was a dire need for primary and secondary schools in the region. Using his networks both in the diaspora as well as in Somalia, resources he raised the necessary resources to establish a school. Over the last few years, the



QUESTS_MIDA

E-mail:

quests-mida@iom.int

Website:

<http://www.quests-mida.org>

**QUESTS- MIDA Success Stories:
'Improving his Environment'**

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school has continued to grow and is able to provide education for an ever-growing student population.

In 2010, as a successful business owner in North America, Hassan again decided to put his life on hold and go back to Puntland as a Natural Resource Management specialist for the QUESTS-MIDA project. Part of his assignment is to support holistic environmental thinking in combating desertification, controlling pollution, establishment of urban greening program, protecting endangered wildlife and plant species and fostering broad-based environmental education, training and awareness.



Seedlings that Hassan has planted in Puntland.

In the first six months of his assignment, Hassan has been working hard to build partnerships to mitigate the effects of deforestation in Puntland. Together with assistance from the International Organization for Migration, he has established the Garowe Tree Nursery and Arboretum. He has also developed a Tree Nursery Manual for Puntland and trained key staff on tree nursery management best practices. Hassan has also completed a progress report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which shows the progress that Puntland has made in promoting environmental sustainability.

In response to a question about the secret of his success, Hassan responds that "motivation is my only tool. It is hard to sustain continued transfer-of-knowledge without an incen-

tive." During his initial interviews he vowed that "before my term ends the [institution] will have a proper strategic and action plan and hopefully a resource centre for studies and training as well as a tree nursery with trained staff." Although his assignment is for only one-year, Hassan has exceeded expectations by achieving most of the targets set for his assignment.



A team planting Hassan's seedlings in Puntland.

QUESTS-MIDA is honored to facilitate and highlight Hassan's contribution as a dedicated diaspora Somali sharing his technical knowledge to make Puntland a better place.

**QUESTS-MIDA CONSULTANT IN NORTH AMERICA
ZAMZAM HAJI**

Zamzam Haji has lived with her family in the United States for the past 15 years; she previously lived in Minnesota, but has recently moved to Atlanta, Georgia. As a member of the Somali diaspora, Zamzam has been active in the Somali community as well as volunteered for local charity organizations. As a mother with a young family, Zamzam is very much aware of some of the difficulties faced by diaspora women who are trying to raise a family while working and going to school part-time.

In spite of the challenges, Zamzam's message to young women living in the diaspora is that anything is possible if one "simply soldiers on with grit and determination." Zamzam

QUESTS– MIDA CONSULTANT IN NORTH AMERICA *(continued from Page 2)*

hopes to show her daughter that education and economic independence will open a whole new world with exciting opportunities for an intelligent, determined girl.

In 2009, Zamzam and her family moved to Nairobi, Kenya to explore the possibilities of relocating to Africa. Her primary motivation was to find ways to contribute her knowledge and skills to Somalia, and the presence of international non-governmental organizations in Nairobi made it a natural choice for her family. In 2010, Zamzam joined the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as a project assistant supporting the QUESTS-MIDA project. During her time at QUESTS-MIDA, Zamzam was responsible for liaising with government officials and members of the diaspora, including setting up interviews for various posts in Somalia.

As the project evolved, Zamzam’s role transitioned from being a project assistant in Nairobi to a Diaspora Liaison Consultant for North America. The transition has been good because it allowed Zamzam and her children to rejoin her husband who had been left behind when the family moved to Kenya. She is anxious to take up her new diaspora engagement role and can barely suppress her excitement as she asserts that “one area that [she is] keen to explore is how to better engage young Somalis living in North America in nation-building activities in Somalia. In [her] conversations with the youth, once one mentions rebuilding Somalia there is a sparkle that gleams in their eyes and they can barely suppress their eagerness to get involved.”

Zamzam’s understanding of how the project works from the perspective of all stakeholders involved is a great advantage in outreach because she will be able to provide a holistic picture of the project to the diaspora. Zamzam is also well placed to provide detailed information on the recruitment process, successes, challenges and constraints among other pertinent information. In addition to her outreach role, Zamzam will attempt to provide accurate information on the skills and assets that exist in the North American Somali diaspora. This will be critical to the success of the QUESTS-MIDA project.

Zamzam’s message to the Somali diaspora in North America is “I hope we shall be able to live up to your expectations. Inshallah!”



Zamzam Haji—QUESTS-MIDA Consultant

QUESTS-MIDA Survey Results

From 1 September to 31 December 2009 QUESTS-MIDA conducted an online survey of Somalis in the diaspora. The survey was an attempt to learn more about the online Somali community worldwide. To see the QUESTS-MIDA survey results in more detail, [go to the quests-mida.org](http://quests-mida.org) website. **1,027 total online surveys** were completed by 31 December, 2009.

Overall, the survey respondents were from a diverse array of countries, ages and academic qualifications, as seen in the survey results. The survey informed us that online Somalis worldwide are very much tied into what is going on in Somalia. They are very active and engaged in sharing resources and traveling to Somalia for a variety of reasons.

2011 QUESTS-MIDA EVENTS in the Diaspora

QUESTS-MIDA Information Meeting in Minneapolis, MN

Date: Sat 29 Jan 2011 – 2 PM - 4 PM

Venue: 420 15th Ave South, Minneapolis, MN 55454

Details: The meeting will serve to provide in-depth information about QUESTS-MIDA, and the opportunity to participate in capacity building in Somalia institutions.

Feedback will be received from the participants. Information materials will also be distributed including the QUESTS-MIDA Brochure & Fact Sheet. For more information regarding the event please call +1404 910 2386 or Email: zhaji@iom.int

QUESTS-MIDA Information Meeting in Sweden/Gothenburg

Date: Sat 29 Jan 2011 – 5 PM - 8 PM

Venue: Kanelgatan 38, 42439 angared - Gothenburg, Sweden

Details: The meeting will serve to provide in-depth information about QUESTS-MIDA, as well as to discuss questions and receive feedback from participants. Information materials will also be distributed (QUESTS-MIDA Brochure & Fact Sheet). For more information regarding the event please call +358 503242644 or

Email: sguled@iom.int

QUESTS-MIDA Information Meeting in London

Date: Fri 04 Feb 2011 – 5 PM – 8 PM

Venue: The Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London, N7 6PA

Details: The meeting will serve to provide in-depth information about QUESTS-MIDA's challenges and achievements in 2010 and plans for 2011. The presentation will cover how QUESTS-MIDA project works and the role the Diaspora can play in rebuilding the Somali institutions. Questions and answers session will follow. The event will bring together prominent

Somali academics, community leaders, professionals and members of the Somali Diaspora to discuss current condition of Somali institutions and the best way that the Diaspora can be more involved in rebuilding and strengthening of these institutions through QUESTS-MIDA.

For more information regarding the event please call +44 07984052584 or Email: jjama@iom.int

QUESTS-MIDA Information Meeting In Leicester UK

Date: Sat 26th March 2011— 2 pm— 5pm

Venue: Campanile Leicester, 1, Bedford Street North, St. Mathews Way, Leicester , LE1 3JE.

Details: The meeting will serve to provide in-depth information about QUESTS-MIDA, and engage with the Somali professionals in the midlands to discuss capacity building initiatives of Somali institutions and how the diaspora can participate in the rebuilding process of institutions in Somalia. Feedback will be received from the participants. There will be questions and answers session. For more information regarding the event please call +44 07984052584 or Email: jjama2@iom.int

QUESTS-MIDA Statistics (Top 10 countries & Visitors to the Website)

Country	Jan 10	Mar 08
	Visits	
1. United States	14,780	15,411
2. UK	11,299	12,552
3. Kenya	11,473	11,965
4. Djibouti	10,181	10,483
5. Canada	6,405	6,660
6. Sweden	4,464	4,688
7. Norway	2,445	2,590
8. Netherlands	2,060	2,105
9. Finland	1,821	1,973
10. Ethiopia	1,937	1,971