

## QUESTS-MIDA E-Newsletter

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QUESTS\_MIDA

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### “To Whom Much is Given, Much is Expected”

“This is the time to go back,” explains Somali diaspora member Dr. Abdiweli M. Ali. “There is a huge brain-drain in Somalia and the country is suffering from a lack of human capital.”

It is for this very reason that Dr. Ali, an Associate Professor of Economics at Niagara University in

*“This is the time to go back”*  
**D. Ali, Associate Professor of Economics at Niagara University in New York**

in Somalia, if given a chance, Dr. Ali plans to work with the Ministry of Finance on public finance management or with the Ministry of Planning on development related issues including data analysis. He is also in conversation with East Africa University and other universities in Puntland to explore teaching opportunities.

Forty-four year old Dr. Ali, originally from central Somalia, lives in New York with his four children and his wife, who is a professor of economics at New York State University in Buffalo. According to Dr. Ali, he came to the United States for the first time in 1986 to obtain his Master’s Degree in Economics from Vanderbilt University in Tennessee. He had completed his undergraduate studies in Mogadishu and won a scholarship to study in the United States through the African Graduate Fellowship Program. Upon arrival, Dr. Ali had no trouble adjusting to life in the U.S., “I was a student, I just had fun!” he says.

*“I left in June of 1989 and came back here to the U.S.”*  
**Dr. Ali**

After receiving his Master’s Degree, Dr. Ali returned to Somalia as a government employee, only to return back to the U.S. within a year. He explains, “Unfortunately, Somalia was going through a very hard time, so I left in June of 1989 and came back here to the U.S.”

New York, Dr. Ali then earned a Master’s Degree in Public Administration from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in Cambridge, MA, a Certificate in Taxation from Harvard University Law School and a Ph.D. in Economics from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. After completing his studies, he worked for the Virginia State Government before returning to academia as a professor at Niagara University in 2003.

In addition to his life in the U.S., Dr. Ali states, “I am always engaged with Somalia.” The majority of Dr. Ali’s family members still reside in Somalia and he has been back many times to visit as well as to

*“The question in life is how you make a difference.”*

**Dr. Ali**

contribute to the country’s development. In 2005 and 2006 Dr. Ali worked as a consultant on the World Bank/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Joint Needs Assessment for Somalia. He returned again in 2008 with UNDP QUESTS and taught at Puntland State University.

“My intention is to help and to give back,” says Dr. Ali. He encourages other members of the Somali diaspora to do the same. He explains, “You can have a good life in the U.S. and never leave, but the question in life is how you make a difference. If I can change just one life for the better, then I have done my work on Earth. What is it they say? “To whom much is given much is expected!”

**QUESTION & ANSWER -  
QUESTS-MIDA ASSISTANT IN UNITED KINGDOM - LATIF ELHAG**



*Photo: Latif Elhag,  
Diaspora Liaison Assis-  
tant for UK*

**How would you describe your work as  
Diaspora Liaison Assistant (DLA) for  
QUESTS-MIDA?**

As a DLA, the essence of my work is to raise awareness and promote QUESTS-MIDA within the Somali diaspora in the UK, especially among qualified Somali expatriates who are the target of the project.

My work depends mostly on networking. I need to liaise with community leaders, organize information meetings with various community groups, and attend events organized by the Somali diaspora such as the London Somali Festival which took place recently. There are some factors that make my work difficult. Even if the whole community is willing to participate in the development of Somalia, the diaspora is quite divided. It's sometimes difficult to bring different groups together. There is no umbrella organization in the UK that brings all Somali together. Also, there are no or very few organizations of Somali professionals such as a doctors' or engineers' union or association. If there were such organizations it could make my work a lot easier.

**What did you learn so far by working with the Somali Diaspora?**

I have learned a lot about the political aspect of the diaspora among different groups. But more importantly, I have learnt how much Somalis are willing to participate in rebuilding their country. I come from a country which suffers civil strife, Sudan. I know how much the contribution of the diaspora is important in capacity building of our countries. Members of the Somali diaspora are very aware of the importance of their role in the development of Somalia. It is very inspiring for everyone to see how eager they are. But the diaspora has serious concerns about the security situation and allegations of political corruption in Somalia. QUESTS-MIDA is usually well received. There is a lot of enthusiasm in the Somali diaspora's desire to contribute but there is often lack of means and facilities. QUESTS-MIDA is perceived as a link between diaspora and their home.

**How can members of the Somali diaspora in the UK reach you?**

They can easily reach me by phone or email. They can also speak with me during the meetings I attend with the diaspora.  
Email: [lelhag@iom.int](mailto:lelhag@iom.int)  
Tel: + 44(0)20 7233 1097  
IOM UK website: [www.iomuk.org](http://www.iomuk.org)

**QUESTION & ANSWER -  
QUESTS-MIDA ASSISTANT IN NORTH AMERICA  
CATHERINE WANGAMATI**



*Photo: Catherine Wangamati,  
Diaspora Liaison assistant for North  
America*

**What is your work as a DLA?**

Basically, my work here is to engage the Somali professionals in discussions about the project to encourage them to take advantage of opportunities presented in the QM project. I send out emails, make calls, attend diaspora meetings, and organize QM information campaigns and get feedback from the diaspora which I send

to the IOM Nairobi office. Challenges include difficulties in reaching out to the Somali women as they often have more responsibilities compared to men. The Somali community is also spread out all over North America and most of it is outside the Washington DC area where the IOM office is located. This does not make it easy to have face-to-face meetings.

Divisions on ideological or clan lines in the diaspora community requires that I have to worry about who to deal with without offending a particular group especially where the group does not see eye to eye. While these groups have different ideologies, the reception of the QM project has been positive.

Diaspora members in North America willing to receive information can contact me on my email: [cwangamati@iom.int](mailto:cwangamati@iom.int) or by phone at the IOM Washington office: **+1 202 862 1826**

**What have you learned so far through your work with the diaspora?**

I have learned a lot by working with Somali diaspora. The Somali community is very hospitable. You learn to be humble, listening to their stories and understanding the Somali culture. Somalis are very motivated to rebuild Somalia. Many of them would like to go back to help but have no means or resources. They are already spending their money and resources and appreciate that QM will bring in more Somalis to help rebuild the country in a structured way. The young professionals especially impress me by how much they are motivated and willing to go back to rebuild their country of origin.

**How would you say your work has had an impact on the project?**

I send out information about the project to the Somali community and provide feedback and comments from the diaspora to the QUESTS-MIDA Nairobi office. I do believe that this process will allow for better understanding of the project by Somali diaspora communities and will result in a better acceptance and appreciation of the results of the project. The Somali diaspora appreciates that an international organization is giving information about the project and asking for comments/feedback about before implementation. That this is the best way of dealing so that the project is owned by the community and results accepted at the end of the project.

**QUESTION & ANSWER - QUESTS-MIDA ASSISTANT IN NORDIC REGION, TOBIAS VAN TREECK**

**How would you describe your work as a QUESTS-MIDA Diaspora Liaison Assistant (DLA)?**

My work as a DLA is to reach out and inform Somali diaspora members in the Nordic region about QUESTS-MIDA, to answer questions that the diaspora may have about the project and receive their feedback and feelings about it. The main purpose is to make sure QUESTS-MIDA collaborates with members of the diaspora to improve the project. It is sometimes difficult to reach members of the diaspora in Norway or Denmark; for example, as I'm based in Finland, diaspora groups are often quite dispersed, and there is not always a lot of cooperation or communication between them. We need the diaspora members we talk with to pass on the information of the project through their contacts.



*Photo: Tobias Van Treeck, (right) with Latif Elhag, during a training in Nairobi office*

After this information and outreach process, the selection process starts. I am however not involved in this process. For transparency reasons, I'm not informed about it until the selection is made by the host institution and UNDP. I do not participate in any manner in the selection process, but when I'm informed about the selected candidate, I will help him/her in his/her pre-departure.

**How can members of the Somali diaspora in the Nordic region reach you?**

My collaboration with the Somali diaspora can be made through face-to-face meetings, phone discussions, participation in Somali diaspora events, conferences and meetings in target countries. For people who live in Finland, I offer them the opportunity to come visit me at the IOM Helsinki office. For other countries in the Nordic region, the easiest way to discuss QUESTS-MIDA is through phone conversations.

Members of the diaspora interested to know more about QUESTS-MIDA or willing to comment on it can reach me by phone or email:

**Phone:** +358 9 684 11 533,  
**E-mail:** [tvantreeck@iom.int](mailto:tvantreeck@iom.int)

**What did you learn so far by working with the Somali diaspora?**

I'm also an immigrant in Finland. I understand the process of integrating into another country and another culture. I also understand that we continue to feel a strong connection with our home countries, even though we have been living in a different country for many years. After talking with members of the Somali diaspora, I am impressed by the very strong devotion they have for their country. I've learned that many diaspora members have real dedication for Somalia. Mostly this motivation comes from the basic sense that Somalia needs the support of those who left. They want to give something back to their country. There is also an interest in going back to see how the country has changed. Most of the people I have met received QUESTS-MIDA well. They view it as an opportunity to give back to Somalia.

**SELECTION FOR 4 POSITIONS IN SOMALILAND IN PROGRESS**

*Nairobi, Kenya, 17 November 2009* – QUESTS-MIDA project is in the process of selecting candidates for short-term capacity building assignments in Somaliland. Somaliland has advertised vacancies over the last few months through the QUESTS-MIDA website to recruit Somali diaspora talent and knowledge to help rebuild its institutions.

The vacancies that have been listed on the website are:

- Senior Public Administration Reform Expert
- Senior Policy Formulation Expert
- Senior Human Resource Management Expert
- Senior Information Communication Technology Expert

The selection process is ongoing. This takes place in Somalia with the beneficiary institution (s) – and the DLAs in North America, UK and Nordic region are not involved in the process for transparency reasons. Short-listed candidates will be contacted in the next weeks for interviews. When selected, the candidate will be informed and the IOM Nairobi office will inform the DLAs to get in touch with the selected candidate.

## SOMALI DIASPORA PARTICIPATION IN QUESTS-MIDA IS GROWING

## CALENDAR

There have been more than 6000 people to visit QUESTS-MIDA website since the launch and more than 600 participants of the QUESTS-MIDA survey to date.

QUESTS-MIDA will continue the survey until 31 December, then will publish the results on the website.

### In the UK

In United Kingdom, 1100 people have showed there interest to QUESTS-MIDA by visiting the website while 110 people have completed the survey.

### In the US and Canada

While more than 1900 person were visiting the website, some 120 send the survey.

### In Nordic region

Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, Denmark and Finland completed 62 surveys for about 510 visitors on the website.

Somalis from more than 50 countries have participated in the survey.

It is thanks to the participation and exchange between the QUESTS-MIDA team and diaspora that we are able to improve the project.

QUESTS-MIDA would like to know about your concerns and questions.

Send Feedback through the website at:

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

If you have not taken the survey yet, please feel free to help us improve the project by participating at:

<http://survey.quests-mida.org/form.asp>

### Seminar "The diaspora's role in development cooperation"

Date: 18 Decembre 2009

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

Detail: The seminar is organized by the Gothenburg Initiative and ForumSyd on the occasion of the International Migrants Day. In the seminar, the migrants' role in and their importance for poverty reduction and global development cooperation will be examined. While development issues in general will be highlighted, discussions will focus on how diaspora organizations and individuals can move forward in the fight for global justice and poverty reduction. More information and Programme at:

[http://www.initiativet.nu/bifogade\\_filer/497\\_1258535337.pdf](http://www.initiativet.nu/bifogade_filer/497_1258535337.pdf)

### Somali Festival in London

Date: Since Fri 13 Nov 2009

Venue: Hampstead Town Hall Centre - 213 Haverstock Hill, London NW3 40P

Details: Attendees from community organizations, London Boroughs' Local Authorities, public figures and the media. Activities include Somali artists, music, song, dance and plays; short speeches delivered by festival coordinating committee, sponsors and public figures; traditional Somali music served. QUESTS-MIDA will have an information booth.

For more information about the Festival please visit:

<http://www.kasmone newspaper.com/>