



State Fragility and Migration in Somaliland: Breaking the Cycle

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Executive Summary

Somaliland gone through massive waves of migration in the 1970s and the 1980s. This was an outcome of abuse of state governance, the suspension of the justice system, and the legitimization of violence against the citizens by the Somalia military regime. Following the 1991 post-conflict period, Somaliland struggled to restore peace and stability and re-established its state institutions from the ashes of conflict. In contemporary Somaliland, the state institutions have several weaknesses, including governance deficiencies, which undermine the political stability necessary for a flourishing and thriving democratic state. Somaliland's quadruple transition from war to peace, from the rubble and ruins of conflict to reconstruction and reconciliation, as well as a customary form of governance and constitutional democracy, has never been without challenges. Those challenges could be tackled by applying good governance principles and practices.

Equally important, the weak capacity of state institutions to provide social services and security to the citizens has a direct link with the increasing number of migrants not only in Somaliland but also in the entire African region. The Somali people across the Horn of Africa region are among the most numerous migrants that cross the high seas to Europe seeking better living standards. The root and immediate causes of this human migration are multi-dimensional and disregard any single explanation. Certainly, there is a clear link between two separate but interrelated factors, which have a constant effect on one another: migration and state fragility, as well as development. Analyzing these two concepts and practices from a logical point of view to come up with a valuable

outcome is extremely important. This can help policymakers understand the origins of migration and state fragility in Somaliland and recommend policies aimed at developing strategies to strengthen the governance structures in the long term and promote a mutual relationship between the societies and established state institutions. Indeed, such a relationship would be built on local resources and the capacities necessary to alleviate migration and the fragility of Somaliland.

On the other hand, migration is an inevitable social process in any society, and without an appropriate mechanism to manage migration, it may result in unnecessary outcomes for communities and ultimately bring about both national and regional uncertainties. Settling the root causes of migration and establishing a wider set of options within a broadly defined framework can help accelerate the process of managing the sources and causes of migration. Reconstituting a framework for progressive and strong political and social service-providing institutions is one of the most crucial factors necessary to control the exodus. While state fragility and migration in Somaliland are phenomena that demand collective response and action, this briefing proposes several recommendations that are expected from the parties concerned to implement them. The paper recommends:

- Develop and implement inclusive policies that are necessary for the development of the state. Those policies will make the state inclusive, transparent, and representative of the citizens' interests.
- The state should address the root causes of migration and enforce policies that deal with migration to overcome the challenges posed by migration on state institutions.

Introduction

The central idea behind state formation is to protect citizens from internal and external threats and provide social and security services to the state's citizens. The provision of those services to the public by the state in return endorses the citizens' trust in the state institutions, thus ensuring legitimacy (Johari, 2006). To carry out these tasks, the state should have the capacity, legitimacy, and authority to implement its policies, strategies, and programs. State legitimacy can derive from a range of sources, including the effectiveness of public institutions in their performance of various functions, such as service delivery, taxation, and social protection systems, and their degree of representation and accountability. Legitimacy does not derive solely from effectively functioning institutions, however. Such institutions must also resonate with societies in order for them to be considered legitimate and to become embedded in society. This involves the penetration of the state into society such that citizens take the presence of the state and its rules for granted; they accept the state's right to rule and its position as the highest political authority (Ali, 2014; Haider & Mcloughlin, 2016). The state needs to be both closely linked to and embedded in society, while at the same time maintaining sufficient autonomy to allow it to operate as the overarching authority responsible for making decisions that are binding on society.

Fragile states are threatening both international security and the security of their neighbours, as well as the well-being of their people. The fragility of any state spreads instability across borders and provides havens for terrorists, drug dealers, and weapons smugglers. In addition, it threatens access to natural resources and leads millions to poverty (Kaplan, 2008; Najafov, 2017). The state is the source of survival and well-being of the society; while its absence damages human beings, state institutions responsible for providing services to the public determine the legitimacy of the state and the government in power, which in turn endorses the citizens' trust in the state institutions, thus ensuring internal sovereignty.

The central argument of the briefing is that fragility is the major source of the state's inability to provide public services

and essential needs to its citizens. Several determinants are the central drivers of the state capacity, including human resources, skills and incentive systems, organizational and administrative arrangements including decision making and control structures, procedures, authority relations, the distribution of functions and responsibilities, management style and leadership; and the organization's equipment, capital, and financial resources, to name but a few (Batley & Larbi, 2004). The drivers and the immediate causes of the Somaliland state's fragility are linked to several factors that have both internal and external dimensions. This includes tribal politics and misuse of the clan factor that are linked to the Somaliland social and political structures, political, ecological, and governance-related factors, among others.

This policy briefing analyses two important concepts: state fragility, which is an outcome of weak governance institutions both in the region and in Somaliland, on one hand, and migration, which is an important trend in a changing world, on the other. The paper examines the implications of state fragility and migration by raising some critical issues. The briefing seeks to bring a dialogue and discussion on this theme that could be a flashpoint for further debates that may take place between the people in academia, the practitioners, and those in the policy and decision-making circles.

The Actors and Dynamics of State Formation in Somaliland

One of the main elements and stakeholders of the Somaliland state and peace-building processes are the civil society organizations, including women, elders, the diaspora, the media, and religious figures. This is a credit to Somaliland citizens. When the war erupted in 1994, they were opposed to the war and expressed their disagreement and outrage. The Somaliland diaspora contributed greatly to the peace and reconciliation conferences and building blocks of the state, and was very much distressed by the sad events in Somaliland and sought to end the war by influencing leaders on both sides to end the violence (Farah & Lewis, 1997; Forti, 2011; Phillips, 2020). Considering this, Somaliland citizens have contributed a lot to the peace

and development of the country.

Despite these achievements, Somaliland is not without challenges. Some of these challenges were associated with service delivery and provision, such as health and education, as well as security. Somaliland's physical infrastructure was destroyed by the Somali military government, posing severe challenges to service delivery and the provision of basic services to the citizens. After its withdrawal from the illegitimate union of 1960 and having rebuilt its institutions from the ashes of conflicts, Somaliland has found itself in an entirely discouraging situation due to several factors. These include a lack of financial support from the outside world to help the emerging institutions, a lack of recognition from the international community, and a lack of skilled and professional human capital, as many educated and capable citizens were killed during the war, displaced, maimed, or dispersed to other corners of the world (Jhazbhay, 2010). The enduring impact of war on Somaliland's citizens and state institutions is compounded by—and cannot be understood without considering—its profound lack of international recognition.

The massive migration both in and outside the country due to multiple factors has reshaped the Somaliland state economically, socially, and politically. However, in recent times, climate change, the changing environment, and massive urbanization have accelerated the rural-urban migration across the country, while those who had previously moved to the cities embarked on a second migration, seeking to improve their lives by moving to the West or to the Gulf Arab States. In urban centers, there are several reasons pushing people to migrate, including growing inequalities in wealth and living standards among the citizens, and ecological pressures, among others (Ali et al. 2023). While all those citizens are leaving the country without exception, the Somaliland government was generally not seen as a central political issue, but it regards individuals who are leaving their country seeking employment opportunities or wanting to acquire citizenship from Western European and North American countries.

The perception of those who run the state institutions is entirely different. This is a question of capacity, meaning that the state should have the capacity to deliver social

and security services to its citizens. This is a serious problem for developing robust indigenous institutions that could promote inclusive political and economic institutions. In Somaliland, the lack of capacity by state institutions is a major issue, as it makes them unable to deliver equitable and affordable services to the citizens. The lack of consolidation of the state institutions, promotion of human development, and social well-being of the state citizens are the major challenges this nation is facing. To overcome those social, economic, and political obstacles and challenges, the government should put in place an infrastructural development plan to boost the country's growth and improve the basic services needed by the citizens, to create hope for all. Once this happens, any policy and strategy introduced by the concerned state bodies will be able to overcome the institutional weaknesses and prevent decay and destruction.

State-society relationships are crucial for the survival of Somaliland statehood, as the state is aspiring to acquire the *de jure* recognition it has been demanding since 1991. The state should foster ties with the scholars, intellectuals, and elites who managed to help this nation during the struggle to overthrow the long-time ruler and dictator, the late Mohamed Siad Barre, and during the reconciliation in the 1990s. It is necessary to build the capacity of the state institutions to overcome the very challenges and weaknesses that hamper their work and performance, and derail the euphoria of the citizens. Therefore, reforming the existing institutions and fixing the gaps within them, addressing the unequal distribution of socio-economic and political opportunities in the democratic Republic of Somaliland, will enable Somaliland to prosper, while effective and efficient institutions will grow and flourish.

The effectiveness of Somaliland's state rests on strengthening the central structure of the state and its political institutions. Several common themes emerge from this briefing, and they include similarities between the causes and drivers of state fragility and migration in Somaliland, the implications of state fragility on migration in the Somaliland context, and the need to make Somaliland state institutions effective and efficient through capacity-building packages and

programs. To overcome those challenges and obstacles against the state and its institutions, it is important to address the issues discussed above to make the state institutions perform their work effectively and efficiently.

Re-examining the Migration-Development Nexus

Despite the increase in South-to-North migration, this has been neglected in the global policy debate on migration and development (Mkwanzani, 2019). The debate is at least as old as the Industrial Revolution, appearing first in Britain and then repeatedly among others who followed (Hatton & Williamson, 1998). However, the nexus between migration and development has once again entered public debate and academic discourses and dialogues in connection with the mobility of people and issues of economic and socio-political development (Faist & Margit, 2011). Migration has mutated from being a problem for economic development to being a solution. In other words, the claim that development failure produces international migration has given way to the 'new mantra' that migration – that is, migrants – may help to advance economic development in their countries of origin (Faist & Schiller, 2010). The flow of remittances from migrants in the Global North to their families in the Global South provides a compelling case for this argument, highlighting a key positive aspect of migration.

Given the emphasis on the earlier argument, there are three major types of the development-migration nexus. These mixed motive games are remittances and return; migration also brings underdevelopment; and brain drain is regarded as the consequence of migration. Also, what one may describe as migration and (co) development in the form of celebration and transnational circulation continues to remain another connection between the two concepts (Faist & Margit, 2011). These types are not necessarily related to out-migration, but they have a link with in-migration, in particular rural-urban migration that can be observed in many parts of the world, especially in regions in the developing world affected by conflicts and natural disasters. For instance, brain drain, one should mention Nigeria has about 14,000 Nigerian medical doctors who were trained in Nigeria but are currently working

in the United States, while 10,000 qualified Nigerian academic staff are in the US alone (Callaghy, 2008; Aladegbola & Olaniyan, 2012). As the figures on Nigerian medical doctors and qualified academic staff in the U.S. indicate, African nations are facing a severe "brain drain," where the exodus of their educated professionals–spurred by political and economic conditions–is causing considerable damage.

While many of these concerns are not new, the vulnerability of the Somaliland state is obvious. Migration, however, has had an impact on the Somaliland state since the 1970s, when the best-educated people, skilled ones, started to leave the country due to the repressive nature of the Somali state. Although people were migrating even before that period, for example, Sailors or Seafarers (IOM, 2017), those people (sailors and seafarers) were coming home, and their migration was more of a personal adventure than seeking better living standards. Underlying the debate on the nexus between migration and development in the aftermath of the state collapse, perhaps between 1991 and 1997, Somaliland neither had a well-functioning state institution that could provide security services to the citizens, nor did it seek economic opportunities. People from the diaspora indeed were helping their families and sending remittances back home, as there was no other means of survival except that money sent from abroad. This contribution kept the people alive and served as the only means for the citizens' livelihood in difficult times. The diaspora was also financing the peace and reconciliation conferences taking place in many parts of Somaliland and contributed to the state-building processes.

Conclusion

Somaliland needs to address the problems and challenges discussed in this briefing by strengthening the existing state institutions. To realize this mission, building the capacity of the human resources of the state and implementing the policies in place would be a key determinant for the state's efforts to develop and prosper. Somaliland can establish responsible governance institutions to serve the citizens and provide social services to those in need, both in the peripheries and at the core. Not only social services,

but also needs to strengthen the security-providing institutions, such as the police, and reform the judicial system of the state, which is also in trouble. Rapid social change and transformation through policies and strategies are needed, but positive change with determinant policies and programs is not easy to achieve; without a doubt, it can take root through a generation.

Furthermore, engaging in regional and international forums to present the issue of Somaliland and its quest for recognition is another obligation that the Somaliland government should take as a serious task. However, Somaliland state policy and decision-making should take the lead in adopting appropriate policies to ensure that good governance and social justice prevail in Somaliland as a whole. Nevertheless, if Somaliland fails to put in place inclusive policies and social equality, more social and political instability will follow and certainly damage the Somaliland state and its citizens. This finally generates massive waves of migration, both legal and illegal, thus having an impact on the state and its institutions.

In a nutshell, migration is not entirely negative, but it plays a role in development, especially on social and economic fronts. This means that those who migrated to the other parts of the world returned to their homes with knowledge and skills as well as finance, thus managing to establish businesses and develop small-scale industries. In Somaliland, when the entire social, political, and economic institutions collapsed as a result of the war in the 1980s and 1990s, migration was a powerful force that saved the people. Many who had returned from the refugee camps in Ethiopia are those who migrated to the Middle Eastern countries, Europe, or North America. Moreover, repatriated refugees from neighbouring countries and substantial numbers of Somalilanders from the wider diaspora have been returning to Somaliland over the past years to see if they can live in Somaliland again. With various skills and expertise, returnees have taken up roles in government, aid agencies, non-governmental organizations, health care, education, and business, displaying much effort and resources in the reconstruction of the country.

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About the Paper

This briefing examines the links between state fragility and migration in Somaliland and its impact on citizens. The paper investigates the causes, drivers, and patterns of state fragility and migration in the country. It argues that the presence of weak state institutions that failed to provide basic services to their citizens, lack of political commitment and will, lack of implementation of the policies in place, and introducing other policies that could impact the lives of the citizens remain the major sources of state fragility in Somaliland. Furthermore, and very importantly, the lack of transparency and accountability within the state institutions remains largely at the center of state fragility and massive migrations happening across the region. This paper calls for an urgent response to the challenges against the state institutions. The adoption of policies to improve social and security services is needed to enhance the lives and livelihoods of the citizens.

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Acknowledgment

The Laas Geel Academy is grateful to the authors of this briefing. We are also deeply indebted to the reviewers and editors of this publication for their intellectual contribution and expertise to raise the paper's standards.

This Briefing is produced as part of the 2025 Laas Geel Academy Policy Briefs.

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Laas Geel Briefing, No. 1, 2025

ISSN: 3079-4978 (Print), 3079-4986 (Online)

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