

Change and Healing in the South Seattle Somali Diaspora: How Lessons Learned can
Help Heal Somalia

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**Thank you for all who we interviewed: Dr. Inslee, Megan, Yasmin Ali, Sundus'
Parents, East African Community Center, and Various Representatives**

Abstract

The Somali Diaspora is spread throughout the globe, in both more and less developed nations. Their perspective in living with other cultures is prepping the second generation of these refugees with the knowledge that, when combined with their desire for unity, will lead the forgiveness and healing of their home country: Somalia. By exploring and nurturing this process through advocacy, education, and helping those in the Diaspora learn how to forgive, this process can be expedited and strengthened. In addition, exploring non-traditional, culturally based methods of healing and forgiveness helps both the first generation immigrants overcome clan hatred, generational bias, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, as well as educating and aiding the second generation immigrants develop techniques for healing and rebuilding Somalia.

Author Biographies**Sundus Ali**

I come from a family of six children, three boys and three girls. Currently I am blessed to be a wife, daughter, sister, and a mother to a newborn baby boy born 3/31/2012. I was born in Somalia, and was at a very young age when the civil war started. My family and I had to depart Somalia and go to a neighboring country: Nairobi, Kenya. I lived in Nairobi, Kenya for eight years before my entire family and I had the privilege of getting sponsored to come to the United States from my older brother who came to the States before the rest of the family. Upon arriving in the States I started High school and graduated with honors from Tyee High school in SeaTac, WA. After high school, for my undergraduate I went to Portland State University where I graduated with a double bachelors of Arts in Community Development and Social Science. I am currently working for the State of Washington as a Case/Resource Manager for the Division of Developmental Disabilities, while completing my Masters at Northwest University where I am studying International Care and Community Development (ICCD). During these many transitional years in my life I had the privilege of working as an advocate for the Somali community and many other immigrant communities who are struggling in the transitioning of their new found home.

Nathan Hamberg

I was born in Seattle, WA near the beginning of the 1980s and the start of the micro-processor revolution. Growing up with computers and the internet has greatly complemented my core strengths of Input, Learner, and Connectedness. Learning about the process; wanting to understand the “why” is fundamental to my person and identity.

While serving overseas in the army I was struck by the Afghan children and the culture as a whole. I was very fortunate to serve in a capacity of community development via supporting Civil Affairs and the State Department which largely influenced my BA in Comparative History of Religion at the University of Washington. ICCD takes my knowledge one step further by showing practical applications of what I have learned. From this stepping stone I plan to pursue non-profit organizations and many more vision/mission trips depending on where the Lord takes me.

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Introduction

Somalia's civil war, stretching back for the past two decades, has disrupted the lives of thousands of Somalis while millions more have fled. While the events of *Black Hawk Down* have brought focus on the fierce fighting in Mogadishu, the resulting famines and diseases that have claimed countless lives due to the constant shifting of power and instability inherent in a decades-long civil war far exceed the atrocities illustrated in the film. While it is very disparaging to hear these stories, it is important to remember that there is more to the Somali Civil War than just violence and disease. There are the survivors living in the Somali Diaspora, and the survivors in Somalia who live their lives as best they can. This paper explores how Somali Diasporas around the world can help to change their country. The Somali Diaspora has many young, educated individuals who have the drive and ability to come together to make a difference for their country, provided they are given the opportunity and their voices are listened to.

Background and History of the project

For the Somali immigrant community, finding traction within American culture can prove to be challenging. In King County alone there is an estimated 30,000 East African refugees calling Washington their home (East African Community Services, 2011, para. 2). In both Somalia and the Somali Diaspora, Somali clans cause tension between different members in Somalia and abroad: Clans are largely responsible for the civil war and continued instability in the country of Somalia. For children and youth living and growing up within the cultural tension between American and Somali

traditions, trying to live by both Somali and American cultures can be quite difficult when trying to form one's personal identity. In addition to struggling with defining their identity, Somali youth in the Diaspora also face a) cultural and generational bias, b) lack of empowerment for youth, and c) a lack of forgiveness and healing. Other obstacles faced by those of the Somali Diaspora include language barriers, culture shock, and other situations that require long-term relationships and assistance by community members, local organizations, and the host country's government in order to transition into the local society without losing the rich Somali traditions brought over from Somalia.

As we started our thesis project we focused on the need for the nation of Somalia to be able to effectively communicate among clans and between the population and the country's leaders, create sustainable programs for their country, and how to work on peace building and restoration. Once individuals and leaders are able to find common ground based on a united need to stabilize the country, the process of rehabilitation and moving forward towards economical sustainability can begin. As we started conducting our interviews and research, we realized the problem was bigger and deeper than we initially anticipated; that creating a peace-building program will not solve the problem of distrust between clans and between generations. A pattern we noticed in some of the interviews and personal communications we conducted was a lack of communication between clans and generations, empowerment for the youth in the various Diasporas, and that each community is holding back all of the torture and the pain each and every one of them suffered while no plans for forgiving are in place. After our research and interviews, we decided to focus and study a) the history and the situation in Somalia, b)

the misunderstanding, cultural crisis, biases in the Diasporas, and c) recommendations from our findings.

With qualitative research, initial questions can evolve throughout the research process. For example: What affect does the Somali Diaspora have regarding the development of the “lost” Somali generation and its view of Somali culture in both the Diaspora and the Somali homeland? This question gained breadth and depth with each interview we conducted throughout our research. As our research developed, we focused our questions around certain themes: a) clans, civil war and immigration, b) contemporary Somali childhood to understand the relationship between parents and children, c) the situation here in the United States specifically (Seattle, Washington) to understand Diaspora obstacles and challenges d) identity crisis, e) whether or not there is bias impacting Somalis in their own community, and f) challenges and strengths of the Diaspora in the Somali community. Finally, we will be making recommendation of what the community can do to move forward in order to establish sustainability here and in Somalia.

What is a Diaspora and What is a Refugee?

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, Diaspora means, “the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland.” According to the Department of Homeland Security a refugee is:

A person who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality⁴ because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

An applicant for refugee status is outside the United States (Martin, 2010, para. 2).

As described by the department of homeland security after the Somali Civil War, which erupted in the 1991, many of the Somali population fled to neighboring countries. There, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) gave them an identification number to help with the process for departure to the United States. Somali immigrants/refugees started arriving in the United States in 1992 and are continuing to arrive today. Currently there are clusters of Somalis spread around the world. In King County alone, there is an estimated 30,000 East African refugees calling Washington their home (East African Community Services [EACS], 2011, para. 2).

History, background, and the culture of the study group

It is helpful to review the cultural, social, and political background of Somalia to understand the importance of clans (and their effects regarding Somali culture) and faith. Clan allegiance and religion both play a pivotal role in the Somali community, with religion also playing a highly significant role in Somali culture. Somalia is located in East Africa in what is often referred to as the horn of Africa. The Somali population is primarily Muslim and follows the Islamic Sharia (moral code and religious law of Islam). Almost all Somalis are Sunni Muslims. For those who are practicing Muslims, their religion forms a comprehensive belief system, which includes culture, a structure for government, and a way of life. Therefore, social customs, attitudes, and gender roles are based on Islamic tradition. The words “Inshallah” and “Qadarallah” are expressions meaning “God willing” and “Destined by God,” and are concepts that guide Somali people through life.

The majority of the interviews conducted in this study witnessed the Somali Civil War either personally or second-hand through their parents. Before the Somali refugees arrived in their new home, their world in Somalia collapsed underneath them and every possession their families owned dissipated into the thin air. Collectively they have witnessed people been shot to death, women being raped, and children dying of hunger as they suckle the breasts of their dead mothers. They have experienced missiles missing their homes and most of them have survived malaria. They have moved from one place to another to get a better life, eventually arriving in various nations such as the United States of America. While these Somali refugees finally have found peace, they are not at ease. Cultural shock, language barriers, and alien government systems are a few of the challenges they have fought to overcome since their arrival. Many adults must act as both father and mother as many of them lost their significant other during the war. Every day they are faced with issues such as helping their families back home and raising their children in a new country on minimum wages due to their insufficient education. As Somali children develop in their host countries, a crisis of personal identity often divides the first and second-generation immigrants as their children adopt many of the host nation's customs and traditions. Trying to maintain both their Somali culture and their American culture, Somali youth often feel separated and distant from their parents. Clan divisions and rivalries further hinder the rebuilding and integration of Somali communities in the Diaspora as they limit cooperation among Somali refugees, while fostering further confusion among youths regarding identity and allegiance.

South-Seattle Somali Diaspora

Community development is not limited to other countries, impoverished areas, or destroyed communities. It occurs everywhere, in particular where there is a higher need for jobs, social services, and inclusion into the greater society. Inclusion does not mean conversion, but rather some conformity to standards that allows for successful integration and use of local and governmental services as well as education and employment opportunities.

Immigrants first settle primarily into areas dominated by a like culture, such as in south Seattle where there is a large Somali community. This segregation, while providing support and familiarity, also restricts the Somali community from taking advantage of the various opportunities in the area. From this segregation, the community can choose two options: Assimilation and pluralism (Conn & Ortiz, 2001, p. 321). In assimilation the parents remain largely true to their culture and heritage, while their children learn the host culture's language and customs. This allows for the second-generation children to understand their host country from the perspective of the host society by adapting the local customs, language, and views into their personal identities. While this assimilation can allow for better use of services and opportunities of the host country for the second generation, it can create a cultural barrier between the immigrant parents and their children.

The Seattle Somali Diaspora is largely experiencing assimilation. This is particularly evident by the views and actions of the second generation children. In an interview with Sundus' brother and his friend Abduhl, we asked questions regarding children and adopting customs. What we discovered was a mix of Somali traditions and a desire to socialize and fit in with American customs. Abduhl (age 34), who immigrated

at the age of 19, described the challenge parents face in teaching children who have never been to Somalia what it means to be Somali; that culture and community is dependent on the first generation adults. Abduhl stated that “as it is right now, only the first generation are sticking to traditions. The younger generation...[are] playing video games, updating Facebook, or going shopping” (personal interview, 25 May, 2011). However, Abduhl did emphasize the need for preserving religion, language, women’s form of dress, and respect of elders as cornerstones of Somali traditions. This blending of traditional customs with American ideals such as female empowerment and use of technology agrees with the assessment of the Somali Diaspora described by Toble, Abdi, and Doug Rutledge as reviewed by Cynthia Greenlee-Dennell. In *The Somali Diaspora, A Journey Away*, Somalis in America are seen in “civic participation in a liberal democracy: voting, partaking of public education, wage work, engaging freely in consumer culture” (Greenlee-Donnell, 2010, p. 355). This engagement, however, is not at the complete cost of identity. Many Somali girls still wear dresses and cover their hair, and second generation immigrants still are largely Muslim.

Background of the Somali Diaspora

Clans, Civil War, and Immigration

Even though today Somali populations are all over the world, regardless of their location clan related problems are having a negative impact on community development and integration into the host society. Earlier this semester, I (Sundus) was reading “Encounter God in the in the City” and how a poor man, who knocked on the author’s (Randy White) door, was treated rudely rather than with respect. White stereotyped the poor man by thinking his story was similar to everybody else on that street and told the

gentleman “sorry, I can’t help you,” and closed the door on his face (White, 2006 P. 24). This is an example of passing judgement based on a quick classification of a person without knowing their situation. Clans affect immigrants even in their new host countries. Clans often foster this quick stereotyping of people not of the same clan, building on assumptions and accusations that often hold little substance or truth. The unfortunate side effect is people of different clans not helping or considering other’s problems because of the clan they belong to. Many people in need are shut down from all other communities except theirs based on their clan. Marriages are limited to youth based on the clans of the suitors and groups/clicks are created based on clans. Given the impact and importance of clan affiliation, successful community development in Somalia and the Somali Diaspora requires understanding clans, their effects on groups, and the role they play in the Somali Civil War.

What are clans? According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, clan is group of people tracing descent from a common ancestor and/or united by common interest or common characteristics. In the past, clans were used by individuals as a way of bonding and supporting each other. But as cultures developed, clans have become detrimental to developing countries. In the Somali community there are 10 main clans, with numerous sub-groups. According to one interviewee, Halima, when asked what “clan” means to her, she responded: “Our clan is our ID, it’s how we are recognized and associate with others” (S. Ali, personal communication, Dec 9, 2011). According to Halima, in the Somali community, clan means sense of identification and being able to classify oneself with a particular group. This is useful for forming one’s personal identity, however, it has

developed as a way for people to describe and classify each other quickly, based on assumptions, without getting to understand those outside of their clan in detail.

In an interview and personal conversation Sundus had with her mother, Sundus asked how the break-down of the clans and sub-clans came about and how it was determined who belonged to which clan? Her mother explained that clans originally emphasized lineage: They largely resemble a family tree. She had her draw a family tree using *Hawiye* clan. It began with *Hawiye* and his nine sons, then the children of each son, and then their own sons. Clans are traced using patriarchal lineage: When girls marry, their children become part of the clan of her husband. As a result, it is believed all Somali clans started from two men who were of the *Darood* and *Irir* clans, and who gave birth to the rest of the boys who divided into the current ten clans. As is seen from lineage, the clans were primarily used for names and identification of families and not originally the cause for discrimination, blood-shed, or segregation. It was a way to find and trace one's heritage. It was a way for brotherhood and sibling bonding to be built. It was a way for fathers to identify their children and their families. It was not for the children to hate each other and kill each other or their children to have never known each other.

The Strength and Weaknesses of Clans. What are the strength and weaknesses of the clans ? Are they useful or should Somalis try to move past clanship? Dawud stated;

In the noble Qur'an, it is stated "Litacaarafu in akramakum cind ALLAH. Yes, it is always important to identify yourself with a clan lineage, so I do believe in Clanism for the purpose of identification. But when it comes to leadership

and nation building I just don't see it working for the better, it only leads to acrimonious situations like the fall of the former Somali government, the current chaos although given face of fanaticism and extremism, the current state of Affairs in Puntland, the Kenyan post election violence, the Serbian war comes to mind. (personal communication, 10 December, 2011)

Clans can unite, both internally and externally, by holding accountable each member. The unity and sense of community responsibility imposes a sort of communal law that supplements institutional law, while drawing on collective support from the clan as a whole. Hesse (2010) stated,

Historically, Somalis have organized themselves into social insurance cooperatives called diya groups (diya meaning 'blood payment'). Diya groups can consist of clans, subclans and sub-subclans, but members are always contractually bound to pay or receive damages collectively. Within this framework, there is no concept of individuality. So, in the case of murder, a killer is expected to have his diya group deliver just compensation to the victim's diya group. (pp. 72-73)

These diya groups are how Somalis have historically solved their differences and small community conflicts. These diya groups are still used today by many Somali communities, either back home or all over the world by Somalia Diasporas. Even here in Seattle, Washington, I (Sundus) continually see my mother mediating to settle small problems before they reach local authorities. In this system, clans are used as a method of creating justice when unjust actions are performed. This is great system but, unless laws and legal systems are involved, there are few penalties

for a wrong-doing. The potential, especially when away from Somalia, for repeated offenses requires a strong legal system backing it up. This illustrates what Dawud meant regarding clans being useful as primary mediators, but that as a system of government they are limited. There are consequences only through laws, and often the community cannot bring to justice the offenders when it involves different clans. Clan bias limits the impartiality of judging between two members of different clans, while the community lacks the authority to enact strong punitive measures.

Another interesting example is one Sundus' sister (Yasmin) shared with her during her recent experience in Somalia. She referred to her clan as "insurance coverage" and "that as I do not know a lot about my clan, I will be only partially protected in the Puntland region part of Somalia where my family is from. In order to be fully protected in that region I will need to know more than I currently do about my clan" (personal communication, July, 2011). Despite the devastation caused by over two decades of civil war, clans are still major players in Somali life today and even form the policy-making system in most regions in Somalia. But Yasmin's description of her trip to Somalia offers a strong reason for the continued presence of clans in Somalia. Clans offer stability, support, and protection for their members, which is comforting in situations of instability and violence such as those found in Somalia. This stability makes members more loyal to their clan, but at the cost of distrust towards others. As individuals turn inwards for protection and support, the otherness of different clans increases, furthering the cycle of violence and distrust.

In another interview Ahmed was asked: What do you think the strengths and the weaknesses of clans are?

If clan is being used accordingly to the our Islamic value, strength and brotherhood will emerge but if it's used in the other way it will distort our togetherness and divide into small faction that can't stand by its own.

(personal communication, 09 December, 2011)

Yasmin affirmed this view by stating: "As Islam teaches us, the strengths of the clan is for identity purposes only but once it is used to demote others or favors others [it] will cause deviation and it could lead to chaos." Islam acts as the counter to the cycle of withdrawing into segregated clans, calling for all Muslims to unite under one religion, while clan leaders often perpetuate the violence causing the instability that makes people further withdraw into their clans. But if Islam is perverted, misconstrued, or manipulated by power-hungry individuals, then it contributes rather than inhibits intra-clan conflict. According to Conn and Ortiz (2001), "an urban leaders' trainee must be motivated first by longing to honor God. He or she must not prepare for urban ministry for selfish reasons or even for the good of the community" (p. 417). The Somali community today is destroyed so badly by clans that there are few people who will do something for the name of God without having a hidden agenda.

Another weakness of the Somali clan is demonstrated by the many failed attempts made since the start of the civil war to rebuild the nation. For example, the transitional government elected Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed as transitional president of the country who was unable to come to terms with the various warlords of the

country. Rigol (2005) states, "Somalia's demographic homogeneity has prevented the ethnic disputes seen in other African countries. Despite this, the region has been torn by inter- and sub-clan warfare. Clans control different regions of the country and often fight over natural resources" (p. 1).

Effects of Clans on the Somali Civil War.

The Somali community has been segregated and separated due to clans; they are the leading cause of the civil war that has been killing millions of people and continues to kill more every day. The war has destroyed families and prevented them from feeling a sense of community even in their new home in Seattle. In her interview with her sister Yasmin, Sundus asked: What impacts did the civil war have/had on you and your family? Has it slowed down any progress you would have made towards your future? Yasmin answered:

The civil war created a void in my knowledge of who I am. Many people ask me where I am from, and I am always not sure what the answer should be.

You see, if the civil never had taken place, I would probably be in Somalia where no one would ask me where I am from. But now that the civil war has happened, the question still exists. It doesn't matter where I am, I am consistently asked where I am from. I visited Somalia Last year, and people still asked me where I am from. At times, I murmured to myself what their obsessions are to where I am from. The war did slow down my progress and the progress of my entire family. My mother was very active business woman who exported and imported goods. At the time, my mother bought a big land for us and if the war didn't happened we would have lived in a

chateo and sipping some organic guava smoothies. (personal communication, 03 December, 2011)

Randy White (2006) further illustrates this changed identity and the effect of not knowing who one might have been had events been different: "The power of this cycle of action and reflection is widely recognized and is an irreplaceable element in the process of leveraging experience for maximum effectiveness in the growth of the disciple" (p. 37). It is heartbreaking to hear some of these interviews about how the community is separated due to clans. It will be a long time of reflection, both personally and as a group, before the community can come together to reestablish Somalia. Unless serious reflection on the effect of clans regarding personal and group identity begins, it will be difficult to reverse the current cycle of violence and mistrust that is causing so many Somali youth to question their identity.

Are Clans the Problem or the Solution of Somali Development? With the destruction and instability caused by the different tribes fighting for power over one another, it is difficult to surmise clans as also holding the solution to Somalia's recovery. As the main contributor to Somalia's instability and distrust among the Diaspora members, clans seem an unlikely avenue for development and unity. They do, however, provide a mechanism for recovery when combined with the unifying aspect of true Islam. The very aspect of communal responsibility, when accessed under the auspices of a common culture and religion, provide a unity unlike that of most diverse countries. It is when these characteristic are used by individuals and groups for reasons of power that they have the devastating consequences seen by Somalis today.

When asked “what do you think are the most reoccurring issues in Somalia? Are those issues factors that are delaying the establishment of good government?” Dawud responded:

Foreign intrusion, Clan conflicts, Fast changing ideologies, Poor leadership and leaders, Lack of enough investment, unemployment, Poverty, illiteracy...yes all of these factors are delaying the peace process. The leaders are not whole heartedly here to resolve the outstanding issues and thus don't care of the country's state of affairs (they are mostly Diaspora). The communities' voices can't be heard for they are battling to stay alive first dodging the bullets and bombs and then trying to earn daily sustenance. Unemployment, illiteracy and poverty are also key players in the conflict as it is easy to recruit into militia groups and other illicit activities such as drugs smuggling and piracy given the desperation of youths. And thus even easier to brainwash illiterate communities with the ideas being seen playing out as extremism. (personal communication, December, 2011)

Clans might not be the only cause of the problems in Somalia today, but are the initial reason why Somalia's government broke down. Today in the Somali community we look at starving children who are suffering from hunger, lack of shelter, and a good health system. Poverty is not the cause, merely a symptom of clan disputes. Poverty is more than any one reason. And clans as they are today cause many of the problems afflicting Somalis in their country and abroad. But clans, when seen as part of the Somali whole, offer a very different picture. They provide support and encouragement that increases each worker's potential while

caring for the sick. By using communal pressure, many crimes are reduced or dealt with before needing the structure of a formal legal system (personal communication, December, 2011). With clans united under one religion and society, real change can begin. Until then, better understanding the situation in Somalia will can help those who face the results of clan fighting.

How Somali Childhood Affects Refugees in the Diaspora

One cannot directly relate to the pain and suffering of being in a civil war without having experienced the situation. To lose friends and family, forced to move or even flee your homeland, is tragic. To say it is life altering is an obvious statement. But what does “life altering” really mean? For children, who are still forming their world-view and personal identity, they have little experience to draw from, making understanding and conceptualization more difficult than for an adult. Because children’s minds are still forming, it is difficult for them to organize, classify, and make decisions. Children shape their understanding of reality based upon what they experience, with prolonged exposure cementing certain realities that persist well into adulthood.

For those living in countries such as Somalia, where prolonged civil war leaves death, destruction, and reinforces poverty, while causing millions to flee to other countries, reality becomes defined by these negative events. Somali children, in general, face many hardships linked to surviving that exclude the possibilities of developing beyond basic skills. Because of the ongoing civil war and large emigration to various other countries, Somali children are at high risk for developmental difficulties, severely limited potential due to many *unfreedoms*, and becoming non-contributors to society upon maturity due to a distorted view of what is right from poor role models and limited

support. Because of the many dynamics of what is happening in Somalia today, it is important to look at how these children live, adapt, and are influenced by events. Primarily, the effect of identity formation is important as it affects a child for the rest of their life, both in Somalia and/or in the Diaspora.

What is Identity?

The [Somali] civil war created a void in my knowledge of who I am. Many people ask me where I am from,

and I am always not sure what the answer should be....my mother bought a big land for us and if

the war didn't happen we would have lived in a chateau and sipping some organic guava

smoothies. (personal communication, November, 2011)

Who am I? I (Nathan) ask this question often, but in many different forms. Usually I wonder what my place with God is, what this new “me” consists of. Am I the same person physically as from before being saved? Am I the same person I was a minute ago, as some cells die and others begin? These are very tough questions with no single answer. But I am secure in the knowledge that I am saved, that I live comfortably, and above all, I have my identities. I am an American, Caucasian, Washingtonian, Hamberg, and employee of PCE Pacific (to name only a few). I am God’s child. With the exception of being saved by Jesus, I have no permanence to any of the identities that define me. As Yasmin Ali illustrates above, any or all of a person’s identities can be stripped away in the face of a catastrophe. Even one’s culture can be lost in the blending of societal norms and the desire to succeed in a new host country.

For 20 years Somalia has been engaged in a civil war. In addition to rampant piracy, hunger and poverty are rampant. With 3.2 million people needing relief aid, active fighting, child abduction and integration into armies, and basic needs not fulfilled, understanding a child's natural resilience and needs is critical when assessing the child's welfare (Oxfam, 2010). If a child has a lower resiliency level, such as being dependent rather than autonomous, they are less likely to be able to break out of their reliance on social and emergency aid services. Consequently, more care is needed to help and encourage that child as he or she develops, begins to take risks, and learns independent skills or trades.

As the civil war continues, the number of displaced people continues to climb. Children, as mentioned by White, who are in high-risk situations require additional focus on ensuring their five needs are met (food, shelter, clothing health, and education; 2003, p. 123). Thus, aid organizations should be aware of what these needs are as they attempt to help nurture these children long enough to find them a suitable home. By identifying the innate capabilities of children while fostering an environment that allows love to prosper, children are provided the maximum potential for a balanced development into mature adults.

I don't really have anything beneficial to give to Somalia at the moment. (Abdullahi, November, 2011)

It is not enough to analyze from afar. To gain a closer understanding of child development in Somalia (and other at-risk environments) it is beneficial to look at current projects and attempts at improving the lives of children. Defining, designing, applying, and reviewing a program is quite time consuming and requires a strong skill set of interpersonal skills from the person or organization attempting such an endeavor. World

Vision provides a strong example of what goes into an applied approach to child development. Communication and active participation by all members (external organization and local persons; youth and elders) is essential in developing and implementing a program to promote child welfare. Abdullahi's feeling of exclusion, of having nothing to add, demonstrates a disassociation with his native country. This lack of belonging is a possible sign of a complex failure at all levels of a child development system.

As previously mentioned, security is a need for a child's development. World Vision created a "systems approach to child protection" with meeting such a goal in mind (Forbes, Luu, Oswald, & Tutnjevic, n.d., p. 3). This discussion paper from World Vision defines the need for many levels of involvement from various groups; from the government to social workers, parents to community structures. Beyond the analysis of child development, practical application demonstrates the contributions all parties make in reducing the risks for children. In particular, this paper mentions "seven elements and five main types of actors of the Child Protection System" (p. 5). The elements: a) Laws, policies, standards, and regulations-define and enforce protection system, b) Services and delivery mechanisms-provide the protection, c) adequate capacity building of resources-human and capital, d) cooperation and coordination-ensure all parts function together, e) accountability-perform self-assessment and checks, f) circle of care-support network for individual, and g) building child's resilience-through positive environment and training (pp. 6-12). This outline of the necessary components provides an understanding of how comprehensive is the network that affects a child's development. Well beyond the family, a systemic view as provided by this paper incorporates, identifies, and then

applies these areas both formally and informally to providing the best environment to develop each child's innate personality and skills.

As the civil war continues, Somalia as a country is divided and broken. There is no one ruling party, not even the government. This large-scale lawlessness, the inability of the state to provide security for children, allows militia groups to kidnap children and force them into armed service. In an ultimate example of child extortion, militants have been known to raid schools in order to "recruit" new soldiers (Hennessy, 2011, par. 5). Children are not safe from being kidnapped, their education is disrupted, and those who stand up to the militias are killed, possibly teaching the children that they cannot depend on others, thereby destroying the community actors. By understanding the role of the seven elements and five actors, holistic plans such as that developed by World Vision can be implemented along with the ending of hostilities. While it is hard for Americans to understand how disruptive a civil war is, for the Somali children, the effects are comprehensive and often insurmountable.

Social Constructivist

I don't see any coalition between the elders and the youth. (Osman, November, 2011)

To some degree child development is subjective to societal values and norms. What is considered appropriate development for one culture (education in arts) can seem totally irrelevant to another (hunting skills highly valued). This is a subtle distinction as the needs of a child do not change, but rather the specifics of what are valued by the culture. Thus, education with math and verbs might be replaced with tracking and animal identification. Because society determines the "packaging" of what is valued, it can be

difficult to argue against a tradition the places elders above the youth. Yet the need for communal interaction cannot be ignored, and after two decades of lawlessness and uncertainty, Somali youth are beginning to realize the need for them to take action.

From a social constructivist perspective, where social interactions define reality or a specific interpretation of it, full participation by all is not an option; it must be expected. Reasoning behind this is twofold: First, if reality is created by society through social interactions then the silencing or downgrading of any segment of the population “hides” a part of what is real or perceived by society as a whole. Second, child involvement and participation provides children the ability to advocate for themselves while marking an important milestone in their developmental process (Reddy & Ratna, 2002, p. 5). Teaching children to identify their needs and speak logically about them develops this social skill set while increasing thoughts and discussion regarding marginalized groups. Society as a whole benefits when all actors are heard from equally.

Children possess a unique perspective in the ongoing effort to reduce risk factors for children. Namely, children are the ones experiencing the hardships that in turn shape part of their reality and identity. Participation fosters communication, allowing children to express their views even as they are defining them. As they practice communicating they become more proficient at distinguishing what is acceptable and what is not (Reddy & Ratna, 2002, p. 14). This process encourages self-defined values and reinforces one’s personal identity.

In addition to helping children work through and develop their internal perspectives, active participation begins to affect their external environment. Being able to articulate the necessity of a government to, say, offer protection from militias

kidnapping children may cause the government to focus on schools more than it has been. Or, their voices can reach the international community causing NGOs and/or other governments to render aid or apply pressure as necessary.

In both aspects, internal development and external involvement, the shaping of reality through social interactions is quite apparent. Most of the Somali youths Sundus has interviewed have expressed a disconnect between their parents and elders. From our interviews with the elders of East African Community Services we have learned that parents and children find it difficult to relate, especially as children shrug off their Somali heritage in order to more fully adopt their American one. This disconnect between the refugees/migrants and the second generation youth born in America affects more than the reality of those in the Somali Diaspora, it affects the children back in Somalia as well. Without advocates to speak for them, children suffer as the most vulnerable members of a society. If children who have escaped the civil war lose their connection to their homeland, as voiced by Abdullahi, then perhaps the strongest advocates for Somali children (the Somali immigrant children) are lost. The ties the elders possess to Somalia must be taught and passed down, along with the reasons for continuing to advocate for the oppressed and impoverished in Somalia. In turn, solutions and involvement by the youth must be encouraged and given serious weight in order for them to feel they have impact. By enhancing the communication skills and value of child input, the torn reality of many Somalis may begin to be changed for the better.

The Need for Bonding, Bridging, and Linking

I play a big role in my community. I came from a community where all believed that "cooperation makes everything easy" I

therefore, act as mentor to my community. (Hassan, November, 2011)

Why all this focus on child development? So what if they have a more involved childhood with love, interaction, or additional resilience? They will grow up, just as children have for thousands of years, into great, mediocre, or poor adults. Who are we to try and change the natural course of things? Potential, need for love, and God's calling are why. All the research that has been discussed or applied revolves around giving all children the opportunity to grow and reach their God-given potential. Not for the benefit of the state or future generations, although that is a strong by-product, but because each child deserves to be given the opportunity to shine in his or her own way. This is not equivalent to making every child a rocket scientist or movie-star. Rather, it is akin to America's "right to pursue happiness." It is giving a child in any country the chance, not the guarantee, to fulfill their dreams and ambitions. Everyone deserves to feel love and to know how to love in return. Give children an opportunity to succeed and they will surprise in their ingenuity and ability.

One final area of focus is the connection between the Somali Diaspora and children in Somalia. Faisa Hassan understands the importance of mutual cooperation in a community. Contrary to the high independence of Americans, a strong and supportive community fills many social roles governments are unable to adequately replace. Co-op healthcare is an alternative to mandatory universal healthcare. Security often comes more from neighbors looking out for each other and building trust than from guns and police. Cooperation of communities also translates into trans-country helping in the form of money and advocacy. This cooperation is part of what is called social capital and is a

product of increasing the potential and involvement of children. Not exclusively, as other activities also build social capital. But for our purposes, social capital between generations and countries arises from child inclusion and includes bonding, bridging, and linking aspects.

Bonding capital is the building of social connections among familiar groups (Healy, 2007, p. 6). This is the Somali Diaspora community, a tribe in the Diaspora or in Somalia, or family. Building this aspect of social capital helps create the firm base from which individuals can venture forth and explore. The inclusion of children's input by elders in the South Seattle Somali Diaspora, for example, would increase the bonding of that group, allowing the elders to pass on traditions and the importance of helping those still in Somalia. *Bridging* capital is where children reach out to others with different identities or cultures. Encouragement in this aspect allows Somali children to work with NGOs or function in different countries in an effective manner. Strong bridging capital aids in advocacy work of by children as they expand their boundaries. Finally, *linking* capital is the alliance between communities and individuals with those groups that hold some form of power. Fostering this area of social capital, by growing a child's potential and love into something strong enough to stand up for themselves and interact directly with a government or external entity, enables change on a systemic level to occur. This social capital is an important component of overall change. As children are nurtured in an inviting, loving, and challenging environment, they grow and evolve into active participants both as children and adults. These children are the future change-makers, and thus for us as a world community to break the cycle of poverty, war, famine (which

is all man-made), and distrust, we must turn to the children who are often rightly referred to as the future leaders of the world.

Forming of social capital, including and giving voice, loving, and building and understanding resilience in children are all interrelated essential components of promoting positive child development opportunities. For children still in Somalia, a contemporary childhood very much includes war, famine, and rights violations. This is why it is important to understand and develop the natural potential of children, to create a sheltered enough environment so that they can develop healthy roots from which to face their added challenges. Whether teaching Somali youth while involving their input in America, or building child protective measures in Somalia, it is the role of elders and adults to learn from children as much as we teach them. This section summarized a few key elements of understanding childhood in order to provide a base or starting point, but there are many other aspects of child development that are worth exploring (i.e. Hart's ladder of child involvement). While in no way all-inclusive, some of the fundamentals and their importance have been explored. Childhood is challenging in the best of circumstances, such circumstances that few children ever receive. And yet, if one looks at the importance of a positive environment rather than monetary opportunities, then the argument can be made that so long as they are in a positive and reinforcing environment, many of a child's needs are being met even in the worst of situations. A loving and involved family goes a long way to providing a child with opportunities through positive development.

Obstacles and Challenges of First Generation Refugees in the Diaspora

Identity Crisis

For many of the Somali youth interviewed, challenges were present. While it seems as though the Western culture has created a divide between the youth and elders, preserving Somali traditions was important to most of the community members that were interviewed. When asked whether or not the lifestyle was more difficult here in the US than in Somalia, one of the fathers named Abdul lamented that first generation Somalis would enjoy a hub of community but the kids wouldn't because they would rather be on Facebook (personal communication, 25 May, 2011). Abdul also pointed to the language barrier being a major obstacle. He explained that:

As parents they can only do [so] much, when you are struggling with life and you have six or seven kids you get up and you go to bed you won't even know (what they are doing). They don't know what they are doing out there. The kids are more Americanized than their parents; they are going to do their thing and may not tell their parents. They could be talking bad in front of their parents and the parents may not know what he is saying because they aren't fluent in English.

(personal communication, 25 May, 2011)

The indication that there was some cultural tension between the parents and the youth seemed apparent. Social Services Coordinator of the East African Community Services, Abdirizak Jama, emphasized that, "The problem for the parents and the children is the gap of language. Because children they are forgetting the language and they are learning English language. Parents they don't go to school here" (personal communication, 31 May, 2011). All three fathers that were interviewed stressed that preserving Somali culture was important to them through language, the Qur'an, and communicating within communities formed in King County.

Both the fathers and mothers professed similar discontent between balancing two separate cultures. Sabah, a Somali immigrant mother, explained that:

It's two different worlds! Is that even a question? At home it takes a village to raise a child. Here you have no one. At home your neighbors are like extended family and they have permission or an obligation to correct and look after your children. Here in seven years I still don't know my neighbors and they don't know me. (personal communication, 23 May, 2011)

Sabah indicated that the loss of community was partly responsible for the disconnect found in the Somali family dynamic. Consequently, cultural pressure on both parents to provide economically has put unnecessary constraints on the family unit. Thus, the Somali youth have had to balance the Somali culture at home and the more separated Western culture at school. As one youth stated, "they [parents] don't want us to follow this [American] culture; they just want us to take the opportunity to gain education and money" (personal communication, 23 May, 2011). Evidence from our interview process displayed the unmistakable identity problems the Somali youth have been struggling with since their integration or birth into Western culture.

Certain themes emerged from our interviews. One theme was what each participant thought was essential in preserving Somali culture in America. From the father's interview, Samatar (Sundus' brother) stated that Islam, respect for parents, language, and female dress were necessary to ensure Somali culture was preserved. Abdirizak Jama from the Community Center interview was more lenient regarding what was important in Somali culture. He disagreed that the type of religion was important to

preserving culture, as even a Christian Somali was still a Somali. He emphasized the role of parents and the necessity of their involvement in the lives of their children. Boys were at a high risk of losing their cultural identity as they are allowed to roam free, causing them to adapt American culture. Females, on the other hand, are often kept home for fear of them being raped or harmed. Consequently, they are more likely to maintain aspects of the Somali culture. Other themes included a) the importance of relative wealth, where being poor in Somalia amongst many other who are poor creates little stress for individuals, whereas being poor in America surrounded by higher standards of living creates much stress for Somali immigrants, b) lack of communal family mindset, and c) the necessity for parents to be proactive in advancing their education while being involved in the lives of their children (both male and female).

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA) PTSD has been around for many centuries. However, it was not officially added to the APA diagnoses manual until the mid 1980s. Even though many people show all the symptoms described by the APA, there are different techniques used to identify specific PTSD risks and symptoms. These include: a) Patient is exposed to a catastrophic event such as war, b) intrusive recollection such as fantasies, traumatic nightmares, psychotic reenactments, and flashbacks, c) signs of avoidant and numbing which impact behavioral, cognitive, and emotional strategies, d) hyper arousal such as anxiety, e) symptoms must last at a minimum more than a month in order to be considered PTSD, and f) it must impact a patient's social or occupational areas (Smith & Segal, 2011).

PTSD in the Somali community. Mental illness in any Somali community is considered taboo. The majority of Somalis do not discuss this subject. However, it is apparent that most Somali adults and children alike have witnessed the murder or torture of family and friends during the war in Somalia. Often, Somali women and men have endured torture and/or rape. Torture and rape are widely used as a means of terrorizing a population into submission. Somalis have either experienced violence personally as victims, or as eyewitnesses, and the vast majority of Somalis have close relatives and friends who have been killed or injured as a result of war. Many Somalis suffer from traumatic memories, flashbacks, depression, and anxiety. The trauma experienced by many Somalis is likely to have had a profound impact on mental health functioning. Available accounts of trauma reported by Somalis suggest that many suffered repeated trauma. These events occurred in the context of a significant social and familial upheaval due to civil war. With long civil wars such as the one in Somalia, nearly all Somalis have been in some way affected by the trauma that follows war. Most Somalis who reside in the US have been diagnosed for either depression or PTSD.

A major part of PTSD is depression. In the Somali language, the words stress and depression do not exist. Thus, when one is translating the word, they use symptoms of it in order to describe it. Traditionally, a Somali family exists in a patriarchal society where men are the heads of the household. Men are the decision-makers and are expected to provide for the family economically, where women take care of the household chores and tend to the needs of their husband and children (Cabdi, 2002, p. 14). However, the dynamics of family roles in Somali families have changed. Many men have neglected their previous roles. Due to desertion or the death of fathers, large numbers of women

have become the head of households and the backbone of the family. In addition to their previous domestic chores, now they are responsible for generating daily income for their families and financially supporting their relatives back in Somalia. The stress of a new environment and the newly acquired roles puts more pressure on already stressed women.

These women all witnessed or overcame aspects of the Somali civil war, which destroyed their nation. Before Somali women arrived in their new home, their world collapsed underneath them and every possession their families owned dissipated into thin air. They witnessed tortured killings of their immediate families and relatives. They were either brutally raped or saw women being rapped, and some of them have lost their offspring to hunger and malnutrition. They have escaped near death experiences where many of them survived deadly malaria and the cruelty of war. They have moved from one place to another to get a better life. Now they have arrived in the US and here they have felt at peace, but not at ease.

Cultural shock, change of family dynamics, language barriers, and climate change are all things they have learned to overcome. These groups of Somali are suffering severe PTSD, yet the majority of the Somalis in the community that I (Sundus) know have not sought support or treatment because they do not understand/trust PTSD treatment and do not wish their condition to be known in the community. As one can imagine, the major impact on the Somali community are flashbacks and hyper vigilance. Flashbacks are images or noises of the memory of the traumatic event coming back into one's mind as if it is happening and can be extremely lifelike. This stirs up memories of traumatic events making it difficult for a patient to be calm and focused. On the other hand, hyper

vigilance is when a person is at a heightened sense of awareness that can make them very jumpy and defensive.

Bias

“Other” is in the eye of the beholder. For a Somali in an American Diaspora reading this thesis, the other is American society; for a non-Somali American the other is the Somali Diaspora. Human beings, unable to view reality in its entirety, must categorize and define everything in order to bring forth the most relevant to the person. Thus, different groups are defined creating an us/them mentality where “I” belong to this group and “you” belong to that group. This difference is not harmful so long as people understand that different is not equivocal to inferior; and equal does not equate to same. Cherishing and learning from differences is one of the greatest challenges and joys of the human existence as difference expands understanding and helps motivate change; fighting stagnations, apathy, and deterioration. But, the subtle trap of viewing others as strange and frightening other entities, rather than as brothers and sisters, creates distrust and bars cooperation. It takes courage to start over in a new country, just as it takes courage to open hearts and minds, to come forth and engage with those who have come to the host country. For the Somali Diaspora in South Seattle, trying to fit in and create a life without losing heritage, teaching the next generation born in America what it means to be a Somali, dealing with different traditions, and trying to overcome stereotypes, are some of the challenges facing this group fleeing a 20 year civil war. Identifying and working with bias is the focus and will explore assessment, cultural, educational, gender, and age forms before addressing implications and methods of minimization as we work together to build up and incorporate those of the Somali Diaspora.

Civil War and Clans. The word bias generally has a negative connotation associated with it, such as racial or gender bias. Bias is not inherently bad, just as a gun or motor vehicle is not inherently bad. Bias is a viewpoint or perspective of an individual based from their history and identity. The danger of bias comes from its overt and/or subconscious influence on our actions. Mirolsav Volf (1996) writes of how the need to assert one's identity is often at the heart of conflict and some of the largest acts of killing in known history (p. 17). This need to belong to a group, to define one's personal identity, is also at the heart of the Somali Civil War.

Prior to the collapse of the government in 1991, the post-colonial African state of Somalia proudly declared its national unity. However, Somali nationalists failed to understand the significance of clans, or lineages, that trace their identities through ancestral documentation (Lewis, 2004, p. 491). What is interesting, as noted by Lewis, is that unlike most African nations where the political state was created before the current national identity, Somali identity as a whole predates the current state. This means that underlying clan loyalties run deeper than the Somali state, providing the "fundamental...basis of security in Somali society" (p.505). They transcend artificial boundaries from Somalia to the distant Diasporas. Bias towards another's clan can hinder unification in Somalia while disrupting community development programs, such as the East African Community Services in south Seattle. Being aware of these different clans is important to forming partnerships between Somali citizens in Somalia, Somali Diaspora members and their host countries, and Somali Diaspora residents and those still living in Somalia.

Cultural Bias. Perhaps the best token to represent the Somali Diaspora and Assimilation is Sundus's hijab (head-covering), which she wears outside of her home as part of her tradition and faith; but that is made by Gucci. Many Somalis of the Seattle Diaspora are still trying to find their place in America while maintaining their Somali identity. In an interview through email with Yasmin Ali, we asked: "As a Somali immigrant, do you feel you are viewed or treated differently in America than Caucasians?" Yasmin's response was: "It is not matter of feeling but a fact...there are times when I view that as Somali immigrants I have to face some obstacles that those of Caucasian heritage don't" (Personal Communication, 12 December, 2011). She continues to describe how her dress, customs, and name sometimes illicit different responses for herself and other Somalis when interacting with Americans; particularly Caucasian. Faisa Hassan describes the dual challenge of teaching her children about Somali culture while dealing with friction between her beliefs and American society's distrust and cultural bias (personal communication, 05 December, 2012).

But this friction from cultural bias is not entirely negative. Tran and Lee (2011) argue that "children, adolescents, and adults who effectively establish ethnically and racially diverse friendships and networks are better able to manage their social environments" (p. 456). This *cultural socialization* exposes different groups to each other while introducing new ideas and beliefs. By learning about others, the us/them bias is softened through understanding. Fear is often a factor of ignorance, and through this cultural education it is possible to lessen the degree of mistrust and negative responses. Tran and Lee studied "*social competence* among Asian American late-adolescents" to see if social competence was affected by "different types of cultural socialization" (p. 457).

They found that “the promotion of mistrust was negatively related to social competence” (p. 459). As social competence through cross-cultural friendships increased, the propensity for mistrust generally decreased. While cultural bias is never completely removed, given that a person’s identity and perspective is shaped by their own culture, many of the negative responses can be mitigated through exposure and friendship development between two groups.

Another way of viewing the effects of cross-cultural interaction and reducing bias is *cultural intelligence* (CQ). In his article, Li-Rong Cheng (2007) reviews the Virginia Tech massacre and the role of cultural competence in allowing such a tragedy to occur. Cheng believes that Seung-Hui Cho had difficulty adjusting to American society, especially when he was bullied and picked on. His negative treatment arose from bias by his American classmates who told him to “go back to China,” his inability to speak English well, and continued bullying at church by “rich kids” (p. 37). Cultural bias may have played a part in missing Cho’s unhappiness and cries for help. Cultural context is important for decoding meaning behind actions or words. Exposure to various cultures is the best method for learning this context and thereby allowing for better understanding between groups. Thus, a person’s CQ is based largely on experience and exposure to “others,” arguing for the need of cross-cultural exchanges such as immigrants in host countries.

Educational Bias. Cho’s teachers read the warning signs of his behavior, yet the Virginia Tech counselors did not catch the imminent threat posed by Cho to other students. Cho’s treatment by other students reflects overt bias that happens in schools between students with different cultural backgrounds. In a study by Guy Boysen and

David Vogel (2009), a full third of professors indicated having perceived a form of bias in their classroom (p. 12). The two most common types were stereotyping and verbal derogation (p. 15). While the professors generally interceded on behalf of the person being degraded, the effects of such negative acts can adversely affect the success of a student already facing the challenge of education in a different cultural context.

Addressing this problem of bias in an educational environment is necessary for aiding groups, such as the Seattle Somali Diaspora, in their efforts to assimilate into American culture.

Educational bias also occurs due to the structure of the institutions themselves. Schools are generally geared toward the majority population or largest minority populations, with standardized and placement exams ineffective at correctly analyzing foreign born children due to language barriers and cultural norms (Fletcher & Navarrete, 2003, p. 30). While this may be less of an issue for second-generation children born in the United States, children who immigrate or whose family does not understand the American educational system are at increased risk for this educational bias due to tests, and instruction methods, being based in a different cultural context.

Parents who are unable or unwilling to provide incentive, motivation, and/or help in a child's education present yet another form of educational bias. Many parents who emigrate from Somalia find it difficult to provide intellectual support for their children in foreign schools. Much of this difficulty arises from a lack of formal education or illiteracy/non-proficiency in host nation's language (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2002, p. 279; personal communication, 10 October, 2011). Whether unintentional, such as different cultural emphasis on education or lack of parental formal education, or by choice, such as

preference for promoting education for a select child, parents are a fundamental influence in effecting family level bias and education.

Gender Bias. Gender bias occurs when families or society favor the development of one or more children based on their sex. This favoritism can be both subtle and/or overt. It is difficult to accurately study bias in education as tests such as the Engle curve do not take into account all forms of bias (Kingdon, 2005, p. 409). For example, if a household prefers to send males to school, but educational expenditures for those in school are equal, than gender bias in education appears to not exist. But gender bias would still be present in enrollment by the families (p.410). Also, if a family prefers to have a boy (or a number of boys) they may continue to have children until this decision is fulfilled. This means that households with girls may have larger family units meaning fewer resources are available for girls even if the resources are spread evenly (p.412). Kingdon concludes that the best way to study bias is on individual expenditure in the household, looking at both parental preference, return investment potential, and supply side opportunities (pp.437, 441).

In a couple of our interviews that specifically asked about gender and education, we were told about a greater opportunity for women and education in America than in Somalia (personal communication, 12 December, 2011). Both Werda and Sundus describe how women, particularly those born into American society, are granted greater access to education given the many primary and secondary schools. In a paper by Svenberg, Mattsson, and Skott, women in the Diaspora seem to have a “higher place in the family hierarchy than in their homeland” (2008, p. 286). Earlier interviews we conducted seem to concur with this statement as Abduhl Ali describes the assimilation

and exploration of feminism and freedoms available for young girls and women to partake in America (personal communication, 25 May, 2011). Abduhl also mentions that one of the greatest challenges for maintaining Somali culture from one generation to the next is the exposure to American culture in schools. For him, it is good that girls are provided more opportunity, but he cautions that the risk is in losing their identity as Somalis.

How to Address Bias. Bias is part of the multi-cultural world that we live in and will always be present. Eliminating it requires eliminating our labels and identities through which we categorize, define, and understand ourselves and others. As this is not practical or possible, we must instead work at understanding our own biases and perspectives while accepting the views of others, even if they are contrary to ours. This does not mean necessarily accepting or agreeing with differing views, but rather attempting to understand another person or group through learning and being exposed to another's cultural context: to let some members of the Seattle Somali Diaspora speak for themselves:

What suggestions do you have to improve this [bias] situation?

Sundus Ali: No-one, should be subjected or looked based on their looks and what they wear. In order to have justice everybody should be given opportunity to be judged based on their ethics and work performance.

Yasmin Ali: There is no hope of changing the type of treatment I would get from a group but with some understanding, perhaps the degree of that treatment could be lessened or increased depending on its impact.

Werda Osman: By educating the people about who we are and where we came from. Maybe if they understand where we come from they'd understand us better. (personal interview, 12 December, 2011)

Involving parents was mentioned by Abdurahman Jama, co-founder and executive director of East African Community Services (EACS), as critical both in the process of assimilation and in the preservation of Somali culture in the Seattle Somali Diaspora (personal interview, 10 October, 2011). Parents are the primary influence for children and help shape their values and culture. But parents must also adapt some of the host nation's customs when in a Diaspora in order for them to better relate to their children. Abdurahman mentioned that for many parents coming from Somalia, their formal education is lacking in certain areas such as math and English. Thus, when their children require help in school, the parents are unable to provide guidance forcing the children to look elsewhere for help; in this case turning more towards friends and teachers who largely embody an American cultural perspective. This widens the gap between the Somali traditions of the first generation parents and their children, expounding the difficulty in passing along Somali culture to the next generation. Providing education for parents, using Somalis as educators, helps to narrow the gap between generations while helping the parents relate to their instructors. This training, along with counseling and youth services, provides help to struggling parents and children. These services that EACS offers are one approach to reducing the effects of cultural bias by helping Somali immigrants understand the values and societal expectations of American society.

Judging a person on their actions rather than their beliefs or appearance, academic and cultural education, and personal exposure are strong themes from our interviews. Exposure, in particular, is an effective method for gaining a certain commonality with groups other than one's own. This can take place either by different groups entering into a host nation, such as the Seattle Somali Diaspora, or by moving into an area dominated by another culture.

Randy White is one example of moving into another group and who has dedicated his life to bringing the gospel into the heart of poverty in the city. Coming from a white, middle-class background, Randy and his family chose to move to the Lowell Community in Fresno, California, the “number-one city in the nation for concentrated poverty” (White, 2006, p. 23). From the start of this incredible journey Randy was confronted with his personal biases as he underwent a spiritual and cultural shift. A shoeless girl views him as rich, when his personal view is that he lives on a meager ministry salary (p. 28). Kathy, a Chinese American, is insulted when her guests pour hot-sauce on the meal she had prepared. To her, a meal is served complete and to alter it is to say it is defective (p. 49). Zorro argues with a tree in front of Randy’s home, causing Randy and his family to start noticing the many people in the neighborhood who spoke to themselves or acted strangely from his perspective (p. 75). Each one of these instances represents an opportunity for self-reflection and cultural comparison that is difficult to gain without direct contact with different groups.

Both researchers have found our specific exposures to different groups to be of great joy and discovery. For Sundus, being from Somalia, living in Nairobi,

and finishing a Masters degree in the United States has broadened her sense of identity while allowing for her to gain understanding of the “other.” She is able to include aspects of each culture into her “group” and feel more comfortable with various ideologies and perspectives. For Nathan, each experience with another culture has impacted his views and thoughts in little ways that even years later he is still struggling to fully understand. His experience in Afghanistan exposed him to Muslim life and the many similarities shared between the two cultures that never make the news. Haiti and India both expanded his appreciation for what poverty really is and the lives of non-white middle class individuals; the mix of new technology (cell phones, TVs, air conditioning), with mud, tin shelters, and lack of food. In many ways we have shared a little of what Randy experienced in the Lowell Community as many of my perspectives and opinions, particularly ones we never considered, were exposed in the lenses of cultures around the world.

In America, students are taught to respect others and many laws protect the rights of individuals to follow their traditions and cultural practices so long as they do not harm others or interfere with the standards and laws of the country. This is a difficult balance, particularly when other cultures attempt to live in, and sometimes assimilate into, the already varied societal norms in place in their area. But these difficulties in associating between different groups serve to broaden the perspectives of all individuals. While respecting others is a necessity, what is also important is to perform a self-reflection regarding “given” truths and bias in order to assess one’s beliefs and opinions. Change and/or acceptance requires this

difficult introspection, as the ugly effects of refusing to critique one's own biases leads to unfair criticism of other's. Thus, in order to address bias, one must expose themselves to not only to the perspectives of others, but also to their own perceptions.

Challenges and Strengths of Youth: Second Generation Somali Diaspora

Challenges Faced by Somali Youth in Diasporas

While researching the youth in the South-Seattle Somali Diaspora our focus was on how much Youths felt their voices mattered, as well as whether gender played a role in being heard by the elders of the community. Interviews were conducted both in person and through email. Questions included:

- Youth, elderly, community leaders, and politicians have to work together both locally and internationally. How effective is this collaboration, if at all?
- What role do you play in your community? Do you have a voice in your community?
- Has your voice been heard?
- Is there a time when you felt your voice did not make any difference? If yes, why? If no, why not?

From one of the local interviews, Yasmin shared how she attended community meetings a few months ago where they shared the concerns about Diasporas and the vision they have for Somalia. But she was disappointed to find out everybody in the committee was all over the age of 50 and not one youth was asked what their input was and how they can contribute. This demonstrates how the community elders, especially

men, create their own plans with little to no input from the following generation. In another response from Sahra in Minnesota, she stated:

I have been involved in the Somali community here in Minnesota since I was 14 years old, but every time I want to be part of the decision I feel like I am not listened to or only used when there are things that cannot be handled by elders such as fundraising and event planning. This is and has been very frustrating for myself and many of my peers. We want to be part of the decision and part of the major change and not be left on the side all the time. (personal communication, December 1, 2011).

When asked about the impact of the Somali Civil War, some of the responses were quite surprising. The questions were:

- What impacts did the civil war have/had on you and your family?
- Has it slowed down any progress you would have made towards your future?

Sadiq A. stated that “this question is very powerful that brings tears into myself, but due to my age most elders will not accept that is how I truly feel because they make judgment saying I was too young to think or remember.” He continued by saying:

Let me answer your question, the civil war has impacted my life and my family financial and created major stress. My family possession were lost and gone in thin air, I was very young when I was forced into new country where I was supposed to learn and adopt new language and culture. Most important my father who was in good career when we were hope becomes uneducated jobless where he asks and begs aids from western NGOs. As for my career growth and future it has not slowed down, I am in country today that I can access education and get to

access to legal justices and rights but however I can say this impacted my peers who are still up to these day are either in refugee camps in Kenya or still in Somalia or died already. (personal communication, December 2, 2011)

Faisa, 34 years old mother of five young children talks about her involvement in the community and how much she does. When asked: In order to make change, youth, elderly, community leaders and politicians have to work together both locally and internationally. What role do you play in your community? She stated:

I play a big role in my community. I came from a community where all believed that “cooperation makes everything easy” I therefore, act as mentor to my community; I am an educator, a translator, and advocate, and guidance. I have both voice and respect in my community. Yes, my voice is been heard but not in my community but in the other communities. I contribute in term of educational progress. I am a union active leader. I advocate the rights of workers who have limited education of their rights and those who do not speak English. In my community, there is a time when my voice doesn’t make any difference because those I am dealing with have little understanding of what the important issue is or the relevance of women and youth participation. (personal communication, December 01, 2011)

The youth interviewed all expressed discontentment regarding the lack of attention given their voices and opinions. Women especially found that they were ignored or given little respect regarding their opinions. The current mentality held by male elders towards younger individuals, even in the Somali Diaspora, has changed little, and represents a bias against youths that ignores their great potential as *bridgers* between nations.

Generational discrepancy. These and many other responses show the generation discrepancy in the Somali community today. The youth of the Diasporas residing overseas suffer many challenges including their voice not being recognized or appreciated by their elder generation. This leads to a feeling that the youth are not relevant and that they tend to lose hope of being part of the change in the Somali development back in the homeland. Another young responder, Mohamed, sees the major decision makers as being “an older male, simply because it’s basically part of the culture...I believe there’s no platform for my voice to be heard in my community” (personal communication, December 2, 2011). Mohammad is another 19 year old boy, who is the future of Somalia, but who feels hurt, destroyed, and crushed because he believes he is not valued at all.

Age bias. Another change in how Somalis in Seattle are modifying some of their traditions is in the area of age-based hierarchy. One of the core traditional values for maintaining Somali culture expressed to during our interviews was respecting one’s elders (personal interview, 25 May, 2011). What we find interesting is that this value was repeated by multiple individuals during our in-person interviews, but in many of the email interviews there was a desire for the voice of youth to be heard. Ahmed Mohamed from the United Kingdom had this to say:

Sundus: In order to make change: youth, elderly, community leaders and politicians have to work together both locally and internationally. What role do you play in your community? Do you have a voice in your community? Have your voice been heard? Is there a time when you felt your voice didn’t make any difference? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Ahmed: Personal and social skills developed in youth are a key factor in the determination of overall life chances. Such skills can be attained through participation in constructive, structured activity and have been linked to a range of positive outcomes for young people in the Diaspora, whereby in Somalia the political participation of young people appears to be less common. Yet, young people remains disconnected within the wider community and their voices were excluded from any decision making or political participation. Therefore, my voice would not make any difference. (personal communication, 01 December, 2011)

This desire for the youth to become more involved, to break the tradition of having elders possess complete say in all matters, seems to reflect some of the acculturation apparent in the Somali Diaspora. Granted not every interviewee expressed the view that elders possessed complete authority, but generally we found that age bias seems to be diminishing to some degree in the Seattle Diaspora as more youth grow up in a Western culture.

Lack of empowerment. Through the process of ICCD, I (Sundus) have learned many great subjects such as participation and child rights. This was enlightening to me for many reasons, as the culture and the background I come from mostly does not believe in child participation. My culture also believes that a child should not have a specific set of rights of their own. During my upbringing I never experienced or saw a scenario where children were given opportunity to partake in decision making in the household or community. The importance of including youth in decision-making is expressed by Reddy and Ratna (2002), “the mechanism for empowerment and the structure for

participation should be created at all levels of decision-making from home to local governance” (p. 11). This illustrates a community is powerless unless we empower our youth from a bottom-up system, which encourages children to be heard, listened to, and let to participant at community and family levels where they can contribute and feel confident enough to voice their opinion and strength, even at the government level. Combining both the power of the Diaspora and youth empowerment, I believe the challenges facing the Somali community can be resolved.

Strengths of Youth in the Diaspora

Some studies (e.g. Mobilizing the Diaspora for Homeland Development based on Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal) have shown it is doubtful that a resolution between groups in Somalia can be reached without the involvement of the youth in the Diasporas. Even though they are all over the world, the Somali population has many young educated individuals who can effect change in their country. Additionally, such actions will test if the youth feel their voices are heard by the elder generation, or if instead they feel their participation and involvements for the Somali development are deemed not necessary by the current Somali politicians or by their local community leaders. With that in mind, this section explores two important questions: a) how significant and important are the Somali youth in the Diasporas regarding the development of their community and their homeland country and b) to compare youth, elders, community leaders, Somali politicians, women, and men regarding whose contribution or voice is more acknowledged by the community?

Over the past few years there have been many Diasporas formed due to civil war or because of opportunities in other countries. Interestingly, these mass migrations do not

seem to be harming the economic development of the host country they reside in or in Somalia itself. According to studies done by Awil Mohamoud (2009), who is the director of African Diaspora policy centre of Amstrern:

Over the past five years, the aspect that has received the most policy attention from the EU and its member states has been the size and impact of the financial remittances that the Diasporas transfer to their respective homelands. However, the African Diasporas also transfer non-financial values which influence the development of their homelands, values that could make a significant contribution to improving the situation on the continent.” (2000, p. 3)

This demonstrates the capacity and power of networks both locally and internationally, that the Diasporas possess regarding their ability to help their host country as well as their native country.

Studies, including the one done by Awil, and *Strategies for Mobilizing the Diaspora for Homeland Development* based on Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, believe that the youth Diaspora are very powerful in creating and building sustainable community development systems that foster growth. Awil (2009) makes the recommendation to “widen development circles in Europe by incorporating the Diasporas as active actors in democratization initiatives and processes in a more structured and formal manner (p.4).

As a member of a Diaspora myself, sometimes I (Sundus) see how this is very true: I feel I am part of the youth that grew up both in a republic and in a democracy. Most importantly, the Diasporas possess a unique culture where they operate as multi-agents with multiple skills, talents, culture, language, networks, and training that can represent both their homeland and other countries such as Europe and the United States. This

empowers both local leaders and other countries to trust in change and work together.

During our course lecture in urban Studies, Dr. Prevette talked about the three components of Social capital that are *Bonding*, *Bridging* and *Linking*. When a country is going through civil war, they need all the help they can get regarding those three component of social capital providers and that where the knowledge, skills and network of the Somali youth Diasporas can be utilized

When it comes to peacekeeping for developing nations that have suffered civil war for many decades, studies such as the one done by Kent (2005) argue that, “In peace building it may be found that ties between local Diaspora networks and local homeland communities structure their politico-economic support for rebuilding peace in a sustainable way (p.23)” I agree because Diasporas have established networks in their new homes and also have a strong bond in their homeland. *Bonding* will be the most value attributes Diasporas can offer, because in the Somali community, before they open up to others, the external agents must gain the trust of the Somali citizens. This normally can only be done by family or community members, but not international NGOs that stay for a short duration. Diasporas can help to break this distrust between international NGO and developing countries by working on both ends as representatives of their country and also as linking their network to provide services and good their nation needs. As members of both Somali culture and their respective host nations, youth in the Somali Diaspora pose the greatest potential and understanding for bridging between Somalia, other countries, and NGOs.

Skills, Talents, and Education the Youth of the Diaspora Possess

Despite how powerful Diasporas are, without the participation of the youth in uniting the many Somali communities, bringing the voice of youth in the Diasporas to the forefront is very challenging. Awil and Kent have proven the important role a Diaspora plays in the development of their nation and community. But it becomes difficult to utilize or develop this role when the youth are not empowered to participant. For instance, here is a part of our interview:

Sundus: Do you think your skills, talent, and education could be beneficial towards the progress of Somalia? Have you taken any steps towards benefiting your country? If yes, what steps have you taken? If no, why haven't you?

Yasmin: I think my experience and academic training has prepared me to be a very crucial part of Somalia's reconstruction, reestablishment, and rebuilding. Although I have taken steps to be part of the change, I think there are limiting factors that might hinder me making any visible change. However, I am rethinking of how I can redirect my thoughts and tailor my skills towards some aspects. (personal communication, 01 December, 2011)

When asked for more specifics to what she was referring to, Yasmin went back to her experience when she was in Somalia last year and also her experience of the event she attended a few months ago in Tukwila, WA which was hosted by one clan that wanted to create community gathering and awareness. She says, "These and many other [aspects] hinders my capacity and I am trying to find a way I can break [the] gap or void where the younger generation's voice is not listened or valued."

How the Diaspora can Change Somalia

During our interviews we encountered a lot of unhappiness with the current situation in Somalia and the resistance of changing cultural traditions to allow youth a strong voice in community matters. The pain of uncertainty caused by a generation of conflict is deeper than it may appear in this report, but the recommendations offered by those we interviewed offer a way forward through cultural change and the leveraging of the untapped resources inherent in educated youths and the Diasporas. Once reconciliation has occurred, the Somali civilization can begin recovering and rebuilding. For a way forward through reconciliation and recovery we have focused on three recommended courses of action:

- Forgiveness and Healing
- Power sharing
 - Clans
 - Empowering Youth Diasporas
- Projects that foster work/income generation/self-reliance/economic and country stability
 - Microfinance/Entrepreneurship programs
 - Hands on educational courses
 - Asking organizations to use local volunteers and not foreigners

Starting the Process in America

Forgiveness and healing. Healing and forgiveness are two sides of the same coin and encompass spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects that contribute to the holistic concept of well being. In order for Somalia to end its current state of disunion and violence, analyzing alternative methods of healing is essential for understanding and

developing plans of action to restore the unity of Somali citizens and the country as a whole. Two independent yet interrelated examples of healing techniques are found in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), where children are given cameras and allowed to document their experiences living with AIDS, and Paul Farmer's hospital in Haiti, where compassion and dedication to healing rather than making money provides modern healthcare to the destitute.

When I (Nathan) was stationed in Jalalabad, Afghanistan I craved to learn about life from the perspective of the Afghans. While speaking to locals and taking pictures provided some knowledge, I realized that I lacked a first-person perspective. In addition to being an outsider who lacked access to the intimate lives of those around me, I also photographed based upon my own personal and cultural bias. In order to receive a more detailed and balanced perspective on Urban Afghan culture, I gave my new high definition video camera to a few children I had befriended while I was there. I was not sure if they would be willing, or even if I would get my camera back, but their enthusiasm surprised me. They later explained how much they enjoyed the experience of being the photographer rather than the subject. It was not until later that I understood the distinction of the two.

In Addis Ababa, Eric Gottesman ran a project in 2003, following the pluralist photography method, which provided cameras to children with the purpose of making the victims more than the subject of the photo. Gottesman used “local children affected by HIV/AIDS, teaching them how to use photography to represent for themselves what it means to live with HIV/AIDS” (Bleiker & Kay, 2011, Kindle edition, chpt. 32, location 9493). Gottesman gave control over what and how images were taken. By giving

control to the children, their voices were heard through the images taken. This process of empowering those affected by hardship decentralizes the power structure often found in aid work and western-centered advocacy. People affected by HIV/AIDS, as in this project, were able to “decide for themselves what kind of information and representation is most appropriate to capture the social, political, ethical, and psychological challenges they face” (loc. 9756). By shifting the power of advocacy, cultural bias from external organizations is dramatically reduced, allowing a different perspective to be shown. This creates a broader overall understanding of what it is like to live with HIV/AIDS, which benefits society as a whole. When those adversely affected by a situation are able to share their side of the story, others are better able to empathize with their situation while increasing inter-cultural cooperation. If healing is to take place, it requires all sides to have an equal voice and active participation in all aspects of the process.

For Somalia, this voice, particularly for children and the youth, is often missing. Mohamed Abdullahi, interviewed via email by Sundus Ali, describes how “there isn’t much of any coalition [between youth and elder generations]” (personal communication, 06 December, 2012). The voice of Somali youth exhibited during our interviews largely spoke of the need for forgiveness and reconciliation among clans in Somalia. If techniques for opening avenues for these youth to express their opinions, such as personal photography or documentation, are encouraged, the desire of the youth to move beyond clans to a united Somali identity could gain traction and promote change where current leaders (and international entities) have failed.

Where advocacy from all perspectives promotes awareness and action, holistic techniques of healing also are important in promoting peace through increasing overall

well-being. “what people can positively achieve is influenced by...the enabling conditions of good health” (Sen, 1999, p.5). Paul Farmer has worked relentlessly in Haiti to provide “high-quality medical care for the poor” (Kidder, 2004, p. 257). Farmer co-founded Partners in Health (PIH), with Jim Yong Kim, that operates many health programs throughout the world such as Zanmi Lasante in Peru. PIH provides a working model of how modern healthcare can be provided, scaled, and replicated using innovative methods. Kim ardently argued for adding second-line antibiotics that are as effective as leading brands (but can cost 95% less) to the World Health Organization’s (WHO) official list of essential drugs (p. 171). Kim succeeded in having them added as an appendix to the list, and prices for these drugs and antibiotics have since decreased dramatically. While these efforts have brought much healing to others, PIH goes beyond providing healthcare by also including the very people the program aims to serve. PIH focuses on teaching and incorporating local individuals to perform much of the work. As of 2010, PIH employed “4000 workers, including 100 physicians and 600 nurses” (Gil, 2010, par. 6). What is important to note is the emphasis on not letting an organization such as PIH depend on one person. Rather, that people like Paul Farmer are models for “what should be done...not for how is has to be done” (p. 244). It is up to others to take the lessons and techniques from successful projects and implement them in ways applicable to their situations. This implementation takes many forms, such as healing rituals and community courts.

Sitaat. Bibi Fatima was Muhammad’s daughter and has a following of women who perform healing rituals associated with her. Noor Kassamali (n/d) interviewed more than twenty women in Greater Boston to catalogue between the ages of forty and the late

seventies, including women from Somalia (p. 43). Sitaat is a ritual primarily performed, in this case by the Somali women being interviewed, in order to facilitate a women's delivery. Followers of this ritual believe the sitaat "provides the pregnant woman with support and encouragement that she would not receive in the hospital setting" (p. 44). Prayer or song is used to call upon Fatima's assistance, while "the use of fragrance, good food, music, and dancing...enhances the spiritual experience" (p. 44). The significance of such traditions, such as sitaat, is the link between spiritual caregiving and physical caregiving expressed by Muslim women who practice sitaat and other Fatima-based rituals. Many come from low socioeconomic positions and feel empowered and supported through the emotional and spiritual healing rituals. Such empowerment, combined with the connections each woman makes through practicing with others, heals in ways physical medicine cannot. Additionally, "these gatherings...subvert their [Muslim women] usually sub-servient social position in the normally male-dominant religious and cultural hierarchy" (p. 45). As with the pluralist photography method, such rituals give voice to a part of a culture that is often suppressed. While not as overt as pictures, these rituals provide an outlet for women to be who they are, not what society or culture has defined as their role. The significance of this is two-fold: women are shown that they have power and independence, and their culture persists even when living in a Diaspora. This idea of promoting different voices and connecting Diasporas (such as the Somali Disapora) demonstrates one path towards reconciliation for Somalia as a united country. Sharing common cultural bonds and participating in religious rituals can soften the division between clans softened in the name of one society.

Kaffa Ceremony. The Kaffa ceremony is a traditional coffee ceremony that dates back more than 3,000 years. Traditionally, this ceremony is shared among friends, family, and neighbors. A person may invite an individual for this event up to three times per day. It is viewed as an insult to turn down an invitation to this event. This ceremony is viewed as a personal, private time for women. Kaffa generally takes place on a round rug that individuals gather around, forming a circle of support. The Kaffa begins with roasting the coffee, then grinding the coffee with a mortar and pestle, brewing, then continues with three pourings. This process takes about two hours. The three pourings have names: Abol, Tona and Baraka. The significance of these steps during Kaffa is that the women have time to talk during each step. Kaffa creates a comfortable, familiar environment for the participants to be able to discuss their issues that may be uncomfortable to speak about. This allows the women to share their stories, rather than repress the memories. They are able to support each other without noticing they are actually getting therapy from their peers.

Utilizing interventions similar to the Kaffa ceremony, which incorporates cultural aspects, allows African refugee women suffering from PTSD and other psychological disorders to feel safe and comfortable in seeking treatment. In a ceremony like Kaffa, common experience and a familiar setting will allow the women to open up, and together they can strategize to learn coping skills in dealing with their trauma. This could be a successful way of assisting refugee clients in viewing their psychological issues in a more positive way rather than in a way that is shameful or embarrassing. From personal experiences of working and seeing this population on a regular basis, I (Sundus) believe such alternative treatments can treat PTSD without the stigma associated with mental

disorders. If this methods shows improvement and great success with the women, it will create other potential ways to extend and try out the treatment with men and children.

Refugee Women Alliance (ReWA). ReWA provides numerous services to the immigrants and refugee community residing in South Seattle Washington. These services include Developmental Disabilities support, Domestic Violence, Early Childhood Education, Education & Vocational training, Family Support, Licensed Behavioral Health, Parent Education, Senior Nutritious and Wellness, and a Youth Program. ReWA established their Licensed Behavior Health programs to help those families and communities suffering many issues similar to PTSD. However, they do not specifically address PTSD, rather, they address a host of psychological difficulties using a Mental Health counselor. Because seeing a counselor is viewed negatively in the Somalia culture, this program could exclude someone in need due to its counseling aspect. According to ReWA's Behavioral health program website, "In 2010, our Behavioral Health Program served over 241 clients to help them with managing a variety of stressors and trauma". These numbers are a combination of all refugees and immigrants and have no separate classification from each country. Also, the number of services provided from 2002 to 2010 appears very low given the vast number of immigrants and refugees. This leads to the conclusion that a variation of the program that uses aspects of traditional healing ceremonies such as Kafaa has the potential to help Somali refugees and immigrants that normally ignore counseling services. After interviewing the Behavioral Health Program Manager and explaining the concern in the community, she said, "if you submit a proposal of new programs which will improve the support and services they currently provide to the community in terms of PTSD, I will

consider and present that to my manager and get back with you" (personal communication, 29 January, 2012). ReWA's current program of Behavioral health, if combined with Kafaa ceremony, provides possibilities of success for those suffering PTSD.

Gacaca Courts. Bridging strong divisions between groups such as clans, cultures, religions, ethnicities, or other factions, can be very difficult. A long history of tension, past violence, and group identity are all factors that affect people's willingness to move beyond distrust or hatred. The key to bridging the divide is forgiveness. Where retributive justice seeks to punish the convicted party and possibly provide some compensation to the victim, restorative justice seeks to bring to the forefront the hurt and pain both sides suffer; guilt on the side of the accused and grief on the side of the victim. During the Rwandan genocide of 1994, "500,000 to 1,000,000 Rwandans were systematically and brutally slaughtered by their own countrymen" (Lahiri, 2009, p. 321). In response to an overwhelmed legal system, Gacaca courts were adopted as an alternative to traditional criminal trials. Respected people of integrity preside over each Gacaca court, where the whole community is invited to share accusations and hear confessions. Confessions are promoted through reduced sentencing, but the confessor is not allowed to defend themselves. Maya Goldstein-Bolocan argues "that while some degree of retribution for the most 'paradigmatic abusers' is necessary...she supports a more restorative approach" (p. 328). While Gacaca courts still retain some elements of retributive justice, they are an example of how state sponsored judicial systems can be revised to focus on a more comprehensive legal system. Goldstein-Bolocan promotes alternatives to prison for lesser offenses, such as "community service, reparation, [and/or]

public apology, to promote reformation of the guilty party and reintegration back into society. Key to forgiveness is acknowledgement of one's guilt and forgiveness by those affected by the crime. While not everyone is willing to forgive, a process focused on rehabilitation over retribution goes a long way to repairing, rather than maintaining, relationships. In the same way that Hutus and Tutsis have worked to forgive and move beyond the atrocities committed during their most violent period, Somali clans can focus on forgiveness through sharing the stories from all sides.

Power sharing. Power sharing among groups and generations are two related yet separate concepts that can promote or reduce cooperation among a culture. In Somalia, the power struggle among leaders of different clans has dramatically reduced the unity of the Somali culture both in Somalia and also in the Diaspora. Repairing this power sharing will prove difficult and require much forgiveness and time, yet it may prove easier to accomplish than changing the traditions of Somalis in order to increase the influence of Somali youth. Clans will not disappear, yet if properly utilized they offer a way for restoring the Somali culture as a whole. Similarly, tensions between youth, particularly in the Diaspora, and Somali elders will always be present as each generation attempts to assert its beliefs and ideas. But this tension, when harnessed constructively, can unite the experience of the elders with the passion and new ideas of the youth. Together, these two reforms in clan and generational cooperation can dramatically strengthen Somalis and create a culture that excels in the 21st century.

Power sharing and clans. Clans offer support and solidarity, as well as a sense of community. When used as an accountability and support network, clans are a positive attribute that can help Somali society come together. Positive attributes of clans include:

a) personal identity, b) respect for existing structures, c) easier to fundraise from one's own group, and d) the ability to consolidate support from clan members. Shortcomings include: a) inter-clan divisions, b) reducing trust outside one's clan, c) they can derail objectives and goals, d) retarding societal progress, e) reducing societal justice and freedoms, f) distorted interpretations of the Koran, g) increase in conflicts, and h) lower conflict resolution due to past disputes and clan loyalty. The goal of reforming Somalia is to focus on the positive aspects of clans, the uniting and support aspects, while reducing the desire to place one's clan over reason or Somali identity. Because one's clan forms part of an individual's personal identity, it may not be possible to emphasize Somali nationality before clan membership, however, it is possible to tie clan membership to being part of the larger Somali culture. To do this requires the energy and voices of women and youth, to include their knowledge gained while in the Diaspora, as part of a power-sharing model.

As previously mentioned, the current situation regarding Somali clans is a self-reinforcing cycle where people turn inwards to their clans for protection and support, further alienating those outside their clan, which fosters more distrust and violence against others, which increases the vulnerability and seeking of protection within each person's clan. We propose a different cycle, illustrated by Randy White, where Somali citizens confront those outside their clan with the intent of understanding and forgiving others for any wrongdoings that have occurred (factual or implied) in the past or present. This process is best begun by those who are somewhat removed from the primary area (Somalia) and who have a strong sense of identity not dependent on one country. Those living in the Diaspora have gained knowledge of other cultures, been exposed to

educational opportunities not readily available in Somalia, and formed part of their identity apart from their clans. By starting the process in their host country, those in the Diaspora have the potential to influence events in the country of Somalia through example, activism, and personal reflection. “The power of this cycle of action and reflection is widely recognized and is an irreplaceable element in the process of leveraging experience for maximum effectiveness in the growth of the disciple” (White, 2006, p. 37). It is time for the community and the politicians to reflect on their actions. Somalia has faced civil war for over two decades and yet there is no peace. The youth of the Diaspora have the desire and ability to act, to think of a new way, guided by the experience and power of the community elders.

The first step is to self-reflect; admit the atrocities that have happened and what has not worked in the past. This means learning how to understand personal weaknesses and strengths and how to tackle each with mercy and diplomacy. It also means understanding how to share power and governmental roles. If these roles are shared, if leaders are held accountable through elections and term limits, and if clans are equally represented in the government, then equality is better ensured at the highest levels. Couple this with movements to reverse the cycle of clan dependency, instead creating environments where everyone supports and helps one another, then true stability at all levels is achieved. We believe Somalia has a chance to recover through the actions of all Somalis, but that will not happen until many challenges and sacrifices are made to build this peace. Clans are currently interrupting the peace, but they also hold the key to recovery through externally focusing the already existent communal bonds and support networks existent internally within each clan.

Empowering the youth in the Diaspora and the community. Today's youth are tomorrow's future and unless we promote them and empower them, it will be impossible to redefine the future of Somalia. In order to do this, youth in the Somali Diasporas and in Somalia need to be allowed not only to voice their opinions, but for their recommendations to be expanded upon and implemented in future actions and decisions. Through the course of Children and Development at Northwest University, we have been exposed to subjects such as participation and child rights. Sundus draws a very personal connection to these subjects given her culture and the background. Her experience of Somali culture was one that does not believe in child participation. Somalis generally believe that a child should not have a specific set of rights. During her upbringing she never experienced or saw a scenario where children were given an opportunity to partake in decision making in the household or community. The importance of including youth in decision-making is expressed by Reddy and Ratna (2002): "the mechanism for empowerment and the structure for participation should be created at all levels of decision-making from home to local governance (p. 11)." As youth are a large part of home and community levels, they form an important element for reforming the system from the bottom-up. This new system encourages children to be heard, listened to, and let to participant at community and family levels where they can contribute and feel confident enough to voice their opinions and use their strengths up through the government level. Combining both the power of the Diaspora as a whole and the ideals of the youth, we believe the challenges facing the Somali community can be resolved.

The power for the future of Somalia is within the hands of the youth today. In order to for youth empowerment to be successful, there are two recommendations that need further studies conducted in order to determine how best to utilize the youth. The first involves the development of assessment framework that will define specific markers for tracking change and propose goals and action plans for youths and elders. This assessment framework incorporates and overall vision, using language that can unite people with different ethnical, political, ideological and religious vision.

Assessment development will create many horizons and opportunities for the Somali community to look at it. By defining how to empower the community to work together as one, with each voice heard, respected, valued, and utilized to the best of their ability, a specific course can be outlined and measured. Further, it will create a healthy environment for those children suffering identity crisis and also bridge the generation gap.

The second recommendation for the youth empowerment is a program such as the *peacekeeping process*, which was established and used for youth clubs in Cambodia. This process was developed for the children of Cambodia to learn how to navigate their choice and opportunities in their lives. The peacekeeping curriculum material written by Fobes, Jordanwood, Lim, Macknlay, Mark, and Tep (2009) explains that youth are the leaders of tomorrow and, most important, they are the ones who suffer the most from the civil war. They are the ones whose education, health, growth, childhood, and livelihood are disrupted. They are the ones who feel the pain most before anyone else. Empowering the youth and helping them draw, create, or voice their opinion of what is going on in their mind can reduce the impact of the war, fight ignorance, bring mercy, and bring

awareness to the politicians who are fighting for power rather than their country's interests. Now is the time for Somalia to take action and let the youth develop and plan out their future. The Peace Road Club Curriculum provides a way for community leaders, politicians, and those in the Diasporas to empower the youth and children to make changes in their nations.

Continuing the process in Somalia: Projects that Foster Work, Income Generation, and Self-Reliance

Currently, those of the Somali Diaspora provide help to family still in Somalia by sending cash back home. While this income is beneficial for those receiving it, it is not sustainable. Money in this form is aid, not an investment. Rather, it is incumbent upon those in Somalia to find their own sustainable forms of income and employment such as farming, fishing, or starting small businesses. Some programs that we recommend for the Somali population back home and the Diaspora to consider are:

- A. Microfinance/Entrepreneurship programs
- B. Hands on educational courses
- C. Asking organizations to use local volunteers and not foreigners

Microfinance/Entrepreneurship Programs. What is social Entrepreneurship? According to Bornstein and Davis (2010) in their book *Social Entrepreneurship*, “social entrepreneurship is a process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problem, such as poverty, illness, illiteracy, environmental destruction, human rights abuse and corruption, in order to make it better for many” (p. 1). When Burst for Prosperity started the Economic Independence Initiative (EII) project they gave the Somali Bantu community a sense of ownership and independence. Per the EII report,

“social entrepreneurs create public value, pursue new opportunities, innovate and adapt, act boldly, leverage resources they don’t control, and exhibit a strong sense of accountability” (p.1).

There is a general understanding that Somali people financially help their families back home. This is normally done in the form of cash transfers. According to one of the money transfer chains, Dahabshiil, an anonymous interviewer states, “when we computed the total cash sent to families annually, more than \$1,000,000.00 is sent to the Somali Diasporas’ families who are residing back home,” (personal communication, 09 December, 2011). With this much money being sent, there is a lot of potential for beginning reform projects with little change to the current situation. For example, for each \$100 sent, one dollar could be put aside for programs that foster educational programs, health services, or helping start micro financing programs to help ambitious and talented individuals.

There are many existing programs such as USAID, UNDP, and other small non-profit organization that are providing services such as water, sanitation, health and education. Using the expertise of such programs, and funding them from the current cash flow entering Somalia, quick and effective steps can be taken to stabilize the region and begin self-sustaining programs inside the country. There is another benefit with using this existing cash flow. Islam prohibits charging interest among Muslims. By providing interest-free loans, micro-finance programs can be introduced to Somalia¹.

Existing programs such as the Somali Bantu Farming project, which is based here in the State of Washington, are demonstrating to create a healthy, sustainable, and viable

¹ One work-around to not charging interest is to purchase or fund a project by lending organization, and then sell it back through monthly payments at a slightly higher price to the borrower

system for both the local Somali community and also for the Somali Bantu. By creating and refining pilot projects in host countries, many of the difficulties are worked out without the uncertainty and instability currently inherent in Somalia. This allows established programs to be introduced into the country, thereby reducing the potential for failed programs and micro-loan defaults.

Case Study: Social entrepreneurship project in Washington - Somali Bantu Farming Project. According to Ashoka, “Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society’s most pressing social problems. They are ambitious and persistent, tackling major social issues and offering new ideas for wide-scale change” (Ashoka Innovators for the public, 2011). Due to a lack of education, skills, and language barriers, the Somali Bantu refugees did not know what to do once they had arrived in America. They felt lost, hopeless, and confused. Burst for Prosperity and Seattle Tilth approached the Somali Bantu Association of Washington to see what they could do with the Somali Bantu population residing in South King County (Zera, 2011). In their EII report, McKenna wrote:

One aim of the Refugee Farming Project has been that refugee families could apply their experience and knowledge along with farming skills so that with a planned program of training and support they would advance economically to achieve a sufficient family income (McKenna, 2010, pg. i, para. 2).

Burst for Prosperity utilized skills the Somali Bantu population already had, and added training while equipping them with tools and income to start a successful harvesting program.

Community perspective of Bantu Farming Project. Hali Ali, who is a community member that owns Halal grocery store in Tukwila, said she “appreciates having local farmers and mostly loves knowing [she] is helping her Somali community toward self economic independence.” I (Sundus) asked Mrs. Ali what she thinks about the project and the possibility of failing to funding issues and farmers failing to cover the operational cost. She said, “as a business owner, I like buying from them but at the same time I like constancy, and if I can’t get constancy my customer will not appreciate that” (personal interview, July, 2011). It is essential for a program the produces products for consumption that they have buyers, yet many established buyers are wary of instability. A technique for reducing this catch-22 is for programs starting out to focus on farmers markets or to sell directly to consumers. As the project grows, develops a reliable reputation, and proves to be consistent, business owners will establish contracts with them. Again, starting projects in stable countries helps reduce this early risk of insufficient buyers by using the resources available from local agencies and protections under the host nation’s laws. Restaurant owner Barlin Mohamed agreed with Mrs. Ali:

I am happy for them and as of right now we will help with what we can and buy minimal produce from them but we cannot put all our business needs on them. That will be pressure on them and we will be taking risk

of the uncertainty, which is not good for business. (personal interview, July, 2011)

Asha Hussein, a community member who, since the farming project started, has been purchasing some produce from the Somali Bantu project, expressed how she felt about the project. She said: “every time I see them at the Friday prayers or other location, it reminds me of home and how we used to buy fresh produce every day and mostly buying from someone who understand and talks in your language.”

This one project and the responses to it from fellow Somalis demonstrate the positive sense of community and relationships existing among the Somali community in South King County. This project is not only creating opportunity and stability for the farmers, it is also creating a sense of home for many Somali refugees in the area. During our interview, even though both Mrs. Ali and Mrs. Mohamed were hesitant to place all their produce needs from their business on the Somali Bantu Farmers, the ladies expressed interest in buying a small number of produce from them until they are able to distribute in a bigger scale. The ability for Somalis to both supply and sell products reduces the dependence on others many Somali refugees and immigrants have felt since they have arrived. These partnerships show that Somalis can help themselves, but only through working as a community rather than as individuals or family units.

Hands-on educational courses. The Somali educational system has largely collapsed during the civil war due to instability. For those growing up in Somalia during this period, there is a large gap in education that dramatically reduces the effectiveness of

these individuals due to a lack of knowledge and skills. While young children still have the potential to gain a solid education provided the national system of schools is brought back, there is a need to provide useful skills for those young adults who did not receive a proper education. The goal is to provide the tools to earn a living wage while contributing to the rebuilding of Somalia.

The first type of program is trade education. Trade courses include manual labor skills such as brick laying, carpentry, and tailoring. While such schools do not teach basics such as reading, writing, and critical thinking, they offer a means for personal income generation, as well as infrastructure and economic growth for the country as a whole. Additional adult education programs to supplement this education are a possibility for addressing literacy and general knowledge deficiencies.

The second type of program is technical education. Technical courses include internet technology, mechanics, electrical installation, and rural community development. These schools require an assessment of the most needed skills as well as what opportunities for work are available for the students upon completion. The students would likely need to relocate to major cities in order to find jobs. These specialty skills focus more on service jobs that tend to have higher income but do not add to the infrastructure of a country.

Both these options will require developing partnerships with existing businesses to train students. This would mean on-the-job-training, possibly with government incentives for the businesses to hire and train unskilled individuals. Additionally, new programs, either created locally or imported from abroad, are required to accommodate the large number of young adults needing education and employment. Such programs

hold great potential for building the local economy, rebuilding damaged infrastructure, and strengthening intra-clan relationships in the community.

Robert Guerrero said, “Relational, community-building partnerships should also *lead to empowerment*” (p. 5). We believe that by equipping local business leaders to become teachers of the next generation they will become the catalyst for a new wave of change agents in Somalia. My (Sundus) experience and observation from living in the Somali community has revealed that people from my community prefer hands-on learning. Thus, trade and technical schools are appropriate as they inherently require such hands-on learning. Moreover, this option will expose students to real businesses and potentially open up more job opportunities, as they are able to build their resume with a viable internship. This option is also optimal for the country as it does not require as much overhead as traditional education, which requires rebuilding and staffing many of the schools that have shut down.

Asking organizations to use local volunteers and not foreigners. Finally, it is important for non-profit organization to look locally for volunteers rather than importing them from other countries. Paul Farmer, a co-founder of Partners in Health (PIH), has demonstrated how successful this method of local hiring is. The 2011 PIH annual report states: “PIH’s training department works to strengthen training programs and systems in our project sites through standardized, culturally sensitive curricula and dedicated training teams focused on local capacity building” (Partners in Health Annual Report, 2011, pg. 26, para. 1). This method shows the organization’s long-term vision for the country. Health practitioners gain valuable skills while working in a PIH hospital, with many leaving to serve other areas. By staffing NGOs and non-profit organizations with

mostly local individuals, these individuals earn income while learning skills they can pass on or use in other local programs. This reduces expenditures while increasing self-reliance and thereby decreasing dependency on external sources. The PIH model, if expanded to trade and technical schools, has the potential to jumpstart these areas in Somalia without waiting for the current situation to resolve itself and the training of a new generation of workers.

Conclusion

Somalia has endured a civil war and civic unrest that has lead to waves of immigrants fleeing to Diasporas around the world, beginning with the 1991 ousting of the military government. The question of how to move beyond the hatred and violence, to reunite those affected by the fighting, is complex. There is hope, however, in addressing the problems of distrust through holistic and alternative methods of advocacy and restorative justice that bypass many problems found in traditional aid and advocacy work. By promoting participation by those affected by hardships, listening to their voices, and promoting restorative rather than retributive justice, individuals usually perceived as passive victims become agents of change. By retributive, we are referring to the law system that tries and sentences violators of the law, while attempting to provide some sort of monetary compensation to those who were wronged. While more traditional (i.e. Western) approaches of drugs, therapy, and retribution each have a role in combating illnesses and crime, they largely ignore the spiritual and emotional needs of the patients or victims. In order for true healing to take place, Somalis must cross clan boundaries in order to forgive past wrongs and end the sectarian distrust. The nucleus of this healing is the Somali citizens and their children in the Somali Diaspora. Through our analysis and

interviews of Somali individuals of all ages and genders we have found that those removed from the fighting, exposed to different cultures, and living abroad are the most able to see past their clan identities and various biases. By educating and motivating such change in these groups in the Diaspora, while including traditional, non-medicinal healing ceremonies, we believe it is possible to start the change that will end the violence in Somalia.

Today those who live overseas are suffering from identity crisis, biases in culture, poor education, gender and discrimination, and lack of communication between parents and children. Those back home in Somalia are suffering from a lack of sustainability and civil war on a regular basis. From many of the interviewees we have heard voices crying for an end and asking for a solution. Many youth are asking for empowerment from their elders and an opportunity to participant in the changes that are happening in their community.

Our recommendation is to increase education, particularly in second-generation refugees, to increase awareness and encourage discussion of various causes and solutions to the war in Somalia. Our focus with first-generation immigrants is, in addition to education, focus Somali healing rituals and encourage the discussion of past traumas and hatred in order to overcome intra-clan hatred. The goal is to create and demonstrate lasting change that then can be used as a model for those Somalis living in Somalia. Given the strong ties, particularly familial, evident between the Somali Diaspora and Somalia, we believe changes effected in the Diaspora will trickle into Somali society. Such work will take many years, perhaps decades, but with continued patience and

practice, old hatred can be replaced with the unity the Somali culture has known since before colonists changed the very nature of African political structures.

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Appendix A: Interviews

**QUESTIONNAIRE TOWARDS GATHERING DATA FOR THE PREPARATION OF A
MASTER'S DEGREE THESIS****INTRODUCTION:**

Please share the information requested as concisely and honestly as you can. The aim of the questionnaire is to provide accurate data from first-hand sources-in this case, Somalis living in and out of Somalia. It is focused on gathering information that shall provide the basis for a deeper understanding of the impact of the Somali conflict on individuals who have experienced its negative impact first-hand. The overall target is to produce a thesis document that has valid and sound truths, and can defend itself on the basis of fact. I want to thank you very much in advance for your help; you are doing an immense service to graduate students, and may Allah reward you for it. Thank you.

Note: Please rest assured that personal information, like names and locations, shall NOT be published in the thesis, and where there is need to refer to a specific individual's information, great care shall be taken to ensure that their identity is not shared.

NAME	AGE (necessary to highlight focus group)	COUNTRY/ CITY OF RESIDENCE: (eg: Nairobi, Kenya)

QUESTIONS:

What is your view about the Somali civil war?

What impact did the civil war have on you and your family? Has it slowed down any progress you would have made towards your future?

What are some of your challenges living in foreign countries?

In order for any lasting change to happen, there is need for close collaboration, both locally and internationally, between and among different groups like the youth, elderly, community leaders and politicians. Do you play any role in your community that you feel shall contribute in the long or short term towards making lasting change? Have you a role among your community members, whether among your own peers or any other group, that gives you a voice to stand up and talk about important issues?

Is there a time when you felt your voice didn't make any difference? (This could be in any situation, whether as a mother talking to her children about their community responsibility, or as a mosque member discussing duty to others, or as a member of your Somali neighborhood community talking about issues affecting Somalis in the community, or even as a teacher talking to students about belonging and giving back to the community. The possibilities are really many). If yes, why? If no, why not?

In your opinion, which group has the most dominant voice when they raise issues: the youth, the elderly, females of any age, males of any age, the literate, or the illiterate? Give a reason for your answer.

Do you believe there is partnership and collaboration between the youth and the older generation? Give an example of this collaboration. Whose contribution, in your opinion, is more acknowledged by the community? Why do you think so?

If today you were given the opportunity to bring change to Somalia's political and economical paradigm shift, what approach(es) would you take? What suggestions would you give to the current leaders of Somalia?

If you are among the following Somali Professionals: doctors, nurses, engineers, policy makers, lawyers, social workers, community organizers and leaders, and among many other professionals of people who are residing abroad, do you think your skills, talent, and education could be beneficial towards the progress of Somalia as a country? How?

Have you so far, taken any steps towards benefiting your country? If yes, what steps have you taken? If no, why not?

Basing on your impression of their leadership style from what you have read in the newspapers, or watched on the news, or experienced first-hand, can you make an assumption of the level of knowledge, experience, and merit that the current cohort of Somali politicians posses? Give a reason for your answer. **(Please refrain from any disrespectful language, in case your response is in the negative. We are talking about our leaders, and even though one may disagree with them, they are still the leaders of our country and deserve respect for that).**

In your opinion, is it enough to be in a political position to lead and represent a nation? What other characteristics would you require from your leaders?

In your opinion, what are the chief criteria you would apply to select a successful presidential candidate for Somalia?

How much does do you think clan affiliation affects a presidential candidate's chance of getting elected? Does this, in your opinion, contribute to the growth of a good government, or does it cause the demise of any efficient construction?

Do you believe in 'clanism'? Why or why not?

What do you think the strengths and the weaknesses of the clan system are?

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES

Is clan the problem or the solution to the development of Somalia?

The civil war was due to large-scale disagreements between different clans. Do you think the absence of peace is still due to that?

What input do you have to create reconciliation/forgiveness?

There is a general understanding that Somali people financially help their families back home. This is normally done in the form of cash transfer. According to one of the money transfer chains, Dahabshiil, "When we computed the total cash sent to families annually, more than \$1,000,000.00 is sent to the Somali Diasporas' families

who are residing back home". Instead of cash transfer, do you think that money could have been put towards creating projects that foster work/income generation/self-reliance/economic and ultimately promote country stability?

What do you think are the most reoccurring issues in Somalia? Are those issues factors that are delaying the establishment of good government? Why do you think so?

Do you think the international communities are mediating effectively among the groups in conflict? If yes, has the mediation had a positive impact or negative one? If no, why do you think they have not?

Who do you think are the big players in the international community? Do you think they are active in Somalia? If yes, are they positively or negatively impacting? If no, why do you think they are not?

Currently, is there any International community who you think are capable of driving Somalia towards the right path? If yes, who and why do you think so? If no, why not?