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Bonding and Bridging.

A case study of four Somali women's organizations in Norway, Oslo.

Their roles, activities and the collaborations existing between them

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Summary

This study aims at finding out basic information and factors that contribute to the establishment of four Somali women's organizations in Norway, particularly in Oslo, to describe their main activities, roles, visions, and also to establish whether any form of collaboration or links exist between them. I interviewed some of the officials of these organizations using a structured interview guide.

The other objectives were to assess the social and economic impact of the many organizations on members of this minority immigrant group who have settled in Norway, and also to find out whether the presence of these organizations serves the needs of their members and the purpose for which they were established.

The data I obtained indicates that most of these organizations were established in order to assist their members with the various problems facing Somali women after coming to Norway. Despite common belief, the leaders of these organizations emphasised that the organizations were not founded based on the different clans originating from the regions from which the members came from in their country of origin, Somalia. The coexistence of organizations with overlapping or even competing fields of interests and activities can be explained by the fact that there was a certain mistrust that existed between the different organizations of this particular community, which played a significant role in formation of these organizations.

When it comes to membership, most of the women and girls joined these organizations in order to obtain assistance with the various problems facing them after coming to Norway. Such problems were for instance, lack of basic necessities including accommodation, appropriate clothing for the winter, employment, language barriers, racial discrimination, and also to maintain a form of social identity within their ethnic community. Most of these organizations also provide different types of training, such as in the Norwegian language, Somali culture, traditional music and dances and health care, as well as discouraging the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Some of the organizations also teach the women skills such as tailoring, cookery or catering and offer professional courses, which prepare them for job opportunities in their new host country of Norway. Furthermore, some of

the organizations managed to receive economic help in order to provide the women with swimming lessons and other activities.

Other notable activities undertaken by all of the organizations whose officials were interviewed were: teaching members about their individual rights, promotion of gender equality, tips on how to live in the new country peacefully without infringing on the rights on others such as neighbors, the country's laws, health care services, lobbying and looking for jobs and national training and employment opportunities to enable their members to be self-reliant. Their efforts are also geared towards preparing members for successful integration into the Norwegian community so that they can contribute fully to national activities.

The findings also indicate that there are numerous challenges facing these organizations of Somali women, which include illiteracy among their officials and leaders. They face failure to hold elections regularly, poor organization of activities, lack of financial acumen and hence lack of remuneration of the officials working for these organizations. Other problems are the lack of offices or adequate rooms for use as classes, meetings and training venues. In addition, the socio-cultural background has some negative impacts since the Somali women are religiously unable to interact freely socially with people of the opposite sex. Traditional and cultural practices like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are still widely practised among the Somali society. These drawbacks constitute the main challenges contributing to poor running and inefficiency seen in some of the organizations according to the findings.

Concerning the issue of collaboration and networking, the findings suggest that the officials are aware of the existence of other similar organizations in Oslo and other cities in Norway, but they are not collaborating effectively. This is because of the lack of adequate resources and set guidelines for such organizations, in addition to the lack of technical know-how. The few organizations, which engage in limited collaboration, do so in areas such as holding training and a few seminars together. They also collaborate in celebrating their national holidays such as the Somali Independence Day and Islamic religious celebrations that take place twice a year called "Idd". The officials however, expressed their willingness to strengthen collaborations so that their activities and operations can be improved.

Some of the officials are trained in a professions such as in the field of health e.g. nursing counseling and community social work, but none of them is trained in management. Some of

the strategies that may help improve the situation according to the interviewees include provision of management training for the officials and voluntary workers, providing employment opportunities in collaboration with local authorities, giving financial assistance to the organizations to enable them to carry out planned activities.

1. Introduction

This thesis aims at describing some of the Somali Women's organizations in Oslo, their roles, and activities and finding out to what extent they collaborate with each other. The study was prompted by a hypothesis formulated by Professor Frank Meyer on the topic: *Ethnic Minority organizations in Norway: Coping with the challenges in the present or in the past.* Professor Frank Meyer describes in his own work how voluntary ethnic minority participation in Norway depends on organizations:

> Theoretically, one can postulate that inclusive organizational patterns will help immigrants to build networks and to accumulate social capital. Inclusive organizations allow immigrants to use their individual resources, and to help one another cope with present-day challenges to integration. There is strength in number, and this is an important factor in relations with the majority (Meyer, 2008).

There are numerous Somali women's organizations in the city of Oslo alone. This necessitated the need for this study to find out from these four organizations, why they were founded, their roles, their activities, and also to establish if there are any collaborations existing between them.

The broad objective is to identify the main reasons for establishing these organizations, and the specific objectives were firstly to establish the main activities of these organizations, such as encouraging their members not to practise Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), how "Astur" influences the Somali women to come together to assist each other, how well the members are integrated into the Norwegian community, and how the members are introduced to the laws and the administrative system of the new country.

Secondly, the study aims to find out if there is any collaboration between these organizations, or competition, or peaceful coexistence. And thirdly, the study is to determine whether these organizations are being managed effectively.

Why is this new knowledge important for the Somali society in Norway? The knowledge obtained in this study will help to identify the existence of organizations that serve this purpose, the nature of their operations or activities, and the kind of service that they can offer

to current or future immigrants. This information empowers the immigrants to cope with needs arising from immigration. It also identifies the gaps that new organizations may seek to address.

Some of the questions that this study was to help answer were - What are the roles and activities of these Somali women's organizations? Are there any significant differences between these organizations? Are these organizations effectively managed according to their aims and objectives? And lastly whether there is any collaboration between the organizations or between the organizations and government departments?

2. Research methodology

In this section, I will explain the choice of a qualitative research design in this thesis and also some of the study limitations. Further, I will describe the process concerned with identification of the study population, determining the sample size, sampling method, data, collection and processing and how I will analyze the data. I will also clearly discuss the issues of validity and reliability of this study. Lastly, I will address the ethical considerations.

2.1.   Why a qualitative approach?

The main method of data collection in this thesis is through qualitative interviews with key personal of the four women's organizations. According to Steinar Kvale (1996) the "qualitative research interview aims at obtaining varied descriptions from the different qualitative aspects of the interviewee's life world; it works with the words and not with numbers".Thus qualitative interviews seemed to be an appropriate approach in order to find out through words and explanations of the key figures of the organization themselves why these four Somali women organizations exist and how they work. Kvale also states that the "quotations of what the subjects experience and why they act as they do, is primarily a task for the researcher to evaluate" (Kvale, 1996: 32). He illustrates this approach with the following example: "The doctor does not start by asking the patient why he is sick, but rather asks the patient what is wrong, what he is feeling, and what the symptoms are [...] Further questioning proceeds from this hypothesis, and on the basis of the patient's answers and results from other methods of investigation, the doctor then makes the diagnosis" (Kvale, 1996:33).

My study is descriptive and explorative reporting back what was said and discussed by the four organizations, and I chose to use a qualitative design in this research because of the type of information I wanted to gather, which was non-numerical, but rather detailed explanations and narratives from the leaders. These would give more understanding of the possible reasons why the organizations were founded.

If I am to further quote what Miles and Huberman (1995) said about this methodology:

> Qualitative data are sexy. They are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local context. With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, see precisely which events led to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations (Miles and Huberman, 1995:1).

2.2   Choice and number of cases

It is a basic characteristic of qualitative research designs that only a small number of cases is being studied intensively, (Kvale, 1996:38). Eight organizations were approached during which, I contacted the leaders and sent them letters explaining the purpose of the study and also asked if they were interested in participating in the study. I had intended to recruit about ten Somali women's organizations, but only five agreed to participate in the study. Out of the five, only four organizations were used in this study. This is because some of the leaders of their own choice declined to participate in the study.

As a consequence, the number of cases was drawn from the officials and leaders of only four of the different Somali women's organizations based in Oslo. These leaders were sampled by "convenience sampling technique". A convenience sample can minimize volunteerism and other selection biases by consecutively selecting every accessible person who meets the entry criteria (Hulley et al, 2001:30) because they were the only leaders or officials who accepted and were willing to participate in the research, after careful and adequate explanations given to obtain consent. All respondents participated voluntarily in the study. An assurance of confidentiality was given to all of the respondents.

A common pitfall of qualitative studies is over generalization. It is obvious that the results from this study are not representative in a statistical sense. The strength of these cases is however to document variation and possibilities of the social world.

2.3 Data collection, processing and analysis

This section covers the procedures and techniques I used to carry out the study. According to Steinar Kvale, there are seven stages of an interview. Kvale's seven stages are thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting. Kvale continues to underline that "[s]ome interview researchers advocate a more flexible approach to design than starting with a definite plan to be followed throughout the project" (Kvale, 2009: 102).

In this study, the data was collected first by using a pre-structured interview guide, and secondly by an unstructured interview that followed after going through the interview guide. All conversations were recorded by voice recorder (dictaphone) to act as a form of backup for the information gathered. The information obtained was carefully written down in notebooks in readiness for analysis and all the information recorded in the dictaphone was transferred to the computer for storage, easy accessibility and use whenever required.

During the interview I had my research questions which were formulated in theoretical language, whereas the interview questions were asked in the everyday language of the interviewees (Kvale, 2009: 132). Based on the information and the specific research questions to be answered, the final interview guide was prepared after carrying out pre-testing with a group of students from the University of Mogadishu in Somalia. On completion of the first interview, I listened to the taped conversation and realized that I was interrupting the interviewee too often, which led to a substantial loss of information from my informer. Aware of my habit, I managed to stop interrupting and in the next session I listened more carefully and patiently and left the respondent to talk freely.

The interviews were carried out in different places. One took place in my office, the second one at one of the leader's home in Oslo, the third one in a coffee house in Oslo city and the last one at the Stortorget in Oslo. The one at the leader's home had numerous interruptions due to the children playing around there. We were also unlucky with the interview at

Stortorget. There was a lorry delivering goods to the coffee house near where we sat, and in effect we had to stop the interview several times.

2.4   The interview guide

I used a semi-structured interview guide to obtain information on the topic as well as giving room to the interviewees in order to get more information. Following Kvales suggestions, the semi-structured interview had a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions (see interview guide given in the attachments section). Yet at the same time, there was an intended flexibility to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects (Kvale, 2009:24).

The interviews lasted between 1 and 1 ½ hours or longer in a few cases. I gave the interviewees a briefing before and a debriefing after the interview just as recommended by Kvale in his findings (2009:129). Although I had provided my informants with all the necessary information about my study, I always started every interview by briefing them on the purpose of the interview, why I chose to use a digital recorder and why I was conducting this study. Briefing was very necessary because the interviewees were very afraid from the outset as to what they would answer. They were particularly concerned that the interview was going to expose some of their personal weaknesses and that they might have said something which could be used against them.

My informants were encouraged to ask as many questions as possible whenever they felt like it because most of them had never been interviewed about their organizations before. As Pierre Bourdieu (1999) argues, "interviews are no neutral arenas of discourse where power is distributed equally to the participants". While the interviewer can feel comfortably well, the interview is a situation with a lot of tension and anxiety because most of the subject opens personal and emotional experiences, which is also mentioned in Kvale's interview findings (2009:128).

My interview guide was developed and based on Kvale's understanding of how a semi-structured interview should be carried out. "A good interview question should contribute thematically to knowledge production and dynamically to promoting a good interview interaction" (Kvale, 2009:131). With this in my mind, I formulated relevant questions in order

to collect the data needed for the research. The questions were partly formulated as direct questions and partly as indirect questions (Kvale, 2009: 130).

2.5   Data analysis

Before analysing the data, I read through the notes that I had written down in my notebook and identified the broad categories such as the vision statements, main aims of starting the organizations, finding out their addresses, finding out who the top leaders are and their qualifications and the major activities of the organization, then summarized them on a master sheet.

Further, I also summarized each organization's activities and responses on the collaboration between the organizations themselves and the collaboration between the organizations and the government departments. I also summarized each organization's activities and collaboration with other organizations within Norway and even beyond Norwegian borders. I also summarized the leaders' comments on how the operations and welfare of their organizations could be improved..

2.4   Transcription, translation, reliability and validity

The information I obtained in both written and taped form was thoroughly counterchecked for any mistakes and correctness before analysis. My informers all chose to use only the Somali language during the interviews. To be able to obtain the reliability of the data I collected, the material was transcribed and translated at Kenyatta University by two Somali students. (See Appendix 1 for key to transcription.)

I had the option of asking a translator in Africa to translate the material from the Somali language to English for me but I learned that the purpose was not to transcribe which means changing the interview from oral taped material to written material. Kvale argues correspondingly, that the question *What is the correct transcription?* cannot be explained satisfactorily, since there is no true, objective transformation from the oral to the written mode" (Kvale, 1996: 166).

> Questions of interviewer reliability in interview research are frequently raised, yet in contrast to socio-linguistic research, technically regarded, it is an easy check to have two persons independently type the same passage of a taped interview, and then have a

computer program list and count the number of words that differ between the two transcriptions, thus providing a quantified reliability check (Kvale, 1996: 163).

The data therefore has been carefully analysed and interpreted to ensure validity and reliability as is necessary for qualitative research as explained above. I have also attempted to put the results/findings of this study in easily understandable language for users or other stakeholders, who include policy makers, students and health care providers.

2.5   Ethical considerations

Confidentiality during the interviews was guaranteed. I informed them that I was going to use a semi-structured interview guide, explained what it means and I also promised to ask only questions relevant to the themes of the study. Ethical considerations were observed to the highest standards as possible from the beginning of this research and in order to protect the rights of the informants, confidentiality and privacy of all individuals who participated in this study. "The person of the researcher is critical for the quality of the scientific knowledge, and for the soundness of ethical decisions in any research project" (Kvale, 1996: 117).

Furthermore, Kvale describes three ethical aspects of the researcher's role concerning scientific responsibility, relation to the subjects, and researcher independence.

> The researcher has a scientific responsibility to his profession and his subjects that a research project yield knowledge worth knowing and that it is as controlled and verified as possible (Kvale, 1996: 118).

As mentioned above, anybody not willing to participate in the research was allowed to decline of her own volition. I also ensured that irrelevant questions were asked of the respondents.

2.6   Limitations to this study

As an actionist working for the Government Actions against FGM, I thought that my role in conducting the interviews was precarious and could affect the study because I am a well-known person among the Somali people living in Norway. In addition, due to the limited time and resources, I decided to use only four of the Somali organizations in Oslo. The decision to interview only four of many organizations in Oslo, was due to the fact that some of the

women respondents have a traditional fear of being interviewed by anybody else for the purpose of making inquires about their operations.

Some of these women are semi-illiterate and lack proficiency in general theoretical language that leads them to not easily understand the reasons for being interviewed in the study. Another important limitation to this study was that the number of organizations interviewed was very small to be representative of the many Somali organizations existing in Oslo. Therefore the results of this study cannot draw tangible generalizations, but they may act as a justification for further research on these organizations.

2.7   Literature review

Some of the information I collected is theoretical, practical, factual or descriptive and historical or current in nature and was enriched by facts from existing research/studies or reports. Additional data is selected from books, periodicals, articles in newspapers, libraries, web sites on the Internet. A further literature review was undertaken whenever necessary to clarify facts that were not clear to me. Based on the information and the specific research questions to be answered, the final interview guide was prepared after carrying out pre-testing with a group of Somali University of Mogadishu students.

3. Social Capital, Welfare and Integration

In this chapter I will discuss the concepts related to social capital, welfare and integration.

3.1   Social capital

There is a definition of Social Capital used by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) in his article *On Economical Capital, Cultural Capital and Social Capital* where he defines Social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1983:249).

The other definitions of social capital are increasingly becoming more agreed upon (Halpern, 2005). Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrues to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network or more or less institutionalized relationships or mutual acquaintance and recognition. Acknowledging that capital can take a

variety of forms is indispensable to explain the structure and dynamics of differentiated societies (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 119).

Social capital can also be defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain action of actors – whether persons or corporate actors are within that structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievements of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible (Coleman, 1988, p. 96). According to Robert Putnam, (2004) the author of *Bowling Alone* and one of the concept's leading proponents, Social Capital refers to the collective value of all social networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other. A useful common denominator for those aspects of society is difficult to measure, but may contribute to long-term economic growth. Networks have shared norms, values and understanding which are arranged and cooperated among social groups according to the Social Capital that is found in social relationships.

According to David Halpern (2006) the concept of Social Capital is currently the focus of interest in research and it refers to the three components of social networks, social norms which are rules and values and expectancies, that characterize the community and the sanctions or punishments that help to maintain the social norms. The three components of social capital clearly have a systematic relationship with one another. He adds that, the networks are partly defined and help form group norms (Tajfe, 1970. 1981). Further he explains, group norms are partly held in place by the existence of sanctions (Posner and Rasmussen, 1999) in turn, effective sanctions rest critically on the existence of shared norms and networks structure, such as a degree of enclosure (Coleman, 1988).

As Halpern states, "A frequently made point about social capital is that, unlike other forms of capital, it is a public good that benefits a group and is not the sole property of a single individual". As such it is a vulnerable to free riding. If you are part of a social network, or live in a community in which a norm of co-operation and helpfulness is widespread, you can derive benefits from that network or norm even if you do little or nothing to maintain it.

This principle also applies to "Astur" which encourages communities to belong to networks that are formed for the benefit of the whole community and individual members. Social capital contributes to development and other forms of benefits in the community like political, educational and social well-being.

3.2   The Somalian concept of "Astur"

"Astur" is a Somali word that is adopted from the Arabic language which means "to cover" or "to take care of". It also means to have control of the norms that guide members of the society in daily living.

How is "Astur" applied in Somali society? "Astur" is often used to compel both men and women to be modest in life, that is to be kind and respectful to the elders, the culture, the religion and, most of all, society in general. For example, families are obliged to provide food, shelter or any other form of assistance including expenditures for the less fortunate members of their own family or other members of the community who need something for survival. This is a culture that is strongly urged in Islam. People must help those who are in need. During Ramadhan, all Muslims have to pay a certain amount of money or food, called "Fitri" to the poor so as to achieve the blessing of fasting a whole month. This is paid collectively before the end of this holy month, or just before the opening prayer to end the 30 days of fasting. This day is called "Idd ul Fitri", which means the celebration of the end of Ramadhan.

The Somali people use this word in all their daily explanations of care for their family, their religion, their clan, their culture, their tradition, their country and more importantly, they apply it to themselves as a yardstick to measure how well they fit into Somali society. "Astur" also gives an individual special recognition in the society according to his or her deeds. An example of how it is used in Somali language is: "qofkaan cidooduu asturay" which means this person gives "Astur" to his family. This is seen clearly both in Europe and Norway, by the amount of cash remittance that is sent back to Somalia by the Somali people. Somalis are a dependent community and like citizens of the other developing countries who do not have a social welfare system, depend on the family, clan or relatives in order to survive.

In the religious context, if a girl wears a "Hijab" (the Islamic head scarf), they say "Gabadhu wey asturan tahay", which means the lady is covered according to Islam regulations. Katrine

Fangen clearly shows the humiliation among the Somali society having strict moral norms imposed by the clothing. "The young women who accept dressing in traditional Muslim women's clothes are viewed as higher up on the scale of dignity than those women who choose to wear modern western clothing" (Fangen, 2006: 16). In Norway, "[t]he dynamics of humiliation are first activated when a young woman violates the rules. In order to avoid condemnation many young women choose to wear the veil when seen, but drop it when on their own" (Fangen, 2006: 17). The clan's use of the word "Astur" is more to the cultural practices of Somali people. Here, the word is used when a man or woman gets married to their own clan member, like a cousin, it is believed to contribute to keeping the family stronger. Another example, "leysku ceeb asturo" means the marriage keeps couples to the family they belong to, and also their problems are solved by the family instead of outsiders. Katrine Fangen gives another example of the family conflicts where a girl who wants to marry a man from a different clan in Norway is physically assaulted by her relatives who are against her choice (Fangen, 2006: 15).

"Astur" is also applicable to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The World Health Organization's definition means "to mutilate the women's genitals" while the Somali see, "infibulations" as an operation done to "cover" the "uncovered" and not allowing her to bring shame to the family. In terms of war, Somalia as a country is said to be "astured" when the Somali people go to war to defend themselves against the Ethiopians as in the recent years. Everyone becomes so happy and uses the word as means of support for each other. Somalis recognize each other by the way they dress and how they behave in the society. If a girl/woman dresses up in western style, the others will tell her to go and "astur" herself. If a man goes to bar, then the others will tell him to "astur" himself according to the codes of Islam that requires that a good Somali should not go to bars.

"Astur" acts as a form of social control among the Somali people and encourages taking responsibility for other members of their society. As indicated by the answer from one of the informants of the Somali women groups in Oslo, which stated, "we started this organization when we saw the problems Somalis are facing, especially the women". *"Because they came to this country as refugees, the country is new, they meet a new language, new weather, new people and even religion, and so many found this to be ………the fact that they have problems as refugees and most of them lacking good education, lacking other languages, this made it difficult to understand the country they came to"*.

"Astur" in this context also applies to Somalis who are either travelers or immigrants in any foreign country where they are obliged to give care to each other irrespective of their clan of origin. "Astur" is a strong virtue that binds Somali people together, yet some times may lead to conflicts. For example, if a member of the family is wealthy but he/she declines to assist another member who requires help, then the other members can compel him to provide help culturally.

Is "Astur" a gendered concept, which means is it applied differently for women and men? So far, there is only little or no scientific research done on this question. According to my personal experience and observation and also from discussions held with many Somalis living in Somalia and Norway, the "Astur" is applied differently to men and women. Women tend to have more responsibilities in a family and are expected to behave in certain ways when interacting with men as a way of showing respect.

Therefore, Somali women in Norway face many challenges in their daily lives as immigrants, which make it difficult to cope up with the life style in Norway. Most of these women come as refugees or for family reunion with refugees or immigrants in Norway and also they have little or no formal education. According to available research done in Norway, Somalis have the lowest level of education (Henriksen 2007). They then are not equipped with the basic training or professional skills, which can enable these women to seek employment outside the traditional household. This unfortunate state is evidenced by the high number of Somali women in Norway who have become dependent on the social welfare system because of failure to engage in income generating activities or employment. Many of them look upon themselves, particularly those with children as mothers who are entrusted with responsibilities for the family upkeep and bringing up of children. These women are also subjected to "Astur" which in this case implies responsibility for her family and the community elders, and this must be done within the provisions of culture.

In general, Somali women in the diaspora, while struggling to start new lives abroad, not only keep in mind those less fortunate relatives who remained in their homeland, but they are also concerned and committed to the reconstruction of their shattered lives that were devastated by the ongoing civil war in Somalia. Translated into the terms of social capital theories, Somali women are members of both close, local networks, and have wider transactional networks to a

degree higher than Somali men. Somali women have social and economical obligations for other members of these networks. Most of them have little or no formal education, and are not equipped with the basic training or professional skills, which can enable these women to seek employment outside the traditional household work.

Somali people however, are said to be "intelligent, sophisticated, subtle, inordinately proud and extremely individualistic" according to the cultural anthropologist, Ioan Lewis. As Hege Larsen states in her study findings: "Political integration of immigrant women, The role of voluntary organizations in Social Capital formation and political involvement" (2007: 17). "In policy formation, it is important to be aware of the gender factor, recognizing the diversity between men and women in contributing to local social capital" (Healy, et al., 2007:117).

She continues to state that "[i]n particular policy initiatives that value informal network activities, especially those associated with the informal care of children and other people, will contribute to greater awareness of women's contributions to social capital creation". Finally, she says, "to make women involved in politics, social capital policy initiatives must recognize the differences between men and women what interest and opportunities are concerned".

3.3   Social capital outcomes

Social capital is related directly to the following general outcomes including economical growth, improvement of health status, enhanced educational level, and leadership of governments. For Putnam, however the main benefits are: the creation or maintenance of civil society, the main benefits of social capital are collective for the individual health and welfare which he has emphasis in his recent work (Putnam, 2000). He further says that the voluntary organizations act as generators of social capital and must rely on either trust as it that generated in face-to-face group experiences and then generalized to the wider society outside those groups, or trust as in increased by organizational densities that facilitate cross cutting ties of membership between different organizations. Putnam (2000: 23) distinguishes between bridging and bonding social capital, the latter being the ridging social capital seems to be entirely beneficial, creating wider identities by linking solidarity groups (Putnam, 2000: 23). Further he says that 'bonding and bridging are not "either-or" categories into which social networks can be compared to different forms of social capital (Putnam, 2000:23).

In this case these four Somali culture organizations are already in conformity with the ideals of bonding and bridging since they are founded for the purpose of assisting each other to overcome the problems facing members and also making attempts to bridge them with the Norwegian system. For example, as in the words of the fourth informant *"What, can I say? God be blessed ... Lacking education on what can make them break the law in Norway"*. She also adds: *"So the work we practically do is reaching out with information divided on you know, integration and the laws"*.

3.4   Social welfare in Norway

In the book about the Welfare State of Norway, *Oil, work and welfare* written by Knut Halvorsen and Steinar Stjernø (2006), they describes the development of the Norwegian welfare state as the result of how different classes and groups have managed to protect themselves against the hazards of life. Four kinds of social risks have been particularly important – old age, sickness, disability and unemployment. Before the welfare state, entering into these situations meant hardship and need for large parts of the population. Today, the structure of different welfare states is characterized by how different elements are combined and mixed. The most important elements of "providing systems" are: the individual and the family, the market, the state and the social security system, the voluntary sector – voluntary organizations, foundations of benevolence and others. Whereas in the poor and non-industrialized countries, the family often has a strong responsibility to care for family members and relatives whenever they face a difficult situation, the market and the state have a more important role in industrialized and post-industrial countries. Almost all welfare states mix the 'providing systems' mentioned above and therefore, the Norwegian welfare state also represents a special mix of these systems. As per the report of UNFPA and International agreements of 2007: "Families are sensitive to strains induced by social and economic changes".

In the same spirit of "Astur" as used in the context of the Somali community, it is comparable to the role of the welfare state of Norway. This is because, in Somalia, and other undeveloped countries, the families share the responsibility of caring for its members and relatives when they are faced with difficult situations, as well as taking care of all the basic needs of an individual and extended family members. This is also strengthened by their Islamic faith teachings, and supported by the findings of (Abdullahi, 2001) *The Islamic Factor*, which

observes that Islam also emphasizes social cohesion and harmony. Its basic philosophy is "enjoining the right and prohibiting the wrong" and one should not harm others. He underlines that "social cohesion begins in the family, community and extends to human beings at large. The law of Islam emphasizes justice and fairness, prohibits cheating, exploitation, fraud, deception as well as coercive policies. Moreover, it also emphasizes good governance under broad moral principles and laws divined by God. Furthermore, Islamic moral teachings also stress benevolence, chastity, and kindness. "O people, be conscious of your Lord, who created you from one soul and from it created its mate and from them twin scattered many men and women. Be conscious of God and remember the rights of the wombs, surely God is always watching you" (Quran, 4:1).

3.5 Integration

According to MNS Encarta dictionary, the term integration is defined in various ways:

1. Equal access for all: The purpose of opening a group, community, place, or organization to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or social class.
2. Acceptance into community: The process of becoming an accepted member of a group or community.
3. Integration is also defined as "the intermixing of persons previously segregated''.

Integration, in the context of this study, means the process of accepting an individual coming from a different race, culture or ethnicity into a new country or community as well as the immigrant also adapting to the new way of life. Therefore, either the receiving society or the incoming individual or groups cannot conveniently describe how well one has been integrated. On the other hand, integration means untouched or whole according to the Latin origin, which differs from the word assimilation. This then means that equal groups of people are supposed to live together in mutual respect, acceptance and have tolerance for each other's differences. This can be said as follows:
"Collective approach to social capital emphasizes maintenance of social norms and cohension within social networks while the individual approach focuses on how the individual can profit from investments in social networks, for instance in order to get a job (Svendsen and Svendsen 2006). Currently, Somalis living in Norway are subject to a negative image, as reflected by the media, that is hard to live with since the term "Somali" has for many Norwegians become equivalent with violent gangs who are associated with the use of KHAT,

practice of FGM, polygamy, illegal immigration, illegal financial transactions and even connection to terrorism (Fangen, 2004).

From this study, the informants indicated that Somali women who are their members face various challenges when it comes to integration into the Norwegian society. This includes poor understanding of the Norwegian system of government. In order to improve the situation, all of the Somali women organizations' leaders expressed the need for the improved means of integration of their members where they can act as the bridges between their members and the Norwegian culture and system. Most of their activities are designed towards assisting their members in becoming successfully integrated into their new country. In the following section I will summarize the integration challenges to the Somali community in Norway.

3.6   Integration challenges to the Somalis in Norway

The Somali people in Norway have been the focus of the media in the past few years due to what the media has described as problems of not coping well with the integration efforts in this country. Several reports in the national media of Norway, in recent times have indicated that Somalis encounter difficulties in becoming successfully integrated into the Norwegian system as compared to the other immigrants who have also settled in Norway. As a result, the qualifications obtained in the country of origin (Somalia) are not recognized or accepted in Norway. This means that Somali immigrants must be retrained for acceptance in order to qualify for jobs. The majority of the Somalis are illiterate and shy away from going to schools as adults even if it means just learning the Norwegian language. According to the findings of sociologist, Katrine Fangen (2006), Somalis who start their new life from the bottom rung of the new social hierarchy, find that their competence is not recognized and they are instead reduced to being only this, a refugee. She further describes that "there might also be a clash between the egalitarian "you shall not be better than us" attitude in Norway (known as the *Jante-loven*) and the Somalis who are just as egalitarian, but in reverse - "We are just as good as you" (cf. Gundel, personal communication. Fangen, 2006: 7).

It has also been noticed that the few Somalis who are employed have difficulties in observing punctuality, frequently get to work late, and are unable to communicate effectively with their

employers in the case of sickness. This has created a negative stereotype of the Somali community as a whole, to potential employers.

With regard to health implications, the Somalis are traditionally not well adjusted to the Norwegian diet, in particular the common practice of eating bread or cold food for lunch. Instead, most Somalis are used to eating their traditional warm meals consisting of rice, spaghetti or Somali pancakes which are taken with meat or milk. They are not used to the practice of carrying packed lunches to work that is common in Norway. Not only are they unfamiliar with carrying packed lunches, but also with eating meals in front of other people without sharing. This new culture has to be learned from childhood. Most of the Somali women have grown up sharing meals in their original dependent culture. After coming to Norway, they have to adapt to the practice of staying in school for many hours without going back home for meals and have to learn this culture of carrying packed lunches slowly. They face a host of other challenges that hinder their successful integration. Therefore, they find the organizations very helpful in introducing them to life in the new environment.

Although the Somali women's organizations' leaders said that their organizations are not clan based organizations, available information suggests that most of these organizations were established based on the clans originating from the regions which the members came from in their country of origin. According to Katrine Fangen, several Somalis report that bullying because of clan also occurs in Norway. She cites the example of one of the Somali youth organizations that was involved in helping a girl who had become pregnant by a boy from another clan. This girl was forced by means of violence not to marry the boy. (Fangen, 2006: 15). Mistrust that exists between the different members of this particular community has played a significant role in the formation of these organizations. It also emerged that most members especially the women and girls joined these organizations in order to obtain assistance with the various problems facing them after coming to Norway. Some of these problems are lack of basic necessities including accommodation, appropriate clothing for winter, employment, language barriers, racial discrimination and also to maintain a form of social identity with their ethnic community. Most of these organizations also provide different trainings, which acts like including, Norwegian language, Somali culture, traditional music and dances, health care messages, discouraging the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and also life skills including tailoring, cookery or catering and professional courses, which prepare them for job opportunities in their new host country of Norway. The

organizations play a major role in assisting the new members in getting early and successful integration within the Norwegian community.

The Norwegian Government introduced an orientation program for newcomers in 2006 that gave all immigrants an opportunity to learn the basic laws, systems and ways of living happily in the country. In addition, the immigrants also learn the language in both written and spoken forms. In order to practice the language they have to work in different companies and institutions in order speak it. This program was only for those who came to the country after March 2003. This program does not include those Somalis who came to Norway before the mentioned date, causing a backlog of many Somalis not getting this training. Further information also shows that Somali citizens in Norway are the majority among those who are unemployed. Only 18% of the Somali population is in employment (Statistics Norway, 2008f) and their children have been noted not to do well in schools, colleges and other institutions. This study however did not aim at finding out why Somali people are overrepresented when it comes to unemployment or the reasons for the poor performance of their children in the schools and colleges. However, the question remains: if organizational work, networking and the accumulation of a social capital can help to improve the social and economic situation of the Norwegian Somali, then it is beneficial particularly for Somali women.

3.7   The Somali culture and other important concepts

This chapter describes a few of the important cultural aspects, health issues and the participation of Somali women in society.

The clan system is based on their identity from their great grandparents who make the main name of the clan and further make the sub clans. A Somali will always identify him/herself by the clan he belongs to and the clan he/she is alienated to. This clan is his/her family and gives all the solidarity one needs. This clan solidarity contributes to the political clan solidarity and leadership. "Contrary to the make- up of clans in many countries where clans do not share much in their ethnicity, clans in Somalia share all the necessary elements of homogeneity" (Abdurahman 2001: 8).

> Social Cohesion begins in the family, community and extends to human beings at
> large referring the quotation in the Quran (4:1): "Oh people, be conscious of your

Lord, who created you from one soul and from it created its mate and from them twin scattered men and women. Be conscious of God and remember the rights of wombs, surely god is always watching you (Abdulrahman, 2001).

The Somali women in Norway come from different clans originating in Somalia, which are spread across that country. Their background is of nomadic life style, small-scale traders, peasant farmers, and the women traditionally are usually housewives. A majority of the Somali people is Muslim and strictly adheres to the Islamic teachings now more than before, due to the strong influence of Islamic cultural education which has replaced the traditional Somali culture. This has affected the original Somali way of life that influenced their manner of dressing, traditional weddings and other family functions. So it is very difficult now to clearly define the Somali culture since most of the Somali men and women have adopted the Islamic culture and are now identifying themselves with the religion, and also using more the Arabic language in their daily talks rather than before. Sometimes these practices have a negative impact on the health of women and children.

The civil war in the 1990s, forced most of Somalis out of their country to seek refuge or join their families in other countries all over the world. These women before depended on either the family that she became married into or on their husbands' wealth. These women today have become the main breadwinners for the family, unlike in the past, due to the changing roles of men and women in their society. Somali women had been granted under the 1979 constitution in the Somali Government, many rights although the progress was erased by the war. Somali women coming to Norway receive women's rights as much as the Norwegian women in Norway. Katrine Fangen also reflects that even though violence seems not to be unusual in Somali families, some of the instances of wife battering in Norway seem to have been triggered by feelings of frustration and anger at not coping with one's own situation in Diaspora. (Fangen, 2006: 19). She also adds, "Men might feel threatened by the many rights women have in the new country, and by the new economic independence of their women, due to their rights to welfare benefits from the state"(abid).

3.8   What is an organization?

According to Mc Namara, a consultant in Sociology (1992-2007), an organization is a group of people intentionally organized to accomplish an overall, common goal or set of goals. The

number of people forming the organization can range from two to tens of thousands. Members of the organization often have a vision (an image in their mind) of how the organization should be working if everything is going well. Similarly, an organization should have an overall purpose or mission that necessitates its existence. An organization is also a form of social system that is quite complex and has inputs, processes and outputs or tangible results. To support this definition, Katrine Fangen (2007) in her study on the Young Somali adults from various backgrounds, observed that Somalis get an opportunity to become involved in organizations and feel that they are doing something worthwhile for other Somalis. Fangen further says that Somali participation in these organizations in Norway, Somalia or internationally enables the aspect of being well integrated in the host society while maintaining a commitment to one's own background and culture.

4. A Case Study of Four Somali Women's Organizations in Oslo

According to available information from Oslo Municipality and the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDI) found for the year 2005, there are 14 Somali organizations in Oslo that are registered and receive economical help from the local community post 73. From this information, only two organizations out of the four that participated in this study appear on that list and this implies that there could be many more existing. These organizations are located in different areas of Oslo city and its environs.

These organizations were established to cater for women only, women and children, youth or occasionally combined groups of both sexes. Some of the organizations were formed for political or religious reasons and are linked to other similar organizations based in Somalia.

There is evidence that only a few studies have previously been done in Norway on Somali immigrants, [for example, the research done by Katrine Fangen (2006)] but no specific research has been done on the Somali organizations, particularly the Somali women in Oslo. Indeed, many Somali women were not reached because they were not organized and could not get information about our gatherings. Another study by Engebrigstsen, Bakken and Fuglerud (2004) on Somali and Tamil immigrant organizations aimed to convince the politicians and local authorities to push for establishment of inclusive voluntary organizations to help integrate marginalized immigrant groups in Norway.

Available literature from studies done elsewhere about Somali organizations such as the Somali community organizations in London and Toronto by Gail Hopkins, (2006) proves that the Somali community has a tendency of organizing themselves in very many small organizations wherever they live, even if it is in one town or village.

In the rest of this section I will present the organizational characteristics of the four organizations that agreed to participate, namely; The Somali Women Integrated Group, Somali Women Solidarity Association, The Somali Culture House Women Group and Somali Women and Children Organization. In addition, I will provide information based on my findings about their major activities, problems encountered and the findings on their collaborations with other organizations both in Norway and other countries where other Somali organizations exist.

4.1 The Somali Women Integrated Group (Somalisk Kvinne-Integrerings- Gruppe - SKIG)

The organization was started in the year 2003 and it is headed by a midwife from Somalia who took her Bachelor in registered nursing at the University College of Oslo in Norway. The organization has an assistant leader who works as a health worker and a secretary and was also trained as a health worker. The vision of the organization is to provide efficient services to Somali women who are new in Norway. There are seventy active members in the organization, but according to the leader, most of the members have migrated to the United Kingdom looking for a better life and in search of other relatives.

4.1.1. Activities of the organization

The activities of SKIG include providing a place for bringing Somali women together in order to share problems and hardships, and support the women members in defining their identity in the Diaspora, organizing social gatherings where members can present their problems or those of their children, giving the women relevant advice on social and health issues, such as the importance of keeping high standards of personal hygiene, immunization of children, proper nutrition and the risks of practicing FGM on girls. Each member pays a membership fee of 100 Norwegian crowns per year for necessities out of which they provide financial support to the needy members. Other activities are organizing community gatherings for celebration of National holidays like "Idd" and wedding ceremonies, assisting Somali children facing

problems at school. This organization also helps members look for housing and especially when they are moving. They give information on employment to members with some level of education so that they can support themselves and other members, discouraging men from sitting idle and chewing "mira" or "Khat", a habit that the majority of them developed while in Somalia. The organization promotes collaboration between members of their organization and their neighbours. They participate in political activities especially when it comes to the Media's discussions on FGM and attend meetings that are organized by the government where they also give their opinions on the ongoing debate on health checks on children and girls to protect against FGM.

4.1.2. Problems encountered

The organization faces problems such as, lack of adequate funds to help run the activities of the organization, lack of salaries for the officials and allowances of volunteers. Those women with children do not have babysitters to look after the children when they go to attend meetings. Lack of offices and enough rooms for the organization's activities is one of the biggest problems that they face and especially when they need to hold seminars. Some of the members are still attached to the Somalia clans' conflict, which discourages many women from joining the organization. Lack of management skills for the leaders and also some of the members make them unwilling to participate in local politics due to the traditional influences and the common practice of women in Somalia.

4.1.3. Collaborations

Although the officials of this organization and their members know and understand the existence of other similar organizations in Norway, they do not collaborate with them due to lack of trust among members.

4.2   The Somali Women Solidarity Association

The organization was started in January 2006 with aim of assisting newcomers or immigrants to Norway. There are seven officials and it is headed by M/s Fatuma (interviewee) who has a Masters degree in Computer science. Her initial training was in Nursing, which she took in Norway. The other leaders are Ordinary-level school leavers and usually assist in the running

of the affairs of the organization. The organization is located at the leader's personal residence.

4.2.1. The vision of the organization

The vision of the organization is to be one of the leading groups engaged in improving the standards of living of Somali women in Norway through empowering the women and girls with relevant training and employment opportunities.

Currently, the official estimates show that there are fifty members but numbers in their register indicate that there are more. A small number have since migrated to other places to join their families or relatives. Traditionally, according to the interviewee, the Somali are nomads therefore they like moving to other places.

4.2.2. Activities of the organization

Some of the activities undertaken by the organization include the enrollment of new members and persuading other women to join the association, assisting members with various problems such as schooling places, lack of housing, mediating in family conflicts and providing teaching or lessons on various topical issues including, the country's laws, rules of the organization, and registration procedures. These sessions are held twice a month and various experts are invited to give talks on variety of issues facing members.

Other activities are promotion of education among members and their children and also to discourage members from taking the children out of school when they move to other places. They also engage in organizing social activities to promote Somali culture and traditions through songs, dances and drama, organizing sporting activities such as swimming for girls and football matches for boys between members and also local communities. They also teach skills like dancing to the children and encouraging Somali children and girls to interact with Norwegian people to facilitate learning of language and community cohesion, organizing regular meetings and yearly conferences to tackle common issues and problems and preparing work schedules for officials and volunteers in addition to making yearly plans of all the activities of the organization.

4.2.3. Problems encountered

The organization faces problems such as lack of formal education among members in order to enable them get jobs or learn the basic system of how to be able to apply for funds from the government funds. They themselves are economically dependant on the funding they get from social welfare which does not enable members to reach all other family demands apart from the basic needs to survive in the a big city like Oslo. These may for instance be having their children attending different kinds of locally arranged activities after school because their parents cannot afford to pay for their children to be membership in the collective sports clubs and also the parents cannot drive their children to the sports area due to lack of cars and the facilities needed.

The organization also lacks adequate premises for offices and other planned activities, lack of regular finances to pay salaries of leaders and allowances to volunteers and also for funding other activities identified by the members. Not all the members are able to pay the annual yearly membership fee.

When it comes to attending the meetings, the organization also faces problems like the members not being able to attend due to lack of having a baby sitter. Not all husbands will agree to take care of their children in order to allow the mother to come to the meetings.

4.2.4. Collaborations and links

The officials reported that currently, they strongly encourage their members to collaborate with members of other Somali organizations. I learned that they have links with another organization for men called Norsom and another one dealing with children. However, the name of the organizations is not clear to the leader of the Somali Women Solidarity Association.

The leaders usually attend meetings and workshops arranged by various government departments and disseminate the outcome to members. The organization also encourages members to participate in local politics by joining different political parties of their choice.

4.3   The Somali Culture House Women Group

This organization was registered only as a Somali culture house and was started in 2003; it is run by only one leader and one assistant. The leader was trained in family therapy in Somalia and worked as a social worker in Somalia before she came to Norway. She started this organization by teaching Somali women about family life in Norway and has an assistant who also leads the organization. Both of the officials work on a voluntary basis due to lack of funds and most members shy away from serving the organization because they are not willing to work without pay.

Currently the organization has 40 families as their members, including their small children the youth girls. Out of this number, a few agree to assist with the running of the affairs of the organization but for a short time only as volunteers. There is no membership fee required, and membership is still open to men also since the organization was started for the families. The organization works with sub- organizations and has plans for splitting the groups so that they can have a women and children group and on the other hand have a group of men on their own. Since its inception, it has registered a total of 250 members but some members have moved to other places.

4.3.1. Activities of the organization

Catering for family needs like shelter, food and clothing especially during winter, enrolling new members and guiding the members on how to search for employment, teaching members how to live in Norway by giving advice on child care, the country's laws, and good neighborliness, promoting equality between men and women because traditionally in Somalia women are discriminated against by society, teaching the girls and children Somali culture and traditions in addition to basic skills in catering and dress making, providing a place for the women to present their problems and look for solutions including solving family conflicts, providing little financial assistance to needy members and also some materials for dress making courses. Members are required to pay a small fee of 100 Norwegian crowns yearly to enable the organization buy the materials needed for training other members. They also encourage members to participate in local politics but most of the members are reluctant to seek political involvement.

4.3.2. Problems encountered

This organization faces the rapid and ever increasing number of immigrants and hence those requiring assistance from their organization. Their meetings include men, women and children at the same time. Despite the fact that they have more than 200 members, not all of them are willing to attend because some of the women demand to have meetings without men. Lack of funds to help run all the activities planned is one of the major problems they face.

Most of the members who are lacking employment and are looking for houses think that the organization is obliged to meet their needs and also that the organization is getting funds on their behalf. The leaders have to spend a lot of time explaining and convincing the members of the voluntary nature of their work.

Training opportunities for the members and officials is lacking due to lack of funds, and failure to conduct elections of officials regularly is due to lack of knowledge of how to run the organization. But most problematic of all is lack of spacious offices for the organization's officials and activities.

4.3.3. Collaborations

The officials and some members only occasionally attend meetings and conferences together with members from other organizations. This is attributed mainly to lack of trust existing between the organizations; however, the officials are aware of the potential benefits of having links with other organizations.

4.4   Somali Women and Children Organization

The organization was started on 20th September 1998, with the aim of assisting Somali women (refugees) facing problems of integrating into the Norwegian society. It was started by 16 Somali women who had come earlier and had problems adjusting to the Norwegian life style but who are now well integrated into that community.

The organization has a leader assisted by a secretary and a treasurer. The manager has university education while the other two officials are form four school leavers. There is also a Board of Management that assists with running of the organization but on a voluntary basis.

Today, there are 150 members in total out of which only 106 are active. They pay 100 Norwegian crowns as membership fee. Men are not allowed to become members but are frequently consulted whenever there are problems facing their family members or their services are required. The organization's vision was to provide efficient services to members whenever they have problems.

4.4.1. Activities undertaken

Most of the activities are planned according to the time of the year since many of these are scheduled for summer when the weather is favourable, and fewer during winter when most people stay indoors due to the cold. They include encouraging members to come up when they face problems so that they can be assisted, teaching members how to dress appropriately during winter and summer and also guide them as to where to get cheap affordable clothes, teaching members on important issues in health like nutrition, "Mat Pakke", going for regular checkups and medical examinations, encouraging members to look for employment during summer and the children to attend school, taking members for outings to Norwegian tourist sites as away of assisting their integration into society.

The other activities are encouraging free communication between school teachers and parents so as to monitor children's attendance at school and liaising with the parents with an aim of correcting the situation. Members are also given guidance on how to become good neighbours without disturbing their neighbours or being a nuisance. They are also are urged to inform their neighbours politely when they hold birthday parties or wedding ceremonies, discouraging members against the practice of FGM and also how to control the youth or "grense setting" and encouraging members to join politics as this enables them to put across some of the problems facing the Somali immigrants in Norway

4.4.2. Problems encountered

There are growing numbers of Somali immigrants in Norway and so the few organizations cannot cater adequately for their needs, lack of offices and other facilities for the organizations operations, the widespread discrimination of Somalis and particularly women in Norway in general, lack of places to take children to be looked after by caretakers when parents go to work or meetings and also some the landlords are not willing to rent houses to

Somalis due to fear of Somalis. They lack employment and so the organization has economical problems also when it comes to the yearly membership fee.

Although they know they can get funds from the local county council or from government funds, they lack knowledge as to when and how to apply for the funds. These organizations fear applying for funds due to lack of knowledge of how to write the report and document the financial use of the given funds.

4.4.3   Collaborations

Establishing links with other organizations for unity and sharing of resources and expertise. The organization frequently collaborates with government departments in organizing seminars and trainings, requests for funding to enable them buy food and drink on special occasions. This organization is a member of FOKUS, another organization headed by Zahra Luley, which has activities against FGM and also the MIRA centre is a member of the International Women organization base in Malmo, Sweden and other organizations dealing with women and Children issues based in the Netherlands and Denmark.

4.4.4.   Benefits of collaborations

The official of this organization, however gave the following as some of the potential benefits of unity and collaborating with other organizations or interested parties: sharing of ideas and experiences, enumerating some of problems facing members and assisting them in find ing solutions, obtaining information concerning other organizations' activities, and forging of a common front to lobby for assistance to their members.

4.5   A summary of the activities of Somali woman organizations

All the four organizations reported holding different kinds of seminars in various venues and covering different and sometimes similar topics. Some of these organizations do invite each other to their functions as a collaboration, and exchange ideas and experiences, they also conduct training of different skills like basic tailoring, cookery, computer lessons and teaching the youth their traditional dances, they provide knowledge on different health issues such as immunization, proper nutrition and also discourage the practice of FGM in

accordance with the existing law established against this practice in Norway. The organizations are concerned about the integration of the new Somali people who settle in Oslo. They teach them about the "mat-pakke" for their children, how to dress during winter, about their neighbourhood and also some try to encourage them to participate in the politics of Norway, both nationally and locally.

Most of these organizations organize sporting activities such as swimming for the woman and children alone, and football for the youth, and also help members to arrange and participate in the wedding ceremonies, cultural events and organize to celebrate "Idd" together with other Somalis residing in Oslo. During summer and even during part of winter, some organizations arrange tours for their members to the Norwegian summer houses for a weekend. This is one way of integrating themselves into the Norwegian life style. All of these organizations are helping their members to integrate themselves into the Norwegian community.

4.5.1   The role of the organizations

From the data obtained, it became apparent that most of these organizations were established basically with one common interest. The Somalis, especially women and children who are resident in Norway, being immigrants from Africa, which is different culturally and socio-economically, are faced with numerous challenges including illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, social stigmatization or segregation and racial discrimination, among others. These collectively make life for them very difficult and full of frustration. This is what has pushed them into forming or establishing several organizations to bring them together and act as a vehicle towards solving some of their problems. The full details of all the potential benefits of these organizations for their members may not be known or clear, but their presence in such a large number in a cosmopolitan city like Oslo suggest that benefits must be there.

Most of the members joined the organizations when they could identify themselves with other members coming from the same clan or regions, from their country of origin in Somalia. Although most of those interviewed say that they try to avoid the clan relationship, Somalis, especially those from pastoral areas and extended families in urban centres have a great solidarity with their different clans. This is related to the social capital of bonding.

It also emerged that most members, especially the women and girls, joined these organizations in order to obtain assistance on the various problems facing them after coming to Norway. These problems were such as lack of basic necessities including accommodation, finances, employment, language, racial discrimination, and also to maintain a form of social identity with their ethnic community.

The leaders of these Somali women organizations all accept that they have realized and learned that in Norway, they must organize themselves into organizations since the government encourages them to do so. All of them were established to help their own fellow Somalis go through the integration process in Norway smoothly, thus serving as a kind of social capital. They also educate members on the need to undergo training in different courses, which enables them to learn how to get employment. This is a task the organizations are taking on behalf of those who have been in the country for a shorter period of time, and is one crucial way of transferring their cultural capital to the new members of the organizations in order to get more social capital.

4.5.2. Collaboration between the organizations

Human beings are not just an anonymous mass of individuals; they are part of specific social relations and networks. These relations may be more or less structured, formal or informal, and the ties between people may be emotional or functional in character (Thränhardt & Weiss, 2005).

Regarding collaboration, I found that the officials and members are aware of the presence of other similar organizations in Oslo and other cities in Norway and the potential benefits that there may be from having links, but only a few of them actually engage in active collaboration citing lack of adequate resources and set guidelines as major problems hindering them from doing so. According to the data collected for this thesis, there are three different types of relations between Somali women's organizations. First, they sometimes hold training or seminars together. Secondly, arrange when possible to coming together during celebrations like "Idd" or celebrating the Somali Independence Day. Thirdly, getting together in seeking for political intervention on various media related issues. On the other hand, the officials were also willing to provide suggestions on how the activities or operations of these organizations could be improved if there was collaboration between the organizations. However, the overall

paramount picture shows that the organizational pattern of the Somali females in Norway and the diaspora is characterized rather by partition, isolation, non-awareness and even the fact that no umbrella organization exists that could serve as a lobby to the Norwegian authorities.

Collaboration between these organizations should be even stronger if they were more awareness of other existence women organizations based in Oslo and look forward to a more stronger network between them. They all admit that Somali people face conflicts when it comes to collaborating between organizations, and when any economy is involved. The explanation given was that there was little or no trust among them and also competing with themselves to be able to get financial supports. The second informant says:

> "But when I look at you establishing an organization with an interest on competing with me, then what happens is 'ownership'" 'ownership then stops collaborations".

Although all these organizations look to be working on the same issues, they also have different formals. She continues:

> "We cannot be one organization because every organization has a different formals, but we can collaborate in many things, like working on projects, courses, attending to the government activities, but I do not think we can be one organization, our agendas are different and our targets are different".

4.5.3. The positive contributions

These organizations are committed to preparing members for successful integration into the Norwegian community so that they can contribute positively and effectively to national activities. They provided vital information and organize training for their members, for example on Norwegian life style, laws, social system and health care. For their youth members, the organization provided Somali cultural lessons including Somali history, music and dances. The organizations also provide training in life skills including sports, tailoring, and cookery or catering as core activities when the members themselves request this.

Other notable activities undertaken by all these organizations are teaching the women about their individual rights and promotion of gender equality. In addition, these organizations also

inform their members about the Norwegian government having a special law dealing with children's rights and does not allow physical punishing of children, which is part of traditional upbringing of children in the Somali society. Some of these organizations also raise awareness on health care services and how to live in the new country peacefully without infringing the neighbour's rights according to the country's laws and social rules. The organizations also inform their members about the importance of employment and how to find jobs in order to be self-reliant.

The organizations also promote sporting activities to their members and they even hire facilities to enable their members (both sexes) to participate twice a week in these activities such as swimming, football and basketball. They also organize and pay for competitions for the youth and girls as stated by the Somali Women Solidarity Association. It also became evident that although men were not generally allowed to become members in two of the organizations, they still had a say and influence on/over their spouses and family with regard to important issues such as the practice of FGM among the Somali immigrant groups and culture. For the same reason, some Somali women organizations frequently invited them to their functions or consulted them on various issues. Women always had to seek permission from their husbands to be able to attend meetings and gatherings. Others have even allowed the men to become members after reviewing their membership rules and regulations on realizing that they could not make much progress without involving men.

Looking at the question as to whether the Somali women's organizations in Oslo were run effectively in line with their objectives or set goals, the study found that although many of the interviewed officials reported that they do their best or are efficient in serving members faced with various problems such as integration, their efficiency and proper running is questionable. This is because their activities seemed to be affected by the limited number of officials actually doing the organizations' work. Most of the organizations had only one or two members of staff, except for the Somaliland women solidarity association, which had three part time officials and three others who are members of the Board of Management. The main reason given for the scanty number of officials was lack of salary thus many hopefuls are not willing to work without pay and most of the organization's work is done after official working hours as volunteers. Lack of relevant training or management skills was noted among the leaders since the majority of those officials interviewed were trained in other professions such as nurses, midwives and social workers.

My fourth informant has qualifications in Computer Science while the third informant has qualifications from Somalia as a social worker in the area of home economics. In addition, further available evidence suggests that these organizations do not work very effectively because elections of new officials do not occur regularly after the stipulated time (two to three years) due to lack of people who can be elected as leaders of the organizations. Some management boards of these organizations were in operation for longer than 2 years without elections being held. Also, some members were not willing to take up voluntary work without a salary.

Among the major challenges and constraints encountered by the groups are lack of adequate finances for necessities like housing, clothing and other activities, illiteracy, lack of employment, not knowing the Norwegian language to enable them interact and communicate with other citizens. Other problems included being ignorant of the country's laws so that they could live harmoniously with neighbors and friends, lack of offices or adequate premises for their activities. In addition, members of these organizations are encouraged by their officials to bring their small children and young girls along with them to meetings or training venues if there were no people to take care of them in the places where they live.
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Asked on how the running of these organizations and service to members could be improved, most of the officials (interviewees) said that, the important strategies that could be adopted include providing regular training of their officials and members in management and other professional skills by the government. They added that getting well wishers who can give these organizations financial assistance to help undertake all the planned activities was important. Finding ways of enabling the organizations to pay a salary or allowance to their officials who are working at their free time will provide their offices with adequate space and venues for their operations much easier and effective. Helping to enlist their members as work seekers at the labor office as well as giving more information on the social welfare funds is also the most important task they work with in order to help their members to get jobs rather than being social clients. They do encouraging more members to join their organization and as leaders they also are prepared to work as volunteers for their own benefit and that of their countrymen. Regular elections to should be carried out as stipulated in the constitutions of these organizations. The organizations also face internal challenges such as not being trusted by their own members who claim that the leaders have been getting money on their behalf and

not passing it on. The most difficult problem faced by the organization's founders is being mistrusted by their members who think that the organizations are able to get some financial support from the different departments. The fourth informant said she has been confronted by her own members who accuse her of stealing the organization's money:

> *You are thieves, you want to eat money on us". She continued: "You want to help them, but they do not understand what your idea is. All they tell you is that "You want to eat money from the Government using our names lying that you want to help us. You have already eaten many millions because of our names ..."*

Other strategies are putting in place policies that are friendly to minority immigrant groups like the Somalis, encouraging local political participation and wider collaboration between the many organizations with some form of coordination by the government The majority of the officials are not trained in administration or management skills, which made them not able to run the organizations efficiently.

On collaboration, most of the officials were aware of presence of other organizations for Somali women and others engaged in similar activities but only a few of them have linkages among themselves and carry out activities such as seminars, celebration of National days like "Idd" jointly. The Somali Women and Child Association enjoys substantial collaboration both in Norway and internationally and seemed to be more in touch with the Norwegian government officials compared to the other organizations for Somali women in Oslo. It is a member of FOKUS (Forum for women and development) and another organization based in Malmo, Sweden and also in Helsinki Finland, which is led by a Somali lady. It also conducts certain activities like seminars and meetings together with other organizations like MIRA center. The leader attended a meeting in Sweden as a result of collaboration and was also intending to collaborate with another organization based in Denmark called Batula that has been working against FGM issues.

However, the Somali House Women Group official stated that she understands that other similar Somali organizations exist in Norway and that there are potential benefits from collaborating with all Somali organizations, but so far her organization collaborates with only a few due to what she termed lack of rules and guidelines for collaboration since some members have mistrust among themselves taking into account the different clans from which

they came from back in Somalia. She further says that their organization has formulated rules to discourage members joining the organization based on ethnic clans.

Somali women's organizations all over Norway are many enough to be able to get an umbrella organization for all Somali women's organizations. An umbrella organization will be of benefit to all other organizations in many ways. In the year 2000 many different Somali organizations came together to try and establish an umbrella organization for all Somali organizations. The idea came from the Integration department who found it necessary to have one Somali organization, which could make it easier to work with rather than many organizations representing the same group. This did not succeed. Later in 2005, a few of the organizations tried to establish a network between all the Somali organizations in Oslo. 17 meetings were held on Sundays from five in the evening to ten o'clock in the night but these organizations never succeeded in creating a network. All the four leaders do agree on the need for having an umbrella organization. But the third informant says:

> *Somalis in Norway are many, numbering almost 18 000 and only one organization or two organizations cannot cover the all the needs for Somali people". She continues: "It could be better to have more Somali organizations that could collaborate together but divide the work among the organizations.*

From the information gathered from the leaders of the four Somali Women's organizations in Norway, there is an urgent need to establish an umbrella organization for all the women's organizations. This will help to regulate and coordinate the activities of all these organizations that are currently operating independently. It will also help to formulate policies and regulations under which the organizations can operate efficiently and professionally. It will also strengthen the collaboration between the organizations and make the many members develop trust in their leaders. It will also provide a forum for lodging any complaints that members may have against their organizations and will thus act as an arbitrator in case of conflict.

In order to establish such umbrella organization, the leaders of most registered organizations will first be consulted to brainstorm on the modalities of this task, and then members will be called for meetings to inform them of the idea and their possible contributions, This will ensure their participation in the process and approval and ownership of that umbrella body. From there, the constitution of the organization can be prepared, officials appointed or elected

with all members participating and then arrangements will be made for it to be launched officially for wider publicity and acceptance. However, there are a few challenges that are foreseen from the previous attempts at establishing such an umbrella body. Some of them include the presence of some organizations that are not officially registered, the mistrust between the various Somali clans and systems. There are many coordinators who can be approached to act as links between the existing organizations, including the four that participated in this study. The most important, is the arena provided by the Government through the various departments under the guidance of neutral government officials with commitment to complete the noble task.

5. Conclusion

This study has provided essential information and data about four of the Somali women's organizations based in Oslo and this information can act as a pointer to what could be happening in other Somali organizations. These organizations seem to be very important to the Somali immigrants not only in Oslo but also in other cities of the country. This is because all of the organizations are engaged in assisting Somali immigrants arriving in Norway and who are faced with a myriad of problems ranging from clothing needs during winter to the understanding Norwegian law and the Norwegian system of administration.

These findings are supported by a study done in Berlin, Germany where Berger el at. (2004), studied the social capital formation of immigrant organizations and political integration. This study also established that bridging social capital is of great importance for immigrants' political integration.

In Norway, most Norwegian organizations are very well organized, well run and serve various interests of their members according to law and the government, which is of very high standard and cannot be matched by the Somali women organizations. The Norwegian organizations have sound financial management systems, are stable and often able to achieve their objectives. This is opposite to what the findings have revealed about the Somali organizations, thereby making them unable to achieve their set objectives.

The findings also show that the leaders of the Somali organizations have no training in management, a fact contributing to the poor running and provision services falling below the

expected standards. Most of the members are not employed and are depending on the social Welfare, a trend that needs to be reversed. The youth also lack recreational facilities and opportunities for trainings in various fields.

In conclusion, I am of the view that these organizations should continue to exist but operate in a better and professional way as they offer valuable services to their members.

Therefore the Norwegian government and other stakeholders should provide managerial and administrative training to the officials and volunteers since this will help improve the running of these organizations. In addition, training opportunities should be provided to the women members and the youth to enable them get employment, which will in turn enable them to be independent rather than being social clients of the Norwegian social welfare. Katrine Fangen also tells: "They are more often unemployed than any other groups of first-generation immigrants in Norway (Statistics Norway 2002) This will also prepare them to get well integrated into the Norwegian society and system.

The Norwegian government should continue providing direct financial assistance to the Somali women's organizations to facilitate the carrying out of all planned activities and hence achievement of the set goals. It should also strengthen the supervisory and monitoring activities to ensure that the organizations are run properly according to the expectations. The government should also encourage the organizations to embrace collaboration and networking among themselves to maximize the use of available resources. If effective collaboration and networking activities are achieved successfully between the various Somali organizations in Norway, this can be interpreted as a positive step forward since it will act as an example for all other Somali organizations based in Somalia. The Somali women organizations being social organizations have certain intrinsic characteristics, notably voluntary participation, and separation and autonomy from the state (Manor J. et al, 1999) and are built on democratic ideals that facilitate some form of freedom of association and expression thus imparting on members a sense of belonging in their new country of residence or adoption since all Norwegians no matter the gender or generation do belong to one or more than one organization. This is one of the reasons why many should be encouraged to exist.

To be able to succeed with the successful Somali integration into the Norwegian country, these Somali organizations should also be given the chance of giving information to Somalis and their members rather than Norwegian officials. This is in conformity with the findings: "When officials try to give information about 'how things are done in Norway', the result might be that a Somali walks away. The ways in which things are being said are important. Even though some of the lectures from the officials are probably well-meant, the result might nevertheless be that the recipient feels humiliated" (Fangen, 2006: 9). Furthermore, there must be an awareness that these organizations operate on a bottom up system rather than a top down structure. Government intervention and assistance should be based on maintaining this by providing the right type of support at the bottom rather than trying to impose an organizational structure which would be in contradiction to the Somali practice of helping their own people. This is in accordance with Titmus' "top down approach" of management which gives little opportunity for those at lower levels to participate in setting their own objectives" (Titmus article pg 1417). In this article Titmus recommends the "bottom up approach" based on employee participation as the best alternative.

Some of these organizations organize social and sporting activities such as swimming for the women and children alone and football matches for the youth, particularly males. The organizations also help members to arrange and participate in the wedding ceremonies, cultural events and organize to celebrate national holidays like "Idd" together with other Somalis in Oslo. During summer, most activities are scheduled to enable members participate fully and during winter, some organizations arrange tours for their members to the Norwegian summer houses for a weekend, as one way of integrating themselves into the Norwegian life style. All of these organizations have a common goal of helping their members to be easily integrated into the Norwegian community.

6. Recommendations for future work

Unless the leaders of the Somali women's organizations, officials are trained in management and other needy areas, the performance of these organizations will continue to be substandard and therefore fail to meet their set objectives. The members of the organizations and their leaders should actively strive to discourage clannish behaviour that has been proved to be a hindrance to their development and improvement of the running of the organizations.

From the findings of this study, I have established that the roles and activities of Somali women's organizations are similar and sometimes conflicting. In addition, there are shortcomings in the way the Somali women's organizations are managed, and the forms of collaborations that exist are neither well defined nor specific. With these findings, the networks that are formed between them are not binding although so many efforts have been made to try and establish an umbrella organization to coordinate and harmonize their activities for maximum benefits to their members.

The government should support and have a follow up structure to ensure that most of these women organizations are well run so as to enable them achieve their set objectives. Further governmental authorities may consider the following recommendations:

1) The leaders of the Somali women's organizations should be encouraged to improve their leadership skills through training and quality management.

2) The Norwegian government should allocate more funds to the Somali women's organizations and enable them to carry out all their planned activities so as to achieve their objectives. Further, monitoring and supervision should be strengthened to ensure proper running of these organizations.

3) Integration of the Somali women who are members of the Somali women's organizations in Oslo, Norway, should be streamlined and the organizations facilitated to participate in the process for it to be a success.

4) There is urgent need to establish an umbrella organization to coordinate and regulate the activities of all other organizations.

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Appendix 1 Transcription symbols

…….. - indicates that the informant paused

mm - indicates the interviewer showing encouragement to the informant to continue speaking

Appendix 2 Letter inviting participation

Safia Abdi Haase
University College of Oslo
Faculty of Social Sciences

8th June 2007

 The Chief Executive

………………………

………………………

Oslo, Norway.

Ref. No. ……………………………

RE: PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW YOUR OFFICIALS

I am a student currently pursuing a Masters' Degree in International Social Welfare and Health Policy at the above-mentioned institution and wishes to interview You and/or some of the senior officers working with you regarding the activities of your organization. These interviews are part of a research which is necessary to enable me fulfill the requirement of Master's Degree thesis.

The information you will provide be kept confidential and will go along way in helping the relevant authorities in various Departments of the Norwegian Government make beneficial and crucial decisions concerning the welfare of our people (Somali Women) living in Oslo and other cities such as integration into the Norwegian society and other nation-building activities.

The purpose of this letter is kindly request you allow us interview or hold focus group discussions with you as the Chief executive of this Organization or your authorized officials whom I have identified as the respondents for my research.

Your acceptance to allow me conduct these interviews will be highly appreciated.

Thank you.
Yours faithfully,

Appendix 3 Questionnaire

Questionnaire on Somali Women Organizations in Oslo Norway

(For interviewing Somali Women Organizations' Officials)

1. Background data:

Name of organization……………………………………. Address ………………………………………………

E-mail address …..

Location of offices …………………………….City …………………………Street …………………….Lane ………………………………………………………………………………………… ……………………..

When was it started? Date ………/………. /……….. Approximate duration the organization has existed in months or years ………………………………………

2. Officials detailed information:

a) Name (s) of Director (s) 1. ………………………………………….. Male …….. Female ………
Level of education ………………………………………………… Profession ……………………………

2. ………………………………………………. Male ……..
Female ………
Level of education …………………………………………… Profession ……………………………

3. …………………………………………….. Male ……..
Female ………
Level of education …………………………………………… Profession ……………………………

Names of other officials

1. ………………………………………………… Male ……..
Female ………
Title (eg Secretary, etc) ………………………………………… Profession ……………………………

2. ………………………………………………… Male ……..
Female ………
Title (eg Manager, etc) ………………………………………… Profession ……………………………

3. ……………………………………….……….. Male ……..
Female ………
Title (eg Treasurer, etc) ………………………………………… Profession ……………………………

4. ……………………………………………………. Male ……..
Female ………
Title (eg Administrator, etc) ………………………………………… Profession ………………………

5. …………………………………………………………. Male ……..
Female ………
Title (Other, specify) ……………………………………………… Profession
……………………………

3. Vision and Purpose of Organization:
What is the vision of this organization? (What do you wish it will be able to do best for members in future?)
………
………..
………
………..
Purpose of the organization:
a) What was the main purpose for starting this organization? (Please explain)
………………………………………………………………………………………………...........
....
b) Who was the originator or who started the organization?
………
………………………...
c) What was the main objective for starting it? ……………………………..
d) What the specific objectives? (For example, to assist members financially, etc)
1.
………
………………….
2.
………
………………….
3.
………
………………….
4.
………
……………….
5.
………
………………….
e) Who is allowed to become a member? Females/Males
(Please explain)
………
….
f) Are men allowed to become members? Yes …………… No ………………..
If Yes or No (Please explain)
………
………………………..
g) What happens when a member moves (or relocates from Oslo to another city or country)?
Please explain ………………………………………………….
………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………….................................
....
h) How many members are presently registered? (No) ……….

4. *__Roles and activities:__*

a) What do you do specifically (What are your main activities?) Please list them

   1.
………
…………………

   2.
………
…………………

   3.
………
…………………

   4.
………
…………………

   5.
………
…………………

b) Other activities engaged in (Please list)

   1.
………
………………..

   2.
………
………………

   3.
………
………………

   4.
………
………………

   5. (Other Specify)
……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

   d) Roles (What are your roles as officials of the organization?) For example administration, soliciting for finances, welcoming new members, establishing links with other organizations, etc.

   1.
………
…………………

   2……
…………………….

   3.
………
…………………

   __4. Benefits to members:__

   a) How do members benefit from this organization? Please list

1.
………
………………

2.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………..
3.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………..
4.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………
5.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………….

b) Do members trust the officials of this organization? Yes/ No

c) If yes or no please explain

……………………………………………………………………………..

d) Do your members participate in any activities like politics? Yes/ No

e) Please explain

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

5. *Collaboration with other organizations:*

a) Do you collaborate with other groups organizations in Oslo or Norway? Yes/ No
If yes, please name them

……………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………

b) Do you think collaboration with other Somali Organizations is beneficial to your
organization or members? Yes or No

c) If Yes or no, Please give your
reasons……………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………….....

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………..

6. *Additional general information:*

a) What are the strengths of your organization? Please explain or list::

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………

b) What are the problems facing this organization and weaknesses of your organization
(Please be
honest)……………………………………………………………………………………………

……
………………………………………………..
   ……
…………………………

   c) What should be done to improve the status and activities of your organization here in
Oslo, Norway?
……
……………………
   ……
……
…………………………………………………………..

d) Give any additional comments/suggestions on the Somali Women Organizations in Oslo,
Norway
……
……………………
……
……
………………………………………………………

Description of terms used:
<u>Level of education</u> means the highest level of education attained eg High school, college or
university graduate
<u>Profession</u> means what profession one trained for eg Medical doctor, lawyer, businessman,
bookkeeper, farmer, teacher, nurse, etc.
<u>Title of official</u> means what substantive post he holds in the organization eg Director,
administrator, manager, accountant or treasurer, etc

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING