

Effective family bonds of Somali refugees

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If they wish to have their children join them in the Netherlands, refugees must convince decision-makers that there is an “effective family bond” between them and the child. Somali refugees have since 2008 been accused of abusing the Dutch asylum family reunification procedure. This accusation is complicated by the assertion that what constitutes an effective family bond in Somali culture is different from that in Dutch culture. In order to gain further insight into Somali family bonds, I carried out a literature review on family ties in Somali culture. Unfortunately, little research has been done on effective family bonds between Somali children and their different family members. I therefore decided to conduct interviews with Somali asylum seekers and refugees. Because I was fortunate to be able to attend interviews with Somali children at the Dutch embassy in Addis Ababa, I decided to conduct some interviews with Somali residing in Addis Ababa. The aim of the interviews was to investigate (i) the strength of obligations between family members and (ii) patterns of child-fostering, e.g. distinguishing institutional-fostering from crisis-fostering of children. Currently I am analyzing the results of the interviews.

What I will present at this MDC forum is the preliminary results of my analysis of the interviews and the field work report. I would also like to discuss my methodology with the group. Shall I send the interview reports to the respondents for feedback? Do I need more interviews, for example in refugee camps? Would discussion panels and interviews with Somali in the Netherlands add something to the research? And lastly, I would like to explore with the group how I can incorporate my results into my legal analysis.