



# THE Refugee

MAGAZINE

Issue #16

| Dadaab | Kakuma Edition

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REECH KUOL MAYEN SHINES  
IN THE 2021 KCPE

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TECHNOLOGY IN WATER SUPPLY

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FOR A **CLEAN IFO**

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## Message from the Editor

This year's International Women's Day (IWD), came as the world continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on women ranging from job loss, being pushed into poverty as the informal economy shrinks leading to unpaid care burden and an alarming spike in domestic violence.

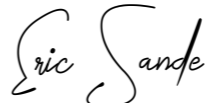
Themed "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world," we celebrate the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and highlighting the gaps that remain.

In this edition we feature Mama Rukia from Dadaab, a remarkable woman who disrupts gender stereotypes to defend women's rights. Her understanding of the challenges women face made her start championing the rights of women and to challenge the stereotypes placed on women by the society that they can't discuss issues that affect them.

We highlight Kakuma's film landscape which has made great strides through film workshops and training offered by FilmAid Kenya. The bits and pieces of some of the outstanding female filmmakers in Kakuma including the award-winning Amina Rwimo's film projects like It Has Killed My Mother, has paved the way for more storytellers in Kakuma.

As I sign off now, I conclude by saying that the story of the COVID-19 pandemic when told in the coming years won't just be one of sickness and death, but will be a retelling story of creativity adopted to all aspects of society. Students couldn't attend schools for close to a year but innovation through use of radio lessons gave Kakuma an opportunity to produce one of the best students in the county. Reech Kuol Mayen scored 408 marks out of 500, not a mean feat given the circumstances in the refugee camp.

Enjoy your read.

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# KAKUMA'S ACADEMIC GEMS; REECH KUOL MAYEN SHINES IN THE 2021 KCPE

Against all odds, with 408 marks out of a possible 500, Reech Kuol Mayen is a top brass in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education 2021 results. But what does the future hold for such young bright minds?

By Noel Bol Deng

After the April 2021 Kenya Certificate for Primary Education- KCPE results announcement by the Kenyan Cabinet Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Professor George Magoha, joy and exuberance hit so many parts of the country as the families, friends and institutions celebrated the success of their students who prevailed in the national examination despite all the challenges brought about by the outbreak of COVID-19 that kept them out of schools for almost 8 months in 2020.

One Faith Mumo from Makueni garnered 433 marks out of the possible 500 marks making her the leading candidate in the entire country.

Away from the celebrations in Nairobi and the rest of the country, further northeast in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Reek Kuol Mayen had scored 408 marks out of 500, not a mean feat given the circumstances in the refugee camp.

Reech Kuol Mayen was born in Duk County, Jonglei State, South Sudan in 2002 to Kuol Mayen Reech and Akuel Lueth Goi. When Reech's

father was shot dead in a 2010 attack by unknown men, Reech's mother decided to bring her remaining family to Kakuma Refugee Camp arriving in Kakuma in 2011.

Reech was barely 7 years old when they arrived in Kakuma, but he was already yearning to go to school. In his initial attempt to join school, having not previously been enrolled at any level, he joined a nursery school but was not admitted given his age.

He later successfully joined Kadugli Primary School where he studied fighting against all the odds until he sat for his final exams early in 2021.

Reech says he owes his success to his family who have been closest to him guiding him in the right direction and always helped him make the right decisions that contributed to his tremendous success and keep alive his dream to become a doctor in the future.

"If he wants to be a doctor, it's fine with me, he is a man now and we support his dreams and wishes," said Reech's stepmother.

Although just a teenage boy, culturally



**If he wants to be a doctor, it's fine with me, he is a man now and we support his dreams and wishes.**

Reech's stepmother.



Photo: Reech Kuol Mayen at home with his mother



Photo: Reech Kuol Mayen at home with his mother

he is already considered the man of the house, and the family believes that he will uplift the family name through his hard work and ultimately success in the future.

It is worth noting that the 2020 academic calendar was adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic when the government in its efforts to tame the impact of the pandemic gave directives that schools be closed indefinitely. Schools' closure brought with it numerous challenges to learners all over the country as players in the education sector grappled to find lasting solutions to learning.

In Kakuma, humanitarian agencies in education provided learning through radio as an alternative to physical learning but this equally had its

limitations to most of the students as there is no instantaneous interaction between teachers and students.

“Learning through radio is not one of the easiest ways to learn. But when I realized there was no other way but radio, I had to take it in my stride. I would pray every night and ask God for guidance because I knew if I didn't pass, it was technically over for me, my dreams and ambitions in life,” he said.

With the whole family now looking back to his journey, they cannot help but compare his hard work to his father's strong will as the family's patriarch and hope he will fill the big shoes he left “With my success and things starting to show up, I only wish my father was here to be proud of me,” he lamented.



**Learning through radio is not one of the easiest ways to learn. But when I realized there was no other way but radio, I had to take it in my stride. I would pray every night and ask God for guidance because I knew if I didn't pass, it was technically over for me, my dreams and ambitions in life.**

Reech



# MAMA RUKIA; DISRUPTING GENDER STEREOTYPES TO DEFEND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

By Mohamed Maalim

It's about 10am in the morning and 48-year-old Rukia Ali, Mama Rukia as she is fondly called by friends and family prepares breakfast as she narrates her horrifying ordeal of fleeing ethnic clashes in Somalia, to get to Kenya.

It's two decades later but the memories of the past are permanently etched in her heart given the loss she experienced, "I lost two of my siblings in the violence in Somalia. I have another two who were injured but survived. We knew we had no choice but to flee", she says. "I arrived in Dadaab refugee camp in 1993, after four long and terrifying days and nights of traveling from Somalia".

Today, Rukia is a revered elected leader in Ifo Camp where in her role she supports Community Protection interventions. Her role as a woman leader gives her the opportunity to work with the youth groups on the Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV), peace building and conflict resolution.

"Understanding the challenges women have made me Championing the rights of women and to challenge the stereotypes placed on women by the society that we cannot even discuss issues

that affect us", she remarks

As an elected leader, Rukia works with Child Protection Partners to in the protection of vulnerable refugee children, she also monitors food distribution and helps allocate shelter and other non-food items to refugee families.

During the COVID-19 outbreak in the refugee camp, Rukia was on the frontline to support the initiatives of the community response of producing soaps for safe handwashing. She also works with 220 block leaders and 18 section leaders.

"My mum is a strong and courageous woman full of love and drive to fight for human rights. Sometimes, I can't help but, fear for her safety. She is quite a vocal leader, and by that you develop enemies", he says with a deep concern.

"During my tenure, I have interacted and worked with two UNHCR Commissioners and I always strive to voice to challenges being faced by refugees in the camps. I was entrusted with the responsibility to defend people and improve lives and that's what I'll do", she says.

All in all, I dream of a peaceful and stable Somalia and a world free from Coronavirus." She quips.



**Understanding the challenges women face made me champion the rights of women and to challenge the stereotypes placed on women by the society that we cannot even discuss issues that affect us.**

Rukia



Photos: Rukia Ali with her daughter and son during the interview.

# KAKUMA'S EMERGING FEMALE FILMMAKERS

By Noel Bol Deng

According to a 2019 article by the BBC titled “Why aren't there more female film directors?”, in the US film industry, women comprised just 8% of film directors working on the top 250 box office grossing films of 2018.

Kakuma's film landscape has made great strides through film workshops and trainings offered by agencies such as FilmAid churning out young talented filmmakers from the hosting community and the refugee community. These youth have shown their mettle by having their short films showcased in local, regional and international film festivals and winning awards in various categories.

## Outstanding filmmakers

Some of the outstanding female filmmakers in Kakuma include the Award winning Amina Rwimo projects like *It has Killed My mother*, have paved the way for more storytellers in Kakuma.

*It has Killed My mother* is a 2017 film about Lola, a young girl who while living with her grandmother gets circumcised at tender age of ten. She later, as an adult, goes into labor and loses her life while in delivery. The film has won major awards in Kenya and internationally including Best feature film at the 2017 Slum Film Festival and the Emerging filmmaker in the 2018 Migration Film Festival and FilmAid Film Festival 2018 while it also received nominations in the Zanzibar International Film Festival 2018. Such



**I am going above and beyond what people think I am capable of...my way is to inspire other children in this situation as mine to be more than what they thought they could be because I believe if positivity is instilled in them at a young age, it is easy for them to achieve greatness.**

*Elizabeth Achol Maker, Filmmaker*



fetes have paved the way for their peers to follow in their footsteps and created an emerging film industry right in the middle of refugee camp.

One such emerging talent is Elizabeth Achol Maker a second born in the family of four girls and an upcoming film writer and aspiring journalist currently pursuing her Communications studies at Daystar University in Kenya.

Her passion for storytelling was evident during her film studies when he dominated the awards charts by winning in four categories: Best Fictional Film, Best Actress, Best Screenplay and Best Editor at the 13th FilmAid Annual Film Festival.

Achol says she was taken to school at a very young age by her father and this had a great impact in her love for reading and telling stories. Along the way, she discovered her interest in films when her stepbrothers would make toy televisions out of plastic cans. They'd then play movie roles and that is how her desire to be on silver screen spouted.

“I am going above and beyond what

people think I am capable of,” she said, adding that, “my way is not to survive but to attract success and better the future, to better lives and to inspire other children in this situation as mine to be more than what they thought they could be because I believe if positivity is instilled in them at a young age, it is easy for them to achieve greatness.”

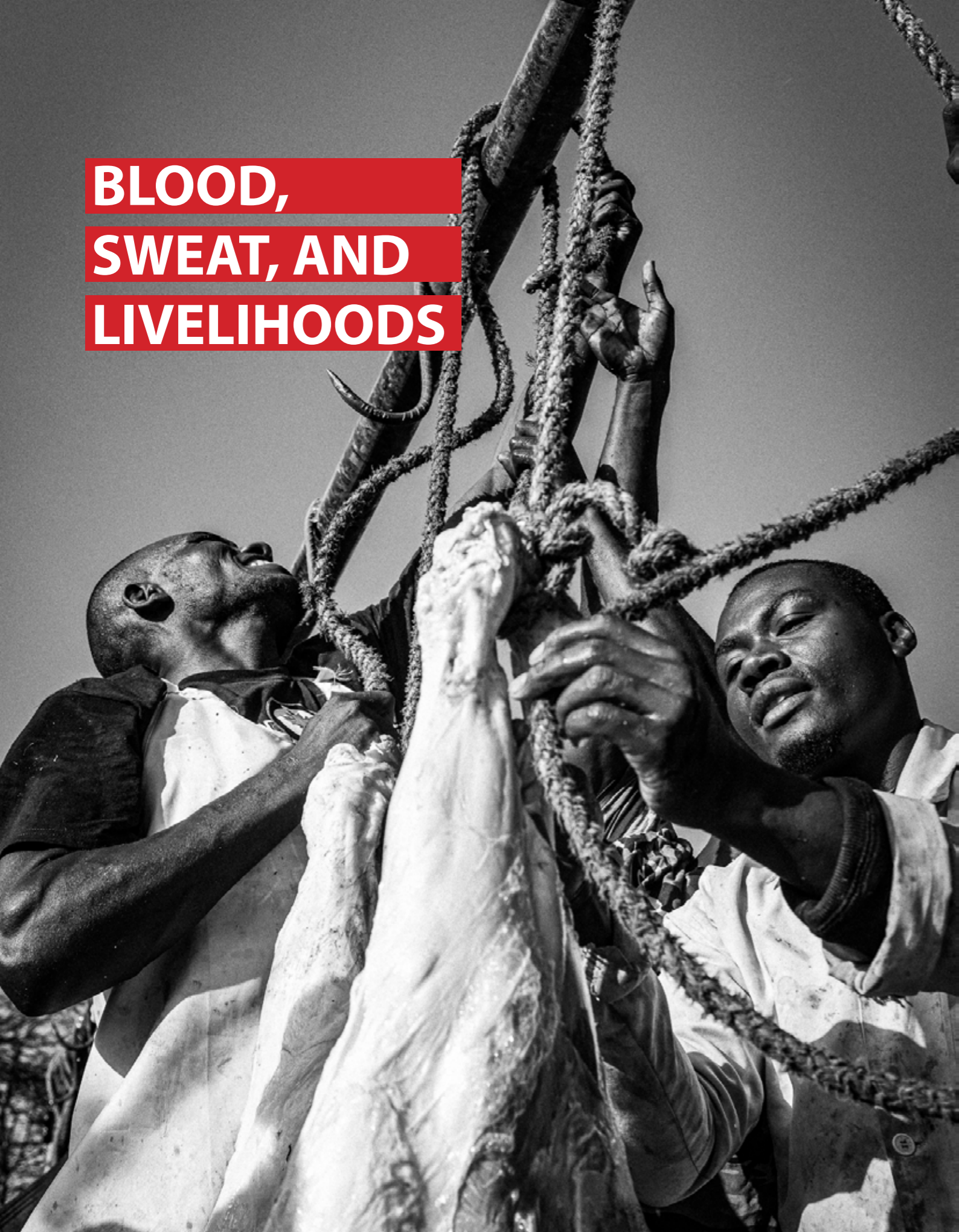
Representation of women and people of color in films has made great strides over the years but there is a general consensus that there are many barriers to opportunities for women directors, producers and actress compared to their male counterparts.

Despite the myriad challenges such cultural norms that keep girls away from such career paths and gender stereotypes, there are plenty of talented women who want to make films.

There are now multiple worldwide initiatives geared to increasing the numbers of female directors, as well as writers, producers and cinematographers and it is with the mindset like Achol's that girls in the refugee camp can dream and pursue those ambitions.

Photos:  
Amina rwimo during the 21st Zanzibar Film Festival.  
Top centre: FilmAid class of 2020 graduation ceremony  
Top Right: Jennifer Nyanchut, a Filmmaking graduand with her graduation certificate

# BLOOD, SWEAT, AND LIVELIHOODS



By Rasha Al Jundi

Sweat droplets cover his forehead, as 35 year old Ibrahim Hussein, takes a 10 second break to sharpen his knife. He is busy filleting a large camel carcass as I approach him to capture his talent and dedication to his job at the Kakuma Slaughterhouse. Ibrahim's infectious smile widens as he tells me "I bring meat for my family every day from work".

Established between 2012-2013, the Kakuma Slaughterhouse is managed by the "Livestock Marketing Association", whose members are composed of livestock traders.

According to the County appointed vet, Dr. Johnson, there are about 20 filleters and six cleaners who regularly work at the slaughterhouse. This is in addition to the local Turkana women who mainly work on cleaning the guts and intestines of the slaugh-tered livestock. With the Muslim Eid Al Fitr, which fell on May 13th/14th this year, the slaughterhouse is buzzing with more buyers and traders than usual, especially from the celebrating Muslim communities in Kakuma.

Towering over a camel carcass stands 30-year-old Nancy Ebey, who comes from Turkana North. With dis-tinct confidence and delicate attention to detail, she turns away from my camera to refocus her energy on the work at hand. Nancy has been working at the Kakuma slaughterhouse for the past five years, together with her husband, whose job is to break bones and cleans fresh animal skin. After completing her work in filleting camels, alongside Ibrahim, Nancy moves to the back end of the slaughter grounds to join other Turkana women in cleaning

animal guts and intestines. "I don't like this job; but my circumstances forced me here to get income and food on the plate".

Nancy has seven children and her direct income ranges between 100-500 Kenyan shillings per day. However, she is also able to take some meat back home to her family and, while her children are left alone at home, they are supported by organisations, such as LWF, to access education.

Moving across the market, I spot a fierce looking man in a white apron, preparing to slaughter a cow. He swiftly moves from one cow to the other, slaughtering, hanging, gutting and skinning. It is easy to spot Ahmed Hanifa, a 29 year old Oromo refugee, from among the many human bodies and animal carcasses that crowd the slaughter grounds.

He is tall, muscular and fast. Ahmed arrived in Kakuma 2012 and started working at the slaughterhouse in 2014. He was trained by an older man from his community called Tariqu, who showed him how to slaughter livestock for a living. "If I can get another job then I would. But I am comfortable with this job", Ahmed tells me. Although COVID19 affected his daily income, by a reduction of approximately 500 Kenyan shillings a day due to reduced demand as compared to 2019, Ahmed's talent and speed at completing his work supports his wife and two children at home, Khalid and Hayat.

At the end of a hard day at work that starts before 6 am and ends at around 9 am, Mohammed Alaki takes a deep drag from his cigarette and counts the daily earnings from the buyers and traders.



Photo: From top-Ibrahim Hussein, pauses for a few seconds to sharpen his knife  
Ibrahim holds a giant camel shoulder  
Ahmed Hanifa, 29, focuses on skinning a cow

He is joined by Ibrahim and the other co-workers, who specialise in filleting camels, to receive their daily share from Mo-hammed. At 45 years of age, Mohammed is one of the most experienced refugees in the animal slaughter business and is in charge of collecting and distributing collective earnings among his colleagues. Resonating pride, Mohammed declares “Sometimes I slaughter six to seven camels on my own!”

Although he is an Oromo refugee from Ethiopia, Mohammed was born in Somalia where he learnt how to slaughter livestock and prepare meat for the market.

Similar to Nancy and Ibrahim, Mohammed also brings meat back to his family, along with earnings that range between 500-1000 Kenyan shillings per day. However, with ten children and two wives to support, Mohammed has to continue working every day until his elder children are able to get their own sources of income and contribute to supporting the family.

With refugees from Ethiopia, Somalia and Burundi, along with members of the local Turkana community, the Kakuma slaughterhouse is the perfect example of a common ground for collaboration and co-existence, where blood and sweat are mixed together for a common goal: earning a living.



Photo: Family portrait of Ahmed, his wife and children, Khalid and Hayat, in Kakuma 1



Photo: Nancy Ebey, 30, stands over a carcass, knife in hand.



Photos from the top:  
1. Ibrahim plays with his two sons, Ammar and Amer at his home in Kakuma 1  
2. Turkana women busy with cleaning livestock guts and intestines at the back of the slaughter ground  
3. Entrance to Kakuma Slaughterhouse

| Rasha Al Jundi

# COCONUT TAKES INITIATIVE FOR A CLEAN IFO

By Abdinajib Ahmed Noor

**Despite the many challenges it faces, the group is steadfast in its resolve to create a healthy and safe environment for all.**



Photo by John-cameron on-unsplash

Disposal of solid waste is a stinging problem in both urban and rural areas in many, especially, developing countries. At the camp, like any other place in the world, improper waste disposal poses a threat to public health and the environment if it is not stored, collected, and disposed of properly.

In Ifo camp, within the Dadaab Refugee complex, a group of youth have taken it upon themselves to ensure the hygiene of the environment they live in by forming a pro-hygiene club that collects garbage and clears bushes around schools, residential areas and market areas.

According to Ibrahim Mohamed Farah, a founding member of the club, the group was formed in 2018 essentially to address the menace of the overgrown thorny Mathenge bushes.

“When we started, all we wanted to do is to clear the dangers posed by the dangerous thorny Mathenge bushes, later we ventured into garbage collection.”

“The formation of our club and what we have done is a good example to other youth within Dadaab and beyond to emulate,” he added.

## Community’s reaction

Being a community led group, COCONUT group being in a perfect position to make a major impact on the amount of waste that is generated in their societies have done so with great success and won the appreciation of their peers and community members.

“What this group is doing is great for the community. It keeps the environment clean and hygienic for all of us,” Jilo, an Ifo resident reacted.

The group operates on the basis of the goodwill of its members, and this has equally come with numerous challenges for the association as the administration of the group functions is affected. Some of the members have sought other forms of employment to meet their livelihood and would not always make it for cleaning activities.

Despite the many challenges it faces, the group is steadfast in its resolve to create a healthy and safe environment for all and pleads for support from any well-wishers and players in the waste management to support their activities.



Photo by John-cameron on-unsplash





## WATER ATM IN DADAAB: INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY IN WATER SUPPLY

By Mohamed Maalim

Thanks to a timely initiative dubbed 'sustainability in water', UNHCR through the WASH partners in Dadaab Refugee Complex set up water kiosks in the three camps of the complex, Dagahaley, Ifo and Hagadera.

The kiosks which are managed by water and market committees of 12 members drawn from refugee and host communities, are to supply water to the refugee and host community businesses in the camps, for a fee. The establishment of the water kiosks was part of the Garissa Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan -GISED, allowing refugees and host communities to share sustainable development programmes.

In March 2020, UNHCR set up the first water ATM in Dagahaley refugee camp and envisions fully operational water ATMs in all three camps by end of 2021.

Hassan, 48-years old Somali refugee and Kahin, a Kenyan Somali are just but two beneficiaries and committee members of this project. I meet them for a chat at a busy Dagahaley water point where donkey carts tow water to be sold to refugees and host community businesses in the market.

"We buy our own fuel and manage water supply in this part of the camp. Water is pumped into the elevated

**It is positive to see peaceful coexistence being strengthened by innovative systems and development-centered projects such as these that will benefit both communities.**

Magatte Guisse,  
UNHCR Head of Operations,  
Dadaab.

steel tank at night and then supplied to the refugee market and nearby villages during the day", says Kahin. So far, the group has six tokens but will be increased as they get more customers within the market.

"Once money is loaded via Mpesa into the bank account, water commensurate to that amount is automatically allocated to the token. Currently, it is four Kenyan shillings for every 20 litres of water", explains Osman Ahmed, UNHCR's WASH Officer.

"At any one time, the card holders can go to the water dispensing machines and draw water using the token. Every time water is drawn from the ATM, the quantity automatically reduces, until its exhausted. As soon as money loaded onto the token is exhausted, members

can reload via Mpesa. For example, if one loads Kshs. 20 into their token, they are entitled to 100 litres of water. If the person draws 20 litres per day, he/she will be required to load after every 5 days to renew their token amount", he adds.

"It is positive to see peaceful coexistence being strengthened by innovative systems and development-centered projects such as these that will benefit both communities", says Magatte Guisse, UNHCR Head of Operations, Dadaab.

Other than meeting the water needs of the traders and the communities living in Dagahaley, the water ATMs is a profit-making venture for the members of the group with frequent buyers being hotel owners, car washes, laundry shops and garage yards. "Last month, we made total sales of about USD 1,000. After deducting expenses, we were able to save USD 600", says Kahin.

"Since the technology is a success, we need more ATMs in the camps and settlements," Kahin adds.



Photo by Mohamed Maalim

## EKING A LIVING OUT OF GOAT HIDES



Photo: Goat skin mat

**I buy the skin at Kshs. 40 from each of the slaughterhouses. I also buy from anyone selling. I then resell to my bulk buyers at Kshs. 200. In a good month, I can sell more than 500 goat skins making Kshs. 100,000.**

Abshiro.

By Mohamed Ali Noor

Abshiro's skin shop is at the heart of the Hagadera market, strategically placed within the busy market that welcomes buyers from as far as Garissa. Massive flies swarm around the raw piles of skin placed in one corner of the shop ready for sale.

To control the strong odour that is from her raw hide, she says she pours salt over them to mask the smell. It's not a good smell to stay around for long but for Abshiro, this is her source of livelihood, and she has gotten use to the smell now, it doesn't bother her much.

The 70-year-old single mother of six, is the only female running the animal hides business in Hagadera market, a business she says she ventured into in order to provide alternative livelihood for her family, but animals and animal products business is not new to her. In 1992 before the war Somalia, she was an animal farmer but bore the brunt of the war when attackers looted all her livestock. She finally fled Somalia into Kenya in 2010.

On a good month, she says she can make up to 100,000 Kenyan shillings selling the goat skin majorly to buyers who purchase in bulk. Her clients come as far as Garissa and other parts of Kenya.

"I buy the skin at 40 shillings each from the slaughterhouses. I also buy from anyone selling. I then resale to my bulk buyers at 200 Kenya shillings. In a good month, I can sell more than 500 goats skin making a 100,000 shilling," says Abshiro.

But running her animal hide business comes with its fair share of challenges. In an environment with strong cultural beliefs around gender roles, this is a venture that is predominantly male and being the only woman running the skin business amongst hordes of men in Hagadera has demanded that she works even harder to stay afloat in such a business environment.

"Sometimes I feel am not being considered as a peer by the men who run this same business, and the competition is not conducive. I am perceived as a competitor and we do not collaborate on anything, it's business so I understand, but I don't give up," shares Abshiro.

Apart from selling skin, Abshiro also sells firewood.

# WHO CARES, ABOUT SELFCARE?

By Caleb Odhiambo.

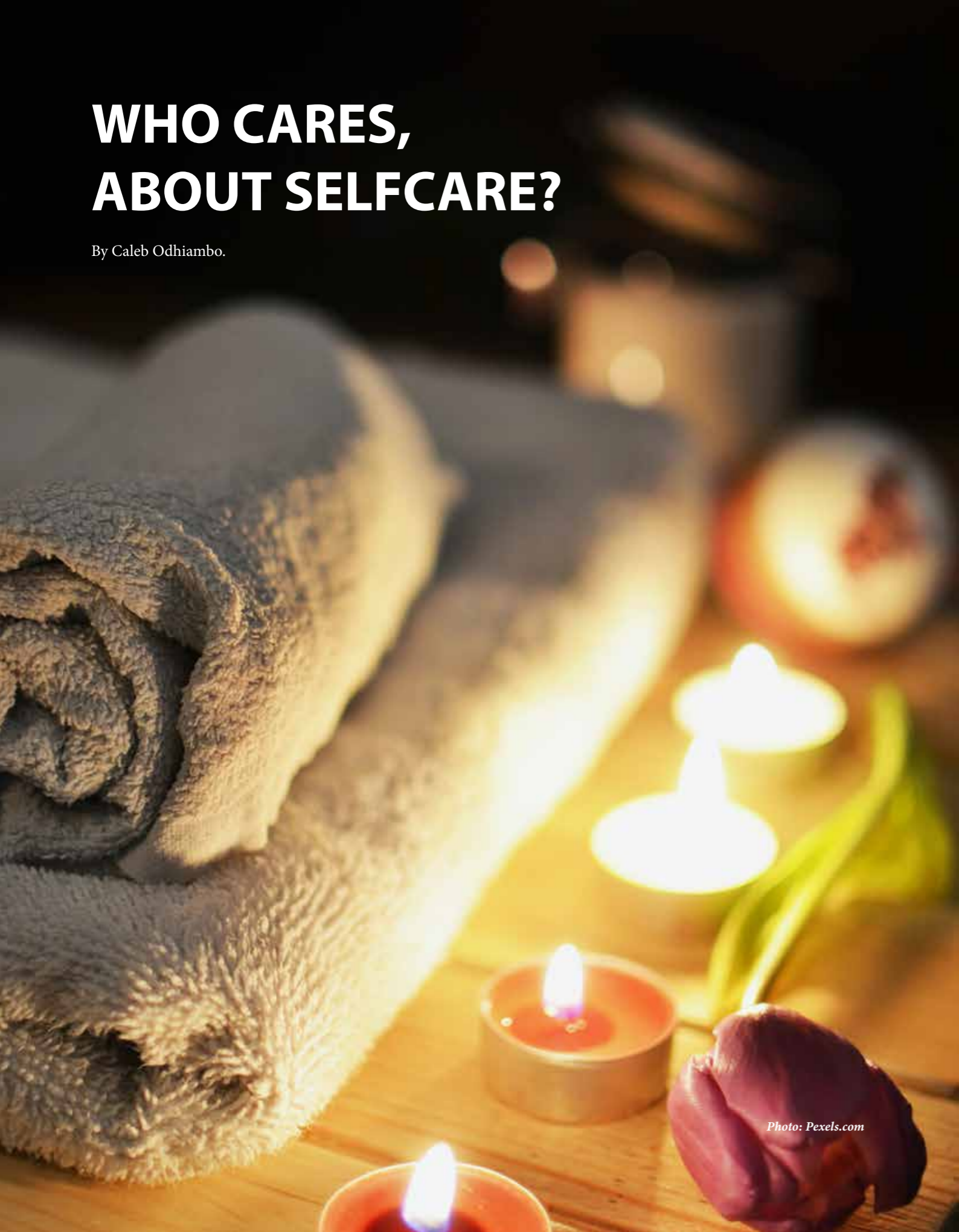


Photo: Pexels.com

By Caleb Odhiambo

Growing up in Nairobi where I was born, we lived by a mantra “take care of your welfare and let us take care of your farewell”, a phrase that loosely translated to “your wellbeing is in your own hands.”

Today, “self-care”, particularly around mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of those providing care to the vulnerable communities is a major topic in many a conversation. But how much is really understood about what self-care is and why it’s important especially for those in the frontline of the humanitarian work? We care for others’ wellbeing, but the BIG QUESTION, do we take time to care for SELF?

The reality of the need for self-care dawns on most of us when we are facing a difficult week with deadlines and expectations to meet and in the perpetual attempt to justify why you need to keep your job, we wade through despite the mental exhaustion weighing us down. Giving up is not an option as the spirit of Humanitarian service requires that you to keep going for the good cause. Until your whole system crashes.

## So, what is Self-Care?

Selfcare describes the actions that an individual might take in order to reach optimal physical and mental health. It’s vital to physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing. It is best understood as the ability to take proper care of your daily living needs, like eating well, sleeping enough, grooming yourself. It’s also about identifying your own unique needs and taking steps to meet them especially those that nurture you and keep you healthy. Self-care can include anything from getting a haircut or a massage, to going to the beach or eating at your favorite



restaurant. But even more than that, it means being mindful of and tending to your own daily needs. Take time for a lunch break. Take time for hobbies, family, and friends and generally attaining a good a work-life balance.

Although self-care takes on so many appearances because each person’s approach to refreshing and re-alignment of self to life’s situations is different, it’s worth noting the great benefits of simple lifestyle changes in dealing with depression, anxiety, or even just the pressures of day-to-day life that can so frequently feel overwhelming.

Knowing when you are being strained mentally and emotionally and realizing that you need a few steps back requires not only the ability to listen to your body but also grit to say it. For instance, saying no to extra task from your boss because your in-tray is already full and you need to take a break a break to refresh your mind.

It is also worth noting that sometimes

when we cannot get out of the situations that boggle us down, the mind in its attempts to cope with the situation directs us to unhealthy coping mechanisms like drugs, alcohol, overeating and risk taking, all which help us to regulate challenging emotions albeit with temporal relief.

## Six benefits of self-care include:

1. Better Productivity-When you learn to say “No” to tasks that take away your time and slow you down you can productively deliver on what is of priority.

2. Better Physical health- with better care we have less of opportunistic ailments such as flu or common colds that slow you down. This leads to an enhanced immune that makes you feel strong both inside and out.

3. Resistance to Diseases-Closely related to better health is that our bodies when well taken care of attains a immune system to fight off diseases.

4. Enhanced self-esteem- when you are good to yourself you send a positive message to your subconscious this goes a long way to discourage negative self-talk and that inner voice that keeps you motivated.

5. Increased self-knowledge-the exercise of thinking about yourself calls for a better knowledge of yourself, limits and needs. This self-knowledge sparks a desire for a change of career, a training need to fill the gap in skills or even a prioritization of goals.

6. More energy reserves to be able to give care to others; it gives you the resources to be compassionate to others.

*The writer is a Humanitarian Aid worker, a trained counsellor and outdoor enthusiast.*

# KAKUMA, HOME OF TALENT



By Ochongodok Sebit

Photo: Internet | Kurasports

Today David Majak plays for KALMAR FF in Sweden premier league. But it all began with playing football on the streets for fun while in primary school in Kakuma Refugee Camp.

David Majak arrived in Kakuma Refugee Camp in 2000 from South Sudan, where he joined Kalobeyei primary school and completed his primary level of education. The future seemed bleak for young David "Carzola" Majak. Living in the refugee camp was hard, it seemed as though there was every aspect of life that required addressing, the shortage of clean water and food exacerbated by the extremely hot temperature made life unbearable for him.

However, he found comfort in playing football, where he began nurturing his footballing talent playing with friends just for the fun of it. Majak never thought it would amount to anything as it was but a deviation from the boredom of the refugee camp life. Soon, he joined an amateur club, D3 FC, and later Golden Boys FC.

Much was not seen of his footballing talent until he was in form 2 at Kakuma Refugee Secondary school in 2014 when he was scouted and recruited to play for the Kapenguria football team. He initially started as a goalkeeper, but soon became the team striker, the position he plays in to date.

His Kapenguria team clinched the national title in the 2018 Safaricom Chapa Dimba tournament. Majak led his team to victory at the regional level, emerging top scorer and was named as the regional and national most valuable player. This showcase opened doors for Majak as he was immediately picked up by Kakamega Homeboyz FC, and later joined Tusker FC in the Kenyan premier league.

In an interview with a Kenyan Media house Majak once said that "I started playing football for the fun of it. My dream was to be a football coach and support youth football in Kakuma."

For Cecilia Akello, born and raised in Kakuma Refugee Camp, realizing her passion for the sport at an early age made her pursue it with much drive admitting that it was as transparent as it could get to her that this is what she aspired to do.

Her football journey began when she joined form one in Kakuma Refugee Secondary School team and was selected to join the girls school team and was made the school team captain for the girls' football throughout the period between 2017 and 2019 when she was in school. A skillful footballer, she was too conspicuous to go unnoticed and was selected into the Kakuma United girls' team, later becoming the team captain.

While playing for the school team she helped them win the UNICEF sports for peace games and regularly winning best player and top scorer in numerous competitions her team would participate in. As her talent grew, more opportunities and responsibilities came her way taking up part time coaching immediately after graduating from High school.

Barely 2 years after school, Akello is well travelled outside the Kakuma refugee camp thanks to her footballing talent. Her alongside her Kakuma Stars teammates have participated in tournaments in Kitale and Nakuru under Kakuma / Kalobeyei stars (KK STARS).

To tap and reward her talent the school Board of Management Kakuma Refugee Secondary School had good plans to engage her to train the girls football team in the year 2020 unfortunately covid-19 interrupted the schools sport calendar, and the pursuit was shelved.

However, the same year she traveled back to South Sudan to try her luck at joining the South Sudan Ladies National team and she made it in where she is now part and parcel of. A feat she says she cannot yet believe herself.

"I never thought that being a female footballer would open opportunities for me," says Cecilia Akello.



**I started playing football for the fun of it. My dream was to be a football coach and support youth football in Kakuma.**

Majak



**I never thought that being a female footballer would open opportunities for me.**

Cecilia Akello.

# A PLACE TO CALL HOME

By Christian Baobab

**W**hat is a refugee camp?  
I was bothered by thoughts  
A place that keeps someone existing?  
When they should be dead

Or a place for innocent victims of the laws of nature;  
People whose lives have been messed up by,  
people playing around with others' lives.  
Or these people became victims of their actions,  
Condemned to hide under a refugee

I thought refugees were miserable people,  
Forced to run away from everything including life itself.  
Condemned to existence for years instead of a living,  
Being pawns in government games of chess

I thought and thought,  
Days, weeks, months, years,  
Then  
I stopped  
I stopped thinking about all that  
And magic happened

I realized that we refugees,  
Are people  
People that have not given up on life  
People that are trying to heal  
Healing wounds that life has caused them.  
Survivors

WE love, WE hate, WE win, WE lose,  
And WE do it again  
WE feel, make mistakes, forgive, and forget.  
WE work, and WE earn  
WE consume, and WE contribute

When I stopped thinking,  
I realized that life was not that easy in a refugee camp.  
Neither was it ever back home  
Then I started thinking again.  
That maybe it is a Place to Call Home.



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