

The Refugee



Magazine
DADAAB EDITION
Issue #3 | November 2014

HER PAST IS ONE TALE SHE HAS NEVER GAINED THE COURAGE TO TELL EVEN HER CLOSEST FRIENDS ABOUT, BUT SHE FEELS PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW THE TRUTH.

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EDUCATION IN DADAAB BOOSTED BY TECHNOLOGY

SOMALI WOMEN SHINING DESPITE CULTURAL HURDLES

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She was forcefully married to an Al-Shabaab Militant while she was still in school. She had to drop out and serve as a slave wife. Find out more about her in the centre pages.

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Editorial

Welcome to another edition of your favourite read, The Refugee. The stories in this edition cover the period September through November, with various parts of August.

Through this period, the camp has witnessed various changes, the latest being the cut in food rations that has hugely affected many refugees who rely on it, and the technological advancement in the education centres and more solar lights installed in the camps.

In this edition, we bring you even more interesting and inspiring stories from the camps in Dadaab. First, we tell you about the story of hope; after a long wait, a number of refugees relocated to Kakuma for processing of resettlement. We also tell you about the struggles that girls in Dadaab Refugee Camps face in pursuit of education; and a Pakistani national living as a refugee in Dadaab. All these and many other stories adorn this edition.

In our second edition, we said that we would start creating magazines that feature stories in both English and Somali versions in order to reach a wider. Unfortunately, we could not manage due to editorial constraints. We are however fast-tracking the processes to get us there.

November 25th marked the beginning of the 16 Days of activism. The next edition of The Refugee Magazine will be dedicated to the survivors of early marriage. We will feature stories of early marriage survivors, people's views and opinions. We will also tell you what you can do to help, where and how to get help if you ever fall victim. Make sure you grab a copy!

We hope you will relish reading through this edition.

The Editor



Stories in *The Refugee Magazine* are written by refugees for the refugee community. It is published by FilmAid with the help of BPRM. It is produced every three months.

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THE STRUGGLE OF GIRLS IN PURSUIT OF EDUCATION IN DADAAB REFUGEE CAMPS

By Mohamed Osman

‘Hooyo,’ my mother softly said. ‘That was a good poem. If you write many such poems, people will notice you. Singers will appropriate your lines; they will turn them into music. When people listen to the songs, you will share the sin with them. That might put you in hell. My son, please stop writing poems. You will be safe.

“**T**he existence of girls is solely for the purpose of marriage and child bearing.” Says a traditional elder in Ifo Refugee

Camp in Dadaab. Such are the sentiments that many male elders in the camp hold regarding women in the society.

In Dadaab camps, refugees and asylum seekers of Somali origin account for more than 95% of the general population (UNHCR/June 2014). Traditionally, girls were not allowed to associate and intermingle with boys. They were not allowed to attend school as it was considered a disgrace to the family. This contributed to the infringement of their right to access education. Affirmative action was thus adopted to uphold standards and motivate them to study.

For the last 5 years, the number of girls being enrolled in schools has rapidly increased. In some classes, the number of

girls is even higher than that of boys. This reflects that the effort by the organizations to support girl education has had a positive impact.

Girls in Dadaab encounter many challenges as they pursue their studies. Forced early marriage and domestic violence are the common challenges that are witnessed in the camp round, inhibiting their completion of studies. Momina, a 14 year old girl in Dadaab, had a dream of becoming a prominent person in the future, to help the defunct society. She dropped out of school when she was in class 5, due to challenges she faced back at home. She had to carry out a series of domestic chores each day to cater for her family’s needs. “I really want to get educated, but I cannot turn a blind eye on my family’s needs,” says Momina. Her father suffers from hypertension and her mother is too old to do much around the house.



During her short stay in school, she always emerged top of her class. Her absence from school was felt by both the teachers and her classmates. The head teacher soon learnt that she had dropped out to support her family and tried to encourage her parents to let her get back to school. But her parents felt they needed her more. "She is the only source of income that we have." Her mother insisted when the pressure to release her daughter to resume her studies became too much.

Other girls have had to leave school due to social challenges. Fadumo was married off by her parents without her consent just before she enrolled for class 8. A few weeks later she got pregnant, sealing her fate of ever returning to school. Her father is an advocate of the traditional principles in respect to marriage. That as soon as a girl reaches adolescence she is mature enough to get married.

Windle Trust Kenya is an organization that funds secondary level education in Dadaab. The organization also founded the KEEP (Kenya Equity Education Program) Programmes meant to empower and motivate girls to take advantage of supplementary classes offered on Saturday and Sunday.

"Educating a girl is educating the nation." Said a teacher in a forum aimed at empowering girls. This saying, which some feel has become a cliché, has been made a reality with the implementation of various programmes. Many girls have proven their competence and this is evident, as many have performed exemplarily well and even secured places for scholarships offered by the World University Scholarship of Canada (WUSC) to pursue their studies in prestigious universities in Canada.

Towfiq Secondary School in Ifo is one of the schools in the Dadaab whose efforts are geared towards empowering girls so that they may qualify for such and other scholarships. It is through relentless work by the organizations that has resulted in providing a more conducive environment for the girls to be able to pursue their studies.

DADAAB REFUGEES RELOCATED TO KAKUMA AWAITING RESETTLEMENT

By Sahal Ali Hussein

Above and beyond offering protection for refugees and displaced persons, the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR seeks, in its mandate, to find durable solutions for refugees. Many refugees flagged concerns over the rate at which these were being done as many have lived in the camps for over 23 years and have since witnessed very small numbers leaving the camps.

Resettlement to third country in the developed world is one of the solutions that UNHCR offers; United States, Canada, Australia and some European countries being the lead recipients.

The last budge of refugees was on November 1, 2014 relocated to Kakuma for final interviews and processing for resettlement. A total of 473 refugees benefited from this project. Some of the refugees under this resettlement program told *The Refugee* that they were happy with the relocation since USCIS has not been in a position to come to Dadaab to conduct interviews.

Over the years the receiving countries of refugees being resettled would come to Dadaab and conduct their immigration interviews at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) compound in Dadaab Main Office. However, due to security concerns this has affected the manner in which these countries conduct the exercise. Some have resorted to conducting interviews through video calls and others such as the United States, which is a major player in the resettlement of refugees in Dadaab; have resorted to establishing a transit camp in Kakuma.

On the other hand some of the

refugees complained that the relocation program is not well coordinated, as some refugees say they receive phone calls and are asked to prepare to go to Kakuma, but not all the scheduled beneficiaries are relocated. Mohamed Osman is one of the refugees who were scheduled for relocation in April this year. When he was informed of his scheduled travel, he was in Thika pursuing a course in Community Health. "I left my studies so that I could join my family and relocate to Kakuma, but few days prior to the scheduled day of departure, I was informed that I would not be resettled yet, even though my mother and brothers would. This separation set me back and caused me a huge frustration." Said Mohamed. He raised concern over the psychological effects that the notification for resettlement has, saying that physical and psychological preparedness follows the notification, and one gets absolutely crushed if plans are changed.

In November this year, a woman was reported to have fainted after she was notified by IOM that she would not be relocated with this budge. The woman, who was the head of a family of six, was reported to have sold all her belongings including the house in which she had lived with her family the previous days on receiving a confirmation call from IOM earlier on.

Abdurrahman, a father of four who also missed a trip in the third budge recommends that in order to avoid such issues, there should be proper coordination between all the parties concerned and refugees to be scheduled only when there is adequate accommodation at the transit in Kakuma and proper plans laid down.

EDUCATION IN DADAAB BOOSTED BY TECHNOLOGY

Over 18,000 refugee school-going children and teachers to benefit from ICT-Enabled learning after the installation of Instant Network Schools in Learning Centres

BY SAHAL ALI HUSSEIN

The 21st Century has seen much technological advancement, with the Internet being a robust system with overflowing information. Institutions of learning have taken advantage of this system to enhance learning and research by establishing e-centres as well as enabling online research in the libraries.

Dadaab Refugee Camps have also caught to the chase. Kenyan telecommunication company, Safaricom in partnership with Huawei and the Vodafone Foundation, brought a tablet based learning to start a project called the Instant Network Schools, in Dadaab refugee camps. The project, which is implemented by the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, is set to offer ICT-enabled learning to over 18,000 refugee children in schools.

The Vodafone Foundation provides funding, technical support and trains the IT team in Dadaab; Huawei provides tablet computers and Safaricom enables connectivity to the Internet.

Safaricom CEO Bob Collymore; the UNHCR Representative in Kenya, Raouf Mazou and the Director of the Vodafone Foundation, Andrew Dunnet, jointly paid a visit to Dadaab on October 8, 2014 to officiate the project.

Mr. Collymore, whose visit was the first in Dadaab, joined students at Nasiib Secondary School in Ifo2, for a History class. The class used tablets for the lesson. Mr. Collymore

stated that he was hopeful that the project would be a success. "With improvement in technology, I am certain it will be reflected by improvement in the quality of education in the camps," he said.

Abdul-Aziz Ibrahim, the Chairman of Ifo Camp who spoke to the CEO, explained that the company does not have to stick to their current role of communication – making profit. "We expect Safaricom to play a good role in assisting UNHCR in some aspects of the operations in the camp," stated Mr. Ibrahim.

Bob Collymore, who was seemingly noting down all that was said by the camp leaders, promised to stand by UNHCR in support of the refugee operation. He however clarified to the leaders that he is currently in Dadaab because of the Instant Network Schools Project.

In an interview with *The Refugee*, Bob Collymore said described the project as one that will take children in Dadaab refugee camps from the third world country to the first world country. "Its Particularly interesting to see children in Dadaab having what a child in London or a child in New York has," he said., adding that students were now able to research on their own through the technological platform; thus "learning will be interesting and full of fun."

The CEO also praised UNHRC for doing a good job in the past twenty-three years. "UNHCR has shown a good fight in dealing with hunger, nutrition and health issues, these would have been a major challenge to our program today,"





Mr. Collymore noted.

Mr. Andrew Dunnet said, “tablet based education will provide an unlimited information resource that they would otherwise not have had.”

“We are happy with this partnership, which brings technology to our education system. Education is central to the lives of refugees since it is the most important thing they can carry home. We are committed to ensuring the success of the project.” Said the UNHCR Representative in Kenya, Raouf Mazou.

Two months down the line since its launch, the program has greatly picked up speed in the various schools. Most of the beneficiary children and teachers are optimistic that the project will raise the bar of performance as well as enhance learning. “The Instant Network Schools have improved my experience, enhanced my confidence and made our work easy.” Says the Head Teacher of Halane Primary School in Ifo Refugee Camp,

Mohamed Omar. Some of the students have also expressed sentiments that learning has become more ‘fun’. “It has been a wonderful experience for me to sit in class and learn using tablets and scrolling a screen as I read.” Says Safiyo Noor, 14.

According to Mr. Aden, Hormuud Primary School Head Teacher, the Instant Network Schools will have a long time impact on the education system in Dadaab camps. He hopes that they will be able to see a massive improvement in the performance of the students both nationally and locally.

As many remain positive about the instant network program few show concerns on sometimes slow and poor network. “I am delighted by this program, but the slow and poor network we experience sometimes is a drawback.” Says the Deputy Center Supervisor in Ifo Youth Education Pack (YEP) Centre, Ahmed Mahad.

An Instant Network School is a solar powered centre with tablets – and in some cases, with computers, where children and teachers access digital educational content and the Internet through Safaricom’s mobile network. The centres are managed by trained teachers and are located within 13 Dadaab schools. Among the centres, 6 are in primary schools, 3 in secondary schools and 4 in vocational training centres.



TOP: Pupils learning using tablets at Mwangaza Primary School in Dadaab Refugee camp.
 BOTTOM: Julia Mugogwa, a teacher at Nasib Secondary School teaching a History class using tablet technology at the school. She also trains other teachers in Dadaab schools in using the tablet-based technology for instruction.

Photos courtesy: UNHCR/Duke Mwanacha

UNITED NATIONS CHIEF VISITS DADAAB REFUGEE CAMP



World Bank President and Top officials from Kenyan Government among the envoy that Visited Dadaab

Photo: UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon giving his key note address. Seated to his left is the President of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim and Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Amb. Amina Mohamed.

By Mohamed Osman

Having high-ranking foreign visitors in Dadaab Refugee Camps is not something new for the residents of Dadaab, but when the head of the United Nations visits, all and sundry wait with anxiety. The questions that often beg in the minds of many include the reasons for their visit and how long they would stay.

For many refugees living in Dadaab, their hopes for getting solutions to the root of their problems – being a refugee – were quickly diminishing, having lived in the camp for over two decades. The arrival of the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon was preceded by the arrival of the Somali Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed, whose presence was highly felt in Dadaab. It was the first official visit by the new Somali Government to Dadaab to oversee the refugee situation. The arrival of both the Prime Minister and

the UN Chief stood a substantial position of resuscitating and reviving the shackled dreams of many refugees and instilling into them hope, that one day they would go back to their motherland.

On October 29 this year, the United Nations Secretary General arrived in Dadaab Refugee Camps together with the President of the World Bank among other envoys and representatives from the Kenyan Government. Eagerness and yearning could be read from the faces of the refugees as they waited with alacrity. Prior to the arrival of the guests, it was highly evident that a high delegation was expected. The security in the camp and its surroundings were heightened, and the movement of vehicles and people hindered. Policemen could be seen dotted all over the streets and deep in the thickets, in a bid to tighten the security.

When they finally landed in Dadaab Airstrip, a long convoy of vehicles led them to Ifo 2, which is an extension of Ifo that was established in the year 2011 during the influx of refugees and asylum seekers from Somalia. On arrival, the delegation was honourably ushered in. They were given a tour of the new Ifo 2 hospital, after which they sat down to listen to the grievances of the refugees and give their addresses.

“This is a tragedy – a man-made tragedy. If leaders had listened more to the aspirations of their people, we would not be here,” Ban Ki-moon said. He lauded the refugees for the community structures they had established to improve security and good governance.

The World Bank President, Jim Yong Kim was pleased by the Red Cross Hospital. He said that it was great to see some sophisticated equipment for diagnosis and treatment in the hospital. “I know most of those equipment, being a medical doctor myself,” he said. He was touched by the condition of some of the patients,

“

This is a tragedy – a man-made tragedy. If leaders had listened more to the aspirations of their people, we would not be here.”

- Ban Ki-moon



Clockwise from Top: World Bank President Jim Yong Kim greets Head of UNHCR Dadaab, Ahmed Warsame. Left, is Garissa County Governor, Nadhif Jama. Red Cross Secretary General, Abbas Gullet at the event. Refugees from South Sudan sing to usher in the envoy. Somali Refugees sing at the venue just before the arrival of the guests.

Photos courtesy: FilmAid/P. Odongo

but was hopeful that they would get treated. He encouraged the refugees to live with resilience, citing that he was once a refugee himself. He also assured the refugees that the World Bank would help get Somalia back on its feet.

When the event was concluded and all speeches put to rest, the envoy took to the Dadaab Airstrip from where they jetted out, heading to Nairobi.

The refugees also had mixed reactions to the envoy’s visit. Though most were happy about it, some did not know the purpose of their visit. “I am happy that our father is paying us a visit. The camp has been my home for five years now,”

said Ali Hassan Mohamed.

UNHCR has been facilitating the movement of Somali refugees who wish to go back home. “We consult with our offices and partners in Somalia to coordinate the process and ensure that the places of relocation are safe,” said the UNHCR Kenya’s spokesperson Emmanuel Nyabera, “in August 2014, we took 9 refugees to Somalia to view the places of relocation to ascertain their safety in the places, and they reported that it was safe.

To date, many refugees still go back to Somalia, whose safety is getting better by the day, owing to the presence of Peace-Keeping troops in the country.

SOMALI WOMEN SHINE DESPITE CULTURAL HURDLES



BY ASAD HUSSEIN

One morning last week, Muna Sheikh and I sat at a restaurant in Nairobi's Eastleigh area waiting to place our order when a waiter suddenly came at us shouting, "Why don't you sit at the Women's Section?"

I was baffled.

There was no point to the waiter's incivility: the Women's Section was mucky and men were not strictly forbidden from sitting in there, beating the purpose of keeping the sexes separate.

So why did the waiter want to shove the girl into a dark, grubby room in the restaurant? Did being a woman mean she needed to be cloistered?

This unsettled me for the rest of the day.

In the same week, on a stroll through Eastleigh, I met 20-year-old Halima who sells tea by the cup at Seventh Street. A long jilbab swathed her body, falling almost to her toes. Her smile caught my eye.

But behind Halima's smile was a great sadness. She had lost her mother a few

days before; she had given birth to a child whose father had divorced her only eight months earlier.

Halima also had to take care of her 11 siblings. Her father had long died and she was too poor to attend his burial in Mandera, in north eastern Kenya.

Halima's woes didn't end there.

She is a Kenyan citizen, from Mandera County, with no identity card. During the crackdown on Somali refugees in Eastleigh in April this year, she was confined in Kasarani Stadium for days until she paid 20,000 Kenyan shillings (220 dollars) for her release.

She is susceptible to the same treatment every time a new security swoop is carried out.

Halima was forced to leave school at class six after an uncle married her off to an elderly man from the U.S. After just four months of marriage, her husband, Hassan, divorced her on his return to the U.S. She tried to contact Hassan but in vain. Halima was left penniless and pregnant. To pay for her upkeep in Eastleigh, she was forced to sell her gold earrings to start a

business selling tea.

As I chatted with her, I could see she was about to cry.

I felt guilty. Then many other scenes from the past flooded my mind.

Halima's story resonated with me. My older sister once sold tea in Eastleigh. She too, like Halima, had gone through similar difficulties of having to raise younger siblings under dire circumstances. She was the one who bought me the first story books I had ever read and sparked the literary fire in me.

There are a few reasons I suppose that shaped my views on women.

We had a neighbour who regularly made disparaging remarks about women. He rained blows on his wife almost everyday. This often put him at loggerheads with my father who was, in his own right, an advocate for women. But the regular beating of the poor woman also had a profound effect on us children.

Dadaab was awash with strong women who ran their families alone. Most of them were widowed; others had left their husbands back in Somalia. Some

of them were caught in the jaws of incessant male cruelty.

I remember Safiyo, a neighbour who doted on me. She told me stories about her family, stories about her experiences and feelings which I did not understand, but I often went to her home. Today, I realize Safiyo needed a friend, a person in whom to confide her fears. Her husband, although he truly loved her, did not understand. She awarded me the name Asad, which means a lion. That is also what she called her son. Many years later, when I decided to become a writer, it became my pen name.

Dadaab was not a nurturing home for its girls. I remember there were only a handful that were in school with us. The Somali parents in the camp did not like sending their daughters to schools. Girls, it was said, would just go to cook for someone else. So taking them to school was considered a waste of scarce resources.

The strong winds of cultural malaise, the shadows of early marriages and the demands of house chores snuffed their talents. When I graduated from high school a few weeks ago, out of 11 girls who started school with us in 2002, just one made it to the end.

Yet the girls flourished in the face of all the challenges.

When we boys were busy going to the cinema, playing football or even chewing miraa/khat, the girls had their heads buried in books. Some of the few who had the chance to go to school obtained good grades that got them scholarships.

Muna Sheikh, the girl I mentioned at the beginning of the story, is a professional social worker who studied in Canada. There is also Fatuma who recently joined the University of Toronto to study chemical engineering. There is another Fatumo who went from the humble daughter of the school watchman to getting a scholarship to study in Canada. And many others, too.

Something extraordinary happened a few months ago.

Fadumo Dayib, a Finn Somali woman, announced that she will run for the presidency in Somalia in the 2016 elections. This, I believe, will be a big achievement for the Somali community. Though it is unlikely she will win in 2016, Fadumo will serve as a motivation for parents in Dadaab, as indeed in Somalia, to educate their daughters.

Then maybe we will change our viewpoint on women.

Perhaps we will cherish the labors they put in holding together a society that had long fallen apart, for enduring the anguish that Somali men had inflicted on them over the years, for bringing up strong children who made and will continue to make a difference in this world.

DREADFUL RAINS

BY ALI SAHAL

Despite the signs of rain being a blessing to many, the dark clouds that gather ahead of rain reek of a disaster in wait to a teacher in his mid 70s in Ifo Refugee Camp in Dadaab.

Mulageta Aroba is seated next to his reading table, perusing through a book after last night's heavy downpour. A few wooden posts hosting a huge polyvinyl sheeting that was provided by UNHCR is what Mulageta calls home. His bed lies next to his reading table.

When it starts to rain, pools of water lay in many parts of Ifo refugee camp in a few minutes. UNHCR and its aid partners have already labeled some areas as flood zones. These include sections A, D, E, S and G and have called for people in those blocks to move to another section, N, which was established in the year 2006 after heavy floods in that camp. A call that many turned deaf ears to.

In a move, UNHCR and other organization resolved to depriving the residents of some services to show concern for them and make them relocate. For some time, the construction of shelters in the area was discontinued. That however was not fruitful. It is now eight years and people still live in these sections. Refugees in those sections, including Mulageta live in old houses.

In 2013, Peace Winds Japan started an equal distribution of shelter to all people in the camp.

The refugees' decision not to move from the dangerous hallows to the safer areas is a question that begs an answer. For some, it feels like moving may take a lot of effort, and settling down could even take longer. "We could not move after the call from UNHCR because it would be a struggle to fully settle again; we built these houses long ago," says the Minority Chairperson, David Aquein, "demolishing everything and settling in a new area will take time."

Alamayo Urdufa Asahari, an Oromo elder living in Block E2 is one of the people who hate the sign of rain. He lives with five cliques of his extended family in a single house. His house is a shack. "It leaks all over. We have to use almost all of our utensils when it rains to collect water that infiltrates through the leaks," he says, "Just the other day, I found my young granddaughter, who lives with us in this house drinking from a plate filled with leaking water. It worries me a lot."

Despite the people in these sections now receiving all the aid services equally with other refugees in Dadaab, they still suffer from the years that they missed some of the services such as shelter.

THE TALE OF AN AL-SHABAAB MILITANT'S EX-WIFE

Married forcefully at the age of 17, she struggled to free herself from the shackles that bound her to her belligerent husband for years, fleeing to Dadaab Refugee Camp

She looks frail as she tries to gain the valor to recount an experience that changed her life, not for the better. At 28 years, Zamzam Abdi (not her real name) has seen more than she imagined she could ever see in her entire life.

Born in what many would call a 'well-off' family, she is the second-born in her family. They lived in Somali's capital, Mogadishu. Their family was stable and her parents could provide for them with relative ease. When she was 7, she joined Nacmur Primary School, one of the most prestigious schools in Mogadishu. "I really enjoyed my time in school and I had a dream of becoming a teacher one day, since there were no female teachers in that school," she says. Her dreams did not live long.

The Somali government was unstable and the Islamic Militants, Al-Shabaab had major control over most of the towns for many years. Some of the militants would visit the schools to preach about Jihad and religious extremism in a bid to recruit more people. "Their preaching misled most of my friends and fellow pupils who were lured into joining them," says Abdi, "two of my friends were forced into joining them but were later killed in airstrikes."

They lived in fear, but still felt at home. One of the militants who often preached at their school followed her home one-day. Abdi was 17. The man had interest in having her as a wife. "He approached my father, proposing to marry me, but my father declined," she says. She felt like she had just escaped a hangman's noose – a bliss that lasted three days. The man came back, with a team, and took her father away for three days. They threatened to kill him and his family, should he refuse to give her out for marriage. "At 3 am on the fourth night, about eight militants broke into our house, fired some rounds of bullets in the air and dragged my daughter outside," says Abdi's mother, Mama Yarey*, "we screamed for help but nobody would have dared to come out as they feared for their lives."

Amid screams, Abdi was taken to a place she cannot recall. She tried to beg but her pleas fell on deaf ears. Instead she was beat up and lashed with belts. "They told me that I should be happy because that was the night of my wedding," says Abdi. Her groom was a "huge man in his 40s. Sleeping with him was so painful," she says, "I cried bitterly and bled a lot. That night I lost my virginity in what felt like an act of ownership."

She lived with her husband whom she says treated her like a slave. "He made it clear that I was his wife at night and a servant by day. I was to cook for all the militants in his group and they even expected me to polish their guns. If I failed in any of my duties, my husband beat me up. He raped me many times and I could do nothing to put him off," she narrates in a flimsy tone. Her husband hardly ever called her by her name; instead he called her names such as 'captive' and 'naaya' - meaning slave. "One night I told him I could not take it anymore, he pulled a gun from beneath the mattress and



Zamzam Abdi* now lives in a camp in the Dadaab Refugee Complex. She expresses gratitude to the agencies concerned for the safe haven she finds in the camp.

Photo: Not self, just a portrayal. Courtesy of FilmAid/P.Odongo



held it to my head, threatening to kill me,” she says.

She got pregnant and when she delivered, her mother went to see her. “My mother noticed my blisters and how frail I was looking, and she said in a low tone; ‘they are hurting you’. Yes I was hurt, but I could not say so, having in mind the consequences,” says Abdi.

Small girls, whom she says were much younger than her, also suffered domestic violence in the small compound they lived in. Like her, they had also been kidnapped and were forced into marital life. “Instead of trying to save them from the misery, the best I could do was teach them how to be better wives,” says Abdi, “they were suffering. Some even had broken ribs that were exposed.”

Abdi was sometimes used to lure men into ambush. She tried to escape several times when the pain got unbearable, but she could only go so far. Each time she got caught, things would get worse. “One time I was caught and declared captive. I was taken to a cave, where I was treated like a slave. Any militant would have sexual intercourse with me – sometimes even more than seven men in a single night, and I could not do anything about it. That was the worst time of my life,” she sadly muttered.

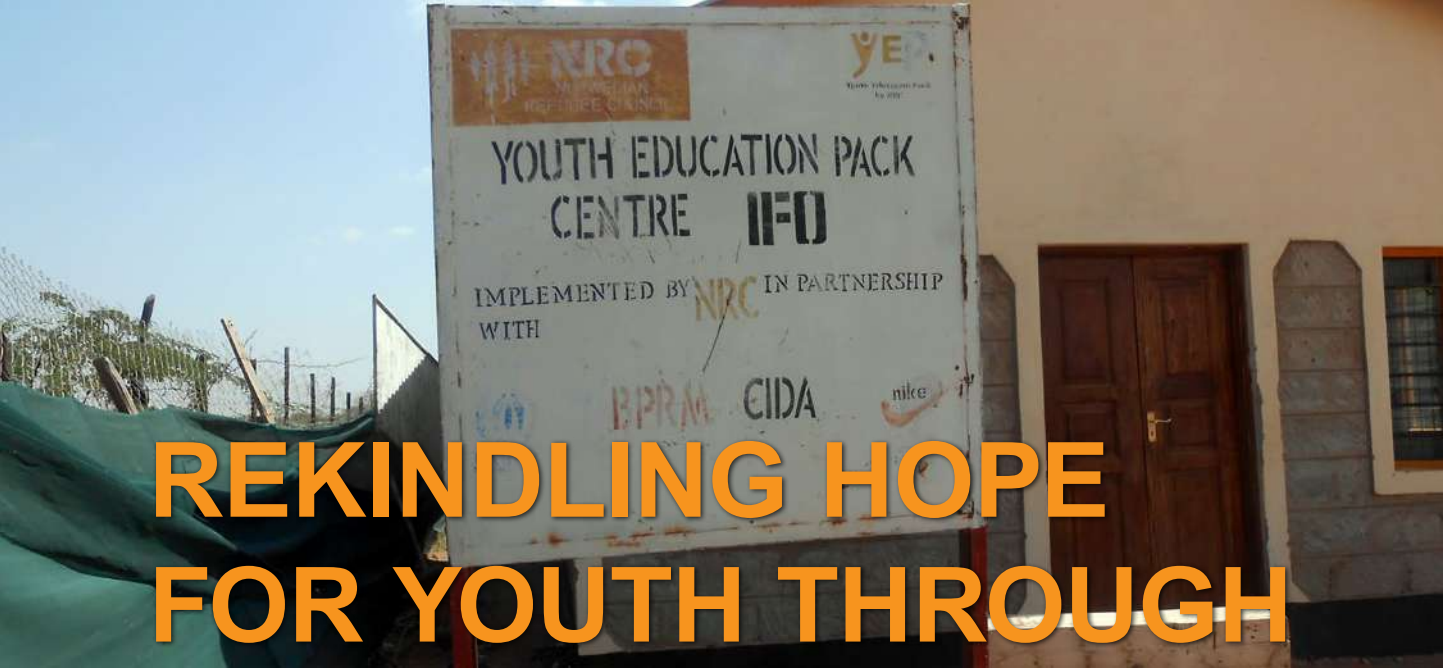
She has never gained the courage to tell anyone about what had happened to her, even her closest friends. “If people learn about my past, it could slim my chances of getting married out of will and living peacefully,” she says.

When the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troops touched base in Somalia, she heard the news. The militants were shaken up and she saw her chance to attempt another bolt for freedom. “I ran so fast, hiding in the bushes and small villages with other people who were also fleeing other places,” says Abdi. Upon arriving at the Kenyan border, they met the Kenyan army. She let out a sigh of relief. “I knew I was now safe. The huge relief overwhelmed me and my feet got feeble that I fell on the ground,” she says, “I am so grateful to the government of Kenya and UNHCR for giving us a place to stay and the peace that I find in Dadaab camp. I don’t know where I’d be now.”

Dadaab is home to over 350,000 refugees and asylum seekers from over six countries, with a major population being Somali (UNHCR 2014). All the communities live and interact peacefully.

AMISOM was created with an initial six-month mandate though subsequent renewals of its mandate by the AU peace and Security Council have also been authorized by the UN Security Council. AMISOM’s objective is to see a Somalia at peace; a country where ordinary citizens can go about their daily lives in peace and security and where they can freely choose their leaders (<http://amisom-au.org>).

* Not the individual’s real name



REKINDLING HOPE FOR YOUTH THROUGH

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

BY MOHAMED OSMAN

Life in the refugee camp has not been easy for many, and most of the time the only surest way to thrive is to get education, then a job. But this has also had its challenges, owing to the overflowing classrooms and limited education resources in the camp.

Some of the youth drop out of school and many others fail their examinations due to various reasons. More than 80% of pupils who sat for the top primary examination, KCPE failed to attain the benchmark score that can help secure them a place among the limited spaces in high school. When children drop out of school, some may end up engaging in vices and other 'immoral' activities. To prevent this, vocational learning institutions have been put up in the refugee camps to engage the youth, keeping them from idleness while at the same time imparting to them life skills.

Youth Education Pack, commonly referred to as YEP Centre, founded by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is one such centre in Dadaab. It offers skills development, which go a long way in building the careers of youths. The skills training they provide include; carpentry, tailoring, electricity, computer literacy, hair dressing and journalism. The students each go through a one-year curriculum after which

they graduate. Equipment are often donated to some of the youth depending on the careers they pursue, to help them establish business ventures.

Ali Abdullahi is a 24 year old renowned tailor in Ifo market. The agency provided him with the equipment he needed, that he used to set up his shop earn a living from. Ali uses his earnings to provide for his family. "I sustain my family of 5 using my tailoring skills." He says. He hopes to change his economic status by growing his business. Ali failed to achieve the requisite grades in his class eight exam and was not able to join secondary school. He needed to find a way to support his parents who were counting on him.

"I sustain my family of 5 using my tailoring skills that I received at the YEP Centre"

He decided to join the YEP Centre after much persuasion by his close friends. He is happy to be in a position to improve not only his standard of living but that also of his parents. He also encourages his friends to join the school and gain new skills that can

serve as a source of livelihood.

However, there are some youths who have not been able to secure places in the YEP centres, but they still try to find ways to earn a living. Abdi Hassan is a 25-year-old father of two. He dropped out of school in class eight after his father died and he had to become the provider for his family. "I was faced with so many fears after my father passed away and there was nobody to support the family. Education is not a priority when you have to first attend to basic needs," laments Abdi. He began working in a milling shop, spending his days grinding maize meal and sorghum so that he could earn a living to feed his mother, brothers and sisters. He is now able to support his family as well as his siblings. He encourages other youth to find ways to earn a living as opposed to just sitting idle. He is a firm believer that the best earnings are those gained through hard work.

Vocational training centres have widely played the role of a 'fail safe' – to help cushion many who fall out of the education system and those who may have not got the chance to join the normal schooling programs for various reasons including age. This has helped better the lives of many, who may have otherwise been distraught or engaged in vices.

TEA SPICED WITH CARDAMOMS: A SOMALI'S FAVOURITE



Photo | fussfreecooking.com

BY ALI SAHAL

Awalk around the markets in Dadaab Refugee Camp will tell you more about the relationship of between tea and the Somali community. Teashops remain an ever-growing business as women and girls interestingly compete in attracting customers by putting the right spice or cardamom in their tea. Dozens of men sit in every teashop sipping a cup of milked tea.

Traditionally it was a habit for old men to sit in these teashops. This used to be a gathering place for old men when solving family disputes. Elders from the two families would sit together and continuously take tea as the discussion on what to do about a certain matter moves on. Not serving tea on such gathering is an insult to the Somali culture.

Today the number of youth taking tea from these teashops is rapidly increasing.

They sit with friends to share their experience of the day. Somali politics, buufis (resettlement), women and families are the main topics of discussion in these gatherings.

It is a tradition for families to honor their guest with a flask of milked tea spiced with cardamom.

Any woman made good tea with milk and sugar was considered noble. Tea should be invited, with every visitor in a Somali home before anything. Refugees from the community in the world's largest refugee camp are no way an exception in observing the tea tradition despite their poor living conditions. Tea in the morning is a paramount drink for all.

In 1997 when the worst floods hit the region, the roads were impassable and Dadaab became landlocked: no goods could be transported to camp and even food aid had to be

delivered by airplanes. There was no trace of sugar in the camps. The 'well-off' families among the Somali refugees had to travel to Dadaab Centre to purchase sugar. Some found a means to improvise; using sweets to substitute the sugar – provided one had sugared tea in the end.

Miraa (Khat) is a favourite stimulant for many Somalis in Dadaab, but they seldom chew without tea. When chewing the drug, a person has to continuously drink; this forces them to drink at least a flask (about 1.5 litres) in every chewing period. It therefore mounts on their day's expenses.

Asking an old man on why they spend so much on the drink, after meeting him in one of the teashops, he jokingly said, "Tea, my son is part of our noble tradition. Do you know that during the stable government in Somalia (before the civil war), doctors used to prescribe tea to patients and it was sold in the pharmacies like any other drug?"

Despite the fact that the frequently used beverage creates job opportunities for many women and girls, it has some notable disadvantages, especially to the refugees in Dadaab.

In a camp where people live majorly from hand to mouth, it is economically unwise to spend too much on tea, sugar being one of the most expensive consumables.

Child labor is also quite common in the teashops, as one would find young girls in the businesses serving tea, washing dishes and spending the whole day in the business centers, hence missing education. Many eventually end up getting married to some old men.

8TH ANNUAL FILMAID **FILM FESTIVAL** CELEBRATED IN **DADAAB**

BY MOHAMED OSMAN

Young refugee filmmakers in Dadaab Refugee Camps got yet another chance to tell their stories through films to the world, on yet another Film Festival organized by FilmAid.

The annual event seeks to provide a platform for refugees to tell their stories and showcase their talents. The stories vary from everyday life to cultural practices as well as social issues that are prevalent in the camps.

Over a period of one week starting August 4, 2014, a series of facilitated

screenings and video workshops were conducted in various parts of Dadaab camps, where the refugee-made films were screened, as well as other informative and educative films. The films were often followed by Q&A sessions where the audience got to ask questions or seek clarification over issues observed in the film to the filmmakers or outreach facilitators.

A total of five films were made by refugee youth for the festival this year.

On Friday, August 8, a closing gala to

mark the end of the festival was held in Hagadera.

Early morning, people had already started gathering at the Community Centre, ready to witness the event. One large tent and two smaller tents were standing at the front of the dais. One of the tents was fully covered, and a 65-inch television-set set at the end and films screened for individuals who may have missed out during the film festival.

The closing event is held to recognize the efforts of the refugee filmmakers, the contributions of





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1. Akune Danza, refugee filmmaker from Ifo receives a Huawei Ascend P6 courtesy of Safaricom, for making the best film.
2. Refugees watch a film made by the refugee filmmakers in a tent at the closing gala.
3. Senior Protection Coordinator for UNHCR in Dadaab, Leonard Zulu speaks during the event.
4. FilmAid Kenya Country Director, Stella Suge awards a certificate to one of the refugee filmmakers, Mohamed Bashir Sheikh, alias Africa.



4

Photos | FilmAid/P. Odongo

partners, and also to enlighten people on the filmmaking process. Graduates of the Journalism Training program are also awarded during the film Festival.

Songs and dances filled the air as the event progressed. The awarded individuals could not hide their happiness, smiling as they took to their seats. “This recognition makes me even more hopeful to become an internationally-recognized filmmaker.” Said one of the filmmakers, Mohamed Jimale.

The awarded Journalism trainees also appreciated the effort of their trainer. “I am now enlightened and full of confidence, as I join the field of Journalism,” said Abdul-lahi Abdi.

FilmAid Dadaab Field Manager, Michael Mbai described the day as a joyous one, and congratulated the filmmakers for their hard work and perseverance. “I am really pleased to see you reap from your hard work,” he said.

FilmAid Kenya Country Director, Stella Suge was also

present at the event. She also expressed her pleasure in the progress of the refugee filmmakers and appreciation to partners for their support. “Our partnership and co-ordination has yielded positive consequences,” she said.

The occasion ended safely at 1pm and people left for their affairs.

Film speaks more to a people than words alone ever could. Even by just watching the motion pictures, people can emulate behavior, making it a powerful tool.

To harness this power, FilmAid International, one of the agencies that operate in Dadaab Refugee Camps has been making films to address social issues.

It also started a training program where refugee and host community youth are trained on filmmaking skills, which they in turn use to tell different stories from the refugee and host communities. The trained youth then make films that are showcased during the annual Film Festivals.

MY SHATTERED DREAMS

BY ASAD HUSSEIN

‘Hooyo,’ my mother softly said. ‘That was a good poem. If you write many such poems, people will notice you. Singers will appropriate your lines; they will turn them into music. When people listen to the songs, you will share the sin with them. That might put you in hell. My son, please stop writing poems. You will be safe.’

Before the evening my father called me to his hut, I was a gifted painter whom the teachers highly commended. My classmates often sat close to me. They would all ask me to help them in sketching diagrams in geography and science lessons. This only sharpened my artistic dexterity. But it would soon all change.

“Mohamed,” my father started. “I found your drawings amazing. They look realistic. But I want you to stop drawing animals and humans.”

“Why?” I was shocked. I had won small prizes for portrayals of children cleaning the streets, people planting trees and school kids holding hands which I made for NGOs to promote peace and environmental conservation, earning resounding fame along the way. My goal was basically to do what I love, and I sometimes did not like to be noticed so I would draw images for other kids to claim them as their own.

“In the doomsday, God will ask you to bring the drawings back to life. It is only God who creates, you understand. Why would you want to imitate God? Do you want to go to hell?” My Father queried.

“No,” I quickly replied. No one wants to go to a place of perpetual fire meant only for the infidels and the wrongdoers. The mere sound of hellfire can

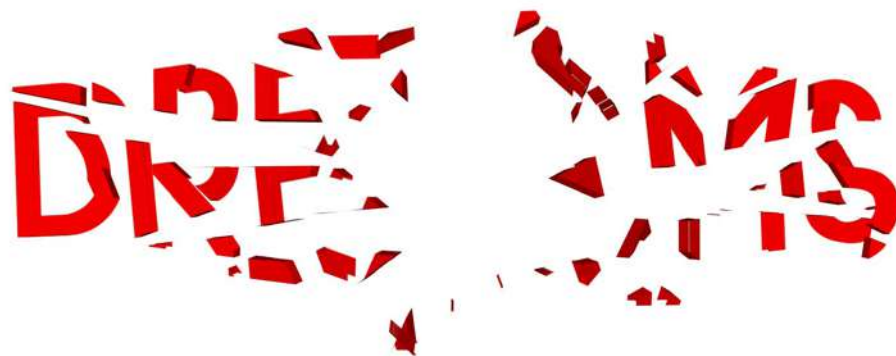
petrify you if you are a little child. So I was made to think that I had sinned.

“Angels do not come to a home where photos are kept,” my father concluded and left away. I felt ashamed. I started burning down my drawings apart from the ones for school. Every night before I slept I pled with God to pardon me for my iniquity.

Then I completely stopped making drawings. I briefed anyone who asked me to help that it was sinful to put a living animal on paper. As the days wore away, I gathered more strength to turn a deaf ear to the voices in my head, which were telling me otherwise. Perhaps it was the devil. But I had to start doing something else. I found out that I was also a good storyteller.

Then I once wrote a Somali poem entitled ‘Waxbarasho iyo Waxqabad’ which I read to my mother. She looked at me straight in the eyes, smiled and clapped her hands. But she would later change her mind. A few minutes later, I was called to the kitchen.

“Hooyo,” she softly said. “That was a good poem. If you write many such poems, people will notice you. Singers will appropriate your lines; they will turn them into music. When people listen to the songs, you will share the sin with them. That might put you in hell. My son,



Artists in Dadaab Hopeful After Octopizzo's Visit

BY PAUL ODONGO

“I have lived in the camp for five years but we have never had an artist visit the camp, we just see you go to Kakuma, so this is a great visit and we appreciate,” says David Omot, an aspiring artist in Ifo camp.

To many aspiring youth, his visit was seen as a blessing and a beacon of hope to expressing themselves through art. The celebrity Kenyan hip-hop artist Octopizzo from Wednesday 17th September visited Dadaab Refugee Complex, meeting youth in various camps. The artist, who is also a goodwill ambassador to the UN Refugee Agency and FilmAid, came with an entourage, to encourage young artistes to express themselves freely through art.



Octopizzo (left) listening to a song by an artist in Ifo Refugee Camp in Dadaab.

Photo | FilmAid/P. Odongo

For long, the youth have felt that their talents are kept in a cocoon since they do not have ways to express them, as some raised issues such as lack of a studio to record their music, and lack of recognition and motivation.

His trip, which was organized by UNHCR was, among others, to help encourage the youth in the camp to use art as an avenue to communicate their issues.

Octopizzo stressed on the fact that through their talents, the youth could make their way to greater heights. “Art is a universal language, use it well and it could take you to greater places beyond the camp,” said Octopizzo, “I have performed in

countries where people do not even understand the language am singing, yet they move to the tune.”

The youth were given a chance to express their various talents. Many felt hopeful when the celebrity hip-hop artist promised to come back and help them record music, do collabo and help propel their music through his networks. Octopizzo was in Kakuma last year, where he recorded music with the refugees and helped promote them. “I promise you, I will come back,” said Octopizzo to the youth in Ifo Refugee Camp in Dadaab.

Both vocal and visual artists were given an avenue to show their talents to the guests.

please stop writing poems. You will be safe.”

Tears started cascading down my cheeks. I left the kitchen to my room. I cried, cried and cried. My mother was right. She was distressed at the thought that I might become a songwriter, a scoundrel. I did not want her to worry. I instantly halted composing poems. That was the first and last work I wrote in Somali. I had to look for a different language. This would be English.

I started reading any English text that came handy- from thrillers to scientific books. My lexicon rose as the days went by. I was now fit to speak and write in simple English. I still struggle to choose the correct words, write concise prose and communicate effectively. But I am optimistic that I will improve my language skills in due course.

My knowledge on different subjects expanded as I read widely. I started to look at certain matters objectively. My beliefs on varying facets of culture- say FGM for instance- changed. I now strive to see a society that can accommodate people with different ideas, cultures and religions. My dreams too soared to greater heights.

I am especially enthralled by the wonders a wild creativity can build. Fiction allows the writer to create the kind of people they desire to meet, the scenery they dream to glimpse and the society they want to discover. This is a freedom everyone should chase.

I want to write novels. I know it is not easy, but I have to follow my dream. I want to share my dreams with the rest of the world. It will take a lot of effort. But I am ready to fight to the bloody end. Hope you will be one of my readers.

Yesterday, I informed my mother that I am considering running for a political office in the future. Perhaps even for presidency. She was silent for a few minutes.

“Hooyo,” she said. “You can become a leader, but if you do not serve the people equally, God will punish you in the hereafter. So please do not become a president.”

“Okay, mom,” I said, nodding. But I am not sure whether I will heed the words of wisdom. Will I be a bad son? I do not know.



So far From Home: Pakistani Refugee in Dadaab

BY SAHAL ALI HUSSEIN

Born and bred in Karachi, Pakistan, Robert Yusuf is now a refugee in the Somali dominated camp of Dadaab. The 51-year-old Asian is the only refugee from outside Africa who has ever resided in the world's largest refugee camp.

Robert shared his story with *The Refugee* barely a month and a half after his arrival Dadaab.

Sitting in front of his semi permanent shelter made of plastic and poles and roofed with iron sheeting, Robert says he fled his country after being attacked at night by unknown persons he terms terrorists, as he looked down in despair. "It was late at night when they broke into my house in Karachi. I am a bishop, a preacher and a faithful Christian." Robert says as he remembered what happened back home on that fateful night.

Robert, with his large family then started to live in horror. One morning Robert and his family felt they could not bear life in Karachi anymore. They thought of seeking asylum. However, Robert himself was not feeling comfortable fleeing to a neighboring country. He thought of somewhere far away. "Dadaab being a famous

camp that I had heard about earlier, I thought of joining it since I thought it would be a save haven for me and far enough for any one follow me." He says.

Unlike Robert, the rest of his family chose to flee to Thailand.

The more than a half a month journey to Dadaab then started for Robert. He found his way to Africa and to Kenya through the sea. He sailed to Mombasa, through Kenya's second largest city. In Mombasa, it was totally a different experience for him. A city filled with black faces. Hopeful of finding someone from his native country or at least an Asian mate to interact with in the world's largest refugee camp, Robert still lived with the dream of registering himself as a refugee in Dadaab.

At Mombasa, he asked for UNHCR offices. He was told about the United Nations Refugee Agency office in Nairobi. He found his way to Nairobi to visit the agency. On his way to the UN agency office in Nairobi, as fate would have it, he arrived just at the onset of the Usalama Watch crackdown. He was taken to Pangani police station where he spent three nights in the cell, despite what he thought was

"....I have never before in my life cooked with a log nor any of the kind of foods provided by WFP...."

a genuine explanation to police as to why he was in the city. From Pangani, he was transferred to Kasarani detention center. "I joined a group of people who waited to be deported back to their countries or to be taken to the camps they wish to live in," says Robert, "The Kenyan authority asked me to choose between Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps. Dadaab was the place I wished to reach all the way from Pakistan."

At Dadaab, just before he alighted from the bus from Nairobi, Robert started to imagine how life in the camp is. "It was totally dark and quiet. I started to doubt if people have ever lived here," he pondered. "I stepped into the darkness of Dadaab, not sure where I was heading." It was a strange situation for him. He knew nowhere to spend the night. He was directed to UNHCR's center in Ifo camp. He was considered a refugee for the first in his life.

Despite Robert being a refugee in Ifo, he is in a camp that he can name no one. He is the only Asian in that camp. His brown color and soft hair makes him odd. "It is so hard for me to move around in the camp, everyone looks at me with suspicious eyes. Some think I am a spy and others think I am an aid staff on a special mission," he says. He says that some of his neighbors in his residential place had strongly warned him not to move around as anything could happen. That forces him to stay in indoors most of the days.

The climate in the camp turned to be another threat to his life. Robert had never lived in a semi-arid place – as is characteristic of Dadaab. He is unable to bear the dust, which he says fills his eyes several times a day and forces him to lock his door at times.

Cooking food is a major challenge to him. "I have never in my life cooked with a log, and even worse, I have never cooked any of the kind of food provided by WFP," he says. He developed constipation by consuming a totally different food from what he used to take.

Robert Yusuf feels hopeful that life will improve, once he gets used to it.

Dadaab Refugees Decry as The World Food Programme Cuts Food Aid by 50%



Due to funding constraints, the World Food Programme (WFP) cut the food rations given to the refugees in Dadaab and Kakuma Refugee camps by half.

The food cut came as a surprise for all refugees, and the reduction margin too high, they claim. This move has left many who rely on this basic need fretful, as they claim that the full ration previously provided was not even enough.

"The reduced food at this time is the worst ever since 1992, and what we received in the last cycle is even less than the 50 percent WFP said they would give," claims the Conflict Resolution Committee chair, Abee Shire. "Children are the most vulnerable because they need sufficient food for growth and development, thus the reduced food can even affect education in the camp as children's academic performance is affected," he adds.

More than 80% of the population in Dadaab fully relies on the food rations distributed by WFP. Most of these people do not have alternative sources of income to supplement their meals, thus many risk

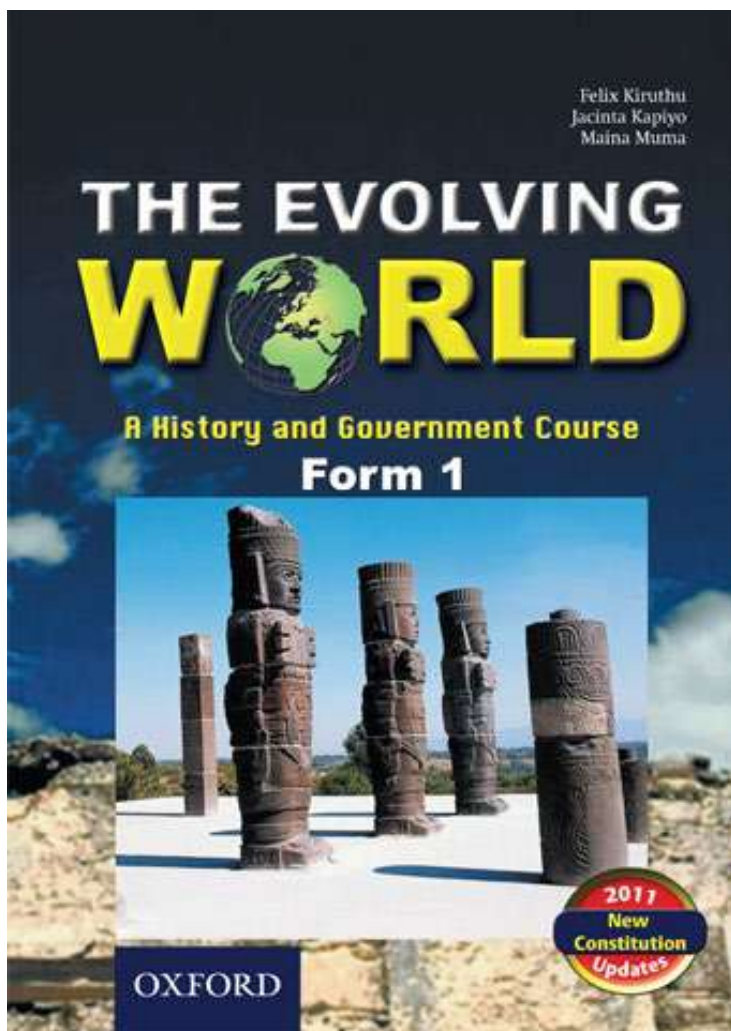
suffering from malnutrition. "The food cuts have come at the worst time when there is huge unemployment in the camps and the food prices have reached the highest levels," says Omar Abdinoor, a businessman in Hagadera market.

Elders in the camp feel that the situation may lead to insecurity as people seek ways to survive. "We did not expect such a high percentage of food to be cut at once," says a 70 year old Somali elder, Bashir Hassan, "the reduced food can even cause insecurity in the camp as people may steal from each other when they miss something to cook for their children." "You cannot watch your children crying for food yet you have no job nor money to cater for their needs, so you may have to steal and even rob," he adds.

WFP and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees are making efforts through funds drives and seeking for donations to curb this shortage and provide the highly needed food to the refugees. Normal rations distribution is expected to resume at the end of January 2015.

OROMO TEACHERS MAKE A MOVE TO PUSH FOR THE REMOVAL AND BANNING OF THE USE OF THE TERM 'GALLA' IN KENYAN CURRICULUM

BY SAHAL ALI HUSSEIN



The cover of one of the books used in the Kenyan curriculum, in which the term 'Galla' is widely used.

The Oromo teachers from Oromo refugee community in Kenya are struggling to bring into attention the negative impact of the usage of what they term a derogative and abusive word to identify the Oromo, used in the Social Studies text books for primary and secondary education in Kenya.

To these teachers, it is wrong to call term them the 'Galla', which is historically unjustifiable and it all seems wrong to use that to educate the nation's generations. The community identifies itself as Oromo and their language as Afan Oromo.

Although the Oromo nation is the second largest in Africa, it is forgotten by or still unknown to the majority of the world today. This is partly because of their political differences with Ethiopia's Emperors, Menelik and Haile Selassie and their successors, which continues to date. The Oromo people endured a stagnant existence where ignorance and famine have been coupled with ruthless oppression,

subjugation, and exploitation in all spheres of life. Everything possible was done to destroy Oromo identity, language, culture, custom, tradition, name and origin.

In short, the emperors maintained their general policy against the Oromo and use the term 'Galla' to dehumanize and victimize Oromo and to destroy their identity and language. Such insulting name to the nation were abolished and eradicated by oppressed nation of 1974 revolution in Ethiopia and the usage of the term Galla is officially banned.

And sadly, to deny the Oromo the right to identity and as if this is not enough and to add salt to the wound, the term Galla is in use interchangeably for Oromo in Social Studies text books used for the education system in Kenya. To cite few books; the Evolution World, a History and Government course Form 1, by Oxford new edition 2010, under the topic Cushitic 'the Cushites group comprised of Galla (Oromo).....' and on page 78 and under the topic Borana, 'the Boran are branch the Oromo or Galla people'.....' they speak Cushitic language called Gallign on page 81. To mention but a few other books citing the ill-termed word include the course book – Milestone in History and Government Form 1 by Longhorn publishers reprinted in 2010 – under the topic Eastern Cushitic comprise of the Elmolo, Gabra, Oromo (Galla)...in page 40. And also in some many other course books published by Kenya Literature Bureau.

Hence, as they clearly tried to indicate, the usage of the terminology to identify the Oromo is wrong and it allows subjugation and victimization of Oromo children and people at large. It violates their basic human Right and the Declaration of children's basic right to good education Kenya. They argue that the term should not be allowed to continue in a free and democratic nation like Kenya.

The Oromo teachers in Kenya are determined in every effort to eliminate the usage of the word in this country. They submitted their petition to the government of Kenya and action is yet to be taken.

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