



Refugees Return



A return intention survey of Somali refugees in Dadaab began on Monday 17th February 2014. The exercise had been planned by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) since September 2013. It is expected to take place in all camps for a period of up to seven weeks and the objective will be to accurately understand the needs and concerns of Somali refugees and to prepare them for any eventual voluntary repatriation interests.

Earlier in December 2013, UNHCR had set up return help desks in all camps for refugees to give seeking information about the situation inside Somalia and the kind of support UNHCR will provide to those willing to return.

Newsletter compiled by UNHCR
External Relations Unit in Dadaab
KENDAPI@unhcr.org

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Articles contributed by Handicap International, Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS), Star Media Development Corporation (SMDC) and CARE International.

UNHCR Inaugurates Host Community Support Projects in Dadaab

In January, UNHCR officially inaugurated four of its 2013 Dadaab refugee host community support projects.

The projects inaugurated include a dormitory for Dadaab Secondary School and a town hall in Dadaab. Others included four primary school classrooms and a dispensary for Maleyley village.

The construction of these projects was funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by UNHCR's partner- Relief, Reconstruction & Development Organization (RRDO).

The projects were officially inaugurated by UNHCR Country Representative in Kenya Raouf Mazou. In attendance were the area Member

of Parliament Hon. (Dr) Mohamed Duale, Deputy County Commissioner Mr. Albert Kimathi, Garissa County officials and representatives from the host community.

At the same event, UNHCR officially handed-over new police reporting offices and accommodation blocks for the Police in Dadaab town and Kambioos camp. Construction of these projects was implemented by UNHCR's partner Lutheran World Federation (LWF) with funds from the European Union.

UNHCR which works closely with leaders from the refugee host community undertook to continue mobilizing resources to support the host community.



UNHCR's representative in Kenya Raouf Mazou (third right) seeing through the commissioning of a school dormitory for Maleyley in Dadaab. UNHCR/A. Nasrullah

UNHCR Inaugurates a School Built by Former Refugees in Dadaab Camps

Former Somali refugees resettled in Canada in 2004 and now Canadian citizens have established a school in Dadaab's Dagahaley camp. The early childhood center is to be funded by money collected by these former refugees who are committed to empower children in camps. Even though the project targets refugees, it is expected to benefit refugee host community members as well. Muuxi Adam and his two friends from Winnipeg are the main architects to this initiative.

This initiative has already proved to be inspirational to refugees who feel that it will not only educate children but also encourage other former refugees to give back to their communities. Muuxi says that he is receiving a lot of good will messages from refugees in camps who are encouraging him to advocate for more support from Somalis in the diaspora.

It all began in 2008 when Muuxi and his friends discussed the project during a casual meeting at a coffee shop in Winnipeg Manitoba Canada. Muuxi's two friends had earlier lived in Dadaab camps. He fondly remembers how they together agreed to register a non-governmental organization through which they began fundraising.

Ironically, each of the three men is from a different ethnic group in Somalia where tribal-based violence has persisted for many years. Yet through their friendship, a new school is set to benefit children of both Somalis of Kenyan decent and refugees from Somalia.

The preschool has already enrolled 140 kids both from Dagahaley camp and the host community. "Over 400 children were lined up to register but we had to take only 140," said Muuxi, who was in Dadaab for the preschool's opening.

Muuxi was so excited that he went around hugging his visitors, visitors that he met for the first time at the event. "This is one of my greatest moments in life," said Muuxi who was also busy taking pictures with his mobile phone.

In this project, about 35,000 USD have been utilized so far but Muuxi is confident that the school which they named Humankind Academy will attract more support from friends and partners. "Our target is to sponsor 120 children every year and I am happy to do whatever possible to seek for more support. What is important though is that the school is now open to benefit the community," added Muuxi.

The occasion was formally inaugurated by UNHCR Head of Operations in Dadaab, Mr. Ahmed Warsame who is also a Canadian from Winnipeg. "It is great to witness the extraordinary efforts made by former refugees to help their communities to alleviate human suffering" he noted. He undertook to offer UNHCR's support through provision of school equipment and learning materials.



UNHCR Head of Operations in Dadaab Ahmed Warsame launching Humankind Academy in January 2014. UNHCR/D. Mwanacha



The newly constructed Bahati primary school in Dagahaley-CARE /Mary Muia

CARE International Commissions a New School in Dagahaley Camp

UNHCR's partner CARE camps since 1996.

International in January commissioned a new primary school in Dagahaley camp. The new school called Bahati primary was constructed with funds from RTL foundation, a fund administered by the German TV station which has been supporting education projects in Dadaab

With 24 classrooms, the school has already accommodated learners from congested neighboring schools. It will begin with only six levels of learning; from class one to class six. Pupils in class six will progress to class seven which will be made available from 2013.

Education Standards Improve in Ifo 2 Camp

Refugees in Ifo 2, one of Dadaab's new camps are making significant development strides just two years after its establishment.

Shukri Kurijow Mohamed is one of the refugee leaders in this camp. She was the first camp chairlady until the last elections in August when she lost to another candidate. She says that even though she was not elected, she fully supports the new leadership whom she expects to diligently steer camp development and especially education for children; an area she is very keen on.

“When this camp was established, my focus as a leader was to push for educational infrastructure and more schools for our children. I'm glad that we have ten

primary schools and one secondary school already; schools that are doing very well, probably even better than schools in older camps,” says Shukri.

Walter Michael Kagwa, one of the education officers in the camp confirms that education standards for children in Ifo 2 are indeed high, though not as high as he and his colleagues would wish. He says that many parents are now freely enrolling their children to the ten primary schools, something that has come as a result of a lot of advocacy championed by stakeholders.

Enrollment now stand at 29, 730 (11, 956 of this being girls) but he says

with sufficient funds and more schools, this figure can increase significantly within a short time. School enrollment is low across all camps (only 36%); a tendency which can be attributed to lack of interest for education by many parents even though this is gradually changing.

Shukri has 12 children; five of her children go to school at Equator primary. She says she loves her country Somalia so much that she would like to have her children get the best education so that they can go back to rebuild it.



Shukri Kurijow (right) introducing some of her family members whom she stays with in Ifo 2 refugee camp where she has been a community leader since 2009. UNHCR/D. Mwanacha

Partners in Kambioos Camp Inspire Hope to Somali Bantus with Livelihood Initiatives

Kambioos camp is the newest camp in Dadaab refugee settlement. It was opened in August 2011 to reduce population pressure in Hagadera camp which was then increasing as a result of an influx from Somalia.

Most refugees in this camp are Somali Bantus who originate from the rural areas of Somalia where farming is the main economic activity.

There are two primary schools in Kambioos and one more to be commissioned soon. There however is no secondary school but plans have been underway to construct one. Primary school enrolment rate is 74% (62% boys). UNHCR and its partners provide various services in the camp. One among them is livelihood activities for refugees.

UNHCR's partner World Vision runs some livelihood activities for women. Another partner, Lutheran World Federation (LWF) runs a livelihood center in one of the main streets of Kambioos.

The center has invited about fifty trainees some of whom attend daily to learn tailoring, dress making, soap manufacturing as well as tie and die.

LWF administrators say these livelihood activities help these refugees to make a living. Items manufactured end up in markets within Kambioos and other camps.

Aden Abdikhadi who is only 16 years old is the youngest in the livelihood center. Most of his classmates are mothers and fathers. He says while in Somalia where he came from in 2010, he never had a chance to attend school. He thinks he is already too old for primary school even though he still attends Upendo primary school.

He however is motivated by the fact that he already has some tailoring skills. “If it happens that I go back to Somalia today, I will be confident with my tailoring skills; skills which I will use to earn a living,” he says. Aden hopes to finish his primary education but he insists that tailoring skills are of utmost importance to him.

The Kenya Red Cross Society Opens a Level 5 Referral Hospital in Ifo 2 for Refugees

A Level 5 Hospital run by UNHCR's partner Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) was commissioned in Ifo 2 camp in February. Commissioning the hospital was the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs H. E. Dr. Aisha Abdullah flanked by KRCS Secretary General Dr. Abbas Gullet, UNHCR representative in Kenya Raouf Mazou and Dadaab Member of Parliament Hon. Mohammed Duale. The four were accompanied by guests from other organizations.

The hospital which has six wards and two theatres with a capacity to admit up to about 120 patients will serve as a referral hospital for all camps. Over the past 23 years, patients from camps have had to be referred to Garissa or Nairobi for specialized medical care.



Isnino Mohamed (in red), the Ifo 2 camp chairlady, expressing her joy during the commissioning of Ifo2 refugee hospital by KRCS. KRCS/Munir Ahmed

A Disabled Man Proofs that Farming is Possible in Dadaab Camps

For many people, it is unimaginable that Dadaab, a region known to be dry and arid can attract any significant farming, more so in refugee camps. Yusuf, a man who has lived in Ifo camp since 1991 when he flee conflict in Somalia is such a remarkable farmer that amazes many refugees in Ifo.

Yusuf lost his two hands while in Somalia but now independently provides for his family through his small scale camp farming. Interested in how farming can be possible without hands, a radio reporter with a local radio station known as Gargaar recently met Yusuf in his farm.

Yusuf narrated to him his story, a story that later inspired many refugees through Radio Gargaar. When Yusuf first arrived in camps, he was helpless and only depended on

handouts from NGOs. When he first arrived in Dadaab, his elbows were freshly wounded and even though he was happy to have found refuge in the camps, he never stopped thinking of how difficult life would be without both hands. In Somalia, Yusuf had been a farmer.

After a few months of settling, Yusuf composed himself and decided to try farming again. He first acquired a small farm next to a water point in Ifo camp, a farm which he has developed and maintained for 23 years. In 1991, Dadaab camps were greener than they are today.

“I was lucky to meet Yusuf by his farm. He was happy to guide me through his routine activities in his farm.” Says the Gargaar reporter. “To my surprise, his farm of fruits and green vegetables was large, in

fact larger than I expected.” The reporter explains how he found Yusuf's farm a point of attraction to camp residents, some of whom were peeping through the side fence.

“After a moment of walking around the farm, I was eager to ask him how he did it by himself. In my mind, I was certain that Yusuf had workers and all he did was to just manage them. That was until Yusuf shockingly demonstrated to me his abilities,” narrates the reporter.

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Yusuf's farmyard with tomatoes under irrigation at Ifo refugee camp. SMDC/Ali Hussein (reporter with Gargaar radio).

A Disabled Man Proofs that Farming is Possible in

Dadaab Camps.....*continued from page 4*

“While sitting on his stool, Yusuf picked his ploughing hoe and bent slightly forward. He stretched his short arms which grabbed the hoe quite comfortably and started ploughing.” The reporter narrates how he was even more amazed a few minutes later when Yusuf fetched water from a small reservoir by the side of his farm and watered the entire farm by himself.

When Yusuf was asked about his motivation, he gently responded and said that even though he receives some support from NGO’s, he likes to work for his family and farming is what he does best. “I have been a farmer my entire life. Back in Somalia, there was no UNHCR to support my family.” Yusuf said this to his Gargaar guest even as he appreciated his camp residents who regularly purchase his farm products. “Life doesn’t have to stop with physical disability,” he added.

A Campaign by Handicap International Gives Hope to a Visually Impaired Child in Dagahaley Camp

Handicap International’s (HI) awareness activities in camps targetting vulnerable children have given hope to a visually impaired school girl. Nimco Fahra Keinan who lives in Dagahaley camp with her parents is now 13 years old and has lived with her condition since she was born. Up until 2013, Nimco had been made to live in isolation for fear of ridicule. Her parents had not taken her to any formal or informal school.

Nimco was identified at her home in March 2013 by a Handicap International team which through its routine awareness activities in camps identifies vulnerable children with special needs. She could not communicate effectively like her siblings and peers, not even with sign language. Nobody in her neighbourhood had mastered any sign language and as a result, Nimco often found herself secluded from daily social interactions with even her own siblings

Her mother could not take her to school because with her condition, she did not think it was possible for Nimco to cope with school environments in Dagahaley camp. It was also discovered that despite her predicament, she was made to stay

home all day long taking care of her young siblings, preparing food and fetching water.

Dismayed by this, the HI awareness team embarked on an urgent mission to counsel Nimco’s parents. They together with other parents from the neighborhood were thoroughly sensitized about the importance of not discriminating upon children with disabilities.

Nimco was already 12 and enrolling her for school was made the first priority. Through a disability center for education assessment and placement in Dagahaley, the awareness team discovered Nimco’s ability to perform well in school despite her difficulties in reading and writing. She was immediately enrolled for formal schooling.

For a year now, Nimco has been learning at Unity primary school. She attends school every day just like other school going children. She can now read, write, and do simple arithmetic. Her sign language skills have also improved. Teachers at Unity primary school say that Nimco comfortably participates in school activities like other children. Her family too now beliefs in her. “Nimco likes writing, she has been writing a lot since she joined Unity primary school,” says Nimco’s uncle.

At home, Nimco freely mingles with her peers who now do not see her differently. Her improvement seems to have inspired her community which now beliefs that there is hope even for children living with disability. This is attested by Siat Aden, one of the Dagahaley camp community leaders who is calling for more camp based campaigns and activities that will empower his community.

Below: Nimco (with a baby) taking care of her siblings at their house in Dagahaley camp in 2013. Handicap International/Mwangi Mungai (education officer).

