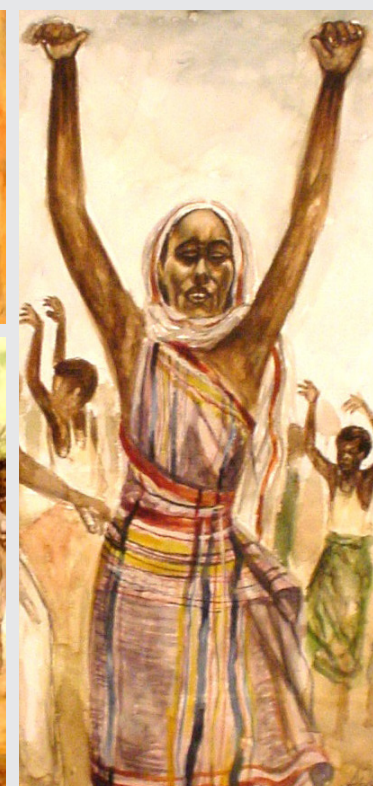
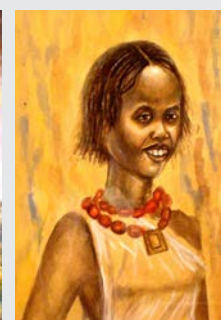
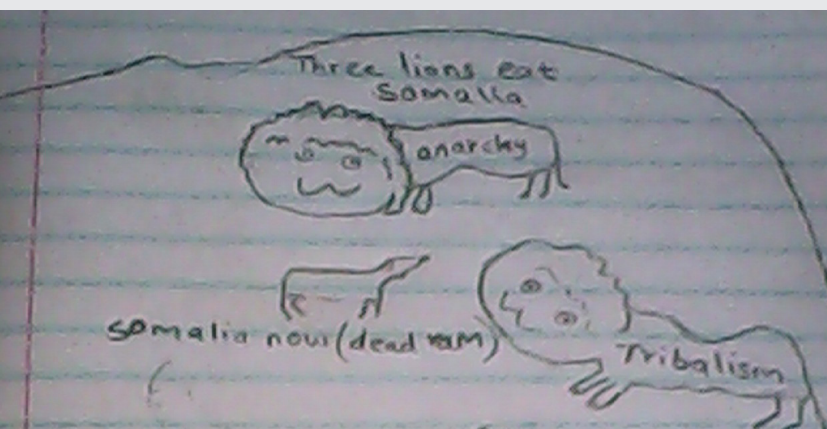


‘My people are scattered all over the world’



WORLD REFUGEE DAY 2014 | UNHCR SOMALIA

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For more information about UNHCR in Somalia:

UNHCR Somalia Population Movement Trends with maps, facts and figures: <http://data.unhcr.org/horn-of-africa/country.php?id=197>



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Foreword

'My people are scattered all over the world, some are stranded in the deserts emaciated, confused and exhausted' – these are powerful words from a Somali refugee, and words describing what all too many Somali people have lived through and what all too many know by heart or from real experience.

This quotation comes from one of the many contributions sent to us by Somali writers and artists for the Essay, Poetry & Art Competition launched by UNHCR Somalia on the occasion of World Refugee Day 2014.

Through the World Refugee Day initiative this year, we as UNHCR Somalia, wish to recognize the resilience and plight of men, women and children who have been displaced from their homes in Somalia over the past decades.

Since civil war broke out in 1991, millions have sought refuge in countries around the world, while others remain in the region. Today, around one million Somalis live as refugees in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in addition to the estimated 1.1 million people displaced within Somalia. While some have given up hope of return, many others still dream of one day going home.

Inspired by the theme 'My Somalia', artworks were submitted to UNHCR from the whole region. We received paintings from Somali refugees in Ethiopia, poems and essays from Kenya, photos from refugee camps in Yemen and contributions from writers in Somalia.

These unique and amazing artworks are all evidence of the extraordinary courage, creativity and resilience it takes to survive life in displacement.

The Somali people, today 'scattered all over the world', live to tell powerful stories, not only of loss and suffering, but also of hope and great resourcefulness. We are grateful for all of the contributions and remain committed to stand by the Somali people together with our partners and donors.

Finally, a heartfelt thanks to the Somali men, women and children in and around their beautiful country for sharing with us 'their Somalia'.



Alessandra Morelli
Representative, UNHCR Somalia



My Somalia.....My story

My family left Sanaag region one faithful morning, I vividly remember saying goodbye to my village, we boarded to a lorry headed to Bossaso, Eastern Somalia, a transit centre to our destiny, Ethiopia. We stayed [in] Bossaso for some days, I can't remember very well but, I remember that me, my mother and five of my siblings stayed at one of our relatives' home.

The journey come to start and my days in my Somalia were fading away, we finally reached our new home in Ethiopia. We settled [in] Jijiga. A new home, new place, and new faces with a different accent. In the beginning in madrasah, kids laughed at us when we spoke, because we had [a] different accent, some of them mimicked how we spoke, but other than that we did not get trouble settling in Jijaga, for people were Somali and we had extended family members there.

After a while, maybe after a year or two, me and my sister who is one year older than me, decided to go to school. My mom could not think of us going to school, because she could not afford buying books and pens for us. She used to go to [the] market. She borrowed money from a relative to start [a] small business, so she could raise her children. She started to sell liters of oil and gas. Nevertheless, we [were] both eager to learn, and joined a few students that used to go to school because people by then used to go to madrasah as it is a religious fundamental for children to learn [the] Quran.

The other morning, which I later learned was end of school year, we went to a school nearby. I had a book with only one empty page, I can't recall much details. I think my sister did have a book too. She was [more] clever than me, [a] very much bright student.

We met the headmaster then, and [he] welcomed us as he ushered us to his office after we told what we came for. Thanks to him, had he not did that, I wouldn't be writing this - my Somalia essay.

The next school season was the beginning of my school journey - 14 years ago. In that period, I was a Somali, I did not think of citizenship, because every kid was Somali, school teachers and we never asked to produce [a] birth certificate. I bet none had it. When I became teenager, I used my school identity card, later when I graduated from primary we were issued IDs by the government through our school.

Finally, I finished my high school in 2009. Plans to go university were all I thought of. I did not know a U-turn that would alter everything and shatter my dream to become an engineer.

My cousin had [since] long heart problems, sometimes she used to vomit blood. Other times, she had blood in her nose. Mom took her to Hospital, and the worst came when we were told that she needs heart surgery that could not be done in Ethiopia, and if a surgery could have been done, we could not afford it.

That is how the name of me being called 'refugee' came about. Mom was convinced by a friend [that] if she went to the Dadaab refugee camp in neighboring Kenya, UNHCR would help and could come to aid my cousin. She took her turn to convince her kids. Among her entices was: UN could offer scholarships to us, free health care and shelter was free. Scholarships never came. We found our real name [to be] Somali Refugees, even though in Ethiopia we were never told that we were refugees, and in fact we have no idea what refugees looked like. In Kenya it was opposite. As a refugee I lost my Illusion that I am Ethiopian, too.

Dadaab refugee camp was one place that brought realities to me. I remember the sleepless nights and how we felt helpless. Even my parents were not prepared for the reality in Dadaab.

It's five years since I left Ethiopia, and though I lost my identity that I got in Ethiopia, I kept this destiny in my dream, and continued my studies through donations from friends, sacrifices I made and family support, and now I am graduating from [university in Kenya]. Unfortunately I can't make the graduation ceremony, because I returned to Mogadishu.

For my family, they still live in [a refugee camp in] Kenya. My cousin who has a heart problem is in class four and my sister, with whom I started in school, will finish high school this year.

I am happy that I mark this anniversary with my Somalia discovery, though still [with] my family as refugees.

Essay 1st prize: Said Mohamud Isse in Somalia

My People

My people are scattered all over the world, some are stranded in the deserts emaciated, confused and exhausted due to the long trekking in the scorching sun with rumbling stomach, hunger pangs and cruel thirst. Some unfortunate ones ended up drowned in the seas and could not make it. Some others found themselves behind bars in unknown cells whereby they are facing torture, humiliation, exploitation and other human rights violations, while others have been infringed off their rights by Al Shabaab whereby extrajudicial killings are rampant, their properties have been dispossessed.

Women are raped and some are compelled to marry off to a man who is as old as their father or are forced to marry to a man against their choice. Early marriages are also prevalent among my people and compounded with female genital mutilation, the problem gets worse from delivery to menstruation periods. They live in constant fear, intimidations and threats. This is an alarming and deplorable situation.

Moreover, most of my people live below the poverty line, they don't secure three consecutive meals a day-they have to skip one meal. Food is scarce, they don't have provision of clean water, and there is no proper sanitation and hygiene. When the civil war broke out early 1991, all hell broke loose. My people, the Somalis, fled to the neighbouring countries including me. The situation was dire at the time, bullets were roaring all over and helter-skelter everyone ran for their own safety. Amidst of all these chaotic situations were children, the elderly, women, some pregnant, some lactating and others were in labour pain. Most of my people were traumatized by the gruesome civil war.

We reached at the border between Kenya and Somalia on foot feeling fatigue and famished. Here we were received by UNHCR staff whereby we were registered and taken by trucks. The journey was long and tedious. As we drove off I was drowsing due to the many sleepless nights in the past weeks. I was only 8 years old by that time. In the camps the situation was appalling, measles, whooping cough and other ailments struck, I was among the victims of whooping cough. Many died due to this but luckily I survived with fingertips.

My people are everywhere, from refugees to IDPS or among Diaspora, all of them affected by the war in one way or the other.

At the camps in Kenya, as well as other camps in other countries, the refugees were well provided for. They were given food, constant clean water supply, makeshift [shelter],

medical care and above all basic education. But even so, the demands are high, and there are many mouths to feed. The situation is unbearable and the refugees are vulnerable people wherever they may be and their situation has been worsened by domestic terrorism, drought and political instability in the region. Hence, the repercussions are far-reaching and difficult to reverse as soon as possible.

Thanks to the international [aid] organizations who worked day and night tirelessly in order to save hundreds of lives that were at stake. Their support was sustainable and relentless despite all the challenges ranging from insecurity, abductions, political upheavals and other obstacles that [has] become a stumbling block to the delivery of aid to the intended people and to its destinations.

However, the refugees have the potential and the stamina to fend for themselves if properly capacitated and through the noble efforts of the international organizations many refugees are leading good lives both abroad and in their native country. A notable example is that the organisations have educated many young boys and girls and the majority are now working to better the lives of their families. This is a commendable result of the resources invested into these young men and women by the international organisations.

Despite all these generous efforts by the organisations, donors and other well-wishers, the threat still remains tangible and catastrophic. Somalia, a country devastated by bloody civil war, warlordism, corruption, political differences, piracy, anarchy and worst of all terrorism. My people lead a very unpredictable life. Due to the inter clan clashes and the fight against the terrorists, many of my people are internally displaced and impoverished by the war, they are stranded amid the danger, many languish in hunger, children are malnourished, hence infant mortality remains high.

A country – Somalia - where a good number of young generations don't go to school and have no jobs, they turn to drug abuse and eventually turn to crimes and hence become vulnerable for radicalism. This has exacerbated the already fragile situation and my people always bear the brunt!!!

I am always dejected, I do weep emotionally, and my mood is always sombre. This is because I always hear of my people being killed, being raped, their properties vandalised. I always hear of sad news, explosions, kidnappings, death and all that stuff! But I am optimistic that one day I will see my people living in tranquillity and prosperity and all the criminals are brought to book, and then I will be able to laugh!!!!

Essay 2nd prize: Hussein Hassan Dahir in Somalia

My Somalia

My Somalia; a piece of land where the hard-won gains and the sacrifices of its famous 'Somalia Youth League' freedom fighters did not last, and only in 3 decades after its independence, it went down to its knees. Mainly characterized by stained brother's blood, My Somalia is today regarded nothing short of a nation unfit to call 'My home'. The dire consequences of the civil strife since 1991 has left many with the agony of untold miseries including crimes against humanity, thus tinting painful pictures in the hearts and minds of its own people and the rest of the world. Ironically, till today the adamant paradox to possible unity supersedes as the evil to shed blood reigns for over two decades. And yet our simultaneous exclusivity of synonymous identity, religion, and dialect exists. I thought, our adequate similarities contribute to our strength to solve issues but guess what? We used them against ourselves!

Made of a former Italian colony and British protectorate, my Somalia was formed in 1960 when the two territories merged. Since then, its socio-political development hasn't been speedy but far well from where it lies today. Relations with neighbors have been soured by its territorial claims on Somali-inhabited areas of Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. In 1970, the late president Mr. Barre proclaimed a socialist state, paving the way for close relations with the USSR. In 1977, with the help of Soviet arms, Somalia attempted to seize the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, but then was defeated after the Soviet and Cuban governments backed the Ethiopians. By then, the country was plunged in to endless chaos and tumult in 1991 after Mr. Siyad Barre was ousted by opposing clan militia who couldn't agree to build another government.

The downfall of the late Siad Barre's government in 1990 inherited many post-civil war complexities one after the other; terrorism, autocratic-feeble administrations with in-depth corruption, piracy and tribalism takes toll, looking re-energized from time to time as ardent patriotism fades away. Again often, the exchange of excuses and pointing fingers has been the habit rather than the urge to accomplish commitments [to] help stop the bloodshed; sponsor a child to education, put together peace, feed the weak and assist building the lost hope of a widowed mother and a potential returnee who lives outside Somalia in a refugee camp. It's time we change this bleeding nation and help incarnate our lost hegemony by ringing the bell of the historic era of 1977.

As we mark the 2014 World Refugee Day, the global refugee populations are on the rise once again with crises in Central African Republic, South Sudan, Syria, and as thousands of fellow Somali citizens continue seeking refuge and asylum, basically looking for better opportunities and safe places to dwell. Many find it the opposite, dying as far as in the Sahara desert, others rot in the cells of a foreign country. And a good number are deported back despite fear of persecution while thousands don't feel safe in their hosting nations. The lack of centralized government and the continuous decades of in-fighting between different warring parties translated into the country's inability to deal with natural disasters such as drought. In 1992, and between 2010 and 2012, famine claimed the lives of around half a million people largely constituting children and women. All this happens because we are fighting and not farming despite the potential of both our Jubba and Shebelle River for a good agricultural production to quell poverty.

Every choice comes with consequences; My Somalia is dangerously deemed a global security concern by exceedingly exhibiting dreadful situations to the predicaments of its own people and others, and the audacity to stand up with humility to put our house in order looks unyielding - where does our journey to a peaceful nation lie? Embracing peace and brotherhood, initiating dialogue, creating jobs, ceasing greediness in leadership, strengthening democracy, upholding human rights, and accepting our differences as our strength to building our nation back.

The branding of my beautiful nation Somalia as the world's most failed state aches me a lot albeit the experience of losing everything including my mother's husband, my cool dad, at a tender age is absolutely itself unfathomable. I fled from Somalia in 1991 with nothing but only the hope of humble beginning to unknown destination which lastly became a refugee camp in Kenya. Since then, I watch Somalia through the BBC media, just to find disappointing depicting dreadful scenarios of dying human souls and eventual pictures of suicide bombers, mass starvation and warring clan warfare - and often a string of continued endless political pyramid tangled with challenges thus killing the hopes of many.

Nonetheless, decades of hardening desperations against aspirations, my hope for the future goes with the faith that one day my Somalia will be the most peaceful nation in the world.

Essay 3rd prize: Abdullahi Abdi Hassan in Kenya



Visual art 1st prize: Abdirahim Abdulkadir Osman in Ethiopia



Essay

1ST PRIZE: Said Mohamud Isse – recently returned to Somalia after nearly two decades as a refugee in Ethiopia and Kenya – for the essay **'My Somalia – My Story'**

Said Mohamud Isse was born in 1991 in Northern Somalia. He has been a refugee since early childhood when his family fled to Ethiopia in 1995. In 2009, Said Mohamud Isse moved to Kenya to study. The Government of Kenya urging urban refugees to go back to the camps or to their country of origin, made Said Mohamud Isse return to Somalia, a country he never remembers having lived in.

2ND PRIZE: Hussein Hassan Dahir – returned to Somalia in 2012 after 19 years as a refugee in Kenya – for the essay **'My people'**

Hussein Hassan Dahir was born in 1989 in South Central Somalia. He became a refugee as a child when his father and siblings, a pastoralist family, decided to leave Somalia after the mother of Hussein Hassan Dahir was killed. They crossed the border into Kenya to seek refuge from war and unrest, like many others, hoping to return home soon, and not knowing that the conflict would last for more than two decades. Hussein Hassan Dahir lived in Kenya in a refugee camp in Kenya for 19 years. In 2012, after completing his studies, he decided to return on his own to Somalia, where he now works with a humanitarian aid agency.

3RD PRIZE: Abdullahi Abdi Hassan – a refugee in Kenya – for the essay **'My Somalia'** on the struggles and hopes for his country

Abdullahi Abdi Hassan was born in 1984 in South Central Somalia. When Abdullahi Abdi Hassan's father was killed during the war, his mother and her five children left their home in Somalia, to seek refuge in Kenya. Abdullahi Abdi Hassan remembers carrying a basket of wild fruits on his head - their food for the journey. Only his mother, a sister, a brother and Abdullahi Abdi Hassan made it to Kenya. Two siblings died on the way. Now, married and a father of a daughter and a son born in Kenya, he is still refugee, but dreams of going back to Somalia one day.

Poetry

1ST PRIZE: Barre Sheikh Abdullahi – displaced within Somalia for three years – for the song ‘Butterfly’, a dialogue between a poet and a butterfly during the war

Barre Sheikh Abdullahi known as ‘Bangaladhesh’ was born in 1969 in South Central Somalia. Most of his life he has worked as a teacher, but Barre Sheikh Abdullahi never left Somalia. The civil war forced him and his family into displacement but he returned home after three years. The poem submitted for the UNHCR World Refugee Day competition was composed in 2011, during his time in displacement, and is today the text of a song famous in Somalia.

2ND PRIZE: Bashir Haji Mohamud, a refugee in Kenya – for a poem and drawing depicting the war and conflicting interest in Somalia

Bashir Haji Mohamud, born in 1992 in Somalia, is a refugee in Kenya. Bashir Hajji Mohamud has created a descriptive poem in Somali and submitted an English translation along with a pencil drawing describing the history and dynamics of the conflicts and unrest in Somalia.

3RD PRIZE: Abdullahi Yussuf Aden – a Somali refugee in Kenya – for the poem ‘My beauty’ about Somalia

Abdullahi Yussuf Aden, born in 1988 in South Central Somalia, became a refugee as a young teenager when civil war broke out and he and his family crossed the border into Kenya. He was among the first refugees in Kenya and today lives and studies in one of the camps.

Visual art

1ST PRIZE: Abdirahim Abdulkadir Osman, a refugee in Ethiopia – depicting migration in the painting ‘The home of peace and rescue’

Abdirahim Abdulkadir Osman was born in 1998 in South Central Somalia. His father, an art teacher, was killed in 2009, when Abdirahim Abdulkadir Osman was 11 years old. The family, fearing for their lives, decided to flee and crossed the border into Ethiopia where they live as refugees. Abdirahim Abdulkadir Osman attends English and art classes.

2ND PRIZE: Abdi Mohamed Abdi, a refugee in Kenya – for a series of paintings of Somali culture

Abdi Mohamed Abdi known as ‘Abdi Gaab’, was born in 1968 in South Central Somalia. When civil war broke out in Somalia in 1991 he fled his country by sea and arrived to the coast of Kenya on a ship with 600 other Somalis seeking refuge. He later married in Kenya and has two sons both born in Kenya. Abdi Mohamed Abdi dreams of one day going home to a stable and peaceful Somalia.

3RD PRIZE: Mohamed Mohamed Muse, a refugee in Yemen – for a photo series from a refugee camp

Mohamed Mohamed Muse known as ‘Coronto’ was born in 1991 in South Central Somalia. For 19 years he lived in a war zone, until in 2010, when the war and deteriorating security situation forced him to move to Yemen where he now lives in a refugee camp.

Review panel members: Louise Tunbridge from Radio Ergo, Mohammed Adow from Al Jazeera along with Alessandra Morelli and the UNHCR Somalia team



Visual art 2nd prize: Abdi Mohamed Abdi in Kenya



Visual art 3rd prize: Mohamed Mohamed Muse in Yemen

Butterfly

Poet: You butterfly
I haven't seen you nowadays
As you left out from the town
You entered in the country-side
Did you sleep with calmness

You butterfly
Do you need
Much fragrance
Wellbeing and beauty

Butterfly: When the capital city
Changed into forest and holes
Cave and dug hollows
Then after I immigrated
Forwarded elsewhere
Preferring there [as it] is safe

Flying from that flower
To blossom over there
I need to play between them

Poet: I foretell and hope
That it becomes good fate
That the displaced people
Who is my community?
Will come together
Transmitting greetings
With pleasure and peace

You butterfly
Do you need
Much fragrance
Wellbeing and beauty

Butterfly Prosperous country
Belongs in many lakes
Those have full of rain drops
Forsake of that happiness
The environment gained
Enough food and water

Flying from that flower
To blossom over there
I need to play between them

Poetry 1st prize: Barre Sheikh Abdullahi in Somalia

Three killer lions

Below is the poem and the picture is attached in this Email.

Three lions smothered and killed milk-bearing ewe.

They finished her while she gave birth only twice.

These lions are so ferocious and very evil.

Every lion grabbed a leg of the dead ewe and dragged.

They swallowed the ewe bone by bone and finished her.

The first lion represents the anarchy and lawlessness as a metaphor.

The second lion represented tribalism that destroyed our nation.

The third lion represents civil war that brought an agony.

I feel nausea for Somalis' condition as they flee and scatter globally.

Let me remind you how to overcome the problem of anarchy.

Come back for the success is within our unity.

Come back for our success is within eradicating discrimination.

Come back for the success is within the air-breeze in our country.

Come back or the hungry lions will swallow us.

Come back and let us forget all traces of tribalism.

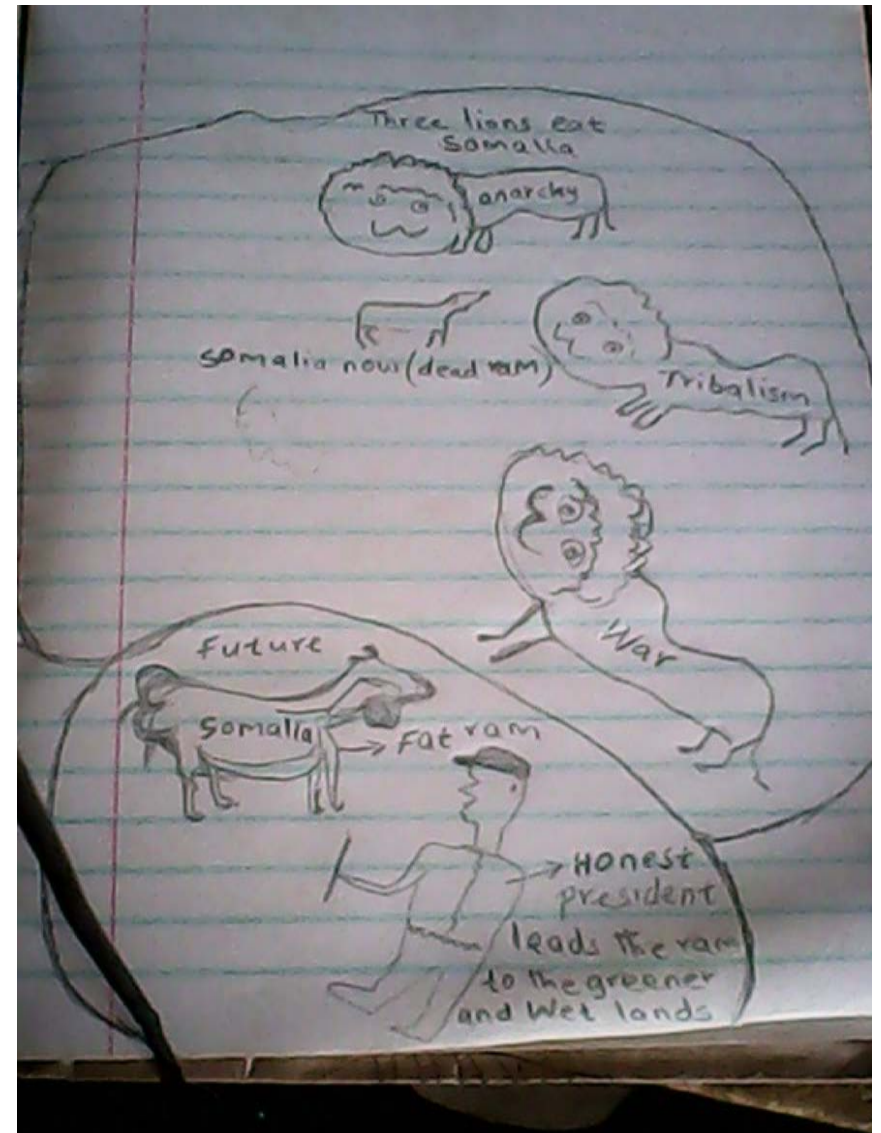
Let us be up to date and walk with the developed world.

The success is within the following the rules of nationhood.

In my heart; I hope Somalia will be successful one day.

I hope Somalia will be also peaceful one day.

I hope Somalis will kick out and abstain from tribalism.



Poetry 2nd prize: Bashir Haji Mohamud in Kenya

My Beauty

Long and long
Missing the beauty
The heart aches
But strong hope
My beauty, Somalia.

Outside the land
The sun is hot
In vain and pain
Sharing is bitter
My beauty, Somalia.

The breeze of peace
Wiped out the tears
Of shattered members
Leading to transformation
My beauty, Somalia.

Answer the cries
Stage the reality
Press the light
And focus change
My beauty, Somalia.

Celebrate the courage
Build the dream
Bond the members
And restore the values
My beauty, Somalia.

Poetry 3rd prize: Abdullahi Yussuf Aden in Kenya

DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO REFUGEE DISPLACEMENT

BARAKACA QAXOOTIGA WAXAA XAL WAARA U AH

VOLUNTARY RETURN
TO THE COUNTRY
OF ORIGIN

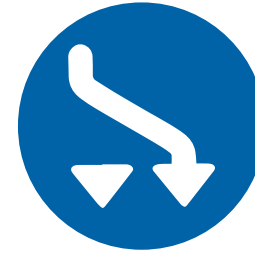
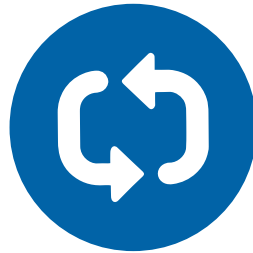
DIB U LAABASHO ISKAA
AH OO AH WADANKII
AAD KATIMID

LOCAL INTEGRATION
IN THE COUNTRY
OF ASYLUM

KAMID NOQOSHADA
WADANKA MAGANGALYADA
KU SIYAY

RESETTLEMENT
TO A THIRD
COUNTRY

DIB UDEJINTA
WADAN
SADEXAAD



VOLUNTARY RETURN
TO THE AREA
OF ORIGIN

DIB U LAABASHO ISKAA
AH OO DEEGAANKII AAD
KASOO BARAKACDAY AH

LOCAL INTEGRATION
IN THE AREA OF
DISPLACEMENT

KAMID NOQOSHADA
GOOBTA AAD KUSOO
BARAKACDAY

RESETTLEMENT
IN ANOTHER PART
OF THE COUNTRY

DIB UDEJINTA QAYB
KALOO KAMID AH
WADANKA

DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

BARAKACA DALKA GUDIHIISA XALKA WAARA

