

THE REFUGEE

November 2010, Issue No. 002

from the heart of Dadaab Refugee Camp

This newsletter has been published by refugee youth under FilmAid's Participatory Video Project in Dadaab Refugee Camp. Its a result of a short Journalism training that was facilitated by Ibrahim Hirsi, a former refugee who is currently a Journalism student in Minnesota where he resettled.

UNHCR HIGH COMMISSIONER VISITS DADAAB REFUGEE CAMP



Antonio Guterres addresses staff members in the UNHCR compound.

By Moulid Iftin Hujale

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee visited Dadaab refugee camps along with Kenyan government officials and UN representatives last September, to explore the needs of refugees and host communities, as well as evaluate the ongoing progress in IFO camp, Dadaab.

After a tour throughout the camps, Antonio Guterres met community leaders including religious, youth and representatives from minority groups. The leaders highlighted various issues that refugees faced.

An Ifo Camp representative condemned UN staff improper use of funding. "Funds that are meant to directly benefit refugees, go to constructions of offices and employment of new staffs," Isnino said. "We better have few implementing agencies that would effectively serve the community and receive adequate funds."

Other leaders presented issues including restriction of movements between the camps and other parts of the country. Youth representatives said restrictions of movement is a threat to their dreams. They suggested having exposure trips and exchange programs would help them share ideas and experiences with other youths in the world.

Hagadera Camp Chairman Kasim Sheikh, said quality education is a challenge in the camps due to congestion of classrooms and inadequate supply of facilities.

Each leader voiced issues specific to their immediate community. Somalis took on their needs for peace. A Sudanese leader emphasized insecurity problems reflecting the conflict between the Somali and Sudanese communities, when his community was allegedly accused of murdering a small boy in Hagadera camp last July.

Dini Abdi Hussein, Ifo Youth Chairman mentioned the need for work permits, "having equipped with the necessary skills to compete

SOMALI IMMAGRANT ELECTED TO A PUBLIC OFFICE IN THE U.S

By Ibrahim Hirsi

He was in a crowded refugee camp in Kenya 17 years ago, but November 2, he became the first Somali immigrant to be elected to a public office in Minnesota and perhaps in the United States.

The 42-year-old founder and CEO of the African Development Center of Minnesota, Hussein Samatar celebrated his historic election to the Minneapolis school board in Safari

Restaurant. Samatar told crowds of his supporters including Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak and U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison that Minnesota Somalis are part of the African-Americans, but the African-American communities do not consider him one of their own,

In response to their rejection, Samatar told the crowds "I wouldn't be here if it weren't for the people who came before us. We are part of the new

African-American community in the state of Minnesota."

Though Samatar ran for the position unopposed, his winning of the District 3 school board seat is a milestone for the nearly 70,000 Minnesota Somalis.

Samatar faces the challenge of closing an academic achievement gap between students of color and white students. His supporters say

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D a d a a b marks the G l o b a l Handwashing day in style

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United after a decade, separated in a week, the tale of Amin Amey.

Time for Malezi Bora a health insight on the importance of breastfeeding... PG 6

THE TEAM....

Moulid Hujale



Twenty-two-year-old Vice-Secretary for Ifo Refugee Youth Consortium, Moulid Hujale, has been involved in journalism for some time. Hujale was a member of a press club during his high school years. He is currently the editor-in-chief of Dawn — an Ifo newsletter published twice a year. This experience makes Hujale one of the few people whose journalism work have been published.

Hujale was appointed the Managing Editor of *The Refugee*.

Akune Atale

Akune Atale, 22, was born and raised in Ethiopia. He completed his middle and elementary school in Ethiopia. Due to instability in his homeland, Atale sought refuge in Dadaab where he completed his high school.

Atale then joined FilmAid in 2009 in search for better skills on camera operations. He has developed skills on photography and video production. There is nothing that Atale is more comfortable with than being the man behind the lens, thanks to FlimAid International. Atale is quick to say that he wants to become a journalist, though he has always aspired to be a lawyer before he joined Participatory Video Project last year.



Atale was appointed the new News Production Coordinator for *The Refugee*.

Liban Rashid



Liban Rashid, 23, was born and raised in Somalia. Because of the civil war, he evacuated from Somali in 1991, and has been an Ifo Camp resident since then. Rashid who joined FlimAid in 2009 is the current Participatory Video Project facilitator. Rashid, the most skillful camera man among his peers, has shot and produced

many documentaries about life in the camps, including *Black Smith and Khat*.

Rashid was appointed the new photographer of *The Refugee*.

Abdi Abdullahi Mohamed

The former English teacher of Midnimo Primary School in Ifo, Abdi Abdullahi, 27, fled from Somali where he was born and raised, and resettled in Ifo Camp in 1991 in search for a better life. Mohamed who joined the Participatory Video Project last year is considered to be one of the best story writers among the participants. He has documented many stories about life in the camps, including *The Betrayed Sector*, *Mysterious Love*, *Swelling Wallets* and many more.



Abdi was appointed the Editor-in-Chief for *The Refugee*.

Hussein Hassan

He is only a from-two student in Community Secondary School in Hagardera, but Hussein Hassan, 22, has a dream of bringing peace and tranquility to his war torn Somalia through journalism: a dream that is not common for many Somali men. He fled from Somalia in 1992 and resettled in Ifo Camp. Hassan who joined Participatory Video Project last October, said he cannot thank FlimAid enough for the role they played in his life. Hassan said that he has learnt how to use cameras really well during the six months he has been with FlimAid.



Hassan is a staff reporter for *The Refugee*.

The Editor Welcomes contributions from interested persons all over the global who have something to share.

**write to:
therefugee.dadaab2010@gmail.com**

TO THE EDITOR....

I found your newsletter on Facebook, since I am linked to the UN Refugee Resettlement site. Your newsletter is very informative and I forwarded the web site address to my coworkers. I have been interested in refugees most of my life and I currently work at a refugee resettlement agency in Idaho, USA. I have worked with many refugees from Somalia, Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, and other locations in Africa and other parts of the world. I strongly encourage you in your work on this newsletter. The only thing I would suggest is to get more women involved in the process. This would include both the journalism training and in interviewing for stories. This will help prepare young women for the work force and life in other countries. Even if they do marry, in many countries both the husband and wife must work to support the family. This is especially true now due to the current economic situation in the United States.

Good luck in your endeavors and I am looking forward to your next newsletter!

Sincerely,

Heidi Carlton

EDITORIAL

I am very much pleased to welcome you to the second edition of the THE REFUGEE newsletter. It has been quite busy edition working on very many articles, comments, feedbacks and sharing experiences of the previous issue.

The refugee newsletter has been receiving an overwhelming number of comments and reactions expressing interests and courage from the entire Dadaab complex since the first edition that was published in September this year. Not only in Dadaab but from as far as USA, CANADA and NAIROBI. They all shared their experiences through the newsletter website and posted encouraging feedback to our mail box.



I am honored to let you know that, in this edition you will find articles and comments that crossed international borders; Indicating that the voice of Dadaab youth is heard overseas. The story of Siraji from Canada, a refugee student sponsored by WUSC (world university service of Canada) gives a clear picture of his life and experience in Canada. His encounter is very ironical and totally different from what he believed. His perception reflects what most of us thought about life outside there, a place like Canada.

It has also attracted a huge number of young potential reporters that promised to contribute to the newsletter worldwide. We now have 7 more reporters tapped from the youths within the refugee camps in Dadaab and abroad making the refugee team a total of 15 (five female). This news letter intends to reduce the refugee community's dependency syndrome. The youths here strife to stand on their feet and work together

I would like to take this opportunity to specifically thank FILMAID international for supporting us and also helping the idle youths explore their potential.

I would like to take this opportunity to specifically thank FILMAID International for supporting us and also helping the idle youths explore their potential. We are very grateful for the consistent courage and support you offered throughout the first two publications.

My appeal to any well wisher is to support the newsletter, as it is a way of advocating and documenting the real needs from the real people. Never hesitate to contact us, should you have something to share with us. Your comments and feedback is always welcome.

On behalf of the entire team, I would like to appreciate all those who contributed to the refugee newsletter and helped the team in one way or the other. We will never fail to live upto the confidence you have in us. And we shall stop at nothing until our dreams turn into reality.

***Moulid Iftin Hujale, Managing editor,
THE REFUGEE NEWSLETTER
Ifo refugee camp Dadaab, Kenya.***

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THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN

How Dadaab Refugee Camp Marked the Holy Month

BY LIBAN MOHAMED,

DADAAB REFUGEE camp is home to more than 300,000 refugees with a majority of them being Somali descent who are predominantly sunni-muslims observed the holy month of RAMADAN.

RAMADAN IS one of the five pillars of Islam and comes once in a year. It is obligatory to every healthy, adult Muslim where as the weak, the sick, children, travelers and menstruating women are among those exempted. Those required to observe the holy month abstain from eating, drinking, having sexual intercourse (married couples) from dawn to dusk.

FASTING IS not just about refraining from eating and drinking until sun set. This is what most people misunderstand hence finding it difficult to practice. To get a glimpse reminder of what it entails, sheikh Harun Ahmed explains: "Fasting calls for a lot of sacrifice a part from stopping to eat or drink. It is about exerting control over the mind. This involves restraining anger, exercising personal discipline and preparing oneself to serve as a good Muslim. One has to be cautious in every single step while fasting. In fact the whole body fasts not the mouth a lone" sheikh Harun concludes.

RAMADAN IS a month of peace and love in which individuals are encouraged to burry differences, to forget and forgive and to renew both human and spiritual relationship Therefore, it contributes to overall principle of making the individual more human, more considerate and generally a more responsible member of the society.

IN THIS way, the month of Ramadan ultimately benefits society not just the individual. It does it in part, by setting a standard for behavior not only in this month but during the rest of the year and, indeed, every year of a Muslim life.

THE BLESSINGS of Ramadan were evident in Dadaab camp. Businesses flourish all over. More goods come and bulky food stuffs are



exchanged daily. It is very common that relatives in Diaspora send a lot of money to families and friends in the camp.

THE DEMAND for goods is high and you will see many people go on a shopping spree. Decorative

"Ramadhan is a month of peace and love in whic individuals are encouraged to bury their differences"

writings with words like RAMDAN KARIM grace the entire market.

"WE ARE excited, this month (ramadan) has no comparison" says Abdi aziz Abdilatif, a father of four children

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UNHCR chief visits Dadaab Refugee Camps

for job opportunities in Kenya would prepare the refugee for a better future."

Mr. Guterres responded by stating that trips outside the camps and work permit were not easy.

Immigration Assistant Minister Francis Baya stated that he could not promise work permits but will have to table it in front of his seniors.

he went on further to state that "The Department of refugee affairs will make the process shorter for medical cases and those in need movement passes," Baya said. Issues regarding education. The Ministry of Education will assess the quality of education which the refugees receive.

A representative of Ogadenia refugee community said his community feels excluded because they had to under

go refugee status determination after being registered.

"We are called asylum seekers before our status is cleared, which takes too long" he said. UNHCR was requested to accept the Ogadenia community as refugees like any other community.

"Department of refugee affairs will make the process shorter for medical cases and those in need movement passes,"

He then urged Somali community leaders to solve their problems before it goes beyond their capacity. "The community have to respect the host country and adhere to their policy," he said. People must also learn to work together regardless of their ethnic background. Only then harmony can be achieved, he added.

Mr. Guterres said that constructions in Ifo 2 are underway; and relocations will commence once important struc-

tures such as social amenities are completed.

The visit marked his third visit to Dadaab with the first having been in 2008.



Hagadera Camp Chairman, Kasim Sheikh

A MASS EXODUS OF CELEBRATIONS

ABDIRASHID ABDULLAHI

THE PEOPLE living in Dadaab are among the billions of Muslims around the world celebrating Eidul-Fitri 'the festival of breaking the fast' in the wake of their poor living conditions.

INSPITE OF the fact that muslims have two major religion observances each year –Ramadhan and Hajj,Eidul-fitr is a corresponding holiday connected with Ramadhan which is observed according to the lunar-based callender which is eleven days shorter than solar callender .

MUSLIMS IN Dadaab observed this joyous three day celebration that comes at the end Ramadhan and at beginning of shawal, the ninth and the tenth months respectively.

IN THE beginning of shawal all Muslims in Dadaab give to charity of donations which is obligatory to those who can afford and is particularly entitled to the needy ones "this is the high time to give charity donation to the poor so that they celebrate with family and friends the completion of the month of blessing and joy" sheik Kamal Abdi said.

BEFORE THE day of Eid, during the last few days of ramadhan each muslim family who was capable gave a determined amount of the stable food in the camps equivalent to two and half kilograms by each adult family member as a donation to the poor.

"THIS IS the day when every muslim is happy rich or poor," added sheik Kamal Abdi.

THIS DONATION includes rice, barely, dates amongst others, and date etc to ensure that the needy can have a holiday meal and participate in the celebration. This donation has its name as 'sadaqah al- fitr' meaning 'charity of fast breaking'

INTERESTINGLY, ON the day of Eid Muslims in dadaab put on their best outfits and gather early in the morning in outdoor locations to perform the Eid prayer. This consists of a sermon followed by a short congregational prayer.

AFTER THE Eid prayer the refugees scattered to visit various families and friends to offer gifts and make phone calls to distance relatives to give well wishes of the holyday. These activities traditionally continue for three days. "Muslims give thanks to Allah for his bounty and mercy and celebrate the holidays wishing each other well", said sheik Abdirahman Ali. "In this respect any language is appropriate in asking blessings to Allah",adds Sheik Abdirahman Ali.

DADAAB REFUGEES uttered some common and traditional Arabic greeting intended for the day, such as: " kulu'am wa entum bil-kheir" meaning " may every year find you in good health". " Eid mubarak" meaning " happy Eid" and may Allah accept from us and from you.

ABOVE ALL, Muslims in Dadaab acknowledged and admired the exclusiveness of this day since there was no dispute over the sighting of the moon to celebrate on the beginning of shawal. "It was a blessing from God to unify Muslims across the globe", said sheik Kamal Abdi.

HANDWASHING TIPS HOW TO EFFECTIVELY WASH YOUR HANDS



**1. Wet hands
running water**

2. Apply soap

**3. Rub hands together
vigorously for 20 seconds (sing
"Happy Birthday" twice) while
cleaning in between the nails**

**4. Rinse hands well under
running water**

**5. Dry hands using a paper
towel or tissue.**

THE GLOBAL HANDWASHING DAY

Dadaab Joins The Universe in Celebrating the Global Handwashing Day.

IBRAHIM ALI MAHAT (PORRIDGE)

Hand washing with soap is the most effective and inexpensive way to prevent diarrheal and acute respiratory infections, which takes the lives of millions of children in developing countries every year. Together, they are responsible for the majority of all child deaths. Yet, despite its lifesaving potential, hand washing with soap is seldom practiced and difficult to promote.

"The challenge is to transform hand washing with soap from an abstract good idea into an automatic behavior performed in homes, schools, and communities worldwide." Says Emmanuel ouk, Care, Hygiene project officer.

Turning hand washing with soap before eating and after using the toilet into an ingrained habit could save more lives than any single vaccine or medical intervention, cutting deaths from diarrhea by almost half and deaths from acute respiratory infections by one-quarter. A vast change in hand washing behavior is

critical to meeting the Millennium Development Goal of reducing deaths among children under the age of five by two-thirds by 2015.

The global Public Private Partnership for Hand Washing with soap (PPPHW) works to save lives by promoting the awareness of this simple practice.

The theme for the day is CLEAN HANDS SAVE LIVES (2010).

CARE International in Kenya being the lead agency in the Global hand washing day celebration this year at IFO Refugee camp, worked together with other implementing partners in planning, organizing and conducting the event. This had never been done before since the inception of

Dadaab camps in the year 1991 hence a great milestone.

In Ifo camp the day was dedicated to children basically schools hygiene club and SCUks (save the children UK) children club. The day started with a procession with banners and messages by children, teachers, hygiene promoters and CHWs. Besides prayers the second mark of the program was a 45 minutes hand wash with soap session headed by mother hygiene Lucy Kipturget, CARE hygiene promotion department.

The hand wash session started with the agency representatives and camp leaders as in the picture and ended with school children following the steps cited by WHO (World Health Organization).



Guests assembled to demonstrate hand washing with soap lead by the UNHCR, Head of Sub-office Richard Ackland.

Generally 1850 children, 45 guest/agency representatives and youth washed hands with soap during the celebration excluding 1450 (facebook friends) who promised to do the same on 15th of October 2010. This should serve as a reminder every year of our achievements towards the reduction of mortality rates in children.

It is said that the best gift to a child is a toy but washing the child's hands with soap and running water after playing with the toy is the best option.

THE FIRST YOUTH FESTIVAL IN THE HISTORY OF IFO CAMP.

**LIBAN RASHID
MOHAMED**

The first youth festival in the history of IFO camp was celebrated on 25th September this year.

Youth organizations had something to show and to be proud of. There have been many ceremonies like the International Day of the Youth, World Refugee day, etc. however, these ceremonies are organized by agencies with the help of UNHCR.

The refugee youth umbrella, consisting of youth from different groups, took the liberty to organize a youth festival independently to motivate the youth in the camps. Having been equipped with the skills, youth in IFO organized this event on their own.

The idea of the youth festival came from Mr. Yoko, an inter community youth officer from UNHCR. It was highly welcomed. However, the question of the budget was a big challenge. Mr. Yoko wanted the youth to stand and say "yes this time we can do it by ourselves" in an attempt to cut the dependency syndrome. that has lingered on for years. The major objectives of the youth festival were to mobilize and sensi-



tize the youth to tackle various social problems within the camps, such as drug abuse, HIV/AIDs, as well as to raise the public recognition of the refugee youth Umbrella organization among refugee communities and partner organizations.

The first step was to develop proposals. The proposal was displayed in front of all agency representatives who shared their inputs and welcomed the idea with enthusiasm.

Having very many youth groups registered under the umbrella organizations made it easy to have quite a number of youth groups participate in the festival.

They prepared drama, poems, traditional dance and the UNIQUE SUMO (J A P A N E S) GAME.

The long awaited day came at a time when every one was eagerly waiting to witness the youth day. "In fact it was a very challenging task but we had to do it to prove our leadership as youth and as part of our

civilian right" said Dini Abdi Husein, IFO youth chairman.

With the diverse nationalities dwelling in the camp it was easier to design and introduce a very interesting game known as SUMO game. This game is played in Japan: Simply two men wrestle each other in a circle drawn on the ground without pinching or boxing and he who is thrown out of the circle would loose. Thanks to Yoko who made it possible. Eight different men from different nationalities including the

Japanese community represented by YOKO and his colleague were made to take part.

Also in the program was a speech contest where three youth finalists presented their oratory skills through speaking to the public about problems the youth face in the refugee camps. The three of them were awarded certificates.

An estimated 2000 people graced the occasion and it was voted the best among all the previous ceremonies organized by implementing agencies in the history of Dadaab camps.

Some of the major objectives were met. This was proved by the number of youth groups that applied for registration, community leaders appreciating and recognizing the youth umbrella and more over, the working relations between the youth organization and the agencies in Dadaab camps.

"Hopefully, we shall celebrate the same way and even better next year if all goes well" says Ebla abdullahi, United Girls Vice Chairlady.

A PACK FOR THE DADAAB YOUTH

THE YOUTH EDUCATION PACK (YEP)

By Kowsar Asad Warsame- Ifo

The Youth Education Pack (YEP) project was established in 2007 in both Dadaab town and Hagadera camp and later expanded to IFO and Dagahaley in 2009. Many youth who drop out of school and those who could not qualify for secondary education due to the limited chances, took the advantage and got enrolled in to the YEP centers. Parents and the community leaders appreciated this initiative and started working towards the empow-



erment of youths. This young boys and girls are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other social vices.

However, many did not benefit from this privilege due to the fact that the project was started when a higher percentage of the youth were engaged in negative activities. The project was expanded and the concerned authorities are planning to have a better approach towards the development of young refugee people. One such step is engaging the graduates in activities/business that is relevant to the kind of course they did. This helps them nurture their talents and skills.

The 2008 graduates were issued with start up kits in October 2009 and were supported in forming cooperatives. Some electrical skills graduates were attached to UNHCR or LWF for apprenticeship. Others joined private contractors and did the installation of solar power in the YEP centers. Masonry graduates were attached to NRC shelter program and participated in slab making. The tailoring graduates were awarded contracts for uniform making in the four YEP centers.

The graduates find suitable places in the market and Start new businesses with passion and confidence. The communities are very proud of them and give

them a hand in modifying their business. Moreover, their business attracts a lot of customers.

"I really enjoyed the services of YEP graduates, I had no idea until when a friend introduced me to them and I decided not to seek services from any other place." Zamzam says.

Learning in the YEP centers is currently flourishing and more students are enrolled every year. These students come from diverse background; they not only

acquire vocational skills but also share ideas and experiences. Students put concerted efforts to fully grasp all that is taught. In an attempt to satisfy hundreds of thirsty students NRC is planning to introduce new courses such as plumbing, welding and fabrication, leatherwork and tannery, food and beverage production and housekeeping and laundry.

During every graduation the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) organizes graduation ceremonies to award students and motivate them. On February 4th 2010 Youth Education Pack (YEP) centers observed their second graduation ceremony. A total of 369 students including 178 girls graduated during a colorful event which was graced by government officials who emphasized the importance of the refugees to abide by the laws of the land. Also present were agency representatives, parents and Friends of the graduates.

The refugee Community was urged to allow girls to benefit from the program which also caters for young Mothers. The students graduated in various Skills including secretarial, tailoring, masonry, electronics and hair & beauty skills.

The centres continue to empower the youth to take control of their lives and be dependent.

REFUGEE LIFE!

Ebla Abdullahi.

Life is never good in a refugee camp. It is a life of poverty and despair. There is lack of enough food, poor sanitation and shelter. The access to secondary and higher education is limited. For the last two decades, hundreds of thousands of refugees have been living in Dadaab camps. This means that those children born during the establishment of the camps are now fully matured. Bloody conflicts in Somalia have caused the world's largest refugee camps with hungry and exhausted refugees bored into this wind swept camps in the neighboring Kenya.

Outside the distribution centre in IFO Camp, refugees transport their food using donkey carts and wheelbarrows. There is nothing worse than seeing youth in the camps sitting idle under trees in front of agency gates and in the market places frustrated, depressed and vulnerable. For sure, that lack of opportunities available within the refugee camps for younger people is the major cause.

Most youths in the camp turn to keep themselves busy by chewing miraa also known as "khat" (the leaves of the shrub *Catha edulis* which are chewed like tobacco. It's illegal in countries like U.S.) But those who chew describe it as creating strong and high visual character that shows above all and makes them at the top life which is the opposite.

Some say it creates brain imbalance and no thoughts in this harsh life in the camps. It has caused many youths to lose their hopes, great expectations and also their dignity. Whenever one gives advice to an idle youth, they respond by saying that there is no point of wasting time in class with no future. This reflects that a large number of youth who completed their secondary education are not employed.

Growing gangs among youth in the camps is worrying the community and implementing agencies who blame

boredom, unemployment and drug for turning young people living in the camps towards violence and crime.

Women and children make up the highest percentage of the refugee population. Despite the fact in many cases they do not play an active role in the crisis that has displaced them from their homes, even though they are the ones who suffer a lot.

Refugee women and children are one of the most vulnerable groups in the world. They came to refugee camps illiterate and with little or no previous employment experience other than tribal dialect, which is common for uneducated and rural women. The vulnerability of the refugee women, especially in dadaab camps plus lack of either legal or traditional support or remedies combined with the ongoing trauma of being a refugee, magnifies the consequences of gender operation.

Most women and girls in dadaab refugee camps are made to do odd jobs like fetching water, cooking and washing clothes for the family. Moreover, refugee women and girls are frequently subjected to rape, mutilation, and exploitation in the camps.

Younger children are the next generation who will stand to rebuild the distorted nations and the war torn countries. Women and mothers are the stepping stone to accomplishing those dreams. So we better equip them with the necessary skills and support instead of harassing them. They are the future of tomorrow.

REFUGEES ATTITUDE TOWARDS HIV/AIDS

MOHAMED ALI HASSAN (GARI)

HIV/AIDS, a devastating killer disease is spreading in the camps.

The big question is why the disease is rampant despite all awareness? Many are convinced that the major cause of the disease is sexual intercourse.

The poor attitude of the Somalis, the dominating community in Dadaab camps, create an atmosphere for the disease to be spread in the camps. The much-maligned carriers are forced to hide rather than seek medical attention. A visit to one of the HIV/AIDS patient was evidence of the poor treatment people face. She was tested positive and never revealed her secret to anybody even her family for almost 7 years. "If I reveal, I have to be ready for the ugly

stigmatization, finger-pointing and of cause-speculation" she said.

The negative attitude of the Somalis towards the disease is a real catastrophe and this fanned the flames for the virus leading to its current good run. Positive attitude from the Somalis can save many lives if taken seriously. Another shocking scenario was when two patients were booed in Ifo market forcing them to rush home with their tails between their legs. This can cause further damage as patients are prone to mental anguish in such situation. The percentage of Somalis living with the disease is 0.1% though the unreported cases make the statistics inaccurate.

Aparts from the Somalis, there are other communities like the Gambella, Ethiopians, Oromo, Sudanese, Congolese and many others living with the disease. These com-

munities therefore live more positive than the Somalis.

A non-Somali teenager living with the disease discussed, 'it is not all doom and gloom for me, and I can still survive.' The non-Somalis living with the disease are relatively higher but still their optimistic approach created fewer atmospheres for the disease, a character, the Somalis are lacking. A good number of non-Somalis attend the VCT daily for counseling, medical attention and further testing. The Somalis are rarely found here. 'We handle a good number of HIV/AIDS patients everyday; but the 'shameful' or 'ill-fated' according to Somalis appear here in rare cases.' A VCT counselor said.

The Somali elders term the disease as a strange scenario where the victims are criminals regardless of its cause. 'It is the

biggest load of nonsense I ever heard' an elder murmured.

"That is blatant example of sheer arrogance, it's embarrassing" another elder said in a life exhibition of persons living with the disease. The disease will keep striking if the Somalis fail to change their attitude and a mass number of victims will be realized in the camps sooner than later.

No strangeness rather than clearing the white blood cells hence bidding war to your life, be realistic and face it, saving lives is a top priority.

A CRY OF HELP

A Flight Delay

A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH: *By Abdi Abdullahi*

She still endures the agony of not fulfilling her dream of leading a new life in America due to the many years she has been waiting for her flight. Currently indigent and helpless the 30-year-old refugee lady says her flight delayance devastated her family's hope for better life in America.

Khatra (LAST NAME) was one of the few lucky ones who were posted for resettlement in 2005, after her son Shukri Abdinoor Ahmed was diagnosed with a heart complication and fulfilled the medical criteria for resettlement.

"On January, 2006 I was taken to Nairobi to attend my first resettlement interview with the Dutch embassy," she said.

As her family was in Nairobi she tells that her family underwent a medical check up which was entirely a physical

examination and was explained that the other medical screenings will be conducted in Netherlands.

"A few days after my medical examination, I was called to attend a cultural orientation class that lasted for three days," she retorted. The cultural orientation is a process that all the refugees must go through as part of their resettlement process.

During her orientation, Khatra said she was given information on how her flight will be and that she will stay in Amsterdam, the capital city for the first eight months only. And later will be relocated in any of the other towns in the Netherlands. But within the same year the embassy induced her to go back to the camp as she waited for her flight. "I can't really forget when they told me to ride a bicycle so that I reduce my heavy weight," she said.

"On our arrival at the camp we sold all our properties and instead bought the items we required for the flight preparation," added the displeased Khatra. In December, the same year it was very early in the morning when

her family's name appeared on UN refugee agency's notice board.

"In the beginning every one was happy because we thought it was our flight schedule, but on reaching the notice board we realized that it was UNHCR re-interview," she said.

Then after attending the UNHCR re-interview, she was told that the Dutch embassy has withdrawn her case without giving concrete reasons on her dismissal.

"They are inhuman and have not done something wise and rational to save the worsening health complication of my son," she said.

On January 2007 the UN refugee agency referred and presented her case to the US embassy that was cordially received. "By July the same year, I accomplished all stages of U.S. resettlement processes and I can't see any



prospect of traveling to America," Khatra said.

In spite of the fact that it is a pain on her family's neck, today her 8-year-old son who is living with cardiac complication has developed a physical deformity on his chest as a result of the transposition of great vessels in his heart.

"A cardiologist has reviewed his case and advised a heart surgery outside Africa, but how can we do that without an external help" she asked.

"He cannot play, run and attend a normal learning class," Khatra said in tears.

SOMALI IMMAGRANT ELECTED TO A PUBLIC OFFICE IN THE U.S

Continued from page 1

they think he may bring a stronger sensibility to helping immigrant students.

Samatar, the youngest of five children, did not know he would hold a seat on the Minneapolis school board when he graduated from Somali National University in 1991 four days before the bloody civil war erupted.

After years in a refugee camp in Kenya, Samatar resettled in the United States in 1993 with no basic skills in the English language.

After studying English for many years, Samatar eventually enrolled at the University of St. Thomas where he graduated nine years ago with a Master's in business administration. Today he is the leader of the Minnesota African Development Center, a local organization that seeks to make immigrants communities more economically stable.

Zahra Ahmed, a campaign organizer, said Samatar's victory is deeply personal and symbolic for Somalis around the world.

"Americans do not know that we are gradually raising up to make a history," said Ahmed. "His victory is a good example for our children to have a confidence in their parents and believe that Somali fathers can

be good role models."

Amina Salah, a campaign organizer, said Minnesota Somalis have made history in the states. "We sent the first Muslim to the U.S. Congress, and tonight, the first Somali-American to a public office," Salah said.

At the end of the party, Samatar held hands with a Somali singer who took the stage and together they danced as she sang a popular Somali song that carried a message about the responsibilities that come with leadership.

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REFUGEE OF THE MONTH

AMIN AMEY, UNITED AFTER A DECADE SEPARATED IN A WEEK, A TALE OF AMIN AND HER MOTHER

By Moulid Iftin

DADAAB, Kenya — A refugee. Radio broadcaster. Writer. English teacher. Community activist. All of these described 28-year-old Amin Amey before the UNHCR resettled him in Sweden last September after a stay in the world's largest refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya, for nearly two decades.

Amey who lived in Ifo Refugee Camp was separated from his parents when the civil war erupted in Somali in 1991. Amey was only nine when his father died.

Though life in the camp was painful, Amey successfully completed his elementary education in 2000, but dropped out of high school due to circumstances that the family he lived with faced.

"I never thought of dropping out of school, but at times there are some feelings that you cant ignore." Amey said. "I could not bear to watch my aunt fetching firewood from the forest just to put food on the table."

When he dropped out of school, Amey worked as an English teacher at an

elementary school in the camps, a reporter for a community radio station, and an active member of a youth group that campaigned aga inst FGM, HIV/A

The IDS and drug abuse.dream that Amey waited for two decades finally became true when the UNHCR contacted him



Amin Amey and his wife in Ifo camp days before his flight to Canada.

about his departure to his new home, Sweden, in mid-September.

However, Amey's final days in the camp were also filled with mixture of happy and sad emotions. His mother who was missing without a trace for 15 years reunited with him only days before this departure.

Amey said he couldn't include his mother

because she is not a registered refugee, and was not part of the process.

"I was tempted to almost cancel my flight...there are no words to express my feelings," Amey said.

But his mother understood, and she encouraged him to leave. "God reunited us now, and we shall meet again," she told him.

Amey promised not only to take his mother to Sweden, but come back to his war torn country and bring a change.

MY OPINION, MY SAY

ZTHE WONDERFUL GAME IN SOMALIA MOHAMED ABDI GELLE

IN THE last two decades of unrest in Somalia, there is no doubt Somali people fell prey to corrupt UN officials, mindless terrorists, greedy business men, sea pirates, clan warlords and Transitional Governments run by tribes' men. They all benefit and get richer every day from the misery and death of innocent civilian Somalis?

CONSIDER THIS fact. Every reliable report coming out of Somalia suggests it would take 20,000 foreign troops to pacify and bring Somalia into the fold of nations. The single main challenge to realize this vision is lack of funding for these 20,000 troops.

WE ARE led to believe, the millions of US dollars provided to United Nation agencies in the last 20 years, are unable to pay the salary of regular army of the transitional federal government for 24 months; what time will it take in Somalia to restore peace, held free and fair election, collect taxes to pay their own soldiers and return back the thousands of refugees staying in neighborhood countries and the rest of the world.

IT IS unbelievable that United Nations experts assigned to Somali cannot see this glaring problem in 20 years and address it promptly. Report after report shows the 17,500 Somali soldiers that have been trained for the transitional federal government are deserting every day for lack of salary payments and are jumping ship to the insurgents. The transitional federal government which the international community and the Somali people were expecting to bring law and order, was unable to do this role because of historical conflicts with its top leaders which are based for their selfish interest and not the interest of ordinary Somalis despite of this, the TFG will in no longer achieve its vision of paving the way for stable government in the coming years.

IF THE international community, African union, United Nation were serious in restoring Somali government they would have paid the salary of the current trained military and police? If they recognize as they tell us that TFG cannot be trusted why not pay directly the regular uniformed soldiers that are restoring peace and security? Why pass the buck to an unreliable entity! Why not add the salary of the Somali military and police to that of UNISOM and make sure they are paid on time? We see soldiers battling with terrorist insurgency under equipped, hungry and barefooted. We are told the United Nations Development Agency is unable to provide shoes and uniform even though it collects millions of money each year in the name of helping Somalia!

IS IT not lack of security that is causing all the myriad problems that the United Nations is dealing with and claims to spend the bulk of their aid? How come they are not doing anything about the single most important and root cause of all the misery in Somalia?

AS THE old poker joke says "if you look around the table and you don't know who the sucker is, it is you" There is game being played and continues to be played here; a game of bribery and deception. I am afraid the suckers in this game are the Somali populations that are dying needlessly every day.

FROM THE DIASPORA: A CANADIAN EXPERIENCE

By, Sirajudin Abdullahi Siraji

I am dedicating this article to my fellow youth in Dadaab camps. I arrived safely in Canada the country of my dreams. I always thought of dropping lines to all of friends and families, to share what once seemed to me the impossible, coming to Canada.

When I initially came to Canada, my major plan were to study, however, I found out that going to school in a different country is tough and challenging.

Despite the challenges, I happened to be the first student from Dadaab who attends to York University in Toronto. Attending school in Canada is not as simple as many in the refugee camps think. For example, some of my classes require attending a lecture in a hall that contains more than 700 students.

My first surprise was when I attended a biology lecture class, I was the only black student in a class of hundreds of students. This is was not what I thought of Canada when I was in the camps. Everything was new to me. I felt like a newborn baby thrown in the madness of the world.

The classes are very intense. Covering many topics and dealing with deadlines for tough assignment is typical in Canada. Even though, it's part of the western culture not to interfere with others, Canadians are quick to help in desperate times.

Another thing that really surprise me was when a white woman asked me "Where did you learn English?" It reminded me of what my classmates

in Kenya used to say about white people: white people think that the Africans are stupid and don't know anything. This is when I realized that "whites associate intelligence with skin color," a statement that was popular among my colleagues in African. This is not to say that all white people have negative stereotypes about Africans, but it's true for many of them. This leads many of us to internalize the negative stereotypes once repeated over and over again.

My other friends who came to Canada with

"I found out that going to school in a different country is challenging. Despite the challenges, I happened to be the first student from Dadaab who attends York University in Toronto."

me were placed at different universities in Toronto. One goes to Ryerson University, another to University of Toronto Mississauga and the third at Humber College in Toronto. Weekends are the only days we meet.

The first few days were very stressful because I felt lonely and I couldn't adjust with the environment, but recently everything got back to normal.

When it comes to food, the part where I live in Canada is not the best place for Muslims. Sincerely speaking, it's hard to differentiate between halaal and haram. (Halaal food is food that Islam permits. Haram is food not permissible for Islamic consumption.)

For example, when I go to a shop to buy meat, It's difficult to choose the one I want from many of different types including pork, chicken, and beef. I found it difficult to differentiate the halal from the haram because they all seemed to me that they are labeled as hallal. In avoidance to mistakenly eat haram meat, I only eat fish and vegetables. Even though there are places you will find real halaal food, it takes about an hour or two of driving from where I live. The luckiest ones about us were resettled in places with many Muslim communities.

Like many campuses around Canada, there is a building called the "Multi-faith Building." In These buildings, people from

all religious denominations come together and pray. Some times the equation might be balanced in such a way that, I find myself praying next with different religions. Some times people from a different religion book the whole building. When this happens, Muslims and other look for other places to perform their prayers.

I am excited to be in Canada. I wish all in Dadaab a success in all your endeavors.

THE REFUGEE

TIME FOR MALEZI BORA!

No substitute can provide the nutritional equivalent of human breast milk.

By: Bashir Ibrahim Mohamed, IFO.

People want to lead healthy lives, raise well-nourished children and provide them with opportunities for the future. In Dadaab camps medical activities have been ongoing for so long and IFO is the most populated among the three camps (Dagahaley, Ifo and Hagadera) in which more influx comes daily but is coping up to achieve these goals.

GTZ is the health organization operating in the camp and an increasing number of mothers are choosing to breastfeed for two years while others are breastfeeding for a shorter time. "Ideally a child should be fed breast-milk exclusively for first 6 (six) months and complementary feeding follows with continuation of breastfeeding for 2 (two) years or beyond" Explains Mr. Hassan basher.



support women group discussing at IFO community centre
Photo by: Liban Rashid

Dr. Mohamed Mohamud, GTZ nutritionist intern, who had an appointment with a sick child of health post one in IFO, adds... When diarrhea disease or other respiratory infections do occur, they are less severe among breastfed

infants and can be treated easily" Women helping women

Hospital routines and other health practices can frequently influence mother's decision of whether or not to breastfeed. IFO hospital has stimulated breastfeeding Mother-to Mother Support Group-(MTMSG) discussion to run in the community centers they await to get mats, basin for motivation.

It is obvious that breastfeeding promotions with supportive programmes can a wake mother's thinking for the health of their children. The camp has a very strong Infant and Young Child Feeding-IYCF mother's supporting umbrella that was founded on 2006 by CARE-Community Development Sector but Later on the programme was handed over to GTZ -nutritionist to run. These mothers were trained and designed to encourage women and

communities to identify and solve their own problems, and receive support for their infant feeding decisions. Mama Abdio Abdi Ali, who is the mother's support group coordinator explains and says... These support groups meet regularly to discuss on feeding behavior change

via women helping lactating mothers' breastfeed their babies. A new mother if well supported has greater confidence and can cope better with the adjustments of motherhood. To be a Mother Support Group, one should be trained and qualified to be given a certificate of participation. This non-formal education and experiential learning approach allows women to examine their values and attitudes,



Certification after 5-day training on infants by: Liban Rashid

build confidence discover assumptions and patterns of behavior, ask questions and relearn new ways of thinking in a positive atmosphere.

These groups are the most effective way to help mothers to continue breastfeeding after the first few weeks of delivery because during this time the mothers are often very vulnerable and sensitive. They consist of 6-14 pregnant women, lactating mothers, grandmothers who meet to talk about their infant feeding experiences and learn from each other. Mama fatumo Qase quotes.. 'pregnant women in the group gain knowledge in preparation for breastfeeding and lactating mothers learn new ways from the wisdom of more experienced mother. Mzee Abdi qoriyo; a father who said his wife is a support group member, believes all successful women behind them is a man. He adds, it is the fathers who can play good role for the mothers to breastfed infants.

Most mothers perceive their milk will not be enough for the baby plus giving them breastmilk substitutes will hinder lactating mothers to give up.

It could be better if trained health-workers can offer expectant mother a infant feeding class during antenatal visits and fostering the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinics.

"nabad"

WOMEN & THEIR ROLE IN PEACE BUILDING

The word peace in Somali means "Nabad" which means what we are destined to by the creator. Therefore, for us to enjoy a meaningful and development oriented lives we need peace as a foundation. Peace can be achieved through the collective effort and contribution by all regardless of race, sex, nationality and religion.

In situations of civil wars many people are displaced either internally (IDPs) or flee across international borders (refugees) majority of them being women and children, because by comparison women are relatively on average more tender, merciful, respectful and constructive. They solely shoulder the role of peace making which is neglected by the men and the youth. The youth are mainly ignorant and confused by the situation in which they find themselves and the men mainly out of selfishness, greediness and personal interest.

Owing to the fact that women are the first universal instructors of all children in the world. They try to nurture the children well and impart positive values of love, trust, companionship, respect and general positive outlook on life as they mould them in to responsible adults. But what happens then? Is that all? The environment is harsh and paradox; innocent children are spoilt by the communities and forced to get involved in criminal activities like abusing drugs, killing other innocent people, stealing etc.

Because many of the reproductive men and youth who are the traditional bread winners in the families die during the civil wars, many households are left without them hence women assuming the double responsibilities of taking care of the children as well as earning a living for the family.

Having felt the biggest burden of this disaster, women pondered consciously and today they are the leaders in the struggle towards peace making. Women have now understood the importance of peace and the negative implications that result from the lack of it.

Traditionally, women are known to be important opinion leaders who can effect any positive change provided they have the determination and the zeal. Most importantly, they are well placed to make extensive awareness on the need for positive co-existence of all entities, individuals, communities and societies because of their social network; they are related to different communities through intermarriage.

Today women have decided to ban their husbands, sons, brothers, cousins and in-laws from the battle fields. This is seen as a way of reducing the number of men and youths participating in the battle fields.



Filmaid Participatory Video Project (PVP) is a filmmaking program for refugee youth in Dadaab and one of the main objective of this newsletter is to help them improve on their writing and reporting skills and which will see an improved capacity in term of writing for film as well.

www.filmaid.org, www.filmaid.blogspot.com