

THE Refugee

MAGAZINE

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FROM THE EDITOR

Life was never meant to be a spinning ball, rather a period of arranging and rearranging our choices depending on the situations we are in. We make choices whether to seek education or bask in the bliss of ignorance, we choose to seek peace and cede conceit or to wade war and propagate animosity. Every choice we make do not only affect our own lives but also those around us. Choices made by governments affect citizens. Choices made by parents affect children. Choices made by culture affect societies.

Malala Yousafzai, a young ordinary Pakistani girl at only 19 has literally lived at the edge of her life making extraordinary choices not to better her life but to empower other young girls living in war torn parts of the world. A former student and a blogger for BBC Urdu in Pakistan, her own story of struggles and her campaign for girl child education has yielded the long overdue need for appreciation of girlchild education within the refugee community. After several weeks of FilmAid video screenings and Girls First education programme trainings, many parents have had a change of heart and an empowered perspective to girl education.

Every year on the 20th of June, the world joins hands to take stock of the gains made towards the refugee situation which has become a global problem with hundreds of thousands fleeing home every day due to war and conflict, politics or drought and famine. In Dadaab, this year's celebrations came a little different as the situation surrounding their stay in the camp hang in the balance with the almost eminent closure.

Despite the usual challenges of life and the tooth and nail struggles to eke out a living, refugees have enjoyed numerous opportunities ranging from education, vocational trainings, and scholarship opportunities to countries near and beyond. These opportunities aimed at skills development help the youth to get engaged constructively and be able to even eke out a living from the skills gained. We capture the tales of a group of journalism and Film training productions students as they finally step out of classroom into the arena where they are able to tell the stories of their people.

It is my utmost pleasure therefore to present to you our 9th read of The Refugee Magazine, in it stories of triumph despite the bumpiness of life's terrain presented by our FilmAid trained Journalism student reporters, writers and contributors. These are a group of media-skills equipped with the nose for the issues that affect them and their societies.

Peter Okello and Jimale Mohammed

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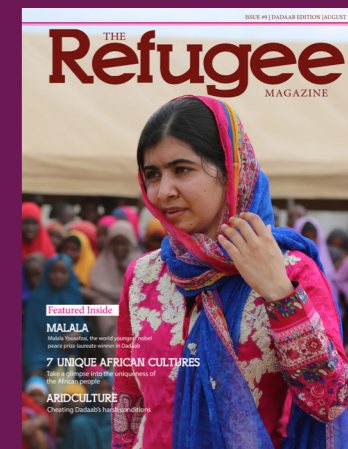
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STANDING #WITHMALALA>>

WHEN MALALA VISITED DADAAB

When she turned 19, Malala Yousafzai the world's youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner decided to blow the candles and cut the cake with the young girls in Dadaab refugee camp. The young Pakistani who formerly blogged for the BBC Urdu website under a pseudonym due to the risks posed by the Taliban, is now a global activist for female education and women's empowerment.

BY PETER OKELLO

Amidst deafening ullulations and the flicking of camera shutters Malala took the podium. This was the beginning of an emotional speech delivered under the baking sun at the Juba Girls' Centre in Dagahaley Dadaab. (al ot of articles begin the same way and talk about the harsh conditions of Dadaab. This needs tob e limited as it becomes very repetitive.

"Today, I turn 19, and this year, I am here to speak for my unheard sisters of Somalia striving for education every day in the refugee camp of Dadaab. I'm so happy to celebrate with my sisters and congratulate them on graduating from the Girls' First program which makes my birthday even more beautiful. My brave sisters here are committed not only to their own education but to fighting for the rights of all girls to go to school."

Malala's fight for the rights of girls education back in her home country , Pakistan has been plagued by great risks and threats on her own life and coming face to face with death when she was shot by a Taliban militant. This came as a warning to her, that she should stop being vocal about women's education or she would lose her life.

Malala's cause for girl's education lead to her being nominated for and eventually becoming a co-recipient of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize for her struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education.

Malala had since then dedicated her life to advocating for free education to all girls affected by conflicts and wars in various regions of the world stating that, "I am here to stand with you, as someone who knows what it's like to flee your home in the middle of the night, as someone who knows how it feels to have your right to education taken away and your dreams threatened."

Aspiring to be like Malala

"I want to be like Malala", a young girl barely nine years old from Friends primary school in IFO confidently tells me, "Malala is a strong girl who fights for rights of all the girls in the world." she continued. "You cannot be like Malala," interjected the other girl

with her, "we do not have quality education here neither do we have enough learning materials." "We do not need all that, we only have to work hard with what we have here in the camp and one day we can be like Malala."

Monica Adhieu, a FilmAid facilitator voiced her amazement at what Malala has achieved, "I am a lady and I love education. I am amazed at what Malala is doing. How she does her things; she is strong and assertive. She was a child. Her love for education was beyond imagination and her father's love for education made him take his daughter to school."

Monica noted that the FilmAid video screenings on Malala under the Girls First programme had yielded the desired fruits with many girls who had dropped out of school committing to go back to school and complete their studies. The change of heart had also been seen in parents who now seemed more receptive to the idea of girls going to school.

Malala's first visit to Dadaab refugee camp could not have come at a better time than now. It is evident that most parents had seen the light on the importance of education. "I believe in education, if my girls are educated, they can manage themselves and their lives. I have girls who are now in secondary schools and they are not married off yet. Early marriage takes away possible opportunities for girls." said 65 years old Dero.

In the same spirit as Ziauddin Yousafzai and Tor Pekai Yousafzi, it would go along way if all parents would join hands amd support their daughters and son's education ambitions to ensure they attain their life's potential.

"I am a lady and I love education. I am amazed at what Malala is doing. How she does her things; she is strong and assertive. She was a child. Her love for education was beyond imagination and her father's love for education made him take his daughter to school."

Monica Adhieu

"Today, I turn 19, and this year, I am here to speak for my unheard sisters of Somalia striving for education every day in the refugee camp of Dadaab. I'm so happy to celebrate with my sisters and congratulate them on graduating from the Girls' First program which makes my birthday even more beautiful. My brave sisters here are committed not only to their own education - but to fighting for the rights of all girls to go to school."

MALALA YOUSAFZAI



PHOTO: MALALA YOUSAFZAI
PHOTO BY: ISAAC ONYANGO



PHOTO: WORLD REFUGEE DAY CELEBRATIONS IN HAGADERA

STANDING WITH REFUGEES

Due to the manner in which the refugees and the refugee status has been viewed with an undeserved indifference, this year's WRD key message, Get to Know Refugees, People like You and Me, was a call for the world to take a moment to look at the refugee situation to be able to understand their troubles, and share in their joys as fellow human beings.

BY JIMALE MOHAMMED

Although this year's celebrations fell around an uncertain time during which the government of Kenya has expressed its plan to close down the camp, this is a celebration refugees in Dadaab are accustomed to attending each year. In past years the celebrations have been attended by a modest number of people, but the numbers today tip the scale. Most faces are filled with enthusiasm and hope but some are lost in thought of what will become of them if the government holds onto its word to close Dadaab refugee camp.

Every year on the 20th day of June, the United Nations, activists and peace advocates around the world come together to take stock of strides made with regards to refugee affairs and to draw global

attention to the millions of refugees forced to flee their homes due to war conflict.

This is a day when the refugees get an opportunity showcase their talents, their cultures and express their dreams to the world through songs, poetry, choral verses and stage skits on their challenges.

While some faces showed optimism in the hope of a positive message about the closure of the camp; possibly that the Kenyan government had backtracked on the immediate closure of the camp, others had their faces blue with hope as grim as the rain laden clouds. Others hated being called refugees because of

everything that has been associated with the tag refugee.

Kicking off the occasion was a well-coordinated scouting presentation by Amine primary school scouting team who lead the gathering in a Somali national anthem with the mass standing up to honor the symbol of national unity.

This evoked deep emotions in many, notably, Sahara Bare, 67 could not hold back her tears remembering the years gone by, the years that Somali had peace and stability. I cannot believe those years are gone by with the wind. "Our children have not known the peace we once enjoyed. It is so painful that most of them have not even stepped into the land of their forefathers," she said amid tears.

After the emotional anthem, there came other cultural, peace and education themed performances and dances from secondary and primary schools, Somali Bantu and the Ethiopian gambella communities.

"Having lived here all my life, I am glad to celebrate this day, it is the only day we have it gives us a chance to come together and voice our concerns to the global community on issues affecting our lives and send a message home that we want to go back to our home," said Issa Hassan.



Having lived here all my life, I am glad to celebrate this day, it is the only day we have it gives us a chance to come together and voice our concerns to the global community on issues affecting our lives and send a message home that we want to go back to our home,

As the day went by, it was time for speeches to be delivered. Various heads of organizations and representatives stood up to voice their continued support and goodwill to the refugee community. The key message would then come in the form of an open letter from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR's) secretariat read by UNHCR Head of Ali Njuqur Abaas Haidoebaigi who emphasized that the planned Dadaab closure will be based on principles choice and human dignity.

"UNHCR will stand with the refugee community and ensure their protection and safety. It is a journey we are committed to, and we will keep the engagements with the government to find a humane solution to the camp closure situation. Contrary to media narrative, we have received great support from the government and we stand here to respect their decisions. There is no forced repatriation, we are only repatriating voluntary returnees."

This year's WRD key message, Get to Know Refugees, People like You and Me, was a call for the world to take a moment to look at the refugee situation to be able to understand their troubles, and share in their joys as fellow human beings.



PHOTO: SCHOOL BOYS AND GIRLS PRESENT A CHORAL VERSE DURING THE WRD

Abaas Haidoebaigi

"UNHCR will stand with the refugee community and ensure their protection and safety. It is a journey we are committed to, and we will keep the engagements with the government to find a humane solution to the camp closure situation. Contrary to media narrative, we have received great support from the government and we stand here to respect their decisions. There is no forced repatriation, we are only repatriating voluntary returnees."

Malala Inspires Girls First Graduates

BY ISSE ABDULLAHI



PHOTO: MALALA POSES FOR A PHOTO WITH THE GF GRADUATES

“My brave sisters here are committed not only to their own education - but to fighting for the rights of all girls to go to school.”

The young girls themselves had not seen it coming. Not an iota of hope had laced their troubled souls that they would play host to the youngest Nobel Laureate winner and global activist for Girls’ education.

They gathered chatting in small groups and covering their faces from the cameras. In white hijab covered heads, blue dera uniforms and dust covered feet they moved around the world’s largest refugee camp, a home to them, with the girl they have lived to idolized since watching her in the Film He Named

Me Malala screened by FilmAid International to the girls as an empowerment tool.

Motivated by Malala’s determination to not only pursue her education but also to advocate for that of other less privileged girls around the world especially those coming from parts of the globe that seem uncondusive to girl education, they braved the scorching sun of the North Eastern desert and the biting pangs of hunger to be around and witness it for themselves the silver lining in their quest for education.

Globally, despite considerable progress for women

in terms of education and schooling over the past few decades compared to about two decades ago where there was a smaller percentage of women in schools pursuing education, education other than being one of the most critical areas of empowerment for women, has offered some of the clearest examples of discrimination women suffer. Amongst the children not attending school there are more than twice as many girls as boys, and among illiterate adults there are similar figures as many women as men.

Malala’s visit on her 19th birthday also coincided with the graduation ceremony for girls who have benefited from the Girls’ Mentorship program spearheaded by FilmAid International to empower young girls to pursue education and be the light of their societies.

Standing up to the ululations of the mammoth crowd gathered, she movingly remarked, “Today, I turn 19, and this year, I am here to speak for my unheard sisters of Somalia striving for education every day in the refugee camp of Dadaab. I’m so happy to celebrate with my sisters and congratulate them on graduating from the Girls’ First program which makes my birthday even more beautiful.

My brave sisters here are committed not only to their own education - but to fighting for

the rights of all girls to go to school.”

Throughout her emotion laden speech she pointed out the myriad of challenges that girls and women continue to encounter and the significance of educating girls.

Malala meets Rahma; a heroine is made.

“One girl graduating today is my sister Rahma. Rahma has fled her home twice to come to Dadaab - once to escape conflict in Somalia and once to follow her dream of education.

Rahma first came to Dadaab as a young girl. When her family returned to Somalia, there was no school for her - so she came back here alone, to finish her education.

There are many girls like my sister Rahma here today. And I am here to remind world leaders that all girls here matter.”

In her closing remarks she emphasized that educating and empowerment is the only way to get out of the poverty beseeching parents to stand for and support girls’ in attaining their full potential and rather than being the impediments in this noble pursuit.

“I urge people today, to join me in my campaign, that education is the right of all girls, yes, all girls.”



“One girl graduating today is my sister Rahma. Rahma has fled her home twice to come to Dadaab - once to escape conflict in Somalia and once to follow her dream of education.

Rahma first came to Dadaab as a young girl. When her family returned to Somalia, there was no school for her - so she came back here alone, to finish her education.”



PHOTO: MALALA AWARDING ONE OF THE GRADUANDS A CERTIFICATE. LOOKING ON IS FAI -DADAAB FIELD MANAGER CHARITY KOLA (FAR RIGHT)

ARIDCULTURE; CHEATING DADAAB'S HARSH CONDITIONS

BY NIMO MOHAMMED



PHOTO: MOHAMED MBERWA
PHOTO BY: ISAAC ONYANGO

PHOTO: MOHAMED MBERWA IN HIS DAGAHALEY FARM

At a time when many former farmers have retired due to the desert thorns, scorching sun and dust clouds that cover Dadaab, Mohamed Mberwa, has defied all the odds and set up a lush vegetable farm. His farm not only feeds him but earns him a living from wholesalers who flock to his farm to get their stock.

Mohamed arrived in Dadaab in 1993, and after so many years of depending on the food rations, he picked up his old hoe and headed into what he thought would be just subsistence farming

after all this was a trade that had provided for him and his family back in Somalia. He explored sustainable ways of irrigating his farm and settled on setting his mid-sized farm next to a tap stand and it worked!

In his 50 by 50 piece of farmland, Mohamed knows the best crops to grow that are resistant to the weather conditions.

"I have in my farm different vegetables that are very adaptive to this environment. ...I cultivate common vegetables like tomatoes, okra and tubers and roots like cassava and sweet potatoes. I also grow maize."

Does the farm produce enough for your family or earn you a sustainable income?

He calmly affirms by saying, "I have been a farmer for as long as I can remember. People come from all around Dagahaley to buy my produce for their daily household use and for reselling in the market. It sustains my family and now I don't only depend on the monthly food rations."

How do you water your farm given the low levels of rainfall if any here in Dadaab?

I get my water from that borehole and fill the water tank, then using my fingers on this pipe, I create a pressure nozzle to sprinkle water around the farm.

What are some of the challenges you face farming in this environment?

"My main challenge are pests. They keep coming now and again and sometimes I am not able to control them before they destroy my crops. It has made me big losses.

Other than that, watering this farm is so labour intensive, especially under these hostile weather conditions.

Thieves too have been visiting my farm harvesting my produce before I am ready to take them to the market. This reduces my returns."

Do you have any future plans with your farming?

"Definitely. I plan to acquire a bigger piece of land and upscale my farming. I also intend to adopt drip irrigation as it requires less water and less labour."

While there are evident challenges that might diverge hopes of farming in Dadaab, Mr Mohamed Mberwa's successful farm is a clear sign of many hidden opportunities that lie within the dry and dusty Dadaab.



PHOTO: KALES/ SUKUMA WIKI FARM



PLOWING THROUGH ASHES

BY WALTER MCDONALD

After frost, grain-sorghum stubble yellow as wheat hid pairs of pheasants scattered on the plains. Seven, eight times a season we searched the rows, shotguns stiff, dogs sniffing ahead, and took our necessary meat.

After the last snow we torched the stalks, the orange flames spreading like a prairie fire, covering the fields with soot.

March, after the dirt cooled, my father plowed the charred earth brown again, like flipping a reversible jacket seam by seam. Unless it rained, he ditched, for two weeks irrigated, and in May he rigged the tractor up, lowered four worn plows into the ground and planted grain.

NORMS AND TRADITIONS>>

WHEN A ZANDE SON IS BORN

BY SUZAN MANGU & YUSSUF SIGAT

Who will break the ground during ploughing period? Who will cut the umbilical cord when the boy is born? And who will lead the chants when the warriors arise?

Our cultures play a vital role in defining our ways of life. It gives us our identities, roles and a sense of belonging to the societal set up we come from. Our languages, our religion, our culinary artistry and social habits, the way we rhythm of our drums, the bellows of our horns and trumpets all melt to form our beliefs systems; a culture from which our behavior is informed.

In the Zande community of the Southern Sudan, when a baby is born, it has to stay inside the house for about three to six days until the umbilical cord is falls. Many people will not be allowed to hold or carry the child including the baby's aunt, no one is allowed to eat in the area where the child is born except the child's parents. A huge initiation ceremony is then held upon the fall of the umbilical cord.

This boy child initiation ceremony is not complete without the smoke ritual where the midwife lights fire at the boy's parent's door from some fresh and dry leaves. As the smoke rises the boy is brought to be smoked till he sweat and coughs from the choke of the smoke.

As the baby is being smoked, *Gadia*, which is a Zande favourite food, is served to the children gathered at the ceremony. The food can only be eaten by the roadside as is the norm. The child will be lightly stroked with a cane by the boy's aunt as she jumps over the child.

To wrap up the ceremony, the child is deliberately frightened by a loud bang or a bellow. All the other children will then smear the finely chewed *Gadia* on the boy before he is washed, clothed and brought out to the people. Gifts and tokens then follow.

Marriage and the married in the Somali culture

Somalis predominantly belong to same ethnic group and speak the same language and majority if not all are Suni Muslims. Per Somali tradition, married women are expected to cover their bodies including their hair. The traditional women dress is called Garbasar and the traditional clothing for men is known as Maawis.

Time is yet to pass over arranged marriages in the Somali



PHOTO: A TRIBAL BOY/ ONLINE

community as the practice is still common with just but a handful of married couples having made their own spouse choices. The societally accepted age for marriage is fifteen years for girls. Men are allowed to marry up to four wives as is provided for in the Islamic religion. It is the husband's duty to provide food and security for his family while the wife is the caretaker of the home and children.

A woman is held in high regard the more children she has borne. Births mostly occur at home and are attended by seasoned midwives. By virtue of marriage a woman is naturally assimilated into the husband's clan though she can still maintain contact with her birth clan.

THE ZANDE TRIBE

The Zande people are a tribe of Ethiopia, mostly in present day Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The word Azande literally means "the people who possess much land", a reference to their history as conquering warriors. They were renowned for their military prowess, using deadly Iron Age weapons and psychological warfare to great effect on raids to gain new resources.

The Zande were against slave trade and are known for their efforts against slave traders. They still exist today, still using the ancient weapons of their ancient tribes.

From Online Source

<<NORMS AND TRADITIONS

7 UNIQUE AFRICAN CULTURES



PHOTO: A TRIBAL BOY/ ONLINE

Africa is globally known for its riches in precious stones, fertile agricultural soils, great wildlife and attractive weather. But we have more than that in our unique treasure safes; cultures only unique to us:

1. Women have their own houses

In the Gio tribe in Ivory Coast, each wife has her own small house that she lives in with her children until they are old enough to move out. The children never live with their fathers.

2. Bull jumping

In order to prove their manhood in the Ethiopian Hamar tribe, young boys must run, jump and land on the back of a bull before then attempting to run across the backs of several bulls. They do this multiple times, and usually in the nude.

3. Spitting your blessings

Members of the Maasai tribe in Kenya and Tanzania spit as a way of blessing. Men spit on newborns and say they are bad in the belief that if they praise a baby, it will be cursed.

Maasai warriors will also spit in their hands before shaking the hand of an elder.

4. Khweta Ceremony

This Southern African ceremony is practiced by several tribes and is how a young boy proves his manhood. When they are of age, boys are sent to spend several days or weeks in a circumcision lodge during winter, where they're put through rigorous and often dangerous tests and rituals such as continuous dancing until exhaustion, and circumcision.

5. Kidnapping your bride

In the Sudanese Latuka tribe, when a man wants to marry a woman, he kidnaps her. Elderly members of his family go and ask the girl's father for her hand in marriage, and if dad agrees, he beats the suitor as a sign of his acceptance of the union. If the father disagrees, however, the man might forcefully marry the woman anyway.

6. Sons are raised by their uncles

When male children reach age 5 or 6 in the Northern Angolan Songo tribe, they are sent to live with their uncles on their mother's side. This is because chiefs inherit their position through matrilineal lines.

7. Beating the suitor

The Fulani tribe live in many countries in West

Africa and follow a tradition called Sharo. Sharo happens when two young men want to marry the same woman. To compete for her hand, they beat one another up. The men must suppress signs of pain and the one who takes the beating without showing signs of pain can take the wife.

<http://africa-facts.org/>

ROLE OF CULTURE IN THE SOCIETY

Although there are some aspects of culture that past there due date and thus harmful to the tightly knit fabrics of the society, norms play a vital role in defining our ways of life. It gives us our identities, roles and a sense of belonging to the societal set up we come from. They also enable us predict our systems and ways of life with ease as a people.

Our languages, our religion, our culinary artistry and social habits, the way we rhythm of our drums, the bellows of our horns and trumpets all melt to form our beliefs systems; a culture from which our behavior is informed.



PHOTO: ETHIOPIAN TRIBAL COMMUNITY/ SOURCE: ONLINE

'I FELL INTO A WELL BUT CLIMBED UP QUICK'

This metaphor tells a story of a cattle trader who on a long distance trip across the Kenya Somali border fending for his family, almost lost his life after being bitten by a venomous snake. It is the story of a journey from dire need, tribulations to establishing himself for success as narrated to [Isse Abdullahi](#)

Abdi Ismael Gedow did not grow up a happy boy. He did not enjoy the bliss of his childhood because of the dire lack in his family. It was so evident that they lacked even the most basic of human needs.

Abdi was born and brought up in central region of Somalia at a place called Guriel where he started his primary school. He was visibly a determined and ambitious young boy who showed dedication in his studies. Unfortunately, his bright star would be dimmed by his family's inability to pay his school fee which forced him to eventually drop out of school at class eight.

Looking at his life crumbling, Abdi despairingly opted to leave home for the bush to become herdsman for pittance. After three years herding and with some savings he went back to his family in order to find a wife and get married.

With a growing family and exhausted savings and no opportunities for jobs, life would prove so difficult for him and his family. Just around the same time when the civil war erupted in 1991, he joined a cow trading company based in his home town working as a merchant. They would travel from Somalia to Garissa on foot covering over 1000km of dry and desert land with neither sufficient food nor water supply except for a few kilograms of dry rice and some small jerricans of water.

Despite the numerous challenges during the trading trips where they walked through massive lands full of dangerous wild animals and poisonous desert snakes to finally face the Kenyan military troops guarding the boarder, Abdi would risk it all just so that he

could provide for his family to save them from the pangs of hunger and risk of death.

It all went difficult but well until during one of his trips from Somalia to Kenya, he got bitten by huge poisonous snake on right shin. The leg swelled like an inflated balloon forcing him to walk with an aid of an improvised walking stick. This incident would cause worries to the entire team of travelling traders not only because they did not have an anti-venom for the snake bite but it also risked the lives of the rest and could expose the whole convoy as they would not be able to move at a good pace to reach particular night camping points in time.

The journey continued and two agonizing days after the bite, they got to Garissa where his comrades sought assistance from a hospital oblivious of the fact that he was not a Kenyan and had illegally crossed into Kenyan border. Fortunately, he was allowed to fully receive the necessary medical attention and later got transferred to the Dadaab refugee camp where thousands of other Somali refugees were hosted.

Amputated leg and "buried" alive

On reaching Dadaab, he was registered as a refugee under the mandate of UNHCR and was relocated to Ifo camp in 1993. Unfortunately, due to an incurable infection on the bitten leg, doctors would later recommend that the leg be amputated.

Around this time (1993), the civil war in Somalia had fully covered all the corners of Somalia and each day break, masses of people would flee that horn of African nation

for neighbouring countries to seek safety. His family that he had left behind were not left behind in the search for safer haven. Having lived away from his family for over five years without any form of communication between them, they had given up on ever finding him again alive and so a symbolic burial ceremony had been conducted in his memory.

It would take Abdi another six years to trace his family and in 1999 he got in contact with them to their shock and amazement. They would later when they joined him in IFO camp. Abdi is now a father to eleven children some of who have finished secondary school level while others are still in primary school.

Overcoming his disability

Him not being a man who would sit and beg for handouts, he sought the assistance of his clan mates to help him set up his own business in order to fend for himself and his family. With great determinations and apt business skills, he now runs a successful business in Ifo market.

Looking at his life crumbling, Abdi despairingly opted to leave home for the bush to become herdsman for pittance. After three years herding and with some savings he went back to his family in order to find a wife and get married.



PHOTO: A YOUNG BOY WATCHES ACROSS THE FENCE IN DADAAB REFUGEE CAMP

THE FUTURE IN THE PAST...

What does the future hold back home for Somali youth?

BY ABDIHAKIM GURASE

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. Unless the dream cracks right before it gets shape. This is cannot be further from the truth for the youth in Dadaab refugee camp who stand with their backs against the shaky wall that has been the only home to them.

What if the camp would shut down today? What if all their dreams would crumble from a single blow? Would there be time enough for self-pity? Or there would be just enough to pick up the pieces left, dust and chart forward to the destinations unknown?

This is the predicament most youth in the Dadaab refugee camp currently grapple with given the dark cloud hovering over the Dadaab camp; the eminent closure has cast despair in the hearts of many a youth who

had envisioned themselves pursuing their education to fruition before contemplating going back home to build the broken structures. To them, the journey back home has come a little too premature.

In an agreement signed between the Federal Republic of Somalia, The Republic of Kenya and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2013, a tripartite commission was to be formed to ensure a conducive return process where there would be no coercion to return and ensured the returnees acted from an informed position about their repatriation.

The UNHCR came up with a campaign to assure willing returnees a safe home to return to. The "Go and See Somalia Programme" was born where groups of individuals visit Somalia to see for themselves the situation on the ground and

then come back to tell real life situation as is on the ground. Yet so far only a few of the nearly half a million Somali refugees opted to voluntarily go back home.

With the eminent closure, is there hope in the debris left of Somalia for the returnees? Majority of the youth having gone beyond basic education, some pursuing degree and diploma courses and some with High school certificates while others are still in underway in school, most have it that these Somali youth will upon completion of their studies be of help to their country; jumpstart development programs and manage diplomatic relations to ensure the horn of African nation restores her lost glory.

When the President of Somalia H.E Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud made his maiden entry into the Dadaab to a roundtable discussion with the Kenyan Interior Cabinet Secretary

FEATURE>>

Joseph Nkaisery – the President expressed his gratitude to the Kenyan Government for having hosted the refugees for over two decades yet reiterated the importance of the repatriation process being peaceful and humane.

“I personally believe in the Somali youth and is very proud of the strides they have made in education and training which will be of immense benefit in rebuilding the country,” he said, adding that, the development of roads, communication networks, and the general health of the economic and education transformation is now assured with the large pool of skilled labour available.

Given the education and technical knowledge and the sponsorships well performing students have received to pursue specialized trainings abroad in countries like Canada and the United States of America, could there be just a little more to be hoped for than the despair and dread covering the faces of many?

With the precarious security situation in the country are there functional institutions of higher learning? Functional enough to train and churn out competent professionals in various fields to support the economic take-off? Are there operational health facilities?

Could Mogadishu have grown enough lush grass to sit her children? Has the debris that filled the streets been cleared to pave way for state of the art highways, does the windstorms still blow over the beautiful soft sand dunes of Lido?



PHOTO: IFO CAMP/ DADAAB
PHOTO BY: KEPHA KIRAGU

-2013-

The year a tripartite agreement was signed between the Federal Republic of Somalia, The Republic of Kenya and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to form a commission that would ensure a conducive return process where there is no coercion to return and ensured the returnees acted from an informed position about their repatriation.

EDUCATION FEATURE>>

EDUCATION BROUGHT ME TO DADAAB

Where do the weak run to when the powerful corrupts the strong to take the land? Where bullets fly like birds through the air and loud bangs are the order of the day. When school doors do not open and villages look like ghost towns. This is the story of a young Somali girl who fled home to get her education as narrated to **PETER OKELLO**.

My name is Nimo and I was born in Somali. My parents moved into the Dadaab refugee camp in search of a peaceful place to live and for me to be able to get education.

When I arrived in Dadaab refugee camp, I was barely seven years old and could neither speak nor write English or Kiswahili. Whenever I spoke, it would worry me about whether what I was saying was correct. I grew up timid and unable to have a comprehensible conversation with my friends. I was constantly paranoid of the possibility that the

locals would be making fun of my speech. I would busy myself with my homework to distract me from the insecurities.

The main reason my family and I moved to the Dadaab refugee camp was to pursue new possibilities. I was young and needed to go to school to study, which was not possible back home. There were no functional education systems and no structure to provide us with the basic foundation for becoming who we wanted to be later on in life. My parents therefore opted to seek refuge in Dadaab refugee camp so that I could get an education.

Three years later, after getting to the camp, I was enrolled in school. It was not easy learning and being taught in a new language. I struggled with classwork, I looked different in the way I dressed and my accent was evidently heavier than the other students.

I did not do well in the beginning. I would spend most of my days crying and wishing someone would just understand what I was going through. I was getting overwhelmed. I told my mother what I was going through at school. Every time I came back home in tears, all I would get from her was, “it will be fine my daughter. You don’t have to look down on yourself and you will learn both English and Kiswahili just like the other students have learned.”

Gradually, I learned and mastered the Kiswahili and English languages. I also got over the culture shock that had frozen me for so long. I was able to interact and make friends with students from other countries; Burundi, Rwanda, Gambella and other tribes.

With these new skills and having mastered the language it became much easier to communicate and interact with other students and receive better grades. With better grades came greater dreams of completing my secondary education in 2013 with good grades.

I then joined college in Garissa for my tertiary certificate pursuing a secretarial course from which I graduated in 2015.

Bitten by the journalism bug

I had always envisioned myself talking, writing and telling the stories of my people, those who have been displaced from their homes due to war and famine. To tell the world how

so much has been denied for the Somali child, from rights to education in a conducive environment to the ability to attain their full potential. This is due to the lack of peace in Somalia. “One of my biggest dreams is to work where I can help my people and be useful in their lives, hopefully inspiring them to be what they want to be in life.” Nimo says. Who is Nimo? If she is the story teller then this doesn’t need to be a quote.

I therefore joined FilmAid’s Journalism training to gain writing and storytelling skills. “My main motivation is that I would be able to become the voice of the Somali woman, who traditionally has taught to only watch and follow the proceedings of the circus that is the society.” She says adding that, “Even if there are not so many opportunities now for the Somali woman, in years to come more doors will open up for more women. I want to become both a writer and a reporter and a global advocate for peace and refugees’ issues.”

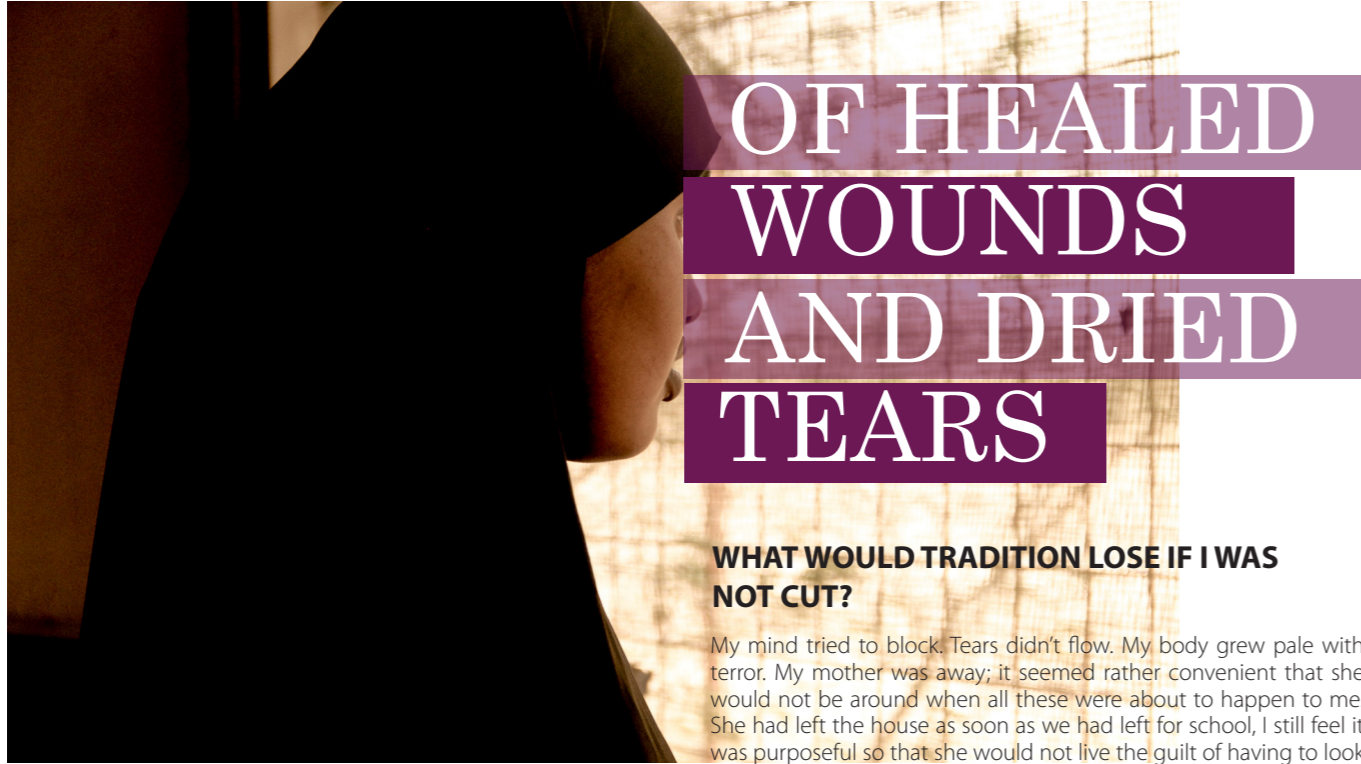


PHOTO: NIMO MOHAMED
PHOTO BY: ISAAC ONYANGO

<<EDUCATION FEATURE



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OF HEALED WOUNDS AND DRIED TEARS

WHAT WOULD TRADITION LOSE IF I WAS NOT CUT?

My mind tried to block. Tears didn't flow. My body grew pale with terror. My mother was away; it seemed rather convenient that she would not be around when all these were about to happen to me. She had left the house as soon as we had left for school, I still feel it was purposeful so that she would not live the guilt of having to look into my eyes later and find questions she didn't have answers for.

I was here, time was here, the knife was there and other circumcised girls were lined up so that we could inspect the parade and see for ourselves the "beauty" that comes with the cut. It is normal to look at fellow circumcised girls, culture permits the inspiration. "Are they going to cut me? Are they going to do this to me?" Visibly shaken, I asked myself.

I was the first to be struck. My legs were tied. Other young girls stood around watching as I helplessly screamed. Pain was an understatement. I could not feel legs. My brain shut. I don't remember what else followed but I stayed indoors for about four weeks unable to do anything not even walk out to relieve myself.

When I got into my puberty, the changes in me as woman stated to manifest. I had painful menses. I had to seek corrective medical attention and the stitches were removed.

I believe had I not been circumcised, I would not have had these taunting thoughts. And if a man someday asked for my hand in marriage, I would know it isn't because I am cut but because he would have seen me as a good partner.

Contrary to the victim most people would expect me to look at myself as, I am neither bitter nor angry about what happened to me. I don't want to live my life giving satisfaction to the perpetrators of these vices against women and young girls. Circumcision does not add any value or dignity to any woman. Young girls are getting maimed. There is no bliss in ignorance and lack of education.

Just what would culture gain by causing harm to those it should unite? What would tradition lose if I was not cut? Nothing!

Having made peace with the pains I went through as a bubbly small girl ignorant of what was happening to her, I suddenly realize out of all the possible unanswered questions I could come up with, one bothers me the most, and it is because it painfully has an answer. What would tradition lose if I was not cut?

BY FATUMO ABDULLAHI AND FAHMO AIDID

In my Somali tradition, any young woman who wishes to get married someday in a "dignified" way has to face the knife; removal of part of the female genitalia. If you opt not to be cut, you risk ridicule and victimization from the society. You will be treated with hate and contempt. Hurtful taunts and scornful looks at the tap stands will be your daily pains.

I was six years old when the striking knife came down on me. I still keep the vivid images of the whole ordeal in my head. I had gone to school that day, my uncle and aunty came to our school for me. They drew me out of class and we headed home. A hapless girl, I was walked home. Deep within I felt a cloud of fear envelope my whole body, this whole thing felt wrong but I could not free myself from the firm grip with which they held my feeble hands. My day had come. But I was not alone. My elder sister was to be cut too.

As young I was I had heard tales share by other young girls who had gone through the pain. The y called it horrible. It was unbearable and inhumane. I did not want to imagine the pain I was about to undergo.



THE ART OF LIFE

The taste of war is
The result of war
The victims of war
The misuse of power and
Abuse of women and children

The kiss of a mother and
The gift of breast milk
The tears of a child
The end of rain
The pangs of hunger

The love of God
The wisdom of mankind
The mission of charity
The sign of love
The pulse of the heart

The humour of comics
The sadness of laughter
The brightness of life
The sense of thrill
The victory of the champion

The liberty of slaves
The crown of peace
The robe of a king
The monument of unity
And the royalty of the kingdom
Such is the art of life
That man sculpts his heart's desires

By O. Omot

IS SOMEONE LISTENING?

Is someone listening?
How did I become a CHILD born in the land
And be not a DAUGHTER of the land?
If I stay in the camp I see my dreams trade for a loss
And frustrations grow in my head like forest moss

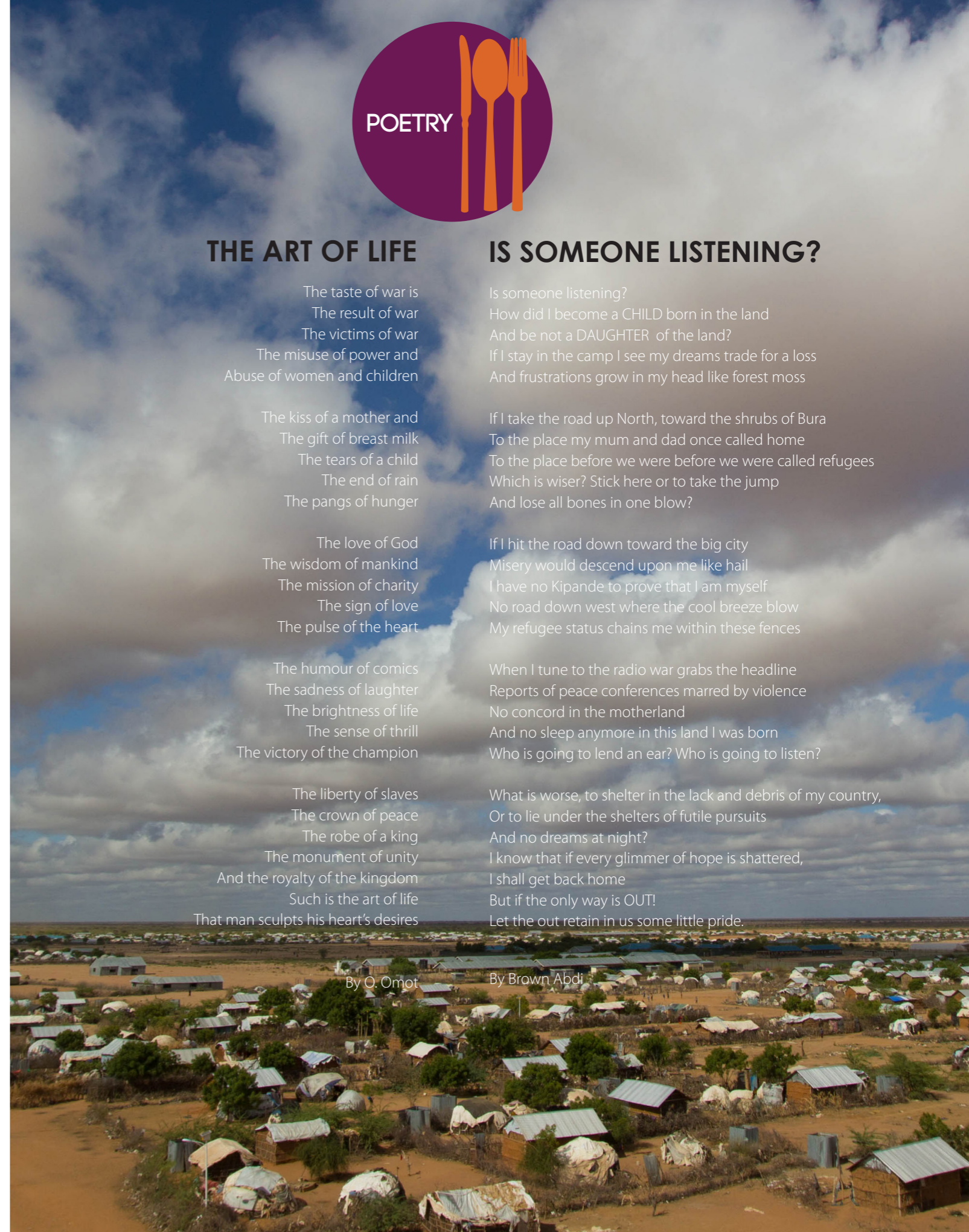
If I take the road up North, toward the shrubs of Bura
To the place my mum and dad once called home
To the place before we were before we were called refugees
Which is wiser? Stick here or to take the jump
And lose all bones in one blow?

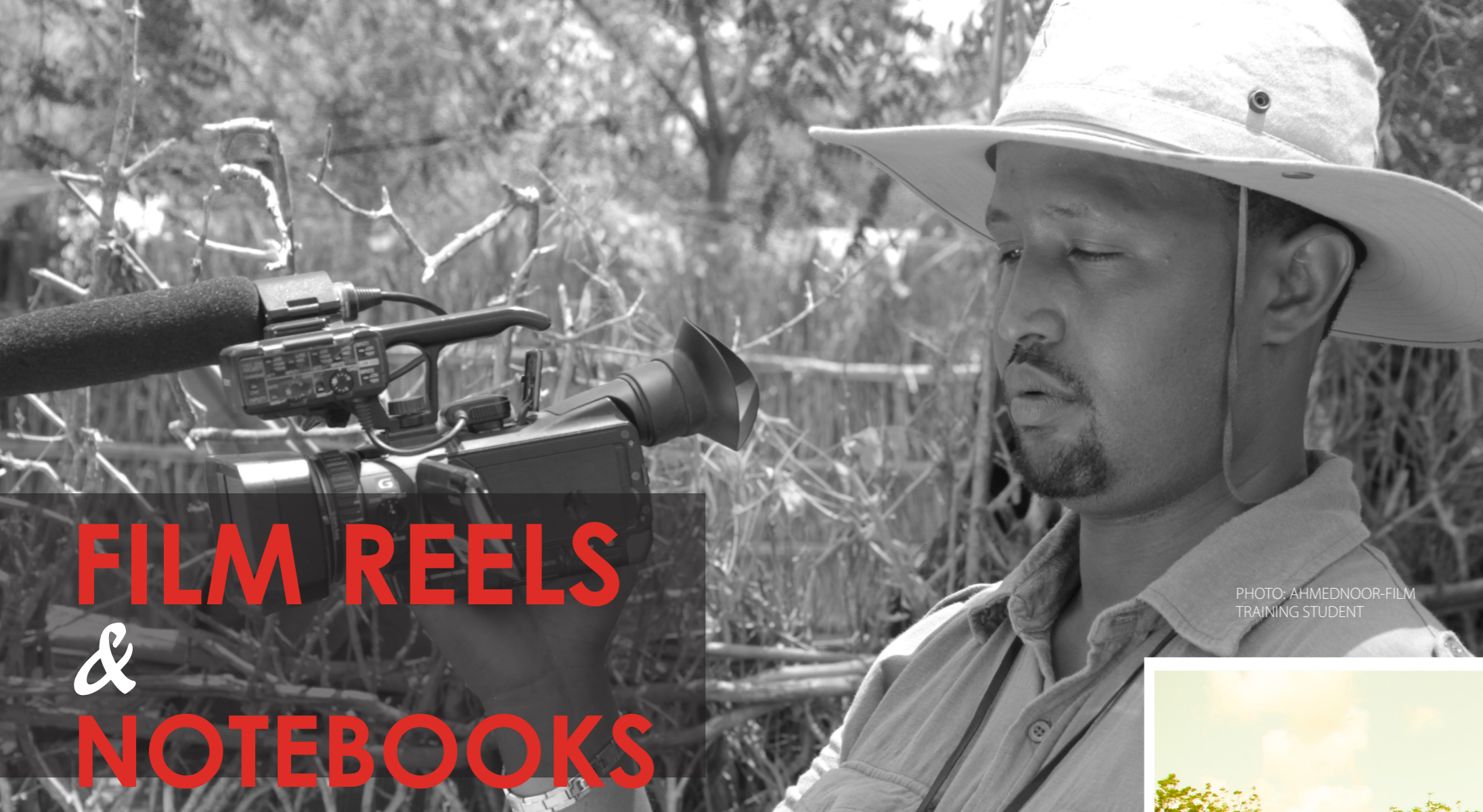
If I hit the road down toward the big city
Misery would descend upon me like hail
I have no Kipande to prove that I am myself
No road down west where the cool breeze blow
My refugee status chains me within these fences

When I tune to the radio war grabs the headline
Reports of peace conferences marred by violence
No concord in the motherland
And no sleep anymore in this land I was born
Who is going to lend an ear? Who is going to listen?

What is worse, to shelter in the lack and debris of my country,
Or to lie under the shelters of futile pursuits
And no dreams at night?
I know that if every glimmer of hope is shattered,
I shall get back home
But if the only way is OUT!
Let the out retain in us some little pride.

By Brown Abdi





FILM REELS & NOTEBOOKS

PHOTO: AHMEDNOOR-FILM TRAINING STUDENT

“This training has been a great experience for us trainees. Personally, it is a branch into another creative career path. Other than The master classes provided us with the tangible experience of how the film industry operates.”

Ahmednoor Mohamed(Gesse)

“Despite the challenges we face, living in refugee camps has benefited us immensely,” said Ojullu Peter. “You can enroll in schools of your choice, study from primary through secondary and even into university as long as you work hard and get good grades that qualify you for scholarships.”

“I began my education here in the camp and have learnt a lot through life. The Journalism training gave me an opportunity to explore an area I was unaware of. Other than the skills I developed, the assignments kept me busy. Journalism knowledge and skills has changed me in a major way. I now look at myself as someone who should tell stories of issues affecting the youth in the society and not being one of the problems the society needs to rid itself of. I consider this an introductory course, in the future I want to be an important a renowned reporter like Richard Quest of CNN and even create my own brand as a journalist.” Peter said.

In a predominantly Somali society, girls tend to shy away from competition against men. This was evident in the recruitment

CONTINUES IN THE NEXT PAGE

IT'S SYSTEMS ROLL FOR FILMAID'S FILM AND JOURNALISM GRADUATES

It is an hour into the basics of radio production class session, we are on homestretch with the journalism cousework. We decide to weigh the gains made by journalism students who have been undergoing the training program for the past 6 months.

BY ISAAC ONYANGO AND PETER OKELLO.

“I want to achieve the highest level of professionalism in journalism. I want to get good knowledge beyond what I have now. This is basic training but it has been a great eye opener for me. It is a foundation which I intend to build on further” Said Mahat Abdullahi.

Living in the refugee camps provides limited options for the refugees. If available, the opportunities are competed for and only a handful of people are able to benefit. This is because these avenues are provided on a donor funding basis which may vary and favour one project at the expense of another.

One of FilmAid's methodology is skills development; training refugee youth on Film Making and Citizen Journalism skills each year. These youth are equipped with writing and film making skills to enable them to tell their own stories from their own perspectives.



PHOTO: FILMAID'S FILM TRAINING AND JOURNALISM STUDENTS AFTER A SKYPE TRAINING SESSION

SKILL TRANSFER>>

process where the number of female applicants was extremely low in comparison to that of their male counterparts.

"I am privileged to have gotten this opportunity," said Fatumo Abdullahi. "I am already enlightened in journalism practice. FilmAid has done great work in nurturing our skills. If I go back to my homeland now, I hope to develop this voice to be able to tell the stories of my people."

"There are numerous problems facing journalists in South Sudan. They are harassed, jailed, intimidated and censored and killed almost every day. I have also heard that most journalists in South Sudan are not professionals and so they do not respect media ethics and media laws all together. With this knowledge of journalism I have gained from this training, I can, without doubt be of help to my fellow journalists and my country." Susan Mangu, a 17 year South Sudanese student.

The value of education and skills development is something that is well understood by the youth in Dadaab. It is from this appreciation that most youth compete for the few available opportunities to acquire skills with the hope that it would benefit them back in their countries or when resettled to countries abroad.

As the news about the closure of the camp and voluntary repatriation back home keep gathering momentum, albeit with some fear, many youth are hopeful that when they are finally home they can help build their respective nations with the skills acquired here in the camp.

"Through this training I got an opportunity to interact with students from other countries and tribes. It was an opportunity to learn from, learn with and learn about others. Other than preparing me for a career, journalism provided me a great ground for intercultural interactions," said Ochalla.

Film Training Program

The Film Training program nurtures film making talent and equips the upcoming filmmakers with the necessary skills to be able to capture vividly the refugee stories.

The six-month continuous program targets refugee and the host community youth within the Dadaab Refugee complex.

The essence of the program is to withdraw the power of the media from the professionals and hand it over to these budding film artists with the most clear understanding of their environment, their plight and the hope sprouting in their dreams as refugees..

in collaboration with the African Digital Media institute as the external examining body, the students received master classes in all Film set areas; from pre-production to post production and content distribution.

"This training has been a great experience for us trainees. Personally, it is a branch into another creative career path. Other than The master classes provided us with the tangible experience of how the film industry operates." said Ahmednoor, one of the Film training graduands.

When the curtains are drawn on yet another successful year of the Journalism and Film Training programme, it is the hope of FilmAid and all stakeholders that the skills transferred will benefit the graduates, and the larger society.



PHOTO: JOURNALISM STUDENTS FROM RIGHT GIRMA MOHAMED, ISSE ABDULLAHI, HUSSEIN ALI DURING A CLASS SESSION WITH PETER OKELLO



I want to achieve the highest level of professionalism in journalism. I want to get good knowledge beyond what I have now. This is basic training but it has been a great eye opener to me. It is a foundation which I intend to build on further"

Mahat Abdullahi.

UPCOMING EVENT

FILMAID

10th ANNUAL FILM FESTIVAL



DADAAB
19TH-23RD SEPT

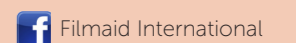
KAKUMA
19TH-23RD SEPT

NAIROBI
3RD-5TH OCT

About FilmAid and the Film Festival

FilmAid is a development and humanitarian communications organization that harnesses the power and influence of film and media to combat critical social issues through the creation of multimedia content designed to inform, inspire and empower.

Every year Film Aid hosts a Film Festival (FAFF) that is aimed at creating awareness through films developed by host and refugee communities geared towards making practical impact on critical issues, from health, education, to human rights, conflict resolution and economic empowerment. By offering marginalized communities a voice on the issues that affect them, these programs enable self-advocacy and self-determination.



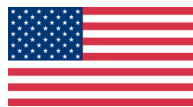


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