Refugee

THE MAGAZINE

ISSUE #9 | DADAAB EDITION | AUGUST 2016

Malala Yousafzai, the world youngest nobel peace prize laureate winner in Dadaab

Featured Inside

WHEN MALALA VISITED DADAAB

7 UNIQUE AFRICAN CULTURES

Take a glimpse into the uniqueness of the African people

ARIDCULTURE

Cheating Dadaab’s harsh conditions
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.
A

midst deafening volleys and the
flashing 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 to be
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 Yousafzai, it
would go along way if all parents would join hands and support their
daughters and son's education ambitions to ensure they attain their life's
potential.

"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

BY PETER OKELLO

PHOTO: MALALA YOUSAFZAI
PHOTO BY: ISAAC ONYANGO

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.
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

Athough 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 where the 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 to showcase their talents, 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, 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 Amna 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 Ethopian 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.

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) co-recipient read by UNHCR Head of Ali Njuqur Abaas-Haidoebi 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.

Abaas-Haidoebi

“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.”
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 Girls First Graduates 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 unconducive 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.

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

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.”

“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.”

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.”

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

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.”

“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.”
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 midsized 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.

A

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 riged the tractor up, lowered four worn plows into the ground and planted grain.
WHEN A ZANDE SON IS BORN

By Suzan Mangu & Yusuf Sigat

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 initiation ceremony is not complete without the smoke ritual where the middle 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 the 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 made to cough and spit to make them4. 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 Angaden Songs tribe, they are sent to live with their uncles on their mother’s side. This is because children 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.

NORMS AND TRADITIONS

7 UNIQUE AFRICAN CULTURES

BY SUZAN MANGU & YUSUF SIGAT

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. They 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 community as the practice is still common with just but a handful of 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. It is 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

PHOTO: ETHIOPIAN TRIBAL COMMUNITY/SOURCE: ONLINE
Abdi Ismail 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. He was a boy who showed dedication in his studies. 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 100km 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 Kenya. 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.
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 it 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 off? Are there operational health facilities?

various fields to support the economic take-off? Are there operational health facilities?

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 off? Are there operational health facilities?

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.

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 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, “right now 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’ rights.”

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 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, “right now 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’ rights.”
I was six years old when the striking knife came down on me. I still remember the day. I was the first to be struck. My legs were tied. Other young 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 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. 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 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! The taste of war is the result of war. The victims of war. The misuse of power and abuse of women and children.
It is an hour into the basics of radio production class session, we are on homestretch with the journalism coursework. 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.

“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 and 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...
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.

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.

“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 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.

“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 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 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.

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.

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.
HAVE YOUR ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN OUR NEXT PUBLICATION

Deliver your articles to our offices at Windle Trust Compound in Dagahaley, Care compound in IFO or Hagadera DRC Community centre opposite IRC hospital.

The views expressed in this publication do NOT represent that of UNHCR, PRM, FilmAid, or any other partner unless otherwise stated.