



**\\SOCIAL CHALLENGES FACING SOMALI WOMEN REFUGEES: THE CASE OF  
EASTLEIGH, NAIROBI. 1990 - 2011/1**

**BETH WAITHIRA MBURU KIBINDA**

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PEACE STUDIES OF UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

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## DECLARATION

This proposal is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in this or any other university.

SIGNATURE CANDIDATE:

Beth Waitira

28 NOV 2013

**BETH WAITHIRA MBURU KIBINDA**

**DATE**

This proposal is submitted for the award of a Master of Arts Degree in Armed Conflict and Peace Studies with our approval as the University Supervisor

SIGNATURE:

Vincent G. Simiyu

29<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2013

**PROF. VINCENT G. SIMIYU**

**DATE**

SIGNATURE:

Milcah Amolo Achola

15<sup>th</sup> Nov 2013

**PROF. MILCAH AMOLO ACHOLA**

**DATE**

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## **DEDICATION**

**To my beloved son Ty Iyanu Muriithi. A great man**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

First and foremost, I want to thank my God, my creator master and friend, for giving me the wealth and health I needed to complete this project. You surely have the best plans for my life.

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motivated me. Thank you very much. I pray that I will always make you proud. I lack words to express my appreciation

However, I want to declare that any mistake that appears in this research thesis is my sole responsibility. Therefore, it should not be attributed to anybody else.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study sought to establish the social challenges facing women refugees of Somali origin living in Eastleigh. The term social challenge shall be used to mean, a condition that at least some people in a community view as being undesirable. The challenges identified were: health and shelter, insecurity, gender based violence, education and access to social amenities. Economic challenges were also highlighted. From the challenges, coping mechanisms were also identified, some of which include: Trade, remittances, employment and religion.

On methodology, the study interviewed thirty local residents, seventy urban Somali women refugees and thirty Somali male refugees. The men were interviewed so as to offer a male perspective on the issues that the women raised and for gender inclusion. The interviews were carried out using a semi-structured questionnaire and were both individual and focus group discussions. The study also used secondary data, that is, from books, newspapers, unpublished articles and articles published in journals and periodicals. Snowballing was used to get a sample that was a representation of the demographic.

Halleh Ghorashi's Organizational Theory was used for the theoretical framework. Through the deficit approach he states that migrants or refugees are held responsible when a society/organization is not diverse enough. The urban Somali women refugee is privileged to limited rights thus making her environment not diverse. The deficit in this study represents the challenges that the Somali women refugees face and therefore seek to get organized or to fill up that deficit by getting organized which is what the study refers to as coping mechanisms. To further explain this, the study concluded that, in a new context where women want to thrive and become active participants, they have to influence their mindsets, change behaviors for a chance to realize their dreams.

The study established that women refugees of Somali origin actively took up education opportunities; they established businesses and took up employment opportunities. It was also discovered that they were prone to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and some of them had been subjected to violence like sexual abuse and Female Genitals Mutilation (FGM). Further, the study established that, while health services were not as discriminative, poor roads,

garbage collection and sewerage systems were a major challenge.

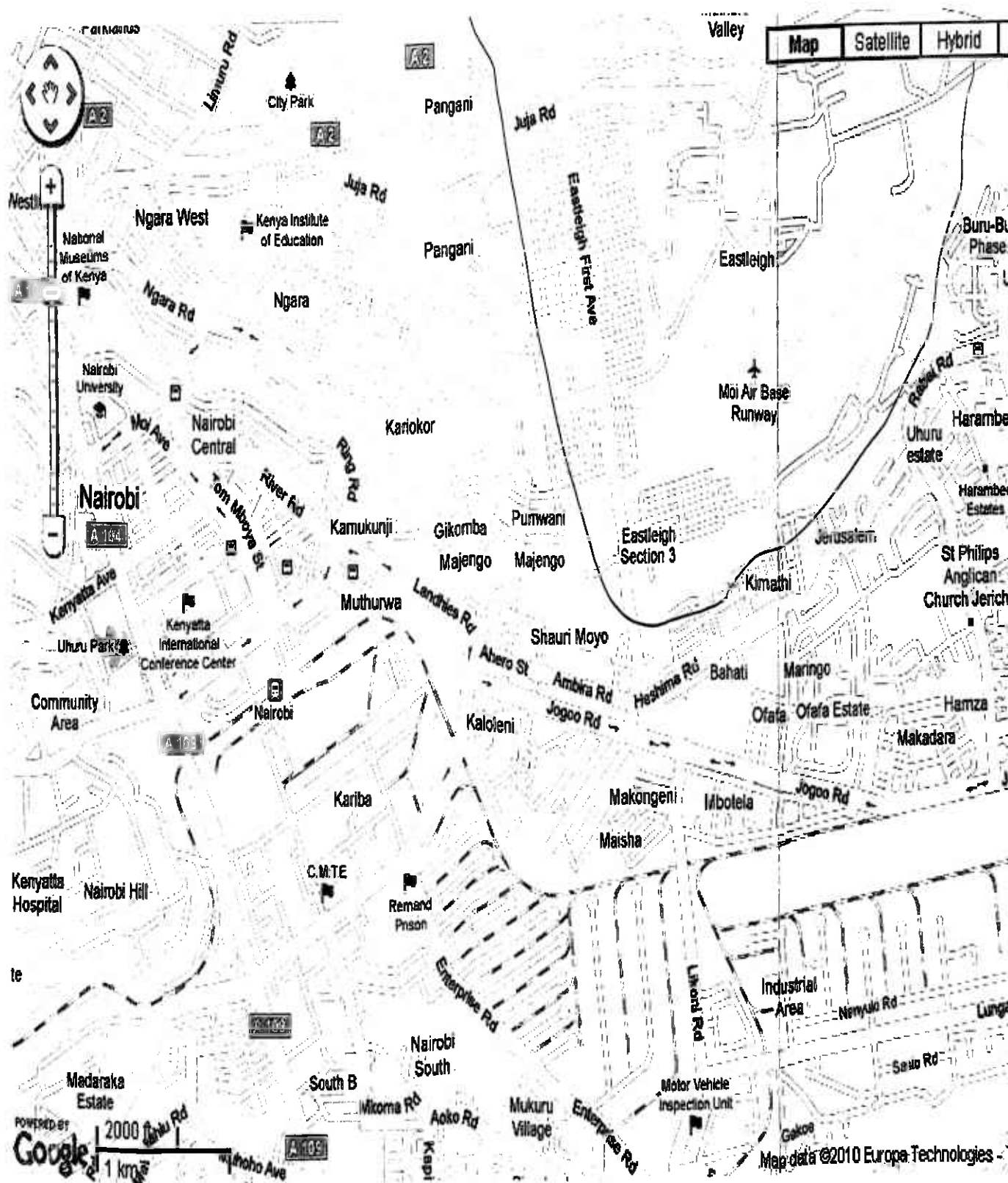
Inasmuch as the study explored different social challenges facing urban Somali women refugees, the study still has room for more academic research in the area of other social challenges facing the women and specifically insecurity, socio-economic challenges and pressure on social amenities.

At the end of the project, the Somali women refugees forwarded some recommendations to the Government of Kenya and the Nairobi County government. This information will be helpful to further development and planning for Eastleigh.

## ACRONYMS

<b>AIAI</b>	Al-Ittihad Al-Islamiya
<b>ARPCT</b>	Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism
<b>CBD</b>	Central Business District
<b>FDI</b>	Foreign Direct Investment
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>GoK</b>	Government of Kenya
<b>ICU</b>	Supreme Islamic Courts Union
<b>IGA</b>	Income Generating Activities
<b>NEP</b>	North Eastern Province
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organization
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OLF</b>	Somali Oromo Liberation Front
<b>RCK</b>	Refugee Consortium of Kenya
<b>SNM</b>	Somali National Movement
<b>TFG</b>	Transitional Federal Government
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# MAP OF EASTLEIGH



Google Earth: Searchable Map and Satellite view of Nairobi, Kenya.

Key  
 Boundary marks area of study

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

<b>Arms Embargo</b>	Prohibition by the United Nations or other state organization over sale of arms to a country or a group of countries in conflict.
<b>Economic Challenge</b>	The pervasive condition of human existence that exists because society has unlimited wants and needs, but limited resources used for their satisfaction <sup>1</sup> .
<b>Failed state</b>	A state that has virtually stopped to function.
<b>Income</b>	The consumption and savings opportunity gained by an entity within a specified time frame, which is generally expressed in monetary terms.
<b>Peace Enforcement</b>	Military operations intervention to impose peace on parties to an armed conflict
<b>Physical Abuse</b>	Any act resulting in a non-accidental physical injury <sup>2</sup>
<b>Psychological Abuse</b>	Emotional abuse, mental abuse A form of mistreatment in which there is intent to cause mental or emotional pain or injury; PA includes verbal aggression, statements intended to humiliate or infantilize, insults, threats of abandonment or institutionalization; PA results in stress, social withdrawal, long term or recalcitrant depression, anxiety <sup>3</sup>
<b>Refugees</b>	The United Nations Convention of 1951 defines a refugee “as a person owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons

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<sup>1</sup> <http://glossary.econguru.com/economic-term/The+Economic+Problem> (accessed 26<sup>th</sup> November 2013)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.reachout.com/What-is-physical-abuse> (accessed 26<sup>th</sup> November 2013)

<sup>3</sup> <http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/psychological+abuse> (accessed 26<sup>th</sup> November 2013)

of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country or return there because there is a fear of persecution

**Remittances** Transfer of money by a foreign worker (migrant) to their countries of origin

**Social Challenge:** A condition that at least some people in a community view as being undesirable<sup>4</sup>. These conditions revolve around, and are not limited to their basic needs: health, education, shelter, among others

**Warlords** Persons who have both military and civil control over a sub national area due to armed forces loyal to him and not to the central authority. The term can also mean one who espouses the ideal that war is necessary, and has the means and authority to engage in war.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www2.maxwell.syr.edu/plegal/tips/sp.html> (accessed 26th November 2013)

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there are more than 10.5 million people around the world struggling in situations of protracted and unresolved exile. This estimate excludes Palestinian refugees under the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) mandate. It is based on national groups of refugees of 25,000 living for five years or more in the same country of asylum.<sup>5</sup>

The host country allows such people to remain in the country and provides them with security, medication, food and water. However, these rights may be limited. For instance movement is restricted to the camps; secondly, refugees are not allowed to take up formal employment without a permit from the host state and are therefore forced to depend on humanitarian aid. However, some are allowed to work under special United Nations (U.N) provisions.

Some of the refugees have managed to go around the system and migrate to various cities, among them Nairobi. As it has been observed, women and children are the biggest hit when there is conflict and the Somali conflict was no different. Thus through the urban migration, many Somali women moved into Nairobi and specifically Eastleigh.

International organizations like the Red Cross, World Health Organization, CARE International, and UNHCR among others provide some support in form of humanitarian aid. Services found in the camp and to some extent in urban areas include and are not limited to health services, education scholarships, food rations and monthly stipend – especially to orphans and vulnerable persons to mention just a few.

This support is not enough, moreover, over the years as it has largely failed to achieve its ultimate goal of providing relief to the refugees and in addition it has proved to be unsustainable. The refugees have consequently resorted to alternative ways to provide for

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<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, "Helping Refugees: An Introduction to UNHCR", Geneva: *UNHCR*, 2000, p.9.

themselves and their households.<sup>6</sup> The alternative ways include seeking employment through UNHCR programs, getting assistance from Western countries or getting aid through humanitarian agencies.

Some refugees immigrate to Western countries and sometimes provide assistance through remittances to those left behind in African countries. The remittances assist the refugees to cope with protracted displacements of their family members. Such money can alleviate poverty and can provide possibilities for improving recipients' situations, within their considerable constraints.<sup>7</sup>

Kenya has been receiving refugees since the 1970s from neighboring countries, namely Rwanda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda and Somalia. The situation worsened by 1990s with mass migration of refugees. The influx into Kenya has been high with some refugees settling among the urban populations. In 2010, it was estimated that over 12,000 refugees were allowed by the Government of Kenya to live and work in urban centers throughout the country.<sup>8</sup> These urban centers included Nairobi, and more specifically in Eastleigh which is predominantly inhabited by the Kenyan Somali and is of concern for this study.

According to UNHCR, in 2010 Kenya was home to more than 374,000 refugees. Most were living in the two designated refugee camps, Kakuma and Dadaab, which over time have become overcrowded.<sup>9</sup> Significant attention was directed to these refugees with focus on the growing number of refugees living in its urban centers by the Kenya government. Indeed, the exact size of the refugee population in the capital city Nairobi is not known. Official figures suggest there are around 46,000 refugees in Nairobi.<sup>10</sup> However, unofficial claims state that there are nearer 100,000. Kenya's Refugee Act, requires that all refugees should be settled in the designated refugee camps. However, high levels of poverty and harsh conditions of life in the camps and more recently insecurity in the camps, have forced some refugees to move to urban areas to find means of survival.

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<sup>6</sup> Jacobsen, K., "The Economic Life of Refugees, Bloomfield", CT Kumarian Press, 2005, p.308.

<sup>7</sup> Crisp, J. "No Solution in Sight: the Problem of Protracted Refugee Situations in Africa" Centre for Comparative Immigration Studies, *Working Paper No. 68*. San Diego: University of California, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, "UNHCR Somalia Briefing Sheet", Nairobi, February, 2010; p. 79.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



In Eastleigh, for example some of refugees of Somali origin became victims of double migration. First, they escaped from their country of origin and crossed the border thus becoming official refugees. Secondly, they refused to stay in the designated refugee camps and moved illegally into urban areas. In such urban areas they faced great challenges such as frequent intimidation by the security agents, clan conflict, forced marriages and lack of economic opportunities as most have no legal documentation allowing them to be in the urban areas.

Eastleigh through observation is an appealing safe haven because of the already existing Kenyan-Somali, thus making it hard to differentiate between a Kenyan-Somali woman and an immigrant Somali woman, herein known as an Urban Somali woman refugee. The urban Somali women refugees have had to adapt and find means of survival in a new country and totally different culture.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Refugees continue to impose economic, environmental and security burdens to the host country. Urban refugees are not recognized unless they are holders of a valid travel document, issued by UNHCR or the Government of Kenya authorizing their stay in such urban areas. They therefore receive limited if any form of financial, medical and in some special circumstances educational assistance from the government.

From 1991, the Somali as a country had no operating government and the conflict was on a high scale. Most of the citizens began migrating to various countries around Eastern Africa and Kenya being one of them. The government closed many of the refugee camps along the Kenya boarder and decided to move everyone to Dadaab camp. The Government of Kenya in conjunction with UNHC and other non-governmental organizations began offering the much need services to the refugees. Alongside that, Kenya embarked on an encampment policy, ensuring that all refugees stayed in the camps unless for some special reason they needed to move to other parts of the country.

The Somali refugees, therefore, engage in income generating activities (IGAs) which include but are not limited to selling of jewelry (either made from gold, silver or other precious stones), forex exchange, small scale trading of clothes, shoes, ladies handbags, among other

things. These businesses are mostly carried out as well by the women refugees of Somali origin living in Eastleigh. Thus, the refugees have not lived a dignified life despite interventions from UN agencies such as UNHCR. The UNHCRs help is sometimes inadequate to support refugees. Therefore the refugees are encouraged to participate in income generating activities (IGAs) as a source of livelihood.<sup>11</sup>

Considering the importance of IGAs in the wellbeing of refugees and in relieving economic burden to host nation, little knowledge exists about the social challenges facing the Somali refugees especially the urban women refugees and any notable coping mechanisms that they have adopted over the years. Extensive research has been done so far which explores the remittances by labour migrants from abroad and the effect of such remittances in their countries of origin. However, little is known about the social challenges facing the refugees in their host country.<sup>1213</sup> Particularly, there is no study that focuses on the social challenges facing urban refugees and some sustainable coping mechanisms they have adopted.

This study will thus seek to investigate how Somali urban women refugees have adjusted into the new roles despite the challenges and obstacles.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- i. Identify specific social challenges that Somali women refugees have faced since their entry into Eastleigh from the period 1991 – 2011
- ii. Identify coping mechanisms that the Somali women refugees have adopted during their stay in Eastleigh.
- iii. Identify any socio-economic activities they have undertaken while in Eastleigh and how effectively they have used the proceeds from these activities to better their livelihoods.

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<sup>11</sup> Kashaija, M. A study on socio-economic and institutional factors affecting income generating activities, 2009

<sup>12</sup> Refugee Action , “The destitution trap: researching into destitution among refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.” *London: Refugee Action*. 2006

<sup>13</sup> Burnett A and Peel M., “Asylum seekers and refugees in Britain: the health of survivors of torture and organised violence”. *BMJ* 322 (7286) 10 March 200, pp.606-9.

## **1.4 Justification of the Study**

The study will make a significant contribution to academic literature in the areas of community development and history, policy makers and Government agencies alike on matters of refugees. The finding will create awareness in regards to the different challenges faced by the urban Somali women refugees. The study will look into the different aspects of social and some economic activities that urban Somali women refugees have engaged in while in Eastleigh.

Further, the study will bring a better understanding of the coping mechanisms that the urban Somali women refugees have adopted so as to survive in a totally new environment. Notably, most traders in Eastleigh are of the Cushitic background and the study will be able to explore just how the Somali women refugees have engaged in this space and the impact their interaction has had with the local residents.

The study will therefore, be important to the ministry dealing with planning and development in Nairobi, The Nairobi City Council especially the city planners and the ministry dealing with local governments. They will get an insight on areas of infrastructure that needs to be expanded or renovated to meet the needs of people living in and around Eastleigh.

## **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

The study will cover the period between 1991 and 2011. This is the period following the civil war that broke out in 1991 through which the Somali government collapsed and 2011 when the Somali refugee influx into the camps in Kenya became large enough to attract notice of international community. In the same year of 2011, Kenya launched *Operation Linda Nchi* to help stabilize Somalia and stop further influx of Somali refugees into Kenya.

The area of study is Nairobi's Eastleigh estate. The estate has a long history of Kenyan Somali settlement who acted as a pull factor to Somali refugees. Refugees of Somali origin who settle in the estate engage in business activities and other social activities that have an impact on the available resources and local community.

The major setback to carrying out this research was financial. Funds were largely sourced from personal savings. Secondly, language was a barrier since most of the Somali

respondents are not fluent in English or Swahili. To overcome this hurdle the researcher employed the services of a research assistant from the area under study to help in interpretation during interviews with the local respondents. This entailed an added cost.

Thirdly, according to Somali cultural beliefs, women are weak and vulnerable and therefore it is always feared that they might leak confidential information to foreigners. Thus they are forbidden to talk to foreigners. To alleviate this problem, local leaders with whom the researcher has a previous working relation, who are considered trustworthy and honest by the researcher and have credibility in the community, were used to assist in introducing the respondents to the study and to the researcher.

Another limitation was the fact that the urban Somali women refugees are not concentrated in a particular area in Eastleigh. They live and work in diverse places around Eastleigh and its environs. It therefore meant walking for hours on end alongside the research assistant in trying to find the sample group and convincing them that the information given was not to be used against them.

Finally, due to the sensitivity of the information collected by this study, the researcher anticipated resistance from the Somali women refugees. For fear of victimization the respondent might not be willing to participate in the study. The researcher assured the women that their responses would be treated anonymously and that information given would be for academic purposes only. Further, the researcher acquired a letter of introduction from the University of Nairobi and worked closely with the elders from Somali clans and networks created through UNHCR.

## **1.6 Literature Review**

In the early 1990s, an influx of Somali refugees was witnessed following the civil war in Somali that saw the overthrowing of President Siad Barre. Over two decades, the humanitarian situation in Somalia has repeatedly been described as one of the worst crises in the world.<sup>14</sup> Early in 2009 over three million people were estimated to be in need of aid. This represented 77 percent increase of the world refugees in less than a year.<sup>15</sup> It has been estimated that as many as two thirds of Mogadishu's population might have fled their

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<sup>14</sup> Menkhaus in USCR, "World Refugee Survey 1997", *Washington DC: USCR*, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> OCHA, "Somalia Humanitarian Overview" March 2009

homes.<sup>16</sup> About 1.6 million displaced persons from Somalia have found themselves in refugee camps or urban areas in Kenya majority of who are women.<sup>17</sup> A lot has been written about these refugees. One common aspect lacking in this literatures is that of the socio-economic challenges of the Somali women refugees particularly those living in Eastleigh, and how they have coped over time.

Heitritter states that, culturally, similar to other cultures, women take care of children and household chores. Usually Somali women put their children's health, education, and well-being as a priority. Somali men only play a small role in this regard. Patterns of family interaction direct women to defer to men, especially in public. Responsible role functioning for men and women is defined differently according to public and private (home) domains.<sup>18</sup> Family dynamics are reported to "shift" by domain: men dominant in public, women 'dominant' at the home front. Yet little is highlighted about these women who are dominant in sustaining families.

According to Samatar the Somali Republic which was formed in 1960 after British Somaliland Protectorate joined Italian Somalia collapsed within thirty years producing many refugees some of whom came to Nairobi. One reason for this was the increasingly despotic character of Mohamed Siad Barre, the president who had seized power in a military coup d'état in 1969. Other reasons include aspects of traditional culture and their transposition from local to national level: the clan system, the concept of group rather than individual culpability, and lineage segmentation, under which individuals, families and clans act in harmony or in opposition to each producing inter-clan wars.<sup>19</sup> Although Samatar discussed the circumstances that led to creation of the Somali refugees, he does not discuss how they survived in foreign urban areas like Nairobi.

El-Sohl notes that there is a tremendous level of female uptake in USA schools and universities for the last 18 years.<sup>20</sup> Further, El-Sohl notes more girls are now getting an education as opposed to the old days when only a small percentage of girls were given

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<sup>16</sup> Lindley, "The Dynamics and Effects of Remittances in Insecure Settings: the Somali Case", *D Phil Thesis*, Department of International Development, University of Oxford, 2009; p. 47.

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR Somalia Fact Sheet, Mar 2009. p. 85

<sup>18</sup> Heitritter, "Somali Family Strength: Working in the Communities, Family and Children's Services", *University of Minnesota Extension Service*, 1999, p. 17

<sup>19</sup> Samatar, Said, S "Somalia: a Nation in Turmoil", *Minority Rights Group*, 1991 p.241

<sup>20</sup> El-Sohl C. F. "Somalis in London's East End: a community striving for recognition," *New Community Journal*, 17, 1993, p.542

education. If it is true that women are also gaining prominence in education, this study will try to discover if it is replicated in socio-economic livelihood of refugees of Somali origin in Nairobi.

Somali women can seek employment, but the community's preferred role is for the man to work and the women to stay at home. The GoK has policies that require refugees to live in camps. Refugees are neither encouraged nor restricted from working. However, when it comes to employment in the formal sector and in the professional classes especially, few work permits are granted to illegal refugees. As long as refugees work in the informal sector, without a work permit and outside of government regulated businesses, the government tolerates their economic activity<sup>21</sup>.

Putnam and Noor<sup>22</sup> says that in Kenya, the majority of citizens are actually employed in the informal sector and do not have access to formal sector jobs.<sup>23</sup> They are employed in the informal economy. They must be having an impact on the host community where they live yet little if anything is known of the impact of the Somali women refugees on Eastleigh.

Putnam and Noor indicate that it has not been a smooth sail for Somali women entrepreneurs in Eastleigh. The two scholars indicated that, with adequate access to finances, producers have access to well-designed credit, savings and insurance services. This makes capital available to finance the inputs, labour and equipment they need to generate income, and therefore, women can afford to invest in riskier but more profitable enterprises and asset portfolios. They can also reach markets more effectively and adopt more efficient strategies to stabilize their food consumption.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, this study sought to establish if this has been the case for Somali women refugees living in Eastleigh.

Fleschner argues that Somali women, like many other women have limited financial resources. They also have to deal with biased lending practices that emerge when financial institutions consider women smaller, less experienced and therefore less attractive clients. Often institutions also lack the knowledge to offer products tailored to women's preferences

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Putnam and Noor, "The Somalis: Their History and Culture, Center for Applied Linguistics", *Refugee Fact Sheet Number 9*, 1993, p. 7

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Dick, S. "Liberians in Ghana: Living Without Humanitarian Assistance" *UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research* No. 57. Geneva: UNHCR, 2002

and constraints.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, like other women, Somali women compared with men; tend to have more limited control over resources accepted as collateral by the financial institution, less access to information and to be more risk averse. Their access to finance has also been limited by the low number of banks that are *sharia* compliant. This research will seek to investigate if these conditions are considered as obstacles to the socio-economic development of Somali women refugees in Eastleigh.

Maimbo and Ratha<sup>26</sup> indicated that remittance flows rank behind only Foreign Direct Investment as a source of external funding for refugees living in developing countries. They point out further that remittances to low income countries were larger as a share of gross domestic product or as a share of imports than were to middle-income countries. Remittances also are more stable than private capital flows, which often move pro-cyclically, thus raising incomes during booms and depressing them during downturns.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, remittances to the women refugees of Somali become an important factor in this study. Maimbo and Rathas' work is a clear indication that the presence of refugees in a developing country like Kenya affects the economy yet we know little of the impact of remittances to Somali refugee women in Eastleigh.

Horst<sup>28</sup> criticises the common depiction of refugee camps as isolated places and highlights the connections between Somali refugees in Dadaab and relatives elsewhere in the Horn of Africa and beyond. She found that a minority – her estimate is roughly 15 per cent – of refugees received regular remittances which, given the meagre international aid and limited local income opportunities, greatly affected their lives and the wider economy of the refugee camps.

Repham argues that remittances are often invested by the recipients, particularly in countries with sound economic policies. Similarly, Somali women refugees with relatives in the diaspora have been able to invest the remittances to improve their life. Improvements in policies and relaxation of foreign exchange controls in the 1990s may have encouraged the

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<sup>25</sup> Fletschner, D., "Rural Women's Access to Credit: Market Imperfections and Intra- household Dynamics", *World Development Journal*, 37(3), 2009, pp. 618–631

<sup>26</sup> Maimbo and Ratha S. M. "Remittances: Development Impact and Future Prospects", The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. *The World Bank Working Paper*, 2005, p.14

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Horst, C. "Transnational Nomads: How Somalis Cope with Refugee Life in the Dadaab Camps of Kenya." Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006, p. 37

use of remittances for investment. By strengthening financial sector infrastructure and facilitating international travel, source (developed) and recipient (developing) countries could increase remittance flows, thereby bringing more funds into formal channels.<sup>29</sup> Eastleigh commercial sector is dominated by Somalis immigrants. They have integrated themselves with the locals and own many businesses in the area. The study will explore to what extent Somali women refugees have had a part to play in this.

Pavanello argues that Somalis refugees have invested heavily in the Eastleigh business, amount more or less \$1.5 billion. Businesses range from small stalls to shopping malls and night lodges. Products are typically imported from Mogadishu and Dubai, and include designer clothing and jewelry among other things.<sup>30</sup> High business growth attracts high settlements leading to growth of slums/informal settlements. The rapid shift from a predominantly residential area to a commercial one has reduced the number of rentable rooms for an increasing population, thereby pushing many long term inhabitants, especially Kenyans, out of Eastleigh into neighboring slums or estates and raising the rents for those who remain. Yet research to enquire how these women refugees of Somali origin survive in this changing economic scenes in Eastleigh has not been done.

According to Campbell, goods imported without taxation or duty into Somalia are easily brought to Kenya and sold at the cheapest possible prices in Eastleigh, undercutting many Kenyan competitors who do not have access to these networks. This small-scale border trade is a key component of refugee livelihoods in Eastleigh. Many local businesses owned by Asians and locals were forced to close down as they could not keep up with the competition.

There is adequate information on refugees, in regards to their camp situation, remittances, education, health etc. However, there is insufficient research on urban refugees and specifically urban Somali women. This study hopes to exhaustively cover this area, how the women settled into Eastleigh and how they have coped over time.

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<sup>29</sup> Rephann, "Asian Women as Transnational Domestic Workers," *Cavendish Singapore: Marshall*, 2001; p. 393.

<sup>30</sup> Pavanello, Elhawary S. and Pantuliano S. "Hidden and Exposed: Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya". *Working paper*, London ,Humanitarian Policy Group, 2010, p. 57



## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

The study will utilize the organizational theory as developed by Halleh Ghorashi.<sup>31</sup> Ghorashi argues that the deficit approach, widely used in organizations, describes a situation where the migrants or refugees themselves are held responsible when an organization is not diverse enough. The urban Somali women refugees living in Eastleigh have established organizations (groups) so as to deal with any gaps in their lives and in their new environment.

These women are faced with common problems amongst themselves right from the moment they live Daadab for Eastleigh; for instance inadequate finances, insecurity, compromised health and insufficient shelter among other needs. They form the groups because from the groups they come up with systems to challenge and arise above their already limited rights. Rights to education, to proper shelter, to wealth etc. from the groups they are able to supplement or increase their sources of income, and better their livelihoods. It is obvious that societies and organizations that form the context where refugee women want to become active participants influence their mindset, behavior and chances to realize their dreams.

The context of the country influences the way the women perceive their past, present and future. The proponents of the theory argue that although women face hardships when they arrive in a new country, they also have access to opportunities and chances to have a new perspective towards the future. Refugee women may undergo different phases throughout their transition from adaptation to belonging. A Somali woman refugee will commence her transition (from home - Somalia to a camp – Daadab to an urban setting - Eastleigh) upon arrival, by putting a lot of energy into starting her new life and see new possibilities in a new system, coupled with a desire to contribute to society and to be accepted. Nonetheless, this may then be followed by feelings of disappointment and rejection when she realizes that she is not seen as an equal.

The country where the women are presently living seemed to have a decisive impact on how they view the past, the present and the future. The past is one that was surrounded by massive conflict, death of loved ones, the destruction of family structures and the disintegration of culture. The present though tough is better than the past. Despite the fact that the women are

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<sup>31</sup> Ghorashi, Halleh. "How dual is transnational identity? A debate on dual positioning of diasporaorganizations", *Culture and Organization*, (2004) 10: 4, 329 — 340

seen as a burden rather than blessings, there are some opportunities that they see and seize so as to better their lives and those of their children - if any. In the new country, the refugees go through the phase of struggle where they are expected to work hard and try to find a place in society.

The organizational theory is relevant to this study because the Somali women in Eastleigh are living in a migrant-oriented context. They have accepted and adopted the standards of the host country in return for opportunities. The women living in Eastleigh feel they are perceived as others and excluded from the Kenyan society although some of them have successful in business.

### **1.8 Research Hypotheses**

- i. The urban Somali women refugees have faced many social challenges since their entry into Eastleigh from 1991 - 2011
- ii. In order to survive in a new and challenging environment and country, the urban Somali women have adopted some coping mechanisms.
- iii. Proceeds from the economic activities that the urban Somali women refugees engage in have given the women an opportunity to better their social livelihood

### **1.9 Research Methodology**

Data for this study was collected from the target population in Eastleigh in Nairobi. Primary data was collected from locals, urban Somali refugee women and men to establish the socio-economic challenges and some notable coping mechanisms of Somali refugee women living in Eastleigh, Nairobi. The research randomly sampled 30 local residents living in Eastleigh, alongside 70 Somali women refugees and 30 Somali refugees men living in Eastleigh.

Guided sampling was used to identify 30 local residents living in Eastleigh. Some of the respondents were working in or outside Eastleigh and were from various ethnic groups, economic backgrounds and from a diverse age group (between 18 years and 60 years). Guided sampling was also used to identify 30 Somali men, living and working within Eastleigh. The men were interviewed so as to assist in highlighting any other issues that could

have been presumed as normal by the women respondents. Secondly, they were interviewed as part of gender inclusion.

Snowballing was appropriate for the research with the local residents and the Somali male refugees, because it has been noted by researchers conducting studies on refugee and asylum-seekers, that its use effectively gains access to participants. This is mainly because refugees and asylum-seekers are difficult to locate by other means due to their sensitive status and challenging experiences.<sup>32</sup> One great advantage with snowballing techniques is that the respondents (the refugees) will tend to name others who are in their network or part of their community.

The researcher got a list from UNHCR branch office with various women groups based in Eastleigh and randomly picked 10 groups that had an average of 5 women per group and thus interacting with 70 Somali women. The 70 women were members of organized groups also known as '*chamas*' and were residents of Eastleigh. All the 30 local respondents, five of the Somali male and thirty Somali women were interviewed individually. Twenty five Somali male and forty Somali women were taken through a focus group discussion.

The focus group interviews were held on August 6, 2012 while interviews were carried out on August 13, 2012. They were held at the home of the research assistant, as this was a non-threatening environment. As a way to emphasize confidentiality and privacy the women came mid-morning and the men in the afternoon. The locals were also separated from the refugee sample group so as to ensure freedom of expression as well. The focus group interviews generated qualitative data.

Social issues were a great discussion among the Somali refugees. The urban Somali women refugees were very vocal about the social issues that they faced. Analysis revealed four common approaches to dealing with and understanding the stressors: social support, religion, acceptance, and benefit finding and hopefulness.

The study utilized both primary data and secondary data. Secondary data was from books, newspapers, unpublished articles and articles published in journals and periodicals. In

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<sup>32</sup> Madeleine Arnot and Halleli Pinson, "The Education of Asylum-Seeker & Refugee Children" University of Cambridge, p. 57

collection of primary data, a semi-structured questionnaire for the respondents was used as well as the Likert type scale to ensure uniformity in response and to encourage participation.

The questionnaires was personally delivered and administered by the researcher, with the help of the research assistant, who also guided the respondents on how to fill the questionnaire. The research assistant also played the role of translator to most of the respondents that could not understand either English or Swahili.

The researcher-administered questionnaires were used in the study to collect quantitative data. The data collected explored how GBV, education opportunities, health services, security, employment and engagement in business have affected these women in their lives.

The researcher assured the respondents that information collected would be for research purposes only and the responses from the respondents would be treated anonymously. After data collection, the completed questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency.

Data clean up, editing, coding, and tabulation in order to detect any anomalies in the responses and assign specific numerical values to the responses for further analysis will be done.

The study findings were presented using tables and graphs for further analysis and to facilitate comparison.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

# **THE SOMALI WAR AND THE RISE OF SOMALI WOMEN REFUGEES INTO EASTLEIGH**

### **2.1 Introduction**

So as to understand the issue of the urban Somali women refugees, a historical context of the Somali culture will be discussed. Secondly a brief analysis of the Somali war and the historical influx of refugees into Kenya (from Daadab camp) and finally into Eastleigh will be investigated. The plight of the Somali women refugee will also be highlighted in this journey.

From this background, the organizational theory has enabled the study to be more explicit by identifying the factors that led to the influx of Somali women into Daddab and eventually to Eastleigh. It is through that movement that the women have encountered numerous social challenges from health and shelter, education to gender based violence and insecurity.

### **2.2 Somali Cultural, Religion and Socioeconomic Activities and Religion**

This section aims at examining the culture of the Somali in relation to the current state of affairs in their life more so the economic life of Somalis. Somalia is an arid country in Eastern Africa with a mostly rural population of farmers and herders. Somali herders are mostly nomadic pastoralists raising camels, cattle, or sheep and leading their flocks and herds wherever pasture and water may be found. Somali society is clan-based, which means that clan leaders often wield greater authority than the national government. The Somali clans trace their roots back to the 12th century, with conversion to Islam taking place around the same time<sup>33</sup>.

Somalis have been Sunni Muslims since the inception of their nation (Somalia) centuries ago, and Somali culture is inextricably entwined with Islam, affecting diet, dress, and daily routines. Although Somali observance of Islam is traditionally fairly casual, fundamentalism

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<sup>33</sup> Putnam and Noor, "The Somalis: Their History and Culture, Center for Applied Linguistics", *Refugee Fact Sheet Number 9*, 1993 p. 7.

has been gaining support in recent years as the Somali people seek security in times of anarchy and chaos. Islamic fundamentalism also offers a unifying force in a nation fractured by inter-clan conflict. Islamic religion is based on the five pillars of Islam. They are<sup>34</sup>:

1. **Shahada:** profession of the Muslim faith stating that “There is no God but Allah and Mohamed is his prophet.
2. **Salat:** Praying five times a day while facing Mecca.
3. **Zakāt:** Giving of alms to the poor, orphans and widows and assisting in the spread of Islam. This is an obligation.
4. **Siyam:** Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan on the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the Islamic calendar.
5. **hajj:** Making a pilgrimage to Mecca (to least once in a lifetime) and this happens on the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar.

Their dress code is mainly influenced by the desert climate and Islamic values. Islamic principles of modesty require men to be covered from neck to knee and women from neck to ankle in non-form-fitting clothing. Traditionally, only unmarried women wear headscarves, but as Islamic fundamentalism increases, more Somali women are wearing head coverings. In celebration of special occasions, such as weddings, henna is used to paint elaborate designs on women’s hands or/and feet and is used to enhance beauty. As the conflict in Somalia has escalated a lot of these customs and traditions have shifted and roles have changed.

This study will investigate how these traditions have affected the Somali women refugees living in urban areas specifically those living in Eastleigh and finally discuss the historical background of Eastleigh focusing on the various major changes that have taken place in Eastleigh especially after the arrival of refugees from Somalia.

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<sup>34</sup> Wallbank, T. *“Civilization Past and Present”*, Harper Collins Publishers, 1992, p.158 – 159.

## **2.3 Background of Somali Conflict**

The Somali Republic gained independence on July 1, 1960. Thirty years after independence however, the nation became a failed state and a socialist state was established following a coup d'état led by Major General Muhammad Siad Barre. His socialist notion was borrowed heavily from Soviet Union. The spirit of volunteerism saw the Somali people planting and harvesting as well as building roads and hospitals. Mr. Barre nationalized the banks, industries and business. The government forbade clanism and stressed loyalty to the local authorities. This did not go down well with some section of the population.

The increasingly dictatorial leadership of Mohamed Siad Barre in Somalia increased tension in an already fragile nation. Further, conflict in Somalia was increased by traditional culture and their transposition from local to national level: the clan system, the concept of group rather than individual culpability, and lineage segmentation, under which individuals, families and clans act in harmony or in opposition to each other according to changing circumstances<sup>35</sup>.

Further, the tendency of territorial boundaries in Somalia to split rather than unite people is seen as a major factor that fueled animosity between Somalia and the neighboring nations. Early independence years were marred by territorial disputes with both Kenya and Ethiopia. Siad Barre's triggered war with Ethiopia over the Ogaden in 1977 to 1978. Siad Barre lost, and several hundred thousand Somali refugees left Ethiopia for Somalia. In 1988, as the situation in Somalia deteriorated, Siad Barre's forces attacked the city of Hargeisa in the northwest of the Somalia. These conflicts led to increased displacement and influx of refugees in the adjacent nations like Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia among others. Somali refugees have been resettled in many countries of the world.

The Somali National Movement gained control of the north, while in the capital of Mogadishu and most of southern Somalia the United Somali Congress achieved control. SNM was a 1980s–1990s Somali rebel group. SNM was founded on April 1981 by a group of Isaaq dissidents living in Whitechapel - East London, to protect the clan's interests and

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<sup>35</sup> Samatar Said, S., "Somalia: a Nation in Turmoil", London: Minority Rights Group, 1991 p.241

subsequently became one of the Somalia's various insurgent movements. The rebels wanted to overthrow Siad Barre's dictatorship.<sup>36</sup>

There was civil war in Somali that saw the then President Siad Barre ousted in 1991 and forced into exile. Turmoil, factional fighting, and ultimately anarchy ensued. The conflict created a humanitarian crisis that has been described as one of the worst crises in the world.<sup>37</sup> Early in 2009 over three million people were estimated to be in need of aid. This represented 77 percent increase of the Somali refugees in less than a year<sup>38</sup>. It has been estimated that as many as two thirds of Mogadishu's population might have fled their homes<sup>39</sup>. About 1.6 million displaced persons from Somalia have found themselves in refugee camps in Kenya or living in Kenyan towns and in neighboring countries illegally<sup>40</sup>.

Conflict between rival warlords and their factions continued throughout the 1990s. No stable government emerged to take control of the country. The UN assisted Somalia somewhat with food aid, but did not send peacekeeping troops into the country. In the late 1990s, relative calm began to emerge and economic development accelerated somewhat. The country was by no means stable, but it was improving. A transitional government emerged in 2000, but soon lost power. Somaliland and Puntland, two regions in the north broke away from the country and set up regional, semi-autonomous governments. However, the two are not internationally recognized.<sup>41</sup>

Subsequent fighting among rival faction leaders resulted in the killing, displacement, and starvation of thousands of Somalis. In 1992, responding to the political chaos and humanitarian disaster in Somalia, the USA and other nations launched peacekeeping operations to create an environment in which assistance could be delivered to the Somali people. By March 1993, the potential for mass starvation in Somalia had been overcome, but the security situation remained fragile. On October 3, 1993 USA troops received significant loss of life with 19 dead and over 80 others wounded in a battle with Somali gunmen. By the

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<sup>36</sup> Helen Chapin Metz, *Somalia: a country study*, Volume 550, Issues 86-993, (The Division: 1993), p.xxviii.

<sup>37</sup> Menkhaus in USCR, *World Refugee Survey 1997*, Washington DC: USCR, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> OCHA *OCHA Somalia Humanitarian Overview* March 2009, p.27

<sup>39</sup> Lindley, A. "The dynamics and effects of remittances in insecure settings: the Somali case", *DPhil Thesis*, Department of International Development, University of Oxford., 2009, p.211

<sup>40</sup> UNHCR, *Somalia Fact Sheet*, Nairobi, Kenya, Mar 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



time the USA and the UN withdrew in 1994 and 1995 respectively, after suffering significant casualties, order had not been restored.<sup>42</sup>

SNM was key in the formation of Somaliland, a self-declared sovereign state that is not internationally recognized as an autonomous region of Somalia. Somalia has been without a stable central government since Dictator Mohamed Siad Barre fled the country in 1991. During this conflict period, many Somalis were displaced from their homes and found refuge in bordering countries and more so in Kenya.

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the USA began to take a more active role in Somalia's affairs, fearing that the country had become a haven for terrorists. Other Western governments hoped to bring stability to Somalia for similar reasons. In January 2004, two dozen or so warlords reached a power-sharing agreement after talks in Kenya. This agreement called for a 275-member parliament. This Transitional Federal Government was the 14<sup>th</sup> attempt at a government since 1991. Its head, Abdullah Yusuf originally called for African peacekeepers to restore order within Somalia, but many Somalis feared invasion, especially by nearby Ethiopia. As of early October 2006, no African Union or The Intergovernmental Authority on Development peacekeepers was scheduled to intervene.<sup>43</sup>

In May 2006, heavy fighting broke out in Mogadishu between the non TFG-affiliated Supreme Islamic Courts Union and TFG warlords hoping to carry favor with the USA by fighting against supposed terrorist supporters. The ICU was formed in 2000 by former members of al-Ittihad al-Islamiya a group that fought along with the ethnically-Somali Oromo Liberation Front AIAI and OLF forces sought the secession of the Ogaden region from Southern Ethiopia. The TFG warlords and a group known as the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism were widely believed to be receiving money from America.<sup>44</sup> This fighting saw more and more refugee flee the country into the neighboring countries.

In June, the ICU seized control of Mogadishu and much of the Southern Somalia, driving Yusuf's TFG from Jowhar to Baidoa. As of July 2006, Yusuf's government, with the backing

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<sup>42</sup> M. Taisier, et, al, "*Civil Wars in Africa: Roots and Resolution*", London: McGill-Queens University Press, 1999, p.26.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Mark Bradbury, "*Becoming Somaliland: Reconstructing a failed state*", Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008, pp.10-30.

of Ethiopia, still hoped to wrest power from the Islamists but had taken little action to do so. The ICU had pushed moderates aside and began to set up a conservative Islamic state. Yusuf has called for peacekeepers from the African Union since the fall of Mogadishu in June 2006, but many have feared that this could lead to further instability. TFG and ICU leaders met in Khartoum in June 2006 for peace talks, but no deal was reached. It may have been difficult to reach an agreement with the ICU, as it was composed of 11 different clans and an asymmetrical power structure.<sup>45</sup>

Because the TFG did not have full control of Mogadishu when it was formed, it was forced to relocate to Jowhar - a town 100 km north of the capital. After the ARCPT was defeated in Mogadishu in June 2006, the TFG transferred its central location to Baidoa - 250 km northwest of the capital. On 18 September 2006, a convoy carrying Yusuf was attacked by a suicide car bomber in Baidoa. Yusuf survived the attack, but 11 people were killed, including his brother. As of early October 2006, it appeared as if the TFG was going to lose Baidoa - the only major Southern Somali city not controlled by the ICU.<sup>46</sup>

Somalia is a failed state and remains one of the most insecure places in the world, with an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Despite the election of a moderate, former member of the Islamic Courts as President in January 2009, fighting between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Islamist fundamentalist insurgents of Al Shabaab and Hizbul Islam continued unabated. In May, the fighting intensified in Mogadishu and displaced more than 270,000 people, causing the number of internally displaced persons to reach 1.5 million people.<sup>47</sup>

The strife in Somalia has also sent hundreds of thousands of Somalis into exile in neighbouring countries and left hundreds of thousands dead. Violence and insecurity in the south and central Somalia have considerably reduced the humanitarian space and compelled UN agencies and NGOs to relocate or evacuate international humanitarian aid workers to safer places. Kidnappings of international and national aid workers, followed by ransom demands, are major obstacles to humanitarian operations in Somalia. The alternating cycles

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

of drought and flood have destroyed crops and livestock, and hikes in food and fuel costs have worsened the crisis, sending additional people into displacement.<sup>48</sup>

## 2.4 Refugees from Somali

The devastating unrest in Somalia created Somali refugees around the continent and the world.<sup>49</sup> Some of the Somali citizens began to flee from Somalia into neighboring countries. The ones with means managed to find refuge overseas.

According to the UN, several hundred thousand Somalis fled to Ethiopia. A number of these and others eventually made their way outside Africa, some to countries like United Kingdom. An estimated 400,000 Somalia refugees arrived in Kenya between 1991 and 1992 alone<sup>50</sup>. In any conflict, it is the women and children that suffer the most, and the Somali conflict is no exception. According to El-Soh<sup>51</sup> single mothers with school-age children were the most affected. As the women and children fled for safety in the neighboring countries, the men were left back to guard their property or died during the conflict.

The government of Kenya in collaboration with UNHCR setup camps at various locations to receive and register the refugees. Large numbers of people were registered and sent to camps in Mombasa along the coastal strip of Kenya, in Thika near the capital Nairobi, in Liboi and Dadaab in the North Eastern Province and in Kakuma in the North West<sup>52</sup>. After the early 1990s influx of Somali refugees, their population started to decline. Some refugees were reportedly voluntarily returning to Somali although this was not on a permanent basis. Others traveled out independently or were formally resettled overseas. The population of Somali refugees in Kenya camps increased again as a result of deterioration of security and war in the southern Somalia. In 2011 alone, an estimated 678,309 people fled to neighboring countries. Most of them ended up in Kenyan camps<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> Peter Little, *"Somalia: Economy without State"*, Indiana: Indiana State University Press, 2008, pp. 15-40.

<sup>49</sup> Samatar Said. S., *"Somalia: a Nation in Turmoil"*, London: Minority Rights Group, 1991 p.217

<sup>50</sup> Milner, J., "Somali refugees in Kenya: Abdication and containment", in *Politics of Asylum in Africa: the Cases of Kenya, Tanzania and Guinea*, DPhil Thesis, Department of International Development, University of Oxford, 2006

<sup>51</sup> El-Sohl, C. F., "Somalis in London's East End: a community striving for recognition," *New Community Journal*, vol. 17, 1991, p.539-52,

<sup>52</sup> Crisp, J., *"A State of Insecurity: a Political Economy of Violence in Refugee-Populated Areas of Kenya"*, Geneva: UNHCR, New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No.16, 1999

<sup>53</sup> UNHCR *Somalia Fact Sheet*, Mar 2009.

## 2.5 Profile of Eastleigh Estate

Eastleigh is a suburb of Nairobi, Kenya which is located to the east of the Central business district of Kenya's capital Nairobi. Eastleigh is mainly inhabited by Somalis who have set up businesses there. Eastleigh is believed to account for a robust business sector. It used to be a lower middle class suburb<sup>54</sup>.

Eastleigh was founded in 1921. The colonial government allotted Nairobi's residential estates by race, until independence in 1963. Eastleigh was meant for Asians and elite Africans who worked as clerks, builders or shoemakers<sup>55</sup>. Eastleigh was originally made up of residential estates. Later, the Asians sold their properties to Kikuyu landlords who in turn years later sold their property to most of the Somalis (Kenyan or migrant Somalis). Prior to the Somali civil war in 1991, there was a small Somali community running shops in Eastleigh<sup>56</sup>. At the end of the 1980s, it is approximated that Kenya had about 12,000<sup>57</sup> refugees and by the year 2000 there were as many as 60,000 displaced Somali people living informally in Nairobi, mainly in Eastleigh<sup>58</sup>. Despite a Kenyan national census conducted in 2009, there were no comprehensive figures in the number of urban Somali refugees living in Eastleigh. This is due to the fact that majority of the refugees have over time intergrated with the local community and some have aquired "valid" identitiy cards.<sup>59</sup>

The population is almost entirely Somali, save for a few indigenous people mingling in between. The businesses which range from small stalls, shopping malls to night lodges are largely, if not all, owned by the Somali community. Over the years, as the Somali community running away from vicious warlords in their country came to settle in this place, Eastleigh came to be referred to as "Mogadishu." All the businesses operating in this area have Somali

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<sup>54</sup> Goldsmith, P. "The Somali Impact on Kenya 1990-1993: The View From Outside the Camps", in H.M.Adam and R.Ford (eds.) *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for Somali Communities in the 21st Century*, Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press: 1997, p. 461-483

<sup>55</sup> Daniel Wesangula, "Roads are a mess, but memories of good times linger", *Daily Nation*, December 27, 2008

<sup>56</sup> Campbell, E.H., "*Formalizing the Informal Economy: Somali Refugee and Migrant Trade Networks in Nairobi*", Geneva: Global Commission on International Migration Global Migration Perspectives No. 47, 2005

<sup>57</sup> Lambo, I. New Issues In Refugee Research: In the Shelter of Each Other: Notions of Home and Belongings Amongst Somali Refugees in Nairobi." *Research Paper No. 233*. UNHCR, 2012

<sup>58</sup> Moret, J., S. Baglioni and D. Eñonayi-Mäder , "The Path of Somali Refugees into Exile: A Comparative Analysis of Secondary Movements and Policy Responses". *SFM Studies Paper No. 46*. Geneva: Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies, 2005

<sup>59</sup> Interview with government official

names: Tawakal, Mogadishu, Qaran, Halal and similar names.<sup>60</sup> From observation, businesses in Eastleigh range from selling designer clothing to jewelry and even guns (with proof that one is not an undercover police). Commodities are imported from Mogadishu and Dubai and are greatly stocked in the shopping malls.

According to Lindley, although Eastleigh has a reputation for thriving business activity, dilapidated infrastructure and crime is a great challenge to the survival of most businesses. Nevertheless, remittances from relatives in first world countries, have contributed to the thriving business in the area.<sup>61</sup> While women refugees of Somali origin engage in socioeconomic activities in order to sustain themselves, little empirical research have been done to establish the impact of Eastleigh women refugees' engagement on development of the area, in terms of infrastructure, banking services, education, and employment among others. Therefore the purpose of this study will be to investigate the social challenges of Somali refugees in particular Somali women refugees living in Eastleigh.

According to UNHCR, social as well as economic capital can overcome many of the challenges that urban refugees face.<sup>62</sup> For instance, in Eastleigh Somalis and Ethiopians own and run the area's thriving markets, transport systems, cybercafés, hotels and electronic shops among other businesses. While they are not allowed to vote, they and their Kenyan business partners have the ear of local government officials, leaders, politicians and religious leaders. Displaced people face deep and chronic problems of poverty and insecurity. In most cases, the forcibly displaced do not have the resources to move beyond national borders, and they remain internally displaced or move across borders to neighboring countries, many of which are facing their own conflicts. In these rough neighborhoods, displaced people face a challenging environment and often impose economic, environmental and security burdens on the host country<sup>63</sup>. Refugees tend to be viewed unjustly as passive victims, waiting for relief handouts and bringing nothing but trouble to their host countries. The multiple ways of

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.afrika.no/Detailed/16696.html> ( accessed 12 June 2013)

<sup>61</sup> Lindley, A. "The dynamics and effects of remittances in insecure settings: the Somali case", *DPhil Thesis*, Department of International Development, University of Oxford., 2009, p.211

<sup>62</sup> UNHCR, "Refugees in Kenya, Nairobi," *UNHCR News letter*, March 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Jacobsen, K., *The Economic Life of Refugees*, Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press. 2005, p.312

refugees to pursue livelihoods for themselves contribute to the economic vitality of host areas.<sup>64</sup>

Today, Eastleigh is almost entirely inhabited by the Somalis, except for a few indigenous residents<sup>65</sup>. The Eastleigh's commercial sector is likewise dominated by the Somali community<sup>66</sup>. Somalis have invested heavily in the enclave, contributing over \$1.5 billion in the neighborhood alone<sup>67</sup>.

## 2.6 The Somali in Kenya: from Refugee Camps to Eastleigh, Nairobi

The deep material deprivation and physical insecurity of life in the refugee camps is well documented.<sup>68</sup> It has been suggested that, given their size, population, permanence and other features, camps like the Dadaab group (Ifo, Hagadera and Dagahaley) might better be thought of as cities rather than camps<sup>69</sup>.

Life at the camp is usually very difficult and challenging especially to the women and the children. The refugee leaders pointed out that some women have been raped while escaping the conflict; either in their country or as they cross the border or between (camp) sites.<sup>70</sup> It is, therefore, a relief when one manages to legally or illegally leave the camp.

There are many opportunities that a life outside the refugee camps can offer, given the restrictive and controlled nature of existence there. But of course there are also significant challenges associated with moving on, both in terms of the journey, and the situation facing refugees on arrival elsewhere<sup>71</sup>.

In practice, refugees have over the years travelled out of the camps both with and without movement passes. 39% of longer-term residents of the camp interviewed during the survey

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<sup>64</sup> UNHCR, *Refugees in Kenya, Nairobi: UNHCR News letter*. March 2009

<sup>65</sup> Daniel Wesangula, "Roads are a mess, but memories of good times linger", *Daily Nation*, December 27, 2008

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Crisp, J., "A State of Insecurity: a Political Economy of Violence in Refugee-Populated Areas of Kenya", Geneva: UNHCR, *New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No.1*, 1999

<sup>69</sup> Pérouse de Montclos, M and P. Kagwanja, "Refugee Camps of Cities? The Socioeconomic Dynamics of the Dadaab and Kakuma Camps in Northern Kenya" *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 13(2), 2000, p. 205:222

<sup>70</sup> <http://therefugeenews.tumblr.com/post/46239693120/my-journey-to-dadaab> (accessed 12 June 2013)

<sup>71</sup> Refugee Consortium of Kenya, *Refugee Consortium of Kenya. Asylum Under Threat Assessing the protection of Somali refugees in Dadaab refugee camps and along the migration corridor*, the Danish Refugee Council, Pann Printers Limited, June 2012

said that they had left the camp at least once, over half of these for reasons of medical referral to services outside the camp. A little over half of the respondents said that they had been able to get movement passes for the journey, and this indicates that movement passes are more commonly issued to those in need of advanced health services than to refugees positing other reasons for temporary absence from the camps<sup>72</sup>.

Due to the strict regulations set up by the government on mobility outside the camp, most of the refugees have found ways to beat the system and smuggle themselves out of the camp. Through their study, the Refugee Consortium of Kenya found out that one had to pay a hefty price for movement to someone known as a 'fixer', who gets them out of the camp, others have fake travel documents and still have to bribe the police to avoid arrest, others through the help of organized smugglers, find alternative routes and avoid police road blocks to escape from the camp and others have learnt the local language and speak fluent Kiswahili thus the police cannot arrest them because they look and speak like the locals<sup>73</sup>.

Despite whatever mode of escape they use, they eventually find themselves in the city because Nairobi to them offers many opportunities to find a second lease of life, start over economically, in some cases reunite with lost family and relying on whatever connections and networks they have. They are either employed or starting their own business.

In 2006, Kenya passed the Refugees Act. According to Milner, in contrast to the more open and accommodating refugee policy of earlier years, Kenya's refugee policy after 1990 is effectively one of 'abdication and containment'<sup>74</sup>. First, the government abdicated to the UNHCR the responsibility of determining the status of asylum-seekers and ensuring their protection. Secondly, the government tried to contain the problem by allowing Somali refugees to reside only in designated camps, restricting their movements and denying them the right to take up formal employment. Despite the policy of abdication and containment by

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<sup>72</sup> *ibid*

<sup>73</sup> Refugee Consortium of Kenya, *Refugee Consortium of Kenya. Asylum Under Threat Assessing the protection of Somali refugees in Dadaab refugee camps and along the migration corridor*, the Danish Refugee Council, Pann Printers Limited, June 2012

<sup>74</sup> Milner, J., "Somali refugees in Kenya: Abdication and containment", in *Politics of Asylum in Africa: the Cases of Kenya, Tanzania and Guinea, DPhil Thesis*, Department of International Development, University of Oxford, 2006

the government of Kenya, many refugees have ended up in Nairobi and other towns or cities. A minority of those Somali arriving in the 1990s had the wherewithal to set up homes in Nairobi or Mombasa. Others stayed with relatives, and never declared themselves to UNHCR<sup>75</sup>. When the Mombasa camps closed in the mid-1990s, many refugees moved to Nairobi instead of relocating to other camps or voluntarily repatriating to Somalia. Some refugees from Dadaab and Kakuma also relocated to Nairobi.

The number of displaced Somali people living informally in urban areas is uncertain. Estimates in the mid-1990s ranged up to 100,000<sup>76</sup>. Little is known about the situation of urban refugees, possibly because they can be harder to locate (compared with the 'captive population' in camps) and are generally not entitled to assistance<sup>77</sup>. In addition to this the containment policy encouraged politicians to play down the existence of refugees in urban areas<sup>78</sup>. This study aims at lessening the gap concerning urban women refugees and their mode of survival in the urban areas they live in.

Between 1990 and 2010, Eastleigh developed dramatically, shaped by its growing population. It is a mixture of rural Kenyans, Sudanese, Eritreans and Ethiopians. Above all, in the largest numbers are Somalis especially Somali refugees. Business people, including incoming refugees, invested in import and export businesses, retail outlets, chemists, property letting and real estate development, hotels, lodges, miraa outlets among other businesses. Commercial development, particularly in the district known as Section Two, also accelerated a rise in the price of land for redevelopment as shopping malls. The centrepieces of Eastleigh's commercial development are its large shopping malls, such as Garissa Lodge and Amal Plaza. The largely unregulated expansion of business and the increasingly overcrowded population soon outpaced repairs and improvements to public infrastructure. Drains, sewers and rubbish collection are very visibly inadequate. Roads are in a dilapidated condition, with deep mud during the rainy season and rising dust when it is dry.

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<sup>75</sup> Goldsmith, P. "The Somali Impact on Kenya 1990-1993: The View From Outside the Camps", in H.M.Adam and R.Ford (eds.) *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for Somali Communities in the 21st Century*, Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press: 1997, p. 461-483.

<sup>76</sup> Hyndman, J. "Managing Displacement. Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism", Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

<sup>77</sup> Moret, J., S. Baglioni and D. Efonyi-Mäder, "The Path of Somali Refugees into Exile: A Comparative Analysis of Secondary Movements and Policy Responses". *SFM Studies Paper No. 46*. Geneva: Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies, 2005

<sup>78</sup> Campbell, E.H., "Formalizing the Informal Economy: Somali Refugee and Migrant Trade Networks in Nairobi", Geneva: Global Commission on International Migration Global Migration Perspectives No. 47, 2005



## 2.7 Somali Women Refugees in Eastleigh

Somali community being a patriarchal society, it gives men a cultural advantage over their women counterparts. Heitritter notes that while women take care of children and household chores Somali men are the breadwinners<sup>79</sup>. According Mary Anderson, when refugees are allowed to gain access to resources, have freedom of movement and can work alongside their hosts to pursue productive lives, they were less dependent on aid, and better able to overcome the sources of tension and conflict in their host communities. They would help mend the fraying economic fabric that binds communities and strengthen what Anderson calls peace economies in contrast to war economies<sup>80</sup>. Crisis situations can lead to the re-making of roles and opportunities for affected communities. For Somali women refugees in Eastleigh, their efforts to survive mean they engage in trade and other economic activities which give them more control, autonomy and status at both household and community levels.

After proper education in Kenyan schools, Somali women refugees can now seek employment, even though the community's preferred role is for the man to work and the women to stay at home. However, this has not been a walk in the park. Particularly, the GoK, is extremely ambivalent about refugees working in its towns, and therefore has put in place restrictions. The refugees after education can only work in the private sector where the government has no direct control. In Kenya, the majority of citizens are actually employed in the informal sector themselves and do not have access to formal sector jobs, so it should come as no surprise that refugees are largely employed in the informal economy as well.

Somali women entrepreneurs in Eastleigh, like other women in Kenya, have constantly complained of problems emanating from inadequate access to credit, savings, insurance services and capital to finance their businesses ventures. Therefore, women refugees of Somali origin businesses' in Eastleigh have not thrived. Somali women have also suffered reduced access to financial resources as a result of biased lending practices by local banks, limited collateral and less access to information.

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<sup>79</sup> Heitritter, D.L., "Somali Family Strength: Working in the Communities. Family and Children's Services", *University of Minnesota Extension Service*, 1999

<sup>80</sup> Anderson, D.M., "'Yours in Struggle for Majimbo'. Nationalism and the Party Politics of Decolonization in Kenya, 1955-64', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 40, issue 3, 2005, p. 547-564.

## 2.8 The Economic Impact of Urban Somali Women Refugees

After relocating into the urban areas, the urban Somali women refugees have found means to contribute to the economic sector of the country as well as find ways of surviving in the city. These refugees have had a major impact on economy of Eastleigh through their activities. The refugees in Eastleigh take part in business activities to earn livelihood. Further, their relatives abroad send them money (remittance) to support them. Here it should be noted that proceeds from business and part of remittance is used in business activities.

Maimbo and Ratha have shown remittances as an important source of external funding for developing countries<sup>81</sup>. They further indicated that unlike other forms of funding, remittances are less affected by economic cycles in the recipient country. Remittances are expected to rise significantly in the long term, once sluggish labor markets in G-7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) economies recover and new procedures for scrutinizing international travels become routine<sup>82</sup>

Remittances are often used by the recipients in business startup and business financing. Likewise, Somali women refugees who receive remittances invest in businesses to achieve self-reliance and they have therefore set up businesses in Eastleigh. Here, these women have engaged in various businesses selling all manner of goods. Pavanello, Elhawary and Pantuliano highlights that these products are mainly imported from Mogadishu and Dubai<sup>83</sup>.

Lindley points out that the diaspora Somali Community has great support for businesses in Eastleigh. There is often more than one 'investor', and the group may include local as well as overseas relatives. Remittances for investment are usually sent in installments and distinguished from regular subsistence transfers. People do not usually 'save up' remittances. A hardworking and independent reputation helps to mobilize contributions. One can get

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<sup>81</sup> Maimbo and Ratha S. M. "Remittances: Development Impact and Future Prospects", The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. *The World Bank Working Paper*, 2005, p.14

<sup>82</sup> Hyndman, J. "Managing Displacement. Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism," Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000

<sup>83</sup> Pavanello, Elhawary S. and Pantuliano S. "Hidden and Exposed: Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya". *Working paper*, London ,Humanitarian Policy Group, 2010, p. 61

between USD 2,000 to USD 3,000 to start-up a business, and if they are hardworking, they might even receive more<sup>84</sup>.

However, this high business growth has attracted high settlements, hence putting pressure on the available resources. Of the two main roads running through Eastleigh, one, Second Avenue, has been permanently closed for several years. Huge craters, potholes, and pools of standing water make the road unavailable. Water supplies are inefficient and many must make illegal connections to the city's pipes, garbage collection, though recently improved, was once non-existent. In 2001, an inspection carried out revealed that Eastleigh had the biggest mounds of garbage, 5,000 tones, among Nairobi Estates.<sup>85</sup> This means that city planners need to turn their attention to this place to ensure that it gets enough drinking water, has good sanitation systems and access roads.

However, the business activities by these refugees of Somali origin have had a devastating effect on locals' businesses. Campbell highlights that, Somalis import goods without taxation/duty<sup>86</sup>. Campbell further notes that these goods are later brought into Kenya and sold at very low prices in Eastleigh. This practice by the Somalis undercuts many Kenyan competitors, who do not have access to these networks used by Somalis. Even though this small-scale border trade by the Somalis refugee is a major component of their livelihoods, it is a big nightmare to Kenyan traders, forcing most of them to close down from escalated competition. The business activities in Eastleigh have attracted all the major bank institution to open up branches in the area. This has brought financial services closer home and thus access to credit is facilitated. This has led to improved business. Further, *Matatus* businesses in the area are doing booming business as they ferry people to shop at Eastleigh and back to Nairobi town.

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<sup>84</sup> Lindley, *New issues in refugee research*, Protracted displacement and remittances: The view from Eastleigh, Nairobi, *Research paper no. 143*, August 2007

<sup>85</sup> Nyaoro, Dulo.. "Policing with prejudice: how policing exacerbates poverty among urban refugees." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 14, 2010, 126-145

<sup>86</sup> Campbell, "Formalizing the Informal Economy: Somali Refugee and Migrant Trade Networks in Nairobi", Geneva: Global Commission on International Migration *Global Migration Perspectives No. 47*, 2005, p. 16

## **2.9 Conclusion**

The Somali nation has experienced violence for more than two decades now. However, recently the Kenya Defense Force in 2010 went to Somali in its efforts to safeguard its internal security. This followed a series of attacks on Kenyan soils believed to be perpetrated by Al-shabab militia from Somali. Since the KDF intervention in Somalia, peace is slowly returning in Somali. All in all most Somalis are reluctant to get repatriated back to their country because most of them know Kenya as their home. The women in particular enjoy the serene and often peace environment they have created for themselves and their children in the urban areas.

Eastleigh has over time evolved into a notable settlement for urban refugees in Kenya. Its population which is mainly made of Somalis is rapidly increasing. The Somalis have bought properties in the area, intermarried with the locals, among other activities and therefore their stay seems permanent. Further, as a result of the heavy settlement, the social amenities have experienced pressure as they support a larger number than their design.

The urban Somali women refugees have found a haven in Eastleigh town. By sight it is very difficult to differentiate a Kenyan Somali woman and refugee woman of Somali origin. This allows the urban Somali woman refugee to engage in activities that help her cope in a new environment and provide for her family since in most cases she is the sole bread winner.

Some of the coping mechanisms the women have engaged in include, and are not limited to carrying out various forms of trade, engaging in education, learning the local language, belief in God, among others, that will be discussed in depth in this paper.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **THE SOCIAL CHALLENGES FACING URBAN SOMALI WOMEN REFUGEES**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The challenges that Somali urban refugee women face can be discussed under the following aspects: health and shelter, education, pressure on social amenities gender based violence and insecurity. This is because there has been feasible evidence and tangible change on these sectors since the influx of refugees into Eastleigh and specifically Somali refugees. The chapter also touches on economic challenges.

When women are displaced due to conflict or human rights abuses, they organize themselves and adopt new strategies to provide for themselves and their families. These new strategies often place them at risk for gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual exploitation and abuse, rape and domestic violence. Without safe economic opportunities, displaced women employ strategies such as prostitution, trading sex for food and leaving the relative safety of refugee camps. Without economic opportunities, women resort to dangerous and desperate measures to provide for themselves and their families, often heightening their risk of abuse. However, when economic opportunities are provided without built-in protective elements, an increase in sexual violence outside the home and heightened domestic violence within the home often ensues<sup>87</sup>.

This chapter gives in details the social and economic challenges that women refugees from Somalia engage in after settlement in Eastleigh. It will, therefore, look at their enrolment in school and their engagement in economic activities as well as their health lives and housing. Further, the study gathered evidence of gender based violence, insecurity and pressure on social amenities that emanates from having these refugees in Eastleigh.

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<sup>87</sup> Wagacha JB and Guiney J.. "The Plight of Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya," in *Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa* edited by David Hollenbach, SJ, Georgetown University Press. 2008, pp 61

In reference to Halleh Ghorashi's theory, the challenges would be referred to as the deficit in an organization, in this regard, the host country that the Somali women refugees reside. That is Eastleigh.

### **3.1.1 Health and Shelter**

Living arrangements and accommodation vary across refugee communities in Nairobi, depending on income and the length of time the refugee has been in the city. There is a correlation between shelter and health. Refugees living in houses that were situated in unclean environs or were overcrowded were found to be at a higher risk of infection and diseases.

Women are mostly tasked with the responsibility to find housing because they are less suspicious and will earn the landlords trust easily. Areas are chosen on the basis of a range of criteria, including security, proximity to relatives and affordability. Data from RCK shows that 80% of refugees live in permanent houses and 16% in semi-permanent dwellings, with the remainder in temporary quarters or other housing structures. However, it is important to note that, asylum-seekers encounter challenges while securing a shelter. The local population often takes advantage of the urban Somali women refugees. In practically all states, "landlords and gray market employers often exploit urban refugees who, in many refugee-hosting countries, do not have legal protection"<sup>88</sup>. The urban Somali women refugees are usually paid less than locals with equivalent skills, yet they also have to pay more per month for necessities, such as housing.

Poorly planned refugee settlement is one of the most pathogenic environments possible. Overcrowding and poor hygiene conditions as seen in Eastleigh are major factors in the transmission of diseases with epidemic potential (measles, meningitis, cholera, among others.). The women are faced with inadequate shelter which means that herself and her family are deprived of all privacy and constantly exposed to the elements (rain, cold, wind, among others.). In addition, the surrounding environment may have a pronounced effect on the woman's health, particularly if it is very different from the environment from which they have come (for example, presence of vectors carrying diseases not previously encountered).

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid

*“Life has really changed since the Somali settled here. Living with them is a nightmare. Their hygiene is questionable and they really don’t care much about cleanliness. Most landlords are tentative in leasing their houses out to them, because they run down the place. In my opinion, the Somali women should take a step in ensuring clean and safe environments. But they are the first to throw garbage out and trash in the neighborhoods. If you highlight this, you become a victim of insults and sometimes physical abuse. You should see places like 2<sup>nd</sup> street, what a shame.” Muthoni<sup>89</sup>*



**A Residential area on Second Street in Eastleigh choked by garbage.**

**Source: Waithera Kibinda August 2009**

Overcrowding and poor availability of medication are the main constraints affecting the quality of public health services. Expensive private health facilities are available to offer better quality medical attention but the private health option is unaffordable for the urban

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<sup>89</sup> Interview on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2012 with a local resident, Muthoni, a 50 year old woman living in Eastleigh. Others in the interview Tom, Otieno, Naliaka

Somali woman. Like Kenyans, refugees have access to public clinics on payment of a one-off registration fee of Kshs. 20, exclusive of drugs and treatment. Only a handful of women are eligible for free medical care through a referral system from UNHCR and its implementing partners<sup>90</sup>. Health services for children below the age of five are free of charge; also free are tuberculosis control and family planning services. In some cases, the community contributes towards the costs of medical care. Among Somalis, this collective contribution is called *Sadaqa*.

Contributions from relatives abroad are also solicited in serious cases. Otherwise, only limited assistance is available. In the past, UNHCR provided health care for pregnant women<sup>91</sup>, but this service ended in 2006 and is currently only available at the health center in Eastleigh. As a result, many poor urban Somali women refugees deliver their babies at home, with no medical supervision. Many children born at home are unregistered and so do not have a birth certificate. The Kenyan government has made significant efforts to ensure access to antiretroviral medicines for HIV-positive individuals. However, to be eligible a patient must have a permanent physical address so that they can be traced if they stop taking the medicine. This stipulation means that many urban Somali women refugees are denied antiretroviral treatment<sup>92</sup>.

The main health concerns among refugees interviewed include tuberculosis, cancer, malaria, typhoid and diarrhea. The latter is a common condition because of open sewers in the informal settlements where refugees live. Oromo women were visibly traumatized by violence they had suffered in Ethiopia, including rape and torture, and complained that they had no access to psychosocial care. Similarly, Somali women in Eastleigh spoke of mental problems stemming from high levels of stress, as well as gynecological problems, particularly infections and complications as a consequence of Female Genital Cutting

*"I live in a one roomed shanty with my husband, our four children aged between 10 and 18 years old, his niece and his sickly uncle. I run a small coffee business during the day but I don't make much. My husband is the sole bread winner; he is a watch man at one of the shops at "Garissa*

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<sup>90</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR Somalia Fact Sheet Mar 2009, p. 56

<sup>91</sup> Ibid

<sup>92</sup> Wagacha JB and Guiney J., "The Plight of Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya," in *Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa* edited by David Hollenbach, SJ, Georgetown University Press. 2008, pp 22



*Ndogo". His uncle has a weak immune system and we all think he will die when he catches a cold. Unfortunately whatever virus he picks up, we also get it. Last week he was found to be suffering from T.B. we are all fearful because we fear we might get it as well. We cannot chase him away because he is family. We just try and make his life comfortable and our lives safe, but it is not easy."*<sup>93</sup>

On matters concerning house structure, a majority of the women (67%) lived in semi-permanent houses, 19% lived in temporary houses, while 14% lived in permanent houses. A majority of the Somali women refugees were living with friends or relatives. These friends or relatives had been living in Eastleigh for an average of at least two years and knew their way around the town. The relatives were either related to the Somali women through clan or by close blood relation.

Some of the Somali women refugees were living in rental houses that they had invited other Somali women refugees or invited other relatives to live with them. Very small majorities owned their own houses, but were not willing to divulge any information on how they acquired the property. From the study, a large majority of the women were living with an average of 5 to 9 individuals and a minimal number of Somali women were being housed alongside 15 other house members.

Due to such harsh living conditions, the study sought to establish if any member of the household had suffered any contagious diseases. 80% of the women had suffered a contagious disease, (60%) indicated they had contracted influenza, 15% indicated whooping cough, 15% said that someone in their family had contracted chickenpox and 10%, measles. Other ailments that the Somali women refugees had experienced include and are not limited to malaria – due to the lack of space to put up a mosquito net and in some cases the inadequate finances to buy one. They had also suffered from typhoid and cholera due to poor sanitation in their own homes and around their neighborhoods. A few women did mention that they had suffered from birth complications due to either FGM complications or the lack

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<sup>93</sup> Interview with respondent urban Somali female refugee interview on 13 August, 2012.

of finances to seek proper medical help during delivery. Due to poor sanitation as well, some of the women had suffered from urinary tract infection and hepatitis B

When the Somali women were asked where they felt they would obtain optimum healthcare, most of the respondents (38%) reported that they preferred getting healthcare from missionary owned hospitals. This is because the hospitals rarely asked for any documentation in return for treatment and services are very affordable. 28% of the women mentioned that they go to private hospitals in Eastleigh which are in most cases owned by fellow Somalis. 20% attended government hospitals, mostly Kenyatta National Hospital because it gave them quality health care especially for chronic diseases like kidney failure, cancer and diabetes. 14% indicated that they would get health care from private city council hospitals.

In order to finance their health care the Somali women indicated that they get most of their finances from relatives either living within the country or abroad, others from their savings, others attend free medical camps in the town by either NGO's or Faith Based Organizations operating in the area. For instance partners of World Vision and Naiioth Church. A small percentage financed their healthcare through NHIF and this is because they had proper documentation allowing them to stay in the city.

### **3.1.2 Insecurity**

Security is one of the basic human needs. With civilians being increasingly targeted during conflict, especially in war torn countries like Somalia, there is great concern about women's personal security. It is noted that there is a correlation between GBV and insecurity. The use of terror and 'display' killings is a widespread phenomenon in the conflict zones such as Sri Lanka. In such situations women are directly targeted through rape, torture and other forms of sexual violence as deliberate strategies that are adopted to destabilize and humiliate communities.

Eastleigh is characterized with "collapsing infrastructure, lawlessness, unplanned growth, and lack of basic services". Simply put, while an official refugee camp may offer slightly better living conditions, Eastleigh provides a "level of invisibility" that a camp lacks<sup>94</sup>. Although a substantial amount of legitimate business occurs within Eastleigh, there is still an

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

overwhelming presence of illicit activities, making it possible to purchase anything from a fake passport to a firearm. Eastleigh is notorious for crime activities, creating a difficult task for the Kenyan Police. Maintaining one of the highest crime rates in Nairobi, Eastleigh frequently experiences unannounced raids or crackdowns by police to check the identification documents of Somalis<sup>95</sup>. After the Kenya Defense force entered Somalia in an operation dubbed "*Linda Nchi*", Eastleigh and Nairobi town have been receiving a series of grenade attacks believed to be carried out by Al-shabab militia.



**Residents look for survivors in wreckage of passenger mini-bus that was bombed in the Eastleigh suburb of Nairobi, Kenya, Nov. 18, 2012.<sup>96</sup>**

According to Pavanello, Elhawary and Pantuliano, for the Somali refugees living in Eastleigh, their reasons for coming to Nairobi vary, but most urban refugees said they were looking for better ways to provide for their families<sup>97</sup>. Many reported feeling unsafe in Kenya's large refugee camps of Kakuma and Dadaab, where security incidents, including rape and killings have been recorded. Many others reported the frustration of having to live in

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<sup>95</sup> Nyaoro, D. "Policing with Prejudice: How Policing exacerbates Poverty among Urban Refugees." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 14, 2010, p.126-145.

<sup>96</sup> Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/violent-eastleigh-police-raids-alienating-kenyas-ethnic-somali-minority/1551714.html> (accessed 26<sup>th</sup> November 2013)

<sup>97</sup> Pavanello, S., Elhawary, S., and Pantuliano, S. "Hidden and Exposed: Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya," HPG Working Paper March 2010, p. 21

camps where there is virtually no chance of employment and climatic conditions are harsh, and so they moved to urban areas to seek economic independence in the hope of a better life.

In Nairobi, their security is also not guaranteed. As noted by Pavanello, Elhawary and Pantuliano<sup>98</sup>, refugees are regularly subject to harassment and extortion, especially by the Kenyan police force. According to Somali refugees living in Eastleigh, they are stopped by the police on a daily basis and threatened with detention, regardless of whether they have appropriate documentation or not. Refugees reported being targeted for extortion by police officers, who demand bribes from refugees they detain often unofficially on the streets. Many said members of their communities have been victims of verbal, physical and sexual abuse at the hands of the police.

*“It looks like there is a season when police raids just increase. If it’s not the police, it is the anti-terrorism unit in search of arms, the Nairobi city council askaris...looks like everyone wants a piece of us. Most of the time we just bribe them and the bribes have been increasing over the years. If one is arrested sometimes we have to raise over Kshs. 10,000 as a community so as to bail them out before they go to court. Because once in court one either goes back to the camp or goes missing<sup>99</sup>.”*

Refugee lives in most cases are characterized by violence. In this sense, they flee their home after eruption of violence and the same takes place in a different form in camps and other areas of their settlements. Violence threatens the security of freely engaging in daily activities and free movement. Violence restricts women’s ability to participate in income generation activities therefore depriving them of the much needed house hold income.

*“I was with my son headed to my small coffee business just here at “Garissa Ndogo”. Out of nowhere, 3 city council askaris surrounded me and started asking me for my papers, before I knew it they were slapping me and my son and bundled us into the lorry. The little money I was to buy more stock with is what I used to bribe my way out of that lorry, because I did not want to go to prison. I am still recovering from the emotional trauma, unfortunately I*

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> Interview with elderly male respondent, interview on 13 August 2012

*cannot run my own business now; I'm doing odd jobs to help me earn some money.*"<sup>100</sup>

According to Weiner, the problem of refugees in many third world host states is compounded by armed groups of exiles actively engaged in warfare with political objectives<sup>101</sup>. Refugee warriors invite military retaliation, complicate relations with other states and threaten the security of the host states and the security of their citizens. As a result, host countries have often been unwillingly drawn into conflicts with their neighbors. Refugee and immigrant communities can also pose considerable political and security risks for host governments. They are a political force for their country of residence, and the way they react to the politics of host country, and their political relationship with the country of origin, have become important factors in influencing relations between the sending and receiving countries<sup>102</sup>.

According to Garissa District Development Plan 1994-1996, the influx of refugees into the district resulted into insecurity thereby adversely affecting the supervision of development programmes. The insecurity problem posed by the coming of refugees to Dadaab has always been stressed by the various government officials as manifested in the various Garissa District Development Plans<sup>103</sup>. In addition to the GDDP report of 1994-1996<sup>104</sup> referred above, the GDDP report of 1997-2001 reiterated on the insecurity posed by the refugee influx when it reads in part that: "With the political instability in the Republic of Somalia and the resultant influx of more than 150,000 refugees, a lot of insecurity in the district is now being experienced"<sup>105</sup>.

A lot of resources have been directed to attending refugees and in stemming the problem of insecurity. Sophisticated weaponry has found its way into the district promoting banditry, cattle rustling and general violence in the district. Further, GDDP 2002-2008 report notes that, Dadaab and Jarajila divisions are a bit insecure compared to others. This has mainly been caused by the presence of refugees in Jarajila and Dadaab, which has made the divisions

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<sup>100</sup> Interview with elderly female respondent interview on 13 August 2012

<sup>101</sup> Weiner, M., "Migration and Development in the Gulf," *Population and Development Review*, Vol.8. No. 11, March 2002, p.11 – 36.

<sup>102</sup> Loescher, G., and Loescher, A. D., "The Global Refugee Crisis", London: Oxford, 2004.

<sup>103</sup> Republic of Kenya, "*Garissa District Development Plan (1994-1996)*," (Nairobi: Government printer), 81

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

<sup>105</sup> Republic of Kenya, "*Garissa District Development Plan 1997-2001*," Office of the Vice President and Ministry of Planning and National Development, Nairobi: Government Printer, 59

adjacent to be insecure. Proximity to Somalia Republic border in these regions makes insecurity a challenge to development.

According to Weiss, lethal modern weapons smuggled into Kenya from Somalia have placed fire power into the hands of Kenyan and Somali bandit gangs<sup>106</sup>. Persistent robberies and vehicle thefts on highways forced relief workers to travel with police protection between refugee camps. Kenyans widely blamed the Somali refugees for perpetrating the violence, while refugees charged that police regularly committed abuses against them. In one incident, five Kenyan police died in an ambush near Garissa, days later bodies of refugees were found buried near Hagadera refugee camp<sup>107</sup>. This state of affairs in Garissa contributes to high levels of insecurity in Eastleigh as the weapon that crosses the border into Kenya eventually finds its way into Eastleigh. Women and children in Eastleigh are vulnerable and, therefore, the presence of such weapons jeopardizes their lives.

Conflict between the refugee and host government is also evident. In January 2009 for example, several Somali refugees were arrested in Eastleigh, Nairobi for illegally being in there. Most came from refugee camps<sup>108</sup>. This was after several Muslims demonstrated against the arrest of Jamaican cleric Abdulla al-Faisal causing violence in Nairobi<sup>109</sup>. With these existing tensions around Dadaab refugee camps, the presence of arms around the region poses a real danger to Dadaab area as a whole. The easy proliferation of arms from Somalia and ever-souring relationship between the locals and the refugees is a big security issue putting the security of Eastleigh and Kenya at a stake.

Fatuma, a Somali woman refugee living in Eastleigh for the last ten years said that she feels safer in Eastleigh anytime, despite the numerous insecurity incidents, than in the Daadab any day. This is because in as much as the police harass them on some occasions, the regular police patrols make the town safer. The presence of a police station also increased the security in the area. Nia, another Somali refugee who has lived in Eastleigh since 1997, mentioned that the unity among the communities and sense of belonging made her and her

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<sup>106</sup> Weiss, T., "Guns in the Borderlands. Reducing the Demand for Small Arms." Monograph No.95, (Durban: Institute for Security Studies, 2004), p.95.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid

<sup>108</sup> Kadida Jillo, "Jamaican hate cleric deported ahead of case", Daily Nation, 22 January 2010, p.2

<sup>109</sup> Chemboi Sammy and Kibiwott Koross, "One Killed, scores injured in protests over Sheikh", Daily Nation, 15 January 2010, p.1

family feel safe. She mentioned that Kenya being a peaceful state, she had no doubt that Eastleigh was also safe.

The study sought to find out some of the common forms of insecurity that the Somali women faced in Eastleigh. In the focus group discussion both men and women unanimously agreed, in order of severity the following as some common forms of insecurity, extortion by police and other illicit groups comes first, followed by verbal abuse sexual harassment and physical abuse came third and fourth respectively as indicated on figure 6 in the appendix. Common perpetrators of insecurity were cited by the women as gangsters, police and petty thieves.

During the focus group discussion, the women were asked their take on the availability of small arms and light weapons in the region in relation to insecurity. Amina, a community leader mentioned that the small arms and light weapons were easily accessible within and away from Eastleigh and this always caused an ever-souring relationship between the locals and the refugees. Mzee Mohammed another community leader indicated that the security of Eastleigh and Kenya in general is of major concern and that violence limits women ability in engaging in IGA to support their families.

Further, the women were in agreement with the statements that violence instills fear limiting freedom of movement, violence threatens the security of freely engaging in daily activities and that the GoK has taken adequate measures in ensuring that Eastleigh is safe, but this is not enough. The women were quick to mention that despite the insecurity and suspicion, they rarely engage in constant conflict with the local residents. A statement that some of the local residents did not agree to when asked.

A majority of the Somali women refugees 66% said that they had been arrested by police since arriving in Eastleigh. The women were mostly arrested for loitering, not having safety belt in a *Matatus*, not having business permit and license. Others indicated that they were arrested during a crackdown while others indicated that the policemen arrested them at night and accused of prostitution. Some of the men during the individual interviews indicated that they were arrested for being in possession of stolen items. These items were rightfully theirs and after producing documentation claiming ownership they were released.



**Somali families move out of their homes after they were broken into during skirmishes in the Eastleigh, November 19, 2012. SOURCE: REUTERS/Noor Khamis<sup>110</sup>**

### **3.1.3 Gender Based Violence (GBV)**

The UNHCR<sup>111</sup> notes that of the approximately fifty million refugees and internally displaced persons in the world today, nearly eighty percent are women and children. Many of these women are in this position because they have fled conflict situations that included sexual or gender-based violence, which have been a component of armed violence since ancient times. Tragically, for many of these women, the violence does not end when they arrive at a refugee camp. It has become increasingly apparent that many refugee camps or communities are rife with acts of sexual or gender-based violence<sup>112</sup>.

The United Nations notes: "In refugee camps, [women and children] are raped and abused by military and immigration personnel, bandit groups, male refugees and rival clan groups." As this problem has come to light, some agencies have begun taking steps to address it. One of

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<sup>110</sup> [http://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2012/Dec/27279/eastleigh\\_feels\\_heat\\_of\\_insecurity.aspx](http://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2012/Dec/27279/eastleigh_feels_heat_of_insecurity.aspx) (accessed November 25th, 2012)

<sup>111</sup> UNHCR, "Statistical Yearbook 2007, Trends in Displacement, Protection and Solutions," December 2008, UNHCR, Geneva, 2008. p.84.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid



the earliest gender-based violence (GBV) project initiated by the UNHCR was in 1993 dubbed "Women Victims of Violence Project", since then, there have been significant developments in the area. Through the WVV Project in collaboration with the refugees and the local police, UNHCR has significantly improved security inside the camps. In the early stages of the project, an average of 29 rapes cases was reported monthly.

While it is believed that reporting has improved through the Project's information campaign and rape counseling training, the problems of under- and over-reporting of rape remain. Nevertheless, indications suggest a gradual decline in the actual incidence of rape within the camps. The dramatic reduction in bandit attacks on the Dadaab camps following the construction of the thorn-bush fencing, has removed one of the major causes of sexual assault within the camps

According to WHO, violence against women constitute an urgent public health problem worldwide, particularly in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic<sup>113</sup>. A growing number of studies document a high prevalence of physical, sexual as well as financial, legal, psychological deprivation designed to control and dis-empower the victims. Women encounter violence as a result of conflict and other upheaval and are often exposed to violence in public spaces, such as the work place and community. The perpetrators can be spouses, parents, siblings, other members of the refugee community, employers, or authority figures, such as police or soldiers. The threat of GBV towards women and children is heightened significantly among refugee populations living in urban settings. Women refugees in urban areas face more violence since the perpetrators knows that they are in urban areas illegally and, therefore, might not seek legal intervention.

Violence against women has profound implications for health but is often ignored. According to WHO's World Report on Violence and Health, one of the most common forms of violence against women is that performed by a husband or male partner. This type of violence is frequently invisible since it happens behind closed doors, and effectively, when legal systems and cultural norms do not treat as a crime, but rather as a "private" family matter, or a normal part of life. Similarly, women refugees of Somali origin in Eastleigh face these challenges.

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<sup>113</sup> WHO, "World report on violence and health," Geneva, Switzerland: world health organization, 2002, p. 47

The situation is likely to escalate especially after the GoK recently gave ultimatums to refugees living in urban areas illegally to go back refugee camps.

*"I work at a local clinic and the other day, my friend who happens to be a Somali refugee came to the clinic all sore. she had a swollen hand and was coming to get it checked. When I asked her what happened she was reluctant to share but she finally said that her husband had been beating her for the last two days on the suspicion that she was being arrogant since coming to Nairobi. I treated her for broken bones and she asked me not to tell the police. I agreed because if I dare speak, then my own life will be in danger. Unfortunately, I am surrounded by 5 such cases almost every week."*  
Naliaka<sup>114</sup>

WHO indicates that the link between gender based violence and HIV/AIDS are a major concern as violence can directly or indirectly expose women to HIV infections<sup>115</sup>. According to WHO, rape can result in vaginal laceration and trauma which in turn increase risk of acquiring HIV infection. Violence and fear of violence makes it difficult for women to negotiate for safe sex including use of condom in their relationship. Further, the report indicates that girls who were exposed to childhood sexual abuse are likely to engage in risk behavior like early sex, more partners and abuse of drugs and alcohol. Also fear of violence prevents women from disclosing their HIV status and seeking for treatment and for services that prevent HIV transmission.

Burmese refugee women in Malaysia face sexual harassment and attacks by employers while working illegally as waitresses in the capital, Kuala Lumpur. Women living in refugee camps however, often face different challenges. In Ethiopia, young refugee women are forced to resort to sexually exploitative relationships for protection and food when they do not have relatives to care for them.

Women interviewed by Human Rights Watch in different parts of the world have reported ongoing medical problems, including psychological trauma, miscarriages by women raped when pregnant, hemorrhaging for long periods, inability to control urination, sleeplessness,

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<sup>114</sup> Interview on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2012 with a local resident and community nurse, Naliaka, a 40 year old woman living in Eastleigh.

<sup>115</sup> WHO, "World report on violence and health," Geneva, Switzerland: world health organization, 2002, p. 47

nightmares, chest and back pains and painful menstruation. The threat of violence limits women's participation in community and public life<sup>116</sup>.

Refugees living in urban areas face different challenges from those living in camps. For example, in Cairo, where urban refugees have no official right to work, refugee women often turn to domestic work, an unregulated sector under Egyptian labor law. This lack of jurisdiction means that women are not protected from abuse by their employers. Refugee women report "being abused, sexually harassed and not being paid while working in domestic service". Similarly, women refugees of Somali origin in Eastleigh, have a risk of contracting HIV/AIDS resulting to violence committed against them.

Most of Somali women refugees in Eastleigh live in deplorable conditions, they are not allowed to work as they don't have work permits. Conflict destroys livelihoods and forces people to adopt new strategies to support themselves. Often these new pursuits are unstable and can increase exposure to gender-based violence (GBV)—especially for women. The setting dictates how livelihood and gender-based violence become linked.

Others find work selling biscuits in the market, but experience an increase in domestic violence as a result of their new role as breadwinner as their husbands were either killed in Somalia or were left behind to look after their properties. Some are victims of violent attacks by local community members while out collecting firewood to cook with and to sell.

According to Pavanello, Elhawary and Pantuliano, for the Somali women refugees living in Eastleigh, they are often confronted with culturally accepted gender roles that encourage inequality and submission to men, mostly due to culture and the Islamic religion<sup>117</sup>. Very extreme cases of poverty have forced most of the refugee women living in Eastleigh to live in overcrowded apartments with men, children and other women. The likelihood of GBV greatly increases and the situation is made worse because the women are not permitted to

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<sup>116</sup> Murunga, G. R.. "Conflict in Somalia and Crime in Kenya: Understanding the Trans- Territoriality of Crime," *African and Asian Studies* 4:138-160. 2005, p. 144

<sup>117</sup> Pavanello, S., Elhawary, S., and Pantuliano, S., "Hidden and Exposed: Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya," HPG Working Paper March 2010, p. 7

legally work (unless they find ways to overcome the laid down systems). Victims are reluctant to complain for a variety of cultural, financial and legal reasons<sup>118</sup>.

Domestic violence and gender based violence can be seen as the most extreme form of patriarchal control over women's bodies that restrain women and deny them the most fundamental human rights of life, liberty, bodily integrity and dignity as a person. The consequence of such violence inflicted and the threat of violence restricts women's lives in term of their options and choices including their behaviour. The experience of violence affects their personal, family and community relations. Such violence also results in serious health problems such as trauma and mental disorders<sup>119</sup>.

*"One evening I was resting at home, my uncle walked in and demanded some food. I went to the kitchen and brought him some rice and beef stew. Apparently it had a lot of salt. He slapped me, I fell to the ground. Before I knew it, he was on top of me and he raped me. The ordeal seemed endless. Finally when I came to my senses, he had left. I must have passed out because when I looked out I saw daylight. I was soaked in blood. I knew I could not tell my aunt, she could not believe me. I did not have money to go to the hospital, so I just had a salt bath and hoped for the best. Nine months later I was pregnant. My aunt could not handle another mouth to feed; she chased me away from her house. An older man took me in, made me his wife and that is where I contracted the virus. Life gets harder everyday"*<sup>120</sup>

Sexual abuse and rape can lead to the life threatening risk of HIV/Aids infections and other sexually transmitted diseases, forced pregnancies, persistent gynecological problems and sometimes even physical disability. This medical and physiological complications were also observed to have been experienced by urban Somali women refugees.

*"My body is not mine anymore. My husband's uncle has constantly raped me on the pretext that he does not want me to be adulterous. I cannot tell anyone in the community because he is a well known and respected leader amongst*

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid

<sup>119</sup> Nyaoro, D., "Policing with Prejudice: How Policing exacerbates Poverty among Urban Refugee," The International Journal of Human Rights 14, 2010, p.126-145

<sup>120</sup> Interview with female respondent Interview on 13 August 2012

*his peers and sometimes leads prayers at the mosque. The other day the doctor told me I need some surgery because I suffer from extensive fistula. I thought that by telling my relative what the doctor has said would make him stop, but it hasn't. what he doesn't know is that while at Daadab I was also raped and contracted HIV, I cannot tell him because then I feel I have power over him. He will die because of his actions. Jasho<sup>121</sup>*

Although GBV was too sensitive, most of the women were willing to share their stories hoping it would sensitize other women and in particular their daughters about the consequences of GBV especially if one does not speak out. During the focus group discussion, a majority of the women refugees of Somali origin interviewed (51%) indicated that they had been victims of GBV.

The Somali women mentioned that during GBV, the perpetrators of GBV were members of their nuclear family, in some cases their spouses, members from the extended family and Somali male refugees living in Eastleigh. A small percentage had been victims of GBV by policemen/army officers during the crackdowns or by bandits or unknown people and aid workers. (see figure 1)

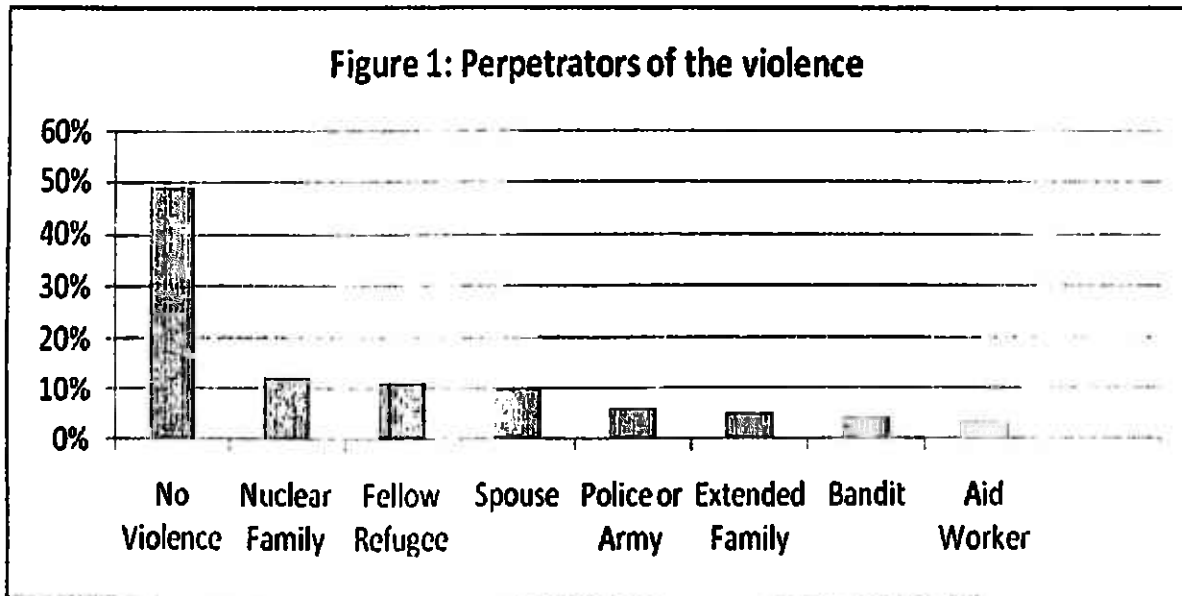
*“When they come to the clinic, we ask them why they are having some gynecological problems, and they always have an excuse. When we threaten to tell the police and reveal their status, they confess that either a brother, an uncle has sexually abused them. There is atleast one case every week around rape here at the clinic. We cannot say anything because we also fear for our lives.” Naliaka<sup>122</sup>*

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<sup>121</sup> Interview on 13 August 2013 with female respondent, Jasho 35 year old Somali woman refugee.

<sup>122</sup> Interview on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2012 with a local resident and community nurse, Naliakai, a 40 year old woman living in Eastleigh.

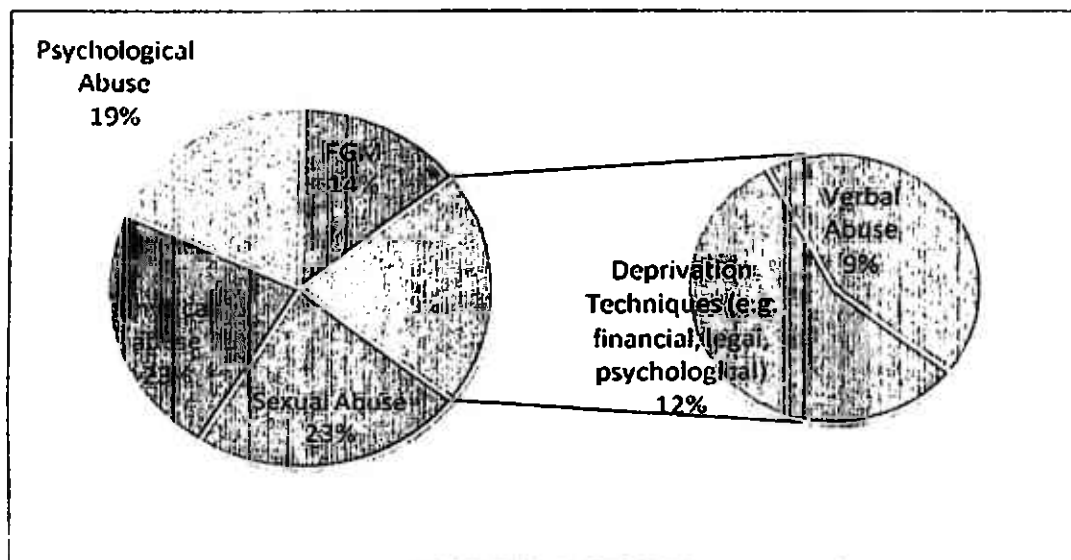
**Figure 1: Perpetrators of Violence**



Further, the Somali women refugees were asked to indicate the form of GBV they were subjected to. 23% indicated that they were either abused sexually or physically, 19% indicated that they were psychologically abused, 14% said that they had had their genitals mutilated, while 12% and 9% said that they were abused through deprivation techniques (e.g. financially or legally) and verbally respectively. A majority of the women (71%) said that they had been abused while at Daadab camp. 29% said that they were abused in Eastleigh. Be it at Daadab or in Eastleigh, those that had been abused, 57% of them indicated that they suffered medical complications. (*see figure 2*)

Naliaka the community nurse said that the most common complications are fistula especially among younger women aged between 18 – 25. Other medical complications have been severe gonorrhoea and syphilis and this is mostly among the men. This is because men are shy when it comes to discussion sexual matters especially with a non Muslim and take longer before seeking treatment.

**Figure 2: Form of GBV experienced by Respondents**

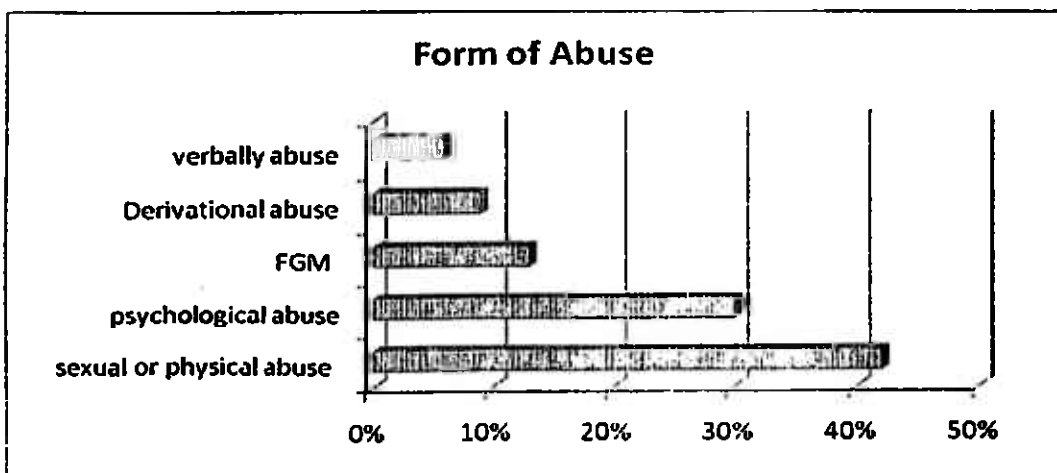


The study established that a majority of the respondents (63%) did not report the perpetrators to the authorities. This is because they feared for their lives if the perpetrators found out that they had been reported. Only 37% of them reported the ordeal to the relevant authorities. However, those who reported a big proportion of them indicate that no action was taken against the perpetrators. This is because even if arrested, most of the perpetrators would bribe the policemen who would then make the case very difficult for the victim.

According to the women highlighted that GBV is a big challenge facing them. Amina, gave mentioned that a majority of the women knew other Somali women refugees living in Eastleigh who had been victims of GBV. The only challenge is that the community is still shy in discussion matters around GBV especially if it was sexual or physical. During the discussion the women mentioned at least 8 women who they knew had undergone some form of GBV and had died.

According to the Somali women, the most common form of abuse is either sexual or physical abuse as indicated by 42% of the women, followed by psychological abuse at 30% then FGM at 13%. Derivational abuse and verbally abused came in last in the list of abuses faced by refugees with 9% and 6% of respondents indicating that they knew of individuals who had suffered such respectively. (see figure 3)

**Figure 3: Form of Abuse**



According to the women, after the violence some victims resorted to prostitution, alcohol and substance abuse or violence. They also became fearful, resentful, withdrawn and to a large extent anti-social. This new behavior affected their daily interaction with the rest of the community.

*“You see me all wrapped up in this buibui (Somali dress code for women) I am lethal. The war, the life at the camp and then constant abuse from the men here, I am on a mission to pay back. I have HIV and I am treating syphilis. I don’t care who I sleep with. All men must pay. My daily quote is I care less and the less I care I care it carelessly.” Mellah<sup>123</sup>*

### **3.1.4 Education**

While the GoK guarantees the right to free primary education to both refugees and nationals, many refugees lack awareness of their rights and are unable to exercise them. In addition, while in some areas primary schools welcome refugee children, in others they request an ‘admission fee’, often in the form of a bribe for the headmaster, who otherwise would find

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Somali woman refugee on 13 August 2013. Mellah, 34 years old.



excuses not to admit refugee children<sup>124</sup>. Poor refugees also find it difficult to access education due to the cost of transport, books, uniforms, desks and school fees<sup>125</sup>. Further, their presence in the city illegally locks them out to enjoy educational opportunities provided by the GoK.

According to Campbell<sup>126</sup>, over 73% of refugees of Somali origin in Eastleigh rely mainly on remittances from overseas for their livelihood. These remittances are supplemented by petty trades and informal employment proceeds. Refugee communities mainly receive monthly transfers of between \$50 and \$200, though this has been decreasing over the last couple of years as a result of the financial crisis in the United States and Europe. In some cases remittances have stopped altogether. This unfortunate occurrence has made many Somali girls to drop out of school or university because the remittance money that had previously paid their fees has dried up<sup>127</sup>.

*“When I grow up I want to be a doctor and help people in pain. But that dream was killed last week when my uncle, who lives in Sweden, told me that he can no longer support my education. He told me he has a new wife and many children and he now needs to start thinking about them. Now I don't know what to do.”<sup>128</sup>*

*“Unlike my sister here, I have had the privilege of attending a local university here in the city. I am able to study what I want and hopefully get a job. If I don't get a job I can as well start on my masters and then a doctorate. But I would love to go back and teach in Somalia and share the knowledge I have gotten here”<sup>129</sup>.*

*“I really want to take my children to school, but they don't have proper documentation: No birth certificates nor immunization cards. The principle in the local primary has told me I need to give him something small so that he*

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<sup>124</sup> World Refugee Survey, 24 August 2009, p.76

<sup>125</sup> Dix, S., “Urbanisation and the Social Protection of Refugees in Nairobi,” Humanitarian Exchange Number 35. Humanitarian Practice Network, ODI, 2006, p. 17

<sup>126</sup> Campbell. E.H., “Urban Refugees in Nairobi: Problems of Protection, Mechanisms of Survival, and Possibilities for Integration,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19(3), 2006, p. 43

<sup>127</sup> Pavanello, S., Elhawary, S., and Pantuliano, S. “Hidden and Exposed: Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya”, HPG Working Paper March 2010, p.21

<sup>128</sup> Interview with respondent urban Somali female refugee interview on 13 August 2012

<sup>129</sup> Interview with respondent urban Somali female refugee interview on 13 August 2012

*can turn the other way and register my children. The problem is that it is hard to find my daily bread and now this. It is sad that the only education they get is from the mosque since I cannot afford to take them to school. I hope that the sheikh will considered giving hem scholarships to local schools. If not my hands are tied.<sup>130</sup>”*

Out of those interviewed, it was noted that 30% of the children were not going to school at the time of the interviews. 40% were in primary schools, 20% in high schools and 10% were in a college or university. Of those in primary schools 35% of them had to bribe to get their children in primary and high school levels. 70% of those in college or university were mainly undertaking classes in the Arts departments.

### **3.1.5 Access to Social amenities**

Camps usually present a higher risk than refugee settlements in open situations as there is more severe overcrowding, and less likelihood that basic facilities, such as water supply and health care services, will be available when refugees first arrive<sup>131</sup>. Relief work is more difficult to organize for very large camp populations, such as some of the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire which contained more than 100,000 refugees. This being the case in the refugee camps, most of the refugees move to urban areas hoping that the situation would be different. The high rate at which the refugees move to the urban areas like Eastleigh, outdoes the rate at which amenities are adjusted to take care of the growing population.

Social amenities were inadequate even without the presence of refugees in Eastleigh. The period under which the study was undertake indicated that there was a population of 43,000 documented refugees but unofficial reports puts this number at over 100,000 refugees living in Eastleigh. Reality on the ground is that a large majority of the refugees are women and thus they greatly suffer the burden of inadequate facilities.

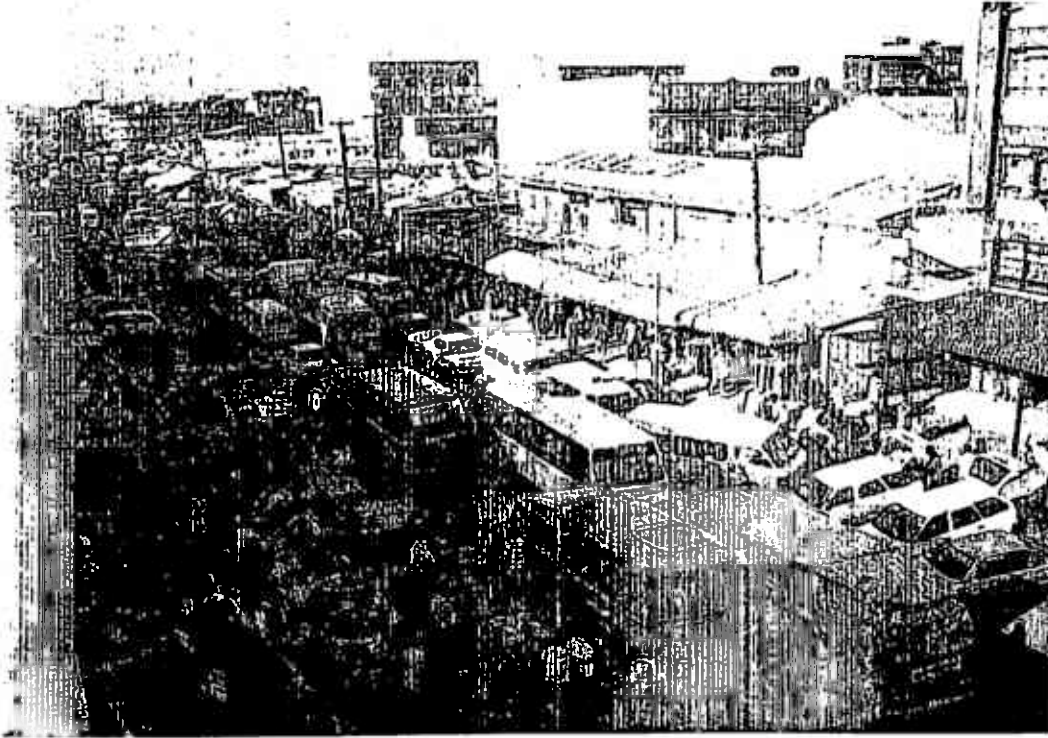
From observation, social amenities like hospitals are not properly equipped to deal with airborne diseases or emergencies. The unregulated expansion of business and influx of

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with respondent urban Somali male refugee interview on 13 August 2012

<sup>131</sup> Ann Arbelot, “Public health engineering in emergency situations”, Paris: Médecins Sans Frontières, 2004, p.19

women refugees into Eastleigh has seen the growing population put pressures on available resources outpacing repairs and improvements to public infrastructure. Drains, sewers and rubbish collection are very visibly inadequate. Roads are in a dilapidated condition, with deep mud during the rainy season and rising dust when it is dry<sup>132</sup>.



An aerial view of busy Eastleigh; the congested road is due to the small scale hawkers that have set up their shops on the road. Source: AbdulJamaa<sup>133</sup>

Rapid population increase resulting from the high influx of refugees in Eastleigh coupled with a few locals who move from rural to urban centers, has led to the growth of informal settlements with poor quality housing. The growth of urban settlements has outstripped the capacity of the city council to deliver services. The supply of potable piped water is erratic and a majority of the poor do not have access to sanitary facilities.

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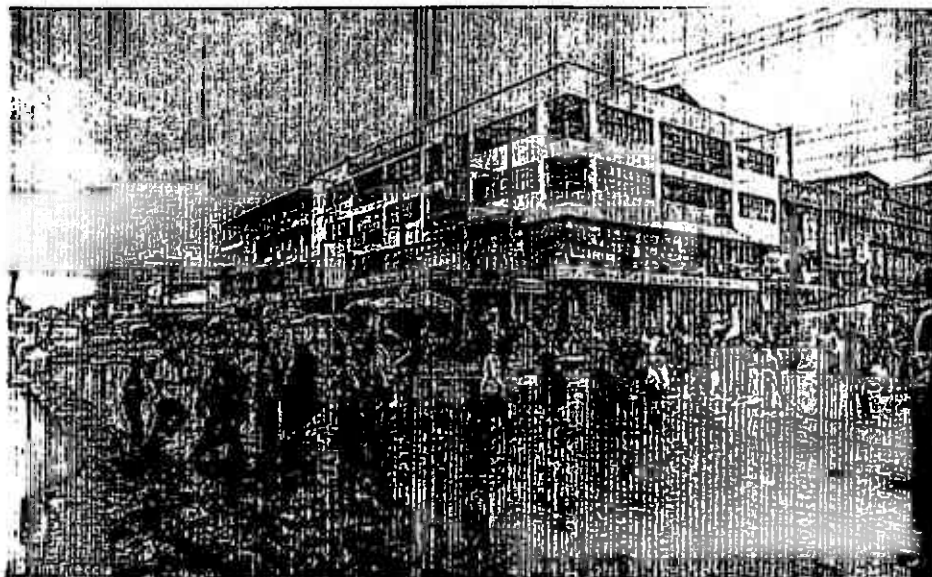
<sup>132</sup> Moret, J., S. Baglioni and D. Eflonayi-Mäder, "The Path of Somali Refugees into Exile: A Comparative Analysis of Secondary Movements and Policy Responses". SFM Studies Paper No. 46. Geneva: Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies, 2005, p.66

<sup>133</sup> <http://pesatalk.com/eastleigh-and-the-rise-of-somali-diaspora-capital/> (accessed 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013)

Rubbish collection and waste management systems are in a deplorable state in low income urban locations. Earth drains and pit latrines are the commonly available waste disposal facilities shared by several households. Water vendors are the main suppliers of water for household consumption. 20 liter jerry cans filled from boreholes, leaking pipes directly from water bodies are sold to the community. Within this unsanitary environment in Eastleigh, the potential for water contamination is high, raising serious concerns about water borne diseases. The majority of diarrhea and respiratory infections reported in the world are related to poor sanitation and hygiene practices<sup>134</sup>.

*“Eastleigh was one of the best planned towns in this city. Wide interconnected roads, good residential plans, you name it. The council had it thought through. Unfortunately with the influx of refugees into the area and rapid population increase amongst both the refugees and the local population, sanitation and social amenities are now a nightmare. Water is a problem, we are constantly repairing broken sewer lines, unblocking drainages, picking up tonnes of garbage...it is quite a handful”<sup>135</sup>*

Further, in determination of whether influx of refugees in Eastleigh had caused pressure on social amenities, the study sought to establish whether, the Somali women had access to clean safe water. Most of them said that they had access to clean safe water.



<sup>134</sup> Buscher, Dale.. “Case Identification: Challenges Posed by Urban Refugees”. Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement. June ,2003, p.4

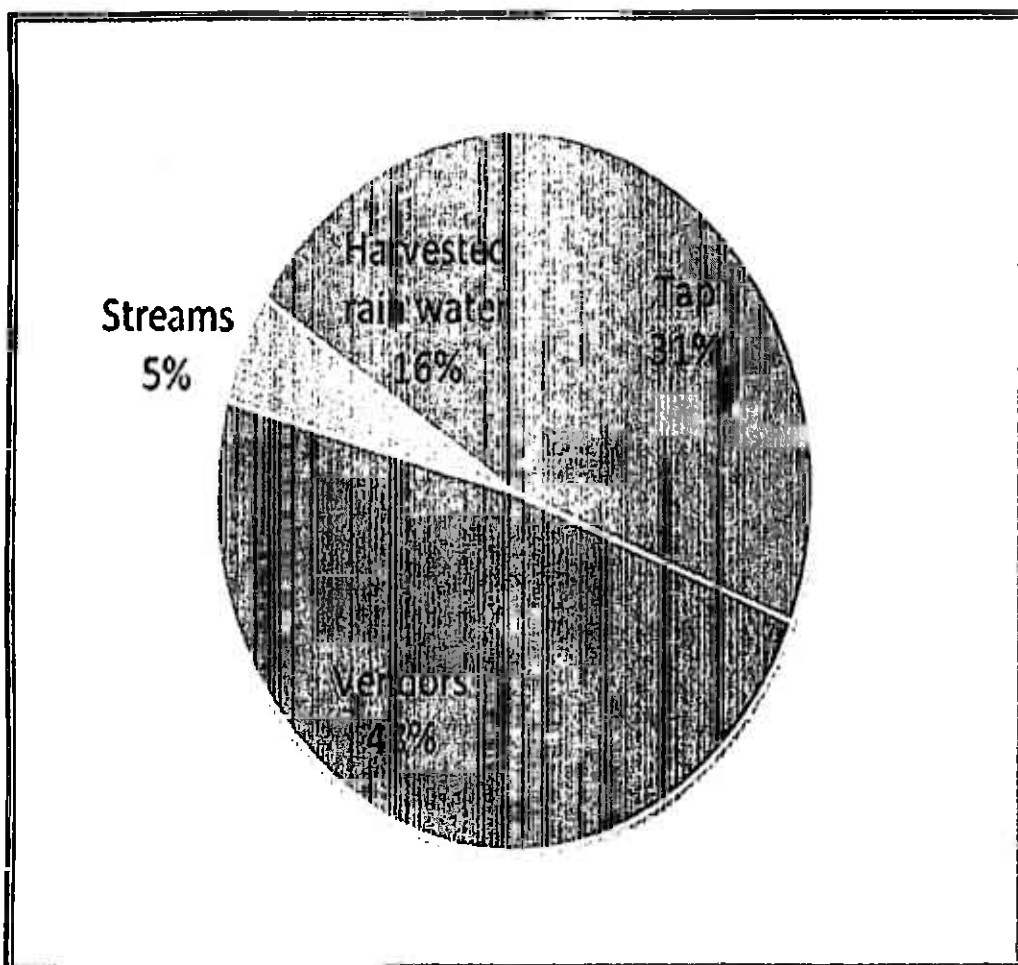
<sup>135</sup> interview with Tom, city council official. Interview was on 13 August 2012

A depleted section of the road in Eastleigh.

Source Tim Freccia

The Somali women stated that they mostly obtain their water from vendors. The water is clear, but the women confessed that they did not know where the water came from. Others obtained water from taps, either from their houses or bought from someone's house. Some of the women harvested the water especially for washing and bathing when it rained. (see Figure 4)

**Figure 4: Sources of daily water ration**



The women were disappointed by the inavailability of other social amenities in the area. For instance when they needed credit facilities, monetary institutions were reluctant in offering loans, credit and saving facilities. The Somali men highlighted that they were not satisfied with the school facilities, the teacher – student ratio, desk capacity, availability of books, availability of free primary education etc.



**A depleted section of the road in Eastleigh with some open sewer.  
Source Tim Freccia**

On the effect of increase influx of refugees in Eastleigh, the study established that social amenities (water and sewerage) have encountered pressure, thus, raising health concerns resulting to malaria, respiratory diseases, infections among other infections. It is also indicated that the influx of refugees has led to poor and depleted social structures due to immense pressure exerted on them.

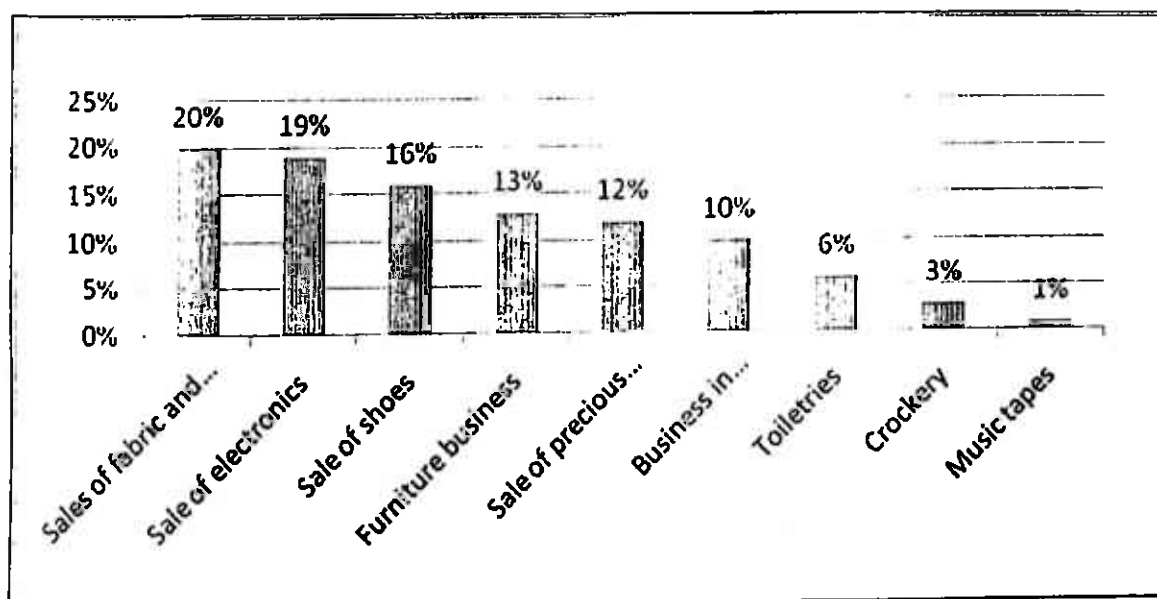
### **3.1.6 Socio-Economic activities and Trade**

The urban Somali women refugees are in constant search of money so as to provide for their families. This is because, as earlier mentioned, the main bread winner is either incapacitated or died during the conflict. The women thus engage in a number of activities: sale of fabric and clothing, sale of electronics, sale of shoes, engaging in furniture business, sale of precious metals, sale of fruits and vegetables, sale of toiletries, crockery and the sale of music

tapes. For the purpose of the study, any economic activity that the women undertook to better their social lives was termed as a socio-economic activity.

The main challenge they face is the lack of capital so as to start-up their business as well as the know-how when it comes to registering the business. Thus most of them will not follow the proper channels to register their business. (see figure 5)

**Figure 5: Forms of self-employment**

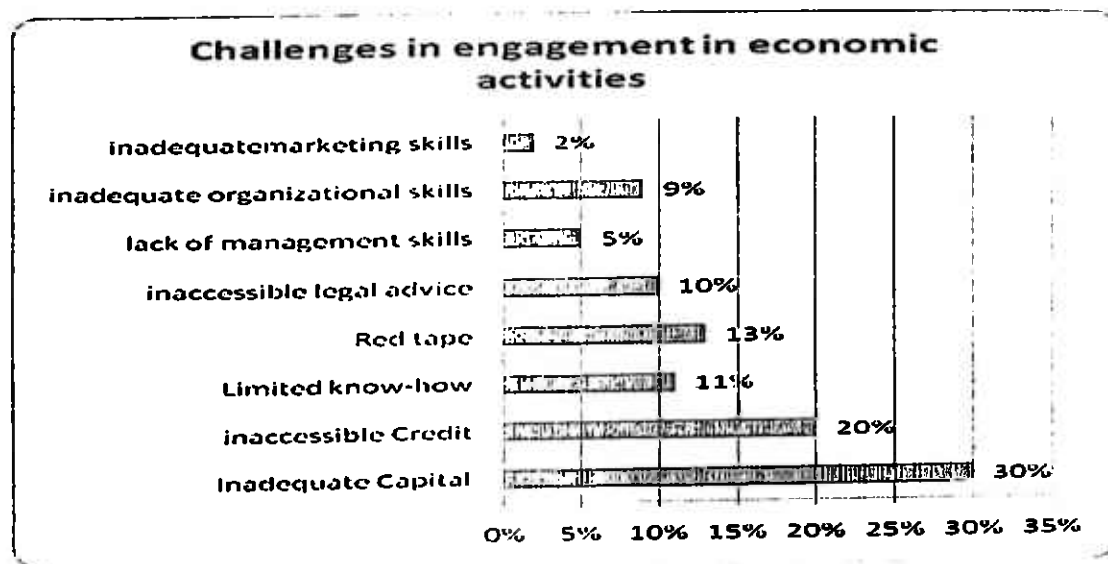


Due to the unavailability of affordable labor, the Somali women in most cases will get their children to sell and keep shop. This is because children offer readily and cheap labor. The children are called upon to look after their family business during school holidays and in some cases, the children that don't go to school are in the family business almost an entire day. Cases of child labour are high, but no cases are reported because this is seen as a cultural practice and a way of growth and mentorship for the children.

The Somali women refugees indicated that some of them were employed while others were in self-employment, For those self-employed, 20% indicated that they were engaged in sales of fabric and clothing, 19% in sales of electronics, 16% were in sale of shoes, 13% were in furniture business, 12% dealt in precious stones and metals and 10% engaged in fruits and vegetables business. Further, 6%, 3% and 1% were in sales of toiletries, crockery and music tapes respectively.

*"When I arrived here, I began trading in small light weight wares. I have found that this is somehow the norm with the other women also on arrival. I realized this is because very little income or capital is needed to start up the business and the business requires very little management."<sup>136</sup>*

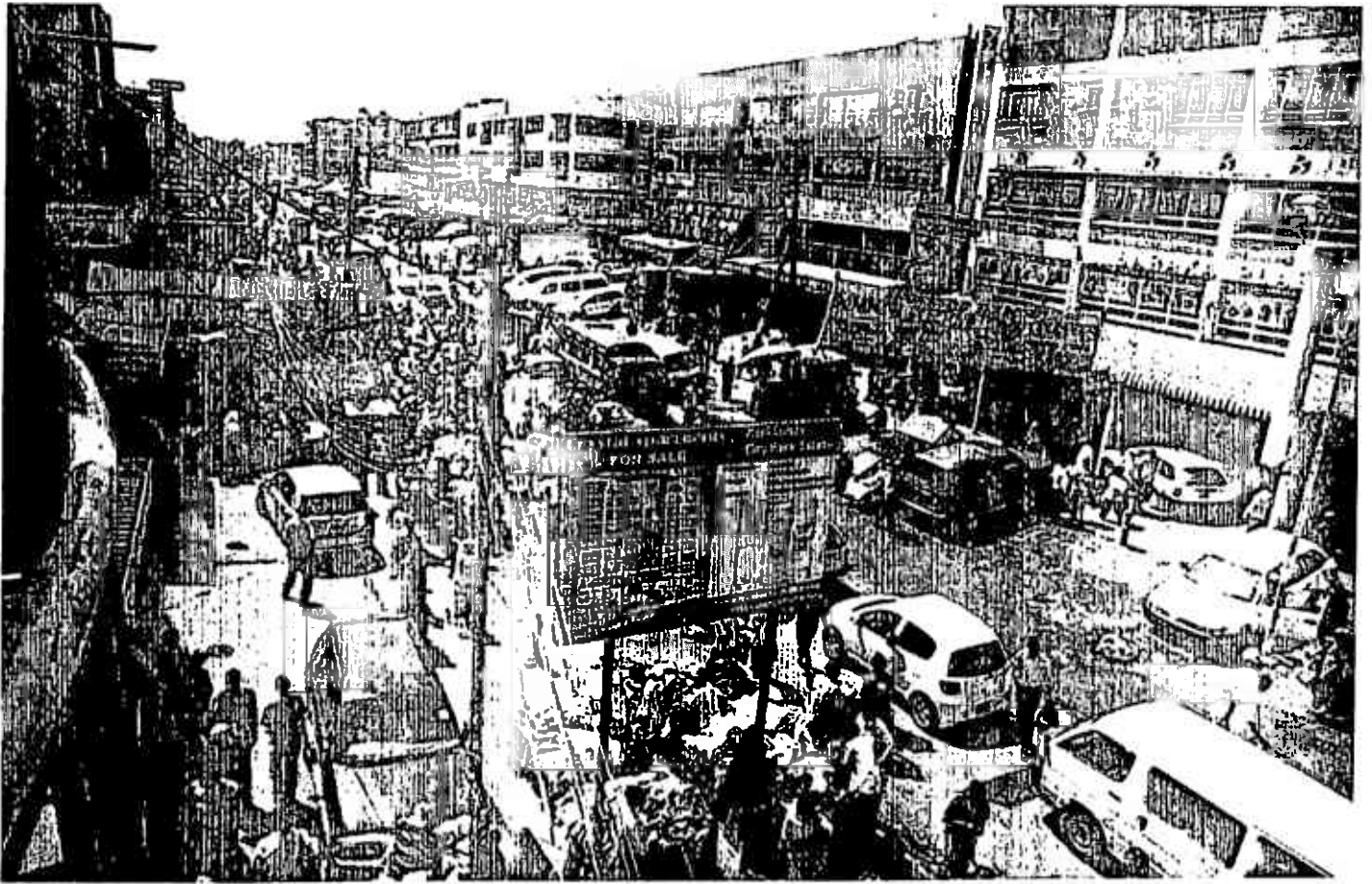
**Figure 6: Challenges in engagement in economic activities**



The Somali men highlighted that the women have a desire to start businesses but they lack capital and most of the time the women will ask them for money which in most cases they don't have. This causes a strain in the already minimal family finances. In addition, the women pointed out that, most of the financial institutions do not give them loans or credit for their business startups. In most cases if they got the capital, they did not have the technical know-how either have management skills or financial skills to run their business, and use their own creative systems to monitor the money. The red tape in the acquisition of trade licenses was also a major concern to the women.

<sup>136</sup> Focus group interview held on 6 August 2012. Fatuma 50 year old female. Fatuma was the leader of the focus group interview





**A general view shows the Eastleigh neighbourhood of Nairobi. The bustling Eastleigh suburb has been the hub of business for Somali women refugees escaping civil war in neighbouring Somalia for decades.**

### **3.1.7 Socio-economic dynamics of Somali women: Kenyan Somali Women and Urban refugee Somali women.**

The individual interviews administered on the local residents highlighted that a majority of the Kenyan health facilities do not discriminate against Kenyan Somali women. Kenyan Somali women have an equal opportunity to enroll in schools in the city as they will. The cost of housing (sale/rental) had gone up since the coming of Somali's into Eastleigh. They were also in agreement with the statement that Somali women who are victims of GBV have access to optimum health care but might not have an idea on how to access the services.

On the other hand the urban Somali women refugees cannot easily access credit facilities from monetary institutions as compared to the local Kenyan women. It was observed that the economic activities that the urban Somali women refugees engage in, have contributed

largely to the Kenyan economy. Alongside this, the economic activities that the Somali women refugees engage in have contributed largely to the improvement of livelihood in Eastleigh. The urban Somali women, have a large percentage of business in Eastleigh.

Further, they were in agreement with the statement that Kenyan Somali women make good employers (in terms of pay and courtesy). It was also evident that the urban Somali women refugees were prone to greater challenges as compared to the local Kenyan women. Finally it was greatly agreed that since the influx of Somali's into Eastleigh, social amenities have been depleted

The Kenyan Somali women felt that the government had done well in increasing social amenities in Eastleigh that is schools, hospitals, roads etc. A fact that the Somali women refugees refuted. The Somali women said that since their arrival, inasmuch as the government knows of their existence, it is not willing to improve important services, like medical care, transport and education.

The Somali women refugees felt that they were constantly perceived as suspicious because of the insecurity in the area. The presence of small arms and light weapons in the region, and with the ever-souring relationship between the locals and the refugees, the security of Eastleigh and Kenya in general is of major concern.

*"Everyone looks at me as though I am Al-shabaab. I cannot carry a bag without a suspicious look. I sit in a hotel to get a meal and I can feel all eyes on me. They think I am a suicide bomber or I have in me very dangerous weapons. I understand that Al-shabaab has given Muslims and Somali's a bad reputation, but surely not all of us are part of the group." Maria<sup>137</sup>*

However, a majority of the local female respondents agreed with the statement that they felt insecure with the presence of Somali women refugees in Eastleigh. They further strongly agreed with the statement that the refugee community is constantly engaging in 'cold-war' conflict with the local community. But due to the sensitivity of the matter, any issues are dealt with secretly.

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<sup>137</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Maria 40 year old Somali female refugee.

*"We are in constant fear of Al-shabaab or Al-queda here in Eastleigh since the arrival of the Somalis. There are rumors that the women are the leaders in some of this militia groups. This is because women are generally not seen as carriers of light weapons. But we have discovered that a majority of these women conceal the weapons in their long bui-bui's and are able to smuggle light weapons across the town and outside the town as well. Almost every Somali man here has a gun at close quarters. To be feared are the traders. Be it large scale or small scale. Because they fear for their business and thus are out to protect them at all lengths Eastleigh is no longer a safe haven." Otieno<sup>138</sup>*

### 3.2 Conclusion

The main pull factors drawing people to urban areas include livelihoods opportunities and the possibility of greater security. Many refugees engage in petty trade or gain employment in small and medium-sized businesses, despite official prohibitions against this. Some have relatives or connections already living in Nairobi, and use these networks to find work and accommodation. Somali refugees in particular exploit family or other networks in Eastleigh, to the extent that many Somalis head straight for Nairobi and do not go to the camps at all. Others who go to the city temporarily for medical assistance or further education often stay on; young people in particular are unwilling to return to life in the camps. Refugees used to living in urban areas in their countries of origin may also be more reluctant to stay in the camps<sup>139</sup>, while city life offers greater independence and a consequent sense of self-worth and dignity.

Refugees living within Kenyan boundaries have unrestricted access to education, especially in Daadab, after the government introduced free primary education 2003. However, the enrolment rates for boys to girls remain un-bridged, with more boys' to girls' enrolment rates in education institution. Further, other incidental cost like cost of uniform, transport, and food is a major deterrent to poor parent to enroll their children in school.

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<sup>138</sup> Individual interview with Otieno, 40 year old man, living in Eastleigh.

<sup>139</sup> Wagacha J. B and Guiney J.. The Plight of Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya, in Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa edited by David Hollenbach, SJ, Georgetown University Press. 2008, pp 27

GBV has made the stay of refugee women almost unbearable. This form of violence takes form of rape, physical violence and abuse which is usually perpetrated by other refugees, bandits, and sometimes aid workers. GBV has psychological, physical and health impact on women. Studies have shown that GBV propels prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

Further, the influx of refugees in the country have destabilized security situation. There is an escalating presence of illicit activities and firearm in Eastleigh district of Nairobi. There is an increasing rate of highway robberies, rape, grenade attacks and killings in Nairobi and areas around refugee camps. All these forms of crime are attributed directly and indirectly to the presence of refugees in those areas. Developmental efforts have been frustrated by state of insecurity in the country; a lot of resources have been diverted to attending refugees and in stemming the problem of insecurity. Lethal modern weapons are smuggled into Kenya from Somalia, placing fire power into the hands of Kenyan and Somali bandit gangs perceived as refugees. Somali women are vulnerable to crime. However some of them are directly involved in perpetration of the crimes.

The influx of urban Somali women refugees in Eastleigh has led to intense pressure on social amenities like schools, medical services, water facilities, roads and sewerage and garbage collection systems. This dilapidated state of infrastructure is a threat to security and health of both local residents and the women as well and the general population. Settlement of refugees in the city centers has tremendously increased the cost of housing as demand exceeds supply. It is clear that landlords exploit the refugees when renting houses, the Somali women refugees pay more for the houses as compared to the locals. The deplorable state of infrastructure and conditions of living in overcrowded areas also poses a health risk to the refugees.

Overcrowding and poor hygiene are major factors in the transmission of diseases with epidemic potential like cancer, malaria, typhoid and diarrhea, measles, meningitis, cholera, amongst other diseases.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **COPING STRATEGIES BY SOMALI WOMEN REFUGEES LIVING IN EASTLEIGH 1990 - 2011**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

With the myriad of challenges facing women refugees of Somali origin living in Eastleigh, Nairobi, there has to be a way of coping with the challenges faced for survival. What Halleh Ghorashi terms as the deficit approach in his Organizational Theory. The Somali women refugees have devised systems to ensure that they survive in a new environment. They have formed groups for social support, engaged in trade, taken up employment, and through remittances from relatives have been able to stay in Eastleigh despite the numerous challenges earlier mentioned.

Somali women refugees have unique coping mechanisms as compared to the average woman in particular the Kenyan Somali women because of two main reasons. Firstly, by the fact that they are refugees, their status makes them work twice as hard to get recognized and appreciated in the community and in the country. Secondly, they have very tight family bonds and intricate networks amongst themselves and relatives abroad, which ensure their survival. Locally, they have formed women investment groups also known as *chamas* that are exclusively for Somali women refugees. Some of those groups are formed under a particular age set, clan or common interest.

Coping mechanisms do exist for some refugee women who have the experience, vocational or language skills to undertake income-generating activities. However there are far too many constraints limiting the economic participation of refugee women that need to be addressed, including: inadequate capital, regulatory controls and licensing, a market for products, insufficient organizational and business skills, inadequate language and vocational skills.

This chapter presents the various ways that these women refugees are able to manage their lives even with the challenges. The period 1990 to 2011 is investigated because as early as 1990, urban refugee women with means or who had a relative or were from particular clans had already started streaming into the town of Eastleigh.

The study highlights five areas that were the most notable coping systems among the Somali women refugees. They include: involvement in trade, remittances, employment, social support, religion and acceptance.

#### **4.1.1 Trade**

In some respects the vigorous unregulated economy that flourished inside Somalia after the collapse of the state there has been exported to Kenya. The economic transformation of Eastleigh has brought a new level of competition to Nairobi, substantially reducing the cost of goods and services. Most Somalis in Kenya (both Kenyan-Somalis and Somali immigrants) are poor, but there are also wealthy individuals, mainly from Somalia, who came with cash readily available (either in hand or in foreign bank accounts) for large investments. Two factors characterize their business activities in Kenya. First, they operate largely outside the formal economy of the country.

Secondly, they rely heavily, on clan or kinship networks of trust in their business dealings. The limited business activities that occur in the formal sector are in hotels, real estate and transport industries. Investments and businesses run by Somalis in Kenya appear to be vulnerable because of their informal nature and situation in a largely unregulated and uninsured market. It could be argued that the unregulated parallel economy that prevailed after the formal economy crumbled in Somalia has been partially copied or exported to Kenya<sup>140</sup>.

There is a wide variety of smaller scale trade networks and businesses in which the majority of Somali women refugees work. Despite the comparatively glamorous malls, most Somali refugees living in Eastleigh are economically poor. Some survive by working for other more wealthy Somalis. Evidence shows that several Somali women refugees in Eastleigh have roadside stands where they sell fabrics, undergarments, scarves, shoes, toiletries, crockery, music tapes, fruit and vegetables and electronics. Many are engaged in the lucrative business

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<sup>140</sup> Campbell, E.H., "Formalizing the Informal Economy: Somali Refugee and Migrant Trade Networks in Nairobi", Geneva: Global Commission on International Migration Global Migration Perspectives No. 47, 2005, p.45

of selling miraa<sup>141</sup>, a herbal stimulant (also called khat) that is widely grown and used in East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

Women mainly engage in petty trade, domestic labour and tea and coffee making. They generally lack access to capital or credit to acquire business licenses and formalize their businesses, and have to rely on men to borrow cash and/or material on their behalf. Women also tend to lack marketing, management and organizational skills, although some have received training and start-up capital from NGOs or faith-based associations (especially the Catholic Church), and have been able to start dress-making businesses.

*“Our greatest fears are the kanjo guys. They arrest us and take our wares and goods. Most of the times we are not charged in court, we just spend time in the van moving from one street to another. So before I can get more capital to uplift the business it is another uphill task.” Zubeda<sup>142</sup>*

Lindley noted that throughout the 1990s Somali refugees transformed Eastleigh from a primarily a residential area into a vibrant commercial and business center, housing import-export businesses, retail outlets (from small-scale hawking and street stalls to shopping malls), real estate agencies, hotels, lodges, miraa stalls, cafes and restaurants and international money transfer and exchange services<sup>143</sup>. The economic transformation of Eastleigh has brought ‘tremendous competition to the marketplace, pushing out many Asian retailers, who had hitherto controlled the businesses<sup>144</sup>. The retail malls in Eastleigh are not just used by individual consumers. Larger commercial businesses and medium-sized traders also rely on retailers in Eastleigh for a wide variety of goods, ranging from hardware to electronics and fruit and vegetables.

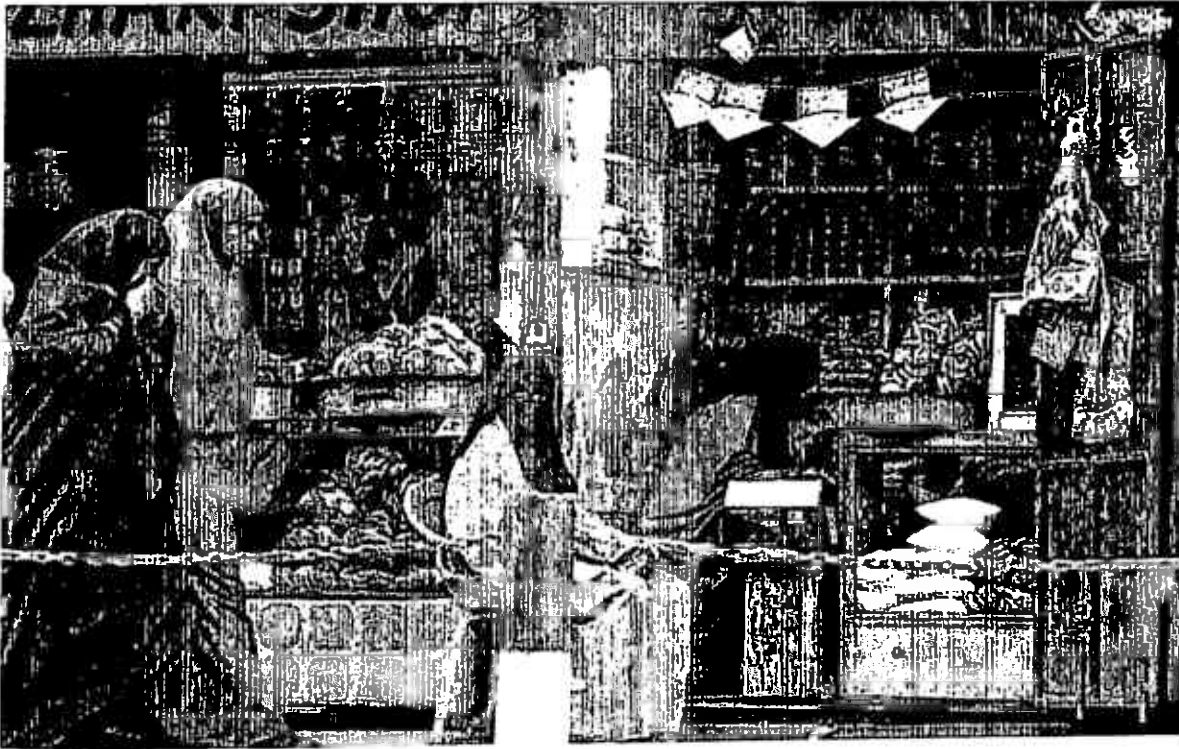
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<sup>141</sup> *ibid*

<sup>142</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Zubeda 30 year old Somali female refugee

<sup>143</sup> Lindley, A., “The Dynamics and Effects of Remittances in Insecure Settings: the Somali Case”, DPhil Thesis, Department of International Development, University of Oxford, 2009, p. 27

<sup>144</sup> Campbell. E.H., “Urban Refugees in Nairobi: Problems of Protection, Mechanisms of Survival, and Possibilities for Integration,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, 2006, p. 402



A Somali woman trading her wares as others walk past her shop. Source: Simon Maina<sup>145</sup>

Some of the refugees, who lack employment, engage in self-employment. Self-employment activities include tailoring, hairdressing, and barbers. These activities earn on average Kshs. 300-500 daily. Working on most days of the week, casual labourers can earn an average Kshs. 9,000 each month. Petty trade is a common activity among the female Somali refugees. These include: selling food, water, handicrafts, clothes and low end jewelry) mostly silver or gold plated jewelry). Depending on the capital injection and the volume of trade, petty traders earn between Kshs. 350-500 per day<sup>146</sup>.

Meanwhile, hundreds of smaller shops, again run predominantly by Somalis, sell electronic goods, kitchenware, furniture, clothes and other items. Almost every business- and shop-owner employs at least one Kenyan (as a cleaner or watchman for instance).

*“It helps to have a Kenyan as one of your employees. They can easily bargain with the authorities when we are being harassed. Most Kenyans are really kind and we try and treat them as family. Some have even converted to Islam*

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<sup>145</sup> [http://sabahionline.com/en\\_GB/articles/hoa/articles/features/2013/01/30/feature-01](http://sabahionline.com/en_GB/articles/hoa/articles/features/2013/01/30/feature-01) (accessed 13th June 2013)

<sup>146</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Mzee Mohammed 60 year old Somali male refugee



*because of our influence to them and their new religious values have increased our business sales.” Mohammed<sup>147</sup>*



**A Somali refugee woman selling fruits and vegetables<sup>148</sup>**

The contribution refugees make to the Kenyan economy is also evident in the cattle trade, particularly cross-border trade with Somalia. Somali cattle traders bring livestock from Somalia for sale in markets in northern Kenya, such as Garissa, and onwards to Nairobi. Such cross-border trade plays a major role in linking refugees (especially Somalis) with diaspora and home communities. Somali businessmen have also built on relations in neighboring countries to establish regional trade networks, selling everything from shoes to clothes and perfume. As the global Somali diaspora has grown over the last 15 years, still more capital has flowed into Eastleigh in particular. There has been very little effort to boost the productive potential of refugees and further strengthen their involvement in the urban economy.

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<sup>147</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Mzee Mohammed 60 year old Somali male refugee. Others in the group were: Ali, Ishmael, Abdi

<sup>148</sup> <http://islamizationwatch.blogspot.com/2009/11/somali-women-beaten-for-violating.html> (accessed 13th June 2013)

*“We have established systems with our clansmen in the camp. They contact our Kenyan Somali relatives and we ‘export’ cattle from there to here. The meat tastes better but it is also very affordable. So most people can have some meat at least in one meal. Again we Somalis love meat and this system has really worked.” Ishmael<sup>149</sup>*

Further, Somali women refugees have various sources of funds that are used as startup capital for their businesses. Other than remittances from relatives and friends in diaspora, evidence shows that Somali women refugees secure the capital investment needed to establish a business (some straightforward, some shadowy and complex.) The sources of capital can be broadly divided into three categories: capital from fellow Somali refugees, Kenyan-Somali business elite capital and petty traders.

The most significant source of capital for Somali investment in Kenya originates in Somalia. This is provided by members of Somalia’s business class, particularly those from Mogadishu and Bosasso, who usually continue to run parallel businesses in their places of origin. The current insecurity and uncertainty surrounding Somalia’s southern regions, and Mogadishu in particular, have also contributed to capital flight and driven out many successful businessmen who want to protect and reinvest their assets. In addition, certain warlords, together with a number of corrupt individuals and businessmen inside and outside Somalia, exploited the absence of a functioning central bank and began to print Somali shillings themselves. The newly printed currency is commonly converted into hard currency through the *hawala* system. Much of the proceeds obtained here ends up being invested in Kenya.

The second major source of capital is from the Kenyan-Somali business elite, which has generated its wealth through the formal economy but lately turned to the growing parallel market. People in this group try to combine the experience gained from Somalia’s business elite (the first category) with their own political connections in order to enhance their investment opportunities. This has led to the creation of partnerships between businessmen from Somalia and Kenyan-Somali entrepreneurs in which the former identify new business and investment opportunities and the latter help in setting up the businesses in Kenya. In

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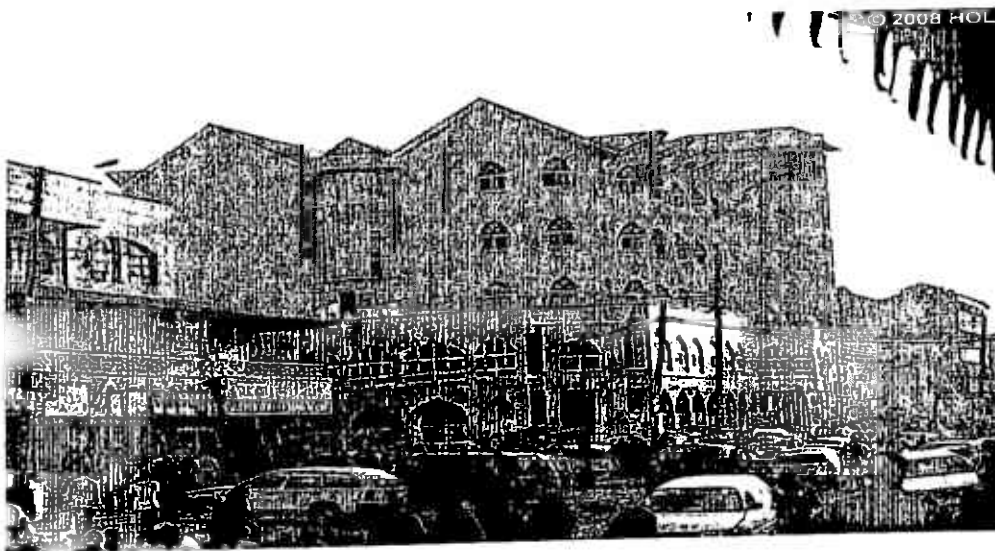
<sup>149</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Ishamel 60 year old Somali male refugee

exchange for initial capital investment, Kenyan-Somalis often provide the businessmen with political cover.<sup>150</sup>

Petty traders probably constitute the largest category of investors in terms of numbers of individuals involved. Although they are not as financially powerful as the other investors (Somalia capital and Kenyan-Somali business elite capital), the source of their capital is straightforward; some have worked hard and saved up to invest in projects, others have secured the initial capital from their relatives overseas.

*“Increasingly, Somalis living overseas elect to put together some financial resources and send them to their relatives in Africa to help them establish a business. This helps to reduce the dependency that may have developed as result of their sending regular remittances for living costs every month”.*<sup>151</sup>

*“It is even possible to exchange currency with many Somali refugees, using a “black market” rate that is far superior to the official exchange rate. Even the legitimate items sold, such as electronics, are brought into the country through the Kenya-Somali border and sold at very low prices compared to other items that are officially imported. These activities are carried out by both male and female refugees in Eastleigh” Khalif*<sup>152</sup>



**A newly constructed mall in Eastleigh. Source ictville.com**

<sup>150</sup> Interview with investors and Mohamed Arale, a Kenyan-Somali.

<sup>151</sup> Personal interviews with seven diaspora investors (August 2012).

<sup>152</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Fatuma 37 year old Somali female refugee

## 4.1.2 Remittances and Social Capital Support

Refugees who are unable to find work in Nairobi tend to rely on better-off members of their communities for support, particularly food and accommodation. The refugees often ask for community contributions when they are out of money, or go to the mosque to ask fellow Somalis for help.<sup>153</sup> Interviews conducted revealed that some unaccompanied refugee minors (UAMs) often move from house to house to obtain food and shelter.

*“I arrived in Nairobi, about two years ago, I got here together with my two other friends who we live with. Life have not been easy for me, me and my friends move from house to house in search of food and money... sometimes we seek for small jobs that will provide us with money to buy food...”*  
Fatuma<sup>154</sup>

A significant proportion of refugees receive overseas remittances. According to RCK, many refugees in Eastleigh have at some point received money from relatives overseas. In many cases, families rely on husbands, brothers or adult children to send remittances, primarily from Europe and North America, and also from Australia, South Africa, the Gulf and the Middle East. Remittances can arrive on a regular, often monthly, basis, or they can be more ad hoc, both in size and frequency.

Remittances are used to purchase equipment and materials for businesses, pay for education and medical bills, pay house rent and buy food. However, other Somali businessmen in Eastleigh use that money from the Somali diaspora as start-up capital to develop their businesses. For poorer refugees, remittance money is often their only source of income. If the money is sufficient, remittances tend to be shared with close relatives and other needy members of the community. The role remittances play in recipients' livelihoods obviously varies considerably depending on the size and regularity of transfers. For some, remittances are extremely volatile and can stop abruptly if relatives abroad are ill, lose their jobs or die. In

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<sup>153</sup> Wagacha JB and Guiney J.. “The Plight of Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya,” in *Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa* edited by David Hollenbach, SJ, Georgetown University Press. 2008, pp 48

<sup>154</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Fatuma 16 year old Somali female refugee

some cases, remittances are solicited only in response to a particular crisis, for example business failure, ill-health or a legal problem<sup>155</sup>.

A number of refugees business women from Somali interviewed indicated that after receiving remittances from families and friends in the diaspora, they have used this money as start-up capital. They however indicated that since they did not have know-how of local market, they hire Kenyans to gain a better understanding of local markets. Other refugees working in the informal sector often rely on Kenyan partners to register small businesses.

*“When my husband sends money, there is so much joy as I further my fruit business. I am glad that Mama Mikhail has agreed to lease her premises and some of her staffs to me as I trade. Somehow she is a form of security when kanjo come and thus I protect the business but also the locals buy from her thinking it is her business” Mariah.*<sup>156</sup>

Remittances funding from the wider Somali diaspora has been crucial to the expansion of Eastleigh and businesses by women refugees of Somali origin. Somalians in Western and Middle Eastern countries have been sending money to their relatives in Eastleigh to boost their business ventures. Most of the investments centers on family-owned businesses but it also extends to real estate. The capital investments for small enterprises vary but typically involve sums of US\$3–5 million. Commercial-mall companies such as Amal, Baraka Bazaar, Garissa Lodge and Sunshine Plaza are in this category, with annual turnover of no more than \$7 million.<sup>157</sup>

*“My sister in Norway has been able to put my three children through primary and campus studies. With that burden out of my way, I have been able to grow my textile business and take my other two children through school and some of my nieces and nephews.” Amina*<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Pavanello, S., Elhawary, S., and Pantuliano, S. “Hidden and Exposed: Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya,” HPG Working Paper March 2010, p.13

<sup>156</sup> Focus group interview held on 6 August 2012. Mariah 40 year old Somali female refugee.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Eastleigh Business Community Association (September 2012).

<sup>158</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Amina 50 year old Somali female refugee

*“Before I started this successful food business, I had tired many other businesses unsuccessfully. Had it not been for my brother sending me money consistently, I would not be where I am today.” Aisha<sup>159</sup>*

#### **4.1.3 Employment/Casual Work**

The great majority of refugees who have access to work are engaged in the informal economy. Semi-skilled and unskilled refugees are involved in the same type of work, mostly casual labour and petty trade. This includes jobs as shoe shiners, shop attendants, mechanics, waiters, car washers and herdsmen in peri-urban areas. A majority of the refugees who have lived in Nairobi for more than two years are self-employed, doing petty trade<sup>160</sup>.

According to RCK<sup>161</sup>, in the urban areas most refugees (49%) survive by working while the rest receive support from community members (15%), family members in Kenya (10%), from family living abroad (6%) and get some assistance from Kenya friends and NGOs (5%). Due to the unclear legal status of refugees in the country most of the women can only access lowly paid menial jobs such as washing clothes and cooking in homes, embroidery, and dish washing in restaurants or food kiosks, housemaid and/or farm laborer during rainy season<sup>162</sup>.

The refugee women work in local large scale or small scale farms where the pay is Ksh. 100 (US\$1.54) for half a day while washing clothes ranges from Ksh. 100 to 150 (US\$2.30) per day. Full time house work as a maid is reportedly better paid ranging from Ksh. 1,300 to 1,500 (US\$20-23), and for a few refugee women the payments are higher at Kshs. 6,000 (US\$92.30) per month<sup>163</sup>. Despite the low pay in these refugee women of Somali refugee have to take up such job so as to provide for their families.

*“When we came here 8 years back, my oldest son and myself found a job at one of the leafy suburbs. We could wake up early in the morning and walk 20 kilometers or so because we had not bus-fare. My employer then, a Mzungu, paid us double what my other friends were receiving in their places of work.*

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<sup>159</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Aisha 40 year old Somali female refugee

<sup>160</sup> Ibid

<sup>161</sup> Refugee Consortium of Kenya, “Enhancing the Protection of Refugee Women in Nairobi-A Survey on Risks, Protection Gaps and Coping Mechanisms of Refugee Women in Urban Areas.” A publication of the Refugee Consortium of Kenya with support from The Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund. April 2008, pg 19

<sup>162</sup> Ibid

<sup>163</sup> Ibid

*He really uplifted our lives. Unfortunately he flew out of the country after 6 years and our current employer is not as generous.” Maria<sup>164</sup>*

Access to employment for refugees is determined by refugee status. Refugees in Kenya are required to obtain work permits, which cost KES 50,000 (\$700) and are valid for two years<sup>165</sup>. The Immigration Act grants class M work permits to refugees recognized by the Kenyan government prior to 1990. The Ministry of Immigration in Kenya stopped issuing these permits in 2004, but announced that it would start issuing them again in December 2008 in an attempt to stop the proliferation of forged documents. The refugees have then encountered numerous challenges in obtaining jobs in the formal sector due to the failure by the government to issue the work permits.

*“I lost my job as a secretary at a local company, where I was working after expiration of my work permit. Life has not been easy to cater for my school going children to provide them with food, clothing and school fees has been a challenge. I have already depleted my saving hoping that the government would issue a new work permit to allow me resume my job or look for a new one...” Amina<sup>166</sup>*

*“I have been left to look for odd jobs in the hotels, sometimes I engage in trade, selling fruits and vegetables... the money I get from these is not sufficient, it was better when I was working with the city council. Amina<sup>167</sup>*

Further, a major constraint for many refugees is that they lack the official documents they need to obtain work permits. One way around this problem for new arrivals is to find work with family or community networks, which are usually flexible about paperwork. As indicated by some of the respondents interviewed during the study, in Eastleigh,

*“Somalis control most businesses; this makes it easier for Somali refugees to obtain work. Somali refugees tend to accept any level of payment or salary,*

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<sup>164</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Maria 40 year old Somali female refugee

<sup>165</sup> USCRI.. World Refugee Survey 2007 U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), Washington DC, 2008

<sup>166</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Amina 50 year old Somali female refugee

<sup>167</sup> *ibid*

*even if they know that their work is worth more....however, Somali employers tended to pay more for work” Mzee Mohammed<sup>168</sup>*

The women that have had a privilege to work and earn a ‘steady’ income do not have to rely on remittances that will sometimes be inconsistent.

*“I have become financially stable; I buy my wares cheaply and can afford to sell them at a reasonable price as well. I can now take my children to an affordable private school because of a stable income. I know my brother Aden meant well when he could send me money, but he has his family to worry about also. These days he sends when he can. I am glad I don't have to worry if he will send or not<sup>169</sup>”*

#### **4.1.4 Social Support**

Refugee women of Somali origin have been faced with challenges to secure jobs especially in cities where refugees are frustrated by the absence of solutions or their exclusion from the labour market, and where exiled populations are fragmented along national, ethnic, religious or ideological lines. To this effect, as indicated by responses from focused groups used in this study, refugee women try to pull resources together through small investment groups locally known as *chamas*, to put up business to cater for their families<sup>170</sup>.

Somalis use their clan-based networks to create geographically dispersed trading networks as they seek new markets and partners. Additionally, as they can mobilize resources quite efficiently and move goods across borders in the region, the well-established Somali business communities in Kenya have the potential to contribute to or spearhead wider regional economic integration and provide a wider benefit to the Kenyan economy and state. These network proliferations have offered the women refugee access to market and business skills which have made them successful in business.

Further, UNHCR has also supported refugees to foster good relationship with the locals through cultural, social, recreational, sporting and community activities of refugees in urban

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<sup>168</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Mzee Mohammed 60 year old Somali male refugee

<sup>169</sup> Interview with Halima 23 years old, has been in Eastleigh since she was 8 years old. Interview on 13 August 2012.

<sup>170</sup> UNHCR, “UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas” September 2009



areas. UNHCR also facilitates the establishment of urban refugee associations, especially those which promote self-reliance and community support. This ensures that the refugee women achieve financial reliance and also protect them from GBV.

Reciprocal social support was identified as a critical resource for managing distress. Despite losing many loved ones during the war, women refugees of Somali origin in Kenya have rebuilt social networks on which they rely for assistance and to provide them with newfound social roles, which help to restore meaning to their lives. They reported acting as surrogate families to one another.

*“I can never sleep hungry in this city. Eastleigh is home, people know me, and I know and love my neighbors. If I really don't have money to buy food for myself or my child, I go to the mosque and someone will definitely give me something to eat or money. Unlike in Dadaab, where everyone was looking out for themselves, because of insecurity and limited food portions.”<sup>171</sup>”*

Male participants also emphasized the importance of community in Somali culture. Focus groups and interviews revealed that Somali women refugees found it mutually beneficial to receive and give social support of various kinds: affective (emotional), instrumental, informational etc.

*“I encourage my wife to go for her chama meeting at least once a month. I have seen her come back rejuvenated and excited about life even when life seems impossible. But she knows I need to know who she is with, where and what time she will come home. In some cases I can drop her and even plan to pick her from the event.” Ali<sup>172</sup>*

Some explained the therapeutic effects of talking to friends and family about problems. Others claimed that simply spending time with friends and family was comforting, in that it allowed them to forget about that worries of life. In light of the scarcity of food and other

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<sup>171</sup> Interview on 13 August 2012 with Mariah, 30 year old woman.

<sup>172</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Ali 40 year old Somali male refugee

basic necessities, many reported sharing available resources with friends, neighbors, and family.

Women participants reported that during times of difficulty, they discussed problems and received material support from their social networks. Social networks included a broad range of individuals such as friends, family and neighbors.

*“The women are not as stressed as the men. We talk openly and let all the bitterness out. Men will just take that coffee and smoke shisha. But when we get into our safe places, we laugh, dance and tell stories of our land. We miss home but also thank Allah for this opportunity. It is a pleasure hearing the older women tell stories and laugh. Then the tears come of how they lost their children, husbands their property amongst other things, and then the prayers come and dance. I look forward” Nia<sup>173</sup>*

Some refugees interviewed enjoyed excellent relations, while others complained of problems ranging from discrimination and hostility to outright violence. Somali respondents reported no tensions with local Kenyan communities in Eastleigh. However, it is not easy for the Somalis. There is a reported growing xenophobia amongst Kenyans, especially towards Somalis. While such attitudes have been present since the large influx of Somali refugees in the early 1990s, they have intensified over the past decade, fed by media.<sup>174</sup>

*“The media has portrayed us as pirates, terrorists and arm smugglers. The authorities and ordinary Kenyans alike, feels that Somalis represent a significant threat to national security.” Ishmael<sup>175</sup>*

According to the Kenyan Ministry of State for Immigration and Registration of Persons, for instance, the influx of Somali refugees into Kenya is creating ‘a major terrorism threat and putting tremendous pressure on social services and amenities’; ‘extremist groups’ and ‘Islamic radicals may use refugee flow to smuggle weapons and people into Kenya to engage

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<sup>173</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012 Nia 25 year old Somali female refugee

<sup>174</sup> Pavanello, S., Elhawary, S., and Pantuliano, S. “Hidden and Exposed: Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya,” HPG Working Paper March 2010, p.27

<sup>175</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Ishmael 60 year old Somali male refugee

in terrorist attacks'<sup>176</sup> This has potentially threatened the social support that the refugee women received from their Kenyan communities in the neighborhood. In fact, the Kenyan communities interviewed in Eastleigh had mixed feelings about Somali refugees. On the one hand, there was recognition that, thanks to the influx of Somali refugees, Eastleigh had developed into a vibrant business and commercial hub. Refugees were not perceived as a 'burden' on the local economy, and there was appreciation of the opportunity refugees provided for local economic growth and therefore there existed cordial relationship between the locals and the refugees. On the other hand, respondents also complained that Somalis did not want to integrate into the local community and were not interested in joining community events, such as funeral ceremonies. As individuals, many interviewees regarded Somalis as noisy, dirty and engaged in oppressive cultural and religious practices, especially towards women and these formed ground for the local needs to disassociate with the Somalis.

#### **4.1.5 Religion.**

All but one of the participants identified to profess Islamic faith. Islamic faith provides members of the Somali community with practices that facilitated coping, as well as a framework through which experiences of hardship and success could be understood. Many reported praying, attending Mosques, reading the Koran, and singing hymns, in order to comfort themselves in times of hardship and to ensure the daily protection and guidance of Almighty Allah. This was expressed by one participant who stated that "*I ask Allah to give me power and make me strong to deal with the situation*" *Mariah*.<sup>177</sup> These women also reported that they gave up trying to deal with the situation and placed their fate in God. These participants believed that God had a plan for them and that by believing in him, their situation would eventually improve.

Among women refugee of Somali origin, religion played multiple roles. It served as a source of comfort for those experiencing hardship, as a guideline for personal conduct, as well as a framework for understanding life events. Additionally, religion served as a medium through which refugees could exercise positive reframing of negative experiences. The participants believed that God was an omnipotent and benevolent being. They also expressed the idea that

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<sup>176</sup> Ministry of State for Immigration and Registration of Persons (MIRP). 2009. MIRP Strategic Plan 2008-2010, p 15

<sup>177</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. *Mariah* 60 year old Somali male refugee

their suffering did not exist in a vacuum, but rather, as part of a series of events that would give further credence to God's munificence. Interviews suggest that this positive view of God also facilitated acceptance of life events and hopefulness.

#### **4.1.6 Acceptance, benefit finding and hopefulness**

Many reported that in order to cope with distress relating to their refugee status, experiences of loss and uprooting, and living in the refugee camp, they had to simply accept situations as they were and learn to live with them despite the distress that they produced. Moreover, some used positive reframing to facilitate this acceptance. In spite of the many losses they experienced during the war, many were grateful to God for their lives and the lives of those in their community. In addition to accepting experiences as they came, interviews and focus groups revealed that many believed that their experiences helped to foster a sense of resilience or hardiness. Many reported being better equipped to cope with situations as a result of their past struggles.

These participants reported that they just got used to living with their difficulties and adopted the attitude that everyone was in the same situation and there was nothing that could be done about it. For example, one participant stated:

*"There's nothing you can do about it. Because...sometimes you get used to it, you get used to dead bodies and a lot of people dying. Then sometimes, then after sometime you think 'it is the nature' so you get used it, you get used to the idea of people just dying like that" Halima<sup>178</sup>*

They therefore hoped for peace to return in their country so that they could go back and live in peace. This wish was expressed by one participant who stated that, *"My wishes that time was peace, and when the peace arrive nobody going to suffer and the killing of the people will be end, nobody or group to suffer anymore" Jedidah<sup>179</sup>* Some of these participants also hoped that the outcome of the war would be freedom and independence in Somali.

After the entry of Kenya Defense Force (KDF) in November 2011, and later the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) most of the women refugees were hopeful that peace

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<sup>178</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Halima 28 year old Somali female refugee

<sup>179</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Jedidah 60 year old Somali female refugee

would be restored in the country. *“I trust that peace will be restored in Somali after the peace keeping mission by the AMISOM... I hope I will go back to my homeland and develop my country.... reunite with my husband who is still in Somalia”* Zubeda<sup>180</sup>

## **4.2 Conclusion**

The study has shown that Somali refugee women have profoundly benefited from the business that they have ventured into. Somali businesswomen in Kenya have engaged in thriving enterprises in the retail, finance, import-export and transport sectors. While some of these women have engaged in these businesses as traders, others have sought for employment as the only chance of survival. Somali refugee women increasingly operate at least partially within the formal economy and are a growing source of revenue for their families. While some refugee women obtain remittances from relatives abroad and in Somali to open massive business venture in partnership with locals (especially Kenyan-Somalis to help them obtain business permits), others engage in petty businesses.

The interviews were an eye opener. Most of the women participants especially, would cry when they remembered the war or things or people they had lost during the conflict. The support they had received and were still receiving from relatives in the Diaspora went a long way in offering great encouragement and hope.

One thing that stood out is the social interaction. All the refugees highlighted that in some instances they did not feel the care of the local community and sometimes even amongst themselves, but they choose to be positive and create new relationships. On the other hand, those that were receptive offered security on various levels.

Religion was also a great support because they found support and solace on a greater spiritual being. When they did not have answers for the situations, the Koran offered answers. In the gatherings they were also able to meet other women or men with whom they found common interest groups.

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<sup>180</sup> Focus group interviews held on 6 August 2012. Zubeda 30 year old Somali female refugee

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

Through the study, the Somali women refugees have faced many challenges and yet have come up with various ways of survival. From the discussions the Somali women made some recommendations directed to mostly the government which are highlighted and finally a conclusion for the study.

### **5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In regards to health and shelter, the women hoped that the government would give them valid documentation so that they would be able to get proper housing. They also made a plea to UNHCR and the GoK to consider allowing them to integrate easily with the locals despite proper documentation so that they can easily access proper health care at free if not at highly discounted rates.

In mitigation of insecurity in Eastleigh, the Somali women, proposed that the government of Kenya and the county government should ensure that there are good roads in Eastleigh for quick police response when called upon, street lighting to open up dark alleys and starting up of community project to avoid idleness and give people chance to earn honest living. Further, they suggested that the government should boost business through easing access to credit for job creation and giving youth access to credit so that they can start their own businesses. Also, sporting activities were suggested to improve community cohesion and therefore improve the state of security.

In mitigation of GBV, the Somali women refugees and the Kenyan Somali women, indicated that the community needs to be educated and that way they will realize each other's worth. As a priority, the men need to be educated to appreciate their women as human beings who have rights and actually contribute to development if given a chance. They urged the government to come out strong to condemn oppressive cultures like FGM that are retrogressive and demeaning to a woman. The women said that they constitute a very strong working, creative working group that can further development.

As of matters concerning education, the women's desire was for the government to at least offer basic reading and writing skills for their children, regardless of their status. These way

poverty levels in the future would decrease drastically.

In regards to social amenities. The women advised the government and the local religious groups to promote their well-being, health and sustainability agendas. Amina, one of the opinion leaders interviewed said that, *“quality of social infrastructure has an influence on how residents feel about environmental issues and can have a direct effect on how residents, in particular, children's happiness, health, development and life-chances. For example, whether children are allowed or able to play safely outside, whether they walk safely to school, whether there is space for activities such as playing football”* and thus asked the government to take up the challenge.

The women urged the local financial institutions to offer them loans and credit so that they can improve their business and in return improve their livelihoods and that of their families. The financial institutions should also consider offering trainings in the local dialects on management and organizational operations. The women said that since they arrival into Eastleigh, they have transformed the area into a business hub that connects Kenya to the rest of East Africa. They said it was time the government recognized their efforts in nation building and allow them to access capital and have their goods tax exempted.

## 5.2 CONCLUSION

One prominent feature of increasing urbanization is the flow of refugees to urban areas triggered by conflict and natural disasters. Today, almost half of the world's 10.5 million refugees are thought to be residing in cities and towns, with only one-third in camps<sup>181</sup>. An estimated 51% of the world's Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) live in urban areas<sup>182</sup>. Refugees move to the city in the hope of finding a sense of community, safety and economic independence. However, in reality, what many actually find is harassment; some are victims of xenophobia, physical assault and poverty.

The study was centered on the social challenges facing Somali women: the view from Eastleigh, Nairobi from the year 1990 – 2011. This study was pertinent to the researcher because years on, refugees are seen as a burden to the citizens of the country to which they

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<sup>181</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR *Somalia Fact Sheet* Mar 2009.

<sup>182</sup> USCRI. 2008. *World Refugee Survey 2007* U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), Washington DC

seek refuge and rarely will they be seen as a blessing. With every conflict, studies have proven that women and children are the main victims, as they flee for safety and their men are involved in the conflict.

The largest group of refugees in Nairobi is of Somali origin. Somali populations have had a lengthy history of migration to Kenya, and have long-established important trade networks (Campbell, 2005). According to UNHCR, there are 20,111 registered refugees and asylum-seekers of Somali origin in Nairobi, the great majority in Eastleigh district<sup>183</sup>. This figure does not include many thousands of unregistered refugees. Some estimates put the number of Somali refugees in Eastleigh at 60,000<sup>184</sup>.

In the case of Somali women refugees, after the flight, most of them settled in the Daadab camp which is in the northern part of Kenya. As a way of escaping the harsh camp life, most of them have found means to land into the city and especially in Eastleigh and find ways to survive in a new urban lifestyle. Life is even harder to the refugees living in urban cities because they are not recognized and they need to live in constant fear of being repatriated to their country of origin or back to the camps. In Kenya this is no different because the GoK and UNHCR have agreed to the encampment policy. Despite this policy, they cannot deny the fact that every day, refugees are infiltrating to urban centers and especially Eastleigh for the Somali refugees.

The women under study were referred to us Urban Somali women refugees. The main objective of the study was to examine the social challenges that the urban Somali women faced. Alongside that specific objectives under the study would explore the role of Somali women refugees in business activities in Eastleigh, investigate the participation of Somali women refugees in formal employment, find out the extent to which Somali women refugees control family finances in taking care of their families and finally find out some coping mechanisms that Somali women refugees have adapted as a means of survival in a strange and new urban environment.

From the literature review they were some gaps identified that this study sort to bridge. For instance, the books did not highlight the challenges that the urban Somali women refugees

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<sup>183</sup> UNHCR, "UNHCR Somalia Fact Sheet," Mar 2009.

<sup>184</sup> Lindley, A. "The Dynamics and Effects of Remittances in Insecure Settings: the Somali Case", DPhil Thesis, Department of International Development, University of Oxford, 2009, p. 23



face, how the adaption of new roles in a foreign country affected the intricate family structure, if financial institutions supported the women's economic activities and to what extent they did this. The study was able to extensively bridge these gaps.

The framework adopted was one the Organizational Theory, forwarded by Halleh Ghorashi. The organizational theory argues that when a deficit arises because an organization is not diverse enough, then the people concern will find means to meet that deficit. In this case, the Somali women are faced with many forms of deficit (what was referred to as challenges) and thus find ways to mitigate those challenges (coping mechanisms). Some of the notable challenges that they face include security violence, human rights violations, education, inadequate health services, and business start-up challenges among other forms of lack. The urban Somali women have had to accept and adopt the standards of the host county in return of opportunities.

The study confirmed the research hypothesis that to the urban Somali women refugee, GBV was a great challenge. Despite the notion that Eastleigh as an urban area is more secure than the camp, most women have been faced with GBV (sexually, emotionally and physically). Secondly the hypothesis that urban Somali women refugees have adapted new coping mechanisms was also confirmed. The women have had to take up roles that are naturally for the men so as to ensure security and provision for their families. They have had to work to ensure that there is food on the table.

The study collected views from both male and female refugees as well as local citizens. Majority of the refugee respondents were female. Most of the Somali women refugees interviewed were either single or widowed this could be attributed to the wars back in Somali where their partners were either killed or the got separated. Majority of them had 3 or more children. The refugee respondents, most of them had high school education as highest with some of them having up to post graduate studies. This situation is similar to the locals depicting that the refugee Somali women took up learning opportunities in Eastleigh.

A majority of the women depicted that they had documentation allowing them to be in Nairobi. Further, most of them (refugees) indicated that they got to the country before year 2011. These Somali women indicated that they were first registered at the camps where they first landed then proceeded to Nairobi on various grounds. The top reasons why they left the

camp were invitation by a relative to Eastleigh, harsh camp conditions, health reasons, to further education and in search of economic independence.

Most of these Somali women refugees had resided long enough in Eastleigh and thus were well integrated with local community to take part in socio-economic activities, for example, some of them were employed in shops while others had started small businesses. Somali refugee women indicated that they got their income from informal employment. This is an indication that they have already taken up employment opportunities with only a small percentage relying entirely on support through remittances by their relatives abroad.

Economic activities, trade and remittances are the greatest assets that the Somali Women refugees have adapted so as to settle in urban areas. The livelihoods of urban refugees are diverse, and include work in the informal sector as laborers, running small businesses and reliance on overseas remittances and community support networks<sup>185</sup>. However, although a substantial amount of legitimate business occurs within Eastleigh, there is still an overwhelming presence of illicit activities, making it possible to purchase anything from a fake passport to a firearm.

Community support networks were also a great advantage. This is because when one could not easily get loan from mainstream banks and organizations, the community support networks were more than willing to give money, at no interest with no guarantee. Trust is a big thing in this kind of commitment.

However, the Somali women refugees indicated that they either had been victims of GBV or they knew somebody who had been a victim. The perpetrators of this violence were mainly identified as members of family nuclear or extended, fellow refugees, security personnel, bandits and aid workers in that order of reducing importance. These women indicated that they were mainly violated sexually, verbally and physically. Other reported to have undergone FGM. Most of them had faced the ordeal while in the camp.

It was indicated that after they were violated, these women suffered medical complications, for example, some indicated sustaining very severe cuts and contracting infections. Majority of them did not report this violence; they were however resentful that no action was taken

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<sup>185</sup> Wagacha J. B and Guiney J., "The Plight of Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya, in Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa" edited by David Hollenbach, SJ, Georgetown University Press. 2008, p 33

even after reporting to the authorities. According to these women very low degree of fatality resulted from the violence. Women who had faced GBV received medical attention and counseling. A concern was however raised that violated women may result in substance abuse and/or even prostitution. Therefore, the communities need to educate both men and women about their role to protect each other and to respect each other's rights.

Majority of the women indicated that they felt safer in Eastleigh compared to the camp, despite the numerous challenges they faced. This was attributed to the frequent police patrol in the area, unity among communities and sense of belonging. Others indicated that there was a police station in the neighborhood which ensured security and that because Kenya is a peaceful state, they felt safe. However, these Somali refugee women reported that the common form of insecurity in Eastleigh was extortion by police and illicit gang, verbal abuse and sexual harassment.

They further indicated the common perpetrators of insecurity as gangsters and police. With the presence of small arms and light weapons in the estate the security of Eastleigh and Kenya in general is of major concern. The fear instilled by insecurity makes refugee women of Somali origin to shy away from their IGA and limiting their right to freedom of movement and association. In mitigation, the government should create good business environment for business to offer employment and reduce idleness especially among the youths. Roads and streetlights should also be put to enhance police patrol and quick police response.

Women refugees of Somali origin in Eastleigh, have access to water, the only notable factor being is it clean and safe considering most of the them got water from water vendors. Few have access to piped water this is an indication of overstretched public resource. People in Eastleigh mainly get their water from vendors. Waste management, road accessibility, supply of water and electricity is not satisfactory. Further, health care facilities in terms of doctor to patient ratio, drugs, staff and bed capacity are also wanting. However, school facilities were accessible especially after introduction of free primary education although the facilities in terms of books, desks and teacher to student ratio needed improvement. Financial institutions were available and the women refugees of Somali origin were satisfied with them. The influx of refugees has led to poor and depleted social structures due to immense pressure exerted on

them. Pressure on amenities has raised health concerns resulting to malaria, respiratory diseases and other infections.

In engaging into this business, these women encounter challenges which range from inadequate capital, poor access to credit; lack of adequate business startup know-how and red tapes in acquiring trading licenses. Further, lack of legal advice and management skills were other challenges faced by Somali women refugees living in Eastleigh while going about their businesses.

Most of Somali women refugees in Eastleigh live in semi-permanent houses. Most of them lived with relatives or friends. However few of them owned houses. In most cases the houses they lived in, they stay 5 individuals and more. The most common infection suffered by these Somali women refugees and members of their households was influenza and malaria with a few incidences of typhoid and whooping cough. They indicated that the considered treatment from mission hospitals and government hospitals to be optimal and the place where they would seek for Medicare. Mainly these women indicated that they financed health care through relatives and friends and savings. However, very few had NHIF.

Owing to the fact that majority of them were single, divorced or widowed, they were therefore mainly the head of their household and therefore controlled the finances. Further, they engaged in economic activities to provide for their family. It is worth noting that a considerable number of the Somali women financed their Medicare and business start-up through savings.

The urban Somali women refugees are faced with various challenges and violations. But all in all they have put systems in place to ensure that they can survive in a strange and new environment away from home. In a place where they are faced with unfamiliarity, they have created familiar territories. They are part of women groups, support groups, have started business and are still very religious.

The analysis shows that urban refugees and poor Kenyans often share the same problems, including precarious living conditions in overcrowded slums and poor access to inadequate health and education services. However, refugees do face particular disadvantages. Pavanello,

Elhawary and Pantuliano, indicated that urban refugees often pay higher rent rates than Kenyans, are charged more for public health services and some schools request an 'admission fee' before admitting refugee children, despite the fact that primary education is meant to be free to all<sup>186</sup>

The dilemma for the most African states hosting refugees, therefore, is a humanitarian concern for refugees, and a realization that refugees can be a source of tension between the African states<sup>187</sup>. Efforts should therefore be made to encourage the refugees to recognize their responsibility to their host government by demonstrating interest and effort in solving his own problems, by becoming a useful member in a society in the country of asylum. In the 1990's refugee movements were likely to be the result of ethnic and annual conflicts fuelled by the increasing availability of modern weaponry and socio – economic inequalities. The underlying dynamics of many third world conflicts has in fact been competition for political power among fiercely rival ethnic groups.

In conclusion, this research has confidently achieved its objectives by proving the argument in the theory that where deficits exist (and in this case challenges) there is some form of order that is created (herein coping mechanisms). Due to challenges, the urban Somali women refugees have organized themselves in order to ensure that they survive and thrive. Therefore this research has achieved its aim.

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<sup>186</sup> .. Elhawary, S., and Pantuliano, S., "Hidden and Exposed: Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya," HPG Working Paper, March 2010

<sup>187</sup> Hovet, T. Jr. "Boundary disputes and tensions as a cause of refugees," in Refugee South of the Sahara Hugh C. Brooks and Yassin El-ayouty(eds), Connecticut: Negro Universities Press, 1999, p.29

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Sample Questionnaire

My name is Waithera Kibinda. I am pursuing a master's degree at the University of Nairobi – Department of History, undertaking a masters in the field of Armed Conflict and Peace studies. My research topic is: *Social Challenges Facing Somali Women Refugees: The View from Eastleigh, Nairobi. 1990 – 2011*. So as to have a successful project, I would appreciate if you took time to answer the following questions.

I assure you that your response will be confidential and is purely for academic purposes only. Therefore kindly don't write your name on the questionnaire.

#### Part 1:

This section is just a brief introduction about yourself, and a brief **Demographic** analysis of yourself

1. Gender:  Male  Female
2. Marital Status  Married  Single  Divorced  Widowed
3. No of children 1-2 3-4 5-6 7-8 9-10 11-12 13 – More
4. Educational Background (Highest level attained)  
Primary High school College Undergraduate  
Postgraduate
5. Do you have any legal documents permitting you to be in the city? Yes No
6. If yes what kind of documentation do you have  
Kenyan ID Somali ID Kenyan Alien Card Kenyan Passport  
Travel Document from UNHCR
7. During which period did you first get into the country Between 1990  
After 2011
8. Did you get registered at Daadab refugee camp on your arrival Yes  
No
9. How long were you at the camp (duration in months)  
0 – 4 5 – 9 10 – 14 15 – 19 20 – 24 25 – 29 30 – 34  
35 – 39 40 - More

10. What are some of the reasons that made you relocate to the city
- i. Invitation by a relative
  - ii. Harsh camp conditions
  - iii. GoK work permit to work in the city
  - iv. Travel Document issued by UNHCR due to health complications
  - v. Travel Document issued by UNHCR due to health complications
  - vi. Travel Document issued by UNHCR to further education
  - vii. Seeking Economic Independence
  - viii. Others (Specify)

11. How long have you been residing in Eastleigh (duration in years)

0-4      5-9      10-14      15-19      Over 20

12. What is your primary source of income

- i. Formal employment
- ii. Informal Employment
- iii. Remittances
- iv. Support from GoK
- v. Support from NGO
- vi. Support from UNHR

## Part 2

This section shall look at **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)**. Once again any information given will be treated with confidentiality and you don't have to give me your name.

13. Have you been a victim of GBV      Y      N
14. Who would you term as the perpetrators of the violence
- |                 |                       |                        |                  |
|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Spouse          | Nuclear Family Member | Extended Family Member | Aid              |
| workers         |                       |                        |                  |
| Fellow refugees | Bandits               | Kenyan Police          | Others (specify) |
15. What form of GBV was it
- |              |                |                     |     |
|--------------|----------------|---------------------|-----|
| Sexual Abuse | Physical abuse | Psychological Abuse | FGM |
|--------------|----------------|---------------------|-----|

- Deprivation Techniques                      Verbal Abuse
16. Where did the violence take place?    In the Camp                      In Eastleigh
17. Did you face any medical complications due to the violence?    Y                      N
18. Did you report the perpetrator(s) to any relevant authority?    Y                      N
19. Was any action taken                      Y                      N
20. Do you know of any other Somali refugee who has been a victim of GBV                      Y  
N
21. Do you know who the perpetrators of the violence were?    Y    N
22. Who would you term as the perpetrators of the violence
- |                              |                       |                        |             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Spouse                       | Nuclear Family Member | Extended Family Member | Aid workers |
| Fellow refugees<br>(specify) | Bandits               | Kenyan Police          | Others      |
23. What form of GBV was it
- |                        |                |                     |     |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------------|-----|
| Sexual Abuse           | Physical abuse | Psychological Abuse | FGM |
| Deprivation Techniques | Verbal Abuse   |                     |     |
24. Did they succumb to death due to the violence?                      Y                      N
25. Where did the violence take place?    In the Camp                      In Eastleigh
26. Are you aware of any support given to victims of GBV as stated below
- |           |       |            |         |
|-----------|-------|------------|---------|
| Financial | Legal | Counseling | Medical |
|-----------|-------|------------|---------|
27. What are some of the behaviors that GBV victims may result to after the violence
- 
- 

28. What are some of the ways you know that can be used to mitigate GBV

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**Part 3**

This section shall look at **Insecurity**. Once again any information given will be treated with confidentiality and you don't have to give me your name.

29. Do you feel safer now that you are in Eastleigh as compared to when you were in the camp



Y N

30. What are the reasons that make Eastleigh feel safer

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31. What are some of the common forms of insecurity that you have faced since you came into the Eastleigh?

Extortion Verbal Abuse Physical Abuse Sexual harassment Others (Specify)

32. Who are the common perpetrators of insecurity

Police Gangsters Petty thieves

33. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Indicating if you Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Strongly Agree (SA) or Agree

(A)

	SD	D	N	SA	A
Violence threatens the security of freely engaging in daily activities					
Violence threatens the security of freely engaging in free movement.					
Violence limits women ability in engaging in IGA to support their families					
I feel that the local community discriminates me by the fact that I am Somali					
The local community is constantly engaging in conflict with the refugee community					
The GoK has taken adequate measures in ensuring that Eastleigh is secure					
With the presence of small arms and light weapons in the region, and with the ever-souring relationship between the locals and the refugees, the security of Eastleigh and Kenya in general is of major concern.					

34. What are some of the ways you know that can be used to mitigate insecurity

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35. Have you been a victim of police arrest      Y      N

36. What were the reasons given for your arrest

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**Part 4**

This section shall look at **Pressure on Social Amenities**. Once again any information given will be treated with confidentiality and you don't have to give me your name.

37. Do you have access to clean safe water      Y      N

38. Where do you get your daily water ration from

Tap                  Vendors                  Streams                  Harvested rain water

39. Are you satisfied with the delivery of the following amenities? Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Indicating if you Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Strongly Agree (SA) or Agree (A)

	SD	D	N	SA	A
Constant reliable electricity Supply					
Constant reliable water Supply					
Health care (doctor - patient ratio. Availability of drugs, kind staff, bed capacity)					
Health care (doctor - patient ratio. Availability of drugs, kind staff, bed capacity)					
School facilities (teacher – student ratio, desk capacity, availability of books, availability of Free primary education etc.)					
Road accessibility					
Water and Sewer systems					
Waste management (Garbage collection, etc.)					
Monetary institutions (availability of loans, credit and saving facilities)					

<b>The City Council of Nairobi (CCN) provides the following services satisfactorily to the residents and refugees living in Eastleigh alike.</b>					
Health Facilities					
Schools					
Recreational facilities					
Water and Sewage management					
Road maintenance					
Waste management (Garbage collection, etc.)					

40. To what extent have the following been affected (Great Extent (GE), moderate extent (ME), low extent (LE) or very low extent (VLE)

	GE	ME	LE	VLE
Social amenities (water and sewerage) have encountered so much pressure raising health concerns resulting to either malaria, respiratory diseases, infections etc.				
The influx of refugees has led to poor and depleted social structures				

## Part 5

This section shall look at **Economic activities, Trade and Remittances**. Once again any information given will be treated with confidentiality and you don't have to give me your name.

41. What is your level of qualification in regards to the economic activities that you engage in?

Professional                      Skilled                      Semi Skilled

42. How long have you engaged in this activity? (reference in years)

1-2     2-3     4-5     6-7     8-9     10 and more

43. If employed circle the one that best suites you

Shoe shiner     Shop Attendant     Mechanic     Waiter     Car washer

Herdsmen in peri-urban areas     Mirror vendor

44. If self-employed circle the one that best suites you

Sale of fabrics and clothing     Sale of shoes     Sale of toiletries

Sale of crockery

Sale of music tapes     Sale of fruit     Sale of vegetables     Sale of electronics

Sale of furniture     Sale of precious stones and metals

45. Circle the one that best suites you when it comes to challenges that have arisen as you try and engage in economic activities

Lack/inadequate capital     Lack/inadequate credit     lack of legal advice

Red tape in acquiring licenses     inadequate business-start-up-know-how

Insufficient saving and salary     lack of marketing skills     lack of management skills

Inadequate organizational skills

46. Do you feel your economic activity has contributed largely to the Kenyan economy?

Y                                  N

47. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Indicating if you Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Strongly Agree (SA) or Agree

(A)

<i><b>My main source of income is:</b></i>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>
Remittances					
Profits from my business proceeds					
Employment					
NGOs (UNHCR, GTZ, CARE etc.)					
GoK					

## Part 6

This section shall look at **Health and Shelter**. Once again any information given will be treated with confidentiality and you don't have to give me your name.

48. Describe your house structure

Permanent    semi-permanent    temporary

49. What form of ownership is it?

Owned                      Rental                      Living with relative or friend

50. How many people live in your household

1-4                      5-9                      10-14                      15 and more

51. Has any member of your household suffered from any of the following (you can circle more than one)

Malaria                      Typhoid                      Cholera                      Chicken Pox    Whooping

Cough

Measles                      Influenza                      Meningitis                      UTI's                      Hepatis B

FGM                      Cancer                      Birth Complication                      Others (Specify)

52. Where would you access optimum health care

GoK owned    Public Hospital (CCN)                      Missionary Owned    Private Owned

NGO Owned

53. How do you finance your health care

NHIF                      Savings                      Relatives                      Free medical camps