

**THE UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN REFUGEES: A CASE OF DADAAB  
REFUGEE CAMP IN GARISSA COUNTY, KENYA, 1991-2017**

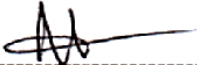
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## DECLARATION


This is my original work and has not been submitted in other university for the award of degree.

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This project has been submitted for an examination with my approval as University supervisor.

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Signature  Date 6/12/2022

## **DEDICATION**

To my grandchildren who wondered how at my age I went to class.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Almighty God for walking me through this work. Secondly, my thanks to the University of Nairobi, through the Department of History and Archaeology for granting me an opportunity to take my studies. Special thanks to my supervisor Dr. Mary C. Mwiandi without whom this project could not have been completed. She constantly mentored, corrected and encouraged me through this academic process.

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My gratitude also goes to the National Police Service for the opportunity they accorded me to study, the Save the Children, UNHCR, refugee families in Dadaab and others not mentioned here for your time and reception.

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## ABSTRACT

The study examined the unaccompanied refugee children in Daadab Refugee Camp in Garissa County, Kenya, from 1991-2017. Since 1991, the number of unaccompanied children has increased considerably in refugee and IDP camps in Kenya. Equally, their challenges have greatly escalated, for instance, lack of family care, psychological and physical trauma, inadequate basic needs, sexual violence, and torture among others. Yet, the plight of unaccompanied refugee children is yet to be fully documented, therefore, creating a lacuna for academic inquiry. Indeed, this study argues that, though scholars have written extensively on refugee camps in Kenya generally, little has been said on the challenges and coping strategies of the minors in Daadab Refugee Camp. Therefore, using the Coping Competence Theory by Erica and the Resilience Across Cultures Theory as represented by Michael Ungar in the work, *Positive Development or Positive Youth Development*, the study examined this aspect of refugee-hood in Daadab. This was accomplished by first looking at the refugee problem in Africa and the Great Lakes to situate the reasons for establishment of Daadab Refugee Camp. It then argues that the establishment of Daadab refugee camp (Ifo 1 in 1991) was a response to the influx of refugees from these regions with profound consequences -- social, economic, and political -- for both the host country and the refugees themselves. Equally, the early 1990s being a period that marked the end of the Cold War, embargoes on the Kenya government on corruption allegations put increased pressure on operations in these camps with adverse effect on refugees in general and the unaccompanied minors in particular. The study found that the unaccompanied minors' stay established in the camp left them traumatized because of various challenges ranging from economic hardships, disease, insecurity, threats of forcible repatriation and lack of social networks and support. Conversely, the study found that unaccompanied children developed mechanisms that helped them cope with some of the challenges in the refugee camp; prayers, going to school, menial labour, sports, learning new languages are some of such mechanisms.

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# MAP OF DADAAB REFUGEE CAMP



## OPERATIONALIZATION DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Refugee Children-** It will be used in this study interchangeably with unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs) to mean those refugees below 18 years in Dadaab refugee camp without biological parents and relatives.

***Cambios-*** In this study is also referred to as Kambioos, the last camp to be constructed and also last to be closed up among the five camps that comprised Dadaab refugee camp.

***Sharia Laws-*** Sharia Laws will be used in this study to mean a set of rules and regulations based on the Quran that govern all aspects of Muslim life.

**Arab-Christian** – This will be used in this study to mean the Arab nationals, or Arabic-speakers who follow and practice Christianity.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

BID	Best Interest Department
CPCW	Child Protection Community Worker
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
EAC	East Africa Community
FAR	Forces Army Rwandaise
FRODEBU	Front For Democracy In Burundi
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IOLF	Islamic Oromo Liberation Front
IOM	The International Organization For Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontiers
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NGOs	Non –Governmental Organizations
OLC	Oromo Liberation Council
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement
FROLINA	Front National Liberation
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SPLA/M	The Sudan’s People Liberation Army/ Movement
TPV	Temporary Protection Visa
UN	United Nations

UNHCR	United Nations Humanitarian Commission of Refugees
URMs	Unaccompanied Refugee Minors
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Aid
USC	United Somali Congress
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic
WSLF	Western Somali Liberation Front

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

Refugee problem is not a new phenomenon. It is a problem that has been in existence even before 1914, during the first world war, when more than 12, 000,000 people were rendered homeless.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the topic has attracted many scholarship who mainly focused on general causes of displacement with adult refugee overly researched. However, the problem of the unaccompanied refugee children has not been given the deserved attention. Currently, over 20 million minors have been displaced either as refugees or internally displaced in the world.<sup>2</sup> Eide notes that almost 10,000 asylum seekers arrive in Europe monthly, with slightly over 20% of them under the age of 18 years.<sup>3</sup> In Africa, the plight of unaccompanied refugee minors is a direct response to ceaseless conflicts experienced especially in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region. For instance, Daadab Refugee Camp in Kenya is one of the camps receiving the highest number of refugee minors in Africa. This is despite various measures to manage the situation, primarily by addressing issues causing displacement. This study focused on the unaccompanied minors from the Horn of Africa, in Daadab refugee camp in the northern part of Kenya.

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<sup>1</sup> Lachen, S. (2017). The Refugees and Refugee Protection in the Early Modern Period. *A Journal of Refugee Studies*. Volume 30 No 2 Pp 261-281

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Children's Fund. (2000) Retrieved from. Information and Data Management, on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2018.

<sup>3</sup>Eide, K and Hjern, A. (2013). Unaccompanied Refugee Children–Vulnerability and Agency, *Acta-Paediatrica*. Vol 102 Issue No.7 Pp 666-668.

## **1.1 Historical Background of the Study**

Dadaab camp, which is about 370 kilometers from Nairobi was established in 1991 to cater for Somali refugees. It was later enlarged to include the refugees from Ethiopia, Rwanda, Southern Sudan, Burundi, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Uganda. These refugees fled their countries as a result of political persecutions, economic challenges or social-cultural as well as personal issues. For instance, there are some refugees who crossed to the camp due to civil war in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and South Sudan while others followed later due hard economic situations as a result of political instability. It is also important to note that for a long time refugees arrived in Dadaab refugee camp after they have walked for weeks through the desolate terrain to escape the various dangers in their home countries.<sup>4</sup> Some of the triggers have been a combination of severe and long-term drought, a huge spike in food prices and brutal civil wars. For example, terrorists' group attacks in Somalia have led to over flow of refugees in Kenya, and around the globe, often overwhelming international humanitarian aid.

Indeed, the number of refugees across the international borders has been concurrent with refugee children who are mainly unaccompanied. In Eastern Africa, armed conflict, which has affected Somalia, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Rwanda, has led to natural calamities that displaced many people to become either refugees or millions more as IDPS.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> UNHCR 2000 –Forced Displacement, Retrieved From [www.UNHCR.org](http://www.UNHCR.org), on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Salgado, S et al. 2000, *The Children: Refugees & The Migrants.* NY, Aperture, p.7.

The situation is even complex and dire for the unaccompanied minors who are left vulnerable, and robbed off their childhood due to loss of parental care. Since there is usually no responsible adult to take care of them, they have been forced into assuming adult responsibilities at a tender age. Most of them have suffered trauma and disrupted childhood as a result of violence.<sup>6</sup> Some have faced even a greater risk of being abused, exploited economically, left neglected and discriminated.<sup>7</sup> Psychologically, they have faced anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress which has not been attended to since they are not able to access such services by themselves.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, most of the time they are rejected as illegal immigrants which exposes them to lack of benefits from international protection.

During conflict, displacement is one of the most common consequences. In the acute life threatening posed by civil war, quite a number of people decide to move for anticipatory and acute reasons. This can be attacks to their schools, farms or homes and as a result this leads to a world of asylum seekers and refugees where children between 3% are unaccompanied children.<sup>9</sup> An unaccompanied minor, according to this study, is someone below eighteen years, who is not with his/her parents and not under care of any adult.<sup>10</sup> Generally, they are supposed to be under a category which ensures that during an emergency a certain procedure protects them.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bracken, P. and C. Petty, eds. *Rethinking the Trauma of War*. Save the Children. 1998, p.44.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Blanchet, T. (1996). 'Lost Innocence, Stolen Childhoods.' Dhaka: University Press Limited..p.17.

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch (2009). 'Hostile Shores: Abuse and Refoulement of Asylum Seekers and Refugees In Yemen.'<https://www.hrw.org>, 7th June 2018.

<sup>10</sup> UN. (1993). 'Activities Financed by Voluntary Funds.' Retrieved From <https://unhcr.com> on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Troller, S., & Human Rights Watch (2009). 'Lost In Transit.' New York.pp.234-250.

Indeed, the first priority should be how to reunite them with their relatives and if possible, their clans, neighbors or friends rather than institutions such as UNHCR. The real situation in most refugee camps in the world however is far below the dictates of the standards set by organizations such as the UNHCR, USAID among others.

Further, there is a myth that unaccompanied children are readily available for adoption. However, the adoption process permanently cuts family links and leads to difficulties in tracing children after wars. Therefore, until all efforts to reunite families, including into the post-conflict phase, have been exhausted, a child should not be adopted.<sup>12</sup> The reason is that ideally the minor should one day return to their home country because repatriation is the best solution to refugee issues. It ensures continuity of those who at one point felt that they were to be persecuted.<sup>13</sup> However, if there is continuity of conflict in the home countries it means they cannot be repatriated.<sup>14</sup>

It should also be noted that some of the children find themselves unaccompanied in a camp setting when desperate parents abandon them there Kenya's law on integration of refugees in this case leaves the children with only options of repatriation, resettlement or staying in the camp with enhanced protection and security provided in the safe houses as the only options. Thus there are no efforts or options to re-unite children classified as unaccompanied with their families.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Loon, J. H. A. et al. (1993). 'The International Co-operation and Protection of Children With Regard to Intercountry Adaption.' Leiden.pp.777-780.

<sup>13</sup> Bit, S., (1991). 'The Warrior Heritage: A Psychological Perspective of Cambodian Trauma.'p.10.

<sup>14</sup> Loon, J. H. et al, (1993). p. 88.

<sup>15</sup> Guest, I., et al, (1991). p12.



## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The problem of the unaccompanied refugee children is not a new phenomenon. Ketil Eide notes that almost 10,000 asylum seekers arrive in Europe monthly, with slightly over 20% of them under the age of 18 years.<sup>16</sup> In Africa, Dadaab Camp tops reception with the highest number of unaccompanied/ separated refugee children since 1991. The camp was established in 1991 as a transit-camp for refugees, mainly from Somali running away from civil war. Two decades after 1991, the problem is spiraling.<sup>17</sup> These children go through many challenges in camps due to lack of caregivers. For instance, Dadaab which is a home to more than 460,000 Somalis, does not have enough space or supplies to meet the growing demand on a daily basis. Each day over 1,300 asylum seekers arrive at the camp. However, workers do not have the means to provide everyone with the help they so desperately need, leaving many asylum seekers waiting at the gates or in police cells arrested as illegal immigrants waiting to be charged in court law.

Despite the worrying nature of the unaccompanied children, many studies have concentrated on adult refugees despite the rising cases of children that are severely affected by conflicts, wars, famine and droughts that render them into refugee hood. Similarly, other works, such as Abraham, have generally highlighted the plight of children as refugees<sup>18</sup> in the host country (resettled minors) and where they are resettled after. Indeed, there is very minimal documentation on the cases of the unaccompanied children refugees in a camp setting despite the fact that they come from different social

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<sup>16</sup>Eide, K., & Hjern, A. (2013).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Abraham, S. (2006). The Easing Foreign-Born Children to the City Schools, *The Columbia News Service*, 28/09/2022, <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>.

backgrounds, upbringing and have become refugees for various reasons. Neither has a study been systematically conducted to examine and understand how the minors in Kenyan refugee camps cope with the endless challenges that span from violation of their rights, lack of provision of basic needs as well as security and education challenges. This study therefore, argued that, despite the alarming increase in the number of unaccompanied refugee minors in Daadab Refugee Camp, no study has focused on their plight. The study examined the genesis of the unaccompanied children to Daadab refugee camp, their coping mechanisms and impact of refugee hood on their lives. How did they earn their livelihood? What challenges did they encounter on their day-to-day activities? Were they able to be joined to their families?

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The main objective of this study was to examine the plight of unaccompanied refugee children in Daadab refugee camps. Specific objectives were as follows:

- i) To examine factors that account for the establishment of Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya.
- ii) To assess the life challenges faced by unaccompanied refugee children.
- iii) To analyze the coping strategies adopted by the unaccompanied children.

### **1.4 Justification of the Study**

Many studies have mentioned children refugees in a generalized way. Therefore, this study in its unique way goes further to examine in depth the unaccompanied children refugees in a camp setting at Daadab in Garissa County in Kenya. In recent years, both

the local and international news agencies have tried to highlight the plight of the minors in the camp both in Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps.<sup>19</sup> However, the news only focused on the plight of specific groups such as those minors who are taken in by foster mothers,<sup>20</sup> without going further as to why and what prompted their action. Similarly, Dadaab refugee camp featured in the both local and international news for various reasons.

Locally, there was news of the Kenyan Government proposing the closure and repatriating all the refugees<sup>21</sup> alleging the camp was a cause of insecurity in the region. Some reported the regrets of repatriated refugees who wanted to come back to the camp as it offered better life than back home in Somalia.<sup>22</sup> On the international platform, the closure of Daadab was scuttled after Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) stood against the idea.<sup>23</sup> Despite the news, there is need for academic studies to explore the coping strategies of unaccompanied children in camps. Therefore, this study is relevant as it highlights the plight of children refugee in Dadaab camp with an aim to of adding to the existing knowledge about the refugees.

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<sup>19</sup> Mugo, D. (July 8<sup>th</sup> 2019). 'Women Refugees Fostering Children at Dadaab Camp.' Retrieved on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2019 From <https://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/dn2/Women-refugees>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Omondi, C and PSCU. (2017, March 25). 'Call to Repatriate Somali Refugees.' *The East African*. Retrieved on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, from <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke>.

<sup>22</sup> AFP (2017, June 27). 'There I Had Free Education': Ex-Somali Refugee. *The East African*. Retrieved on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, from <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke>.

<sup>23</sup> Oluoch, F. (2017. April 4). 'Summit Scuttles Kenya's Plan to Repatriate Refugees.' *The East African*. Retrieved on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, from <https://www.theeastafrican>.

## **1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study examined challenges and coping mechanisms of the unaccompanied children in Dadaab refugee camp between 1991 and 2017. The year 1991 was chosen as it coincides with the creation of the first camp of the Dadaab refugee camp. This is the period where the government of Kenya decided to move all IDPs to refugee camps and allowed UNHCR to fully be in charge of all refugee camps in the country. The research ends in 2017 when the Kenyan government proposed the closure of the camp after it was alleged that the camp was harbouring Al-Shabaab sympathizers. Indeed, Kambioos was closed down in 2017 and later Ifo II in 2018. On the two occasions, the government repatriated some of the refugees while others were transferred to central camps and Kakuma for easy management.

The research was conducted in the five camps of the larger Dadaab refugee camp. However, a number of factors were a limitation to the research in these areas. Firstly, was personal safety and security as a result of the general security problems in the region. This was however, solved by getting in touch with both the security officers in the region as well as camp officials who introduced me to the respondents. Secondly, was suspicion where locals do not trust Christian visitors therefore this limited the access to the much-needed information. However, using the research permit, I got assistance from both the UNHCR officials such as Bonaya Galgalo and Yusuf Rashid. Similarly, having interacted with officers dealing with children cases, I got assistance from the security officers who linked me to relevant respondents and to the refugees in the camp. After a lengthy period,

I was able to win the confidence of the refugees, some of whom also became my research assistants helping the researcher in translation.

## **1.6 Literature Review**

The history of unaccompanied children has for many decades been given the deserved attention. The category of displaced people who end up as refugees in foreign countries go through many challenges that call for proper documentation. This literature review, therefore, seeks to explore the related works in the field of refugees to form a basis for my study.

Kia-Keating and Ellis Heid, note that of the total number of the uprooted persons in the world, about 19.2 million are young under the age of 18 years. They are exposed to many stressors related to the war such as separation from caregivers, deprivation of basic needs as well as witnessing death of their loved ones. These children are affected mentally yet not all may be able to access mental assistance. As a result, schools are considered the best in assisting in the mental development of the separated refugee children and adolescents. The author argues that a greater sense of belonging in a school setting lessens depression and increases self-efficacy regardless of the level of past exposure to adversities. He notes that schools reduce stigma and increase psychosocial adjustment, belonging and connecting with others.<sup>24</sup> This study is relevant to the understanding of the role of the school in the mental development of the Dadaab refugee unaccompanied children.

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<sup>24</sup> Kia-Keating et al. (2007). 'Belonging and Connection to School in Resettlement: Young Refugees, School Belonging and Psychological Adjustment.' pp.29-43.

Similarly, Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj looks at the compatibility of school choice policies and educational equity goals among the unaccompanied minor immigrant children in USA. The author argued that there are some challenges the students (unaccompanied refugee Minor) face while pursuing education in United States of America. This is due to the policy of mandatory high school policy by the state which hindered its equity potential.<sup>25</sup> The author insists that equity are key due enormous disparities in families' financial resources, cultural capital, and social networks. The study helps raise the following issues; first the kind of education system in Daadab camp and whether it favors and takes into consideration all unaccompanied children in the camp.

Focusing on the identities on the move, especially of the young refugees aged 11-14 from Somali, Sporton and Valentine argue that asylum seeker children fleeing from conflict have entered the United kingdom either as dependents or unaccompanied without identification, documentation or guardians.<sup>26</sup>Of the total applicants for asylum in United Kingdom, one third of the total are children under the age of 18 years, yet many debates still focus on adult refugees forgetting the plight of the young refugees. Therefore, it will be interesting for this study to examine how the minors in the camp, especially those not registered cope in a camp setting cope. Their experience compared to those who are registered and whether there are sufficient policies to support unaccompanied asylum seekers. The author has enabled my study to identify the gaps in the unaccompanied minor legal framework, and why there is need to study it.

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<sup>25</sup> Sattin-Bajaj C. (2015). 'The Unaccompanied Minors: The Way Children of Latin American Immigrants Negotiate High School Choice.' *American Journal of Education*, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu>.

<sup>26</sup> Sporton D. (2010). Whole article.

Kuo and Roysircar argue that the unaccompanied Taiwanese minors exhibited ill preparedness and poor basics upon their arrival. Similarly, the minors did not know about their host country and their purpose of being there.<sup>27</sup> This is important in understanding whether the unaccompanied refugee children in Dadaab are prepared for life after the camp. What is the UNHCR is doing different to help these group of people and if the Kenya government have enough legal backing to support the resettlement options of such a group or the government integrate them.

Elsewhere, three groups of the minors, that is, the accompanied immigrant, unaccompanied immigrant and non-immigrant were compared. Ocariz et al. finding was that there was a huge difference suggesting that the criminogenic factor was not the migrant experience but rather the lack of familiar and social references.<sup>28</sup> After the government declared that Daadab was harbouring Alshabab criminals, how did the minors respond? Did they feel profiled? How did they take the news that the camp was to be closed due to the fact that it was hiding enemies of Kenya which was hosting them? Were the minors more worried of being forced back to their mother country or were happy that the host country was going to minimize the level of their harassment by compelling the criminals to leave the camp? This study will seek to answer some of these questions.

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<sup>27</sup> Kuo B.C.H. (2006). 'An Explanatory Study of Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Adolescent Taiwanese Unaccompanied Sojourners in Canada, <https://scholar.uwindsor>.

<sup>28</sup> Ocariz E., and Bermejo F. (2008). 'Unaccompanied Foreign Minors and Delinquency: A Retrospective Study of Influence of Psychosocial Variables.' <http://www.sc.ehu>. on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

According to Seglem et.al, the unaccompanied refugee minors tend to be at a risk of experiencing mental health problems after they are resettled. This is believed to affect females more than males. Interestingly, Somali children refugees had fewer symptoms compared to other participants from other countries such as DRC, and Sudan.<sup>29</sup> Are minors mentally affected differently in the camp setting? This key in examining whether there are mechanism to address the trauma that the unaccompanied children refugees undergo in Daadab refugee camp and does it have an impact. One may say that this is the reason as to why the Somali minors have a smaller magnitude of mental health problems in the study that was carried out in the Scandinavian countries.

Bonnie et al, argue that despite the various challenges such as adoption, children refugees develop resilience and thrive even in an environment where they are exposed to multiple risks. The minors are also quick to adapt to the use of healthy, religiosity and connectedness to prosocial organizations.<sup>30</sup>The article examines the resettlement of the minors in a new country. It would be interesting to assess how the minors adapted if at all, to the Daadab camp in regard to the system governing all the basic needs such as education, health and shelter.

Derluyn and Broekaert argue that adolescent refugee children without parents are the most endangered group with many risks due to the absence of their parents, or caregivers. These include, but are not limited, to traumatic experiences, all forms of exploitation as

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<sup>29</sup> Seglem.K.B. et al (2011).

<sup>30</sup> Carlson, B.E et al (2012). 'A Risk and Resilience Perspective on Unaccompanied Refugee Minors.' *Social Work*. Vol. 57. No 3, pp.259-269. Accessed from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23719755>, 31-08-20.



well as abuse. These challenges, therefore, may interfere with their emotional well-being, resulting in dangerous emotional and behavioral challenges in future. Some countries where the children have been resettled have taken a perspective that legally considered the unaccompanied refugee children as refugees and migrants and not children. As a result, the minors end up not receiving the appropriate support and care as they need.<sup>31</sup> This will probably help in understanding how the unaccompanied refugee children in Daadab camp responded to their status of refugee hood. This study assesses how the unaccompanied minors in the camp setting are affected by laws of the host country.

Diane Pask looks at the unique challenges that affect children and young adults who are refugees. The author points out at the legal and jurisdictional questions, particularly, those governing the selection of decision-makers and the processes of decision-making as well as the representation of children, their plight and interests. She argues that, although the challenge has been there for a while, there are no legal frameworks that deal specifically with unaccompanied refugees and displaced children. She insists that the rules for their treatment must be derived from international conventions. According to Pask unique challenges have various impacts on children. Some could be the processes therein and representation of children interests. Similarly, the writer argues that there is no procedure that deals with them.<sup>32</sup> How then are the unaccompanied minors coping in Dadaab? Are there clear laws to protect them?

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<sup>31</sup> Derluyn I and Broekaert E. (2008).

Eide, K and Hjern, A. (2013). Unaccompanied Refugee Children–Vulnerability and Agency, *Acta-Paediatrica*. Vol 102 Issue No.7 Pp 666-668.

<sup>32</sup> Pask, E. D. (1989). ‘Unaccompanied Refugee and Displaced Children: Jurisdiction, Decision-Making and Representation.’ *International journal of Refugee Law*. Accessed from Heinonline, on 31 August 2019.

Kales, et.al draw a comparison between unaccompanied refugees who retained or achieved good mental health visa-a-vis those who maintained or developed poor mental health. Kales assert that the process to distinguish the refugees in terms of their mental health trajectories was through an assessment of post-migration acculturation hassles and heritage culture competence, as well as pre-migration traumatic events and gender.<sup>33</sup> Very important issue the study will therefore address is whether Dadaab camp setting impact positively on the mental health of children refugees and what mechanisms were put in place to address such challenges in a camp setting.

Young unaccompanied Somali refugee resettled in the western countries were relatively protected by their adaptive, nomadic way of life that existed in their community.<sup>34</sup> It was interesting for this study to examine whether the unaccompanied children refugees in the camp also showed the resilience that emanated from their cultural ties back home. Elsewhere, in their work, Gilligan and Raghallaigh argue that the minors developed various coping mechanisms. They adjusted by learning, changing, and suppression, acted independently but also by involving themselves in destructive things.<sup>35</sup> It would be therefore, interesting to explore the key activities that the unaccompanied children refugees in Daadab camp involve in day to day.

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<sup>33</sup> Keles S., et al (2018). 'The Resilience, Acculturation Among Unaccompanied Refugee Minors'.

<sup>34</sup> Rousseau, C., et al (1998). 'Resilience in Unaccompanied Minors From the North of Somalia.' *Psychoanalytic Review*.

<sup>35</sup> Gilligan, R and Raghallaigh M. (2010). 'Active Survival in The Lives of Unaccompanied Minors; Coping Strategies, Resilience, and The Relevance of Religion. Child and Family Social work.' Vol. 15 No 2. Pp.226-237. Accessed from <http://hdl.handle.net/10197/5410> on 2019-08-31.

According to Huemer et al, the refugees resettled in Austria despite being exposed to welcoming environment, had high distress levels and low happiness which again questioned their resilience. This further showed that they harbored great fears due to existing vulnerabilities.<sup>36</sup> This study was significant in understanding issues in the Daadab camp that deny full life the unaccompanied refugee children. What factors affect the refugee happiness? Goodman, supports the view that the unaccompanied children refugees who ran away from violence and loss from Sudan and resettled in United States of America had collectively and communally self, suppressed as their coping mechanisms.<sup>37</sup> It will be of importance that this study examine what the activities the unaccompanied children in Dadaab camp were involved in to help them cope with the change of environment.

Voikl-kernstock et al writing in 2014 assert that the phenomenon of the unaccompanied children is a global problem. Of the 31.7 million refugees, 44% are the unaccompanied children and 10% of them are below five years. These refugee minors are separated from their parents at such a tender age that the unaccompanied refugee young girls developed PTSD.<sup>38</sup> This study examines how the unaccompanied young boys and girls in Dadaab refugee camp dealt with PTSD. How did PTSD affect each group in the camp and how has it been addressed.

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<sup>36</sup> Huemer, J. et al. (2013). 'Personality and Psychopathology in African Unaccompanied Refugee Minors: Repression, Resilience and Vulnerability.' *Child Psychiatry Hum Dev*. Vol 44, pp.39-50.

<sup>37</sup> Goodman H.J. (2004). 'Coping with Trauma and Hardship Unaccompanied Refugee Youths from Sudan.' *QualitativehealthResearch*, Vol.14No9,pp.1177-1196. Accessed from <http://qhr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstarcat/14/9/1177> on 31-08-2019.

<sup>38</sup> VoikL-Kernstock S et al. (2014), pp.6-11.

Focusing on Zimbabwe minors who had gone in search of jobs, education and or shelter in the camp, Fritsch et al argue that the minors had various challenges. This, according to the authors, was due to the fact that political issues, combined with other factors, denied them their rights which they were legally entitled both by the international and domestic law.<sup>39</sup> Using Fritsch argument, it will be interesting to examine how the political actions in Kenya impacted on the protection of the unaccompanied children refugees in Dadaab camp. Similarly, the study will assess reasons that prompted the young unaccompanied refugees to move to Dadaab camp.

Elsewhere, extant literature shows that the unaccompanied Sudanese refugee minors in the US were more focused on personal agency and getting education. Similarly, their foster parents would argue that each of the minors had different personalities that supported and influenced the trajectories after resettlement.<sup>40</sup> In Kenya, there has been news in the local dailies from both Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps about foster parents. How long has the arrangement been around? Is it an accepted activity across all the communities in the camp? Are the other unaccompanied minors willing to be adopted, and finally, what is their goal?

Rana et al, note in their journal article that when Sudan had civil war in 1983, many people were killed, others displaced while children were separated from their families. The minors first flight was to Ethiopia and later to Kenya, in a process in which they endured considerable trauma and deprivation due to minimal support from adults. In the

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<sup>39</sup> Fritsch C. (2010).

<sup>40</sup> Luster, T. et al (2010). 'Successful Adaptation Among Sudanese Unaccompanied Minors: Perspective of Youth and Foster Parents.' Michigan State University. Vol 17, No 2, pp.197-211. Accessed From <http://chd.sagepub.com> on 31-08-2019.

same way, the opportunities for schooling were often scarce and erratic. There were no schools to attend when they arrived in Kakuma since the plan for classrooms was still underway. They were therefore forced to take their lessons under trees, and classes sometimes had to be cancelled due to storms which made it impossible to even see the blackboard. Furthermore, during their resettlement, they were interviewed as probable candidates for those to be resettled in USA, “education” being their primary goal. The Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URMs) had the desire to help the people from their home country Sudan. Quite a number among those interviewed had either completed or were continuing with higher education.<sup>41</sup> The study endeavored to find out the pull factors of the unaccompanied minor refugee in Dadaab camp. The researcher will assess the reasons as to why the unaccompanied minors are attracted to the refugee camp. Is education one of the attractions to the camp and what do they want to achieve after they are done with their education?

Christofferson in his M.A thesis argues that the unaccompanied refugee minors strive with problems of their poor economy, longing for their families in Somalia and discriminating treatment from others. He notes that, such categories of refugees apply a wide spectre of coping strategies, mostly adaptive coping strategies, and that there are differences in the ways they cope with different problems.<sup>42</sup> Similar incidences have been recorded with the Somali refugees since 1992 to date. Some have been sexually harassed

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<sup>41</sup> Rana M et al. (2011). ‘Factors Related to Education Resilience Among Sudanese Unaccompanied Minors.

<sup>42</sup> Christofferson M. (2007). “But If You Tell Somebody, the Hurt Disappears” A Qualitative Study of How Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Cope With Their Problems During Adaptation in Norway. Master’s Degree in Psychology, University of Oslo. p.2.

by people who are mandated to take care of them yet, there is still minimal documentation about them. This is why this study is important.

Overall, as of 2017, there were over 20 million children displaced both within and outside their countries by wars raging in over fifty countries across the globe.<sup>43</sup> Megan asserts that the global community has faltered in addressing the needs of the URM. This is despite the fact that there have been attempts by the international law to address the issues through the creation of historical conventions, declarations and treaties with an aim of providing durable solutions for the vulnerable victims of war.<sup>44</sup> This study will evaluate how the international and domestic laws are applied in Dadaab camp with the aim of protecting the unaccompanied minors.

Lessons can be drawn from the Swedish model of fostering and empowering unaccompanied children. The unaccompanied refugee children who were resettled in Sweden showed that over a period of time they had an improved way of life and adapted well to the new environment. This they did by going to school and sharing their trauma which was addressed within good time. Undoubtedly, the unaccompanied children had an increased empowerment in their everyday life.<sup>45</sup> How did the life of the unaccompanied minor refugee in Daaadab camp transform? This is the gist of this study.

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<sup>43</sup> Kures, M. E. (2001). 'The Effect of Armed Conflict on Children: The Plight of Unaccompanied Refugee Minors.' *Suffolk Transnational Law Review*. Vol 25, No 1, pp.141-164. Accessed from Heinoline on 31-08-2019.

<sup>44</sup> Kures, M. E. (2001). 'The Effect of Armed Conflict on Children: The Plight of Unaccompanied Refugee Minors.' *Suffolk Transnational Law Review*. Vol 25, No 1, pp.141-164. Accessed From Heinoline on 31-08-2019.

<sup>45</sup> Aytar, O and Brunnberg, E. (2016).

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

This study will adopt two theoretical frameworks. The first one is; The coping Competences Theory by Erica Fredenberg. This theory will be complemented by Resilience across Cultures (RAC) represented by Michael Ungar in the work, Positive Development or Positive Youth Development. Frydenberg in Coping Competencies, defines coping mechanism as a function of the situational determinants and the individual characteristics, perceptions of the situation and coping intentions. He asserts that in times of crisis, individuals bring a host of biological, dispositional, personal, and natural characteristics to the encounter. All these characteristics work towards solving the problem while the individuals remain optimistic, fit, relaxed and socially connected. The author notes that every individual has natural feedback that informs him/her whether the mechanisms employed are likely to be successful and to be freed again in future or will fail, therefore rejected for the future use. In this situation, coping intentions and beliefs are important elements of the process. They assist in giving confidence in all tough situations that comes your way.<sup>46</sup>

Frydenberg's Theory is relevant to my study since it sheds light on how minor / unaccompanied refugee children in Dadaab refugee camp might have adopted to the situation they found themselves in after losing their parents, in Somali, and during the transit to Ethiopia then Kenya without adult caregiver. They learnt how to earn a livelihood for themselves, what Frydenberg calls characteristics that assist towards solving problems while remaining optimistic and socially connected. However,

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<sup>46</sup> Fredenberg E. (2004) The Coping Competences: What to Teach, and When, Theory to Practice.

Frydenbergs theory does not take of how the refugees were able to interact with others from different countries, cultures and way of lives in their quest for survival.

To deal with the above mentioned weakness in Frydenbergs theory, I adopted the Resilience across Cultures (RAC) theory by Michael Ungar.<sup>47</sup> His main argument is that of resilience, where the capacity of individuals to access resources that enhance their well-being, and the capacity of their physical and social ecologies to make those resources available has meaningful ways.<sup>48</sup> He argues that the interaction of individuals and environment makes it possible to adapt. It also accommodates cultures from different backgrounds and encourages coping strategies. This theory (RAC) gives me the liberty to examine such conceptual areas as; success, challenges, support, and capability.<sup>49</sup>

## **1.8 Hypothesis**

- i) Dadaab refugee camp was part of the government containment policy of refugees.
- ii) The unaccompanied children had various challenges in Dadaab refugee camp.
- iii) The unaccompanied children improvised ways to cope with the challenges in the camp.

## **1.9 Methodology**

The researcher used both secondary and primary sources. To begin with I reviewed literature to develop a conceptual area of inquiry. This was mainly by reading books and scholarly journal articles around the unaccompanied refugee children. It helped me raise

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<sup>47</sup> Ungar, M. (2008). 'Resilience Across Cultures.' *British Journal of Social Work*, Vol 38, pp. 218-235.

<sup>48</sup>Ungar, M. (2010).p.1.

<sup>49</sup> Lee,J.S. (2012).p.14.



some questions from each literature reviewed and thus was able to come up with the extant gaps. Primary sources included data collection through the administration of questionnaires and face to face interviews while secondary sources included books, journals, articles and UNHCR annual reports. My entry point was through the UNHCR officials at their offices at Uhuru highway, Nairobi.

In schools, I contacted my interviews at break, lunch time at their school during the week and in the evening at their homes. In schools I was able to follow up with their activities and also get their teachers opinion on how the URMs were able to cope with the camp culture. In their homes I was interested in knowing how those who live by themselves, foster parents or relatives were able to cope. Data analysis was concurrent with data collection where every evening I would seat down and create a detailed theme and category of different and similar cases in each group. From this approach I was able to develop various categories that helped me in constructing the subsequent chapters.

I divided the sample into 5 strata, IFO 1, IFO 2, Dagaharc, Algardera/Halgadera and Aljugur, and by use of purposive sampling I identified the actual respondents; 9 respondents in each were chosen in stages. First, the three locations were divided into blocks. Each of the blocks was regarded as a cluster. Systematic sampling was carried out within each block to identify the unaccompanied children that was the focus of this study and due to the geographical spread of the target population, the researcher used multi-stage and purposive sampling methods. From each cluster, households with unaccompanied children was listed and categorized in terms of ages up to 15 years. The unaccompanied children purposively selected in every stratum were targeted to provide

respondents for administration of questionnaire and focus group discussions. During sampling, every effort was made to ensure that the sample reflect the characteristics of the population and geographical areas.

The study also adopted snowball method for sampling. This sampling method was with an intention to approach and locate key informants with rich information. I focused on people with particular knowledge, skills and characteristics. Using this method, I was able to consult the village elders, opinion leaders and translators who had ample knowledge about the area of their jurisdiction. The village elders directed the researcher on the first key informant. Key informants and resourceful in establishing risks and need of unaccompanied children in the Dadaab camp were identified. They included unaccompanied children, teachers, community leaders, government officials and officials of local NGOs/UN.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REGIONAL CONFLICTS AND REFUGEES IN KENYA**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The increase in intrastate conflicts in early 1990s in East Africa has for decades created permanent refugees in the region. Kenya, which is a host of Daadab Camp located in the North Eastern part of the country is a home to refugees from Somali, Sudan, Uganda, Eritrea and Ethiopia. The camp began as a temporary make-shift home for refugees who were expected to return to their home countries as soon as the conflicts ended in their countries. This chapter is a background of the study, examining the origin of Daadab Refugee and its sister camps. It demonstrates that conflict in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa are the main cause of Refugee hood in East Africa. Additionally, Somalian wars and the rise of Daadab Refugee Camps, the Ethiopian refugees in Kenya and finally the Sudanese conflicts and the constant flow of refugee in the country are all important variables to the conflict. The chapter postulates that in the event of conflict, there is little or no time at all to make sure all members accompanied each other. In such a situation women and children are the main casualties and suffer more whenever they are displaced, either internally, or as refugees.

#### **2.1 Conflicts and Refugeehood**

Refugeehood has been a world challenge for many decades. Globally, major refugee movements arose due to the process of the formation and consolidation of nation–states and the subsequent adoption and promotion of nationalist ideologies by those

states.<sup>50</sup> Political and military conflicts were the major causes of refugee flows especially from one country to another. East Africa region, is currently on the world map for constituting a major global flashpoint of forced migrations. Indeed, the region accounts for more than a quarter of the total Africa's refugees and asylum seekers which are estimated to be about 3.4 million refugees.<sup>51</sup> This means that for a very long period of time, the region has been in a continuous state of conflict causing the number of those forced out of their homes to cross the international borders hence increasing the number of refugees.

The conflicts, especially in the countries of Great lakes and those of the Horn of Africa, took the form of both intrastate or domestic wars as well as interstate wars. Caroline Kennedy and Thomas Waldman define such wars as ethnic or identity conflicts which tears states apart. They are mainly as a result of struggles of succession, or struggles against an authoritarian regime. Such wars which have been called new wars, were evident and rampant in 1990s after the end of cold war.<sup>52</sup> For instance, intrastate wars were forged by insurgencies in Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia in the reigns of Mengistu, Nimeiri and Said Barre respectively. In the interstate wars, regions such as that of the Ogaden, the historical Somali-Kenyan conflict, and Ethiopian involvement in the Sudanese civil when they supported the Sudan's People Liberation Movement (SPLM) and its military arm, the Sudan's People Liberation Army (SPLA) are good examples. As a result, many refugees were forced to flee to Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. In Kenya for

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<sup>50</sup> Bariagaber, A. (2016). 'Conflict and The Refugee Experience: Flight, Exile, and Repatriation In the Horn of Africa.' Routledge.p.14.

<sup>51</sup> Kamanga, K. (2002). International Refugee Law in East Africa: An Evolving Regime. Pp.25-35.

<sup>52</sup> Kennedy, C., & Waldman, T. (2014). The Changing Nature of Intrastate Conflicts and 'New Wars'. Pp. 229-239. Routledge.

instance, Daadab camp which includes, Ifo has over 84,089, Dagahaley over 87,000 refugees and Hagadera camp with over 106, 000 refugees. In Tanzania in the oldest camp – Katumba, as of 2021 hosted over 67,000 refugees.<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore, the periodic massacres experienced both in the Great Lakes led to a heightened flow of refugees. For example, in the early 1990s, the Tutsi community were almost annihilated. The aim was to transform Rwanda into Hutu land in a massacre that turning out to be the most gruesome act of genocide since the Second World War.<sup>54</sup>The ethnic cleavages between the Tutsi and the Hutu in Rwanda degenerated into a series of massacres of each other that caused deaths to millions and triggered over 1.2 million refugees in the region.

The continued flow of refugee had a spillover effect into Kenya. Between 1993 and 2002, Kenya had a heightened number of refugees.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, Kenya itself generated negligible numbers of her own refugees. For example, in the same period stated above, over 44,000 refugees were displaced from Ethiopia. The influx of refugees created a crisis not only to the two hosting countries but also to the international community for sometimes lack of preparedness. Some of the refugees died before they reached the country in which they wanted to seek asylum while others died in refugee camps for lack of sanitation and other important facilities immediately, they were admitted in the camps. In the camps also, the refugees were affected by alleged detentions, beatings, and

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<sup>53</sup> Wardeh, M., & Marques, R. C. (2021).

<sup>54</sup> Bariagaber, A. (2016).p.5.

<sup>55</sup> Veney, C. (2006). *Forced Migration in Eastern Africa: Democratization, Structural Adjustment, and Refugees*. Springer.

harassment either by the police, security services or occasionally from their host communities and fellow refugees. This was compounded by little food, scanty housing facilities, little medical care and unemployment that led to scarcity of money and firewood for the refugees.<sup>56</sup>

Women and unaccompanied children were the most affected in such circumstances. Some of the issues they grappled with were gender and sexual violence. Ironically this is despite the fact that they had been forced to run from the very rape, fear of rape, or experiences with other forms of sexual and physical abuse in their home country. For example, the Somali women, including young girls as unaccompanied, for fear of being raped fled to Kenya. Unfortunately, that did not protect them fully as they became prey to the abuses from their fellow refugees, and security personnel.<sup>57</sup>

Since she got her independence in 1963, Kenya has hosted a relatively smaller number of refugees but this changed from early 1990s. For example, in 1983 it had 8,000 refugees and by 1989 they had increased to 5,000 mainly from East and Southern African countries.<sup>58</sup> Fortunately, most of these early lot were uprooted from urban backgrounds with education and skills, such as doctors, teachers and other professionals as placement. They were, therefore, easily integrated in various regions of the country.

In early 1990s however, there were much larger numbers of refugees. Between 1990 and 1993, for example more than 300,000 Somali, 80,000 Ethiopians and 40,000 Sudanese

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<sup>56</sup> Oral Interview With an Elder K, in Hagdera on 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.p.7.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.p.8.

either fleeing from violence, anarchy or famine triggered increase I refugee to 427,000. <sup>59</sup> As time went by, refugee's number has always been fluctuating either due to repatriation or instability back home. For example, in 1998 their number stood at 235,700, in 2002, between 205,600 and 231,700. This number includes 155,800 Somalis, 57,800 Sudanese, 11,200 Ethiopians, 4,400 Ugandans and 2,500 from Rwandese. <sup>60</sup>

## **2.2 Somali Wars and Refugeehood**

Although refugees in Kenya have diverse countries of origin, the collapse of Somali state is argued to have immense contributor to many refugees in the country. Kenya unconditionally opened its doors for refugees despite the many security challenges accrued. Uniquely however, Kenya does not have specific refugee legislations nor refugee policy. It however, draws authority from a host of diverse statutory instruments therefore, making it difficult to depend on a specific consolidated legislation. <sup>61</sup> Since the end of 1980s the country has been a significant destination especially with the war between different factions such as Somali National Movement (SNM) who had gained control of the capital of Somaliland, Hargeisa. Conversely, the Somali government response of bombing Hargeisa, Burao town and arming the Ogaden refugees from Ethiopia and later on the UN intervention in 1992 <sup>62</sup> in ethnic based war that had lasted between 1989 and 2000, only catapulted the problem to new heights. Many Somalis were displaced especially when the war reached Mogadishu, triggering refugees especially into North Eastern part of Kenya.

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<sup>59</sup>Veney, C. (2006). *Forced Migration in Eastern Africa: Democratization, Structural Adjustment, and Refugees*. Springer. p.8.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.p.8.

<sup>61</sup> Wardeh, M., & Marques, R. C. (2021).

<sup>62</sup> Mogire, E., and Mogire, E. O. (2011).

Thus, the Somali refugees are linked to various dynamics that occurred in their country. Indeed, the genesis of the Somali refugees is greatly linked to the 1977-78 Ogaden war which pitted Somalia and Ethiopia as stated above, Hargeisa bombing in 1988, and the overthrow of Somali leaders in 1991. The refugees' influx therefore, testified a wide range of social, economic and environmental factors.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, the Somali conflict was militarized in two dimensions. Firstly, the government of Siyaad Barre gave all the required support to (WSLF). His goal was for the Ogaden people to have self-determination which, together with a support from the Somali army, almost succeeded in 1977.<sup>64</sup> However, the victory was short lived mainly due to the shift of superpower in 1978 where USA supported the Somali while the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) opted for Ethiopia.<sup>65</sup> The USSR injected massive military aid valued at one billion US dollars and advisors<sup>66</sup> into Ethiopia that facilitated the recapture of Ogaden region into their territory. The massive input of weapons in Ethiopia and Somalia exacerbated the conflict and created a new wave of refugees into IGAD countries.

In addition, the refugee crisis in Somalia was heightened by the manipulation of ethnicity. It was easy for their leaders to divide and rule whenever they succeeded in creating hostility between ethnic groups. Although divide and rule were mainly a colonial

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<sup>63</sup> Hasci, N. A. (1995). 'Somali Refugees In the Horn of Africa: State of the Art Literature Review.' No. 3. p.13.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid .p.14.

<sup>65</sup> Hapte-Selassie, E. (1985). 'The Political Economy of African Refugees: The Case of North East Africa.' Master of Development Studies Thesis. Pp.16.

<sup>66</sup> Kibreab, G. (1991) 'The State Of the Art Review of Refugee Studies in Africa.' Uppsala Papers in Economic History. No.26. Uppsala.p.16.



legacy of suppression, African leaders continued with the practice of manipulating and politicizing ethnicity. This would later influence African politics to follow kinship lines. Siyaad Barre, for example, took advantage of a divide and rule strategy and rewarded loyalties while suppressing those who seemed to be against him.

The manipulation of ethnicity and the strategy of divide and rule by Siyaad Barre culminated in 1988 when the Isaaq people were persecuted and bombarded in Hargeisa. In this episode more than 300, 000 people were displaced to Ethiopia. Similarly, the bombing of Hargeisa opened a Pandora box of self-centered clan movements. Although a group of people from political arena and influential businessmen tried to intervene to convince military personnel to go back to barracks, Siyaad refused but instead pursued clan hegemony.<sup>67</sup>

In January 1991, Siyaad was ousted. However, this was only followed by an intensified war, especially among the Hawaye clan in the United Somali Congress (USC). The war between the then interim president, Ali Mahdi and General Mohamed Farah Aideed, created havoc in Mogadishu and its surrounding regions. According to Fardosa, a respondent in Dadaab block j, the overthrow, over time, transformed Shebelli and Juba to a fierce battlefield where Hawiye's USC of the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SDDF) and the Somali National Front (SNF) disagreed. This led to torture, displacement and death of many innocent people.<sup>68</sup> By October 1991, 2.5 million Somali were experiencing food shortages. Among them were

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<sup>67</sup> Kibreab, G. (1991).

<sup>68</sup> Oral Interviews with Fardosa at Block J on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

100,000 internally displaced and over 300,000 who fled to Kenya as refugees.<sup>69</sup> The refugees also experienced trauma during their flight which was again heightened by cases of historical animosities of the Northern Frontier District dominated by Somali and regarded as the Greater Somali by the Somali Youth League during the war between Kenya and Somali guerrillas in 1960s.

### **2.3 The Ethiopian refugee in Kenya**

Similarly, some of the unaccompanied children refugees in Kenya were from Ethiopia escaping the fighting that had ensued. The regime was brutal to all those viewed as “enemies of the revolution.”<sup>70</sup> This left many children under the age of 18 years parentless and the only option was to leave the country as unaccompanied refugees. However, as time moved on, and despite the 1992 peace accord between the warring factions, Ethiopia experienced a dynamic of events that pushed many into refugee-hood in Kenya.

The infightings in Ethiopia between different factions over various issues was another source of refugees’ influx in to Kenya. Rebel groups that engaged in a fierce fight included the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF, and (EPDM) of Ethiopia, just to mention but a few. The Mengistu authoritarian leadership was overwhelmed in mid-1991, his government was overthrown forcing him to flee to Zimbabwe.<sup>71</sup> Ethiopia did not collapse but Eritrea got its independence. However, the war to oust Mengistu created a lot of disaster that led to famine and suffering of many who trekked across the borders as

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<sup>69</sup> UNHCR (1993a). ‘Report for 1992-3 and Proposed Programming and Budget. Africa.’ (MAC.961793) Geneva: UNHCR.

<sup>70</sup> Veney, C. (2006). *Forced Migration in Eastern Africa: Democratization, Structural Adjustment, and Refugees*. Springer. p.29.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.p.31.

refugees to Kenya. This was so especially with the continued internal conflicts in the country despite the fact that they had ousted Mengistu. The climax was when a bitter war erupted between Eritrea and Ethiopia from 1998 to 2000. The internal and external wars triggered more and more refugees into Kenya. Between 1991 and 1992 more than 80,000<sup>72</sup> refugees from Ethiopia had crossed into Kenya to escape the ethnic conflict.

Nonetheless, the Tigray people during the war succeeded to liberate their province. The problem however, was that it happened to be in a landlocked position and the only way to come out of that situation was to encroach into the other parts of Ethiopia and more so those strategic in natural resources.

The tension and conflict reached a culmination after OLF broke out of the Transitional Government in boycott of election in 1991. War erupted between TGE and OLF and threatened to return the country into full-fledged civil war. The war escalated further when the Oromo people in the south formed rebel groups and waged war against the state.<sup>73</sup>The conflicts forced many of the Oromo people to flee to Kenya as refugees for fear of persecution. For instance, in 1999, there were approximately 20,000 Oromo refugees in Kenya and following clashes between students, police and security in 2001 after university students protested the number of police in the learning institution the Oromo refugees, student population increased in Kenya.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Veney, C. (2006). *Forced Migration in Eastern Africa: Democratization, Structural Adjustment, and Refugees*. Springer. p.31.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.p.32.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.p.33.

Similarly, other contingents of Ethiopian refugees to Kenya came from the Ogaden and Amhara region. From the Ogaden were the Somali ethnic members who unlike the Oromo, did not want to form an independent state but rather join Somali. For a long period therefore, clashes were witnessed and displaced many to Kenya.

#### **2.4 The Sudan Conflicts**

The then larger Sudan was even a more complex theatre than the Somali and Ethiopian conflicts given the dynamics and attached to resources, independence ethnicity, religion and race, that generated quite a huge number of refugees. For example, the imposition of *sharia* law with an intention to alienate a huge population of the southern Sudan who were not Muslim served as a catalyst to the civil war that broke out in 1983. The conflict would then spiral in 1991 after Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) split. The SPLA mainstream was led by Garang while SPLA United was headed by Riek Machar. These events caught the citizens unaware and together with military actions many fled to Kenya for their lives.

Sudan war has been a dynamic one, involving civil and total unrest right from the eve of its independence in 2010. Out of the unrest and war thousands of Sudanese citizens sought refuge in her neighbouring country, more so Kenya to escape conflicts, persecution, hunger and famine coupled with diseases. Historically, the country's diversity in ethnicity, language, and culture, religion that pitted the Arab-Christian and Arab Black African and the divide and rule perpetuated by the colonialist had left a huge scar.

The division was widened by the conflict between the Sudanese government on one side and the military groups headed by John Garang, a member of the Dinka ethnic group, the largest in southern Sudan. Notably, SPLA/M got support from the Nuer. Both the Dinka and Nuer are mainly Christian and therefore the act of introducing *sharia* law in 1983 as a national directive was regarded as an insult to them. Similarly, not only were SPLA/M opposed to the injustice of the then government, but there were people especially from the north who were against the idea.<sup>75</sup>

The war between the government and SLMA especially in 1980s and 1990s was about the configuration of power. This was intended to allow the citizens have access to power and resources. The fighters wanted a unified and progressive nation which was not monopolized in Khartoum. Equality in jobs, distribution of oil revenues and land were some of the grievances that led the country into war. This was after Khartoum crafted a law that saw the proceeds from oil benefit the north at the expense of the south.

The action angered people of the south, leading to escalation of war especially from 1983 to 1991. This left many dead, led to detentions, abductions either for sexual or domestic jobs, displacement of women, men, and children heightened both internally (IDPs) and externally (refugees in Kenya), looking for food, shelter, and peace. This would later spiral in 1991 after heated enmity between Garang and Riek Machar heightened.

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<sup>75</sup>Veney, C. (2006). *Forced Migration in Eastern Africa: Democratization, Structural Adjustment, and Refugees*. Springer. p.36.

## **2.5 Civil wars in Rwanda and Burundi**

The Great Lakes Region was not spared as a refugee producing region to Kenya. Countries like Rwanda, DRC and Burundi produced many refugees due to the prolonged conflict in the region. Most of the conflicts were portrayed as ethnic. However, that seems not to present the whole picture because some of these conflicts took economic, historical and political perspectives and only used ethnicity to justify the divisions.<sup>76</sup> This was especially the case with the Rwanda conflict that led to the 1994 genocide. Although the explanation here does not intend to go deep into the divisions created by the Germans and Belgians between the Hutu and Tutsi, it acknowledges the impact of the colonial legacy on the communities. The study therefore, only touches on the conflicts and creation of refugees in the region. For example, in Rwanda over 20,000 people were massacred in what was termed a revolution in 1959 where the Tutsi monarchy was overthrown, expelled and replaced with Hutu power which led to over 10,000 to 13,000 deaths.<sup>77</sup>

The conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi however was more of political, economic and social nature after the colonialists bluntly favoured one over the other. In the colonial period, the Tutsi were considered the aristocracy of Rwanda and dominant over other ethnic groups like Hutu and Twa especially during the Belgium colonial rule.<sup>78</sup> However, the Tutsi regime was overthrown in 1961 by the Hutu who then took over the control. Many of the Tutsi fled and crossed over to the eastern Africa countries like Uganda and Kenya. Their differences began in 1973 Juvenal H. came to power through armed

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<sup>76</sup> Veney, C. (2006).p.41.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.p.42.

<sup>78</sup> Cruden, A. (2010). 'The Rwandan Genocide.' Cengage Learning.pp.34-56.

forces.<sup>79</sup> The leader appointed Tutsis in prominent positions such as education, the civil service, the church and the economy.

However, Habyarimana began losing support in the early 1990s, following the democratization wind that was blowing in Africa. As the country neared 1994, the Tutsi and Hutu animosity exploded into a full genocide. In April 1994 and for the following hundred days, more than 800,000 had been killed by Hutu where approximately 10000 deaths occurred every day.<sup>80</sup> The invasion of RPF and the ensuing civil war signaled more than one million people to flee to neighbouring countries before the genocide began.

Burundi had two similarities with Rwanda. One was in the sense that the country was populated by Hutu, Tutsi and Twa people. Secondly, the country was first under the colonial rule of Germany then Belgium who had triggered similar disruptions of the two communities and hence creation of divisions among them. Therefore, the social unrest that took place with their neighbour in 1959 had direct impact on their counterparts in the neighbouring Rwanda. Although earlier on Burundi had, through the Union for National Progress (UPRONA) nationalist party, tried to initiate grassroots level, initiatives to bring together the two major communities did not hinder the conflict from spreading into their territory.

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<sup>79</sup>Veney, C. (2006). *Forced Migration in Eastern Africa: Democratization, Structural Adjustment, and Refugees*. Springer. .p.42.

<sup>80</sup> Nardo, D. (2011). *The Rwandan Genocide*. Detroit, Mich: Lucent Books.

The overthrow of Jean-Baptiste Bagaza by Pierre Buyoya in 1987 would bring in some hope for the citizens as the regime was seen to be political and religious liberator. However, from 1991 to 1992 the Hutu who had sort asylum in Tanzania attempted to invade the country with an aim for independence, but instead experienced the wrath of the government forces. To manage the community, however, an election held was won by FRODEBU and Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu was appointed a prime minister. The action served as a catalyst that Tutsi joined UPRONA while the Hutu were associated by FRODEBU.

The assassination of Ndadaye in 1993 led to spontaneous conflict where the Hutu blocked roads from the northern, central, and eastern parts of the country. Conversely, the tragedy that followed the coup d'état was even bloodier and damaging, triggering a wave of refugees both in Tanzania and Kenya. To explode the war further, were the deaths of presidents Sylvestre Ntibantunganya and Habyarimana of Burundi and Rwanda through a plane crash in 1994. The incident created fear among the people, resulted in deaths and refugees fleeing to the east African countries.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the regional conflicts and the emergence of refugees. The main argument was that, wars both in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa led to displacement of people and subsequent influx of refugees in the region. Among the direct recipients of the refugee burden was Kenya. Indeed, Kenya is one of the very few countries, in the region, which despite, of its post-election tendency of ethnic conflicts, has been able to remain politically peaceful hence able to accommodate many refugees.



The chapter has shown that many of those wars took various dimensions, ranging from the colonial legacy, proliferation of weapons, ethnicity, political, economic, social and external influences, among others. Ethnicity in particular played a major role in those conflicts as it was politicized and divisions created among the people from Ethiopia to DRC. Additionally, the cyclical famines that was experienced after every war in many of the countries discussed in the chapter, and long-lasting droughts that led to hunger in Somalia after the war in the early 1990s, has been a major problem leading to refugees' influx into Kenya. These refugees range from the very young to the elderly, trooping in from be it Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and then South Sudan.

Undoubtedly, refugee plight in Kenya, like anywhere else in the world, is full of challenges, from registration to areas of settlement in the respective parts of the country. Those affected most in the process are always women, children and the elderly. Even more so are the unaccompanied children who in the process of the war lost contact, and parents during the flight, or even during the registration and post registration in their host countries especially during the period of creation of the camps. This leads to the next chapter, which examines the influx of refugees leading to the creation of Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya. It documents the various experiences especially for the unaccompanied children.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE GENESIS OF REFUGEE CAMPS IN KENYA

#### 3.1 Introduction

The involvement of Kenya in hosting refugees fleeing from neighboring countries started in early 1990. At first, the government thought that the refugee problem was short lived and therefore, did not take time to come up with strong legal guideline on how to deal with the issue. This therefore, led to establishment of temporary structures, which would allow refugees to reside in various parts of the country such as Mombasa and Thika, as they awaited to be returned to their countries. Kenya would later decide to adopt the policy of encampment of all refugees through the 2006 Refugee Act which advance refoulement and denied refugees rights to movement, social-economic rights among other freedoms as enshrined in the Refugee Convention and the International law.<sup>81</sup> This chapter assesses the refugee legal system in Kenya, why Kenya opted for refugee camps and finally, the history of refugee camps related to Daadab Camp in Kenya. The chapter argues that whether short or long-term, these measures were a precursor to the various challenges faced by the unaccompanied minors.

#### 3.2 Kenya's Refugee Laws

The refugee legal framework in Kenya is not clear. Although Kenya has been a party to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, the Protocol of 1967, as well as the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention has not initiated deliberate moves toward legislating the regulations

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<sup>81</sup> MUIGUA, K. (2010). Protecting Refugees Rights In Kenya: Utilizing International Refugee Instruments, The Refugee Act 2010 And The Constitution Of Kenya As Catalysts. *Nairobi: The Constitution Of Kenya*.

to guide on how to deal with the refugee problem in the country. Kamanga Khoti, for example, notes that despite Kenya being a key destination for different categories of asylum seekers, particularly those running away from the state of war in their countries, it is reluctant in improving its refugee legal systems.<sup>82</sup> Despite many years of involvement with regional refugee problems; about four to five decades, Kenya has refused both refugee-specific legislation and national refugee policy. The legal framework in the country as of now therefore, is neither grounded nor based on any consolidated legislation, but however, draws power and authority from a number of different statutory instruments.<sup>83</sup>

For example, the Refugees Bill proposed by a group of Human Rights proponents on protection and management of refugees as per 1951 UN convention was overwhelmingly rejected by the public. Does this mean that Kenyans are still in a state of antipathy and outright xenophobia toward refugees after almost four decades of hosting them? Additionally, fresh efforts were initiated later, but for similar reasons. The process floundered for lack of support. Some scholars indicate that the retrogressive trend can be partly explained by the dramatic increase in the magnitude of refugee flows, in not only Kenya but also in Uganda and Tanzania which has almost a similar approach to the refugees. Secondly, also at play is the changing nature of conflicts, and the interplay of

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<sup>82</sup> Kamanga, K. (2002). International Refugee Law in East Africa: An Evolving Regime. *Journal of International Affairs*, 25-35.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid P12

such factors as the proliferation of arms into the region, increasing inter-ethnic conflicts and local electoral politics.<sup>84</sup>

Therefore, Kenyan government has been in charge of refugee status determination through the eligibility Committee, assisted by the Ministries of Home Affairs and the Department of Immigration, which determines whether one is qualified to become a refugee in Kenya. On the flipside, the UNHCR were observers of the process and a times they gave their views and advice on how the interviews should have been done. For instance, the war in Somalia resulted in over 400,000 Somali refugees in Kenya, combined with the arrival of the Sudanese 'walking boys' in the northwest, which led to the final collapse of the system of individual status determination by the Kenyan Eligibility Committee.<sup>85</sup> This created room to a significant shift to new refugee regime in Kenya which involved the foreign Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) as well as UNHCR, which guaranteed an external source of fund to assist in the funding of ever increasing number of refugees in Kenya. Later after Kenya declared that all refugees must reside in camps and the subsequent creation of Daadab and Kakuma camps, UNHCR took complete control of the refugee procedures in the country.

### **3.3 Kenya Refugee Camps**

The beginning of democratization in African states, especially after the end of cold war served as a new twist to many and a genesis of civil wars that displaced and killed many. Conversely, this period saw many asylum seekers who feared for their lives, either from

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<sup>84</sup> Verdirame, G. (1999). Human Rights and Refugees: The Case of Kenya. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 12(1), 54-77.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p.4

political persecutions or from economic, social and other natural disasters. Kenya became home to many refugees emerging from the wars, ranging from the countries of Ethiopia, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Somalia. However, between 1991- 1992, the arrival of more than 400,000 asylum seekers from Somalia prompted Kenya to come up with refugee policy, especially after it had tried to prevent them from accessing the country.<sup>86</sup>

Initially, as stated before, Kenya solely determined who qualified to be a refugee in the country. This was through a special committee that was drawn from the ministry of home affairs and immigration department and situated in Thika as reception center for the United Nations Humanitarian Commission of Refugees (UNHCR). However, this would later change after the Kenyan government came under pressure especially after the Sudan, Somali, Ethiopia and Uganda refugee influx of the early 1990s and was unable to register and administer them alone and therefore left the whole management to the UNHCR.<sup>87</sup>

Kenya opted for refugee camps for two main reasons. First, it argued that the refugees had failed the previous open policy that protected them and therefore it was not willing to conduct any interviews for the new incoming refugees. Secondly, Kenya felt refugees had become a burden especially those that were employed and as a response it imposed

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<sup>86</sup> Milner, J. (2009). 'Refugees, the State and the Politics of Asylum In Africa.' Springer.p.84.

<sup>87</sup> Balakian, S. (2016). "Money Is Your Government": Refugees, Mobility, and Unstable Documents In Kenya's Operation Usalama Watch. *African Studies Review*, 59(2), 87-111.

restrictions on access to employment and freedom of movement for refugees, stipulating that refugees live in designated camps.<sup>88</sup>

Kenyan administration designated areas where refugee camps were established and managed. Despite the fact that the government transferred all activities associated with refugees to the United Nations Humanitarian Commission of Refugees (UNHCR) it also maintained a dual policy of abdication and containment, an action that was criticized by many factions, including the Human rights commission. To the administration, there was little donor support with heightened security concerns in respect to the refugees. The UNHCR appealed for help from donors to support its activities especially during the emergency period from 1992-1993.<sup>89</sup> For example, from 1991 donors pledged US\$14.7 million, of which US\$8.5 million was from the US. However, the institution was overwhelmed by the number of refugee influx in Kenya due to few personnel to address their various issues and problems.<sup>90</sup>

Government, though, reluctantly accepted the refugee camps and provided land for their establishments. However, initially UNHCR was given the mandate to set up camps in Mombasa and in Dadaab to cater for the Somalis and the other for Ethiopians in Mandera while others harbored the Sudanese in Kakuma, located in the Turkana district. In the refugee camps, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) were contracted by UNHCR to offer and help in various sectors as partners.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Milner, J. (2009). *Refugees, The State and The Politics of Asylum in Africa*.p.84.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.p.85.

<sup>90</sup> Verdirame, G. (1999). *Human Rights and Refugees: Case of Kenya*.

<sup>91</sup> Horst, C. (2007). *Transnational Nomads: How Somalis Cope With Refugee Life In the Dadaab Camps of Kenya* (Vol. 19). Berghahn Books.

It should be noted however, that many camps, established to host refugees such as Liboyi, which is along the Ethiopian and Kenya border, were collapsed and refugees moved to either Dadaab or Kakuma. This chapter is interested in the establishment of Dadaab camp and how that informs the plight of unaccompanied children. To begin with the focus will be on what kind of refugees were taken to Dadaab and the reasons behind the selection. Many of the Refugees in Liboyi and Coastal parts were mainly from Somali and would later on be moved to Dadaab in the north eastern part of Kenya.

### **3.4 Dadaab Refugee Camp**

Dadaab refugee camp is one of the largest camps in Africa and the entire world. The camp is in Garissa County— and nearly 100 km from the border with Somalia. Way before the establishment of the Dadaab camp, the land in which the camp sits was a local town with the main population traditionally consisting of Somali nomadic ethnic pastoralists herders who mainly kept, camels, cattle, as well as goats.<sup>92</sup> Garissa, where the camp is located, has a flat terrain, is barren and dry. The region experiences dust storms on an almost daily basis. The region has scarce water, where rain is occasional and even when it rains it frequently leads to flooding. During floods the red dusty earth turns to mud and as it dries off it forms a hard crust. Vegetation is sparse. Cultivation of crop is almost impossible. Life in the camp therefore, is a big challenge to the livelihood means of the refugees.<sup>93</sup> This is despite the fact that the camp covers an area of approximately 50 square kms.

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<sup>92</sup> Teff, Melanie. 2012. “Kenya Can Turn the Dadaab Refugee Camps Into an Asset.” Refugees International, April 18. [www.refintl.org/pressroom/oped/kenya-can-turn-dadaab-refugeecamps-asset](http://www.refintl.org/pressroom/oped/kenya-can-turn-dadaab-refugeecamps-asset).

<sup>93</sup> UNHCR, (2004) Information bulletin.

The camp was established in the 1990 to host the Somali refugees. With time it, however, it expanded to serve refugees from Eastern, central and Horn countries (Southern Sudan, Ethiopia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Uganda, and Rwanda).<sup>94</sup> As at 2017, the camp had over 500,000 refugees. The first groups of refugees to arrive in Kenya were Somali women and unaccompanied minors. It was for these women and unaccompanied minors that the refugee camp was built in Kenya to provide protection and assistance to some Somali teenagers who had trekked long distances in dry dusty land and bushes to reach the border town of Dadaab.<sup>95</sup> Though Kenya is a signatory to the international legal instrument, governing refugees, for security reasons it demanded that refugees be confined in camps for them to be assisted. Outside of the camp they were considered as illegal aliens. It was on this understanding with the UNHCR that the Dadaab Refugee Camp was established.<sup>96</sup> As the home to refugees of nine different nationalities and 20 ethnic groups, Dadaab it is the most cosmopolitan refugee camp in Africa. The different nationalities have distinctive living arrangements. They have settled in zones or villages according to their ethnicity.<sup>97</sup>

However, there were various reasons to why the government opted for camps and more specifically the Dadaab region. The key reason was to contain and control refugees. Priorities for exemption were only to those who needed major medical attention but which was by all means unavailable in the camps. Interestingly, majority of those camps were established in the arid regions commonly associated with pastoralism and a long history of *shifita* (bandit) wars that affected many, including the refugees themselves.

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<sup>94</sup> Mackinnon, H. (2014). *Education In Emergencies: The Case Of the Dadaab Refugee Camps*. CIGI.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. P.12

<sup>96</sup> Marrazza, Martha. "A Critical Analysis of Kenya's Forced Encampment Policy for Urban Refugees."

<sup>97</sup> Ibid



However, the government argued that refugees and rebel fighters posed security threat. This was due to the allegations that they had brought with them guns to Kenya, and given the economic conditions, specifically in the northern and eastern regions, guns were easily purchased for a few shillings. The blame for the issues of security was totally placed on the refugees in the region despite the rebels being few. In response, therefore, the Kenyan government forcibly repatriated Somali refugees on the same accusations.<sup>98</sup>

This kind of treatment was of course not welcomed by the international community, given Kenya was seen as a second home for many of the people running away from conflict. However, that did not save the Kenyans of Somali origin and Somalis living in the North Eastern Province from challenges. For example, quite a number had challenges in proving they were Kenyans. They were all required to have legal documents such as identity cards or a passport for them to remain in the country.<sup>99</sup> Those who were unable to provide any proof, were forcefully repatriated. This was confirmed by the Africa Watch where cases of Kenyan-Somalis deported to Somalia even though they were Kenyan by birth was reported.<sup>100</sup> With fear of deportation to Somalia, hundreds fled to Tanzania and Uganda.

After attack of Rwandan refugee in Uganda, Kenya ordered all Ugandan and Rwandan refugees to leave. This was in response after Uganda had accepted its territory to be used against Rwanda which was a sovereign state. To actualize its stand, security sweeps in Nairobi, Nakuru, and Eldoret was immediately executed and those who were found to

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<sup>98</sup>Veney, C. (2006).p.95.

<sup>99</sup>Veney, C. (2006). p.95.

<sup>100</sup>Africa watch. (1990). 'Kenya: Screening of Somalis: Cruel Consequences of Kenya's Passbook System.'

have flouted the rules were either detained or deported without any time or chance to explain themselves. Disturbingly, the security personnel were accused of mishandling the refugees and even destroying their documents, an accusation they denied.<sup>101</sup>

Insecurity issues heightened in Northern Kenya and around refugee camps like Liboi where many killings, rapes, and robberies were witnessed. That prompted the government to close many of such camps. According to Isho Gure, a refugee at block J, the tensions was started by the refugees who wanted to equally enjoy the privileges given to Kenyan citizens such keeping livestock and grazing them freely outside the camps.<sup>102</sup> However, the host communities refused. The rivalry transformed into clan issues and competition over grazing and watering points and hence instability transferred to Kenya. It impacted severely on the social services providers who were already strained. This situation led to many deaths that the government was unable to curtail. The competition increased over food relief, housing and limited watering holes. In the anarchy, problems of rapes on girls as young as four were perpetuated by the shiftas, security personnel or fellow refugees.<sup>103</sup>

### **3.5 Refugee Management Dilemma**

The problem of who would manage the refugees in Kenya gave the government of Kenya sleepless nights after the establishment of the refugee camps. From the beginning of the camp, there were problems that continued many years afterwards. The challenges included, registration, shelter protection. When the camp was established in the 1990s, the Kenya government did not have an established system to support refugees and was

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<sup>101</sup> Oral Interview With Ismail Guba at Block J on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>102</sup> Oral Interview with Isho Gure at Block J on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>103</sup> Africa watch. (1990).

primarily concerned with national security especially the proliferation of small arms that refugees carried even within the camp. The government in conjunction with UNHCR, therefore, set up temporary reception centers which were used to screen for diseases and serve as food and essential items issuance point for refugees on their arrival. The centers used to increase each time in response to needs such as the case when IFO was formed in order to provide new arrivals with access to full registration on the same day of arrival. However, this has since stopped as from October 2011.<sup>104</sup>

It is noted however, that from August 2011, housing facilities within Ifo 2 west and east was improved. Another plan was mooted of opening a camp in Fafi district- Cambios- which was spacious and could host more than 180,000 refugees. However, as of 2017, Ifo 2 extensions was stopped and construction halted. Cambios had 12,000 refugees.<sup>105</sup> It was also important for water to be readily available. This could help the people and those in need to access the precious commodity. However, accessibility of tap water became an uphill task and this would later adversely affect the unaccompanied schooling children in the camp. The work of getting water for these children consumed much of their time and at the end resulted in poor academic performance at school.<sup>106</sup> Those who had stayed with them felt that they were burdens needing extra effort.

The UNHCR together with a wide range of organizations intervened to offer the service as this was under its jurisdiction and that of the state. From 2007 under the Kenya refugee Act, a hierarchy was formed where a Camp Manager was to oversee the camp affairs in

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<sup>104</sup> Last, M. (1994). “*Putting Children First.*” *Disasters* 18(3).p.10.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>106</sup> UNHCR, (2004). ‘Brief On the Refugees Assistance Programme at Dadaab Refugee Camp.’

liaison with humanitarian agencies. The UNHCR and the partnering agencies on the other hand were to respond to the conditions and challenges by providing the most needed services to the refugees. For example, there was the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) who from when Dadaab camp was formed have offered services to the newly arrived refugees. They concentrated much on children who were extremely affected as refugees.<sup>107</sup>

They accommodated a 200-bed inpatient therapeutic feeding centre. They also built a new health and nutrition post in Bulobate itself to provide ready-to-use supplementary food for malnourished children to prevent their condition from deteriorating even further. To get more support from donors, they shared what they do and where they needed help. Using such results, the UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP) and other aid agencies were able to intervene and help by providing food rations to refugees as soon as they reached the reception centre, and improving supplementary food distributions

However, by November 2011, there were more cases of malnourished children admitted to MSF's hospital in Dagahaley camp. Many of them came from IFO camp where MSF had halted its activities after their staff members were kidnaped. At the time of writing this project, the Kenyan Red Cross had been expanding their activities to address the challenge. These efforts were aimed at reducing the burden in Dagahaley hospital.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>Burman, U. (1994). 'Innocents Abroad: Western Fantasies of Childhood and Iconography of Emergencies.' *Disasters* Vol. 18 No 3.pp.44-67.

<sup>108</sup> Boyden, J. (1991).

The situation was more severe for the unaccompanied children. Their malnutrition could be traced from way back home when conflicts erupted, famine and hunger to when they set foot in Dadaab refugee camp. It is believed that women and children made up to 80 percent out of the 300,000 Somalia refugees who fled to Kenya between 1991 and 1993.<sup>109</sup> This was due to the civil wars that had erupted in the country and gotten many by surprise especially those in the interior parts of Somalia. Back home their villages were attacked or families killed while they were away with the cattle. Together with other calamities like long drought and famine that hit Somalia time and again with each other, they opted to flee to Kenya and other neighbouring countries to get shelter and education. To achieve this the young children trekked for months, sometimes from remote parts of Somalia and often with practically no food or water with high chances of being attacked by wild animals, *shiftras* and security personnel that were deployed along the Somalia-Kenya border. They swam over several crocodile-infested rivers. Many succumbed en route to their destination.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Since the first refugees arrived in Kenya, the country has undergone through several phases of both legal and other challenges that comes with refugees. The chapter has highlighted how the Kenyan government at first had opened ground for the refugees to come in the country without much hindrance until the burden of refugee influx in the early 1990s became unbearable. The chapter highlights the reasons as to why Kenya, though unwillingly, opted for refugee camps. Secondly, the study highlights why some

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<sup>109</sup> Gardner, J. and El Bushra, J. (Eds.) (2004). 'Somalia-The Untold Story: The War Through the Eyes of Somali Women.'p.70.

refugee were left with the options of either going back to their home countries, or to Kakuma and Dadaab. Kenya authorities argued that the refugees had become a burden especially causing insecurity in the northern part of the country. It further accused refugees of coordinating with the *shiftas* to destabilize the country from Liboi camp. Furthermore, they were accused of enjoying tax free business and hurting the country's economy.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**CHALLENGES FACED BY UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE CHILDREN IN**  
**DADAAB**

**4.1 Introduction**

Dadaab refugee camp with its many refugees posed a variety of challenges. This chapter posits that the unaccompanied children had challenges in accessing basic needs like water, food, shelter, education and clothing. This, together with instances of trauma, given that many did not have parents but only caretakers, posed such a huge challenge to them psychologically that they were largely unable to cope. Similarly, there were challenges tied to the manner to service providers grouped the minors in ages and sex but not by specific needs and special attention. Their separation was due to a variety of reasons and circumstances.

**4.2 The Experience of the Unaccompanied Children**

The challenge faced by unaccompanied children is not a new phenomenon. However, there has been a deliberate omission of their fate in refugee legal system especially in Africa.<sup>110</sup> The existing laws does not speak to the prevailing predicaments faced by the unaccompanied child therefore, leaving them vulnerable in terms of provision of basic needs and also in terms of physical and psychological challenges. These children are deprived of their normal social, economic and cultural environment. Macclintok defines a child's social life as the part of a child's time spent doing enjoyable things with others. This consists of different bonds formed with people known to him/her, such as family,

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<sup>110</sup> Okitikpi, T., & Aymer, C. (2003). *Social Work with African Refugee Children and Their Families. The Child & Family Social Work.*

friends, members of their community, and even strangers. This can be quantified by the duration as well as the quality of the social interactions they have on a regular basis, both in person and currently online platforms.<sup>111</sup>

During wars, most children lose their parents in cold bloodshed. Parents are tortured and made to go through disturbing circumstances that will always remain in the minds of children. Such parental distress and anxiety can seriously disrupt the normal emotional development of their children. Additionally, children often lose their role models in their parents as they flee due to war. Children in Daadab refugee camp have been deprived of their childhood which comes with doing all they want to do with their peers and family members by detaching them from their society. They experience domestic violence mainly perpetrated by adult refugees which severely affect them in many ways. For example, Crisp writing on the state of insecurity and violence on refugees in Kenya, noted that children and adolescents being physically abused by adult men.<sup>112</sup> His argument was confirmed by several respondents in the field. Maryan Mahamud Shurne for instance, opined that such cases were rampant especially in 1991, 2002 and 2017 during Kenya's elections since most of the security officers who dealt with the cases were pre-occupied by election.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, victims of rape were coerced into a "marriage", with the rapist or the men of their clan or family provided with compensation.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> MacClintock, P. L. (1907). *Literature In the Elementary School*. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>112</sup> Crisp, J. (2000). *A State of Insecurity: The Political Economy of Violence in Kenya's Refugee Camps*. *African affairs*.

<sup>113</sup> Oral Interview with Maryan Mahamud Shurne at Block J on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>114</sup> Oral Interview With Fardosa at Block J on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014.



### 4.3 Sexual Violence: The Fate of Unaccompanied

The health of a child especially during adolescents is strongly affected by social factors at both individual levels, family, society, as well as at national levels. Nations around the world present their young generation with structures of opportunity as they grow from one level to the other.<sup>115</sup> Viner notes that the health and health behaviors of a person correspond strongly from adolescence into adult life, therefore, the way the surrounding affects adolescent health is very crucial to the wellbeing of the whole population and the economic development of nations. Therefore, as children transition to adolescence, they begin to spend less time with their parents and siblings and more time in a social environment.<sup>116</sup> What happens then when the environment is hostile, unfriendly and insecure? This question describes the predicament adolescent and generally young boys and girls go through in the Daadab refugee camp.

The camp environment has provided an insecure hidden space where adult refugee men sexually abused adolescent girls at the refugee camp. This has been widely been confirmed especially among the Somali households who still practice female genital mutilation.<sup>117</sup> The unaccompanied minors for instance, have been vulnerable due to lack of responsible persons to take care of them especially at night and as they are going about with their daily chores. From our oral interview, it was indicated that, since the establishment of the camp, over 60 children of adolescent age and below have been defiled by known adults in the camp, however the case was handled by elders.<sup>118</sup> They

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<sup>115</sup> Mr Lungile Magqibelo, Postgraduate Student; Department of Social Work, University of the Western Cape, Bellville, South Africa

<sup>116</sup> Viner, R. M., et.al. (2012). Adolescence and the Oral Social Determinants of Health. *The lancet*.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Abdulahi at Hagadera Refugee Camp on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2014

<sup>118</sup> Oral Interviews With Halima at Hagadera Refugee Camp on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

are sometimes intentionally excluded to expose them to rape despite the international attention it attracted.<sup>119</sup> For example, by 1993 there were over 200 cases of rape involving children aged 12<sup>120</sup> mainly in the bush while fetching firewood and within the camp at night before it was fenced. It is noted:

Camp life for young girls especially those without their mothers is very risky. Many school girls have been defiled while playing, others while picking firewood along the paths of the camp but no action has been taken so far. Sometimes camp officials even fear to address such incidences because of clan conflicts that emerge frequently between different Somali clans. This has affected the provision of justice to many rape cases reported within these camps.<sup>121</sup>

On one hand it is said that many of the incidences of rape were committed by robbers and bandits who were mainly cattle rustlers, a mixture of Kenyans, Somali refugees and Somali based militias believed to be operating in the trans-border activities. On the other, it is said to be an extension of clan issues away from Somalia and the rape used as a tool of war. However, there are differing arguments that suggest that the rape cases are committed across all refugees be it from Ethiopia and Sudan women.<sup>122</sup> That negates the idea of clan issues.

Further, along the roads that plies Daadab refugee camps and other parts, reported highway banditry and robberies have happened on a daily basis. Apparently, the robberies are done at night and the same bandits rape women and girls during the day in

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<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Oral Interview with Abdulahi at Hagadera Refugee Camp on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>122</sup> Kenya Human Rights Commission. (1999). 'Haven of Fear: The Plight of Women Refugees in Kenya.'p.10.

and around the Dadaab camps. The robberies are believed to target a number of refugees and other personnel involved in business or a cash income, aid agency facilities and installations, including warehouses, schools and pumping stations, vehicles travelling in the region, especially those without the requisite police escort. It also affects miraa or khat traders, who deal in the narcotic leaf which is chewed by people throughout the Horn of Africa.<sup>123</sup>

#### **4.4 Social-Economic Conflicts and Child's Welfare in the Camp**

Indirectly, the unaccompanied children are faced with other challenges in the camp such as conflicts mainly among the Somali nationals where the clan problems were exported. However, the Somali clan conflict was said to be related to their historical culture of revenge. For example, in 1998, there were reports of a quarrel between two Somali women at a tap-stand in Hagadera that turned into an inter-clan block fight in which four women were injured.<sup>124</sup> However, it did not end there as a few days after, a revenge mission linked to the women spiraled into quarrel where two refugees armed with a knife attacked a 40-year-old man who sustained serious injuries and was admitted to hospital.<sup>125</sup>

Old issues were brought into the camp. This is where one said:

“The root cause of the conflict at the communal tap was not water but was as a result of the disagreement between two officers back in Somali who unfortunately died during the war. Their wives have never been at peace at the camp. This has often caused rivalry between Hagadera block HAG-K1 and HAGE.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Crisp (2000).p.607.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>126</sup> Oral Interview With Abdulahi at Hagadera Refugee Camp on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

Similarly, Dadaab camp witnessed conflicts between the majority Somali (mostly nomadic pastoral) and minority Somali Bantu (speak different language and practices sedentary agriculture) refugees. For example, there were conflicts between the majority Somali and the minority Somali Bantu, Ethiopians and Sudanese people in 1999 that forced the camp management to introduce a wrist band for the minority refugee in Dagahaley camp.<sup>127</sup>The refugees have also had challenges coping with the host communities that have been the genesis of the insecurity in and about the camp. This has been an issue especially between the majority Somali refugees and the host communities which has a blurred difference. The two have similar language, culture and clans that cut across the Kenyan-Somalian border.<sup>128</sup>

However, there have been certain responses to curtail the insecurity menace in Dadaab refugee camps. Importantly, the UNHCR was also accused of administering the camp shoddily and largely ignored the international humanitarian law and more so ignored the rape cases that were labeled against the security personnel.<sup>129</sup> However, the officials of UNHCR and her partners are strained by both finance and human manpower which is a challenge in addressing the security issues surrounding the refugees. This is despite the fact that they installed radio network linking the police of Liboi, Garissa and Dadaab to enhance surveillance in case of emergency.

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<sup>127</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>128</sup> Oral Interview with Hussein at Block E on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*

#### **4.5 Lack Basic Needs and Good Social Amenities**

Whenever a refugee flees from war in his home country, his ultimate aim is to save his life. However, very few of the Refugees live to return home after very many years of starvation, and suffering in a deplorable refugee camp especially the minors who have been unaccompanied. Daadab camp provides a true case scenario where there is evidence of death not only to the unaccompanied children but also to elderly who could not withstand the challenges that come with lack of food and malnutrition. Fardosa a refugee from block J noted that many deaths occurred as a result of lack of enough food for unaccompanied have been recorded. For instance, there were children who died as a result of malnutrition, injuries and communicable diseases. The groups that were at more risk of death among the refugees were minors especially the unaccompanied children who had little attention while in the camp.<sup>130</sup>

Communicable diseases also accounted for the minors deaths especially those that accessed the camp in the rush. Diarrheal diseases, acute respiratory infection, measles and other diseases were the common epidemic in the Dadaab Refugee Camp.<sup>131</sup> Disturbingly, measles was believed to be the highest killer of children from the Somalia origin. In the early 1992 diarrheal diseases and cholera dysentery was the most dangerous killer of the children. In addition to this are deaths of refugee caused by malnutrition. For example, this accounts for an estimate of 29% deaths for the refugees who come to Kenya from Somalia. An interview with the UNHCR children officer at Daadab Refugee Camp noted that the problem of malnutrition and cholera was worse in 1991 and 1992.

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<sup>130</sup> Oral Interviews with Fardosa at Block J on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid p. 602

This was attributed to lack of food, water and sanitation. The officer also reiterated on the reported deaths of the unaccompanied children due to the injuries they got while in war area, transiting and in the camps. Some of those injuries were caused by rapes on the younger girls both in the battle field and in the Dadaab refugee camp.<sup>132</sup>

However, there were responses from both the state and UNCHR where the refugees could be given 3.5 litres of water per person per day especially in Liboi where there were over 1700 reported cases of hepatitis and which caused around 63 deaths.<sup>133</sup> The officers also gave awareness of oral rehydration therapy for the emergency responses. This was done in conjunction with traditional local clinics that were in the area before. Although this was not totally enough it however helped at a time of people in dire need.

The refugees in Dadaab experienced food starvation; this was mainly due to the daily increase in food requirements that was directly impacted by the increased number of refugees and decreased quality and quantity of food rations in 2013.<sup>134</sup> The refugees in Dadaab argue that the food quality was reduced to three kilograms of maize per person for two weeks.<sup>135</sup> Sadly, the flour used by the Somali to prepare *injera* their staple food was not easily available which again became a challenge to the Somali refugees and more so the unaccompanied children who were used to the kind of food. This forced the refugees in the camp to sell their rations like meat, milk and vegetable to the locals in

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<sup>132</sup> Oral Interview with UNHCR Children Officer at Daadab Refugee Camp, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid

<sup>134</sup> Oral Interview with Fardosa at Block J on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>135</sup> Abdi, A. M. (2005). 'In Limbo: Dependency, Insecurity, and Identity Amongst Somali Refugees in Dadaab Camps.' *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, Vol.22 No. 2.p.8.

exchange for teff flour used to make *injera* and in the end this denied them a balanced diet.

The refugees also experienced the challenge of protection especially where there was conflict between the institutions and the state that hosts them. For example, the UNHCR have time and again faced the problem of lack of support from the Kenyan government especially on provision of food. Kenyan government instead opted to give land under which they can relocate the refugees. In addition, this became worse when the regional borders like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and East African Community (EAC), which instead of offering support to UNHCR were indeed the member countries that were producing refugees.<sup>136</sup>

The Dadaab refugees especially the young ones experienced various health issues that served as a challenge to them, the care takers and camp administrators. Although oral health was a neglected care, in many of the refugee camps<sup>137</sup> it is believed to be a major challenge because of the immediate change of dietary issues, poor access to oral health services or due to the historical trauma that was associated with the conflict and the reason they had to run away from their homes. Similarly, the minors and more so the unaccompanied suffered from chronic pain and musculoskeletal symptoms, a disease associated with headaches, abdominal, pelvic and chest pain, that is due to the post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and somatization.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Abdi, A. M. (2005).

<sup>137</sup> Mishori, R., et al (2017). 'Primary Care For Refugees: Challenges and Opportunities.' *American Family Physician*, Vol .96 No. 2.pp.112-120.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid

Young ones in the camp especially those traumatized after what either occurred back at their homes or in the camps end up with mental health issues. Compared with the general population, it is said that the refugees have higher rates of mood disorders and anxiety that leads to sleep disorders, fatigue and paranoia or suicide thoughts.<sup>139</sup> Therefore, the unaccompanied need regular referral health care, professional psychological counselors to address their problem which again has been a challenge to many refugee camps and more so Dadaab that is highly populated. Together with trauma and torture which was common among the refugees in refugee camp it became a sensitive issue during the screening period.

In addition, the unaccompanied children also experienced the same challenge of language. The unaccompanied children faced language barriers and needed qualified translators on many occasions. Naturally, it was impossible for the minors to move together with their own translators. However, the international law requires that the UNHCR provided them.<sup>140</sup>

Furthermore, it is believed that the refugees experienced the challenge of cross-cultural medicine too.<sup>141</sup> Historically, the notion of the link between body, health and illness are differently considered in different countries. For example, the Somali refugees and the minors in this area expected the care taker in the Dadaab camp to know what they were suffering from without actually asking them but be treated.<sup>142</sup> The situation was

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid p. 117

<sup>140</sup> Eckstein, B. (2011). 'Primary Care for Refugees.' *American Family Physician*. Vol. 83 No.4, pp. 429-436.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid

<sup>142</sup> Ibid 435



complicated even more by the refugee's low level of health literacy. Many refugees do not understand the concept of medication refills. After they finished a bottle of medication that was intended to be refilled and used for long time, they assumed the treatment was complete or do not even think that they should return to the doctor. This also happened when they are unable to differentiate between primary care and other subspecialties. In return, it affected the planned schedule or appointment with the referral. However, the refugees in Dadaab complained of poor security and lack of transportation and ability to schedule appointment to see the physicians.<sup>143</sup> The refugees were unable to schedule their trips to the doctor because it was unfamiliar as they were used to situations where they did not need to go on planned dates but rather wait for a turn and get the treatment.

Furthermore, the children faced economic hardships as they were unable to get income unlike other refugees who were able to get money either from self-employment or by being employed by other refugees. The unaccompanied children were unskilled and not able to speak Swahili and English that are both Kenyan national languages. Finally, Kenya's system also posed a challenge to the unaccompanied children in Dadaab refugee camp. This was mainly because they were unable to get sufficient information on how the state works and therefore, they had little means on how to get the needed support. This was believed to emanate from the language barrier, state bureaucracy and other systemic problems that were attached to the creation of camps.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Oral Interview With an Elder in Hagdera on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>144</sup> Oral Interview With Hussein at Block E on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

The minors interviewed were also traumatized by the memories of their families' displacement. They linked the disruption of their family to the refugee status they found themselves in after they stopped in Dadaab refugee camp. They were used to helping their parents in domestic chores like cattle herding, firewood collection and fetching water only for their roles to change as they became refugees. This was tough as the elder unaccompanied children became the care takers of their younger ones.<sup>145</sup>

#### **4.6 Inability to Establish New Social Networks**

This affected them most as they had to struggle and build new social networks in the camp which was not an easy task. The minors only depended on the UNHCR and other partners for their upkeep with extensive and extreme ways to fend for their siblings. This of course killed the hope of many children who had hopes that where they were heading could be better than from where they were running from. The challenges of settlement in the camp became a reality on the ground. According to the UNHCR officer, the unaccompanied minors also bore the brand of discrimination, especially those who came from minority ethnic groups of Sudan, Ethiopia and Somali Bantu. The majority Somali discriminated those who were not of their race posing a huge problem to the refugees. A similar issue and problem were that some of those children were not Muslim and that again played a huge problem to the unaccompanied.<sup>146</sup>

One teacher working with UNHCR education department also noted that unaccompanied children faced many problems that affect their education for instance, overcrowding in classes. Children compete over class spaces which are again rare. Many of the children

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<sup>145</sup> Oral Interview With UNHCR Children Officer at Dadaab Refugee Camp, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

would convert what is used as church, or mosque space to classrooms during the week day up to Friday and these days that they are available. Sadly, those little spaces are in a woeful condition, small and poorly lit. Obtaining enough school text books also played a great challenge to the unaccompanied children in Dadaab refugee camp. Besides, due to lack the of parents to do the follow up of their school performances they ended up losing focus because they had several roles to play in the camp unlike those who had their parents around.<sup>147</sup>

The other challenge associated with education was getting qualified teachers willing to work from Dadaab which is said to be so dangerous to the non-Muslim and Somali professionals. Similarly, many of the unaccompanied children did not know English but most of the classes would be conducted in English. The volunteer teachers from the local setting were not competent enough therefore could do so much when it comes to content delivery.<sup>148</sup> The unaccompanied children also had the challenge of administrative problems that mainly emanated from curriculum, fiscal support, relations with the Kenyan state and security issues that affected learning in the camp. Through schools in Dadaab are supported by UNHCR and other protocols, however, the finding in many cases show inadequacy of facilities and the refugees are forced to take what they have like classes lacking furniture and other factors like playing grounds and partners to support the kind of sports the children could be willing to participate.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Oral Interview with Teacher K (requested the name to be withheld), UNHCR Education Department, on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Oral Interview With UNHCR Children Officer Mr. Bonaya Galgalo, at Daadab Refugee Camp, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014

There were other challenges for children who got unaccompanied status in the refugee camps. This was more so among the Somali communities who encouraged polygamous marriages. For instance, husbands had to choose which wife and children to accompany him and to marry and then another chance to move occur with chances of whom they preferred to leave some children back and became parentless.<sup>150</sup> However, this was severe decisions which left many wondering how men could would be heartless to their children and decide to leave them behind. Lastly the unaccompanied children had a problem accessing good housing facilities.

This was however related to lack of money and information; this led to overcrowding of the minors in one particular area. Similarly, the minors are not able to get emphasized that it becomes more difficult to get good housing facility. They are also constrained by age to apply for housing unless the officials take them into account at the first instance such facilities are provided.

The worst instance was where the service provider of refugees experiences the disconnect between the time the refugees arrived, those that required assistance and during a specific length of time. It is said that sometimes there is unwelcoming or intimidating from the officers involved in the service.<sup>151</sup> However, this was believed to be due to the reason that there is overload and the refugees especially the unaccompanied are by passed along the agency to agency ensuring frustration and disconnection in some provision. Also, there is the completion of agencies that provided services in the funding and community groups.

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<sup>150</sup> Francis, J. (2010). 'Poor Housing Outcomes Among African Refugees in Metro Vancouver.' *Canadian Issues*, 59.p.62.

<sup>151</sup> Francis, J. (2010).

Similarly, the heightened requirement of agencies to continue reapplying and networks makes many of them to spend a lot of time over administration in the fear that without those funds then lacked job security. On one hand, this could increase the turnover, on the other it will differently interrupt the continuous provision of services to the unaccompanied children in Dadaab conference camp who are always on a struggling status.<sup>152</sup>

Furthermore, children who lacked healthy family and community become easy prey for gangs and criminal groups. This is because they lacked bonds and kind adults or safe community studies especially in the refugee camp of Dadaab magnitude to have the same of meaningful belonging. Therefore, they became a prey to traffickers and often entered into these situations with belief that they are loved by the trafficker. Similarly, the unaccompanied children fast stranded in the camp. This led them to have fragile bonds unlike those with a family system.

Age also became a challenge for the unaccompanied children. The minors were forced to take on the role of family heads. The challenge came in when the minors were unable to protect their siblings who were young or generally had problems to be their providers. For example, Margaret Imoli became a refugee in Kenya at the age of 16 years together with her five younger siblings aged from 8 to 15 years.<sup>153</sup> In the refugee camp she became the head of the family with many challenges despite the fact that at their ages

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<sup>152</sup> Oral Interview With Fatuma Maqul at Block C1 Hagadera on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>153</sup> Kahongeh, J (2018,October 15). 'War Forced Me to Become a Parent to My Siblings.' *Daily Nation*. Retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2018, From <https://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/dn2/Of-war-and-life-Coming-of-age/957860-4805750-fipm4v/index>.

they were able to absorb the language and culture in camp that gave them the benefit to adjust unlike those who were at the adolescence stage. Imoli would prepare her siblings for school, took over house chores like cooking and washing before she also left to school. They only depended on UNHCR rations that were not enough. Since the sharing of rations needed aggression, it was a challenge to them. Similarly, they were powerless and vulnerable to attacks from those families that had exhausted their food. On many occasions their food stock was stolen and that forced them to go without food for days.<sup>154</sup> This affected more the children who stayed longer in the refugee camp without being reunited with their family members.

Nevertheless, lack of legal status posed a great challenge to the unaccompanied children forcing most of them to live in fear and engage in illegal means for survival. This of course limited integration of the refugees. For instance, Abdulahi Hassan Mohammed aged 53 years have resided in Hagadera refugee camp block C5 from 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2006 due to persistent civil war in Somalia where he was an area chief in Buella town. In the camp he did not have relatives but worked in children's department as child protection community worker (CPCW). According to him:

Life in the camp is generally good I enjoy peace and there are no more fights and wars, children get education and when I fall sick, I get the right medication on time. Some of the challenges I encounter in the camp are that when got my current job as a child protection community worker in the children's department, as I try to protect girl child from being misused. I get threatened by my community members and force me to leave the job.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Kahongeh, J (2018, October 15). War Forced Me to Become a Parent to My Siblings. *Daily Nation*.

<sup>155</sup> Oral Interview with Abdulahi at Hagadera Refugee Camp on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

The workers in the children department were threatened by community members for pursuing child assault cases which according to most Somali elders should be local solved. For example, due to persistent wars in Kismayu Somalia, Fatuma Maqul aged 48 flew and found herself at Liboi border where she was then taken by the UN Agents to Hagadera refugee Camp. She was hosted in block C1 a refugee since 1992 and worked as a children department officer. There she said;

Life in the camp is generally good, that is; I get enough food, peace, proper treatment when am sick and some of the challenges in the camp are intimidation from the community members, especially due to being in the children's department and I adopted one child namely Hawa Abdilahi Hurda, where I was threatened that I should sent the child away.<sup>156</sup>

In the camp, the unaccompanied children were assigned various households. However, the families those children were attached to experienced challenges managing them. The story of Maryan Mahamud Shurne aged, 42 year and who resided at Hagadera refugee Camp block J came to in 1991 from Somali country, Kismayo is illustrative. Luckily, she had relatives within Hagadera refugee Camp like Fatuma Ahmed Shuriye and Hassan Ahmed Shuriye. However, she did not have any job both in the camp and back in Somalia. So, the war in Somalia and life in the camp gave her various challenges. The more challenging one though was the unaccompanied child she was assigned to take care of in Dadaab refugee camp. She said;

Life in the camp is generally good because I enjoy peace I couldn't get while in Somalia some of challenges I encounter at the camp was that the food supplied by UN agents isn't enough to sustain a family of seven members and to add on

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<sup>156</sup> Oral Interview with Fatuma Maqul at Block C1 Hagadera on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

that I was given one child aged 12 years called Sharif Abdulahi Yakur by the children's department to take care of her.<sup>157</sup>

The families' assigned unaccompanied children were severely intimidated by cultural beliefs which discouraged taking care of a child who is not from your lineage. The story of Isho Noor Gure aged 32 years old residing at Hagadera Refugee Camp Block E5 came from Somalia Kismayo area in 1991 due to persistent civil wars is a good illustration. Although she had a job back home, she did not have relatives in refugee camp and therefore decided to venture in water selling business within the blocks harbouring in Somalia. She also asserted that life in the camp was generally difficult as the food supplied by World Food Programme (WFP) was not enough to sustain a family of seven members. She also added that;

The challenges I face in the camp are intimidation from neighbours with my block because I adapted a child, from save the children department namely; Hamdi Laila Tawane aged 5 years and the child is normally beaten by fellow children within the block.<sup>158</sup>

Similar sentiments were shared by Nadhifo Ali Mahamud aged 41 years residing within Hagadera Refugee camp block e-1 and who came from Somalia Kismayo Lower juba Alanley area in the 2006. Ali was a house help in the camp while back home she had been a business lady. She said that:

Life within the camp is generally difficult as I have seventeen (17) children so the food supplied is not enough to support the family. Challenges in the camp are intimidation from my neighbours within the camp and discouragements in that they discourage me from taking care of the five (5) children I was given from

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<sup>157</sup> Oral Interview with Maryan Mahamud Shurne at Block J on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>158</sup> Oral Interview With Isho Gure at Block J on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2014.



children's Department, "Save children and even persuade me to throw or chase away the said children."<sup>159</sup>

Some staff in the children department also complained of underpay which undermined service delivery despite their higher demands. For example, Ibrahim Yussuf Odowa aged 30 years and residing in Block B8 came from Somalia Kismayo Lower Juba in 1992 due to civil wars back home in his country. Together with his relatives they fled the conflict to Liboi then to Hagadera. In the camp he worked in the children department of Best Interest Department (BID) with Save the Children Nongovernmental Organization (NGO). He said:

Generally, he said. "Life here in the camp is good especially for the free services that we are offered like education, timely health services, food and enjoyment of peace. However, some of the challenges I come across in the camp are that of being underpaid in the duties that I perform and jobs of lower standard compared to my level of education."<sup>160</sup>

The unaccompanied minors had higher chances of fail academically than their peers who had parents. They faced the issues of disruptions, language, culture and lifestyle, discrimination and crisis of identity.<sup>161</sup> Similarly, the girl child was more affected as they were ridiculed by men and that affected their performance in class. For example, Imoli was told by men that she wasted time in school instead of getting married. Some told her that she should get married so that the man helps in raising her siblings.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Oral Interview With Nadhifo Ali at Block e1 on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>160</sup> Oral interview With Yussuf Odowa at Block b8 on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>161</sup> Bailey, B. (2001). 'Dominican-American Ethnic/Racial Identities and United States Social Categories.' *International Migration Review*, 35(3), 677-708.

<sup>162</sup> Kahongeh, J (2018, October 15). *Daily Nation*.

## **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the challenges experienced by the unaccompanied children in Dadaab camp. Indeed, the refugees experienced various challenges ranging from social, political and economic troubles. Minors had arrived to the county as unaccompanied while others could get the status of unaccompanied children while already in the camp. Similarly, the children in Dadaab experienced problems accessing education and those who accessed had problem in terms of getting enough books, class norms, formative and enough teachers. Similarly, they experienced social problems like insecurity in and about the camp, lack of health facilities and psychological trauma that was associated with many of them leaving parents behind and hence being subjected to adult +roles which the next chapter would like to explore in term of coping mechanisms.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **COPING MECHANISMS OF THE UNACCOMPANIED MINORS IN DADAAB CAMP**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, it was established that the unaccompanied children had different challenges in Dadaab refugee camp that ranged from social, political to economic challenges. In this chapter, we examine the ways they devised to survive in, and about the camp. This was mainly through the assistance of the UNHCR and her partners. However, some created networks with their fellow children both in play grounds at schools, worked for other refugees and in the end got their lives moving. This chapter deals with the minors' coping mechanisms.

#### **5.1 Local Integration as Coping Mechanisms**

The United Nations Organization in 2016 called upon states around the globe to embrace the initiative of refugee resettlement and Integration. The resettlement of refugees owes its origin in the aftermath of the Second World War when many people were displaced from their home countries, mainly in Europe. Many refugees in Kenya, particularly in Daadab refugee camp have been looking forward to resettlement and integration as a coping strategy. Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another country that has agreed to admit them and grant the refugee a place of permanent residence. According to UNHCR resettlement is a unique and durable solution which

countries around the world should embrace.<sup>163</sup> Just like in many other countries, Kenyan legal framework has been skewed towards finding a solution to refugees within its boundaries and therefore, has not paid attention to resettlement. Thus Kenya for a very long time has been struggling with the decision of integration of refugees in Dadaab camp. Nonetheless, in 2018, Kenya promised to commit to Global Compact on Refugee by allowing Somali refugees to start their integration in Kenyan Society. It has not, however, lived to its promises. Indeed, the concept of integration has been a tough decision not only to Kenya but to many countries around the globe due to many Security related issues.<sup>164</sup>

Local integration aspires to have refugees legally, economically and socially infused into the host country and availing themselves for the national protection of the host government. Hewell-Bond refers to Integration as a situation in which the host and the refugee communities are able to co-exist, sharing the same resources- both economic and social with no greater mutual conflict than that which exists within the host community.<sup>165</sup> Although this option seems to be the most suitable solution to Dadaab refugees who have stayed in the region for decades, the government is still reluctant to implement it. The policy, according to different camp administrators who requested their names to be withheld, noted that, majority of the refugees being of Somali origin, share

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<sup>163</sup>Fritzsche, L., & Nelson, L. (2020). Refugee Resettlement, Place, and The Politics of Islamophobia. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 21(4), 508-526.

<sup>164</sup> Balakian, S. (2016). "Money Is Your Government": Refugees, Mobility, and Unstable Documents in Kenya's Operation Usalama Watch. *African Studies Review*, 59(2), 87-111.

<sup>165</sup> Harrell-Bond, B. E., & Voutira, E. (1992). Anthropology and The Study of Refugees. *Anthropology Today*, 8(4), 6-10.

common ancestral roots and it would be easier for them to co-exist within the region if integrated.

I know the government of Kenya has good intentions of Daadab Refugees since they first resettled here, but with everything that is happening in the region, the government may fear integrating them. My advice, however, is that since the refugees share the origin, language and culture with locals, let them be integrated because they will easily learn to live with each other.<sup>166</sup>

A local leader who is also an official in Dadaab Refugee Camp, indicated that the government's fears are valid. He pointed out that there insecurity cases involving refugees not only around the world but also in Dadaab. He also noted that the local communities, just like other African communities, are strongly heterogeneous with strong correlation between ethnicity and social-economic activities. Therefore, if not handled with the keenness it deserves, the people of Mandera whose social structures are intertwined with their source of livelihood may be heavily affected. Thirdly, he noted that the people of Mandera already have many different ethnic divisions within their own which differences therefore bringing Somali and refugees among them would complicate their conflict.<sup>167</sup>

## **5.2 Women and Integration: Refugees or Locals?**

For over two decades Dadaab women who have been refugees in the Camp, have had a mixed reaction to the relationship between the refugees and local communities. The unaccompanied boys and girls have blossomed into independent women and men. According to the local community the fears that existed have been neutralized over time,

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<sup>166</sup> Oral Interviews with UNHCR Officer, Mr. Bonaya Galgalo, Dadaab Camp November 12, 2014.

<sup>167</sup> Oral Interview with Abdi Galgado, Local Leader, Fardosa Block, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

and they have adopted a mutual relationship.<sup>168</sup> Both the refugees and the local community suffer from the same challenges of inadequate food and water and as a result have decided to work together for mutual benefit. An interview with Fatuma Nagul, indicated that refugee women were long integrated. For them, they had homes both in the camps and among the local communities where they shared everything. She noted that local women depended on refugees mainly for clean water which is provided by refugee administrators and food rations whenever they are available to refugees and medicines. In turn, refugees depended on the local women to provide meat, and milk among other local valuables that cannot be accessed in the camps.<sup>169</sup>

Women also plotted to increase the marriage relationships between the two groups. For instance, Nuru argued that, what used to be forbidden relationships are now common. Refugee girls are married to locals and therefore cementing the relationship between the two. This has made access to both social and economic amenities easier as refugee women have developed a cordial relationship with the locals. She notes;

We now live like residents of the region. Despite many restrictions, we have complete access to local resources that initially were reserved for local communities; our girls are also getting married to locals, therefore, cementing our relationship.<sup>170</sup>

Judging from the 'live let live' relationship between the refugee women and local women in the Dadaab refugee camp, the two groups have broken the barriers existing between refugees and the locals to live a normal life. This mechanism, although unofficial and can

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<sup>168</sup> Oral Mahalim Abdi Local Leader, 2014 November.

<sup>169</sup> Oral Interviews with Maryan Mahamud Shume, Block J 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>170</sup> Oral Interview with Mariam Hassan, Refugee Block C1 Hagadera, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

be termed illegal, has been adopted by young unaccompanied refugee who have now grown up into beautiful young women able to make decisions on how to eke their livelihood.

According to Montclos et al, before 1991, the local population surrounding Daadab Refugee Camp was about 5000. The population, has currently grown due to intermarriages and cross movement of locals to camps and refugees outside the camps. The author notes that, the surroundings of Dadaab has attracted two categories of the populace; first, the local populace into the camp and Secondly; the Kenyan Somali who are not from Dadaab. Initially, they settled at the periphery but slowly they intermarried and infiltrated the camps. These have formed the largest group of Kenyans who have mixed with the refugees.<sup>171</sup>

### **5.3 Social Networks as Coping Mechanisms of Minors**

The children formed social networks. This was especially so among the ethnic groups like the Somali, Somali Bantu, Sudanese and Ethiopian who organized these social networks amongst themselves. The strong ethnic community links played a part in the coping means of the children. Indeed, these social networks that are created through ethnicity links helped them to benefit by sharing what each one knew. It is believed that the Somali unaccompanied children had a head start because they were used to such an environment and shared similar language. For example, the Somali and Somali Bantu children – the Somali community with the Bantu origin – living among the Kenyan

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<sup>171</sup> Montclos, M.APD & Kagwanja P.M (2000) Refugees Camps or Cities? The Social-Economic Dynamics of The Dadaab and Kakuma Camps in Northern Kenya. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 13 (2) pp. 205-222.

Somali were able to cope with the kind of food attainable. This was similarly true of the Ethiopian unaccompanied children who were able to eat injera. However, the communities could differ over religion where by the majority Somali children were of Islamic orientation while the Sudanese and Ethiopians and other populations from the great lakes were Christians. Additionally, because the majority of the Somali and South Sudan population were used to cattle herding which was mostly practiced around the Dadaab refugee camp this gave the children a chance to go help and be given camel milk to supplement their diet.<sup>172</sup> The children in Dadaab refugee camp also explored social support networks. For example, they would in times of problems, go to their friends and neighbours. Mama Abdi, a mother to two boys and one girl has been for 10 years a mother to three other children – Wahid, Rashid and Marriam, whose mother was prior a neighbor in Somali before the war. This is what she told us during our interviews;

Wahid, Marriam and Rashid are not my biological children. We were just neighbours back home and though we didn't talk more often as parents the children played together. So during the war, I did not see them again only to find the poor children alone during our coming to Dadaab Camp and I therefore decided to take up the responsibilities until they get their family. Now they are big boys and girls, I can't be far from them anymore. I thank Allah for these children.<sup>173</sup>

Mama Abdi is just one among many other families that adopted the helpless unaccompanied children. Some decided to make them part of their family by informing both their children and camp officials. This is the case with Abdulahi in Hagadera camp and Fatuma Magul in C1. Despite having separated with their biological parents, who

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<sup>172</sup> Oral Interview with Hussain at Block j on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>173</sup> Oral Interview, Mama Abdi, Hagadera Market, January, 2014.



either died during the war or separated and could not be found again, these children have a family to run to.<sup>174</sup>

#### **5.4 Identity as a Coping Mechanism**

Identity is increasingly becoming beneficial worldwide. In the scramble for the partition of Africa, the Europeans used identity to pursue their social, political and economic desires in Africa. The pan Africanists took the same route to defend the African race against European oppression, and managed to unite Africans all over the world giving rise to renowned African movements such as the organisation for African Unity in early 1960.<sup>175</sup>

Similarly, identity emphasises on the unique concerns of different communities and demographic groups, shows how historical inequities have been distributed across different races, genders, religions, abilities, and sexualities which can be used even in a camp setup. Similarly, the country of origin and tribe of the unaccompanied children played a role in making it possible to cope with the environment. The unaccompanied children got social identity by associating with their fellow countrymen and that could in turn serve as security to them while in the camp.<sup>176</sup> Although the Sudanese and Ethiopian unaccompanied children were few they exploited their culture of associating into groups and which in the end served them well. Thus the minority unaccompanied children could form bond out of race and share the experiences of Dadaab refugees camp as a group.

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<sup>174</sup> Oral Interview with Hussain at block j on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>175</sup> Cervenka, Z. (1977). *The Unfinished Quest For Unity: Africa and The OAU*. Friedmann; Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

<sup>176</sup> Oral Interview with Fardosa at Block j on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Further, it was believed that some teachers would discriminate the refugees especially the unaccompanied children because they needed more attention than the others.<sup>177</sup> Conversely, the minority unaccompanied children were more likely to be part of their peer groups in the camp emphasizing racial solidarity that was discouraged in schools. The young refugees also adapted to the camp life by acquisition of language. The young unaccompanied decided to put more effort to learn new languages as one factor of an achievement.<sup>178</sup> Linguistic assimilation was encouraged in Dadaab camp which was supported by the UNHCR and as with other agencies which was done through cultural events supported by UNHCR. Every time such events were done in different refugees' countries of origin, the UNHCR officials would prepare for the same at the camp which was open to all. This helped the children especially those unaccompanied to integrate.

There were also cases where the unaccompanied children got sponsors for their education from the initial immigrants.<sup>179</sup> Some of the Somali refugees who had moved to other countries decided to sponsor the unaccompanied minors so that they would acquire some education. This was through buying of text books, desks, uniforms and other materials to support their education. However, some young minors would decide to involve themselves with criminal activities. A few said they were pushed by the hard life in the camp. Unlike those with their family members, the unaccompanied lacked a means of supporting their siblings, and thus some opted for the criminal activities. However, those with parental care and family around the Dadaab camp were not easily swayed by the peer pressure.

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<sup>177</sup> Oral Interview with Hussein at Block e on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>178</sup> Holton, G. (2010).p.66.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid

## 5.5 Morality or Livelihood? The Other Business

Although sex is the oldest form of business, humanity has never acknowledged the Commercial Sex Work. The discussion around sex and sexuality has attracted legal frameworks to protect girls, women and recently men against violence-around the globe. In Kenya for instance, the sexual offences Act No. 3 of 2006 contains 49 legal guidelines and offences to protect citizens against sexual exploitations. However, do we take time and ask ourselves what happens to the unaccompanied girls and boys who are sexually harassed by not only, strangers on the way, but also fellow refugees and camp officials?<sup>180</sup>

According to mama Abdi, the unaccompanied children who were sexually assaulted at tender age were traumatized, psychologically affected by sexual violence meted on them.<sup>181</sup> Some were hardened by the challenges they went through and due to lack of proper guidance, while some grew up bitter and violent. There were others who decided to live by selling their bodies for survival. For instance, in Hagadera, just like other businesses such as retail shop, wholesale businesses, hotels, meat selling, prostitution is a well-established underground business that is silently feeding mostly refugees with low income in Dadaab. These include women who have lost their husbands, the majority of the unaccompanied girls and also local women from the surrounding.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Kilonzo, N, Ndungu, N, Nthamburi N., Ajema Carolye, Miriam Taegtmeier, Sally Theobald and Racheal Jolhust- Sexual Violence Legalization in Sub-Saharan Africa; The Need for Strengthened Medico-Legal Linkages.”

<sup>181</sup> Oral Interview with Mama Abdi, Hagadera Market, January 8<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>182</sup> Oral Interviews, Respondent K, Hagadera Market, 5th January 2014.

Some of these children have been identified by local businessmen and women as important labour market. Kagwanja notes that Charitable Organizations, provides more than 2000 jobs to young people.<sup>183</sup> However, majority of these refugee girls have been taking these jobs to create new markets for commercial sex work. Mama Abdi, a business lady at Hagadera notes that even after they have established a relationship mainly with the Kenyans working for UNHCR, they leave their jobs to pursue the new catch.<sup>184</sup> However, there are those who have genuinely been employed in both casual and contract jobs by both local organizations operating in the camps as well as the UNHCR. These jobs have enabled many young adults that once came as unaccompanied children to make a livelihood and support their family members.<sup>185</sup>

### **5.6 Capital Generating Small Businesses**

Refugees in Dadaab Camp, including the unaccompanied children, have engaged in small businesses to raise a family income. Abdulahi Rahiman, who came with his two young sisters as unaccompanied refugee children recounted how he grew his business from hawking sweets and groundnuts to a retail shops in Hagadera. Like many other shops, his business survived when a close friend from a well-off refugee family got a job with UNHCR and gave him a small loan of 25,000 Kshs. to boost his business.<sup>186</sup>

Perouse de Montcols confirms that, many refugees have grown their small businesses to a very high competitive business through credits from local lenders, salaries attained from casual UNHCR jobs, family members support from abroad as well as UNHCR support

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<sup>183</sup> Kagwanja PM (2000) Pg. 14.

<sup>184</sup> Oral Interview with Mama Abdi, Hagadera Market, January 8<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>185</sup> Kagwanja 2000 (Pg. 14).

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Abdulahi Rahiman, Unaccompanied Refugee, Hagadera, January, 2014.

for small businesses.<sup>187</sup> The author notes that most common businesses engaged in selling of food rations and selling water distributed by UNHCR to locals. Women on their part are on record in the formation of women groups to assist them access revolving fund from CARE International. These monies have assisted them to start businesses such as buying and slaughtering goats, poultry and selling the meat. They are also involved in poultry keeping, roofing and thatching services, selling cereals, vegetables, hides and skins.<sup>188</sup>

### **5.7 Creative Arts**

Many unaccompanied refugees also become creative in many forms. The creativity was evident in all experiences they went through in the camp. This was more evident in the behaviour among young ones behavior who grow up with the idea of dual origin. They mostly focus on to the daily environment and what they went through. Some organizations like the International Rescue Committee (IRC), in particular the network of youth programs, came up with union activities that aimed to help the young children in the refugee-hood status to be able to cope with their status.

One of the programs was the comprehensive and integrated programme. The aim was to help adopt a way which they can help the refugee children and the children around the camp. In the end, the young refugee would acquire skills in academic, information technology, leadership skills, music, sports and drama.

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<sup>187</sup> Montcols, M.A PD (2000) P.11. Montclos, M.APD & Kagwanja P.M (2000) Refugees Camps or Cities? The Social-Economic Dynamics of The Dadaab and Kakuma Camps in Northern Kenya. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 13 (2), Pp. 205-222.

<sup>188</sup> Kagwanja (2000) p.13-14.

This both built confidence and encouraged integration between the refugees and the host community. The youths also learnt ways under which to maintain health habits and hygiene. This benefited the entire family as it encouraged diversity that enriched their activities.

Similarly, some of the children, especially the unaccompanied were able to cope after they embraced participation of leadership activities. This eventually helped them in planning for their future life management, and recognition of other people's culture ranging from religion at their own pace. Also, children learned how to work as a team while in school. This would later on involve teachers and project staff and other facilitators who were all focused on developing a solution for the refugee youth.<sup>189</sup> They also ensured that curricula and other activities for the youth were coordinated and integrated with regular school programs.

The linkages between private and public activities also helped the unaccompanied minors to cope with Dadaab's camp dynamics. The children were given a priority in various services provided by agencies concerned with children. Within the camp for example, the unaccompanied minors were helped out by various agencies which aimed at improving the people's interaction and existence. There were religious groups that helped nurture the children in the camp. Locals and various organizations and individuals volunteered in the camp and this in turn helped the unaccompanied children a lot. Some of those who volunteered were employees within the camp who helped the children cope.

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid p,202

To further cater for their wellbeing, health workers kept a watchful eye on the unaccompanied children to make sure that they have good health. In addition, the mental health professionals, together with the child welfare agencies, were also key players in making sure that the unaccompanied children were coping with the camp life.

Finally, professional associations made it possible for the unaccompanied to cope while in Dadaab refugees' camp. This was made possible, for example by having qualified personnel both as employees and volunteers. For example, the staff and volunteers in Dadaab refugee camp were recruited on the basis that they were bicultural or bilingual; they had education that was required to work either as an employee or a volunteer and able to nurture non- judgmental but safe environment for the victims. The staff and volunteers were always caring and served as peers and adult role models and mentors, good in communicating, to set appropriate limits and also provide encouragement, recognition and praise to those children struggling with life in the refugee camp. To achieve this, staff and volunteers received regular ratings and also provided opportunity for the unaccompanied children to acquire training that assisted them in future.

### **5.8 Religion as a coping mechanism among the unaccompanied.**

Unaccompanied children also used religion as a coping mechanism. They noted that during difficulties they could pray for strength to soldier on or for God's intervention so that they can get what they desired.<sup>190</sup> Their prayers were literally to get back home or for parents to come to where they were in Dadaab refugee camps especially among the groups that had lost contact with their parents and did not know what had happened to

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<sup>190</sup> Oral Interview with Nuru at Block f on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

them. They learnt through what they had seen their parents do back home in times of difficulties. The unaccompanied minors believed that by leaving everything in the hand of God their situations would eventually change.<sup>191</sup> This was evident to some of the unaccompanied refugee minors who through all the challenges endeavored to wait on the Lord. Some such as offering themselves to serve in churches.<sup>192</sup> The refugees also reframed their situations mainly in two ways. The unaccompanied children had inner belief in their strength. This was an inbuilt faith that they were strong and able to face the challenge. Secondly, they normalized their Trauma experiences and resigned to whatever situation that comes.

Also the unaccompanied minors in the refugee camp of Dadaab had a way of articulating their wishes and aspirations as a coping mechanism. They had varied wishes mainly that wars back home in their countries of origin should end so that they could return.<sup>193</sup> Secondly they wished that they be able to continue with their daily life in the camp especially finish education and one day get employed, and lastly they wanted an improved life in the camp and hoped that as they continued staying around one day their life would improve.

## **5.9 Sports and Education**

It is, however, important to note that the children at Dadaab Refugee Camp did all types of work to make something of their lives. Some got engaged in sports such as football and leg ball while others were in clubs such as debating and others still engaged in

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<sup>191</sup> Khawaja, N. G, et al (2008). 'Difficulties and Coping Strategies of Sudanese Refugees: A Qualitative Approach.' *Transcultural Psychiatry*, Vol. 45 No. 3. Pp. 489-512.

<sup>192</sup> Oral Interview with Nuru at Block F on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid 499.



community service. There are those who joined various choirs which existed within the camp together with other religious activities with an aim to adjust and cope. Indeed, the unaccompanied children in the camp as I observed are determined to succeed because of what they are involved in both in schools and training centers where, they seem to enjoy themselves and at the same time got engaged as a way of coping with their situations.<sup>194</sup>

Although education was not emphasized, it gave them a sense of purpose and accomplishment in their lives. As has been rightly observed from the activities at Dadaab Refugee Camp, education programs were designed to help develop skills. Children were encouraged and sometimes forced to go to school, while play and sporting activities occupied the children and reduced idleness among them. Football, volleyball and athletic tournaments were organized at the camp and at the district and provincial levels. These activities provided the children with the opportunities to overcome hopelessness, stress and boredom. Other children helped their parents run the boda-boda business and even sell food stuff and other items around the camp. The study attributed reliance on these particular strategies to the context of the refugee camp where there were many constraints and few opportunities.

Despite the fact that they some missed their home culture and everything that they were involved in back at their home countries, they adjusted to new cultures. They did this by improving interaction with friends and with those taking care of them as professionals and foster parents, which helped them learn about practical and cultural aspects of

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<sup>194</sup> Oral Interview with Halima at Hagadera Refugee Camp on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

Dadaab which in turn was a foundation for them to achieve psychological and socio-cultural adaptation.<sup>195</sup>

The children also had to focus on the aspect of positivity as a coping mechanism. For example, Imoli the unaccompanied child became the caretaker of her siblings and concurrently prepared for the Kenya Certificate of Primary education (KCPE). Her hope was to score a minimum of 300 marks out of the total 500 and secure a scholarship for a boarding school. However, her hopes were conflicted because she was also concerned about her five young siblings whom she wished good education without disruption.

The unaccompanied children also suppressed their emotions by seeking distraction. Some decided to remain silent on their past. Sometimes the silence was stemmed from different cultural norms such as hesitation from self-disclosure and emotional expression. Although the strategy was short-term, it helped them address their loneliness, anxiety and worry about the difficulties they experienced in relation to their past and present lives.<sup>196</sup> Like the homeless, young people view their situation in a positive way. They adopted an independent approach to working for better themselves in order to have the sense of control for their future and help cope with the unaccompanied environment. The children believed in God and in case of loneliness they prayed and felt reassured that the friends they left either at home or were together with in the camp were part and parcel of their daily life.

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<sup>195</sup> Oral Interview with Nuru at Block F on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

<sup>196</sup> Goodman, III. (2004). 'Coping With Trauma and Hardship Among Unaccompanied Refugee Youths From Sudan.' *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 14. pp. 1177-1196

## **5.10 Conclusion**

The unaccompanied children have various coping mechanisms to enable them face the challenges that come with being a minor in a refugee camp. This chapter therefore, dealt with different coping strategies including mastery of the local language as a way of securing a source of livelihood as well as protection. The children learnt English and Swahili to communicate with staff representing different organizations. It argued that the unaccompanied children used various ways to cope while in Dadaab refugee camp. The chapter has given a glimpse into the role of religion, culture, framing and other ways to overcome the challenges associated with the life in Dadaab camp, for example the reliance on prayers to cope with the tough life in the camp. The unaccompanied children were also involved in various menial jobs to sustain their livelihood.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

Globally, the number of refugee adolescents and minors who arrive in refugee camps without their families has gone up. Different scholars of refugees such as Ketil Eide and Anders Hjem have widely written on the problem of unaccompanied children, particularly in Europe.<sup>197</sup> However, this situation also applies to Africa and Kenya, a country surrounded by war-torn neighbors including Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and other countries that have faced political instability. The rate of political instability has increased greatly in the region especially from the early 1990s prompting many refugees to flood in and thus increasing the numbers in refugee camps, especially in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

To give a strong background to the study, this work examined the salient causes of conflicts in the region that gave rise to Dadaab refugee camp. Among the causes was political instability leading to civil wars. These have affected countries such as Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. As a result, many of their nationals fled for asylum in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Similarly, the work looked at the genesis of refugee camps in Kenya, specifically the Dadaab Refugee Camp. To do this, it outlined the legal framework in Kenya that informs the creation of Refugee Camps, the relationship of Kenyan government with the refugees, and the former's expectations of the latter.

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<sup>197</sup> Aide K, & Hjem A, (2013) Unaccompanied Refugee Children – Vulnerability and Agency, *Acta Paediatrica*, 102 (7) 666-668.

The chapter explored the different levels of development that Dadaab Camp has gone through to get to where it is now, two decades since it was formed. It also examined the settlement of the refugees, growth and also the development of the unaccompanied refugees.

The project focused on the main coping mechanism of the unaccompanied refugees in Dadaab Camp. Among the Salient Mechanisms adopted by these minors in the camp is the formation of social networks which not only assist them to navigate the day to day challenges, but also enables them to grow normally like other children. The social networks were mainly aligned to their identity where most unaccompanied children mainly associated with their countrymen or clansmen and worked in groups for safety and protection against their rivals. Creative art was also among the simple adaptive mechanism these children engaged in to pass time and sometimes earn a living from. These talents opened them up to many people who viewed them as normal children and therefore accepted them.

Of importance to note were women and their special way of integration. Despite the long legal tussle between UNHCR and the Government of Kenya on integration procedures and whether Dadaab refugees should be integrated or not. Refugee women had their own informal integration whereby they got married to local communities, while some moved out of camps to live at the periphery of the camp with local communities for free hand to eke out their livelihood. Other women engaged in commercial sex across the camps and among the locals as a way of earning a livelihood. The business though, termed as illegal has been a solution to many destitute unaccompanied children in Dadaab Refugee Camp.

Similarly, refugees engaged in various business activities ranging from hawking sweets, selling cereals, goat meat and vegetables. Some engaged in poultry keeping, small-scale gardening as well as retail shops. Women also joined groups, “chamas” to allow them to get finances from CARE International as a startup fund for their businesses.

The study used the theory of coping Competences Theory by Erica Freedenberg and the Resilience across Cultures (RAC) postulated by Michael Ungar in the work Positive Development or Positive Youth Development, focusing on the challenges faced by unaccompanied minor refugees. This study shows that these challenges begin right from the point of separation from their families, during transit and during the many years they lived in the Refugee camps. The theories speak to the psychological and emotional challenges faced by unaccompanied refugees. In the case of Dadaab, this includes losing parents during the war, sexual violence and harassment by not only their peers but also, adult refugees, camp officials as well as security officers in the camp.

Though crimes were reported, little or no action were taken promptly. The increased economic conflicts in the camps between the refugees and the rival tribes and raised the questions to how far the conflicts in the camp contributed to civil wars back in their countries of Somalia. Furthermore, lack of basic needs and good social amenities for example in access of competitively good housing, food and shelter and failure to go to school since they had no adult to organize them was an issue. Some could not get friends to play with and establish social networks in the camp, while others could not grow normally because they assumed the role of parenthood earlier in order to feed and take care of their younger siblings.

In Kenya, the focal country of this study, the Kakuma and Dadaab Camps form one of the largest camps in the world. The two camps have been in existence for more than two decades. This work focused on the unaccompanied children in Dadaab Refugee Camp which in spite of the huge increase of refugees, has not received enough attention concerning how unaccompanied minors cope with the many challenges in the Refugee Camp. This work, therefore, argued that despite the increasing number of unaccompanied children in Dadaab Refugee Camp, their plight has, for over two decades been ignored by scholars in the field of refugees. Very minimal studies have been done to capture the challenges and coping strategies of the unaccompanied minors in Dadaab Refugee Camp by scholars.

In all, it is accurate to note that the study on unaccompanied children still offers many openings for further study. For instance, some of the key areas that need more attention include: unaccompanied children in conflict with the law. In their daily struggle for a livelihood, these children often find themselves on the wrong side of the law. Since they are minors and are unaccompanied and vulnerable, they often have to deal with the situation by themselves. Eventually, many of them end up not getting justice. What about the families that have taken up unaccompanied children as their own, do they need scholarly attention?

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## **Thesis**

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