

THE DAWN

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

APRIL 2007

WELCOME!

We would like to welcome you to the inaugural issue of *The Dawn*, a quarterly publication written **by youth for youth!**

The vision of the newsletter is to encourage and facilitate youth participation and engagement in Dadaab, and to provide youth with an opportunity to develop skills and attitudes that will enable them to become more active members in the community.

The Dawn is an inter-camp initiative that provides a forum for youth in the three camps to share information, ideas, views, and events. Youth are encouraged to use their words and pictures to express and represent themselves and the issues affecting them, and are equally encouraged to learn from the words and pictures of others.

Despite funding limitations for this project, the long-term potential for the newsletter is substantial. Youth have already articulated numerous creative ideas for its future and we are confident that with some hard work and perseverance, the project will flourish, giving youth a strong voice and presence in the Dadaab refugee camps.

"Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies." (Kofi Annan)

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hessel
Youth Empowerment Intern
CARE Kenya

K. Danae Pauli
PSEA/Youth Intern
CARE Kenya

THE MEANING OF 'THE DAWN'

By JAWAHIR ISSACK ADEN — DAGAHALEY

The Dawn, the title of our newsletter, refers to a new beginning for youth, like the dawn of a new day. For a long time, youth have not had the chance to be outspoken about topics that affect them. As members of the community, it is important that youth have a forum to share views and ideas with other youth. Now for the first time, youth in

Dadaab have an opportunity and means (media) to share their views with the community. Therefore, *The Dawn*, was chosen to reflect this new phase for youth. Youth can begin speaking out and expressing themselves. Now that the dawn has broken, youth can have strong and clear voices. 🗣️

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Working to create a world where all people have the opportunity to realize their full potential and find their voice. Because in the end, that's the key to ending injustice and poverty. (CARE)

EARLY MARRIAGE

BY ISMAIL HIRSI ABDI—IFO

Such is the pride of a woman whose daughter is married at the tender age of fifteen or below. For weeks she will be so generous that members of her community will not feel ashamed in coming [by her house] now and then.

Habiba Abdi had her daughter married at the age of fourteen by a wealthy tycoon. “Three days after the wedding of my daughter, I roasted a goat for my community to feast on. My son, a woman should count herself among the very luckiest on earth if she succeeds in marrying her daughter off at a tender age,” concludes a beaming Habiba.

The culture of early marriage has been entrenched in the rich Somali traditional norms for centuries. It has been a practice that successive generations inherited from their forefathers. Even changed that came with the 21st century has failed to check on the growth of early marriage.

On 18th March, 2006, a forum

to discuss the pros and the cons of early marriage was organized by a group called the Committee Against Domestic Violence in collaboration with the youth representatives from different youth groups and the attendance of community elders.

A majority of the youth, with the exception of very few, had similar opinions about

early marriage. Holding forth, Ali Haleys, a 25-year-old Youth Committee member described early marriage as a “retrogressive, redundant, unpalatable, archaic, unspeakable and barbaric norm, which hampers the growth and development of young girls.”

But the tone adopted by Haleys and the majority of youth infuriated the elders and the remaining youths. Haji Abdi Makahil, an 85-year-old prominent Somali elder became red in the face, and reminded all that such remarks if repeated again will at-

tract the wrath of the ancestors.

“It is an abomination and an insult to our old-age traditions. If you are interested in marrying post-menopausal women, then go ahead, but you should not advise us when and who to marry,” quipped Makahil.

He went ahead, much to the joy of his comrades and to the chagrin of Haleys and company, to philosophize on how early marriage has curbed the rate of rape. Says Makahil, “have you ever wondered why the rate of rape is so high among the Kenyan and Ethiopians? It is because women are married at the age of forty and fifty. The urge to have

sex drives teenagers mad—but since they cannot marry at a tender age, they resort to rape.” (cont'd on page 3)

THE CULTURE OF EARLY MARRIAGE HAS BEEN ENTRENCHED IN THE RICH SOMALI TRADITIONAL NORMS FOR CENTURIES.



A young girl who has experienced early marriage (photo: Ismail Hirsi Abdi)

DAGAHALEY LEADS KCPE TOP IN REGION

BY SIYAD MOHAMMED—DAGAHALEY

Dagahaley emerged top in last years' KCPE despite the major competition in the region which saw more than 800 students competing for the lead. It was a success and honour for Dagahaley to be the leading camp. Abdi Moalim was the leading student in the region having scored a total mark of 364 out of 500.

Abdi comes from one of the best performing schools in the camp, Unity Primary School. His parents played a strong role in his success by assisting him with all the necessary support that he required. This is not the first time Dagahaley leads the KCPE but the record Abdi scored was so astonishing that everyone was shocked. Abdi, who is 21-years-old, expressed (cont'd page 3)

EDITORIAL POLICY

The Dawn is committed to promoting diversity of opinions as well as gender equity in its contents. In order to reflect this, the advisory team deems it necessary to communicate the editorial policy as here understated. The following content will not be accepted for publication:

- Material that promotes sexual stereotyping
- Material that promotes racial/cultural/tribal stereotyping
- Material that promotes unbalanced political opinions

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the views of CARE International in Kenya or any of the international organizations working in Dadaab.

EARLY MARRIAGE CONT'D

(cont'd from page 2) The forum was stormy and the two groups (one for early marriage and the other against) nearly traded blows. The Committee Against Domestic Violence, fearing possible violence, had to cut short the roundtable discussion and schedule it for another day.

Unfortunately, the elders failed to honour the promise they made to attend subsequent debates and, sadly, the dragon of early marriage continues to devour young girls. Despite strong opposition, youths in Ifo made gigantic steps in abolishing the vice. Whether their efforts will be a success only time will tell. ☘

KCPE CONT'D

(cont'd from page 2) his joy on the KCPE result and said "my hard work has paid off". By being awarded the top position in the region, he gives all students the hope and advice to work hard and pass their exams. He said, "after hard work, there is always a reward. And the reward I got was this."

According to this year's results, more students are expected to get admission in Form One. Girls whose mean grade used to be low have even improved this year, as more girls will also be admitted to Form One.

There were speculations that the minimum required grades for this year's intake will be as low as 200 for the boys and 178 for the girls. If this happens then automatically more chances of winning Form One admission will be very high. ☘

THE PLIGHT OF REFUGEE CHILDREN IN DADAAB CAMPS
BECOMING RESPONSIBLE FOR THEMSELVES

By AMIN WADAR AMEY — IFO

In the dusty market of one of Dadaab's refugee camps, Ifo, a young boy struggles to carry a heavy load of water on a wheelbarrow, trying to resist the still-powerful summer sun, as he has no shoes.

Abdifatah, a seven-year-old boy, lost both of his parents to the Ogaden Crisis, which broke out in the Somali-speaking region in Eastern Ethiopia, before he sought refuge in Kenya four years ago. The young orphan left school a year ago and now works in a local restaurant in Ifo Refugee Camp. He keeps his eyes downcast, hoping for handouts from customers, most of whom cannot afford a single offer.

"I don't earn much," Abdifatah says. "This bar's customers do assist me a lot."

But unlike Abdifatah, Mohamed Ghedi, a 15-year-old shoe shiner, whose parents are alive, has managed both to go to school and earn a living from the market. "I am happy to be a shoe shiner. I started this work in 2002.

And look! I am in grade Seven," Ghedi responds frankly as he shines a pair of shoes for his client.

Outside Ifo market, there are many children like Abdifatah — orphaned, vulnerable and abandoned—who left their schools to become responsible for themselves.

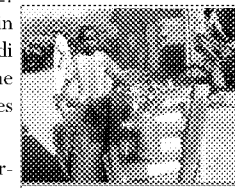
Hawa, a ten-year-old school-

dropout-girl is one of the many refugee children who are subjected

to unbearable tasks, either by their parents, employers or foster-parents. She works as a house help to a neighboring family to earn a living. "I am not happy to work for this family. But my father sent me here," says Hawa.

It was three months ago when Hawa was discovered to have left school to become a breadwinner for her family. Mr. Mohamedamin, her class teacher, convinced Hawa's mother to let her daughter come back to school. "Since Hawa is an active and bright pupil, I should know her whereabouts," her teacher adds.

On the other hand, refugee teachers play a key role in ensuring that all children in Dadaab camps are given access to education regardless of their sex. But this can-



A young boy pushes a heavy wheelbarrow in Ifo market (photo: Amin Muhumed)

"OUTSIDE IFO MARKET THERE ARE MANY CHILDREN—ORPHANED, VULNERABLE AND ABANDONED—who LEFT THEIR SCHOOLS TO BECOME RESPONSIBLE FOR THEMSELVES."

not be effective unless all guardians ensure that kids under their custody report to learning institutions at all times.

Halima, Hawa's mother, understands the importance of education for her daughter but nevertheless argues that their family needs financial support. "We need sugar and clothing," argues Halima.

Abdi Shukri, an (cont'd on page 4)

DATING AND CULTURE

BY KHALIF ABDIKADIR HASSAN
IFO

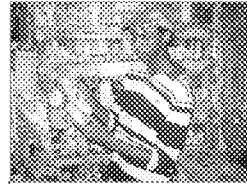
Saturday afternoon. We were all ears as a colleague boasts of his dating prowess.

"I can date ten girls at the same time and the same venue and none will fail to turn up," says Bishar Noor Ali, a self-styled professor of women and women's affairs, as we all burst out laughing. "Some of you take ages to convince a lady to come over to your place for a cup of tea and a little talk," he chides us, and goes ahead to demonstrate the sort of magic one requires to win over ladies.

Among the Somalis, dating has long been controversial. It was and still is regarded as morally decadent, unheard of, and an always ill-motivated act.

"Why should I lock myself up in a room with only a man as company?" wonders Leila Abdi*. "It goes against the grain of our rich

tradition for one [lady] to accompany a stranger [a man] to the park or any other recreational place," concludes Leila.



Noor Ali shops for his girlfriend (photo: Khalif Abdikadir)

Dating among the Somalis has always been one-sided—potential suitors visiting the girls they were interested in. Says Bilka Bashe, a renowned custodian of the Somali tradition, "since women should not leave their homesteads at all times, it is mandatory for men to visit those they are interested in, in their homestead so as to demonstrate to them that in as much as they are confined to the privacy of their homes, still the men folk cares for them."

But other communities, like that of Juvenile Nkurunzizas* believe that dates play a crucial role in setting up families and that dates gone sour can have a disastrous effect on the individuals concerned and the community at large.

*not their real names (cont'd page 6)

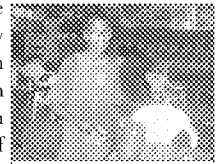
THE PLIGHT OF CHILDREN CONT'D

(cont'd from page 3) assistant to the Children's Office from CARE, emphasizes the need to establish rehabilitation centers for these kids.

"They need much assistance. They need parental care. They need durable solutions," Abdi Shukri concludes.

CARE International in Kenya is one of the main implementing agencies operating in Dadaab camps that has a unit dealing with children's issues.

No one can deny that such children need a source of income to support their lives.



A young boy serves food in a hotel (photo: Amin Muhumed)

Though NGOs concerned with children's affairs in Dadaab Refugee Camps try to do their best, the needs of these kids seem to be overwhelming, as the number of vulnerable children grows higher.

ARE WE WHAT WE WEAR?

BY ISMAIL HIRSI ABDI—IFO

Have you ever argued with a parent, especially your mother, about which clothes you put on?

Throughout history, generations have fought this battle. To you, it might appear that mum and dad automatically disapprove of anything you put on. To them, you often look as though you got dressed in the dark. According to them, the clothes you wear every

day are wrinkled, ill-fitting and mismatched.

In the 1960's, teenagers raised their parents' tempers with long hair. Some years later, the shaved "punk" look upset them—strangely though, both gave parents sleepless nights. How many arguments have centered on pierced ears and earrings worn by both young men and women?

Fashion seems to have nothing

to do with looks. Eye-shadow, for example, was first used by Egyptians—they wanted to protect their eyes from the glare of the sun. Lipstick has been used by men and women of diverse cultures. It was not to enhance attractiveness. Centuries ago, sailors wore earrings to keep from drowning.

You never know what will be in fashion next, but chances are that tomorrow's fashion will be someone else's eyesore.

EDITORIALS

GIRLS IN EDUCATION

BY HALIMA HUSSEIN SAMAN
HAGADERA

Many cultural and social blocks are placed in the path of girls on their search for education. Most communities in Dadaab reinforce gender differences which are biased against girls in education.

At a tender age, girls are taught to be nice and quiet and are told that modeling themselves after such behaviour will lead them to a decent life. From an early age, parents indicate their favoritism towards males over females. Girls are seen as property to be taken and given. As an example, girls can often hear statements from their parents like 'Shall we give her to our nephew or the sugar daddy in Golfa-9 whose son is in America?'

Many parents believe that if a girl is sent to school she will end up spoiled or she will become too old and may therefore miss the chance for a man to marry her. Worse still, in the Somali community girls are introduced to the proverb: *Let a girl be in a grave or in a man's house.* Therefore, around the age that girls reach puberty, education is pushed to the side and marriage is automatic and the priority.

Instead of marriage, society should consider education and good morals to be paramount in the development of girls. And it is at schools where these values are instilled. Education is vital, not only to girls, but also to the whole world.

In spite of the importance of education, each year girls continuously fail to perform in their studies in comparison to boys in both KCPE and KCSE. In elementary levels, boys and girls are approximately equal in number but as they continue in their studies (Standard 5 to 8), the number of girls enrolled drops to a ratio of one girl to ten boys. This is due to hindrances from the society and from girls themselves, who are taught from an early age that education is not important.

I urge the community and agencies concerned to protect girls from cultural misconceptions and practices that deny girls chances in education. And to my fellow girls, it is up to us to choose what we want to be. Never feel too old to learn!

INSTEAD OF MARRIAGE, SOCIETY SHOULD CONSIDER EDUCATION AND GOOD MORALS TO BE PARAMOUNT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GIRLS.

LIFE AFTER SECONDARY

BY MOHAMED HUSSEIN NASIB
HAGADERA

In Dadaab refugee camps, refugees view education as the only way to succeed in life and the only



A form-four graduate sits beside the job noticeboard in Hagadera (photo: Mohamed Hussein)

way to bring a durable and lasting peace to their home countries. Following this logic, parents take their children to school. These children pursue both primary and secondary levels in the camps, facilitated by CARE Education sector.

As a result, a majority of younger members of the community is literate, contrary to when the refugees first came to the camps.

The youth see evil acts like clanism, tribalism and favoritism as things in the past. They are united, and cooperate in working together without considering their ethnic or tribal affiliations. They are busy learning, committing a lot of effort into determining how they can best perform in exams to enable them to succeed from one education level to the next. Nevertheless, in the camps, life after secondary school is seen to have a lot of challenges, including inadequate

employment opportunities, few chances for scholarships and societal pressure to find jobs.

To begin with, the inadequate employment opportunities make employment highly competitive. It is not surprising for agencies in Dadaab to receive over 80 applications for a single post advertised. Due to this serious competition, many remain unemployed, instead filling their time by loitering and sitting around in groups. Not only will you see them at the market places but also around the advertisement boards in front of the agencies. You can't miss finding them in front (cont'd on page 7)

YOUTH VIEWS ON EDUCATION

BY SIYAD ADOW MA'ALIM
HAGADERA

The population of Hagadera camp in Dadaab is now exceeding 67,000, according to a statistical analysis carried out in early 2007. Out of this population half are youths, thus they are an essential part of community. One thing which the youths of the camp value most is education. As the saying goes "education is the key to life".

The youths work hard to achieve their goals. For instance they read tremendously during the night so that they don't fail in their exams, they form groups of ten pupils or more, they fund raise money to buy lamps for reading during the night and for other important stationeries like text books which may not be available in the schools, and lastly they meet in separate houses during the night mainly to discuss and share ideas that relate to their lessons.

However, after working very hard in their studies, the youths are demoralized when only some of them are admitted to high school due to the variation in their Kenya

Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exam results. In fact, from the possible six hundred candidates who may sit for KCPE exams every year, only one hundred and twenty candidates may be allowed to join high school. The remaining 480 candidates are left to join the market, where many end up becoming gangsters, drug addicts, and society rejects.

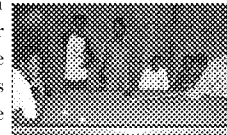
One day as I was helping a journalist in interpretation we interviewed a youth who failed to join high school due to his poor performance in his final KCPE exam. The journalist, who works for a Swedish media group, asked the young man what he feels when he sees his friends going to school. The young man responded, "aad iyo aad ayaan u niyad jabaa", which means, "I feel very disappointed. It could have been better if further trainings like typing, carpentry and craftsmanship could be provided to me." He continued, and his answer really showed how much the youths in

general are desperate and thirsty for education. In Dadaab, the youths are educated solely with the help of donors who give money to UNHCR, who in turn gives it to implementing agencies like CARE. Although CARE does provide educational opportunities, for youth like this young man, who are dependent on the options provided and ultimately the donor money, they are limited.

It is not only the youths who failed in primary education who feel very disappointed, but also those who did very well in their final high school exams and did not win scholarships according to their expectations and are now unable to get the further education they desire. In addition to the difficulty of winning scholarships, the youths face the challenge of finding employment opportunities. For instance, out of 115 candidates who may graduate from high school in a given year only 20 may be lucky enough to secure a job, thus leaving the rest jobless and stressed.

In spite of all these difficulties and challenges, many youths have approached or tried other alternatives, such as asking relatives who are in America to do fund raising for them, thereby allowing them to pursue their studies either in high school or in college with whatever they receive. I urge my fellow youths not to give up because nothing is more worthwhile than education.

"I URGE MY FELLOW YOUTHS NOT TO GIVE UP BECAUSE NOTHING IS MORE WORTHWHILE THAN EDUCATION"



Youth in Hagadera who do not pursue secondary education spend much of their time playing pool (photo: Abdinasir Shalle Sagar)

DATING AND CULTURE CONT'D

(continued from page 4)

Thus, what is considered proper, moral, desirable and normal varies enormously from culture to culture. While each society has standards of conduct that are often enforced by moral and legal sanctions, there are important, and, at

times, extreme culturally learned differences in what is viewed as appropriate sexual expression.

Therefore it is very paramount for us to consider the cultural differences of different communities and races before making judgments on different aspects of life.



