

EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES: THE CASE OF THE DADAAB REFUGEE CAMPS

HAYLEY MACKINNON



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Hayley MacKinnon is the interim manager of evaluation and planning for CIGI. She first joined CIGI in 2012 as project and research coordinator for the Africa Initiative. Hayley holds a B.A. in political science and psychology from Western University and an M.A. in human security and peacebuilding from Royal Roads University. She also obtained a certificate in international development from the University of British Columbia.

Prior to her tenure at CIGI, Hayley was a project officer with CARE Canada in Ottawa, where she assisted with humanitarian assistance and emergency response projects focused on Afghanistan, Pakistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Haiti. During the height of the 2011 crisis in the Horn of Africa, she spent four months working in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya.

KEY POINTS

- Conflict in Somalia has caused millions to flee the country since 1990, many to Kenya's Dadaab refugee camps, which have been in existence for more than 20 years. They were originally established by the Government of Kenya (GoK) to host 90,000, but now hold over 520,000 refugees.
- The camps in Dadaab still operate on an emergency basis by providing relief, but fail to mobilize the resources required for longer-term development — known as the “relief-to-development” gap.
- Education in emergencies is key to human development and protection, but has not been a priority in humanitarian aid. It is grossly underfunded globally and particularly in the Dadaab refugee camps.
- It is recommended that implementing organizations responsible for providing education in the camps focus their grant writing in support of human capacity building and infrastructure improvement, and the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and funding partners collaborate to prioritize aid to the Dadaab camps, focusing on the education sector.
- Funding for education should be added to all humanitarian appeals, and include education as the fourth core pillar of humanitarian aid, and inter-agency advocacy should be enhanced to make education a priority in humanitarian emergency response.

INTRODUCTION

Between 1991 and 2009, more than 2.5 million Somali citizens fled their homeland to Ethiopia, Djibouti and, most notably, Kenya, following the collapse of the Somali government of Siad Barre. This led to violent clashes between various factional clan groups, and fighting to control land and resources ensued. This

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resulted in the displacement, starvation and slaughter of thousands of civilians, leading to a crisis that prompted international intervention during the 1990s.

The Dadaab camps, located in North Eastern Province, Kenya, represent the longest-standing and largest refugee camps in the world, hosting more than 520,000 refugees. Seventy-five percent of those living in these camps are women, the elderly and children under the age of 12 (Médecins Sans Frontières 2014). Having been in existence for more than 20 years, the situation in Dadaab constitutes a protracted emergency. A protracted refugee situation is defined by the UNHCR as one in which “refugees have been in exile for five years or more after their initial displacement, without immediate prospects for implementation of durable solutions” (Loescher 2011). In Dadaab, third generations are being born inside the camps, and they will likely never return to Somalia.

During 2011, the protracted crisis in the Horn of Africa intensified when the United Nations declared a famine in parts of southern Somalia, through a combination of drought and a lack of political foundation to mitigate the effects of the famine (UN News Service 2011). In the months that followed, a steady rate of refugees — approximately 1,100 per day — continued to seek protection and humanitarian assistance in the camps (UNHCR 2011a).

The UNHCR is the agency entrusted with the responsibility of camp management until such time that durable solutions for refugees — namely voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to third countries — are viable options. Voluntary repatriation is dependent on the re-establishment of some form of peace and stability in Somalia, as well as political changes in the country. Since lasting peace or stability in Somalia is not on the immediate horizon, refugees continue to

wait for durable solutions to their plight. However, the escalation of attacks in Kenya by the Somali militant group known as Al Shabaab have amplified calls from the GoK to force repatriation of refugees to Somalia. The attack on the Westgate shopping mall in 2013, which killed 72 people, is the most widely recognized attack (*The Guardian* 2013). The GoK has employed both ricochet repatriation and relocation-stimulated repatriation intended to force refugees to make the choice to return to Somalia (Stein and Cunny 1991). The former occurs when military or police use tactics that instill fear in refugees, and the latter occurs when refugees are rounded up and moved to the Dadaab camps. Refugees who are not rounded up are forced to make the decision to live in fear of being sent to the camps, or arrested if they continue to live outside of the camps illegally; to avoid arrest, refugees make the choice to return to their home country of Somalia.

Implementing organizations in Dadaab — such as CARE, Oxfam and the Danish Refugee Council — operate as an emergency response and continue on in the relative absence of longer-term development programs that promote lasting solutions and lead to self-reliance. Existing shortages in funding for humanitarian assistance activities constrain organizations' abilities to plan and implement long-term development strategies.

Traditionally, humanitarian aid focuses on three pillars: food, shelter and health. Most recently, education is informally recognized as the fourth pillar of humanitarian assistance (USAID 2014). Known as “education in emergencies,” it encompasses basic quality education provision from the onset of an emergency and throughout the recovery process.

This policy brief looks at the state of education in the protracted refugee situation in the Dadaab camps, and provides recommendations to address the shortfalls of

education provision in the camps, prioritize education at the global level and consistently increase funding for education in emergencies.

OPERATIONS IN DADAAB

Located in North Eastern Province (approximately 50 km from the border of Somalia), the Dadaab refugee camps were established in 1991 and temporarily opened in 1992 by the GoK to honour its international commitment to respect the principle of *non-refoulement*, which sets out in international law that a refugee cannot be sent back to an area where the person might again be subjected to persecution.

Dadaab originally consisted of three camps — Dagahaley, Hagadara and Ifo — but has been expanded to include the Ifo extension and Kambios. These camps are comprised mainly of Somalis, who represent 99 percent of the population hosted in the camps, as well as small numbers of Sudanese, Ugandans, Eritreans and Ethiopians. If Dadaab were a city, it would be the third largest in Kenya (UNHCR 2011d).

The GoK enacted specific terms and conditions for refugees being hosted by Kenya in the Dadaab camps, which requires that refugees be settled in closed camps (Hyndman and Nylund 1998). This encampment policy — which prevents refugees from owning cattle, cultivating, moving freely, working or integrating with the host community — renders the refugee population entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance and with very limited economic opportunities. As a result, there have been increased security incidents (such as fire fights, shootings and mass protests), as well as overexploitation of scarce resources beyond a level that can be sustained in the dry and sparse environment of North Eastern Province.

In the months prior to the 2011 crisis in the Horn of Africa and the international community’s attention to it, large influxes of Somali refugees were arriving in Dadaab. The largest arrival in a single day in the camps’ history — of 1,600 individuals — occurred in June 2011 (field notes, June 2011). Refugees cited insecurity in Somalia as the main reason for fleeing, and drought as the secondary reason (Médicines Sans Frontières 2014). An official working for UNHCR explained that “half of the year, UNHCR is scrambling to provide enough water to refugees and the other half of the year, UNHCR is responding to the raging floods that emerge from the rainy season” (Provost and Mohamed 2011). Since the UN-declared famine in 2011, the world has moved on to other disasters and humanitarian crises, and aid in the protracted refugee situation in Dadaab still struggles to move from humanitarian aid to longer-term development activities.

EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

Education is a human right, and is stated as such under Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights;¹ the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951); the Geneva Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War; the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966); the Dakar World Education Forum Framework for Action (2000), promoting Education For All; and Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is the most widely adopted piece of international law to date (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies [INEE] 2004).

Literacy and education are crucial to increasing an individual’s capabilities and are a main component

in human development. Education improves one’s capacity to mitigate conflict without resorting to violence, and “providing education in emergencies is a critical contribution to protection, human rights, and post conflict reconstruction” (Academy for Educational Development 2003). Education in emergencies appears in the *UNHCR Education: Field Guidelines* manual, which emphasizes the need for “early intervention and development of education programmes in the earliest stages of an emergency and access to education programmes by children and adolescents upon arrival” (UNHCR 2003, policy statement 8). Unfortunately, financing for education is rarely a priority during humanitarian emergency responses, and is often considered a development activity, which does not merit donor funding. In 2013, education received only 2.4 percent of humanitarian aid from the Consolidated Appeals Process in 2013 (Save the Children and the Norwegian Refugee Council 2014).

One leading authority on education in emergencies is the Sphere Project, a voluntary initiative that brings together a wide range of humanitarian agencies to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance. Its handbook outlines the minimum acceptable levels of humanitarian assistance in five traditionally accepted emergency response categories: water supply and sanitation, nutrition, food aid, shelter and site planning, and health services (Sphere Project 2011). The project originally considered education as a category, but it was dropped by the majority of committee members who argued that education was not an essential emergency provision. One official who helped develop the standards said that “they were stuck looking at what had to be done in the first few weeks of an emergency to save lives,” but agreed that “education may in fact be as vital to the preservation of human life as the five assistance categories addressed by the Sphere Project,

1 Please see United Nations (1948) for more information and the full text.

as it has been widely cited as a basic protection tool for victims of humanitarian emergencies” (Sommers 2001, 54).

INEE is another leading, more widely recognized, organization that provides an avenue for representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies, donor agencies, governments, academic institutions, schools and affected populations to communicate and collaborate to ensure the right to quality, safe education in emergencies. INEE’s members have put together minimum standards for the education sector, worked with government to introduce conflict-sensitive education and brought attention to how education can worsen or alleviate conflict. One of the most recent accomplishments of the INEE was through the Global Education First Initiative, which represented a call to action by the UN Secretary-General to encourage access to quality, safe and relevant education for all to reach Millennium Development Goal 2 (Achieve Universal Primary Education). There is now a heightened focus by the group on education in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (INEE 2013).

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

The dismal state of the educational environment in Dadaab and the lack of higher education options gives Somali youth ample reason to drop out of school, thus eliminating their hopes for a brighter future for themselves and their families. Idle youths often turn to drugs and then criminal activities, and are left exposed to the risk of recruitment by armed groups, such as Somalia’s Al Shabaab, which can lead to security incidents (UNICEF Somalia, International Labour Organization and UNDP 2012). Those living

in the Dadaab camps function within an insecure (and deteriorating) environment and face threats of persecution, violence (often sexual- and gender-based), and, along with aid agencies, attacks by armed groups and improvised-explosive devices, and abductions. This unstable environment contributes to the growing inability of international aid organizations to provide quality assistance to refugees hosted inside the camps, and increases the need to implement protection measures that keep children safe. Education and safe learning environments are critical to accomplishing this goal.

Education in emergencies, whether protracted or rapid onset, not only provides a safe environment for children to learn, but also represents the possibility of a better life for future generations. Numbers show that for every additional year of formal schooling undertaken by males, their risk of becoming involved in conflict is reduced by 20 percent (Basic Education Coalition 2011). As the 2011 UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report on education in armed conflict points out, “nothing is more important in a new nation than providing children with an education. If you want peace and justice, if you want jobs and prosperity, and if you want a people to be fair and tolerant towards one another, there is just one place to start — and that place is school” (UNESCO 2011).

By ensuring access to education for children of school-going age in Dadaab, there is a greater chance they can recover from the traumatic experiences of their past by providing a safe environment to learn in — especially for girls, who are more vulnerable to sexual- and gender-based violence. Conflict is known to have different impacts on men, women, boys and girls, and education plays a critical role in empowering women and girls in improving self-confidence and rights realizations,

as well as increasing community participation and economic benefits in the long term. Research highlights that primary education increases a girl's income from five to 15 percent over her lifetime (Chaaban and Cunningham 2011).



Children being educated at the Dadaab refugee camps. Photo by Hayley MacKinnon.

PROVISION OF BASIC PRIMARY EDUCATION IN DADAAB

The Dadaab refugee camps likely host some of the future leaders of Somalia, making it vital to improve access to quality education for the long term, as educated individuals are likely to make a more positive contribution and potentially play a central role in peace building and post-conflict reconstruction in Somalia. Research shows that individuals with primary and secondary education are up to three times more likely to support stability and democracy (UNESCO 2008). The greatest barrier in the provision of quality education to all children of school-going age in the Dadaab camps is the lack of adequate funding for education by donors and implementing agencies charged with providing education.

The GoK's Ministry of Education (MoE) has made the Kenyan curriculum mandatory in all schools, and the UNHCR is responsible for overall camp management. As a part of its guiding principles, the UNHCR ensures the fundamental right to education, including both formal and non-formal education. Due to the requirement to follow the Kenyan curriculum (which focuses on Kenyan history), many refugees feel that this education is not relevant to their lives (especially if they repatriate) and does not reflect their needs.

The Kenyan MoE produced minimum standard operating procedures (SOPs), meant to ensure quality education. The SOPs standardize the pupil-teacher ratio (1:45), the number of children per class (45) and the required minimum physical facilities, such as classrooms and desks for all levels of schooling (Umbima, Koelbel and Hassan 2010).

As of October 2011, it was estimated that Dadaab had 179,578 children of school-going age (UNHCR 2011b). There are only 19 primary schools, six secondary schools and three adult education centres in all of the camps, at least half of which fail to meet minimum SOPs. As of August 2011, the Dagahaley camp alone had approximately 27,000 children of primary-school-going age. Of that number, only 11,000 were enrolled in primary school (CARE Kenya 2011c). For the 2011 school year, Dadaab camps presented 42 percent enrollment at the primary level and five percent at the secondary level (UNHCR 2011b). As of 2011, the camps had one UNHCR-supported secondary school in each of the three camps and one community secondary school in each camp. In 2010, there were only 2,864 individuals enrolled in secondary school (Umbima, Koelbel and Hassan 2010).

Between 2006 and 2010, there 1,933 teachers active; of this, only 143 teachers were trained (ibid.). To meet

the needs of an estimated school-aged population of 179,578, almost 5,500 teachers would need to be trained and employed. As of June 2011, there were 985 teachers, with over 95 percent coming from the refugee community. This number represents about 25 percent of the teachers required (UNHCR 2011b). Many teachers lack the motivation necessary to provide quality education, and all of the schools in the camp face ongoing concerns with teachers not coming into work or not being able to conduct classes appropriately due to a lack of capacity, training or personal education. On average, a Kenyan national teacher will earn a salary of about US\$1,000 per month, while “incentive teachers,”² whether trained or not, earn on average US\$100 monthly (Umbima, Koelbel and Hassan 2010).

The camps suffer from a lack of adequate learning resources and infrastructure for the children already attending primary schools. The standard classroom-to-pupil ratio set out by the INEE is 1:40, but as observed in Dadaab, the reality is more accurately 1:80. With an influx of new arrivals of about 1,100 per day, the ratio has been as high as 1:110. In addition, upwards of 34 children share a single textbook. Desks that fit three children are holding up to seven. To satisfy INEE standards as of 2011, over 4,400 classrooms and 15,000 desks would be needed to serve the current number of children enrolled in school (CARE Kenya 2011b). To accommodate the demand, children are learning under tents and, when there are not enough tents, under trees. The environment in Dadaab is not conducive to learning: hot and windy days create sandstorms and outdoor classes are cancelled during the annual rains. Refugees who are members of the Parent-Teacher Association at Illeys Primary School in Dagahaley articulated that due

to a lack of resources, parents do not send their children to school or end up taking them out of school (field notes, June 2011).

These issues contribute to the lack of quality education being provided in the camps. At the primary level, the overcrowded classrooms, number of inadequately trained teachers and lack of motivation by teachers to provide quality education create learning environments that are less than mediocre and exacerbate the decline in access to quality education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementing organizations (any NGO working in Dadaab must work through the UNHCR) entrusted with providing education in the Dadaab camps should focus their grant writing for funding in support of human capacity building and infrastructure improvement to provide a safe learning environment.

This would allow for construction or rehabilitation of schools, provision of education supplies and materials, and training and capacity building for schoolteachers and administrators. There remains an enormous need for funding, especially at the primary level, where classrooms are overcapacity and dilapidated, learning materials are in high demand to be able to achieve minimum standards and more teachers need training to be able to provide students with quality education.

The UNHCR and funding partners should work together and with their own countries’ donors to prioritize aid to the Dadaab refugee camps with a special focus on the education sector. As implementing organizations deal with ongoing cuts to funding, they must partner with donors to address the lack of resources and delivery of assistance. By not adequately addressing the deteriorating conditions, the international

² As per the GoK encampment policy, refugees are not permitted to work and earn a salary, but are instead provided with incentive wages and are known as “incentive staff” (Teff 2012).

community, implementing organizations and the GoK are not living up to their original commitments to meet internationally accepted minimum standards, and are not acting in accordance with the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNHCR 2011e; Academy for Educational Development 2003).

Funding for education should be added to all humanitarian appeals, and education should be included as the fourth core pillar of humanitarian aid. This would recognize education in emergencies as a priority, and require that funding be allocated to its provision. Education should also be added as the sixth emergency response category in the Sphere Project's minimum standards guidelines, outlining minimum acceptable levels of humanitarian assistance for the sector.

Inter-agency advocacy should be enhanced to make education a priority in humanitarian emergency response and an integral part of the planning and provision during rapid onset, slow onset and protracted emergencies. Consistent and pooled funding available to be mobilized to provide education in emergencies should be developed through collaboration. Only a handful of donors have policy frameworks for education in emergencies. The Global Education Cluster, led by the UN Children's Emergency Fund and Save the Children, should be enhanced to move beyond coordination activities and act as a central repository for pooled funding available for education in emergencies. Cluster members should approach current donors, such as the World Bank, and mobilize future donors to increase funding for education in emergencies, allowing for a rapid and effective response that ensures enough funds are available from onset to recovery. In addition, governments and organizations providing education

in emergencies should advocate for the UN Secretary General's five-year Global Education First Initiative to increase the education share of humanitarian funding to four percent (Sparkes, van Kalmthout and Martinez 2013).

CONCLUSION

The failure to successfully address the instability in Somalia means that its refugees are unable to return home. Humanitarian agencies mediate on behalf of the refugees with the GoK and with international donors in the attempt to increase funding to improve the deteriorating environment within the camps, and to provide the necessities of life, including protection and the right to education.

The Dadaab camps have been providing services for more than 20 years through a humanitarian lens, while long-term, comprehensive strategic plans for the education sector have not yet occurred. Over the years, when crises have arisen (such as the 2011 drought), existing education funding has been taken and reallocated to emergency response priority sectors, such as food distribution and shelter. This limits the ability of those working in the education sector to implement any of the necessary improvements consistently. If education in Dadaab is not prioritized, with an increased level of funding to offer access to quality education, implementing agencies will not be able to ensure that the current system does not cause more harm than benefit in the longer term. Shortfalls in funding affect all aspects of the primary school system, which can lead to unsafe environments, both in terms of appropriate physical facilities, but also in terms of not being able to provide a safe space for children, girls in particular, to learn. This can cause further psychological suffering for children who have fled dangerous conflict in the past.

Should this shortfall happen, the humanitarian system would no longer be able to claim proper accountability and protection to beneficiaries or adherence to the recognized standards and principles of providing education in emergencies.

Save the Children Norway CEO Tove Wang (2013) said, “If you look at the big picture, we have failed to deliver...we have failed to tell the story. We have failed to convince the donors of how critical education in crisis is. Parents know how critical it is, and so do children.” Many humanitarian aid agencies are calling on the international community to recognize the vital importance of providing access to quality education by including it as the fourth core pillar of humanitarian aid. Beyond recognition, a global commitment is required to prioritize funding for education in emergencies in order to meet internationally accepted minimum standards in delivery.

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57 Erb Street West
Waterloo, Ontario N2L 6C2, Canada
tel +1 519 885 2444 fax +1 519 885 5450
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