DADAAB CAMP PROFILE

**Established:** 1990-1992  
**Population:** 289,315 (as of Aug 2009)  
**Demographics:** 95% Somalis from Somalia. Ethiopians comprise the second largest group, and very small numbers of Sudanese, Eritreans, Congolese, Burundians, Tanzanians, Ugandans and Rwandans are also present.  
**Location:** Approximately 90km from the Somali border  
**Climate:** Semi-arid with temperatures often reaching 40 degrees Celsius.  
**Environmental Challenges:** widespread flooding, limited natural resources, cholera and measles outbreaks.  
**Camp Layout:** Dadaab is comprised of three separate camps: Dagahely, Hagadera and Ifo.  
**No. SRP Students from Dadaab in 2009/2010:** 18

**BACKGROUND**

The Dadaab camps were constructed in the early 1990’s in response to the large numbers of Somalis fleeing the civil war in Somalia. This violent conflict had escalated from the struggle between Mogadishu warlords (known as the ‘Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism’) and the militia loyal to the Islamic Courts Union. The three camps were originally designed to accommodate 90,000 refugees; they have now become the world’s largest refugee settlement with nearly 300,000 inhabitants. By 2007, the conflict in Somalia showed no sign of decreasing, nor did the influx of refugees into Kenya, and as a result, the Kenyan-Somali border was officially closed. Regardless, there were nearly 62,000 new arrivals in 2008, and the refugee influx to Dadaab was categorized as an “emergency” by the UNHCR. Arrivals continued to increase in 2009, with approx. 6,500 new registrations each month. Due to the lack of land available for the construction of a fourth camp, the UNHCR began transferring thousands of refugees from Dadaab to Kakuma in August 2009 to reduce congestion. There are essentially two operations taking place in Dadaab today: the provisioning of updated infrastructure and services to long-term protracted refugees, and the emergency allocation of basic resources to new arrivals. Due to ongoing violence in Somalia and Kenya’s policy of encampment, resettlement to countries like Canada remains the only viable option for many refugees in Dadaab to find a durable solution.
LOCAL CONTEXT

Dadaab refugee camps are located near Dadaab town, in the Garissa District of Eastern Kenya. The camps’ remote location, high temperatures, and limited natural resources make for harsh living conditions. Within Dadaab, refugees’ economic opportunities and mobility are limited, and occasional attacks by armed militia threaten their security. Because the Kenyan government maintains a policy of encampment, there are no opportunities for refugees to locally integrate. Tensions with the host community (comprised primarily of Kenyan Somalis) have been on the rise in recent years – particularly with respect to the camp boundaries. The host community stopped the UNHCR’s attempt to expand the camp borders and is concerned with the increased pressure on land & resources. As a result, the UNHCR and implementing partners have allocated funds to support the host community and promote diplomacy.

EDUCATION

Educational provisioning is a pressing challenge in Dadaab. Approximately 37% of the camp population is school-going age (5-18 years old), but 49% of these children (roughly 50,000) are not in school. In order to provide every child in Dadaab with access to a formal education, the UNHCR would need to construct 46 more schools. Currently the teacher/student ratio is 1:68, with over 90% of these teachers being untrained. Within the three camps, there are 18 primary schools that cater to 37,125 learners (39% girls), and 3 ‘official’ secondary schools with 2,705 learners (26% girls). The refugee community has demonstrated their agency by constructing three additional Community Secondary Schools. While the number of refugee youth in the camp steadily increases, the level of funding and resources remains relatively static. However, there is hope for more learning opportunities; 240 refugee girls in their final year of primary school are benefiting from the remedial education classes funded through WUSC and implemented by Windle Trust Kenya. The UNHCR Dadaab office reminds us that, “the youth are eager for livelihood opportunities, and training courses

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Debi Goodwin’s Citizens of Nowhere: From Refugee Camp to Canadian Campus, was inspired by her trip to Dadaab in 2007 to shoot the award winning documentary "The Lucky Ones," – which told the story of young Somali refugees being resettled from Dadaab to Canada. Her book offers us a glimpse of a year in the life of 11 refugee students entering universities across Canada. Cindy Horst’s Transnational Nomads: How Somalis Cope With Refugee Life In The Dadaab Camps Of Kenya, is one of the most comprehensive resources you’ll ever find about Dadaab. Horst is a researcher from the Netherlands who has lived in Dadaab on and off for years and speaks Somali fluently. Many current WUSC sponsored students knew her when they lived in Dadaab, and a few were even research assistants for this book!