

Music as a Strategy of Youth Resilience in Dadaab Refugee Camp Kenya

Felix Kiruthu

Dept of Public policy and Administration, Kenyatta University, P.O. Box 43844, Nairobi –Kenya (00100)

Email: fkiruthu2002@yahoo.com/ kiruthu.felix@ku.ac.ke

Abstract

The Dadaab Refugee Camp is located in Garissa County in North Eastern Kenya. It comprises five separate camps for refugees, most of whom are Somali, although it is also home to other refugees mostly from the horn of African, including Ethiopia and Sudan. Given the difficult life in the refugee camp, residents lead a difficult life, but have devised ways of entertainment and expression of their fears, hopes and daily struggles through music. This study analyses the forms of music adopted by the youth in Dadaab. The themes in the music are interrogated as well as the crucial role this music plays in the context of the refugee situation.

Keywords: refugees, Dadaab, camps, resilience, well being, music, dance

1.0 Introduction

This paper focuses on the role played by music and dance among the refugees in the Dadaab Refugee camp in the North Eastern region of Kenya, which is located approximately sixty Kilometres from the Kenya-Somali border. In 1951, the United Nations defined “refugee” as a person who owing to a well founded fear of persecution, for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or membership of a particular social group has run away from his country (Hein, 1993). This implies that refugees lead a difficult life by virtue of living away from home. However, it cannot be gainsaid that contrary to the view that refugees are essentially passive and needy individuals with nothing to contribute, to the contrary, there are many refugees engaging in important artistic, intellectual, economic and social activities in exile (UNHCR, 2011B). For instance, many refugees engage in artistic activity all over the world and by so doing, serve as active creative agents in society in terms of enhancing cultural life in the face of severe and adverse conditions of life in forced migration. This is particularly important in alleviating the misery experienced in the difficult environment of refugee camps. As we shall see shortly, most of the refugee camps in Africa are located in remote and harsh environments. Artistic activity not only promotes the wellbeing of communities in forced migrations, but could also prevent conflict and unhealthy behavior among such vulnerable communities in the face great socio-economic and political challenges, away from home (UNHCR, 2011B).

This study specifically focuses on the youth in Dadaab. As Murray (2001) points out, it is critical to address a general lack of attention to the processes through which African youths encounter new social systems and struggle to comprehend their conditions and experiences. The youth are defined as young men and women between the ages of 15 years to 24years. This is based on the UNHCR definition in 2011. However, it must be noted that the definition of youth varies depending on the context to the extent that some scholars have regarded any one between the ages of 15 to 35 years as falling under the youth bracket. The Dadaab Refugee Camp experiences dry and hot climatic conditions which make life very uncomfortable especially for the refugee residents, most of whom lack enough economic resources due to their situation in forced migrations. The camps have existed for over 20 years and many refugees have spent their entire lives there (Jaji, 2009; Murunga, 2005). The refugees and their hosts, the Kenyan Somalis, have formed a community that has remained poor and largely dependent on external aid for livelihood support. Social amenities are provided by the government of Kenya with the support of United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and other donor agencies (Jaji, 2009). Given the difficult life in the refugee camp, where freedom of movement and the right to seek for wage labour and other forms of livelihood is lacking, residents lead a tough life. However, refugees have devised ways of entertainment and resilience through a number of artistic expressions such as music, dance, storytelling and painting, in order survive in difficult conditions (UNHCR, 2011B). Such artistic activities also provide an avenue for expression of their fears, hopes and daily struggles.

A description of the situation in Dadaab is important here in order for one to appreciate the role played by music in such an environment. The region neighbors Somalia to the East and Ethiopia to the North. Garissa County, in which Dadaab refugee camps are located, is made up of six constituencies, namely: Balambala, Dujis, Laghdera, Dadaab, Fafi and Ijara with a total population 623,060 Kenyans (CBS, 2009). The area also hosts five camps for refugees from troubled Horn of African countries, namely: Somalia, Sudan, and Ethiopia. The camps together form one of the largest refugee hosting locations in the world. Given the porous borders between Kenya and Somalia, the refugees’ criss- cross between the two countries from time to time. By November 2011, the camps in Dadaab had a population of about 463,500 refugees, of which 266,900 (57.6 per cent) were children (aged below 18 years) and 88,600 (19.1 per cent) youth aged 15 to 24 years (UNHCR, 2011). The camps have

existed since 1991, when Siad Barre's government collapsed triggering the influx of refugees into Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Sudan, among other places. Many of the refugees have spent their entire lives in Dadaab and other refugee camps in Kenya. However, some are able to immigrate to other countries around the world, where they may obtain education and enter into a variety of jobs. The refugees and the hosts in Dadaab have formed a community that has remained poor and largely dependent on external aid to support their livelihoods. The government of Kenya requires that refugees must register with the responsible government authorities as soon as they enter the Kenyan territorial space. Moreover, they are expected to live in formally organized refugee camps (Kaiser, 2006). Unlike in Uganda where some refugees are settled in areas where they can carry out lucrative farming ventures, in Kenya, the two main refugee camps, namely Dadaab and Kakuma, are located in remote and marginal areas.

While the Dadaab refugee camp is located closer to the north-east of Kenya near the Kenya- Somali border, Kakuma refugee camp was established in the North Western part of Kenya near Sudan in July 1992, following an influx of approximately 23000 Sudanese refugees into Kenya from southern Sudan (Choge, 2005). However, Kakuma camp also hosts a number of Somali refugees, in addition to refugees from other nationalities including Ethiopia, DRC Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. Apparently, 13000 of the refugees who went to kakuma were youths. This underlines the importance of paying attention to the large population of youth in refugee camps.

In order to understand the life of the refugees in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, it is very important to focus on the civil war in Somalia that led to the ouster of Siad Barre from power. It is this political instability that precipitated an influx of Somali refugees into Kenya. Siad Barre had taken power in Somalia through a bloodless military coup in October 1969, only a decade after Somalia gained political independence from Britain and Italy. He remained in power until 1991 when he was ousted from power by a united force of opposition groups (Murunga, 2005:141). The opposition was unhappy with Barre's government over a number of grievances against his regime, which ranged from clannism, poor governance, dictatorial rule and ideological differences.

Once Barre was ousted from power, the coalition of forces that toppled his regime was itself divided. This could explain why soon after, a new spate of conflict began (Murunga, 2005:144). In the course of time, Somalia became a divided country with war lords taking over power in different parts of the country. This state of affairs therefore led to a continuous outflow of population that was fleeing in search to refuge in safer countries. Kenya was among one of the most favoured safe havens for refugees although some refugees fled to other neighbouring countries including Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda and Egypt. As we have already observed, some refugees sought refuge in developed countries such as Norway, Canada, Sweden and the USA among other countries. Indeed Murrey (2001) has observed that after the collapse of Northern Somalia in 1988, and the further breakdown of the social systems following the eruption of full-scale civil war in 1991, United States of America and Canada experienced a great influx of Somali immigrants as Somali nationals fled political unrest in their country. However, the immigration to North America and different parts of Europe always presented great difficulty for the immigrants. Quite often, they had to take a circuitous route through a number of neighbouring African states such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania, which "host" Somalis in several refugee camps (Murray, 2001). The immigrants would eventually find their way to Europe first, prior to accessing Canada or the USA.

Among the factors that made Kenya one of the favoured destinations for Somali refugees, is the fact that Kenyan Somalis are closely related to Somali nationals by virtue of belonging to the same extended family, friendship, clan and business networks. Indeed, many of the later refugee immigrants were assisted to settle down in Kenya through such networks. This could explain why a large number of Somali refugees ended up not only in the north eastern part of Kenya, but also in different urban centres in Kenya particularly in Eastleigh Estate in Nairobi (Murunga, 2005; Njihia, 2013). This influx of refugees in the country and the easy mingling of Somali nationals with Kenyan Somalis has been a source of discomfort for the post independent government of Kenya for many years. During the Kenyan population census of 2009 report, the government of Kenya went a notch higher by refusing to announce the population in the northern parts of Kenya due to the sudden surge in population mainly associated with the influx of peoples from Somalia forced by circumstances to migrate into Kenya. Since the Al Shabaab attack on Nairobi in September 2013, the government of Kenya has become even more determined to facilitate the repatriation of Somali refugees back to their country citing improved political environment in Somalia.

Life as a refugee is very difficult regardless whether one resides in camps or otherwise. For instance, although urban-based refugees are perceived as leading a better livelihood as compared to those residents in camps, they face a number of challenges in Kenya, especially the women, who also carry the burden of taking care of the children (Jaji, 2009). Although the government of Kenya is signatory to the 1969 OAU protocol obliging African states to host refugees, it does not take any responsibility for their protection, maintenance and security (Murunga, 2005). On the other hand, the UNHCR regards camp confinement as the appropriate site for refugees. According to Kaiser (2006), states prefer the encampment of refugees for a number of related factors.

First, camps offer visibility of refugees and this is very useful especially when there is need to claim for burden sharing by other members of the international community. Secondly, camps offer a mechanism for containment and control, which helps to mitigate any perceived security threat in the short term. Finally, camps reduce the risk that refugees will gell with the host population and fail to repatriate when things improve in their own countries. The latter has been among the main reasons why the government of Kenya has been very concerned about the infiltration of Somali refugees especially in the context of heightened security threats posed by the Al Shabaab fundamentalists since the entry of the Kenya Defence Forces into Somalia in 2011.

The encampment policy has no doubt been motivated by the reality of increasing restrictions placed on refugee settlement in Africa by various national governments. Consequently, UNHCR has had to emphasize organized settlement for refugees particularly in camps. This could explain why many refugees particularly in different parts of Africa including in countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Sudan and Kenya, are confined to camps and have little opportunity to become self-supporting. However, this is not to say that refugees in camps are docile and just sit and wait for handouts from the donor agencies. Even in camps, Somali refugees in particular, are known to venture into lucrative enterprises. Contrary to what Kaiser(2006) observed that in Kenya, with settlements located in relatively remote and impoverished areas, employment and other income-generating activities for refugees are virtually absent, this could not be further from the truth. The refugees in Dadaab -Kenya are reported to take advantage of the close proximity of the refugee camps to the Somali border with Kenya (Murunga, 2005). Some also sell food stuffs and textiles, while others run businesses like restaurants as well as passenger taxi vans known as *matatus* in Kenya. So successful are some of the refugee entrepreneurs that they are no longer in a hurry to go back to their countries even after a return to normalcy in their countries of origin.

As Kaiser (2006) observes, refugees who remain outside the formal system of refugee registration and settlement are deprived of the refugee status to which they are entitled to. The interesting debate revolving around the question whether encampment is an appropriate and ethical way of meeting the needs of the refugees which has continued since the 1990s is therefore still relevant (2006:597). This explains why in spite of the fact that few people would openly support refugee encampment, it is still the only practicable response to the plight of refugees in difficult situations.

1.2 Challenges Experienced by Residents in Dadaab Refugee Camps

Choge (2005) has observed that the lives of refugees are characterized by a mixture of frustration and hope. This is mainly due to the harsh conditions in the refugee camps environment where most camps are located. The dismal conditions in refugee camps are aptly described by Tasew (2001), who singles out the hot sun and dust as making life in refugee camps unbearable. Kenyan Somali occupy the arid and semi-arid region of North Eastern Kenya. The region is characterised by hot climatic conditions mixed with very irregular short rainy periods. The environment cannot support sedentary mode of subsistence. The harsh climate and ‘inhospitable’ environment dictates a transhumance mode of living (Murunga, 2005). The climate of Dadaab is semi-arid and the dominant mode of subsistence for both the host and refugee populations is pastoralism. The town and camps are located on the Lagh Dera flood plain.

Though the climate is hot and dry, the Ewaso Ng’iro River occasionally floods and affects parts of Dagahaley and Ifo due to poor drainage. Poor soil composition and infrequent rainfall result in sparse vegetation. Building and energy resources / material are scarce and in high demand. Presently, the environment and life resources in the camps are over-extended and need intervention to mitigate and reduce the impact of adverse environmental stress. Nevertheless, in spite of this harsh life in refugee camps, many people prefer to stay in camps for many factors. Refugees have access to a number of services which they would have to forego in the event that they discard camp life. In the camps they have access to food, water and medical services, among other things. Children get access to education at Dadaab free of charge through the assistance of several Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Windle Trust, AVSI and Lutheran World federation, among other humanitarian agencies operating in the northern part of Kenya. Finally, refugees feel more secure within the confines of the camps than outside.

RCK (2012)’s description of refugee camps in Dadaab makes it clear that the environment resembles that of urban slums in several respects. Although various agencies provide water to refugees, the funding to sustain this is never assured. In many cases, refugees depend on portable water using pails and jerry cans. Similarly, provision of sanitation is a big problem especially given the high population in the camps. Quite often, Emergency communal latrines fill up quickly especially in the event of an influx of more refugees in a camp. Even when refugees participate in digging their own pit latrines for family, this leaves the camps without enough latrines. This inadequacy greatly increases the likelihood of disease outbreak and is a major challenge for the agencies that work.

Inadequate shelter is another major challenge in refugee camps. At any one time, there are thousands of families living in tents in different refugee camps. Some of the houses are made up of plastic sheeting

especially for new arrivals. Such shelter is vulnerable to regular destruction by severe weather and requires replacement regularly. The strong wind and occasional rains wreak havoc in Dadaab particularly due to the cotton soils in most of the camps. An oral source in Dadaab confirms that during the rainy season, the agencies operating in the area are forced to use tractors to pull out vehicles that often get stuck on the roads. This inevitably undermines the ability to supply provisions to the camps (Oral Interview, Benjamin-February, 2014).

A report by a consortium of agencies that provide humanitarian work in Dadaab, highlights the enormous challenges experienced by the refugees, particularly, children, youth and women in Dadaab (CARE, et al, 2012). The report points out that camps in Dadaab continue to be the scene of significant insecurity, violence and protection concerns for the refugee population. While acknowledging the efforts made by the government of Kenya to strengthen police presence in the camps, the report notes that police are not trusted by the refugee population. Many cases have been reported whereby the police have extorted for kick backs from refugees. In this sense, the police themselves are sometimes regarded as perpetrators of harassment and violence against the vulnerable refugee communities (Human Rights Watch, 2012; Jaji, 2009). Eye witness accounts of the nature of violence that takes place inside the refugee camps report cases of rapes, murders, assaults, shooting and gender-based violence. These vulnerable groups struggle to access basic services and protection (RCK, 2012).

Due to the harsh life in refugee camps, the longing and desire among refugees is to be able to go back home to rebuild their countries. This is one of the aspects of their life reflected in their music. However, refugees in the camps go through the motions of life like other members of the community in several ways and these motions of life are also depicted in artistic expressions especially in music and dance. As Choge (2005) has observed, refugees celebrate the birth of a new child. They also go to school as many facilities for learning have been established in Dadaab refugee camps by various agencies including the Lutheran World Federation and Windle Trust Kenya, in spite of the shortage of facilities and personnel. Refugees prepare meals and have wedding celebrations as well as sad events, like when they lose their loved ones. All these events are marked by music and other rituals in Dadaab.

As we have already seen, the situation of refugee camps in Dadaab is akin to the environment in urban slums of Africa, which are characterized by insecurity and lack of basic amenities. Wesonga et al (2005) have observed that youth in slums unlike other youth living in better neighborhoods', are exposed to economic, environmental, social and cultural hardships (2005:102). The problems range from unemployment, poor and overcrowded housing, lack of recreation space, poor sanitary conditions and unconstructed roads. RCK (2012), reports that the youth in Dadaab constitute 52 per cent of the total population and face enormous challenges quite similar to those of youth in the slums. Among other challenges experienced by vulnerable youths include lack of basic education and vocational training facilities. This leads to extreme frustration and loneliness and exposes them to other vulnerabilities such as sexual and economic exploitation by unscrupulous people. The Al Shabaab Islamic fundamentalists, for instance, are reported to recruit vulnerable youth into their militias using economic incentives (Muthoni, 2011). Frustration and loneliness among the youth in refugee camps, arises from psychological and physiological changes taking place in the society as well as the breakdown of the traditional family due to war and insecurity in their countries of origin.

Due to the large influx into Kenya by refugees from the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa, the government of Kenya established the Department of Refugees Authority (DRA), to handle issues to do with refugees. During our research on refugee music in Dadaab, three Music and dance groups were identified through the DRA, namely: the youth team, women team and a combined group of elderly men and women refugees. It was clear from the very outset that music plays a crucial role in refugee lives. The more elderly refugees confided that most of the dances and music they performed was based on their cultural music back in Somalia. This information was confirmed by the staff working in the agencies (Oral interview-Lewis Mwaniki-February 2014). This means that music and dance helps the refugees to consolidate their identity by preserving their cultural traditions of music and dance in a foreign land. Besides, music helps the refugee communities in the camps to get some form of entertainment (UNHCR, 2011B).

1.3 Types of Songs and Dances in Dadaab

Ntarangwi (2007) has observed that many communities in the world have traditionally used music to express and construct their identities, to create knowledge networks that have assisted co-ethnics and nationals to share, generate, and disseminate information (2007:14). In the context of the above difficulties experienced by refugee communities highlighted above, it can be concluded that music and dance therefore constitute an opportunity for making life more bearable for such communities. According to UNHCR (2011B), anecdotal evidence and some limited studies have confirmed that artistic activity plays an important, though often overlooked, role in the lives of refugees who live under encampment conditions. The report also notes that in spite of the challenging environment of the refugee camps in places like Dadaab, many of the refugee camps provide sites for artistic activity across the globe.

The Government of Kenya through the Department of Refugee Authority (DRA), United Nations High

Commission for Refugees and the various humanitarian agencies are therefore keen to support music and dance activities among the refugees in Dadaab. There are several occasions that provide such opportunities for promotion of cultural activities such as music and dance for entertainment. These include public holidays such as Kenyan national holidays and international holidays such as the World refugees Day and World Environment Day, among others. Dance and music is also used to entertain visitors who frequent Dadaab refugee camps from time to time. A number of dance and music groups have established themselves among the refugees and are supported with clothes, food and sometimes token money payment for entertaining guests. According to UNHCR (2011B), Many benefits of artistic activity may be enjoyed at significantly less financial cost than alternative programmes aimed at similar ends, making such programs more widely accessible in areas in which funds are already stretch to their limit covering the basic needs of physical survival.

Music and dance in Dadaab refugee camps can be categorized into three: First, there are songs and dances for the youth. As we shall see shortly, the youth in the camps are heterogeneous and therefore different youth groups preoccupy themselves with their preferred type of music and dance. Secondly, we have music and dance for the adult men. Among the Somali community, the most common music and dance for men and women include Hamari and Shirieb. Hamari combines Arab and Somali style of music – dance and involves the swinging of hips. It is very close to the taarab music and dance popular among the Swahili coastal peoples of Kenya and Tanzania. *Shirieb* performance also involves both men and women. This performance entails making a circle whereby men dance and clap while moving around the circle (Fordowsa, Oral Interview, and March 2014). This is performed in praise of the clan and their land. Sometimes, it can also be done in praise of the bridal and groom's family if performed in weddings. The *Saar* dance is performed by men and involves traditional healing, meaning that traditional doctors are depicted as incharge of the performance. Women songs and dances among the Somali community are the most common. The most popular songs and dances are wedding dances referred to as *Buranbur*. As *Choge* (2005) has observed correctly, weddings take place among the refugees from time to time and these are marked with great celebration. However, in addition to singing and dancing during wedding occasions, *buranbur* is popular for a number of other reasons and this could explain why it is also popular during public holidays, even when no wedding would be taking place. First, music plays an important role of entertaining the society especially among vulnerable communities such as refugees. Wedding songs and dances carry a positive message that things will be better at a future date. They help the society to remember with nostalgia some of the good things they experienced in the past and by so doing make life more bearable. Secondly, *buranbur* is appreciated not only by the Somali refugees but also by other refugee communities as it is an expression of joy in a desperate and hopeless situation in exile away from home and family. In general, Somali women in Dadaab perform songs and dances to celebrate various rites of passage. Besides other benefits, music and dance empowers people to use their individual voices to deepen their sense of a shared cultural identity. Across cultures, music and dance have physical, emotional and social benefits to members of the society (Ogechi, 2007).

In addition to separate men and women dances and songs, there are those dances and songs that are performed by a combination of men and women. Singing as part of a group allows people to overcome shyness and nervous reactions. Experts maintain that that singing strengthens the lungs, improves posture and oxygen flow to the blood stream and brain. While the elders perform cultural music and dance, the youth perform very different music and dance in Dadaab. This can be explained by a number of factors. While the Somali elders- both men and women, re-enact some of the motions of life in their original homelands such as Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia, the youths have no similar experience. Even some of those who were born in their countries of origin have little recollection of some of the events that took place two decades ago. Some of the most popular Somali dances are performed by a combined group of both men and women and resemble some form of drama- cum dance. Such combined dances by both men and women involve different rhythms for men and women. One such dance involves the women complaining about actions of the husband, while the men respond in a different rhythm. Besides highlighting the gender relations affecting the family in the refugee community, such music provides entertainment as well as educates the members on the issues affecting the community. At the same time, it helps to enhance cultural identity among members of the community (Kinyanjui, 2013).

In general, the songs and dances performed by the adults in Dadaab, whether by women alone or by men, often contain a number of common and important messages, according to informants. The music exhorts members of the Dadaab refugee communities to cultivate cultural identity and unity. Some music also warns about the dangers of sexual immorality which leads to evils such as HIV/AIDS. Girls in particular face enormous challenges including the risk of being raped or assaulted especially when collecting firewood in the bush. Indeed, they are underrepresented at all levels of education due to high school drop-out rates. Consequently very few women in the refugee camps access higher education and this is also one of the themes captured in the refugee music in Dadaab. The needs in Dadaab refugee camps are enormous and often humanitarian agencies do not have sufficient funds to provide essential services for the care and protection of encamped populations (RCK,

2012). Barriers confronting girls' access, retention and achievement are grounded in social-cultural norms which put girls in a subordinate position to boys. Shortage of female role models and lack of enough trained teachers in the camps also pose a challenge to provision of equitable education to both girls and boys in Dadaab. Consequently, some songs emphasize the importance of education, while others provide some form of counseling for those who are either married or planning to marry (Oral Interview, Benjamin Mutio, Kenyatta University, and February, 2014). Some of the dangers in the refugee camps such as insecurity, rape and murders, are also decried in some of the songs and dances. It is in this environment that artistic activities provide useful tools for improving the quality of life for camp residents, mainly as a vehicle to address psychosocial issues; as an educational tool; and as an effective medium for behavior change communication (UNHCR, 2011b).

Commenting on the role played by popular culture in African communities, Kinyanjui (2013) observes that such music represents the normal things that people perform as they engage in livelihoods, society, politics and economy on daily basis. In addition, it highlights popular opinions, tastes and cultures in an imaginative and creative way. Music restores and institutes hope in people's lives because of its cathartic nature. Moreover, it allows people to release their deep-seated emotions, document and narrate their experiences, convey information, construct different world views and find meaning and identity. The role played by music among refugees in Dadaab can be understood in terms of knowledge networks. This refers to the connections between people based on what they know, how to share what they know, and how to make decisions based on this knowledge. Ultimately, knowledge networks is about sharing, exchanging, illustrating, and taking action (Ntarangwi, 2007: 14).

1.4 Youth Dance and Music in Dadaab

Ogechi (2007) observes that youth identity has generally been labeled youth culture. Given that culture is a way of life which includes codes of manners, dress language, religion, ritual, norms of behavior and systems of belief, one of the behavioral norms of youth identity is associated with a sub-culture, which is manifest in youth's language choices (2007:132). The use of slang by the youth, for instance, has been explained in terms of the need of the in-members to invoke group identity and solidarity. However, one of the points to be made from the very outset is that the youth in Dadaab refugee camps are heterogeneous: They are a reflection of the different communities represented in the refugee camps. These include the Somali, who are the majority. In addition, there are some youths from South Sudan and from Southern Ethiopia (Oral Interview, Lewis Mwaniki-February, 2014). While the Somali youths are predominantly Muslim by religion, most of the youth from South Sudan and Ethiopia comprise members of different Christian denominations, with Catholics being more pronounced than Protestants. There is also a large group of Youths who do not associate with any religion whatsoever. This cultural divergence is clearly illustrated in the music and dance performed by the youth in Dadaab.

One of the youth groups which performed songs and dances at a ceremony marking the handing over of Dadaab Constituency Development Fund learning facility to Kenyatta University in 2013, comprised boys and girls from the Gambella community which originates from southern Ethiopia. The style of performance and even the outfit worn by this group were radically different, not only from that of Somali refugee's youths, but also from that of the more elderly folks in the Gambella community. This group fitted the description of Marc Sommers of the returnee diaspora youth from Kenya and Uganda in Juba (Sommers and Schwartz, 2011). Male youth wore the so-called nigga clothes which consist of baggy jeans that expose a bit of underwear and T-shirts sporting hip-hop icons. The outfit worn by girls included tight trousers and short blouses. Among the Gambella group, it is noticeable that boys and girls are equally outgoing and girls are not afraid of dancing and singing with boys. This is unlike the Somali community where girls and boys rarely intermingle during social occasions and even when they do, the boundary between boys and girls is very clear as illustrated in the photos attached. The most popular music and dance performed by the Gambella group of refugee youths is the hip-hop type of music, like the type performed by African American musicians.

Shiine, a Somali refugee youthful urban-based musician in Kenya, points out that after witnessing the appalling conditions under which Somali refugees lived in Eastleigh-Nairobi, he decided to promote rap music among the refugee youths in the estate. In his view, most refugee youths are idle and disillusioned, and therefore easily fall prey to false doctrines. Consequently, he decided to establish a music group starting with his own friends. His club, which was formed in 2003, took the name Waayaha Cusub. Shiine has been quoted as having stated that his greatest mission, and that of the group, is to save the next generation of Somali youth from the pain and suffering that he personally experienced, by spreading the message of peace and reconciliation. Although Shiine's group operates in Nairobi, it could provide an indication of the nature music and dance among the refugee youth in Kenya. Shiine, has been quoted as having confirmed that of the 16 members that constitute his club, 11 are Somalis from different clans. This has been done deliberately to send the message that there is great need for inclusiveness among refugees and to campaign against inter-clan conflicts which have contributed to the destruction of the Somali community. The rest of the members of his band constitute youths from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

Other popular music performed by the Gambella youths in Dadaab include rap and reggae music, which carries messages of empowerment. The hair style of a number of refugee youth also illustrates this influence from African Americans in terms of dreadlocks for both boys and girls. Although it is not possible to pin point the main factors that motivate the youth to love this type of music, it is clear that it makes them feel uplifted. It can also be argued that given the adventurous nature of youth, many of them hope to travel and possibly lead a better life in the United States of America. This vision is perhaps not very remote given that many refugees have benefitted from relocation to the USA. A case in point is the community of Burundi refugees in the City of Pittsburgh in the state of Pennsylvania. The lost boys of South Sudan, who were also assisted to relocate to the USA, are another good example of youths who have benefitted from such relocation.

As we have already seen, the youth refugees access some computer games, video tapes and cds containing music from the USA and the Western world through their kith and kin that are living in the Western world. Some of the out fits they wear are also sent by family and friends in the Diaspora. It should be noted that rap and reggae music requires energetic singing and dance. Music experts argue that such music and dance releases endorphins which can help reduce feelings of depression and anxiety among vulnerable groups such as the refugees. Such music and dances can also make the youth feel uplifted and at times euphoric. According to UNHCR (2011B), by performing hip hop music, the youth seek to use their music as a means of creating hope in the midst of the seemingly hopeless intractability of their plight. Drawing on traditional Palestinian narrative and musical traditions as well as Western hip-hop and rap genres, youthful artists in a Jordanian refugee camp were reported to express not only the violence around them but also the beauty of their culture and the possibilities for the future(2011B: 30).

One of the rap songs performed by Gambella youth in Dadaab is a Swahili and sheng (Slang) song that is also quite popular with Kenyan youths. This could imply that contrary to the view that refugee youths do not interact with youths from the host communities, this could not be farther from the truth as youths share a common identity (Ogechi, 2007).The song highlights the dangers of HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Gambella group had modern music equipment including lap top computers, loud speakers and video tapes, as opposed to the drums and sticks used by elders and Somali youths.

As we have already pointed out, youths in Dadaab camps are not homogeneous given the different ethnic communities residing in the refugee camps. Whereas a large group of youths from South Sudan and Gambella prefer rap, reggae and hip hop music, there are others who prefer gospel music. The Catholics and Protestants prefer such gospel music, which is characterized by messages of hope in the gospel and the Old Testament. This type of music, is mainly derived from the Kenyan media and churches, and is often in Swahili language and English. The suffering of the Jews in Egypt and ultimate salvation are major themes in such music. Such slow rhythmic music also has a number of merits according to experts. First, it helps the youth and adults to relax, slow down breathing and heartbeat. In this way, such gospel music helps to connect the group's emotional well-being and relationships. Secondly, by virtue of singing together, the group develops a sense of togetherness and unity. Moreover, it also creates a sense of identity among the members, as well as sense of belonging.

The Somali youths, particularly those who come from devout Muslim families, also prefer slow rhythmic music especially in Arabic, which also contains messages of hope. Similarly, this music helps not only to unite the youth and adult Muslims, but also helps them to relax. Like gospel music, Islamic music helps to connect the group's emotional well-being and enhances relationships and creates a sense of group identity. This is further enhanced by frequent prayers in the mosque alongside other members of the Muslim community.

1.5 Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is very clear that in order to understand refugee vices in the form of music and dance, one must understand the circumstances that led to the influx of refugees into Kenya. While the elders respond to the refugee situation by remembering life in their homeland through music and dance, the youth who may not have recollection of life back in their original homeland respond differently. This can be seen in the rap, hip hop and reggae music of the Gambella youths from Southern Ethiopia. As Ntarangwi (2007) has pointed out, music and dance provides an important opportunity for the sharing of knowledge networks. The elders sing not only to provide entertainment, but also to entrench cultural values in their societies through music and dance. On the other hand, the youth hopes and ambitions are carried through their songs and dances. Their determination to keep track of hip hop, rap and reggae music, as well as their mode of dressing demonstrates that youth have a common identity with youths well beyond the refugee camps. Music and dance also helps to enhance a message of hope, while providing useful education. Nevertheless, the youth in Dadaab are not homogeneous. While some embrace Christian gospel songs, others are Muslims and they mainly prefer to sing and listen to Muslim music, whose rhythms are slower as opposed to reggae and other forms of music.

References

- Choge, E.J., (2005): "The Role of Religious Organizations in promoting Peace Education among the refugees and their Neighbours: A Case Study of Kakuma Refugee Camp". In *Maarifa Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Volume1No. 2, (2005).
- GOK (2009): Report of population Census in Kenya.
- Kaiser, T., (2006): "Between a Camp and a Hard Place: Rights, Livelihood and Experiences of the Local Settlement System for Long-Term Refugees in Uganda ": *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Dec., 2006), pp. 597-621.
- Kinyanjui, M.N., (2013): "Gikuyu popular culture music: ordinary peoples' perspective on economy and society", Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi (Unpublished paper).
- Murunga, R.G., (2005): "Conflict in Somalia and Crime in Kenya: Understanding the Trans-Territoriality of Crime ". In *African and Asian Studies*, volume 4, nos. 1-2 (2005).
- Njihia, c., (2013): "Coping Mechanisms of Somali women refugees in Eastleigh, KENYA, 1991-2010", Unpublished MA Dissertation, Kenyatta University.
- Ntarangwi, M.,(2007): "Music, Identity and Swahili Networks of Knowledge". In Kimani Njogu and Oluoch-Olunya (EDS.), *Cultural Production and Social Change in Kenya: Building Bridges*, Twaweza Communications.
- Ogechi, O. N., (2007): "Building Bridges Through Trichotomous Youth Identities in Kenya; evidence from Code Choice". In Kimani Njogu and Oluoch-Olunya (EDS.), *Cultural Production and Social Change in Kenya: Building Bridges*, Twaweza Communications.
- RCK, (2012): "Asylum under threat". In *Human Rights Watch, Kenya*, (2012).
- Sargajan bin Kadii Somali (2012): "Artist uses Rap Music to Fight Al-Shabaab", Nairobi March 19TH 2012.
- Sommers, M., (2007): "Contours of the Youth Employment Challenge in Four West African Nations". United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). (Unpublished report).
- Tasew, Y.T., (2001): *Agonizing Wounds*, Wellington, New Zealand: refugee Migrant Service.
- UNHCR (2011): " A Positive Review of the Role of Artistic Activities in Refugee Camps, Policy Development and Evaluation service, UNHCR, Geneva-Switzerland.
- Wesonga, W.P., Akong'a, J.J., and Musebe, O.R., (2005):" Youth Groups and Poverty Reductionin Mathare Slum, Nairobi: Some Constraints and Remedies". In *Maarifa Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Volume1, No. 2 (2005). <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/05/23/kenya-refugees>
- Oral Interview, Lewis Mwaniki, February, 2014-Kenyatta University, Nairobi
- Jaji, R., (2009): "Refugee Women and the Experiences of Local Integration in Nairobi, Kenya". PhD Dissertation, Bayreuth University-Germany.



Combined dance by youths from Sudan in Dadaab



Traditional dance among Refugee Women in Dadaab



Somali Youth song in Dadaab



The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

