EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH:
A CASE STUDY OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH
WITH YOUNG REFUGEES IN DAGAHALEY CAMP, KENYA

by

ELIZABETH COOPER

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Abstract

This thesis is a personal account and analysis of the methodological considerations, choices and activities that I undertook in a research project about out-of-school youths in the Dadaab Refugee Camps of Northeastern Province, Kenya. It chronicles two distinct stages of research in the camps, the first in 2003 which was a blended experience of pilot data collection and advocacy research, and the second in 2004 which was an attempt at a pure model of Participatory Action Research (PAR), as well as the personal, theoretical and practical deliberations that were a preoccupation before, during, between and following these experiences in Dadaab.

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the empirical documentation of implementing PAR as well as its potential for realizing various forms and degrees of empowerment among participants. A review of the literature that espouses and critiques PAR is included as is a review of the literature about research with refugees and in refugee camps, but the primary focus of the thesis is experiential data. Thus, the “Methodology chapter” (Chapter 5) may be thought of as the nucleus of this thesis with the rest of the paper orbiting around it to try to make sense of how the methodology should be approached and how it may have achieved some forms of empowerment.

I argue that PAR can provide a social opportunity through which the realms of human agency and freedom may be expanded. For individuals and collectives as disempowered as youths in a long-term refugee camp, the values that direct PAR, which I summarize as authenticity in relationships, hold unique potential for human flourishing. An important lesson from this research experience is that the significance of synchronizing such an opportunity for human flourishing with the imagination and ambition of youth participants should not be underestimated.
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Prologue: July 16, 2003: A Methodological Breakthrough

I think my "breakthrough" in this research endeavour came during a lonely, confused and fearful night spent alone in a dark room, imagining myself to be Hassan, a twenty year old Somali refugee who I had become friends with in Dagahaley Refugee Camp. I was imagining what it might feel like to be him that night going to lie down in his mud and stick home amidst the other refugees' 'temporary' dwellings, with no belief that the next day or any of those that would follow would hold anything different from the hopelessness and idleness he experienced that day. I wondered what he might be lying awake thinking about. I wondered how alone and vulnerable he might feel given what I knew about his separation from his family and his particular marginalization within the Somali refugee population. I was afraid during those hours of what it was to be him, how it must have felt to say "goodbye" to me as I departed for the plane to take me away, and I cried with pity.

When dawn broke, I realized what was more pitiful was that the night before had been the first time I had felt real pain about what I learned at the Dadaab Refugee Camps and it had come at the end of a month of data collection in the camps, when I was safely tucked separately in a Nairobi guesthouse. Somehow I had evaded feeling so distressed while I was in Dadaab. Why did my emotions re-emerge after the fact of learning? Why did I wait to try to feel the personal toll of someone living in a refugee camp? While collecting information in the camps through such personal means as sitting down to listen to people's stories and concerns and ideas, I had obviously remained aloof in some ways; choosing – surprisingly subconsciously – to assume a role of professionalism, albeit sympathetic professionalism, in "my work". This kind of separation of my emotions from my interactions, as well as from my processing of information, is unnatural for me. From a research perspective, I wondered what kind of artifice it might have manifested in the analysis I produced: Was my stifling of emotion an attempt to achieve objectivity? What else had I been inattentive to and what did this preclude from my data collection and analysis? From a personal perspective, I felt like I had been dishonest with myself and the world around me, and I felt ashamed for my cowardice.
In fact, Hassan is the only person I had come to know well enough during that first month in Dadaab to be able to imagine his life in detail. And the many insights he had shared with me provided my most important reference points for how I wrote about the situation in the Dadaab Camps as well as my commitment to return to the camps to appropriately address the research problem. I began to think that if this one personal interaction could hold such significance for my own understandings and motivation, it hinted at how the research should actually be done.

I felt ridiculous for crying about what it might feel like to be Hassan. Of course, I could never authentically feel what it is to be Hassan or any other young refugee who has experienced civil war, the loss of a family and growing up in a camp. But I could learn from him how he felt and why, rather than making my own assumptions. I also guiltily questioned what the use was of me being alone with knowledge from him anyway, when Hassan and his peers are left behind, hoping for me to return or someone else to come so that there would be a way to act on their hopes for change. I mistrusted how I would bear this burden for them, realizing that they would be more determined with it. It seemed they had a right to lead their own struggle, ensuring its best chance at success.

So my resolution to be more intimately involved in the research process with young refugees in Dagahaley Camp was born that night. From then on, I wouldn't tolerate any pretense in this research, not pretense in the form of my own assumed objectivity or expertise, nor pretense as to who this research was to be for. I didn’t like what those belated hours awake in the middle of the night in Nairobi said about me, and from then on I realized that this experience of research in the Dadaab Refugee Camps would represent a test of both my character and my conscience. To be meaningful, this research had to improve the possibility of hope for the young people in the camps who it was about. I wanted to find a way to put them first; in my own considerations, in their own considerations and in the considerations of others. I hoped that Hassan would not feel as powerless the next time I left. I wanted the participants in the research I was going to facilitate and me to be able to go to sleep the night after we said our next goodbyes.
knowing that things were better than they had been before we had worked together. I wasn’t wishing as much for a happy ending as a hopeful start.

1.0 The Research Project Introduced

In 2003 I was invited to the Dadaab Refugee Camps in Northeastern Province, Kenya to investigate the significance of a burgeoning out-of-school youth population. Program Managers with CARE International in Kenya (CARE Kenya), the non-governmental organization (NGO) responsible for education and community development programming in the three camps, had concerns originating from their emergent quantitative data about the so-called “school leaver” population. While each year a growing number of young refugee women and men in the Dadaab Camps are passing primary education examinations, limited secondary school capacity prevents the majority of these youths from continuing school, which leaves most without productive enterprise. By December 2003, there were over 2,000 young people in the camps’ new “school leaver” population and it is forecasted that by 2009 there will be more than 11,000 refugee youths in the camps who will have completed primary school without the opportunity of advancing to secondary school (CARE Kenya 2003). Various NGO staff members were also aware that out-of-school youths were idle and frustrated in the camps and they surmised that such a situation was leading to dangerous and anti-social behaviour in the camps and beyond. Recognizing that their intuitive concerns were lacking credible documentation, CARE Kenya’s Program Manager in Dadaab requested that research be done to collect and analyze the experiences and perspectives of out-of-school youths so as to inform youth-focused program planning. As a graduate student researcher volunteering to come to the Dadaab Camps, I was welcomed to implement such a research project.

This thesis focuses on the methodological choices and activities that occurred during the course of this research about refugee youths in the Dadaab Camps. Considering the potential vulnerabilities of the population about whom I wanted to learn, as well as my

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1 According to a UNHCR 2002 report, options for durable solutions for the Somali refugees in the Dadaab Camps are limited and it is expected that most will continue to live in the camps for the next several years.
lack of experience doing research in a situation as complex as a protracted refugee camp, this entire undertaking has been characterized by my absorption in the ethical and practical questions related to how to most appropriately conduct this research. Supporting this process of careful deliberation was a strategy to divide my time in the Dadaab Refugee Camps in to two stages with a year between these periods. The organization of the research in this way ensured ample time to contemplate and plan the research methodology and methods. Thus, this thesis is able to offer both an experiential and literature review of choosing and implementing participatory action research with youths in a refugee camp.

1.1 PAR: An Under-studied Methodology under Study

My preoccupation with this research has been with its process, more than its product. While a real problem was addressed, and, in fact, the research activities were organized to investigate this problem, the predominant theme for my own analysis was how the research was conducted and if its conduct resulted in gains among participating individuals and groups beyond the obvious gains in knowledge about the problem. I set myself the admittedly ambitious, and arguably idealistic or impractical, goal of trying to learn whether the research process itself could support gains in the empowerment of the participating refugee youth. The research question I set for myself before returning to the Dadaab Camps for my second and final phase of this project was: Can participatory research in a refugee camp context engage and empower refugee youth participants? The subsidiary questions were: If so, how? and If not, why not?

This goal necessitated a multi-layered approach to the research design that began, continued and concluded with focused self-reflection. While there was an obvious layer of this project that focused on a tangible research problem and project, I also tried to suspend myself in another layer, in my mind's eye an over-layer, which was constantly engaged in analysis of the project's participatory process. Such attempted suspension outside of the process, during simultaneous intimate engagement in the research process, seems inherently contradictory and impossible. I argue, however, that I was not attempting an objective study and evaluation of tangible outcomes, but rather a very
personal (for me and the other eleven refugee youth participants) reflection about what occurred in terms of psychological empowerment and the realization of, or potential for, individual and collective agency among participants. Thus, this study focuses on relationships and the personal development that was witnessed in these relationships.

This thesis explains why I chose participatory action research (PAR) as the research methodology, how this methodology was implemented and an evaluation of this research approach. PAR is a research methodology positioned by its proponents to be antithetical to so-called scientific models of research in that it rejects the role of the outside researcher as an expert, but rather values local people as experts; it focuses on participatory decision-making with research participants (who are regarded as actors in research rather than subjects or passive objects of knowledge) and an experiential learning-by-doing approach, rather than a top-down, standardized, and attempted objective study approach; and it emphasizes the enhancement of local power and possibilities for action rather than the extraction of knowledge for outsiders to analyze and use to draw their own conclusions. One commonly-cited reason for adopting a PAR approach is to seek gains in empowerment of research participants (ibid). This is the theory which I decided to put to the test in Dagahaley Camp.

PAR has been accused of being a methodology lacking in rigorous analysis (Cleaver 2001, Cooke and Kathari 2001, Cernea 1995). Critics vent significant frustration at the moralistic claims made by PAR practitioners in the absence of evidence or even documented processes (ibid). Both ideals of participation and empowerment are under attack and acceptance of PAR as a credible and reliable research methodology continues to be threatened. What seems to most exasperate these critics is that PAR theorists have a tendency to assume too much in both procedural instruction as well as impacts. For example, Frances Cleaver writes, participation is simply assumed to be a good thing: “an act of faith in development, something we believe in and rarely question” (Cleaver 2001: 36), and yet “the rhetoric of intent is still far ahead of the design for action to promote

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2 A review of PAR literature and critiques is found in Chapter 4.
participation” (Cernea 1995: 25). As the World Bank’s long-time in-house sociologist Michael Cernea has warned, participatory research theorists “… have been busier advocating participation than working out social techniques for organizing it. But without the know-how to organize it, participation will remain a hot ideology lacking a social technology.”(Cernea 1995: 25) Jacqueline Lane adds “… it seems that NGOs are unsure how to translate the rhetoric of participation into practice. On the ground participation can mean very different things to different people.” (Lane 1995: 190) There is cause for concern, as Dianne Rocheleau notes, that some permutations of participatory research may actually be undermining PAR’s other central goal of empowering or benefiting participants, and thus we need to be vigilant about what we mean when we invoke the methodology of PAR:

Uncritiqued, participation in theory and practice can help to foster a positive image of development-as-usual, which has been somewhat less than benign with many of the world’s people over the past 30 years. Participation can be a wolf in sheep’s clothing – a vehicle for a new form of manipulation or intervention. It might even serve as a ‘Trojan horse’ to bring a new level of global cultural, ecological or economic restructuring processes directly to local communities, by-passing potential buffers and pre-empting critical review by national agencies or the communities themselves. (Rocheleau 1994: 1)

With such complaints have come calls for empirical evidence and analyses of the effects of PAR, with deliberate focus on process (Cleaver 2001, Cooke and Kothari 2001).

Significant to this research, in addition to the gaps in analyses of PAR methodology, there is a general lacuna of documentation of research processes in refugee situations. In a recent review of refugee research, UNHCR policy researchers note that “much of the work on forced migration is weakened by the fact that key components of the research design and methodology are never revealed.”(Jacobsen and Landau 2003: 186) They criticize a tendency favouring “‘advocacy research’, where researchers already know what they want to see and say, and come away from the research having ‘proved’ it” and claim that “refugee studies, and humanitarian studies in general, reveal a paucity of good social science, rooted in a lack of rigorous conceptualization and research design, weak
methods and a general failure to address the ethical problems of researching vulnerable communities” (Ibid: 187)

Certainly, studies of participatory action research processes in refugee situations are lacking, in a large part because the methodology seems to be posed in inherent tension with the essentially top-down process of humanitarian assistance (Hallam 1998). Tania Kaiser, writing for the UNHCR, finds it necessary to ask in a recent policy paper: "Can the participatory approaches which are entering the mainstream of developmental work, particularly in relation to innovative strategies of impact assessment, be applied to the humanitarian arena?" (Kaiser 2002: 1) What she finds is that while many of the major international organizations, donors and NGOs include guidelines for participatory processes with the intended beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance (e.g. UNHCR's mission statement states that “UNHCR is committed to the principle of participation by consulting refugees on decisions that affect their lives”), these processes are not being systematically implemented and much of the information about their implementation is anecdotal (ibid). From such anecdotal information Kaiser notes that many of humanitarian practitioners feel constrained by a lack of know-how for implementation (ibid).

Very little participatory case study research with refugee youths\(^3\) has been published despite the strong endorsements of participatory research as an ethical methodology for research with refugee populations (Krulfeld and Macdonald 1998, Hinton 1995) and with children and adolescents who have experienced conflict (Women’s Commission 2004, 2002, 2001, 2000a, 2000b UNICEF 2002, Boyd 2000, Bowden 2000). An important exception is the recent work of the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children (the Women’s Commission), which includes participatory research projects with war-affected or persecuted adolescents in Kosovo, Northern Uganda, and Sierra Leone. The findings of these three research ventures argue for further investigation with similar

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\(^3\) There are varying definitions among international organizations and states for different categories of young people, as well as varying definitions among the youth in the Dadaab Camps. The United Nations offers the following guidelines for their policies: children are under 18 years of age; adolescents are between the ages of 10 and 19; youth are aged 15 to 24; and the general term of young people refers to individuals between 10 and 24 years old. In this thesis, my references to youth are consistent with the age group between 15 and 24 although CARE Kenya’s own definition of youth includes ages 15 to 36.
methods, citing that young participants often describe that they feel separated from
decision-making that affects their lives and thus limited in their opportunities for personal
development (Lowicki 2002). However, as anthropologist and child rights campaigner Jo
Boyden (2000) cautions, while participatory research warrants welcome into the field of
studies with children facing adversity, its impacts and implications require careful
monitoring.

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute documentation and analysis of how participatory
action research served as a methodology with refugee youths in one case study. A
consistent theme across the PAR literature, forced migration literature and literature about
research with vulnerable young people is that such empirical evidence is necessary in order
to gain a more informed and credible perspective on the methodology’s relevance and
potential for transferability. Through this case study I offer an argument of why PAR may
be chosen as an ethical and efficacious methodology. I also provide a detailed description
and evaluation of how PAR was enacted and what can be learned from this particular
experience. This thesis represents my story of some of what I learned through the
experience.

1.2 Organization of Thesis
The following six chapters of this thesis provide a background description of the research
context of the Dadaab Refugee Camps, an explanation of the ideological, theoretical and
practical considerations that led to me to choose participatory action research as an
appropriate methodology for research with youths in the Dadaab Camps, a documentation
of the research process, an analysis of how this process supported or undermined
empowerment of the research participants and other intended beneficiaries, and final
statements about the transferability of PAR.

The principal thrust of this thesis is an account of the inner workings of the research
process, both for me as a facilitator as well as for the research participants as individuals
and as a collective so that this thesis may contribute to our understanding and
development of PAR as a social technology. More specific content about the Dadaab
Camps’ out-of-school youth population that was produced through my research involvement in the camps, and which was the primary interest of CARE Kenya and other NGO audiences, is attached as Appendix 1 (a report I produced independently in July 2003 after one month in the camps) and Appendix 2 (a report that eleven refugee youths and I produced together after seven weeks of PAR in Dagahaley Camp). These reports are explained in this thesis and may be regarded as the most tangible outcomes of an experience that enjoyed varying degrees of tangibility and intangibility – all of which I attempt to include as the domain of this analysis of the research.

2.0 The Dadaab Refugee Camps

There are approximately 134,000 refugees living in three camps located near the village of Dadaab in Kenya’s Northeastern Province, some 90 kilometres west of the border between Kenya and Somalia (CARE Kenya 2004). The names of the camps are Dagahaley, Hagadera and Ifo, but they are commonly referred to in international policy documents as well as by donor agencies as the “Dadaab Camps”. Ifo Camp was established in 1991 and Dagahaley and Hagadera in 1992 in response to hundreds of thousands of people fleeing into Kenya from Somalia. In 1990-91 more than 400,000 Somalis crossed into Kenya seeking refuge from the outbreak of clan-based conflicts and widespread famine that followed the overthrow of General Mohamed Siad Barre’s twenty-two year dictatorial rule. For several years these refugees lived in several smaller refugee camps, but between 1994 and 1997 UNHCR consolidated all of the refugees in Kenya into two major camp settlements, those near Dadaab for mainly Somali refugees and camps near Kakuma in the northwestern corner of Kenya for mainly Sudanese refugees. Today, approximately 97% of the Dadaab Camps’ refugee inhabitants are from Somalia, and predominately from southern Somalia since refugees from Somalia’s northern regions (the self-declared independent Republic of Somaliland and the self-declared autonomous state of Puntland) have now repatriated given the relative level of stability experienced in these areas (UNHCR 2002). Numerous warlords and factions are still fighting for control of the city of Mogadishu and other southern regions while discussions concerning the establishment of a government in southern Somalia continue unresolved. The camps’ minority populations are comprised of Ogaden Somalis from
Ethiopia, asylum seekers from southern Sudan, and smaller groups of Ethiopian Christians and refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi (ibid).

The Dadaab Camps are enforced settlements representing a deliberate policy of encampment due to the Government of Kenya's continued opposition to integrating these long-standing refugees into the economic and social life of the 'host' country\(^4\). Accordingly, the camps are located in remote and desolate areas devoid of cultivable land and advanced infrastructure such as paved roads and easy communication. This semi-arid desert region is sparsely populated by nomadic and mainly ethnic Somali pastoralists and has long represented contested space (Hyndman 2000).

The first officially enforced border between Kenya and Somalia was established by the British colonial administration in 1909, diving ethnic Somalis between the two colonial territories. Prior to the cessation of British colonial administration in Kenya in 1960, a United Nations commission found that the overwhelming majority of Somalis living in the Northeastern Province preferred unification with the newly independent Somali Democratic Republic (comprising the areas that before 1960 were British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland) rather than remain politically part of Kenya (ibid). However,

\(^4\) The Kenyan Government has publicly committed to developing new legislation that will increase the mobility and economic rights of refugees in the country (United Nations Kenya Resident Coordinator Office 2003).
Kenya's president-to-be objected and the British conceded, leaving this region as part of Kenya. Ethnic Somalis in the region revolted, and the Government of Kenya responded to the ongoing tension in the region by instituting a 'state of emergency' policy that lasted from 1963 to 1991. As Jeff Crisp, of the UNHCR, described in 2000, "The border areas of north-west and north-east Kenya have always been insecure and weakly governed, characterized by banditry, cattle rustling and insurgency, as well as violent clashes between Kenyan army and local armed groups." (Crisp 2000: 618)

Since 1991 the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has administered the Dadaab Camps with protection services provided by the Government of Kenya police forces. To fulfill its broad mandate of providing basic services to the refugees, UNHCR has sub-contracted various service delivery programs to a few other organizations. CARE International in Kenya has also been involved in the Dadaab Camps since 1991 and today is responsible for water and sanitation services, food distribution services, education and community development services, which is a sector including a range of activities from micro-credit loaning to psychological counseling and physical rehabilitation. The World Food Programme (WFP) is responsible for food provision, the Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) implements medical services and environmental programs (e.g. tree planting for wind blocks and live fencing) and the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) offers services related to sexually transmitted disease awareness, counseling and intervention. Given the instability of the region, all of these agencies’ offices are located in armed compounds next to the village of Dadaab (7 km from Ifo Camp, 15 km to Dagahaley Camp, 17 km to Hagadera Camp); and their staff are driven out to work in the camps with armed escorts during the days, returning to the Dadaab compound each evening from which staff can not venture after 6:00PM. CARE Kenya is the only agency working in the camps which also houses staff in compounds at each of the three camps.

According to a UNHCR 2002 report, options for durable solutions (repatriation, resettlement or local integration) for the Somali refugees in the Dadaab Camps are limited (UNHCR 2002). It is expected that these refugees will continue to rely on
international assistance as delivered in the Dadaab Camps. Protracted refugee situations, such as the Dadaab Camps, are characterized by the state of limbo experienced by refugees and the humanitarian agencies that serve them. Stuck between not wanting to return to unsafe home countries, not being granted permanent residence or even economic and mobility rights beyond camp boundaries in asylum countries, and having no opportunities for acceptance to reside in other countries, refugees are left with no obvious legal option apart from dependence on the UNHCR's mandate to protect them. Unfortunately, even thirteen years later, UNHCR budgets for the Dadaab Camps are negotiated on an annual basis, thus undermining the planning and implementation of longer-term development initiatives (Crisp 2003). Some observers have noted an approach of "humane deterrence" being applied by the UNHCR in such protracted camp situations which refers to a deliberate strategy of not making the camps too comfortable or supportive of the refugees (Rogge 1993: 24). With the passing years, however, camp-based innovation has made the most of limited funding and the basic "care and maintenance" approach to supporting refugees in the camps has, in some areas, been augmented with more development-focused initiatives.

Protracted refugee situations remain, by definition, emergencies, yet in practice they present complex and contradictory circumstances, standing as tangible reminders of the commonly invoked 'gap between relief and development'. As the UNHCR reports, protracted refugee situations are found around the world, but they are especially prevalent in Africa where more than two and a half million people are known to be living in camps or other organized, designated areas (UNHCR 2001). Debate over the predicament of protracted refugee situations has continued for decades and various initiatives have been championed or pursued to move beyond the "care and maintenance" approach of holding refugees in camps where they are dependent on international assistance for security, food, water, shelter, medical treatment, education and other human needs (Crisp 2003, UNHCR 2001, Harrell-Bond 1998, Thomas and Schenkenberg van Mierop 2004). In fact, it has been argued that the long-term effects of protracted

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5 The UNHCR offers a working definition of protracted refugee situations to be an experience of exile for more than five years without immediate prospects for voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement (Crisp 2003)
camp situations may actually threaten the success of the durable solutions required to close camps (ibid, Jamal 2003). As anthropologist Barbara Harrell-Bond reasons, “common sense and experience suggest that people impoverished by an economy based on relief will be unable to return without enormous investment in their economic rehabilitation, while those able to acquire the resources in exile are likely to return voluntarily when conditions are conducive.” (Harrell-Bond 1998: 22) A Dadaab-based UNHCR officer describes in Hyndman’s book, “Refugees are part of a culture that has learned to be dependent and we taught them that.” (Hyndman 2000: 139) Letting temporary solutions to forced displacement (i.e. camps) survive may undermine their underlying purpose of temporality. Dependency then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

2.1 The “School Leavers’ Dilemma”

CARE International in Kenya has been contracted since 1991 by the UNHCR to deliver education and community services programming in the Dadaab Camps. As the years passed the education system was periodically reviewed and enhanced and in 1997, upon reflection that the refugee camps would continue for the foreseeable future, Kenya’s national curriculum was adopted for the camps’ upper primary (Standards 5-7 taught in Kiswahili and English) and secondary schools (Forms 1-4 taught in English). Currently, out of the three camps’ total population of 46,522 school age children (ages 6 to 18), 51.2% (23,858) are enrolled in schools (CARE Kenya 2003). The education system in the Dadaab Camps has made great gains in providing access and quality education to young refugees: between 1993 and 2003, student enrollment has grown by 237% and the number of female students has increased from 1,524 in 1993 to 9,900 in 2003, a rise of 550% (ibid).

Unfortunately, however, while the numbers of young refugees accessing primary school have increased, the capacity of the secondary schools has been restricted to admit only 360 students each year (120 in each camp). This is not an accident. Deliberate decisions have been made to constrain programming budgets and UNHCR officials reportedly worry that education serves as “a magnet” for refugees and may attract more than actually are in need of merely protection (Personal communication, Dadaab, June 22,
In November 2003, 980 students sat for their primary examinations, knowing that only 360 or 27% of them would be eligible for continuing on to secondary school, regardless of whether they passed their exams or not (CARE Kenya 2003). A second generation of similar circumstances is now occurring as increasing numbers of young people complete their secondary school education with limited prospects for post-secondary study or employment. Other programming alternatives for youth in the camps are very limited although CARE Kenya does employ over two thousand refugees in various capacities (e.g. full-time, part-time, temporary, service contracts) and offers a few dozen refugees vocational and apprentice training opportunities.

Table 2.1: School Enrollment Statistics for Dadaab Refugee Camps (CARE Kenya 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of Students Registered For KCPE</th>
<th># of Students Admitted into Secondary</th>
<th># of Primary School Leavers</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of Students Registered For KCSE</th>
<th># of Students Admitted into University/College</th>
<th># Secondary School Leavers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>364</td>
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<td>406</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>980</td>
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<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>620</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>1,433</td>
<td>2,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,545</td>
<td>2,112</td>
<td>Sub-total: 1,995</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,614</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>1,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>1,732</td>
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<td>1,372</td>
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Education is widely recognized in refugee studies and practice as an important development strategy for youth in emergencies. In evaluating a UNHCR repatriation program, Stefan Sperl recommends:

*Residence in refugee camps, undesirable as such, should be treated as an opportunity to provide the residents with new or upgraded skills so as to help them reconstruct their livelihood when the opportunity arises. To this effect, educating, training and literacy programmes aimed at all sectors of the*
population should not, as so often, be seen as ancillary but as vital primary and no less important than the provision of food and health care. (Sperl 2000: 12)

It is also understood and practiced that children and youth in complex emergency situations will require a broader scope of learning than what is included in traditional or national curricula:

Reasons for education in emergencies include the psychosocial needs of children and adolescents affected by trauma and displacement, the need to protect them from harm, and the need to maintain and develop study skills and disseminate key messages about how to avoid HIV/AIDS, landmine awareness, environmental education and education for peace and citizenship. All of these are aspects of the rights of the child. (Sinclair, 2002: 1)

Increasingly, the practicality of vocational training for young people in emergency situations is promoted (Sesnan et al 2003, Lyby 2002, Refugee Education Trust 2002). It is assumed that the provision of varied educational and capacity-building programs can contribute to social and economic development and security of young people, and in turn, of their societies. However, there is very little published information about how such education and capacity-building initiatives are meeting the needs of young people (Sinclair 2002).

Until 2003, the consequences for young refugees in the Dadaab Camps not gaining a place in secondary school or opportunities following secondary school had only been informally surmised by CARE personnel based on anecdotal evidence (personal communication with Marangu Njogu, Program Manager, CARE Kenya in Dadaab Refugee Assistance Program 2003). CARE Kenya managers expressed concern that idle out-of-school youths were possibly at particular risk and were creating increased risks for other members’ of the camps’ populations. In fact, in an introductory email to me in January 2003 Marangu Njogu, CARE Kenya in Dadaab’s Refugees Assistance Program Manager, wrote: “The greatest challenge to our programming is the increasing number of school leavers.” (Ibid.) In a later email he described deep concerns:

The absence of technical, vocational training and any other form of continuing education within the refugee setting means an increase of school leavers (primary
and secondary) lazing about in the camps. The more this number increases the
greater the risk of school leavers engaging in antisocial activities. Somalia, the origin
of 97% of the refugees, is still without an authoritative central government.
Possibilities of idle primary/secondary school leavers infiltrating and ganging up
with warlords cannot be underestimated. Should this happen, then the ramifications
would be felt far and wide. (Ibid.)

This research project was first defined as an exploratory investigation into how young
people living in the camps were occupying their time and what they could identify as
their priorities for engagement and empowerment during their time in the camps. The
findings were expected to provide a basis for informing CARE’s youth-focused
programming decisions. (See Appendices 1 and 2 for more information about the school
leavers’ dilemma.)

3.0 Methodological Considerations for Research with Young Refugees

Given my lack of familiarity with the context into which I was treading for this research,
I was advised by my graduate supervisor to take an initial “scoping” visit to the Dadaab
Camps. The purposes of this visit would be to ascertain what research questions and
research methods would be most appropriate and whether indeed I had the capabilities to
conduct this research. Prior to my departure, suggestions from various academic
colleagues on what this first exercise should entail ranged from my simple observation
and contemplation of the situation to conducting a rapid needs assessment or leaving in
place a continuing process of which I could study the results when I returned. As I was
self-funding this first stage of the research, I did not experience the burden of others’
expectations or demands and thankfully, this freed me to plan my arrival with my own
ideals for my behaviour and objectives.

One of the most successful elements of the study’s design was its division into two
separated periods of research in the Dadaab Camps (June – July 2003 and June – July
2004). With nearly one year between the two periods, I was able to carefully reflect on
what I had learned during the first month in the camps as well as to answer certain methodological and theoretical questions through my review of the pertinent literature. This ensured that during the second stage of research in the camps I was extremely well prepared mentally, emotionally and physically (in terms of the materials I needed), and that I could set realistic expectations for both the research process and products.

To reflect the impact and value of this two-phased approach on my methodological choices, I have organized the following sections in an approximation of their chronological order. As such, I begin this section with disclosure of my personal values that I credit with significantly influencing how the research was shaped, followed by a description of the study’s contextual opportunities and constraints that I learned during my first visit to the Dadaab Camps, concluding with how this study’s design was informed by existing literature. Of course, none of these elements of the research design process can be disassociated from the others as if they were sequential steps in my work plan. Instead, they often developed simultaneously with constant melding of my personal orientation with contextual considerations as well as advice from other scholars and practitioners. The literature review section is limited to two specific methodological themes: (1) research with refugees and (2) participatory action research theory, practice and critical appraisals.

As postmodern or post-positivist social science theorists have taken great pains to explain, qualitative social science research is a subjective enterprise in that it rejects the notion that an objective reality exists, and it recognizes the influential role of the researcher’s personal orientation on both the process and product of the research (Best and Kellner 1991, Schrijvers 1995, Denzin and Lincoln 2002). In brief, post-positivist social science research theory organizes itself around the understanding that social reality does not exist within a vacuum, its composition is influenced by its context, and many constructions of reality are therefore possible (Best and Kellner 1991, Onwuegbuzie 2002). As early as 1883, philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) argued that meaning is an interpretation determined by the reality of the interpreter. In his book Introduction to the Human Sciences, Dilthey wrote:
A historical as well as psychological approach to whole human beings led me to explain even knowledge and its concepts (such as the external world, time, substance, and cause) in terms of the manifold powers of a being that wills, feels, and thinks; and I do this despite the fact that knowledge seems to be woven of concepts derived from the mere contents of perception, representation, and thought.... The questions which we all must address to philosophy cannot be answered by the assumption of a rigid epistemological a priori, but rather only by a developmental history proceeding from the totality of our being. (Dilthey 1883: 6)

More than one hundred years and many contributing philosophers later, post-colonial theorist and literary critic Edward Said (1989) added to this argument that an author should reveal her or his identity as an important admission of responsibility for what story is told and how an account is written. The reader may rightfully be suspicious when no such attempt at disclosure is made:

This silence is thunderous ... you will begin perhaps suddenly to note how someone, an authoritative, explorative, elegant, learned voice, speaks and analyses, amasses evidence, theorizes, speculates about everything – except itself. Who speaks? For what and to whom? (Said 1989: 142)

With due regard and respect to this argument, I begin my account of the research with a further disclosure of my own realities, or more accurately, the tenets of my own interpretations of realities.

### 3.1 Personal Orientation

The decision to focus my graduate thesis research on the issues of long-term refugees in Kenya constituted a major departure from my previous education and employment experiences. While very similar to ambitions I had held dear as an adolescent, working in the realm of humanitarian assistance in eastern Africa was certainly a very different experience from anything I had ever tried before. I didn't have expertise or even related past experiences to justify the proposal that I could contribute anything practical or academic to the field of refugee assistance. But I definitely had interest and commitment as well as strengthening senses of self and purpose to support this ambition.
When the idea to venture into this foreign realm first grabbed hold of my imagination, I recognized its strength, which perhaps mitigated the dose of skepticism through which I would force it to be filtered. Something about the idea instinctively locked into place in my self's consciousness and conscience and deterred any serious wavering. The reasons are not easy to discern, but I believe I was desperate to do something bolder and more directly humanitarian in my life, which had heretofore been relatively easy, privileged and self-centered. At the point in my life when I entered graduate school, I realized I had learned and internalized a sense of cynicism that I did not want to own, and that what I most wanted was to clearly define and uphold my own, self-selected core values. Months of trying to figure out exactly what my heart was trying to tell me culminated in a single, crystal-clear moment of truth, and from that moment forth I've been trying to find a place for myself in the field of refugee assistance.

I knew a few things about myself at the beginning of this journey. The first was that I didn't want to work in the abstract; I wanted to work in real-life situations with people at their household and community levels. I had three years of professional policy and political analysis experience at the federal level of government in Canada that had left me jaded and uninterested in the prospects of working at a distance from people's lives and realities. A related motivation was that I didn't want to work for a government agency because I wanted to feel free to be critical of existing economic and political hierarchies and centralizations of knowledge and power. Believing that it is time to show some resistance to the dominant assumptions that economic growth and competition should reign supreme over all other values, and objecting to contemporary trends of jingoism and disregard for international human rights and inequalities, I sought a way to try to fight back. To summarize in very short form: I wanted to fight for an underdog that deserved a fairer chance. Finally, I can state without exaggeration that I felt humble at the outset and for most of the duration of this project because I was very aware of how little I knew and how my main advantage would be a willingness to learn from others and from my own mistakes.
With this degree of awareness of my own shortcomings and determination to try to be useful to the young refugees and agencies in the Dadaab Camps, I was easily susceptible to writings about how PAR can serve everyone involved as an engaging and empowering research methodology. I was strongly attracted to the writings of educationalist Paulo Freire, particularly his 1970 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, as his frustrations, ideals and hopes seemed to mirror my own. I also read and was influenced by international development theorist Robert Chambers’ analyses of the contrasts between participatory research and development and more traditional, hierarchical approaches that privilege the outsider and possibly contribute to the further marginalization of research ‘subjects’ (Chambers 1997, 1996, 1995, 1983). Extremely valuable before I set off for my first round of research in Dadaab was feminist geographer Jennifer Hyndman’s book *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism* (2000) which is based on her research in the Dadaab Camps in the early 1990’s. Her evaluation of the power inequalities in the camps (at one point, describing refugee camps as “akin to Foucauldian youth reform colonies” [p xvi]) and practices of humanitarianism in such circumstances functioning as a “colonialism of compassion” certainly sensitized me to the importance of entering the camps with a critical perspective of institutional practices. I benefited from reading an article by anthropologist Cindy Horst (2001) discussing her ongoing PhD dissertation research about the social security mechanisms of Somali refugees in the Dadaab Camps and Nairobi (research years: 1995-2000). These latter two works offered some useful guidance about appropriate research methodologies and methods as well as the context-specific considerations that had informed these approaches. Finally, I also scoured the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee’s on-line library of policy reports and became apprised of which questions were being addressed and which were not. More about the literature that influenced this research are included in Section 3.3

Although not successful in securing funding support for this research stage, I decided to proceed. I felt that an important relationship of trust and partnership had already begun to develop between me and CARE Kenya, in particular with Marangu Njogu, the Program Manager in Dadaab, and I did not want to jeopardize this. I had already begun
to feel personally responsible and committed to this research project as well as attracted
to doing it. I sold my car, applied for a student loan and emailed CARE Kenya managers
that I would pay all of the research expenses. At that moment, my worries of financial
debt paled in comparison to my concern about not doing this research the way I wanted to
do it.

3.2 Practical Research in a Refugee Camp Context
My first lesson about doing research in a refugee situation came while I was still a
student in Canada. In response to my emailed offer to conduct volunteer research about
refugees’ involvement in the management of natural resources, Marangu Njogu, CARE
Kenya’s Programme Manager for the Dadaab Refugee Camps, explained that CARE’s
priority for research was investigation of the “school leavers’ dilemma”, and that if I
wanted to do research with CARE in the Dadaab Camps, I could come to take up this
research topic. “Lesson Number One”, then, was that theoretical questions don’t hold
much value in the face of a refugee situation’s immediate needs. From this moment
forward, the pressure from CARE staff and many of the refugees with whom I worked, to
quickly and cheaply deliver practical outputs from this study, never let up.

While I felt intimidated to venture forth into a research topic of which I had no previous
experience, I also felt grateful that I could try to respond to a need obviously pertinent to
the refugees and their humanitarian workers. In fact, as I was freshly versed in Robert
Chambers’ ideology that truly participatory research should begin with local people
defining the research problem and goal (Chambers 1997), I felt quite privileged to have
been given an assignment by local representatives. I recognized that this would help to
ensure that my work would be more relevant and action-oriented than a more theoretical
study.

This lesson coincides with the trends noted in forced migration research. Research
focused on refugees’ experiences has a critical and political agenda. Or, perhaps more
appropriately, there is a growing movement within the field of so-called refugee studies,
that as researchers we should devote ourselves to a critical and political agenda (Krulfeld
and MacDonald 1999, Jacobsen and Landau 2003). For the most part, refugee research is usually focused on effectively contributing to both the improved practice of humanitarian assistance as well as the theories that enable broader understandings of human crisis responses. As prolific refugee researchers Stephen Castles (2003) and Robert Black (2001) have both recorded, compared with non-humanitarian fields, there are few studies in the field of forced migration research that do not provide policy recommendations for the UNHCR and agencies at work in refugee settings. In her groundbreaking book, *Imposing Aid*, published in 1984, anthropologist Barbara Harrell-Bond was one of the first scholars to cast aspersion on the uncritical acceptance of humanitarian responses to refugee situations (Harrell-Bond 1984). This text had an important impact on how researchers perceived their role in contributing to important knowledge for improving conditions for refugees and the actors with mandates to protect and support refugees. Rather than automatically aligning themselves with humanitarian agencies, some researchers of refugee situations began to turn their critical gaze to challenge the actions of these agencies.

Research in emergencies, even protracted forms of emergency such as that presented in the Dadaab Camps, can fall prey to what has been termed “disaster tourism” in that outsiders are often not able, or don’t make deliberate enough efforts, to access information from non-official sources (Black 2003). Security concerns, coupled with humanitarian agencies’ institutionalized control, can restrict how a visiting researcher sees the camp and with whom the researcher talks. During my first week in Dadaab, I was surprised to be advised that due to security concerns, I would not be permitted to walk freely in the refugee camp, but would be required to move with a Kenyan police escort armed with a machine gun. At first this seemed a blow to my aspirations for effecting participatory research, but upon more careful thought, I realized that, in fact, that restriction bolstered the importance of PAR methods. I wrote in my journal that night: “my access to the ‘field’ (every day life) is restricted; must rely on trusting relations with youths: youths must do the research. My physical removal from the research should result in my analytical removal: youths to do data collection and analyze it themselves.” I was not yet familiar enough with youths in the camps to implement this
and I knew I would not be staying for long enough during this first visit to support our
 collaboration, but this realization stayed with me as I planned my return to implement the
 research most appropriately.

During my first visit to the Dadaab Refugee Camps in 2003 I was also naively surprised
to hear from refugee youths and elders about their “research fatigue”. As I met with
students, out-of-school youth involved in the Youth Committees, and parents, I was told
repeatedly that too many researchers had come in the past, asked their questions and left
without ever reporting back to the research participants and without the refugees ever
seeing the benefits of participating. Researchers are not the only guilty party in abusing
refugees’ cooperation; the humanitarian agencies have also been disrespectful and
neglectful. As male members of the Dagahaley Youth Committee told me, the
humanitarian agencies will sporadically invite youths to give their input to planning
processes but progress is never reported back or made obvious to them. Some youths
resent what they term being “used” by the agencies to help with community awareness
campaigns, and not having their efforts reciprocated even through acceptance of meetings
to discuss youth issues. As one young man said to me: “The agencies tell us we are the
floor [ground]. But if you don’t put water on the floor, nothing will grow. There is no
good framework. The agencies should be woken up. They are asleep. They need to be
woken up.”(Personal communication, July 4, 2004, Dagahaley Camp) What these youth
told me echoed what I had been reading in Pedagogy of the Oppressed: “Without faith in
people, dialogue is a farce which inevitably degenerates into paternalistic
manipulation.”(Freire 1970: 91) The young refugees with whom I spoke in Dagahaley
Camp recognize the lack of faith in authentic dialogue with which agency personnel
operate and the resulting paternalistic manipulation with which the young refugees are
treated by agency personnel.

I realized that to earn the cooperation, and possibly even the trust, of young refugees in
camps requires a different approach. In the Dadaab Camps, the young refugees don’t
want to tolerate the extractive nature of traditional research. What may provoke them to
do so despite their resentment is their desperate hope that things might change. I believe
that relying on such desperation for research or program consultation can be seen as a form of coercion.

I also noted many attitudes and actions among the agency personnel implementing services for the refugee population that I deemed disrespectful, discriminatory, ineffective, inconsistent and verbally and psychologically abusive. There were too many sad and horrible ironies. For example, I attended the performances being put on for World Refugee Day (June 20) in Hagadera Camp in 2003 and in Dagahaley Camp in 2004. In both cases, while the agencies had sponsored these events “for the refugees to celebrate” this day, refugees were left standing unsheltered in the afternoon’s blazing sun while agency staff and a few chosen refugee representatives sat in chairs under the one available tent (“for dignitaries”); those refugees who wanted to find their own shelter crammed themselves into the food distribution structure so they could watch from behind barbed wire.

Figure 3.2: Refugees at World Refugee Day, Dagahaley Camp 2004

Preoccupation among staff with program delivery and meeting program targets seems to have obscured some common sense and sensitivity in agencies’ operations in the Dadaab Camps. Another example of this is the way in which primary school ends for most young refugees. Despite CARE’s expressed concerns for the discouragement and frustration that a young person may feel when she/he is unable to continue her/his education, the way in which primary school finishers have been learning of their future is through the public posting of a list of the Standard 8 exam marks with a red line marking the cut-off between the top 120 marks (those who can go to secondary school) and the “failures” as all of the others are often referred (those who likely passed the exams but who were not among the top 120 marks and thus dropped from the school system). The majority of the
youths who experienced this day recall mayhem, tears, fainting and bewilderment. This practice seems so obviously insensitive and counter-productive to the psychological wellbeing of the youth population, but did not seem to have ever been considered by agency personnel before I mentioned what out-of-school youth were telling me about that event.

One popular approach for community development campaigns sponsored by CARE Kenya is the use of slogans on T-shirts, posters and other items which are distributed among members of the refugee population. One example of this was a campaign against female genital cutting in the camps which I witnessed was kicked off by handing out T-shirts to several dozen refugees that had written on their backs in large letters: “ANTI FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING”. This minimalist effort disappointed me as I recalled Freire’s words:

to substitute monologue, slogans and communiqués for dialogue is to attempt to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication. Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated.

(Freire 1970: 65)

In too many ways, the refugees are treated by agency personnel as objects, rather than subjects in their own self-determination. The shackles of dependency come in many insidious forms.

As Hyndman describes in her analysis of the humanitarian system in the Dadaab Refugee Camps, “humanitarian agencies re-inscribe neocolonial and counterproductive relations of power predicated on a hierarchy of cultures in the camp and on major asymmetries of power linked to gender and political status.” (Hyndman 2000: 90) Although CARE Kenya has certainly made efforts and some progress in delegating powers certain powers to some refugees in the camps since the time Hyndman was there, the refugees are still
largely under the rule of an authoritarian regime. Their movements and economic rights remain restricted. They are subjected to regular monitoring and "headcounts" and most of their lives are regulated by an imposed system: from the time they can collect water from the local pump to the day they receive an amount and kind of nutritional rations as determined by camp administrators.

As many researchers in refugee contexts have observed, and which quickly became apparent to me in the Dadaab Camps is that outsiders interviewing refugees can perpetuate the same unequal power relations that exist between humanitarian agencies as the ‘givers’ or administrators and refugees as the ‘recipients’ or the administered (Horst 2001, Boyden 2000, Hyndman 2000, Krulfeld and MacDonald 1998, Voitura and Harrell-Bond 1995). As Hyndman realized in her own research in the Dadaab Camps, “interviews exact the same kind of performances from refugees as do the relief agencies that organize access to food, medical services, and other needs. Consent becomes almost meaningless in the wholly unequal relationship between the interviewer and interviewee” (Hyndman 2000: 92). I was most certainly afforded more authority than I deserved by refugees in the camps who associated me with more powerful outsiders that contribute to funding, resettlement or goods distribution decisions. Nevertheless, I also recognized that I represented some kind of opportunity to the people I was meeting and I needed to communicate this opportunity in a way that did not raise impossible expectations for me to meet, but did leave room for people interested in my availability to determine the purpose of my contribution to them and the way in which we would interact. Just as it would have been utterly inappropriate and unappreciated for me to conduct research in the camps on a topic chosen to satisfy my own curiosity, I felt that it would also be inappropriate and disrespectful to dictate to potential research participants my role in regard to them and the expected final product of our collaboration. My purpose for being in the camps was “to help in some way” and I knew I didn’t understand how best I could

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6 CARE and UNHCR have been supporting a Community Self Management (CSM) program since 1994 in the Dadaab Camps that includes annual elections for equal male and female refugee representatives at the camp (e.g. Hagadera is approximately 50,000 people or 12, 200 families), section (approximately 4,500 people) and block (approximately 600 people or 143 families) levels as well as for topical committees such as Security and Justice, Community Services, Parent School Committees, etc. However, different degrees of authority are permitted through these committees and refugees hold very little influence over budgeting decisions. While refugees are consulted, they are not decision makers.
help. Moreover, I felt I required a different kind of approach, a more respectful, inclusive and supporting approach, to deliberately distance myself from the people I did not represent, namely the agencies operating in the camps and the donors funding them. How I pursued this differentiating approach is described in Chapter 5.

Certainly, cultural and language challenges permeated this research experience. Quite apart from the considerations of institutional organizations of power inequalities, I was cognizant that my presence as a white, English-speaking, non-religious, Canadian, young, educated female would impact the research. Firstly, much consideration had to be given to language and translation. The majority of the refugee population in the Dadaab Camps speaks Somali and I do not. Ideally, I would have become fluent in Somali which would have been more consistent with my values as a researcher in this situation; however, I did not achieve this. Instead, I was very cautious in my considerations of who might translate for me and I planned to try to develop a close and trusting partnership relationship with a young woman and a young man in the camps (predicting that, given Muslim norms in the camps, each might face difficulties in communicating with members of the opposite gender). In initial conversations that were translated by Somali refugee staff with CARE Kenya I felt completely vulnerable as I had no idea how my message was being conveyed and how the response to me was being edited as well. I felt the anxiety of being misrepresented and not gaining the information that the speaker wanted to share with me, either because of the speaker’s discomfort of sharing this information with the translator or because the translator was adding his own interpretation to the speaker’s words. I revisited Hyndman’s book (which I brought with me to the camps) and found I was experiencing an observation made by Russian author Mikhal Bakhtin:

*Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property or the speaker’s intentions; it is populated – over populated with the intentions of others. Expropriating, forcing it to submit to one’s own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process.* (Bakhtin 1981: 119 in Hyndman 2000: 92)
Luckily for me, I found that the young people who have completed primary school in the camps have enough mastery of English to permit us to have basic conversations together with only intermittent use of a translator: this made the research project enormously more straightforward and defined the kinds of discussions I had with youths in the camps. It also led to me to believe that I would be able to develop enough understanding with these youths to more intimately engage in the entire research process (not just asking and answering questions) and that they could help me in gaining access to other youths who do not speak English.

More challenging barriers arose because of the way in which gender roles are segregated in the camps and the way I was regarded as a non-Muslim. I quickly learned that I wanted to cover my arms and legs and often my head so that people would not feel uncomfortable around me or untrustworthy of me. While female and male personnel of the agencies operating in the camps routinely wear T-shirts, I decided I preferred to wear shirts with long sleeves and ankle-length skirts. I felt that this helped to communicate deliberate respect for the Muslim people with whom I interacted and made my differences from the burka-clad women less pronounced. At the same time, I did not feel comfortable mimicking the dress style of the refugee women as I would find wearing a burka a psychologically and physically disempowering act. There was no objective way of knowing whether what I was trying to accomplish through these choices had any affect on my research, but I know that the youths with whom I became most familiar approved of the way I dressed. In fact, one of them remarked that I looked normal in the camps; he actually observed that I had followed the advice “When in Rome, dress like the Romans” (Personal communication Nairobi July 26, 2004).

There is a lot of suspicion about people identified with the United States and Britain in the Dadaab Camps. Among the plays written and performed by refugees of various ages on World Refugee Day in 2003 in Hagadera Camp, one was about a British man buying a Somali girl from the camp for marriage, infecting her with HIV/AIDS and then refusing to care for her. There is also a level of awareness, particularly among the educated youth that ‘westerners’ regard Somalis and Muslims as terrorists. I heard several times that
young refugees understand their Muslim faith to be a reason why there is not more investment in the camps and Somalia. I was asked to give my view about the United States’ reaction to the September 11, 2002 bombings and the Taliban many, many times and about George W. Bush as well. These were opportunities for me to describe my own values and my rejection of the kinds of intolerance and ignorance about Islam that are commonly espoused by Bush and in western media. I was also asked many times whether I was not afraid to walk around the camps without a police escort because a “terrorist” might get me. Such questions were always asked with humour, implying the ridiculousness of such allegations, and I believe my deliberate acts of walking freely in the camps (usually with young refugee friends) communicated my rejection of such ideas.

The greatest challenge I found during my first visit to the Dadaab Camps was my access and ability to develop relationships with young women. The gendered division of labour in the camps means that women are responsible for fetching water, fetching firewood, cooking, childcare, laundry and cleaning, and each of these tasks is time consuming given the few resources that are available. For example, women line up for water at a local pump from which a tap monitor dispenses water for only two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. Every second week a half of a day is spent lining up for the food distribution. Girls’ and young women’s education enrollment is still far behind boys’ enrollment despite years of active campaigning by the Dadaab agencies. Generally, girls’ education is not valued since girls are expected to only serve the family, not to pursue careers and once a girl is dropped from the education system, there are few other options. As one young woman told me in an interview, when she finished primary school and was not offered a place in secondary school her parents told her: “You had your chance. You had eight good years. And you failed. So now you must only stay at home.”(Cooper 2003: 3) Since I was not entering people’s homes uninvited to solicit interviews, but instead hoping to develop relationships through more public means such as the Youth Committees, word-of-mouth, spending time at the community halls, I found that most of the youths I was meeting were male. As another young woman explained, “boys have more options” and she described how parents still want to find ways for their
sons to gain new opportunities through education or work and I hear from boys about how they visit the agencies and the job signs board regularly, underscoring their abilities to roam the camps while girls' remain busy at home (Personal communication, Ifo Camp, June 25, 2003). I understood from this experience that I would need to make more deliberate efforts to develop dialogic relationships with out-of-school young women. I also understood that I might not be very effective in doing this. I considered these realizations pertinent to other more marginalized groups among the youth population, such as members of minority clans, young refugees with disabilities, and young refugees with greater burdens such as acting as orphan heads of households.

My first round of research in the Dadaab Camps proved to me the importance of trying to achieve a more participatory and collaborative research approach. I realized that my own abilities in attaining thorough understandings of the extremely complex phenomena that out-of-school young refugees face in the Dadaab Camps would be limited by contextual, language and cultural barriers. I came to believe that by removing myself as the outside researcher as much as possible from the actual data collection and analysis might provide opportunities for more accurate, relevant, and complete information to emerge among refugee participants. I also recognized that some of these youths would be capable and interested in doing the research themselves which could lead to the research process itself being an important opportunity for them. I felt like this was something I would like to facilitate, but I needed to think carefully through how to carry out such a PAR project in 2004.

3.3 Methodological Trends in Refugee Studies
Too often, the use of the category 'refugee' has implied a common identity (Jacobsen and Landau 2003, Hyndman 2000, Malkki 1997, Knudsen 1995, Voitura and Harrell-Bond 1995). An emergent discussion is occurring among researchers of refugee issues which strongly critiques popular trends of standardizing textual and visual representations of refugees (Kumar 2002, Horst 2001, Malkki 1997, Uehling 1998). Certainly, visual representations of refugees are far more common than is the reproduction of refugees' stories and the spectacles of photographs are often issued with little or no commentary for
providing context (Malkki 1997, Uehling 1998). Such speechless construction of refugees makes obvious a preference for one story which is easily interpretable by the audience, rather than a diversity of stories that may contest one another as well as the audience’s own expectations, biases and values. As Hyndman observes, refugees “... are often dematerialized into refugee statistics or homogenized and silenced under the rubric of voiceless refugees” and she argues that this constitutes “... a kind of semio-violence, a representational practice that purports to speak for others but at the same time effaces their voices” (Hyndman 2000: xxii). Uehling (1998) and Kumar (2002) note that it is often experts or officials in refugee situations that displace refugees in the telling of refugees’ stories assuming that they have the right to narrate (and thus edit) refugee experiences. Moreover, such representations are often claimed to be made for humanitarian purposes (ibid). In these efforts, the term ‘refugee’ is re-enforced as synonymous with suffering: a refugee acts as “a kind of mirror through whose suffering we can see the injustice, the oppression and the maltreatment of the powerless by the powerful” (Oxfam 1984: 1).

Such practices have obscured the complexity of refugees’ realities in favour of more reductionist accounts that comply with assumptions of what audiences will find comprehensible and consistent. In this sense, the goal of persuading, or more appropriately advocating to audiences a certain reaction (often charity) has so abstracted particular stories that only one story, in the tradition of the ‘grand narrative’ or ‘official story’ remains. To tell individual refugee stories as meaningful in their own right/write, becomes subversive of the official story.

In fact, refugee populations are often multicultural and comprise a diversity of ethnic, class and status backgrounds as well as political allegiances (Voitura and Harrell-Bond 1995). Anthropologist John Knudsen observes that assuming a concept of a ‘community of refugees’ benefits the professionals who seek to interact with refugees (via humanitarian assistance or research) as it provides them with a simplified cognitive order, but it negates the diversity of realities of refugees’ experiences (Knudsen 1995). This kind of negligence can obscure important truths and result in misleading research.
findings. Knudsen’s conclusion is that this practice can be overcome by encouraging and listening to individual refugees’ stories which act for the refugees telling them as processes of identity negotiation between ‘who I was’ and ‘who I have become’ (ibid: 25). The researcher’s role with refugees, according to Knudsen, “is not to penetrate what may seem to be fiction and thus expose the person to further loss but to assist refugees in their attempts to remake their world” (ibid: 30). Such practice acknowledges that all identities are constructed and accordingly, research should not be biased in assuming that the researcher’s or anyone else’s identity is more ‘perfectly formed, devoid of contradictions or immune to dysfunction’ than a refugee’s identity (Uehling 1995:130).

This kind of analysis helped to me understand that a researcher that acts as an agent countering, contesting or expanding that which is held ‘true’ and ‘known’ about refugee experiences can only do this by embracing the diversity and particularity of individual and collective stories. I agree with anthropologist Lisa Malkki that it is politically and intellectually possible to achieve something better than de-historicized and de-politicized accounts of the meaning of being a refugee (Malkki 1997). Investing authority in the stories of refugees is a critical approach for improving current practice and knowledge. Allowing these stories to negotiate their way into broader consciousness of refugees’ realities is an important step toward rejecting their ‘otherness’ and current suffering. This is certainly a responsible role for a researcher.

Awareness that research and research methods can perpetuate the continuing violation of refugees’ human rights has led research theorists to argue for a practice of critical self-reflection throughout the research process (Krulfeld and MacDonald 1998). Disturbingly, one anthropologist has described that “refugees have become the new ‘primitives’ for anthropologists; because many of them are so needy, they are vulnerable to our research in much the same way American Indians and African villagers were to anthropologists at the turn of the century.”(Hopkins 1998: 68) Her suggested strategy for preventing such imperialistic research practices from continuing is to work more collaboratively with research participants. Certainly, within refugee studies there is active critique and dismantling of traditional researcher-informant relationships and research methods
including the basic tenets of the researcher deciding what to study, how the study is designed and analysed and also how the information gained is subsequently used. Consistent with participatory research methodology (described in the next section), the researcher should approach potential research participants as a researcher intent on helping them to bring about their own visions in their own ways (Zaharlick in Krulfeld 1998).

Establishing a nexus of trust in which refugees may feel safe to participate in research and particularly share personal information can be a major obstacle (Daniel and Knudsen 1995). The refugee camp is a hierarchical and dichotomized space with the humanitarian agencies at the ‘giving’ or administering end and the refugees at the receiving end (Voitura and Harrell-Bond 1995). Refugees live in camps as the result of coercion rather than choice. A “machinery of power” is at work binding refugees to their “helpers” and rarely are refugees in positions to choose how they are helped (Ibid: 211, Malkki 1997). The relations of power between researchers and refugees are not easily rectified. Indeed, as Voitura and Harrell-Bond argue, expectations of a locus of trust in a refugee camp are misguided as the entire structure of the donor-refugee regime is “predicated on the exercise of a type of authority, which is itself maintained and legitimized by the absence of trust between the givers and the recipients” (Voitura and Harrell-Bond 1995: 219). Trust is displaced and mistrust dominates interactions in refugee camps.

There is a limited but growing body of research that recommends focused investigation on the impacts of refugee camps on youth. At a 1998 conference on the Protection of Children and Adolescents in Complex Emergencies, UN agencies and NGOs stated their recognition that youth and adolescents are often invisible groups in the context of emergency and displacement, yet they are particularly vulnerable to military recruitment and sexual abuse given their levels of maturity (Norwegian Refugee Council et al. 1999). A recent study of protracted refugee camps in Africa that includes analysis of the Dadaab Camps calls for youth-focused research because preliminary findings suggest that the experiences of youths in camps offer relevant insights for policy and program planning (Crisp 2003). As Jeff Crisp, formerly the Head of the Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Unit of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), surmises in the afore-mentioned policy analysis, it is important that the psychosocial dimensions of such situations be studied, and in particular the circumstances of children and adolescents (Crisp 2003). Anthropologist and long-time researcher of refugee situations Barbara Harrell-Bond asserts that enduring refugee camp systems are creating passive, dependent, mendacious and unquestioning young people, and that camps also contribute to indolence and delinquency among youth (Harrell-Bond 2000). She insists that alternatives need to be explored for the sake of children and young people living in refugee camps and near to camps. In a study concerning the experiences of young men in the Lukole Refugee Camp of North Western Tanzania, Simon Turner finds that young male refugees employ different coping strategies, and notes that little is known about the effects of such situations on young people’s identity creation and preparation for self-reliant futures (Turner 1999).

How to do research with refugee children and youth is the subject of a very limited body of literature. While Jo Boyden of Oxford University’s Refugee Studies Centre has contributed important literature about how research may be appropriately designed to involve young and vulnerable participants (2004, 2000, 1997), there are very few case studies analyzing research processes with young refugees. The most important contributions in this area are the recent case studies of PAR done by the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children (Women’s Commission) with adolescents in Northern Uganda, Kosovo and Sierre Leone. The Women’s Commission’s final analysis of their PAR efforts with these three different groups of young people affected by conflict argues that it is an efficacious methodology for youth empowerment because it recognizes and plays a role in redressing the discrimination and neglect these young people have previously experienced:

*Participating in decision-making and program implementation helped young people overcome feelings of social dislocation and build self-esteem, self reliance and a new sense of identity that allowed them to heal and even thrive. Over time, their involvement in programs produced a much broader social impact, as young people applied the skills and experiences they gained in new ways, forming organizations*
that significantly improved the lives of their peers and whole communities.
(Women's Commission 2004: 3)

I consulted these reports closely in my preparation for the how-to of PAR with youths in the Dadaab Camps. They informed some practical considerations, such as a concern with purposive recruitment and recognition of the different reasons why youths might choose to participate or not. These reports also provided affirmation in the words of past participants of how such processes can be valued as positive life experiences, building confidence, skills and a way of reckoning with pasts and presents and planning futures.

4.0 Origins and Practice of PAR

As its name references, since its origin, Participatory Action Research (PAR) has represented an effort to bridge the two worlds of academia and social activism. Inherently of the academic world, given its research agenda, PAR was promoted and experimented with by social science scholars in the 1960s and 1970s who were set on escaping the “emptiness” of their academic confines to contribute work that was more politically engaged and relevant (Rahman and Fals-Borda 1991). Recalling these creative years, founding and leading PAR proponents Orlando Fals-Borda and Muhammad Anisur Rahman write:

Among us, some found inspiration in certain Gandhian strands, others in the classic Talmudian Marxism then in vogue – or in both. And some were driven by humanist urges of their own. Our personal modes and loyalties strongly rejected such established institutions as governments, traditional political parties, churches and academia in such a way that those years can be seen mostly as an iconoclastic period. (Ibid: 25)

PAR itself was envisioned by these first theorists and practitioners as “a part of social activism with an ideological and spiritual commitment to promote people’s (collective) praxis.” (Ibid: 25) Understood as a philosophical, ethical and methodological choice, these founding theorists contend that “a rather permanent existential choice is made when one decides to live and work with PAR” (Ibid: 29). These words speak to the high idealism and commitment with which the original perspectives on PAR were imbued.
In post-colonial states, such as India and Tanzania, participatory research and
development were pursued in the 1960s and 1970s as alternatives to community
development policies which were criticized for absorbing people’s participation into an
unchallenged system of economic and political power relations in which these people
remained marginalized or oppressed (Wright and Nelson 1995, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1993).
PAR was proposed as an alternative approach through which oppressed people could
develop their own critical consciousness of the ways in which they were oppressed and
determine their own course of action (ibid). As Rahman describes the summary of
PAR’s theoretical standpoint:

_The basic ideology of PAR is that a self-conscious people, those who are currently
poor and oppressed, will progressively transform their environment by their own
praxis. In this process others may play a catalytic and supportive role but will not
dominate._ (Rahman 1991: 13)

Thus, change, usually pursued as the empowerment of previously disempowered people,
is the purpose of PAR in both style (organization of the researcher’s role with other
research participants) and substance (benefits of the research are accrued to research
participants). This purpose is expanded upon in the following section.

Consistently, PAR theorists recognize the important influence of Paulo Freire’s _Pedagogy
of the Oppressed_ (1970) which introduces the philosophy of _conscientization_, a process
of learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action
against the oppressive elements of reality (Freire 2003). Freire roots his theory of how
oppressed people might liberate themselves in an understanding of praxis: “reflection and
action upon the world in order to transform it” (ibid: 51) and argues that “to alienate
human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects” (ibid: 85).
He describes his perspective about the benefits of problem-posing education, instead of
traditionally hierarchical models of education whereby teachers deposit knowledge in
students, which correspond well with PAR’s ideal of handing direction of the research
project over to local participants rather than imposing the traditional model of a
researcher extracting knowledge from more passive study participants or respondents or studying local people as objects of research.

The act of “handing over the stick” is an analogy introduced by Robert Chambers (1995 and 1997) to illustrate the paradigm shift he believes participatory research and development to be in development thinking and practice. For Chambers, one of the world’s most recognized and prolific writers about participatory research and development, PAR represents a shift from a professional paradigm centred on things to one centred on people which should include “a shift of power to those who are local and poor” (Chambers 1995: 33). “Handing over the stick” then, symbolizes the transfer of recognition of knowledge and the right to speak from the professional and institutional authority of researchers and developers to the marginalized and previously disempowered local people. Demonstrating the complementarities with Freire’s work, Chambers describes the change that needs to occur on the part of the researcher or practitioner: “From being teachers they become facilitators of learning... The dominant uppers ‘hand over the stick’, sit down, listen and themselves learn” (ibid: 34).

Participatory research methodology is organized around the general principle that the people who the research is about become agents rather than objects of the research (Burkey Wright and Nelson 1995, Maguire 1987). Wright and Nelson explain: “In using the research to generate change, the point is that participants should take the lead in determining the strategy and the researcher’s role in it.” (Wright and Nelson 1995: 51) The outside researcher practices a more catalyst and facilitative role, applying her or his skills and knowledge to support the research process (ibid). As Chambers lists, the PAR practitioner’s activities are “… to establish rapport, to convene and catalyse, to enquire, to help in the use of methods, and to encourage local people to choose and improvise methods for themselves” (Chambers 1997: 131). Other scholars have emphasized the researcher’s role in developing a safe and trusting environment and process of symmetrical relationships for research participants (Salazar 1991, Hailey 2001). Feminist scholar Maria Mies (1983) describes the researcher’s alignment with research participants as ‘conscious partiality’: “the researcher takes the side of a certain group, partly
identifies, and in a conscious process creates space for critical dialogues and reflection on both sides” (Mies quoted in Schrijvers 1995: 22). Consistently, PAR theorists instruct that the research should proceed in ways that are most amenable to research participants’ realities, values, and norms (Burkey 1993, Chambers 1997, Chambers 1995, Fals Borda and Rahman 1991). As well, the research process should provide support to research participants, either via the researcher dedicating their skills to a task assigned by the research participants or through a truly collaborative research process that ensures learning is mutual (ibid).

One of the epistemological bases for participatory research harkens to complexity theory. ‘Professional research’ has been critiqued by PAR theorists as “... ‘primitive’ in its understanding (and in knowing how to understand) the complex forces – social, cultural, ethnic, psychological - which influence the course of an attempted social transformation” (Rahman 1991: 19) PAR theorists differentiate it from other social science methodologies influenced by physical science methods and economics in its rejection of reductionist methods or analyses and its acknowledgement of the complex, diverse, dynamic and unpredictable natures of people’s realities (Chambers 1997, Welbourn 1991). Illustrating this point, Freire (1976) provides the following analysis: “All these aspects [peasants’ knowledge of erosion, reforestation, farming, religion, death, etc.] are contained within a cultural totality. As a structure this cultural totality reacts as a whole. If one of its parts is affected, an automatic reflex occurs on the others.” The practice of PAR is supposed to be organized to encourage as many different accounts as available. PAR theory takes due note of the common fault of social science researchers to treat communities as homogeneous, (Chambers 1997, Nelson and Wright 1995, Eyben and Ladbury 1995) and to combat such misleading assumptions, PAR practitioners are advised to deliberately seek out different groups of people and particularly the most marginalized or ‘invisible’ of community members and to include as many different accounts in an analysis as possible, what Alice Welbourn (1991) terms “the analysis of difference”. PAR methods are designed with the goal of encouraging the participation of as many different people as possible, and thus demonstrate a tendency toward visual and inter-active practices, such as participatory mapping and diagramming, naming, sorting,
counting and ranking, and the use of local materials such as seeds or stones in such activities (Chambers 1997). Chambers claims that a deliberate PAR approach can achieve a reversal of power:

- "from closed to open restrains the normal dominance of the etic, and encourages expression of emic reality;
- from measuring to comparing enables the expression and analysis by people of realities and preferences which are otherwise inaccessible (because not measured or measurable) or sensitive (when expressed in absolute rather than relative terms;
- from individual to group shifts the balance of power, with a lower ratio of outsiders to insiders;
- from verbal to visual empowers local people, and lowers within a community to express their reality – those who do not speak up, the marginalized, those who do not read or write, women, children, those of low social status;
- from paper, table and wall to ground reduces the dominance of the few who hold pens, sit at tables or stand at the wall, and encourages and enables more to participate... ;
- from reserve to rapport and from frustration to fun help outsiders facilitate analysis by insiders and release social energy" (ibid: 154).

Taken together, this approach signifies to Chambers a “radical personal and institutional change” (Chambers 1994: 958).

4.1 Ideas of Empowerment through PAR

Perhaps the most dominant theme in PAR theory is the ideal of empowerment. For some, participation and empowerment are used nearly synonymously which implies a very broad concept of participation in which participation is regarded as an end in itself: the very act of participating is regarded as an empowering opportunity (Lane 1995). This conception follows Anthony Giddens’ (1984) description of the creation of “more spaces of control”. It is also consistent with political participatory theories that champion participation as an essential value in itself, necessary to the growth and full development of citizens in supporting their abilities “to enlarge their vision and sense of themselves” (Hanna Pitkin in Bacharach and Botwinick: 20). In their edited book entitled Power,
Process and Participation (1995), Rachel Slocum and Barbara Thomas-Slayer introduce:

“We regard empowerment as a process through which individuals as well as local groups and communities, identify and shape their lives and the kind of society in which they live.” (Slocum and Thomas-Slayer 1995: 4) They interpret participatory research as a means of supporting this process of empowerment in several identifiable ways: “... involving local people in the problem definition, data collection, decision-making and implementation processes... encourages community awareness, understanding and commitment, facilitates decision-making, coalition formation, and consensus building, and promotes collaboration among outside researchers or development workers and the community, a co-operation which can assist processes of empowerment...” (ibid: 5).

Another argument favouring the idea of participation-as-empowerment is that the participatory process allows previously silent or silenced voices to be included and honoured (ibid, Lane 1995, more refs). This claim is similar to feminist and post-colonial theories which assert that the telling of a story and having it listened to with respect by others can be a validating experience for traditionally marginalized individuals or groups. In this way, a telling of a story is valued as an event in itself; a process through which the story teller enacts agency (Said 1994, Ewick and Silbey 2003, Austin 1962). Feminist theorist Joke Schrijvers reflects on her own experiences of listening to refugees’ stories: “By telling their own stories to a complete outsider, they gained some power to conceptualize their own experiences – a first step towards re-defining their identities. Looking back now I believe that the envoicing of relatively powerless people by the sharing of defining power is a decisive element in a transformative approach.” (Schrijvers 1995: 27) As renowned Somali writer Nuruddin Farah describes of his own learning process through the collection of Somali refugee stories: “I came to understand that colonial subjects die a kind of death when they lose the birthright to define themselves ... as they are made to respond to the multiple identities imposed upon them by others: when they are forced to see themselves as someone else’s invention.” (Farah 2000: 51) Telling a new story then can represent a process and articulation of meaning-formation. Feminist scholar Dorothy Smith has written that the telling of a story is an act by which the storyteller externalizes her or his consciousness and objectifies reasoning, knowledge,
memory, decision-making, judgment and evaluation as the properties of social organization (Smith 1990). The sharing of stories is poised as a chance at equalizing opportunities for recognition and inclusion in the social realm and may be regarded as a cathartic and reflective exercise for individuals and a society. In this way, story is part of the liberating process of critical reflection as well as the future-oriented dialogue that transforms realities.

The participatory research process is advocated as a means by which power can be practiced by participants: “effective participation implies involvement not only in information collection, but in analysis, decision-making and implementation – implying devolution of the power to decide” (Pretty and Scoones 1995: 160). In her reflections concerning an attempted participatory research project, anthropologist Rachel Hinton wrote: “For the refugees with whom I worked, giving them a ‘participatory voice’ in the texts I produced was not enough. Gathering information that I alone would analyse and comment on later would not meet their expectations... the refugees, in their particularly disempowered situations, were acutely aware of inequalities brought about by being acted on rather than actors with agencies. Participatory processes gave them greater ownership, confidence and a measure of control.”(Hinton 1995: 2)

I accept the practice of Participatory Action Research as a “social opportunity”: “The crucial role of social opportunities is to expand the realm of human agency and freedom, both as an end in itself and as a means of further expansion of freedom” (Dreze and Sen 2002: 6). A PAR process has the potential to support people enacting agency through its invitation for people to represent themselves, their values and ideas as well as determine how these representations should be used to further their own purposes. For example, PAR participants’ setting of research goals or questions ensures that resources are allocated to their priorities; their choice and design of research methods improves the likelihood that data collection is done in ways that are sensitive to local contexts and peoples, thus preventing insensitive or even psychologically destructive research (Macdonald 1995); and participants’ attribution of meaning to the data can serve as a consolidating step in their understanding of a problem. The social opportunity is
embedded in these experiences as well as the potential legacies of such experiences, including feelings and abilities that support acting with enhanced agency ("means of further expansion of freedom" ibid). It is also a social opportunity for the linking of individual and collective social consciousness. The practice of facilitating a process through which people may collectively determine what they can try to accomplish together, invites the development of a social contract: a recognition of the mutual benefits of a combined effort.

A sensible caution and instruction for PAR practitioners comes from geographer Janet Townsend: "We cannot empower others, for individuals can only empower themselves although perhaps opportunities can perhaps be created for them to do so" (Townsend 1995: 104). The creation of such opportunities is predicated on setting a safe stage for participants. Ellesworth notes that a vulnerable individual’s decision to participate is the "result of a conscious and unconscious assessment of the power relations and safety of the situation" and that "trust, risk, and the operations of fear and desire" contribute to "what we say to whom, in what context, depending on the energy we have for the struggle on a particular day" (1993: 313). Combined with Chambers’ reflection on past international development interventions that "Part of the explanation of persistent error lies in interpersonal power relations" (Chambers 1997: 76), it becomes crucial to recognize that the PAR facilitator can enhance the potential for participants’ empowerment through participation by eliminating whatever factors (including assumptions) that may inhibit the freedom of participants to engage, explore, reveal and act as they choose. It is this core principle of putting participants’ interests first that distinguishes PAR as a methodology or technology primarily concerned with social activism.

4.2 Critiques of PAR
A healthy dose of skepticism has entered the PAR literature, mainly thrust forward with the rationale that to date, PAR has not been subject to rigorous critique and requires more deliberate analysis and explanation as a methodology (Cooke and Kothari 2001, Lane 1995). Showcasing this skepticism are descriptions of participation as "the new
orthodoxy" (Henkel and Stirrat 2001), participation as one of several terms “… dangerously close to becoming buzzwords, rhetorical terms without theoretical clarity or practical content” (Lane 1995: 190) and, in a title of a book of essays critiquing participation in development, even a “new tyranny” (Cooke and Kothari 2001). Blurring the boundaries of critiques of PAR methodology, however, is the expansive cooptation of participatory approaches in development practice. As Rahman and Fals-Borda lamented in 1991, this experience of cooptation has created “dangers for the survival of original PAR ideals, even certain feelings of betrayal” (Rahman and Fals-Borda 1991: 29).

Chambers finds it necessary in the outset of a chapter explaining participatory research and development to preface with:

There are three main ways in which ‘participation’ is used. First, it is used as a cosmetic label, to make whatever is proposed appear good... Second, it describes a co-opting practice, to mobilize local labour and reduce costs.... Often this means that ‘they’ (local people) participate in ‘our’ project. Third, it is used to describe an empowering process which enables local people to do their own analysis, to take command, to gain in confidence, and to make their own decisions. In theory, this means that ‘we’ participate in ‘their’ project, not ‘they’ in ‘ours’. It is with this third meaning and use that we are mainly concerned here. (Chambers 1995: 30)

Certainly there are plenty of critiques decrying the inauthentic claims of various development processes and projects as participatory. The confusion and contradiction arising from appropriation and misuse of the term ‘participation’ is dangerous and threatening to PAR as a respected theory. However, this review is more concerned with the critiques leveled at PAR that focus on what are perceived to be the methodology’s own shortcomings.

One defining PAR claim that is in dispute is the ability for the methodology to be empowering. It has been argued that the PAR literature does not recognize the true nature of power, or give it due consideration in the development of methodological processes or analyses. For instance, Ilan Kapoor (2002) makes the point that much of the participation literature espouses the importance of public spheres and community-wide participation, which can be the very conditions that preclude women’s participation in
cases where women live primarily in the private sphere. Separately, David Mosse (1994) and Uma Kothari (2001) contend that the more “participatory” a process becomes, with an emphasis on jointly created knowledge, the less likely it is to reveal differences (of power, opinion, etc.) within the community because the process (“group activities leading to plenary presentations” as Mosse describes) assumes and encourages expressions of consensus and a community’s “official view”. Clearly, this is antithetical to PAR’s ideal of embracing complexity and diversity, and thus Mosse and Kothari are implying a lazier or even manipulative form of participatory process which produces conformity and reductionist interpretations. Frances Cleaver (2001) argues that participatory development’s emphasis on empowerment is not supported by the required insights into individual positions, the competing costs and benefits of participation and the potential participants’ opportunities and constraints related to participation. Usefully, Heiko Henkel and Roderick Stirrat advise that in critically evaluating empowerment as an outcome of participatory projects the question should not be “how much” are people empowered but instead “for what” are people empowered. This latter question, they argue, addresses the actual meaning of participation, uncovering the biases of its use:

> And in the case of many if not all participatory projects it seems evident that what people are ‘empowered to do’ is to take part in the modern sector of ‘developing’ societies. More generally, they are being empowered to be elements in the great project of ‘the modern’: as citizens of the institutions of the modern state; as consumers in the increasingly global market; as responsible patients in the health system; as rational farmers increasing GNP; as participants in the labour market, and so on. Empowerment in this sense is not just a matter of ‘giving power’ to formerly disempowered people. The currency in which this power is given is that of the project of modernity. In other words, the attempt to empower people through the projects envisaged and implemented by the practitioners of the new orthodoxy is always an attempt, however benevolent, to reshape the personhood of the participants. It is in this sense that we argue that ‘empowerment’ is tantamount to what Foucault calls subjection. (Henkel and Stirrat 2001: 182)
The blame is laid at the depoliticization of PAR and the need for it to organize around a more “politically-committed approach” (Hildyard, Hegde, Wolvekam and Reddy). Critics protest that participatory research and development have lost their “radical, challenging and transformatory edge” and as such, meaningful empowerment is an empty promise: “... we now talk of problem-solving through participation rather than problematization, critical engagement and class... This limited approach to participation gives rise to a number of critical tensions or paradoxes.” (Cleaver 2001: 37) These critiques of PAR are immensely useful because they highlight the need for PAR to remain true to, and reflective of, its roots: that is, “a part of social activism with an ideological and spiritual commitment to promote people’s (collective) praxis” (Fals Borda and Rahman 1991: 25).

An important aspect of PAR that is sometimes overlooked in the common literature is the “action”. As development theorist Stan Burkey defines, PAR is “active research with a clearly defined purpose of creating knowledge to be shared by both the people and the investigator, knowledge that leads to action and, through reflection, to new knowledge and new action” (Burkey 1993: 62). Indeed, one of the most important questions I ruminated on during the design and implementation of the project with youths in Dagahely Camp was: what is the action part of it? For me, this is where I discern the threat of PAR’s ambiguity that Trevor Parfitt warns against. As Parfitt writes, there is an inevitable means/end ambiguity for PAR since participation as a means has different implications from participation as an end:

*Participation must function as a means because any development project must produce some outputs (therefore participation is seen as a means to achieve such outputs), but it must also function as an end inasmuch as empowerment is viewed as a necessary outcome. This ambiguity becomes contradictory when emphasis is laid on participation as a means at the expense of participation as an end.* (Parfitt 2004: 544)

The practice of the PAR facilitator is another lightning rod for critique. In explaining the individualistic approach of the facilitator’s role, Chambers writes: “The most striking insight of the experience of PRA is the primacy of the personal... Responsibility rests not
in written rules, regulations and procedures but in individual judgment.” (Chambers 1994: 1450) The rationale for PAR practitioners to “unlearn” various professional attitudes and practices originates from an understandable hypothesis that top-down, extractive research can alienate research participants or respondents from gains made through the process or outcome of a study. PAR’s emancipatory project renders such approaches hypocritical and obviously counterproductive. However, justifiable questioning of PAR’s credibility as an adequately theorized, proven and transferable methodology results from the lack of rigor in literature and training available to inform the PAR facilitator’s role. Michael Cernea points out that, “Development agencies often have to rely excessively on a sociologist’s personal aptitudes and on the accident of his or her flair and inspiration in the field, rather than on the discipline’s methodological and conceptual tools... Although the creativity, intuition, and ad hoc judgment of the social analyst are critical for the project (and help develop the discipline itself), in the long term it is essential to have a systematic body of sociological know-how that is transferable and usable in operational work by sociologists and non-sociologists alike.” (Cernea 1995: 28) Social anthropologist Paul Francis (2001) disapproves of PAR theorists’ emphasis on values and the associated assumptions that this provides sufficient guidance to PAR facilitators. Francis argues: “The importance of charismatic specialists with esoteric training, combined with the centrality of the moral dimension, the inner-directedness expressed in the precept to ‘follow your own judgment’, and the symbolism of ‘reversal’... recall the role of the shaman.” (Ibid: 80) Cooke and Kothari worry that the “methodological revisionism that characterizes the limited self-reflexivity with participatory development” is not sufficient, and hence the participatory discourse “embodies the potential for an unjustified use of power” (Cooke and Kothari 2001: 4)

I judge the critiques of Francis, Cooke and Kothari to be rooted in confusion about what “the primacy of the personal” means. The rejection of ‘professional’ approaches to research, and the encouragement of creativity, receptivity and personal judgment in research do not deny a role for learning how to practice PAR. While the participatory concept of research-as-relationship challenges efforts to prescribe specific actions, just as with any methodological role for the researcher, there is knowledge that should be
prevalent, and ways to interpret values and knowledge into action. There are PAR writings that include this kind of translation. For example, Hailey’s (2001) findings from a study of nine South Asian NGOs offer practical advice that refrains from dictating a formalistic approach. He first describes specific activities that supported facilitators’ successes with achieving participatory processes, such as a two-year process of ‘walking and talking’ with villagers, the efficacy of walking or bicycling over automobile transport and the importance of a practitioner’s personal relationships (“he visited our homes, inquired after our wives and children”), and Hailey then extends these particularities to comment on more general advice: “… personal dialogue, conversation and discussion are crucial to the success of shared decision-making…”, concluding that “…participative decision-making should not therefore be reduced to some formulaic process, but should be rooted in a dynamic relationship of mutual trust and respect” (ibid: 12). A reader notes that the experiential of PAR cannot be divorced from the values that underpinned the experiences. It is obviously possible to provide advice, both practical and ideological, based on experiences, once one acknowledges what is transferable, including attitudes, deliberate actions, resources and conditions. One of my contract obligations with CARE Canada was to produce a brief set of practitioner’s guidelines for doing PAR for youth empowerment, and I found this a relatively straightforward task. I relied on specific challenges that had arisen and how someone better prepared might have prevented or mitigated these challenges. I reflected on what parts of the process had been fruitful or special to participants and I wrote suggestions about what had contributed to these opportunities. Unfortunately, however, the critics are correct in noting that there are not enough contributions to this body of knowledge from PAR practitioners. Just as slogans are not enough to meaningfully raise consciousness among marginalized people, slogans applied as research advice are also deficient.

In his rebuttal to recent critics of PAR, Parfitt acknowledges that some PAR writers, including Robert Chambers and Oakley have misrepresented participation in their attempts “to try and sell it to aid agencies on the basis of claims as to its efficiency”. He warns that “this resort to a discourse of efficiency has the tendency to open participation up to colonisation by top-down concepts of managerial efficacy.” (Parfitt 2004: 547)
While PAR practitioners should not shy away from reporting their accounts of facilitating participation and how it may have achieved an efficient research or development process, the caution is not to choose PAR as a methodology for "efficient" research or development. To preserve the integrity of participation-as-empowerment the researcher needs to regard efficiency as a potential characteristic or side benefit, but not assume its realization. A preoccupation with efficiency could certainly undermine a process that is meant to be empowering for participants. I agree with Parfitt (2004) that participation as a means has quite different implications from participation as an end.

5.0 How the Methodology Translated into Practice

The best laid plans ... to continue this sentence would grossly misrepresent this study’s design since a comprehensive and systematic work plan was never possible. From my intentionally open schedule during the first stage of the research in the camps, to the research design adaptations required to gain the support of CARE’s sponsorship, through to ever-changing conditions on the ground, as well as fidelity to a purist PAR approach, this project was challenged to strike the necessary balance between adequate preparation and adaptability to situational opportunities and constraints.

The research was designed with a deliberately loose framework. Interestingly, this "deliberately loose" framework took significant discipline to implement, defying the idea that qualitative, participatory research proceeds without rules or planning. As a new researcher, rejecting the impulse to over-plan how I would implement the study was difficult, as was explaining this strategy to others. Sensitive to how this strategy might be interpreted as a "non-strategy", I was somewhat hesitant to admit to peers and advisors, as well as potential funding agencies, including CARE Kenya and CARE Canada, that I didn’t have a list of study objectives with a matching set of methods to address these objectives. While an important goal of PAR is collecting data to promote social change, one cannot know at the outset what data will be important. The proposal to facilitate a decision-making process through which research participants set the research goals, questions, design, schedule and outputs required me presenting an open opportunity to
them. Trying to anticipate the outcomes before the process was underway would have undermined the PAR approach.

5.1 The Research Design and Process

2003: Advocacy Research

Feeling obligated to provide CARE Kenya with results, as well as a reason for wanting me to return, and also feeling inspired and permitted to share what people were telling me in the refugee camps, a week into my first four weeks in Dadaab I decided to produce a report about the ‘school leavers’ dilemma’. My working research question was: *What are the opportunities and challenges facing out-of-school youth in the camps?* The content of this four week informal study came from discussions with CARE staff (non-refugee and refugee), students in primary and secondary schools as well as vocational training programs, members of the Youth Committees (out-of-school youth), parents and anyone else that was interested in approaching me in Dagahaley, Hagadera and Ifo Camps. While I was introduced to CARE’s operations and the camps in a relatively organized manner, with briefings offered by CARE’s program heads (Education, Community Services, Logistics (food distribution), Mechanical Services Unit and Water and Sanitation), I was soon left to my own designs and devices.

During this first visit, I organized my days to meet with different groups and I always took my notebook with me, taking notes of everything I heard and observed. I came to rely on a few people who were interested in the research and whom I came to trust and appreciate for their perspectives and knowledge. For the most part, these individuals were refugees either employed with CARE or active among the refugee population (e.g. Youth Committee executive members) and a few of CARE’s non-refugee staff, mostly those who were camp-based rather than based in CARE’s main office in Dadaab. These individuals helped me in arranging discussions with different groups of refugees and provided me with useful background information. To translate this process into research terminology, these individuals became my ‘key informants’ and helped to arrange a
‘snowball’ style of research participant recruitment. I was often responsive in this process, rather than directive, and agreed to meet with any group that one of these key informants recommended to me. As I became more familiar with the camps, I would walk around them or sit in a school yard or at the job postings board in efforts to make myself accessible to anyone interested in talking with me. Translation was ad hoc, rather than through one appointed person, and I made decisions based on the situation. I came to request the translation services of a few CARE refugee employees with whom I had developed trusting relations and I found it most useful for a daughter or son to translate when I spoke with a group of parents. Young refugees, both in and out-of-school could either communicate directly with me in English or through one of their friends translating.

In every meeting I carefully introduced myself. I consistently repeated the same description: that I was a student from Canada doing volunteer research about out-of-school youths in the Dadaab Camps; that I was not paid by, or responsible to, CARE or UNHCR; that I realized there was a problem with too few opportunities for young people in the camps; and that I saw my job as helping the refugees make their realities and wishes known to the agencies. I would tell the people that I am not an expert, but that I hoped to help them convince outsiders of the challenges they are facing: in fact, I said “I want to help you make the most convincing argument possible” which, of course, is a very biased way of initiating research. However, even with an acknowledgment that advocacy research can be useful (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1993), I was not primarily concerned with doing research at this point. I was more concerned with developing relationships and learning. I definitely had the intention of communicating my alignment with the refugees, not with the agencies, and my willingness to act as an advocate on behalf of out-of-school youths. I also wanted to make clear my lack of direct power and thus curb any undue expectations of my work’s influence. I believe that this kind of

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7 Snowball recruitment refers to the incoming researcher using a group of informants with whom she is familiar to link her with people in their networks who are then in turn asked by the researcher to further expand her request for participation to others. (Denzin and Lincoln 2002).
honest appraisal of why and how I was there encouraged a greater understanding that participation was entirely voluntary since I didn’t have a mandate or position of power

I had a list of questions that I modified as I discussed the school leavers’ dilemma with different groups and individuals. They included:

*What do out-of-school youth do each day?*

*What do out-of-school youth want to be doing?*

*What is the most beneficial program of Standard 8 graduates?*

*In the absence of increased spaces at secondary school, what are recommendations for programs for youths?*

*What will help youth most in preparing for repatriation to Somalia?*

In all cases, these questions stimulated discussions that lasted at least an hour, often two hours.

I did this kind of interviewing for three weeks and then I wrote a report that I self-consciously titled a “concept paper” because I didn’t want to present it as authoritative. I broke this report down into key points and had them translated into Somali and then met again with every group that I had previously consulted. I often repeated my original introduction and explained that I was reporting what I had written to ensure that it was accurate and not missing any other important information. This kind of verification step is recommended in social science research (Denzin and Lincoln 2002), but perhaps is often overlooked in the pressed timelines and ad hoc nature of research commonly practiced in refugee settings (Jacobsen and Landau 2003). This step was obviously appreciated by the research participants and was valuable in enhancing their trust for me as well as adding to and, for the most part, validating my interpretation of the situation. It was very instructive to me about how process can be as powerful, if not more powerful, than a final product. As I read a part of the report’s summary, one father on a school committee remarked (through a colleague’s daughter translating) “It seems when she was writing this, she wrote it from my heart” (Personal Communication, Ifo Camp, July 7, 2003). This step is critical in ensuring that the researcher and the other research participants are all confident in the credibility of the research. When I returned to the
camps a year later, I found I was remembered by some of the past participants and I was able to remember them since we had met at least twice the previous year. Appendix 1 is the report that I produced and in its own appendix is a list of the people who were included in the study.

For me, this first report represents a short stint of advocacy research. Sociologist Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo argues, “Advocacy research shares the general goals of participatory research, as the research aims to challenge societal inequality by empowering the powerless, and by including a social change orientation in both the research process and through the utilization of the research findings.” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1993: 58) However, she lists three factors that distinguish advocacy research from the “pure model of participatory research”: 1) the people being studied do not control the research; 2) advocacy research recognizes that it is not always possible to know in advance precisely what research findings will in fact be "useful" as a tool of social change; and 3) advocacy research is realized through political action, but not necessarily in the same community in which the research was conducted (ibid). The document I produced was circulated widely through CARE Kenya in Dadaab, as well as with various other NGOs and garnered attention from staff at CARE Canada, the Refugee Education Trust and UNHCR (Education branch, Geneva). CARE Kenya took recommendations from it, such as increasing their apprenticeship placements for primary graduates, and used excerpts from the report in their proposals for increased education and youth programming funding. Moreover, in early 2004 CARE Kenya re-organized their Community Services program to emphasize Community Development and made “Youth” one of the four branches of this sector (previously “youth” were not specifically addressed in any program area). When Microsoft Corporation contacted UNHCR and CARE Kenya in the fall of 2003 to propose their donation of Community Technology Learning Centres (Internet centres) in the Dadaab Camps, Microsoft representatives were briefed by CARE with my 2003 report and they subsequently contacted me to request advice about programming for out-of-school youths.8

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8 The Microsoft Internet centres project is scheduled to begin in January 2005.
This first phase of research was invaluable to the overall project. While a product stood alone and was found useful in program planning, it also served to provide me with credibility with CARE as a sponsor for the next period of research as well as with many refugees as research participants. Moreover, as described in the Prologue to this thesis, the experience also made clear to me that I would prefer to do research that more meaningfully engaged and empowered young refugees in the camps. I had been impressed with the wealth of information and ideas among different groups of refugees. I had also failed at engaging many young out-of-school women in the research and knew that this experience was under-represented in the final report. I was suspicious that other important pieces were also missing from my “quick-and-dirty” analysis. The research process had remained unequal as underlined by my ability to leave at any moment and correspondingly for the research process to end with my departure. Despite my good intentions, I had left the research participants no better off than before I had arrived. I had listened and I had organized what I learned for others to learn. However, the young refugees were still alienated from the decision-making that was affecting their lives and had not gained any new capacities to redress this inequality.

Upon reflection, I felt that it would be possible to do “pure” PAR, and despite receiving well-meant cautions about not expecting too much from this process, I had a hunch that something more powerful could be achieved if my emphasis was on providing an opportunity for some kind of self-determination among young refugee participants, rather than producing a stand-alone advocacy document. I made my overarching research question: Can participatory research in a refugee camp context engage and empower refugee youth participants? And I endeavoured to learn how.

2004 Participatory Action Research

I battled a bit to hold fast to my proposed research design in the face of CARE Canada’s changing expressions of interest regarding funding my 2004 visit to Dadaab. I had wanted to be in the camps for five months, beginning in January 2004, as I felt this amount of time would benefit the research through relationship development and deeper
investigations. In the end, CARE Canada kept me waiting for confirmations of funds until March 2004 and I decided that I could only afford to go for two months. I also proposed to concentrate the study with a group of youths in one camp rather than to try to be involved in all three camps because I wanted to ensure I could commit enough time and attention to the PAR participants. CARE Canada and Kenya also asked me to revise my proposal to include both refugee youths and non-refugee youths in the village of Dadaab—ostensibly, to identify possible program linking opportunities, and I agreed to this although I was concerned that the differences in the populations’ circumstances would be too different and I wasn’t familiar at all with the situation or people in Dadaab. Eventually, we settled on a budget from CARE Canada that would cover the costs of my travel and lodging, as well as provide an additional $800 (Canadian) that the youth research participants could decide how to spend in a way that benefited the general youth population (subject to CARE Canada and Kenya approval). This last item was the compromise we reached in lieu of my interest in paying the youth researchers as a demonstration of our appreciation of the value of their contributions to the project.

I found the question of paying research participants a tricky one. Given the enforcement of hierarchies of power which dominate most interactions between refugees and agency personnel, I believed that it was unfair for me, given my initial association with agency personnel, to “invite” participation without any tangible recognition of the value of people’s contributions of time, effort, knowledge or skill. Inviting participation without any material incentive for participants in such a context seems patronizing and unfair. I worry that many young refugees are vulnerable to exploitation given their interest and perhaps desperation for potential opportunities at improving their lot in life. Perhaps the most vulnerable would not feel capable of saying no, for risk of offending agency personnel, and others may not feel capable of saying yes, because participation would reduce time for other more directly advantageous work, including possibilities for paid work. I considered that acknowledging the value of people’s contributions with an honorarium payment would facilitate understanding of our more equal status as fellow researchers (even though I wasn’t being paid) and would tangibly demonstrate my confidence in their abilities. At the same time, however, this process was supposed to
prove beneficial in other ways to participants, such as skills development and an opportunity for self expression and advocacy, and I didn’t want payment to obscure these ideals. I remain torn on this issue. While I prefer the idea of earning people’s participation in research because they determine that it can be useful to them for reasons other than material gain, I also believe that we need to be careful about assuming too much about why people participate in research. Is it really due to altruism and a sense of community service or are there other self-interests at play? (Of course, there are other self-interests probably at play: we should endeavour to understand these so as to inform the research approach: please see page 63 for a discussion of how I addressed this.) Also, is the donation of time and effort a sacrifice we can conscientiously expect of refugees? Is paying for work on a research project not a useful strategy in undermining the conceptualization of refugees as helpless and useless? And certainly, remuneration enhances opportunities for self-sufficiency, which is an overriding concern of humanitarian assistance in protracted refugee situations (UNHCR 2003). Or is this ideal unsustainable? CARE Kenya doesn’t want to set a precedent whereby all refugees would expect payment to participate in consultative processes, and I can sympathize with their reasoning that they want to enhance refugee participation and ‘self-management’ but cannot afford to reward all such contributions with payment. In the end, I believe we struck a useful compromise that symbolized a real investment and trust in the young participants by offering them a sum of money to spend on a community purpose. On pages 75 and 76 in the next evaluative chapter of the research process I describe a difficult situation that the research participants faced during budget decision-making which pitted issues of self-interest against issues of community interest.

The importance of my first visit to the camps in 2003 was obvious to me within days of returning to the Dadaab Camps. I had earned some kind of “street cred” with both the development workers and the young refugees. Even those who had not met me the year before reacted to me with more appreciation and openness than I had experienced from anyone during my first visit. I was privy to more “insider” information from agency personnel, and welcomed to familiar and new groups of refugees with expressions of confidence in my commitment and abilities. Basically, I felt more trusted which
translated into more access to people’s knowledge and information. Moreover, due to my familiarity with the context, I could hit the ground running and this ensured that the project began with a strong thrust which I believe affected the overall momentum with which it was carried forward. I also had friends and associates who were prepared to help me get the research project off the ground.

In contrast, I found initiating the research project in the village of Dadaab frustrating and eventually I decided to abandon this component of the research because I didn’t have enough contextual understanding or contacts in the community to help inform the process. CARE’s Local Areas Program, which is responsible for all projects targeting the local populations, is comprised of four people who were too busy and not interested enough to help me plan how I should approach the community. Moreover, the topic of education was extremely sensitive in the local village since girls were being integrated into the secondary school for the first time in 2004. Previous to this there had been a ban on girls’ secondary education as a result of a brutal attack on a girls’ boarding house in the mid-1990s. A campaign to encourage parents to allow their daughters to attend secondary school was being planned, and according to CARE personnel, there was resistance among the male youth population, parents and community elders. Attitudes in Dadaab seem less open to outsiders and rather than people approaching me out of interest, as happened regularly in the camps, I felt I was unwelcome and on two occasions children threw small stones to hit me while adults watched. I decided that I had insufficient time to design and implement a constructive study in this situation. It felt too risky to start something in such uncertain and unsupported circumstances when I would be leaving again in seven weeks.

My commitment to facilitating a pure PAR approach, buttressed by my confidence in the potential of the young people in Dagahaley Camp to do something interesting or useful with this opportunity, led me to veer away from CARE Kenya’s agendas for this research. Upon arrival in Nairobi I was advised by CARE’s Country Director to think of “packaging” the research for fundraising proposals (Personal Communication, Nairobi, June 2, 2004). At CARE’s Dadaab office, it was suggested that I concentrate on
implementation of a formal volunteer placement program for young refugees with CARE staff. In both cases, I remained non-committal as I did not intend to apply another objective to the research other than facilitation of a good PAR process for the research participants. I was asked several times by different CARE personnel to contribute to other initiatives (e.g. the Microsoft proposal, research skills courses in Hagadera and Ifo Camps), and when the task didn’t undermine the PAR process in Dagahaley Camp (in time or paradigm), I did. However, I deliberately separated myself from CARE’s activities and staff in the camps. I believe that the attention I dedicated to my personal relationships with agency personnel after work hours (during “lockdown”: 5pm until 8am) prevented any resentment among these colleagues for my independent work practices.9

To initiate this project, I visited with various refugee groups and individuals to introduce myself and the project. After speaking with a few contacts, I was invited to present myself to a gathering of youths to be organized by the Dagahaley Youth Committee. To this grouping of approximately 60 youths, I explained my personal orientation and why I believed that PAR would be efficacious. I described what I did in the camps in 2003, what the findings were, and what the report affected (the Microsoft project, CARE’s establishment of a “Youth” sector in Community Development programming). I explained that I did not believe myself to be an expert about out-of-school youths in the camps, but that I considered the youths themselves as the experts. I also stated that I didn’t accept that I should report youths’ realities to others, but that youths themselves should be given the full opportunity to express themselves and to choose their advocacy actions. I quoted Freire to communicate my inspiration: “to speak a true word is to transform the world”. However, I was always careful not to invoke words or ambitions such as “empowerment” since I didn’t want to influence how people might later report their experiences to me. I then explained that I hoped to work with a small group as a research team that would then seek the input of as many other youths in the camp as possible. Again, I found this step of deliberate initial disclosure important for how this

9 At my farewell party with CARE, UNHCR, WFP and GTZ staff at the Dadaab Main Office, my practice of working independently from the agencies was remarked upon with respect.
The project was conceptualized by all participants, and interestingly, references were made back to these first introductions several times throughout the research process by team members and other youth observers of our process. After answering many questions on a range of issues, I told the assembled youths that anyone could approach me or Noor (a 28 year old Somali refugee employed by CARE Kenya as the Youth Liaison Officer for Dagahaley and a trusted friend of mine from 2003), and that I could always be reached at the secondary school on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday mornings. I also committed to reporting back to the Youth Committee regularly.

Recruitment for participatory research can be perplexing since the ideal is to include as many different perspectives as possible and to gain the participation of the most marginalized peoples in a population (Chambers 1997). Considering my short time period (seven weeks) for this research project, I chose to purposively recruit a group of ten young people from different backgrounds to form the team of researchers. Ten was a somewhat arbitrary limit, but I thought that it would allow for enough differences among members as well as ensure enough people to work together to fulfill some kind of research project and not too many individuals to prevent meaningful relationships to develop among us. While I didn't want to dictate what kinds of personalities joined the team, I did want to ensure diversity in the group's constituency and I brainstormed various distinctions within the youth population that I had learned from consultations with refugees and agency personnel during my preliminary research in 2003 including gender, home country, age, education, family structure, employment and other activities. I didn't set strict language requirements as I was aware that most primary school finishers in the camps retain the basic English they learned in school and I knew that we could do internal translations within our team when necessary. For such purposive recruitment, I needed to rely on and trust the judgment of several refugee youths whom I had come to know in 2003 and who were interspersed in different groupings of youth like the self-organized Youth Committee, the recent secondary school graduates and CARE's activities.

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10 I also chose to teach a Form 2 (approximate equivalent of Grade 9) English class for 6 weeks and while I learned a lot from my students, I did not incorporate this knowledge into the research. This was a separate initiative, but it did provide me with more relationships which facilitated my acceptance and movement around the camp.
Community Development Services. When only one young woman showed up for our first scheduled meeting, I asked the group if they thought they represented the diversity of youths in the camp. They discussed how they were a mix of secondary and primary finishers, employed and unemployed, Sudanese and Somali. Only the young woman, Idil, said the group was unrepresentative because there were too few young women present. I asked if the six present young men and Idil could please work together to identify and invite other young women from different backgrounds. In the end, a team was formed of eleven youth researchers of a diverse array of backgrounds and experiences: there were five young women, six young men; ranging in ages from 18 to 25; ten Somali refugees and one Sudanese refugee; primary school finishers and secondary graduates; employed with agencies, self-employed, involved in vocational training, holding volunteer appointments within the camp and “doing nothing”; living at home with parents, married with children, heading a household of orphan siblings – the Dagahaley Youth Research Team thus represented various subgroups within the camp’s youth population. The following introduces the individuals who pioneered the Dagahaley Youth Research Team:

Idil: At eighteen years, Idil was the youngest member of our team. She has completed primary school and works part time (although she hasn’t been paid for six months) for the International Red Cross helping to locate family members for refugees. She lives at home with her parents and is active with the Youth Committee.

Hassan: My friend and volunteer research assistant in 2003, Hassan was very eager to volunteer again in any capacity. Having finished primary school in 2000 he is now “idle” and lives with an aunt who sells garments in the market. Hassan is of a minority clan and thus is often subject to some discriminatory behaviour within the refugee population.

Ali: Ali graduated secondary school in Dagahaley in 2003 and is now employed by CARE as a Science teacher in one of the camp’s primary schools. He earned a B+ average on his national examinations and is extremely motivated to advance to university if a scholarship or funding from a sister in Sweden is available.
Peter John: At twenty-two years, Peter John is the head of a household of six other orphans who arrived together in Dadaab in 2003 after experiences of horrible violence in his home of Sudan and Kakuma Refugee Camp in western Kenya. Peter John completed secondary school in the Sudan but has no proof of that and was enrolled in a 6 month typing course in Dagahaley Camp.

Sahara: At twenty-two years of age, Sahara lives with her parents and siblings. She has completed her primary education and is employed part-time with the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK).

Halimo: Halimo also works for NCCK on the issues of gender-based violence and sexually transmitted diseases. She is twenty years old and lives at home with her parents and younger brother and sister. She is her family’s sole income earner.

Abdullahi: Married with one child, Abdullahi finished his primary education in Somalia, and is now self-employed as a private teacher of primary-level classes (English, Math, Kiswahili) and employed part-time as a Peace Education teacher. He is twenty-five years old and pursuing a diploma in Social Work through a correspondence course put on by the Kenyan School of Social Work.

Abdi: As Youth Committee Chairman, Abdi is a recognized leader among the youth in the camps. He is twenty-two years old and has completed primary school. Abdi is engaged to be married and he picks up odd jobs to earn money (sometimes acting as a courier in the camp). He is currently saving to pay his fiance’s family a “bride price” and to furnish their new home (which his friends volunteered to help him build out of mud bricks).

Isnino: Isnino is twenty-one years old and finished her primary education two years ago. She is now employed by CARE as an early primary school teacher. She lives at home with her father and step-mother.
Bashir: Employed as a translator for the UNHCR in Dagahaley, Bashir is quite fluent in English. He graduated from the camp’s secondary school in 2003 and was applying for scholarships during our research process. He is twenty-six years old and lives at home with his parents and siblings.

Fatumo: Fatumo works with Isnino as a primary school teacher now that she has finished her primary education in Dagahaley. She is twenty years old and lives at home with her parents.

Beyond the more obvious ‘categories’ of youth who were purposively recruited, the project also greatly benefited from the less obvious distinctions among personalities and the group dynamics that emerged. Halimo is a trailblazer, a young woman who demonstrated day-in and day-out confidence and openness about her opinions. Even when she wasn’t sure if her opinion was correct, she didn’t hesitate from voicing it within our group. I was so grateful to have her as part of the team because she would prod the other young women to speak up and to feel more comfortable as important team members. Abdi took it upon himself to report the progress of our team to attendees of the weekly Youth Committee meetings within the camp and Ali similarly reported to the self-organized group of secondary school graduates. Such actions helped keep other youth in the camps interested, supportive and engaged in our project. Peter John provided us all with comic relief at times as well as optimism via his unbridled enthusiasm at being a part of the project. Hassan chose his unofficial role as the group’s behind-the-scenes mediator and monitor, and I learned that he was visiting with each team member individually to encourage them and to hear about any concerns they had with the research process. Thankfully, he felt comfortable reporting problems to me when he felt I needed to know or to intervene and this helped me smooth out a few misunderstandings that had unintentionally been created. I learned that it takes more than the facilitator to keep a project on track and to keep a team together, and indeed, I certainly wasn’t the sole facilitator of this research process. Just as a combination of different experiences and perspectives matters to the success of such a multi-faceted
research project, so does a combination of personalities matter to the success of a PAR process.

Our work together began with a two-day research skills workshop at which I presented different information about research and facilitated group exercises such as brainstorming a research team code of conduct and possible research questions, as well as practice of different data collection methods (e.g. role-playing interviews and focus group facilitation). While this process began with me in the position of ‘teacher’ and the youth similar to ‘students’, I explained that I didn’t foresee that this is how the project would proceed. At the end of the first day I asked each person to take a green card with “Hopes and Expectations” printed on one side and “Concerns and Fears” printed on the other. I asked them to anonymously write their thoughts about the project and process we were about to undertake and return them to me the next day. I explained that these would help us design a process that helped to avoid people’s fears and meet their expectations.

When we met the next day we began with me writing these anonymous hopes and fears on two large posters and then discussed how we might, as a team, address these concerns. The ‘hopes’ list ranged from lofty ambitions about nation building and helping poor people, to personal goals of getting married, earning a Bachelor of Commerce and receiving a certification for this workshop, to others that focused on hoping the report would reach education NGOs and actually help Dagahaley youth. The fears were equally instructive, ranging from rape, killing and forced marriages of young women, to anxiety about publicly presenting and “fear the report may not reach to the refugee headquarters”. This exercise proved to be very instructive as to what I needed to be sensitive to, and helpful for the entire group to begin to recognize the different perspectives and needs assembled in our team. I used this discussion to segue back to our learning about research by asking the team to brainstorm possible research questions that respond to the expressed hopes or fears. The team members came up with many different questions and we further discussed how we could collect data that would answer specific research questions. This illustrated how inspiration for research can come from either the things you fear and want to change or the things you hope for and want to achieve. Applying
the young team members' knowledge and judgments in such straightforward ways demystified the concept of research and demonstrated how research is not the exclusive prerogative of academics and outsiders. This discussion also seemed to 'break the ice' effectively for our team and the second day was much more interactive and comfortable.

Another important moment in our initial team building came during lunch at a refugee-owned restaurant in the market. In fact, the lunch I spent eating as a woman in the backroom on the floor with the other young women, while the young male team members ate in the main restaurant at tables, sticks in my memory as the first chance for free and open communication between me and the other young women. This private and intimate setting was more comfortable for the young women and we began to talk about families and friends, rather than research methods. This was an important change in how the young women team members related to me. After the group exercises and casual time together, I noted a discernible shift in our team's behaviour as we let go of the teacher-student organization and adopted a more group-oriented and interactive environment. While the first day seemed quite formal, the second day included a lot more laughter and everyone seemed more at ease. Another noteworthy aspect is that I observed that the plastic binders and pens that I had distributed to the team members during the workshop were carried around the camp proudly and the hand-outs about research were well-read and carefully preserved in them. I believe this is testament to the pride and interest team members felt in being associated with this project.

After my provision of this research skills workshop, I facilitated a process whereby the youth team determined the goals and questions for the research as well as appropriate methods for accomplishing it. The team unanimously agreed that their main goal was: "to tell donors about the problems of the Dadaab refugee youths" and after I prodded that when presented with a new problem, many people will ask for recommendations to help them understand what should be done, the team added a second research goal: "to tell donors about the solutions to these problems". We named ourselves the Dagahaley Youth Research Team (the youths always counted me in their definition of the team even though I played more of a facilitative role in the research, i.e. I didn't design the data
collection methods, collect or analyse data). The youths decided they wanted to produce a report that could be sent to outside donors and I offered to type whatever they assigned. The group also discussed different preferences for data collection methods and decided to conduct one-on-one interviews and to facilitate several focus group discussions based on a question guide we developed together. Abdullahi suggested that each youth researcher conduct four interviews over the first weekend and then we would meet to review whether our questions were effective. Everyone agreed that this pilot-test concept would be helpful. The team then set a time for the next meeting by unanimous consensus. I was surprised at the regularity of the meetings they called (approximately 3-4 times/week) and I interpret this as their appreciation of the project and process. Sometimes we would review a calendar to gauge how much time we had left (the deadline being my departure) and Abdi often mobilized the team members to set deadlines for certain tasks.

The team chose to regularly review their collected data together and during these sessions we discussed the kinds of answers they had received and together we began mapping emergent themes. Discussions of interview findings led to repeated realizations that there are so many different experiences among the camp’s youth population and this seemed to fuel enthusiasm among the youth researchers to continue interviewing other young women and men. I observed that the content was so fascinating to the youth team members, and so intertwined with their own fates, that each member became increasingly invested in the project, or at least, a part of the project. For example, when Bashir reported to our group the content of an interview with a young woman working as a ‘house girl’ in another family’s house, several of the female members of our team decided to try to interview other girls working as domestic servants to learn more about this distinctive sub-group. Hassan also organized a focus groups with the young men who he had finished primary school with in 2000 and he asked that I record what was said while he facilitated the discussion. I found that Hassan was the most enthusiastic about using my digital camera (which all team members took turns using) and not as enthusiastic to write, so I asked if he would prefer to do a photo essay of daily life in the camp and then verbally describe to me what each picture showed and I could record these descriptions. He took to this task with great zeal and met me at the school gates every
morning to borrow my camera for a few hours (most of the photographs in the report are his). I tried to carefully monitor how each person was coping with the research and I consulted individuals to make sure they did not feel overwhelmed or troubled. At team meetings I would emphasize that this was volunteer research and that we would all just contribute what we could and what we wanted. Usually, I found I did not have to worry as team members were exceeding the tasks even they had set for themselves. For example, over a period of three days when the group had decided each person would try to complete five interviews, several people did more than eight. Some team members also added new questions that they determined were interesting to the project. I encouraged and praised individuals' initiatives, while also explaining the benefits of consistency in data collection questions for research projects.

At a later team meeting, I organized a session for the team to practice data analysis. I asked them to break into two groups (one of the young women commanding that they should be mixed gender groups) and to prepare a summary presentation that reported to “donors” what other youths in the camp were telling them. After these informal presentations, I facilitated a group conversation about the illustrative power of people’s real-life experiences, the convincing power of people’s own words and how to associate and differentiate data into theme groupings. Again, this role-playing exercise helped to demonstrate that the team members were capable of conducting their own research projects through to analysis and presentation. In the evenings of these last weeks, I typed up the responses to every researcher’s interviews and when the team felt we had exhausted what we could learn from our questions, we reviewed the issues that had been raised through the research. The team decided on a list of key topics that the interviews and focus group discussions had highlighted and each team member selected a topic for which she or he would prepare an analysis summary for inclusion in the final report (it was agreed that I would write the section explaining PAR as a methodology). As each person chose a theme to summarize for the final report (the team nominated me to write the section outlining our methodology), I noticed increasing senses of ownership and pride in individual contributions. It was at this time that the team asked if we could meet more regularly and I was always surprised at the amount of work various members’ had
accomplished between meetings. Eventually, these summaries were shared among the team and we each offered suggestions that included other quotes from interviews to use and other implications. When agreement on drafts was reached I typed them up as a draft report which each member took home to review and we discussed and made final revisions. The report which was completed, printed and bound in CARE’s Dadaab office on July 23, 2004 is attached as Appendix 2.

The team members did not always agree with one another’s analyses, but we found ways to work toward consensus, sometimes through my facilitation and sometimes with other team members leading or negotiating. For example, several of the male members disagreed with mentions of incest as something that occurred in the camps. The young woman who had written the section of sexual abuse in the camps argued forcefully that she and others knew of cases, some reported to UNHCR security officers. When a fuller conversation about this subject continued we realized that the reason the few young men didn’t want the topic mentioned was not because they were disputing its reality, but because they thought it would portray the refugee population badly to outside audiences whose support they hoped to gain. The small debate evolved into a more philosophical conversation about why it was important to include all realities in such research and the importance of not concealing information that we didn’t like to admit. I found that the majority of our young team enjoyed such philosophical conversations and that letting our detailed concerns or questions evolve into broader considerations encouraged more open-minded and adventurous thinking among some of us. I also noted that one of the most enjoyed topics of conversation among our team was about how bias might manifest itself through data collection and analysis; analysis of the subtleties of our own biases and their effects on the research. I believe the youth team members became quite conscious and conscientious about the distinctions between the strengths of their subjectivity and the weaknesses of their biases. The atmosphere of trust and respect that we carefully built and the constant vigilance with which we protected it encouraged differences in opinions to be voiced and considered, and this definitely enriched our understanding of one another and the research topics. I also made sure that I was accessible to each team member to consult with in private and ten of the eleven team members did seek me out or
responded to me seeking them to discuss matters in private, both related to the research process as well as their personal lives.

As the facilitator of this process, I played many different roles. I was a teacher and advisor on research matters; confidante on several individuals’ personal matters; logistical coordinator (travel, food, rooms, materials); administrative support (typing handwritten interview notes and final report); as well as an active facilitator encouraging dialogue and decision-making, negotiating disagreements and recording progress. I tried to strike a balance between being informal and friendly while also being conscientious and aware of what I was expressing and how team members were responding to the process. Luckily, different team members felt comfortable giving me advice along the way. The clearest example of how I erred in my behaviour was when I responded to Abdi’s request to leave a meeting early. I tried to communicate that he was in control of how much he contributed to the process and I accepted whatever decisions team members made. Unfortunately, as part of this response, I included the statement “I don’t care”. I remained oblivious of the offence this statement had caused until two members of the team privately brought to my attention that by saying I didn’t care I had made Abdi and other team members feel bad. My lazy language had caused a sense of loss among some members of the team as they contemplated that I didn’t care for them. The very next day I apologized to the entire team and described how I use the phrase “I don’t care” loosely in my casual conversations and how I understood they had interpreted the meaning differently from my intended message. I took time to explain what I had hoped to communicate and I stated unequivocally that I care very much for each member of the team and the team as a whole. Thankfully, this discussion ended with broad smiles and heads nodding in acceptance of my apology. However, I realized how imperative it is for me as the facilitator to be very deliberate and attentive to what I am expressing and what meanings might be interpreted, especially given language and cultural differences. I was relieved that some team members felt enough confidence in me to know this was an unwitting error and that I could rectify it, but I was also again reminded at how tenuous the nexus of trust is between me as an outsider and the youth research participants. Preserving this trust requires constant attentiveness and cannot be taken for granted.
Following the completion of a final written report (which we were surprised to find exceeded thirty pages with photographs and recommendations) we prepared and practiced a public presentation. The team had decided mid-way through the project that they wanted to orally present the report to the agencies in Dadaab and they also enthusiastically supported the proposal I made to use a portion of the $800 (Canadian) offered by CARE Canada for youth programming to pay for some of the team members to travel with me to Nairobi to present to donor agencies there. We decided to first present to other youths and agency personnel in the three camps, then Dadaab and finally Nairobi. I did the formatting of a PowerPoint presentation while the young women team members dictating what content should appear. The young men of our team were busy choosing who would represent them in Nairobi.

I refused to play a role in deciding what members of our research team should accompany me to Nairobi to present to donor agencies. Instead, I asked that four individuals be chosen, two female and two male. This number was somewhat arbitrary, but we had a limited budget, I was the only 'chaperone' and wanted to feel capable of keeping everyone together and safe, and I felt our meetings might be less effective if there were too many of us in the room. The young women did not seem to have difficulty in deciding who would represent them: Halimo and Idil. I asked how they had made the decision and Halimo told me that Isnino could not leave because she would be giving examinations to her students, Fatuma was ill with malaria (she was in the hospital and absent from a week of our meetings) and Sahara was too shy. I asked Isnino, Fatuma and Sahara each privately if they agreed with the way the decision had been made and each told me they did, but I cannot be sure in the cases of Sahara and Fatuma. Halimo has a very strong personality and I have no idea if she was too forceful for the others to deny her. After privately asking each individual if she agreed that the process was fair and nobody refuting it, I did not want to second guess their process farther. I accepted their decision and recognized that, indeed, Halimo and Idil had been the most dedicated young women on the team as well as committed to making young women’s experiences
better understood. The young men, on the other hand, became deadlocked in their attempt to choose representatives.

I was not privy to the machinations of the young men's decision-making process, but I heard accounts from several participants. I know that two of the deadlines I gave for this decision expired with no results. In the end, they spent several hours on several days trying to figure out a fair process. Firstly, the six young men sat together around a table and each was invited to list the arguments in favour of him going. These apparently ranged from the constituency he represented (Sudanese population, secondary graduates, Youth Committee, etc, etc), to his presentation skills and other reasons he wanted to go to Nairobi (to see family in Nairobi, to apply for scholarships). They crafted a process in which every good reason in his favour earned the young man a point and they planned to add the points together to name the 'winners'. Apparently, this method did not satisfy everyone. Then they tried to vote for representatives. Again, this method was disputed. I heard that different young men on the team visited their 'constituencies' and had other youths make appeals on their behalf to other team members. At the time, I was unaware of any of these efforts and I learned later that everyone stayed respectful of each other through the process. The only intervention I was asked to make was to accept three, rather than two, male members to go to Nairobi. I consulted with the young women and we agreed that this would be fine (the 'girls' and I would laugh together about the hard times the 'boys' were having). With an ultimatum that I needed whoever was going to Nairobi to meet me the next morning to apply for UNHCR travel permits, the young men knew it was time to reach a final decision. They agreed to invite Noor, the Community Development Youth Liaison Officer in Dagahaley Camp who is a 28 year old Somali refugee in the camp, to arbitrate. Noor is very well respected among the youth in Dagahaley and he was the most helpful and genuinely encouraging staff person to me and the team in Dagahaley Camp. His approach was to listen to each individual in a group session and then listen to each individual privately. Noor then advised the young men that he would consider everything they had said as well as the purpose of the trip and he would decide which three people should go. Everyone agreed that they would accept his binding arbitration. The next day he arrived with three names and he discussed his
reasons for choosing these individuals with all of the young men and later with me. He chose Peter John, Ali and Abdullahi. I again asked each person if they supported the process and, unfortunately, Bashir was too disappointed at not having been chosen. He and Ali asked for both of them to go arguing that the secondary graduates needed more representation. I explained to Bashir and Ali privately, as well as to the entire team later, my understanding that the five youths would go to represent all youths in the camps and would present the research as it is recorded in the report. Therefore, I reasoned, the people going would not represent a particular ‘constituency’ such as secondary graduates in the camp, but rather would represent the entire diversity of young refugees in the Dadaab Camps. Moreover, Ali would be there to address any specific questions about secondary graduates’ personal experiences. Bashir agreed that Ali was capable of doing this and he did not seem to hold a grudge against any of us.

Unfortunately, however, after not being selected to represent the team in Nairobi, Bashir did not continue his involvement during our last week of team meetings and presentations. While he wrote the section of the report about “Youth as Decision Makers”, he unexpectedly did not come to present with us in Ifo or in Dadaab. Bashir is good friends with Ali, and Ali was surprised at his absences, but we also were aware that he was very busy with his job as a translator with the UNHCR. When I spoke privately with Bashir I did not sense that he held any animosity or fear about the process and three weeks after the Nairobi trip he wrote to me “your contributions left a permanent mark in my heart” (Personal communication August 18, 2004). However, in Nairobi I learned from another team member that Bashir might have felt intimidated to cease his involvement with us because one of his Kenyan superiors had asked him a lot of questions about why we were doing our research. I wish I had known earlier to be able to explain our research to this individual and ease Bashir’s anxiety, and I realized how each individual had likely employed different strategies (perhaps negotiation or subversion) to participate. This is an important acknowledgment that as a facilitator, I did not know and did not assume to know all that was occurring in team members’ lives during and as a result of this process. Again, I only have some stories to piece together, based on what was shared with me overtly or tacitly.
Unfortunately, our time was too limited to present in all three camps and we only did this in Ifo Camp, however, the team decided they would present to Dagahaley and Ifo Camps after the Nairobi trip. The presentation in Ifo Camp was well attended by refugee youths in that camp, but unfortunately, my arrangements with CARE Kenya personnel were not enacted and so we were late to start (benches had to be moved in the room, electricity connected) and the driver ordered us to leave before our presentation was finished (my request for a later police escort back to Dagahaley Camp had been ignored). This was an unfortunate set of circumstances because it unsettled some of the team members: the last of our presenters didn’t have time to present, we could not receive feedback from Ifo youths because we were forced to leave early, and it showed that there were situations out of my control. I felt terrible and I apologized the next day letting them know that I felt I had let them down when they were ready to take a very important and courageous step. I heard back from them that they felt it was unfortunate too, but they mostly felt bad for me.

Apparently, on their drive back from Ifo to Dagahaley, their discussions were about how I had tried so hard and CARE Kenya was not supporting me. In our team conversation it was obvious that many of us felt obligated to one another out of friendship and respect, as much as invested in realizing our research goals.

On the day of the scheduled presentation to agency personnel in Dadaab I was nervous of a similar disappointment occurring. I had advertised this event with CARE Kenya staff through emails three weeks, two weeks, one week and two days before the event. I had hand-delivered invitations to the other agencies (World Food Programme, UNHCR, GTZ and NCCK) and followed up with phone calls. I had booked the ‘mess hall’, learned my lesson from Ifo Camp and double-confirmed the transportation arrangements and our PowerPoint presentation was set up before the scheduled time. But the team members

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11 These presentations occurred in November 2004.
and I were left standing around. Thankfully, forty-five minutes after our scheduled start time, agency personnel filled the room and we began. I began by explaining the PAR approach we had used and then I ‘handed over’ the presentation. Each member of our team spoke for under five minutes to give the main points of one of the report’s sections. The audience was attentive, and when invited at the end of the presentation, they asked questions and made comments for over forty-five minutes. The team members fielded these questions with information they had collected, detailed analysis and often good humour. The team received many compliments for the useful information they had collected, but they were also confronted with confounding questions such as “How will more education and vocational training opportunities help people that will continue to stay in the camps?” and asked to prioritize programming interventions. One official also commented that it was necessary for the youths to “paint a positive picture” to other donor agencies and to “tone down” the criticisms they had made of how difficult life was for young refugees. This individual stated “young people are hot in the blood” and the youths should temper their impatience to see changes. Nevertheless, following the presentation, the eleven young people from Dagahaley Camp were a joyous group recollecting how much attention and respect their work had garnered. They stated they were amazed at how interested the agency personnel were in their findings and at the request of CARE’s Program Manager to continue their efforts they cheered “We will live on!” I heard from the driver of their vehicle that they were a jubilant and excited group during the thirty minute ride back to Dagahaley Camp.

The next day we met to review the presentation. I was gratified to learn that the youths were able to discern which comments were constructive and which were misguided. For example, I asked them what they thought of the question a program officer had asked about the statistical reliability of our research and I heard back that “he didn’t get it” and “we didn’t do quantitative research”! I asked them whether it was a valuable experience and the affirmative response was “We submitted our problems. They cannot say we are sleeping.” I queried how they felt about being asked to be less critical or impatient and they told me that they are not being critical, they are reporting how life is for young
refugees and that they have no interest in complaining about current agency assistance, but they do want to try to achieve more.

Early the next morning Halimo, Idil, Peter John, Ali, Abdullahi and I left for Nairobi on a ten hour bus ride. Over the next few days we met with representatives of UNHCR, World Vision, Jesuit Refugee Services, Refugee Consortium of Kenya, CIDA and the Canadian High Commission, UNICEF and the Windle Charitable Trust. In all instances, the team presented themselves admirably: they were articulate and straightforward, thoughtful and good-natured. They were told at each meeting how impressive and valuable their work was. They also received commitments of partnership and assistance such as new resources (e.g. typewriters and computers from World Vision) and new programs (e.g. UNICEF committed to initiating programs for youth in the Dadaab Camps in partnership with CARE Kenya). In many cases, the team was told how the agency personnel had never before witnessed young refugees taking such initiative to advocate on their own behalf. After each meeting the five youths would dissect it, recalling a comment or a question, even a gesture like a raised eyebrow; they smiled and laughed at the admiration and encouragement they had garnered; and they nodded confidently about the promises that were made by the agencies to follow up and to commit resources to enhancing youth programming in the Dadaab Refugee Camps.

These days together in Nairobi were more than just meetings. They were also the first experiences four of the five youths had ever had in Nairobi (Abdullahi had studied in Nairobi for six months) and they were a special time of learning and sharing. Before I left Dadaab, I was warned by CARE Kenya staff that it was dangerous to take refugee youths to Nairobi because they would run away. Even the nicest of youths, when taken to Nairobi, “turn into monsters”, I was told by one teacher (Personal communication July 22, 2004). Apparently, CARE had faced such experiences during field trips of students.
participating in examinations or inter-school competitions. I didn’t believe that the five youths going with me would act like this; firstly, because I knew the presentations were important to them; secondly, because I knew they felt like they were being watched as a possible experiment in new ways for CARE to work with young refugees and they didn’t want to spoil future opportunities; and thirdly, because we had built trust and respect for each other and I think they felt obligated to ensure this trip was a success for me as well. I told them what I had been warned and how I didn’t believe they would act this way and they assured me that “we are a team” and that nobody was putting himself or herself ahead of the team or our purpose. I felt confident enough to arrange for us to twice visit Eastleigh, the Somali neighbourhood on the outskirts of Nairobi, which I had particularly been warned against venturing to with the youths. The young men and women had all heard great things of Eastleigh where Somalis are thriving, and luckily, Abdullahi knew his way around so we could eat our lunches there and do our shopping. I know that this was an important part of our trip since these young refugees could see for themselves this world they have been heard so much about. They also knew that I was the most vulnerable one of our team during these visits, given my lack of familiarity with place or language. Thankfully, as I had anticipated, they looked out for me as much as I looked out for them.\textsuperscript{12}

The one major fault of this entire process occurred on our trip to Nairobi and it was due to my negligence of PAR principles. Soon after Idil boarded the bus for this trip her sandal’s strap snapped rendering that sandal useless. I lent her mine and I also lent one of the young men my jacket because he had come with only a tank top and a thin shirt with one button and Nairobi is cold during July. When we arrived at the guesthouse I found that none of the five youths had soap and the guesthouse didn’t supply this. I realized that I should distribute some spending money to Ali, Abdullahi, Idil, Halimo and Peter John to ensure they could purchase what they needed during our visit in Nairobi. I gave them each 1,000 Kenyan shillings ($15 Canadian) explaining that they could spend it at their discretion. Unfortunately, I made this decision, and how much to allocate, without

\textsuperscript{12} I spent a good time considering before we went to Eastleigh what it would mean if one of the team members did abandon us to try to stay in Nairobi (illegally). I wondered if this would not represent an act of agency and I privately prepared to be non-condemnatory if such a decision and action was taken.
consulting the team. The second night in the guesthouse I found that the five of them had
gotten together to discuss how this amount was not sufficient and I was asked to consider
giving each member more money. I sat down and listened to their case. They argued
that items were too expensive in Nairobi and that they had many things to buy. They
explained that they should look smarter in their meetings with donor agencies with new
jackets and new shoes. They also said that they were expected to bring gifts back to their
families and that as representatives of the youths they deserved to receive more
remuneration for their time and effort. I listened to what they said impassively, but I was
cringing inside at my mistake of not ensuring this decision was made with full
participation. The sensation of this meeting was unpleasant for me and I observed for
some of the youths as well as we were suddenly on opposite sides of an issue that people
felt strongly about. My mind raced at how to address this problem and new group
dynamic constructively. I stated that I was sorry not to have ensured that the issue of
pocket money was a decision we made as a team, I replied that I recognized that their
perspectives were valid and I asked that they hear my perspective. I explained that this
project had been from the start a volunteer effort and that I had understood all team
members had agreed that we were dedicating our efforts for collective gain rather than
personal gain. Heads nodded in agreement. I mentioned how many other youths had
wanted to be a part of our team and how our other team members had wanted to come to
Nairobi so I had understood this trip was regarded as an opportunity, not a burden that
deserved payment. Again, I observed that various members agreed with this
interpretation. I reminded them that our budget was dispensed with the requirement that
its expenditure be for the advantage of all youths in the Dadaab Camps and I asked them
to consider how other youths would perceive the fairness of these five youths having
shoes and jackets bought for them with the common budget. I wondered aloud whether
they would feel comfortable reporting their budget to the youths in the camps. The male
youths on the team regularly read the Kenyan national newspapers and a common topic
of coverage and conversation is corruption among government officials. In this
conversation, I asked the team members to recall those stories and to consider how
officials who argued that their community service warranted added bonuses of more
expensive cars and homes was different from the arguments that their service on behalf of
Dadaab refugee youths deserved new shoes and jackets. Then I offered that we should review the budget together and everyone could think about this issue overnight. We sat together and added up all of our receipts and discussed how many more copies of our report we wanted to print the next day. The next morning when we all sat together I was told that the youths did not want extra pocket money from this budget and we went to the printers to negotiate more copies of our report to send to other donors. I was relieved that this situation was saved by us reasoning openly together. However, this situation made two things very obvious: again, trust is not a finished product: it is continuously negotiated and vulnerable to unwitting erosion or dismantling, and of course, material concerns are always going to be a preoccupation for young people in such dire straights. Inevitably and understandably, youths have every right to ask for payment for their efforts and I encouraged them to understand that their expertise and skills are valuable. I am glad, however, that their faith in the project’s purpose outweighed their material concerns.

Our final effort as a team was to draft a job description for the new youth PAR facilitator that CARE International in Kenya committed to hiring. Three months after I left the camps I received an email from Lucy Kinyua, a recent Kenyan university graduate, who has been hired by CARE Kenya as their Youth Officer for PAR and Participatory Action Learning facilitator. She advised me that the eleven original youth researchers are preparing to train other youths in the three camps in research methods. We are now in regular contact to try to identify ways I can help from a distance.

My closing lesson as a PAR facilitator with these young refugees who had so little previous experience being believed in and encouraged was that I had become a mentor and a friend, and thus I retain those personal responsibilities. We came to care for one another very deeply and we continue to write letters and emails to one another.
6.0 Evaluation of PAR in Dagahaley

There are ... intangible realities which float near us, formless and without words; realities which no one has thought out, and which are excluded for lack of interpreters. (Natalie Clifford Barney, translated by Ezra Pound in Adam 1962)

This PAR experience was a qualified success in its empowerment of participants. It was successful in empowering participants through their development of new skills and knowledge that they deem useful, and through the realization of varying degrees of individual and collective psychological empowerment among the young participants. The project also wrought positive changes in the forms of new relationships between the refugee youths, CARE and other Nairobi-based NGOs and the achievement of commitments of new resources for youths in the Dadaab Camps. Success was limited, as anticipated, because of the short time frame in which to accomplish further changes. Nevertheless, the saving grace of this first project’s limited success is that it achieved continuity through CARE Kenya’s recruitment of a volunteer Youth Development Officer to support ongoing youth PAR and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) in the camps. This section describes in more detail the successes, limitations and legacy of this PAR experience. While material changes, and even some forms of enhanced capacity are readily discernible as outcomes of this project, some of my interpretations of realized empowerment are based on less tangible realities. I empathize with French writer and poet Natalie Clifford Barney’s observation that these realities also require interpreters (ibid).

Empowerment is not an absolute condition. Michel Foucault (1980) described that power is not a fixed entity, but rather circulates as abilities to exercise it as a technique, and this definition is consistent with what I learned from the youths on the research team. Even in such a disadvantaged situation, each experienced simultaneous and ever-shifting pockets of power and powerlessness in their own lives. They also showed me that power and powerlessness come in many different shapes. For example, Halimo earns a pay-cheque with NCCK which gives her power through financial leverage, not to accept an arranged marriage. However, it also binds her to her extended family as the sole income earner
and she often finds her pay-cheque already spent (on credit) by the time she receives it. Isnino finds she can be independent with her time because her father has remarried a young woman who does not like Isnino, but this also means that Isnino does not receive emotional support from her parents and she fears for how they will provide for her in the future. While Peter John has recently completed a typing course, he feels it will not be useful unless he is able to prove that it meets some certified standard. I found that my assessments of whether research participants were empowered or not needed to be steeped in their own reflections. Assumptions about empowerment are dangerous given the complexity of how powers translate in people’s lives.

The day after the full team’s presentation to the agencies in Dadaab and the day before five team members and I left to present to agencies in Nairobi, I asked the ten remaining research team members to anonymously complete a written assessment of the project. Across the top of this page I had typed “I am asking you to honestly and anonymously (no names) give me answers to the following questions so I can learn from this experience. Please write as much as you want and add any extra information.” I also verbally explained that I wanted to learn from these comments so I can improve my future research. This page had six questions as well as an invitation to add any other comments or advice. The questions were:

1) Please tell me about what you have learned from this research project experience.
2) What was your favorite part of the research project?
3) What was your least favorite part of the research project?
4) Have you gained anything from this research project that will help you in your future?
5) What were my strengths as a facilitator of this research project?
6) What were my weaknesses as a facilitator of this research project?

Some team members completed their assessments within the hour, others I received the next day.

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13 As described above, Bashir did not participate in these last few team activities.
Different research team members acknowledged their appreciation of learning more about youths' realities and what their peers believe are their greatest problems and potential solutions. I noted how many of the researchers took pride in their expertise in a specific topic area and they listed these topic areas in their responses to “What was your favorite part of the research?” Peter John stands out as having prized his opportunity to learn more about drug use and abuse in the camps as he found it interesting and disturbing. At the end of the research project, he told me that in the future he might want to work as a counselor to youths on drug abuse issues.

The value the youth researchers attributed to the knowledge they learned was due to the participatory way in which we chose a research topic. The project was focused on matters that the youths found relevant and curious to their lives, which not only motivated involvement but also benefited them with data and analysis that they find interesting and useful. The assessment page asked “What was your least favorite part of the research?” and one individual wrote “It was all most favorite because what we were talking about is youth problem and as it was related to youth’s problem. So it was all favorite to me and did not see any least favorite part in these research.”

Team members also volunteered their acknowledgment that they had learned particular skills. In response to my request on the written assessment “Please tell me about what you have learned from this research project experience?” different team members listed: “how to ask questions without leading anybody ... collecting the datas from them without corruption”; “I have learned how to collect data information. I have also learned how to present data collection.”; “how to listen to different sets of people”; “how to research”; “knowledge of how to present issues to donors ... Asking clear questions, open-ended question, single question”; and “idea sharing”. Notably, many of the skills the youth researchers mention having learned are transferable skills that they could employ in non-research related arenas. For example, their assumed capabilities of representing themselves to the agencies in the camps and beyond, were recognized by several of them as being important in their lives. In response to the question “Have you gained anything from this research project that will help you in your future?” someone replied:
Yes I have gained enough experience from this research because you opened for us a
gate that we can submit or forward our problems or my problems through this gate
which means that from now onward I can forward any problem related to me and the
offices and we shall not continue sleeping. (Anonymous assessment from Dagahaley
Youth Research Team, July 24, 2004).

My own critical reflection on the question “Empowerment for what?” elicits a mix of
responses. Perhaps most tangibly, Peter John and Hassan gained employment with
Dadaab-based agencies. However, what contributed to these gains returns to the question
of what kinds of empowerment were achieved. Peter John wrote to me in a letter dated
August 13, 2004 that he replied to an advertisement for a job posting with CARE’s Water
and Sanitation Sector and was chosen over twenty-one other interviewees. Perhaps he
would have earned this position without the experiences of the research project, but I
estimate that the confidence and ease in presenting himself that Peter John developed
through this project, as well as his own improved sense of self esteem as an individual in
the camp’s population, contributed to his initial application and compelling candidature.

During the last week of the research project in Dagahaley Camp, I was asked by a CARE
manager if I could recommend one of the youth researchers for employment as a library
monitor. I asked Hassan if he was interested and while he was initially a bit uncertain of
himself, we worked together to write his first resume. Through this task, I encouraged
Hassan to put into words the assets he can bring to an organization and employment.

After I left the camps Hassan pursued this opportunity and he is now working in this paid
position. Hassan’s own recognition of his strengths asserted itself in his written request
to me to post his name and information on web-sites for researchers. In a letter written
after I had left the camps, Hassan asked me to advertise him as “an expert with refugee
information and willing to work any MA student who interest to carry more research
about refugee problems linked with his/her Master’s degree promotion.” (Personal
communication, July 25, 2004 Dagahaley Camp) Obviously, these two previously
unemployed individuals feel better equipped now to earn employment. Moreover, they
are both now earning incomes which are remarkable advantages for them and their
families as refugees in these camps. I conclude that the research experience was empowering in transformative ways for both Peter John and Hassan.

While some gains are measurable, who can put a value on the opportunity to fight for something you passionately believe in? Or estimate the psychological impact of witnessing your words move and motivate people to join you in a struggle? I watched as one young woman realized the importance of her own story as a powerful tool in opening people’s consciousness to the threat and practice of forced marriages that young women and girls face in the camps. When the team was choosing thematic areas of concentration for the final report, this young woman asked to take up the issue of how early forced marriage of girls and young women is a barrier to girls’ education. A week later she handed to me a short essay about this issue, which contained an explosive dialogue between a girl and her parents about an arranged marriage to a much older man. I was surprised at the way this section of her essay was written; with its use of violent language, larger and darker handwriting and many exclamation points it looked as if it had been written in a fit of anger. When I privately asked her how she had written the dialogue, she confided that it was based on an argument she had had with her parents when at the age of 14 she was told by them that she would be married to a man of 49 years. She told me more of the story on different occasions, about how she ran away from the camp and hid until the man agreed to a divorce, about what she thinks she missed out on during this time and what she now thinks of marriage. When I asked if she wanted to include her dialogue in the final report, she said yes and she also included programming recommendations to address this challenge. This young woman determinedly held on to her position as our team’s spokesperson about the issue of forced marriages and she presented to other refugee youths in Ifo Camp, agency personnel in Dadaab and NGO representatives in Nairobi. She was the first to memorize her presentation and she delivered it with such uncharacteristic forcefulness, at one time banging her hand on a boardroom table to punctuate her main points. It was obvious to me, and confirmed in a brief conversation we had, that she had come to realize the authority and power of her words and her ability to use them to make others aware of what she and other young women suffer. Unfortunately, I didn’t ask her how that made
her feel, and none of us can presume the effects this experience will have through her future, but perhaps putting her story of trauma to constructive use was cathartic and even therapeutic.

Tellingly, one of the youths summarized her or his perspective on the project in the following way: "If donors come, which means there is no weakness. But if they do not come definitely there is problems." The achievement of the youths’ original goals to tell donors about the problems of refugee youths and solutions to these problems was the most valuable thing: both in tangible form, but also as an experience to prove the significance of this participatory effort. This merging of the outcome with the process should be considered for youths beyond the direct PAR experience as well. While measurable gains were made as far as investments of resources in youth programming in the camps (through UNICEF’s new programs, UNHCR’s planning of a vocational training school, etc.), there is no clear answer to how watching their peers produce this report and present it to the powers-that-be affected other youths. How was it to be a young woman in Ifo Camp watching another young refugee woman from Dagahaley lecture about the injustices of forced marriage? How was it to be a younger sibling of a brother or sister who traveled to Nairobi to talk about youth realities and programming needs with UNHCR and UNICEF officials and who returned to the camps to report the gains of new commitments and interest? I assume such reflections occurred given the high degrees of interest with which our team was met by other youths in the camps, but I cannot gauge how they may have changed a young refugee’s understanding of what is possible. As this thesis is being reviewed, the original youth researchers in Dagahaley Camp are preparing to train other refugee youths in research methods. I don’t know the influence this kind of education by peers has on the awareness of young refugees’ capacities and potential, but at least it demonstrates the enduring commitment and hope of the original youth researchers to address the neglect of young refugees in the Dadaab Camps. A longer and more in-depth study period may have been able to yield better conclusions, but I believe that the claim that this research has done more good than harm as far as the individual and collective psychological empowerment of refugee youths in the Dadaab Camps is justifiable.
I credit the success of this Participatory Action Research primarily to the authenticity of the process. The authenticity of the process encouraged the participants to engage authentically, which allowed transformations to occur both in individuals’ experiences and collective experiences. This idea is captured in planning theorist John Friedmann’s definition of authenticity in “the life of dialogue”:

> To be authentic means to discover yourself through dialogue with many others. And therefore we can say: The life of dialogue engenders a process of mutual self-discovery. At each stage in the process, you attempt to integrate discoveries about yourself into the already existing structure of your personality, thereby changing and expanding it. To do this well, you must have found an inner security based on a consciousness of what you have become and are yet capable of becoming; a basic confidence in your ability to integrate new learning; and, finally, a willingness to open yourself to others. (Friedmann 1973: 178)

These characteristics ascribed to the authenticity of the person engaged in dialogue, parallel PAR’s themes: the pursuit of conscientization and praxis, espousal of mutual learning, faith in people, and practice of self reflection. While Friedmann is discussing how changes in self are made possible through authentic dialogue with others, I believe his definition also applies to the potential for meaningful engagement (usually through dialogue, which Friedmann explains is “a relationship of total communication in which gestures and other modes of expression are as vital to meaning as the substance of what is being said” ibid: 180) to stimulate discovery, change and expansion of a group’s collective identity.

Authenticity is a theme that emerged in the youth participants’ evaluation of me as a facilitator. What team members offered in their replies to the assessment’s question “What were my strengths as a facilitator of this research project?” and its closing invitation to add “Any other comments or advice” were often descriptions of my personal attributes:

“You are actually good because you are somebody who is kind and honest and also confidence in ourself.”
“I am highly appreciating your hard working, collaboration, respective and your honourable patient”

After the Nairobi trip, I received other, unsolicited written reflections from the youths. Again, I was struck by how these focused on my personal qualities:

“I wish to express to you all my deepest good feelings, values and gratitudes for your compassionate support and genious initiatives of enhancing the refugee youth livelihoods in Dadaab. It was a precious moment we worked together in Dadaab and Nairobi, Kenya.”

Authenticity was also a theme reflected in the kinds of responses I received to the question “What were my weaknesses as a facilitator?” To these I received only one response worded slightly differently from four different youths: “lack of proper and organized means of transport and communication” which was the team’s unfortunate experience for our presentation at Ifo Camp. I know this advice was offered constructively since I had already heard that the youths had felt sorry that this incident made me feel guilty for disappointing them and that some of the team members told me they felt I was not adequately supported by CARE. As reflected in the story of my mistake in saying “I don’t care” (page 68), obviously some of the team members felt comfortable enough to advise me when I had erred, and I was correct in immediately acknowledging to the team my mistakenness. I am glad that I showed the youths my weaknesses because I believe it underscored the importance of our team effort as well as the fact that I was not an expert facilitator, but rather just a willing facilitator, and this might have helped prove the point that the team members are capable of facilitating others’ participation in processes, and indeed have insights and skills that would have improved upon my efforts.

PAR requires the faith and goodwill of the participants. It is evident from the youths’ comments that they attribute the success of our shared experience to two factors: my kind and respectful behaviour toward them and our shared efforts to achieve a significant and common goal. In essence, we earned each other’s trust as well as respect for what we could accomplish together. There was an enjoyable sense of camaraderie that I felt with the youth team members, and I also observed this growing among themselves as a group, but I also know there was an unspoken deeper core to the importance of our coming
together. We experienced solidarity. The youths felt the project was a noble effort and a very egalitarian respect of the importance of each person's contribution emerged through our work to tacitly form a social contract. This came from a consistent emphasis that I encouraged, but I also consider may be perhaps uniquely possible among the people living in Dagahaley Refugee Camp assuming occasional needs for physical and psychological solidarity in the face of an alien and disempowering refugee experience.

Through our joint commitment to something we all felt was an important cause, in working moments I observed that many other differences were overcome. We found a way to produce something that didn’t allow a few people to dominate and made each individual's contribution appreciated because what we agreed we wanted demanded more work than one person could do (e.g. more interviews and topic coverage) and required different experiences to be represented (e.g. young women’s experiences, young men’s experiences). Also, as our team environment relaxed (through the personal influences of Halimo, Abdi, Peter John, Abdullahi and others, the gathering around food and social conversations) the young women and men worked together more freely, with contributions valued and voices offered and listened to, and I was treated with more intimacy and friendship, rather than deference. The story of my ignoring PAR principles in the final budgeting of the Nairobi trip also demonstrates the validity that: “Perhaps the most fruitful use of trust as an analytical tool is to recognize its situatedness and thus fluidity” (Peteet 1998: 169). The reliance of this PAR effort on the goodwill and faith of the researcher participants demanded my integrity and I had promised a process that the youths would determine. My deviation from this core principle undermined my integrity with the youths. If I had not recognized my wrongdoing in this situation and worked with the youths to find a solution to the problem I had created, I could have irretrievably damaged their emergent understanding that my faith in them is genuine.

I am not surprised, given the realities of Halimo, Idil, Abdullahi, Bashir, Peter John, Hassan, Isnino, Sahara, Abdi, Fatumo and Ali, that an approach that emphasizes treating people with respect and confidence would be the most notable aspect for them. They are each experiencing changes in their relationships and responsibilities given their
transitions from childhood to adulthood, and as these experiences are embedded in the
dehumanizing context of the refugee camp, they have few chances to feel encouraged and
uninhibited to experiment with new identities and focus on feelings of self-esteem.
Boyden recognizes that relationships of confidence and trust may elicit uniquely
empowering environments for young refugees: “Such conditions can be especially
empowering to children who have suffered torment and oppression, for the researcher
may be the first person to really listen to their problems and take their concerns
seriously.” (Boyden 2000: on-line) However, I remain surprised that seven weeks of
demonstrating hope and respect for these eleven young refugees’ capacities was enough
to foster nascent and promising senses of individual and collective potential for
countering some of the disempowering aspects of life in a refugee camp. No camp was
razed or hierarchies overthrown, but a space was created that has the potential to grow
and expand. Several times following our successful presentations, different team
members referred to themselves as “pioneers” among the Dadaab refugee youths.

I recognize that this process was often about relationships and these do not evaporate
when the research project ends. Two weeks after I left the research team I sent letters to
each of the eleven team members. In reply I have now received letters from ten of them.
One read: “I had received your letter/message, I read it and finally comprehended it. I
have enjoyed it since it was entailing addressing my life and all issues that revolved
around it. What I can utter at the moment is that I had missed your encouragement.”
Another read: “I, Ali Mohamed Askar missed your company and encouraging words...”
Particularly because I began relationships of trust and hope with extremely marginalized
young people, and as Boyden (2000) predicts, in some cases, I likely offered their first
opportunities to hear in a personalized way from someone outside of family that they are
believed in and have important contributions to make, I believe I have a role in the
continued support of these young people. With ongoing contact, I may be able to sustain
some aspects of the psychological empowerment that was initiated during the research
project experiences. I respect Boyden’s advice that it is crucial not to raise expectations
among such vulnerable young people and I don’t think any of them expect my overtly
sustained involvement in their lives. But I believe even a less tangible role, through
continued occasional contact and encouragement, can remind them of the hope and accomplishment our PAR experience conjured and thus ensure that the solidarity we built up does not crumble and erode with time and disillusionment.

7.0 Conclusion
I was surprised that when it was time to give our report a title, (our last report writing task) one of the team members asked to be reminded of what quote I had used at the very first encounter I had with them, before we had even committed to the project. It was Paulo Freire's statement in Pedagogy of the Oppressed: “to speak a true word is to transform the world” (Freire 2003: 87). Yes, Ali replied, that would make a great title for our report, and the others agreed. And so the title stands as Speaking Truth to Transform the World. A catchy title can’t reliably summarize an entire experience, or more accurately a diversity of experiences, but the team's consensus to choose this name for their work does indicate the kind of hope and confidence that the project stirred among them. The title also seems to have been auspicious because institutional transformations were promised in its wake.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) reads, "State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child." Too commonly, children are socialized into pleasing adults and acquiescing with adult decisions (Boyden 1990). This is lamentable: children and youths' realities are different from adults' realities, and in the case of the Dadaab Camps, young people are growing up in conditions that are far different from those of their parents' experiences. Just as Simon Turner's (1999) research in the Lukole Refugee Camps of Tanzania demonstrates, the refugee camp system can erode traditional family and community structures of leadership as the humanitarian agencies appropriate the roles of providers and decision-makers. Such situations are known to have psychologically disempowering effects on refugees (ibid, Boyden and deBerry 2004), but there is a paucity of understanding of how such
experiences are different for youths who are in the first stages of developing beyond their childhood dependency on parents for basic needs to individuals.

I wasn’t working with children when I worked with the Dagahaley Youth Research Team. I was working with young adults who, despite the restrictions inherent to their lives as refugees, are resilient in courage and optimism for their futures. They are articulate, open-minded and ambitious to speak and act on their own behalf. My experiences facilitating a social opportunity for youths’ empowerment in Dagahaley Camp makes me anxious for the double jeopardy scenario that surfaces as young refugees reckon with their personal transitional human development stage between childhood and adulthood within a context of limbo which simultaneously disassociates them from both past and future realities. Summoning the requisite imagination to transcend these limitations seemed impossible to me before this PAR experience, but I was proven wrong: imagination of different realities is abundantly possible for the youths in the Dadaab Refugee Camps.

Participatory Action Research has the potential to develop new knowledge, capacities and collective consciousness. Its significance as a social technology is not derived from gaining participation for the sake only of achieving a more representative reality, but in supporting other human beings to flourish. An important lesson from this small research project is that the significance of synchronizing such an opportunity for human flourishing with the imagination and ambition of youth participants should not be underestimated.

**Epilogue: July 27, 2004: Broken Through**

What really began with a tearful night in a Nairobi guesthouse, ended with another tearful night in a Nairobi guesthouse. This time, however, I wasn’t alone and I wasn’t trying to belatedly understand what it was like to be Hassan or Halimo, Ali, Abdullahi, Idil, Isnino, Abdi, Sahara, Fatumo, Bashir or Peter John. Instead, it came as I realized I had to say goodbye to these friends among whom we had cultivated a source of hope and courage to carry forward, certainly in our individual lives but also perhaps as an enduring bond with
each other. As I contemplated each of the individuals I was leaving, I recognized what they were going back to and also what kind of special space distinct from, but embedded in their difficult realities, we had created. I had come to care so much for my friends, and to feel connected to their hopes and struggles, that I felt pain in letting go.

My goodbye with Peter John embodied so much of what I learned through this research. Saying our final words to each other I was looking into the face of a friend, an individual I admire for his senses of honour and responsibility as well as his determined optimism, an individual who learned from me and from whom I learned. We were both sad to say goodbye to one another because we had both found strength in our relationship and we would each miss the encouragement the other instilled. As I tried to tell him what this experience with him had meant to me, tears started to pour down my face. But my tears seemed to strike fear in Peter John and he grasped my two shoulders in his hands and admonished me with a look of concern and reprimand: “Never cry, Elizabeth. You must never cry. You must never cry, Elizabeth. Never cry. Never cry.” I tried to smarten up quickly and show him a braver face, realizing that he was shocked and confused to see me cry as were the Halimo, Idil, Ali and Abdullahi, both because I was a friend for whom they cared and didn’t want to see hurt, but also because I had played the role of the person offering them unwavering hope and encouragement. My tears communicated a sense of helplessness, which is one condition these young refugees are fighting so determinedly against, a fight in which they believed I had joined. By giving into tears I was expressing my difference in situation from them, which is something I want to fight against. Thankfully, they lent me the inner strength to suck it up.

My thesis supervisor, John Friedmann, wrote in a book published in 1973:

*Most of us are afraid to become truly authentic as human beings, to join our feelings to reason, to turn completely to the other in all of his particularity, listening to what he says beyond the logic of semantics and responding with care to his essential needs as a person caught up in a concrete situation.* (Friedmann 1973: 238)

I couldn’t have learned to the extent I did without joining my feelings to reason, and without sharing an experience vested in mutual sharing and respect among a group of
different individuals. As Halimo wrote to me in September 2004: “Dear Elizabeth you know the situation of refugees and the way we live here is not something you needed to be explained for you.” Therein lies the difference between my leaving the camps in 2003 and leaving again in 2004: I had learned intimate lessons from and about the people who live in Dagahaley Camp, and I was not alone a year later trying to imagine their lives or how they thought of my intervention. I had managed through my application of PAR to earn trusting and respectful relationships with eleven young refugees as someone aligned with them. Halimo explained this, too, in her letter: “I think of you, the way you used to guide us in Nairobi and you protected us with the help of God. In fact you did a good job with us and you wake up us as the youth in order to heard our voice. Thank you for that.” The transformations that occurred through PAR were that the research was done with, not for or about refugee youths and it was their voices that were heard, not mine. Being thanked two months after I had said goodbye to Halimo and our comrades for these kinds of changes let me know that I had done the research appropriately.
References


The following document is nineteen pages and is only available in its hard copy form prior to edits.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14} The electronic version of this paper was saved on the hard drive of my laptop with which I returned to the Dadaab Camps in 2004. Unfortunately, this laptop was dropped and broken during a team meeting and none of its contents are retrievable.
INTRODUCTION

Young Refugees
Young refugees should be considered the indicators of donor agencies' successes and failures in promoting self-reliance among refugee populations to achieve the universal priorities of successful repatriation, integration or resettlement. Meeting these priorities rests on the empowerment of young refugees with hope, determination, knowledge, and practical abilities. At the same time, these priorities are undermined if young refugees are not offered opportunities to develop values and capacities that support healthy and constructive futures.

There is no doubt that young refugees offer the greatest hope for the future of their communities. They are the ones who will assume the roles of leaders, workers and parents in their societies. As such, planning for the development of young people is planning for the development of societies.

On June 20, 2003 the refugees and donor agencies of the Dadaab refugee camps (Dagahaley, Hagadera and Ifo) worked to organize celebrations and presentations to mark World Refugee Day. The theme for this occasion was "Refugee Youth Building" reflecting a preoccupation among the refugee population, and their supporting agencies, concerning the challenges and opportunities for young refugees. The representations on World Refugee Day, expressed in poetry, drama, speech and song, made clear the recognition of youth as the most precious asset a community has, and challenged refugees and supporting agencies to ensure that young refugees are offered the opportunities they require to prepare themselves and their societies for peace and productivity. By positioning youth at the camp's center stage, the refugee population was sending a message that they consider the fate of their societies to be inextricably linked to the fate of their young people.

Young Refugee Students
The self-determined motto of the students of Hagadera Secondary School is "I lead, others follow". This aptly reflects a common understanding among refugee youth and parents that education is the most powerful tool for future success and leadership. It also testifies to the idea that these students occupy a unique place among the refugee population, one that is invested with authority and a position that confers upon its holder an understanding of self-importance and leadership.

Over the past decade the number of young refugees in the three Dadaab camps pursuing primary and secondary education has increased from 6,753 in 1993 to 22,895 in 2003, a growth of 237%. Significantly, the number of girls pursuing this education has increased from 1,524 in 1993 to 9,900 in 2003, a rise of 550%.
These figures reflect the motivation of young refugees and their families, as well as the commitment of donor agencies.

Unfortunately, however, there are stories of failure embedded in these promising statistics. While each year the number of young refugees who successfully complete their primary education is growing, the capacity to offer them secondary education remains seriously limited. In fact, the majority of young refugees do not receive any educational opportunities beyond primary schooling.

The capacity of the secondary schools in Dagahaley, Hagadera and Ifo refugee camps is restricted to admit only 360 students each year (120 places at each camp). In 2001, 766 students completed their primary education. In 2002, this population was 980. In November 2003, 980 young refugees will sit for their final primary school examinations. 73% of this number will not be eligible for secondary education regardless of whether they pass their exams or not. From a population of 980, only those students with the top 360 examination results will still be in school next year.

The capacity-building program alternatives to the secondary education provided in the camps are extremely limited. While extensive and innovative programs have been initiated in the three camps with the support of CARE, GTZ, MSF, UNHCR and other donor agencies, only a small sliver of the entire refugee population directly benefit in terms of payment and skills development. The attached table in Appendix A shows the number of refugees who personally benefit from all CARE programs. The number of school leavers who benefit from existing programs is much lower.¹

**School Leavers’ Dilemma**

The students and parents in each camp know that the opportunities are limited. And as several school leavers have noted, it is this knowledge that spurs some young males to leave the camps and return to Somalia to seek other opportunities, despite knowing the inherent danger of this option. Male school leavers advise that they will resort to any means available to earn some income, including selling a portion of their food distribution, collecting firewood from surrounding areas, selling mirra on behalf of local drug dealers, and engaging in dangerous trafficking activities across the Somalia-Kenya border.² Frustration and low morale are widely prevalent among this population.

The consequences of not receiving a place in secondary school are different for boys and girls. Girls who are not given the opportunity to continue their formal education are expected by their families to return to the home. As one young refugee girl who was forced to leave school after her primary education described, she has been told by her family: “You had your chance. You had

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¹ Add statistics here
eight good years. And you failed. So now you must only stay at home.” In what seems to be many cases, the chance for these refugee girls to continue their education comes only once: at the time of secondary school admittance. After that, the expectations become restricted to working at home and marrying.

Some young boys who are not accepted for secondary school in the camps seem to be offered a few more chances. For example, some receive the support of their families to pay to repeat their final primary examinations, aiming for improved scores to achieve admittance to secondary school. The majority, however, describe that “we do nothing” and that others with whom they finished primary school spend their time “loitering in the markets”, “chewing mirra”, and that still others have returned to Somalia on their own or in the company of warlords.

The parents of young refugee boys not in school are deeply concerned for their fates. As one parent described, for eight years a family supports the efforts of a son to pursue his primary education. When this student fails to gain a place in secondary school or alternative capacity-building program, he becomes extremely discouraged and demoralized. He is also then at an age (the average is 16\(^4\)) when he no longer listens to his parents’ advice and instruction. It is at this stage that the young man’s frustration and boredom may inspire defiance, and he exposes himself and others to great risks in taking drugs, engaging in thievery, and joining Somali gangs in the camps, in Somalia and in other parts of Kenya.

The threats of a growing population of disillusioned, demoralized and frustrated young refugee men and women should not be underestimated. Neither should the waste of human potential and the erosion of young girls’ and boys’ hopes and determinations for personal development. Refugee camps as containers of thousands of idle, bored and discouraged young people are potential breeding grounds for depression, social upheaval and personal and societal harm.

**RESEARCH PROJECT**

The goal of this research project is to bring forward the ideas and perspectives of refugees living in the three camps regarding opportunities and challenges for young refugees not in school. The experiences of young refugees and their families in the camps will be explored to provide insight into existing conditions. The principal objective of this research project is to identify practical programming options in which young refugee school leavers may be offered capacity-building opportunities that support their future successful repatriation, resettlement or integration.

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4 Must know average age of primary graduates
CONTEXT OF RESEARCH PROJECT

The refugee camp context is a closed system. It is closed in terms of the restrictions by which refugees must abide: restrictions of mobility and access to outside economic and social opportunities (including access to employment and post-secondary education). Such confines mean that dependency on outside resources will remain necessary for sustaining the three camps' population that exceeds 130,000 individuals. Despite CARE’s, and other donor agencies’, innovation and emphasis in developing human capital resources among the refugee population, as with any closed system, it is a fact that eventually maximum efficiency will be achieved. The majority of people living in this closed and isolated system will not be able to develop full self-reliance (in terms of socio-economic independence). The refugee camp context is characterized by the dependency of refugees on assistance from others. Unless the transformation is made from refugee to independent actor, through repatriation, resettlement or integration, no amount of ingenuity and hard work within the refugee camps will be able to break the system of dependency for thousands of Somali, Sudanese, Ethiopian, Eriterean, Ugandan, Congolese and Tanzanian people.

All planning for improving the conditions and opportunities for the 130,000 plus refugees who live in Dagahaley, Hagadera and Ifo camps must orient itself in the above-described recognition of the closed nature of the refugee camp context. The only solutions that seem to provide hope for long-term effectiveness are related to ending the refugee camp’s system of dependence through variations of integration, repatriation and resettlement.

Unfortunately, such changes for the bulk of the refugee population will likely not prove feasible for years to come. Therefore, further action needs to be taken to improve conditions and opportunities within the existing confines of the refugee camp systems. Developing self-reliance among the refugee populations is a critical objective so that when the time comes for permanent solutions to be implemented they can be successfully achieved. In this document, such priorities are categorized as medium-term planning recommendations.

Finally, minor revisions or additions (in terms of financial cost and human resources) may capitalize on the effectiveness of existing CARE programs to promote perhaps greater development of self-reliance among refugee participants. Recommendations aimed at this objective are included in the short-term planning section of this concept paper. These ideas do not offer sustainable solutions, but rather enhance current opportunities in the camps.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The findings included in this concept paper are preliminary. They are based on meetings, informal discussions, small group and one-on-one interviews with school leavers (Youth Committee volunteer members and interested volunteer participants), students (Standard 8 and Forms 1-4), parents (mostly School Committee/PTA volunteer members), vocational training participants, paid refugee Community Development Workers (CDWs), refugee and non-refugee teachers and Head Masters, and other CARE refugee and non-refugee staff. These discussions were either arranged by CDWs, Youth Committee members, School Committees or teachers. They were held in roundtable fashion and were guided by several key questions. A list of several of the standard questions that were used in these discussions is attached in Appendix B. Opportunities were also offered for any comments to be made and any questions to be asked by participants.

Each group was consulted at least twice, the first time for an initial question-and-answer based discussion, the second time to review the draft concept paper and to provide feedback for any revisions.

It is strongly recommended that these groups and individuals remain consulted on any proposal developments emanating from the release of this concept paper. They are the generators of these ideas, and the 'author' of the paper mainly served as a facilitator and transcriber. A list of groups that participated in the drafting of this concept paper is included as Appendix C.

**SHORT TERM PLANNING**

The recommendations included in this section are limited in their estimated financial costs and could likely be implemented in a short period of time. For the most part, they rely on the continued efforts of paid staff from CARE’s Community Services and Education Sectors, as well as those dedicated volunteers among the refugee population who make up Community Self Management Committees and School Committees. In this way, they are suggestions for maximizing the vast resource of human capital already in existence in the camps. Despite their minimal requirements for additional funding, they may offer positive and enduring impacts on the conditions for current and future school leavers in the camps.

These options do not, however, address the most pressing challenges for young refugees and the wider refugee populations. They only affect the status quo in limited ways. In this way, they are not the priorities for the refugee population. The priorities of those refugees who contributed to the development of this document are found in the following sections that offer recommendations for medium and long-term program planning.
Recommendation: Public celebration and recognition of graduating students (Standard 8 and Form 4).

Completion of primary and secondary education should be regarded as valuable accomplishments by young people. In the face of extreme challenges, these young people and their families have demonstrated commitment to the pursuit of education as a human right and promise for the future. This accomplishment should be publicly recognized and students and families should be congratulated.

The majority of students who pass their Standard 8 exams (KCPE) but do not qualify for one of the annual 120 secondary school admissions, are referred to as ‘failures’ or ‘drop-outs’ by themselves, their families, their peers, and the communities at large. This negative re-enforcement undermines the opportunities for future personal development that both young refugees and their families may seek. As described in the above section entitled “School Leavers’ Dilemma”, many young refugees experience great demoralization and low self esteem at the point when they complete one stage of their education, only to be rejected for continuing this personal development. This moment should be regarded as an extremely vulnerable and critical time for young refugees, with the possibility of provoking dangerous and anti-social attitudes and behaviour.

One minor way to affect this moment of disappointment in a young refugee’s life is to turn it into a moment of recognized achievement and praise. A graduation ceremony may provide a symbolic marker in a young person’s life of an important accomplishment. A community’s recognition of the value of a young person’s efforts may support the young person’s own understanding of their value. Such an event may also contribute to greater respect among family members for the young person’s hard work and perseverance.

Recommendation: Pre-graduation (Standard 8 and Form 4) counseling for post-graduation planning.

Self-reliance is a value that is much espoused by refugees and donor agencies as critical to an individual’s and a community’s sustainable success. There are, however, inherent challenges to realizing self-reliance in the refugee context because the refugee camp system is characterized by a degree of refugee dependency on donor assistance. This is made necessary due to restricted access of refugees to mobility and economic opportunities. What this means is that refugees, especially those in camp schools, have limited exposure to outside realities. This limited exposure restricts how refugees might plan and work toward their own self-reliance. It limits what they may use as reference points for imagining and preparing for different futures, and thus likely limits the innovation and planning these refugees may demonstrate.

When asked what they imagine themselves doing in one year’s time, Standard 8 and Form 4 students alike had no answers other than “go to secondary school”
and "go to university" respectively. Despite their understanding of the limited opportunities for both eventualities, they attest that they are mainly unaware of any other possibilities. Occasionally, someone mentions "look for work", and when vocational training is mentioned, many agree that would be something they would desire as a second option. These students explain that they talk among themselves about what might happen to them in a year's time, but they fail to come up with ideas beyond trying to earn the best marks they can so that they might receive an opportunity to continue their education.

The self-reliance of young refugee students is thus undermined by their limited knowledge of alternative program options and opportunities they may pursue for themselves. Their lack of information leaves them further dependent on donor agencies for deciding their futures (e.g. offering secondary school admittance, offering university scholarships). The majority will graduate from school unprepared for what faces them. Not one student that was interviewed in this research offered an example of a "back-up plan" if continued formal education is not offered to him or her.

As much as possible, donor agencies need to put information in the hands of these young refugees. At the end of the day, an individual's best asset for the future is herself or himself. He or she should be given every opportunity to take control of their own decision-making and use their own dedication and creativity to achieve a future they want.

There is a time period between completing examinations (November) and receiving the results (January). This time could be used to provide students with information about all current programs in the camps (e.g. microfinance, economic skills development, vocational training opportunities, agency hiring practices, Community Self Management Committees, etc.) as well as those outside the camps (universities, non-governmental organizations that sponsor students, scholarships, etc.). This kind of initiative could take the form of graduate counseling (a standard program in other secondary schools) or could be developed in a similar way to a jobs fair market.

Recommendation: Catalogued inventory of all scholarships, camp programs, NGO sponsorship opportunities, etc. to be provided in each school's library.

This initiative is related to that of graduate counseling described above. Such a catalogued inventory should be made readily accessible to students and the public so that individuals are able to seek out and independently pursue their own interests. Information of this kind may be obtained from contacting various Kenyan universities, embassies, consulates, and agency offices.

Recommendation: Provision of self-marketing training to graduates.
This recommendation comes directly from a Form 4 student who expressed a need for improved understanding of how to prepare applications and perform in interviews (for university or employment). His classmates agreed that they would benefit from some kinds of self-marketing training, and could apply skills learned to improving their chances for future successes.

Recommendation: School-focused awareness campaign regarding the importance of life-long learning.

Life-long learning may be a theme that can counter the perception that a young refugee’s hope for a better future ends with the formal education they are offered in the camps. Its concept is one of self-reliance, and could emphasize that each individual is his or her own best resource, and that learning and capacity-building can be achieved through many avenues, both formal and informal. Self-directed learning may take forms such as reading, volunteer service and participating in community events and programs. The idea that although one expectation and hope did not occur, alternatives may provide new opportunities, is a positive one that may encourage continued constructive social engagement and personal development.

Refugee Community Self Management Committees and CARE Kenya staff have been very successful in promoting various awareness campaigns, including that of the importance of education, especially for girls. This strength should be capitalized upon to promote greater awareness among students in primary and secondary schools of their own abilities to pursue their own learning and capacity-building.


If resources are made available, some formalization could occur of the above-described concept of promoting self-directed learning and capacity-building among young school leavers. Upon completion of primary or secondary school, each graduate could receive a package of learning tools, (a Life-Long Learning toolkit) including, for example, a notebook, pens, a dictionary, a calculator, and perhaps a small booklet including stories of achievers who persevered despite lacking formal education and other motivational messages for continued self-learning.

Formalization of a Life-Long Learners’ Club could be developed through some support for self-organized book clubs, drama clubs, language training groups, etc. Youth committees may be best positioned to promote such initiatives as they have as one of their mandates to “avoid idleness” among school leavers.5

Recommendation: Extension of extracurricular activities' programs as offered through schools for broader community participation.

In primary and secondary schools, each teacher is expected (as outlined in their job description) to offer their time and efforts to coordinate an extracurricular activity such as choir, drama, debating, sports, games, environmental service, and extra tutoring. These activities are offered out of school hours, and are open to voluntary participation by interested students. They are extremely popular and young refugee students have demonstrated high levels of skill and talent. For example, school choirs and student essays by Dadaab refugee students have won national awards in Kenya.

Extending such activities to the entire youth population of the camps would be one way by which to encourage continued constructive engagement and community participation. Among the other benefits of such voluntary programs are the development of positive community networks, raised self-esteem and skill development among participants as well as exposure of participants to new ideas and activities.

While some extracurricular activities are currently offered to the general young refugee population by Community Development Workers (CDWs) at the Family Life Centres, these activities do not seem well-organized nor well-attended. Volleyball is the main scheduled activity and very few, if any, girls participate (other than staff). It seems that the Family Life Centres are currently not utilized to their potential as very few young people spend time in the days at these centers, and very few activities regularly occur there.

It is recommended that a more formal schedule of voluntary extracurricular activities be supported by CDWs. Such activities would need to be supported by skilled or trained staff or volunteers so that participants enjoy and benefit from them.

Recommendation: Microcredit policies and practices to favour income generating initiatives that provide alternative educational opportunities.

Abdinoor Ali Sigat is a young refugee man in Hagadera camp who has earned a loan from CARE's Community Revolving Fund to start a private computer laboratory (3 computers and a small generator) that offers training programs to refugees. Located in the Hagadera camp market, this private business offers training for six different computer programs to an average of forty students at any time. Abdinoor reports that business is good, thanks to a healthy demand among young refugees who have only had the opportunity to complete their primary education. He attests that these young people and their families find many ways to fund this alternative form of capacity-building in hopes for increased opportunities for their futures.
CARE and donor agencies can increase opportunities for both refugee entrepreneurs and school leavers by favouring those microcredit proposals that provide alternative education opportunities. In doing so, the agencies will be supporting the development of social capital and social networks among refugees in the camps, and thus support an important factor in self-management and reliance. This kind of program may be regarded as a transitional step from the straight-forward provision of education services, to the provision of support for self-owned and operated education services.

Recommendation: Study of private educational and capacity-building initiatives.

This study would contribute to an understanding of current alternatives available to school leavers. Interviews with providers and clients could inform policies and programs to support increasing the capacity of such initiatives. An assessment of the potential of private refugee community endeavours in this field may provide positive direction for program planning.

Recommendation: Election of youth representatives to serve on each Community Self Management (CSM) committee.

Young people in the refugee camps have different perspectives and priorities from the rest of the population that need to be considered in all areas of self-management. Representing ...% of the total refugee population, youth, (ages ..-..) constitute a dynamic and influential force in the camps. The creation of elected youth positions on each CSM committee would serve a similar purpose to the mandate of gender representation on each committee: ensuring the unique perspectives, concerns and priorities of this important group are factored into each level of decision-making.

While Youth Committees currently exist in each camp, young people are not necessarily directly consulted on other community issues that may affect them. According to several young people, young refugees do not run for elected positions on other CSM committees because they do not want to challenge their elders. One way of ensuring that youth voices are heard and considered in all community deliberations is to provide youth representative elected positions on each committee.

Recommendation: Agency hiring policies and practices to favour Form 4 and/or Standard 8 graduates.

Powerful messages about the value of education may be expressed through agency hiring policies and practices. Agency hiring policies that favour primary and secondary school graduates provide other students with motivation to continue their education and to recognize the value of education in building better futures.
Graduates of camp primary and secondary schools seek opportunities to apply the skills they have acquired and to continue their own capacity-building. Their potential in contributing to the camps' self-management should be recognized through their employment.

Recommendation: Hire or provide volunteer opportunities for teaching assistants.  

Teachers report that they are over-worked because of the numbers of classes they are expected to teach and their large class sizes. It seems that Standard 8 school leavers might appreciate opportunities to volunteer or be hired as teaching assistants so that they may remain in a learning environment and learn teaching skills from the instructor's example. Teachers would benefit from assistance in marking straight-forward assignments (e.g. those with right and wrong answers) and preparing class lessons (e.g. photocopying, collecting books).

The average class size in the camps' upper primary schools is approximately 45 students. The desired class size is 35 students. To keep pace with increasing student enrollments, UNHCR is on average hiring forty new teachers in each of the three camps every year, but these new positions are still not achieving the desired lowered ratio of students to teachers. Volunteer or paid teaching assistants from among the school leaver population may ease the workload of teachers while providing a constructive environment for young boys and girls not offered secondary school or vocational training placements.

Recommendation: Creation of 'friendship schools' linkages program.

Many country's international development agencies have dual mandates for supporting initiatives in developing countries and increasing awareness among their own citizens of these initiatives. This means that these agencies seek opportunities for publicizing in their home countries information about their international projects. One easy and popular method for disseminating such information is through primary education institutions.

CARE could propose to a country's international development agency that the agency support the costs of establishing a 'friendship school' linkage program whereby classes in the Dadaab refugee camps' schools are partnered with classes in the supporting country's schools. This kind of program may lead to increased social networks among refugee children (and schools) and international peers, improved communication skills and practice among students, and possibly increased direct support for refugee students' and schools' endeavours from these new friends.

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6 Need to confirm recommendation with teachers.
7 Check for more precise figures
The supporting country's agency minimal costs would cover postage and some writing materials (possibly cameras for the refugee schools to be able to send photographs of life and school in the Dadaab camps).

**MEDIUM TERM PLANNING**

Included in this section are the top two priorities identified by young refugees and their families: increased secondary school capacity and increased vocational training opportunities. Both priorities are regarded as extremely important in preparing young refugees for successful repatriation, resettlement or integration. Both are seen to improve the odds of young refugees in achieving a greater degree of self-reliance in the camps, and eventual true self-reliance outside of the refugee camp system. At the current time, these options are the most critical in responding to young refugees' concerns and challenges.

Other program recommendations included in this section support the first two priorities. Through such initiatives the potential of young refugees may be achieved as fully as possible given the constraints of the refugee camp context.

**Recommendation: Increased places at secondary schools.**

This recommendation is strongly advocated by primary school graduates and their parents. “As refugees, we are here for education, nothing else,” explained one parent School Committee volunteer. This sentiment is echoed by many parents: the aspect of refugee camp life that they most value is the education opportunities for their children.

Secondary education is a steppingstone toward self-reliance, but certainly not an end in itself. While young refugees and their parents seem to regard education as inherently valuable, they explain that increasing the number of secondary school graduates is not a sustainable response to the principal challenge of achieving self-reliance. For the most part, it only delays this challenge. Increased secondary school placements must be supported with opportunities or incentives for graduates, including sponsorship for college or university programs, vocation training opportunities and employment opportunities with donor agencies. Without such opportunities, the value of secondary education may diminish in the eyes of current students and the wider community. As one secondary school teacher expressed, it is terrible to see graduating students with false hopes or no hopes for the future. One must ask, what will be the impact of these students falling so far from hope to despair if their hard work in school amounts to nothing?

One thing became clear in interviews and discussions with parents, students and school leavers: their priority is preparing for repatriation or resettlement. When
asked the question of which they considered more important for young refugees in the camps, paying jobs now or developing potential for the future, all unanimously stated that they considered preparing for the future more important than immediate improvement in their living standards.

Increased secondary school capacity in the three camps will require the hiring of more teachers, the building of more classrooms and the provision of necessary learning materials. Head Masters and teachers say that the most important factor is teachers. In fact, they volunteer that if necessary classes can be held under trees rather than in built classrooms, and students can share learning materials. The priority, they express, should be the quantity and quality of educators.

Recommendation: Increased provision of college or university sponsorship/scholarships.

As outlined above, many refugee students and parents believe that secondary school students should have some reasonable hope of achieving post-secondary education. Such hope is predicted to spur greater motivation in achieving excellence in secondary studies and to support the community's continued high regard for secondary education. Post-secondary opportunities for refugees rely on donor funding.

A concerted effort should be made to identify international organizations that would offer sponsorship to the top twelve students in each school. This number would mean that at least 10% of the future graduating body is offered the opportunity of post-secondary education. Such advanced education would be a powerful force in preparing young refugees for successful repatriation, resettlement or integration.

Recommendation: Increased provision of vocational training opportunities.

Vocational training is widely regarded among young refugees and their families as the most immediately practical option for young school leavers. The opportunity to learn a trade, such as carpentry, tailoring, welding, mechanics, accounting, computer skills, medical service or teaching, provides young refugees with the opportunity to develop his or her own self-reliance.

Graduates of the vocational training programs currently offered in the camps attest that their circumstances have improved. Some are providing services for payment within the camp markets, others have been accepted based on their professional qualifications for resettlement in third countries and others are employed by donor agencies delivering services that were once provided by non-refugee staff. In each case, graduates describe increased levels of confidence for their own futures. An important aspect of vocational training is the earning of certificates that are recognized by relevant industries and countries (or origin,
settlement or employment). Such certification equips the trained individual to compete in open markets with evidence of her or his skills and training.

Vocational training opportunities are limited in the camps. Only ... or ..% of refugees in the camps receive formal vocational training placements each year. The current population of refugee school leavers with only primary education is more than 1,400 young men and women and this population will grow by hundreds each year. The provision of increased vocational training opportunities is critical in providing positive capacity-building alternatives to these young and frustrated refugees.

Increased provision of vocational training opportunities will necessitate the hiring of more trainers, the expansion of workshop space and additional vocational tools and materials. Market analysis of the camps as well as of the local country, home countries and potential resettlement countries should be conducted to inform what vocational training programs offer the most potential for refugee participants.

Many young refugees and their parents spoke with enthusiasm about last year's initiative to sponsor the vocational training of 45 students at the North Eastern Province Technical Institute in Garissa. Support for this program was high among interviewed refugees although acceptance of this opportunity for girl students remains a challenge due to security and cultural concerns.

Recommendation: Increased opportunities for vocational trainees to access vocational tools.

Learning a trade is only tangibly valuable if the learner is able to apply that trade. One major obstacle for most refugee graduates of vocational training programs is their lack of the tools of the trade. Given the dependency of refugees on the donor agencies for material support, most vocational trainees do not have the means by which to acquire the tools they need for practical application of the skills they have learned.

CARE has implemented several vocational training programs through which graduates may earn use and/or ownership of the necessary tools or materials for their trade. For example, graduates of the community tailoring schools join in groups of three to receive a material loan in the form of a sewing machine. As they apply their trade in camp markets, their earnings pay back the value of the sewing machine to CARE until it is completely paid for and the tailors own the machine outright. Similar programs would be useful for carpentry graduates, trained teachers (who could offer private services in the camps) and others depending on the trade.

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8 Obtain these figures
Sponsorship of toolkits for various vocations could be pursued from among foreign trade and labour unions, professional associations, and private companies. Proposals written for such sponsorship could be forwarded to CARE Canada for solicitation with Canadian trade associations and industries.

An alternative option to providing individuals or small collectives with their own toolkits is for donor agencies to supply a warehouse of vocational tools that may be loaned or rented to graduates who are applying their vocation in the camps.

**Recommendation: Provision of distance education learning opportunities.**

One option that is perhaps more cost-effective than offering more secondary school places or university scholarships is to provide opportunities for young refugees to pursue their own education and perhaps diplomas/degrees through distance education programs. Predicted costs would include some staff support (e.g. tutors available to provide some minimal assistance), some computer access by participants and postage costs. A study should be pursued of the actual costs of providing basic support for refugee school leavers to pursue distance education courses.

CARE has some experience with facilitating distance education. For example, the Logistics Sector provides support for selected staff to pursue Cambridge International College courses by correspondence and the Community Services Sector has provided distance courses for staff through the *Kenya College of Social Work*9. Teacher training has also occurred in the camps with instruction offered to current teachers during school vacations.

**Recommendation: Provision of electricity in secondary schools, libraries, and/or other central community resource centers for increased hours of study.**

With the provision of electricity for lighting, (and perhaps later for computers for student use) more primary school graduates could pursue secondary education through part-time studies in the evenings. As described in the above section regarding distance-learning, part-time studies could be organized in a more self-directed, rather than teacher-directed, manner, making them more cost-effective than traditional instruction-based learning.

Many parents and teachers volunteered this idea for increasing opportunities for school leavers. The commitment of School Committees may be the key factor in the success of extending schools' operational hours.

**Recommendation: Student and parent participation in education budget decision-making.**

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9 Confirm correct name
Limited budgets necessitate trade-off decisions among various education priorities. Such decision-making should be the responsibility of those most affected by these decisions, in this case the refugees in each camp. While donors will likely insist upon certain standards or criteria being met in exchange for their financial support, the apportionment of funding among different educational programs may be most effectively determined by refugee community members. Over the long-term, such responsibility will ensure that the community's priorities are met and that the goal of community self-management is achieved.

Important education program decisions need to be made in weighing the advantages and disadvantages of providing more or less primary education, secondary education and/or university sponsorships. While primary education is a basic human right to which all human beings are entitled, there may be more cost-effective ways to provide this level of education than are currently pursued.

The social networks and innovation of the refugee community may be the best assets in identifying and pursuing their own education priorities. All public governance bodies must face challenges of meeting their community's goals within fixed resource constraints. The primary and education systems in the three refugee camps are now well-established and producing successful and competitive Kenyan curriculum graduates. This provides a good base from which the refugee population may assume responsibility for addressing the changing needs and assets of their community.

Recommendation: Creation of Repatriation Self Management Committee.

One concern that was voiced by students in secondary school was the lack of information regarding conditions in their home countries. A discussion with Form 4 students brought forth the recommendation that improved media and communication within the camps regarding challenges and opportunities related to repatriation would be helpful in their own short and long-term planning.

A Repatriation Self Management Committee could serve as the conduit for disseminating reliable information regarding conditions in home countries to refugees living in the camps. As representatives of the refugee population, elected committee members could seek to answer those questions most important to the refugee community, appropriately represent and advocate on behalf of the refugees of the Dadaab camps and generally serve as community liaisons on this most critical issue.

LONG TERM PLANNING

The survival and development of refugees depend on the provision of donated resources. Despite great human capital expressed in innovation, commitment
and hard work, the more than 130,000 refugees of Dagahaley, Hagadera and Ifo
refugee camps will be unable to break the cycle of dependency unless the rules
for their engagement in larger society are changed. Without opportunities for
mobility and economic engagement beyond the borders of the camps, refugees
will continue to require external support in the forms of food, water, shelter,
education, and security. This kind of system is unsustainable in the long run, and
refugees remain at risk of declining donor interest and support.

Everything about young refugees' opportunities for the future stalls on the issue
of permanence. As long as these young people livelihoods are dependent on
donor agencies and confined within camp boundaries, only a few will be lucky
enough to marginally improve their lots. Broadened scope of access to post-
secondary education and other capacity-building opportunities are only made
relevant for this population's majority if permanent solutions to ending the
systems of dependency are achieved. Below are some of the recommendations
that students provided for addressing young refugees' needs and goals.

Recommendations: Attractive repatriation packages for top students.

Young refugees see themselves as the leaders and builders of their home
countries. As one young Somali refugee expressed, "there is no place better
than our home for us".10 Young Somali students and their parents understand
that the education they receive in the Dadaab camps gives them advantages in
contributing to the future governance and management of Somalia where the
education system is much less developed and strenuous.

If repatriation is a goal for young refugees, then attractive repatriation packages
are an appropriate reward for top secondary school graduates. Such offers
would empower young refugees to return to their home countries with a head-
start in terms of both education and financial resources. These offers would also
send the message that education in the camps does serve the purpose of
developing a more prosperous future for young people in their home countries.

Recommendation: Change resettlement policies from favouring family
resettlements to providing overseas university scholarships to refugee
graduates.

As one Form 4 student explained, a change in resettlement policies to favour
providing secondary school graduates with opportunities to study in third
countries could offer more benefit to the current refugee population, and future
repatriated population, than resettling families in third countries currently
achieves. Over the long term, such a policy would support the development of a
highly educated and experienced sector of the refugee/repatriate population, thus
providing greater skill and leadership for rebuilding home countries.

Recommendation: Advocate to Kenyan Government to provide equal consideration and tuition costs for refugees in Kenya applying to post-secondary institutions.

At the present time, Kenyan universities regard refugees from the Dadaab camps as non-residents or foreigners and thus impose much higher tuition fee requirements than those of Kenyan students. For example, a Kenyan national is asked to pay approximately ... for a year’s tuition at university while a non-resident, or refugee in Kenya, is required to pay .... 11

A compelling argument can be made that refugees in Kenya who have completed their entire primary and secondary education through the Kenyan system, using the Kenyan curriculum and passing the Kenyan Curriculum Primary and Secondary Examinations, should be considered on the same footing as Kenyan residents. Those students who complete the Kenyan curriculum and perform with excellence in the national standard exams demonstrate great potential for contributing to Kenyan universities’ student bodies and high academic standards.

Such easing of the great challenge for refugees in Kenya to pursue post-secondary education may result in increased opportunities for refugee graduates to further their education and thus further develop their own potential and self-reliance for repatriation, resettlement or integration. Such outcomes will eventually ease the Kenyan government’s and donor agencies’ costs of supporting refugees.

Conclusion

In the refugee context, there are two over-riding preoccupations. The first is the immediate need for security, clean water, food, and shelter. The second is the preoccupation of transcending the dependency and limitations of life as a refugee. This second focus is important and necessary as it addresses the root causes of refugee crises and seeks to prevent future crises. The refugees who have inhabited the Dadaab refugee camps since 1991-2 have advanced to this second stage in preoccupation and planning. Their basic subsistence needs are being met with improved efficiency, and they are working to improve their opportunities for the future. For most, young refugees represent this future.

Education and capacity-building opportunities are two of the most important strategies for supporting eventual self-reliance from external assistance. They are steppingstones in preparation for permanent solutions. Thousands of young refugees require these steppingstones to ensure their success once permanent solutions are achieved.

11 Find tuition costs
A young refugee who is only offered primary education is not adequately prepared for a hopeful and self-reliant future. Frustrated and demoralized at the lack of further opportunities because of her or his political status as a refugee, the hopes and ambitions of young school leavers are curbed and perhaps even corrupted by other negative influences. Potential is not explored, and chances may be lost forever for this young person to apply his or her mind, talents, skills, optimism and determination to developing self-reliance and eventual independence. The consequences of such waste in human potential are extremely dire in a context as difficult as that of a refugee camp. Commitment to improving the chances of refugees to break the cycle of dependency must be demonstrated in commitment to improving opportunities for young refugees to prepare for independent and productive futures.

The following document is thirty-four pages. Several minor errors exist in this document. Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties in Dadaab, it is only saved as a PDF file which does not allow changes to be made to it.
Speaking Truth to Transform the World
Participatory Action Research by and for Refugee Youth

A research report by
the Dagahaley Youth Research Team

Abdi Saney Ibrahim
Abdullahi Aden Mahamud
Ali Mohamed Askar
Bashir Abdullahi Abdi

Elizabeth Cooper
Fadumo Ibrahim Hiloule
Halimo Dagane Mohamed
Hassan Mohamed Aden

Idil Hassan Mohamed
Isnino Aden Ibrahim
Peter John Nyarza
Sahara Hudle Tarar

July 2004
Dadaab, Kenya
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Executive Summary
This research was done by refugee youths about refugee youths. This report presents what the refugee youth living in the Dadaab Refugee Camps of Northeastern Province, Kenya believe are their problems and solutions. We believe this report is important because many people are unaware of the needs of refugee youth and we want to raise awareness. We hope to sensitize donor countries and agencies as well as mobilize youth in the camps to address their own challenges.

We are twelve youths who voluntarily joined together to conduct a research project about refugee youth issues in the Dadaab Camps. Eleven of us are refugees ourselves: ten of us are from Somalia, one of us is from Sudan and one of us is a visiting graduate student from Canada. We have very different backgrounds and viewpoints but we are all determined to act together to represent and empower the Dadaab Refugee Camps’ youth populations and to address their problems and ambitions.

Youth overwhelmingly feel neglected and nervous in the Dadaab Refugee Camps. Youth face a different set of problems and frustrations and a different set of hopes and ambitions than adults and children in the camps. The biggest problem of refugee youth in the camps is idleness. This makes youths feel demoralized, frustrated, negative and hopeless about our futures.

Different refugee youths face different problems according to our individual situations. For example, female youths face the serious problems of forced early marriages and being forced to leave school to work at home. Male youths engage in various activities to try to earn money and some of these are dangerous to the individual and the society, for example banditry and fighting in Somalia. Others are doing what they can to earn an honest living, like pushing a wheelbarrow or collecting firewood. Many female and male youths feel that they are working hard in poor conditions, for little pay and with few chances for success.

Education is youths’ number one priority. However, there are not enough education chances in the camps to meet the needs of all the youth who desire to improve their futures with education. Each year more youths are finishing primary school but the secondary school enrolment remains fixed at 360 for the 3 camps. This year 1,614 refugee students will sit for their final primary examination, but only 360 will be allowed to continue to secondary school. Also, each year more youths are finishing secondary school, but there are currently no chances for post-secondary
education and employment opportunities are limited. This year 216 students will sit for their final secondary examinations – what will they be doing next year? Nobody knows.

Vocational training chances in the camps are also extremely limited. This is a program area that needs to be improved with more selection of courses, longer courses that meet national standards and more resources so that more youths can learn new skills for their futures. Youth know that our future successes and roles as nation builders require more knowledge, skills and work experience. Youth believe that given the chance, we can each help positively change our lives, families, communities and nations.

Youth are more frustrated than anyone else about the dependency syndrome that grows in the refugee camps. Many youths have spent the majority of their lives as refugees in these camps and we want to be allowed freedom of movement and employment so we can find better chances for themselves. Repatriation and resettlement are opportunities that refugee youth in Dadaab wish for but they are not occurring to help the youths.

At the end of the day, youth want to play a role in decision making about matters that affect their own lives. This is one of the most important recommendations of this report. Youth can and should be participating in decision making about their own lives and chances – this is the way to real empowerment for youths and lasting positive change.

We want to rebuild our lives and our countries. Please give us the chances.
1.0 Introduction

1.1 What is this report about?
This report is about refugee youth living in the Dadaab Refugee Camps. It tells about their needs and development, hopes, ambitions and recommendations for positive changes.

The reason we chose to write this report is to investigate the matters of refugee youth from the viewpoint of refugee youth, and to tell outsiders about the plights of refugee youth. We believe this report is important because many people are unaware of the needs of refugee youth and we want to raise awareness. We hope to sensitize donor countries and agencies as well as mobilize youth in the camps to address their own challenges.

Youth overwhelmingly feel neglected and nervous in the Dadaab Refugee Camps. Youth face a different set of problems and frustrations and a different set of hopes and ambitions than adults and children in the camps. While there are common problems among youth, there are also differences, especially between boys and girls, disabled and able-bodied youth, youth who have never been to school and those who have finished primary school as well as those who have finished secondary school, between orphans including those who head households of younger siblings and other youths who live with their parents, as well as those who have employment and those many youth who are idle in the camps.

This report tries to address the differences and similarities among young refugees' needs and goals, and to make recommendations for both.

1.2 Who are we?
Our names are Abdi, Abdullahi, Ali, Bashir, Elizabeth, Fatuma, Halimo, Hassan, Idil, Isnino, Peter John and Sahara. (Our short biographies are printed at the end of this report.) We are the self-formed, voluntary Dagahaley Youth Research Team that was initiated only six weeks ago in June 2004. We are twelve in number, six female members and six male members. Ten of us are refugees from Somalia, one of us is a refugee from southern Sudan and one of us is
a visitor from Canada. We have different educational backgrounds: some of us have completed secondary school, others have completed primary school, and one is currently doing her Master’s degree in Canada. Several of us have employment as incentive workers with the agencies in Dadaab, (as primary school teachers, a translator, social service motivators, and an information officer) one of us is enrolled in a vocational training course, one of us is the Chairman of the volunteer Youth Committee, several of us do not have jobs. Among us we have different experiences, interests and ambitions.

We were invited to participate in this research project because of our different backgrounds, our availability and our interest. After an initial research skills training workshop, we each decided to continue working as a team to accomplish this research project about refugee youths.

We believe our mission is to act together to represent and empower the Dadaab Refugee Camps’ youth populations and to address their problems and ambitions.

1.3 What are our goals?

We decided by consensus that our goals for this research project are to:

(1) tell donors about the problems of the Dadaab refugee youths;
(2) tell donors about the solutions to these problems.

These goals fulfill a need that youth in Dagahaley Camp tell us they have. Youth want their voices heard. They told us they want international attention. And they told us that they want donor agencies to be more aware of their needs and their goals.

Organization of the Report: This report is organized into four main parts: the first section provides an overview of the research methodology and methods to help you understand how this information was collected and analyzed. Then we provide a general introduction to life in the Dadaab Refugee Camps. Thirdly, we organize the findings of our research into the general themes of: Youth in the Dadaab Camps, Discontinuity of Education, Forced Marriages, and the Risks of Idleness. The last section of this report focuses on what young refugees in the Dadaab Camps hope can be done about their problems.
2.0 The Research Project
This project is applied research focusing on the real-life, practical problems and possible solutions for youth in the Dadaab Refugee Camps.

2.1 Participatory Action Research as Methodology
Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a way of doing research that aims to put all of the project’s decision-making and activities in the hands of local research participants. The goals of this research approach are to:

(1) value and learn from the expertise of the local people who experience the problem that is the focus of the research;

(2) support the capacity of local people to investigate their own challenges and to determine solutions; and

(3) cause positive change in relation to the study problem.

Participatory Action Research tries to support people to address their own problems and to plan their own solutions to these problems. Since the people who experience the study problem are the researchers, they are likely to be well informed and motivated to understand and address the problem. Participatory research methodology holds the general principle that the research participants, not an external researcher, are expert and research should proceed in ways that are most accommodating to research participants’ realities, values, and norms. Moreover, the research process should provide support to research participants, either via the researcher dedicating their skills to a task assigned by the research participants or through a truly collaborative research process that ensures learning is mutual. (Ibid.)

Just as the name states, “Participation” and “Action” are the key ingredients in PAR – you want to encourage local people to participate and be active in all stages of the research; from the decision of what the research goals and questions should be (research design), how the research should be collected (data collection), what the collected information means (data analysis) and presenting what was learned from the research (communication of findings). If this happens, there is a good chance that the research will be more important to local participants and they will have the experience to be able to do more research in the future.
2.2 How was this research done?

The research project was instigated by Elizabeth, who is a volunteer graduate student researcher from Canada’s University of British Columbia. Elizabeth took up this project as the topic of her thesis research after learning from CARE Kenya’s Program Manager in Dadaab about the challenges facing youths in the camps. She visited the camps for a month in 2003 so that she could learn more about how the study could be appropriately and effectively implemented. She decided to return in 2004 to attempt a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach.

Once we had all decided to commit ourselves to the project, we participated in a two-day research skills workshop that Elizabeth offered. This workshop covered the basics of applied social research and we each learned more about how to plan and how to begin a research project. During the workshop we also shared our ideas about possible research goals and questions, we designed our research team’s Ethical Code of Conduct, and we learned more about each person on our team. We practiced interviewing and doing focus groups, as well as using Elizabeth’s digital camera. At the end of this workshop we had agreed on our research goals and scheduled our future work plan.

We met as a team at least twice a week (2 hours each time) for five weeks. At our meetings we discussed and made decisions about what data we required and how to collect this data. We also reported back our research findings to the full team. At each meeting we would plan the next week’s work and schedule a time that everyone could meet several days later.

We chose to use different methods for our data collection. We are youths ourselves so we had the advantage of being able to do participant observation. As a team, we also designed our own questionnaire and we each conducted many one-on-one interviews with youths in different blocks (neighbourhoods) of Dagahaley Camp. Some of us organized and facilitated focus group discussions with different groups of youths, and each of us volunteered to write essays specific to certain themes that grew out of youths’ answers to our questions.
Several times during the data collection we analyzed the data as a team. This helped us reflect on what youth were telling us so that we could investigate certain topics in more detail. We kept transcripts of the interviews so that we could look back on quotes and other statements that different youths made and compare these to other youths’ answers to our questions. This helped us learn the similarities and the differences between different youths.

From the data we collected we noticed some similarities and differences in youths’ situations and opinions. We each chose one topic of interest to us and wrote an essay on that topic from what we learned through our investigations. These essays form the basis of this report and they have had information added to by other research team members. You may notice that the writing style changes in places. This is because of trying to sew together different authors’ writing styles. We hope it does not distract you.

The end results of our efforts are that we are going to publicly present the contents of this report to the communities of the three Dadaab Refugee Camps as well as in Dadaab to the active agencies (UNHCR, CARE, WFP, GTZ, NCCK). We are also presenting our findings and recommendations to different non-governmental organizations based in Nairobi and we are attending the ongoing Somali Peace Conference Talks in Nairobi where we hope to have the opportunity to tell Somali leaders about the concerns of
Somali youths who have lived in refugee camps in Kenya for most of our lives.

3.0 The Dadaab Refugee Camps

There are three refugee camps located near the village of Dadaab, Northeastern Province, Kenya, approximately 90 kilometres from the border with Somalia. The names of these three camps are Dagahaley, Hagadera and Ifo, but they are commonly called the "Dadaab Refugee Camps". Ifo Camp was established in 1991 and Dagahaley and Hagadera in March and June of 1992 because hundreds of thousands of people were fleeing into Kenya from Somalia. In 1990-91 more than 400,000 people from Somalia crossed into Kenya seeking refuge from the outbreak of war and widespread famine that followed the overthrow of General Mohamed Siad Barre’s twenty-two year dictatorial rule.

Today approximately 97% of the Dadaab’s 136,455 refugee inhabitants are from Somalia. Most of these refugees are from Southern Somalia (mainly from the Juba River Valley and the Gedo Region) since refugees from Somaliland and Puntland (Northeast and Northwest provinces) have returned to their home country over the last several years. In fact, hundreds of thousands of Somalis have repatriated to the more stable areas of northern Somalia. In addition, thousands of refugees, mainly of minority clans, have been resettled in third countries. The camps’ minority populations are comprised of several thousand Ogaden Somalis from Ethiopia, several hundred refugees from southern Sudan, and smaller groups of Ethiopian Christians and refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Burundi.

Woman carting water home to family

Poor refugee family’s home
The camps are located in remote desolate areas without arable land and lacking advanced infrastructure such as paved roads and easy communication. This area is hot, averaging temperatures between mid-30s and low 40s Celsius and vegetation and water are scarce. The refugee camps occupy bleak terrain with desert stretching as far as the eye can see with only water boreholes and concrete buildings of the international agencies’ and the Kenyan police, post office and schools representing symbols of longer-term development potential. The region is semi-arid desert, sparsely populated by poor nomadic and mainly ethnic Somali pastoralists.

The Dadaab camps are the result of the Government of Kenya’s policy of restricting refugees’ rights of mobility and employment within Kenya. Very little integration of the refugees is officially allowed.

According to a UNHCR 2002 report, options for durable solutions for the Somali refugees in the Dadaab camps are limited. It is expected that these refugees will continue to rely on international assistance in the Dadaab camps. The Dadaab refugees are stuck in limbo, in a situation between not wanting to return to unsafe home countries and not being granted permanent residence or even economic and mobility rights beyond camp boundaries, and having no opportunities for third country sponsorship. Thus, refugees are left with no option but dependence on the UNHCR’s mandate to protect them and care for them. Unfortunately, even twelve years later, UNHCR budgets for the Dadaab camps are negotiated on an annual basis, and this undermines long-term planning for development.

Compared with other refugee camps, such as the Kakuma Refugee Camps in northwestern Kenya, there are few non-governmental organizations working and funding humanitarian assistance in the Dadaab Camps. UNHCR is the lead agency and is responsible for security
measures and overall management of the camps. UNHCR sub-contracts specific responsibilities to other agencies, such as the World Food Program (food distributions), CARE Kenya (water, sanitation, education, community development services), GTZ (medical services and environmental conservation), National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK: health education and family planning). The United States Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM) also funds several assistance programs through CARE Kenya. Occasionally, there are donations made by other non-governmental or private organizations for specific programmes.

Security: Security has been volatile and tense from the beginning of refugees coming to the Dadaab region. In the first few years, there was regular gunfire, with murders, looting and rapes occurring at night and nearby outside the camps. It was unclear whether the bandits were refugees or Kenyan citizens. At the same time, refugees were suffering from police brutality. While these situations have improved, there are still occasional problems with serious crimes in and around the camps, as well as police brutality. It has been learned that bandits have some colleagues in the camps that normally assist them in terms of pointing out and directing them to the places they can hit. The Kenyan government has put more pressure on either side of the collaborators and the bandits themselves. It seems that the security of Dadaab refugee camps is now improving and they are becoming safer places to inhabit where life can exist.

Women have been suffering more than men who spend most of their time at home. Women used to fetch firewood at nearby bushes where they have been tortured, and sometimes raped, by armed bandits, even sometimes in the camps. On individual bases UNHCR has tried to solve this problem, and particularly GTZ-Rescue have begun bringing firewood within the camp so as to limit the rate of the torture and rape of women at large.

"As I am one of the young girls whose life has been safe from all those problems that many refugees in the camps encountered, I am fully appreciating and thanking the nongovernmental organizations and governmental organizations for the effort they have made for the refugees." (Female Research Team Member)

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse, including rape, defilement and incest, have passed from generation to generation and exist today in the refugee camps. Some men have turned away from abiding by international regulations that safeguard young girls. Sexual abuse is a real fear of young girls and it can destroy the moral of a young girl victim. This might result in her running away from home in order to join bad peer pressure.
Sometimes you find that a man defiles his wife when she refuses to have sex, he tries to beat her up and down very seriously and the consequences will be family break up which may result in a women indulging to have illegal sex and be susceptible to contracting the HIV virus. Some men have got bad attitude in that they force themselves to rape very young girls who are under age and the result will be society rejects that girl and she may commit suicide. There are also some men who may try to have sex with their sisters or their daughters and this incestuous act, which is very offensive in our religions, can result in disaster for the young girls.

These kinds of sexual abuse have no place at local, national or international levels.

**Food:** The quantity of food that is distributed to a refugee is 6 kilograms of wheat and maize or corn as well as 300 grams of porridge and 250 milliliters of oil which is supposed to last that person 15 days. This forces some people to only eat one meal per day (usually supper). Especially at the end of the 15 day period, people suffer because their food is running out. Sometimes adults will go two days without food so children can eat. The WFP feeding programme is helpful to children in school because it fills them up until supper.

Before 1995-6 the food distribution was 6 kilograms of wheat flour and 6 kilograms of maize as well as a portion of sugar. Since that time the food rations have been decreasing. Sometimes wheat flour is eliminated and only maize is supplied. Maize requires grinding which is a service that refugees must find a way to pay for in the camps’ markets. It is common for people to immediately sell a portion of their food ration in order to pay for (1) its transportation by wheelbarrow or donkey cart to their home; (2) storage of their food in a safer place than their homes; (3) grinding maize; and (4) other foods to try to gain a more nutritionally balanced diet (e.g. vegetables). This further reduces the overall amount of food that the refugees have to live on.

**Health:** Malaria is the most common disease in the camps. Other illnesses are pneumonia, asthma and other respiratory problems, diarrhea, ulcers and tuberculosis. Children, elderly people and breastfeeding mothers often suffer from malnutrition. There are hospitals in each of the three camps that are run by GTZ, but there are shortages of drugs and specialized treatment. A serious medical condition requires evacuation to Garissa or Nairobi.
There are also sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in the camps, such as syphilis, gonorrhea, urinary infections and HIV/AIDS. While the number of known HIV positive cases is still quite low, it seems that the numbers of infected refugees are increasing.

Additionally, there is no eye care in the camps so those refugees with poor vision must cope without glasses.

3.1 Youth in the Dadaab Refugee Camp

According to UNHCR’s 2003 statistics, there are 47,025 persons between the ages of 18 and 36 years in the three Dadaab Refugee Camps (35% of total refugee population), and 66,707 young people between the ages of 13 and 36 (50% of total refugee population). There is a nearly equal split between the numbers of young women and young men in these age categories.

When we asked several refugee youths in the camps to define “who is a youth?” we learned that youths themselves don’t agree with UNHCR’s classification. Instead, they generally agree with the idea of youth being approximately between the ages of 15 and 30. Several other definitions include references to physical changes that mark the passage from childhood to youth (for girls, menstruation is often mentioned as a sign of maturity); others mention the ability to tell right from wrong and no longer relying on parents for moral guidance, but instead “taking responsibility” for one’s own actions. Males noted that youth have gained some experience, learning and knowledge that can help them take leadership positions in the society. Research participants also agreed that different ways of being brought up – through different cultures or family situations – influences how youth behave and whether they are a positive or a negative force in society. One warning that came up in several discussions is that “Youth need to keep themselves busy”.

Youth are regarded as the communities’ hopes for the future and youth themselves feel they have the potential to become future leaders. However, many feel that they lack the chances to feed themselves with the right knowledge and skills.
The majority of youth in the camps are idle because of lack of opportunities for education, employment and training. Youth report that they feel frustrated because there are not enough jobs or training opportunities. In fact, when we asked individual youths about how they feel about their situation we got the following answers: “not happy”, “not comfortable”, “dejected”, “demoralized”, “negative”, “frustrated”, “pathetic and troubled”, “sorry” and “bored”. The only youths who said they felt comfortable or happy with their situation were students in school or youths with agency jobs that they enjoy.

Female youth play major roles in family affairs such as caring for children, preparing food, fetching water and washing clothes. They have little free time to do their own activities. Often female youth are troubled because of their responsibilities. For example, one young woman who is the eldest of a family with no father and a sick mother, said,

“I’m frustrated about the life of my young brothers and sisters to die hungry some time when the food ends and I miss somewhere to borrow food and also when I miss somebody to assist me taking my mother hospital for treatment when she becomes very ill.”

Young women without parents are especially vulnerable. Some are forced to work as domestic servants for other families and are treated very poorly and earn very little money. As one 22 year-old young woman told us about her experience as a “house girl”: “The job is indecent to my dignity and spoils my education... The suppression from the Somali community using me as a house girl instead of taking me to school.” Another young woman of 23 years who lives with her Aunt’s family said that she feels “like a colonized person” and “like someone in jail” because she was forced to drop out of school to take care of her Aunt’s children and household.

Male youth who are not in school or with jobs do different things. Some look for informal labor pushing wheelbarrows, collecting firewood from the bush, shining shoes or making clay bricks for homebuilding. They also play the role of collecting the family’s food distribution every two weeks.
Male youths often report taking a portion of the family’s food to sell so that they have some pocket money. This frustrates them even more because they know they are still burdens on their families. Young men are also frustrated because they are not able to marry at the age they want because they cannot afford a young woman’s dowry. Many young men loiter around the camp markets, and spend some time paying to watch films in the markets’ video halls or to take tea and play chess with friends, or they play games like football or pool.

Each year several young idle men from the camps go back to Somalia both because they are frustrated by life in the camps and to try to find a better or more independent future. Some of them are known to be smuggling things across the Somalia-Kenya border and joining the fighting in Somalia. It is reported that others with primary education from the camps go back to start private tutoring of English and Mathematics because there is demand for education in Somalia. Other young men go to Nairobi to look for more chances of employment and usually end up doing under-the-table work in restaurants, hotels and shops or shining shoes on the streets. Some will go to Nairobi to visit the UNHCR offices so that they can present their own cases because they are frustrated with the slow attention in Dadaab.

3.2 The Risks of Idleness

Idleness is the greatest problem for youths in the Dadaab Camps. It makes them feel hopeless and frustrated. These feelings can result in self abuse and dangers to youths, the camp communities at large and even others. Many bad practices begin because of idleness including drug abuse, banditry and depression.

3.3 Drug Abuse

Drug abuse is the harmful, habit-forming use of drugs and it is a growing problem to the refugees and to the world today. Among the drugs that are abused in the Dadaab Refugee Camps are: alcohol, mirra, cigarettes, marijuana, opium and sniffing chemicals, especially glue. Alcohol is used as a fuel or to dissolve other substances that are abused by refugee youth in the camps. Mirra is an intoxicant drug that affects youth physically, mentally and socially. It causes refugee
youth not to sleep and to be sexual. It causes youth to have no respect for teachers and community leaders and also increases the rate of criminals in the camps. Marijuana and opium make a person imagine things that do not exist or create fantasies. Sniffing glue and other chemicals can result in some of the refugee youth running crazy and it can bring more sickness or diseases like chest problems, pneumonia and increases in AIDS in the camps due to idleness, which is the cause of drug abuse in the first place.

Youths abuse drugs for these claims:
- to avoid being hungry
- to forget problems
- to get energetic and to be happy
- to enjoy fantasies
- to think about their future
- to change their minds
- to avoid frustration
- to cause no fears
- to keep their penises erect

The disadvantages of drug abuse are:
- young women and men become more sexual
- it causes no sleep
- it causes self neglect
- aggression and violence
- family problems
- risks of cancer of the lungs and lips
- heart disease
- stomach ulcers
- pneumonia or other respiratory illnesses
- loss of job opportunities and school drop-out
- increasing crime and prostitution
- young women have premature babies

Addiction is a dangerous trap that can lead to bad health and even death, but with determination, effort and support, addiction can be overcome. What youth need to overcome drug abuse problems is:
- education about drug abuse and its harms and about rehabilitation
- community support groups for youth who used drugs
- education about good health and nutrition
- more choices for youth education
- resources for health and development of new visions, e.g. comic strip magazines containing adventures of several development characters

3.4 Banditry

Some idle youth engage in banditry in and around the camps. Some look for guns from Somalia or other war-torn countries and start banditry activities to earn a living. Others use knives and pangas as their weapons. Crimes in the camps include bandits breaking into people’s shops in the
camp markets to collect the stock and money. Properties that idle youth may steal include plastic sheets (for making roofs), household good and personal articles. Some of these bandits loot properties from refugees at night and even in broad daylight. Some stay in the bush around the camps throughout the day and night waiting for people with properties to come by and they also harass females who go to the bush to look for firewood. There are those who illegally hunt wild animals with the aim of selling their meat to increase their earning power.

To curb the above dangerous activities engaged in by idle youth, youth should be given jobs, education and other relevant training chances so as to get more knowledge and skills to earn an honest living.

### 3.5 Depression

Depression is a distraught situation where people are suffering from certain critical issues that can victimize their state of equanimity. A good example of such suffering is youth being idle in the camps and having no single activity to be involved in. This can create individual stress which later develops into persistent depression. One thing that can contribute to the formation of individual depression is having inadequate satisfaction of all basic needs, including education, health care, food or having security dilemmas in the camps.

Depression like this can affect both the mental and physical state. Some refugee youths reported that they often faint because they feel so depressed with their situations.

The state of depression is greatly aided by the deteriorating refugee youth situation due to limited chances for secondary and university education, employment and resettlement. At present, the expected attention and interventions from donor agencies and other well wishers are not satisfactorily meeting the youths’ needs.

### 3.6 Forced Early Marriages

"The most unique problem that affects the youth, particularly the female gender, is forcing young girls to marry old men who are not their choice. This is a problem that seriously touches the hearts of the girls. The girls are overwhelmingly pressured and unwillingly forced toward negative development (meaning that this may cause couple dispute, torturing and at last divorce)." (Female, 21 years, Standard 8 finisher, working as a primary school teacher)
For the most part, girls don’t have any consideration at all in the camps. They live in fear of their parents and they don’t have choices, unlike boys who do have choices. Some parents have the goal that they can trade their daughters for animals to earn the family some wealth. A girl is not allowed to marry a man of her choice unless the person who is willing to marry her can pay heavy taxes to the girl’s family. Otherwise, the family will consider the girl a laughing stock or object of ridicule in society, hence causing a miserable life. Often the men who can pay this money are older than the young girl’s father and the girl is afraid of being married to such an older man.

Forced early marriages can either be the cause or the effect of a girl losing her chance at education. Quite a number of girls drop out of school when they get married. Most parents want their daughters to get married as soon as they begin their menstruation. In fact, parents will say that by the girl’s second menstruation she has already missed a chance for one child and by the third menstruation, she has missed two children. Parents think girls should be married at 15 years.

The following is a dialogue representing how a girl faces such a dilemma. This was written by a young woman who was forced by her parents to quit school at age 14 (during Standard 6) to marry a man of 49 years who had paid her father a lot of money. This brave young woman ran away from the marriage alone, eventually forcing the older man to agree to a divorce. She has since returned to school, completed her primary education and found employment in one of the Dadaab Camps.

“Oh my God!!! What shall I do! My parents give me a man while I am schooling and if I refuse his/her idea I will fear his/her cursing, but if I accept his/her idea I will lose my learning.”

Then the parents quarrel with the girl and they say to the young girl: “Even you don’t go to school! What is school? School is waste! They don’t teach how to write, but they teach how to rape, kill and some other corruption at school. Furthermore, do you like to become like them white women who go to school, eh! Small element meant for nothing other than cooking and collecting firewood and fetching water to the family and taking care for the young children. Hold on your tongue! You will not be silly like this way. I give you a man! I give you a man!!! Either you jump up and down to this man I will give you. If you refuse my idea, I will curse you. Follow this man.”

When girls are not in school they remain in-doors with a lot of tension and suffering oppressive rule from both parents and boys. They are afraid of being cursed by their parents. However, these girls are also afraid of forced, early marriages. The married women have no freedom of movement, no right to express her ideas, no right for education, and they are tortured without
apparent reason. Also, young girls are sometimes not able to withstand pregnancies at young ages. It causes death to young girls, during delivery, and they lack protection.

If the girl refuses her parent’s decision for marriage she may be forced to leave her beloved family. When she is outcast like this she may be involved in social corruption such as prostitution, birthing fatherless children and getting sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS. The girl will be blamed as the cause of her problems because she refused her parents. Girls may suffer mental damage because of such a situation.

A good amount of wealth is wasted on marriage which could be used for developing life standards. One of our team’s young female members concludes with this plea:

"With vigorous support I am alarming the entire world to launch a campaign in support of women’s matters and give a chance to build this global effort because we are all equal with one another."

4.0 Solutions for Positive Change

**What Youth think of the ‘Dependency Syndrome’**

Youth clearly state that the so-called ‘dependency syndrome’ is real and something to worry about. This ‘syndrome’ is the result of refugees completely depending on outside assistance (through the non-governmental agencies) for everything: food, shelter, protection, clothing, education, medical attention, etc. As one young man stated in an interview about his personal situation: “A refugee person is a disabled person.”

Youth also report that they are the most frustrated of anyone in the refugee camps by the dependency syndrome. Male youths say that they are frustrated at continuing to be burdens to their families and not being able to move to find new chances for themselves to build their own futures.

Many youth point to the lack of mobility as the main cause of this dependency. They argue that with freedom of movement, they would be able to seek new opportunities to work, be educated, and become independent.
In addition to physical access, some refugee youth stated a preference for Internet access so that their "voices will be heard by the international community and other well wishers." (Male, 36 years)

4.1 Education

Pre-Refugee Status: Prior to arriving in the camps, few refugees from Somalia had experiences with formal, secular education. In 1990 the total number of pupils in primary schools in Somalia was only 150,000 and throughout the country there were only 611 trained teachers.ii [Somalia’s total population in 1990 was estimated to be 8,424,269.iii] When civil war broke out in 1991 the remains of the formal education system collapsed. UNICEF analysts report that education in the formal sense did not take place anywhere in Somalia for the next two years and since that time progress has been limited.iv Today primary school enrolment nationwide in Somalia is estimated at 17% of the school age population (girl enrolment rate is 14% and boy enrolment rate is 19%).v As a result of the Somalia education system’s collapse, countrywide 47% of Somali adolescents have never been in any formal school.vi

Education in the Dadaab Refugee Camps: As soon as the Dadaab camps were established in 1991 and 1992 informal education programs were initiated. During the first ‘emergency phase’ of the camps’ programming, the education curriculum emphasized basic literacy skills.vii By 1993, the total number of children and youth registered in the schools was 6,753.viii In 1997 the camp-based education system was overhauled to adopt Kenya’s national curriculum for upper primary (Standards 5-7 taught in Kiswahili and English) and secondary school (Forms 1-4 taught in English).

Most, if not all, Somali children also attend madrasas or Koranic schools in the camps. They usually begin these classes before they reach the average primary pupil age and continue taking classes during the first several years of their education in the camps’ primary schools. The student has successfully completed her or his madrasa education when she/he can recite the Koran by memory.
There are also several private tutors offering classes in the camps. Based on interviews with a few private teachers and students, we estimate that there are approximately 12 private teachers in each camp, offering English, Mathematics and Kiswahili classes to approximately 350 school-aged children and young adults.

Private school in Dagahaley Camp

**Education is the Number One Priority of Youth**

**Q:** "What do you feel hopeful about?"

**A:** "I feel hopeful about education. Although I am not educated, education is power. If somebody is educated today from this chance of education, tomorrow it will help him/her to fulfill his life and his/her needs of tomorrow." (female, 17 years, left school at Standard 5 to take care of younger siblings)

**Q:** What do you enjoy?

**A:** "Sometimes I enjoy the way secondary students dress, and I ask myself several questions. Like, if you could have passed you could look such dressing and you could have learned what they are learning." (male, 21 years, Standard 8 finisher)

Dagahaley Secondary Form 2A class

"I feel discrimination because I have finished my primary in the year 2000 and CARE has taken ¼ of the students to secondary while others were told to go home and I was included in those who were left. The little education I have is not enough to me so my solution will be provided if I got further education." (male, 25 years, Standard 8 finisher)

"I want to become a good learner for my future because I am still a student. In the case that CARE has sucked me from the school it does not mean that I am not a student." (male, 21 years, Standard 8)

The discontinuity of education was the biggest theme of refugee youths' frustrations. Some youths talked about the poor quality of their schooling in the camps, but most students who were interviewed said that they were happy about being students. The major problem with education in the refugee camps is that it ends too soon for too many people. School doesn't start or it ends too early for youths because of two main reasons: (1) family pressures and (2) budget constraints.
**Family Pressures:** Some children and youth never get the chance to go to school because their families oppose sending them to school. This is more the truth for girls. Many parents think that their daughters should stay at home to cook and clean and that girls will learn immoral things at school and be at risk of rape. Especially when girls get older and have their first menstruation, parents say that they are too big to be going to school. Many parents think it is a waste to send their daughters to school. They say: “To educate a girl is to dig the farm of your neighbour” which means that educating girls does not help her family. Girls who don’t live with their parents, but instead with distant relatives or others, say that they are forced to leave school because they must work for the family.

Even girls in school suffer because they have must do a lot of work for the family at home. Girls are often late for school because they have to finish cleaning and cooking before they can go to school. As one of our female research team members told us, she was late for her primary school examination because she had to finish preparing the breakfast for her father and two brothers – when she arrived late for the exam she was shivering because she was so nervous. Girls also often cannot finish their homework or do enough revision for their classes because they have too much work to do at home. Because of this, many girls fail at school.

**Basic Resources:** As several current and past students report, students suffer because of a lack of basic resources, including food and notebooks. As one young man said, “*A hungry stomach has no ear to listen.*” (Male, 28 years, Standard 8 finisher) A 15 year old young woman told us that she is not in school because “I am searching of somebody in order to get food and clothes.” One 24 year-old male student currently in Standard 7 stated, “*I think all youth students, both female and male, must have any resources that a student who lives in Europe or USA have.*” This student specifically told the interviewer that he doesn’t have money with which to buy exercise books and a pen.

Young women also experience difficulties in attending school during the time of their menstruation. Sanitary conditions, for example the school toilets, are not enough and girls have a hard time because of needing to change and clean their sanitary pads. Many girls miss school during the days they have their menstruation.

**Budget Constraints:** A real problem is the limits on secondary school enrolment in the camps. Each year more students finish primary school but the number of secondary school places stays at
360/year. This forces thousands of youths to be idle and frustrated because they want to continue their education but cannot. The few who manage to get chances for secondary admission encounter numerous learning problems, including for example acute shortages of teachers and learning facilities. Life in the school is not a bed of roses.

After completion of secondary education the same trend happens, all the graduates flock to the market with no jobs available. Secondary school graduates have obviously gained some awareness about their personal strengths and ambitions. When twelve 2003 Form 4 graduates were interviewed together, they identified eight different professions that they wished to pursue (nurse, doctor, business, lawyer, electrical and communications engineer, journalist, teacher and international relations specialist). Unfortunately, none had been offered opportunities to go to pursue their post-secondary education. Instead, ten of them had been hired as primary school teachers in the camps. While this is somewhat positive since it provides the education system with new teachers and at least gives the Form Four graduates some employment benefits, it also has disadvantages such as that these new teachers have no training and, in many cases, these new teachers do not want to be teachers and so are quite unmotivated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primary School Analysis</th>
<th>Secondary School Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of Students Registered For KCPE</td>
<td># of Students Admitted into Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>3,545</td>
<td>1,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,614</td>
<td>360</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1,732</td>
<td>360</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2,047</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2,964</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>13,377</td>
<td>2,160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education is the only tool for both social and economic development. Its continuity makes one realize and achieve meaningful goals in life. It is a deplorable fact that the majority of school-aged children in the camps wander or flock into the market each year after completing Standard 8.
due to limited funds and chances for secondary admission. The lack of chances for post-secondary education also demoralizes youth.

Discontinuity of one's education is the sensitive stage resulting in the following consequences:

- endless frustration that can ruin one's entire life;
- indulgence in drug abuse and other dubious activities;
- banditry and violence, robbery-related activities;
- poverty and disease, resulting from unemployment and low paying jobs due to limited skills;
- despondency as one has failed to get his target academic goals;
- creation of more burden for families and the community;
- lead a life of gross indulgence.

Girls who complete their education and fail to secure jobs may become commercial sex workers in order to harvest their daily income for their family.

4.1B Education Recommendations

Education is the number one priority for youths and there are many ways to improve the education situation for refugee youths in the Dadaab Camps. All of the recommendations listed here are important because they meet different youths' needs.

**Recommendation: Increase Secondary School Enrolment**

Currently, education resources in the camps are stretched to their limits. Increasing secondary school places will require hiring more teachers, building more classrooms, and providing more resources such as text books, lumber for desks, blackboards, etc. A recent UNHCR project proposal estimates the cost of increasing enrolment is $46/student per year. We also recommend that any new contributions to the Dadaab Refugee Camps’ education programme come with the condition that the refugee students and parents can have some role in overseeing the budgeting process.

**Recommendation: Provide post-secondary scholarships**

Each year the number of secondary school graduates is increasing. Scholarships to the students with the top marks (both female and male) will create an outlet for youth in the camps and thus reduce the burden of idle youth from the camps.

**Recommendation: Improve quality of education**

Students suffer in both the primary and secondary schools because teachers are not qualified or well trained, there are shortages of stationary and the libraries are under-supplied. Teacher training and hiring motivated and dedicated teachers are priorities.
### Recommendation: Educate parents about importance of education

Parents and guardians, especially those of girls and young women, should be educated about the importance and safety of education. Fears of girls learning immorality at school or objections to losing girls’ domestic help need to be fought against through a campaign that educates parents about the value of education for girls.

### Recommendation: Agencies should monitor if girls are being forced to quit school and intervene.

### Recommendation: Student fieldtrips

Refugee students don't have many chances to learn about the world outside of the camps. Increased exposure through field trips to other parts of Kenya can give them better understanding of the world and inspiration for their hard work and futures. Hopefully, it can also make others aware of these refugee students living in Dadaab.

#### 4.2 Vocational Training

"Training is useful for today and tomorrow. If the youths of today are trained they will train the youths of tomorrow, they will be the leadership of tomorrow." (Female, 23 years, forced to quit school after Standard 3)

"On the one hand, youth are always called the future leaders of tomorrow but there are no developmental courses or capacity-building to enable them to develop the nations." (Male, 22 years, Standard 8 finisher)

Vocational training opportunities are very limited in the Dadaab Refugee Camps. While 45 primary and secondary school graduates are chosen every year to go to Garissa to take vocational courses at the Northeastern Technical School, this is not a good solution for everyone. First, it is expensive and more opportunities could be provided in the camps for the same costs. Second, parents of female youth don’t like to send their daughters to Garissa because they fear for their safety. This prevents gender equality in opportunities.

In each camp there is a tailoring school, a typing school, and a few opportunities for training in carpentry and leatherwork. However, these do not have adequate resources. For example, the typing school in Dagahaley Camp only has 3 working typewriters so only 20 students can do this training (10 in the morning and 10 in the afternoon, each with 45 minutes of practice). The tailoring school only has 27 sewing machines so only 50 students take tailoring courses every six months. Many students find this is not a long enough course. They would prefer a one-year course so they can learn more tailoring skills. The carpentry program in Dagahaley Camp only has five male students and one trainer. There is no carpentry workshop, only a storage shed, and
there are very few tools. The carpentry students learn how to make crutches and desks and other useful products. Currently, there is only one leatherwork student in Dagahaley Camp. The community does not value leatherwork training.

One of the most successful training programs has been with CARE’s Mechanical Services Unit, which offers 10 youths a one-year apprenticeship course in mechanics. These students take classes and gain practical experience and at the end of the course they sit for a Kenyan examination that will give them professional certification. This is a very practical training program because youths achieve a national standard for an employable trade.

Overall, there are too few choices and chances for vocational training in the camps. More vocational training is clearly needed to help youths gain skills and experience for their future lives.

4.2B Vocational Training Recommendations

There are currently too few choices and chances for vocational training in the Dadaab Refugee Camps. Vocational training is an important alternative to secondary school and it can teach young people practical skills that will help them be economically independent.

**Recommendation: Vocational training courses**
Female and male youth consistently identify computer skills training courses as their first interest. They regard this training as critical to their future employment opportunities. They also list: typing, secretarial and office management, business and accounting, and medical training as their top priorities.

**Recommendation: Long-term courses to match national standards**
Youth prefer courses that are serious and lead to professional certification. They do not want to waste their time in short, poorly organized workshops that don’t earn them certification.

**Recommendation: Vocational training resources**
One place to start is by adding more resources to existing vocational training courses, like the typing and carpentry programs. The training staff is already in the camps so now what is needed is more equipment: typewriters, stationary and carpentry tools. Also, the carpentry program only has a storage shed and a workshop would improve this program.
4.3 Youth Employment

Youth are currently working in the camps both as formal employees of the agencies and as informal laborers doing whatever tasks they can to earn their "daily bread". Most youths with employment say they feel good about earning some income and gaining work experience, but several also complain about the hard labor, indignity of certain domestic service jobs, and unequal pay compared with Kenyan staff doing the same jobs (like teaching primary school).

Those with agency jobs are generally more educated and more and more agencies are now advertising for Form 4 graduates, rather than Standard 8 finishers. This frustrates many primary school finishers who think they are capable and should be considered. As one male Standard 8 finisher who now looks for odd jobs like wheelbarrow pushing said,

"I don't like what I am doing because I am an educated person who can work with the agencies, if they could have give me a chance. I have applied several times and I didn't get any consideration from them and I am sure if I could get such chance from them I could have done to my best level. I am someone who can read and write so I can manage it."

The few jobs that are available with the agencies are very competitive to gain and refugees are paid low wages in comparison to other staff.

Female youth say that male youth have more chances and gain more consideration because they are allowed to walk freely in the camps and have time to visit all the agencies to look for work. Meanwhile, girls are usually forced to work for free in their homes and do not have time to seek consideration from the agencies. As one 20 year-old woman said, "I feel stranded because I am jobless." Girls with jobs are more valued by their families, because they are bringing advantages to the family, and this may help them to avoid early marriages. However, young women with jobs report that all of their income is demanded by the family.

4.3B Youth Employment Recommendations

Again, there are different considerations for primary school finishers and secondary school graduates when it comes to employment.
Recommendation: Agencies need to be fair with their expectations
When hiring agencies should carefully consider what the job requires and advertise and make decisions based on these specific requirements. Too often, job advertisements automatically ask for O Level education when a Standard 8 finisher could also fulfil the job requirements. There needs to be opportunities for both Standard 8 and Form 4 graduates.

Recommendation: Agencies should provide computer training as part of the employment, not expect it as a prerequisite.

Recommendation: Youth labour needs to be monitored.
Some youths are being forced to do labour, like domestic service for other families, for very little income and are being abused by those families and others who treat them like slaves. Agencies need to monitor the safety of youths doing informal labour in the camps.

4.4 Recommendations to End Forced Marriages

Recommendation: Community counselling against forced marriage
Community members, and especially parents, need to be educated about the dangers of forced marriages of young girls which include: desperation, depression and possibly suicide, education drop-outs, dangerous births, and high divorce rates.

Recommendation: Parents need to learn about schools
Parents should be given confidence about the safety of schools for girls. Parents should visit the schools and meet the teachers to discuss the student's behaviour and assignments. Parents should also be encouraged to look at the student's schoolbooks to understand what they are learning.

4.5 Youth Views on Repatriation

Oh! Warlords  A Poem by Mohamed Issack (Form 2 student, Dagahaley Camp)

Warlords worthy of nobody
Warlords wish defilement still
Warlords weep of the wealthy and skilled people
Warlords were and are worthless

Warlords washed our name from the globe
They terrorized and tortured us
They left our country insecure and
Our people some died, some ran mad,
Some out of the country: "Refugees".
Warlords left our generations with a gun
Instead of a pen and a book
Our old men under trees only to plan conflict
Our girls raped and some were killed because of
Illegal pregnancy that they took, some crossed overseas
Searching for asylum but from a fire to a frying pan!

They broadcasted us over and all over the world
Where no right we rendered
No freedom favoured
And no neat name except “A Refugee”

Our country people are dying of starvation
Bullets are fired a minute in every time
A mine in the roads and repay with a gun and
Every day murder – it’s insecure!

They are told to hold a meeting
But they meet to meat us
The fact is that they are illiterates
They don’t write, read and understand
They shake “Apokora” instead of a pen
But for those write: deceive and defile

They order people, money begged from enemies
Who dwell in a daring life
Who dream to exploit and extract
The land of those sleeping a led by decrepts

Decrepts deal with death
Decrepts deal with devil deeds
Decrepts defile, destruct and defame!
Decrepts who deceive damn you!

Warlords
Don’t they think?
Don’t they bless? And
Don’t they repent?
The answer is no
Because the heat of a fire is felt by who touches it
But who is far finds it fine meanwhile
They exclude the fate.

Most youth hold on to dreams of returning to their homelands – usually as the leaders and re-builders of their nations:

“I am willing to struggle hard in order to restore the lost tranquility and peace in Somalia.” (Female, 22 years, Standard 8 finisher, Peace Education primary teacher)

“I need to improve my situation to build the nation.” (Female, 24 years)

“Sometimes I dream that I am in my home country with a good condition and easy life, enjoying peacefully.” (Male, 21 years)
Lack of Peace: Because of instability back in our home countries as youth we don’t prefer to lay ourselves on baseless ground. There are important insecurity reasons since torture, massacre, genocide and as well as home-based attacks are still the only tools back in our home countries. As youth we don’t prefer to lead ourselves on homicide ground.

Health Hazards: There are also health hazards since there is no advanced medication back in our home country of Somalia because there is no government. Thus we as youth will be in a terrible condition if we are repatriated back home.

Education: Since ignorance is the mortal enemy to humankind, and now we are on the route of eradication of it, we as youths want to uplift our standard of education and in this sense there are no chances for study back in our home country. Before the war there were 103 secondary schools in Somalia; in 1997 there were only 3! According to UNDP, today there are approximately 20 secondary schools running in Somalia, but this still means that very, very few students are gaining an education in Somalia.

Economic Uncertainty: We know that the mainstay of a country is the economy and to upgrade its facilities it needs security and stability so that NGOs and other well-wishers can invest their capital in the country. Without these conditions, we would not prefer to return.

Actually, the youth also fear that their rights will be ruined and they will not acquire a firm future if they go back. At the movement there are a lot of hardships and hostilities that exist back in our countries of origin.

If Somalia retains peace, prosperity and tranquility then repatriation will be possible. Youth believe that “east to west, home is the best” but where there is not peace, there is no chance at life.

**Recommendation: Work toward peace in Somalia and Sudan**

It is time that the other nations of the world become serious about building peace and development in Somalia so that hundreds of thousands of refugees can return home.
4.6 Youths’ Views on Resettlement

The humanitarian organizations on the ground, including UNHCR, object to giving special consideration to Dadaab youth in terms of resettlement chances. However, the youth are always said to be the majority members of the camp, particularly Somali youth. Other refugee youth, including Sudanese and Eritrians, are currently living in various parts of the world following their resettlement.

Actually, problems have engulfed the entire refugee youth population, specifically Somalis, and there are some who truly require agency attention. The UNHCR protection officers normally say that resettlement opportunities are not the right of the refugees. If they’re not, why are the decisions of durable solutions existing in the camps?

Indeed, the UN is a non-biased organization and its working procedure is to target some communities apart from the Somali refugees for resettlement. In addition, there are large numbers of youth facing inhumane acts including insecurity, but their cases are usually left under management. Lastly, we require the world community to provide equal humanitarian support.

**Recommendation: Resettlement consideration**

UNHCR needs to realize that there are other causes of risk other than only being a member of a minority group in the camps. UNHCR needs to consider individual cases of risk as well.

4.7 Youth Desire to be Decision Makers

The desire of refugee youth in camp decision making, budgeting, planning and assessment cannot be overlooked. The youth are the torchbearers and backbone of every society. Therefore, refugee youth participation in the afore-mentioned subjects will permit refugee youths to take control of their own lives and this is fundamental to developing, or rebuilding, a healthy community.

Through participation refugee youth can regain influence and control over their lives, which, in turn, will have a positive impact on the raising of self-esteem. Consulting refugee youth on matters such as budgeting, planning and decision-making can make a critical difference in the restoration of cultural normalcy.
There are many ways in which implementing agencies can seek and encourage refugee youth participation through:

- Formal representation by elected youth leaders;
- Informal contacts between refugee youth and staff during budgeting, planning and decision-making;
- Employment of refugee youth, especially in decision-making positions;
- Support to youth committees;
- Recognition that in many traditional communities, like Somali culture in the camps, the leadership tends to be exclusively male, and so special efforts are needed and must be made to encourage the participation of female refugee youth to ensure that all aspects and desires of youth are appropriately represented.

The instability that exists in home countries like Somalia and Sudan, and to some extent in the refugee set-up, and the uncertainty that characterizes refugee populations, make the youth, both male and female, extremely vulnerable to coercion by agencies and individuals wishing to impose decisions on budgeting and planning of assistance programmes. Participation of refugee youth not only increases effectiveness, but it supports refugee youth in solving their own problems.

"It is also important to organize workshops for the refugee youth so that they can discuss issues which affect them. It is also important to give WEIGHT to the opinions and ideas of refugee youth on matters that affect them." (male, 25 years)

Becoming a refugee is stressful for all involved. It has a variable impact and some will show more symptoms of distress than others. In most cases, refugee youth would want to learn and become self reliant and find support from among themselves, but the thorny question remains: Are participatory strategies being implemented in the planning, budgeting and implementation of refugee youth services? Refugee youth participation in decision-making has two main thrusts:

- First and foremost, it empowers the refugee youth with the skills and strength to make decisions over issues that affect their lives the most;
- Secondly, this will also encourage the formation of self-supporting groups as this participation will create forums for discussion among youth populations.

The single most important programme that refugee youth would like to participate in is educational budgeting and planning because this is the only tool they can use to develop their
lives and develop their country, continent and world in general. This ambitious desire can only
be met by involving refugee youth in planning and budgeting.

The single best way to promote youth participation in decision-making fields is to equip the youth
with the right to make decisions over issues or matters that affect their lives.

5.0 Concluding Statements

Youth will be the leadership of tomorrow, but today they face problems for which the need
consideration and assistance.

We have tried in this report to present many of the different problems that refugee youth in the
Dadaab Camps face and the solutions for these problems. We think youth should be given higher
priority by the donor agencies in Dadaab and by the rest of the world. We have been here in the
refugee camps for thirteen years and we feel demoralized and frustrated. Our problems are not
well known outside of the camps and we want to wake up the world to be aware of our problems.

We are the people who are missing our home countries, our lives have been looted, we have lost
our beloved parents, brothers were killed, sisters were raped. Our nations collapsed and now we
need assistance to help us to solve these problems.

We want to rebuild our lives and our countries. Please give us the chances.

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Somalia Country Case Study. Nairobi: UNICEF.
4 Ibid.
5 All data from the 2000/1 and 2001/2 Survey of Primary Schools, UNICEF as cited in UNHCR. (2003) Project
6 Ibid.