



Building Hope: Refugee Learner Narratives

*Manitoba Education and
Advanced Learning*

2015

© UNHCR/Zs. Puskas. June 19, 2012. World Refugee Day 2012 in Central Europe. Európa Pont venue of the European Commission in Budapest hosted an exhibition of drawings showing the response of school children to hearing refugee stories. www.flickr.com/photos/unhcrce/7414749518/in/set-72157630205373344/. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

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This resource is available on the Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning website at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/>.

Available in alternate formats upon request.

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INTRODUCTION



Students from immigrant and refugee backgrounds are an important and increasingly growing portion of the learners present in Manitoba's schools. The integration and improvement of educational programming for newcomer children and youth from refugee and war-affected backgrounds is one of the priorities of Manitoba's growth strategy and a key aspect of the province's future and collective well-being.

In 2005, Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning developed and released an action plan that was intended to improve the nature and quality of educational programs and supports for learners from English as a second language and immigrant backgrounds. An important part of this action plan was the recognition that learners from refugee and war-affected backgrounds, in particular, needed greater attention and would benefit from the development of appropriate programming and supports and access to these. Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning recognized that the provision of a real opportunity to obtain an appropriate education for those whose education was disrupted or denied by war, conflict, and other factors is one of the most important things that may be offered to these young people. In the research literature on child soldiers, and war-affected and refugee children and youth, education plays a vital role in healing, facilitating social inclusion, and improving the health and life chances of such children and youth.

PURPOSE

We believe that collecting, documenting, and publishing the individual stories of young Manitobans from war-affected and refugee backgrounds will provide invaluable insights as to the variety of needs and experiences of learners from such backgrounds in Manitoba's schools. While there is some helpful and valuable research and information available in educational literature and from other jurisdictions, the specific information and insights gained from interviewing Manitoban students about their experiences in Manitoba will be invaluable. A list of [resources](#) is provided in the appendices section of this document. Some of these resources feature the stories or profiles of youth and adults from refugee and war-affected backgrounds.

Although the principal objectives of this document are multifaceted, they can be summarized as follows:

- To help make refugee and war-affected learners more visible by providing a venue for their voices to be heard through the sharing of their stories, life and school experiences, needs, challenges, successes, and aspirations
- To introduce educators and the general community to some of the young new Canadians from refugee and war-affected backgrounds who have immigrated to Manitoba and have entered our schools
- To obtain insights about resiliency and what works and what doesn't in terms of educational supports and programming from these learners who experienced a range of school supports from EAL classrooms and teacher support, to newcomer support centres as well as after-school and summer school programming

- To strengthen programming and school supports by providing educators and schools with a set of learner case studies for professional learning and school planning purposes



© E.Hockstein/UNHCR. December 20, 2008. The three camps at Dadaab, which were designed for 90,000 people, now have a population of about 350,000 Somali civilians, making it one of the world's largest and most congested refugee sites. Children play in Ifo camp as the sun goes down. <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/3287252875/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

DESCRIPTION

The project was launched in February of 2012 with the formation of an Advisory Team and outreach activities in schools and in the broader community to identify potential candidates for this initiative.

In order to participate in the initiative, candidates needed to

- be young adult Manitobans who immigrated to Canada in 2006, at the earliest
- be of refugee or war-affected backgrounds
- have spent at least two years in a school program in Manitoba
- be willing to talk about and share their experiences prior to arriving in Canada and during their first few years in Canada, and their prospects and hopes for the future

With the assistance of several educators, potential participants were provided with information on the project and referred to the project lead and researcher. Eventually, 11 candidates, who were willing to participate and met all or most of the criteria, were identified. These candidates were selected and interviewed from March 2012 to July 2012. Prior to being interviewed, participants were provided with detailed information, an informed consent form, an exemplar of the stories or narratives the department wished to create based on their interviews, and the interview questions.

Interviews were held in locations that were appropriate and that interviewees suggested or approved. The interviews lasted from 1.5 to 2.5 hours. The participants were asked about their journey and life experiences before coming to

Canada and after arriving in Canada, and their prospects and hopes for the future. The participants were asked to share details about their experiences that were relevant to and influenced their educational needs. This included family characteristics, cultural identity, linguistic backgrounds, social contexts, educational experiences, physical, social, and emotional well-being, important life events, and the impact of war or conflict on them and their families. The [interview questions](#) are provided in the appendices section of this document.

Participants chose an alias for themselves (in order to protect their privacy), interviews were recorded, and transcripts of the interviews were prepared. The learners' stories or narratives are directly based on the interviews with these young Manitobans. They are partially edited and reorganized versions of the interview transcripts that ensure authenticity as well as maintenance of the learners' voices. In addition to each learner's story, contextual and historical information and images were added to each narrative. This information allows readers to better understand the situation in the region, and provides a context for the learner's story or amplifies aspects of each story. The information added included

- a description of the country of birth or the country with which the learner identifies



© F. Noy/UNHCR. November 1, 2012. Keeping Busy in Rwanda's Kiziba Camp. These young women are part of a music and dance troupe set up in Kiziba as part of an awareness campaign against sexual and gender-based violence. The young—male and female—are encouraged to take part in recreation activities that will keep them away from crime and other anti-social behaviour. <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/8361200220/in/photostream/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

- information on the diversity of the country's people
- the history and nature of the conflict or war in the country
- details about countries where the learner may have lived as a refugee or sought asylum before coming to Canada
- exemplary or notable Canadians from similar backgrounds in Manitoba or other parts of Canada

Once the narrative for each participant was written, the participants were provided with a copy of the draft narrative for review, revision, and approval.

REFLECTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

The narratives document the diversity of the learners and the diversity of their experiences. Even when participants were from the same or neighbouring country, they often had very different stories to tell. Some reported having happy and positive experiences in the countries and refugee camps in which they lived, while others reported having only negative experiences and memories. Many suffered the loss of a parent, or other family member, because of war while others did not. Likewise, some were separated from their parents and sought asylum with aunts, uncles, or family friends, while the families of others remained intact.

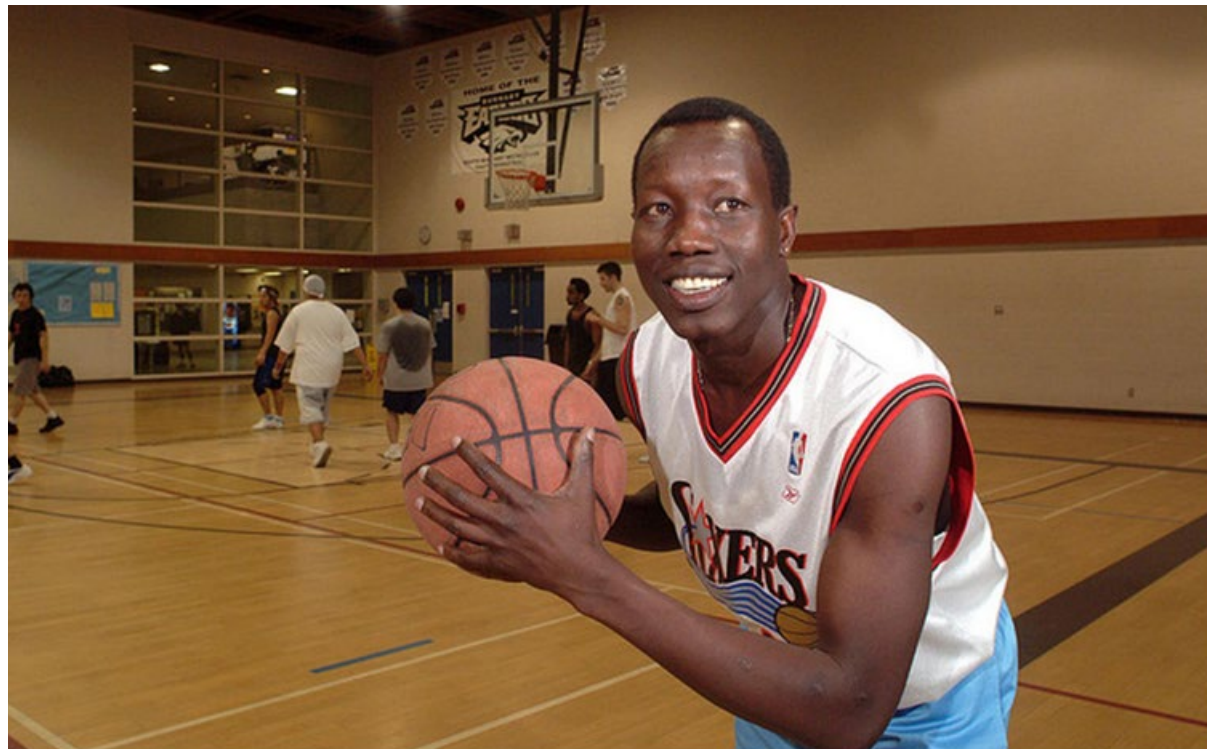
The nature and quality of the refugee camps or places of asylum also varied greatly. While some participants found safety and stability, and had their basic needs of shelter, food, and water met at their refugee camps or places of asylum, others did not. Access to education prior to arriving in Canada also varied significantly. Some of the participants were from relatively privileged families and had continuous access to education. Those from less privileged families experienced disrupted schooling or did not attend school at all.

The narratives also provide insight into the challenges of restarting life in a new and very different country. Resettlement in Canada was difficult and traumatic for some and a relatively pleasant experience for others. But the common reference in all the narratives was the importance of school in their new lives in Canada. School restored or maintained their hope for a better future. The narratives highlight the supports and programming that helped the participants achieve success in school and also tell of the barriers or inadequacies encountered in their school experiences.

All the narratives stress the importance of receiving EAL programming and supports for newcomers. All but one participant recommended that EAL supports and accommodations

be provided for a longer length of time, because many found the transition to non-EAL classrooms challenging, disruptive, and difficult.

Ultimately, the narratives point to the incredible strength and resiliency of children and youth from refugee and war-affected backgrounds. Through the participants' stories we learn of their will to survive and the power of support and relationships at school in helping them overcome the effects of war and the challenges of restarting their lives in a new country.



© B. Dennehy/UNHCR. March 2004. William Pioth's Story of Resettlement: From the Sudan to Canada. William Pioth, who arrived from Sudan as a teenager and has now been recognised as a refugee in Canada. <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/3201667394/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

VIDEO RESOURCES AND CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION FOR EACH NARRATIVE

Each narrative includes additional contextual information related to the learner's story. This information includes

- a map of the country of origin
- images of refugees, refugee camps, or places of asylum related to the story
- background information about the nature of the conflict, relevant events, and linguistic diversity
- images of the ethnic community in Canada and short biographies of significant individuals of similar ethnic origins and either refugees or non-refugees

Lastly, each narrative ends with a list of hyperlinks to potentially useful video resources. A brief description of each video is provided. These resources may be used to introduce the narrative or provide additional contextual information. The video resources were selected to complement the learner's stories. The videos provide

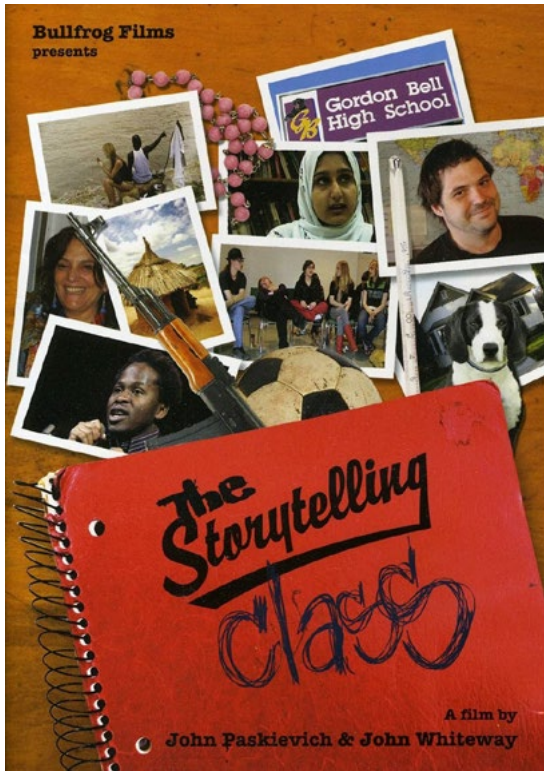
- information about the nation of origin of the learner, its history, and the nature of the conflict or war
- visual insights about the refugee camps and their characteristics as referenced in the learner's narrative or story
- additional stories of refugees from similar backgrounds and experiences
- evidence of the impact and challenges faced by refugees from that particular nation or group
- the life of refugees after immigration or repatriation



Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences

Films, videos, photographs, multimedia resources, artwork, and other educational and commercial resources may be very effective tools for exploring issues related to refugees within a professional development session, support group, or classroom. Narratives, interviews, profiles, and/or stories of refugee survivors are also powerful educational tools, whether they are documentary or fictional in nature. However, it is critical that teachers or other facilitators working with newcomers of refugee and immigrant backgrounds or in any other setting carefully preview, select, and plan for the use of these resources to ensure that they are used effectively and that learners/participants benefit from viewing and discussing the book, story, photograph, artwork, film, video, or other multimedia resource. Many of these resources deal with the impact of war on civilians, the experiences of refugees (especially children and youth), and child soldiers. The content and images depicted in the videos and in this document may deal with violence, deprivation, or other themes and be disturbing and emotionally challenging for viewers, readers, or participants, whether they be of refugee or non-refugee backgrounds. In addition, they often deal with long-term conflict that is complex and challenging. The information within the video resources included for the introduction has been found by some teachers, refugee support workers, and refugee awareness facilitators to be potentially useful. However, these videos have not been reviewed through a Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning formal resource review process, nor are they endorsed by the department. They, therefore, do not carry a Manitoba recommended designation. Film, video, and multimedia resources, as with all other literature or educational resource selections, should be reviewed by school division staff before they are used by or with students or staff during professional development activities. In this way, learner sensitivities and the perspectives of the student population, as well as the appropriateness of the resource for the intended learning audience and objectives are taken into account. In addition, the effectiveness of a particular resource will depend greatly on what the teacher or facilitator does in terms of preparing the audience before viewing, as well as the needs and interaction of learners during and post viewing.

The Storytelling Class



© Doowah Design Inc. *The Storytelling Class*. Winnipeg, MB: Doowah Design Inc. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

[The Storytelling Class](#) is an excellent film to introduce the series of learner narratives, or to stimulate a discussion on the experiences of learners of refugee background in schools and the power of storytelling and healing. The film documents the experiences of the students and teacher who participated in an after-school storytelling project that took place at Gordon Bell High School in Winnipeg School Division. The school is situated in Winnipeg's downtown urban centre. Gordon Bell High School is one of the most diverse

schools in the city, with approximately 58 different languages spoken by the student body. Many of the students are new Canadians of refugee and war-affected backgrounds from Africa and other various war- or conflict-torn areas of the world. There is also a strong First Nations presence in the school as well as students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Mark Kuly, a teacher in the school, inspired by a summer course at the University of Manitoba on storytelling for peace and human rights, initiated an after-school storytelling project through which he hoped new Canadian students would share stories with their Canadian-born peers. The project was intended to break down barriers of misunderstanding and stereotypes and build bridges of understanding and belonging across their respective cultures and histories. The stimulus for the cross-cultural interaction and dialogue centred on the students reading and discussing the book *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah. The book is a memoir of Beah's traumatic time as a child soldier in Sierra Leone's civil war and his immigration to the United States of America.

The voluntary after-school meetings took dramatic, difficult, and unexpected turns. One week, during the course of Marc Kuly's storytelling project, the class had an inspiring and powerful session with two guests. Beah and his American adoptive mother, Laura Simms, a renowned professional storyteller, were both in Winnipeg for a speaking engagement

and generously agreed to meet with the students. They talked with the students about their experiences and the healing power of storytelling. With their help, the students participating in the project began to listen to each other and find the commonality and sense of community that long eluded them.

The Storytelling Class is inspiring evidence of humanity's resilience and capacity for forgiveness, reconciliation, and redemption.

The Storytelling Class DVD is available from the Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning Library (Call # D 370.117 S86), the Winnipeg Public Library (Call # DVD 373.2380971 STO), the Elizabeth Dafoe Library at the University of Manitoba, and the University of Winnipeg Library.



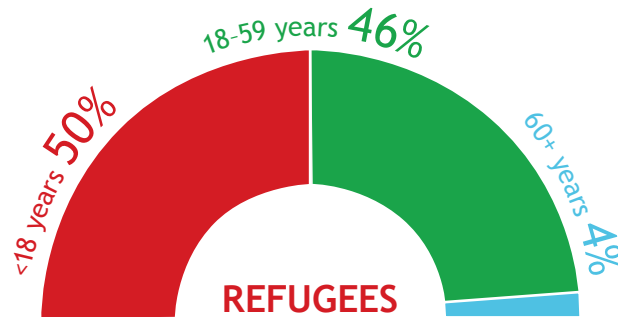
© John Paskievich. Gordon Bell High School. Winnipeg, MB: *The Storytelling Class*. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

THE IMPACT AND EFFECTS OF WAR ON CHILDREN

Modern warfare does not take place in isolated or remote battlefields and is not fought between opposing countries. The vast majority of contemporary conflicts take place within a specific country, not between countries. In this new form of warfare, civilians are often caught in the midst of the fighting and routinely targeted. Presently, civilians make up to 90% of the casualties. (War Child)

“Today’s conflicts frequently involve different ethnic or religious groups, combining political, communitarian and criminal violence. Violence that appears indiscriminate may also be deliberately targeted at certain groups of civilians, and may include the use of sexual and gender-based violence. These armed conflicts may be aimed at securing social or economic power, and usually affect areas in repeated cycles. When UNHCR was established in 1950, armed conflict usually meant wars between States and generally allowed limited scope for humanitarian action until the conflict ended.” (THE STATE OF THE WORLD REFUGEES | 2012 | UNHCR SUMMARY)

Children account for the majority of civilian casualties. Mostly, they do not die from the weapons themselves, “but from preventable diseases that aren’t prevented or treated because the health systems and infrastructure have been destroyed.” (War Child) For example, to date more than 2.7 million children died in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a result of the conflict there, and the conflict continues. (War Child)



Children below 18 years constituted 50 percent of the refugee population in 2013, the highest figure in a decade.

Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2013. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

War affects children in many of the same ways that it affects adults. There are, nonetheless, specific effects on children. Firstly, children’s access to the care, empathy, and attention of adults who love them is often restricted or non-existent. In times of war, the loss of parents, the separation from parents, the parents’ extreme preoccupation with protecting and finding subsistence for the family, and the emotional unavailability of depressed or distracted parents lead to significant and frequent disruption in their attachments. In some cases, children may be in substitute or temporary care with someone who has limited connections or familiarity with them (distant relatives or neighbours, an orphanage). Many war-affected children lose all adult protection and become in the refugee parlance “unaccompanied children.” (Santa Barbara, 2006)

War also has an enormous impact on childhood, which may adversely affect the life trajectory of children much more than adults. Consider for a moment the impact on their young lives.

- Children often experience disrupted or no schooling. One of the most damaging effects of war is the way it disrupts and destroys children’s education. There is much evidence that education is really the best weapon against poverty and conflict.
- Children are often forced to move into refugee or displaced person camps where they may wait for years in extremely trying and difficult circumstances for normal life to resume, if it ever does.
- War destroys the local economy, agriculture, industries, jobs, and infrastructure. Since today’s conflicts usually take place in the poorest countries, the impact is huge. Parents struggle to feed their children and provide them with basic necessities. Children may be forced to stay at home to look after siblings or work instead of going to school, or they may even end up on the streets in situations of acute poverty.
- The bombs and bullets of war often kill, maim, and disable children. Some are recruited to become soldiers and are placed directly in the firing line. It is estimated that there are tens of thousands of young people under 18 serving in militias in about 60 countries. Hundreds of thousands of children die each year in warfare. When conflict has ended or ebbed, landmines

and unexploded ordinance can remain a threat for years. Children may lose limbs, their sight, or cognitive capacity.

- Many more children die or become fatally ill from the indirect physical effects of war. War destroys hospitals and health centres, and medical personnel are killed or forced to flee. Millions of children have died from treatable diseases like diarrhea, malaria, and cholera because of a lack of medical attention. Refugee children are particularly vulnerable to the deadly combination of malnutrition and infectious illness.
- Increasingly, many children are subjected to rape and sexual violence as these are frequently used as “weapons” of war. Girls and young women may have babies as a result, or are so injured and maimed that they will not be able to bear children in the future.
- The psychological effects of war and war-related trauma may be severe. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may result as the effects on vulnerable and impressionable children can be worse than on adults. Many children cannot understand the cause of the conflict or why it is happening. Severe losses and disruptions in their lives lead to high rates of depression and anxiety in war-affected children. These impacts may be prolonged by exposures to further privations and violence in refugee situations. Their experiences may make it difficult for them to form healthy relationships with adults or with their peers. Some cope by turning to alcohol or drugs.
- These children often lose their social life. Girls who are raped may be marginalized by society and lose marriage opportunities. Boys who have been forced to become child soldiers are often expelled from their communities because of

the violence they inflicted on the communities and sometimes their own families. Children may lose their community and its culture during war, sometimes having it reconstituted in refugee or diaspora situations.

- Moral and spiritual impacts can also occur. The experience of indifference from the surrounding world or, worse still, the malevolence may cause children to suffer loss of meaning in their construction of themselves in their world. They may have to change their moral structure and lie, steal, and sell sex to survive. They may have their moral structure forcibly dismantled and replaced in training to kill as part of a military force.

Almost half of the world’s forcibly displaced people are children and many spend their entire childhood far from home.

In 2013, an estimated 51.2 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced due to conflict and persecution.

The largest refugee camp complex in the world is Dadaab in north-east Kenya. Since it opened 22 years ago to host a maximum of 90,000 people fleeing civil war in Somalia, it has grown into five camps hosting more than 350,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, including third generation refugees born in the camp.

Source: UNHCR

For children, a refugee camp may not offer the protection one would hope. A study done by the UNHCR during the 2005 to 2007 period in Southern Africa with refugee and returnee children testifies

to the vulnerability of children during times of displacement or asylum. The key findings were as follows:

“Although the refugee situations differ in several respects—size, ethnic mix, location, quality of services, etc., most of the key problems identified during the participatory assessments were quite similar:

- Children experience violence within and outside refugee camps, as well as in reintegration and urban situations.
- Refugee children often experience discrimination by local residents—including teachers—and sometimes experience discrimination within camps from members of other ethnic groups.
- Gender-based violence directed at girls, including harassment and rape, is widespread.
- Children living without parents are especially vulnerable, due to lack of adult protection and scarce economic resources.
- Forced marriages, often resulting from rape and pregnancy, are common in several camps.
- Alcohol and substance abuse by adults often results in violence and sexual assault against children.
- Some of the tasks assigned to children (such as collecting water and gathering firewood) put them at risk for discrimination and rape.”

(Source: UNHCR, Through the eyes of a child: refugee children speak about violence: A report on participatory assessments carried out with refugee and returnee children in Southern Africa 2005-2007). <[www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=47c804682&query=Through the eyes of a child](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=47c804682&query=Through%20the%20eyes%20of%20a%20child)>.

The impact on refugee children extends long after the war has ended, or the children have returned home or restarted their lives in another country. Many may never regain the potential they had before war.

“I want to educate the next generation, because education brings peace.”

—Afghan refugee girl

“If the school wasn’t open I would be working right now. That would make me sad because children aren’t meant to work; we are meant to be in school and studying... Education is very important. Only if I am educated can I help take care of my mother and get a good job. When I am older this is what I will do.”

—Chin refugee boy (Myanmar)

Source: UNHCR, Global Report 2013: Educate a Child

Resilience and Hope

At times, the effects of war on children seem overwhelming and insurmountable, but there is hope. It is essential that we recognize that these children are often incredibly resilient and possess a great desire to survive and thrive. To do so; they do need the right environment, as well as protection, care, and support. When they do experience such conditions they remarkably, if not miraculously, thrive, recover, and overcome the really difficult, tough start or periods in their lives.

This is a crucial point and it should form the basis for educators and others who work with war-affected children in the field, or in the countries and communities to which refugee children immigrate and resettle. We must not treat war-affected children as helpless victims but, instead, seek to build on their own resilience, strengths, and capabilities. Educational programs and related programs should strive to give young people the resources and opportunities to rebuild their own lives and create the protective environment that will allow them to do so. In the support document *Life After War: Education as a Healing Process for Refugee and War-Affected Children*, greater detail is provided regarding how schools can support war-affected learners. It also addresses the importance of education in both healing the effects of war and rebuilding community. The document also details the linguistic, literacy, and academic tools that will allow these children to thrive.

The narratives that follow speak to the effects of war on new Canadians of war-affected backgrounds and their experiences in rebuilding their lives in Manitoba, with an emphasis on their educational experiences and pathways. To a large degree, they attest to the resiliency of such children, the healing that has taken place, and their hope for their future.



© V. Vick/UNHCR. April 2008. UNHCR News Story: Uganda: The Gift of Education. Siripi Primary School in Rhino camp refugee settlement in Arua. Most of the students are refugees who fled the decades long civil war in Sudan. <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/4598181832/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

ANAM* (BURUNDI)

“Being healthy enough to go to school has been my dream.”

See [Keza’s Refugee Learner Narrative for another perspective and additional information on Burundi and Rwanda](#).

Life before Canada

Birthplace and Family

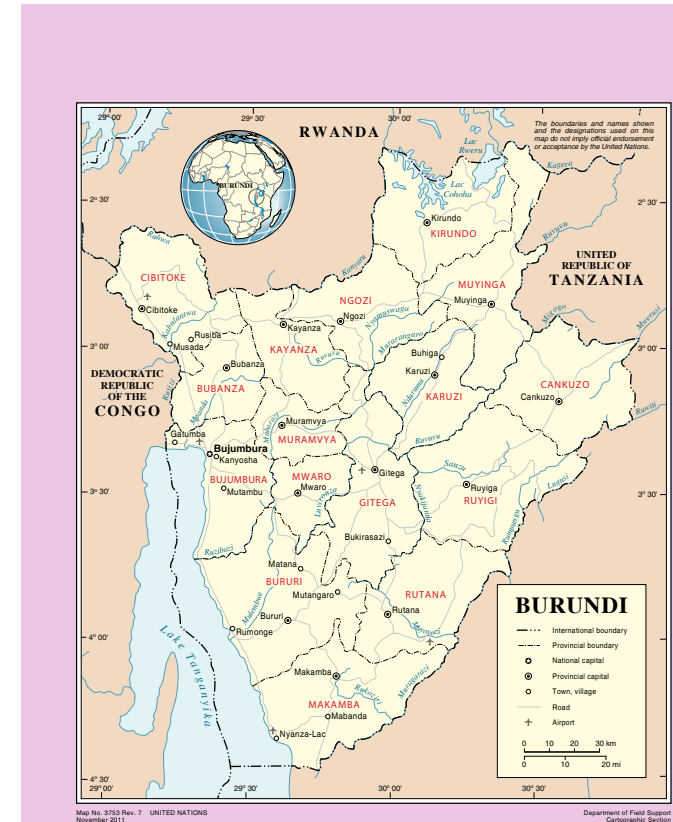
My name is Anam, which means “shining light.” I was born on March 5, 1992, in Burundi. I am Burundi and my family speaks Kiswahili, Kirundi, and Kinyarwanda (Ruanda).

There are seven children in my family—four boys and three girls—plus my father and mother. My father was a professional soccer player. He travelled a great deal playing soccer. My mother was a business woman. She was part of a small shop where she sold vegetables. I helped my mother by taking care of my younger brother and sister while my mother worked. I didn’t go to school because there wasn’t the money to attend school. School was not free. The schools required that families pay tuition fees. The tuition fees paid for the uniforms, books, and the teacher.

In Burundi, we lived in a small city with mostly bicycle traffic. The buildings were mostly made of sand, cement, or wood. I was very close to my parents, including Dad even though he wasn’t at home very much. I was happy living in Burundi. I had a lot of friends there but I didn’t see them that much because I was usually helping my mother.

My family left Burundi because there wasn’t peace. There was fighting every day. We eventually went to Rwanda to escape the war, but first went to Tanzania. We stayed in a city called Gungu in the Kigoma region for a while. One of my bad memories that I have of that time was when my mother got sick in Tanzania and we did not have the money to get help for her from a doctor. Luckily, my father who was away working was able to send some money to pay for my mother to go to a hospital. I believe that her illness was the result of wearing clothing worn by someone else. In our culture, this is not a good thing. Eventually, my mother’s health improved.

My father stayed in Tanzania, but the rest of the family returned to Burundi after a while. But, we did not find peace.



Map No. 3753 Rev. 7 UNITED NATIONS Department of Field Support
November 2011 Cartographic Section

© United Nations/Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section. Map No. 3753 Rev. 7. November 2011. Map of Burundi. CC License. <www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/burundi.pdf>.

* To protect the participant’s privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this narrative.

BURUNDI

Burundi is a densely populated country of approximately 9 million and borders Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Tanzania. It has many similarities with its neighbour, Rwanda.

Diversity

The official languages of Burundi are Kirundi and French. All of the Burundians displaced in 1972, including those who have spent their entire lives outside of Burundi, speak and understand Kirundi. Also, many have picked up Kiswahili from living in Tanzania.

Burundi's major ethnic groups include the Bahutu/Hutu (about 7.21 million), the Batutsi/Tutsi (about 1.2 million), and a smaller population of Batwa/Twa (about 30,000–40,000). The Twa are thought to be descended from the original forest-dwelling inhabitants of Burundi and nearby region. Hutus and Tutsi are believed to have migrated to present day Burundi and the surrounding region centuries ago. Tutsis and Hutus have coexisted in Burundi and the surrounding region for centuries and presently share a common language and many similar values, cultural practices, and traditions. As a result of the conflict and turmoil between the two groups and the desire to unite and reconcile, some Burundis will self-identify as being Burundi or Burundian, rather than Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa.

Burundian refugee characteristics:

- About 40% of Burundian refugees have had no schooling, and 20% are illiterate.
- The majority of refugees are Christian. Most are Protestant, and about 20% are Catholic. A small percent of the Burundian refugees from 1972 are Muslim.
- Burundian society is traditionally patriarchal in nature.

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I remember hearing gun shots close to our home and we would hear of attacks in nearby places. We did not feel safe living in Burundi and we wanted peace. So we left again, but this time to Rwanda.

We travelled by bus, north to Rwanda to a refugee camp outside the capital city, Kigali. My father joined us in Rwanda. Life was very difficult.

Burundian people were allowed to have their own small businesses in Tanzania but not in Rwanda.

For a while, we tried to live in Kigali but there wasn't any work for either of my parents and we couldn't live there because we feared being arrested. We decided to return to the camp because we couldn't go back to Burundi. My father got some money for working as a soccer coach and playing soccer. There was a small shop in the camp where my mother was able to sell some things. Life was still difficult because we were starting life all over again. We lived in a tent in the Kigali camp. In the camp there wasn't very much peace. It was not very safe.



© Georgia B. Travers/International Rescue Committee. January 2, 2012. Muyinga Province, BURUNDI—Two kindergartners enjoy their serving of “bouillie,” a floury porridge provided every morning at schools in Gasorwe Refugee Camp in Burundi’s eastern province of Muyinga. The breakfast provides a major incentive for many of the children to attend school. <www.rescue.org/blog/photo-share-breakfast-school>.Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Civil War and Conflict

Burundi has experienced civil problems since they gained independence from Belgium in 1962. In both Burundi and Rwanda, conflict and competition for power between the Tutsi and Hutu populations has led to civil war and mass killings. The minority Tutsi have largely dominated the political and economic life of Burundi, including the armed forces, police and judiciary, business, and news media.

Violent conflict has repeatedly broken out. In 1972, 200,000 Burundians were killed in the violence and 150,000 fled to neighbouring Rwanda, The Republic of Congo, and Tanzania (which has historical links with Tanzania since the 1600s). The 1972 Burundian refugees living in Rwanda later fled to Tanzania after the outbreak of genocide in that country. Conflict in 1978–79 and again during the civil war of 1993–2004 that resulted from the assassination of Burundi's Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, led to further mass migrations and killings. An estimated 300,000 plus people were killed during the civil war. Most Burundian refugees are of Hutu ethnicity

In 2005, Burundi held the first local and national elections since 1993. The largely Hutu National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD) emerged as the country's largest party. While Burundi's civil war officially ended in 2005, it has remained in a state of political upheaval and violent conflict. Violence between rival groups has continued to erupt from time to time since the elections of 2010.

Some of the Burundian refugees in Rwanda were urban refugees living in Kigali and other urban areas. Most sought asylum in the Kigeme refugee camps and others near the border with Burundi. Many of these camps are now home to Congolese refugees. The majority of Burundian refugees now live in Tanzania, in one of three different refugee camps: Ngara in the north, Kibondo in the country's central region, and Kasulu in the south.

Many Burundians have spent most, if not all of their lives in exile. If they were to return, many no longer know where their family's land is located and much of the land owned by those who were forced to flee has been repossessed by the government.

References

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- Freedom House (2012). Freedom in the World 2012—Burundi. Retrieved from <<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2012/burundi#.VRAQuW6Ei70>>.

School

We moved to Rwanda when I was 13. I attended my first school when I was 14, in Kigali, Rwanda. I only attended school for about 1 ½ years because I got sick with heart disease and stomach problems. I wasn't strong enough to continue studying.

My class in the school had about fifty students and one teacher. There were not enough materials for everyone, so we had to share the resources. We sat at long tables, usually three to four students at one table. There were three or four classrooms in the school in total. I was put in a class with other teenagers of similar age. I don't think that the teachers in the school were well educated, but they tried their best to teach us. But, overall, I did not learn much when I attended that school.



© B. Bannon/UNHCR. Photo ID 3096891522. October 24, 2008. TANZANIA: A choice, finally. Lukama Village, where some Burundi refugees have been given the chance to stay and have found a new home. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/3096891522/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Repatriation of Burundian Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

Following the Burundi peace accord of 2005, Burundi and Rwanda agreed to consider asylum seekers from both countries as illegal immigrants and deport them to their respective countries. This was followed by a tripartite agreement signed by UNHCR, Rwanda, and Burundi for the voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees in Rwanda. Many Burundian asylum-seekers and refugees were reluctant to return because of ongoing instability and fear of continuing conflict and violence.

Tanzania has increasingly limited the Burundian refugees' rights to freedom of movement, employment, and property ownership, making it necessary for them to seek resettlement elsewhere.

By May of 2009, UNHCR had repatriated nearly 400,000 Burundian refugees, from Rwanda, Tanzania, and other areas. UNHCR launched efforts to reunite separated children with their parents and family in Burundi from neighbouring countries in 2010–2012.

In 2012, UNHCR reported that it planned to assist the voluntary repatriation of about 20,000 Burundians from other countries in the region.

References

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- Tripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian Refugees in Rwanda. <www.refworld.org/docid/44ae612dc6.html>.
- 2012 UNHCR country operations profile—Burundi. <www.unhcr.org/pages/49e45c056.html>.

The school week was from Monday to Friday. In Rwanda, there are two school breaks. School would start in February and go to April and then there would be a break for three months then school would reopen in August and go until January. The language used in the school was Kinyarwanda and a little bit of English. The English I learned and spoke in the camp school was different from the English that I learned in Canada.

I really liked going to school. My favourite subject was math and even now I still love math, although I find it hard at times. My biggest difficulty then was learning English. Before I came to Canada I wanted to become a nurse and that is still my hope.



© A. Kirchhof/UNHCR. Photo ID 4128035726. May 18, 2009. The People We Help—Returnees. UNHCR has managed numerous large-scale voluntary repatriation programs that brought millions of refugees home, including these Burundian refugees seen at the border on their return home from Rwanda. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/4128035726/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Immigration to Canada

We were all still living in Rwanda when we immigrated to Canada. I didn't know anything about Canada. All I knew was that living outside of the refugee camp life could be very difficult and dangerous. Because we stayed in the refugee camp, we eventually had the opportunity to immigrate to another country. Our family's resettlement in Canada was based on health reasons.

When I got sick, I went to the camp clinic. The camp had a doctor and a nurse who looked after 2,000 people. I was given medication for the stomach problems I had developed, but I got sicker. The camp hospital transferred me to the local town hospital. In the end, I was sent to three different hospitals. My heart was growing larger and there wasn't any equipment for them to do the surgery.



© Sam Garcia/Embassy. June 4, 2014. Burundian drummers entertain the crowd at Africa Day on May 27 in Ottawa. <www.embassynews.ca/chatter-house/2014/06/04/burundi-drummers--the-perfect-way-to-shush-a-crowd/45615>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

They wanted to give me other medication for my stomach to reduce the gas I was experiencing. My stomach already had an infection. I was really sick; I was throwing up blood. I was in a coma for three months. I spent almost two years in the hospital. I also developed problems with my liver. The hospital could not help me with my heart problems, but they were able to help alleviate my liver and stomach problems.

My move to Canada is a direct result of my health problems. We were allowed to immigrate to Canada so that I could get the medical treatment that I desperately needed. I was really happy to come to Canada because getting healthy was the key to my future. Once I was better and stronger, then I could go back to school, work hard, and eventually become a nurse.

But before coming to Canada, we had to return to Burundi one more time. The Rwandan government began to force Burundians in Rwanda to return home and they destroyed the camp near Kigali. Sadly, we had to leave my uncle (my mother's brother) and his wife and their three children behind.

Starting a New Life in Canada

I was 15 when I moved to Canada. A settlement counsellor from Welcome Place helped us when we arrived. The counsellor met us at the airport.

It was December and it was so cold that I thought that I was going to die from the cold. I couldn't touch anything because I felt frozen. It was very difficult for me to breathe. When I was in the hospital in Rwanda I was on oxygen most of the time, so the cold weather in Winnipeg made me

feel very weak. I could only go outside for very brief periods of time. This is what I remember most about that time. Despite this obstacle, I pushed myself to attend school because I wanted to go to school so badly.



© United Way. September 12, 2012. Drummers from MSIP's Peaceful Village program at Gordon Bell High School. After school programming is an important element in providing equitable and successful educational supports for war-affected learners. <<http://unitedwaywinnipeg.ca/tag/peaceful-village/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

We had some difficulties finding a safe place to live in Winnipeg. Our first home was a house on Toronto Street. Soon after arriving, my medical treatment began. I was recuperating from stomach surgery at home when our house was attacked and three windows were broken in our house: living room, kitchen, and my bedroom window. Luckily, I had sensed that my window would be hit and I pushed a piece of furniture against the window because my bed was directly under it. I am so glad I did because I might have been cut by flying glass. I was so frightened by the attack that I had to return to the hospital. This event forced us to look for another house.

My father put a deposit down on another house we wanted to rent but then we weren't allowed to move in. We tried to get the deposit back but the person had already spent it. Fortunately, an acquaintance gave us two rooms to live in for several months. Later on we found a house to rent on Anderson. But, there were lots of problems with this house too. We lived there for about a year. We moved two more times again before we settled in East Kildonan. In all, we ended up moving five times in the first two years.



Marceline Ndayumvire was the recipient of the Manitoba Human Rights Commitment Award in December 2005 for her work to improve women's rights. Marceline Ndayumvire is a survivor of the conflicts in Burundi. Her family was among those first targeted in isolated attacks that began in December 1969. By July 1972, as many as 200-500,000 Hutus were massacred in the Burundi genocide, including Ndayumvire's six siblings and her parents. Marceline has drawn on her experience as a refugee and newcomer in her work with Welcome Place and she has helped many refugees settle and reclaim their lives in Manitoba. She has a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education from the University of Saskatchewan.

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When I think about those years, those were the things that I liked least about Canada: the break-ins, the many moves, having to go back to the hospital, and being cheated out of \$2,000. But not all was bad. I really liked the fact that living in Canada has allowed me to get an education and the medical treatment that I needed for my heart and stomach problems.

Also, I like the living conditions and physical environment in Canada. Now that I have had heart and stomach surgery and recovered, I am feeling much better. I am thrilled that I now have good health. I never imagined I could feel so well and healthy. I am now able to walk a good distance without tiring. I am strong enough to attend school regularly. I am able to do whatever I want because I am healthy and feel good.

I am also pleased with my life and relationships. When we arrived in Canada there was a family that my family knew from the camp and we were able to resume our friendship. I easily made friends with young people who speak the same languages as I do. I am still living with my family, which has grown since being in Canada, with the birth of my new brother. I have good relationships with all the members of my family. Everyone in my family is active and either working or going to school except for my now three-year-old brother! No one is experiencing any after-effects from the war or from our refugee experiences. We all found it difficult to learn English. But for all of us, the worst problem we faced living in Winnipeg was finding safe, affordable housing. Now that we have found that in East Kildonan, we are all very pleased.



Louise Simbandumwe was the recipient of the 2012 Manitoba Human Rights Commitment Award. Louise arrived in Canada at the age of 11 with her family in 1979 as a privately sponsored refugee from Burundi. They became refugees when her parents, who were studying in India at the time, received word of widespread massacres in Burundi that claimed the lives of many of their relatives. These life experiences have made her a passionate advocate for human rights and social justice. Her volunteer commitments include Amnesty International, the University of Winnipeg Community Renewal Corporation, the Stop Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls Action Group, the Families at Risk Refugee Sponsorship Committee, the All Aboard Poverty Reduction Committee, and the Immigration Matters in Canada Coalition. She has a Bachelors in Commerce and a Masters in Comparative Social Research. Louise is currently the Director of Asset Building Programs at SEED Winnipeg.

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School Experiences

The first school I attended in Winnipeg was a large junior/senior high school. I went to that school because of a friend of my father. The friend's son went there and he encouraged my father to enrol me at the same school. The EAL classroom I was placed in had about 18 students (depending on the time of day) with one teacher and an educational assistant. I was placed in Grade 7/8. This is the only school I have attended in Canada.

At first, I spent most of my day in the EAL classroom. I was quiet in class but I worked hard and I handed my work in on time. The teachers saw that I was a good student and worked hard. My EAL teacher was very welcoming, spending one-on-one time with me, helping me develop my English skills, and feel more comfortable speaking English. She also made sure that I got other support, such as a volunteer to assist me with my reading when the EAL teacher was working with the other students. The regular (subject) teachers helped me during the lunch break by giving me their time and helping me with what I didn't understand. I was also given extra time on tests and exams. I believe that being placed in the EAL program was good for me.

My friendships and relationships with other students in the school were good. Usually, I found it easy to make friends, but I was shy about talking to the boys in the class even though the classes I attended in Rwanda were mixed. There was another girl who also spoke Swahili and I soon became friends with her. I found having a common language helpful in making friends even though we come from different countries. I also made some Canadian

friends with students in the regular classes who were taking the same subjects. We became friends by working together and helping each other with the assignments and course work. My friendship with these students goes beyond the school and I see them outside of class. I love being in school in Canada, that was my dream.

I do not work while I am in school, so that I can focus on school. I am looking forward to graduating in June 2013.

Life Today and Hopes for the Future

I have just finished volunteering at The Children's Museum. My EAL teacher helped my friend and I become volunteers at the museum. Because of this volunteer work, there is a possibility that I will be able to get a summer job at the museum. I love volunteering at the museum because I love working with children.

Next school year, I will be taking Grade 12 Math, Chemistry, Biology, and Dance. I have already completed my Grade 12 English language arts requirements. I have had good experiences at the school. I had the opportunity to develop a good educational foundation and I am being well-prepared for my future. The school has helped me in identifying what I would like to do and career choices. I have received help from student services in making my course selections and how to apply for scholarships. The school has done all the right things for me. They have been great, and there isn't anything the school should have

done differently. I hope that they continue to offer the same programs and supports to me and other students.

I plan to attend university to study pediatric nursing. I already know how to find a vein and insert an intravenous line because of my illness and the long time I spent in hospitals. I remember when I was in the hospital in Rwanda the doctors suggested that I become a nurse.

I am at a point where I am very satisfied with my life in Canada. I am in good health now and I am living my dream of getting a good education. I feel good about myself and my prospects for the future. I am so very happy to share my story.

VIDEO RESOURCES

See [Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences](#).

Burundian and Rwandan Conflicts

The 1972 Burundians is a United Nations video by UNFugee about the 1972 Burundi conflict. It appears on the UN's YouTube channel.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BluizW35gFw

Burundi Refugee Displacement is a video about a Burundian refugee's experiences with displacement during several periods of conflict.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=chFUjUVp3zU

The Rwandan Genocide is a series of videos on the History Channel's website about the Rwandan genocide and the international reaction to it.

www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide

Rwandan Stories is a great collection of videos, photographs, and articles exploring the origins, details, and aftermath of the Rwandan genocide through the eyes of both survivors and perpetrators.

www.rwandanstories.org/index.html

The Rwandan Refugee Crisis: Before the Genocide: Part I is one of the video resources available from this site which is dedicated to the Rwandan genocide.

www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/cases/rwanda/turning-points/the-rwandan-refugee-crisis-part-i

Refugee Camps and Experiences

UNHCR Tanzania, Angaara Refugee Camp is a 2012 video that provides insights about a camp in Tanzania where about 60,000 Burundians are living.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=omEVKdF9YBo

Burundian refugees in Tanzania worried about the army, by BBC Africa, discusses the fears of Burundians at the last camp left in Tanzania.

www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-19080877

NYTimes.com—Signs of Peace in Burundi is a 2008 video about the restrictions placed on Burundians in Tanzania.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKILWPSC2mA

Tanzania: A New Start. The Story of Mawazo Pardon, a Refugee from Burundi is a video by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Mawazo Pardon has a new lease on life. After spending his entire life as a refugee in Tanzania, he now has the possibility to become a citizen of Tanzania.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc_Fsie6j8M

Burundi: Finding Our Place is a 2008 video by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees about the challenges faced by returning refugees.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijTiNm5WWPE

UNICEF: Helping returning refugee children in Burundi is a UNICEF video about support being provided to refugee children.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNZP33N4nvw

Burundi 2012 documents the travels of nine youth and three adults in Burundi, working with Sister Connection, an organization that works specifically with widows and orphans.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=giG9KmvubGg

Burundians in the Diaspora

Refugee Stories: Mudibu, Burundi (Parts 1 and 2), by USA for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, is the story of Jean Patrick Bimenyimana, whose artistic name is "Mudibu," who grew up in the central African state of Burundi and was forced to flee after the 1993 civil war.

Part 1:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcPwM86fSxI

Part 2:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQt0BFWjcCY

Saido Berahino shares his own refugee story, by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, is a video about Burundian refugee and West Bromwich striker, Saido Berahino, who shares his story of displacement, and how he came to find a new, safe home in the UK.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFRGPO8g8zl

No More Blood in Our Phones (Parts 1–4), is a video by Anna De Leon MacDonald, a grade twelve student at the Seven Oaks Met School. Anna was inspired to do this documentary after learning about the negative impact Canadian mining companies are having in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

<http://vimeo.com/user12280931>

ANGELICA*

(DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO)

“We don’t all have the same opportunities.”

See Favor’s Refugee Learner Narrative for another perspective and additional information on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Life before Canada

Birthplace and Family

Jambo, Bonjour, and Hello. My name is Angelica. I was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), in Kindu, Maniema, on February 1, 1994. Before coming to Canada, I lived in Goma, and in Kampala, Uganda. I’m Congolese, but I belong to a tribe that is part of the Kindu-Maniema region and belongs to the Barega Group. My family speaks five languages. My father speaks French, English, and Swahili. I speak French, English, Swahili, Uganda, and Lingala.

I don’t remember too much about our village—I was only there for a few years. I also lived in Goma City for about two years, but I don’t have many memories of that place. I do have a few pictures, but I was only seven when I left the Congo and went to Uganda (Kampala). What I remember the most is my friends, our neighbours, and the people. We shared everything and I knew everyone.

* To protect the participant’s privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this narrative.



Map No. 4007 Rev. 10 UNITED NATIONS July 2011
Department of Field Support Cartographic Section
© United Nations/Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section. Map No. 4007 Rev. 10. July 2011. Map of Democratic Republic of the Congo. CC License. <www.un.org/depts/Cartographic/map/profile/drcongo.pdf>.



© UNICEF DRC/Cornelia Walther. July 15, 2014. A picture deploring the recruitment of child soldiers painted by former child soldiers managed by UNICEF-partner CAJED in Goma, DRC. <<http://speakjhr.com/2014/07/goma-despite-supervision-former-child-soldiers-still-pose-danger/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



© UNHCR/G. Katende. Photo ID 7548400218. July 5, 2012. Congolese cross into Uganda at Bunagana to escape the latest fighting in Eastern Congo. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/7548400218/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Everything is different in the Congo. People are friendly, they don't care what you look like, and everybody helps each other. We were a community.

When I went to Kampala I didn't really know anyone, except for my cousins who lived in Kampala. I had met my cousins before moving to Kampala, but I had not seen them for a while. So I really didn't know them and we had to restart our relationship again. In the end, everything went well and we became friends. In Kampala, I learned Uganda and I also began to learn English.

I was just turning eight when we left the Congo. We stayed in Kampala for about five years, so I was 13 years old when I came to Canada. Kampala is not a really a big city. It's a small city, but very crowded. The buildings were made of brick and cement, like here.

The best part of living in Africa was the relationships I had. My relationship with my family was good—very close. I liked the friendships I had in Kampala—we shared things and we helped each other. For example, with my neighbour, who we only knew for a few months, when she had a baby and had nobody to help her, and needed some help, I helped her out! That is the way we do things there. That is why I was very happy living in Kampala and in the Congo.

School in Goma, North Kivu

I went to school while in the Congo, but not in Kampala. I started school when I was about six years old and attended until I left the Congo. In all, I went to school for two to three years. I didn't attend school in Uganda because the school was too expensive and my dad had to find a new job.



© Andrew Regan/Wikimedia Commons. May 20, 2010. Downtown Kampala. CC License. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Uganda-Development.JPG>>.



© Simisa/Wikimedia Commons. August 26, 2009. Suburban Kampala. CC License. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kampala_26.08.2009_12-52-00.jpg>.



© Simisa/Wikimedia Commons. August 26, 2009. Street views in Kampala. CC License. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kampala_26.08.2009_12-39-51.jpg>.

THE ERUPTION OF MOUNT NYIRAGONGO IN 2002

Mount Nyiragongo is a volcano located inside Virunga National Park, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, just 20 km north of the town of Goma and Lake Kivu and near the border with Rwanda. Nyiragongo and neighbouring Nyamuragira jointly are responsible for 40% of Africa's historical volcanic eruptions. Mount Nyiragongo, since 1882, has erupted at least 34 times, with significant eruptions in 1977 and 2002.

A major eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano began on January 17, 2002, when a fissure opened in the south flank of the volcano, from which lava flowed in a stream 200 to 1000 metres wide and up to 2 metres deep through Goma. 400,000 people were evacuated from the city across the Rwandan border into neighbouring Gisenyi during the eruption.



© Cai Tjeenk Willink/Wikimedia Commons. May 7, 2011. Lava lake of the Nyiragongo Volcano in Virunga National Park in Eastern DRC. CC License. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lava_Lake_Nyiragongo_2.jpg>.

The school in Goma was like a bunch of little single-storey cement houses that were grouped together. We were about 25-30 children in a classroom. Everyone had their own desk and their own books. My dad had to pay tuition. Everybody wore uniforms and had lunch at school. In Grade 1, we had the same teacher for the day. In Grade 2, we had one teacher in the morning until lunch and then another teacher came in the afternoon.

In the Congo, the students attended school during two different parts of the day. The first section was from 8:00 a.m. until noon and the second section from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. I was in the morning section and attended classes then. There were lots of kids. In Grade 2, we studied French, Swahili, math, science, and geography. The languages used at the school were French and Swahili. But, French was the predominant language. I always liked going to school. My favourite subjects were math and science. I do not recall having any difficulties in school.

The school year was pretty much the same as in Canada—September to June, but we had more holidays. Summer vacation was two months long and we had a two to three week break at Christmas. We also had some time off in the spring, very similar to what we have here in Canada.

I stopped going to school in Kampala, because the tuition was more than in Goma, and my dad had to pay for this, and we had a big family. There are 14 children in my family and I am number 7, right in the middle. We all needed to go to school, so my dad had to make a decision as to who could attend. He tried to find work in Kampala, Uganda, but it was a new country and it was hard. He wasn't able to work as a doctor and my stepmother couldn't work as a nurse, as in Uganda they didn't accept their certification/credentials. So I was out of school from the age of 8 when I left the Congo until I immigrated to Canada at 13 years of age.

In Kampala, we lived in the city. Life was different as I couldn't go to school. I felt bad, but I did understand that some of my siblings could go to school, and I couldn't. We didn't have the money. Those that attended school brought home books and homework, and I was able to look at those and learn a bit.

I was always so cold in Uganda, and I had nothing to do. Every morning I had to help with the younger children, and that was it. So I spent a lot of time sewing. That was why my aunt told me I should become a clothes designer. I did it for a while, but I didn't really like it, even though I did it well. It was fun, but I didn't want that as a job. I always wanted to be a doctor, like my dad.

The Volcano

Our family was not really affected by the war in the Congo. The event that caused us to leave the Congo was the volcano that erupted near Goma. Lots of people had to move because of the volcano. That is why we left the Congo. We went to Kampala. First, we walked from Goma to Rwanda (there were no cars leaving Goma). Then, from Rwanda, where we stayed for about seven months, we took a bus to Uganda.



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Immigration to Canada

I don't know how my Dad decided to come to Canada. I didn't know anything about Canada then. I had heard about it, but didn't know anything about it. I was kind of happy to come to Canada, but I missed my friends and my life in Uganda. But when I did leave, at least I had my family. Twelve

children and my parents came to Canada together from Uganda and after two years, my two brothers came directly from the Congo. I do have some family in Quebec; some of my aunts, uncles, and cousins live there.

Life in Canada

A settlement counsellor from Welcome Place met us when we arrived in Winnipeg. We arrived in June. The adults went to English classes. I stayed home during the summer, but I really wanted to get going again. It was two months before I could go to school. We first lived in one place, and then got a permanent place. We lived on Victor Street for about two years.

Some of my first impressions of Canada were that the houses were all very big and I noticed that there were a lot of white people everywhere! The thing I liked best about being in Canada was being able to go to school. When I finally could attend school, I almost cried. Not because I was afraid, but because I was so happy. The one thing I still like least about living in Canada is the cold and the winter. I never have gotten used to the winter.

I went to a French/*Français* school. I went right into Grade 8, but I just was not at the same level as the students in Grade 8. As I had stopped going to school at the beginning of Grade 3, I found it difficult. I knew French, but after living in Kampala for five years I had almost forgotten it. I didn't listen and I didn't know what the teacher said... or anything. The other students understood, but it was hard for me. For example, when we did reading and other stuff, and I was the one person in the class who struggled and when everyone understood and I didn't, it was very hard. In my classes, everyone spoke very fast, especially in English Language Arts, but I would tell them to slow down,



© Marie Frechon/UN Photo. Photo ID 185631. April 4, 2008. Aerial View of Camps for People Displaced by Conflict. Mugunga I and II (in the foreground) and Bulengo (in the background) Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). CC Licence. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/5737272258/>.

and they would. The teacher did try to help me. Happily, in the end, all went well. I graduated from high school in June 2012.

When I moved to the high school in Grade 9, I found it to be very different from my experiences with the teacher in Grade 8. In high school, I had more than one teacher and I found that some teachers, a few, tended to focus on the students who understood and got it right away. Some tended to ignore the students who needed more help like me. So in high school I wasn't getting the same type of help I got before in Grade 8. As a result, I had to ask some of the teachers for help, and sometimes—really, mostly—I went to my friends or to those students who understood the course work and got help that way.

School is my number one priority in my heart. I didn't have much opportunity to go to school from Kindergarten to Grade 8 unlike others here, so school is very important for me. I didn't work outside of school because of that. I like school; I like the subjects; I like to get involved; I like to learn new things.

I found it easy to make friends at school even though I was the new person at the class. For example, if I was in gym class, I would talk to other students, including students of different races. Some students would just approach those of the same race. But I believe that if you need something, you

have to show it and reach out to them... and don't just hide. Some of my friends were from Africa. Some were from the Congo and some from Uganda. When we were together, we could talk about our lives before coming to Canada and we had something in common.

I got involved in many school activities in high school—sports, Spirit Day, Pizza Day, and other events. I noticed that the students in Grade 8 with the highest grades at the school went to such events and so they got me involved. Well, to be truthful, they didn't, I did it myself! I just wanted to fit in and be part of the school and did anything that would help. An example of this is how I got involved in badminton. One day, I went to the gym and I saw other students playing badminton. I watched for a while. I didn't know what game it was—but I always want to try new things. So one day I tried playing it and I did very well.

This involvement continued to my last year in high school. I can say that I was 100% involved with all the activities going on in the school, such as student counselling, sports, ministry, and many others in my last year of high school. For example, for school leadership class, I had to coach a team for my school. We did a lot for leadership class—we even had to fold jerseys.



Thebahatizz—Almost 10 years after fleeing the violence in Congo, the Mulimbwa family arrived in Winnipeg in December 2012. The family of nine arrived in Winnipeg after waiting for years as refugees in limbo in Kampala, Uganda.

The four oldest of the children, sisters Sylvie, Francine, Odette, and Rachel, were already a well-known gospel hip-hop group called Thebahatizz that performed in churches around Uganda.

In May 2014, the group released an EP album of six songs. Among them, is a humanitarian song “La Violence.” Proceeds from the sales of the album will go towards The Panzi Foundation, an organization that provides funding for a hospital which helps victims of war and those who have been sexually abused, and is especially driven to improve the overall health and well-being of the women and children who have been affected.

The group wants to use “La Violence” as a platform to raise awareness about the violence that exists all over the world.

See Thebahatizz—La Violence (Official video) at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uL50a_2HLc>.

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Paul Kambaja is a teacher with Congolese origins who is a very committed volunteer and one of the founders of the Congo Canada Charitable Foundation.

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Life Today and Hopes for the Future

Looking back, the schools and teachers helped me a lot. They provided a lot of help and resources. My principal helped a lot too. If I sometimes found myself without something, I would just ask them and they provided it for free! It's quite amazing!

In the end, I think the teachers did a good job. I think that they did everything they could, and did everything I needed. There could always be something more that could have been done, but for me personally it was enough. But I also believe that some high school teachers need to recognize that they need to pay more attention to the students who are having difficulties. I know teachers don't have a lot of time in high school, but they should pay more attention to students like me. It's very easy for teachers to figure out by just the first test who really doesn't understand the concepts of a particular subject. They should pay more attention to those kids. They should not do what some did in my school—they shouldn't wait to help until the end of the year. Some teachers were always doing that. A month before school ends that's when they would come to see you and tried to help you to do better in their classes. They should have started giving that help from the first day of school. I know they

tell students on the first day of school that "If you need help...", but they do so only once and then they never talk about it again. They should provide more support. I think most teachers do a good job, but it is not enough for students like me.

It is important that teachers have more information about newcomers who come here without any education, or much less education than they should have had. Not everyone who is in our schools had the opportunity to go to school from age five. We don't all have the same opportunities. In many countries only some people get the opportunity to go to school.

I also have a few suggestions for students from immigrant backgrounds who like me have missed school or have limited schooling. Feel free to ask for help! It's okay to know nothing and no one is perfect. Feel free to ask about what you don't know, and someone will help you, and they will correct you. It's okay to ask, and by asking for help and getting it, it will increase your self esteem. Never feel like you're stupid—no one is stupid! Everyone goes to school to learn!

Plans for the Future

I am looking forward to volunteering and working at a camp this summer. I will be involved in planning activities for all the six weeks of summer camp and I will be a staff member. The students at the camp will be from 13 to 17 years of age. I did the same thing last year. The main purpose of the summer camp is to help newcomers. It will help them with academic skills, reading, information, et cetera.

I first got involved when these camps started in the Congolese community when I was in Grade 8, and I attended as a participant. The camp helped me with my math and science skills and prepared me for other subjects before entering high school. I really liked the summer camp. That made me want to become a staff member and I was able to do so last year.

I helped with math and science, and sometimes I supervised the children and youth who attended. Later in September of that year, after the camp ended, the schools with students who attended the summer camp wrote a letter in which they said they could see a difference in achievement for the students because of the camp! I'm real happy I played a part in helping the students. We were all really happy!

I am not employed right now. In part, that is because while I was in Grade 12 this past year, I was also training to obtain a

certificate to be a Health/Nursing Assistant at the university, so I was very busy. I went to school from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. I completed the training and I graduated from the Health/Nursing Assistant program just one week before my high school graduation.

My dream now is to be a nurse. I plan to take a year off to work so that I can pay for my university studies. My plan is to apply for a job after the summer camp ends. I am going to look for a job as a Health/Nursing Assistant at a hospital or somewhere else, and work for a year. After that I am going to go to the university and enter University 1. University 1 will help me improve my skills and improve my grades from high school, so that I can be accepted in Nursing. Nursing takes four years, and then one year for a Bachelor. So, I have six or seven years left to go.

I am feeling positive about my future. I achieved everything that I wanted to do so far. I am happy with my experiences in Canada and I have a plan for a career and my future. I feel confident about the future because I have confidence in myself. I know that I have a lot to learn yet. I learned to ignore people who said that I was not good enough. I know I had to improve, but I wanted to do it myself, and I'll do it. I just said to myself, in my head, you can do it and I did it... and look at me now! I'm sitting here after graduating—after two graduations in the same year!



Newcomer Youth Educational Support Services (NYESS) Coalition Summer Program: The Congolese along with their Sierra Leonean, Eritrean, and South Sudanese community partners, formed a coalition that offers summer and after-school programs for newcomer and war-affected youth. Along with language and academic programming, sports and healthy living activities are a major part of the summer programming offered.

Accueil Francophone du Manitoba in collaboration with the DSFM (Franco-Manitoban School Division) also offers a summer camp dedicated specifically to children from immigrant and refugee families at Collège Louis-Riel in St. Boniface.

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VIDEO RESOURCES

See [Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences](#).

The Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Everyday Emergency: Africa's Deadliest Conflict (DRC) by Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) is the first of a three-part series that deals with the plight of Congolese in Eastern Congo and the extreme challenges they face as refugees. Several refugees share their experiences.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebGjxYZLiNI>

A Silent Genocide—Democratic Republic of the Congo is a video by CongoJusticeLasVegas. Although in 1994 it was widely reported that the situation with refugees fleeing into eastern Zaire (now Congo) was creating a humanitarian catastrophe, the crisis continues today unabated. Reaching epic proportions of casualties, the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has seemed to vanish from the mass media.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5Wo0WYEQVI

Uganda's Silent War, by TheBIRorg, is the winner of the 2008 Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award. This BIR report looks at the impact of International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrants on the civil war and peace process in Northern Uganda. It also highlights the challenges faced by former child soldiers.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8ZxHQLA0ww

Nyiragongo Volcano

Nyiragongo Volcano and the Volcanic Observatory of Goma, Congo, by TVE Asia Pacific, is a video depicting the Nyiragongo volcano eruption.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZLSvO6vJZ0

Refugees and their Experiences

Children Of The Congo: From War To Witches, a video by Renderyard, documents the plight of street children living in Kinshasa and confirms the widespread accusations of child witchcraft, torture, and child prostitution. The film also examines efforts to reintegrate demobilized child soldiers, displaced refugees, and orphaned children following the eruption of the massive Nyiragongo volcano, near the city of Goma in Eastern Congo.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNPKLekfYks

Delivering as one for Congolese refugees (2013), by UNICEF, is a look at how Congolese refugees are arriving at Rwamwanja settlement in western Uganda.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xvv8JeoPj78

Democratic Republic of Congo refugees in Uganda 'rise to 70,000'—*Red Cross*, by BBC News Africa, shows how a rebel attack in Eastern Congo in 2013 led to a mass exodus of refugees to Uganda.

www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-23310192

Congolese refugee camps in Uganda are 'unbearable' by eNCAnews, documents the experience of Congolese refugees in camps in Kyangwali, Uganda including a boat accident that resulted in the deaths of 251 Congolese refugees who were on their way home to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Npp22ow7IZ4

Refugee Camps—Gulu, Uganda by littleaexchange, shows an aid worker who is personally impacted by the story of a young child who now has to care for younger siblings.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=78sM-qGozds

Kahuzi-Biega Environmental School—Congo Classrooms for a Brighter Future by Canadian Ape Alliance, is a video of Dominique Bikaba speaking on issues in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Kahuzi-Biega Environmental School run by the Canadian Ape Alliance.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3WZYXTsmLU

Congolese Diaspora

Congolese refugee sisters build music career in Winnipeg by CBC News, is about a group of sisters who escaped a deadly civil war and have turned their difficult past into success as singers in Winnipeg.

www.cbc.ca/player/News/Canada/Manitoba/ID/2445888506/

Thebahatizz—La Violence (official video) is a video dedicated to all the women who are going through sexual and domestic violence and children victims of war who can't access formal education due to the war in their home countries.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uL50a_2HLc

BANDIRI* (SOMALIA)

“Education is the passport to the future.”

See [Layla’s Refugee Learner Narrative for another perspective and additional information on Somalia](#).

Life before Canada

Birthplace and Family

Is ka warran. Nabad miyaa? Hello. How are you? My name is Bandiri. I was born on October 19, 1991, in Mogadishu, Somalia. Just a few months before the burbur (catastrophe) of 1991-92 and the collapse of the Somali state, clan war, and famine.

Before coming to Canada, I lived one month in Nairobi, Kenya. I belong to the Somali cultural group and the language that my family spoke and continues to speak is Somali. My family consists of six children (four boys, including myself, and two girls) plus my parents.

In Mogadishu, we lived in a villa. My mother looked after the children while my father worked at two stores he owned. He sold construction equipment in the Bakara Market (also known as Bakaara market) in Mogadishu.

Mogadishu is a big city with a population of a million people. The buildings are very close together like London, England. There is not much space between them. I have always enjoyed a good relationship with my family. I was surrounded by relatives, family, neighbours, and teachers, all who supported each other. The culture that I come from is one where “everybody is your parent.” In my community when a child has done something bad or is going to do something wrong, an adult usually intervenes. They will speak to the child or stop them from behaving badly, even if the adult is not the child’s parent. We would call these caring adults uncles or aunts, even if they were not relatives. This was considered a sign of respect. I was very happy living in this community.

School in Somalia

My first school was a Koran school that I began attending at the age of four or five. This was a religious/spiritual school. At the age of seven, I began attending a “normal” school and entered Grade 1 (there wasn’t any kindergarten year). I attended school from Grade 1 to Grade 8. My parents had to pay a monthly tuition of about \$10. The primary school’s tuition was \$7 a month. All of my brothers and sisters also went to school. If you had a lot of kids, you were in trouble.

* To protect the participant’s privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this narrative.



© United Nations/Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section. Map No. 3690 Rev. 10. December 2011. Map of Somalia. CC License. <www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/somalia.pdf>.

SOMALIA

Bakaara Market

The Bakara Market (also known as Bakaara, *Suuqa Bakaaraha*) of Mogadishu is the largest open market in the nation. The Market is located in the heart of Mogadishu. The market was created in late 1972. Merchants and businesses sell everyday food essentials, gasoline, and medicine. During the Civil War, the market expanded significantly and became notorious for selling small arms and other weapons.

Bakara market has been the site of many violent incidents and events over the years, including the October 1993, Battle of Mogadishu (also known as The Battle of the Black Sea). It was in the market area that two American Black Hawk helicopters were downed which led to a fierce firefight that lasted the whole night. More recently, on May 14, 2011, heavy shelling hit the market resulting in at least 14 civilian casualties. Most of the civilians killed were women who were doing their shopping and a child was also killed.

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When I attended primary school, it was from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. When I attended junior high school, it was from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The subjects were taught in Arabic and Somali. I studied English in high school. The school year was from August to May and we attended for 5 ½ days a week, Saturday to Thursday, which was a half-day only. Friday is *jumu’ah* or “Friday prayer day” and was our day off. Boys and girls attended the same school. At first, the sexes were not separated but when the Islamists took control of the government, that changed. After that, the males and females were separated. This happened about the time when I was in junior high.



© Stuart Price/UN Photo. August 9, 2011. Mogadishu Market District Deserted. A woman walks through the deserted streets of Bakara Market in central Mogadishu, Somalia. Bakara was, up until 2011, a strategic stronghold of the Islamist group Al-Shabaab until their sudden withdrawal from the city overnight 5 August. Thousands of Burundian and Ugandan African Union troops, which support the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), now control over 90 percent of the city since Shabaab's retreat. CC License.<<https://www.flickr.com/photos/africa-renewal/6036306862/>>.

The school was a one-storey rectangular shaped building with primary grades on one side and junior high on the opposite side, with the school office at one end. The rooms are identified using the Somali alphabet rather than numbers. The school building was made of cement. The windows were opened to get cool air, because there was no air conditioning. There were just tables and chairs in the classrooms, no other equipment. The students learned from books or the teacher’s notes on the board. Not all the students had books because they weren’t able to afford them. They would copy the teacher’s notes into notebooks. There weren’t any handouts.

In my first school, there were 180 students with about 24 to 25 students in a class. When I was in junior high, the class size increased to about 30 to 34 students. We used to sit two or three students together at a cement table, attached to the ground. Students stayed in their classes and the teachers rotated. This was true of all the grades even in high school. If the classroom was filled with students, then the extra students would either go to another school or wait until the next semester to see if there was room. The school just had classroom spaces and we did not have any space for students to get together. If necessary, students could cross the city to go to another school. It really was based on first come, first served.

I did not like the teachers very much. I think that most of the teachers were rude and I couldn’t talk with them. Some of the teachers were very stupid and they were very hard on students. They tried to beat you. There were three incidents that stayed in my mind.

The first incident occurred when I was in high school. In the afternoon, there is a break at 3:00 p.m. followed with prayers at 3:15 p.m. One day, I was washing myself in preparation for prayers when a teacher came along who felt that I wasn't hurrying enough. The teacher told me that I should have been ready by that time. The teacher beat me with a very hard stick. I felt that the teacher had beaten me for nothing. My uncle was the vice-principal of the school and so I told him what had happened. My uncle told me that he would speak to the teacher.

Another incident involved the same teacher. I was writing an English exam and I had brought a math book into the exam room. When I am nervous I sweat a lot. The book had a plastic cover and I used the book to rest my hand on to keep the sweat off my exam paper. I told the teacher why I was using the book. The teacher didn't believe me and kicked me, hitting me in the kidney. That day I went to my uncle and my mother and told them that I wasn't going to that school anymore.

The third incident involved an issue about the payment of school fees. The school wanted me to pay for a month when I did not attend school and I was discussing the situation with the accountant. My math teacher overheard the conversation and reacted by taking a math book and slamming it against my face!

But not all teachers were bad. Some teachers were very good, very honest, and did their jobs well, teaching even when they were sick and advising students on life issues. The teachers controlled the whole school and they could do whatever they wanted.

Despite the physical punishment and the attitude of some teachers, I enjoyed going to school. My mother never had to wake me up for school. My favourite subject was geography. I was successful in my studies in spite of the relationships I had with some of my teachers. I only missed about two months of school when the war directly affected the city of Mogadishu. Before Canada, my dream was to attend university and help Somali kids by possibly becoming a teacher.



© Abdurrahman Warsameh/International Relations and Security Network. May 12, 2008. Students at Al-Khaliil Primary School, Mogadishu. Despite the shelling and pitched battles in the Somali capital, teachers, parents, and students are willing to risk life and limb for an education. CC Licence. <www.lurvely.com/index.php?id=2492041906>.



© M.Sheikh Nor/UNHCR. May 11, 2010. A Somali woman carries her belongings as she flees to safety in Mogadishu. <www.unhcr.org/4be9651c6.html>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Civil War and Conflict

Somalia achieved independence from Italy in 1960 and merged with the British protectorate of Somaliland to form the modern Somali Republic. Dissatisfaction with Barre's totalitarian regime in the 1980s led to the outbreak of the civil war in 1991 and overthrow of Barre's regime later that year. From this point on, Somalia became a divided nation with different groups and militias, competing for power. Since 1991, conflict and instability has continued in Somalia and the civil war has gone through three distinct phases.

United Nations intervention (1992–1995): The combined effects of the civil war and extreme drought conditions created a massive humanitarian crisis in Somalia. Early in 1992, estimates suggested that over half of the Somali population of 4.5 million people, were in severe danger of starvation and malnutrition-related disease. This resulted in the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) intervening in 1992 by sending forces to support humanitarian aid. Later, a United States led multinational Unified Task Force (UNITAF) was dispatched to ensure the protection of the relief efforts. The UN forces were withdrawn in March of 1995 as a result of opposition from several of the competing militias.

Steps Towards a National Government and Ethiopian Intervention (2000–2009): The early 2000s saw the first steps towards the establishment of national administration and government. These resulted in the creation of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004. However, by 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), an Islamist coalition of militias, assumed control of much of the southern part of Somalia. The TFG fought to re-establish control over the territory with support from Ethiopian troops, African Union peacekeepers, and the United States of America. By the end of 2007, it had managed to drive out the rival ICU and resume its control over most of the country. However, some of the more radical elements of the ICU, including Al-Shabaab, regrouped to continue their fight against the TFG and the presence of Ethiopian military in Somalia. From 2007 to 2008, Al-Shabaab managed to again control many areas of central and southern Somalia. By 2008, the TFG together with several rebel groups agreed to a truce and formed a coalition government.

Southern Somalia and Al-Shabaab (2009–present): Presently, the war is concentrated in the south. This phase of the civil war started in early 2009 with fighting between The Federal Government of Somalia (with the support of African Union peacekeeping troops) and the forces of various militant Islamist factions led by Al-Shabaab. This phase of the war saw the continued presence of Ethiopian troops and the involvement of Kenya in support of TFG. The violence has displaced thousands of people in the southern part of the country.

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Civil War

War changed my life. In times of war you don't worry about going to school. I witnessed many bloody days in Somalia that made me forget about school. Three of my brothers were persecuted and killed by Ethiopian soldiers. My father was put into jail, where he suffered a stroke due to the stress of the situation and lack of medical attention. He is a diabetic and has high blood pressure. As a result my father is now paralyzed from the stroke, unable to use one hand and one leg. I was also jailed at the age of 15 for three months.

In 2006, the nature of the war in Somali changed. It went from a being a civil war to a regional war that involved nearby countries and other international forces. It became a kind of global war. The Islamists militia (Al-Shabaab) began to take over the country and Mogadishu during this time. The United States got involved and supported those fighting the Militia. They sent East African troops into Somali to defeat the terrorists in Somalia and nearby region.

The situation was desperate during this time; 1.5 to 2 million people were killed. Everything broke down. There wasn't any police or military, no functioning government, no government schools, everything was

“You Don’t Know Who To Blame”

War Crimes in Somalia

“Civilians have borne the brunt of the fighting between the many parties to the Somali conflict: the TFG, al-Shabaab, AMISOM, the Ethiopian-supported pro-TFG militias Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama’a and Ras Kamboni, and Kenyan-supported militias. There have been serious violations of international humanitarian law (the laws of war) by the parties to the conflict, including indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas and infrastructure, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and summary killings.

Somalis fleeing from al-Shabaab-controlled areas reported widespread human rights abuses. Al-Shabaab continues to carry out public beheadings and floggings; forcibly recruits both adults and children into its forces; imposes onerous regulations on nearly every aspect of human behaviour and social life, and deprives inhabitants under its rule of badly needed humanitarian assistance, including food and water.

The population in areas controlled by the Transitional Federal Government and its allies has also been subjected to violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. These include arbitrary arrest and detention, restrictions on free speech and assembly, and indiscriminate attacks harming civilians.

Somalis seeking safety in Kenya contend with police harassment, arbitrary arrests, and deportation back to Somalia. Somali refugees en route to the sprawling complex of refugee camps at Dadaab, Kenya, take hazardous back roads to avoid the Kenyan police and the official border post that until recently remained closed. They are then at the mercy of well-organized networks of bandits who engage in robbery and rape.”

From: Human Rights Watch, “You Don’t Know Who to Blame,” 14 August 2011, <www.hrw.org/reports/2011/08/14/you-don-t-know-who-blame>.

private. The health care was so bad that if you had money and any type of significant health issue, you had to go out of the country to get the necessary care.

Things changed again in Somalia and another situation arose. Allies of the Somali Government intervened and 30,000 to 40,000 soldiers with tanks occupied the country. They were targeting the rebel

militia. The militia was not an army, it was civilian. They didn’t have a particular dress or military numbers. The militias did what El Qaida did. They bombed and they fought. It was very difficult for the soldiers to find the militias because they fought at night, wore civilian clothes and covered their faces. In the morning the soldiers would spread out in the district looking for young men who could be involved with the militia.



© S. Abdulle /UNHCR. February 9, 2009. Displacement in Somalia. Recent fighting in Mogadishu has sent thousands fleeing the capital for Lafole, where they set up a makeshift encampment near the 100-bed maternity hospital run by Dr. Howo Abdi. Dr. Abdi said that she had not seen such crowds since 1991 when the civil war toppled dictator Mohamed Siad Barre. Conditions at the encampment are rough with several people sick from dysentery. Here, IDPs haul water to their new temporary home. <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/3214421359>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Somalis in Nairobi

Kenya and its capital city, Nairobi, hosts many Somali refugees and immigrants. Eastleigh district of Nairobi is inhabited primarily by Somalis. In the commercial sector of the district, many businesses are owned by the Somalis.

Kenyan Security Forces from time to time will carry out operations to identify and arrest Somali refugees without legal documents. In the last few years, the declaration of war by the Somali al-Shabaab militant group has heightened tensions and placed the Somali community in Kenya under greater scrutiny.

Source: *Somali Refugees in Eastleigh, Nairobi* by Manuel Herz, Published in: Instant Cities, (Ed.: Herbert Wright), Black Dog Publishing, 2008.



© Dan Kori. Somalis in Nairobi: Garissa Market, Eastleigh. CC License. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/d_kori/8180074675/>.

On one such morning raid, five male members of my family, including me, were captured by the Ethiopian soldiers. I was 15 years old at the time and I was the youngest of the group. I was taken to a Somali troop station.

We were separated. My three brothers were taken to the Ethiopian camp. My father was taken to the biggest Somali station. Each of us was unaware of where the others were. Those taken by Ethiopian soldiers were usually killed, tortured, or persecuted. One day the Ethiopian soldiers were attacked by the militia. Several Ethiopian soldiers died. As retaliation, the Ethiopian soldiers murdered all the prisoners inside their station. My three brothers were part of the group who were murdered on October 10, 2007. They were not involved in the militia. Beyond my immediate family, there were many more of my relatives who lost their lives.

I was freed thanks to the actions of my mother who paid \$100 for my release, which she collected from our relatives. My father was also eventually released because he had had a stroke and the soldiers didn't want to look after him. While in jail, I was sometimes interviewed by the soldiers. They wanted to get information about the militia from me but I didn't know anything. After I was released in the beginning of October, 2007, my family and I decided that I had to leave Somalia. I did so on October 15, 2007, just four days before my 16th birthday!

I was sent by my family to Kenya for my safety, but I had to travel alone.

I traveled from Mogadishu to the Kenyan border through southern Somalia. It was a difficult land to travel through. I didn't need to hide but, when I got to the Kenyan border, it was very risky. The soldiers make sure that they see you.

My path took me through Somali communities and villages on both sides of the border, as North East Kenya is called the Somali region because there are so many Somali people there.

I managed to cross from Somalia to Kenya safely, but I couldn't stay in that part of Kenya. I had to get to Nairobi. In Kenya I travelled by car at night, not often during daylight for safety reasons. I didn't have papers. So I had to hide and I couldn't go into a refugee camp. It was full of risk.

I stayed with my father's friend in Nairobi for a month. I felt like I had lost my freedom during this time. I was always hiding. I couldn't walk down the street at night because it was too risky. I could not take the chance of soldiers stopping and questioning me. I didn't have papers and I didn't have money to bribe the soldiers, if necessary. There was always the fear that I would be put in jail, possibly tortured, and called a terrorist. I stayed inside most of the time and during the day I was helped by my father's friend to complete documentation to immigrate to Canada.

I couldn't go to school during this time period. My memories of this period in my life are all bad. Kenyan people were nice but the Kenyan soldiers were not. They were too rude to strangers. They tortured and raped women even during the present day.

Immigration to Canada

I was in Nairobi just before coming to Canada. I lived with my father's friend. I really didn't know anything specific about Canada. I just knew that it was a country that is safer than Somalia and Kenya. I knew that in Canada there was a chance for a better life and that I could build a future there, and that I could then help my family. In Canada I could build a new life.

I wanted to "open that window" that going to Canada allowed me to do. That was the image that I had. It also included the United States. I chose to come to Canada because my father's friend "sponsored" me as if I was his son. I travelled with my father's friend as far as Toronto but then I went on to Winnipeg. I did so because my father's friend thought it would be safer for me in Winnipeg

and I was not likely to have problems with the immigration people. My father's friend said that in Winnipeg I would get my immigration papers faster. My father, mother, and two sisters were forced to remain behind. They couldn't get out because it was too risky to travel by foot, by car or truck. The only way they could get out of Somalia was by airplane, but there was no money for them to do so, and I was not able to help them. But even then, it would have been very risky for them.

When I arrived in Canada, the only person I knew and my only friend was my sponsor, my father's friend in Toronto.

Starting a New Life in Canada

I was 16 years old when I immigrated to Canada. I arrived in Winnipeg on December 12, 2007, and so my first impression of Canada is that it is a very cold place. The snow was piled up high in hills. I was not expecting hills of snow and wondered how the snow became hills. There was a lot of snow that winter. There was a 40 degree difference between the temperature in Winnipeg and Kenya and Somalia. I was not dressed for the weather.

Since I came to Canada under "different" circumstances, when I arrived in Winnipeg, my first step was to approach the local Somali community for help. The president of the community at that time took me to Welcome Place. Welcome Place gave me a place to live, food, and

sent me to Family Services. They also assigned me a legal guardian who was a counsellor at Welcome Place. She helped me with my finances, gave me advice, and took me to social events. She helped me a lot and she helped fill the empty spot that was created when I left my family in Somalia.

I am very thankful for the help I received from Welcome Place. I met my friend Mada, who is also Somali and had also worked at Welcome Place. Mada helped me a lot too. He shared his room with me, until he moved out a few months later after he got married.

Now that I have been here for a while, the thing I like best about being in Canada is that I feel safe right now.



© J.Ndua/UNHCR. June 11, 2007. Members of the popular Waayaha Cusub band outside the video rental business that they run in Nairobi's Eastleigh district to raise funds for their operating costs. <www.unhcr.org/466d68fa4.html>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Back to School in the World's Largest Refugee Camp

The new academic year got under way in September 2011 in the world's largest refugee camp complex, with some 43,000 Somali children turning up for classes at Dadaab in north-east Kenya.

Education in Dadaab is a luxury denied to most of the children who live there. Set up at the outset of Somalia's civil war in 1991 to accommodate 90,000 refugees, three camps near the northeastern Kenyan town of Dadaab—Hagadera, Ifo, and Dagahaley—are now home to more than 5 times that number, and persistent conflict in Somalia, from where 95 percent of the refugees originate, means the population grows daily. In 2012, the refugee population there was close to 470,000.

Some, particularly those who have arrived in the last three months, are going to school for the first time. But enrolment rates among the estimated 156,000 children of school age are relatively low in Dadaab's camps, which have 19 primary schools and 6 secondary schools. In addition, there are 11 private, fee-paying primary and six secondary schools.

According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the primary school attendance rate is 43 percent while in secondary schools the rate is just 12 percent.



© S. Perham/UNHCR. September 2011. First day of school for Somali refugees at the new Ifo 2 Primary School in Dadaab, Kenya. <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/6119723672/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

I like the diversity that I see in the population. I like living with different people. In Somalia everyone knows everyone. If you go from one corner to another corner everyone welcomes you and treats you like family. Someone will know your uncle or dad by name in other parts of the country. I could connect with people I met because they were somehow connected to a relative. In Somalia everyone is Somali. It's like they are one big tribe. This makes them too close. But here in Winnipeg living among different people and from different communities, everyone is very happy to be with others. They are very helpful, and very welcoming. They are all very happy to be here. Canada is a good place to be.

But there are some things that I do not like about living in Winnipeg and Canada. These are the weather and the geographic location (I miss swimming in the Indian Ocean a couple of times a week), and the loneliness. I miss my family greatly. I have friends who help me, but not as much as I sometimes need and they can't replace my family. It's not the same. It is not good to live alone, and have all these memories of my parents and sisters and missing them all the time.

I am pleased that I have been able to give something back to the Somali community in Winnipeg. At one point I was invited to share an apartment with a young man who also was a refugee and was here by himself, and a third person, Ali, a Somali. It was Ali who introduced me to the Winnipeg Somali

Youth organization. Ali is no longer involved with the organization, but I am. I have been given the responsibility of being the organizer/coordinator for the organization. Ali also introduced me to the community and the soccer team. The relationship with Ali has proved to be very good for me. I easily made many good friends through the organization.

I am one of the founders of the Winnipeg Somali Youth League and I got involved in sports, particularly soccer through the organization. This involvement helped me to build confidence, to develop many good friendships, and it has made me happy. I volunteer in the community and help Somali youth stay in the school by encouraging them to continue their education and helping them recognize the importance of education over money. We also do a lot of fundraising through bingos and social events.

My adjustment to living in Canada was helped a lot by my involvement in the Somali community, being supported by Welcome Place, playing soccer, and the moral support I receive from my family from their twice monthly phone calls. Also, I have had a fairly stable home. I didn't move a lot, because I don't like moving!

I was very scared when I first came to Canada. But the Somali people are very strong. I was advised when I left Somalia to be careful and to try not to lose my identity. However, when I came to Canada I realized that people respect my culture and that I can live freely as a Somali Canadian. When I went to court for my immigration hearing to obtain permanent resident status, I found that I was more than welcome here. The immigration officer told me that he knows that Somalia is going through a dark period at this time. He recognized that there were few opportunities for me. There was

no place for me in Somalia. The officer recognized that I, Bandiri, was seeking a chance for a life and he told me that I was more than welcome to stay here in Canada. The immigration officer talked to the school that I was attending and he asked questions about my life. As a result I was given permanent resident status. And now, at the time of the interview, I am preparing for my Canadian citizenship test, which will test my knowledge of the history of Canada and my competency in English, among other things.

School in Canada

I attended a junior/senior high school in the southwestern part of the city of Winnipeg. I call it the star school. I had just arrived and was 16 at the time. I was first placed in Grade 9. Initially my timetable included some junior high subjects, Grade 9 Math, Physical Education, and EAL classes. In second semester I had some Grade 9 and Grade 10 courses. I was placed partly in regular programming and partly in EAL. Three out of five classes I attended were in the EAL program which involved English, math, and social studies, so this was approximately 60% of my day.

The EAL program had an EAL teacher and an educational assistant (EA). There were approximately 12 students in the program but the class numbers would fluctuate throughout the year. The EAL teacher and the EA helped a lot. They did more than teach the contents of the textbooks. They would help in many other ways. They helped me deal with Family Services; they helped with my family situation; they encouraged me to study; they worked hard to develop a relationship with each student; they encouraged us to talk about our feelings; they worked hard at building their

students' hope and encouraged us to think and dream about our futures.

This was quite different from my experiences with teachers when I attended school in Somalia. In Somalia, there wasn't any discussion of personal feelings or family matters. There was a distance between the teachers and the students. It was all about discipline.



Keinan Abdi Warsame (also known as **K'naan**) is a Somali Canadian poet, rapper, singer, songwriter, and instrumentalist. One of his biggest hits and one that gained him a world presence was his single "Wavin' Flag," which was chosen as Coca-Cola's promotional anthem for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Besides hip-hop, K'naan's sound is influenced by elements of Somali and world music. He is also involved in various philanthropic initiatives, including WE Day.

© David Shankbone/Wikimedia Commons. April 22, 2010. K'naan at Tribeca Film Festival 2010. Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic License. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K'naan>>.

In my school in Winnipeg, the EAL teacher and EA invited the students to their homes and encouraged the students to be close to them. They were more than just teachers. They used to bring their own children to school to talk with the EAL students about attending university, and the way of life in Canada. The EAL teacher and EA were able to help me learn and to adjust to the school.

The “regular” teachers were very helpful as well. They would ask me about my life before coming to Canada. They offered help and asked me how they could help me. They had a great deal of respect for me. Eventually, I became very well-known in the school. The teachers were very pleased to have me as a student. I was voted the most valuable player for soccer by the teachers.

While going to school, I had to work. I worked three nights a week from 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. on Thursday to Saturday. I used to go to school every day at 8:00 a.m. but my attendance became erratic. But the teachers let me be because I would always do my homework even if I handed it in late. They understood that I needed to work and so they were lenient with me, because they could see that I was trying very hard. But, there was one teacher who scared me. This was the Grade 10 Pre-Calculus Math teacher who was always quite serious. But, she allowed me to hand in assignments late because she knew that I was trying. She also gave all the EAL students more time on exams.

The school program and all the support I received really met most of my needs. However, I believe that more EAs are needed in the regular classes to support EAL students.

During the first two years at the school, I found it difficult to get to know the regular (non-EAL) students. By the third year, it was much easier and I had many friends among the regular students. I met some of them through playing soccer and others in my non-EAL classes. They discovered that I was very friendly and I had friends who came from many backgrounds, not just Somali.

I graduated from high school in June 2011, four years after I arrived. I liked being in school in Canada because I believe that education is the passport to the future. And, I know that I have to prepare for that future today. I want to get that passport!

Life Today and Hopes for the Future

My family was finally able to leave Somalia and they are now living in Kampala, Uganda since March 2010. I have started the process of sponsoring them to Canada. In the meantime, I send \$300-\$400 a month to help support them. I am excited about being reunited with them soon. This will mean a lot to me.



© Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba Inc. (IRCOM), Jim Agapito and Ervin Chartrand. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Life from 95

Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba Inc. (IRCOM) is located at 95 Ellen Street in downtown Winnipeg. It is a transitional housing complex that is the first home in Canada for many newly arrived refugees and immigrants. In addition to housing, IRCOM delivers social and recreation programs.

On average, 300 people live at IRCOM of which more than 50% are under the age of 18, thus youth programming is an important part of the services provided. IRCOM's youth program through the Winnipeg Arts Council's *With Art Program* was able to

provide youth with a video-making project that explores their experiences and features their voices in navigating in their new environment and the challenges they face. Artists, Jim Agapito and Ervin Chartrand, worked with the IRCOM youth over an extended period and a project emerged that reflected an artistic style and content that was relevant to the youth. Wab Kinew and Dammecia Hall joined the filmmakers (mentoring the youth in hip hop music and dance) as well as other artists to create a high quality rap video and documentary of the process. IRCOM youth decided what they wanted to say and in what way, making their video unique and personal, as well as an often universal expression of life in a new land.

The youth of IRCOM who wrote the music and performed in the films were: Azim Bekhodjavea, Takatel (T.K.) Dayasa, Dagmawit Fekede, Mandela Garang, Mohamed (M.D.) Mohamed, Musa (D.P.) Mohamed, Daniel Ogbagirgis, Biniom Tesfaldet, and Jamshaid Wahabi.

Live from 95 video: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3amrAKEpwol>>

Life from 95 Documentary Part 1: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6op3KQMjW0>>

Life from 95 Part 2: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sv1qQaPBA3w>>



Shadya Yasin is a teacher who was born around 1984 in Somalia. She later lived in Tanzania and Kenya, before emigrating to Canada in 1998 while in her teens. She is presently working toward a Masters in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Yasin is an active community member and, since 2008, she has been the network coordinator for the York Youth Coalition, in Toronto. She has recently been named as one of the People to Watch by the Toronto Star. <www.thestar.com/news/gta/2012/12/30/people_to_watch_shadya_yasin.html>.

© Awesome Mohamed/Wikimedia Commons. September 20, 2011. Somali social activist Shadya Yasin. CC License. <<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shadyasin1.jpg>>.

Presently, I have taken some time off from my studies. I did this because I have to prepare and to look at my situation. I need to consider my family, scholarships and loans available, and how to start university in the best way. This is my preparation year.

I have found work at the university that I plan to attend and I am getting to know the layout of the university, where the classes are held, and who the professors are. My friend Mada has helped me find information about various financial resources to help me attend university. I am planning to apply for Opportunity Funding. I am interested in studying international development and conflict resolution. I hope to finish as soon as I can in completing a double major degree. When I begin my university program, during the summer months I would like to work with one of the United Nation agencies that work with the refugee people of the world, and especially the children in East Africa. I want to help these children.

My hopes for the future are good. I am mostly satisfied with my life and experiences in Canada and my prospects for the future. Canada is the only option that I have to help myself, my family today, and my family in the future. Living in Canada has given me the chance to get an education, and the government helps us do so. But I recognize that by being given this opportunity, it is important that I give something back to Canada and Canadians. I hope to do this by being active, participating in the Somali-Canadian community, and the Canadian community at large. I just want to thank all the people who have helped me and others like me.



© University of Winnipeg. Muuxi Adam. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Muuxi Adam is a former economics student at the University of Winnipeg and one of University's first Opportunity Fund students. In 2012, he was a recipient of the Annual Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award. Muuxi arrived in Winnipeg in 2004 as a teenage refugee from Somalia, struggling to overcome the effects of working 16-hour days without pay in a garage fixing cars. Since his arrival in Winnipeg, he has been dedicated to helping other refugees. At one point, he was employed as the After School Program Coordinator at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba. Currently, he is the Newcomer Community Development Coordinator for Aurora Family Therapy Centre. A few years ago Muuxi helped to found Humankind International which, in the spring of 2014, opened a new pre-school in Dagahaley Camp.



© D. Mwancha/UNHCR. Somali children at the pre-school in Dagahaley Humankind International. <www.unhcr.org/5321ae6a9.html>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

He is a community leader who is passionate about working with youth and their families and is also a filmmaker who produced "Ray of Hope" an inspiring documentary of courage and luck. "Ray of Hope is a positive and hopeful film that uses stories to go beyond the borders of ethnicity and age to address those issues we hold in common— family, personal dignity, and community responsibility." said the National Film Board of Canada's Joe MacDonald, who acted as a mentor on the film. See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Rb-lwi5Utg>> for a video on Muuxi's work with IRCOM.

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VIDEO RESOURCES

See [Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences](#).

The Conflict in Somalia

Somalia Refugees by Journeyman Pictures is a documentary covering the history of the conflict since 1991 and the challenges that Somalians face in surviving in such trying conditions.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOdFq69itQ4>

Somalia: caught in the war of Mogadishu and *War in Mogadishu* by FRANCE 24 English, are two videos that provide information about the conflict in southern Somali in the 2009–2010 period.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUO4Pe9503Q>
www.youtube.com/watch?v=7y_tFQ6kOVY

This is Somalia by International Rescue Committee: “The International Rescue Committee’s Peter Biro reports on the crisis in Somalia, a country devastated by conflict and the worst drought in 60 years. As a result of the violence, hundreds of thousands of people are displaced inside Somalia with little access to humanitarian aid. Learn how the IRC is helping uprooted families survive.”
www.rescue.org/video/somalia

Conflict in Somalia: a young member of the militia by BBC Learning Zone: “A report following a young boy, Muktar, who is a member of a militia group in the Somali capital.”
www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/conflict-in-somalia-a-young-member-of-the-militia/3227.html

Somalian Refugees and Experiences

Somali Refugees in Kenya—Hawa’s Story by MSF South Africa: “Hawa, a young Somali woman who has fled the civil war, talks about the violence she has escaped and the realities of her life as a refugee.”
www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNylg4_-Tw

Somali Refugees: Camps in Crisis by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): “UNHCR faces a major challenge in finding solutions for newly arrived Somalia refugees in Kenya.”
<http://unhcr.org/v-49be1e262>

Somalian Diaspora

Mustafa Ahmed 12 Spoken Word Artist Somali Toronto Canada by M.J.G is a moving and thought-provoking video of a performance of a young Somalian Canadian artist.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qCc8CppZbg

Integration TV—Episode 2: Somali-Canadian Community and Education by INTEGRATIONTV, is a City TV programme focusing on the Somalian Canadian Community. This programme focuses on education including an initiative by the Toronto District School Board to help Somalian students succeed that became controversial.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFHKVU9X9jc>

Canadian Somalis in Alberta Parts 1–3 by Global TV is a series that looks at violence in the Somalian community in Alberta.

Part 1:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=L16j1sckC-Y

Part 2:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=2owKOYEXtKg

Part 3:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HGLpd2bJss

Civil War Kids: Young Somalis in Minnesota by MPRdotOrg: “This is a glimpse into the stories of young Somalis confronting violence in their new communities, struggling with the psychological scars that the bloodshed in their homeland left behind and building stronger relationships in the process.”
www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3r6DmYlp2o

A series of videos about the Somalian-Canadian artist, K’naan

- *Somali Success Story* by garoowe74
www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQiro2luFjQ
- *Shameless Idealists—K’naan* by freethechildrenintl
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wm0ILGsozBY
- *K’naan explains how Islam shaped his giving* by The Globe and Mail
www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LRs_14HNxl
- *K’naan—Wavin’ Flag (Coca-Cola Celebration Mix)* by Knaan VEVO
www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTJSt4wP2ME
- *Knaan Goes Back To Somalia* by CEO CidPro Tv
www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wqXsLzoFgQ

FAVOR* (DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO)

“Right now in Africa, people are not in peace.”

See Angelica’s Refugee Learner Narrative for another perspective and additional information on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Life before Canada

Birthplace and Family

Losáko, Hello. My name is Favor. This is my story of how I came to live in Canada and my hopes for the future. I was born on April 13, 1993, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), but before coming to Canada I lived in Uganda.

I belong to the Barega cultural group. My family spoke French, Swahili, and Lingala. I am the youngest of my family that consists of eight children and my two parents. The two eldest siblings and one other younger sibling are boys. The other four siblings are girls. My father worked for the government and my mother was a pharmacist.

At first, in the Congo we had a good life. We were living then in a city in a big beautiful house surrounded by gates. We had servants and I remember that my sister used to go to school in a car. And then things changed; my mother was killed.

* To protect the participant’s privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this narrative.



Map No. 4007 Rev. 10 UNITED NATIONS
July 2011

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section

© United Nations/Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section. Map No. 4007 Rev. 10. July 2011. Map of Democratic Republic of the Congo. CC License. <www.un.org/depts/Cartographic/map/profile/drcongo.pdf>.

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

War and Conflict

The modern history of the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly known as Zaire) has largely been one of conflict and misgovernment. Immediately after obtaining independence in 1960, the country faced an army mutiny and an attempt at secession by the mineral-rich province of Katanga.

In 1965, Mobutu, an ethnic Nebandi, was able to seize power. He renamed the country Zaire and himself Mobutu Sese Seko. Mobutu enjoyed American support during the Cold War, but his authoritarian regime and mismanagement led to the First Congo War and his overthrow in 1997.

The Rwandan Genocide was a prime factor leading to The First Congo War. In 1997, Rwanda invaded its neighbour Zaire in pursuit of extremist Hutu militias that were threatening the new Tutsi dominated government of Rwanda and refugees who had fled to Zaire. The invasion was a boost to anti-Mobutu rebels in Zaire. They soon won, installed Laurent Kabila as president, and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Peace did not last. Barely one year later, the Second Congo War (also known as the Great War of Africa) began in August 1998. Discord between President Kabila and his former allies resulted in a new rebellion and war. Rwanda and Uganda backed the rebels, while Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe supported Kabila.

The Second Congo War officially ended in July 2003 when the Transitional Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo took power. The Second Congo War was the deadliest war in modern African history and the deadliest since World War II. The war directly involved eight African nations and 25 different armed groups. It is estimated that by 2008, the war resulted in the death of 5.4 million people, mostly from disease and starvation. In addition, millions of people were internally displaced or had to seek asylum in neighbouring countries.

Despite a formal end to the war in July 2003 and a government of national unity, conflict and violence continues. Today the significant centres of conflict are

- Equateur with Enyele rebels
- North and South Kivu with Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels and RDC-Goma rebels
- Ituri, with numerous militia and groups
- Northern Katanga, with Mai-Mai (created by Laurent Kabila)

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Time, The Deadliest War in the World. <www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1198921,00.html>.

As I said, my Father worked for the government and although he thought certain people were his friends, they were actually planning to kill the entire family. My parents attended a dinner party at a family friend's and, after they returned from the party, my mother got very sick. It soon became obvious that my mother was poisoned and a few days later she died. My father continued to work and tried to be both father and mother to us children. But, he was quite stressed by the circumstances and was very unhappy because he was missing his wife, my mother. Soon, his health began to suffer and he had a heart attack.

I remember the day I last saw my father. That day I begged my father not to go to work because I hadn't seen him for a week. I wanted to spend time with him. I wanted to go to a park and relax with him. However, my father said that he had to go to work. He gave me some money and told me that he would be back by 4:00. He told me to stay with my auntie (our maid/nanny). He kissed me on my forehead. That was the last time I saw my father alive. He was shot in his car that very day. I am pleased we were able to bury my father in a good place and we were able to give him a good burial and follow all the burial rites of our religion.

My father was a good man and looked after us even in his death. His best friend was a lawyer and, possibly because he knew that he could die at any time, my father had directed his friend to protect

and look after us, his children. After a few weeks the lawyer friend came to the house and told us that we were in danger and had to move. That is when we moved to Uganda, leaving behind many of our possessions. I was six by then.

Even though we did not live in a refugee camp, I and my brothers and sisters did not find peace in Kampala, Uganda. Kampala is Uganda's biggest city and its capital. The people who had murdered my parents followed us to Uganda and wanted to kill us. We continuously heard gun shots while we were sleeping. Our lawyer friend tried to get protection for us from the Canadian Embassy. At that time, we were in school, but we could not get protection, so it was very dangerous for us to go to school. I was having trouble seeing well and I needed eye surgery. I couldn't read and I felt then that my sight problems were caused by all the stress in our lives. Our lawyer kept returning to the Canadian Embassy, telling them about our story and our difficulties. Eventually we were taken to the Red Cross. In the end, my siblings and I lived in Kampala, Uganda for 10 years. During that entire period we never felt safe; we were never at peace.

The lawyer friend helped us a lot. He made sure that we had enough money to eat. However, we were not protected and thus we didn't have any peace. Even if you have everything that you have, even if you are living in a nice house, without peace it is nothing. When you are asleep at night and then you hear banging outside, you hear things that don't make any sense to you. That is what has been going on for so long in our lives. Right now in Africa, people are not in peace. There are some places in Africa where people are crying because they need something to drink because of politics; they aren't getting what they need. Children are

suffering. Children need school. But, they are not going to school. They are just wandering around on the streets. The situation is all due to politics.

My best memories of my life in Africa are connected to my relationship with my father. I miss him greatly. He was my best friend. We used to go out together and sit in the house and talk. He was very open with all his children.

He wanted the best for his kids. I often wonder why my dad was taken from me. Now, when I hear my friends talk about their fathers and what they are doing, I think how lucky they are to have their fathers. I often cry for him.

School in Uganda

In Kampala, I attended school on an irregular basis from Grade 1 to Grade 9 because of being in constant danger. The language of instruction in the school was English. There were approximately 60 students in a class. The school was co-ed and the students rotated from class to class. It was a large school with many different teachers. The school day is long in Uganda. When I was younger, I attended school from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and then later from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. This included three breaks.

In junior high, there were four required subjects: science, math, English, and social studies. In senior high, other subjects such as biology and chemistry were added. Generally, all the subjects that are studied in Canada were also offered in the Ugandan school I attended. The school year was broken into three semesters, with the biggest vacation period in the third semester.



© J. Akena/UNHCR. November 2008. Refuge in Uganda. Over 4,000 Congolese refugees have entered Uganda through Ishasha since the beginning of November 2008 as part of an influx of over 13,000 from DRC into Uganda. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/3196320045/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



© UNHCR. February 24, 2012. Solar lamps brighten future for refugee students in Uganda. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/6779107620/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



© F. Noy/UNHCR. November 2, 2012. Congolese refugee children attend catch-up classes in Rwanda. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/8181597197/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

My sister and I would go to school on a public bus. I enjoyed going to school, but because of the cataracts in my eyes, I couldn't see well. That is why I fell behind in school. My favourite subjects were social studies and English.

Immigration to Canada

By the time I was 16, I was still living in Kampala, Uganda with all my brothers and sisters. Because I am the youngest, they looked after me and raised me. Sadly in 2009, our house in Kampala was burned down.

Because of our difficult situation in Uganda, we had to seek safety in another country. We had no choice but to go to the Canadian Embassy for help.



© Denis Jacquerye/Wikimedia Commons. December 31, 2004. Map of the major languages of the Democratic Republic of Congo. CC License. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_the_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo>.

Eventually, we were accepted and we got the papers to come to Canada.

I was happy to come to Canada, but I did have some mixed feelings leaving Africa, because I also wished that my father could be with us. I had heard that Canada was a very nice place, a very safe and protected place. I understood that we would live in peace there, that no one and nothing would disturb us, and nothing would come our way that would disturb our peace.

All of us left Uganda, but not all immigrated to the same country. We were separated. This was not our choice. We were told that in order to get us all out safely, we had to go to different countries. This was a government decision. I came to Canada with three of my sisters and one brother. Another brother and sister went to Norway and the remaining brother went to Italy. When we arrived in Canada we were able to contact some acquaintances from Uganda when we realized that they were also living in Winnipeg.

My dream was to become an international journalist, a lawyer, or social worker. I want to do something that will be of help to my country and my people. I promised my dad that someday I would go back home to Congo and work from there. It bothers me that people are suffering. I don't mind that I personally suffer, but it bothers me greatly to see Congolese or other Africans suffer.



© E. Denholm/UNHCR. December 2007. A boy plays with a football in front of an abandoned hut, Oyam refugee camp, Uganda. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/4426889972/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Starting a New Life in Canada

I was 16 years old when I left Kampala and immigrated with my brother and sisters to Canada. We arrived in Winnipeg in September and I found it to be very cold, even though it was not winter yet. We were met by a settlement counsellor from Welcome Place. At first, we lived in transition

housing at Welcome Place but then we moved to East Kildonan. I kind of have two homes in Winnipeg. Monday through Friday during school days, I live with my eldest sister, her husband and their four children, my brother, and one other sister. But on the weekends, I live with a sister who lives alone downtown.

I think Canada is a very nice place, you can get what you want, and I feel safe and protected. My first impression of Canada was that it was a rich country and that I could “find money on the ground.” However, I know that if you want money you will have to work for it.

What I like best about living in Canada is the laws and that I usually feel safe and protected here, although that changed a bit when I was robbed at knife point. That was really disappointing. I also like the fact that I have the right to go to school and that I do not have to pay fees until entering university. I think education is important and I am glad that young children have to attend school. I am also pleased that I was finally able to get the eye surgery I needed. My cataracts were removed just a few months after our arrival in Winnipeg.

Our adjustment to our new home and life in Winnipeg was fairly easy. I made friends easily with many students from different backgrounds in my new school. I am still sad that our move to Canada splintered our family. I think it has been the same for my family. My brother and sisters have not expressed any difficulty adjusting to Canada. My relationships with all my family members are good. I don't feel that I experienced any emotional or health problems related to the effects of my having to flee the Congo and being a refugee. I really have not had any problems since immigrating to Canada.

The senior high school I attended in Winnipeg is very large. At first I was placed in a Grade 10 classroom. It was a bit of a challenge. While it did not require a lot to adjust, it wasn't easy either. Even though I had been schooled in English in Uganda, I still found English to be a challenge. The English used in school is different from what I was used to in Uganda. The EAL teachers at my school really helped me adjust to the school and living in

Canada. They were there for me in so many ways during the school year. They were the best things that ever walked into my life. I believe that they really helped me become the person I am today. Sometimes I found it difficult to understand what was being said. But I worked hard and if I found something to be too hard, I would ask for help. I think that the difficulty I had with Canadian English was due to differences in accents and vocabulary. In my experience, all the teachers were very nice and helpful. My teachers usually gave me work that I could understand. If I had problems understanding the material, my teachers worked with me and helped me understand. EAL students like me, were given more time for completing assignments. When we needed more help, the teachers would make time to meet with us outside of the classroom. If the subject area (classroom) teachers were very busy, then I would go to my EAL teachers to get help with the assignments.



© Newcomer Youth Educational Support Services (NYESS)/Karen Koroma. Summer Program for Refugee and Immigrant Youth 2014. Young children participating in a sport activity in the summer youth program organized by Newcomer Youth Educational Support Services (NYESS). The coalition provides hundreds of newcomer children with opportunities to continue to develop community in a healthy and active environment. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Congolese actress **Rachel Mwanza** (born in 1997). Her performance in the Canadian film *War Witch* (*Rebelle*) garnered her awards for Best Actress from the Berlin Film Festival, the Tribeca Film Festival and the Vancouver Film Critics Circle in 2012, as well as the award for Best Actress at the 1st Canadian Screen Awards. In the film by Montreal director Kim Nguyen, Rachel plays Komona, a 12-year-old girl who is abducted from her home and forced to become a child soldier: an experience shared by so many children in Africa and in other parts of the world where there has been war and conflict.

Rachel was abandoned by her parents as a child and spent several years living as a street child in Kinshasa before being cast in *Rebelle*. Due to her lack of education, she was illiterate when she was first cast in the film; however, the filmmakers made arrangements to pay for her education and housing until she turned 18. Rachel Mwanza is now living in Montreal with the line producer of the film Anne-Marie-Gélinas. She is doing well and is presently attending school. She is looking forward to completing a high school diploma.

© Item (7). 2012. <www.rebelle-lefilm.ca/english/>. Montreal, QC: Item (7). Used with permission. All rights reserved.



At first I was placed in the EAL class full time for the first few months because of my problems with my eye sight. Once I had the surgery and my eyesight improved, I was placed in regular classes. But I always felt comfortable returning to the EAL teacher for help when I felt it was necessary.

The most difficult part of school was the Grade 11 Math course. The teacher would give us examples without providing an explanation or working through the examples. She directed the students who asked for help to check the examples she had provided. As an EAL student, I was uncomfortable asking a question in front of so many students, but I did not feel that the teacher welcomed questions or was approachable. As a result, I struggled and failed the course and had to repeat the course. That to me was the biggest challenge I faced. I was able to work at a florist's shop during the summer only so I could concentrate on school. I found that the other EAL students supported each other and they made friends with any newcomer. The rest of the school programming has met my needs. I feel that I have been successful and expect to graduate this year from high school. I liked being in school in Canada.

Life Today and Hopes for the Future

Reflecting on my school experiences, I feel that my high school has prepared me for my future. I believe that my classes were very well organized and presented in a way that I could understand. However, I think that schools should recognize the needs of EAL students. They need more time, encouragement, patience, and a step-by-step teaching approach.

I think it is important that teachers realize that students are coming from places where many haven't attended school. Many of the newcomer students haven't had the same opportunities like the Canadian-born students. Teachers should not assume that newcomer students understand what is being taught. For EAL students with limited schooling, they need help to adjust to being in school and they need the teachers to help them build a foundation for the various subjects they need to study. The EAL students have faced difficult life experiences that impact on their learning and thus they need the help and encouragement from all teachers. I know that it can be difficult; not all students are kind and not all teachers are patient.

I ask that teachers give the EAL students time and understanding. Teachers need to consider what students have experienced previously and how those experiences can continue to affect their well-being, as a result of painful memories, dreams, or flashbacks. The effects of the difficult experiences students have faced may be expressed as anger, frustration, or depression. It may cause them to question, "Why am I here?" or "Why am I even studying?"

My biggest concern at this point is finding employment. I have applied for many jobs and sent my resumé to many places. But so far, no one has called and offered me a job.

I am feeling good about my future in Canada. I am generally satisfied with my experiences in Canada and my prospects for the future because of the schooling I received and the knowledge and organization that was the basis for my success. My relationship with my family is still good and strong, and I have good relationships with others outside my family. I plan to return to high school this fall to get the Grade 12 Math credit that I need to graduate. After that, I want to go to university and possibly study nursing. I still dream of being an international journalist or a lawyer, but some teachers told me that it will probably be hard for me to get a job in those fields. I am still thinking about the possibility of studying social work.



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Gentil Misigaro (Gentil Mis) arrived in Winnipeg in 2010 after living as a refugee in Uganda for 5 years.

In 2014 he was one of the recipients of the Top 25 Canadian Immigrants Award in recognition of his achievements in such a short time and in spite of "starting from zero." Misigaro has accomplished much in the music and arts scene in the past few years, more than some have accomplished in a lifetime. Gentil has produced albums, formed bands, helped found non-profit music and arts organizations, written and performed songs for special events (including the Junos), and released an EP in August 2014 online. (See Gentil Interview.)

Misigaro is also a teacher who cares about the community and children. He teaches at-risk youth about the fundamentals of music, singing, dance, and guitar as the music program director for the non-profit organization Status4. Currently, Misigaro is also working on his own non-profit organization, A Better World Movement, to help people use music and art to express messages of social responsibility.

Status4 website: <www.status4.ca/>

Baba Yetu: Gentil Misigaro—Spirit's Call Choir—Status 4 Benefit Concert Video

VIDEO RESOURCES

See [Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences](#).

The Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

This is Congo by Michael McCabe, is an excerpt from a documentary film they are shooting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
<http://vimeo.com/39532924>

The Displaced: This Is Congo by National Geographic: “In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Hakiza Ndaba, a 58-year-old tailor, lives a life of displacement, continuously running with his family from a war that has surrounded them for decades.”
<http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/news/140327-hakiza-congo-vin>

Horror of Congo's forgotten war 2008.03.27 by NewsRevue: “The war formally ended five years ago—but the fighting didn't. It just carried on, ignored by much of the world.”
www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_ois9rQNvE

Rape in the Forest by United Nations: “It's an impossible choice—feed your family, or run the risk of a brutal sexual attack. It has happened to hundreds of thousands of women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since civil war broke out ten years ago. The assaults show no sign of abating, even though a simple solution could reduce the risk.”
www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXvZdTvQGil&list=PL08FC29DE58D6F860&index=10

Security Negotiations Between Congo and M23 by STRATFORvideo: Stratfor Africa Analyst Mark Schroeder discusses the conflict between Congo and Rwandan proxy force M23 and the bigger struggle in the region.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KvxtDaYSko>

Congolese Refugees and Experiences

Urban Refugee || Congo to Uganda by YourPlatform: “Moses shares his life as an urban refugee. A clip from the short documentary on urban refugees produced by YARID. YARID—Young African Refugees for Integral Development—is a grassroots refugee organization in Kampala, Uganda.”
www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHo3yBv1UMc

Uganda: New Refugee Camp and Arrivals from DRC by UNHCR: “Recent fighting in eastern Congo has seen thousands of civilians flee to a new camp, Bubukwanga, in neighbouring Uganda. Food and water is scarce for the new arrivals, many of whom slept rough on the way. UNHCR are moving those they can to Bubukwanga, where they can access food and health care.”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5iYmUulpU4>

UN, Uganda, DRC sign pact on refugees return (2009) by PressTV News Videos: “The repatriation of Democratic Republic of Congo refugees from Uganda comes as the East African country is running out of resources to support the asylum seekers who have been in the country for months.”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nCmp73mWHk>

Congolese refugees in Uganda by brunodc: “Photographer Christian Overdeput describes his visit to Matande Camp, Uganda (near the border with DR Congo)—April 2009.”
<http://vimeo.com/13643768>

ROCKED: Sum 41 in the Congo (Full Length Documentary) by War Child Canada: “Rocked is an unscripted account of an African country in turmoil as seen through the eyes of rock band, Sum 41.”
www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgpf0ZNUO_Y

North Kivu: Education For the Few by UNHCR: “The violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has caused more than 1 million people to flee their homes, including huge numbers of children. Efforts to make sure the displaced youngsters continue to receive an education face huge challenges.”
<http://unhcr.org/v-49b7cbdc2>

Congolese Diaspora

Introducing 'I am Congo' by ENOUGHproject: “This groundbreaking series features amazing people living their lives in eastern Congo amid the world's deadliest war. These are stories of hope. These are stories of the people who call Congo home -- in their own words.”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jBNM37CGEM&index=1&list=PLbmFh8d5EHgouDGsnKU_5BCjbDeRuE1Pz

View the entire series at:
www.RaiseHopeForCongo.org/IAmCongo

We want peace in CONGO/ Nous voulons la paix au CONGO by Doug Brinkman: Interviews with Congolese Canadians about the conflict in the Congo and issues related to resource exploitation and the linkage to the violence.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsE7iJII7aI>

KEZA* (RWANDA)

“What most people don’t know is that the killing hasn’t stopped.”

See [Anam’s Refugee Learner Narrative](#) for another perspective and additional information on Burundi and Rwanda.

Life before Canada

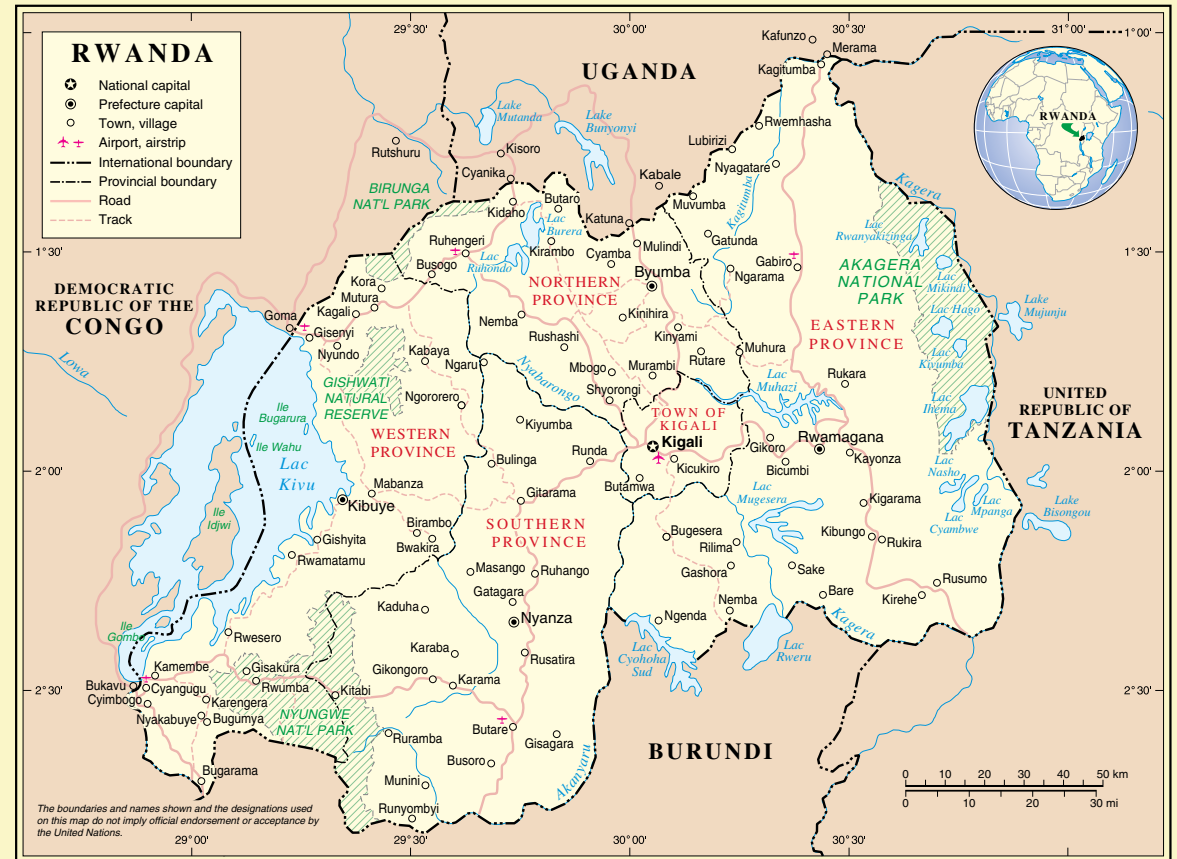
Birthplace and Family

Muraho! Hello! My name is Keza. Keza means beauty in Kinyarwanda. I am 19 years of age. I was born on January 1, 1993, in a Rwandan refugee camp near the border with Burundi. Before coming to Canada, I lived in another camp, Kigeme Refugee Camp, near the city of Gikongoro, Rwanda.

My family speaks Kinyarwanda. My father is Rwandan. My mother came from Burundi to Rwanda in 1972 to escape the civil war in her country of birth. She met my father in Rwanda.

I am the second youngest child. My mother gave birth to ten children but two passed away before I was born. I had five sisters and two brothers. My oldest sister has five children and my second oldest sister has two children.

* To protect the participant’s privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this narrative.



Map No. 3717 Rev. 10 UNITED NATIONS June 2008 Department of Field Support Cartographic Section
© United Nations/Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section. Map No. 3717 Rev. 10. June 2008. Map of Rwanda. CC License. <www.un.org/depts/Cartographic/map/profile/rwanda.pdf>.

RWANDA

Rwanda is a country with an estimated population of 11,689,696. Rwanda has the highest population density in Africa. It has many similarities with its neighbour, Burundi. Both are former colonies of Germany and then Belgium post World War II.

Diversity

The official languages of Rwanda are Kinyarwanda, French, and English. Kiswahili is a common language of commerce. The main religions in Burundi are Christianity (mostly Roman Catholicism), and traditional beliefs, often combined with Christianity.

Rwanda, like neighbouring Burundi, has significant populations of people of Hutu (84%), Tutsi (15%), and Twa (1%). The Twa are thought to be the original forest-dwelling inhabitants of Rwanda and the surrounding region. Tutsis in Rwanda, as in Burundi, have been the dominant political and economic group. Tutsis and Hutus have coexisted in Rwanda and the surrounding region for centuries and share a common language and many values, cultural practices, and traditions. However, Rwanda has a long history of inter-ethnic conflict between the groups.

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BBC, Rwanda Profile, <www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14093238>.

Civil War and Genocide

The civil war and Rwandan genocide of 1994 forced us to flee and live in a refugee camp. My father, a soldier, was killed during this period. In the end, my mother lost 12 of her family members during that time. Only 3 of us survived. My mother, one of my sisters, and I were all that were left from a family of 16 people.



© UNHCR/E. Fitzpatrick. June 2014. Move to a new camp transforms life for resilient amputee Judith with her three children in southern Rwanda's Mugombwa camp. Judith lost her right leg to a gunshot wound during renewed fighting between Congolese government forces and rebels in North Kivu province in 2012.

Armed conflict in Rwanda, and surrounding nations of Burundi and eastern Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo) led to extensive suffering among local and refugee populations in the Great Lakes region, over the last few decades. While the situation has improved in Burundi and Rwanda, armed conflict in Eastern Congo remains a major issue and has forced the displacement of many Congolese to neighbouring countries or to other regions of the DRC. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

After the Rwandan Genocide took place in 1994, my mother walked with the surviving children to Kigeme Refugee Camp. We had no money for a bus or other transportation. I was about one month old when we moved into the Kigeme Refugee Camp.

Life in Camp

I remember playing and having fun with the other children in the camp. But I also remember that we were always scared that the war and genocide

could start again at any time. Today, in Rwanda, on the anniversary of the genocide, there is something similar to Remembrance Day. What most people don't know is that the killing hasn't stopped. Even today, people are still being killed on that day because of conflict. When we left the camp to fetch water or firewood, we were often threatened by people who lived outside the camp. If they caught us, the refugees would be beaten or would have to run back to the camp without what they had come to get. I didn't feel very safe in the camp.

We farmed land and sometimes we worked on other people's farms. I helped my family on the farm by digging the holes, planting the seeds, hauling water, and carrying rocks from one valley to another valley. Some of the children's growth in the family and community were affected by the weight of what they had to carry. Carrying rocks and water is not easy work. To get the water I had to walk about 20 kilometres. The water

A History of the Rwandan Genocide of 1994

From 1916 onwards, Belgium's control of the colonies of Ruanda (Rwanda), Urundi (Burundi), and neighbouring Belgian Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) created the conditions for future conflict and violence. Noting the distinction between Tutsi and Hutu in the local society, Belgium embedded the differentiation of ethnic groups into their colonial system. First, it left the administration of the colony in the hands of the Tutsi aristocracy. Then the Hutu were subjected to forced labour, but the Tutsi were privileged and were left to supervise the Hutus. Lastly, Belgium issued ethnicity-based identity cards to citizens in Ruanda.

In November 1959, a violent political incident ignited a Hutu uprising. Over the next several years, thousands of Tutsis were killed, and thousands driven into exile in neighbouring countries. This period marks the end of Tutsi domination and the worsening of ethnic relations. By 1962, when Rwanda gained independence, 120,000–150,000 refugees, mostly Tutsi, had fled to neighbouring states to escape the violence which accompanied the coming into power of the Rwandan Hutu community.

In 1998, a rebel group, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) emerged from the exiled Tutsis in Uganda (the ranks of the RPF did include some Hutus, but the majority and most of the leadership, were Tutsi refugees). RPF launched attacks on Rwandan Government that resulted in a civil war in 1990. The war, together with political difficulties and economic challenges, resulted in a worsening of ethnic relations that culminated in April 1994 in a state-orchestrated genocide. Between April and July of 1994, an estimated 800,000–1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed (75% of the Tutsi population was eliminated). The scale and speed of the slaughter left Rwanda and the world in shock.

The genocide ended late in July 1994 when the Tutsi-led rebel movement RPF captured Kigali the capital. But this set off a new wave of refugees. About 2 million Hutus fearing Tutsi revenge, fled to neighbouring Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire (DRC). Many of the refugees included Rwandans who later were implicated in the genocide. Since then, many of the refugees have repatriated, but several thousand remain in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

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was moved in buckets and big pots which I carried on my head. Kigeme Refugee Camp was not very clean because there were so many persons crowded and living together in one place, but my family tried hard to stay clean. I lived in the camp until I was thirteen years old. We lived on the land and had only two huts for all of us to live in. The walls of the huts were made of dirt (earth) and the roof was made of plastic material. Sometimes the roof leaked when it rained. Every six months we were given new material for the roof. If the roof fell apart before six months, then we were expected to deal with it on our own.

Not everything about the camp was bad. I had a good relationship with my family. And, I really liked the fact that our community was for the most part friendly and helpful. If you



© UN. Photo ID 168516. January 29, 2008. Kigali, Rwanda. Secretary-General Visits “Village of Hope” Community in Rwanda. Young people welcome Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the “Village of Hope” community project, run by the Rwanda Women Community Development Network, a non-governmental organization dedicated to the promotion and improvement of the welfare of women in Rwanda. CC License. <www.unmultimedia.org/s/photo/detail/168/0168516.html>.

were hungry and needed some food, usually a neighbour would feed you. I also liked that I knew many people in the community. I was happy living in that community but I wasn't happy living as a refugee in a refugee camp.

School in Rwanda

At age five, I entered school and went to Kindergarten. I was able to attend the school in the refugee camp, but could not attend as regularly as those students who lived outside of the camp. Kindergarten through Grade 4 were offered in the school in the refugee camp. For Grades 5 and up, the students would have to go to a Burundi school outside of the camp. I went to school for eight years.



© UNHCR/T. Maurer. December 2006. Sport for refugees—Let's play! A refugee from Burundi in Kigeme refugee camp. UNHCR recognizes the power and importance of sport, and works with implementing partners to ensure sports are integrated into refugee programs. <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/3859348966/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

The refugee camp school wasn't very big. We didn't have real tables but instead big pieces of wood with chairs. About six students shared each piece of wood. It was a one-storey building. There were about 30 students in each class. There were 12 classrooms with 12 teachers. The school was made of the same material as the huts. The language of instruction was French. The school day was from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with a lunch time when we would go back home. We would study English, sciences, math, and our language, Kinyarwanda.

High school begins in Grade 4 in Rwanda and we began to study history and geography in that grade. In Grade 4, you would have one teacher in the morning and a different one after lunch.

The school building outside of the camp was made of concrete and the roof was made of metal. The buildings were one storey. The class size was larger than in the camp, with about 40 or 50 students in each class. In Grades 5 and 6, we students had the same teacher throughout the day. Sometimes I would miss school if we could not pay the school fees. It could take about two weeks or more before I could go back to school. To me, those two weeks at home would seem like a year. Usually, the school fees were paid by the refugee camp



© UNHCR/R. Chalasani. April 1997. Rwandan Children. Like Yolande Mukagasana, these Rwandan refugees fled the genocide and sought refuge at the Kasese camp in former Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo). Yolande is a Tutsi nurse from Kigali, who managed to escape the Rwandan genocide and flee to Belgium, where she was granted refugee status in 1995. <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/4150331396/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

supporters but sometimes my family would have to find the money for the school fees.

The teachers in the camp school were often harsh in their treatment of students. The teachers encouraged the students to do better so that they would have a better life. But they thought this meant that they needed to be hard on the students. Often, when a student made a mistake or behaved poorly, the teacher would hit him or her with a stick. I tried hard to do better in school so I would not be hit. This is very different from the way teachers treat students in Canada. You are not hit for making a mistake. In my experience, if a student behaves badly in Canada they are sent to the office or they are sent home.

I wanted to go to school outside of the camp, but I did not always like it. At times, I and other camp members experienced racist attitudes and actions from the surrounding community. This was especially true if you weren't a Rwandan. Because I am of mixed heritage, Burundian and Rwandan, I was a target. Each of my parents is from a different tribe. But I was born in Rwanda and so I challenged people who told me to go back home by asking, "Where should I go since I was born in Rwanda and it is the only place that I know?" The teachers and the non-camp students also held racist attitudes and made it difficult for me and other camp children. My difficulties in school didn't have to do with the subjects themselves but rather the ethnic politics.

My favourite subject has always been math. But I have had some difficulty with the sciences. I find

that if I do my math work first and then my science assignments, I do better than if I do them in reverse.

I came to Canada at the age of 13. Before I came to Canada I wanted to become a lawyer. But because I was having some trouble with learning English, I was advised that I would have trouble becoming a lawyer. I also thought about becoming a doctor but was also discouraged for the same reason. I listened and took their advice, but maybe it was a mistake to do so. Some people have also told me that if I am not a Canadian citizen I won't be able to become a professional such as a lawyer or a doctor. I have lost my French language but I am now taking French classes to become fluent again.

Immigration to Canada

I had no knowledge of Canada before arriving in Canada. My family didn't have a choice as to whether their new home would be in Canada or Australia. It was decided by which government would accept them first, if at all. I was very excited to come to Canada. My flight to Canada was the first time in an airplane. I was very scared. I was very worried about flying over countries that were at war and we could be shot down. I came to Canada with my mother, two sisters, and



© UNHCR/B. Garden. September 22, 2009. UNHCR: Bringing Cultural Riches. Refugee children and teenagers who became separated from their families while fleeing Rwanda dance at Djoundou camp in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/4013855364/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



© J. Stjerneklar/UNHCR. July 1994. What would you take? A group of Rwandan refugees arrive in Goma with little more than sleeping mats and small bundles of clothing. <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/5842401994/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

my brother. My second oldest sister came the day after I, my mother, and brother arrived. My oldest sister stayed in Rwanda until 2011. She now lives in Winnipeg and we are all together now. When we left Rwanda, we did not have any family or friends living in Manitoba or Canada.

Starting a New Life in Canada

A worker from Welcome Place met us at the airport and assisted us with our settlement. Initially we were in Welcome Place's transitional housing for three months. Then, a friend helped us find a house in St. Boniface. We moved again to Windsor Park where we continue to live.

We arrived on December 6, 2006. It was very cold. I and my mother were dressed in skirts, sandals,



© Tiggy Ridley/DFID—UK Department for International Development. March 10, 2009. Rwanda: 15 years on. Children were not spared. Every child in these family snapshots was murdered 15 years ago. At the Kigali Memorial Centre at Gisozi, Rwandan school children are given tours daily to learn and talk about the genocide and, as importantly, reconciliation. Many of the museum guides are themselves genocide survivors. CC License. <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfid/3403033714/>>.

and sweaters when we arrived. The pictures of Winnipeg and its weather that were shown to us on the television in the camp were quite different from what we actually experienced upon arrival. My mother wondered out loud if we were being brought here to die. So, my first impression of Canada was that it is a very cold place. This is still what I like the least about Canada, even though after six years I am more used to it and know how to dress for winter weather.

The other thing that impressed me upon arrival was that people were friendly. It was exciting to see that people here actually welcomed us and that we were appreciated and accepted. This was quite the opposite of our experiences in Rwanda. We

experienced a lot of racism there. I liked the diversity I found in Canada and being around different people. I find the diversity is interesting.

I did have some difficulties at first with schooling in Canada. After arriving, I had to wait three months to attend school because we were told we had to be in permanent housing before I could register at a school. As a result, I entered school six months after my arrival. I also learned that not everyone was accepting of us. When I started Grade 9, some kids said and acted in racist ways to me. I learned that racism was not only something that existed back in the refugee camp, but that it was here as well. I found that learning English helped me adjust and respond to the racism because it allowed me

to speak for myself and challenge racist remarks.

I met most of my friends in EAL classes in school and a few others I made through teaching our traditional dances and belonging to a dance group. The dances are performed by volunteer dancers at Folklorama but also at weddings, where we are paid for our performances.

The first school I went to in Canada was at an educational centre in a school division in south-east Winnipeg. I spent half the school day in the EAL

program and the other half day in Grade 9 at a high school near my home. I would have preferred to have attended the EAL program and high school classes in the same school. On reflection, I feel that I wasn't placed in the correct grade. I was placed in Grade 9 because of my age but it would have been okay to be put back one grade. By being placed in Grade 8, I could have refreshed my skills. However, being placed any further back would not have been good.

I found that there are two main differences between schooling in Rwanda and schooling in Canada. First, high school here is very different because you have choice and can decide how many courses you take in each semester; whereas, in Rwanda, you have to take a full course load. I liked the fact that I could take a lighter course load than in Rwanda and be able to focus on my studies



© John Isaac/UN Photo. Photo ID 78958. July 27, 1994. Seeking Safety. A make-shift camp in the French-protected area in Gikongoro, Rwanda. CC License. <www.unmultimedia.org/s/photo/detail/789/0078958.html>.

Rwanda: In Search of Hope

A film by Peter Raymont

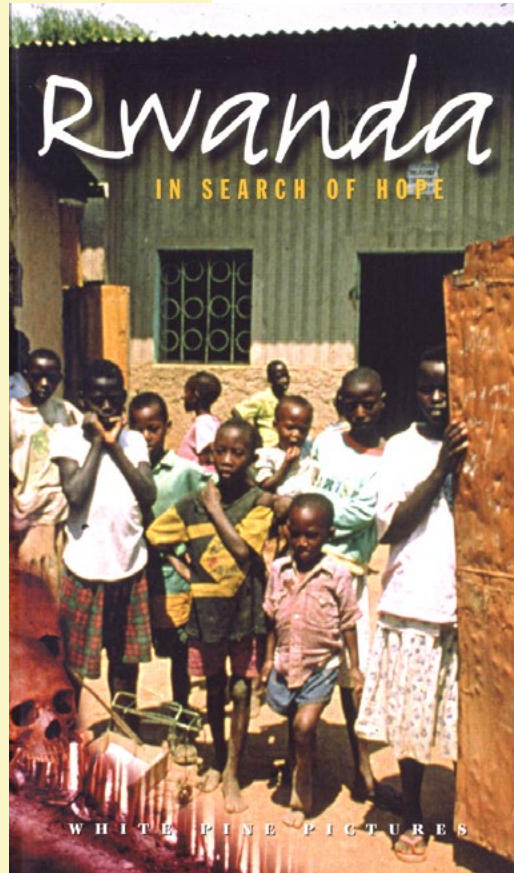
Five years after the horrific genocide, in which over a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were brutally murdered, a group of Canadian teachers and community workers travel to Rwanda to try and understand what happened and what can be done to help the half-million orphans left behind.

Sixty thousand families in Rwanda are now headed by children. Together, the Canadians and Rwandans have created Hope for Rwanda's Children Fund in Canada and the Tumurere Foundation in Rwanda to support these children.

The group includes Rwandan-Canadian teacher, Leo Kabalisa who lost his father, 4 brothers, 12 cousins, and 8 nieces in the genocide. Also in the group is Dr. Carole Ann Reed, Director of Education at Toronto's Holocaust Education and Memorial Centre.

The Canadians find a country still in shock, still reeling from the genocide and its aftermath. Struggling under the weight of the violent consequences, ordinary people search for ways to rebuild their shattered nation. Rwanda: In Search of Hope chronicles the experiences in July 1999 of these civil society groups, as they travel throughout Rwanda visiting massacre sites and memorials, orphanages, and trauma counseling centres.

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without the pressure of a full course load. Also here in Canada, the Grade 12 provincial exams are worth 30 percent of the final mark. In Rwanda, the exams are worth much more and if you don't pass the exam, you don't pass the course.

I found it hard at first to attend two schools. It drove me crazy to be going to two schools in the same day. For example, I was taking Grade 3 level math in my EAL class, which was easy for me. But when I attended the math class at the high school, the course content was very difficult for me because the assumption was that I had already studied algebra and geometry. If I had stayed in Rwanda, I would have begun studying algebra and geometry in Grade 6. I think that if my EAL classes focused on the Grade 8 Math curriculum it would have helped me prepare for Grade 9 Math and it would have been more in line with my age and grade.

I attended the EAL classes at the centre from morning until after lunch. Then, in the afternoon, I attended the high school in my neighbourhood. During my first year I was the only EAL student who went to

the EAL program and then went to a high school in the afternoon. I didn't know anyone else in the high school and it was hard to go through the other stuff but I did receive a lot of help from my teachers.

There were approximately 12 students in the EAL class, whereas in my high school classes there were about 15 or 20 students. My relationship with my EAL teachers was very nice. They treated me as if I was their daughter. The teachers were very friendly, treated me nicely, and gave me advice like a mother would. The teachers were able to help me learn and adjust to the school. They helped me prepare for what I was going to study in the high school, especially in English and science. I remember one of the teachers teaching me about the various organs in the body as well as teaching me how to figure out the meaning of a word by knowing the prefix.

My high school teachers were also helpful and supported me by giving me extra help with assignments as well as extra time to complete assignments. But, I found the sciences difficult. I studied biology and chemistry. The teachers did their best, but I also feel that in order to be good in the sciences that I needed to have really good English language skills. I could memorize terms, but if I didn't understand the meaning of what I had memorized, then I couldn't apply it. I did do better in biology than in chemistry. But I liked chemistry because it is much more like math. When I understood the formula then it was easy for me to apply it. With biology, I had to memorize everything and if I forgot one word in the definition, the whole thing cannot be understood.

I believe that the EAL program and my teachers met my needs and I feel more prepared to face my future and my career. However, based on my experience, I believe that EAL students should be given more time to study English and to make sure that the EAL students get it.

I am 19 years old and I was supposed to graduate last year (2011) but I decided to take an extra year to help me improve my English and skills in other subjects. I really find that the extra time was very beneficial for me. My English skills have improved, but they could/should improve even more. I benefited from first taking a special English course which prepared me to take the regular Grade 12 English course that is required to get me into university. The EAL English classes gave me the base I needed for my future courses and learning. However, I believe that if newcomer students like me could get extra help from volunteer tutors, student teachers, or educational assistants in all their classes that would help a lot and help them be successful.

While at school I worked during summers and in September but I would stop because I didn't want any distractions from my studies. My summer work was at the Manitoba Museum, Take Pride Winnipeg, and the Folk Festival. I have worked at all those things every summer. As time passed by I kept making friends and

they were friendly. Some of my initial friends have moved, but others have remained close. I look forward to graduating with my friends.

My family hasn't experienced any great difficulties in adjusting to Canada and I am pleased my relationships with my family continue to be good. I am living with my mother, my second oldest sister, two brothers, and two other sisters. The move to Canada affected my family in a good way. We could go to school without having to pay school fees. We have food to eat and we found jobs, although not easily. But the jobs helped us and they allow our family to live our life.

I did experience some health problems in the form of stomach aches that I believe comes from eating too much corn, which was the main food we were given in Rwanda. The greater diversity of foods that we have here in Canada and that we eat, together with some medication I was given has corrected the problem. I am lucky, because in Rwanda some people, who had the same problem from a diet of mostly corn and didn't have the money to pay for the treatment, often died from the condition. Living in Canada and having universal Medicare, that allows us to meet our medical needs, has been very good for me and my family.



Dr. Régine Uwibereyeho King is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba. She was born and raised in Rwanda, where she witnessed and survived the 1994 Tutsi genocide; two of her brothers and many other members of her extended family did not.

After the genocide, Dr. King worked as a co-ordinator and facilitator of a trauma healing program through World Vision Rwanda, bringing together the Hutu and Tutsi for mutual healing. She moved to Canada in 2000, where she worked as a mental-health counselor. She completed her Ph.D. in 2011 at Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto. Her research interests include

social processes in post-genocide Rwanda, women's rights, and psychosocial well-being of survivors of organized violence who resettle back into their communities and who resettle in Canada as refugees and immigrants. Dr. King is also interested in cross-cultural mental health interventions. She has published on truth commission, grassroots intergroup dialogue, and other healing processes in post-genocide Rwanda, transnational research, and North-South partnerships in social work education.

Dr. King is committed to social justice, human rights, and healthy communities. Her community engagement has focused on genocide education and prevention through public speaking both in academic and non-academic settings. Dr. King was instrumental in organizing events that marked the 20th anniversary of the Tutsi genocide in Winnipeg. The Tutsi genocide is one of five formally recognized by Canada's Parliament. The event is featured prominently in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

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Fight Like Soldiers, Die Like Children

A film by Patrick Reed

When you've been to hell and back, how do you shake the memories?

This question has haunted General Roméo Dallaire since 1994, when he was UN Force Commander during the Rwandan genocide, explored in the award-winning documentary, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, also by White Pine Pictures.

Dallaire has now found a reason to live: embarking on a mission to end the use of child soldiers. Will Dallaire succeed where others have failed? Or will he once again be forced to look on as the world turns away?

In this documentary, Dallaire is back in Africa trying to prevent the use of child soldiers, a practice he sees as inexcusable as nuclear war. "If we could make them cry as a child again, I would think they would want to get rid of the weapon and not play real-life soldier any more," he says in one of the film's more poignant points.

Dallaire recognizes that eradicating the use of child soldiers is not for the weak of heart. He sits down with warlords and "shake hands" with them to discuss the problem. "It's not just a crime against humanity; it's a sin," he says, and tries to reach them by any means to prevent more children being trained to kill and be killed in war.

But the scope of the problem is enormous when one faces the reality and extent of lawlessness, corruption, and anarchy in many parts of the African continent.

The documentary was shot in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and South Sudan, and across North America and is based in part on the book *They Fight Like Soldiers, They Die Like Children* by Lt. General Roméo Dallaire (Random House)

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I did not actually experience war directly, because my mother was pregnant with me during the war and I was a very young child when we moved to the refugee camp. But, I still believe that I was affected by the war and genocide that took place in Rwanda. In my culture, we believe that anything that a mother experiences during one's pregnancy, will also affect her unborn child.

Life Today and Hopes for the Future

I have just graduated from high school in June of 2012. I plan to continue to work at the Manitoba Museum as it has been part of a course credit. However, I am also continuing to work at the museum because it is fun. I will also volunteer at The Winnipeg Folk Festival. I have been doing this for three years already. I also plan to look for a paying summer job but that may not be easy. I am happy to take any job because I need and want to help my family.

I am positive about and hopeful for my future in Canada. I have a good and strong relationship with all my family. I have had good school experiences in Canada and that has helped me prepare for the future. The opportunity to learn English and the extra help I got from my teachers made a huge difference. In Rwanda I would not have had the help I got here. My goal is to study medicine or social work because I like to work with people and help them. I have applied to the University of Winnipeg. I hope to study chemistry, biology, psychology, math, and environmental studies in the coming year. Overall I am satisfied with my life and experiences in Canada and my prospects for the future.

VIDEO RESOURCES

See [Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences](#).

The Rwandan Genocide

20 Years Later, Rwanda Heals and DRC Struggles by Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF): Rachel Kiddell-Monroe the head of the mission before and after the Rwandan Genocide returns 20 years after and shares her reflections on the events in Rwanda and the current conditions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news-stories/field-news/20-years-later-rwanda-heals-and-drc-struggles

The Rwandan Genocide by History Channel provides a series of videos about the genocide and the international reaction to it.

www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide/videos

Rwanda Genocide documentary by CwnInternational offers a series videos on the Rwandan genocide. The first of the 8-part series:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3DrvrSgHl>

“Rwandan Stories is a collection of video, photography and journalism exploring the origins, details and aftermath of the Rwandan genocide through the eyes of both survivors and perpetrators.”

www.rwandanstories.org/index.html

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum offers a series of articles and video resources concerning the Rwandan Genocide.

www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/cases/rwanda

These resources include eyewitness testimonies.

www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/cases/rwanda/rwanda-video-gallery

Fight Like Soldiers Die Like Children Trailer by White Pine Pictures: Video extracts from Patrick Reed’s

documentary about how the world ignored the massacres in Rwanda 20 years ago—while former child soldiers explain how they are still used to killing. Features Lt. General Domeo Dallaire.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrXFdXloS2c>

Rwandan Refugee Camps

Solange and Esther—Kigeme Refugee Camp in Rwanda | *World Vision* by World Vision USA: Congolese refugees fled to Kigeme Refugee Camp in Rwanda. Solange, her husband Ethienne, and their four children recently escaped from their home in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She shares her fears and hopes for the future.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iciR3jGCiaA>

Reconciliation and Survivor Stories

Rwanda blood ties by Euronews: Covers the commemoration of the genocide in Rwanda and the reconciliation efforts.

www.euronews.com/2014/04/11/rwanda-blood-ties/

Rwanda’s reconciliation village a symbol of hope 20 years after the genocide by Euronews: Residents of Rwanda’s reconciliation village share their experiences.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0U66sychEs>

RwandaNow—Official YouTube Channel is dedicated to the Commemoration of the genocide against Tutsis in Rwanda. It offers several videos of survivors.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/RwandaNow/videos>

unforgiven.rwanda trailer by Augustin Pictures: A trailer for the feature length documentary *Unforgiven: Rwanda NDR* (German television) that deals with life after the genocide and reconciliation efforts.

<http://vimeo.com/83806118>

Rwandan Genocide Survivor Recalls Horror by CBS News: Immaculee Ilibagiza, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, shares her story with *60 Minutes* correspondent Bob Simon.

www.cbsnews.com/news/rwandan-genocide-survivor-recalls-horror/

Refugee Stories—Shadia Mbabazi, Rwanda by USA for UNHCR: Shadia Mbabazi, 22, was born in Rwanda and fled during the genocide in 1994. Her family traveled overland through Burundi and Congo and finally, in 2001, to Botswana, where they have been living in a camp ever since.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfNCO2jE4kM>

Rwandans in North America

Meeting the Rwandan Diaspora (Canada / OYOW- Maggie Padlewska) by Maggie Padlewska (One Year One World): Saturday August 6th, 2011, the Rwandan High Commissioner to Canada and members of the Rwandan Diaspora in Quebec, Canada came together to commemorate the 1994 massacre.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FnryFJ--2JU>

REEL CANADA @ Silvercity Mississauga—Leo Kabilisa discusses Rwandan genocide with students by REEL CANADA: Leo Kabilisa speaks to students about his experiences surviving the Rwandan genocide at a screening of the film *Shake Hands with the Devil*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ab7D59KY3uo>

Rwandan survivor Christian Butera on the Holocaust by Schmoozequeen: Thoughts from Rwandan survivor Christian Butera... Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3JIM3ASPZM>

Les 20 ans du génocide au Rwanda commémorés à Winnipeg by Radio-Canada:

<http://ici.radio-canada.ca/regions/manitoba/2014/04/07/005-genocide-rwanda-20-ans-commemoration.shtml>

LAYLA* (SOMALIA)

“Every family is your family.”

See [Bandiri's Refugee Learner Narrative for another perspective and additional information on Somalia](#).

Life before Canada

Birthplace and Family

Ma nabad baa?! Is ka warran. Hello. How are you? My name is Layla. My story begins in Somalia. I consider myself to be Somali even though I lived in Ethiopia and Kenya before coming to Canada. Somali is my first language and the language we speak at home. Father also spoke a little Italian. I was born in Somalia on January 1, 1991, but I soon moved with my family to Ethiopia because of the war. Ethiopia was my home until the age of 14. At that age, I left and moved to Kenya.

Five refugee camps are located in the Somali region of Ethiopia near the town of Dolo (also known as Dolo Ado or Dollo Ado) with an estimated total refugee population of 153,200 (July 2012).

In Ethiopia, my family lived in Dolo. I never heard a gun or saw any fighting in Ethiopia. Dolo was a safe place. It was like a small city or very large village. Certainly, it was not as big as Winnipeg. I am the

middle child of a big family of 10 children and a mother and a father. But four of the children died, and one of my older sisters moved to Kenya to live with an aunt. So there were five children living with my parents in Ethiopia.

Life was good in Dolo. My mother had a store and my father took care of the children. Mother sold fruits, other foods, and clothing. I helped by bringing Mother her lunch every day. I had a good relationship with my family. I had childhood friends there. I liked living in Dolo and I was happy. Everyone looked out for each other. In my community we lived as if every family is your family. It's not the same in Canada. Here, parents won't let you stay with other families.

School

I went to school in Ethiopia when I was 10 but only for five months because my family did not have the money for me to continue. Classes were in Somali, even though we were living in Ethiopia. I had to be at school by 7:00 in the morning for the national anthem and religious studies (religion was important and also taught at home) before classes began at 9:00 a.m. School ended at 12:00 noon. It was a simple one-room school made of grass, sticks, and mud. The floor was also made of mud. I avoided putting my feet down on the floor. Boys



© United Nations/Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section. Map No. 3690 Rev. 10. December 2011. Map of Somalia. CC License. <www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/somalia.pdf>.

* To protect the participant's privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this narrative.

SOMALIA

War in Somalia

Somalia achieved independence from Italy in 1960 and merged with the British protectorate of Somaliland to form the modern Somali Republic. Mohammed Siad Barre became leader of the nation after a coup in 1969. The civil war in Somali began in 1990 when United Somali Congress and the Somali Patriotic Movement sought to oust Siad Barre's regime. In 1991, Somalia fell into the hands of different militias, who divided the country along clan lines. Somalia is at the heart of one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world today. Twenty years of conflict and waves of drought have uprooted many of the country's people. Somalia is the third largest refugee source country of the world (after Afghanistan and Iraq). UNHCR reports that as of June 14, 2012, there were 992,488 Somali refugees in the region, mainly hosted in Kenya, Yemen, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Tanzania, and Uganda. In addition, almost 1.36 million Somalis are internally displaced within the country, settled mainly in the south-central region. As the region faces its most severe drought in 60 years, the Somali exodus is growing fast.

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and girls both attended the same school. We sat at long tables with about 12 students to a table. It was a very cramped, small hot room. There were chairs and a chalkboard.

I had a good relationship with my teacher. I liked studying and learning. The teacher made it fun to study. My favourite subjects were Somali and mathematics.

But, my relationship with other students was not good. I did not like how they made me feel. My classmates would make fun of me if I didn't know something. The other students bullied and threatened me because my family didn't have money. Because of them, I did not like going to



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school. When I was forced to leave school because my parents could not afford the school fees, I had mixed feelings about leaving school for these reasons.

Immigration to Canada

When I moved to Kenya at age 14, I thought about returning to school. I was looking forward to life in Kenya and the changes it would bring. But, because of the four-year gap in my schooling, I did not return to public school in Kenya. I was tutored at home in Swahili, the language spoken in Kenya and a little English. As a result I can understand Swahili but do not speak it well. My brother who came to Canada with me speaks Swahili well.

I went to Kenya to live with my older sister, Yaya. Yaya was 23 at the time and already had two children. Yaya moved to Kenya when she was seven to live with an aunt. She wanted me to come to Kenya because she was going to Canada and she wanted me to join her. I lived in Kenya for about a year. I travelled from Ethiopia to Kenya by bus.

It was a big change for me. I had to adjust to living with Yaya and her family and living

Somali Culture

Somali is the official language. Somali is a Cushitic language that is similar to the languages spoken by the Galla and Afar in Ethiopia.

Somalis are a relatively homogeneous people who are believed to have come from Southern Arabia. Somalis largely share a common language, culture, ancestry, and religion (they largely subscribe to Islam).

Traditionally, the people of Somalia lived nomadic lives and moved with their herds. For this reason, animals are often featured in Somali folktales and poetry. Camels, sheep, and cattle are very important in Somalian culture.

There are, however, some elements of diversity. While northern communities have a history of camel nomadism, there are communities, especially in the south, that practice farming, fishing, ironwork, a mixture of farming and herding, trading, etc. In addition, some other languages such as Maay, Jiidu, Barwani, and Dabarre are spoken.

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in a new community. I knew Yaya a little because she returned to Ethiopia from time to time to visit my parents, but I didn't know her well because we didn't grow up together. I was very happy to go to Kenya, but sad I had to leave my mom behind as my dad had just died shortly before my leaving Dolo. My dad's death was one of the reasons that I had to leave Dolo. I needed to go to Kenya for a chance at a better life.

In Kenya, before immigrating to Canada, I was living with Yaya, my brother Samir, two other sisters, and Yaya's two biological children.

We all came to Canada together. Yaya had a UNHCR refugee card from living in Kakuma Refugee Camp. I was added onto my sister's card. An aunt was also listed on the card.

I was very happy to move to Canada even though we did not have any family or friends living in Manitoba or Canada. I had always wanted to live in a city and now I had a chance to do so. Everything went very quickly in terms of immigrating. I had heard good things about Canada.

My mom, my two oldest sisters, and two younger brothers still remained behind in Ethiopia. My mom is concerned about what she hears about what happens to some Somali youth, especially males, living in Canada. She hears that some of them change in ways that are not good. She worries about her sons changing in the same way. She wants to emigrate when my brothers are older and when they are more mature and grounded in their religion and culture. When they are older, Yaya will sponsor them.



© J. Ose/UNHCR. June 12, 2012. Dollo Ado, a year after the Somalia famine. Somali refugee children attend class in Kobe Camp. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/7979542682/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Starting a New Life in Canada

I believed that when we immigrated to Canada everything would be better. I thought we would own a house and that life would be easier. But everything was different than I expected. Getting used to a new time zone, the winter, and learning English was difficult. Everything was different. What I knew about Canada before immigrating and what I now have experienced was all very different. The reality did not meet my expectations.

I was almost 15 when I immigrated. My first memories about Winnipeg

Refugees in Ethiopia

“Ethiopia shares borders with six countries in a region where political, social and environmental challenges continue to cause massive displacement. As a result, the past three years have seen almost a three-fold increase in the number of refugees in the country. While the majority of these refugees are from Somalia, there are also large numbers of Sudanese and Eritrean refugees. In 2011 conflict in the Three Protocol Areas between Sudan and South Sudan saw a new surge of refugees from that region entering western Ethiopia. Despite the many challenges it faces, however, Ethiopia has remained a generous country of asylum.”

From 2012 UNHCR country operations profile – Ethiopia <www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483986.html>.



© J. Ose/UNHCR. June 2012. Dollo Ado a Year After the Somalia Famine. Delighted children pass part of the day in a simple playground in Kobe Camp. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/7979542682/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

and Canada were how tired we were and how long we had to wait at the airport for the settlement counsellor from Welcome Place. We did not know what was going on. That September day the weather was very cool and we weren't dressed for it. Eventually, the Somali settlement worker/ counsellor from Welcome Place arrived at the airport and assisted us with settling.

I remember that I did not like the food. The food was different; it lacked flavour; it was not spicy enough. It was so different from what I was used to in Africa, even salt didn't help! Winter came early and I saw for the first time this white stuff coming down from the sky. The cold weather took a lot of adjustment.

At first we lived in temporary housing provided by Welcome Place. Later we found a small apartment in Osborne Village. Six people were living in a three-room apartment! But then, one sister moved to Edmonton and my brother moved out when he was 18 and got a job. He had an easier time settling because he spoke English. In the six years we have lived in Winnipeg, we have lived in five different places.

I like summer in Winnipeg the best. I was also pleased with the school I first attended. The classroom teacher was very friendly and the EAL teacher was very helpful. The teacher had learned that there were two new students living in the Osborne Village area. The EAL teacher went to pick them up to attend school. The teacher taught us how to take the buses to and from the

school. The teacher's efforts helped me feel welcome in my new school.

My greatest difficulty was learning English. I felt a great deal of frustration and anger at not being able to communicate my thoughts. I wanted to speak to people but I couldn't. At first they gave me time to adjust to the classroom by not pressuring me into doing academic work right away. Instead I was given time to colour pictures and watch other students' activities. I was given very simple work such as learning the alphabet and using simple books to begin to learn to read. The alphabet had pictures on it of African animals that were familiar to me.

This was helpful because I was already familiar with those animals. Now I just had to learn how to say their names in English. I found that Somali and English are very similar in form and that similarity helped me to learn English quickly.

I was placed in a Grade 9 EAL class at a large junior/senior high school but I also had to attend other classes. I found it very difficult to fit in because some of the other students in the EAL class had not missed school like me. I found it very hard. The regular (subject-area) teachers didn't seem to understand how difficult it was for me because of the language barrier. I believe that I needed the EAL programming but in spite of the problems, I also needed the regular classes—they forced me to be more independent.



Daadir Faarax Yare arrived in Winnipeg in December 2007, as a privately sponsored refugee. He attended Grant Park High School and is now working as a security officer while studying at the University of Winnipeg and majoring in International Development Studies and Conflict Resolution Studies. Daadir is a community Activist and the founder of and a volunteer at Somali Youth League INC of Winnipeg.

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I remember that, if I had difficulty with the assignments, the regular teachers sent me back to the EAL teacher to get help from her with the assignment. The regular teachers didn't try to bridge the gap between what I understood and what I was being taught. By sending me back to the EAL class, it made me feel stupid! But I wasn't stupid. I struggled because I had little schooling and didn't know English. I believe that in part, this was because regular teachers had large classes and it was difficult for them to give me the attention and help I needed. There were two other Somali girls in my regular classes, but they didn't attend school regularly so they weren't able to help me.

I spent about a year and a half in the EAL program. Without the EAL program I wouldn't have been successful and survived. I recently graduated from high school. I made friends with other Somali girls and an Eritrean girl in the EAL program. Even though one of my friends didn't speak Somali, we found a way to communicate and got along. I liked being in school in Canada. It changed my life. It made me think about my future.

Life Today and Hopes for the Future

I believe that the move to Canada made our family stronger because of all the challenges of settling in a new country where everything was so different from what we were accustomed. It also made me closer to my sister Yaya. I didn't have my Mom here with me, so I realized it was important to respect Yaya. Yaya became my second mother by taking on the role of parent in Kenya and in Canada. I still live with my sister and her children. We had some difficult times but those experiences made us closer. I now feel much closer to my sister Yaya and the years we have lived together gave us a chance to get to know each other better.

The hardest thing that I had to experience in coming and settling in Canada is being separated from my mother. I really wish that she could be here with us. Family is very important to me and the Somalia culture. So, I still try to maintain contact with my mother in Ethiopia. I speak with my mother regularly. Even though she is far away, Mom still cares for me and is always concerned about my safety and health. I miss my mom. When I see other people with their mothers, I think

that they are so lucky to have their mothers with them. But, being away from my mom has made me stronger and more mature.



Former Refugees Helping Refugees

Somali children at the new pre-school in Dagahaley camp funded by Canadian NGO, Humankind International

Humankind International was formed in 2008 when Muuxi Adam met two friends in a Winnipeg coffee shop to explore how they could help other Somalis stuck in refugee camps in Africa.

That discussion led the three Somalis from different clans to establish a non-governmental organization, Humankind International. The NGO's mission is to spread awareness about Somali refugees in neighbouring countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia and to raise money for education projects for refugees.

In February of 2014, their dream became the opening of a pre-school in the Dagahaley camp, part of the world's largest refugee camp complex at Dadaab in north-east Kenya. "More than 400 children lined up to enrol in the school, but we could only take 140 for now," Muuxi told UNHCR at the recent opening ceremony. He added that half were from the camp and half from the host community.

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Abdikheir Ahmed is a university-educated Somali who arrived in Canada in 2003 after living in Kenya and claiming refugee status. In Kenya, he worked with a number of organizations including Oxfam Quebec and CARE International. After graduating from the University in Kenya, together with a few of his former college friends, he formed a

non-profit called Environnementalistes Sans Frontières where they initiated programs to resolve natural resource based conflicts amongst nomadic pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya.

After arriving in Canada he decided to attend the University of Winnipeg to study International Development and graduated in 2007. During this period he began volunteering in the after-school program at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM). His volunteer role in IRCOM led to a career in youth programming and community development. Ahmed became director of the after school program and later Executive Director of IRCOM. This allowed him to develop extensive experience working with immigrant and refugee communities in Winnipeg's inner city and on settlement issues, gang and street crime prevention, and peaceful coexistence amongst immigrant and aboriginal communities.

Ahmed is a member of the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) and was the recipient of the Amina Malko Fund fellowship in 2009 that provided him with the opportunity to participate in the CCR's consultations and working group meetings for a year as one of few potential immigrant leaders in Canada. In 2011, he was the recipient of the "Great Friend of Children" award by the Manitoba Children's Museum for his work in support of immigrant and refugee youth in Winnipeg.

Also in 2011, he was awarded a Rotary Peace Fellowship at the School of Political Sciences and International Studies of the University of Queensland in Brisbane Australia, where he completed a Masters in International Studies (Peace and Conflict Resolution). He is interested in emerging challenges for peace building and conflict resolution in the Horn of African countries, environment and natural resource based conflict, and the role of outside interests in the conflict in Somalia.

In 2014, Abdikheir became the Local Immigration Partnership Winnipeg (LIPW) Coordinator for the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

People in Canada care about and plan for their future and this perspective has made me think about my own future. My current goal is to complete the requirements to get a home care certificate. This will allow me to work in the home care field and save some money. My long-term goal is to go to university to study social work. However, for the time being I will work in home care or daycare. I enjoy working with people, especially with the elderly and children.

Reflecting on my experience, I appreciate that generally teachers and people in Canadian schools are nice, respectful of others, and helpful. However, I feel that Canadian schools could help immigrant students much more. They need to be more understanding of the fact that immigrant students often struggle in school because they have difficulty with speaking and understanding English. There needs to be more EAL support and people assisting immigrant students. Volunteer tutors in classes with EAL students would be very helpful. At first, I thought it was kind of crazy to be placed in a Grade 9 classroom when I had come from nothing (I only had five months of schooling before coming to Canada).

But I survived, and I am happy where I am right now. I have plans for a better future.



Sulekha Ali, Canada's latest singing sensation is not only attracting the attention of music lovers from coast to coast but is quickly building a solid fan base across the continents. The young, Somalia-born, Ottawa-based Sulekha Ali, a recording artist on a lyrical journey to global greatness, continues to mesmerize her fans with new hit singles including Hooyo and Time and Time etc. Sulekha arrived in Canada at the tender age of 4 after her family fled the protracted civil conflict in Somalia. Her family settled in the Canadian capital where she went to school and excelled all the way to university level graduating with a Bachelor of Arts (BA Hons) degree in Human Rights from Carleton University. Her choice of post-secondary studies has largely influenced her music, which is loaded with socially-conscious lyrics.

Hooyo Video: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBj7Gk8BoEU>>

Photo Credit: This work has been released into the public domain by its author, Sulekha Ali. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulekha_Ali>.

VIDEO RESOURCES

See [Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences](#).

History of Somalian Conflicts

Ogaden War 1977 Somalia Ethiopia by ColdWarWarriors is a documentary about the 1977 war between Ethiopia and Somalia.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CemACOk-p0>

Somalia—The social Clan life before and after the war (English) Part 1-2 (2011) by Interpeace and Academy for Peace development (Maxamed-Amin Siyaad Cabdi) describes the role of Clans in Somalian society before and after the civil war.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmbBpWUuRC0&index=11&list=PL45gdSqHlr0J3riwIDO08jCFLsqpTVwN>

Somalia: 'The desperate struggle' by CBC News (1992): "Somalia is ravaged by civil war, perpetual battle and widespread famine."
www.cbc.ca/player/Digital+Archives/CBC+Programs/Television/The+National/ID/1829222442/

NEED TO KNOW The ghost city Inside Mogadishu, Somalia by PBS (2012): A Need to Know episode on Mogadishu takes a rare look inside Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, a city struggling from decades of civil war, Islamist militants, famine, and piracy, to learn more about how the nation came to be in the state it's in today.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENPEdrPTQR4>

Somalia in Crisis by CBC News (2011): Almost 20 years after the 1992 famine, this report looks at the continued impact of war and drought in Somalia and refugee camps.
www.cbc.ca/player/News/TV+Shows/Connect+with+Mark+Kelley/ID/2079534060/

Doctors Without Borders leaving Somalia by CBC News (2013): Organization says country is too dangerous and authorities weren't doing much to stop attacks on aid workers.
www.cbc.ca/player/News/World/ID/2401275747/?page=33&sort=MostRecent

Somalian Refugee Camps in Ethiopia and Kenya

Somalian Refugees Flee Fighting, Famine in Ethiopian Camps (2012) by Pulitzer Center includes information about Dollo Ado.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAtqjcS4p2c>

Ethiopia: Somali arrivals by UNHCR (2013) shows the challenge of meeting the need of Somalian refugees fleeing famine in Ethiopia.
<http://unhcr.org/v-4e1740eb2a>

Tanya Pinto In Ethiopia—Dollo Ado Refugee Camp (2013) by World Vision. In 2012, Tanya Pinto volunteered for World Vision International in Ethiopia. In this video she is in Dollo Ado—the second largest refugee camp in the world. The video focuses on efforts to provide schooling and other services to children.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwJBfHFhqcEAlDo>

Kenya: Somali exodus to Kenya by UNHCR: The world's largest refugee complex at Dadaab in north-east Kenya is growing steadily as a fresh wave of Somali civilians flee their country to escape drought or conflict.
<http://unhcr.org/v-4e0ddfd56>

Kenya: In Nairobi's Somalian neighbourhood "Little Mogadishu," Somalis pay the price of al-Shabaab (2013) by FRANCE 24: This report addresses the impact of recent Al Shabaab attacks on Kenya and the impact on Somalis in that country.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56v5klxqJ3U>

Somali's in North America

A Brighter Future—Journey to Canada: Stories of Refugees by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), shows Okach and his family, refugees from the Dadaab camp in Kenya, Africa, as they describe their new life in Regina, Saskatchewan.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmPG_8_598I

Somali Success Story (2011) by garoowe74, shows how Yasmin Younis succeeded after she came to the United States as a refugee.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQiro2luFjQ

Storytelling and Refugees: A Somali's Story (2012) by Stanford University: Ifrah Magan presents her initiative to promote storytelling for Somalian refugees in order to capture a more accurate picture of the country's culture. The talk was part of the first annual AMENDS Summit at Stanford University.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uN7ApymG70w>

For additional resources concerning Somalia, see the [Video Resources](#) provided at the end of Bandiri's narrative.

MARY* (SOUTH SUDAN)

“I had to get my brain around the differences to make it work.”

See [Yödu’s Refugee Learner Narrative](#) for another perspective and additional information on South Sudan.

Life before Canada

Birthplace and Family

Hi, my name is Mary. I was born on April 5, 1994, in South Sudan. Before coming to Canada I lived in Ethiopia. I am of Mabaan ethnicity. My family speaks the Mabaan language.

I am the youngest child in my family that includes my three siblings (two brothers and one sister) and my mother. My father passed away when I was just six months old. He was a soldier during the civil war. My mother worked as a nurse with HIV groups for UNICEF in both south Sudan and Ethiopia.

Life in Sherkole Refugee Camp, Ethiopia

I was two years old when we moved to Ethiopia. I ended up living with my mother and three siblings in the Sherkole Refugee Camp for 12 years. I was very young when the conflict in Sudan was taking place. I know that my family left South Sudan because of the civil war and we walked to Ethiopia.

* To protect the participant’s privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this narrative.



Map No. 4450 Rev. 1 UNITED NATIONS
October 2011

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section

© United Nations/Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section. Map No. 4450 Rev. 1. October 2011. Map of South Sudan. CC License. <<https://www.un.org/depts/Cartographic/map/profile/southsudan.pdf>>.

SOUTH SUDAN

Upper Nile State

The Upper Nile State is located in South Sudan's north-eastern region. It has an estimated population of 964,353. The state is composed of 13 counties, including Maban County.

The Upper Nile region is one of the areas in South Sudan that experienced disproportionate levels of violence and instability during Sudan's civil war due to the large number of militia groups that lived and operated in the region. The Upper Nile State has become one of the most marginalized and devastated regions in South Sudan because of the presence and activities of militias, harsh environmental conditions, and the proximity of the state to the cultural and military population of the north. In addition, the region only began to experience a significant increase in the presence of humanitarian agencies in 2006.

The majority of the state's people are nomadic "agro-pastoralists" who depend on both growing crops and the rearing of livestock, mostly cattle. Unfortunately, the area's unpredictable weather patterns, combined with other environmental challenges such as pests, disease, and flooding, has made farming in Upper Nile a complex, difficult, and uncertain endeavour. The result is limited crop yields and extensive food insecurity.

The region is rich in oil but, despite this, the region remains very poor with little improvement in basic development indicators such as education, health, sanitation, and access to clean drinking water.

Upper Nile faces external threats. After years of war and instability, many areas of the state's border with the Gambella region in Ethiopia are prone to security issues and are dominated by armed groups, unresolved intercommunal disputes, multiple waves of displacement, and competition for land, water, services, and citizenship.

Most recently, Upper Nile has become home to more than 100,000 refugees from Sudan's Blue Nile region, where conflict between Sudan's military and rebel groups has forced many to seek asylum in South Sudan, especially Maban County. In 2012, four refugee camps, in the Upper Nile, Gendrassa, Yusuf Batil, Doro, and Dori, provided asylum for the refugees from Sudan.

Mabaano of South Sudan

South Sudan is comprised of about 60 indigenous groups. The Dinka and the Nuer ethnic groups are the largest of the groups. The Upper Nile State is also diverse. The main ethnic groups are the Shilluk, Nuer, Dinka, Mabaan, and Koma peoples.

The Mabaano people (also known as Maban or Burun) are a Nilotic people (these are ethnic groups mainly inhabiting the Nile Valley, the African Great Lakes region, and south-western Ethiopia, who speak Nilotic languages). Mabaan, or Southern Burun,

is a language of South Sudan. The Mabaan groups speak different dialects.

The civil war caused the displacement of most of the Mabaan people to camps in Yabous, Wedega, and other parts of Southern Blue Nile as well as in western Ethiopia. A small Mabaan Diaspora is found in the Bungo refugee camp in western Ethiopia.

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<www.gurtong.net/Peoples/PeoplesProfiles/Maban/tabid/212/Default.aspx>

United Nations Missions in South Sudan, Upper Nile State, <<http://unmiss.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=5094&language=en-US>>.



© John Ferguson/Oxfam. Jamam refugee camp, Republic of South Sudan. Children and women queue at a water point, in Jamam refugee camp, Republic of South Sudan. Eighteen months after its independence in July 2011, the Republic of South Sudan is teetering on the brink of a renewed civil conflict while confronting a host of other problems. One of these is a major refugee crisis in Upper Nile state near the border with the Republic of Sudan (North Sudan). CC License. <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/oxfam/8328853321>>.

Sherkole Refugee Camp

Sherkole Refugee Camp was opened in 1997. It received a large new influx of Sudanese refugees in September 2011. Many of the refugees are from Kurmuk of Blue Nile state in Sudan. The refugees of Sudanese and South Sudanese origin are from the Uduk, Mabaan, and Dinka ethnic groups. There are some long-term residents that originate from other countries, including from the Great Lakes region.



© Yann Libessart/MSF. March 8, 2014. Bambasi Sudanese refugee camp, Ethiopia. There are often fewer men in refugee camps, as many of them stay behind to fight. Many displaced mothers have sole childcare responsibilities for often large families. Any household job falls to them. <www.msf.org/article/slideshow-international-womens-day-forced-flee>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

As of July 2012, 9,600 refugees were living in the camp. The camp has a primary to Grade 8 school and five pre-schools. It has no secondary school and lacks appropriate school supplies, such as books, desks, pencils, uniforms, etc. A high school education is only available in the town 16 kilometres away. There is need to improve access to the town's secondary school by improving transportation and increasing the school size to accommodate students from the camp. There are a large number of unaccompanied youth in the camp who need an education.



© Enough Project. October 23, 2011. Women walking down a dirt path in Sherkole refugee camp. Nearly 5,000 Blue Nile refugees can be found in Sherkole, a camp that received refugees from the 1983–2005 civil war in Sudan, and continues to shelter refugees from the Darfur, South Kordofan, and Abyei conflicts. CC License. <www.flickr.com/photos/enoughproject/6284232122/>.

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© Norwegian Refugee Council/Christian Jepsen. Humanitarian agencies have established some schools for the refugee children in the camps of Upper Nile, but there is still a huge need for educational programmes. <www.nrc.no>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

I was just a child and so I was carried during the journey.

My first memories of living in a specific community or place were in the Sherkole Refugee Camp. I recall that the camp was very large. My mother worked as a nurse in the camp. Our round house was made of grass and painted clay with drawings on the clay sides. I was very happy living in the refugee camp. I had many friends to play with. I felt safe in the refugee camp. What I liked the best about living in the camp was there was a school program and it was free. I started school at the age of 4 and attended until age 11 in the refugee camp. The school was made from cement and it had about 10 classrooms. I seem to recall that there were about 1,000 students and less than 20 teachers.

School would begin in September and continue for eight months. A typical school day was from Monday to Friday, either in the morning or the afternoon depending on the grade. Grades 1 to 3 attended from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Grades 4 to 8 attended from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. From Grade 9 on, the students would attend “college” in Addis Abba, the capital city of Ethiopia. In the upper elementary I had different teachers for different subjects. The teachers would move from class to class. We studied four subjects during the school year: mathematics, science, social studies, and English. All of them were taught in English. There was an additional subject but I can’t remember/spell it. The classrooms had long tables and chairs, three to four students at a table. There were textbooks for every subject. Sometimes the students would have to share them. There were chalkboards.

I attended school quite regularly except when I had to help my Mom, or had to wash my clothes, or if I

got sick. I liked going to school, but I really didn’t have a favourite subject. I don’t recall having any difficulties in school. I do not remember having an idea of what I wanted as a career or to do when I finished school before I came to Canada at the age of 14.

Immigration to Canada

I immigrated to Canada in 2008 from Sherkole Refugee Camp in Ethiopia with my mother and one of my brothers. My older brother and older sister remained behind because they both had married. I have not seen them since, but I communicate with them via telephone, Facebook, or Skype.

Before we emigrated, we were told that Canada was very cold and that we would need to dress in very warm clothes. The information about the weather/climate in Winnipeg scared us! My mother chose to come to Canada because UNICEF, who she was working for, encouraged her to do so. The UNICEF officials told my mother that in Canada her children would have an opportunity to get a good education and it would be a good life for all of us. Also, I had cousins living in Manitoba. I was happy to come to Canada because I had heard that I wouldn’t have to work and that there would be



© Marcel Cretain/QMI Agency. Winnipeg Sun. July 9, 2011. A parade celebrating the independence of South Sudan takes place in Winnipeg, Manitoba. <www.winnipegsun.com/2011/07/09/celebrating-indendance>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

enough money to live on. However, now I know that this isn’t true and that I have to work if I want to have money to live and do the things I wish to do.

Starting a New Life in Canada

We arrived in Canada on October 8, 2008. I was 14 years old when I came to Canada. Our family was met at the airport by settlement counsellors from Welcome Place who were also South Sudanese. We didn’t experience any difficulties in settling in Winnipeg, because the Welcome Place counsellors helped us a lot. At first we lived in temporary housing downtown at Welcome Place and now we live in an apartment in East Kildonan.

My first impressions of Winnipeg and Canada were not very good. I cried when I saw the bare, leafless trees. It wasn't at all what I expected. I could not sleep that first night. I only managed to fall asleep the next day.

Looking back at that time, what I liked the most about being in Canada was going to school. What I liked the least was the snow and the cold weather. The first year was very difficult for me because I was so uncomfortable going out. Now I have become accustomed to the weather and the climate and I don't worry about it anymore.



© Jillian Austin/Winnipeg Sun. July 9, 2011. A group of children gathers at the celebration at Central Park in Winnipeg, marking the independence of South Sudan. <www.winnipegsun.com/2011/07/09/celebrating-independence>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Obviously, the move to Canada has affected my family because we are now separated from my older brother and sister. However, I made friends in my new community, but it takes time to know people and become good friends. Just like me, I don't think that my mother or my brother had any difficulties immigrating or adjusting to life in Canada, other than the weather. Our relationships are good and our bonds are strong.

The first school that I attended in Canada was a large high school. I would describe it as being a lovely school with students and teachers who were kind and friendly. The school had smaller class sizes and more teachers to teach the students than in the school in the camp in Ethiopia. One of the big differences between the school in Ethiopia and Canada is that every day in the refugee camp I would speak Mabaan but in Canada, only English could be used throughout the day.

One of the things that I needed to adjust to was the difference between English spoken in Africa and English spoken in Canada. The Canadian accent is very different, but also there are differences in the words used and the pronunciation. I had to get my brain around the differences to make it work.

At first, I was placed in a Grade 10 EAL class for the entire day and then the second year I was partially in EAL and regular classes. But it was not just English that I studied that first year. I also studied some other subjects (English, math, and mini-

units in science and geography), which helped me develop some subject area skills and prepare me for the regular classes.

It was in the EAL class that I met my best friend. I didn't find it that easy to make friends. It takes time but I would say "hi" to people in my classes and gradually developed friendships. The first few weeks were difficult because I didn't feel comfortable and I was shy about the English that I spoke. It was so different! It wasn't easy to come into a classroom where you didn't know anyone and where the routines were all different. In the regular classes there were educational assistants to give students extra support. The teachers offered and gave me additional help at lunch or other times outside of class. I felt comfortable accepting and coming for the extra help.

The EAL teachers were also very important in the first few years. I got a lot of help from my EAL teachers and I had really good relationships with all of them. I recall that they used flash cards to help me learn vocabulary and math facts. Even when I was no longer in the EAL program, I was welcome to return to the EAL class to get some extra help when I needed it. Everyone was just lovely, in my opinion.

The most difficult part of going to school was speaking English. I was very shy about speaking and communicating in my new classes at the beginning of each semester. I found it hard to ask questions in front of my classmates. I thought that if I said something that the other students would laugh at me. However, I always felt comfortable asking questions or speaking privately with my teachers. Once I became accustomed to my new teacher, I would feel more comfortable and confident in asking for help.



Reuben Garang was born in what is now the South Sudan. He was one of the Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan—unaccompanied minors who were forced out from villages due to civil war in Sudan in the 1980s and ended up taking refuge in Ethiopia. When the civil war broke out in Ethiopia, Garang moved back to Sudan where he became a child soldier. He later spent many years in refugee camps in Kenya before coming to Canada. While volunteering at Winnipeg Harvest, Garang authored the report *Integration and settlement: The experiences and expectations of African immigrants and refugees*, which highlights the challenges facing African immigrants and refugees after arriving in Canada, and recommends possible solutions. He earned his bachelor of science and master's degree from the University of Winnipeg. For the first time after over 20 years away from home, Garang returned to Africa to reconnect with his surviving family members in the refugee camps in Uganda. He now works for the province.
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I worked part-time, usually about 35 hours a week on three days after school and then on the weekends at McDonald's. Between attending school and working I had a very busy schedule.

Reflecting back on my experience, I feel that the programming and the support that I received met my needs. Everyone did their best to give me the support or help I needed. I love being in school in Canada because I get to learn different subjects, meet new students and teachers, learn how to be independent, and be part of a community. Also, I love the homework and projects that I had/have to do!

Life Today and Hopes for the Future

I am pleased that at this point my family and social relationships are really good. I have not experienced any difficulties related to finding employment, health, or education. I have had good experiences at school in Canada. My schooling has taught me how to be a good student and my teachers helped me plan for my future. I feel that I am well-prepared for the future. I have many opportunities, and I have high hopes for the future.

I graduated from high school in June 2012. I plan to work at McDonald's during the summer and work longer hours so that I can save more money. This will help when I apply and go to college in September. At first I wanted to be a doctor, but now I would like to be an airline pilot. I know that there are probably not many female pilots, but I intend to do some research on the possibilities of becoming a pilot.

When I was in school in Ethiopia I did not have a sense that I was learning very much and I didn't think about my future. But in Canada I can see that there are many opportunities and I am encouraged to think about my future. I would like to travel. I believe that it is possible to do and be what I want, but it will take time and effort.



Suraya Issa, also known as **Baifa**, a South Sudanese Canadian based in Toronto, is a writer, poet, author, independent scholar, and Founder and Executive Director of the Centre for Women's Advancement for a New Sudan (CWANS). CWAN International is a youth initiative started by South Sudanese in the Diaspora to promote and empower young women and youths in the areas of health, academics, sports, social issues, and economic justice.
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VIDEO RESOURCES

See [Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences](#).

History of Sudanese Conflict and South Sudan

Darfur in 10 Minutes: An Overview of the Conflict in Sudan by Pete McCormack presents an interview with Ivan, a former aid worker.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=USLDoliFzzg

Two decades of war: Sudan's history of crisis by Journeyman Pictures: The documentray provides an overview of the history of the conflict in Sudan since post-colonial times.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=KB5eNauNhs4

What's going on in South Sudan? (2014) by Truthloader: An overview of the South Sudan conflict since it became the world's newest state when it seceded from Sudan in 2011.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=MySLTevlDwE

Massacre in South Sudan (2014) by CBC News: An interview with Nonviolent Peaceforce director Tiffany Easthom on targeted ethnic killings in South Sudan in spring 2014.

www.cbc.ca/player/News/ID/2451150545/

Sudanese Refugees

Ethiopia: South Sudanese Refugee Influx by UNHCR: Despite a ceasefire agreement signed in early May, fighting continues between government and opposition forces in South Sudan. The renewed conflict has forced thousands of refugees to seek shelter in Ethiopia.

<http://youtu.be/MMIPX0nELN0>

Ethiopia: A Green Refugee Camp by UNHCR: Sherkole, in the western highlands of Ethiopia, is showing that a refugee camp can be a place for a conservation project.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckrouEp1S1I

South Sudan: In my Shoes by UNHCR: Former refugees bring special insight to their work in South Sudan helping refugees.

www.unhcr.org/v-50a0d06f6

The Village: Life in South Sudan (2011) by Todd Hardesty of the Alaska Sudan Medical Project: "This 37-minute documentary is a moving, heartfelt portrayal of life in Old Fangak, South Sudan. Produced by filmmaker Todd Hardesty and narrated by Emmy-winning narrator Peter Thomas in newly independent country of South Sudan."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lesvJ7MTdQ

Sudanese in North America

A trailer for the movie, *The Good Lie*, by Warner Brothers: A movie about the experiences of three Lost Boys' settlement in the United States.

www.warnerbroscanada.com/index.php/coming-soon/the-good-lie/

Lost Boys of Sudan by KTEHTV: A video that features the reflections and stories of two Lost Boys who settled in the United States.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kQSg0z6vEAA

For additional resources concerning Sudan, see the [Video Resources](#) provided at the end of Yodu's narrative.

MUSTAPHA* (SIERRA LEONE)

“I couldn’t imagine being here today in this position without her.”

See [Navaeh’s Refugee Learner Narrative for another perspective and additional information on Sierra Leone](#).

Life before Canada

Birthplace and Family

Bonjour, Kushe, Hello. My name is Mustapha. I was born May 13, 1991, in Sierra Leone, in the small town of Bumbuna in the Tonkolili District¹ in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone. For a while, before I came to Canada, I lived in the capital city—named Freetown, relatively close to Bumbuna and still in Sierra Leone. I am not sure of what cultural group I belong to. My family and I spoke French at home and also a form of broken English, which is called Krio (also known as Kriol).

I have a very, very big family, which is spread out through Africa and all over the United States. My mom’s brother’s family, and my sister’s family, aunts and uncles, sisters and brothers, and cousins and their respective families, family like that, are

all spread out. In my immediate family, we are at least 20—which include my mother and father, 11 of their children, and my nieces and nephews and my brothers’ and sisters spouses’. I have five brothers and five sisters. I had a good relationship with my family. I was the sixth child to be born, so I have younger brothers and sisters.

In Sierra Leone, my dad was in the army fighting for the country. My mom was in sales at the local market—she had her own stall. She sold ginger, gingerbread, cakes, popcorn, ice cream, sweet things, and cultural foods, like benni (Sierra Leonean word for sesame). Benni are like little seeds that you put seasoning on, such as salt or pepper and then mix it up and grind it up, and then use on rice. I was always at the market—helping my mother. I didn’t have a say in it, it was expected of me. I had to help and I didn’t have a choice. My job was to wipe down the counter and keep it clean, as there were always fresh batches of things coming up, and making sure the stall was clean. I was about seven years old when I started helping her. I did that for about two years at least. I didn’t have time to eat the ice cream—I had to make sales.

* To protect the participant’s privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this narrative.

1 The people of Tonkolili District in Northern Sierra Leone are mostly from the Temne ethnic group. Other ethnic groups in Northern Sierra Leone with significant population are the Limba, Kuranko, Mandingo, Loko, Fula, and Yalunka. The majority of the population is Muslim with Christianity being the second largest religious group in the region, followed by traditional African religion.



© United Nations/Department for Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section. Map No. 3902 Rev. 5. January 2004. Map of Sierra Leone. CC License. <www.un.org/depts/Cartographic/map/profile/sierrale.pdf>.

The village had a small population compared to other villages nearby and there were not a lot of buildings around. All the homes were little houses. The houses were made of bricks and sand, all handmade, not made with machines. There was always a lot of wind, a lot of breezes.

At night there is not a lot of light—except when the moon is shining.

I listened to the birds and the animals. Kids were running around all day, all night, riding their bikes and motorbikes, but the motorbikes didn't go very fast. There were no cars. We would just run around and had nothing to worry about—it was very free. As soon as there was no light, I would see so many stars.

In Bumbuna, there were some people who were wealthy and lived in big houses, just like anywhere else. We all can't be like that, wealthy. The guy who has everything, he's obviously going to have whatever he wants. His house is going to be fancier than anyone else's house. Usually, as kids we would go and peek through the curtains of the rich peoples' houses to see if there was a TV show we could see. We would stand there and watch. If the owners changed the channel, we would leave.

Children in Bumbuna were running around and enjoying themselves all the time. We just had to watch out for animals that could make us sick, like snakes. There was one really bad one I still recall, but can't remember the name. It was green and not too big, but I didn't want to get in its way. I was always scared of it. There were big bugs like, scorpions and spiders. Snakes are number one though.

Also, depending on where I went there were tigers or lions. For example if I went hunting, away from the village, then it was possible to see those animals. They didn't generally come around the village as they knew we're around, and they knew we would take action if we saw them. So they generally stayed away so they weren't butchered.

There were many things I liked about living in Bumbuna. But especially the way people carried themselves and the way people knew that we weren't living up to standards. And just the culture, because everything that happens happens for a reason, we're living in Africa. People do not have to worry about paying any bills—just freedom. There's nothing you have to pay for, you just live—you grow your own food, you cook when you want to eat, you go to get water, you take a shower when you need to take a shower with the water you have. When there is no more water—you get some more. When I was younger, my mom would send my brother to get water. I was about five when I had to start getting water. I had to go miles to get water for drinking and for washing. But life there was still easier—you didn't have to worry about bills, etc. We just did what we're supposed to do there to survive. It wasn't as complicated as living here.

My mother used the money she made selling in the market to buy more things that she could sell, and to buy some clothes. There was so much we could make ourselves, but at some point we needed to buy some things. Mother also used some of the money for school uniforms and books in order for the children to be able to attend school. I could choose to pay for lunch there or I could choose to come home for lunch. People in Bumbuna would grow their own food, and build their own houses. I was very happy living in my community.



© Tim Elmer. Bumbuna Village, Circa 1974. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



© Tim Elmer. Dyed Lapas spread out to dry, Sierra Leone circa 1974. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



© Imagine Canada. February 26, 2008. Plan Canada. Portrait of girls in window at Harford Secondary School for girls in Moyamba, Sierra Leone. School provides education for refugee and displaced girls. <www.flickr.com/photos/imaginecanada/5684755913>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

SIERRA LEONE

A Brief History

Today Sierra Leone is a nation with a population of about six million people. At least 2,500 years ago, its lands became inhabited by indigenous African peoples and over time populated by successive movements of peoples from other parts of Africa.

After European exploration, Sierra Leone became a centre of the Atlantic slave trade, and hundreds of thousands of Africans were transported from the interior to the Americas from there. Later, it became a site for the repatriation of former slaves during the abolitionist movement. The capital, Freetown, in 1792, was founded as a colony for freed slaves who had fought on the British side during the American Revolutionary War. About 1,200 Black Loyalists were resettled from Nova Scotia on March 11, 1792. In 1808, Freetown became a British colony. It gained independence in 1961 after a long period of colonization by the British.

Sierra Leone has played a significant part in modern African political liberty and nationalism. However, from 1961 until the start of the civil war in 1991, political instability was common with several coups and regime changes.

Civil War

The brutal civil war that was going on in neighbouring Liberia played a critical role in the outbreak of civil war in Sierra Leone. Charles Taylor, the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia at the time, has been charged with helping form the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) under the command of former Sierra Leonean army

corporal, Foday Saybana Sankoh. The prolonged and brutal civil war that followed in 1991 led to a substantial portion of Sierra Leone's peoples being displaced. By the end of 1999, it was estimated that 460,000 people were forced to leave the country, including 371,000 in Guinea and 96,000 in Liberia. An additional 500,000 were internally displaced. In November 1999, Sierra Leone began the long road back to stability and some form of normalcy, after the signing of the Lome Peace agreement in July 1999 and the deployment of a peacekeeping force, UNAMSIL.

However, conflict continued in several areas of the country in 2001. But the demobilization and disarmament process of RUF fighters was able to proceed, and eventually secured. By January 2002, the war was officially declared to be over and the entire country was secured. This allowed for presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in May of 2002.

Refugees and Repatriation

Despite the difficult and unsecure environment in Sierra Leone, refugees began returning as early as 2000. Over 40,000 returned, largely in response to violence in Guinea, even though areas of the country were still controlled by the rebels. As the country stabilized, UNHCR began to facilitate repatriation. From 2001 through June 2004, when formal repatriation ended, about 280,000 refugees had returned home. Many of the refugees and returnees had special

needs and included thousands of people such as former child soldiers, orphans, amputees, and victims of sexual abuse.

Refugees faced huge obstacles and severe challenges in resettling and integrating. Sierra Leone had been badly damaged with an estimated 300,000 homes and 80% of all schools having been destroyed. In addition, Sierra Leone hosted over 65,000 Liberian refugees, who had been driven out by conflict in the neighbouring country.

Reference

Claudena Skran (2012). A catalyst and a bridge: An evaluation of UNHCR's community empowerment projects in Sierra Leone. UNHCR. <www.unhcr.org/4f27bb689.html>.



© David Turnley/UNICEF Italia. June 18, 2010. The moment of choosing teams as if it were the World Championship. Certainly, the team that gets David Beckham will have some chance of winning the game. Beckham, a Great Britain UNICEF Ambassador, played an unplanned match in Aberdeen, a suburb of Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. CC License. <www.flickr.com/photos/unicefitalia/4710948213/>.

Schooling in Bumbuna

I first went to school at about five years of age, when I was very young. We were still living in Bumbuna, Sierra Leone. I went to school for about two to three years. The school was small—just a one-storey building. I don't remember how many classrooms were in the building, but there were about 40 students in a classroom. Each classroom had a blackboard, crayons, long tables, and a lot of chairs. Many tables would have about 40 kids sitting at them. The boys and girls were mixed together.

We always had the same teacher; teachers didn't change for different subjects. We went to school for a half day, morning or afternoon, we could choose. I had to help my mom in the morning and then went to school from noon until about 5:00 p.m. We attended school about four days a week but, they would be spread out, depending on what classroom activities were being done. I don't remember what the school months were. I didn't go to school after two to three years because the rebels took over and started making demands and scaring everyone. It became dangerous to go to school.

French was used to teach in the school. I liked school and looked forward to going to school every day. My favourite subjects were math, art (drawing), and reading. The only difficulty I experienced was being the age I was—some kids were older, and they'd bully me and get under my skin. I'd come home and talk to my mom, and she told me to "act like a man." So, I did that and told the guy, "Hey, don't push me," or "I didn't do anything wrong, you have no reason to push me." I just told him, "There's no point in your acting this way towards me, as I didn't do anything. But then I can also push you back."

Civil War

The war/conflicts affected me and my family a lot. Everything was going great—I had started school and I was looking forward to going to school more and getting more education and then the rebels came down on our house. It affected all of my family. My mom had her stall at the market and my dad had a good job with the government, but that all changed when the rebels came. When that happened, we had no other solution but to leave Bumbuna. You can't just grab a stick or a gun and fight. If you stay, you're going to die. But if you leave, you'll have a chance, and my family chose to leave and try to find somewhere that wasn't as dangerous.

We travelled and left Sierra Leone. We left Freetown and headed north. We stopped to sleep for a bit, and kept going. If we stopped, they would catch up with us. For at least one year we were on the move. I was still pretty young—about nine or so. Mom had me on her shoulders. We split up—my two brothers and my two sisters came with my mom and me. My dad went with the others. There was a plan to meet somewhere, but I don't recall where, and we did eventually meet. Following that year of moving about, we ended up in a refugee camp in another country, because after all that happened, we were basically refugees. We went to the farthest camp away from Bumbuna for protection. All our travelling was on foot. I don't remember where that camp was

located. Life during that time was hectic. I tried to sleep, but I just couldn't sleep because I knew what was going on. I was young and didn't know what to think of it. All I could do was just let my mom take care of me and hope for the best for me and my family. I was very afraid. It felt like there was nothing we could do about our situation. Just one year before we were fine, and then out of nowhere all this happened to us.

Bumbuna is one of the poorest communities in the country. Most young adults are out of work and there is a higher than average child and maternal mortality rate compared to the rest of the country. Children walk everyday for several miles to attend school.

Reference

<www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/?p=1630>



© Silke v. Brockhausen/UN Photo. March 26, 2014. Children at a school supported by the World Food Programme run towards UN cars near Koindu, Sierra Leone. CC License. <<http://sl.one.un.org/2014/03/26/feature-drawing-down-the-end-of-un-peace-operations-in-sierra-leone/>>.

I felt safer once we were in the refugee camp. There wasn't a lot of food, but there was enough water for people to take showers, and just enough food when you needed it. They'd give us a bag of rice, barely a few cups of rice and we'd have to live on that for a while, until it was finished, and then ask for more in a food line. We had to travel not too far to get firewood. It was relatively safe as they had people protecting the camp all around it. I didn't go to school during that time. I do not have any good memories of that time. I don't have many other memories—the way things happened is what I remember. I remember I travelled often on my mom's shoulders.



© BBC News. February 15, 2001. Progress in Guinea refugees' plight. Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in camps near Guinea's borders, especially Parrot's Beak area near the border of Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia. The map shows three possible safety corridors being planned by UNHCR and the three nations that would allow for the "safe passage" of refugees from affected camps in Guinea to Sierra Leone or other parts of Guinea. CC License. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1171872.stm>>.

The whole family was together at that point. My dad also came to the camp, but he was still fighting for freedom and doing his job up until we met again. One day on his way to the camp, something bad happened to the airplane he was flying in. The rebels shot it down. When it was all said and done, after the shooting, they were able to land the plane, but not everything in the plane was in good shape. They didn't have brakes, and so they landed pretty hard. As they were landing, they hit the ground too quickly and too hard and skidded.

In the last moments before his passing, my mom called to me, and because I didn't want to face what was going on, I didn't respond. I didn't want to have that memory with me for life. But my mom called me again and told me that my dad wanted to say something to me. I didn't want to go into the room to listen to him or try to listen to him and hear his last words to me. But, I finally went to him and then he whispered some words. I couldn't really understand what he was trying to say to me, so I just watched him. He passed away right in front of me. After, I just ran away and sat outside. There was nothing we or I could do, because we had no money for the doctors to even look at him, or for the doctors to even think about looking at him. We could all see how much he was hurting and how much he needed help. But the refugee camp could not help him in that way, because that's not what they were there to do. So in order for them to give him a hand, or try to save his life, we needed money for medical



© Michael Kamber/UNICEF. May 18, 2010. Guinea, 2009: A girl attends class in an under-equipped school in the eastern city of Kindia. Primary school enrolment/attendance rates, currently at 51 percent, are falling, and adult literacy stands at 30 percent. Poverty is widespread, with over 70 percent of the population living on less than US \$1.25 a day. Deteriorating public health systems and political unrest are also contributing to the resurgence of preventable diseases, including measles and polio. CC License. <www.flickr.com/photos/unicef/4725453962/>.

treatment, and we didn't have any of that. We lost everything. We lost him, because there was nothing else we could do.

Immigration to Canada

Just before I came to Canada, we were in the refugee camp north of Sierra Leone, and my father had died. There was me, my older brother, my twin sisters, my youngest brother—that's five of us and my mom—so that was six of us. So there were six others left behind. The others went back to Sierra Leone after everything calmed down. Most of

Sierra Leonean Refugees in Guinea: Life Harsh

During the height of the civil war in Sierra Leone, as many as 2 million of the country's 6 million people were displaced. Some 490,000 of the displaced people fled south to Liberia or north to Guinea. By 2001, an estimated 340,000 Sierra Leoneans were living in camps in Guinea.

The camps on the border with Sierra Leone did not bring peace, nor were they safe. In 2001, most of the refugees had to be relocated to new camps because of cross-border fighting and rebel incursions from Sierra Leone and Liberia. At that time, most of the larger refugee camps were situated near the border and the intense fighting endangered the lives of the people in the camps. The fighting also led to strong resentment, anger, and harassment by Guinean civilians against the refugees in camps as they were seen to be harbouring rebels, militia, and army personnel. In some cases, the Guinea local people are extremely poor and they resent that the refugees are given food and medicine by the aid organizations. Some refugees reported attacks on camps and killings by local Guineans.

References

UNHCR (2008). Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea advised on end of their status <www.unhcr.org/4890898c4.html>.

Rainer Lang, (2001). Suffering: A Harsh Daily Reality in Guinea Refugee Camps. UMCOR <<http://gbgm-umc.org/umcor/emergency/harshdailyreality.cfm>>. Accessed 2013.

them have passed away. Two brothers and one sister passed away. There's only about three of them left. They stayed behind.

I didn't know anything about Canada—I had heard about the United States, but nothing about Canada. We were told we were going somewhere—to the States. I thought that was awesome. I had heard about the States and thought that would be a good place to live. That's what my mom had told me. I have an uncle who lives in Canada, and we also had another uncle who lives in London (England), so we thought we were going to go there.

My mother wanted to go to where there was family and my dad's brother, my uncle, lived in Winnipeg. That uncle, when he found us by searching for our names, sponsored us. He could only sponsor so many people; that's all he could afford to do.



© IRIN. 2005. Guinea: Ethnic tensions and weapon trafficking threaten the stability of the fragile forest region. CC License.

I was happy to come to Canada. I was just happy to get out of the refugee camp and the things that were happening at that time and in that place.

I was 11 years old at the time and I remember thinking of becoming an electrician or a radio host or something like that. When we played, we listened to the radio because there was no TV.

Starting a New Life in Canada

I was 12 years old by the time we landed in Canada. I had my 12th birthday before we left the refugee camp. My dad's brother, my uncle, helped us settle. He met us at the airport, with his daughters, his son, and his wife—his whole family. I had never met him before. I think he had been in Winnipeg for 29 years. He came to Winnipeg when he was young—just like me.

My first memories of Winnipeg and Canada are lots of lights and lots of cold. I think we arrived in November or December. It was cold and windy, and I wasn't prepared for that kind of weather. My uncle turned on the car heater, and he took us home. The next day, we got winter jackets and boots. That is still what I don't like about Winnipeg/Canada. I don't like the cold, I don't like the winter—that's about it.

I also remember it was white at Christmas. There were even more lights at Christmas. My family and I lived in my uncle's house for about a year, until we found our own place, which was an apartment. We lived in that apartment for about another year, and then moved out. We moved to a lot of places—at least six moves. We moved for a lot of reasons (because we're too noisy and the neighbours complained, the TV's too loud, too expensive, can't

afford it, the neighbours smoke and I didn't want to be around that). We are now living in a condo and we finally feel settled; we rent the condo, we haven't bought it yet. I'm now living with my mom and two younger sisters (twins), and my little brother in our condo. My older brother has moved out, and he's still living in Winnipeg but in his own apartment, which is very close nearby.

I didn't have to worry about anything happening, like us being attacked—nothing to worry about in those terms. I felt safe.

At first we had difficulty adjusting to the Canadian culture and the way things are done: the way people talk, how they dress, how they act, the different characters, and different ways that people look at the world. Everything was pretty much different... everything. I didn't know what to wear, as I had just moved here. I wasn't used to the temperatures, so I was always trying to keep warm and protect my body by wearing a sweater and jacket. I saw a kid who was just wearing a shirt, when I thought it was pretty cold! But I guess it was cold for me, but not to him! But, I just wasn't used to the temperatures yet, and I don't know if I can ever get used to them.

The move to Canada affected our family life because the culture in Canada is so different—the weather was different, the food was different. Fortunately, my uncle and his kids helped me adjust. His wife was also a big part of it—they helped step by step. One can't tell someone new to a culture everything about it at once. Each day he would tell us something new about Canada. We watched TV and picked up some things, and went from there.

We had to spend more time cooking and learning how to shop and what to buy at the grocery store. When you buy something, but you don't know what it is and you've never seen it before, if you don't like it, you can't just return it, because you've taken a bite out of it. Simply going to a fast food restaurant was new to us. My uncle took us and we didn't know what to order, but he said that we would soon know. At first my uncle would order for all of us at McDonald's and choose things he thought we would like or what his kids liked. Later, when he knew what we liked, he ordered those things, and then we started ordering our own food. This was just one example of different ways to do things in the community and in Canadian culture. In Sierra Leone, we never had a drive-through and we never bought food ready to be eaten.

We started the practice of ordering pizza on Fridays. At first, I didn't know what pizza was. It was something I had to get used to and learn how to eat. My uncle's son showed me how to hold it correctly. I couldn't even hold a slice of pizza right but he was doing it perfectly! My favourite pizzas are now pepperoni and meat lovers'.



© Kanelstein, E./UNHCR. 2004. A returnee child on his way back to Sierra Leone. On July 21st, during a torrential rainstorm, the final UNHCR convoy from Liberia crossed over the Mano River bridge into Sierra Leone carrying 286 returnees. This convoy included the last of some 280,000 refugees returning home after Sierra Leone's brutal ten-year civil war which ended in 2000. UNHCR provided returnees with food rations, and various non-food items, including jerry cans, blankets, sleeping mats, soap and agricultural tools in order to help them establish their new lives in communities of origin. <www.forcedmigration.org/photography-directory/a-returnee-child-on-his-way-back-to-sierra-leone/view>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

In the beginning, it was very hard for me to make friends—very hard. One of my uncle's children was around my age (the others were older) and he showed me how to play video games and how to use the computer. So we spent time together. But my cousin only speaks English and not French—so there were a lot of difficulties and errors in speaking. I would try to talk to him but not know what to say, so sometimes I just had to point to things.



Dr. Francis Amara was born in Sierra Leone, but left in the 1970s before hostilities began to study abroad. He studied in the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Russia before immigrating to Canada to do post-doctoral work. Today he is an assistant professor of biochemistry and medical genetics at the University of Manitoba.

Dr. Amara has also been active in supporting refugees and co-founded the Sierra Leone Refugee Resettlement Inc. which has been instrumental in supporting refugees from Sierra Leone, and providing after-school and summer youth programming for children of refugee and newcomer backgrounds.

Dr. Amara is passionate about medicine and science and he loves to share that passion with youth. In collaboration with the local Aboriginal community he founded the Inner City Science Laboratory, in which youth explore and learn about medicine. He also founded the Head Start Aboriginal Biomedical Youth Program and the Biomedical Youth Summer Camp. The camp, which started in 2006 with 15 youth participants, has now grown to accommodate 220 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, including newcomer children.

See Francis Amara's video on TEDxManitoba: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xa87Rm_tm4I>.

© University of Manitoba. Spring 2009. Inner City Science Centre Brings Groups Together. CC License. <http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/medicine/units/community_health_sciences/departamental_units/biomedical/news.html>.

I felt a bit like a “fish out of water,” as everything was so different. It’s a huge adjustment, but I think it was a good experience now when I think about where we came from and what we have now accomplished. I definitely experienced growing pains at first, but I can’t really think about what has happened in the past. I mean, I can think about it—but how long am I going to think about? The best thing my family and I try to do is to make sure that we don’t spend a lot of time thinking about what has taken place, because we can’t change it. We have to leave it up to God to answer for us.

We were lucky that our health has been fine. We had to see a doctor regularly to make sure everything was fine, but we are healthy. We are now able to sleep better and eat more, because the fighting is not going on around us anymore.

School Experiences in Canada

The first school I attended in Canada was an elementary/middle years school. I was homeschooled for a while. It took a long time for me to get into the system—at least a year—as I didn’t have a permanent address. My first school was a Kindergarten to Grade 9 school in south-east Winnipeg—I was placed in Grade 6. I was the biggest kid in Grade 6. When I moved to Winnipeg, I was average or even small, but then I started eating and got bigger. My uncle’s wife cooks really good food, and so does my mom. Everything they cook is really good.

There was a big gap from the school I went to in Freetown—it was very, very difficult to fit in. The terms the teacher used were not terms my teacher had used and not those I was familiar with. The teachers had a different style of teaching. The teaching was in English, but different English. When I was homeschooled my parents spoke English all the time with me to help me recognize different English terms and slang. So I had some broken English when I came into the school. It was Krio a (Creole) language. Krio is English, but then it isn’t Canadian English.

Although I was placed with other students in the school, I did have after-school classes to help me pick up on what I missed, or what I didn’t catch in class. I felt comfortable with the teacher. Obviously, different teachers have different ways of getting the message out. I stayed at that school until Grade 9.

One of the things that helped was that the teacher would just spend more time with me, if I didn’t understand something or looked like I didn’t understand. She would also repeat her instructions, as I was the new student in the classroom. My teachers were all quite helpful. I think that the programming that the school provided at that time met my needs, but could be improved a little more with what happened. However, I did complete high school and finished my studies at the nearby high school.

High school was probably the best thing that happened to me because I got EAL help in the final year or so—Grade 8 and 9 at the

elementary/middle years school. The EAL help wasn't a class, I did not have to go into a class and sit there. It was with a teacher who decided to take me on and started giving me help. She was the one who was spending extra time with me before school or after, or between classes to help me read and such, just to help me catch up. The help was great. I didn't really like to go, but I knew I needed to go as I needed to improve. That's why I did it, I had to!

The most difficult parts of school in Canada were learning to speak the language and making friends. Trying to talk to a kid who's lived here all his life was difficult, as they talked quickly and in slang. I didn't always understand what they were saying. Also, I believe at that time, that I was the only refugee attending that school.

At the end, I had some good friends, but it was a very rough start at the beginning. Some kids called me names, and I would fight with them, as I didn't know what else to do. Eventually the students who called me names accepted me. I did have some friends and we would talk about sports and TV shows. We would run around and push each other on the playground. There will always be some people you're not going to get along with—especially in elementary school. Everyone's just trying to find their place. I was trying to find my place, and so were they, but I didn't know that at the time.

Some of those friends I made at high school I still see from time to time, but we have gone our separate ways. When I see some of them at the

mall or around the community, we do say “hi,” but that's about it. We don't call each other, as everybody's gone their separate ways.



Charles Bendu arrived in Winnipeg from Sierra Leone in 2006. He is a graduate of the Academic and Professional Bridging Program for Internationally Trained Teachers (IET Program, University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education). He is now a Special Education Resource Teacher at Dufferin School in Winnipeg School Division.

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Life Today and Hopes for the Future

Everything is good at home. I feel that I had a good experience in the schools in Canada and I felt they prepared me for the future. The other students often asked me why I was going to the teachers for extra help and EAL support. Sometimes I would miss gym and instead sit with the teachers. But all the decisions you make throughout your life lead you to where you are now. If I hadn't done that, I wouldn't be sitting here now.

When I graduated, I was doing different jobs like managing at a Wendy's. I started working when I was in Grade 7 and throughout high school. In high school, I worked about 18-20 hours during the week, about 3 hours each day. Now I am a contractor and work for Canadian National/ Canadian Pacific Railways (CN/CP). They give out the contracts. I work more like an independent or private company. I build railway tracks. I would like to go to a trade school and learn more about a trade. I still don't know what I want to do, really. I know what I have to do. I am able to save some money towards going to a trade school.

Reflecting back, perhaps there is one thing that schools could do to help students like me. They could do more hands-on activities and more shops classes and take some of the newcomers to the different shops. They could take them to factories, workplaces, or field trips to some places where students can get vocational training such as Red River College, so they can learn what's out there.



Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier from Sierra Leone, published his best-selling memoir, "A Long Way Gone." At the age of 12, Beah fled his home and family following an attack by rebels and began to wander the turbulent West African country in search of safety. At 13, he was picked up by the government army and forced to fight with them for two years. Beah was eventually released and sent to a UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) rehabilitation centre. From there, he moved to the United States where he attended high school and college and has since become an influential advocate and writer. Beah has worked with groups and students in Manitoba.

© UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe. Ishmael Beah, Former Child Soldier, Addresses Press Conference. CC License.

This way they can develop an idea of what they would like to do after leaving high school, and they can look forward to something when they're done and have something to think about. I didn't have those opportunities.

I'm very satisfied with life and experiences in Canada and my prospects for the future. I feel like I've learned a lot up to this point. But there's always more to know and to learn. I need to spend more time listening to the news and listening to the radio.

Canada, Manitoba, and Winnipeg are all very unique. They are very safety-oriented. Everybody tends to keep to themselves, but at the same time they know when to reach out to people. That's what I like about this place—somebody reached out to me—the first teacher I had reached out to me, and gave me a chance. I couldn't imagine being here today in this position without her.

VIDEO RESOURCES

See [Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences](#).

History of the Conflict: Sierra Leone

The Story of Sierra Leone (Part 1 and 2) by Nathan Mascardo and Rachel Sullivan: A student-made film for Invisible Children Conference at Ferris High School.

- Part 1:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUDovmygWYc
- Part 2:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIX9twDZzDQ

Witness To Truth: A Video Report On The Sierra Leone Truth And Reconciliation Commission by Witness is a video about the Sierra Leonean Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and accompaniment to an official TRC report.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJbLHAX4k8Q

Child Soldiers

Jonathan Torgovnik's 'Girl Soldier,' Life After War in Sierra Leone: The women caught up in Sierra Leone's brutal civil war tell filmmaker, Jonathan Torgovnik, how they have coped in the decade since the country and their lives were torn apart.
<http://proof.nationalgeographic.com/2014/06/18/jonathan-torgovniks-girl-soldiers/>

Girl Soldiers—The Story from Sierra Leone by The New Zealand Herald: Child protection expert Dr. Mike Wessells of Columbia University recently visited New Zealand as a guest of ChildFund New Zealand to share his expertise and draw attention to the plight of the world's so-called lost generation—formerly recruited child soldiers.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=eINH_QggsEg

Special Assignment—Sierra Leone: Children of War (Parts 1–3) by Special Assignment's Jacques Pauw and Adil Bradlow, is a three-part series of videos. This award-winning documentary on child soldiers and the horrors of the Civil War in Sierra Leone. This documentary won the CNN African Journalist of the Year Award in 2000.

- Part 1:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=PugaQJcAn64
- Part 2:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=merqFuel-_o
- Part 3:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bc7K1X71xV8

Sierra Leonean Refugees

Life in a refugee camp: Marie by WAtoday.com.au: “Marie Sesay was eight-years-old when she fled war-torn Sierra Leone for a refugee camp in Guinea where food was scarce and sanitation obsolete. Now aged 25 and studying in Sydney, she tells her story to mark World Refugee Day 2014.”
<http://media.watoday.com.au/news/national-news/life-in-a-refugee-camp-marie-5529074.html>

Breaking Rocks (2010) by IRIN (IRIN is the humanitarian news and analysis service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs): This video looks at the hundreds of Sierra Leonean children who work breaking rocks for construction in order to pay for their school fees.
www.irinnews.org/film/4211/Breaking-Rocks

Education: an enduring casualty of war by UNICEF, describes efforts to rebuild the education system after war.
<http://vimeo.com/21068030>

Sierra Leone Refugee All Stars are a group of six Sierra Leonean musicians who came together to form a band while living in a West African refugee camp. Links to several videos follow:

- *Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars* by Panagea Day:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EA4z2sd3fOI>
- *SLRA's Refugee Rolling | Playing For Change* by Playing For Change:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyB6Vk25RHY&list=PLkmRgXU17ME9AQDa46EfIS-ff9QhnhUub

Amputee Football (2010) by IRIN, profiles the determination of a Sierra Leonean man to keep playing the game he loves despite losing a leg during his country's long and vicious civil war.
www.irinnews.org/film/4244/Amputee-Football

Sierra Leoneans in the Diaspora

Ishmael Beah, former child soldier born in Sierra Leone, now 26 years old, tells a powerfully gripping story. Links to two videos follow:

- *Former child soldier Ishmael Beah recounts his past* by Allan Gregg In Conversation:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kEL_LRBSqk
- *Life After War in Sierra Leone* by Big Think:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwV4pImBdpA

Sierra Leone family adjusts to winter in Winnipeg by CBC Winnipeg shows how a Sierra Leone family adjusts to Winnipeg during one of the coldest winters on record.

www.cbc.ca/player/Embedded-Only/News/Local+News/Manitoba/Homepage/ID/2440095204/

For additional resources concerning Sierra Leone and Liberia, see the [Video Resources](#) provided at the end of Navaeh's narrative.

NEVAEH* (SIERRA LEONE)

“I thought I had lived a lifetime.”

See [Mustapha's Refugee Learner Narrative for another perspective and additional information on Sierra Leone.](#)

Life before Canada

Birthplace and Family

Kushe. Hello. My name is Nevaeh. I was born on July 22, 1994, in a village in Sierra Leone. I am not clear what village it was because the civil war had already started and people were on the run trying to find a place of safety. In between all the running, that's when I was born. I lived in several villages and places in Sierra Leone. I was living in Gambia prior to coming to Canada and, according to my parents, I also lived in Guinea, but I was very young and I do not remember that time.

I belong to the Kpamende cultural group. My grandmother speaks several dialects and she and my mother speak Mende, the language of the Kpamende. My father comes from the Kono district and speaks Temne. At home we spoke Krio, the dominant language. I grew up with my Grani until she came to Canada. I had some “aunties” and “uncles” who were just friends of my family, but I mostly grew up with my Grani.

I have two brothers and one adopted sister. My adopted sister's biological mother was killed during the war and my mother took her in. My father worked in the diamond mines. That is where the war started. We did not hear from him for a while, so we thought that he was dead. Before the war, my mother worked for a non-government organization (NGO). She helped the NGOs with constructing buildings and houses for them. She also taught the blind and the deaf to read.

Sierra Leone had a civil war that affected my family and had a lot to do with the control of the diamond mines. I was separated from most of my family when rebels attacked my village. On that day and at the time, I was still very young and my Grani was holding me in her arms. Everyone tried to escape from the rebels. In the chaos of the moment, Grani and I were separated from my mother and my brothers and sister. This separation lasted for many years. For a while, Grani and I ended up living in Freetown, the capital city, after we escaped the village. We were living in a house with 15 or more other persons, all who were not related, and all who were strangers. We had to hide and be very quiet all the time because we were afraid of being found. I recall that there were times when, if someone knocked on the door, I would have to hide under the bed and be very quiet. We had to be in our homes by a certain time of the day or they



© United Nations/Department for Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section. Map No. 3902 Rev. 5. January 2004. Map of Sierra Leone. CC License. <www.un.org/depts/Cartographic/map/profile/sierrale.pdf>.

* To protect the participant's privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this narrative.

SIERRA LEONE

Historically, Sierra Leone was a source country for the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Later it became a site for the repatriation of former slaves during the abolitionist movement.

Sierra Leone is a nation with a population of about 6 million people. It became an independent nation in 1961 after a long period of colonization by the British. From 1961 until the start of the civil war in 1991, political instability was common with several coups resulting in regime changes.

Sierra Leone has many natural resources and is rich in diamonds and other minerals. The illegal trade in diamonds became known as “blood diamonds” due to their role in financing and perpetuating civil war.

Civil War

The civil war began in 1991 when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) began a campaign against President Momoh and captured towns on the border with Liberia. The brutal civil war in Liberia played a critical role in the fighting in Sierra Leone. Charles Taylor, the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, is deemed to have helped form RUF.

The conflict was not based on ethnic or religious divisions. It resulted in part from opposition to the corrupt ruling class and a fight for control of the country’s diamond mines. The war resulted in an estimated 50,000 deaths and the displacement of over 1 million citizens. Both rebels and government forces used a large number of child soldiers. RUF was notorious for atrocities committed during the war, such as mass rape and mutilation of victims.

The war came to an end in 2002. An UN-backed war crimes court was set up to try those who were primarily responsible for the atrocities committed. In April 2012, the court found former Liberian leader Charles Taylor guilty of aiding and abetting war crimes in the Sierra Leonean civil war.

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- BBC Country Profile, Sierra Leone. Retrieved from <www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094194>.

would “cuff” us. There were times when we had to hide in the sewage ditch. I remember vividly when a soldier came to our house and everyone fled to the back of the house and tried to be very quiet. One of the older men was having trouble staying quiet because there was a dead body close to where they were hiding and he started to cry. Someone put a hand over my mouth to keep me quiet. It was at this point that I too saw the dead body, and soon realized that the situation was very serious. I was five years old when I came to that realization.

The community was very caring; they gave me snacks and watched out for me. If one of them saw me somewhere where I shouldn’t be, they would take me back to my home. I often felt like I had many Granis. I was happy living in the community because of the sense of being looked after, but



© UNESCO/J. Caro Gardiner. Everyday life in a market in Freetown, Sierra Leone. CC License.

Sierra Leonean Refugees

During the height of the civil war as many as 2 million of the country's 6 million citizens were displaced, with some 120,000 fleeing to Liberia (even though that country was experiencing its own civil war and conflict) and 370,000 to Guinea. Others sought asylum in neighbouring countries such as Gambia, Ghana, and Nigeria.

Under UNHCR's voluntary repatriation operation from September 2000 to July 2004, more than 179,000 Sierra Leonean refugees returned home and many others returned by their own means. However, many Sierra Leonean refugees remained in refugee camps in neighbouring countries long after 2004. By 2008, around 43,000 refugees from Sierra Leone continued to live in exile, mainly in neighbouring countries, including Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, and Nigeria. As of 2012, there are still pockets of refugees who have not repatriated. For example, significant numbers of Sierra Leoneans remain in the Buduburam Refugee Camp in Ghana. Some of the people in the camp have little choice but to stay as they have no identification cards or paperwork.

Some of the camps that provided Sierra Leoneans asylum in Guinea included Sembakounya, Telikoro, Boreah, Albadaria, Kountaya, Kouankan, and the Mambya transit centre.

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eventually as I got older I became aware of the fighting and the war. I would hear the older people speaking about the war. We were afraid.

I developed malaria while living in the house. My Grani made me herbal medicine for the malaria. Later, when I moved to the refugee camp, I was given medication. I lived with my Grani from my birth until I was reunited with my family. I have a very close relationship with my Grani.

We also lived in Gambia for a while. We had a house for the two of us then. All of the houses had metal roofs which were very sharp and had clay walls. Once I cut myself on the metal roofing.

Seeking Asylum in Gambia

Eventually, my Grani and I fled to Gambia to be safe. Seeking safety in another country allowed for the possibility of immigrating to a third country. I was very young but I know from what I was told that my Grani and I spent some time

in a refugee camp but I do not know the name of it. I think it was a large camp. I do remember being very bored in the refugee camp. There wasn't any school and there wasn't anything to do. I did meet some UN soldiers there and their presence made me feel safe compared to living in the house in Freetown. There were long waits in lines to get food. The only work that I could do was selling stuff, usually water. I would go and get the water in a container and then my Grani would help me pour it into plastic bags for selling. Sometimes I didn't get money for the water but I would barter with my customers for things we/I needed or that we could sell to someone else. It was hard living in the camp. I remember people pushing me when I was in line for food. I was very small and

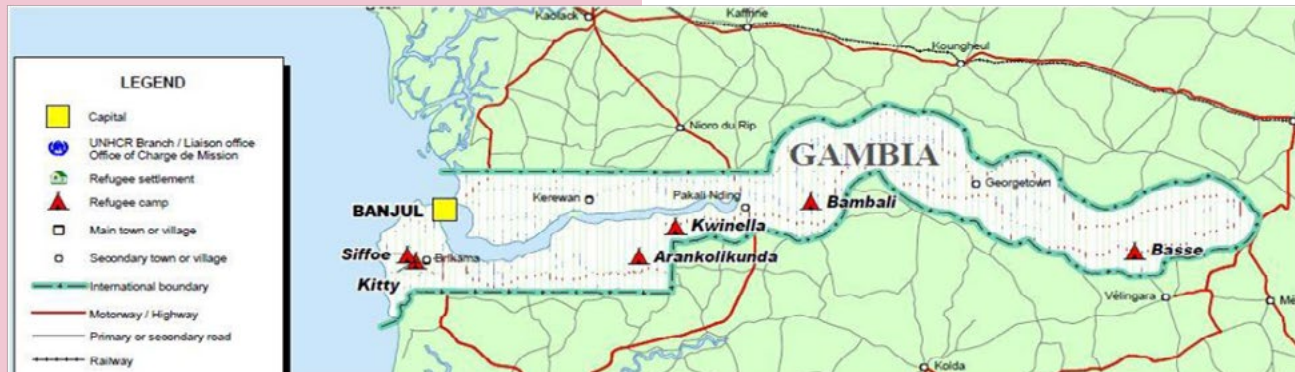


© Kathy Roberts/Child Aid Gambia. April 2011. Makumbaya Lower Basic School in the Gambia. <www.kathyroberts.co.uk/what_katy_did/makumbaya_lower_basic_school_makumbaya_village_gambia_001.htm>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Sierra Leoneans in the Gambia

According to a 2004 UNHCR report, *Refugee livelihoods: A case study of the Gambia*, Sierra Leonean refugees sought asylum in Gambia in primarily three locations, Basse and Bambali refugee camps, and as “urban” refugees in or around the city of Banjul. The Gambia at that point was considered to be one of the most “refugee friendly” countries in all of West Africa. In 2004, the Gambia has a population of approximately 1.5 million people. UNHCR estimated that there were approximately 12,000 refugees living throughout the Gambia, but other sources estimated the refugee population to range from 10,000 to over 30,000 persons. The refugee population in 2004 consisted primarily of Sierra-Leoneans (the majority) followed by the Senegalese (second highest), Liberians, Somalis, Ethiopians, Rwandans, Iraqis, and Eritrean.

Map Below: © UNHCR/Geographic Information and Mapping Unit. Excerpted from Map of Senegal as of December 2001. CC Licence. <www.unhcr.org/3ceb88514.html>.



malnourished and they took advantage of that. In that environment people changed, only caring about themselves, being greedy, and stealing frequently. My one and only good memory of that camp was the day I left.

School in Gambia

I remember attending school for a brief time in Gambia when I was about six or seven years old. My Grani had to pay school fees, the transportation, the books, the uniform, and lunches. She found it difficult to continue to pay the school fees and she tried to negotiate with the staff to find other ways to make the payments. She was not successful.

The entrance and stairway was on the outside of the school building. The school was a two-storey building. There was no railing to protect the students from falling down the uneven stairs and many fell and cut themselves on the metal roofing. I remember that many



© L. Taylor/UNHCR. November 27, 2008. Appreciation: Sierra Leonean women refugees in Guinea with transport vouchers to a safer camp. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/3063348226/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

students had accidents on those stairs. The school had indoor toilets, but no one wanted to use them because the plumbing really wasn't very effective. The classes had about 35 to 40 students in them. Some of the classrooms had long tables for several students to sit at but in other classrooms there would be just two students sharing a table. Before classes began each day, there was always the singing of the national anthem outside in the school yard. The subjects were taught in English. I studied math and a little bit of French, but now I do not remember any French words.

I liked going to school, but the teachers were really strict, they didn't “baby” you. I didn't have my own textbooks, so I shared with another student. I am not sure, but I think that I had one teacher for all my subjects. In any case, if another teacher was

Liberian Refugees in Sierra Leone

Liberia experienced its own civil wars from 1989–1997, which was followed later by a period of rebel insurgencies from 2001–2003. Some Liberians fled to Sierra Leone seeking asylum even though Sierra Leone was experiencing its own civil war during much of these periods. As a result of conflict in Liberia more than 700,000 Liberians became refugees in neighbouring countries (Guinea [325,000], Ivory Coast [270,000], Sierra Leone [125,000], Ghana [8,000], and Nigeria [1,700]). In addition, up to 500,000 Liberians were internally displaced in the capital, Monrovia. Most Liberians suffered or witnessed atrocities.

By 2003, about 50,000 Liberian refugees were hosted in seven camps in Sierra Leone and UNHCR was expecting an influx of 30,000 additional refugees. In 2004, with the return of peace to Liberia after Charles Taylor's departure, some 350,000 refugees and 500,000 internally displaced persons were awaiting repatriation to their rural villages and towns.

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Manuel Toledo (2010). West Africa: Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees feel abandoned in Guinea. Retrieved from <<http://pambazuka.org/en/category/refugees/64294>>

required to teach a specific subject, the teachers would move around from class to class.

One of the problems that I remember at that school was the competition between the students. I feel that the teachers should have focused on helping all students and on finding different ways to teach the students in the class, rather than making it a competition. Another problem was the use of student hallway monitors when the teachers had to leave the classrooms. These monitors would control



© R. Ochlik/UNHCR. December 2004. In 2002, the Kamara family fled the war in Liberia and settled in Jembe refugee camp in Sierra Leone, where they lived for almost three years. When UNHCR began repatriating refugees in October of 2004, the Kamaras decided to return home. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/6774703524/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

the class by taking it to the next level. I remember getting in trouble in art class because I couldn't duplicate a picture. I was punished by the teacher who pumped (pulled) my ears. I thought then that it was my fault, now I know it wasn't. I should have not been punished in that way. When my Grani could no longer pay the fees, I had to leave school and went to work selling water and oranges. I thought about being a singer or an actor. Although I am quite shy, if you put a microphone in front of me or put me on a stage in front of an audience, I will start singing. I always loved the spotlight!

Immigration to Canada

I was still in a refugee camp in Gambia with my Grani before coming to Canada. I was about 8 ½ years old when I left Gambia. We had thought that Father was dead because many who worked in the mines had been killed and we had not heard from him. Actually, he was alive and managed to immigrate to London, England. Meanwhile, Mother and my brothers and sister had immigrated to St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada. It was pure luck that we eventually learned that Father was alive.

My brother attended an elementary school in St. John's. During the point when class pictures were taken in the school, one of his classmates was showing his class picture to his

Vocabulary of Trust

“Clearly many Sierra Leoneans had undergone significant ‘traumatic’ episodes during the war, but the vocabulary of trust and mistrust immediately took on greater significance in my research because it was the way that Sierra Leoneans described the world around them. It was the way they often understood their interactions with the State and with one another in personal relationships. Distrust was a topic of constant chatter and concern. Whom to trust? How to trust? They described a world where virtually no one can be trusted, not even fathers. In such a context, how do people live their lives and how does anything get accomplished?”

Carpenter, Shelby E. (2011). Trust Building in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone. In: Themes of Displacement, ed. Shelby E. Carpenter, Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences, Vol. 27. <www.iwm.at/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=463&Itemid=362>



© Tommy Trenchard/IRIN. Youths campaign in Freetown ahead of presidential elections in November. CC License.



© L. Taylor/UNHCR. November 27, 2008. Hope: Young Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea camp. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/3063348286/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

mother. As my brother was the only black student in that class, he stood out. The classmate’s mother asked her son about the new student in the class. Her son said his name and the mother realized that she recognized the unique family name. Previously, the mother had worked in England, where she had met my father and had gotten to know him. She thought it might be his son. She contacted my father in England and that is how he came to reconnect and eventually be reunited with my mother and my siblings.

We were now the only members of the family who were separated and missing. My mother and father believed that Grani and I had been killed during the war and were dead. But they still decided to ask immigration and the UN soldiers to search for us. We were found in the refugee camp in Gambia, along with an uncle who had also sought asylum in a refugee camp. Once we were located, the process for reuniting my Grani, my uncle and I with our family in Canada began. My father also began the process of being reunited with the family in Canada. By that point, my mother and my siblings had been in Canada for about three years. After many years of separation, we were all going to be one family again.

Starting a New Life in Canada

I was very impressed with how Grani, my uncle and I were looked after on the trip to Canada. Every person involved with our journey, such as ticket agents, baggage handlers, and flight attendants, were very kind and generous with their time. When we landed in Montreal, we were met by a group who took us to a hotel, gave me toys and all of us warm clothing. We then flew to St. John’s Newfoundland and we were taken to a newcomers’ house.



© Canada Mathare Education Trust (CMETrust). A poster from an Ottawa screening of a documentary about Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars. "Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars have risen like a phoenix out of the ashes of war and enflamed the passions of fans across the globe with their uplifting songs of hope, faith and joy." <<http://cmetrust.org/news-and-events/past-events/ottawa-past-events/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

CMETrust is a Canadian charity providing high school scholarships to students from Mathare, Kenya's second largest slum.

I thought that it was the most beautiful house that I had ever seen. "It couldn't get better than this!" I thought. We lived in temporary housing for a while. My grandmother was still my legal guardian, so we lived together in an apartment, but very near to my mother, and my brothers and sister. We all attended the same school. Eventually, Father was also reunited with the family.

My first memories and impressions of Canada were basically good. I remember how nice everyone was to my family and me. I couldn't get over the fact that I wasn't being pushed around and everyone was so gentle. We arrived in early January and the Christmas decorations were still up. I thought everything was so pretty, including the snow which I ate. The first time I saw snow was in Montreal. I loved it. Some of the snow was yellow, but it was only later that I realized it was yellow because dogs do their business in the snow.

My favourite part of living in Canada was going to school and the students who were in my class. It was a really friendly environment and the teachers were very passionate about helping me. Teachers actually sat down with me and gave me one-on-one help! I also was helped by a special EAL teacher who taught me basic vocabulary and explained many things to me. She taught me how to spell using a completely different approach from what I had experienced in Gambia. And best of all, it didn't involve punishment if I didn't get it right away. The EAL teacher was very patient and she understood what I was feeling. When I got frustrated with some task, the teacher would try a different approach. The biggest challenge I faced in school was that I was super shy and uncomfortable because I couldn't speak English well. I thought I was the only one who had an accent and I felt that I was the only one who was different. Also, I wasn't

accustomed to being around so many white people. There were five black students in the school and three of them were in my family!

I really don't remember having any negative experiences or difficulties during that time. The school and the support I received helped me adjust. There were likely some, but if there were any difficulties, my parents and Grani probably handled them. During the first few years in St. John's I lived most of the time with my Grani. We were still separated but living close by to my brothers and sisters and parents. But then my Grani and I made a third move, this time into public housing. From then on, I stayed with my parents and siblings during the school year because the school was closer to my parent's home. But I still spent a lot of time with my Grani because I liked to be with her, especially on weekends and in the summer.

The move to Canada literally brought my family closer together. After many years of being separated and thinking that the others were dead, we now were physically reunited. Now we could celebrate special occasions together. But, because my family was separated for a long period of time, we had to get to know each other. I remember feeling nervous about meeting the rest of my family for the first time. In the beginning there were a lot of little things which are part of getting used to each other that we had to overcome. But in the bigger picture what was most important was that we were all happy to be together and know that we still had each other. Looking back on those times and now having the opportunity to live and spend time with my parents and brothers and sisters, I realize that the discomfort and little difficulties we experienced at first were really nothing.

When I was in Grade 5, that summer, my father got a job in Winnipeg and moved there. Over time, the rest of my family joined him in Winnipeg. We didn't all move together at the same time; we arrived in Winnipeg in intervals. It was about a year before I was reunited with my Grani.

The Effects of War

Looking back I realize that in those first few years in Canada and my life in Africa, that my frequent frustration was part of the effects of being a refugee. I often wondered why people were at war and when it would end. It was emotionally draining. I also felt scared all the time. When I was frightened by something, I often feared I might not wake up in the morning. My reaction to being scared was to laugh very nervously. I still remember that the adults that lived with us in Freetown, when they were scared, they would often vomit or lose control of their bowels or urinate on themselves. I remember having nightmares. I felt paranoid all the time. One of my brothers who was with my mother was taken away to be a child soldier. He still experiences nightmares because of what he witnessed as a child soldier. He is receiving support through a church group. But now I feel that I have peace of mind. I greatly appreciate that fact and do not take it for granted.

Life in Winnipeg

By the time I came to Winnipeg, I was a teenager and I had been in Canada for three years. I felt much more comfortable, in school and in the community. I no longer felt that I was the "odd man out" and I found that there was more diversity in my Winnipeg schools than in Newfoundland schools. I wasn't treated any differently and I

felt very accepted. I made friends easier than in Newfoundland, partly because I was more comfortable speaking English by then.

My mother, however, had a harder time. She had difficulty adjusting to Canada because she had to return to school. She was already in her 30s and had her children to look after. Even though she had a university degree, her credentials weren't accepted here. My mother took a job as a home care worker, but the elderly person she was assigned to, was prejudiced, and did not like her. She made it difficult because my mother was African. The senior treated her very badly and had her daughter come and tell her that she felt uncomfortable having her around. Mother was shocked by the experience but then it motivated her to return to school. She now has a degree in women's studies and community development and is currently working in that field.

In Winnipeg, I was placed in a Grade 6 classroom in an elementary school. I thought at that time that I had already lived a lifetime. My school and experiences in Newfoundland prepared me for my schooling in Winnipeg. My Newfoundland EAL teacher helped me communicate with the other children on the playground and develop relationships. I did okay at the beginning when I was placed in a regular class. But, I wish that I had gotten extra EAL support like I had in Newfoundland. I found that it was difficult for me, especially grammar and spelling. My father was busy working and my older siblings were busy with their own life. My mother and Grani were still living in Newfoundland, so I had to do it on my own.



Mariatu Kamara was born in Sierra Leone. In 1999 at the age of 12, Mariatu had her hands cut off by rebel child soldiers. For three years, Mariatu lived in the refugee camps of Freetown and eventually immigrated to Canada in 2002. Mariatu lives in Toronto and has graduated from high school and is now attending college. She is the author of *The Bite of the Mango* which is based on her life experiences.

Mariatu has spoken publicly for the non-profit group Free the Children. She has also traveled speaking to high school students and organizations about her physical and emotional journey from a child victim of war in Sierra Leone to a successful author, public speaker, and student in Canada. She was recently honoured in New York City with a Voices of Courage award given by the Women's Refugee Commission.

In February 2008, Mariatu, a UNICEF Special Representative, travelled with UNICEF back to Sierra Leone and visited many of UNICEF's projects for children in that country. She now seeks to share her story and help raise awareness about the work that UNICEF does for children around the world.

Photo © Don Pollard/Women's Refugee Commission. Mariatu Kamara. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

The Bite of the Mango book video trailer featuring Mariatu Kamara can be viewed at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCsvUkFG4L>>.

An interview with Mariatu Kamara in Gemany (in English) as a UNICEF representative about child soldiers can be viewed at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D92lvHRqUMU>>.

I know that my Grade 6 teacher tried to help me and was really nice, but everything was going too fast and I wasn't getting the type of help that I needed. I felt that everyone was super smart and I felt that I wasn't as smart as everyone else. When I went on to a different school for junior high in a different area of Winnipeg, there was a lot more emphasis on French than I had in Newfoundland. Also, I found that my Grade 7 and Grade 8 classmates had formed cliques. In the beginning, even though I didn't have as much as they did in material things (iPods, clothing), I was very friendly and made friends. Some of the students who were my friends in middle school went on to the same high school, but everyone started branching off into different groups.

In Grade 12, I still have some of the friends I made in Grade 10. Most of my friends are white. There aren't that many blacks in my high school. I was in choir and band from Grades 4 to 8. I joined the social justice club, the student council, and a drama club. These clubs were my interests and my strengths.

When I came to Winnipeg, it was about finding myself and finding out who I wanted around me. Like the saying goes, "Birds of a feather flock together." I never thought about that saying until I entered high school. For a while, I got involved with a group of young people who were different than me and were the wrong group for me. In high school you sometimes want to be with a certain group, to be like them, but not because of who you are. Once I realized that the group wasn't for me, that is when I became involved with people who were more like me. They had the same interests as me, such as social justice. Also, I became more successful in school. Coming to this realization, I

feel that I have developed my inner strength and I feel comfortable with myself.

Life Today and Hopes for the Future

In June 2012, I graduated from high school. I was very excited about graduating. In my Grade 12 year, I did everything that I wanted and wished to accomplish. I did an internship with a law firm. During that internship, I helped with files, warrants, and subpoenas. I was given many responsibilities. I am pleased that at the end of the internship, I was given a reference letter that stated that I acted in a professional manner. They even offered to help me prepare for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT).

I am lucky that I had such good school experiences in Canada and that I have been well-prepared for the next stage in my life. I am organized, punctual, and professional, and I can prioritize and plan. I feel that I have matured. Reflecting on my school experiences, the only thing I regret is not having had more EAL support beyond the three years that I got. I recognize that I still have some English language weaknesses, such as difficulties with spelling and writing. I believe that those difficulties could have been dealt with, with additional EAL support. I wish I had been able to advocate for myself when I was told upon entering school in Winnipeg that because I had EAL in St. John's, Newfoundland that I didn't need any more EAL support. I wonder why no one ever noticed my struggle. If I had gotten just one hour a day of additional EAL support, it would have made a really big difference, especially when it comes to English language skills.

I have had three jobs to date which I loved: a banquet server, a telemarketer, and a summer camp counsellor for refugee children for the Boys and Girls Club. I like to be busy. But now my goal is to become a lawyer. However, I care about more than having a good career.



Ngardy Conteh, Sierra Leonean-Canadian filmmaker, founded Mattru Media Inc. named after Mattru Jong, a town in Sierra Leone and the birthplace of her parents. She was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone and moved to Canada as a child. Ngardy was a scholarship track and field athlete and a graduate of the University of New Orleans Film and Video program.

Her film, *The Flying Stars*, had its world premiere in the fall of 2014, see <www.flyingstarsdoc.com>. Ngardy describes the film as "Bornor and Census are amputees who play organized soccer in Sierra Leone to cope with the horrors of war they suffered a decade ago. As they dream of playing internationally, they wrestle with nightmares that haunt their daily lives and threaten the very families they are trying to feed. Can Bornor and Census overcome their postwar trauma and score a victory for their children off the soccer pitch?"

Photo © Indiewire. 2014. Ngardy Conteh. <<http://blogs.indiewire.com/shadowandact/c0a7e8c0-8b11-11e1-bcc4-123138165f92>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

I want to give back to my community. I hope someday to start a non-profit organization for refugee kids and open an orphanage. Currently, I am helping with fundraising to build a school in Sierra Leone. I do so by speaking and telling my story at different schools and organizations and also by participating in car washes. Sometimes the donations are in the form of backpacks and school supplies.

I am excited about what the future holds for me. In September 2012, I will begin my studies at the University of Manitoba. I plan to enrol in International Studies and Development and then go into law school.

At this point in my life, I am very happy with how my life in Canada turned out and with my personal life. My family and my relationships with them are good. Of course we have the usual ups and downs along the way that any normal family experiences but, for the most part, our ties are still strong. I am very close to my brothers and sister and I feel sorry for those who aren't close to their siblings. I love mine so much because when you have problems with

your parents, your siblings are always there for you. I can't believe that I once almost lost them.

I am very grateful for everything that I have in my life and appreciate how things have turned out. I didn't know that I could achieve and be where I am today. Even after I came to Canada, I thought that I would always be that dumb kid in class and I wondered if I would ever be friends with the cool kids. Now, I realize that the most important thing is being true to oneself. There's no point in not being oneself. When you are yourself you will attract like-minded people.

Sierra Leone Refugee Resettlement, Inc.

Photographs from the Summer Program 2014 in Winnipeg.



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VIDEO RESOURCES

See [Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences](#).

Liberia: Conflict

A Lifetime of Violence: Reflecting on Liberia's Bloody Wars by International Reporting Project: CNN Seema Mathur tells a chilling tale of a former Liberian warlord, "General Butt Naked," who has found refuge in his religious conversion.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MRzJeeD570>

Between War and Peace—Liberia by Journeyman Pictures: After fourteen years of anarchy, the international community is helping to stabilise Liberia. But how does a country move on after so many years of war?
www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXKyuZrd3Bg

Child Soldiers Cry—Liberia by Journeyman Pictures: This film looks at Liberian child-soldiers in rehabilitation, who are still haunted by their nightmares. This film paints a very human picture of the devastation of war. What can Liberia do to protect its future?
www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7PbhCmBoFY

Liberia: Refugees

Refugee Camp [A Week in West Africa—1 of 9] by International Rescue Committee (IRC): A visit to Jembe refugee camp in Sierra Leone shows Liberians who fled the civil war in their country.
www.rescue.org/video/refugee-camp-a-week-west-africa-1-9

Sierra Leone: Conflict

Sierra Leone's Blood-Diamond Hydra by Journeyman Pictures (2008): West Africa's civil wars were almost exclusively funded by the trade in 'blood diamonds.' But now, the UN and EU is tightening the trade in precious gems through the Kimberly Process.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zdt1WWuMBM>

Africa—Liberia & Sierra Leone—Dancing with the Devil 1 of 2—BBC Our World Documentary by Travel Places & Culture: Humphrey Hawksley retraces Graham Greene's journey across Liberia and Sierra Leone and finds that despite huge amounts of international aid, the countries are still beset with a multitude of problems.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_SccCldtcB0

Sierra Leone—Overcoming the legacy of war by United Nations (2013): Sierra Leone's particularly brutal civil war left its people with a terrible legacy. Tens of thousands are now disabled, as a result of savage amputations of limbs by rebels.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uweqloiubk

Children on the Front Line: Sierra Leone by ProVention Consortium (2008): A Plan International film on how music can help prevent future conflicts and give youth an outlet to express themselves in post-conflict situations.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-WUGDHv510>

Sierra Leone: Refugees

Performing in a Refugee Camp by POV: The Sierra Leone Refugee All Stars perform the song *Weapon Conflict* at the Sembakounya Refugee Camp in the Republic of Guinea.
www.pbs.org/pov/sierraleone/video_classroom1.php#.VHYxpmz4C70

Life in a refugee camp: Marie by WAtoday.com.au: "Marie Sesay was eight-years-old when she fled war-torn Sierra Leone for a refugee camp in Guinea where food was scarce and sanitation obsolete. Now aged 25 and studying in Sydney, she tells her story to mark World Refugee Day 2014."
<http://media.watoday.com.au/news/national-news/life-in-a-refugee-camp-marie-5529074.html>

Friends of Mabureh by mywildweb (2012): Describes the work being done to support CanSerra Primary School, which was recently built in Kissi Town, the former Waterloo refugee Camp near Freetown and is a recipient of many Canadian donations and support.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPgrFECtSGs>

Sierra Leoneans in the Diaspora

Mariatu Kamara visits the Don Mills Library (2014) by Don Mills YAG: A visit to the library to talk about her book, *The Bite of the Mango*.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=816dit11PrA

UNICEF: Mariatu Kamara on the right to live safe from harm by UNICEF: Mariatu Kamara is UNICEF Canada's Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6B4q_YY8a4

Ishmael Beah—Child Soldier on George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight: The child soldier, of Sierra Leone, who witnessed and committed war atrocities talks about his new book.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=5K4yhPSQEzo

For additional resources concerning Sierra Leone, see the [Video Resources](#) provided at the end of Mustapha's narrative.

TANYA* (AFGHANISTAN)

“...I still have one foot in Afghanistan and the other foot in Canada.”

Life before Canada

Birthplace and Family

I was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, on January 1, 1989. Prior to coming to Canada, I lived in Peshawar, Pakistan. I am a Muslim. My family speaks Farsi. I speak Farsi, Urdu, Pashtu, and English. I have two brothers (Atash and Babur), one sister (Azin), and my mother (Afshan) and father (Asa). I had a very good relationship with all my family.

My father died before we moved to Pakistan. Prior to my father's death, my mother, Afshan, worked as a nurse. My father was an Afghani government employee. He died in a fire of a government building where he worked. We believe that the fire was set by the Taliban. I was almost 12 when Father passed away and brother Atash had just been born.

We left Afghanistan because of the war with the Taliban rebels, who caused my father's death. After he died, there was no one to support us. My mother couldn't work in Afghanistan and she wasn't allowed to be outside her home without a male accompanying her. It was hard for my mother because one of my uncles was giving her a hard time. He wouldn't help her.



Map No. 3958 Rev. 7 UNITED NATIONS
June 2011

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section

© United Nations/Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section. Map No. 3958 Rev. 7. June 2011. Map of Afghanistan. CC License. <<https://www.un.org/depts/Cartographic/map/profile/afghanis.pdf>>.

* To protect the participant's privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this narrative.

AFGHANISTAN

The current borders of Afghanistan date back to the 1893 Durand Line Agreement that followed the second Anglo-Afghan war of 1878–1881. The agreement resulted in the split of the Pashtun tribes between Afghanistan and British India (part of which today is Pakistan). Afghanistan gained full independence from British control in 1919.

War and Conflict

Afghanistan has experienced over 40 years of almost continuous political instability, war, and conflict. This period of instability and conflict began in 1973 with the coup that saw the overthrow of King Zahir Shah. This was followed by the Saur revolution in 1978 that led to the control of the nation by a Marxist government that was closely allied and supported by Russia.

Opposition from Islamist parties, collectively known as the Mujahedeen, to the Marxist government and its policy changes led to civil war, when the Soviet Union intervened and sent its armed forces into the country. The Soviet War in Afghanistan lasted from 1979 to 1989. The war had an enormous impact on the civilian population. It resulted in massive displacement and an exodus of refugees to Iran and Pakistan which peaked in 1990 with the displacement of 6.2 million Afghans. This conflict also resulted in over 1 million civilian deaths by its conclusion in 1989.

The Soviet war was followed by a period of Mujahedeen control and infighting from 1989–1994. During this period, various factions within the Mujadeen fought for power and control.

During the Mujadeen period of internal conflict, a new group, the Taliban, emerged. The Taliban sought to establish an Islamic state according to the conservative “Deobandi” Pashtun traditions in Afghanistan. The group, led by Mullah Muhammad Omar, consisted primarily of ethnic Pashtuns from eastern Afghanistan who were educated in Pakistan’s madrassas (religious seminaries). They came to prominence and dominated Afghanistan from 1994 to 2001.

The Taliban regime attracted the attention of the international community by providing a safe haven for al-Qaeda, allowing the presence of the militant Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan to function, the systemic discrimination against women and girls, and the illicit opium production. This led to international intervention and the launching of the US Operation, Enduring Freedom, late in 2001.

From 2001 to the present, the war has had an international element. Although the Taliban were largely defeated and lost control of the nation, conflict and armed attacks are still common. The Taliban are still active and are a threat in the eastern and southern part of the country.

Reference

Human Security Project Report: Afghanistan Conflict Report <www.conflictmonitors.org/countries/afghanistan/about-the-conflict/conflict-history>. Accessed May 2013.

Life in Peshawar, Pakistan

We travelled to Pakistan by car and sometimes on foot through the mountains because the Taliban was checking who was leaving. It was far from Afghanistan. I wasn’t happy to leave because we had just lost our father. We realized that we could get an education in Pakistan and have opportunities to work. We knew that there, we would have the freedom to choose what we wanted to do. We had friends in Pakistan who helped us get settled. The Pakistani people were helpful giving my mother a job and a place to live. We felt safer there. But, there were also some Pakistani people who were not so helpful. Some of them gave our family a hard time.

For example, a down payment, which my mother had saved to buy a house, was stolen from us by a big (important) man in the local Pakistani community. We gave him the money but were not even given the house to rent. We could not do anything about it because he was powerful. We couldn’t complain to the police. We were afraid that if we did, we would be killed. We know that he cheated us as well as another family. We were forced to move back to our previous landlord, a good person who allowed us to stay for another month until we found another place. Luckily, the bad times passed and then the good times came.

Life in Peshawar had good and bad points. It was good that I was with my family and that if anything happened we could face it together. It was hard to be in a new country, trying to find employment, worrying about being on the street with no food. But I was able to make friends there, some were Pakistani and others were Afghans like me.

After moving to Pakistan, my mother earned a living as a seamstress and worked with a group of other women. First, she had to learn how to sew and then got work sewing. She was able to do it at home.

Pakistan was kind of scary, especially for women. My mother wanted us children to go to school and come directly home. As I was only 12 years old when we moved to Pakistan, I wasn't allowed to work. It was difficult to find housing in Peshawar because my mother didn't have a husband.

Life was different in Afghanistan before the Taliban came. In Kabul, everyone had the freedom to choose what they wanted to do and to be educated. There wasn't any fighting. I was allowed to play outside. The neighbours were always there to help with the younger children, when my mother was working as a nurse. I helped by looking after the younger children after school. I was very happy living in Kabul. It was peaceful like Canada. Afghanistan was a beautiful country before the



© Sam Phelps/UNHCR. November 2011. Three young Afghan girls attending school in Pakistan, which might be difficult in some conservative areas of their homeland. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/7453351188/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Taliban came. The mountains and the land were very beautiful. After the Taliban came, women were not allowed to leave their homes. If a woman wanted to go out for anything, for example, shopping, she must be accompanied at all times by a man to the market. Women had to be completely covered in a burka. Girls were not allowed to attend school.

I first went to school at age six, in Kabul. The school year was divided into about eight months of schooling with four months of school breaks. I remember going to school in Kabul for about two or three years, then I had to stop. I was about eight or nine years old at that time.

The school I attended was big. The boys and girls went to school at separate times and had separate classrooms: boys in the morning and girls in the afternoon. Our school uniform was a black dress with a white head scarf. There were about 10 or 11 classrooms in the school. In each class there were about 12 students. I liked going to school in Kabul. I don't recall having any difficulties in school in Kabul.

In Peshawar, Pakistan the school was different. There were about 24 to 25 students in each class. Only one teacher taught the girls. The subjects were Farsi, mathematics, sometimes science, and the history of Afghanistan. Each girl had her own desk and chair. We went to school for six days a



© Zalmai/UNHCR/APERTURE 2003. August 2008. A school in Kabul: "In many classrooms the age difference among students may be ten years or more, a legacy of the six years of education lost during the Taliban regime." <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/2753175578/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

week, from Saturday to Thursday. My favourite subjects were mathematics and the history of my country. I liked going to school and being with my friends, but I didn't like the school work, especially when we had exams because I didn't pay attention in class. My mother encouraged me to work harder at school and study.

In Peshawar, I walked to school in a group of friends accompanied always by one of the mothers for safety and protection. The school I attended was also very big. I was put in a Grade 6 or 7 classroom with girls my age, even though I had left Kabul with only Grade 2/3 schooling. When we moved to Pakistan, I didn't attend school until about two years later, when I was about 14, because I stayed at home with my younger sister Azin until she could go to school with me. Before attending the school in Pakistan, I had to study for a test that would determine where to place me. The boys and girls were still separated in the school in Peshawar. At the school I had the opportunity to study some English. All the subjects were taught in Farsi. I had some problems in the Pakistani school, because

Afghans in Pakistan

Pakistan is home to considerable numbers of Afghans. They are mostly refugees who fled Afghanistan during the 1980s Soviet War as well as business people, diplomats, workers, students, tourists, et cetera. In 2012, approximately 1.65 million registered Afghan refugees were living in Pakistan. The majority are in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Peshawar), FATA, and north-western Balochistan. Many of the Afghan refugees were born and raised in Pakistan over the last 30 years, but are still deemed citizens of Afghanistan. Afghan refugees are allowed to work, rent houses, travel, and attend schools until the end of 2012. As Afghanistan currently does not have the capacity to repatriate many refugees, the UNHCR has helped some refugees relocate abroad, mostly to Canada, Australia, Germany, Norway, and Sweden. Due to historical, ethnic, and linguistic connections, Afghan immigrants and refugees find it relatively easy to adapt to local Pakistani society. However, they do face some challenges as approximately 71% of registered Afghans in Pakistan did not have any formal education and only 20% were active in the labour force. Despite the economic hardships and challenges they face, many Afghans are not motivated to return home soon because of safety concerns, lack of housing, and/or employment opportunities in Afghanistan.

Throughout Pakistan, Afghan schools have been established to attend to the educational needs of the large numbers of Afghan refugee children. Increasingly, many Afghans use and are fluent in Urdu, the national language of Pakistan.

Peshawar has been a major center for Afghans fleeing the Soviet War and the Taliban regime. For example, Jaozai refugee camp had an Afghan population of 100,000 in 1988. Thousands of Afghans live in the region in places such as Latifabad, Zaryab colony, Hayatabad, Tehkal, Afghan colony, Afridiabad, and Sethitown. Peshawar, before 1893, was one of the principal cities of Afghanistan and this historical connection has facilitated the integration of the Pashtun Afghan refugees.

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2012 UNHCR country operations profile—Pakistan <www.unhcr.org/pages/49e487016.html>.

2012 UNHCR country operations profile—Afghanistan <www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486eb6.html>.

if I didn't understand something or know the right answer, the teacher would hit me. But my sister was smarter than me and she would help me. At that time, I don't recall having any idea of what I wanted to do in my future.

Immigration to Canada

I lived in Pakistan until my family was able to immigrate to Canada. We all came, my mother, my two brothers, my sister, and me. I was 18 years old when I immigrated. I didn't know anything about Canada. Some neighbours told my mother about the Immigrant Center where she could apply to immigrate to Canada. She applied but it took almost seven years for us to get permission to immigrate to Canada. The Canadian government wanted proof that we were telling the truth about the situation, but we didn't have any documents to prove our story. Everything we had was left behind in Afghanistan. Eventually, we were accepted. I was happy to come to Canada.



© J. Redden/UNHCR. June 2003. UNHCR helps in the registration of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/4623285993/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

My grandmother, an uncle, and an aunt remained behind in Afghanistan. We were not able to contact them until we had moved to Canada.

Starting a New Life in Canada

At first, we did not know anyone in Manitoba or Canada. We were met at the airport by a settlement counsellor from Welcome Place. Welcome Place helped us settle. We have moved three times since arriving in Canada. In Pakistan, we were told by Canadian officials that we would be free in Canada, that we would be given money, and a free education. But when we got here we soon realized that we had to work if we wanted money to support ourselves. We did receive financial help for the first year, but after that we had to earn our own money. The help we got the first year to begin our new life in Canada was good. The help given was in the form of food, money, housing, schooling, and the child tax benefit. These were the good things.

One of the best things about life in Canada was the freedom to say what you think and not have to like everything. You can say what you like and don't like and not get a beating. No one teases you. There is no name calling. And I can go to school.

On the other hand, I think that there is too much freedom for most young people in Canada. I think that some teenagers make really bad decisions.

Our family is still together, and I am living with them in Winnipeg. The move to Canada has brought our family closer together. We have had to work together to overcome the new challenges we faced. I have made some friends in Winnipeg. Some are

Afghans I have met, but I also have friends from various countries in Africa.

The adjustment has been most difficult for my mother. She doesn't learn as easily as she is older. Everything is new for her. There is so much freedom for kids. It is hard for her to accept that her children are making decisions now, not her. I have found that I act and behave the way my new friends in Canada do. I feel that if I don't, I will not be accepted by my new friends. So I need to do and act in the way that things are done in Canada. I try to share with my mother what happens to me during the day. If I do something wrong, I tell my mother. So in a way, I still have one foot in Afghanistan and the other foot in Canada. My mother still has both of her feet in Afghanistan.

The major difficulties I experienced were adapting to the new school. It was hard to learn more English, understand what was expected of me in school, get to know my teachers and classmates, and learn how to do the school work. But I had help. The Peaceful Village program, my mother, and my friends, all helped.

I attended a large high school and was placed in grade 10. It was difficult for me to cope and adjust to boys and girls being in the same classroom. There were other things I found difficult at first, like reading the timetable, not being accustomed to moving from class to class, figuring out the room numbers, and getting used to so many subjects and classes.

I attended an EAL class for one period a day. I am very thankful for the help I got from my EAL teacher. I felt very comfortable with my female EAL teacher. She was very approachable. There were about 20 students in the EAL class. My relationships with the other teachers were also good, but their different personalities and teaching styles and approaches affected how they taught me and my comfort level in the classroom. At first, I wasn't comfortable with male teachers. Also, I was uncomfortable asking questions in front of the class, so I would wait until the end of the class to ask the teachers for clarification or help. I did so regardless of whether the teacher was male or female.



© M. Maguire/UNHCR. October 24, 2007. Born in Exile. "A young Afghan returnee, born in exile in Pakistan, smiles for the camera in the government-funded township of Sheikh Mesri on the outskirts of Jalalahad. The girl is part of a community that left Pakistan in 2007 for the eastern province of Nangarhar. These returnees have no land and they are living in temporary accommodation. UNHCR is trying to secure land for them." <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/2430974042/>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

The Afghan School Project

The Afghan School Project is an international volunteer initiative to support the Kandahar Institute of Modern Studies (KIMS), a professional educational institution in Kandahar, Afghanistan. KIMS is the result of a 2006 initiative by Ryan Aldred, President of the Canadian International Learning Foundation (CanILF), and Afghan educator Ehsanullah Ehsan to establish the Afghan-Canadian Community Centre (ACCC). For five years, the ACCC enjoyed tremendous growth with significant support from the Government of Canada and other international donors. In 2012, the ACCC changed its name to the Kandahar Institute of Modern Studies (KIMS).

Today KIMS provides more than 1,500 women and men with the opportunity to receive education in Business Management, Information Technology, English, and Communications. It also provides the local community with access to the Internet and online classes from Canadian and international institutions.



© The Afghan School Project. March 2012. 200 women graduate from the Afghan-Canadian Community Center in Kandahar, Afghanistan. <www.theafghanschool.org/?s=200+women+graduate>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



© The Afghan School Project. March 2012. ACCC School in Kandahar has 1,500 students (most of whom are women). Audience looks on as hundreds of female students graduate. <www.theafghanschool.org/?s=200+women+graduate>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

It was very difficult for me to be placed in regular Grade 11 and 12 English classes. I had a male teacher who didn't understand the difficulties I faced having only been in the country for less than two years. He was always pushing me. It was hard for me to write essays. Sometimes, I feel that I shouldn't have graduated and left school so soon.

I need to acquire more skills and that takes time. I would have liked to spend more time to study the subjects and be in the class. I feel that I was being pushed to graduate as soon as possible because of my age.

One of my teachers gave me a zero on an ELA assignment. I think that was mean. I needed more time to learn and be in the regular English Language Arts classroom. I did well in the EAL classroom, but I feel that I could do just as well in a regular English class. Rather than putting me back in EAL, I think that it is better to fail a regular ELA course and repeat it than being in an EAL classroom for a long time. I believe that if I had to repeat a course, I would do better the second time. I think that it is just a matter of getting more time to be exposed to the work and to practise the different skills required in the English Language Arts course.

I worked while I was in high school at a fast food restaurant, usually six hours a week and only on weekends. I was afraid to make friends with Canadians. I felt that my English might not be good enough, and that I might be misunderstood. So I was reluctant to initiate conversations with Canadian students. I was worried that I might embarrass myself or that they may not like me. I felt that the problem was more with me than the Canadians. I was afraid to make friends. I felt it was easier to make friends in the EAL class

because everyone was learning English and they were the same as me. Because of this, I wasn't so worried about making mistakes. In the regular classes, I was always quiet when my friends were not there but also the Canadians never approached me or introduced themselves. Everyone had their own groups and I would be by myself except when my sister was taking the same class. My sister would help me with information that I didn't understand. Ironically, when we were living in Afghanistan and Pakistan, we often argued or fought. But here in Canada, it was a different story as our circumstances helped us get over our differences. We became closer as we worked on the various challenges that come along with settling in a new country, coping with a new language, and adjusting to a very different way of living. My sister has become my best friend.

I liked being in school in Canada. I had decisions to make. I liked that I could choose my own classes, and that I could choose what I wanted to be. In Afghanistan, I didn't think about my future after high school. I only thought that I would finish high school and get married. However, I found out when I came to Canada that there was more than just graduating from high school. You have to make your own life. If you want to be something, then you can be something. Your classes can help you work towards your dreams. I always wanted to be in school. My mother encouraged me but she didn't push me too hard because she didn't know how. So, I started doing my own thing, working hard to get my credits.

Life Today and Hopes for the Future

I have achieved the first part of my dream by graduating from high school. Now I am hoping to go to college or university to study some more; to be something in my life such as being a nurse or a receptionist. By continuing to study after high school, I will be able to help my mom and my own future—A future I hope will include owning a house, a car, and making good money. I want to make my family happy and I hope that my brothers will be continuing their schooling as well. Currently, I am working as a receptionist at Peaceful Village, MSIP. I have taken a year off from attending school to figure out what I want to be. I have discovered that I like to work and be with people. Possibly, I will go to university next year (2012-2013). In the meantime, I am trying to learn more about my abilities and what I need to do to improve.

I am still not sure what I want to be. But, I know that I want to continue to learn and attend school. I want to improve my English language skills because I recognize that there are things that I read that I do not understand. I want a good future for myself and my family, so I want to continue learning to get a good job. I want to be sure that I can read, write, and understand well in English.

My family relationships are good, but my younger brother Atash is having some difficulty at school.



© N. Na Champassak/UNHCR. January 2007. Resettlement: From Afghanistan to Pakistan to Canada. A former Afghan refugee resettled from Pakistan to Canada in 1998. Seen here in front of the Parliament Building in Ottawa. <www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/3201666794/>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

He's going to a new school and sometimes making friends is difficult for him. We are worried about him because there are good and bad people. We worry that he will get involved with the wrong people. We are always pushing him to be with good people who study hard and do their best. I sometimes worry about pushing him too hard, but I am scared that he will go in the wrong way. I tell Atash and Balbur that because they moved to Canada at a younger age that they have more time to learn English. It is important for them to find their way.

My mother is also trying to learn more English so that she can get a job and not be on social assistance. One day, the hope is that we can all live together in our own house and have our own car. My sister and I graduated from high school at the same time. Azin is now at the University of Manitoba, planning to study dentistry. She volunteers as a tutor at the Peaceful Village. Everyone is doing their own thing but the one hope is to always be together and that we will support each other.

Sometimes I worry that my boss may not be happy with my work and I try my best to not make a mistake. At times, I feel scared about making mistakes because one mistake can change everything. But I also realize that I can learn from my mistakes. Sometimes, I am not sure that I will be able to go to university but I still want to get a good job instead of just working in a restaurant. I know the importance of getting more education and the connection between education and one's standard of living. I want to improve my standard of living, as well my family's. Although one day I may

get married, right now my focus is on furthering my education.

On reflection, I believe that I had a good experience with school in Canada and that the school prepared me well for the future. The EAL classroom support and the opportunity to attend school even when I was 19 years old made a big difference. At first, I was told by some people that I wouldn't be allowed to go to school, but the school I went to accepted students up to the age of 20. The thought of not being allowed to go to high school was scary. The fact that I was accepted by the school was very important to me because I really wanted to graduate from high school.

I really believe that newcomer students need more opportunities for schooling. I feel that Canadian schools shouldn't be concerned about the age of the new students. In my case, I feel it would have been better for me to have been placed in Grade 9 rather than Grade 10. My subject teachers would often refer to the previous year but I didn't have the opportunity to study the earlier material that they were referring to because I was placed in Grade 10 and took

a mixture of Grade 10 and Grade 11 courses. Atash was young (age 14) but he was quite good in English and so he was pushed ahead to Grade 10 and then Grade 11, but he began to have difficulty with the courses. His attitude towards school and studying changed then, especially when he was moved back to Grade 9. He doesn't study now and he is still in Grade 10. I believe that there is too much emphasis on age, which isn't good. It is more important to make sure that the students have a good foundation. But still, I am generally satisfied with my school experiences in Canada and I believe that my prospects for the future are good. I don't feel that the doors are closed to me. I am looking forward to learning more and opening more doors.



© Nelofer Pazira/UNHCR. UNHCR: Actress and director Nelofer Pazira, a former Afghan refugee who is now a Canadian citizen. She is a founder of the DYANNA Afghan's Women Fund, a charitable group that provides for education, training, and support for Afghan women in Afghanistan. <www.unhcr.ca/news/2010-09-30.htm>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

VIDEO RESOURCES

See [Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences](#).

History of the Conflict in Afghanistan

Afghanistan: The New Forgotten War by CISAC Stanford (2013): Stanford scholars and military experts talk about the history of the war, lessons learned, the gains and losses, and what to expect after the war formally comes to an end.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM51bRWSEdY>

Afghanistan: Outside The Wire by Scott Taylor: CPAC presents an exclusive one-hour documentary that takes you inside the heart of Afghanistan to places rarely seen by the outside world. Canadian journalist Scott Taylor travels without military protection into the deadly back roads of Taliban country, coming face-to-face with warlords and would-be suicide bombers.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJMVbyDbREw>

Women's Education

Women's Literacy Classes at the Baghe Daoud Refugee Camp, Kabul Afghanistan (2011) by PARSА in Afghanistan: This video features the literacy program developed by PARSА, a small NGO based out of Kabul, Afghanistan, with the support of The Nooristan Foundation.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpu58EOyuAo

Girl's education in Afghanistan—Nazifa's story by Oxfam International (2011): Millions of girls have entered school in Afghanistan, since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. It is one of the few good news stories of the last nine years. But the progress is in danger of slipping away and Afghan girls, like Nafiza, still face many barriers to receiving an education.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPoYhE0MUow

Educating the Next Generation of Girls in Afghanistan by The I Files (2012): Millions of girls have entered school in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. However, education reformers still face an uphill battle.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzUh99sPuT8

Women in Afghanistan by CBC's The National (2011): (Warning: graphic content) Susan Ormiston looks at life in Afghanistan today through the eyes of two women who have seen some change, but wonder whether it's enough.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVgCIIAJyog>

Afghan Refugees

Shamshatoo Refugee Camp—"In This World" by faraway1001: The Opening Sequence of "In This World" (2002), a documentary drama movie depicting one of the largest refugee camps in the world.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9hqjS8SleQ

Pakistan: Helping the Hosts by UNHCR: Tens of thousands of Afghan refugees in Pakistan's Balochistan province have access to schools and basic services, but the cost is not easy to bear.
www.unhcr.org/v-4fbbb0336

Afghanistan: Mariam's Story by UNHCR: Mariam was a refugee in Iran for six years. The widow and mother returned in 2002 and has been internally displaced ever since. Her situation is very uncertain.
www.unhcr.org/v-4e9fe8356

Afghan Refugees in Pakistan Anxious As Year-End Deadline Looms by VOA Video (2012): One out of every four refugees in the world is from Afghanistan, and 95 percent of them live either in Iran or Pakistan. In Islamabad where Afghan refugees are to lose their legal residency at the end of the year,

many are not ready to return.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgVpknKDIDY

Memoirs of the Afghan War, "Them Afghans" by omermqureshi: This short story about Afghan war children in Islamabad, Pakistan was presented at the World Youth Forum "Right to Dialogue" meeting in Trieste, Italy in October 2010.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4ZwBTNZ_jY

After Refuge (Afghanistan) Australian Refugee Film Festival 2010: An Afghan refugee shares their story of escape and life after.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2J5ob5C4DI

Afghani's in North America

Refugee Stories: Selay Ghaffar, Afghanistan by USA for UNHCR: A former refugee's story.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfnLe4ZL2Tk&list=PLiSpdG6NHD01zB_qfP6t_oSa_6B7KhXjL

Fatima—Journey to Canada: Stories of Refugees by Citizenship and Immigration Canada: Fatima, a former Afghan refugee and now proud Canadian citizen, shares her inspirational journey.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91MYG6N6StM>

YÖDU* (SOUTH SUDAN)

“Education is the key to the future.”

See [Mary’s Refugee Learner Narrative](#) for another perspective and additional information on Sudan.

Life before Canada

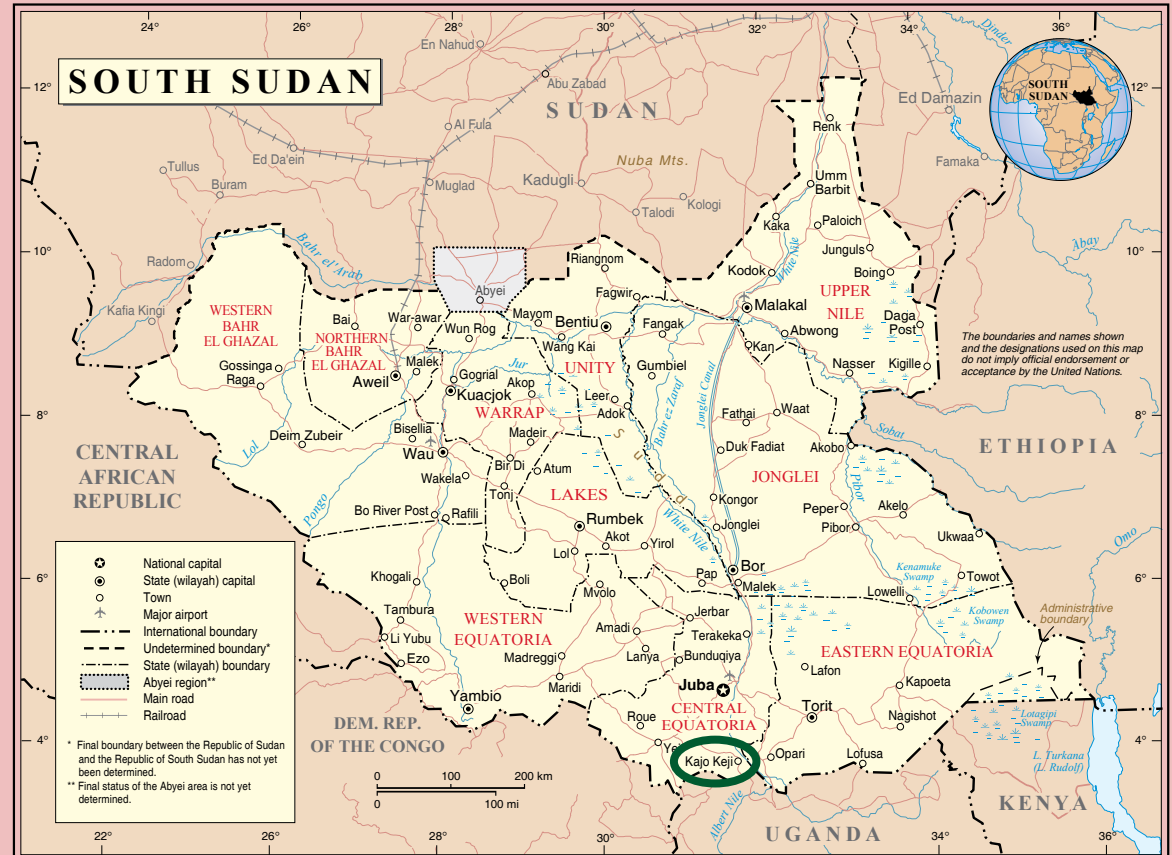
Birthplace and Family

My name is Yödu and I was born in Kajo Keji, Central Equatoria, South Sudan, on January 1, 1992. I identify myself as a woman of the Kuku people and I speak Bari. At home in South Sudan, I and my grandmother, Yaya, spoke both Arabic and Bari.

I lived with my Yaya since the age of two, when my parents divorced. I didn’t have any brothers or sisters. After the divorce, my father went to Kenya and my mother went back to her father’s home and remarried. I was left with my grandmother, who lived with one of her sons, my uncle Chriz. I lived with them until the age of 13, when I left and went to live in Uganda with a friend of the family.

I grew up in a large family. There were 15 children (my uncle’s 14 children plus me), Grandmother Yaya, Aunt Grace, and Uncle Chriz. My uncle was a farmer and my grandmother worked as a nurse

* To protect the participant’s privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this narrative.



Map No. 4450 Rev. 1 UNITED NATIONS October 2011 Department of Field Support Cartographic Section

© United Nations/Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section. Map No. 4450 Rev. 1. October 2011. Map of South Sudan. CC License. <<https://www.un.org/depts/Cartographic/map/profile/southsudan.pdf>>.

in a hospital. My grandmother taught me a lot of stuff. One of these was how to cook and care for other people that prepared me for my future life. My uncle sold the food he grew in the village and provided food for the family. I had another uncle, who was a soldier, but he passed away.

Kajo Keji isn't like a city. The homes are made of grass and mud. There is no running water. I would go into the bush to go to the bathroom. We drank water from the river which was very dirty. I became sick with malaria, but now I am healthy. Despite the conditions, I loved living in my community because everyone was friendly and helped each other. Even here in Canada it is the same; the members of my community help each other. I was very happy living in Kajo Keji.

But not everything was good in Kajo Keji. When the rebels came we would have to leave and hide in the bush for several days, until they left. I remember often feeling scared because they could come at any time.

Life in Kyangwali Refugee Camp, Uganda

I left Kajo Keji and South Sudan as part of the process of coming to Canada. I took a bus to Uganda and then took a taxi to the refugee camp on my own. I stayed in the refugee camp with a female friend of my father, who had her own children. The refugee camp was called Kyangwali Refugee Camp (Jungali) in Hoima District, Western Uganda. Life in the refugee camp was similar to my life in Kajo Keji, because we also farmed for our food.

It was a very large refugee camp with many people from many different countries who had fled to seek safety. I remember getting up in the morning and doing my chores before I went to school. After school I would have to work on the farm. So there wasn't time for me to do my homework. But, life in the refugee camp was okay because at least there was no war there. We just had to provide food for ourselves. Sometimes the UN would provide some food. Generally, I felt safer in the refugee camp.

School in Uganda

I didn't go to school when I lived in Kajo Keji because we didn't have enough money to pay the school fee, uniform, shoes, and books that were required. So I only started school when I went to Uganda. I was 14 by then. I was placed in Grade 2 because I already knew some things. I attended that school for three years.

I recall that school well. It was made of wood with a metal roof. There were more than 200 hundred students in a class. You had to pay attention. In your class were also teenagers like me, from 14 to 19 years of age. The students didn't change classrooms; the teachers did because the classes were very large. We students sat at long tables, with four to six at a table. We copied notes from the chalkboard onto our notebooks.

The school day went from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. I went to school five days a week. The school year began in February and went until the end of September. The school closed from October through February. This allowed the students to go home and to spend time with their families after their exams (especially for students who lived in far away villages). It also allowed us to be with our families through the holy month of January.

Children of the Kyangwali Refugee Settlement



Jeaninne is an orphan who cares for two younger orphans.

All images © People Weaver, a non-profit organization established to provide economic assistance to impoverished women in developing countries. Currently, their efforts are focused on women refugees. <www.peopleweaver.org>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

SOUTH SUDAN

Diversity

South Sudan is a nation of diverse peoples from a cultural, linguistic, and religious perspective. English is the official language of South Sudan, but there are over 60 indigenous languages spoken. English is widely spoken by those who have attended school. Most indigenous languages are from the Eastern Sudanic and Central Sudanic family. The others are from the Ubangi languages of the Niger-Congo language family.

Many years of civil war resulted in South Sudan being heavily influenced by the neighbouring countries. Many Sudanese fled to Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda where they interacted with the people there and learnt their languages and culture. Most of those who remained in the country, or went north to Sudan and Egypt, largely assimilated Arabic culture.

However, most South Sudanese kept the core of their culture even in exile and in the Diaspora. Traditional culture is highly upheld and a great focus is given to knowing one's origin and dialect.

Chadian Arabic is one of the major non-indigenous languages in South Sudan. In the capital, Juba, many use the Juba Arabic dialect. Since South Sudan was part of Sudan for a century, some may speak Sudanese Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic. In 2011, South Sudan announced that Swahili will be introduced in South Sudan with the goal of replacing Arabic as a lingua franca.

South Sudanese practice traditional indigenous religions, as well as Islam and Christianity. Estimates indicate that the majority follow traditional beliefs or are Christian while 18% are Muslim.

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South Sudanese Society, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, <www.goss.org/>

I was taught in English. This was my first experience with English, even though it is an official language of South Sudan. I studied math, English, religion, social studies, and science. There were a few textbooks but not enough for all, so we usually shared the books. I liked the teachers very much. I thought that they were very helpful. I loved going to school and I never missed any days. My favourite subject was math because the teacher was very nice. He took the time to explain problems to me and then I would get it. Social studies was my second favourite subject. Social studies involved the study of the history of Uganda and other countries all over the world, including America and Canada!

School at first was very hard and difficult for me because I started school a lot later than many of the other students. I soon learned that the best thing that I could do was to ask the teachers to clarify or explain again things that I didn't understand.

Before I came to Canada, I wanted to go to college and follow in my grandmother's footsteps by becoming a nurse. My grandmother, sadly passed away at the end of 2003 when I was already in Uganda. I miss her very much.

Immigration to Canada

I came to Canada from Uganda to be reunited with my father. At the time, I was still living with my father's friend in Kyangwali Refugee Camp. The only thing I really knew about Canada, was that my father was living there. That is why I chose to come to Canada because it gave me the chance to be with my father again. I was 16 when I immigrated to Canada. I was very happy to be with him again. Fourteen years had passed since I had last seen him. However, on my papers my age was increased to 18 so that I could travel to Canada on my own. In Canada, my legal age is still two years older than my birth age as this is what appears on my immigration papers and I have not had this corrected.

I still have family members who remained behind in South Sudan to help rebuild their country. I hope to visit and stay with them in the future.

Kajo Keji and the Kuku People

South Sudan is very near the equator and it has a tropical climate, and the land consists of mainly tropical rainforests.

Kajo Keji (also known as Kaji Keji) is a city and a county in the state of Central Equatoria in the south. It is located just south of the capital city, Juba, and it is very close to the border with the nation of Uganda.

The Kuku people inhabit the agricultural lands of Kajo Keji County in Central Equatoria State. The Kuku speak a Bari dialect, also called Kuku. The Kuku are traditionally an agricultural people who rely on mixed farming for survival. In the rainy season (April to October), they grow various food crops, primarily sorghum, maize, millet, cassava, sweet potatoes, and beans. In the dry season, they turn to small scale cattle, goat, and sheep herding. The Kuku are known to be good beekeepers. They supplement their farming with collective hunting with arrows and bows in the dry season.

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© Jack Welsch/Panoramio. February 2, 2013. Wudu Market, Kajo Keji. <www.panoramio.com/photo/85552921>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



© Jack Welsch/Panoramio. December 18, 2012. Wecome, Kajo Keji. <www.panoramio.com/photo/83561242>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



© The Water Project. Kajo Keji Secondary School. <<http://thewaterproject.org/community/projects/sudan/new-well-sudan-201>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Starting a New Life in Canada

My father met me at the airport and it was he who helped me settle in Canada. At first it was a bit strange; I really didn't know him because we were separated for 14 years. I wondered about who he was as a person. Now that we have lived together and I have gotten to know him, our relationship is okay.

At first, I lived with my father in an apartment in East Kildonan that he shared with a friend. I arrived in July and was surprised at how hot it was. I thought that Canada was hotter than Africa. But that changed, in the winter time, when I had to go downtown and was left waiting for a bus that didn't come for about two hours. I was frozen. It was at that point that I learned about the importance of wearing winter clothing. Winters are the things I like least about Winnipeg and Canada. What I like best about coming to Canada is the educational opportunities I have here.

I didn't experience many difficulties in making the move and adjusting to Canada. The move to Canada was a good thing because it gave me the opportunity to live with my father and get to know him. My father and an uncle had already immigrated to Canada in 2000. So, that made it easier. By the time I came, they were well settled enough to assist me with my own settlement. I and my father moved to our own apartment after a while. I am now living with my Father and the uncle that came to Canada with my father. In the beginning I was very shy around my father. I almost didn't believe it was really him. For 14 years I had no contact with him or any idea of what he was like as a person. But, over time we began to know each other and I am beginning to feel close to him and my uncle.

I have found it easy to make friends within the Winnipeg South Sudanese community. I have become quite involved with the South Sudan community and was the Youth Ambassador for the Sudanese Folklorama Pavilion in 2010. I also got to travel to British Columbia in 2011 to participate in a Miss South Sudan pageant. This year, 2012, I was elected to the board of the community organization as secretary for women and youth affairs. This shows that my community members trust me and they know that I can do the job. I now speak four

History of South Sudan

The contemporary states of South Sudan and Sudan were at one point part of Egypt and later governed by an Anglo-Egyptian alliance until Sudanese independence was achieved in 1956. After the First Sudanese Civil War (with the Anyanya Rebel Army), the Southern Sudan Autonomous Region was formed in 1972 and existed until 1983. A second Sudanese civil war broke out soon thereafter (with Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement [SPLA/M]) that ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005. Later that year, southern autonomy was restored when an Autonomous Government of Southern Sudan was formed.

The two Sudanese civil wars had a serious toll on the nation and people. They resulted in serious neglect, lack of development and infra-structure, and extensive destruction. More than 5 million persons were forced to flee South Sudan and seek asylum in other countries. More than 2.5 million people were killed.

South Sudan became an independent state on July 9, 2011. Today, South Sudan has an estimated population of 8 million, but because of the extensive wars, this estimate may be incorrect. The economy is predominantly rural and relies chiefly on subsistence farming. Around 2005, the economy began a transition from this rural dominance, and urban areas within South Sudan have seen extensive development.

Continued Conflict

The independence of South Sudan did not bring peace to the region. Since June 2011 and continuing into 2012, heavy fighting within Sudan between Sudanese armed forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North has resulted in the displacement of large numbers of Sudanese who have sought refuge in Ethiopia and the newly independent South Sudan. Bordering Blue Nile State of Sudan, Upper Nile State has witnessed the spill over of aerial bombardments and ground fighting. As of July 2012, the UN Refugee Agency estimated that the state's Mabaan County was hosting 109,000 refugees in Yusuf Batil, Jamam, and Doro settlements.

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languages—Arabic, Swahili with my father and uncle, as well as Bari and English.

Moving to Canada allowed me to continue to study and go to school. At first I tried to register in a Christian independent (private) school. The school did an English and math assessment. I did well in both subjects. But, I didn't feel comfortable speaking with the principal. So I did not respond to the principal's attempts to communicate with me, even with a female staff member present. I just didn't feel comfortable speaking with her too. Because of this, the principal told my father that the school could not accept me because I wasn't speaking.



© Doctors Without Borders/ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). February 02, 2011. Southern Sudan: Overcoming the Trauma. Continued exposure to violence makes the population of southern Sudan even more vulnerable.

MSF helps those who have survived attacks by armed groups in Yambio, Western Equatoria State. "We've seen that the children have suffered quite severe reactions. Some tend to withdraw from school and social activities, and some even become aggressive. Some children blame themselves and they think that they have brought suffering to their parents.... So we have games, activities, and storytelling for children, which helps relieve their minds of the problems they might have encountered." <www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news-stories/slideshow/southern-sudan-overcoming-trauma>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Three days later, a friend took me to a large senior high school in East Kildonan, where I met the EAL teacher. I liked the way the teacher welcomed me and casually said hi when I first met her. I responded to her welcome and I began to feel comfortable in her presence. I still don't know why I didn't speak with the principal at the Christian school. I could understand him, but I just did not feel comfortable.

At first I was placed in the EAL program to improve my English language skills for most of the school day. After a while, I started taking some Grade 10 courses as well. At first it was difficult to adjust and fit in because the teaching style was very different from what I used to in Uganda. In Uganda we had large classes and we had to make an appointment with the teacher if we wanted help.



© USAID Photo/Jenn Warren/U.S. Department of State. July 9, 2011. South Sudan Independence Day. Guests at the Republic of South Sudan Independence Day celebrations in Juba, South Sudan on July 9, 2011. CC License. <www.flickr.com/photos/statephotos/5922592445/>.

Here the classes are much smaller and I could get help immediately by just asking the teacher, and I did not have to make an appointment for a later time.

All my teachers were very helpful. But, my relationship with my EAL teacher was very good. If I didn't understand a word, the teacher would work with me and use different techniques to help me understand. For example, she would use the word in a sentence, use flash cards with pictures to help communicate the meaning of the word, and would help me with the spelling of the word. When taking regular classes, sometimes I returned to the EAL teacher for help. My EAL teacher told me that she would always be there for me, whenever I needed something. In many ways, my EAL teacher was like a mother to me and the EAL class was like a home away from home for me.

The most stressful part of school was exam time. But, the school made some adaptations that helped. I was given more time to write the exams if I needed it. Also, I was given some help with understanding the question but not to the extent that the teacher would answer the question for me.

Reflecting back, I feel that the programming and support met my needs. I got a lot of help from my teachers and that made a difference.

My friendships with other students were also important. I found it easy to make friends in the school.

Some of them were in the EAL program, others I met in many different places. I also met my EAL teacher's daughter who was a student at the same senior high school at the same time.

I loved being in school in Canada and I have a chance to get a good education. Education is the key to the future. If you are not educated then you aren't moving forward.



Michael Nuul Mayen is a South Sudanese, a former child soldier, co-founder of the Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan in Winnipeg, and Founder and Executive-Director of the Language Center for Newcomers (LCFN), a not-for-profit literacy organization in Brooks, Alberta. In the photo, Michael is seen speaking to the Honourable Dr. Lloyd Axworthy during the convocation in 2007, in which he received his degree in International Development Studies. In 2014, Michael received a Distinguished Alumni Ward from the University of Winnipeg.

© The New Sudan Vision. March 3, 2012. Michael Nuul Mayen chatting with the Honourable Dr. Lloyd Axworthy. CC License. <http://76.74.247.50/~cv9938/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2543:shining-the-spotlight-on-a-south-sudanese-trailblazer-in-canada&catid=2:diaspora&Itemid=8>.



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Daniel Swaka was born in the Republic of Sudan during the bitter civil war between the North and South Sudan in the early 80's. He completed his secondary education in Juba, South Sudan. As the war intensified, he fled to neighbouring Uganda. As a young refugee separated from his family, the challenges he faced in Uganda were many; however, he survived and the challenges he overcame developed in him an enormous sense of determination to overcome all life obstacles and to succeed. Lacking travel documents, and in a desperate bid for safety and better opportunities for education, he managed to travel far to South Africa. In South Africa, he was able to be recognized as a refugee and started a new phase in his life. He managed to find support and enroll in North-West University, South Africa and graduated from there with a four-year degree in Education, majoring in biology and physical sciences.

Daniel taught in a high school in South Africa before coming to Canada in August 2010. He holds a Manitoba provincial teaching certificate, and he is currently pursuing his postgraduate diploma in Education at the University of Manitoba.

Daniel is the Director of The Peaceful Village Program with the Manitoba School Improvement Program. He firmly believes education is the best tool to bring about positive changes to a society and to contribute to the development of a good and peaceful society. Daniel is passionate about his work with refugees and immigrant newcomers. Through personal experience, he knows the importance of education in the life of war-affected youth. Drawing on his own life experiences, he strives to be an example of hope, a mentor, and a role model.

Life Today and Hopes for the Future

In 2010, I started working while still in school for about 14 hours per week after school and on the weekends. I have now graduated from high school and I am currently working at McDonald's. I plan to attend CDI College to get a health care aid certificate. It will take me nine months to get the certificate. I have decided not to work while taking the health care aid course so that I can concentrate on my studies. My plan is to work as a health care aid for a while and to save some money to attend university in the future. I still hope and dream of being a nurse and following in my grandmother Yaya's footsteps.

Everything is going well for me at this point. I have great hope for the future. I feel very good about my school experiences in Canada and I believe they have prepared me well for my future life. The EAL program and support played a big part of my success in school. If I hadn't had that support, it would have made it very difficult for me to be successful in school. I believe that the EAL program is very good for the students who come from other countries and need help like me. Having an EAL program in a school is an asset for all newcomer students.

I feel that if the principal of the Christian school had given me a chance and was more understanding with respect to my initial discomfort communicating, and not made assumptions about my abilities, that I could have also been successful at that school. Teachers and principals should not make assumptions about newcomer students and their abilities. They need to be supportive and have positive expectations of newcomer students. They should encourage them to strive for their dreams.



© Abraham Thon Duot. 2014. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Abraham Thon Duot, a former child soldier, is one of the many hundreds of thousands "Lost Boys of Sudan," who were forced to flee conflict in Sudan. Having survived the journey from Northern Sudan he spent four years as a child soldier fighting for South Sudan's liberation.

When child soldiers were released by Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), a friend took him to a camp in Uganda. Eventually, he worked with Care International in the Kenyan Refugee Eastern Camp as a teacher at the early and middle years level.

From Kenya, Abraham made his way to Canada and worked in several local firms to survive. But Abraham knew the importance of a good education. And while working at Palliser and Federated Co-op, he began to work towards a Manitoba high school diploma (completed in 2006). Two years later he applied to Red River College to study Business Administration, which he successfully completed in 2010. Currently, he is pursuing an education degree at the University of Winnipeg.

Abraham is a dedicated and active community member. He has volunteered at Helping Hands Resource Centre for Immigrants from 2007 to 2012 and is a co-founder of the South Sudanese Families Learning Together Program (SSFLTP) that offers a summer youth programming. He has served as a board member of Helping Hands (for seven years), the South Sudanese Community Centre in Winnipeg, and has played many other roles in various initiatives and programs.

VIDEO RESOURCES

See [Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences](#).

Sudanese Conflict and South Sudan

Sudan's 22 year war: The longest conflict in Africa by Journeyman Pictures: Sudan's civil war has raged for over two decades. This film gives insight into its bloody and violent history.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKzpUCv5OIo

South Sudan's short-lived moment of hope by Journeyman Pictures (2013): After a 21-year civil war, peace seems to be returning to the region and refugees are coming home. This video explores life in the newly formed country of South Sudan. The hope and the challenges facing the people of South Sudan are addressed.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIHr_dJQUWo

Videographic: A history of modern Sudan by The Economist: Split between north and south, Sudan's recent history has been shaped by conflict and oil.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fj4hWU3VNr0>

Poporata—Kuku Kajo Keji by Desmond Yengi: This video features Kuku Music and scenes of life in Kajo Keji, Southern Sudan and The New Seed of Sedan charity projects.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9oN_CYB6OQ&list=PL422BF7F6E7189832

Sudanese Refugees and Camps

Ensuring children's access to education in Unity State, South Sudan by Save the Children South Sudan (2013): After decades of conflict that killed two million people, forced four million from their homes, and left generations without access to schools, South Sudan's education system is still struggling to rebuild itself.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJlhbyBlhlo

On Their Own—Films made by the children of Doro refugee camp by Save the Children South Sudan: This video provides an overview of the project that led to the production of a series of four youth-created videos.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9yz-FaiXAc>

The videos are available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCluB89PyS6T1SPdPwGdsIWA>.

Uganda: Unique Approach For South Sudanese by UNHCR: Uganda has once again taken in thousands of South Sudanese refugees. The government's rather unique approach to providing assistance is to give them land to build a shelter.

<http://youtu.be/QqUqiozwlxI>

Uganda: The gift of education by UNHCR: As the violence in northern Uganda abates, UNHCR helps children go back to school.

<http://unhcr.org/v-49be21902>

State of South Sudan Refugees in Uganda by World Vision Uganda (2014): This video, shot at Dzaipi refugee reception centre in Adjumani district, gives you the sense of how the over 25,000 refugees are faring. Also, two refugees explain what they are going through and how they wish to be helped.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9x1OUpSexg8>

Fears and Tears: Kyangwali Refugee Settlement by Refugee Law Project (2011): As the number of refugees in settlements increases daily, their need for services also increases. Many refugees are denied their right to movement, to health, and to justice among others.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=gafm-k39v9Q

Life After War: The Sudanese Diaspora

Child Soldier Now Musician by TV2Africa: Emmanuel Jal is a former child soldier from South Sudan and now is a successful musician using his talent to raise awareness about the plight of vulnerable children.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_u9z0FSN1I

Sudan's 'Lost Boys' Return Home by The Nation: Three young men who fled the fighting in South Sudan as boys to grow up and be educated in three different US cities return home. In an emotional journey, they reunite with loved ones, grieve over those who have died, and offer the skills they acquired in America to help a struggling people.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcsmsEy02kc

Sudanese raising money for relatives by CTV (2013): A news video about efforts of the South Sudanese community in Winnipeg fundraising for their families back in South Sudan that have been affected by the conflict.

<http://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=289632>

For Additional Resources concerning Sudan, see the [Video Resources](#) provided at the end of Mary's narrative.

APPENDICES

References and Resources

Refugee Profiles and Stories

Against all Odds

A United Nations High Commission for Refugees game that lets youth experience what it is to be a refugee.

www.global1.youth-leader.org/2012/10/%E2%80%9Cagainst-all-odds%E2%80%9D-an-interactive-educational-online-video-game-a-life-changing-learning-experience/

Beyond the Fire: Teen Experiences in War

<http://archive.itvs.org/beyondthefire/education.html>

This site is designed to provide teens with an experience that is unique, interactive, and educational. Key features of the site include:

- Interactive world map
- Teen refugee stories
- Conflict timelines
- Country facts
- User passport
- Travelog
- Border control questions
- Lesson plans
- Teacher talkback
- Resources



© UNHCR/Zs. Puskas. June 19, 2012. World Refugee Day 2012 in Central Europe. Európa Pont venue of the European Commission in Budapest hosted an exhibition of drawings showing the response of school children to hearing refugee stories. www.flickr.com/photos/unhcrce/7414749518/in/set-72157630205373344/. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

This website offers a series of video resources on immigrant success stories. The videos available include some on protecting refugees that feature the stories of several Canadians of refugee background.

<www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/multimedia/>

The Documentary Project for Refugee Youth

<<http://thedocumentaryproject.org/>>

Faces and Voices of Refugee Youth

By Joyce A. Kelen and Leslie G. Kelen. Salt Lake City: Center for Documentary Arts, 2002. 62 pp.

Fiftyrefugees Malaysia

As of June 2007, there were approximately 37,000 Refugees registered with the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) in Malaysia. Many more are asylum seekers who have yet to achieve refugee status. This website tells the stories of 50 of them, aged from babies barely a month old to grandfathers and grandmothers in their 50s.

<<http://fiftyrefugees.wordpress.com/>>

Film Aid International

This organization seeks to use the “power of film and video to promote health, strengthen communities, and enrich the lives of the world’s vulnerable and uprooted.” Their vision is to address “the frequently neglected problems of refugee despair and psychological trauma. FilmAid uses the power of film to break monotony and isolation, as well as to convey essential information. Films help to restore dignity, quality of life, and hope—which have been missing in the lives of refugees who often languish in camps for years.” FilmAid’s YouTube space features 70 videos on a variety of themes and issues filmed by refugees in various camps and places throughout the world.

<www.youtube.com/user/filmaid/videos>

Go Back To Where You Came From Interactive School Resources

Go Back to Where You Came From is a 2011 Australian documentary television series that provided a first-hand account of the international refugee experience. “The documentary follows the experiences of six Australians who for one month are confronted with the harsh realities of life as a refugee as they journey to some of the most dangerous and desperate regions of the world. From different backgrounds, with different viewpoints, six contentious perspectives will challenge, test and help form your students’ attitudes.”

The school resources section of the series site contains curriculum-relevant tutorials based on video clips from the series intended to stimulate discourse on the complexity of managing those who seek asylum on Australian shores. The tutorials include student activities, supported by teacher notes with background information, facts, and statistics. Swearing has been removed from the clips.

<www.sbs.com.au/shows/goback/listings/detail/i/2/article/8326/Schools-1>

Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds: Promoting well-being in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia

A research report (October 2009), by Sandy Gifford, Ignacio Correa-Velez and Robyn Sampson, describes the key findings of a longitudinal study (2004 to 2008) investigating the experiences of settlement among a group of 120 recently arrived young people with refugee backgrounds settling in Melbourne, Australia. This was a collaborative project between The La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, La Trobe University, and The Victorian Foundation For Survivors Of Torture (Foundation House).

<http://apo.org.au/files/Resource/good_starts_for_recently_arrived_youth_with_refugee_backgrounds_gifford_correa-velez_sampson_2009.pdf>

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

The IRC website features videos, photos, and podcasts with refugee stories and other matters. Refugee Voices journal features the writings of clients who are studying or have studied in the English Language and Literacy Program of the IRC in New York. For more information, please contact Erika Munk and Natasa Milasinovic at <refugeevoicessjournal@gmail.com>.

<www.rescue.org/video>

Iraqi Refugee Stories

The idea behind the Iraqi Refugee Stories website emerged from an interest in creating an intimate oral history of the refugees displaced from Iraq, who currently number more than 5 million. In the interest of allowing Iraqis to have a voice, this site welcomes stories from Iraqis and from those who have worked closely with them. Personal stories are preferred in any format: text, video, audio, or accompanied by photographs.

<<http://iraqirefugeestories.org/stories.html>>

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)

IRIN has its head office in Nairobi, Kenya, with regional desks in Nairobi, Johannesburg, Dakar, Dubai, and Bangkok, covering some 70 countries. The bureaus are supported by a network of local correspondents, an increasing rarity in mainstream newsgathering today. The service is delivered in English, French, and Arabic, through a free email subscription service, and social media syndication. IRIN was launched in 1995, in response to the gap in humanitarian reporting exposed by the Rwandan genocide and its aftermath. It is an editorially independent, non-profit project of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), funded entirely by voluntary contributions from governments and other institutions. The site has a section with refugee stories *Hear our Voices*, online photo shows, and films.

La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, Audio Visual Materials

2010

- QPASTT and Larrc (2010) KAREN YOUNG PEOPLE: DIGITAL STORIES. Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma and La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, Brisbane.
- QPASTT and Larrc (2010) LIBERIAN YOUNG PEOPLE: DIGITAL STORIES. Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma and La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, Brisbane.

2009

- 4US: YOUNG PEOPLE WITH REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS LIVING IN AUSTRALIA, (2009) [DVD] Melbourne: Refugee Health Research Centre, La Trobe University.

2008

- Home: An exploratory journey with young Somali-Australians (2008) [DVD] Melbourne, Vic: Refugee Health Research Centre, La Trobe University.
- Finding Light: Reflections of recently arrived Afghan boys living in Australia (2008) [DVD] Melbourne, Vic: Refugee Health Research Centre, La Trobe University.

2007

- See Through Me: Discrimination through the eyes of ten young Somali-Australians (2007) [DVD] Melbourne, Vic: Refugee Health Research Centre, La Trobe University.
- Crazy: The everyday experiences of Sudanese-Australian young women (2007) [DVD] Melbourne, Vic: Refugee Health Research Centre, La Trobe University.

Mapping Memories

This is a collaborative media project which uses personal stories and a range of media tools (video, sound walks, mapping, and photography) to better understand the experiences of youth with refugee experience in Montreal. The objective has been to produce creative work that will have an impact on policy, education, art, and on the lives of the youth involved. This project has been developed in partnership with the Canadian Council for Refugees and Montreal Life Stories, a university and community initiative working with refugee communities to record their own life stories and build understanding about Montrealers displaced by war, genocide, and other human rights violations.

<<http://storytelling.concordia.ca/refugeeyouth/>>

The New Kids: Big Dreams and Brave Journeys at a High School for Immigrant Teens

A book by Brooke Hauser (2011): Chronicles a year in the lives of youth attending the International High School at Prospect Heights in Brooklyn, where all of the students are recent immigrants learning English. The students come from more than forty-five countries and speak more than twenty-eight languages.

Penrith Migrant Stories

Twenty-five Penrith Valley primary and high school students have completed the groundwork for the Penrith Migrant Stories Project. The students—from Years 5 to 10—quizzed 18 local residents from migrant and refugee communities about their experiences in leaving their respective home countries and settling in Australia. Those quizzed ranged in age from their mid-20s to 92 and hailed from Croatia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Iraq, China, Japan, Egypt, the Netherlands, Russia, Bhutan, Italy, Argentina, and Jordan. The interviews were written into descriptive, non-fiction short stories and, together with photographs and other images, were published in a book. The project was funded and managed by Penrith City Council.

<<http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/38198036?versionId=50546875>>

Refugee Action Committee

This website features Australian refugee stories.

<<http://refugeeaction.org>>

Refugees' Australian Stories

A site featuring several stories of Australians of refugee backgrounds.

<www.ras.unimelb.edu.au/stories.html>

The Refugee Community History Project

The project has collected the previously untold stories of refugees who have settled in London since 1951 in order to highlight the enormous contributions they make to the city.

<www.trustforlondon.org.ulc/policy-change/strategic-work-item/refugee-communities-history-project/>

Refugees International

This independent organization advocates for lifesaving assistance and protection for displaced people and promotes solutions to displacement crises. The blog features stories, photo essays, and films about refugee issues and experiences.

<<http://refugeesinternational.org/blog/refugee-stories>>

Refugee Space Project

This is a “space,” a “platform,” or a “network” intending to connect refugees among themselves first of all, and then with other non-refugee people (friends of refugees) so that they can reason about the life of these people of concern and share their stories, ideas, and ideals to raise public awareness about the reality of the life they are leading in the world.

<www.refugeespace.net/index.html>

Refugee Stories Wiki

This site is an online collaborative learning resource for children and their teachers and families.

<<http://refugeestories.wikispaces.com/>>

Refugee Voices: Life Histories of Somali and Ethiopian Women

This is a year-long digital storytelling project designed to record and preserve the stories of East African refugees living in San Diego. This project is a partnership between the San Diego Central Public Library and the Media Arts Center San Diego. Local teens learn high tech media skills and use library research in order to produce two short documentaries that focus on the lives of East African refugees and their experiences living in the United States. Refugee Voices II is a continuation of the former youth-produced program known as Refugee Voices: Life Histories of Somali and Ethiopian Women that produced a video documenting the life histories of three Somali and Ethiopian women, giving them the opportunity to share their stories. Refugee Voices II will continue to raise awareness about the African refugee experience, to help promote cultural understanding and to dismantle existing prejudices. Several of the videos are available on YouTube. See

- Making of Refugee Voices
<www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwEb4munwh8>
- Tu Voz : Refugee Voices 1
<www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUhiV9RDmLg>
- Tu Voz: Refugee Voices 2
<www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGT0PvaMFzM>
- Where is my Home?
<www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9C4fg9BK6g>
- Girls Working For A Better Tomorrow
<www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4RDi3Gian4&feature=plcp&context=C4c97662VDvjVQa1PpcFMIQA5HLOTlqYS1aDtAE54HEsn86k5pd0Q%3D>

Refugee Voices Video

A 6.26 minute video on YouTube of four Australians of very different refugee backgrounds—from Burma, Iraq, Sudan, and Liberia—tells of what brought them to Australia and the lives they now lead. Filmed as part of the international 2011 Refugee Conference hosted by University of New South Wales. See Refugee Voices—YouTube.

Refugee Voices: A journey towards resettlement

Executive Summary (2204) by New Zealand Immigration Service. This research examined the experiences of three groups of refugees: those coming through the Refugee Quota, individuals who claimed asylum in New Zealand and were subsequently granted refugee status, and people from refugee backgrounds who entered New Zealand through standard family sponsored immigration policies. As such, Refugee Voices provides a comprehensive overview of refugee experiences in New Zealand. The issues that need to be addressed include those of English language proficiency, housing, adult education, discrimination, and employment. Particular difficulties for certain groups are also highlighted in the report.

<www.immigration.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/18C717C0-0720-4CFA-A81D-672BBDE406CF/0/RefugeeVoicesExecutiveSummary.pdf>

Refugee Youth Health Project

Access Alliance <<http://accessalliance.ca/research/activities/refugeeyouthhealthRespect>>: Refugees Blog is a non-governmental organization (NGO) headquartered in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Their flagship project is a global letter exchange program introducing refugee students to non-refugee students. This project creates pen pal relationships between the students, helping non-refugee students learn about the issues facing refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Starting Again: Stories of Refugee Youth

With funding from the Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG), School's Out Washington partnered with documentary filmmaker Jill Freidberg of Corrugated Films to produce a film chronicling the lives of refugee youth in Washington State. The film highlights four youth from Burma, Nepal/Bhutan, Russia, and Somalia.

<www.schoolsoutwashington.org/1260_194/StartingAgainStoriesofRefugeeYouth.htm>

The Suitcase: Refugee Voices from Bosnia and Croatia

A book by Julie Mertus, Jasmina Tesanovic, Habiba Metikos, & Rada Boric (1997) University of California press.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR <www.unhcr.org/>): The UNHCR website features a Video Gallery (as well as a photo gallery). "The videos also illustrate the kind of challenges UNHCR staff face in the field, often working close to the front lines, where refugees need the most protection. Take a look and learn more about refugees and UNHCR's tireless efforts to assist some of the most vulnerable people in the world."

<www.unhcr.org/pages/4ac9fdae6.html>

US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

The website features articles and profiles of refugees and immigrants in the United States of America. The Refugee Voices section includes youth issues and resources.

<www.refugees.org/refugee-voices/refugee_voices_index.html>

United States Association for UNHCR

The United States Association for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees supports the UN Refugee Agency's humanitarian work to protect and assist refugees around the world. The site includes three refugee stories and refugee artwork.

<www.unrefugees.org/>

Witness

This is an international not-for-profit organization that uses the power of video and storytelling to open the eyes of the world to human rights abuses. It was co-founded in 1992 by musician and human rights advocate Peter Gabriel, Human Rights First, and the Reebok Human Rights Foundation.

<<http://www3.witness.org/about-us>>

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UNHCR. (2012). *The State of the World Refugees: UNHCR Summary*. <www.unhcr.org/4fc5ceca9.html>.

UNHCR. (2014). *Protecting Refugees*.

UNHCR. (2008). *Through the eyes of a child: refugee children speak about violence*. A report on participatory assessments carried out with refugee and returnee children in Southern Africa, 2005-2007. <[www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/txis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=47c804682&query=Through the eyes of a child](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/txis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=47c804682&query=Through%20the%20eyes%20of%20a%20child)>.

War Child UK. *The Effects of War on Children*. <www.warchild.org.uk/issues/effects-war-children>.

Interview Questions

Life Before Canada

The interview will start by asking some questions about your life and experiences before coming to Canada.

1. Tell us about you, your place of birth, your cultural background, your community, and your family life before coming to Canada.
 - When and where were you born? Where did you live before coming to Canada?
 - What cultural group do you belong to? What languages did your family speak?
 - What was your family like? Did you have a large family? What did your parents or caregivers do for a living? What did you do to help the family make a living?
 - What did your village, city, or community look like?
 - Did you have a good relationship with your family?
 - What are the things that you liked best about your community?
 - Were you happy living in this community?
2. Describe the type of schools you attended and your school experiences before coming to Canada.
 - At what age did you first attend school?
 - When and where did you go to school?
 - How many years did you go to school?
 - Describe the school or schools you attended (physical description, number of classrooms, number of students, number of teachers, etc.).
 - Describe a typical school day (length of school day, subjects studied, etc.).
 - Describe your classroom and relationship with teachers (number of students, physical space, seating, etc.)
 - Describe your school year (days of week and months attended)
 - Were you out of school for long periods? Why?
 - What was or were the languages used to teach at the schools you attended?
 - Did you like going to school?
 - What were your favourite subjects?
 - Did you have any difficulties in school?
 - What did you want to do before you came to Canada?
3. Describe how you and your family may have been affected by persecution, war, or conflict.
 - Briefly describe the nature of the conflict or war that affected you and your family.
 - Why did you leave your home, community, or country?
 - Where did you go? How did you get there?
 - Did you live in a refugee camp or camps and, if you did, where were they located?
 - What was your life like during this period? What was life like in the place or places you sought asylum or protection? What did you do?
 - Did you go to school during this time? What was school like during this period?
 - What good memories do you have of this time?
 - What are some of the bad memories that you have from this time that you are comfortable talking about?

Starting a New Life in Canada

This section of the interview will focus on your experiences during your first few years in Canada, especially the school experiences.

4. Describe why and how you chose to immigrate to Canada.
 - Where were you just before you came to Canada?
 - Who were you living with at this time?

- What did you know about Canada before you immigrated?
 - How did you choose to resettle in Canada? Were you happy to come to Canada?
 - Who came with you when you came to Canada? Did any family members remain behind? Why?
 - Did you have any family or friends in Manitoba or Canada?
5. Describe your first experiences in Canada, such as your arrival and your experiences during the first year or two.
- How old were you when you immigrated to Canada?
 - Who helped you settle in Canada? Did anyone meet you when you arrived?
 - Where did you live (city/community, housing, neighbourhood)?
 - What were your first impressions of Canada?
 - What did you like best about being in Canada?
 - What did you least like?
 - Did you experience any difficulties?
 - What helped you adjust?
 - Did you move a lot?
6. Describe your relationships and family life in Canada.
- Who did you live with when you came to Canada? Are you still with the same people?
 - How did the move to Canada affect your life as a family?
 - Did you make friends easily in your new community?
 - Did your family experience difficulties adjusting to Canada?
 - Were your relationships good with your family?
 - Are you experiencing or have you experienced problems related to the effects of war or being a refugee before you came to Canada (health, emotions, social life, etc.)?
 - Are you experiencing or have you experienced problems related to your experiences immigrating and adjusting to Canada?
7. Describe your school experiences in Canada.
- Describe the first school you attended in Canada (location, size, type of school—elementary, high school, program).
 - Did you attend other schools in Canada? If so, when and where, and what type of school?
 - What grade were you first placed in?
 - Did you find it difficult or easy to fit in to the new school?
 - Tell us about the school and teachers you first encountered. Were you placed in with all the other students or were you in a special EAL classroom for at least part of the day? If in an EAL program, describe the type of program (number of hours per day, number of students, etc.).
 - Describe your relationship and experience with your EAL teacher or teachers. Do you feel that the EAL teacher or teachers were able to help you learn and adjust to the school?
 - Describe your relationship with other teachers. Do you feel that the other teachers were able to help you learn and help you?
 - What were the things that the teachers did or the type of classroom experiences that helped you learn and adjust?
 - What were the aspects of schooling that were most difficult?
 - Do you feel that the programming and support you received met your needs?
 - What could have been done that might have helped you?
 - Did you work while in school? If so, how many hours per week and when?
 - Did you complete high school?
 - Did you find it easy to make friends at school? How did you make friends in the school?
 - Did you like being in school in Canada? Why or why not?

Where are you now and what are your plans for the future?

This is the concluding section of the interview. The questions will focus on your life and general well-being at this point in time, your plans for the future, and your reflections on your past experiences. You will also have the opportunity to share any thoughts or comments you wish about your experiences in the interview.

8. Tell us about your life now and your hopes and plans for the future.
 - What are you doing now? Are you still studying or are you employed?
 - How would you describe your family and social relationships at this point? Are they good?
 - Are you experiencing any problems or difficulties at this point in terms of employment, health, education, or other aspects of life?
 - Do you feel that you had a good experience in schools in Canada? Did they prepare you for the future? If not, what do you need? What was missing?
 - In your opinion, what did Canadian schools do that helped you the most?
 - In your opinion, what can Canadian schools do differently that would help students like you?
 - What would you like to do or accomplish in the future?
 - Generally, are you satisfied with your experiences in Canada and your prospects for the future? Why or why not?
9. Do you have any closing thoughts or questions?
 - Do you have anything else you wish to say and share?
 - How do you feel about this interview? Are you comfortable with the process and experience? Was it a good experience?
 - Do you have any suggestions about how we can improve the interview experience for others?

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