



Dadaab: Host Community Perspectives on Refugee Return

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About Sayara International

Sayara International is a social enterprise combining rigorous research and communication strategies to create positive change in fragile and conflict-affected societies.

Sayara provides complex monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning (MERL) and social and behavior change communication (SBCC) in the most challenging environments. We work on countering disinformation, measuring social cohesion, and assessing education, migration, inclusive governance, climate change, and health.

Sayara East Africa operates from its hub in Nairobi, Kenya.



Methodology

Purpose

Data were gathered as part of a client-funded assessment on the protracted Somali refugee situation in Kenya, and returnees in Somalia.

Methods included:

- KIIs with stakeholders
- Focus group discussions with refugee women leaders, refugee men leaders, refugee youth leaders
- Focus group discussions with host community women leaders, host community men leaders, host community youth leaders

Data collection

In Kenya data collection took place in Dadaab, Kakuma, and Eastleigh. In Somalia data was collected in Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu. This presentation focuses on results from Dadaab only.

Dadaab Research

Thematic focus:

- Among other questions, host community members were asked about



Economic impacts of the refugee hosting experience



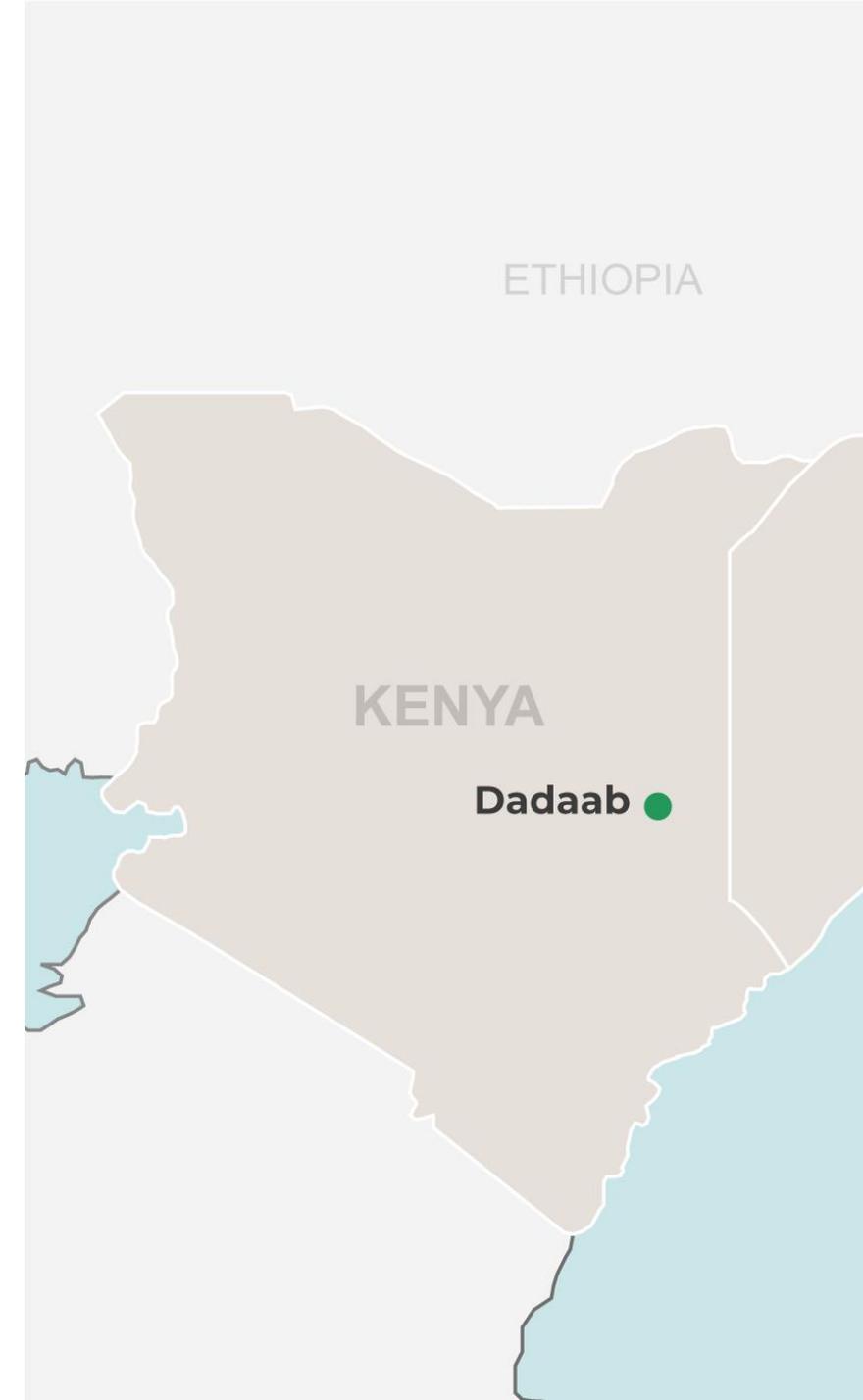
Social impacts of the refugee hosting experience



Social cohesion and potential for conflict with refugee groups



Their opinion on refugee return to Somalia, given Kenyan government calls for closure of refugee camps.



Background

- For several years now, the Kenyan government has been demanding UNHCR close Dadaab refugee complex, citing “national security threats”
- The government has argued, without sufficient proof, that Dadaab provides a “safe haven” and a recruitment ground for Al-Shabaab
- Dadaab is currently home to a population of 218,000 registered refugees mostly from Somalia.
- As of May 2022, 85,000 refugees had returned to Somalia; returns have significantly declined in recent years to a few hundred per year

Key Findings...

- ▶ Almost all host community respondents were opposed to “forcing” Somali refugees’ return to Somalia
- ▶ Respondents acknowledge the negative effects refugees long-term stay has had on them, especially on the environment, but say damage is already done.
- ▶ On the contrary, respondents favor refugees being integrated within Kenyan society, and becoming part of the community permanently.

Key Findings...

Quotes

“Refugees are our brothers and sisters. They are Muslim. We are Somali together. So, we integrated, and we are an integrated community whether we are locals or refugees. There is no way of us parting ways.” **Female host community member, Dabaab**

“Actually, we are benefiting from refugees through the aid that comes through organizations that help refugees.” **Host community leader, Dadaab**

Key Findings...

Reasons for these viewpoints:

- a. Refugees and host communities have integrated through intermarriage, and already feel part of one large community.
- b. The host community, in various ways, benefit from the presence of the refugees.

Host communities around Dadaab rely on aid services provided to refugees. The region is underdeveloped and suffers from lack of government investment. Host communities use facilities and services provided to refugees, such as education and healthcare.

Key Findings...

Example:

Bula Kheir, a host community village a few kilometers from Ifo Camp, does not have access to water, healthcare, and schools despite being older than the camps. Residents access these services in Ifo.

Residents of Fafi (host community) rely on services such healthcare and education in Hagardere camp.

Conclusion

- ▶ Findings suggest that **increased public participation** should be a key component of decision-making processes on Dadaab closure going forward.
- ▶ Refugees and **host communities in particular should be key participants** in decision-making processes at the national and county level.
- ▶ Host communities can **propose solutions for integration** that will address potential conflict and enhance sustainable integration.

An aerial photograph of a vast agricultural field, likely a vegetable or fruit plantation, showing neat rows of crops. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The text "THANK YOU" is centered in the middle of the image in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

THANK YOU