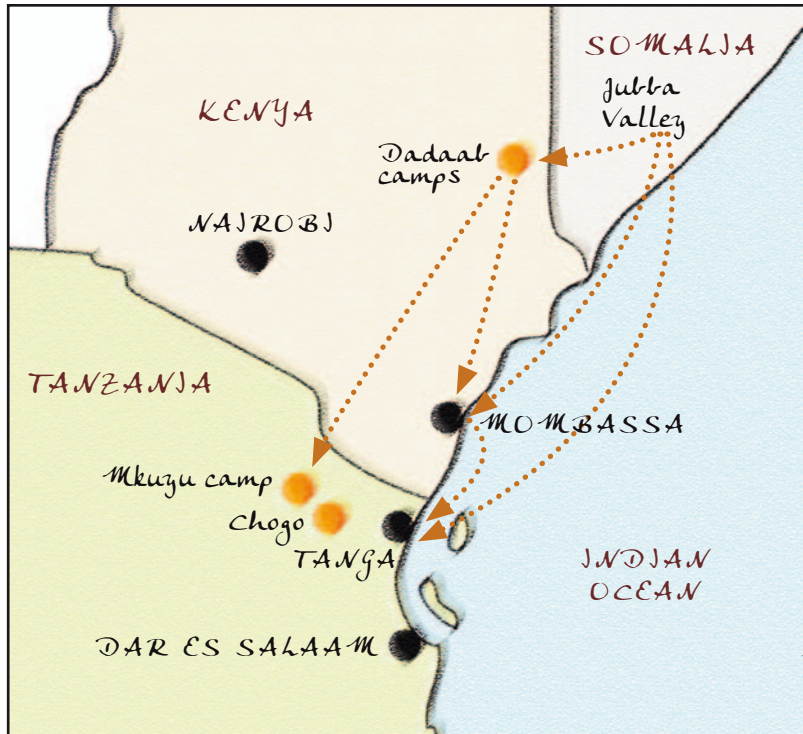


Finding a Home on Ancestral Land

Somali Bantu
refugees gaining
citizenship in
Tanzania





Flight routes of the Somali Bantu refugees



The neighbourhoods in Chogo refugee settlement are named after places in Somalia. In 2003 the Tanzanian Government transferred the Somali Bantu refugees from Mkuuyu camp - in the same region of Tanga - to Chogo, in a move towards naturalizing those who wished to stay. Today Tanzania's new citizens and refugees awaiting citizenship live and work here together with neighbouring local communities. Very soon Chogo refugee settlement will cease to exist and will be fully absorbed in the local villages ●



Finding a Home on Ancestral Land

For millions of refugees across the world home is a distant memory. It is a place they have had to flee to escape violence and persecution. Most dream of going home, others hope for resettlement and some are able to integrate in their host countries. A small number of so-called Somali Bantus who fled their country in the nineties found a new home in their ancestors' land, Tanzania.

Chogo refugee settlement in Tanzania's coastal region of Tanga is host to some 3,000 Somali refugees from Bantu origin and newly-naturalized who are living and working alongside the local communities. Most of these refugees and new Tanzanian citizens can trace their origins back to the Zigua tribe in this area of the country, which their ancestors left almost two centuries ago.

In the late 1830s slave traders took advantage of a prolonged drought in East Africa to falsely offer coastal tribes labor opportunities in foreign lands. In the hope of staving off starvation many accepted, including members of the Zigua tribe in northeast Tanzania, only to be sold as slaves when they arrived to their destinations.

One of the places they were brought to was the Benadir coast of Somalia where, once sold, they worked in plantations producing sorghum, maize and sesame seeds for export throughout the Indian Ocean. Later on, escaped and ex-slaves established thriving farmer settlements on the fertile land along the lower Jubba river in southern Somalia.

During colonial times these Bantu communities in Somalia had to endure expropriations and forced labour enforced by both the Italian and British administrations. Until in the 1970s and 1980s their worst fears got realized: the Somali state dispossessed one Bantu village after another of valuable riverine land. Excluded from the

traditional Somali clan protection network - that mainly catered for pastoralist groups - the Bantu farmers fell into increasing marginalization.

In the early nineties civil war broke out and Siad Barre's regime was overthrown, pushing many Somalis, including Bantus, to flee their country. Tens of thousands of them risked their lives and travelled all the way down to the Kenyan harbour of Mombasa on overcrowded and rickety dhows. A small group of refugees of Bantu origin made their way even further south, to Tanga in northeast Tanzania, reversing the path their ancestors had taken.

Upon their arrival, the Government of Tanzania hosted the Somali refugees in Mkuyu camp, where they received assistance from UNHCR and partners. In 2003, more than a decade later, these refugees were transferred to the newly-constructed settlement of Chogo, in a move towards naturalizing those who wished to stay.

Since 2005 Chogo's 3,000 inhabitants - new citizens and refugees awaiting citizenship alike - have been self-sufficient while the local authorities took over the responsibility of UNHCR in providing public services such as education, health and water.

Through the following pictures, UNHCR wants to recognize the strength and resolve of these refugees who finally found a home and were able to start a new life on their ancestors' land thanks to the generosity of the people and Government of Tanzania.



Oluseyi Bajulaiye
UNHCR Representative Tanzania



Hawa, 52 years old, and her family fled Somalia in 1992, making their way down to Tanzania's coastal region of Tanga. Today she lives with her five children and fifteen grandchildren in Chogo where she worked hard to make a life for her family. Although she is still waiting to be naturalized and become Tanzanian, she feels at home here ●



Fatuma, 72 years old, also fled Somalia in 1992 with just the clothes on her back and a few possessions she was able to carry. Escaping violence and death in the Jubba valley, she boarded a truck and crossed into northeast Kenya, where she found refuge in Dadaab's refugee camps. After two years she decided to proceed to Tanzania, to claim asylum in the land of her ancestors. When the Government of Tanzania subsequently offered her and other Somali Bantus naturalization, they gladly accepted ●



Athumani, also called Kizito, and his wife Khadija are proud new citizens of Tanzania. They live in Chogo's Mogadishu neighbourhood as one out of only two Christian families in the settlement. Back in Somalia, Kizito studied at an Italian missionary school and later became head master of a special school for Bantu children. When civil war broke out, his family fled Somalia while he stayed behind to take care of his sick parents. He finally escaped the country in 2001 and reunited with his family in Tanzania. Today Kizito has a thriving farm and is keen to see his community emancipate. One of his interests is to optimize the farming techniques used in Chogo and surrounding villages. Kizito and Khadija's three daughters live and study in Dar es Salaam, two of them are married to Tanzanians ●



In 2003, upon their arrival in Chogo, each refugee family received a residential plot and more than 2.5 acres of fertile land from the Tanzanian government. The refugees initially lived in shelters, constructed with plastic sheeting provided by UNHCR. Soon these shelters gave way to houses, constructed and decorated in much the same way as Bantu houses back in Somalia. Various colours of mud are employed to embellish inner and outer walls with flowers or sayings ●



In Somalia, Bantu children were denied education for decades, but here in Chogo, they attend school together with the locals. With the help of UNHCR and the Tanzanian NGO Relief to Development Society, a primary and secondary school were constructed on the public grounds between Chogo village and Chogo refugee settlement, next to a dispensary, community hall and police post. UNHCR ensured that the assistance provided to refugees also brought tangible benefits to the local communities. Today the secondary school attracts 327 students from all over Handeni District while the health dispensary serves an estimated 9,000 people from Chogo and surrounding villages ●





A very steep slope leads to one out of six water points in Chogo settlement. The wells not only provide a necessary good, but also serve as meeting place for the women. While fulfilling their every day tasks such as fetching water, preparing food and farming, the women in Chogo show a very high degree of solidarity. They share food and water, look after each other's children and work side by side on the fields ●



Each day Amina, a 58 years old widow, makes her way to the well in Chogo's Mogadishu neighbourhood. She describes Chogo as peaceful and reassuring, and doesn't miss her life full of fear in Somalia, where she lost two husbands who got killed in the war ●



In southern Somalia, the Bantus were the backbone of agricultural production. Here in Chogo maize and sesame are harvested twice a year and sold to businessman arriving by truck in the settlement. Chogo's high food production also attracts locals who are looking for employment. Unfortunately work on the farm is also one of the reasons that keep some youth from attending secondary school ●





A dance group from Chogo settlement is performing the Zumo dance, a victory dance to recall the war between the Zigua and other tribes. While in Somalia, these Bantus continued to speak Zigua and Swahili and honour their traditional rituals, in an effort to preserve their identity. Today they regularly invite locals from the neighbouring villages to participate in traditional or muslim celebrations ●





The village chairman of Chogo settlement, Ibrahim, is shaking hands with his former counterpart from Chogo village to mark the conclusion of a traditional dance performance. The Somali Bantus' familiarity with the Zigua language and rituals predisposed the local population of Handeni District positively towards these 'refugees' ●





The Tanzanian Government is processing the last citizenship applications from Chogo and expects to have completed naturalization by the end of 2010. Soon after, Chogo refugee settlement will cease to exist and will be fully absorbed in the local villages while UNHCR's engagement with this group will end.

In an unprecedented humanitarian gesture Tanzania extended this naturalization and local integration offer to 218,000 Burundian refugees from 1972, hosted and accommodated in three 'Old Settlements' in the western regions of Rukwa and Tabora. After almost four decades of exile, 162,000 of them were granted citizenship, while some 54,000 preferred to return to Burundi with the help of UNHCR. The Tanzanian Government has also agreed to consider naturalizing a group of 1972 Burundian refugees who have settled around the town of Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika.

Every Sunday morning, women from Chogo settlement go to the market in the neighbouring village of Kabuku to sell their produce and buy household items. They exchange the latest news with the locals and talk about the harvest and other farming tasks ●

UNHCR calls on the international community to recognize Tanzania's efforts to pursue lasting solutions for long-standing refugee situations. Continued engagement will ensure that the process of integrating Tanzania's new nationals is successful and encourage other countries with long-standing refugee populations to follow this example.



Some 170 years after their ancestors were taken from here to be sold as slaves, a small group of Somali Bantu refugees are now becoming full citizens of Tanzania ●

Special thanks to the photographer Giuseppe Salerno who collected images and testimonies while on assignment. Our greatest appreciation goes to the people featured in this book who consented to share their personal stories with us.

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