

What makes a city?

Is Dadaab like a city?

Cities are places of change. They develop in particular locations over time, driven by a range of factors that are mostly linked to human needs. These needs are common to people in different cities around the world. But when is a city a city? Could exploring the growth of a refugee camp help clarify some of those needs and how they relate to each other?

The Dadaab refugee camp in Northern Kenya [that has been in existence since the early 1990s] could be said to demonstrate some of the characteristics of a city. It shares common issues of development with cities around the world, such as how to enable access to clean water, food and health care, and how to offer adequate shelter. It has to deal with waste, organise sanitation, offer employment and education as well as maintain order. It has to consider all aspects of living.



The ongoing crisis in Somalia raises questions about the causes of the conflict, and how places cope with the influx of people with extreme needs. Since devising this activity, conflict within the camp has grown, and so has the size of the place.

The activity enables learners to understand that life in a refugee camp still goes on: babies are born; children play; people meet and communities evolve. Basic needs have to be met, but that leads to other needs and the need for organisation.

The web of factors to be considered is in many ways similar to those experienced in a city. By linking the stimulus of photos from Dadaab to our own needs, learners can gain insight into the nature of those needs.

The activity centres on a collection of 23 photographs from a photo feature by Claire Provost and Hamza Mohamed in **theguardian**, featuring different aspects of the camp

Click here: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/gallery/2011/mar/24/dadaab-refugee-camps-in-pictures#/?picture=372901443&index=0>

The photographs raise tangible aspects of day to day functioning, and of the planning involved. They can also stimulate discussion about the things that are not photographed, but are considered important.

By using a class discussion approach, it is possible to build in more subtle matters to do with human relations, conflict, spiritual needs and the quality of life that continue to be important, despite the poverty experienced.

Proposed process ...

1. Review all 23 photographs as a class. Show them as a slide show; don't invite comment or analysis at this stage.
2. Working in pairs ...
 - ? What are the photographs about?
 - ? What questions would you like to ask, to find out more about what they represent?
3. Discussion about the core questions arising.
4. Review the slides again, this time discussing briefly each one. In the process brainstorm core issues about what is involved in creating such a camp. [See image list with questions below.]
5. Working in pairs ...

Write key words highlighting the range of needs.
[See grid below for examples]

 - ? Which five do you feel are the most important?
 - ? How are those needs met where you live?
 - ? Did other groups choose the same ones?
6. What questions do city planners need to ask, to make sure they are thinking about people's needs?

water	plans	sewerage
clinic	food	jobs
school	farming	energy
fuel	energy	police
worship	shelter	aid



Dadaab photos ...

These notes are offered to demonstrate the scope of ideas and issues. They are offered as teacher support, not as a stimulus.

Numbers refer to photos as on Global Guardian website.



1. Size ... Sense of scale; series of camps building up to the largest refugee complex in the world.
2. 300,000 people [the size of Cardiff]. Aerial shot of just part of the development. What planning was involved? Who has done the building? How will this core infrastructure evolve?
3. [Linked to (2)] Which materials have been donated from an aid programme? Which have been generated locally? What will it be like to live there?



4. The need for basic things such as water.
5. Building your own house ... Where do you get the materials?... What are the implications for planning?
6. Looking to the future ... planting trees. The need for jobs. Projects to enable longer term development. What other projects might there be?



7. The scale of a city ... what are the implications?
8. The need for heat for cooking ... firewood. What are the implications for managing the camp?
9. The need to organise water collecting points ... Where does the water come from? Who organises this? Is it rationed? What happens to waste? How is that organised?



10. Outside projects can help maintain the environment and create employment.
11. Making baskets and other things are valuable economically - what other activities might there be?
12. How do they plan for education? What schools could be made available? What is it like living here? What experiences do young people have?



13. What happens when the camp suffers things like floods or, as in 2011, a drought?
14. What aid is needed to help keep this place going? What is the role of UNHCR? What is UNHCR? How does it work?
15. How do you sustain agricultural activity to help produce food locally and enable economic activity?

16. New people are arriving ... what controls are there for registering? How are the police organised? Are there issues of communication?
17. Do different groups seek different things from school? Is there conflict between different groups within the camp? What are the implications of this for young people?
18. Food is essential, where does it come from? Can it be locally supplied? Can it be distributed fairly? How?
19. How will the medical needs of people in the camp be met? What nurses and doctors are needed? What other basic services are needed to support daily life in 'the city'? How do you gain community involvement in health matters?
20. How big can the place grow? What controls can there be to stop new people coming? What are the implications of this?
21. Focus on the face ... What does this experience do for aspirations and visions for the future? What hopes for the children? Focus on the card ... what organisation is needed to keep records about food aid?
22. How do people feel when they are getting old, when they are tired? How does this new community support them? What happens when people die? What are the families' spiritual needs?
23. Dadaab residents donating clothes to newly arrived refugees. How does the sense of community grow?



[See Guardian Global Development for updates ...](http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development)

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