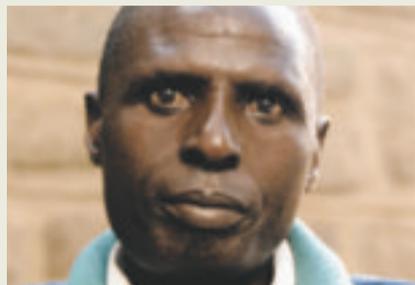


FACE TO FACE

Some of the returnees from Tanzania and Uganda



Elijah Kimely Keshio, 55: 'Who pocketed our heritage?'

He lives in Chemelil with his brother because he has no place of his own. He works as a casual labourer in sugar plantations. He has six children. His parents moved to Tanzania in 1955, the same year he was born.

He came to know about his heritage in Kenya when, as a child, he enquired about his father's rather frequent trips to Kenya.

He explains: "My father had three wives. The other two remained in Kenya. So he would often travel to Kenya. One day, I asked him why he kept travelling to Kenya and back.

"He told me that where we were in Tanzania was only the place we had been sent to, but that our real home was in Kenya."

Kimely says he didn't get much education because of the decision in Tanzania, that would not allow them to go beyond Class Seven.

They had settled in Isenye, near Serengeti. From 1978, while only 13, he would travel to Turbo in Kenya to sell sorghum and return to Isenye. It was during one of those trips, after he had attained the age of 18, that he applied for the Kenyan ID card and got one. When it was imminent their stay in Tanzania was coming to an end, he was among the group that made a return before the 1991 deadline.



Amon Kipkosgei arap Chumo, 78: 'We have experienced enough problems'

He, too, lives in Chemelil. He was 18 when they migrated to Tanzania with his father.

He had been born in a farm called Cheberer in Uasin Gishu in 1932. He witnessed the gradual relocation of some Nandi families to "reserve" areas, because, claimed the colonial administration, grazing land was becoming scarce.

By 1950, he remembers, the invasion of settlers into the area had intensified because those who had fought in the Second World War were moving in and being given portions of land by those who had settled in earlier.

That's when, he says, the colonial DC of the area travelled to Tanzania to speak with a counterpart in Musoma to accept people from Nandi.

"After that they started transferring us to Tanzania," he recalls. He was resident in Musoma District from around 1951.

He returned to Kenya in 1991, with seven children. They are now adults with their own families, making a total of about 30 descendants. "We came with nothing," he stresses, and says he lost about Sh28,000 to border officials at Sirari border post. He first went to Molo to his brother. He later moved to Chemelil to try and make a living out of casual work. He doesn't get much of that these days because of his age.



John Kipkosgei Some, 44: 'We felt alienated and threatened'

He was born 1966 in Sebei County, presently Kapchorwa District, East of Uganda. He now lives in Chemelil Sisal Estate as a squatter. "We are about 100 landless families there," he says.

Kipkosgei's father left Nandi in 1938 with the first group of families to flee the area in protest against being relocated to reserve areas, and ended up in Sebei County in Uganda.

They lived there peacefully until Idi Amin overthrew President Milton Obote in 1970.

First, Kipkosgei, who had been nicknamed Obote at birth, had to drop the Obote name just in case it attracted the attention of Amin's people.

Then the Karamojong started acquiring guns in 1975 and intensified cattle raids.

The situation got worse in 1979, following the removal of Amin from power.

The war gave the Karamojong access to the nearby Moroto military barracks after Amin's soldiers had fled. They helped themselves to bullets and guns.

Kipkosgei's family had moved to Soroti, still within eastern Uganda. His sister had been married there. In 1980, the family lost about 800 head of cattle, this time to a militia group. They felt alienated and threatened, and realised it was time to return home.

had expressed reservation about the ujamaa concept introduced in 1967. The ujamaa (clustering of homes into communal villages) ideology conflicted with their pastoralist lifestyle and they dared to express as much.

Reference to them as "visitors" became more pronounced soon after and eventually in 1990, they were asked to return to Kenya and a deadline of 1991 issued. Around the time, Tanzania had embarked on land reforms, and the presence of the Nandi might have created discomfort in some quarters.

"So, people started leaving slowly," Chumo narrates.

"People with a lot of cattle started selling them, together with whatever property they had. Those who did so early were lucky, because later, some Tanzanian authorities decided that any property acquired in Tanzania belonged to the country. You sell a cow and you will not pass the borders with the money because a thorough search would be conducted. We would be stripped naked at border points just in case any of us hid some money."

The border officials would take away any cash in excess of what was necessary as fare to Nandi Hills. "Hii ni mali ya Tanzania (this is Tanzanian property)," they would be told.

Chumo returned to Kenya in 1991, with seven children, but without the Sh28,000 he had tried to come back with.

"Since I came, I have not done much other than casual work here and there. I don't have much energy

left. I am now waiting to die. I don't see much hope. We have experienced enough problems.

"This is not a small matter. Even my children have nothing. They didn't get much education because they were not allowed to go beyond Class Seven in Tanzania. Who will employ them?" he asks.

Kimely and his family of four were in the group that returned before the 1991 ultimatum expired. They generally ended up in forests, lost for where else to call home.

"I went to Kapsasur forest. Some went to Kimondi, others to Mau. Some came to Tinderet to beg for space to farm. After Narc (National Rainbow Coalition) came to power in 2002, we were ejected and I went to Chemelil to be accommodated by a brother who had gone there earlier. Many of us are now scattered in sugar plantations as workers and squatters. None has land," he says.

The group that was evicted from Tanzania in 1991 at the expiry of the ultimatum went to Kapsabet, according to Kimely, who says he was among the people who facilitated their return.

They stayed there for about three months, he says, before the government told them to find their relatives. Some went to Mosop. Others ended up in Uasin Gishu, Cherangani, and Chemelil, living mainly as squatters.

According to Kimely, the affected people, including himself, are 1,110, and that number excludes the chil-

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Our land was given to Indians as reward for their participation in the British war against Germany in Tanganyika. What about us? Where are we supposed to go?”

Elijah Kimely Keshio, who was among Kenyans forced to migrate to Tanzania

dren and grandchildren, whom he claims are growing up facing the same problem.

They have since dug into history to come up with facts that could help them put their matter across for possible resolution by relevant authorities.

Discussions with elders and trips to the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi with the help of Koitalel Samoei Nandi Trust, whose mission is to promote equitable socio-economic development in Nandi Hills, and the Centre for Community Dialogue and Development, an NGO, have yielded significant facts.

Leaning forward on a bench in Nandi Hills at the burial site of Koitalel arap Samoei, the Nandi leader who held off the British invasion into the area before being duped and killed in cold blood in 1905, Kimely says: "We found that our original home was in Tinderet, the lower side.

"It was called Soin, which then covered Tinderet all the way to Muhoroni and Miwani. We also established that's where the war with the colonialists started - from Londiani to Fort Ternan, where the colonial administrators had established their military base in the area.

"In trying to establish who took over the lands after the colonialists went, we discovered that they were given to Indians as reward to their participation in the British war against Germany in Tanganyika. What about us?"

"Where are we supposed to go?" he wonders.

How the deal to migrate was struck

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The cool weather, the rolling topography, the lush vegetation, and now the abundant tea estates, give Nandi Hills a pleasant scenery and an aura of freshness that few would deny is attractive.

A visit to the place shows why it became a prime attraction to the British administrators in the early colonial years, to the extent that they viciously killed and mercilessly displaced the inhabitants and expelled some out of the country, so that British settlers could gain farming access and grab ownership of the lush lands.

Now, underneath the beauty of these vast rolling lands lays a sad history concerning hundreds of families who, in the early 1950s, were exiled to northern Tanzania, and then evicted from there in 1991 to return to Kenya to be confronted by landlessness and an uncaring government.

Since their return to the country, administrative letters have been exchanged between district commissioners, provincial commissioners, permanent secretaries, and lands commissioner, but these families say they are still landless and desperate.

Communication between district, provincial and ministerial administrators during the colonial years confirm that between 1951 and 1955, not less than 200 families from Nandi district in Kenya relocated to Musoma and Serengeti districts in Tanzania.

The decision to send these families to northern Tanzania was sealed after a November 6, 1951 report by the district officer of Nandi of the time. It detailed the findings of a four-day trip to Ushashi, Nata and Ikoma areas, to appraise the selected regions and observe the response of the Nandi representatives who had been included in the trip.

The detailed report, addressed to the district commissioner of Kapsabet then, concluded: "There appears to be no great obstacle to either the Ushashi or Nata-Ikoma schemes from the ethnological or political points of view. Both sides appear genuinely to favour settlement by Nandi in the Musoma district."

It further confirmed that the district commissioner in Musoma was agreeable to the arrangement.

By February 1953, according to records from the Kenya National Archives, 110 Nandi families had moved into Musoma District.

Another 90 were expected, to make the total 200 families agreed on by both Kenyan and Tanganyika colonial administrators then. Each family was allowed to move with a maximum of 20 head of cattle.

However, from the various correspondences between the administrative authorities in Nandi/Kapsabet and Musoma, more families than anticipated secretly moved to Musoma, and a few to western Uganda.

According to Peter Kirwa, a trustee and treasurer of Koitalel Samoei Nandi Trust, some of the families could have continued to move as far as Congo and Central African Republic.

Koitalel Samoei Nandi Trust is one of the organisations that the homeless returnees from Tanzania and Uganda are banking on to push their case for resolution by the government, and hopefully also through the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC).

The other is the Centre for Community Dialogue and Development, headed by David Busienei as its secretary general. The organisation was formed after the election related violence in 2008, to promote understanding and peace within the region.

The organisation's involving in the matter of seeking to find solutions to the landless returnees from Tanzania and Uganda is therefore to persuade both the authorities and the communities to devise peaceful mechanisms of addressing the landless problem that if not properly approached, could explode to undesirable proportions.

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There appears to be no great obstacle to either the Ushashi or Nata-Ikoma schemes”

Report by Nandi DC in 1951 on sending Nandis to Tanzania