

# UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF REFUGEES IN KALOBYEI, KENYA

The Kalobeyei Settlement was established in 2015 in Turkana West, Kenya, to accommodate the growing population of the Kakuma Refugee Camps. The settlement was set up based on principles of refugee self-reliance, integrated delivery of services to refugees and host community members, and greater support for livelihood opportunities through evidence-based interventions. The Kalobeyei Integrated Socioeconomic Development Plan (KISED), an area-based development framework, aligns with the Global Compact on Refugees in recognizing the need for collecting and using socioeconomic data on refugees and hosts for targeted programming, linking humanitarian and development actions. The [UNHCR-World Bank 2018 Kalobeyei Socioeconomic Survey](#), a replica of the Kenyan national survey measuring poverty (KIHBS), generates comparable evidence to inform policy and program targeting to support refugees and host communities.\* The Kalobeyei survey provides a comprehensive snapshot of demographic characteristics, standards of living, social cohesion and specific vulnerabilities. Highlights of the survey's findings are presented here.

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The majority of Kalobeyei refugees are South Sudanese (74 percent), with sizeable populations from Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi.

68 percent of refugees in Kalobeyei are younger than 18 years old, compared to 57 percent in Turkana County and 48 percent nationally. Just 0.4 percent of refugees are 65 or older, compared to 3.9 percent of Kenyans. The result is a high dependency ratio (1.9) with the young population outweighing the number of working-age adults.

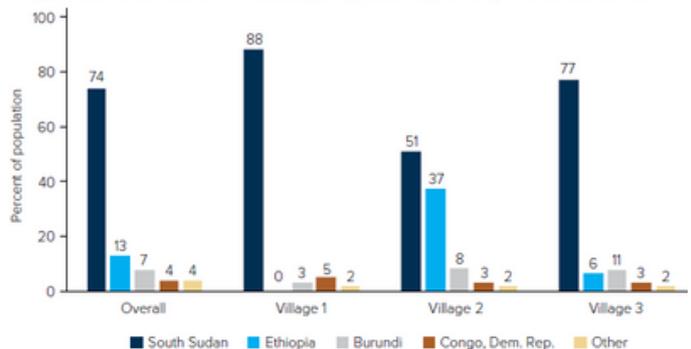
Half of refugees in Kalobeyei are women, yet most households are headed by women, especially those from South Sudan. The population distribution and household headship vary according to age groups and nationalities. Young men under the age of 25 (43 percent) outnumber women (37 percent), while women over 25 (12 percent) outnumber men (7 percent). Women head 66 percent of households and this proportion is higher among South Sudanese refugees (77 percent).

## POVERTY PROFILE

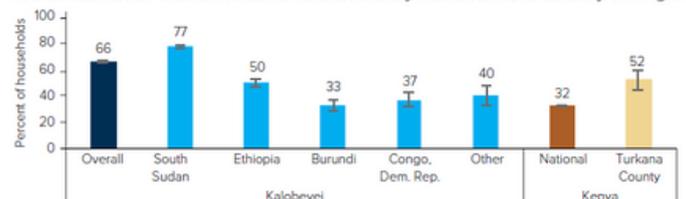
65 percent of refugees in Kalobeyei are poor. This is more than the national rate (37 percent) and comparable to the 15 poorest counties (59 percent on average). Kalobeyei's poverty rate is lower than Turkana County's, where 72 percent overall are poor, including 85 percent in rural areas and 51 percent in urban areas.

Using a modified version of the Multidimensional Poverty Index used by the UNDP, one-third of refugees are 'deprived' or 'severely deprived' in respect to education, health, and living standards. Of the remaining, 41 percent are 'vulnerable to deprivation', while 26 percent are 'non-deprived'. Comparable data for nationals are not available.

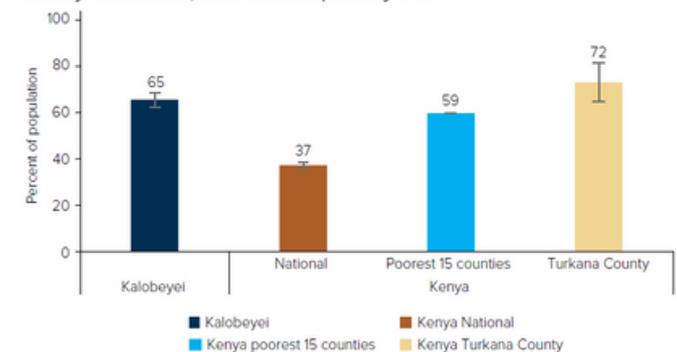
Population distribution in Kalobeyei by country of origin and residence



4: Distribution of women-headed households by residence and country of origin



Poverty headcount, international poverty line



\*The survey is comparable to the Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS) 2015/16 and the Kenya Continuous Household Survey.

## EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

Almost 4 in 10 refugees are of working age, among whom only 39 percent are employed. In part due to the young age of the refugee population, rates of economic activity are low: about 4 in 10 refugees are of working age (15-64 years). Comparatively, 55 percent of the total population of Kenya falls within this age range, as do 46 percent of Turkana County.

Among the refugees, 39 percent of the working-age population are employed, while the majority (59 percent) are outside the labor force, a classification which includes caring for household members and students. The remaining 2 percent—those who are available and looking for work—are unemployed. In comparison, 71 percent of Kenyans have an occupation, 26 percent are outside the labour force, and 2 percent are unemployed.

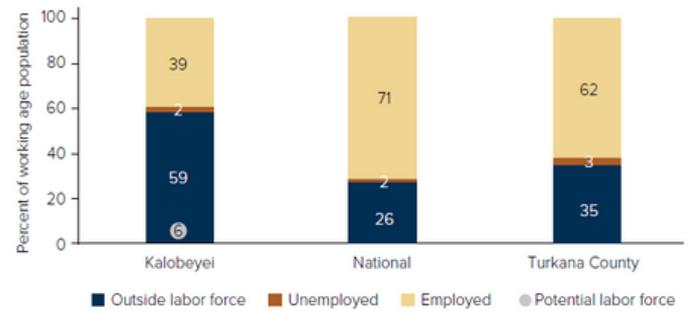
## ACCESS TO SERVICES

77 percent of refugees 6-13 years old attend school, compared to 80 percent nationally and only 48 percent in Turkana County. Secondary school attendance is lower, at 5 percent among refugees, 38 percent nationally and 9 percent in Turkana County. When considering overall education levels, most refugees report having attended school at some point in their lives (80 percent). But gender gaps are large: compared to 90 percent of men, only 71 percent of women have attended school.

Almost no refugee household has access to electricity from the grid or a generator. The top three light sources for refugees are: solar or biogas lantern (31 percent), battery-powered lamp (33 percent) and fire lit at night (12 percent). In comparison, 12 percent of Turkana County households and 42 percent nationally have access to electricity through the grid or generator.

Although access to water in Kalobeyei is nearly universal, access to improved sanitation is lower than that among nationals. Every Kalobeyei resident has access to a water point, though two-thirds reported insufficient quantities of drinking water. Nationally, 73 percent of Kenyan households have access to a water point, including 63 percent in Turkana County. Access to improved sanitation is lower for refugees and Turkana County residents (32 percent) than for Kenyan nationals overall (65 percent). Women-headed refugee households have lower access than men-headed households (48 percent versus 60 percent, respectively).

Labor force status



## POLICY INSIGHTS

Data collection, analysis and dissemination are crucial to inform targeted policies. Systematically surveying and including refugees into national surveys can contribute to filling socioeconomic data gaps to inform policies and programs.

The analysis of the survey data from Kalobeyei provides several recommendations:

- Building and maintaining human capital in the refugee population—especially among girls and women—needs to be prioritized.
- Promoting self-reliant agricultural interventions can help avoid food insecurity.
- Efforts to strengthen access to improved sanitation must be continued among the refugee and host populations.
- Increasing work opportunities for the refugee population can help lift aid dependence and improve livelihoods.
- Joint programs for refugees and host populations can further improve social cohesion.

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