

# 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 Profiling Survey \(SEP\)](#), a replica of the Kenyan national survey measuring poverty (KIHBS), generates comparable evidence to inform policy and programme targeting to support refugees and host communities.\* The SEP provides a comprehensive snapshot of demographic characteristics, standards of living, social cohesion and specific vulnerabilities – information that is crucial for informing policy and targeted programming. Main highlights of the SEP findings are presented here.

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

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

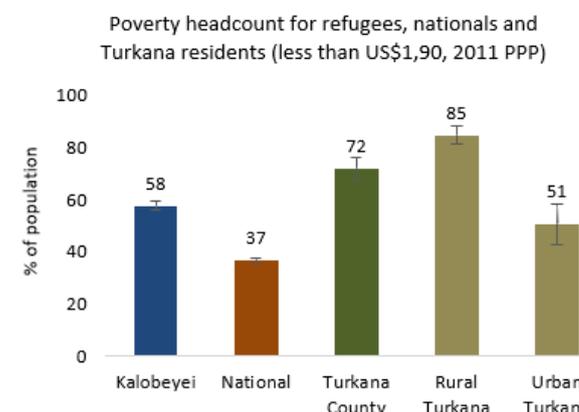
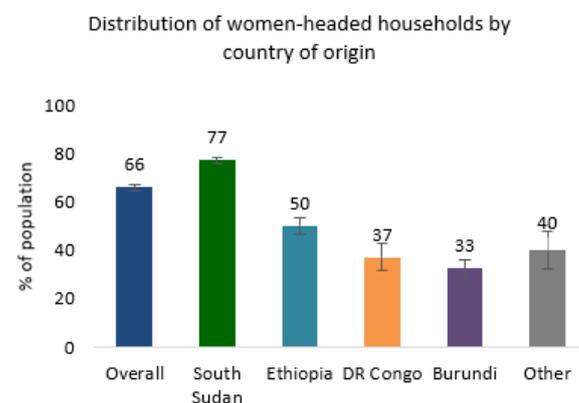
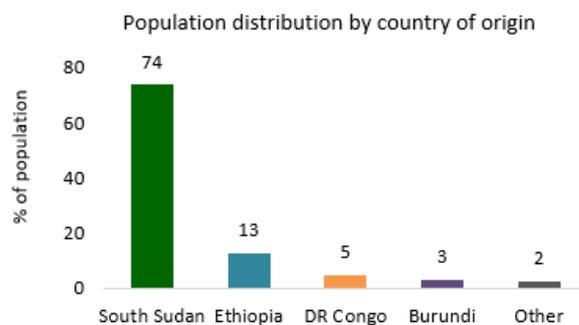
7 in 10 refugees in Kalobeyei are younger than 19 years old and there are virtually no elders. This compares with 59 percent in Turkana County and 50 percent nationally. Just 0.4 percent of refugees are 65 or older, compared to 3.9 percent of Kenyans. The result is a high dependency ratio (1.9) with the large young population significantly 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

More than half of refugees in Kalobeyei live in poverty. This is higher than the national rate (37 percent) and the urban Turkana County rate (51 percent).

The poverty gap is greater among refugees than Kenyan nationals, but lower than that of Turkana County residents. Using the poverty gap as a rough estimation of the cost of household cash transfers required to eliminate poverty, eradicating poverty among Kalobeyei refugees will require an annual transfer of \$144 per person. In comparison, closing the poverty gap for Turkana County residents will require an annual transfer of \$234 to each person.



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

## EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

4 in 10 refugees is of working age, while only 37 percent of them are employed. In Kalobeyei, 39 percent of the population is of working age (15-64 years). Comparatively, 55 percent of the total population of Kenya falls within this age range, including 46 percent of Turkana County.

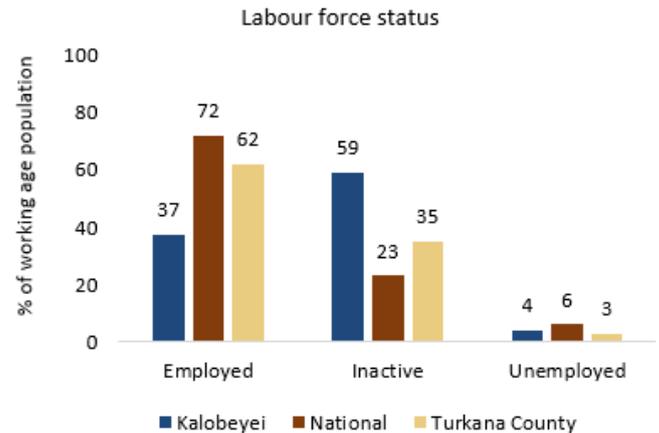
The majority (59 percent) of working-age refugees are considered inactive, a classification which includes caring for household members and students. Volunteering was the most predominant form of work reported by refugees. As found in precedent studies, due to restrictions on freedom of movement and difficulties in obtaining a Class M work permit, most refugees in Kalobeyei are limited to 'incentive work' and volunteering. Half of refugees worked as volunteers in the past 7 days.

## ACCESS TO SERVICES

77 percent of primary-school age refugees attend school, while only 5 percent of secondary-school age refugees do. Turkana County, with a 48 percent net attendance rate, falls far below national averages (82 percent). The secondary school attendance rate is lower for refugees (5 percent) than for nationals 38 percent and Turkana residents (9 percent). Low levels of secondary-school enrolment are consistent with the lack of available schooling options for refugee youth.

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 (48 percent) than men-headed households (60 percent).



## 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 SEP data from Kalobeyei provides several recommendations. First, building and maintaining human capital in the refugee population – especially among girls and women – needs to be prioritized. Second, promoting self-reliant agricultural interventions can help avoid food insecurity. Third, efforts to strengthen access to improved sanitation must be continued among the refugee and host populations. Fourth, increasing work opportunities for the refugee population can help lift aid dependence and improve livelihoods. Fifth, joint programmes for refugees and host populations can further improve social cohesion.

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