

SUMMARY

COMPARING SOCIOECONOMIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN URBAN AND CAMP-BASED REFUGEES IN KENYA

Kenya hosts over half a million refugees, who along with their hosts in urban and camp areas, live in difficult conditions and have limited socioeconomic opportunities, though many have skills and professional experience. Most refugees live in camps located in the impoverished counties of Turkana (40 percent) and Garissa (44 percent), while 16 percent inhabit urban areas mainly in Nairobi, Mombasa and Nakuru. Socioeconomic interactions between refugees and hosts, especially in camp areas, have overall contributed to the economic landscape and improved wellbeing, including nutritional outcomes, for both communities. Refugees and host communities have specific vulnerabilities, strengths and capabilities that need to be understood through socioeconomic data to inform policy and programming.

The World Bank and UNHCR undertook a comparative examination of the socioeconomic conditions of camp-based and urban refugees to understand key differences between both populations. Previous socioeconomic surveys comparing refugees and their hosts in the [Kalobeyei Settlement \(2018\)](#), the [Kakuma Camp \(2019\)](#) and in [Urban Areas \(2020-21\)](#) were used to select key findings which could explain factors driving the differences among refugees. The comparative analysis presents differences with regards to housing, energy, sanitation, access to finance, and social cohesion. As it is likely that education, livelihoods, and food insecurity fluctuated due to COVID-19, differences on these are presented only for camp-based refugees in Kalobeyei and Kakuma (discussed in the full report).

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Kenya hosts refugees mainly from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia. 74 percent of refugees in Kalobeyei and 52 percent of those in Kakuma are from South Sudan. 23 percent of Kakuma refugees are from Somalia while Kalobeyei hosts ethnic Somalis displaced from Ethiopia's Ogaden region (13 percent). About 89 percent of urban refugees live in Nairobi, 4 percent live in Nakuru and 7 percent in Mombasa. Most refugees in Nakuru are South Sudanese (73 percent) while in Mombasa, Somalis are the majority (84 percent). In Nairobi, 44 percent are from DR Congo and 22 percent from Somalia.

Camp-based refugees are younger, their households are mostly headed by women and have higher dependency ratios. Compared to 45 percent of urban refugees, 71 percent of refugees in Kalobeyei and 61 percent in Kakuma are 18 years and younger. While fewer than half of urban households are headed by women (41 percent), the majority of camp-based households are headed by women (66 percent in Kalobeyei and 56 percent in Kakuma) with overall dependency ratios at least double the ones of urban households.

ACCESS TO SERVICES AND HOUSING

Camp-based refugees are less likely to live in improved houses. Most houses in camps, especially those in Kakuma, are constructed with unimproved materials like mud, iron sheets and tent materials. In urban areas, refugees mostly live in houses constructed with cement blocks and stones, with variation by the date in which the household head arrived in Kenya. Households whose head arrived in Kenya 5 or more years ago (protracted displacement) are 6 percentage points more likely to live in improved houses than more recent arrivals. Improved housing has been linked to better health and educational outcomes.

Overcrowded rooms are more common among camp-based refugees, urban women-headed households, and urban households in protracted displacement. Camp-based refugees are 17 percentage points more likely to live in crowded rooms than urban households. This may partly be explained by their larger household sizes (6.2 members) compared to urban households (3.2 members). In urban areas, women-headed households are 7 percentage points more likely to face overcrowding than their male counterparts. In urban areas, protracted households (which tend to be larger) are 4 percentage points more likely to be crowded in rooms than non-protracted ones, with no such difference in camps. The higher incidence of overcrowding among urban protracted households could be linked to household sizes increasing according to the length of displacement and difficulty in accessing affordable housing. Overcrowding is linked to stress, poor health and educational outcomes, and intergenerational transmission of social inequality. Increasing funding for national housing programs, and inclusion of refugees in area-based initiatives, could improve housing for both communities.

The use of biomass as the main fuel for cooking is more prevalent in camps, mainly among women-headed

households, and among urban households in protracted displacement. Refugees in Kakuma are 65 percentage points more likely to use biomass fuels (firewood and charcoal) for cooking than those in urban areas. This may be partly explained by the cost of non-biomass fuels as well as by the limited access to electricity in camps. In urban areas, women-headed households are 5 percentage points more likely to use biomass fuel than those headed by men. In addition, urban households in a protracted situation are 7 percentage points more likely to use biomass fuel than non-protracted households. Expanding energy access for refugee and host households to non-biomass fuels could be key to enhancing health outcomes, especially for cooks who are primarily women and their young children who normally remain in the proximity of the cooking area.

Refugees in Kakuma and women-headed households in urban areas are more likely to have access to improved private toilets than Kalobeyei refugees and urban households headed by men. A refugee influx in 2016/17 affected the capacity to construct private toilets in Kalobeyei and thus, community toilets were built instead. Consequently, Kalobeyei refugees in 2018 were 18 percentage points less likely to have access to private toilets than Kakuma refugees in 2019. However, during the time of this comparative analysis, a cash-based intervention for latrines increased private latrines coverage to 78 percent and 42 percent of households in Kalobeyei and Kakuma, respectively. In urban areas, women-headed households are 5 percentage points more likely to have access to private toilets than those headed by men, while no gender-based difference in camps is noted. Sharing of toilets is linked to sexual and gender-based violence and psychological stress among users, especially when using the toilet late at night.

On average across both camp and urban refugee populations, ownership of bank accounts is low (10 percent) while 78 percent of refugees have a mobile banking account. Camp-based refugees are 40 percentage points more likely to have bank accounts while urban refugees are more likely to use mobile banking. The higher incidence of bank account ownership among camp refugees can be explained by the cash-based interventions for food in camps/settlements, and for shelter in Kalobeyei, which requires refugees to receive cash through bank accounts, enhancing their financial inclusion. Expanding access to bank accounts and mobile money would increase access to formal loans and credit and improve savings. This can help start and grow businesses as well as smooth socioeconomic shocks.

When it comes to remittances, the differences exist mainly within communities. Urban households headed by women are 5 percentage points less likely to receive remittances than those headed by men. In camps, protracted households are 4 percentage points less likely to receive remittances than non-protracted households.

While camp-based refugees are less likely to have positive perceptions about trust in the host community, perceptions of security are higher in camps than in urban areas. Camp-based refugees are 19 percentage points less likely to agree that their hosts are trustworthy than urban refugees. This could be partly explained by the fewer interactions that refugees in camps may have with hosts—mainly through market transactions—compared to urban refugees who live among the host community. On safety, refugees in camps feel safer in their neighborhoods than those in urban areas, though refugees in women-headed households in camps feel less safe. The camp-urban difference may be partly explained by a higher perception of crime in urban areas, where 60 percent of households agree that crimes are common in their neighborhood.

REFUGEE WOMEN SPECIFIC VULNERABILITIES

Women refugees are more likely to live in overcrowded rooms, less likely to receive remittances, and have lower access to loans and mobile banking. Households headed by women have worse perceptions of safety. Looking only at camp-based households, those headed by women with at least one child under 5 years of age are less likely to be employed. Further, youth who are not in employment, education, or training are more likely to be women. Policies that introduce or expand gender-sensitive programs and support women and girls' empowerment could help alleviate barriers to socioeconomic opportunities and build human capital. Financial inclusion programs coupled with entrepreneurship skills, business training and cash grants targeting women could be a starting point to unlocking refugee women's socioeconomic potential and integration.

ADVOCATING FOR INCLUSION OF REFUGEES IN NATIONAL SURVEYS

Refugees in Kenya are not systematically included in national surveys, which results in a lack of comparable socioeconomic data of refugees and their hosts. Yet, this data is crucial in Kenya, especially in face of ongoing conflict, environmental hazards and other shocks, as well as the recent government decision to close refugee camps, which may impact the influx of refugees as well as the living conditions of those already in Kenya. A deeper understanding of the socioeconomic needs and capabilities of camp-based and urban refugees and their hosts is crucial to help inform durable solutions.