



**APPENDIX 3-7**

**03**  
**2025**

**FORCED SELF RELIANCE? PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT  
AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION: CASES FROM EAST AFRICA**  
**APPENDIX 3-7**

Måns Fellesson and Mats Härsmar

Forced Self Reliance? Protracted  
Displacement and Economic Inclusion:  
Cases from East Africa  
(Online appendix 3-7)

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## Appendix 3: Global displacement situation

According to recent figures from the UNHCR 122.6 million people were forcibly displaced or stateless in 2024. The number of *refugees* worldwide reached 37.9 million at mid-2024. Most refugees stay in exile for years or decades and protractedness has steadily increased. Table A3.1 provides an overview of different categories of displaced people.

**Table A3.1: Current global refugee situation**

	Millions, 2024
Refugees under UNHCR mandate	32,0
Refugees under UNRWA mandate (Palestinians)	5,98
Asylum seekers	8,0
People in refugee-like situations	5,79
Internally displaced people	72,1
<b>Total</b>	<b>122,6</b>
<i>Stateless people</i>	4,4

Sources: (UNHCR 2024d). IDP figure (IDMC 2024a).

*Asylum seekers* have not yet been legally recognized as refugees but are awaiting asylum decisions. They are increasingly finding their protection claims assessed in countries that already host large numbers of displaced people – often countries already struggling with weak and overstretched institutional capacity for legal protection.

*Internally displaced persons* (IDPs) account for the larger share of displaced people: 72.1 in 2024, according to the recent Global Report on Internal Displacement. Over the last ten years the numbers have almost doubled, adding five million IDPs only since 2022 (IDMC, 2024a). Conflict and violence are the principal drivers, for instance

conflicts in Ethiopia, DRC, Sudan, Ukraine, and Palestine. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa currently host 46 percent of the world's IDPs (IDMC 2024a).

The number of *stateless people*, who are not considered nationals by any state, has gradually increased over the past ten years. As of 2024, the UNHCR reported 4.4 million stateless persons – possibly an underestimation due to the invisibility of many stateless individuals in national statistics (UNHCR 2024a). An estimated 85 percent of the reported stateless people live in just ten countries, without signs of improvement.

People in *refugee-like situations* fall outside the legal and definitional boundaries of the above categories.

### **Underlying causes of displacement**

Driving forces of displacement are manifold and increasingly intertwined. *Armed conflicts, violence, persecution often implying human rights violations* remain the primary drivers of displacement. The 2025 Global Peace Index displays a significant increase of both civil wars and foreign military support to intrastate conflicts over the past decades. The latter has increased threefold since 2010 (Institute of Economics and Peace 2025).

Intensified geopolitical competition seems to be one factor behind the increasingly blurred distinction between intrastate and internationalised intrastate conflicts. Regional powers promote their interests and fight through proxies. These situations become more difficult both for asylum seekers and international humanitarian actors to navigate. In conflicts, displacement can also be a deliberate strategy (cleansing, depopulation and forced relocation) by state and non-state actors – to expel undesirable populations, or to identify the undesirables, forcing people to send signals of loyalty (Lichtenheld 2020).

Recent research on migration shows that individuals affected by conflict mostly opt to stay within their country of origin due to lack

of abilities, but paradoxically also for security reasons. This could be one explanation of the increasing number of IDPs and relativise the assumption that people affected by conflict want to leave the country as their first choice (Hagen-Zanker et al. 2024).

Environmentally induced displacement due to *extreme weather-related events* (droughts and flooding) caused by *climate change* seems to be increasing and has thus received increased policy attention. Governments and the international community are pushed to reconsider existing mitigation and adaptation strategies (Chen and Caldeira 2020, Cattaneo et al. 2019). A single drought can be disastrous for communities that depend on regular harvests for their lives and livelihoods. For countries in the Horn of Africa and across the Sahel, droughts have become more severe, leaving millions of people without the means to grow food, resulting in hunger and starvation. Even though links between drought and displacement remain unclear, studies point to dramatic scenarios.

The correlation between displacement and climate change is highlighted in the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report. According to the report, future climate-related displacement is expected to vary by region and over time, according to climatic drivers, patterns of population growth, the adaptive capacity of exposed populations and international development and migration policies. With every additional degree Celsius of global warming, the risks of involuntary displacement due to flood events are projected to rise by approximately 50 percent (IPCC 2023). A forecast report published by the Danish Refugee Council, DRC, tells the same story. In 2015, 16 million of the displaced were hosted in countries most vulnerable to climate change. This figure has increased to 46 million in 2023 and is set to increase further (DRC 2025). Sub-Saharan Africa is particularly affected.

Regardless of the underlying causes of displacement, economic conditions and incentives are often at play, both as enabling and constraining factors. The economic dimension contributes to the

complexity both as an individual factor and intertwined with conflict- and environmental/climate-induced displacement factors. The appearance of mixed migration flows constitutes one example, where economic migrants and forcibly displaced people move together, resulting in distinction- and appliance problems challenging existing legal and humanitarian frameworks designed for refugees and asylum seekers.

### ***Geographic distribution***

Forced displacement continues to escalate in Africa. The total number of displaced persons in African countries reached around 50 million in 2024 (almost 39 million IDPs, 11-12 million refugees and refugee-like) (IDMC 2025, UNHCR 2025). The number of displaced Africans has more than tripled over the last decade. Notably, African migration and displacement were largely regional and only a small fraction of African migrants and displaced persons embarked on a journey towards Europe. (McAuliffe and Oucho 2024). Since 2021, insurgencies and military coups in Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, Niger, Gabon, and Chad have led to political instability and displacement of millions of people

These figures can be set against estimates for Europe and North America – where only about 3.8 percent of the displaced (approximately 256,000 individuals) are expected to be hosted. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and Latin America are expected to witness an increase of 0.5 million each by the end of 2025.

### **Financing gap**

The humanitarian funding gap is now wider than ever. UN-OCHA (2024) projects that 300 million people will require humanitarian assistance in 2024, necessitating USD 49.47 billion in funding (50 percent). At the end of year 24,58 billion USD had been received, which is slightly than in 2023, but higher as a share of needs (45 percent).

ODA funding for conflict, peace, and security, which is closely associated with displacement and prospects for return, decreased in 2022 from an earlier 5-year average of 2.6 down to 1.7 percent as a share of total ODA, with Ukraine receiving an increasing share of the shrinking total. In light of this, there is a real risk that longer-term development funding is both reduced and diverted away from other crises and the poorest countries. The fact that ODA spending on hosting refugees in donor countries more than doubled to USD 30.1 billion in 2022 is an indication of this (OECD 2023a, van Teutem et al 2023).

It is a well-known reality that the current major host countries are grappling with their own development challenges. In 2022, 53 percent of displaced people were in countries with the lowest levels of human development and highest levels of poverty and the proportion is estimated to grow. Climate-changed induced displacement will most certainly be a contributing factor.

**Table A3.2: Ten largest host countries of displaced people**

<b>Host Country</b>	<b>Size of displaced population (million people)</b>	<b>Human development index rank</b>	<b>Size of ODA (MUSD 2023)</b>
1. Iran	3,8	78	231 675
2. Türkiye	3,1	45	1 259 221
3. Colombia	2,8	91	1 900 745
4. Germany	2,6	7	n.a.
5. Uganda	1,7	159	1 211 882
6. Pakistan	1,6	164	757 968
7. Chad	1,2	189	303 454
8. Russia	1,2	56	n.a.
9. Peru	1,0	87	919 175
10. Ethiopia	0,99	176	2 756 148
...			
15. Kenya	0,57	146	1 470 925

Sources: UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, OECD-CRS, UNDP HDRI

**Table A3.3: Ten most protracted displacement situations 2024.**

People of concern	Main host countries	Size of displaced population	Duration of exile
Syrian	Jordan, Lebanon, Türkiye	13,8 million	Decade
Sudanese	Chad, Libya, Ethiopia, Kenya	12,8 million	Decades/ last year
Ukrainian	EU	9,8 million	2 years
Afghan	Iran, Pakistan	9,6 million	Decades
Congolese (DRC)	Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya	8,1 million	Decades
Venezuelan	Colombia, Peru	7,5 million	Decade
Ethiopian	Ethiopia (IDPs)	7,4 million	Decade/ recent
Palestinians	West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria	5,9 million*	Since 1948
Somalians	Kenya, Uganda	4,9 million	Decades
Rohinga (Myanmar)	Bangladesh	4,6 million	7 years

\*Eligible for support from UNRWA. Sources: UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, UN and Media reports.

## Appendix 4: Persons interviewed

Person	Organization/function	Time of interview
Ivana Unluova	UNHCR, Kenya, Nairobi/ deputy representative	2024-05-17, 2024-08-26
Arifur Rahman	UNHCR, Uganda,	2024-05-17
Aurthur Mutambikwa	Kampala and field	Group interview
Gerald Peter Emoyo		
Jason Hepps		
Paul Kenya		
Carol Sparks		
Joseph Okony Ajang		
Allan		
Georges Lemesle		
Leon Lorestho Banks		
Benson Ngiela		
Gordon Adima Eneku		
Sateesh Nanduri	UNHCR, Kenya, Kakuma/head of field office	2024-05-23
Aurthur Mutambikwa	UNHCR Uganda Livelihoods and Econ Inclusion Officer	2024-07-01
Georges Lemesle	UNHCR Uganda, External Relations officer	2024-07-01
Carol Sparks	UNHCR Uganda, Sr. External Engagement Coordinator	2024-06-12
Jason Hepps	UNHCR, Uganda, Deputy repr.	2024-06-12
Aman Aligo	UNHCR Uganda	2024-06-12
Luba Shara	KKCF, Kenya	2024-06-19
Roberta Ruso	UNHCR HQ, Donor relation officer	2024-07-05
Nada Omeira	UNHCR HQ, Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Officer	2024-07-18
Anna Gaunt	UNHCR Livelihoods officer, Regional Office, Nairobi	2024-07-17

Suhail Awan	UNHCR, Kenya, Nairobi, Strategic Partnership Advisor	2024-07-24
Masud Rahman	UNHCR, Kenya, Nairobi Economist	2024-07-17, 2024-08-26
Andrew Agumba	UNHCR, Kenya, Nairobi, Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion and Social Protection Officer	2024-07-16, 2024-08-26
Charles Odera	UNHCR, Kenya, Nairobi Government Liaison Officer	2024-08-26
William Ejalu	Head of SO Dadaab	2024-07-15
Edith Ingutia	UNHCR, Kakuma. livelihoods officer	2024-06-22, 2024-08-28, 30
Gordon Adima Eneku	UNHCR, Assistant livelihood& economic inclusion officer, Kampala, Uganda	2024-06-24
Jared Owuor	Samuel Hall Associates, Nairobi	2024-07-08; 2024-09-04
Jimmy James Kokedieny	DRC, Arua, Uganda	2024-08-19
Juliet Aryamo,	LFS manager, NRC, Arua, Uganda	2024-08-19, 2024-09-04
David Akasa	Team leader, livelihoods and food security, NRC, Arua	2024-08-19, 2024-09-04
Iganachi Razaki Omia	Omia Agribusiness group, Arua	2024-09-20
Antony Otude, Robert Drabua, William Omara (only 08-24)	Welthungerhilfe, Arua	2024-08-24, 2024-09-05
Khalid Kim	Assistant Camp officer, Office of the Prime Minister, Rhino Camp	2024-09-04, 2024-08-19
Paul Kenya	UNHCR, Arua	2024-09-03
Adam Kahsai Rudebeck	Swedish Embassy, Kampala	2024-09-02
Jonatan Landström	EU Delegation, Kampala	2024-09-02

Arifur Rahman, Aurthur Mutambikwa	Head of program, UNHCR, Kampala	2024-09-02
Eric Ruto, Rasmane (?)	CEO, Kakuma Chamber of Commerce, Kakuma	2024-08-30
Innocent Havyarimana	GLAP Enterprises, Kakuma	2024-08-29
NN	Business owner, textile shop	2024-08-29
Mwachange Charunga, Evin Chavare, Timothy Sineh Kwosi N Peter Emuria, Faith Akuwam Aletea	Turkana County governor, Camp manager, Kakuma Head of Kakuma Police, FDS Kakuma municipality Kakuma municipality	2024-08-30
Father Mathew	Don Bosco training centre	2024-08-29
Adam Nsabimana	Chicken farmer, Kakuma	2024-08-29
Dorotheé; David	Dan Church Aid, Kakuma	2024-08-29
Michael Musyoki	Head, Biashara and Huduma Centre, Kakuma	2024-08-29
Brian Meme	Head Kakuma office, KKCF	2024-08-28
Caroline Njuki	Chief Technical Advisor, IOM Nairobi	2024-08-27
Oscar Muriuki Muriithi	DRC, Nairobi	2024-08-27
Sunil Chithra	Education officer, UNHCR, Nairobi	2024-08-27
Muzabel Welongo	Exec. director Resilience Action International (RAI)	2024-08-29
Wycliffe Barasa	Managing director, RAI	2024-08-29
Zelous Nezervy	Programme coordinator, youth organisation, Kalobeyei	2024-08-29
Samuel Brinya	Team leader, youth org, Kalobeyei	2024-08-29
Ivana Unluova	UNHCR, Nairobi	2024-08-27

Brenna Carmodie	DRC, Nairobi	2024-08-27
Ruth Kasolo	GROW, Uganda	2024-10-25
Esther Nabukeera Sempira	GROW, Uganda	2024-09-17
Mabele Cosmas	Chair, VSLA, Rhino Camp	2024-09-04
N N, chair, and members	Mwana Farm, Kakuma	2024-08-30
Group interview	Mushroom growers, Kakuma	2024-08-29
Group interview	Block Farming group (NRC supported), Rhino Camp	2024-09-04
Group interview	Unity Farming Group, (NRC supported), Rhino Camp	2024-09-04
“Job”	Model farmer, Madokolo district, West Nile County (Rhino Camp)	2024-09-04
Axel Maguba	Sub-district agricultural counsellor, West Nile	2024-09-04

A total of 69 persons were interviewed, out of which 9 were key informant interviews. In addition to this we conducted 5 group interviews.

Interviewees belong to the following categories: UN (heads and program officers), implementing agencies, donors, refugees, host community, host governments, private business actors. The refugee category is sometimes overlapping with other categories.

## Appendix 5: List of livelihood interventions

Selected implementing agencies / interventions are marked in **bold**.  
Selection criteria:

- Interventions relevant either to agriculture or business promotion
- Interventions assessed by key informants to lead to results in terms of economic integration
- Organisation having activities both in Ugandan and Kenyan settlements
- Implementing agents both from private sector, international organisations, refugees and civil society.

**Table A5.1: List of interventions**

Kenya		Uganda	
Organisation	Activities	Organisation	Activities
Action Against Hunger (ACF)	Livelihoods (Not present in Kakuma)	Ugafode Microfinance Limited	Microfinance
ALIGHT	Livelihood support to LGBTQI – not in Kakuma	DanChurchAid (DCA)	Agriculture, livelihoods
BRAC, Kenya	Microcredit, not in Kakuma	BRAC, Uganda	Microcredit/finance, Arua Office
AVSI	TVET <sup>1</sup> , Digital skills training	<b>OMIA Agribusiness group</b>	Agriculture, livelihoods

<sup>1</sup> Technical and vocational skills education and training

Trickle Up	TVET	<b>Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises (GROW)</b>	Finance and technical support
Welthungerhilfe (WHH)	Livelihoods, agriculture	UMRA regulated financial support	Various financial agencies
<b>DanChurchAid, (DCA)</b>	Livelihood, agri/avi-culture Kakuma	<b>Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)</b>	Livelihoods, agriculture
<b>Danish Refugee Council (DRC)</b>	Livelihood programmes, waste recycling, Kakuma/ Kalobeyei	<b>Danish Refugee Council (DRC)</b>	Livelihoods,
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Livelihood programmes, Kakuma/ Kalobeyei	CARE, Uganda	Livelihoods, VSLA
<b>Kakuma/ Kalobeyei Challenge Fund (KKCF)</b>	Pvt sector development, challenge funds	World Vision, Uganda	Livelihoods, agriculture, VSLA
Development Alternatives (DAI)	WASH programmes	Community Empowerment for Rural Development	Livelihoods, agriculture
Caritas	Cash transfer, WASH, agriculture	<b>Welthungerhilfe (WHH)</b>	Livelihoods, agriculture
<b>FAO</b>	Food security, Livelihoods, aviculture	Associazione Centro Aiuti Volontari (ACAV)	Livelihoods
ILO	PROSPECTS. Support to TVET	FAO	Livelihoods, agriculture
IKEA Foundation	Financing partner, Livelihoods, pvt sector promotion	International Aid Service (DK)	Livelihoods, water

Bilaterals (DK, BE, SE..)	Financing partners Various programmes, Agriculture, livelihoods	Joint Aid Management (JAM) /ForAfrica Kulika	Livelihoods
<b>Mwana Farm, Refugee led</b>			Ecological organic agriculture
Resilience Action International, Refugee led	TVET	Mercy Corps	Livelihoods, market dev't
GLAP, Refugee led	Entrepreneurship	Bilaterals (DK, SE, BE,..)	Various programmes
Helping Hand	Skills development	ZOA International	
<b>Don Bosco BOMA</b>	Skills training Livelihoods, entrepreneurship		

## Appendix 6: Analysis of Kenyan refugee policy coherence

Since the 2016 adoption of the New York declaration, five significant government actions and policy measures can be combined and viewed as a national-level policy framework for refugees. It is within this that economic inclusion, livelihoods, and self-reliance interventions are conducted in Kakuma and Kalobeyei. The framework includes: (i) the 2018 Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-economic Development Plan (KISED) – phase I (2018-2022) and phase II (2023-2027), (ii) the Third County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027 for Turkana County, (iii) the Refugees Act of 2021, (iv) the Socio-economic Hubs for Integrated Refugee Inclusion in Kenya – the Shirika plan and (v) the UNHCR Kenya - Multi-year Strategy 2023 - 2026 - Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion. Most of these are strongly supportive of the economic integration of refugees, but not all, as will be apparent. A key question is to what extent policies and regulations are supportive of such integration in practice.

### **KISED phase I (2018-2022) and II (2023-2027)**

The 2018 Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-economic Development Plan (KISED) was born out of a critical need to address overcrowding in the Kakuma refugee camp. With twice as many refugees as designed for, the camp required additional land. The Turkana County Government's proposal for a sustainable and integrated refugee assistance approach laid the foundation for KISED. In 2015, 1,500 hectares of land were allocated 15 km northwest of Kakuma Town – the Kalobeyei settlement. With initial financial support from the European Union, the operationalisation was to be led by the Turkana County Government in close collaboration with the UNHCR.

The plan has four strategic objectives: 1) creating an attractive environment for private-sector investments, 2) investing in a sustainable socio-economic infrastructure to improve national

service delivery, 3) enhancing aid delivery and financial inclusion to increase self-reliance and reduce poverty and 4) increasing access to higher education and supporting the skills and capabilities of refugees and host communities to participate in the local economy (UNHCR 2018b). The settlement is supposed to develop into an urban centre.

As of 2024, the KISED P has entered its second phase covering the period 2023-2027. Phase II largely follows the objectives of the first phase, but there is a notable change in the last objective, which now appears less integrative. Instead of the previous

*‘...promote and support market-driven skills and capabilities of refugees and host communities to **take part in the local economy**’,*

it now says: *‘Increase access to quality, cost-effective education, healthcare, WASH, and energy services for refugees and host communities and **support market-driven solutions**’* (our emphasis).

This shift in wording comes despite that both the Government and the UNHCR have hailed the first phase as a success. The KISED P II is being launched amidst a significant policy shift (Republic of Kenya 2021) that promises to broaden opportunities for interaction between the refugee and host populations.

Since its launch in 2018, the implementation of the KISED P has only been partial. According to official reporting, the funding requirements for each year have never been met. The KISED P has still been the focus of various research and evaluation efforts. A process-oriented evaluation was conducted already in 2019, examining the roles of stakeholders in supporting the KISED P (UNHCR and Danida 2019). The evaluation concluded that increased self-reliance of refugees is impeded by the remoteness and poorly developed infrastructure in Turkana, along with the restrictive features of the encampment policy. It went on to argue that KISED P requires strong participation of much more experienced development actors to conduct rigorous and robust economic analyses of investment opportunities. It also called for evidence-

based scenarios to determine the pace at which self-reliance can be attained. Furthermore, there was a compelling proposal to consider alternatives including the relocation of refugees to other regions of Kenya.

Concerns have been raised about the UNHCR's capacity to lead the plan effectively, underscoring the necessity for broader engagement of development-oriented UN agencies like UNICEF, FAO, UNDP, and WFP to drive meaningful change (Crawford et al. 2019).

Despite the critique, most early evaluations and studies on the KISEDIP tended to have overlooked critical aspects of its implementation, such as the legal and environmental boundaries of the refugees' surroundings and living conditions. Interestingly, most of the studies and evaluations touch on the issues – indicating some tension – but seem not to be willing to obscure the vision and political ambition of the plan, consequently leaving critical cornerstones unattended.

### **Turkana County development plan 2023-2027**

The third Turkana County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP III) indicates a commitment to economic and social integration between refugees and the host population. However, the CIDP III still does not take an inclusive approach towards refugees; instead, it presents a quite problematic view of the refugee presence and the implementation of the KISEDIP. The refugee situation is described as an ever-increasing inflow and the integrative impact of the KISEDIP as being one-sided caused by unbalanced humanitarian assistance.

*‘Social integration in Kalobeyi Settlement however has been found to be only minimal and partial, with most residents of the new settlement being refugees. Additional barriers to full integration of the host and refugee communities include unbalanced assistance by humanitarian organisations in favour of refugees, socio-cultural differences between the communities and a lack of deliberate programming to mainstream realistic integration.’ (Government of Kenya 2023b:17).*

The relationship between host community and refugees is described as complex. Although the host community has seen economic benefits of the long-term humanitarian operation in the area, these have reportedly been tempered by conflicts (access to water and firewood, land ownership etc.), which have tended to intensify due to climate change.

Notably, the CIDP III description of the refugee situation focus on the economic and social fragility of the hosting area. The county's own poverty analysis reveals quite daunting numbers – a multidimensional poverty rate of 86.3 percent<sup>2</sup> and the highest prevalence of extreme monetary poverty (45.7 percent) in Kenya (KNBS 2023).

The CIDP III, while comprehensive, lacks integrative approaches or interventions aimed for refugees and host populations. Due to a significant lack of funding, the implementation of the plan appears in large parts unrealistic, due to a 57 percent estimated resource gap.

### **The Refugees Act of 2021 – a milestone towards inclusion?**

In 2021, the Kenya Parliament endorsed the Refugee Act 2021, which replaced the Refugee Act 2006 (Republic of Kenya 2021). According to the government, the new Act is a 'milestone', providing a better legal framework for the protection and solutions for refugees. Essentially, the Refugee Act 2021 follows in large parts the previous Act, stipulating restrictions in movements and encampment as the prime hosting solution. In the new Act one finds a few paragraphs that could be read as supportive of the KISEDIP – e.g., the role of the Commissioner for Refugee Affairs is to:

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<sup>2</sup> 86.2 percent of children compared to a national average of 52.5 percent; 97 percent of the elderly compared to a national average of 55.7 percent. Among adults in the age group 35–59, the core drivers of multidimensional poverty are housing (95 percent), education (91 percent), nutrition (87 percent) and economic activity (74 percent).

*‘...promote as far as possible durable solutions for refugees granted asylum in Kenya’* (Paragraph 8 – also in Refugee Act 2006) and to *‘initiate, in collaboration with the development partners, projects that promote peaceful and harmonious coexistence between the host communities and refugees’* (Paragraph 8t – also in 2006 Refugee Act).

Still, these openings are confined by clear restrictions in residence (designated areas) and movements. The term *‘designated areas’* occurs several times in the Act, but its meaning emerges most clearly in the section on the rights and duties of refugees in Kenya:

*‘The Cabinet Secretary may, ... designate specific counties to host refugees. The Cabinet Secretary may, ... designate places and areas in Kenya to be transit centres for purposes of temporarily accommodating refugees’* (Paragraph 28, 2–3).

The Act does not provide clarity on the distinction between a designated area and a camp. The term *‘designated area’* is defined as

*‘...any reception area, transit point or settlement area as may be declared by the Cabinet Secretary’* (Republic of Kenya 2021, our interpretation).

The notion of control and concentration is further reinforced by the specifications that outline the requirement to reside in a designated area:

*‘The Commissioner may upon consideration of any special needs or conditions that may affect the refugee’s protection and safety require any refugee within a designated area to move to or reside in any other designated area.’* (Ibid. paragraph 31: 1).

The process of issuing movement passes is done at a high level by the Commissioner (Paragraph 31: 5). Movement without adequate permission, would result in either a fine of around \$1,500 or up to five years imprisonment.

The Refugee Act 2021 includes a few notable steps in support of the integrative approach taken by the KISEDPA:

*‘...refugees shall be enabled to contribute to the economic and social development of Kenya by facilitating access to, and issuance of, the required documentation at both levels of Government ... a refugee recognized under this Act shall have the right to engage individually or in a group, in gainful employment or enterprise or to practise a profession or trade where he holds qualifications recognized by competent authorities in Kenya’* (Republic of Kenya 2021, paragraph 28: 4–5).

The Act emphasises increased interactions between refugees and the host population by shared use of public institutions, facilities, and spaces (Paragraph 35). It also recognizes refugees as economic agents (Paragraph 28). However, the economic activities of refugees must not have a negative impact on host communities, natural resources, or the local environment. Any specific definition of ‘negative’ impact is not provided.

In sum, the new Act has some integrative elements aligned with the approach proposed by the KISED, but it still maintains a framework based on concentration and control through encampment and movement restriction. While there is an attempt to view refugees as economic agents, there are no actions to increase economic freedom, such as simplifying the process of obtaining work permits. The Act also does not mention the GCR and CRRF frameworks, even though Kenya is a signatory to these.

### **The Shirika plan – a paradigm shift?**

The Socio-economic Hubs for Integrated Refugee Inclusion in Kenya (Shirika) plan, which is still awaiting approval from the Parliament, was announced in 2023. It has been described as a *‘paradigm shift that no longer views a refugee as a burden’* (Principal Secretary of Foreign Affairs Abraham Korir Sing’Oei). The Shirika Plan – ‘Coming together’ in Swahili - expresses the government's intention to transition from camps to integrated settlements in Garissa, Turkana, and urban areas (Government of Kenya 2023a). A multi-stakeholder consultative approach has laid a participatory foundation for the plan, which is structured as a phased approach with an

estimated budget of USD 943 million for its first four-year phase<sup>3</sup>. Reportedly, the plan is designed based on existing legal frameworks. It is aligned with the broader national development agenda, specifically the Government of Kenya's Vision 2030 agenda, as well as the integrated development plans (CIDPs) of Turkana and Garissa counties (Government of Kenya 2023b). It is also aligned with international refugee treaties signed by the government, including the GCR. In support of the plan, the government has recently designated Kakuma and Dadaab as municipalities.

The Shirika plan opens a range of opportunities for increased economic interaction. For instance, refugee ID cards should be granted the same status as the '*Alien Card*' issued to other foreign nationals. Refugees from the East African Community (EAC) should also be given the option to relinquish their refugee status and be registered as EAC citizens instead. However, these opportunities are still subject to navigating within a restricted legal environment. Even refugees who have their profession or practice recognized, would need to have their documents certified by visiting the Kenyan National Qualifications Authority in Nairobi. Similarly, the process for refugees from the EAC to renounce their refugee status remains unclear, including the rights they would have if they did so. As freedom of movement is limited under the Refugee Act, refugees would still only be able to reside in 'designated' areas.

As late as March 2025, the Government finally endorsed the plan. However, uncertainties seem to persist regarding operational practicalities and funding. Moreover, it appears that the plan does not aim for full integration, and restrictions are likely to endure. Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi has explicitly stated:

*'By promoting the socio-economic integration of refugees, we are collectively preparing them for eventual voluntary repatriation to their home countries.'*

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<sup>3</sup> The plan is a 12-year endeavour spanning across three phases: transition, stabilisation and resilience, concluding in 2035.

## **UNHCR Kenya Multi-year Strategy 2023–2026**

The strategy, developed in collaboration with government and non-government partners, provides a framework for UNHCR's involvement in the livelihoods sector. Its overall objective is to promote self-reliance through facilitation of self-employment and wage-employment opportunities for refugees, asylum seekers, and host communities (UNHCR 2023d). The strategy ties directly to the implementation of the KISED and the GISED as well as the UNHCR's corporate livelihoods strategy. Among others, the IFC's study - Kakuma as a Market Place – has reportedly informed the strategy (World Bank 2018b, UNHCR 2023d).

The strategy signifies a shift in UNHCR's role from being an implementing partner to acting more as a catalyst for projects led by other development partners, NGOs, and the private sector. Interestingly, the strategy extensively discusses obstacles and challenges related to economic inclusion and livelihoods, pointing to the problem of a non-conducive policy and regulatory environment. Specifically, it highlights issues such as lack of freedom of movement, encampment, work permits, ability to own land, access to banking services, access to training, issuance of identity cards, job opportunities in host areas, and distance of the camps from major markets. Additionally, it emphasises some important political barriers to economic inclusion, such as refugees and asylum seekers being viewed as a security threat, host perceptions of preferential treatment for refugees, and concerns about environmental degradation by refugees and asylum seekers.

The strategy highlights that UNHCR currently lacks a comprehensive socio-economic database to track the impact of its interventions in the field, which hinders the development of projects and programmes proposed by UNHCR's implementing partners.

In sum, we have seen that Kenyan refugee policies at the national level have moved in the direction of becoming more inclusive, at least in policy documents. The integration of refugees into local

economies has been increasingly promoted. However, the slow and partly lacking implementation of policies create substantial hindrances for the studied interventions. We have also observed that the focus remains on keeping refugees in settlements. A combination of threats and even decisions by the government to close refugee camps, and a very slow implementation of the more integrative refugee policies makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the overall policy direction. Are competing interests at play, pushing policies in contradictory directions? Is the government sending different messages to international versus domestic audiences? Or is the implementation of policies simply slow due to lacking resources and administrative inertia?

A clear observation is that there exist tensions between policies at the international, national and the county level, including apparent contradictions between national and county level strategies. This finding is further reinforced by interviews. The recent introduction of a third administrative level, the municipality Kakuma, in Turkana County, may further affect such interplay.

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