

Promoting Life Skills and Livelihoods in Kakuma, Kenya

2015/16



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Facts and figures

Since 2012, Kakuma camp in Turkana County, has been receiving record numbers of refugees from South Sudan.

Out of the total 181'121 refugee and asylum seeking population in Kakuma, 90'759 came from South Sudan and 56'229 from Somalia. (Status March 2015)

By mid-2014, Kakuma camp was unable to accommodate new arrivals. Therefore, in June 2015, the County of Turkana, with the agreement of the Kenyan government, offered UNHCR an adjacent plot of land to set up a new innovative settlement, aiming at enhancing the interactions between the refugees and the host community. (Source: UNHCR)

Skills 4 Life focus for 2015/16

Conducting further technical trainings to complete all 12 trades. .

Continuation of life skills trainings including psycho-social support skills, as well as literacy and numeracy trainings.

Deepen exchange with local authorities, community leaders and UNHCR.

Key partners

Swisscontact and NRC

Financial planning 2015/16

CHF 1'200'000 (?)



Hairdressing Training at Kakuma Three, Turkana County ©Project Manager, Skills4Life

Improving protection and living standards for refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and migrants is one of Switzerland's key areas of focus in the Horn of Africa, as set in its Cooperation Strategy Horn of Africa 2013-2016.

Objectives and implementation approach

The Skills 4 Life project aims at strengthening the income generating capabilities of youth within the refugee and host community in Kakuma by enhancing technical, financial, life and literacy skills, which will enable them to improve their livelihoods.

The primary target beneficiaries of the project are 500 unemployed youth, both male and female from the refugee (250 youths, 50% female, 50% male) and the host community (250 youths, 50% female, 50% male). The project focuses on skills that are relevant to the existing market opportunities in Kakuma, as well as in light of a possible return of refugees to their home countries.

This project is the first pilot to enhance current and future (self-) employment opportunities, as well as improve motivation and self-esteem of youths growing up in the daily hardship of a refugee camp. The pilot serves as a basis to expand the approach in the Kakuma area with a potential for replication in other refugee or fragile contexts.

Partners, donors and budget

This pilot project is implemented by Swisscontact in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Swisscontact provides skills development and labour market insertion expertise, while NRC has a longstanding experience in working in refugee camps, including Kakuma. The programme started in Summer 2013. SDC is funding CHF 1.2 million until the end of 2015.

Rationale for engagement

- Kenya hosts more than 500'000 refugees (mainly from Somalia and South Sudan). The majority of them live in the refugee camps of Kakuma and Dadaab in Northern Kenya. Their basic needs such as food, health and primary education are covered by UNHCHR and its partners. However, offering longer term perspectives and additional skills goes beyond the mandate and means of UNHCR.
- Refugee protection has been a central objective of Switzerland's Humanitarian Aid for many years in the region. In addition, SDC has a longstanding experience in promoting skills development/vocational education systems to enable poor people to access better (self-) employment opportunities in many other contexts.
- The emergence of a vibrant small scale market economy in and around Kakuma refugee camp offers people opportunities to reduce their dependency on aid. Adequate skills help them to seize these opportunities.
- Research has shown that refugees, who achieved better economic perspectives in the camps were the first ones to return to their home countries.
- The inclusion of both, the refugee and the host community population, helps to mitigate conflicts between the two groups, where parts of the host population is often even worse off, than the refugees who receive support from the international community

Main results and perspective

- Comprehensive analysis of market relevant skills in the Kakuma area, as well as in the refugees' home country was carried out and from the initial 9 planned technical training curricula a total of 13 were developed of which 12 were used.
- A total of 527 participants (285 female) benefited from technical skills training with integrated entrepreneurship skills in agriculture, masonry, waste management, computer repair, weaving, tailoring, jewelry/beadwork, bakery, hair-dressing, blacksmith, tool-making and laundry. Another 827 (69% women) received literacy and numeracy skills training and 690 (58% female) benefitted from psycho-social skills training.
- 24 community based trainers were trained in the Mavuno methodology of group saving and lending. 164 participants (127 female) joined Mavuno group saving and lending and accessed Mavuno loans. From eleven operating saving groups (30% men) there was a total cumulative saving of USD 9'350 and total loans borrowed by group members of USD 26'833 was realized by May 2015. At impact level the average additional income created per beneficiary tripled in 6 months from a baseline of USD 24.9 in 2013 to USD 95 in December 2014.
- 1'813 interested beneficiaries attended career guidance and counseling sessions: 590 (30% female) from the host communities and 1'241 (19% female) from the refugee community.

Further information

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