

PROSPECTS Partnership

Kenya: Building Inclusive Pathways for Refugees and Host Communities



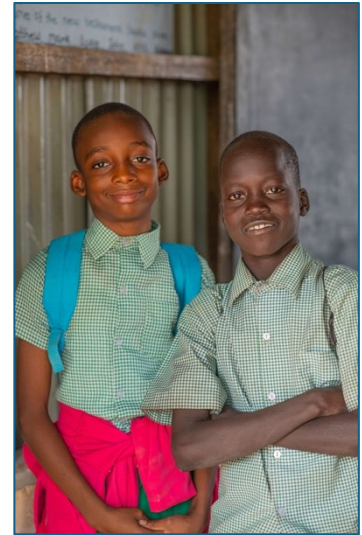
Kingdom of the Netherlands

Country Context

Kenya hosts more than 864,000 refugees and asylum seekers, primarily from Somalia, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia. The majority reside in Dadaab and Kakuma camps and the Kalobeyei settlement, while tens of thousands live in urban centers such as Nairobi. Over three-quarters of the refugee population is children, and women and girls continue to face heightened protection risks.

For decades, Kenya managed refugees under a camp-based model that restricted movement and limited access to employment and services. This changed with the passage of the 2021 Refugee Act and the launch of the Shirika Plan in March 2025, which signal a transformative shift toward refugee inclusion. These reforms aim to integrate refugees into national systems, allow greater freedom of movement and channel investments into refugee-hosting counties – opening space for expanded self-reliance, provision of basic services (education, health, WASH) and protection opportunities.

Yet the transition comes amid persistent challenges. Refugee-hosting regions are among Kenya's most fragile, grappling with high levels of poverty, drought, food insecurity, weak infrastructure, and high youth unemployment. Public services remain overstretched, and competition over scarce resources (such as land) risks fueling tensions. Ensuring the success of Kenya's progressive approach and aligned reforms requires sustained investment in local systems and opportunities that benefit both refugees and the communities that host them.



David, 11, is a Congolese refugee while Mayiel, 9, is a South Sudanese refugee. They've been friends and classmates for three years.

© UNHCR/Pauline Omagwa

PROSPECTS in Kenya

Supported by the Netherlands and implemented by IFC, ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF, and the World Bank, PROSPECTS is helping turn Kenya's progressive policy vision into practice. What makes PROSPECTS different in Kenya is its ability to align directly with the Government's Shirika Plan, ensuring that national commitments are backed by coordinated investment and technical expertise.

Working closely with the Government of Kenya and county authorities, the partnership focuses on four pillars:



Strengthening Protection and Social Protection to facilitate civil registration and IDs, bolster child protection and gender-based violence services, and improve refugee access to national social protection systems. These steps help ensure that refugees and Kenyans alike can exercise their rights.



Promoting Employment and Livelihoods to support Kenya's shift from camp-based assistance to economic inclusion by linking refugees and hosts to formal work, promoting private sector investment, and expanding access to financial services and entrepreneurship opportunities.



Expanding Education and Training to improve access to schools in hosting areas, strengthen teacher training and expand vocational and digital skills programmes. These initiatives help refugee and host youth gain the tools needed for employment and self-reliance.



Investing in Critical Infrastructure by upgrading water, sanitation and renewable energy systems in hosting counties, PROSPECTS improves essential services and creates local employment for both host communities and refugees. These projects also support Kenya's Shirika Plan, which is transforming camps into integrated communities.

Outcomes and Impact

In Kenya, PROSPECTS has translated its integrated approach into tangible results for both refugees and host communities. Schools have been rehabilitated and furnished, teachers trained, and refugee students supported to access national curricula and exams, while children and youth continue their education through both formal and vocational pathways. Families have benefited from legal documentation, child protection services, psychosocial support, and social safety nets that reduce vulnerability and strengthen dignity.

Together, these efforts are enabling tens of thousands of people to move beyond survival toward greater resilience, opportunity, and inclusion.

Protection and Social Protection

- **792,362 refugees and asylum seekers** have gained national legal status
- **34,355 individuals** have benefited from mental health, psychosocial support and case management services
- **22,776 people** are benefiting from national social protection schemes

Education and Training

- **3,586 youth** have completed professional or skills training programmes
- **62,207 children** have received in-kind and cash support
- **4,741 people** have received Recognition of Prior Learning certification, including 905 refugees

Economic Inclusion

- **8,741 new job opportunities** have been supported through wages and self-employment
- **2,778 employed or self-employed individuals** have increased their income or improved working conditions
- **29,146 workdays** were created for people through labour-intensive infrastructural development programmes

Critical Infrastructure

- **10,181 children** will gain access to clean water and sanitation services in 15 schools
- **130,000 community members** will gain access to improved sanitation services and basic clean water

Note: Some activities have relied on multi-donor contributions.

“As we move into Phase II, the government remains fully committed to creating an enabling environment where refugees can rebuild their livelihoods and achieve self-reliance. The Shirika Plan reflects this vision – ensuring that refugees and host communities actively participate in Kenya’s economic development and stand on their own feet.” - Joshua Owuor, Deputy Commissioner, Department for Refugee Services

Masika’s Story



Photo: ILO

“Since joining Jamii Biashara, we can now showcase our products online. Now we get many more customers compared to before.”

Masika, a Congolese refugee in Kakuma, had long relied on traditional basket weaving to support her family. But her market was limited to the camp and nearby communities. Through Jamii Biashara, a digital platform supported by PROSPECTS, she learned how to market and sell her products online. Today, she earns a steadier income and shares her skills with other refugee women, showing how digital inclusion can turn a craft into an opportunity.