

NRC’s operations in Kenya

Humanitarian overview

Kenya hosts more than 858,137 registered refugees and asylum seekers in the two camps Kakuma and Dadaab, as well as in urban areas (14%). 80% of these are women and children, with children forming 60% of the population. To date, Kenya continues to receive refugees from neighbouring countries, mostly Somalia and South Sudan. Kenya hosts up to third-generation refugees with some having lived in Kenya for decades, while many fled to Kenya during the 2010 drought and the 2016 civil war in South Sudan. Freedom of movement is restricted to the Kakuma and Dadaab camps where livelihood and working opportunities are limited. Kenya has experienced severe climate shocks, including the worst drought in 40 years (2020–2023) followed by destructive floods in late 2023 and 2024, driving rapidly rising humanitarian needs across the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) region.

Kenya’s humanitarian space has experienced a drastic reduction in funding despite the increasing asylum seeker and refugee population, thus straining limited resources and affecting service provision. As a result, a shift in response model has resulted in the implementation of differentiated assistance (DA) where humanitarian and development services are no longer delivered by a blanket approach but based on individuals’ vulnerabilities and capacities. Currently, the rollout is on food distribution with households placed under category 1, 2, 3 and 4, where Category 1, comprising the most vulnerable receive, only 56% of the MFB and category 4 receive no food assistance either in the form of cash or in-kind.



Photo: Karl Schembri/NRC

Our core activities



Education



Information, counselling
and legal assistance (ICLA)



Livelihoods
and food security



Water, sanitation
and hygiene (WASH)

NRC in Kenya

Established	2007
International staff	0
National staff	26

Humanitarian overview (continued)

The Refugee Act (2021) continues to be hailed as progressive legislation, especially on matters of economic inclusion and by extension self-reliance for refugees – a crucial component of local integration as a durable solution. In addition, in line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), the Government of Kenya has developed the “Shirika plan” (2025), a pioneering transformative approach to refugee management. The plan aims at transitioning the refugee camps into integrated settlements to support the sustainable socio-economic inclusion of refugees and host communities in Garissa, Turkana and urban areas. Though far from activation, the plan proposes a shift in policy from aid dependency to refugee self-reliance and development.

Since February 2024, the Government of Kenya through the Department of Refugee Services (DRS), UNHCR, WFP, county governments, NGOs and refugee-led organisations (RLO) has collaborated to design a differentiated assistance (DA) framework. The DA approach supports refugees by prioritising tailored humanitarian and development assistance based on individual needs and capacities, rather than the registration status of the refugees.

Our activities in detail

NRC supports displaced populations in refugee camps and surrounding host communities in Garissa and Turkana counties, as well as climate-affected communities in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) region. Our interventions focus on delivering lifesaving assistance and promoting long-term solutions for displacement-affected populations.

Support to Somali refugees and cross-border collaboration

Despite persistent insecurity in Somalia, Somali refugees in Kenya continue to face pressure to return. NRC is concerned that returns facilitated through the Voluntary Repatriation Programme may result in secondary displacement or unsafe conditions upon return.

In response, NRC Kenya works closely with our Somalia country operation to advocate for safe, dignified, and voluntary returns. NRC ensures refugees are equipped with reliable information to make informed decisions. NRC works towards promoting conditions that support sustainable reintegration and the restoration of livelihoods.

Localisation agenda and strategic programming

NRC in Kenya intensified its localisation efforts in 2023 and began formally partnering with local organisations in 2024. This approach is guided by a newly developed funding strategy, and programme designs built around four strategic pillars: Durable Solutions, Climate and Energy, Self-Reliance and Emergency Response. Each programme is grounded in a defined theory of change, outlining key priorities, interventions, partnerships, and approaches. Programme design is also supported by corresponding budget frameworks to ensure strategic alignment and effective implementation.

NRC Kenya’s operations are concentrated in Dadaab refugee camps, Kakuma refugee camps, Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement, and the surrounding host communities.

NRC continues to participate in advocacy and policy engagement initiatives. The country office actively engages in advocacy to influence policy and operational standards, ensuring the rights and needs of displacement-affected populations are reflected in government and humanitarian responses.

NRC Kenya works in close coordination with key stakeholders, including Government entities such as the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Department of Refugee Services (DRS), UN agencies, particularly UNHCR, and national and local partners, in line with our localisation agenda.

Our areas of operation

- **Garissa County:** Dadaab refugee camp and surrounding host community areas
- **Turkana County:** Kakuma refugee camps, Kalobeyei integrated settlement and surrounding host community areas
- **Nairobi County:** Informal settlements resident to urban refugees



6,660 people reached in 2024 ▼

Education

In Kenya, the education programme targets vulnerable over-age out-of-school children (OOSC) aged 10 to 18 years who have never been to school or have dropped out of school before completion of primary school or have had some kind of sporadic learning. This includes refugees, internally displaced persons, and host communities in Dadaab and Kakuma Refugee Camps and Kalobeyei Integrated Settlements. NRC in Kenya supports children's educational and psychosocial needs in the aftermath of emergencies leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes through the Accelerated Education Programme (AEP) and the Better Learning Programme (BLP) respectively.

- NRC in Kenya collaborated with the Ministry of Education in the development of AEP guidelines that provide a framework in teaching practices, assessment methods, and learning outcomes, which fosters a structured and effective learning environment around accelerated education. Currently, NRC is collaborating with KICD to develop an AE curriculum.
- NRC provides access to safe, quality and inclusive education for OOSC who have missed out on education by providing accelerated learning programmes that enables them to catch up with their peers.

- NRC in Kenya is collaborating with the MOE and the National Council of Nomadic Education in Kenya (NACONEK) to institutionalise the Better Learning Programme (BLP) in formal schools.
- Through the KPEELP programme, NRC supports formal schools by providing remedial learning in literacy and numeracy for early grade learners and language intensive programme for secondary school students to strengthen learning outcomes.
- NRC is conducting teacher professional development in collaboration with the MoE through continuous training, coaching and mentorship.



10,741 people reached in 2024 ▼

Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA)

Our ICLA programme in Kenya ensures that vulnerable displacement-affected populations exercise their rights towards increased protection outcomes and access to durable solutions. Our interventions largely target refugees and host communities in Dadaab and Kakuma Camps. Recently, ICLA piloted interventions in informal settlements targeting urban refugees in Nairobi. Our programmes are tailored around 3 thematic areas: promoting legal identity (LID), safeguarding housing, land and property (HLP) rights, and advancing employment laws and procedures (ELP).

Our ICLA teams:

- assist displaced people to access civil and legal documentation such as birth and death certificates and identity documentation
- promote housing, land and property rights for refugees and host communities with a focus on women
- support refugees and vulnerable host community members to obtain business development documentation
- generate strategic research on legal protection issues
- collaborate with government and humanitarian partners to ensure Kenya's legal and policy frameworks protect displaced people long-term



685 people reached in 2024 ▼

Livelihoods and food security

We strive to improve living conditions and access to food, and build livelihood opportunities to enhance self-reliance. We:

- provide capacity building on market demand technical skills to enhance employability and entrepreneurship capabilities of target participants
- develop and implement comprehensive programmes on graduation approach and NRC economic inclusion framework that address the multi-dimensional challenges of displacement-affected populations and set them on a trajectory towards self-reliance
- promote climate-smart agriculture and dry land farming in prioritised value chains and partner with county departments of agriculture and livestock to enhance the capacity of target participants
- support enterprises in pre-identified value chains to access jobs and self-employment
- support refugees and surrounding host communities to form community groups and obtain business licences and other legal documentation for businesses



4,074 people reached in 2024 ▼

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

We work to sustain the improved access to safe and sufficient water and collaborate with other actors to support the provision of safe access to sanitation facilities. We also deliver hygiene promotion for the displacement-affected refugee populations in Dadaab, Kakuma and Kalobeyei refugee camps and settlements. We:

- design and operate water supply systems including source siting, abstraction, storage, treatment and distribution
- work with communities to plan for preventive and corrective maintenance routines, rehabilitations and replacements
- mobilise and engage refugees and host communities on household water treatment and safe storage (HWTSS) and responsible water usage practices
- select and design suitable sanitation and hygiene promotion strategies, in collaboration with other actors
- undertake institutional capacity building to support long term sustainability of NRC investments

19,072 people reached in 2024 ▼

Emergency response

Our emergency response programme provides rapid, life-saving assistance to vulnerable populations affected by natural disasters, conflict and displacement, particularly in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) regions. Our interventions focus on:

- delivering multi-purpose cash transfers (MPCT)
- provision of emergency shelter
- water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)
- rebuilding livelihoods
- education in emergencies
- protection services

By partnering with local organisations and government authorities, NRC ensures that emergency aid reaches the most affected communities swiftly and efficiently. Recent efforts include responding to the flood and drought crises in Garissa and Tana River Counties, where thousands of households received critical support to rebuild their livelihoods. Through capacity building, community engagement, and coordinated response strategies, NRC is committed to enhancing resilience and reducing vulnerability to future shocks.

Climate and environment

NRC Kenya recognises the interconnectedness between climate change, environmental degradation and displacement, and actively works to develop and implement climate adaptation and environmental mainstreaming strategies in its interventions. One of the objectives under our new Strategic Plan (2024–2026) aims to ensure that displacement-affected communities strengthen their resilience to climate and environmental shocks and gain improved access to clean energy. We:

- conduct research and assessments to improve understanding of climate change, environmental risks and lack of access to clean energy in NRC's areas of focus, informing targeted interventions
- build community capacity through enhancement of community awareness and skills in climate adaptation, environmental conservation, and clean energy solutions to promote sustainable practises
- strengthen access to innovative climate-resilient solutions by supporting community-led and market-driven approaches in partnership with the private sector, local and national entities, and other key stakeholders
- advocate for supportive policies and standards implementation for climate adaptation, environmental conservation, and clean energy access in collaboration with government, the private sector, and relevant actors

We do so in partnership with local organisations, government and intergovernmental bodies, civil societies, the private sector and academia.

Our donors

We are grateful for the generous support from our donors:

- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- World Bank
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- European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)
- European Union (EU)
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- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
- Innovation Norway
- German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO)
- IKEA Foundation
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- VISA Foundation

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