Kakuma Camp Profile

Established in 1992
Population: 45,638 (as of Aug 2009)
Demographics: Somalis constitute 49%, Sudanese 35%, Ethiopians 10%, and other nationalities including: Rwandese, Burundian, Congolese Ugandan, Eritrean, Congolese, Nigerian, Zimbabwean and Namibian, account for the remaining 6%.
Location: Close proximity to Kakuma town, Turkana West District, North Western Kenya (1,000kms from Nairobi)
Climate: Semi-arid with average temperatures reaching 40 degrees Celsius.
Camp Layout: The camp is divided into 4 sections: Kakuma I (mixed nationalities), Kakuma II (predominantly Somalis), Kakuma III (mixed nationalities) and Kakuma IV (predominantly Somali Bantu and Darfurians).
No. SRP Students from Kakuma in 2009/2010: 29

BACKGROUND

Kakuma refugee camp was established in 1992 in response to the arrival of the Sudanese “Lost Boys/Girls” who had travelled through Sudan and Ethiopia by foot, fleeing civil wars, and finally arrived to relative safety in Kenya. 1992 also marked the fall of the Ethiopian government, which resulted in a significant inflow of refugees from Kenya’s northern neighbor. The camp has now been in operation for almost two decades, and during that time it has experienced major demographic shifts. The majority of Somalis began arriving to Kakuma after the closure of Kenya’s coastal refugee camps in 1997; since then, the influx of Somali refugees has continued, particularly with the relocation of 15,000 refugees from Dadaab to Kakuma in Aug. 2009. Following the signing of the Sudanese Peace Accord on Jan 9, 2005, and the subsequent launch of Organized Voluntary Repatriation in Kenya on Dec 17, 2005, approximately 37,491 refugees have repatriated to Southern Sudan with the aid of the UNHCR. This repatriation has dramatically decreased the population of Kakuma, and as a result, many services (including 3 high schools) have been closed. Because the Kenya Government favors an encampment policy over local integration and repatriation for many groups is hindered by ongoing civil war and violence – resettlement is the only hope for many refugees in Kakuma to find a durable solution. In 2008, 1,367 refugees were resettled to different countries like Canada by the UNHCR.
LOCAL CONTEXT
Kakuma refugee camp is located near Kakuma town, in the Turkana West District of Kenya. The local Kenyan population is comprised of approximately 60,000 people - predominately of the Turkana ethno-cultural community. The local economy is based on livestock and some subsistence agriculture, and it is one of the poorest regions in Kenya. As a result of this poverty, there has been a historical tension between the refugees and their host community that has occasionally resulted in violence. As a result, the UNHCR and implementing partners have allocated funds to support the host community and promote peaceful co-existence between the Kenyan locals and the refugees. While refugees come to the camp seeking safety, Kakuma is not without its own security risks. The proliferation of armed robberies in the region, and the close proximity to Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia, threaten camp security.

EDUCATION
Although there has been a dramatic decrease in educational services since the start of the Sudanese repatriation, the Kakuma school system continues to support 10,491 students (4,209 girls) by operating 6 pre-schools, 10 primary schools and 1 secondary school. There are 220 teachers in the camp, but 81% of them are untrained. Of the 394 students who attend secondary school, only 67 are girls. However, there is hope for gender equity - 240 refugee girls in their final year of primary school are benefiting from the remedial education classes funded through WUSC and implemented by Windle Trust Kenya, with the support of the UNHCR. The key challenges facing the education system in Kakuma are: cultural/traditional practices that do not favor girl's education, congestion in schools, dilapidated and under-resourced facilities, and a lack of trained teachers. Despite these challenges, students remain eager to learn; in the photo to the left, you can see a group of students who are so passionate about education that they are sleeping in the secondary school to share one kerosene lamp and study at night.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?
The inspirational stories of the “Lost Boys of Sudan” who travelled by foot from their homes in Southern Sudan to Ethiopia and then Kakuma Camp, have been shared through acclaimed novels, biographies and documentaries. Why not organize a movie night with your Local Committee and watch “The Lost Boys of Sudan” or “God Grew Tired of Us”, or form a book club and read “What is the What” or “They Threw Fire on Us from the Sky”? The Kakuma News Reflector – A Refugee Free Press (www.kakuma.wordpress.com) is a remarkable online forum and resource written by refugees living in Kakuma. You can also check out WUSC’s youtube video series “Refugees: Life in the Camp” to learn more about this protracted refugee situation.