

Stitching for Hope – Empowering Adolescent Mothers in Kakuma Refugee Camp.



Adolescent mothers in one of the tailoring classed preparing for their final exams at the Jitegeme centre in Kakuma Refugee Camp. Photo: LWF/P.Omagwa

LWF is empowering adolescent mothers through Vocational skills and business start-up kits in its operation in Kakuma

90% of youths who have been displaced by war or political conflicts experience conflict, poverty, and lack of opportunity. Girls, more than are boys who are displaced, are at risk of sexual exploitation and harassment. The confinement of refugee camps creates a negative view of the future for young people. In the Kakuma refugee camp and Kalobeyei settlement in Turkana West Sub-County, there are 197,341 refugees, out of which 16,880 are adolescent girls aged 12 to 17.

Like other camps, adolescent pregnancy in the Kakuma refugee camp and Kalobeyei settlement is one of the many challenges the refugee community faces. This is due to the economic vulnerability, breakdown of traditional protection, changing gender roles, and unsuitable living conditions. Among adolescent mothers in the camp, there is a high level of trauma caused by experiences related to Sexual gender-based violence, early marriages, survival sex, and harmful cultural practices. This, in return, leads to stigmatization, which in the long run, increases school dropouts among girls. Due to this, they are predisposed to double exploitation because of their vulnerability.

To enhance self-reliance among adolescents, LWF designed a self-sustaining program to address the vulnerability faced by teenage mothers in the Kakuma refugee camp. The program objective is to strengthen protection and mitigate adolescent mothers' exposure and their babies through life skills training and improved livelihood. Teenage mothers are identified through protection community structures based on their interest in hairdressing and tailoring classes. The training runs for six months and is certified by the National Industrial Training Authority (NITA) of Kenya. Upon completion, they are given start-up kits and some basic training on business management skills to enable them to make market-driven decisions to ensure their business's suitability.

"If I could change times, I wouldn't have taken the path that led me here. I could look at other girls going to school, dressed in uniforms, looking happy with no burdens that could alter their future. " - Bindu is an 18-year-old refugee from Congo, she came to Kakuma Refugee camp while she was young. Being a girl in the refugee camp, she was exposed to many challenges ranging from exploitation to harmful cultural practices. She became pregnant at the age of 15. Through the support of the LWF Livelihood sector, she underwent a six-month certified training on Hairdressing and was later placed in saloons to help her connect and create her clientele.

"Bindu is one of the most sorted hairdressers in her community. Her dream is to own her salon." stated Hilda Thuo, LWF Livelihood officer

LWF in Kenya-Djibouti-Somalia provides education, protection and livelihoods support to refugees and their hosts. Over 100,000 refugee children learn in schools managed by LWF In school protection, interventions such as peace clubs, rights clubs, adolescent clubs, and menstrual health clubs have been put in place to support girls and boys in school. The adolescent empowerment project was supported by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (EU-ECHO) through UNICEF Kenya.

A special focus lies on encouraging girls' education. LWF conducts campaigns to enroll girls in primary and secondary schools, and set up child rights clubs which advocate against child abuse and early marriage. Please support our work!