

Oxfam in Kenya

Oxfam works with the most vulnerable communities in the dry and remote northern regions, and in the impoverished slums of the capital, Nairobi.



What Oxfam is doing

Since starting work in Kenya in 1963, Oxfam has:

- provided long-term development aid and emergency relief
- promoted peace and managed conflicts between communities
- lobbied governments and donors to reduce chronic poverty and suffering across the country

Our work in Kenya has supported communities in the Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL) and in the urban informal settlements. We also work in the Daadab Refugee Camp and across Kenya when need arises.

We work with others from government, international development actors, the private sector, civil society and communities to significantly reduce poverty, inequity and vulnerability.

In numbers*...

550,000
total people helped



Eyomo Kadenge collects water from an Oxfam water kiosk in Wajir

Photo: Jane Beesley

Working with communities in the ASAL

In Kenya, the highest poverty levels are in the northern pastoralist districts where many people – 95% in some areas – fall below the national poverty line. These areas are largely marginalised and suffer from limited government attention, low private sector investment, regular outbreaks of livestock disease and recurrent droughts.

We work with pastoralists and other marginalised communities in the ASAL, focusing on:

- producing livestock
- food and cash during emergencies
- developing market-based alternative and complementary livelihoods
- water resource development, management and public health
- governance, peace-building and conflict resolution

Working with poor urban communities

Like many developing countries, Kenya is undergoing rapid urbanisation. With an annual growth rate of 4.4%, it's estimated that by 2050 half the Kenyan population will be living in urban areas. This high rate of urbanisation presents a myriad of challenges. 34% of the 17 million poor Kenyans are urban poor and most of them live in informal urban settlements.

In urban areas we work to support the development of "humanitarian response indicators", strengthen connections on advocacy issues at national and international level, improve governance, and strengthen urban poor people's voices. We are doing this by supporting campaign activities that promote concerns about urban poor people's livelihoods, such as access to clean portable water and sanitation services, as well as small-scale traders' access to justice.



Children playing in the rubbish dumps of Mathare, Nairobi

Photo: Andy Hall

Peace-building and conflict management

In the northern parts of Kenya, where cattle-rustling, banditry, and inter-ethnic and cross-border clashes over resources are common, development has been slow. In urban centres, there has been increased violence because of unemployment and a lack of alternative livelihoods among urban poor people.

We focus on enhancing communities' capacity to resolve conflicts and co-exist peacefully. We also influence national policy through the National Steering Committee on Peace-Building and Conflict Management, under the Office of the President.



Photo: Crispin Hughes

Advocacy

We work to link development and humanitarian practices with policy, for sustainability and to reach more beneficiaries. We incorporate advocacy work – informed by our development and humanitarian programmes – into our development and humanitarian work. Our advocacy work is done at different levels, from local community level to international level.

We support research and key stakeholders to get involved in formulating and implementing policies and legislation that support poor and marginalised communities. We focus on peace-building and conflict management, disaster management, food security and nutrition, livestock management and marketing, water, and Land Vision 2030, Kenya's plan to replace slums with modern buildings.

Left: Pastoralist women escort cattle across to Uganda on a day's journey for water. Oxfam's peace-building programme works to resolve cross border clashes over resources.

Climate change

Pastoralist communities of northern Kenya claim the seasons are becoming increasingly unpredictable, with rains failing more frequently than before, leading to more dry spells and severe droughts. People living in urban areas also battle with floods, high food prices as a result of droughts, and storms that put at risk their already stretched water supplies, infrastructure, health and sources of income.

We're working closely with others, supporting local civil society to hold the Government accountable for its response to climate change. We're also generating relevant climate change data to inform advocacy positions locally and internationally. Previous policies have failed to take into account the needs of the poorest and most marginalised communities, a situation which has contributed to the current climate related disasters experienced in Kenya.

Right: Massai pastoralists living near the Tanzanian border say that the weather is getting hotter and the rain more



Photo: Sven Torfinn

Humanitarian work

Rains failed in 2010 and 2011, pushing up food prices and causing millions of small farmers and nomads to lose their livelihoods. As a result, 13 million people across the Horn of Africa were facing desperate food and water shortages by July 2011.

In Kenya, Oxfam is responding to the food crisis in three main areas: the northern regions of Turkana and Wajir, and in Dadaab refugee camp near the border with Somalia which is home to several hundred thousand refugees who have fled conflict and famine in their homeland.



Photo: Andy Hall

Governance

All of Oxfam's work in Kenya is rooted in promoting better governance – at local, regional and national levels – by strengthening poor people's ability to defend and demand their rights. We aim to ensure that the Government fulfils its responsibilities to poor Kenyans, through lobbying and advocacy work, and by strengthening civil society organisations to engage with the government. We also engage closely with the private sector for our governance advocacy work.

Left: Families queue to collect food rations from an Oxfam distribution point in Turkana as part of our response to the food crisis of 2011