

Impact Report



Background

Kakuma Refugee Camp, in northwest Kenya, is home to hundreds of East African LGBTIQ refugees, who have fled from Uganda, Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan, and Burundi. The crises ebb and flow, but one thing remains the same – LGBTIQ refugees struggle to survive in the camp.

LGBTIQ refugees experience daily discrimination and violence from the Kenyan host community and fellow refugees because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Marginalized, with limited access to work and services, many are forced into poverty.

Despite these huge daily obstacles, an enterprising group has seized the opportunity to create the camp's first LGBTIQ refugee-led soap making business.

This inspiring initiative is the start of a brighter, more sustainable future for the community.

Entrepreneur Training Gives Hope

In Kakuma, this economic empowerment project led by local NGO Upper Rift Minorities (URM) and supported by ORAM and Mossier and their donors currently has 23 LGBTIQ refugees in a cooperative for producing and selling soap and hand sanitizers, a critical necessity in the camp.

The success of their LGBTIQ-run chicken farm revealed a market opportunity in making and selling soap within and outside Kakuma. The group developed a business plan and then received seed funding from ORAM to buy ingredients and to establish a shop.

The first group of trainees to run the cooperative included 12 LGBTIQ refugees from South Sudan, Sudan, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Congo and Somalia who have been resident in the camp for up to thirteen years. They have developed skills in soap manufacturing, financial education, and marketing.

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The Soap Business will help my future and give me the possibility to earn money so I can survive.

- Abdu, Project Beneficiary





The cooperative developed a marketing strategy and coined the name 'Kakuma Cleans' for the business. The group produces large batches of multipurpose soap which fully meet quality and safety standards. This is then packaged into recycled water bottles with the logo ready for sale in the shop. The cooperative has also generated a wider market of customers both within and outside the camp including local Kenyan businesses which recognize the quality of the product. Since production started the cooperative has produced 1168 gallons and sold 749 gallons of multipurpose soap.

The project is growing and some of the trainees have already begun training other LGBTIQ refugees, sharing their new expertise and extending the skill base within the refugee community. The new group of 12 LGBTIQ refugees all come from Uganda and have lived in the camp for up to 10 years.

The soap making project is an important first step in offering fresh hope and a chance to establish a self-sustaining small business to increase their financial autonomy.

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Since we started the Empowerment Program with ORAM, I am encouraged by the smiles and enthusiasm of the new trainees and stories of hope.

- Brian, Upper Rift Minorities

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Working with the community has been an inspiration to ORAM and its partners. Their resilience in the face of extreme hardship and determination to build a better future for themselves is incredible. They have a lot to teach us.

- Steve Roth, ORAM's Executive Director

Making Soap Amid COVID-19

During COVID-19, the team has played an important role in prevention and containment of the virus by expanding its product line to include hand sanitizer and acquiring more equipment and raw materials to expand production. Since March 2020, the team has produced 171 gallons and sold 72 gallons of hand sanitizer.

Since the pandemic, there have been more attacks in Kakuma Camp against LGBTIQ refugees. Yet those LGBTIQ refugees involved in the soap making business have not been targeted and are increasingly seen as instrumental members of the wider refugee community.



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