About the Country

To walk the land of Kenya is like walking the history of humankind. Some of the earliest fossils of prehistoric humans have been discovered in Kenya in the Great Rift Valley. A former British colony, Kenya achieved independence in 1963. Some of Kenya’s most well known people are the Maasai – a semi-nomadic warrior tribe that live in the southern portion of the country as well as in northern Tanzania. A Maasai shield is at the center of the Kenyan flag. Today, Kenya is known around the world for its technological innovations, especially in mobile finance.

Although many languages are spoken in Kenya, English and Kiswahili are the official languages. Employers in Kenya require a high level of English proficiency, and newspapers in Kenya are written primarily in English. But being literate in English is the key not only to getting a good job; it’s also key to survival; medical records and medicine labels are also written in English.

Education

Primary school education is free in Kenya, but many schools charge fees for supplies or other expenses, which places a burden on families. All students have to pay for secondary (high) school, but it is subsidized by the government for very high-achieving students. There are many colleges and universities in Kenya, and university education is subsidized for those who score high often on their high school exams.

The African Library Project

In Kenya, the African Library Project works with Rongo University to establish school and community libraries. The partnership works in Homabay and Migori counties, in southwest Kenya. Since 2017, we have started 94 libraries (many with our former partner, Project Humanity).

Quick Facts

• Kenya is a sizeable country -- comparable to France, slightly smaller than Texas -- with a population of about 48 million.

• The population of Kenya is on average very young, with about 60% of people under age 24.

• Kenya’s literacy rate is 81% for men and 75% for women.

• Kenya is home to one of the world’s largest refugee camp, with over 200,000 refugees, mostly from Somalia.

• Kenya’s HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is 5% nationwide; the rate in Homabay County is 21%), while the rate in Migori County is about 13%. While these rates are high, they have decreased over the last couple years, which is great news.

• Kenya is known for its abundant wildlife, and many tourists visit to see the animals. Kenya’s government takes an active role in conservation and recently burned 105 tons of ivory in order to discourage poaching.

• Agriculture contributes one-third of Kenya’s GDP. Kenya is especially famous for its tea and coffee exports.

• Kenya has extreme income inequality, and 36% of the population lives below the poverty line.