

POPULATION DYNAMICS, ENVIRONMENT,
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN

HOMA BAY COUNTY



Homa Bay County is characterized by a rapidly growing population, high population density, falling food production, and low resilience to climate change. The combined effects of climate change and rapid population growth are increasing food insecurity, environmental degradation, and poverty levels in the county.

The county’s strategic plan identifies population dynamics, environmental degradation, and climate change as key development challenges. These issues need to be linked in county policies and programs to ensure that projects that address them are implemented jointly. Addressing population growth, environmental degradation, and climate change together should be a top priority if Homa Bay County is to achieve sustainable development. The county government, donors, and program implementers should develop policies and implement programs that integrate population dynamics, environment/climate change, and development.

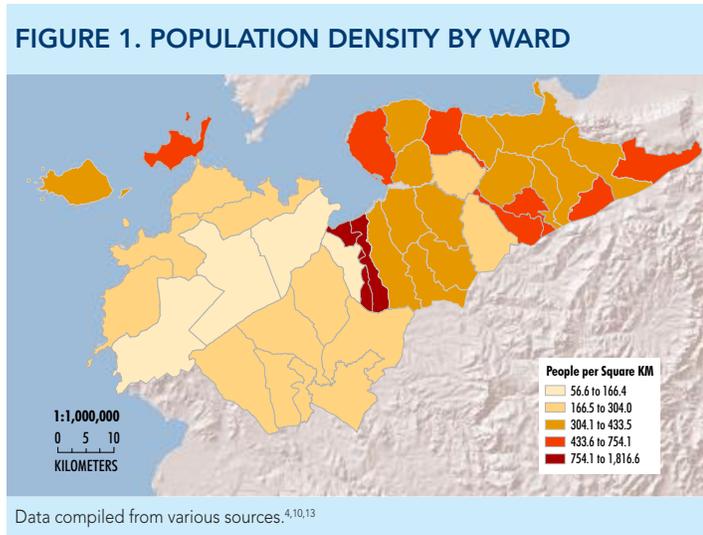
Population Dynamics

Located along the shores of Lake Victoria in western Kenya, Homa Bay County is home to 955,060 people. The population has been growing rapidly.

This growth is largely a result of high fertility, which is currently 5.2 children per woman, compared to a national average of 4.6 children per woman. This number has declined from 6.6 children per woman in 1998, mostly because of increasing demand for

TABLE 1.	HOMA BAY	KENYA
Current Population	955,060	37,919,647
Current Population Density	302.7	65.3
Total Fertility Rate	5.2	4.6
Contraceptive Prevalence Rate	43.9%	39.4%
Unmet Need for Family Planning	25.5%	25.6%

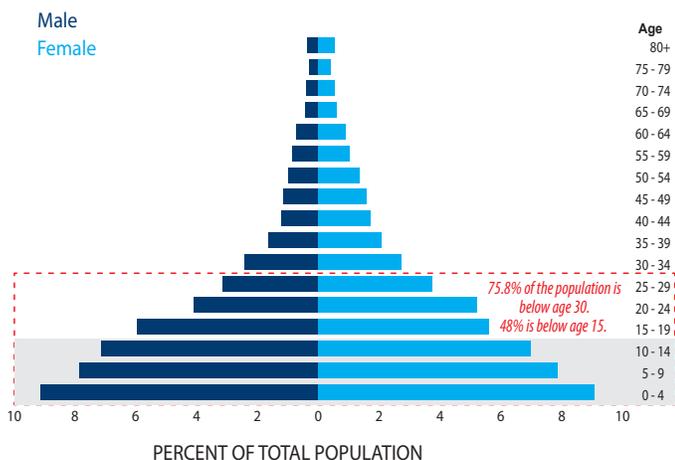
Data compiled from various sources.^{1,4,8,9,10}



smaller families and use of modern contraception. Addressing barriers to access and use of family planning would further reduce fertility. In 2011, about one in four married women who wanted to postpone their next birth or stop childbearing altogether were not using any method of contraception.

Currently, the county’s population is dominated by young people who need to be supported by those in the workforce. Three quarters of the population is under 30 years old and about half is under 15 years. The county strategic plan identifies the young population and high unemployment as threats to development. Homa Bay County’s young age structure also means that the population will continue to grow for several generations. However, if birth rates were to decline rapidly, the age structure of the population would shift and there would be more working-age adults relative to children. Consequently, the county could benefit from what is called the “demographic dividend”

FIGURE 2. HOMA BAY 2009



Data from KNBS⁶

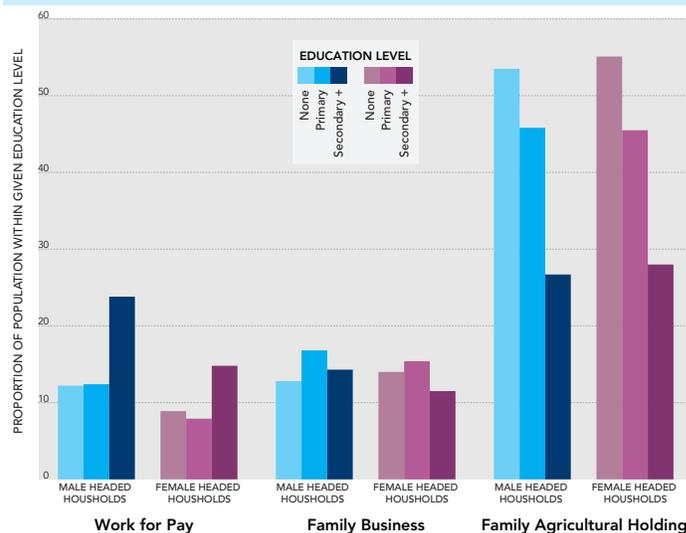
– economic growth resulting from increased productivity and greater savings due to a lower number of dependents. Benefits of the demographic dividend are optimized when accompanied by investments in health and education, and pro-growth, job-creating economic reforms.

Development

Homa Bay County performs below the national average on most socio-economic indicators. The county scores a 0.46 on the Human Development Index (HDI)—a composite measure of development that combines indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income. This is below the national average of 0.56. Poverty is prevalent in the county and manifests itself in other socio-economic outcomes such as poor nutrition, health, and education, as well as a lack of access to basic services.

Unemployment is a major challenge in the county, especially among youth. The majority of the population is employed in fishing and agricultural activities, with limited opportunities in commercial ventures and public service. As more young people enter the workforce due to rapid population change, the pressure on available employment opportunities is expected to grow.

FIGURE 3. EMPLOYMENT BY EDUCATION LEVEL IN MALE VS. FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS



Data from KNBS/SID¹⁰

Environment and Climate Change

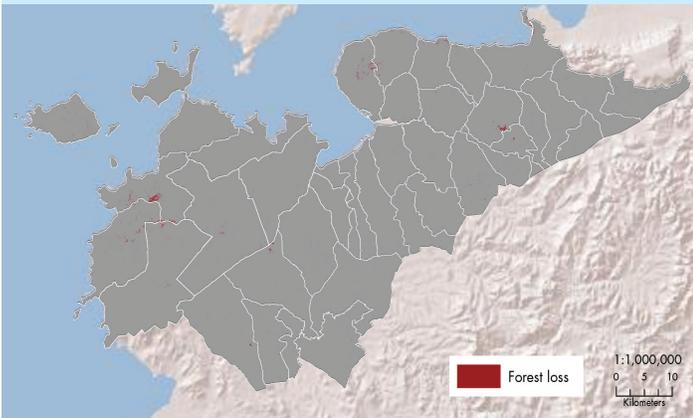
The livelihoods of most county residents depend on fisheries and rain-fed small-scale farming, practices that are highly vulnerable to environmental degradation and the effects of climate change. Rapid population growth places enormous pressure on

TABLE 2.	INDICATOR	HOMA BAY	KENYA
Human Development and Gender Inequality	Human Development Index (HDI)	.46	.56
	Gender Development Index (GDI)	.41	.49
Poverty	Proportion of Population Below the Poverty Line	48%	45%
Education	Primary School Pupil/Teacher Ratio	No Data	52:1
	Secondary School Pupil/Teacher Ratio	No Data	31:1
Health	Average Distance to Health Facility (km)	No Data	No Data
	Doctor/Population Ratio	No Data	1:5,678
	Nurse/Population Ratio	No Data	1:1,431
	Infant Mortality	77 per 1,000 live births	49 per 1,000 live births
	Under-five Mortality	130 per 1,000 live births	73 per 1,000 live births
	Skilled Attendant at Delivery	42%	44%

Compiled from various sources.^{5,7,8,10,11,12}

natural and environmental resources such as fisheries, forests, water, and land. Already scarce resources such as fisheries and farmland must be subdivided among more people, resulting in overexploitation. Fish stocks are dwindling due to overfishing and changing water temperatures, and people living in lowlands are frequently displaced due to flooding. As the county's population increases, these pressures on resources will be magnified.

FIGURE 4. FOREST LOSS 2000-2012

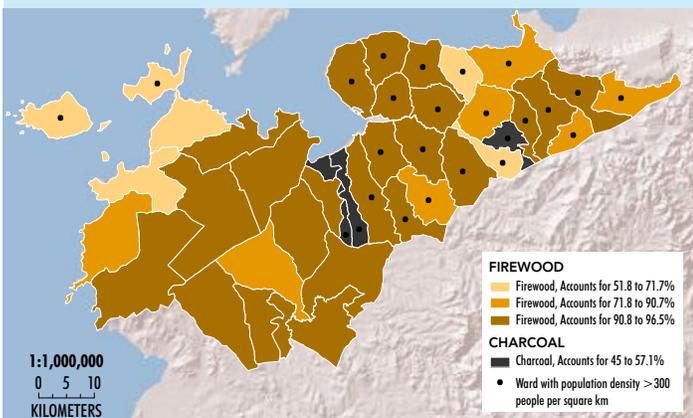


Data compiled from various sources.^{2,10,13}

Homa Bay County boasts abundant water resources due to its proximity to Lake Victoria, but as its population grows and climate change compounds water shortages, the county's water demands will increasingly exceed freshwater sources. Degradation of upstream catchment (land area where water collects and subsequently flows into water bodies), mainly due to agricultural expansion associated with population growth, is already impacting water availability.

Destruction of forests and wetlands in the county, and the resultant biodiversity loss, is also identified as a key environmental challenge. Population growth, agricultural expansion, over-dependence on wood fuels, and low levels of afforestation have accelerated deforestation in the county. The loss of forests and wetlands can have consequences for ecosystems and food security.

FIGURE 5. MAIN SOURCE OF COOKING FUEL BY WARD



Data compiled from various sources.^{4,10,13}

The majority of Homa Bay's population depends on wood fuel for cooking. With estimates that at least 97 percent of households use firewood or charcoal for cooking and heating, population growth and associated increases in demand for farming and residential land will undoubtedly accelerate deforestation and exacerbate the effects of climate change in the county.

Policy Framework for Linking Population, Environment and Development:

Given the strong links between population dynamics, environment, and climate change, integrated policy and program responses to addressing them would make sense and offer combined benefits for sustainable development in Homa Bay County. The county's strategic plan recognizes population dynamics as key challenges for development.

The following recommendations will help integrate policies and programs on population, environment, and climate change in the context of sustainable development:

- 1 Incorporate and prioritize population dynamics in county policies and strategies. These include the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) and sectoral policies that are being developed in the county. In addition, planning for overall development and sectoral strategies such as food security, health, education, water and sanitation facilities and services must be informed by systematic use of population data and projections.
- 2 Mainstream population issues within other development sectors, including public health, education, environment and climate change. The government should also address population issues such as urban planning, infrastructure development, and safeguarding the lives of the rural and urban poor against effects of climate change.
- 3 Secure financial resources from the county government, development partners, and non-governmental sources to fund programs that integrate population, environment/ climate change, and development.
- 4 Prioritize meeting women's and their partners' needs for family planning. Family planning is a win-win intervention that can help reduce unplanned births, improve health outcomes for women and children, and slow population growth. It would help ease pressure on the environment and natural resources, strengthen resilience to climate change, and enhance county economic growth by empowering women.
- 5 Optimize the county's potential to benefit from the demographic dividend by enhancing investments in public health, education and empowerment of women, and by adopting pro-growth, job-creating economic reforms.
- 6 Enhance the design and implementation of programs that integrate population, environment/climate change, and development. These programs could include diversification of food crops and alternative energy sources, reforestation, water conservation and recycling, modernization of agricultural production and fisheries, and expansion of agricultural land under irrigation.

ENDNOTES

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