Nubians in Kenya

Numbers and voices

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In 2010, the Open Society Justice Initiative carried out research among Kenya’s Nubian population. The research revealed many previously unknown facts about Nubians and their lives in Kenya. The research involved a survey of 18,862 individuals in 5,761 households, as well as focus groups with community members, and key informant interviews with government officials.

This fact sheet explains some of the basic findings of the research.

### Documentation
Percentage of Nubians that hold essential documents.

- **63%**
- **87%**

### Age structure
The Nubian population is younger than the average Kenyan population. Among Nubians, 80% are below 30 years, compared to 73% among Kenyans in general.
A Nubian child is born

99% of Nubians were born in Kenya.

Birth certificate 63%

No birth certificate 37%

Stateless?

Vetting 44%

Unlike most other Kenyans, Nubians have to go through a vetting process at majority before they are considered as nationals by the government. This involves producing a host of documents, many of which have no bearing on Kenyan nationality – such as grand parents’ birth certificates.

Bribe

Buying counterfeit ID

Lying about name or ethnic group

National ID card 87%

56% of Nubians have obtained ID cards without going through vetting. The reasons for this are many, including bribes, lies and counterfeit IDs.

Rejected

Stateless?

Passport 8%

Vetting 38%

38% of Nubians are re-vetted before they obtain a passport, even though the government has confirmed that they are nationals.

Other nationality

99% of Nubians were born in Kenya.
I went to the vetting manager of ID cards and she asked me whether I was a Muslim and I responded “Yes” and she told me “Okay, we don’t deal with the issue of Muslims here.”

The vetting committee, they ask you intimidating questions, like “How is Sudan?”

You must speak to the officer the Kenyan way. By bribe. If you follow the right way it takes forever.

Some say we are from Sudan but personally I’ve never been there and don’t even know what it looks like.

What are the documentary requirements for a Nubian to obtain an ID card?

“Birth certificates of parents”
“Recommendation letter from the chief, an elder or a religious leader – Maalim”
“National ID of both parents”
“Title deed”
“Death certificates of grandparents”
“School leaving certificates”
“Affidavits from a lawyer”

Getting a passport in Kenya is very difficult especially if you are a Muslim or Nubian. First of all you have to get the form from Nairobi.

When our forefathers came, Africa was one big country and there were no borders or countries – this division was done later on.
Research by the Justice Initiative shows that reported income levels within the Nubian community in Kenya are relatively low. Some 52 percent of Nubian households have a monthly income of 5,000 Kenyan Shilling or less. This equals roughly $60, or $720 per year.

While data on average household incomes in Kenya is not available, GDP per capita is $738 (World Bank, 2009) which suggests that the majority of Nubians are significantly poorer than your average Kenyan.

This is in part explained by the fact that a very significant number of Nubians are unemployed: 60 percent of Nubians above 18 are unemployed, and if one includes lower age cohorts the figure rises above 70 percent.

The reported levels of income may in some cases not include rent and/or remittances.

I am still single. Due to discrimination I cannot get a job and hence I cannot marry because I’m broke. And when you go and ask a job they ask you where you come from. When you say Kibera they start telling you that Nubians are very lazy. I’m over thirty and I’m not married as I have no money to feed a family.