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| **Item type** |  |
| **Bibliography** | Minnegal, M.; Cox, J. (2023) Kubo and Febi households in Kiunga: growth and challenges, 12 pages, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC |
| **Abstract / Content summary** | Kubo and Febi people have been moving from their villages in Nomad District to Kiunga town since at least the 1990s, but until recently the numbers have remained very small. A household survey conducted in 2014 by Dr Monica Minnegal and Dr Peter Dwyer recorded 51 people from Suabi village living in Kiunga. By early 2023, that number had increased to 430 (both counts including short term visitors). This is a significant and rapid increase, with approximately half of all Kubo and Febi households in Kiunga having been established in the last five years.
The principal driver of this movement of people is education. The community school in Suabi has faced severe challenges to its viability, including prolonged difficulties in securing teaching staff and basic resources. For several years in a row, teachers have come early in the school year but have not stayed longer than a term. Challenges with transportation and communication have contributed to these problems with recruitment and retention; unable to reliably book flights to and from the village for themselves, without the means to order and ship store goods to Suabi, and with no means to maintain contact with family elsewhere, qualified teachers are understandably reluctant to accept positions at Suabi. Challenges with transport, moreover, have also meant that the school has often not had access to pencils, paper, books
and other essential teaching equipment. Many parents have given up in frustration and moved their families into Kiunga to access schools there.
These same issues also affect access to health services at Suabi. Recruitment and retention of Community Health Workers has been difficult. Very limited access to mobile phone services has made consultation with doctors at Rumginae difficult. And when patients are referred to medical services in Kiunga, lack of air transport has meant that they and their carers often have no option but to stay in town for much longer than medically necessary.
Living in Kiunga is a challenge for most Kubo and Febi people, few of whom have regular or substantial income. Most households make do with growing garden vegetables, selling food at Kiunga market or working as labourers in Chineseowned retail stores. The great majority of Kubo and Febi people in Kiunga live in informal housing on public or church land (e.g., Sare Corner, Gretutu or Last Corner) or, more recently, have reached arrangements with Awin landowners to ‘buy’ blocks of bushland along the Kiunga-Tabubil Highway (Kilo 4, Kilo 7 and Kilo 8), which they clear and develop themselves for housing and gardens. None of these settlements have piped water or sanitation infrastructure.
Because the movement of Kubo and Febi people into Kiunga is so recent and small scale (relative to other groups around the town), there is still an opportunity for government, church and community leaders to take action to manage the situation proactively. To date, few adults from these groups have been born or grown up in town, and most would prefer to return to their villages. The poor state of education and health services at Suabi is a clear ‘push’ factor, leaving people with few options but to bring their children to town. (Part of Executive Summary] |
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