



African Population and
Health Research Center

LEARN SHOP REPORT

Lessons Learnt from Project Implementation
Towards Refugee Inclusion into the Education System in Kenya

TeachWell Voices & TeachWell Unlocking Playful Learning

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Background

Teachers are the greatest school-level predictor for student learning, well-being, and holistic development especially in conflict-affected settings with limited resources and familial support (Braun et al., 2020). Schooling can restore a sense of normalcy, providing physical, cognitive, and psychosocial protection, with teachers at the forefront in creating inclusive learning environments (Kirk & Winthrop, 2013; Soyly, 2020). Yet, teachers in humanitarian settings, often refugees themselves (Kirk and Winthrop 2008; Sesnan et al. 2013), must not only learn the curriculum in the host country but also manage overcrowded classrooms, excessive students-teacher ratio (180+), inadequate resources and infrastructure with restricted certified and credentialed teacher professional development (TPD) opportunities (Adelman 2019; Mendenhall et al. 2020). The high teacher turnover has been attributed to myriad factors including low remuneration, heavy workload as well as the magnitude of learners' academic, linguistic, and psychosocial needs (Falk et al., 2019; Wa-Mbaleka, 2012). Additionally, these teachers must provide psychosocial support to children with trauma, despite the limited support towards their own emotional well-being (Kirk and Winthrop 2013; Mendenhall et al. 2015). To meet the learning and developmental needs of the children in their care, these teachers require expert support to deliver quality learning, overcome the challenges of their situation, and embrace the rewards and opportunities of their role. This means investing in teachers' knowledge, skills, and motivation; advocating for improved policies; and healthy and safe environments.

The TeachWell Project

The TeachWell project, funded by the LEGO Foundation and the Grundfos Foundation, seeks to enhance the quality of inclusive education and teacher well-being in refugee and refugee-hosting communities in Kenya. The project, implemented in Turkana and Garissa Counties (covering both camps and host communities) over a period of five years (2023-2028), comprises two grants:

Grant 1 (TeachWell Voices-TWV), led by Save the Children International (SCI), seeks to advocate changes in policy, participation, and financing, to improve the quality of instruction and wellbeing of refugee teachers. The implementation is through a consortium of partners:

- Save the Children International (SCI) will manage the consortium, leading engagement with Government and spearheading advocacy efforts towards inclusive policy reforms.
- The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) is the research and learning partner which will support evidence generation for adaptive programming towards impact.
- Elimu Yetu Coalition (EYC) will support mobilization and stakeholder engagement at community level.

Grant 2 (TeachWell Unlocking Playful Learning-TW), led by International Rescue Committee (IRC), seeks to strengthen quality, equitable and inclusive teacher continuous capacity development (TCCD), and supportive school environments for teachers and learners in refugee camps and refugee hosting communities in Kenya. This will be achieved through strengthened competencies and resilience of teachers, creating enabling policy and environment, developing safe and supportive school environments, and increased resources and resilience in schools during crises. Project implementation is supported by a consortium of partners with complementary expertise to support holistic education programming:

- International Rescue Committee (IRC) will manage the consortium, leading engagement with Government and at the same time implementing the Water Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) component; integrate select health interventions in education and implement crisis modifier activities aimed at mitigating learning disruptions in event of disasters.
- Research Triangle International (RTI) together with its partners (M-Shule and Dignitas), will work with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to design TCCD content and train teachers in refugee host community schools.
- Lutheran World Federation (LWF) will extend capacity development to teachers teaching in refugee camp schools.
- Film Aid Kenya (FAK) will mobilize communities to support teachers and implement the messaging aspects of the project.
- APHRC is the research and learning partners which will support evidence generation for adaptive programming towards impact.

To guarantee success, the project is working collaboratively, and in alignment with Ministry of Education's (MoE) and Teacher Service Commission (TSC) priorities.

The Research and Learning Agenda

The Research & Learning (R & L) Agenda provides a high-level overview of how TeachWell Voices (TWV) and TeachWell (TW) will approach research priorities and activities during the project timeline (2024-2028). It provides a common research framework for studies – spanning formative, implementation, effectiveness, and system-level research as well as cost analyses. It seeks to ensure that evidence generated from the project contributes to filling identified evidence gaps for the project, the education sector in Kenya, and the broader Education in Emergencies (EiE) field. The core research question of TW and TWV R & L is:

What are promising and effective policies and practices for the inclusion of refugee teachers into the national education system in Kenya?

This question will be addressed by several types of research studies:

1. **Formative research** will take place in the beginning of the project to understand existing challenges, opportunities, and practices to inform project design and planning.
2. **Implementation research** will take place throughout the project timeline to understand and document project implementation quality, fidelity, and barriers.
3. **Effectiveness research** will take place in the second half of the project timeline (upon maturity) to identify the interventions' impact.
4. **Systems-level research** will take place throughout the project to understand how to scale up and sustain the project's interventions through the Kenyan national system.
5. **Costing research**, including cost-efficiency and effectiveness, will take place in the second half to understand project cost-efficiency and the cost of inaction.

This learn shop provided a platform for partners to share lessons learned from the TWV and TW projects' formative and implementation experiences, from the inception stage to the current second year of implementation.

The TeachWell Learn Shop

Purpose of the Learn Shop

The Learn Shop provided a platform for partners to share lessons learnt from the TWV and TW project implementation, also serving as a collaborative platform for stakeholders from both grants to exchange insights, share progress, and foster joint learning to enhance synergy between policy advocacy and program implementation.

Objectives

1. Facilitate knowledge exchange between Grant 1 and Grant 2 partners on key themes such as teacher continuous capacity development, teacher professional development, safe and supportive school environments, policy engagement, research, and learning.
2. Build a shared understanding of the TeachWell project research and learning agenda.
3. Identify gaps and best practices to inform further policy advocacy and best practices.
4. Strengthen linkages between policy advocacy (Grant 1) and program implementation (Grant 2).

Expected Deliverables

1. A shared understanding of progress, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration between the grants.
2. Recommendations for strengthening evidence and addressing gaps in policy and implementation.
3. A learn shop report and a blog documenting key discussions and recommendations.

Participants

- TeachWell Voices-SCI, EYC
- TeachWell-IRC, RTI-Dignitas and M-Shule, LWF, FAK
- APHRC
- MoE
- TSC

Highlights of Implementation and Key Lessons

Each partner presented top-line details of their focus areas in implementation, highlighting key lessons learned from interventions aimed at continuous capacity development for teachers, professional development, instructional leadership, policy advocacy, and research and learning.

Teacher Continuous Capacity Development

Research Triangle Institute (RTI) has implemented the TCCD program in the refugee host counties in Garissa and Turkana through:

- Developing TCCD modules to support teacher implementation of the competence-based Curriculum (CBC) using Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Learning through Play (LtP), Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS).
- Training curriculum support officers (CSOs), Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) and other officials to implement TCCD trainings.
- Providing on-going small, targeted training using virtual and SMS platforms with the support of M-SHULE as one of the partners.
- Conducting high-level workshops to garner buy-in, feedback, and support from the government at all levels of implementation.
- Using teacher digital platforms and teacher learning circles in collaboration with county and sub county officials to bolster teachers to use the TCCD modules.

Key Lessons

- Strengthening teachers' capabilities significantly enhances the quality of learning in the classroom.
- Utilizing innovative pedagogies such as LtP, UDL, SEL, and MHPSS is critical for effective teacher training and holistic learning.
- Ongoing digital support and feedback are vital for continuous teacher capacity development.
- Ensuring the TCCD training agenda includes more practice time for teachers guarantees increased engagement during training.
- Linking TCCD content to actual classroom experience demonstrates the relevance of the former, culminating in adequate teaching and learning outcomes.
- Access to sufficient teaching and learning resources is essential for enhancing teaching and learning outcomes.
- Aligning training with the school calendar ensures that lessons are not interrupted, enabling teachers to fully participate in training.
- Teacher shortages in refugee school contexts can be addressed by engaging untrained teachers and providing enhancements for them through continuous capacity development, monitoring, and coaching to achieve sustainable improvements in teacher performance and learning outcomes.
- Active learning circles in refugee contexts can support teachers' ongoing capacity development, addressing gaps in teacher shortages, attrition, and retention.
- Collaborating with the Ministry of Education in design, implementation, and evaluation can ensure alignment with government priorities, creating opportunities for ownership and sustainability of best practices even after project exit.
- Strengthening collaboration within communities of practice (CoPs) can enhance knowledge sharing among teachers of refugee learners, optimizing impact.
- Providing regular coaching support and monitoring is important for improving and sustaining best practices for teaching the CBC.
- Harmonizing discrepancies in data related to refugee inclusion in education can avert gaps in effective planning and advocacy.

Teacher Professional Development

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) successfully enrolled 152 teachers in the diploma and bridging certificate programs to enhance teacher qualifications through:

- Co-designing and launching the Diploma in Primary Teacher Education (DPTE) / Diploma Teacher Education (DTE) programs for the first cohort of teacher trainees.
- Developing, testing, and implementing language modules for refugee teachers.
- Establishing active Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs) and Communities of Practice in both Garissa and Turkana.
- Facilitating ongoing in-class monitoring and support by teacher trainers, refugee CSOs, and education officers.
- Supporting the design, testing, training, and rollout of the TCCDs to cohort 1 grades 1-3 teachers.
- Co-developing the Child-care Support model for female teachers with children aged 0–1 years to support teacher retention.
- Supporting advocacy efforts by Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) and consortium partners that ensured MoE and TSC approval and alignment of the DTE program.

Key Lessons

- Recognizing prior learning for qualified and experienced refugee teachers, along with including them in national education systems, can help address teacher shortages for refugee learners.
- Integrating host community members into DTE is essential for tackling teacher shortages and fostering local support. A verification exercise in Dadaab revealed that many public schools depend on untrained high school graduates, affecting learning outcomes.
- Expanding DPTE access to refugee and host community teachers is vital for enhancing education quality and community engagement in refugee education.
- Scaling up DPTE/DTE programs to incorporate host community teachers would promote equitable access to professional development for all teachers.

Instructional Leadership

Dignitas has implemented strategies towards strengthening instructional leadership of education officers, heads of institutions and teachers through:

- Development and training of instructional leaders using five modules: growth mindset and the role of the instructional leader; effective teaching support; formation and management of CoPs; data-driven school support; and MHPSS support coaching tools development.
- Developing coaching tools comprising an instructional leadership coaching tool and field education coaching tools.
- Developing the LeadNow virtual platform which enhanced continuous learning and collaboration, with a significant enrollment of 320 participants in Garissa and 784 in Turkana.

Key Lessons

- Structured training using manuals and virtual support are critical for supporting continuous learning for instructional leaders.
- Continued support for the instructional leaders including CSOs can be achieved through virtual coaching including the use of WhatsApp groups, and online meetings.
- Data driven coaching systems that respond to gaps can improve teaching and learning outcomes.

Policy and Advocacy for Refugee Education

As the lead partner for policy advocacy, Save the Children International (SCI) highlighted the challenges faced by refugee teachers and children in Kenya's refugee camps and host communities. This included the struggle of qualified teachers to gain certification from the TSC, which affects their pay, career growth, and motivation. SCI, alongside local partners, advocates for policy reforms and increased funding to improve education quality and support refugee teachers. The Kenyan government has committed to inclusive education through legal frameworks that promote equitable access and recognition of refugee schools.

Key Lessons

- Policy advocacy is essential to ensure more coherent and efficient educational frameworks that support teacher professional development and subsequent refugee teacher inclusion.

Safe and Supportive School Environments

As the partner supporting interventions aimed at creating safe and supportive school environments, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has implemented several measures to improve Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), integrate a playful environment into healthcare, enhance education system resilience using a crisis modifier, and address monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEAL). This has been achieved through:

- Construction and rehabilitation of WASH facilities, including gender-segregated latrines and repositioned handwashing stations, to ensure dignity, privacy, and improved hygiene for students.
- Enhancing emergency preparedness and response through the rapid repair of damaged infrastructure in response to crises such as floods or disease outbreaks.
- Establishing the crisis modifier mechanism for responding to crises, which was reviewed, revealed over 90% satisfaction with the quality, timing, and value of distributed materials.

Key Lessons

- Leveraging government support, particularly through initiatives like Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), is crucial for scaling up school health initiatives at the county level.
- Using evidence from needs assessments to align infrastructure improvements with MoE standards and providing technical support to existing WASH committees for maintenance tasks, is critical for optimizing WASH outcomes in schools.
- Training of school WASH clubs and committees, as well as empowering students and teachers to champion good hygiene practices and maintain WASH facilities is critical for sustaining WASH outcomes.
- Collaborating with local self-help groups to produce and distribute reusable sanitary pads is one of the sustainable ways of enhancing menstrual hygiene management.
- More proactive responses to crisis situations, such as flooding can be taken up by expediting actions taken after crisis triggers, reducing the duration between timing of trigger and action for more impact on learning continuity.
- It is critical to have local partners to support development partners in reaching schools in hard-to-reach locations towards a faster response to mitigate the effects of crises.
- Apart from the direct impact of flooding on school infrastructure, there are other indirect consequences such as school occupation by communities during crises, which inflicts more damage to the school infrastructure.
- Health integration strategies, including MHPSS services are essential for improving overall health outcomes.
- Training of MHPSS Officers to reach more health facilities promises more impact than concentrating efforts on one health facility.
- Integrating LtP into healthcare has a lengthy approval process for authorization by ministries and relevant authorities, which can delay implementation.
- Integrating MEAL tools and approaches into training design can ensure a continuous feedback loop that improves program effectiveness, promotes accountability, and supports adaptive learning for sustained impact.
- Alignment to school calendars must be taken into consideration in planning MEAL and other data collection activities.
- The vast distances between schools should also be taken into consideration in the design to ensure effective MEAL activities.
- Joint planning in cases of concurrent studies / MEAL activities across projects is an adequate measure for optimizing resources and outcomes.

Research and Learning Agenda

As the research and learning partner, APHRC highlighted several key initiatives and research activities aimed to generate evidence to support adaptive programming and policy advocacy. Some formative studies conducted so far include:

- Political Economy analysis which illuminated the socio-economic dynamics on refugee inclusion in Kenya, highlighting the factors that enhance and/or impede refugee inclusion.
- The study on WASH provided information as regards the status of access to WASH facilities as well as the literacy condition in this regard.
- The Crisis modifier study which mapped the status of crises and their impacts on learning to inform interventions to promote learning continuity during crises.
- APHRC developed learning outputs (policy briefs, blogs, fact sheets) as well as a research output (an article submitted to a journal for publication).

Key Lessons

- Co-creation of tools and protocols with diverse stakeholders, including relevant ministries such as MoE and TSC ensures buy-in, supporting access to education institutions and alignment to government priorities.
- The contextualization and use of standardized tools for data collection ensures validity of data.
- Data collection procedures should take ethical approval schedules into consideration in order to plan adequately.
- Developing diverse research and learning outputs ensures that different audiences are targeted, including policy briefs (policy makers), blogs (stakeholders), journal articles and conference papers (academicians).

Surprises, Challenges and Solutions, Opportunities

Surprises

- Curriculum Restructuring: The merger of Diploma in Primary Teacher Education (DPTE) and Diploma in Early Childhood Teacher Education (DECTE) into the Diploma Teacher Education (DTE) program was a significant change, stretching the training duration to 21 months and integrating additional subjects not previously considered.
- Funding Volatility: The abrupt termination of United States Government - Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (USG-BPRM) funding created a significant salary gap, raising concerns about the project's sustainability. This highlighted the unpredictability of funding sources and its potential impact on long-term initiatives.
- Host and Refugee Collaboration: Unexpectedly strong buy-in from both host and refugee communities demonstrated a demand for continued interventions. This enthusiasm suggests a foundation to sustain long-term support.
- The availability of pathways to teacher certification: TSC has provisions for registration of refugee teachers as long as they meet TSC's eligibility criteria.
- Refugee Schools Acknowledged: A key development at the Kenya Primary Schools Headteachers Association (KEPSHA) conference, where refugee schools were formally recognized, signaling a potential turning point for refugee teachers to gain formal recognition.
- Variation in definition of terms related to teacher professional development between TSC and MoE (TCCD, TPP, CTCD), which is problematic for stakeholders.
- Misalignment between MoE guidelines and TSC's actual registration requirements

Challenges and Possible Solutions

- Geographical Expansiveness: The vast operational areas between schools (e.g. during data collection and implementation monitoring), created unique coordination challenges, which could be alleviated by localized coordination (e.g. use of community resource persons/organizations) to increase responsiveness.
- Language Barriers: Refugee teachers' limited English proficiency hampered the implementation of the CBC. Bridging this language gap is crucial for successful curriculum delivery.
- Qualification Deficits: A significant percentage (56.7%) of teachers lacked DPTE entry qualifications for eligibility in Kenyan primary schools. This underscored the need for bridging programs to address this qualification gap.
- Teacher Retention: High turnover rates among both host and refugee teachers point to deeper systemic issues including low salaries and poor working conditions in overcrowded classrooms. Improving teacher welfare will play a pivotal role in reducing attrition.

- **Coordination Gaps:** Inadequate stakeholder collaboration (e.g. MoE, TSC, UNHCR, UNICEF) necessitated the creation of catch-up groups. A more structured collaboration framework (e.g. Technical Working Groups, online platforms, joint work plans) could prevent future gaps in coordination.
- **Cross-Sectoral Collaboration:** Collaboration across sectors, including MoE, Health, DRS and UNHCR would lead to more holistic interventions. An interministerial approach could promote comprehensive and sustainable education solutions.
- **Bureaucratic Bottlenecks:** Delays in ethical research approvals as well as MoE approvals and bureaucratic hurdles to access schools and teachers caused setbacks in the project timelines, necessitating quick adaptation on the part of both the project as well as collaborating institutions. and raising concerns about the efficiency of government processes for future interventions.
- **Climate-induced Crises:** Torrential rains led to significant infrastructure damage, prompting the need for crisis modifiers. This was a wake-up call to establish more resilient systems capable of withstanding environmental disruptions.
- **Overlapping Initiatives:** Multiple teacher-focused projects by different players within the refugee contexts caused scheduling conflicts and misaligned/competing priorities. This underscores the need for better coordination between players to avoid duplication of efforts and optimize outcomes.
- **Role Confusion:** Ambiguities around the roles and responsibilities of entities such as TSC led to operational inefficiencies. Clarity on roles/mandates could lead to smoother implementation.
- **Alignment of government priorities** runs the risk of derailment from project agendas and possible perpetration of the status quo. Governments should be positively challenged using appropriate framing to foreground useful agendas.

Opportunities

- **Diverse Players/Organizations** in the field of refugee inclusion: Better coordination among organizations targeting refugee teacher inclusion could reduce redundancies and amplify the project's impact. A unified approach would streamline efforts and foster greater collaboration.
- **Policy Reforms:** Ongoing dialogue on policy reviews (e.g. Basic Education Act 2024, TSC ACT 2024, Refugee Act 2021) and development of new policies (e.g. National Teacher Education and Training Policy), provide an opportunity for inclusion of refugee teacher priorities into policy.
- **Annual Teacher Meetings** (e.g. KEPSHA), which embraced refugee heads of institutions in their last annual meeting, are an opportunity to integrate head of institutions from refugee schools to amplify the voices from refugee school contexts.
- **Political Goodwill:** Tapping into existing political will (e.g. TeachWell partnership with MoE, TSC, UNHCR, DRS, UNICEF) could drive long-term reforms, providing an opportunity to push for systemic changes that improve refugee teacher integration and education delivery.

Implications for Policy Advocacy and Future Research

Policy Advocacy

- **Refugee Teacher Recognition:** Advocate the formal recognition and registration of refugee teachers within the Kenyan national system. This could unlock government funding, enhance teacher professional development and deployment, as well as improve educational outcomes for refugee children.
- **Recognition of Refugee Schools:** The push for official recognition of refugee schools into the mainstream education system could unlock government funding through capitation as well as increase teacher deployment in those schools.
- **Political Advocacy for Education:** Position education as a national priority, emphasizing its role in economic stability and growth. This could rally support to ensure long-term investment in education.
- **Parental and Community Engagement:** Enhance community and parental involvement in education through structured channels to support teacher retention and improve learning outcomes.
- **Clarify Teacher Training Frameworks:** Push for clear, actionable policies that address gaps in the implementation of teacher professional and capacity development (e.g. in-service, school-based, virtual learning) TPD and DTE programs, ensuring alignment with national teacher qualification standards.
- **Gender Inclusivity:** Advocate policies targeting gender balance, with a focus on increasing female teachers' participation and retention in refugee and marginalized settings as well as addressing debilitating socio-cultural norms.

- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in line with the now-approved National Qualifications Framework, especially for refugee teachers who have over 5 years of teaching experience.
- Recognition of the Diploma course provided by MMUST and other universities diplomas and qualifications to support teacher professional development of refugee teachers, to mitigate teacher shortages.

Future Research

- Impact of Refugee Teacher Integration: Generate evidence on how the integration of refugee teachers can affect educational outcomes, also highlighting student the long-term sustainability of refugee inclusion in national education systems.
- Classroom Management in Overcrowded Settings: Investigate solutions for overcrowded classrooms, including flexible scheduling and innovative infrastructure designs to enhance learning in refugee school contexts.
- Sustainable Funding Models: Explore long-term funding strategies (emphasizing national interventions) for refugee education inclusion programs, focusing on scalability, sustainability, and adaptability in different contexts, while mitigating reliance on external sources.
- Teacher Retention and Mobility: Generate evidence for improving teacher retention, especially in remote areas, by addressing the underlying causes of high turnover and instability.
- Gender responsiveness: Generate evidence on what works to promote gender balance, with a focus on increasing female teachers' participation and retention in refugee and marginalized settings and addressing debilitating socio-cultural norms.

Action Points and Way Forward

NO.	ACTION POINTS	RESPONSIBILITY
1.	Review previous research and interventions undertaken on refugee inclusion before TW/TWV. This will highlight where the gaps are to optimize our impact	Partners
2.	Familiarize with the mandates/duties of TSC/MoE through engaging with policy documents to anchor policy advocacy and implementation efforts accordingly.	Partners
3.	Support a platform for coordination of all organizations in the refugee education space in Kenya through MoU with TSC to avoid duplication of efforts and support collaboration towards greater impact	SCI/IRC
4.	Map the policy/legal framework landscape on refugee inclusion in Kenya to establish gaps and strengths to adequately align the TWV and TW interventions	SCI, IRC, APHRC, EYC
5.	Harmonize on-going work on Communities of Practice (CoPs) as a possible space for synergy between the two grants, in order to optimize the impact of the CoPs	RTI, LWF, SCI
6.	Harmonize data discrepancies within the project as well as the data generated/previous work by other stakeholders such as UNESCO and UNICEF, to ensure validity and reliability of our work	SCI, IRC, LWF, RTI, M-SHULE
7.	Map and harmonize definitions of terms across the grants (e.g. CoP, TPD etc.). This will ensure alignment across the project.	Partners
8.	Undertake some research on the implications for certification of the MMUST teachers to inform the next step for the project diploma program.	LWF, RTI
9.	Undertake collaboration between Grant 1 and Grant 2 in building relationship with DRS to garner their support in project implementation and policy advocacy	IRC, SCI
10.	Integrate cross-cutting issues and emerging trends (e.g. AI, PWD, gender, children's voices) across research, policy advocacy and other interventions across the project	SCI, IRC
11.	Consider the inclusion of private schools (e.g. in trainings; private school associations), among the beneficiaries of the interventions to maximize efforts towards leaving no learners behind.	RTI, LWF
13.	Document the learnings and share the learn shop technical report with the partners and publish a blog to share learnings with the refugee eco-system.	APHRC

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