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**PROMOTING INTEGRATION OF
PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR
REFUGEES INTO COUNTY AND
NATIONAL LEVEL EDUCATION
SECTOR PLANS**



POLICY BRIEF

PROMOTING INTEGRATION OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES INTO COUNTY AND NATIONAL LEVEL EDUCATION SECTOR PLANS

The Policy Brief seeks to contribute to the formulation and/or review of County and National policies and plans towards the realization of the aspirations of the Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education (IGAD 2017).

This policy brief is informed by a study titled “Towards the integration of Pre-primary Education for Refugees into County and National Level Education Sector Plans- Prospects and Challenges: A case of Turkana County.”

The study was commissioned by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Kenya-Somalia Program.

ACRONYMS

- CBC:** Competency Based Curriculum
- CIDP:** County Integrated Development Plan
- CECM:** County Executive Committee Member
- CO:** County Officer
- CRRF:** Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
- ECD:** Early Childhood Development
- FGM:** Female Genital Mutilation
- GCR:** Global Compact on Refugees

OVERVIEW:

Refugee and asylum seekers hosting in Kenya predates the 1960s. According to the February 2024 UNCHR data, Kenya currently hosts over 744,747 (51% Males) refugees and asylum seekers, 86% of whom live in Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps located in Garissa and Turkana Counties respectively. Children, 0-17 years, account for over 51% of the population living in the camps.

Kenya is progressively transforming its refugee response and management towards a model that facilitates a social economic local integration solution for refugees and asylum seekers. The Government, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), has taken some concrete actions to enhance the social economic inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers into national and county policies, plans and programs. The Refugees Act of 2021, for instance, provides for an enabling legal framework for the protection, promotion and fulfilment of human rights for refugees and asylum seekers including the right to education.

The right to education for all children is guaranteed and enshrined in various international, regional and national human rights instruments. In Kenya, education is prioritized in the Vision 2030 as one of the foundations for socio-economic transformation. Towards this, Kenya has ratified most international and regional treaties, conventions and Declarations that protect the right to education, and which form part of the country's laws. Such include the United Nations Convention on

the Right of the Child (UNCRC) that stipulates the right to education for every child in Article 28. Article 22 of the Convention specifically states that refugee children or those seeking refugee status (asylum) must be enabled to enjoy all rights provided for in the Convention. Similarly, Kenya is party to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child that commits all State parties to take all appropriate measures towards full realization of the right to 'free and compulsory education' for children in Art 11 (1). This includes for the refugee children and those seeking refugee status (Article 23 (1). Kenya is also party to the Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education (IGAD, 2017), that calls for provision of education to all refugee school-going age children. The declaration also calls for partner states to oblige and offer education that is aligned to the children in that state.

Nationally, the right to education is granted in article 43(1) (f) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, where every child's right to free and compulsory basic education is entrenched in article 53 (1). This right is further enshrined under the Basic Education Act of 2013 which mandates all children in Kenya access to free and compulsory primary education. and the Early Childhood Education Act 3 of 2021. In addition, the Early Childhood Education Act, 2021 provides a framework for establishment of systems of administering early childhood education within the counties. The Act is mandated to establish comprehensive early childhood development and education systems by the county governments. Similarly, the Persons with Disabilities Act (PDA), 2023 safeguards the right to education and prohibits the denial of admission of a person with a disability to any course of study based on a disability.

The need for integration of Pre-school education into national and county education sector.

Over half of the refugee populations in Kenya are children of ages 4-18 years. They need education as a protection tool and to prepare them for durable solutions. About 7,913(4,086M, 3,827F or 51%M and 48%F) are enrolled in Kakuma's refugee camps pre-schools, primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Dadaab, Kakuma and Kalobeyi settlements. Further, the need for pre-schools can be noted in the Turkana County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) which notes that increased investment in Early Childhood Development Centre (ECDCs) has raised the number of children enrolling for basic education in Turkana by over 60 000 children in the past five (5) years. Current enrollment for Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) for children between 4-6 years' category is 155,300 (79,067 boys and 76,236 girls) including the refugee population.

UNHCR and the international community have managed and financed camp-based learning institutions for almost three decades. Some of the international NGOs supporting education in the camp in addition to LWF include JRS (Jesuit Refugee Services); DRC (Danish Refugee Council); NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council); Windle Trust Kenya; Waldorf; and Peace Winds Japan. United Nations agencies including the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO) have played a critical support role for refugee children in accessing education in the camp. Evidently, the government of Kenya has made considerable efforts towards facilitating the fulfillment of the right to education for refugee and asylum-seeking children. In Kenya, children in refugee camps

schools follow the Kenyan national curriculum and sit for national examinations. However, the governance and management of learning institutions by the international community has led to a parallel system of service delivery that is less sustainable and does not adequately respond to the needs of refugees, asylum seekers and their host communities. Further, it does not augur well in the current dispensation where inclusion of refugees into the economic and social development processes and plans in Kenya is promoted.

This Policy Brief thus proposes recommendations that would contribute to the effective and sustainable integration of refugees into national and county sector plans and policies.

¹County Government Of Turkana Third County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027

POLICY ISSUES

Findings from the research indicated a positive attitude towards integration into county education sector plans with at least **92.8%** of the host and refugee communities.

Nevertheless, several issues that would hinder this initiative were identified during this research and which this Policy Brief seeks to highlight while providing possible recommendations towards achieving effective and refugee integration.

POLICY ISSUES BASED ON FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

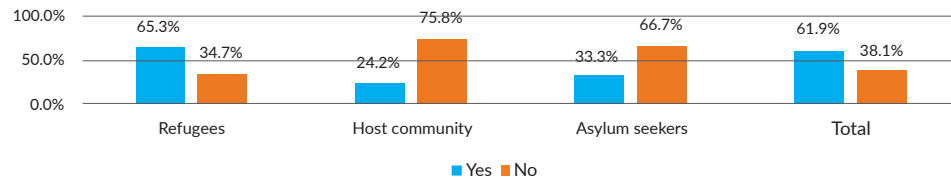
Accessing pre-schools: About **61.9%** of the respondents expressed that their children have difficulty in accessing pre-school education. This implies that most of the refugee children need support to access ECD education. Reasons given included: Lack of enough pre-schools (**63.1%**); inadequate funds to support the children (**40.3%**); illiterate parents who do not value pre-school education (**29.3%**); community norms and cultural factors (**11.4%**) and understaffing/deployment of teachers (**27.4%**). Children without school uniform was mentioned by about **15%** of the respondents as a limiting factor.

"While the state of Early Childhood Development, or ECD education is still far from meeting the expected standards of quality, integration of learners would be of great benefit as it would increase per capita allocation of funds per student and also help us get Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) approved teachers," Carolyne Wainaina, Area Program Manager, Lutheran World Federation, Kakuma Program, Kenya.



Pre-primary school children enjoying various outdoor games at a learning institution in Kakuma refugee camp of Turkana County. Photo: LWF Kakuma Program

Do children in the camps have difficulty in accessing pre-school education?



Quality of pre-school teachers: About **19.3%** of the respondents were not satisfied with the quality of education. Reasons were that some teachers are not equipped with the necessary skills to effectively teach children; not all teachers have attended teacher training colleges, leading to a disparity in teaching qualifications; the teaching style varies among teachers, resulting in some not being adept at conveying information to students; and some teachers with only a high school education (form 4 leavers) may lack the essential qualifications to effectively teach; and certain students struggle to learn due to extended periods required to grasp essential skills, such as reading. The overcrowded classrooms make it challenging for teachers to control and effectively convey information to all students.

Safety of pre-schooling environment for children: While **81.6%** of respondents indicated that pre-school environment was safe for children, another **18.4%** felt the schools were unsafe. There is a gap in the safety of learners due to parental negligence and absence (as they search for livelihood); relatively long distance to schools and insecurity; and limited availability of

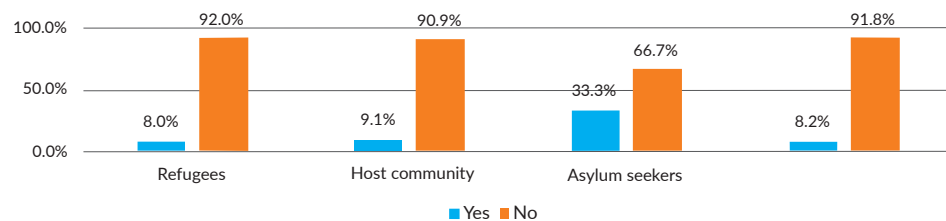
schools in some areas and family circumstances. Lack of safety within the school environment was associated with absenteeism and low access to education.

Integration of ECD schools: It was noted that the community members were comfortable with the integration. An overwhelming **94.3%** wanted the pre-schools in the camp to be integrated into county and national education sector plans. Only about **8.2%** of the integration process has been done. The integrated functions were school registrations and periodical quality assurance checks from the county education staff. The gap in ECD integration was associated with reasons like government education is expensive; buying of learning materials, especially Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) materials; some of the assignment and homework require resources that the community cannot afford.

In relation to stakeholders in ECD integration, not all related functions were supported as expected. For instance, the Government of Kenya (National & County governments) ought to provide new and maintain existing pre-school institutions to reduce overcrowding (some classes have over 160 pupils) (**supported by 50.6%**); provision of free education (**66.8%**); provision of learning materials (**42.8%**).

NGOs were required to support integration of ECD education through providing pre-school institutions (**43.3%**); provision of learning materials (**66.8%**); and supporting free education (**53.4%**); and other forms of support like psychosocial aid, child protection and social cohesion (**11.1%**). The beneficiaries who include the refugee children and the community (both refugee and host communities) need to support their children by taking them to school; providing necessary learning materials and a safe environment.

Has the refugee ECD education been integrated into the Kenyan education system?



"Integration is key because by learning together, children share resources and learn from each other. This reduces the work of NGOs since they do not have to give 30% of food to the host community when all the children are having their meals together."

Hon. Joseph Munyes, Loima Sub-County Education Officer, Turkana County, Kenya

Benefits arising from integrating ECD education: access to quality of education as supported by 89.9% of the respondents on the affirmative; development of talents and engagement co-curricular activities; and emotional and social development as supported by NGOs programs.

Risk factors: There were gaps in security as 28.5% of respondents mentioned increased risks in pre-schools within the camp. These included; accidents on the road; insecurity during school travels; instances of child abuse; child labor; child trafficking and its prevalence; community conflicts and fights involving children and cultural conflicts; hazards related to distance and stagnant water. This suggested a need to improve security and protection for school-going children in camps.

Cultural norms affecting school attendance: age bracket (beliefs that children should not attend school at an early age); circumcision; madrassa classes (where certain communities prioritize madrassa classes before formal schooling, leading to delays in preschool enrollment); early marriage and gender-based violence mostly affecting girls; and education devaluation where in certain contexts, there is a perception that education is not important.

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

National Government through Ministry of Education

1. Full implementation and institutionalization of the Djibouti Declaration and on Refugee Education 2017 and the Basic Education Act.
2. Provide free basic education to the refugee children. This is through including them in the funding program and capitation.
3. Provide a framework for capacity building and training refugee teachers to deploy them among the refugee camps. Special attention is needed as the refugee teachers have different educational backgrounds, hence the need to treat them as special groups in teacher training colleges.
4. Education Ministry to register all pre-primary and primary refugee children through the NEMIS (National Education Management Information System) for tracking and support.

Ministry of Interior and National Administration

1. Provide necessary framework to ensure security within the camp and around the schools. This can be done by assessing the security situation and installing more security infrastructure including police stations.
2. Creating awareness in the camp on crimes against children and the associated punishment.
3. Handling cases of insecurity to completion discourages repeat cases.

National Parliament

1. The Parliament needs to actualize the Djibouti Declaration, the Refugee Education 2017 and the Basic Education Act. This is by providing the necessary policy support needed in implementing the declarations.
2. Through budgeting, support and allocating funding to cater for the funding of refugee pre-schools. The funding should be directed towards establishing pre-school centers, providing learning materials, and hiring teachers.

The Treasury/ Ministry of Finance

1. Allocate adequate funding to pre-primary and primary school children in refugee camps.

County Government of Turkana

2. Through the CIDP and the ECD Department (CECM and COs), plan, budget and implement free pre-primary education in Kakuma refugee camp and Kalobeyei Settlement Scheme.
3. Plan, build and equip new pre-school centers in the camp based on the need to decongest, reduce the distance to schools and to enhance security within the school environment.
4. Provide capitation to identified and registered refugee children to ease the burden from parents. Financing learning will attract more refugee learners and eliminate absenteeism.
5. In coordination with the Ministry of Education and Treasury, provide free lunches (and morning porridge) to keep the learners in school.

6. Identify potential teachers from the refugees, sponsor them for teacher training and capacity building to increase the teacher-student ratio. After training, they should be absorbed into ECD teaching, paid for by the County Government of Turkana.
7. Continuously ensure quality of pre-school education through regular inspection to ensure teachers adhere to set standards; monitor lesson plans and teaching contents.
8. Provide adequate learning materials and teaching resources to schools and teachers.

UN Bodies

1. UNHCR to continue advocating for the rights of the refugees in the camp, including education.
2. UNICEF, as the custodian of children education, needs to support the integration of pre-primary education through an integration policy with steps of integration, stakeholders involved, and the resources needed for integration.
3. UNICEF and UNHCR to source for more funding to spearhead the integration process.
4. The UN bodies further need to ensure pre-school education is financed, supported through policies and legislations.

Civil Societies and NGOs

1. LWF and partners need to initiate the integration process and engage all pertinent stakeholders in county and national education sectors for a smooth integration process.
2. There is a need for a detailed integration policy document, specifying the role and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the ECD education process (NGOs, county and national government, refugee and host communities). The policy

document on integration is to be supported by an integration matrix, showing phase-by-phase implementation of the integration process.

3. Increase the number of schools in the camp to reduce overcrowding and ease access to pre-school education. Awareness be raised about the number of schools within the community providing integrated education with national and county governments. With integration taking place, camp-based schools can be decongested by enrolling refugee learners in public schools in the host community.
4. Implement comprehensive in-service teacher training programs within camp-based schools to address identified challenges: There is need for initiating thorough teacher training initiatives in camp-based schools. This targeted training should specifically address the skills gap observed among teachers, ensuring that all educators receive adequate training even if they haven't attended teacher training colleges. Furthermore, efforts should be made to standardize teaching qualifications and styles across educators, promoting consistency in conveying information to students.
5. Community Sensitization Programs: Develop and implement community-based programs aimed at raising awareness about the benefits of early education. Tailor these programs to address specific cultural norms, such as the belief that children should not attend school at an early age.
6. Promote inclusivity through school uniform assistance: Initiate programs that provide assistance, particularly in the form of uniforms, to girls facing cultural expectations preventing them from attending school. This not only removes a barrier to education but also promotes gender equality.

7. Advocacy against harmful practices: Collaborate with community leaders, NGOs, and government bodies to advocate against harmful cultural practices such as early marriage, FGM and gender-based violence. Emphasize the positive impact education can have on breaking the cycle of such practices.

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NEMIS: National Education Management Information System



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