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Creating Pathways for Refugee Teacher Recognition and Registration

Policy Brief

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Creating Pathways for Refugee Teacher Recognition and Registration

Executive Summary

In Kenya's Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps, education serves as a stabilizing pillar in an otherwise volatile environment. Refugee teachers are integral to this system, dedicating themselves to providing education amidst adversity. Despite their critical role, they face systemic barriers such as unrecognized qualifications, limited access to professional development, and stark economic inequities that hinder their professional growth.

Addressing these challenges through comprehensive policies offers an opportunity to strengthen education systems while ensuring equitable, quality education for all. Moving beyond immediate gaps to foster inclusive and sustainable educational frameworks is essential. Recognizing refugee teachers in alignment with Kenya's Refugee Act 2021, the Shirika Plan, and global frameworks like the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).



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Who Are Refugee Teachers?

Refugee teachers play a vital role in providing education to displaced children in camps like Kakuma and Dadaab. They can be categorized into three groups:

1. National Teachers: Qualified educators registered with Kenya's Teachers Service Commission (TSC) working within refugee schools though not employed by TSC. They often work in refugee camps and receive full recognition and pay.
2. Refugee Teachers: Displaced individuals teaching within their communities. Despite holding teaching diplomas or degrees, their qualifications are often unrecognized by the TSC, limiting access to formal roles.
3. Aspiring Refugee Teachers: Refugees who start as volunteer teachers or assistants while pursuing further qualifications.

Each group plays a distinct yet interconnected role in maintaining the education ecosystem within refugee settings.



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Challenges Faced by Refugee Teachers

The challenges refugee teachers face underscore the need for structural reforms rooted in existing policy frameworks. The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Act provides provisions for the recognition and certification of refugee teachers, while the Basic Education Act mandates the inclusion of refugee education within Kenya's national education system. To operationalize these frameworks effectively, government and education development partners must adopt a comprehensive resource mobilization strategy to finance a costed plan for managing teachers in both refugee and host communities. This approach ensures that systemic gaps are addressed, enabling refugee teachers to contribute fully to the education ecosystem.

Refugee teachers, national teachers, and aspiring refugee teachers in Kenya's camps navigate an intricate web of challenges that reflect systemic gaps and policy shortfalls. These obstacles underscore the urgent need for robust resource mobilization, inclusion of refugee education within the national education system, and the formal recognition of refugee teachers under existing legal frameworks such as the TSC Act and the Basic Education Act.

Addressing these issues requires a coordinated approach by government and education development partners to adopt a comprehensive resource mobilization strategy. Such a strategy would support a costed plan that ensures effective management of teachers in refugee and host communities, bridging the gap between policy aspirations and on-ground realities.

Unrecognized Qualifications

- Refugee teachers' credentials are often invalidated due to restrictive policies. Institutionalizing Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programs under the TSC Act can bridge this gap and ensure formal accreditation.
- Experiences from Rwanda highlight how validating refugee teachers' qualifications can address teacher shortages and foster growth. Kenya can adapt similar frameworks to strengthen its education system.

Economic Inequities

- Refugee teachers earn as little as KES 5,000–9,000 per month, significantly lower than their national counterparts. Establishing equitable pay structures under a costed resource mobilization plan can address these disparities and improve retention rates. These inequities deter talent retention and professional growth.

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Parallel Education Systems

- Refugee teachers in Kenya work under NGO-managed systems, separate from the national framework. Aligning these systems under the Shirika Plan is crucial for inclusivity and integration.
- Lessons from Uganda demonstrate the benefits of integrating refugee teachers into public schools, providing them with union membership and professional development opportunities.

Inadequate Professional Development

- Limited access to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) aligned with Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) leaves refugee teachers underprepared for classroom challenges.
- Addressing this gap with context-sensitive training programs tailored to their needs can enhance their effectiveness.

Gender Inequities

- Female refugee teachers face cultural and logistical barriers, limiting participation in leadership and training opportunities.
- Addressing gender inequities is vital to improving overall teacher representation.

Funding Gaps

- Refugee education heavily depends on international donors, with a 48% funding shortfall in 2024. Establishing a Refugee Education Fund under the Shirika Plan can create a sustainable financing model.
- Partnerships with private sectors and international bodies can supplement these efforts and ensure adequate resources for teacher training and infrastructure.

Policy-Practice Discrepancies

- Inter-agency conflicts and unclear guidelines hinder effective policy implementation.
- Strengthened collaboration and accountability are essential for progress.



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Policy Pathways for Refugee Teacher Inclusion

Building on the challenges outlined above, these policy pathways are designed to address systemic gaps and create sustainable solutions for refugee teachers. By tackling issues like unrecognized qualifications, economic inequities, and fragmented systems, these pathways provide a framework for meaningful inclusion and empowerment. They align with the TSC Act's provisions for recognition, the Basic Education Act's focus on inclusion, and the Shirika Plan's emphasis on resource mobilization. Together, these strategies foster a cohesive approach to strengthening refugee and host community education systems.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

- The TSC Act provides a framework to evaluate and certify refugee teachers' qualifications based on their prior education and experience. This pathway ensures that the skills of refugee teachers are recognized, reducing barriers to formal accreditation.
- RPL programs streamline the process for teachers to enter Kenya's formal education system, addressing qualification gaps efficiently.
- Establish programs to evaluate and certify qualifications based on prior education and experience.
- Simplify pathways for refugee teachers to gain formal accreditation.

Accelerated Teacher Training Programs

- Collaborate with institutions like the Kenya Teacher Training College (KeTTC) to provide tailored training and mentorship opportunities.
- Ensure that training is context-sensitive and accessible.

TSC Registration Pathways

- Amend policies to allow refugee teachers with validated qualifications to register with the TSC.
- Facilitate streamlined application processes to reduce administrative burdens.

Integration into National Systems

- The Basic Education Act supports the inclusion of refugee education within Kenya's national framework, ensuring equitable resource allocation and standardized service delivery.
- Incorporating refugee teachers into the national education system through structured contracts and equitable pay addresses systemic disparities, fostering cohesion and efficiency.
- Incorporate refugee teachers into the national education framework through structured contracts, equitable pay, and career progression.
- Promote inclusive policies that value the contributions of refugee teachers.

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Sustainable Financing Models

- A comprehensive resource mobilization strategy is essential to implement the provisions of the TSC and Basic Education Acts. Establishing a Refugee Education Fund under the Shirika Plan can pool resources from government, international donors, and private sectors.
- Expanding public-private partnerships supports training initiatives, infrastructure development, and equitable pay structures, ensuring sustainable education delivery for both refugee and host communities.
- Establish a Refugee Education Fund pooling resources from government, UNHCR, and private sectors.
- Expand public-private partnerships to support teacher training and infrastructure development.



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Policy Recommendations

These recommendations are crafted to guide policy actors in creating inclusive and sustainable education frameworks for refugee teachers. By addressing systemic barriers and leveraging existing legal provisions under the TSC Act and Basic Education Act, policymakers can transform challenges into opportunities. Additionally, these strategies call for collaborative resource mobilization to ensure that refugee teachers and their host communities benefit equitably from Kenya's educational advancements.

Legal Reforms and Policy Frameworks

1. Amend existing laws, including the TSC Act 2012 and Basic Education Act 2013, to incorporate refugee teachers into national systems.
2. Institutionalize RPL programs to validate and certify refugee teachers' qualifications.
3. Align refugee teacher inclusion with national goals under the Shirika Plan.

Professional Development Initiatives

1. Develop modular certification programs and mentorship opportunities tailored for refugee teachers.
2. Collaborate with institutions like KeTTC to enhance training accessibility and relevance.

Sustainable Financing

1. Establish a Refugee Education Fund to ensure long-term investment.
2. Expand partnerships to address funding gaps effectively.

Gender Equity Strategies

1. Create scholarships and training programs for female refugee teachers.
2. Develop mentorship schemes to encourage women's participation in leadership roles.

Community Engagement

1. Address misconceptions through awareness campaigns in host communities.
2. Partner with community-based organizations to foster support for refugee teacher inclusion.

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Conclusion

Recognizing refugee teachers is more than a moral obligation; it is a strategic investment in global education and social cohesion. By addressing systemic barriers through the Shirika Plan and other frameworks, refugee teachers can be empowered to contribute meaningfully to education systems.

Policymakers must act decisively to unlock the potential of these educators, ensuring sustainable inclusion and improved education outcomes for all. Their journey deserves not only recognition but actionable support—a step towards building resilient and inclusive education systems.

