



African Population and
Health Research Center



Save the Children

Policy Brief

Inclusion of Refugee Teachers into Kenya's National
Education System



LEAD AUTHOR:

Farah Abdimalik

Co-authors:

Lydia Namatende-Sakwa (PhD), Davis Musyoki,
Erick Makhapila–*African Population and Health
Research Center*

Nancy Njeru – *Save the Children International*

Introduction

Kenya hosts over 774,000 registered refugees, most of whom reside in the Dadaab and Kakuma camps (UNHCR, 2024). Within these camps, more than 160,000 refugee learners are enrolled in approximately 200 schools, many of which are overcrowded and operating under immense strain due to limited infrastructure. Refugee teachers form the backbone of the education system in these settings, constituting over 80% of the teaching workforce.

However, 74.6% of them lack certification from the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), which restricts their professional recognition and career progression. As a result, student-teacher ratios can soar as high as 1:96, significantly undermining the quality of teaching and learning for refugee learners.

This policy brief is informed by a **Political Economy Analysis (PEA)** conducted by Breinscope Consulting for Save the Children International (SCI), under the TeachWell Voices Project. The analysis examines systemic barriers and opportunities for integrating refugee teachers into Kenya's national teacher management framework.

Overview

Refugee teachers play a crucial role in providing education to displaced children and promoting social cohesion between refugees and host communities. However, they face numerous challenges:

- Overcrowded classrooms with student-teacher ratios as high as 1:96.
- Lack of certification and professional recognition under the Teachers Service Commission (TSC).
- Low salaries (Ksh. 8,000 per month) compared to Kenyan teachers (Ksh. 22,800).
- Barriers to professional development and limited access to training aligned with Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC).

Despite these barriers, refugee teachers represent untapped potential. Integrating them into Kenya's education system would alleviate teacher shortages, improve education quality, and contribute to the country's socio-economic development.



Problem Statement

The current exclusion of refugee teachers from Kenya's education framework perpetuates inequities and compromises education quality for refugees and host communities alike. Key issues include:

1. Certification and Accreditation Gaps:

Refugee teachers often lack TSC certification due to restrictive requirements. Without formal recognition, they are confined to informal teaching roles with limited career progression opportunities.

- 74.6% of refugee teachers lack accreditation.
- Only 15.5% are trained and licensed.

2. Remuneration Inequity:

Refugee teachers earn significantly less than their Kenyan counterparts and rely on in-kind benefits like food rations.

- Incentive-based pay (Ksh. 8,000/month) is inadequate and discriminatory, leading to high turnover.

3. Professional Development Barriers:

Refugee teachers face limited access to structured training programs.

- 44.3% of teachers report a lack of opportunities or funding for training.
- This hampers their ability to implement the CBC effectively.

4. Overburdened Schools:

Teachers manage massive class sizes and lack essential resources.

- 30.9% of learners cite shortages of basic supplies like books and pens.

5. Gender and Cultural Constraints:

Female teachers face additional challenges, including balancing reproductive and professional roles, while cultural biases hinder acceptance of refugee teachers by host communities.

These findings, drawn from the Political Economy Analysis report, highlight the structural and cultural barriers faced by refugee educators and learners.

Key Findings

The analysis highlights systemic barriers to refugee teacher integration and their impact:

- **Teacher Workforce Composition:** Refugee teachers represent 80% of the teaching workforce in Kakuma and Dadaab but are excluded from national systems.
- **Qualification Gaps:** 74.6% of refugee teachers lack TSC accreditation.
- **Overburdened Schools:** Refugee schools face student-teacher ratios of 1:96, compromising learning outcomes.

Remuneration Disparities: Refugee teachers earn 63% less than Kenyan teachers, leading to dissatisfaction and high turnover.

Policy Context and Gaps

Kenya has shown commitment to refugee inclusion through frameworks like the Refugees Act (2021) and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. However, implementation gaps persist:

- **Fragmented Governance:** Responsibilities for refugee education are divided among multiple entities, including the Ministry of Education, Department of Refugee Services (DRS), and NGOs, resulting in poor coordination.
- **Funding Constraints:** Refugee education relies heavily on inconsistent donor funding, leading to resource shortages and unsustainable programs.
- **Limited Policy Awareness:** Only 48.9% of refugee teachers are aware of relevant policies, with higher awareness in Dadaab (66.3%) than Kakuma (16.5%). This low awareness, especially in Kakuma, risks inconsistent policy implementation and limits teachers' ability to improve teaching quality and advocate for their needs, ultimately affecting education outcomes for refugee learners.

Recommendations

1. Policy and Institutional Reform

Support legal and policy reforms to enable recognition, certification, and registration of refugee teachers and their schools.

TWV Alignment:

- Outcome 1 / IO 1.1a & 1.2: TSC Act & Basic Education Act include refugee teacher certification and school integration.
- Key Activity: Position papers, policy dialogues with MoE, TSC, Parliament.

Influence legislative texts (TSC Act, Basic Education Bill) to include refugee teachers and schools.

2. Accredited Professional Development

Expand structured, accredited TCCD opportunities for refugee teachers focused on CBC, SEL, trauma-informed pedagogy, and inclusive education.

TWV Alignment:

- Outcome 2 / IO 2.2: Refugee teacher access to alternative TCCD pathways.
- Outcome 1 / IO 1.3: TE&T Policy includes inclusive TCCD models and wellbeing components.

Push for inclusive TCCD in national teacher policy and implementation frameworks.

3. Equitable Teacher Compensation

Harmonize refugee teacher remuneration with national pay structures through phased integration into TSC employment frameworks.

TWV Alignment:

- Outcome 3 / IO 3.2: Budget allocation for teacher management and wellbeing.
- IO 1.1a: Formal inclusion in TSC Act.

Secure government commitments to recognize and fund refugee teachers under national employment systems.

Recommendations

4. Sustainable Financing Models

Strengthen government and partner resource mobilization to support refugee teacher certification, TCCD, and employment.

TWV Alignment:

- Outcome 3 / IO 3.1 & 3.2: Resource mobilization strategy; increased education budget allocations.
- Key Activities: Budget dialogues, evidence-based policy briefs.

Push for funding streams in NESSP and MoE budget that target refugee teacher

5. Community Engagement and Cohesion:

Foster community ownership through awareness campaigns, dialogue forums, and inclusive professional development opportunities for teachers.

TWV Alignment:

- Outcome 2 / IO 2.1: Engagement of refugee teachers in sub-county and national platforms.
- Key Activities: CoPs, dialogue with host teachers.

Position refugee teachers as active contributors to education reform, not just beneficiaries

6. Monitoring and Feedback Systems

Establish monitoring and feedback tools to track the integration of refugee teachers and respond to real-time needs.

TWV Alignment:

- Cross-cutting MEAL system (established in Y1).
- IO 2.2: Bulk SMS feedback mechanism.

Use evidence from feedback loops to shape policy and program adaptations.

7. Gender Equity and Inclusion

Promote policies that address structural and cultural barriers to the participation of female refugees as teachers.

TWV Alignment:

- IO 1.3 & 2.2: The TE&T Policy includes components for SEL, MHPSS, and gender sensitivity.

Conclusion

Integrating refugee teachers into Kenya's national education system is a critical step toward equitable and high-quality education for all. Addressing certification, remuneration, and training gaps will empower refugee teachers, improve learning outcomes, and foster social cohesion between refugees and host communities.