



EXPLORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2019 GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGES BY THE GOVERNMENT OF KENYA:

A CASE STUDY OF THE DADAAB REFUGEE CAMPS

Photo credit: Goundo Diarra, Kakuma Refugee Camp.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

In 2019, 3.7 million refugees were of school age, yet a significant number had missed years of school due to conflict, displacement and (re)settlement in host countries (UNHCR, 2020). Education plays an essential role in the wellbeing of refugees and their ability to pursue opportunities beyond their displacement. In recognition of this critical need, Member States made 140 education-related pledges at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, demonstrating a widespread commitment to ensuring refugees gain access to education within host countries. At this time, the Government of Kenya pledged to “strengthen and support refugee and host community education.”

Through focus group discussions and key informant interviews with teachers, students, and school administration across four different secondary schools in the Dadaab complex, this research project explored Kenya’s implementation of its refugee education commitments. A total of 48 participants contributed to the study from the Dagahaley, Hagadera, and Ifo subcamps. Following the data collection, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes, patterns, and insights. Narrative analysis was used to interpret the stories and experiences shared by participants.

BY THE NUMBERS

3.7 MILLION

refugees of school age (UNHCR 2020)

63 %

refugee children enrolled in primary school (UNHCR, 2019)

24 %

refugee children enrolled in secondary school (UNHCR, 2019)

1 %

refugees enrolled in university/tertiary schools (UNHCR, 2019)

140

education-related pledges at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings demonstrate that substantial progress has been made in providing education to refugees in Dadaab. Participants noted positive changes such as improved student performance, greater access to educational materials, new digital learning tools, enhanced training for instructors, and support from external organizations. However, while the participants expressed that access to education has improved, they also shared how there are still noticeable gaps.

Ensuring access to primary, secondary, and tertiary education for persons in refugee situations is extremely important because it gives them opportunities to expand their capabilities and provides them with the means to make informed decisions for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Full integration of refugees into Kenya's education system requires overcoming systemic barriers, cultural expectations, gender inequalities, insufficient funding, overcrowding in schools, high teacher turnover rates, and the lack of support for tertiary education. Furthermore, the authors emphasized the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach that facilitates cooperation between teachers, parents, school administrators, humanitarian and non-governmental organizations, donors, governments, and the refugee learners themselves. Cooperation is the ideal approach to developing a comprehensive and sustainable education system in Dadaab. It is clear that more work is needed to ensure that the Government of Kenya fully achieves its educational commitments towards refugee students.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors offer eleven recommendations to improve the quality of the education for learners across secondary schools in the Dadaab refugee camps:

- Improve teacher remuneration and training
- Strengthen government collaboration with NGOs and humanitarian agencies
- Increase funding and resource mobilization
- Encourage community and parental engagement
- Introduce supportive programs for mature students
- Expand vocational training and employment opportunities
- Address issues regarding exam integrity and student discipline
- Expand food programs and ensure students are fed
- Implement sports, cultural, or social activities at schools to increase social cohesion
- Increase collaboration and inter-school activities between refugee camp schools and non-refugee schools
- Support pathways to tertiary education for refugee students

This research contributes to our understanding of refugee education in Kenya. It also contributes to global efforts to provide inclusive education for all children, regardless of status. These findings can inform future policy development and improve the execution of refugee education initiatives within Kenya and other countries facing similar challenges. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of refugee-led research by involving the Dadaab Response Association (DRA) and other regional stakeholders in the knowledge production process.



Photo credit: Goundo Diarra, Kakuma Refugee Camp.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The Dadaab Response Association is a refugee-led organization based in Dadaab, Kenya. Founded by graduates of the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) Program, the research team seeks to fulfill research needs by offering their skills, expertise, and time to produce quality research that accurately reflects the local refugee and host community.



ABDIKADIR ABIKAR

Abdikadir is a Somali refugee who completed his Master-in-Education degree from York University in Toronto, Canada. Through the [Borderless Higher Education for Refugees \(BHER\)](#) Project, he has also completed his Bachelor of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, Geography major, at York University, while living in Dadaab refugee camp.



ARTE DAGANE

Arte Saman Dagane is responsible for managing the finance of the [Dadaab Response Association](#). He collaborates with the rest of the team to budget and monitor how money is used. He audits internal activities and gives frequent updates. He also acts as the logistics officer and keeps the stock and property of the organization. Through the [Borderless Higher Education for Refugees \(BHER\)](#) Project, Dagane completed his Master of Education at York University, Toronto, Canada in 2020.



LEOMOI OCHAN

Ochan Robert Leomoi, Administration/Research Manager for the [Dadaab Response Association](#), is a graduate degree holder from York University, Toronto, Canada. He earned his first degree in Human Geography under the [Borderless Higher Education for Refugees \(BHER\) Project](#). Subsequently, he completed his Master of Education from the same institution in 2020.



MARK OKELLO

Mark Okello Oyat is a Ugandan refugee residing in Dadaab, Kenya. He is the director of a community-based research organization, the [Dadaab Response Association](#) (DRA), that positions Mark and his team as refugee scholars in encampment.



GOUNDO DIARRA

Goundo Diarra is a graduate of the Migration and Diaspora Studies program at Carleton University. Her master's thesis explored the experiences of female refugees, a marginalized group in discussions on forced migration and studied the potential differences between Kakuma and Kalobeyei.

Local Engagement Refugee Research Network



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