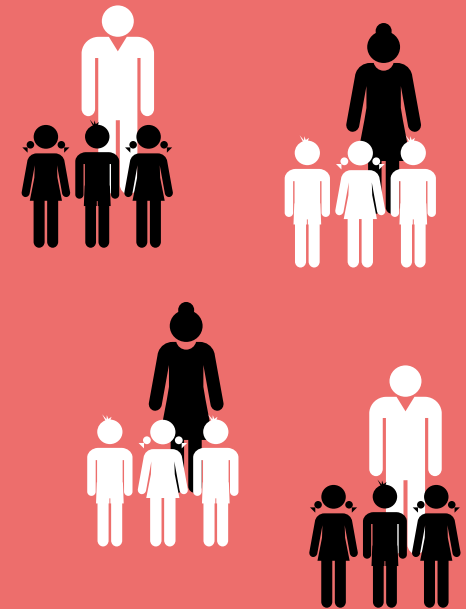


POLICY INSIGHTS

# REFUGEE TEACHERS

THE HEART OF THE GLOBAL

REFUGEE RESPONSE



## ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

This NORRAG Policy Insights publication on refugee teachers is born from a realisation that, while education has received increased attention in global refugee policy and programming, refugee teachers and teachers of refugees have often been overlooked. Additionally, although nationally registered teachers' work, well-being, and professional development received overdue attention at the 2022 United Nations Transforming Education Summit and with the establishment of a High-level Panel on the Teaching Profession in 2023, the unique realities and needs of refugee teachers remain under researched, under addressed, and under funded.

On the occasion of the second Global Refugee Forum in 2023, NORRAG brought together 48 experts from its network of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to critically reflect on the challenges facing refugee teachers to promote evidence-informed policies to help ensure that teachers are recognised for the role they play at the heart of the global refugee response.

Representing more than 15 contexts, the 28 contributions in this publication showcase current evidence and propose policy priorities across three themes: including refugee teacher voices in policy making and practice, addressing the challenges of teachers' work and wellbeing, and improving refugee teacher professional development. Through these themes, it is NORRAG's vision that these compelling contributions inform debate and inspire researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to engage with and learn from refugee teachers as teachers and as transformative agents of change.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Anouk Pasquier Di Dio is responsible for the design of the publication and Camille Chabinaud managed all promotion and events related activities.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

A full list of the 48 experts who contributed to this publication, including their biographies, is included at the end of this publication. This publication has been coordinated, edited, and introduced by Christopher Henderson, Education in Emergencies Specialist at NORRAG, with the direction of Moira V. Faul, Executive Director at NORRAG.

## ABOUT NORRAG

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# CONTENTS

	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	6
	Christopher Henderson	
<b>1</b>	<b>THE INCLUSION OF REFUGEE VOICES IN POLICY MAKING AND PRACTICE</b>	9
	<b>Refugee education: Teacher voices will not be quiet</b>	10
	David Edwards	
	<b>Unpacking the concept of 'teacher voice' and why it matters in refugee settings</b>	12
	Stephanie Bengtsson	
	<b>The 'unseen heart' of refugee education: The narratives of Sri Lankan refugee teachers in India</b>	14
	Mini Chandran Kurian and Nomisha Kurian	
<b>Teachers' voices on refugee school inclusion in Jordan</b>	16	
Daniel Shephard and Yasmine Alkotob		
<b>Listening to informal educators to support minoritized refugee populations: Lessons from Amman, Jordan</b>	18	
Elisheva Cohen		
<b>2</b>	<b>POLICIES THAT ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHERS' WORK AND WELL-BEING</b>	21
	<b>Locating refugee teachers' work within bordering regimes: Considerations and implications</b>	22
	Ritesh Shah	
	<b>National inclusion efforts: Don't forget refugee teachers</b>	24
	Mary Mendenhall, Rebecca Telford and Mohamud Hure	
	<b>Education programming in Lebanon and the curse of 'business as usual'</b>	26
	Mai Abu Moghli	
	<b>Towards an inclusive future: Syrian refugee teachers' roles in shaping education policy in Lebanon</b>	28
	Felicity Kersting and Watfa Najdi	
	<b>Empowering Syrian refugee teachers: The vital role of psychosocial support in Jordan</b>	30
Consuelo Guardia Macchiavello, Naima Al-husban and Abdeljalil Akkari		
<b>How inclusion can create exclusion in Iraq: A paradox</b>	32	
Nastaran Jafari and Arshed Berwary		
<b>Who can be a teacher? The ambiguity of refugee teachers' work and status in Kenya</b>	34	
Loise Guchuhi		
<b>Teachers of refugees in Uganda: Toward an inclusive approach</b>	36	
Celia Reddick		

	<b>Impossible choices: The relationship between teacher compensation, well-being, quality, and retention in South Sudan and Uganda</b>	<b>38</b>
	Danielle Falk	
	<b>Pathways to certification for refugee teachers: Lessons learned from Chad and South Sudan</b>	<b>40</b>
	Greg St. Arnold and Parfait Fouda	
	<b>How Colombia's complex crises bring more challenges to teachers' well-being</b>	<b>42</b>
	Janaina Hirata	
	<b>Building inclusive educational communities with and for refugees on the borders of Mexico</b>	<b>44</b>
	Atenea Rosado-Viurques and Catalina Moreno Ávila	
	<b>Refugee teacher isolation: Over three decades of confined teacher management on the Thai-Myanmar border</b>	<b>46</b>
	Greg Tyrosvoutis, Gray Rinehart, Cherry Ku Paw, Naw Nay Yu Paw and Saw Sam San	
	<b>Empowering Ukrainian refugee educators: UNICEF's initiatives in Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic</b>	<b>49</b>
	Andrea Naletto	
	<b>Language for resilience in Jordan, Uganda, and Ukraine: Six recommendations</b>	<b>51</b>
	Joseph Field	
<b>3</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE REFUGEE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>53</b>
	<b>Leading by example: Translating the Djibouti Declaration into action through refugee teacher professional development</b>	<b>54</b>
	Kebede Kassa Tsegaye	
	<b>Transforming teacher professional development: A core practice approach for education in emergencies</b>	<b>56</b>
	Lindsay Brown	
	<b>Paving the way for inclusive teacher professional development in refugee contexts</b>	<b>58</b>
	Helen West and Katja Hinz	
	<b>Strengthening teacher professional development in refugee contexts in Uganda: Enhancing inclusion and well-being</b>	<b>60</b>
	Francis Bizoza Bigirimana	
	<b>Strengthening (not circumventing) education systems: Promising approaches for TPD in East African refugee contexts</b>	<b>62</b>
	Jonathan Kwok, Anne Smiley and Lilian Viko	
	<b>Professional development for teachers of Afghan refugees: Challenges, opportunities, and prospects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan</b>	<b>64</b>
	Syed Munir Ahmad and Najma Begum	
<b>Improving refugee teacher development in Lebanon and Jordan: Nurturing teacher identity, relationships, and agency</b>	<b>67</b>	
Maria Grazia Imperiale, Damian Ross and Giovanna Fassetta		
<b>Can low-tech solutions improve Rohingya teachers' pedagogical skills in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh?</b>	<b>69</b>	
Nishitha Andra		
	<b>CONTRIBUTORS</b>	<b>71</b>
	<b>ENDNOTES</b>	<b>74</b>

## List of tables and figures

Figure 1	Challenges faced by refugee teachers validating their credentials	24
Figure 2	Barriers to improving teacher quality	25
Figure 3	Impact of crisis on teachers	26
Figure 4	Teacher satisfaction statistics	26
Figure 5	Teacher absenteeism in Lebanon	27
Figure 6	Teachers planning to leave the education sector	27
Figure 7	The tensions created by the isolation of refugee teachers in Thailand	46
Figure 8	The refugee teacher isolation cycle	47
Figure 9	Teacher management challenges	47
Figure 10	Core practices: An evidence based framework for improved teacher practice	57

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# INTRODUCTION: REFUGEE TEACHERS – THE HEART OF THE GLOBAL REFUGEE RESPONSE

## Christopher Henderson

Editor, NORRAG, Geneva Graduate Institute

At the previous Global Refugee Forum held in 2019, education advocates lifted the humanitarian community's focus towards greater inclusion and funding for education in refugee policy and practice. Where a lack of legal status, restricted mobility and the denial of basic human rights can strip displaced and stateless persons of agency and hope, quality education can contribute to mending the disjuncture of their uncertain futures.<sup>1</sup> While this intervention was timely, one key factor remained sorely underrepresented (as it had been in previous refugee education campaigns): refugee teachers and teachers of refugees (hereafter, 'refugee teachers'). Of the 240 education-focused pledges at the 2019 forum, only 33 pledges mentioned teachers, and only six were focused on teachers.

Readers with the privilege of working with teachers in refugee hosting settings will know that their sacrifice, commitment and perseverance demand our collective attention and respect, especially as they contend with the same traumas and material hardships as the students they teach. Whether formally trained or alternatively qualified – in the sense that teachers understand and can respond

to the complex learning needs that shape their students' lives – the conditions in which refugee teachers live and work rarely support the professional well-being necessary to wake up every day and teach. Yet, against all odds, so many teachers do. Without formal recognition, without commensurate remuneration and without the security of formal employment, these teachers still manage to inspire learning, and they often nurture environments that foster protection and possibility.

As many contributions in this NORRAG collection convey, refugee teachers fulfil multiple roles within and beyond the classroom. Refugee teachers' scope of work is often more complex than teaching in politically stable and privileged settings. With job descriptions that stretch our common conception of teaching, alongside responsibilities for teaching basic numeracy, literacy and subject-focused curriculum, teachers act as life coaches, mentors, peacemakers, community builders, social workers, lay psychologists and even as stand-in family members for students who have lost their own. In myriad ways, teachers are the heart of the global refugee response.

We must also acknowledge how we condemn teachers to working and living conditions that contribute to their poor well-being and high rates of attrition. Appallingly low and irregular pay as well as a lack of funding and coordination for continuous professional development inhibit teachers' acquisition of the pedagogical knowledge and skills they so desperately desire and need. No amount of moral purpose can sustain a person's motivation to teach when the incentives to do so are so low. Thus, as we are in the midst of a chronic global teacher shortage, we need to take responsibility for our own shortage of care for teachers.

Teachers in crisis-affected settings also remain a neglected factor in Sustainable Development Goal 4: quality and inclusive education for all. In other words, all must include teachers. As many of the papers in this volume argue, our effort (in line with the UN Global Compact on Refugees) to include refugee learners in national education systems has overlooked the corresponding need to include refugee teachers—not just because refugee children and adolescents benefit from teachers' nuanced

knowledge and skills, but also because teachers must be able to uphold their professional identity and continue their careers with the security, status and dignity they deserve.

On this point, and to inform and support work towards all of the aspirations outlined above, this edition of NORRAG Policy Insights presents evidence and suggestions for improving refugee teacher policy and practice across three thematic sections.

### The inclusion of refugee teachers' voices in policymaking and practice

David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International, lays the foundation for this section. Building off the United Nations Transforming Education Summit's call for improved social dialogue between teachers and governments, a case is made for refugee teachers' engagement in national teacher unions and their contribution to policymaking processes, whereby teachers' lived experiences and niche expertise can shape more relevant mechanisms of support for teachers' work. Edwards argues that this is best realised through teachers' creative problem-solving skills.

At the risk of becoming an empty catch phrase at the global level, Stephanie Bengtsson rescues the importance of 'teachers' voices' by outlining, in pragmatic terms, three types of voices that can contribute to improved policymaking and practice at a local level. Bengtsson asks that we recognize refugee teachers as having

a professional voice, a pedagogical voice and an evolving voice; in other words, we should provide pathways for progressive levels of contribution as teachers' own experience and expertise grow. By focusing on the experiences of Sri Lankan refugee teachers in India, Mini and Nomisha Kurian remind us that ethnographic voices also provide opportunities for teachers to share their analysis of exclusionary refugee teacher policy and practices.

The next two papers shift our attention to Jordan and theorise, using recent empirical insights, the benefits of including teachers in policymaking and decision-making processes. First, Daniel Shephard and Yasmine Alkotob demonstrate how teachers' sophisticated readings of the relationships between Syrian refugee and Jordanian host community students can better inform policies that improve social cohesion. They also make it clear that decision-makers must suspend the deficit framing of teachers, which marginalises their participation in policymaking processes. Elishiva Cohen then introduces the many 'shapes and sizes' of refugee teachers in informal education settings, showing how, in an environment of restrictive refugee education policies, diverse teachers' voices help construct a system tailored to the unique needs of minoritised learners.

### Policies that address the challenges of teachers' work and well-being

Ritesh Shah begins this section with a polemic. Noting the humanitarian sectors' expropriation of refugee teachers' labour through insufficient stipends and deregularised employment – a result of 'bordering regimes' and racialised policies that undermine teachers' identities and undervalue their work – Shah challenges us to consider the cost that our collective tolerance of such policies has on refugee teachers' lives and on the status and attractiveness of the teaching profession.

Several papers problematise the policy of refugee inclusion in host-country education systems, as prioritised by the UN Global Compact on Refugees. Some authors argue for an extension of the policy to include refugee teachers. In definitive terms, Mary Mendenhall, Rebecca Telford, and Mohamud Hure reflect on findings from a recent UNHCR study on teachers of refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons and recommend that en route to full inclusion, refugee teachers should be able to earn professional qualifications and compensation in accordance with their experience and the demands of their roles. Proving this concept's feasibility in Chad, Gregory St. Arnold and Fouda Parfait highlight an encouraging case in which, with international actor support and state facilitation, refugee teachers have gained access to teacher training colleges and benefit from

formal certification and a pathway to inclusion in the national education system.

Mai Abu Moghli also helps contextualise the challenge of refugee teacher inclusion by examining the context of Lebanon. This paper draws our attention to the 'curse of business as usual', in which aid regimes fail to adjust to the challenges facing host-country teachers as governments chronically underfund and underserve the profession. This paper reveals sobering data and holds our aspirations in check – the needs of refugee teachers are curtailed by intersecting education crises at the national level. Although Abu Moghi's paper presents a dire case study, Lebanon reflects a reality experienced by neighbouring state contexts such as Kenya, Uganda, Türkiye, Jordan and Bangladesh, countries where a vast majority of the world's forcibly displaced people are hosted and often educated.

Focusing on the forcibly displaced Karen population on the Thai–Myanmar border, Greg Tyrosvoutis and colleagues explore refugee teachers' isolation from Thailand's national system. Based on Thailand's policy of non-integration and mother-tongue learning policies (to disincentivise further integration), refugee teachers' opportunities for professional recognition are restricted. As a result, Thailand's refugee teacher attrition rate is unmanageably high. To stem the impact of teacher attrition and address teacher shortages in Uganda, where displaced children and adolescents are allowed to attend national schools, Celia

Reddick echoes calls for refugee teacher inclusion, which can fill a gap in the workforce and add necessary capabilities to the country's current teaching cadre. Writing about Iraq, where displaced Arabic-speaking Syrian Kurds are included in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's (KRI) Kurdish language education system, Nastaran Jafari and Arshed Berswary remind us of the paradoxical language challenges that come with inclusive policies that, in so many contexts, can stymie children's, parents' and teachers' integration, engagement and progress in national schools.

This section also addresses the compounding effects of inadequate psychosocial support and irregular compensation on teachers' well-being in complex settings. In Colombia, for example, Janaina Hirata advocates for advanced crisis-sensitive planning so that teachers of refugees, who manage the delicate integration of refugee learners into national classrooms, are protected from the challenges associated with their work. In Uganda and South Sudan, using rich ethnographic data, Danielle Falk amplifies how refugee teachers' daily decision making is determined by questions of survival and self-sacrifice because their compensation is well below the cost of living in these areas.

### Opportunities to improve refugee teacher professional development (TPD)

This section opens with a policy exemplar for other contexts to follow, albeit with limitations. Kebede Tsegaye outlines how, within the

parameters of the Djibouti Declaration, a refugee-focused TPD pilot was implemented for over 700 teachers across Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda. Although this study provides welcome insight into the translation of policy into promising practice, in which teachers respond with high levels of motivation and engagement, Tsegaye laments the residual effects of exclusionary state policies. This is especially true when formal recognition and possibilities for teachers' career progression do not stem from their participation in quality TPD.

To the extent that quality TPD is championed as a key policy priority in refugee hosting settings, Lindsay Brown's contribution reminds us of the dearth of evidence on the fidelity of TPD (i.e. what works best where and for whom) in different conditions and across different contexts. As Brown illustrates, the core practices approach promotes a defined and common set of high-impact and contextually responsive teaching techniques.<sup>2</sup> These techniques are identified as effective by teachers and community members, and they are strengthened through iterative policy development and professional learning cycles.

As to the extent that continuous TPD is being strengthened in many national contexts, Helen West and Katja Hinz argue that government TPD policies should be expanded to include refugee teachers. West and Hinz also contend that refugee teachers' access to TPD should provide a pathway to formal accreditation within national systems. Similarly, based on

lessons from International Rescue Committee's PlayMatters programme, Anne Smiley, Jonathan Kwok, and Lilian Viku claim that new TPD interventions should be grafted onto the strengths of existing TPD systems rather than disrupting or working against them.

Based on the success of Uganda's Flying Colours initiative, which improves refugee teachers' pedagogical skills through existing TPD systems to encourage disaffected learners to come back to school, Frances Bizoza cautions that TPD must be informed and owned by community-level partnerships. Likewise, in Pakistan, Syed Munir Ahmad and Najma Begum track multiple curriculum changes, shifting priorities and corresponding iterations of TPD for Afghan refugee teachers. Amid these tumultuous changes, community-informed teaching tools have steadied teachers' knowledge and skills to realise effective teaching practices in complex settings.

Maria Imperiale, Damian Ross, and Giovanna Fausette contend that notions of teacher identity and agency are at the core of TPD. This is especially important as refugee teachers incorporate political dimensions into their teaching and navigate the precarity and loss that their displacement entails. As such, TPD must rehabilitate a sense of agency in circumstances where there is often so little. For the Rohingya refugee teachers (who are also genocide survivors) in Bangladesh, where I work, I have observed that a sense of professional identity and agency would complement the force of quality subject

knowledge and skills-based TPD. However, we still need stronger evidence to substantiate the centrality of teacher identity and agency to TPD and to design better policy and programmes that promote and protect teachers' identity and agency in the full scope of their work.

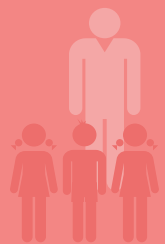
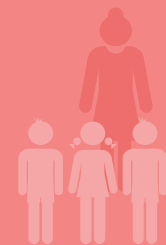
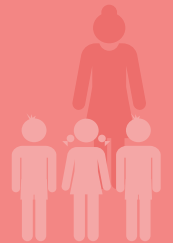
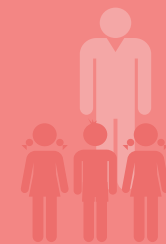
Thank you to all contributing authors, especially those whom I have not named in the introduction. This edition of NORRAG Policy Insights on refugee teachers is the first publication of its kind. Therefore, my vision is that this edition serves as a powerful reference point and resource that shapes progress in refugee teacher research, policy and practice for many years to come.





# 1

## THE INCLUSION OF REFUGEE TEACHER VOICES IN POLICY MAKING AND PRACTICE



# REFUGEE EDUCATION: TEACHER VOICES WILL NOT BE QUIET

## David Edwards

General Secretary, Education International

What do you remember about June 2022?

It would be no surprise if a catastrophe off the coast of Greece is not the first thing that comes to mind. A boat on its way from Libya to Italy sank, leading to 600 Syrian, Afghan, Egyptian and Pakistani refugees being reported missing and presumed dead in the Mediterranean.

In the constant cycle of cascading crises, the spike of tragedies from day to day and month to month vies for our attention and action against a steady backdrop of years of intractable emergencies, including the current displacement of more than 100 million people from their homes, some 15 million of them school-aged children.

Our response must be to stay focused, to be resilient, and to keep our voices raised, but most of all, to organise systemic change that can solve – rather than simply salve – chronic disasters. We can start with education.

Sustainably supporting teachers in crisis settings is fundamental to rebuilding and maintaining a quality education system. The

lack of qualified teachers in refugee settings is a major challenge, and teachers are likelier to be prioritised in refugee education responses if they are represented at all stages of decision-making processes.

Disruption of education is not temporary – it is reality. Our responses must be strategic and institutionalised, with crisis-resilient systems and mechanisms that can deploy and retain trained and well-resourced teachers where they are needed most.

Currently, education responses to crises tend to focus on physical infrastructure; they do not adequately invest in teacher support. At the last Global Refugee Forum in 2019, states and stakeholders made numerous pledges in relation to education, but very few of them had a specific focus on teachers.

We must redouble our efforts to support teachers and invest in the recruitment, retention, training, deployment, terms of employment, and working conditions of teachers in crisis and refugee-hosting contexts. Teacher voice and representation in decision-

and policy-making processes can improve the professional status of all teachers.

These views are reaffirmed and given new prominence by the United Nations High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession. The preliminary recommendations tasked governments worldwide with transforming the role, status, and future of the teaching profession.

The Panel affirmed both the status of education as a human right and a public good and the central importance of teachers in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 towards quality education for all.

The Panel stated that governments should develop clear policies to support teachers working in crisis-affected regions and refugee camps. The policies should aim at providing adequate support and access to professional development; promoting the well-being of teachers by addressing their physical, emotional, and psychosocial needs; and raising the status of all teachers working in contexts of crisis and displacement.



The Panel further recommended that refugee and displaced teachers be provided entry pathways into the education workforce of host communities, with recognition of their qualifications and experience acquired across borders, and that the employment of teachers in camps for refugees and displaced persons should be under conditions that guarantee fundamental principles and rights at work.

Responding to growing global crises in education, the Panel called for the establishment of a Global Fund for Teachers in Emergencies to provide payment of salaries for teachers working in crisis-affected contexts.

A series of urgent calls for government action were included in the draft recommendations, such as ensuring that teachers and their organisations can engage in social dialogue with governments, the encouragement of collective bargaining, and policy dialogue on all matters affecting their profession. This collaborative framework should be the principle means for developing policies on education, teaching, and the teaching profession.

We all know about the teacher voice that rises above the din of the classroom. By effectively raising teachers' voices through social dialogue with teacher unions, our unions can be partners in leveraging our resources and problem-solving experience to solve challenges at the classroom, school, and community level. These same voices are also essential to the decision-

making process at the local, national, and international levels.

The steady toll of tragedies in human displacement is an outcome of the status quo. Changing this status quo is not inevitable; it is a fight that can only be taken on by a broad global coalition in an organised and systemic fashion. The teaching profession and the unions that unite their concerns and aspirations can help lead the way.

# UNPACKING THE CONCEPT OF 'TEACHER VOICE' AND WHY IT MATTERS IN REFUGEE SETTINGS

## Dr. Stephanie Bengtsson

Benedex

### Key takeaways:

Refugee teachers should not be seen merely as education system inputs but as:

- Professionals with a professional voice who can contribute to a more collaborative, sustainable workforce that supports both refugees and host communities alike.
- Educators with a pedagogical voice have something to teach not only their students, but also each other, and the wider community.
- Lifelong learners with an evolving voice who should be supported and support each other throughout their careers.

As such, teachers' voices should not just be included in discussions, they should be leading them.

Until recently, teachers in refugee settings have typically been treated as passive system inputs, with an emphasis on deploying them where there are shortages and improving them through training. Little consideration is given to the key role they play in the lives of refugee learners and communities. While there is increasing recognition of the importance of the inclusion of teachers' voices in policymaking and practice, in this article, I invite readers to consider 'what' inclusion of teachers' voices might look like to demonstrate 'why' refugee teachers' voices should matter and to contribute to burgeoning work on 'how' to include them.

The main barrier preventing the inclusion of refugee teacher voices in policymaking and practice is limited political will and a lack of comprehensive financing.<sup>3</sup> To elaborate, the refugee education response to date has been driven by a focus on recruiting a sufficient number of teachers to address shortages, without considering that teachers are themselves members of affected communities with a right to lifelong learning and decent work and that they can be powerful agents of change if they have adequate support and

resources and access to improved living and working conditions.<sup>4</sup>

Addressing this barrier involves moving from designing and implementing programming and policies for refugees as beneficiaries, to co-constructing programming and policies 'with' refugees as active leaders and participants, which requires an asset-based rather than a deficit-based perspective to working with refugee communities and the issues that affect them.<sup>5</sup>

Below, I outline the three mind shifts necessary for an asset-based approach to the inclusion of teacher voices in policymaking and practice.

### Teachers are professionals with a professional voice

In global discourse, teachers are often viewed as system inputs, with an emphasis on improving these inputs through training, rather than seen as professionals in their own right. Even policies referring to teacher professionalism and empowerment often involve 'false promises' or, worse, have 'exploited teachers' labour'.<sup>6</sup> In refugee settings, many schools face staff shortages, and it can be particularly

tempting to take such a view, especially given that refugee teachers are often unqualified,<sup>7</sup> undercompensated, and lack job security and opportunities for career advancement.<sup>8</sup> Mobilising ministries of education, teacher unions, and other relevant organisations to actively engage with these teachers to co-construct and implement professional standards and protections and recognising that refugee teachers – regardless of training and qualifications – belong to a profession can help to ensure a more collaborative, sustainable workforce. Providing refugee teachers with a sense of belonging to a profession that offers job security, decent working conditions, and opportunities for career advancement can help curb high attrition rates and improve teacher retention, which is a growing concern for the international education community as a whole in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Teachers are educators with a pedagogical voice

Typically, refugee teachers have been treated as passive policy objects to be trained and deployed in refugee classrooms. However,



regardless of their qualifications or experiences with training, it is important to remember that teachers are educators and that they have something to teach not only their students, but each other and the wider community. In fact, in some contexts, host community teachers mention that they have difficulties relating to and/or communicating with refugee learners and highlight the crucial role played by refugee teachers in bridging this divide and improving the quality of education provided as a result.<sup>9</sup> To elaborate further on this idea, while the definitions of what exactly constitutes quality teaching differ across contexts, recent research involving high-achieving countries finds that, to teach well, teachers need to

1. develop an understanding of content, pedagogy, and learners;
2. aim to meet not just their students' academic needs, but their social and emotional needs as well; and
3. engage in ongoing inquiry and research to inform their own professional practice.<sup>10</sup> If we think about these findings in relation to refugee teachers, we can see that the

understanding that refugee teachers bring to the classrooms of refugee learners and their diverse needs, as well as of pedagogical traditions and practices from their home countries, is a potentially valuable asset in terms of improving education quality.

### Teachers are lifelong learners with an evolving voice

As the work of teachers in part involves them supporting their students to become lifelong learners, it is important that teachers are given the opportunity to be lifelong learners themselves and to enjoy 'the freedom to take risks, learn from mistakes, and be supported in engaging in experimentation and exploration'.<sup>11</sup> To teach well, teachers need to be active learners, and to ensure that they continue to build their understanding of content, pedagogy, and learners.<sup>12</sup> However, another consequence of thinking purely in terms of numbers of teachers needed at a particular point in time is that we lose the dimension of time, which is inherent in the concept of lifelong

learning; importantly, we fail to understand how teachers' careers evolve and how they can best be supported throughout the course of these careers. In fact, when it comes to financing, to date, teacher training programmes are typically treated as one-off or limited-term costs, and refugee teacher salaries or incentives typically do not increase over time (i.e., there is no career progression in terms of training or salary). By recognizing the need for progression and working to include the voices of refugee students who dream of becoming teachers, participants in pre-service teacher education, novice teachers, experienced teachers, senior teachers, and headteachers, we can better support the professional development of the teacher workforce as a whole through the co-construction and implementation of costing and planning models that consider teachers as lifelong learners.

Changing this status quo is not inevitable; it is a fight that can only be taken on by a broad global coalition in an organised and systemic fashion. The teaching profession and the unions that unite their concerns and aspirations can help lead the way.



### Recommended reading:

Jalbout, M. & Bullard, K. 2022.  
*Key tensions in refugee education*.  
Washington DC: Center for Universal  
Education at Brookings.

# THE 'UNSEEN HEART' OF REFUGEE EDUCATION: THE NARRATIVES OF SRI LANKAN REFUGEE TEACHERS IN INDIA

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“Refugee” is another word for “full of pain”. Our expectations, aims and achievements are all closing because of our refugee status. Because I am a refugee, I have less opportunity. I got my degree after a great struggle, but so what? I don't have any idea of how to achieve anything or rise,’ says Selvaraju, who conducts free tuition classes for refugee children in his camp in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, while painting houses to earn enough just to survive. He is one of our many refugee participants who feels called to teaching, but has his aspirations and well-being hampered by systemic barriers to employment and mobility. This case study draws on the firsthand narratives of Sri Lankan refugee teachers in India, who help us conceptualise refugee teachers as the ‘unseen heart’ of the refugee crisis.

India has a longstanding history of hosting Sri Lankan refugees, given the close historical and cultural connections between the state of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka in particular. Over 300,000 Sri Lankan refugees have arrived since 1983, fleeing a 14-year civil war.<sup>13</sup> In Tamil Nadu alone, the government has spent INR 1,021 crore (roughly US \$130 million based on 2020 conversion rates) on Sri Lankan

refugee relief between 1983 and 2019, which includes educational scholarships and study-related expenses all the way through to higher education.<sup>14</sup> However, the voices and needs of Sri Lankan refugee teachers like Selvaraju have remained largely excluded from research, policy, and practice. This gap needs to be addressed for multiple reasons. For one, it is these teachers who walk alongside children and families in the day-to-day realities of refugee camps, carrying firsthand insights into families’ unique challenges and aspirations as well as their own lived experiences of being refugees themselves. Excluding teachers’ nuanced understandings of community dynamics and educational needs from a research and policy perspective may result in the implementation of generic solutions that fail to address the specific needs of refugee children and communities. Furthermore, refugee teachers often play a central role in their communities – they are not just educators but also community leaders who can mobilise resources and support for educational initiatives. Their perspectives are vital for fostering community engagement and building trust, as they can contribute to tailored support, improved work conditions, and

strategies for long-term educational success. As one participant put it, ‘When you are a refugee teacher, you are not just a teacher who gets a salary, you are a nurturer of your own people and when they grow up, they will show how much you have helped them.’ Thus, the inclusion of refugee teachers in policy and research is both a matter of respecting teachers’ human rights and dignity and a practical necessity for enhancing the quality and sustainability of refugee education programmes.

Thus, from a dataset of over 200 hours of interviews with 72 teachers across disparate socio-economic settings in India, our study draws on interviews with six Sri Lankan refugee teachers in a grassroots community school set up inside the refugee camp in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, by a local NGO. These interviews generated actionable policy insights regarding refugee teachers’ work conditions and well-being that can encourage policymakers and practitioners to improve refugee teachers’ opportunities for employment and mobility.

Specifically, we recommend that policymakers address what we call the ‘education–work paradox’. Despite living in camps with poor

## Key takeaways:

Refugee teacher support programmes that include legislative protection of teachers’ rights and pathways to certification, employment, and social mobility to address the ‘education-work paradox’ should be invested in. Broader community outreach should be initiated to promote social acceptance and the recognition of the value of refugee teachers.



infrastructure, Sri Lankan refugees in India are able to study and gain degrees at institutions of their choice. However, even after attaining a school and college education, these refugees face severe restrictions on their freedom to work. As one participant said, 'I can never become anything more than a house painter because as a refugee, I am not legally permitted to go beyond 4 kilometres from my camp.' This results in multiple psychological, economic, and pedagogical pressures. Refugee teachers feel frustrated that they are trapped in cycles of precarious, short-term work that requires them to juggle unskilled manual labour with teaching to make ends meet. The inability to find permanent, stable employment is a documented pattern in Sri Lankan refugee camps, resulting in limited career prospects, financial instability, and a sense of hopelessness among the refugee population.<sup>15</sup> These restrictions not only hinder refugees' ability to fully contribute to their host society, but also perpetuate cycles of poverty and dependency. This makes it crucial to improve teachers' overall well-being and future prospects.

Moreover, the education–work paradox means that teachers face constant questions from students about why anybody should bother to study if they cannot find employment on the basis of their certificates or degrees. Although this is an instrumentalist view of education, it stems from a sense of hopelessness and despair over a lack of intergenerational mobility. One participant explained, 'For refugees, no

matter how hard you study, you cannot get government jobs. So, the students ask, "What is the use of studying well? I am not going to get a good job. Why should I study and put in effort?" They see their parents and their friends without degrees. They figure they will paint houses like them.' Another said, 'I love to teach and give back to the community, but the children don't believe their lives will get better. As long as we are not citizens, we can only be house painters.' As a result, teachers report persistent absenteeism. Students and families do not see education as a path to social mobility, which makes teachers' jobs harder, as students frequently refuse to come to class, complete homework, or continue learning. Participants also report that their lack of formal rights sapped their motivation to teach; as one put it, 'I can serve the community and I can help... all we want is citizenship. Then we can belong to this country, belong somewhere.'

We recommend, therefore, that policymakers in the Ministries of Education and Labour and Employment advocate for refugee teachers' employment beyond the current restricted zones. We suggest that international and local non-profit organisations consider domestic legislative protections for refugee teachers' rights. Simultaneously, prioritising teacher certification programmes will provide refugee teachers with meaningful credential capital to broaden their employment options. They would also help teachers demonstrate to students that education can actually lead to social mobility,

potentially increasing students' motivation and engagement and decreasing student dropout rates.

Local and structural barriers to the full inclusion of refugees emerge from the lack of a cohesive legislative framework for refugee rights, which is partly the result of India's absence from the 1951 U.N. Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, which then exacerbates refugee teachers' precarity. If decision-makers and associated instruments do not support full citizenship, a parallel system of rights may be feasible. For example, India has the OCI (Overseas Citizenship of India) Card system, which allows non-resident Indians to live, work, and buy property in India; a similar scheme for refugees may be a realistic starting point for advocacy. In addition, humanitarian and development organisations can help systematise the fragmented and ad hoc system of refugee teacher support and promote inclusive community attitudes. Awareness campaigns could prioritise refugee teachers' own understandings of their potential as change-makers for the next generation. Central to achieving these recommendations is the continued inclusion of refugee teachers' voices in research, policy, and practice, as teachers' first-hand insights will help ensure evidence-based decisions, foster policies that are deeply sensitive to the unique needs and challenges of refugee communities, tap into teachers' power to engage and lead their communities, and honour the vital role they play in the quality and sustainability of refugee education



### Recommended reading:

Keser Ozmantar, Z., Cin, M., & Mkwanzani, F. (2023). Becoming a teacher: The liminal identities and political agency of refugee teachers. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 24:3.

# TEACHERS' VOICES ON REFUGEE SCHOOL INCLUSION IN JORDAN

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NORRAG and Indiana University,  
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**Yasmine Alkotob**  
Ernst and Young, Amman.

## Key takeaways:

International and national education agencies involved in refugee education need to engage teachers in the construction of policies and programmes to ensure their relevance to daily practice. This requires a shift away from viewing refugee teachers through a deficit frame and towards a perspective that sees teachers as resource persons who can inform a more realistic and nuanced approach to refugee school inclusion.

Supporting refugee school integration requires engaging teachers, particularly those in low- and middle-income countries of first asylum. While international education policymakers and researchers acknowledge teachers' significance<sup>16,17,18</sup> teachers' voices in refugee school inclusion policies are often underrepresented. Jordan illustrates this pattern, as entities such as the Queen Rania Foundation promote refugee inclusion by training teachers to deliver quality education in times of emergency.<sup>19</sup> However, the perspectives of teachers are not prominently featured in national or international policymaking.

Given the many gaps between policy and practice – especially regarding refugee school inclusion policy – teachers are uniquely placed to advise education policy and facilitate the implementation of well-meaning policies that may otherwise languish on paper or have perverse effects in practice.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, consulting teachers on inclusion policies is all too rare, resulting in disconnects between policy, practice, and learner experiences. To illustrate this gap, UNHCR's strategy for refugee education through 2030 mentions teachers 42 times, but never mentions teachers as

active contributors to policies.<sup>21</sup> Teachers are uniquely positioned to identify and support the effective implementation of inclusion policies that merit their name because they uniquely understand the opportunities and challenges involved in refugee inclusion policies and their enactment.<sup>22,23</sup> Beyond teachers' involvement in policy and programme formulation, supporting teachers' use of data to provide feedback to policy implementation has the potential to further improve inclusion policies.<sup>24</sup>

In this paper, we share the perspectives of 26 public school sixth-grade teachers in Jordan on refugee and Jordanian student inclusion. Their voices capture the opportunities, challenges, and nuances of combining or separating refugee and host-community students as envisioned by the UNHCR 2030 strategy.<sup>25</sup> Future research and practice should move beyond documenting teachers' voices to directly engage teachers in policy and programme formation and document lessons learned for doing so effectively.<sup>26</sup>

## Opportunities

Teachers underscored the opportunities for transferring their culture, customs, and traditions when refugee and Jordanian students share sixth-grade classrooms. One teacher shared the importance of students' 'exchanging friendships and cultures and the experiences that refugee students have been through in their country'. The teacher highlighted how this enabled 'learning how to integrate and engage with different nationalities' and facilitated brotherhood among students. 'They realise they are all one unit.' The teachers also noted how refugee student inclusion can enhance social skills for cross-cultural interaction. These are important benefits of refugee inclusion for all students and are relevant to the discussion of developing students' global citizenship competencies in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4.7.

## Challenges

The teachers highlighted specific logistical challenges in merging refugee and Jordanian learners. This included difficulties in meeting unique student needs among refugees,





such as their need for additional 'financial and emotional support'. This challenge was amplified by 'the increased number of students in the classrooms'. These reasons hindered effective and personalised teaching, as one teacher bluntly shared that under such circumstances, 'differences between students will not be considered.' Another teacher mentioned how combining students hinders their ability to be 'considerate of the differences in customs and traditions between students and makes communication harder'. Conversely, teachers underlined the great challenges created by separating students, as doing so 'creates biases and does not foster a sense of unity'.

### Nuances

*'It is a gradual unison. After a period of time, a social unison is formed through initial indirect relationships.'*

Several teachers highlighted the importance of time horizons for understanding school inclusion policies. As another teacher explained: 'At the start, the refugee student would find themselves unable to form relationships with their peers, which would affect their academic achievements. Integration takes time; it is not quick.'

However, the teachers were optimistic: 'There might be some initial difficulties in integration, but with time, the barriers to creating friendships and communication

between students will dissolve.' Approximately 10 years after the beginning of the Syrian crisis, one teacher explained that 'there are now no disadvantages' to including refugee students. Teachers explained that successful inclusion is supported through opportunities for collaborative student learning in school, for example, by 'assigning activities among them to encourage them to cooperate with each other'. These insights align with other social science research but are restricted by Jordan's rigid schooling structure, as reported in this study and in other studies.<sup>27,28</sup>

Teachers also considered the temporal impact on cross-age student interactions, 'especially for teenage students.' They worried that older students who had experienced earlier challenges with the inclusion policy might negatively impact the perception of younger students. This suggests the need for carefully tailored cross-cohort interactions alongside increased student interaction.

### Limitations

Are these teachers uniquely optimistic? No. Drawing from quantitative data on the teachers in our sample, we find that they are likelier to disagree with feeling equipped to teach marginalised and displaced learners, to disagree with multicultural and egalitarian sentiments, and to express prejudicial attitudes towards displaced learners. However, the qualitative data illustrate how these teachers still expressed optimism about cross-cultural

learning and social cohesion opportunities via combined student schooling. These teachers also stressed logistical challenges and the significance of extended time frames for evaluating inclusion policy effectiveness – timeframes that exceed almost all funding and political cycles.

### Conclusion

This piece acknowledges Jordan's teacher engagement and urges increased and sustained involvement as education and displacement realities evolve. Teachers' lived experiences of current or potential policies can inform decision-makers, enhance policy formulation, and support the translation of policy into schooling realities.<sup>29</sup> Teachers need collaborative opportunities for sharing their insights on refugee inclusion across diverse contexts.

These opportunities can amplify approaches that illustrate the ideal for refugee school inclusion that was articulated by one of the teachers we worked with: 'By giving the decision-maker and the school an environment that represents complete harmony within relationships and by not discriminating by name or status or school, an opportunity to learn through an engaging environment is provided.'



### Recommended reading:

Atkinson, L., & King, E. Creating space for teacher voice: insights on professional development in two diverse settings. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 1:16.

# LISTENING TO INFORMAL EDUCATORS TO SUPPORT MINORITIZED REFUGEE POPULATIONS: LESSONS FROM AMMAN, JORDAN

## Dr. Elisheva Cohen

Indiana University, with Hayleigh Keasling and Reena Nimri.

Jordan is a small country of approximately 11.4 million people with a large and diverse refugee population. In addition to two million Palestinian refugees served by UNRWA, Jordan hosts 736,159 refugees under UNHCR's mandate. The majority of these refugees come from Syria (approximately 650,000), and the remainder originate from Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen. Although non-Syrian refugees constitute only 11% of Jordan's total refugee population under UNHCR's protection, they are primarily based in the capital city of Amman, where they form 35% of the city's displaced population.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the Government of Jordan's (GoJ) commitment to provide all children with education, the policy context, funding schemes, and provision of education prioritises Syrian refugees, often at the expense of other refugee populations.<sup>31</sup> The shifting school enrolment requirements for non-Syrian refugees, including the showing of (often unattainable) residency papers, deeply hinder school access. Additionally, unlike Syrians, non-Syrian refugees must pay a fee for enrolment plus the cost of a school uniform and supplies, expenses that many cannot afford. Non-Syrian refugees who

successfully navigate these bureaucratic hurdles and financial barriers to enrolling in school also often experience discrimination, bullying, and violence in school.<sup>32,33,34</sup>

Given the systematic exclusion of non-Syrian refugees from both the international (e.g., the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan) and national (see the Jordan Response Plan) policy response in Jordan, the limitations they face in accessing education, and the negative experiences they have in school, minoritised refugee populations have turned to informal activities and non-formal educational opportunities in Amman. These activities differ from formal in-school education in several ways:

1. They are organised by international or local NGOs or community-based organisations and are typically easier for refugees to access.
2. The programmes are usually designed specifically for refugee populations; thus, the curricula and pedagogies tend to be more inclusive of refugees and aligned with their needs.
3. The facilitators of these programmes often include refugees themselves. This

enables smoother communication and trust between programme leaders and refugee families.

4. The administration and management of these programmes caters to refugee populations and strives to overcome key barriers that refugees face in formal schools.

These informal educational programmes vary widely in scope and may include literacy and numeracy training as well as accelerated learning programmes. They also offer diverse activities like sports, leadership training, homework help, music lessons, and a range of summer camps.

The case studies in this collection highlight the importance of listening to the voices of refugee teachers in shaping and supporting refugee education. In order to ensure that all refugees – particularly minoritised refugees – receive equitable and high-quality education tailored to their needs, this case study draws on the case of Amman, Jordan, and urges policy makers to meaningfully engage with and listen to teachers, mentors, coaches, and guides

### Key takeaways:

Informal educators – those educators working with refugee children outside the formal school context – often have strong ties to refugee children and families and can provide policy makers and practitioners with meaningful insights into the needs of refugee children, particularly those from minoritized and extra vulnerable populations.



working with minoritised refugee children in informal education.

### Why should we listen to informal educators in Jordan?

- **They are already doing the work.** Informal educators working with minoritised refugee populations have extensive experience and expertise in supporting minoritised refugees and can offer valuable insight into how to successfully work with refugees. They have successfully recruited and retained refugees in areas where the formal education sector has frequently failed, and they offer meaningful learning experiences without the discrimination, bullying, and violence often accompanying refugees' experiences in public schools.
- **Informal education matters.** By listening to the experiences of informal educators and paying attention to the ways in which they work with marginalized refugees, the importance of informal education becomes evident. Educators in the informal sector employ unique, trauma-informed, contextually relevant, and culturally appropriate learning experiences for young people that are essential for academic learning, personal growth, and professional development. Listening to how informal educators conduct their work illuminates the ways in which other forms of education can be strengthened.

- **Teachers come in all shapes and sizes.** In order to listen to refugee teachers, we must define the concept of 'teacher' more broadly than just those who are formally trained and working in formal schools. Educators in the informal system have a wide range of backgrounds: Some hold college degrees and are trained to teach, but many do not. Educators in informal spaces are refugees with shared backgrounds: teenagers with shared experiences, sports coaches who foster confidence and team building, yoga instructors who remind refugees to care for their bodies, experts in well-being who facilitate mindfulness, active listeners who create safe spaces for young people, artists who give children creative outlets to express themselves, and caring children who support and encourage their peers.

- **Education is more than schooling.** In planning and implementing refugee education, it is essential to recognise that a) learning happens beyond the school and b) learning is more than academics. Alongside efforts to integrate all refugees into formal schooling, support must be given to informal education environments, where educators are better able to connect with young people on a personal level and provide holistic guidance and a sense of belonging. Supporting the psychosocial and social-emotional needs of children furthers their ability to learn.



### Recommended reading:

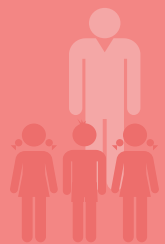
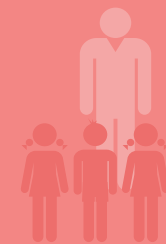
Johnston, R., Baslan, D., & Kvittengen, A. (2019). *Realizing the Rights of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Jordan from Countries other than Syria with a Focus on Yemenis and Sudanese*. Norwegian Refugee Council.





# 2

## POLICIES THAT ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHERS' WORK AND WELL-BEING



# LOCATING REFUGEE TEACHERS' WORK WITHIN BORDERING REGIMES: CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

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Refugee teachers – who are themselves displaced across borders – have been at the forefront of efforts to ensure equitable access to quality education for refugee learners for decades. It is on these teachers' efforts that projects of inclusion and integration of learners within national education systems of hosting countries are being advanced in classrooms and other learning spaces.<sup>35</sup> Importantly, for refugee learners and their families, it is these teachers who are best positioned to respond to the social-emotional, cultural, and educational needs and backgrounds of displaced learners.<sup>36</sup>

Concerningly, the altruism and professional dedication<sup>37</sup> of these educators is exploited by host governments, the international community, and humanitarian organisations, who use 'bordering regimes'<sup>38</sup> – or the policies and practices which separate out refugee populations from others – to expropriate refugee teachers' labours.<sup>39</sup> Such bordering regimes are reflected in restricted legal entitlements to work for refugee teachers, host country regulations which do not recognise teachers' prior qualifications, or requirements for language or curriculum competencies which a refugee teacher may not hold. Such

restrictions are often put in place out of fears<sup>40</sup> that refugee participation in domestic labour markets will distort them, driving down wages and increasing unemployment amongst citizens despite strong evidence<sup>41</sup> suggesting that this is not the case for skilled workers, such as teachers. This is then reinforced by a lack of professional pathways for teachers to upskill themselves and become part of the national teacher workforce based on perceptions that once these individuals are recognised and regularised in the profession, they will choose not to leave.<sup>42</sup>

Consequently, bordering regimes are put in place along racialised lines and based on citizenship status. This leads to refugees being dispossessed from competitive labour markets. Refugee teachers thus become 'relative surplus labour' who are un/underemployed and easily exploitable in service of education provision for refugee student populations.<sup>43</sup>

In many instances, refugee teachers work as volunteers in educational facilities in both community and camp settings as educators, language interpreters, or cultural liaisons.<sup>44</sup> Compensation, if provided, is in the form of

small stipends or incentive payments, which are often treated as cash-for-work payments under humanitarian livelihood programmes. Such forms of compensation are often universal – irrespective of the qualification, experience, or expertise of refugee teachers. In camp settings, they can lead to skilled refugee teachers earning the same amount as every other refugee paid under such a scheme.<sup>45</sup> This also leads to refugee teachers frequently being paid significantly lower amounts than national teachers and staff.

Additionally, incentive payments to refugee teachers are non-regularised and project-funded, meaning that the rates of pay and conditions of work can vary from partner to partner, be time-limited, and are often irregularly paid out – heightening the precarity of refugee teachers' labours. In many contexts, due to concerns that officially recognising the work they do as 'teaching' might lead to refugee teachers permanently resettling in hosting countries, these individuals are not given any form of official status. This can preclude them from accessing the training, resources, support, or professional development opportunities available to nationally registered teachers.

### Key takeaways:

Refugee teachers' labours, qualifications, and skills should be sufficiently and equitably recognised, compensated, nurtured, and strengthened within education systems globally, free of discrimination or bias based on nationality, citizenship, or displacement status.



In these scarce contexts in which adequate resourcing remains one of the most acute challenges facing humanitarian responses in the education sector, excess value is extracted from paying these teachers less, allowing for scalability and efficiencies of programmatic efforts.<sup>46</sup> It also becomes a short-term solution to the chronic and severe teacher shortages in many refugee-hosting nations.<sup>47</sup> This 'humanitarian-industrial complex' serves to 'discipline, de-politicise and commodify' refugee teachers' lives and subjectivities, while increasing capacities for humanitarian actors and hosting states to provide a minimum level of education provision to refugees, making the violence that occurs 'more tolerable and less visible.'<sup>48</sup> The victims in this are the teachers themselves, whose economic, social, and political agency is undermined and whose well-being and professional status is compromised through such mechanisms of exploitation. While UN agencies, INGOs, donors, and governments see teacher well-being as increasingly vital for refugee education, their own systems and structures erode this at the most fundamental level.

There are several steps that should be taken to address this injustice and improve the conditions of refugee teachers' work.

First, there is a need to acknowledge and recognise teachers for the work they do; full professional status should be afforded to them, as outlined in the ILO/UNESCO Recommendations on the Status of Teachers.<sup>49</sup>

This can occur by either recognising their prior qualifications and experience and/or establishing mechanisms for enabling refugee teachers to earn new national qualifications.<sup>50</sup>

Second, in all settings, refugee teachers need to be recruited, deployed, and paid under the same terms and conditions, irrespective of who is employing them, and ideally at parity with national teachers. In Uganda and South Sudan, through the BRICE/Education for Life project, Education International is working with the Uganda National Teachers Union and partners towards this aim.<sup>51</sup>

Thirdly, these expectations need to be clearly outlined and prescribed within INEE's Minimum Standards as a precursor to any efforts to promote or enhance teacher well-being.<sup>52</sup> At present, key actions, guidance notes, and indicators regarding teacher recruitment, conditions of work, and support/supervision are not sufficiently clear on the need to protect the rights of refugee teachers from any form of discrimination, including citizenship status.

Taking these measures would ensure that a group fundamental to the achievement of the Global Compact on Refugees' objectives for education – refugee teachers – are better protected from exploitation and treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve.<sup>53</sup>



### Recommended reading:

Bird, G. & Schmid, D. (2023). Humanitarianism and the 'Migration Fix': On the Implication of NGOs in Racial Capitalism and the Management of Relative Surplus Populations. *Geopolitics*, 28(3), 1235–1261

# NATIONAL INCLUSION EFFORTS: DON'T FORGET REFUGEE TEACHERS

**Mary Mendenhall, Ed.D.**

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**Mohamud Hure**

UNHCR

## Key takeaways:

Refugee teachers need to be included in national teacher management and development systems through the provision of professional qualifications and compensation in accordance with their contributions and experience as well as the demands of their jobs.

- Increase advocacy that highlights the roles and contributions of refugee teachers.
- Identify options for refugee teachers to equate and/or acquire formal qualifications that are recognised in both host and home countries.
- Ensure equitable teacher compensation for refugee teachers on par with national salary scales.
- Consider the short- and long-term implications of policy reforms for improving teacher quality, professionalisation, and workforce sustainability and their potential impact on refugee teachers' job continuity.

The global push for the inclusion of refugees into national systems primarily focuses on refugee learners, while their teachers who are also refugees have received less attention in many contexts.<sup>54</sup> This begs the question: What are the responsibilities of national and international education actors to the refugee teachers who have been teaching for years, if not decades, in some displacement settings? To answer this question, this spotlight draws on findings from a recent mixed-methods study on teachers working in refugee and displacement settings across 16 host countries around the world.

## Recognising and facilitating the acquisition of teaching qualifications

The first step in facilitating refugee teachers' inclusion into national systems, especially in protracted refugee settings, is ensuring that they have teaching qualifications that are recognized by national education authorities in the host country. For some teachers, this means recognizing teaching qualifications acquired in their countries of origin through credential equivalency measures. For many others, particularly those who transitioned into teaching roles due to the crisis, this means being given access and scholarships to support participation in in-service training programmes

offered by teacher training institutes, which provide the minimum requirements to be employed as a teacher. In host countries currently undertaking efforts to bolster the quality of their education systems by raising the minimum requirements for the teaching profession (e.g. requiring bachelor's degrees), refugee teachers – on par with national teachers – must also be afforded the opportunity to upgrade their teaching certificates or diplomas to meet the new criteria. Refugee teachers require assistance to overcome the various challenges they face trying to validate teaching qualifications from their countries of origin (as shown by individual survey responses in Figure 1 below<sup>55</sup>) and identifying

alternative pathways for them to demonstrate their knowledge and preparation (e.g. interviews, teaching demos, trial employment periods with supervision by mentor teachers, etc.). Additional modifications may be needed to ensure the sufficient recruitment of female teachers, given the immense academic and protective benefits they provide for girls' education. The years of teaching experience accrued during refugee teachers' displacement should count towards the assessment and recognition of their professional competencies, especially when these teachers' efforts were the only reason displaced learners in many settings had access to educational opportunities during their displacement.

**Figure 1**  
Challenges faced by refugee teachers validating their credentials



Source: UNHCR Teachers in Refugee & Displacement Settings Study (2023)





### Identifying constraints and opportunities for the national inclusion of refugee teachers

Efforts to include refugee teachers in national education systems are further helped or hindered by a number of policy- and practice-related factors, including the following:

- Refugee teachers' right to work in the host country (and other pro-refugee policies and laws that grant rights similar to national citizens);
- The existence of standardised and streamlined equivalency mechanisms for reviewing teaching credentials acquired in other countries (and in other languages) and accessible information about how teachers can navigate this process (including ways to minimise challenges related to costs and distance from processing centres)<sup>56</sup>;
- Policy-practice gaps whereby refugee teachers can acquire teaching credentials in host-country teacher training institutes and then still not be recognized by national teacher service commissions (or equivalent agencies);
- The inclusion or exclusion of refugee teachers in national education sector plans and the availability of accurate teacher data that accounts for the size of the refugee teacher corps, their education and training profiles, years of teaching experience, and upgrading needs to inform better planning; and

- Available finances in domestic budgets and/or through international donors to support teachers' salaries, including equitable pay that is on par with national teachers' salaries with similar credentials and/or teaching experience

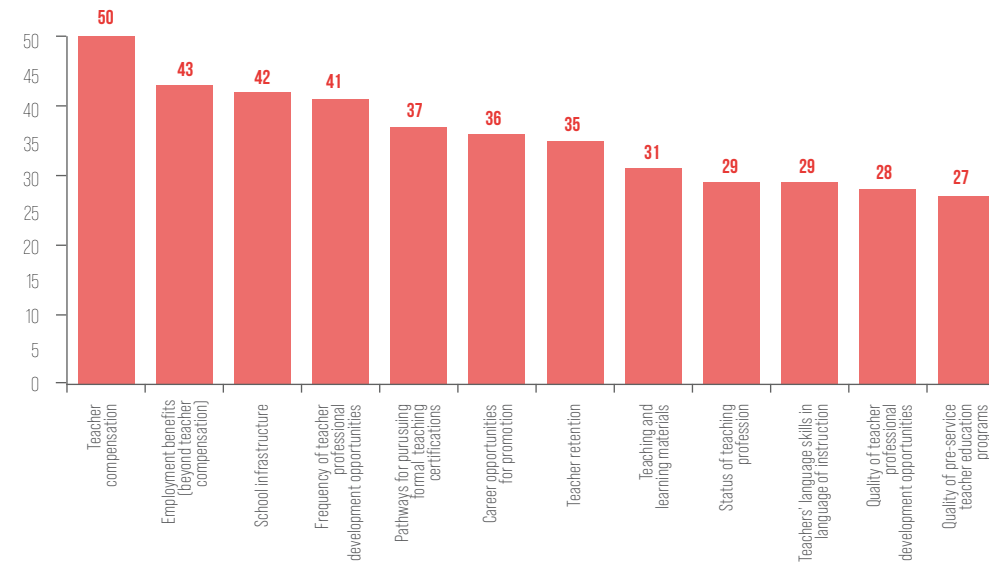
These interrelated factors create both complex constraints and opportunities for strengthening support for refugee teachers. However, UNHCR, along with national and international partners, can take incremental and progressive steps across the inclusion spectrum to advocate for more support for deserving refugee teachers. Donors must also fully embrace the reality that if teachers (refugee and national alike)

are not provided with liveable incomes, then none of the education reforms, priorities, or innovations they seek will be realised. Teachers' compensation is the biggest barrier to improving teaching quality in refugee and displacement settings (see Figure 2 below). To address this, donors, with the support of national and international actors, need to work with national governments to explore cost-sharing models for supporting recurrent teachers' salaries both in alignment with the Global Compact on Refugees' responsibility-sharing principle and the recognition that many refugee-hosting countries are unable to absorb these additional expenditures.<sup>57</sup>

### Moving forward

When refugee teachers are provided with quality professional development opportunities that lead to qualifications formally recognised by national authorities in both host countries and countries of origin, and when they are paid a respectable salary commensurate with the demands of their jobs, they can focus on providing continuous quality instruction and psychosocial support to all learners (refugee or otherwise), whether it continues to happen amidst displacement or upon return home to their countries of origin (two of the most likely scenarios). Meanwhile, the myriad national and international actors involved in supporting teachers in refugee-hosting settings will collectively contribute to strengthening the profession for all teachers and pushing back against the all-too-common practice of overburdening teachers with additional responsibilities without tending to their professional and personal well-being.

**Figure 2**  
Barriers to improving teacher quality



Source: UNHCR Teachers in Refugee & Displacement Settings Study (2023)



#### Recommended reading:

Pherali, T., Abu Moghli, M., and Chase, E. (2020) "Educators for Change: Supporting the Transformative Role of Teachers in Contexts of Mass Displacement." *Journal on Education in Emergencies* 5 (2): 147-75.

# EDUCATION PROGRAMMING IN LEBANON AND THE CURSE OF 'BUSINESS AS USUAL'

**Dr. Mai Abu Moghli**

Centre for Lebanese Studies

## Key takeaways:

- Donor funding should not be tied to conditions that keep refugees out of fortress Europe, risking the lives and wellbeing of those seeking refuge. Funding should be utilised to respond to the actual needs of the education sector, particularly the needs reflected in teachers' demands.
- Professional development for teachers needs to not only focus on skills, but also engage with teachers' social, economic, and political grievances.
- Teachers are a key component in society; they have social and political power. Donor countries and agencies should not ignore teachers' demands for and right to a profession and living standards that offer the dignity they deserve.

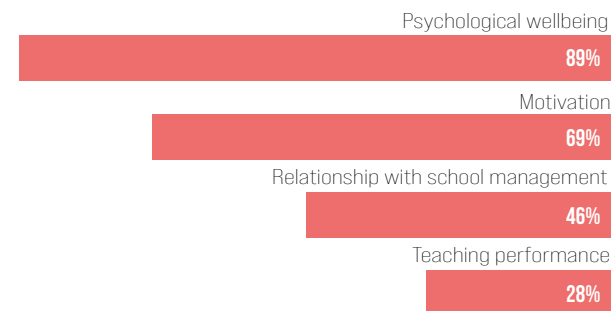
Since 2011, the interest in the education sector in Lebanon has proliferated. For example, organisations such as UNICEF and UNHCR have raised hundreds of millions of dollars with the Lebanese government to develop an education programme for Syrian children within the Lebanese public school system (RACE I and RACE II). To date, over \$300 million USD has been spent on this programme. However, the response by UN agencies, INGOs, donor governments, and Western research institutions can be characterised as disruptive, frantic, and opportunistic. The challenges that learners and teachers in Lebanon face have thus been exacerbated.

The situation has deteriorated not only for Syrian refugees but also for Lebanese students as the country has dipped into its worst-ever economic crisis. The sequence of compounding crises includes the devaluation of the Lira in December 2019, which was followed by the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Beirut blast of August 2020. Consequently, the Lebanese public education system, controlled by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), has come to a

**Figure 3**  
Impact of crisis on teachers

### IMPACT OF CRISIS ON TEACHERS

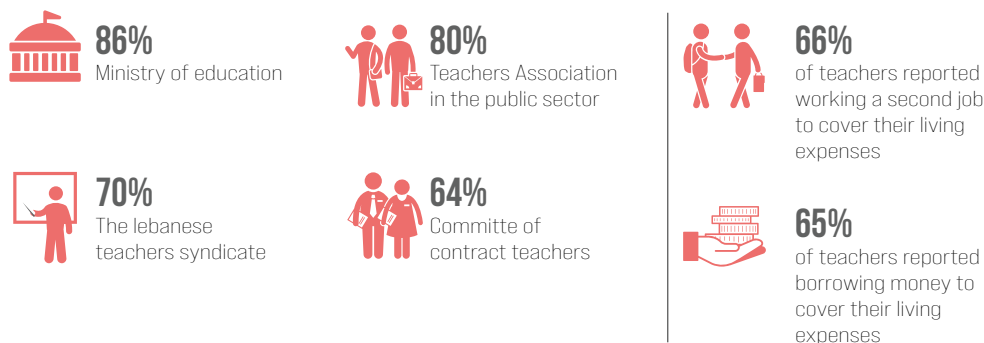
Teachers reported that the crisis has led to a decrease in their motivation to work, negatively affected their psychological wellbeing, and worsened their relationship with their school management.



Source: Centre for Lebanese Studies (2023)

**Figure 4**  
Teacher satisfaction statistics

### PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS UNSATISFIED BY THE PERFORMANCE OF:



Source: Centre for Lebanese Studies (2023)



halt because of almost complete electricity blackouts and teachers' strikes.

Teachers are unable to make ends meet or even physically make it to their schools. Between 2019 and 2022, their salaries lost more than 90% of their value, meaning that teachers now earn just \$50 a month. In 2023, nearly 350,000 Lebanese students and 40,000 teachers in the state sector have been kept from teaching and learning for over four months due to a freeze in state education spending. Only on sporadic days could teachers and students return to the classroom. Syrian refugee children at school in Lebanon face the same predicament, with extra layers of barriers to accessing education. On January 10, the Director General of the Ministry of Education, Imad Achkar, suspended their schooling until the situation for Lebanese students is resolved, citing the need for 'equal treatment'<sup>58</sup>.

While the situation in the country has deteriorated, the international response remains the same. It does not consider the changing needs of the people and continues 'business as usual' with government institutions that have cracked down on teachers and disregarded the interests of students and the education sector as a whole.

In April 2023, the Centre for Lebanese Studies issued a report entitled 'The Cost of Education in Lebanon: Treasury and Community Expenditure'.<sup>59</sup> This report highlighted that given the exponential increase in education

expenditure in Lebanon, the quality of and access to education has actually decreased, with no mechanisms for accountability among local or international institutions. Teachers who are striking and raising their voices against the deterioration of their work conditions and corruption are being attacked and imprisoned. For example, on 15 June 2023, Nisrine Chahine, a teacher-unionist, was accused of defamation against caretaker Education Minister Abbas Halabi. Following a Facebook post and defamation complaint, she had to appear before the criminal investigation office at the Beirut courthouse.<sup>60</sup>

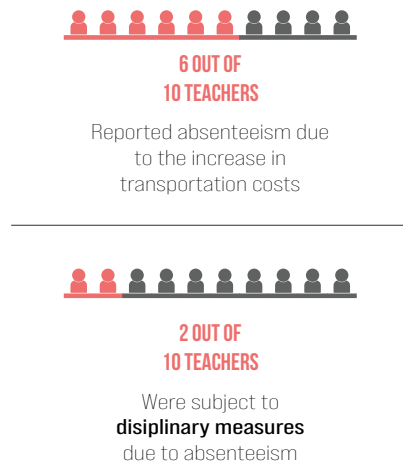
Under these conditions, teacher professional development (TPD) is not a priority. Teachers are living in dire social, political, and economic

conditions. Yet, models of online training, which were introduced as a panacea for refugee teachers who have no access to formal TPD, are neither practical nor effective in a context in which there are regular electricity blackouts, where the load of work on teachers is immense, and where access to the internet is prohibitively expensive. Moreover, Syrian teachers are being forcibly returned to Syria, against international non-refoulement laws, which leaves them in an even more precarious condition.<sup>61</sup>

Between July 2022 and March 2023, the Centre for Lebanese Studies conducted six face-to-face workshops, aiming to bridge the skills of teachers and co-create training modules that can be used online and offline. These workshops focused on alternative assessments, the use of technology in education, psychosocial support, and inclusive education. The workshops included Lebanese and Syrian

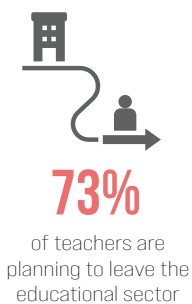
refugee teachers working in public, private, and informal sectors as well as with Palestinian refugee teachers from UNRWA schools. The space that was created not only allowed these educators to share their experiences and learn new skills, but it was also an opportunity for critical engagement for teachers to co-organise, including non-Lebanese teachers who were doubly marginalised, to share grievances and join together in solidarity together. In a situation in which formal education structures are oppressive and unresponsive to the real needs of educators and learners and where physical spaces for free expression and thought are shrinking, bringing educators together is vital not only for the current moment, but for their reclamation of the role and status of educators and for imagining a more human and humane education system that feeds social justice and equity.

**Figure 5**  
Teacher absenteeism in Lebanon



Source: Centre for Lebanese Studies (2023)

**Figure 6**  
Teachers planning to leave the education sector



Source: Centre for Lebanese Studies (2023)



**Recommended reading:**

Shuayb, M. (2019). Who shapes education reform policies in Lebanon? *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 49(4), 548-564.

# TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE: SYRIAN REFUGEE TEACHERS' ROLES IN SHAPING EDUCATION POLICY IN LEBANON

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NatGen International

**Watfa Najdi**

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Refugee teachers are excluded from policy discussions in Lebanon's education sector, despite their lived experience and expertise in understanding policy priorities<sup>62</sup> and refugee students' needs.<sup>63</sup> Political fragmentation, economic collapse, and regional tensions hinder much-needed policy reforms. This piece examines refugee teachers' exclusion and potential solutions based on a literature review and the author's (Najdi's) experience as a Lebanese academic in Beirut.

## The politics and economics of Syrian refugee exclusion

In Lebanon's strained education system, government and international organisations' policies and financial decisions impact refugee students and teachers. Increasing wages and job security would encourage refugee teachers' integration<sup>64</sup> while improving education would enhance economic prospects for all children.<sup>65</sup> However, Lebanon's deteriorating economy and complex political landscape limits incentives to include refugee teachers within the national system.

Since 2011, 1.5 million Syrian refugees have been displaced to Lebanon,<sup>66</sup> exacerbating already complex Lebanese-Syrian relations. Lebanon's political system is based on power sharing among sectarian groups; the government avoids registering Syrian refugees, who are mainly Sunni, as this could destabilise the existing balance between Muslims and Christians. This, and a lack of formalised asylum procedures, as Lebanon is not party to the Refugee Convention, leaves Syrian refugees in legal limbo.<sup>67</sup> Strained resources and disproportionate aid distribution also pose challenges.<sup>68</sup> Syrian refugees receive assistance from international actors, but host communities are overlooked.<sup>69</sup> These intersecting issues present significant barriers to integrating Syrian teachers into Lebanon's education system.

Furthermore, restrictive labour laws leave Syrian refugee teachers with no option<sup>70</sup> but to work as 'volunteers' in non-formal education (NFE) spaces,<sup>71</sup> leaving them vulnerable to exploitation by private schools, aid agencies, and host communities who use their ambiguous legal status, economic precarity, and lack of formal work authorisation to

underpay them and deny them fair working conditions.<sup>72</sup>

While UN agencies and humanitarian organisations work to fill the gaps left by the state, there remain systemic challenges, including international priorities not matching local needs,<sup>73</sup> reluctance from donors to fund recurring costs such as teacher salaries,<sup>74</sup> and limited data on Syrian refugees and their needs nationally (almost half are not registered with the UNHCR).<sup>75</sup> These regional, structural, and systemic challenges disempower refugee teachers and perpetuate exclusions.

## Recommendations for key actors

For meaningful inclusion, international, national, and local actors must embed refugee teachers' voices and understandings of their own and refugee students' needs throughout the education and humanitarian policy development cycles.<sup>76</sup>

## Key takeaways:

International discourse should move away from viewing refugees only through a 'vulnerability' framing. Instead, it should recognize their expertise and the role they can play in actively shaping policies and programmes at all levels. Their involvement in policy making could lead to more localised and relevant policies that are better attuned to teachers' on-the-ground needs and obstacles. The meaningful inclusion of refugee teacher voices and perspectives is a crucial step towards fostering a more equitable education for refugee and host-community children alike.



### International actors should

- Prioritise local expertise: To ensure international priorities and local needs align, refugee teachers should contribute to policy development. Humanitarian organisations should learn about the local context from those with lived experience and integrate this knowledge into policymaking. Policies should consider political economy factors, such as the sectarian balance and the impact of providing aid to only refugee communities. This could reduce Lebanese–Syrian tensions and ensure that local needs are addressed appropriately.
- Avoid framing refugees as only vulnerable. This discounts their skills, knowledge, and experience. Refugee teachers are well placed to identify obstacles for refugee students' learning and potential solutions.<sup>77</sup> Being active agents<sup>78</sup> in policymaking would improve refugee teachers' mental health,<sup>79</sup> resilience, self-worth, and commitment to work.<sup>80</sup>
- Address funding challenges for NFE programmes. This includes increasing UN stipends<sup>81</sup> for refugee teachers and reforming policies so that refugee teacher salaries, despite being recurring, are adequately financed.<sup>82</sup>
- Invest in filling data gaps on refugee teachers' experiences and contributions. This could inform funding decisions

and highlight their positive impact on education.

### The Lebanese government should

- Examine what refugee teachers can contribute to the education system: Refugee teachers should be protected by labour laws, particularly considering their limited legal status<sup>83</sup> and long-term presence in Lebanon.

### Refugee and local teachers are recommended to

- Develop communities of practice: Due to labour restrictions, Syrian refugee teachers cannot join teacher unions. Communities of practice would improve social cohesion and provide space for ongoing dialogue, sharing best practices, and mutual support. These should then provide feedback to key actors on refugee inclusion and education policy.

### Concluding remarks

As instability in Lebanon escalates and tensions in Syria prevent safe repatriation, refugee teachers' inclusion becomes even more essential for enabling children access to quality education. Providing refugee teachers with a voice in policymaking and Syrian children with adequate education would equip them with the tools needed to advocate for increased rights in Lebanon. Refugee teachers' inclusion in policy

making would foster a more inclusive and equitable education system, providing refugees with a supportive platform from which they can advocate for their communities. Their inclusion, diversity of backgrounds, and dedication to inclusive and diverse education would also ensure higher-quality education for all children in Lebanon.



### Recommended reading:

Adelman, E. (2018). *Challenges of Integration, Obligation and Identity: Exploring the experiences of teachers working to educate Syrian refugee children in Lebanon* (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University).

# EMPOWERING SYRIAN REFUGEE TEACHERS: THE VITAL ROLE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT IN JORDAN

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## Naima Al-husban

Arab Open University, Jordan.

## Abdeljalil Akkari

University of Geneva, Switzerland.

### Key takeaways:

Teachers and those working in the field of education in emergencies should be trained with a focus on pedagogical and psychosocial skills and associated academic knowledge. Professionals working in teacher professional development should prioritise direct observation, monitoring, and peer mentor discussions to ensure that teachers can transfer professional development outcomes to the classroom.

Education is a right for every person, as stated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the case of Jordan, a country where the European Commission<sup>84</sup> has documented the existence of 770,000 refugees – with Syrians accounting for approximately 660,000 of this number – it becomes all the more crucial to ensure that everyone has equal access to education. As multiple studies indicate, addressing the myriad challenges experienced by teachers is key to improving education in emergency situations.<sup>85,86</sup> To enhance the quality of education and teachers' working conditions, it is crucial to recognise and address the specific needs of teachers. In this research paper, which was carried out in two stages, we interviewed 20 teachers in Jordan. For the first part of the research, we began by interviewing five Jordanian teachers who taught lessons in double-shift schools and five Syrian teachers working in refugee camps. In the second part of the research, we interviewed nine Syrian teachers at the Azraq camp. The teachers in this study raised several primary concerns:

### The recruitment process

In 2020, the Jordanian Ministry of Education recruited a total of 9,616 teachers for refugee camps and double-shift schools. This included 6,020 male and 3,596 female teachers. However, the recruitment process followed a traditional approach; teachers were recruited as regular teachers or substitute teachers who were paid on a daily basis. This resulted in a lack of loyalty to the teaching profession, especially for those who are employed as substitutes.

It is worth noting here that Syrian teachers in Jordan face limitations in securing permanent teaching positions, and as such, they are often designated as assistant teachers. This practice not only underutilises the available workforce but also adversely affects the quality of education. By denying students the opportunity to be taught by teachers with a deeper understanding of their culture and experiences, the students' overall educational experience suffers.

Therefore, it is crucial to prioritise high-quality employment conditions for teachers. By providing secure and stable employment, we

can attract and retain qualified professionals who are dedicated to the teaching profession. This, in turn, can greatly enhance the quality of education and create a more inclusive learning environment for students.

### Salaries

One of the concerns raised by the recruited teachers is a lack of motivation, which is caused by low salaries and unfavourable employment conditions. As previously mentioned, there is a disparity between the different types of contract conditions that teachers are offered.

In Jordan, some teachers are employed as substitutes and receive daily wages, particularly those working in double-shift schools. However, throughout the data collection process, we observed that motivation plays a crucial role in education during emergencies. Motivation is a factor that permeates all aspects of teachers' work and lives and includes questions on how actors can best motivate teachers to teach, how teachers can motivate students to learn, and, most importantly, how all actors together can give significance to the concept of schooling. At the core of these questions, however, is the



extent to which a lack of motivation among teachers is the result of inappropriate contracts and inadequate salaries, which affect the status and sustainability of teaching as a profession.

### Teacher professional development

In Jordan, professional development falls short when it comes to tackling the challenges that teachers face. This applies to teachers in regular schools, in double-shift schools, and in camp-based schools, all of which have their specific needs and demands, despite the differences in the challenges that their respective teachers face. Out of the five Jordanian teachers interviewed for the first part of this project, only two had received training in psychosocial support for students in emergency situations. These two teachers described these training sessions as brief and lacking follow-up from trainers. On the other hand, two Syrian teacher assistants emphasised the importance of such professional development for effective classroom management due to the increasing number of students with trauma-related issues.

When comparing the perspectives of teachers, either refugee teachers inside camps or Jordanian teachers in double-shift schools outside the camps, those who had received professional development in psychosocial support were found to be better equipped to identify students with psychological problems than those with little or no professional development. Teachers with limited professional development, while able to

recognise the existence of these issues, often feel incapable of intervening effectively. It is worth noting that among the untrained teachers, one stated that they did not have any students with such problems, which may indicate a lack of identification tools.

In general, these findings underscore the importance of providing continuous training in psychosocial support for teachers dealing with refugee hosting situations. By providing teachers with the necessary tools and knowledge, they can better address the psychological needs of their students during times of crisis.

### Conclusion

Improving the quality of education and working conditions for teachers in Jordan is crucial, and addressing the concerns identified in this case study, such as recruitment, salary issues, and training, can help achieve this goal. This involves implementing fair recruitment processes, improving salary structures, and providing comprehensive teacher training programmes. Through these actions, both teachers and students can benefit from the provision of high-quality education, which is particularly important during emergencies.

In light of this, the Ministry of Education in Jordan should prioritise implementing these recommendations in the national system, whether for teachers inside the camps, or for Jordanian teachers working in double-

shift schools. Additionally, international, and non-governmental organisations, which are responsible for teacher recruitment and professional development and for non-formal training centres, should also focus on addressing these concerns.



### Recommended reading:

Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (2022). *Promising practices in teacher well-being, management, and school leadership*. INEE: New York, NY.

# HOW INCLUSION CAN CREATE EXCLUSION IN IRAQ: A PARADOX

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Independent Education Consultant

## Arshed Berwary

Independent Education Specialist

### Introduction

While national inclusion education policies can be highly effective in creating and streamlining inclusive and consistent teaching and learning practices in refugee-hosting contexts, these policies may also cause unintended exclusion. This case study illustrates how the adoption of an inclusive single-language policy for teaching and learning has paradoxically increased barriers to access to education for teachers, students, and parents. This paper particularly explores the consequences of changing the language of instruction for Syrian refugee teachers from Arabic to Kurdish as part of a national refugee inclusion policy in Kurdistan, Iraq, which aligns with UNHCR's Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Education.<sup>87</sup>

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) enacted a national inclusive policy to change the official language of the refugee school curriculum from Arabic to Kurdish from the beginning of the 2021–2022 academic year. However, in practice, only Grades 1–4 of the primary school curriculum were transitioned from Arabic to Kurdish by the beginning of the 2022–2023 academic year.

Although almost all Syrian refugees in KRI are Kurdish and can speak Kurdish, albeit with a different dialect, they completed their own schooling in Arabic in Syria and now face numerous obstacles in delivering the curriculum and teaching students in Kurdish, which also uses a different script.

To assist the teachers, the Education in Emergencies (EiE) community, in coordination and collaboration with the MoE-KRI, conducted several language-strengthening training sessions for Syrian refugee teachers. However, a majority of the teachers still struggle to read and write in Kurdish, let alone teach using Kurdish with students as the main language for dialogue and instruction.

This, in turn, has impacted the following main actors:

### Refugee students

Refugee students have faced difficulties due to the transition of the language of instruction from Arabic to Kurdish within the curriculum, which was implemented in four grades at once within the 2022–2023 academic year.

### Refugee parents

The parents of refugee students face similar challenges, as they cannot support their children in their studies. A majority of the parents use Arabic language in everyday life rather than Kurdish.

### Teachers

Host community (KRI) teachers have been transferred to the Kurdish refugees' schools to support refugee teachers in teaching the curriculum in Kurdish. Refugee teachers are now learning to strengthen their Kurdish language proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing, with some improving via self-study and by attending daily language courses.

As Kurdistan follows UNHCR's national education system inclusion guidance for refugee teachers and learners, it is important to outline and understand the objectives and potential implications of adopting the one-language policy in Iraq.

### Key takeaways:

Targeted and culturally sensitive supplementary curriculum materials should be developed to support the educational needs of refugee students within the framework of national education systems.





## Aims

The one-language policy in Iraq aims to:

- Promote integration and social cohesion between Kurdish refugees who studied only Arabic in Syria and the Kurdish school community.
- Leverage and generate efficiencies through the utilisation of the existing educational infrastructure and resources in Kurdistan. This includes the streamlining of Kurdish teaching resources and classroom instruction, with flow on effects for teaching instruction and materials received by the students.
- Strengthen local Kurdish cultural ownership and sustainability at local and national systemic levels.

## Implications

The one-language policy in Iraq might:

- Overlook and ignore the specific educational needs of Syrian refugees and their cultural contexts.
- Create new or exacerbate underlying feelings of exclusion and othering between the Kurdish and Arabic school community.
- Lead to competition for limited educational resources between refugees and host community students.

- Increase the overcrowding of classrooms in locations already under pressure by the influx of Syrian refugees.

## Recommendations

- Develop supplementary curriculum materials that address the unique linguistic, cultural, and psychosocial needs of Kurdish refugee students.
- Establish bridge programmes to help Kurdish refugee students catch up on missed education and language skills.
- Provide training and support for refugee and host-community teachers to understand and address the trauma and psychosocial needs of Kurdish refugee students.

Of critical importance and consideration in these recommendations is ensuring that cultural sensitivity is undertaken in their development and communication. It is essential to ensure that the language transition is not perceived as an intervention or erosion of language or culture, as evidenced in other countries where the adoption of a preferred/one language policy fuelled further division and tension between ethnicities.

## Target Actors

The target actors for the above recommendations are noted below. The following actors are actively working in refugee

camp and schools to provide a safe and neutral environment for refugee students and teachers as they adapt within the community and to the KRI curriculum:

- Ministry of Education, KRI
- UNHCR and other relevant international organisations
- Both KRG and Syrian refugee school community members, including teachers, parents, and students
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the education sector

Implementing the suggested recommendations above would make a meaningful difference to the vital work and lives of refugee teachers in Kurdistan. The outcomes of these recommendations could include, but would not be limited to:

- Refugee teachers' effectiveness in addressing the needs of their students would be enhanced.
- The improvement of refugee teachers' job satisfaction and morale.
- The overall quality and relevance of the education provided to refugee students would be strengthened.

However, there exist communal and systemic barriers to implementing these recommendations. These include:

- Limited financial and human resources in KRG.

- Bureaucratic challenges in coordinating efforts between various stakeholders.
- Potential resistance from host communities feeling overlooked and under-supported.
- The underlying cultural division between host and refugee communities and the perceived need to preserve culture and language based on historical and existing trauma faced by both communities.

These barriers can be navigated through the following:

- Fostering collaboration between the host government, UNHCR, and NGOs to share resources and expertise.
- Advocating for increased funding from international donors for refugee education in Kurdistan.
- Developing clear communication strategies to engage host communities and help them understand the shared benefits of inclusive education.



### Recommended reading:

UNHCR. (2019). *Refugee Education: A Global Review*. UNHCR.

# WHO CAN BE A TEACHER? THE AMBIGUITY OF REFUGEE TEACHERS' WORK AND STATUS IN KENYA

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Since the year 1990, Kenya has had a notable rise in the influx of migrants, resulting in a significant increase in the number of refugees, particularly among younger demographics. As of April 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has conducted verification procedures for a total of 599,120 individuals registered as refugees and asylum seekers. Among this population, it was determined that 50 percent consisted of children who were of school age. The Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Integrated Settlements serve as havens for around 43 percent of Kenya's refugee and asylum seeker population and all eligible school-age children are housed in 28 primary schools and 10 secondary schools. Within these schools, refugee teachers make up 93 percent of the workforce. Based on the government's Teacher Service Commission standards, about half of these teachers lack the necessary credentials to teach. The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) states that to be recognised as a qualified teacher, one must be a citizen of Kenya and possess a certificate of good conduct from their country of origin, which presents a problem for many refugee teachers, as the

majority were either born in refugee camps or became refugees when they were still very young. Additionally, it is challenging for refugee teachers to return to their place of origin to collect a certificate of good conduct without violating the principle of non-refoulement.

## Refugee qualification mismatch

Even though many young refugees have completed the Kenyan educational system, their Form 4 grades often fall short of the standards needed to enrol in a teacher training college (TTC). For refugees to enter TTCs, the TSC requires a minimum of a grade of C, and yet refugee graduates who achieve this grade have many choices for scholarships to study at more desirable universities outside of the country. This then leaves a substantial pool of Form 4 graduates who are labelled as 'untrainable' as the available candidates for accredited TTC courses.

The mismatch between what people say, what they want, and what they do continues to elicit many critical discussions among educational stakeholders as the 2030 deadline for inclusive and quality education for all draws near. For

instance, issues over hiring, recognising, and accrediting refugee teachers have sparked vigorous debates between humanitarian and development actors; however, policy development and strategic planning are slow to follow and often unclear on who is responsible for implementing change.

## Current Kenyan initiatives

Kenya has pledged to support refugee integration with host communities through two policy dimensions as part of efforts to embrace the 2018 Global Compact for Refugees (GCR), the 2021 Refugee Act, and the Shirika Plan. Refugee camps will be transformed into integrated settlements as part of the government's effort to end the parallel-education system. A quadripartite and multi-sectoral strategy for refugee teacher management is therefore crucial under the multi-year Shirika Plan. To improve recruitment, training, and recognition, the government, TSC, UNHCR, and teacher training bodies must all think creatively and collaboratively to create a pool of refugee teachers that will strengthen the government's integration process. This

## Key takeaways:

Even if it means that an affirmative action policy is employed, refugee teachers need to be recruited, trained, recognised, and accredited within the parameters of their host government. In lieu of or in addition to this, alternative options for teacher accreditation must be provided by the international community, especially if they are serious about meeting education SDG4 targets for all children by 2030 and beyond.



ensures that the government, as the custodian of policy design and implementation, takes on more responsibilities for the future of refugee teachers' employment, which relies on the host government's and other institutions' goodwill and the speed with which these plans are implemented.

### The way forward

Being aware that education in refugee camps is not only a humanitarian issue but also a development problem is important and urgent. Many refugee children spend their days in overcrowded classrooms with novice refugee teachers who lack classroom management experience, have low self-esteem, and often endure the same psychosocial struggles as their learners. To improve student learning outcomes, refugee teachers' well-being and mental health, their operational environment, and the narrative of teaching and learning in refugee camps must be changed. Meagre compensation packages, a lack of recognition even after training, protracted encampment, and the differential treatment of refugee and non-refugee teachers are all barriers to better outcomes.

Although the TSC requirements for teacher training are higher than what many would-be refugee teachers have, this can be gradually addressed if the refugee teachers and camp schools can access TSC-accredited pre-and in-service teacher professional development (TPD) and quality assurance appraisals like

their national teacher counterparts. This will help in the short and medium term to address the teachers' skill gaps in the NGO-run parallel educational system, where in-house, ad hoc, and uncoordinated training packages and certificates are offered to refugee teachers. To date, however, these opportunities are not only unaccredited but are often contextually irrelevant to the local teaching and learning environment and needs.



### Recommended reading:

West, H., Hinz, K., Séguin, T., Amey, D., Bengtsson, S., & Cameron, L. (2022). *Teacher management in refugee settings: Kenya*. Education Development Trust.

# TEACHERS OF REFUGEES IN UGANDA: TOWARD AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH

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## Key takeaways:

Policies regarding refugee educational inclusion must extend to the teachers of refugees from both refugee and host communities. This involves creating pathways for refugees to work as teachers in settings of displacement, and for teachers from host communities to receive the comprehensive training and support they need and deserve to do their work well.

Uganda's approach to refugee education<sup>88</sup> reflects a global shift toward including young refugees in national schools in host countries.<sup>89</sup> However, this move towards educational inclusion has not been mirrored in policies affecting the teachers of refugees – neither refugees who are also teachers, seeking to work in displacement, nor host country teachers who teach refugees. Instead, refugees who worked as teachers before displacement or who have the skills and interest to become teachers in host settings find it difficult, if not impossible, to do so despite a global teaching shortage that refugee teachers could help stem.<sup>90</sup> For host country teachers implementing policies of refugee educational inclusion, national training initiatives rarely address these policies and their importance. They also often fail to address the specific needs of young refugees in host country classrooms, including the need for trauma- and conflict-sensitive pedagogies, the implications of interrupted schooling for young peoples' academic performance, and potential language barriers affecting learning and engagement at school. This lack of attention to the teachers of refugees – both refugees aspiring to teach in host country settings and host country teachers

in classrooms attended by refugees – threatens to undermine broader efforts to include refugees in national education systems.

However, this challenge is not without its solutions. There are two key areas that governments, donors, and practitioners can act on to remedy this:

### Employ refugee teachers and include them in national training

It is vital to develop pipelines for refugees who worked as teachers before displacement to continue their work in host country schools serving refugees. In Uganda, refugee teachers must navigate an onerous process to be deemed qualified to work – one that is all but impossible to navigate and achieve. We know, however, that refugee children benefit from refugee teachers, who often share life experience, language, and an understanding of how to bridge home and host curricula. Furthermore, we know that in refugee settlements in Uganda and elsewhere, classrooms often overflow with newcomer students.<sup>91</sup> Creating clear pathways to harmonise refugees' teaching credentials,

permit them to work swiftly after displacement, and offer access to ongoing professional development can help to address the pressing need for more educators to serve growing populations of young refugees. Despite the hesitance that governments often feel about permitting refugee teachers to work in host settings, doing so can help fill pressing teacher shortages and provide refugee children with access to teachers who have the experience and knowledge to effectively serve them in host country classrooms, thus strengthening the broader education system.

### Engage and support host-country teachers

In Uganda and globally, host-country teachers work to make young refugees feel included in classrooms. However, they are often asked to do so with little guidance or support<sup>92</sup> and are left to navigate on their own the diverse life experiences, learning needs, and languages that young refugees bring to school. They are also often left out of conversations regarding the reasons for policies of refugee educational inclusion or the precipitating



events forcing young people to migrate. In Uganda, for example, national teacher training is centralised; however, this system does not address the unique challenges and experiences facing refugee learners or the ways in which teachers can support them. National pre- and in-service teacher training similarly fails to draw on host country teachers' extensive personal experience navigating migration and multilingualism themselves, assets that could be valuable in allowing them to meet the needs of their refugee students. However, revised national professional development and training opportunities, including in collaboration with INGOs currently implementing ad hoc professional development for the teachers of refugees, would go a long way towards remedying these gaps.

### The benefits of such reforms would be tangible

Schools would be closer to having enough teachers, allowing them to meet the needs of all learners. In addition, refugee children would benefit from teachers who are more linguistically and pedagogically prepared to support them – and to ensure they feel included at school. With these reforms, refugee teachers would be compensated and acknowledged for their work, and host country teachers would be supported to successfully enact complicated policies of educational inclusion. As colleagues in classrooms that refugee and host community children attend, refugee and

national teachers would also be able to learn from and support one another. Children from refugee and host communities would similarly benefit from this collaboration, learning from teachers who bring diverse experiences to their work. Developing an educational model that includes not just refugee learners but also the teachers of refugees – from host and refugee communities alike – would strengthen Uganda's national education system and offer a promising approach for others navigating similar challenges.



### Recommended reading:

West, H., Hinz, K., Séguin, T., Ameyna, D., Bengtsson, S., & Cameron, L. (2022). *Teacher management in refugee settings: Uganda*. London, UK: Education Development Trust.

# IMPOSSIBLE CHOICES: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER COMPENSATION, WELL-BEING, QUALITY, AND RETENTION IN SOUTH SUDAN AND UGANDA

**Danielle Falk, PhD**

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Conflict and displacement disrupt education for unprecedented numbers of children. In these settings, teachers play an essential role in supporting children's well-being, often while facing similar adversity. However, support for teachers' own well-being remains insufficient. Despite recent advocacies seeking to improve teacher well-being, there remains a dearth of

evidence – particularly from the perspectives of teachers – on how to best address their urgent needs.<sup>93</sup> This raises the question: 'What are the most salient factors influencing teacher well-being in crisis-affected contexts?' This brief draws on 126 interviews with 42 South Sudanese primary school teachers in the Palabek refugee settlement (Uganda) and Torit (South Sudan) to demonstrate the relationship between teacher compensation and well-being. The findings illustrate how teachers' salaries led to impossible choices between dignity and survival, which has wide-reaching implications for teacher quality and retention.<sup>94,95</sup>

to be smart. I have no money to buy clothes. They said a teacher has to be an example to the children. I'm hungry; how can I teach?'<sup>96</sup> These impossible choices between survival and dignity frequently led teachers to sacrifice their own well-being for that of their family. Elizabeth (female, Palabek) shared how she rationed her own food so that her children can eat: 'I am caring for my children... Feeding, hospital, and education must come from the salary... From morning, up to sunset, I eat only once so the children can eat twice or three times.'

Making these difficult decisions prevented teachers from delivering quality education. Muni (male, Palabek) explained, 'Teaching is not something very easy. When you are confused in the mind [stressed], it will even confuse you [in] the class.' John (male, Torit) reiterated this point, explaining that teachers need to have a 'settled' mind, 'But when you think back the family is hungry, the children are there suffering and you're here teaching, the mind will not be settled.' Insufficient compensation also prevented teachers from progressing in their careers. Lam (male, Palabek), stated, 'I was

## Key takeaways:

Teacher management policy concerning compensation and benefits needs to be commensurate with market prices and reflective of the contributions and demands of teachers' work and their qualifications. To achieve this, entities employing teachers must collaborate to:

- Increase teacher compensation and provide non-financial compensation (e.g. hardship allowance, staff accommodation) for national and refugee teachers working in contexts affected by conflict and forced displacement.
- Provide scholarship opportunities for refugee and national teachers to upgrade their teaching qualifications as aligned with national standards, and financial support for refugee and returnee teachers to access the equivalency mechanisms to validate their qualifications.
- Advocate for predictable, flexible, and multi-year funding from donors to invest in teacher management in ways that respond to the immediate need to fund teacher salaries while addressing long-term, sustainable plans for funding teacher compensation and benefits.

## Teaching quality: Meeting basic needs and professional responsibilities

In Palabek and Torit, teachers lamented that their meagre compensation forced them to decide between meeting their basic needs (e.g. food, clothing, healthcare, etc.) and upholding their professional roles. Osman (male, Torit), explained, 'How can I come and teach yet I have no soap to wash my clothes because I cannot afford it in the market? They said a teacher has



planning to go for further studies, but because of a shortage of money, that's why I stopped... We cannot support our family and save money for further studies.' This was especially stressful for teachers in Palabek, where the new teacher policy, enacted in 2019, stipulates that all primary school teachers must upgrade their qualifications to a degree within 10 years, as failing to do so would force them out of the profession.<sup>97</sup>

### Teacher retention: Balancing survival and sacrifice

Teachers' low compensation led most teachers to express their plans of leaving the profession. Okot (male, Torit), lamented, 'The low salary sometimes discourages me from continuing in the profession, because when you are paid less, it gives you a hard time...it makes me feel like being a teacher...is not really important.' Beyond sharing personal plans to leave the profession, teachers described the broader trend of teacher attrition across both countries due to low salaries. Mayam (male, Torit) explained, 'Many people have deserted from teaching...they went at least to earn a living to cater to the needs of their family. That is the most painful thing that needs to be addressed. Because, if not, almost all teachers will desert.' While most teachers expressed their plans to leave the profession, several teachers shared that they planned to remain teachers despite the challenges they faced. Antinasio (male, Torit) said, 'The payment may not be favouring

teachers...it may not be helpful since it is small. But we just sacrifice ourselves to help our brothers and sisters...we just persevere.' Teachers connected their persistence to sacrifice, giving up the chance to live a dignified life so that future generations may have that chance.

### Teacher well-being: Improve teacher salaries

Findings from this study demonstrate that refugee and national teachers working amidst conflict and displacement need to be paid a liveable wage and receive equitable employment benefits that allow them to live dignified lives. Beyond being essential for teachers to be able to do their work, it is fundamentally their right and the responsibility of their employers to uphold. Entities employing teachers – from national governments to international actors – should coordinate to ensure teachers' salaries and benefits are commensurate with market prices. In crisis-affected contexts, the UN can lead or support this coordination in partnership with the government and advocate for longer-term, multi-year, and flexible funding from donors, which is currently not a common practice in humanitarian settings but is necessary for paying teacher salaries and ultimately supporting their well-being.



### Recommended reading:

Kirk, J., & Winthrop, R. (2013). Teaching in contexts of emergency and state fragility. In Kirk, J, Dembélé, M, & Baxter, S (Eds.), *More and better teachers for quality education for all: Identity and motivation, systems and support*. Collaborative Works: Bangalore. (pp. 121–139).

# PATHWAYS TO CERTIFICATION FOR REFUGEE TEACHERS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM CHAD AND SOUTH SUDAN

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## Parfait Fouda

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### Key takeaways:

Teacher certification programmes tailored specifically for refugee teachers bring a wide range of benefits to host country education systems, teachers, learners, and refugee communities. These programmes can be effective when structured as multi-stakeholder partnerships: certified training institutions can provide flexible and rigorous training; schools can identify, supply, and enable supervision of teachers during training; and NGOs and civil society partners can support teachers during training with wraparound services such as tutoring, psychosocial care, and medical support.

### Inclusion of refugee teachers: A persistent challenge

Guided by UNHCR's Education Strategy 2030, considerable progress towards the inclusion of refugee learners in the schools of their host countries has been made in the past several years. Integrating refugee teachers into host country education systems, however, remains a persistent challenge. Education authorities and institutions issuing teacher qualifications understandably aim to maintain a standard of teacher quality. To meet this standard, refugee teachers must possess two requirements often in short supply in environments marked by forced displacement: clear records of prior education and funds for tuition to acquire a new qualification. The formidable nature of these barriers can be overcome through dedicated and adaptable partnerships between education authorities, teacher training institutes, and NGOs.

### Delivering results for teachers, learners, and education systems

Since 2016, three partnerships in Chad and South Sudan have addressed these barriers through creative pre-service and in-service models, increasing the supply of qualified teachers teaching national and refugee learners alike. These partnerships deliver benefits to several parties. Local education systems have expanded the pool of qualified teachers and have made better-prepared and more skilled educators available in remote areas, where staffing can be challenging. Refugee teachers have also benefited from these partnerships, securing a more stable professional standing that leads to increased compensation, enhanced knowledge and skills, and more professional opportunities. Consequently, learners in vulnerable and remote areas, both refugees and nationals, have benefited from a strengthened education system offering higher-quality education through its teacher workforce. The benefits have extended beyond the classroom and school walls, as qualified teachers with a broader range of professional, administrative, and collaboration skills have

become leaders and problem-solvers within their communities.

### Eastern Chad: Adapting programmes to address certification barriers

In Eastern Chad, two national teacher training institutes collaborated with UNHCR and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) to enrol Sudanese refugee teachers in primary and secondary teaching programmes, leading to improved teaching skills and the opening of new professional pathways. Since 2012, 718 refugees have completed two-year training programmes through Ecole Normale des Instituteurs Bilingues d'Abéché (ENIBA), a primary teacher training institute in Abéché. The programme's hybrid model enrolls active teachers to attend three months of intensive training at ENIBA during the school holidays for two consecutive years, with a 45-day internship component in between each year. To avoid disrupting refugee teachers' schools, ENIBA adapted its curriculum, reducing its overall duration, increasing daily instructional hours, and modifying the internship length. While the intensity of the programme is daunting for many teachers,





with sessions running for up to 10 hours a day with few breaks, completion brings several rewards: formal certification, a step upwards on the salary scale, the pride and confidence that comes from such an arduous achievement, and an esprit de corps among graduates, many of whom are also colleagues.

Since 2017, a similar partnership has existed between Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS), a secondary teacher training institute in Abéché, UNHCR, and JRS. Refugee teachers attend ENS alongside Chadian nationals, are charged the same fees, and receive the same services. As a facilitating partner, JRS assists refugees with housing, food, healthcare, and supplementary French language instruction. Both partnerships provide graduates with recognised entry-level teacher qualifications such as a primary certificate or secondary teaching diplomas, potentially opening professional pathways to the Chadian teaching civil service. In practice, professional pathways remain undefined pending legal reforms. Both qualifications do, however, lead to higher compensation for the teachers holding them.

### South Sudan: Building local resilience and the foundations of peace

In South Sudan, rather than increasing refugees' access to centrally located institutions, teacher certification has been pursued through a satellite training model. Since 2018, JRS has operated a residential training centre in Maban

County that is accredited by the University of Juba (UoJ). It offers primary teacher certificates to refugees and host community members. This centre is one of the only accredited postsecondary training facilities in Upper Nile State. With refugees and nationals studying alongside each other in a residential setting, the programme builds a pipeline for national and refugee teacher qualifications, strengthening local resilience through peaceful coexistence. Initially, due to low secondary school completion rates in the county, UoJ granted trainees without secondary certificates the ability to take teacher certification and secondary certificate courses simultaneously. As the number of secondary graduates in the county has increased, this is no longer necessary, which has enabled the programme to consider growing to meet the county's continuing demand for more qualified teachers. The partnership demonstrates how a flexible programme can accommodate the needs of refugee teachers and extend benefits to the host community.

### Flexible partnerships can address teacher shortages

Several lessons emerge from these cases. First, by adapting training and certification programmes to meet the needs of refugee teachers, education authorities and training institutions are creating a larger and more skilled teaching force to educate all learners, both nationals and refugees, especially in

remote and hard-to-staff areas. Second, humanitarian NGOs can play a crucial enabling role in such partnerships by providing holistic support for trainees and their families with supplementary training and services, which can mitigate disruptions when families' breadwinners leave for training. Finally, teachers in these programmes gain valuable collaboration and administrative skills, as well as more professional confidence – all of which constitute net benefits for individuals and their communities, whether they remain in teaching or transition to other careers.



### Recommended reading:

Ring, H. R., & West A. R. (2015). Teacher retention in refugee and emergency settings: the state of the literature. *The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, 14(3), 106–121.

# HOW COLOMBIA'S COMPLEX CRISES BRING MORE CHALLENGES TO TEACHERS' WELL-BEING

## Janaina Hirata

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### Key takeaways:

In countries such as Colombia, it is crucial to incorporate refugee education policies into crisis-sensitive educational planning. This allows for the swift allocation of funds to schools accommodating a significant number of asylum seekers and refugee children and adolescents. Such educational planning should draw on past experiences and lessons learned in responding to human mobility challenges. With access to financial resources, schools can proactively implement strategies that empower teachers to avoid extended periods of stress that contribute to burnout and teacher attrition.

Colombia plays host to a complex crisis brought about by Venezuelan asylum seekers and refugees, leading more than 2,475,000 people to move to Colombia.<sup>98</sup> Additionally, Colombia's own history of armed conflict has left over two million internally displaced people around the country and continues to introduce violence into many lives. These complex and compounding crises increase the vulnerability and challenges that the entire school community, especially teachers, face each day.

In a needs assessment conducted in March 2022 with 72 Colombian teachers, teachers reported that their well-being is an element that affects the school environment and directly impacts students' learning. The focus group (n = 3) and survey findings (n = 55) showed the urgent need to promote teachers' well-being, especially in refugee-hosting schools. Our analysis categorised different aspects that affect teachers' well-being; these are psychological and social problems, social support and confrontation, job satisfaction, recognition, and participation and autonomy. Many of the challenges mentioned by teachers would exist regardless of the number of refugee children

joining public schools. However, several challenges connected to human mobility are highlighted below to focus the discussion.

Under the psychological and social problems and job satisfaction categories, the teachers mentioned how the lack of family co-responsibility in the education process affects teachers' well-being. More than half of the group indicated that their level of job satisfaction was affected by their lack of progress in learning and their student's lack of progress in human development. A common phenomenon in contexts of high vulnerability is that internally displaced, asylum-seeking, and refugee families suffer from job insecurity, a lack of financial resources, violence, and the violation of their basic rights. These factors may explain caregivers' limited capacity to engage positively in their children's education.

The lack of collaboration between schools and families negatively impacts teachers' well-being. It therefore follows that the increased feeling of being overwhelmed and stressed leads to lower performance as teachers and a lower quality of service provided, with behaviours such as a lack of empathy, teacher absenteeism, or sparse

participation in the institution's activities as common outcomes.

The recommendations presented below therefore aim to support schools in taking advantage of existing capacity, spaces, and resources to promote teacher well-being. However, local actors collaborating with public schools and the regional education secretary can use these recommendations to inspire innovative approaches to acquiring the required financial and human capacity to support policy implementation.

### Recommendations

1. Set up 'self-care collaboratives' led by teachers and with the support of educational psychologists to promote and celebrate weekly self-care routines, which can range from physical hygiene and exercise to mindfulness and meditation.
2. Schedule time to meet with teaching staff for short emotional check-ins. The outcomes of our research show that identifying and managing emotions and talking about them with others must



be strengthened. This can also help teachers increase their social-emotional skills and incorporate them into their pedagogical approaches with national and refugee children.

3. Create a family training project in addition to the 'Parent School' opportunities already at many schools. These can be opportunities to invite families to work with the teaching staff to resolve collective challenges; this is important for strengthening parent–teacher relationships and forming an alliance to support children's learning and well-being.
4. Develop a teacher mental health referral pathway with public health providers or mental health service providers that is accessible by the teaching staff at no cost, easy to access, and confidential.
5. Increase financial and human resources to overcome barriers to teachers' well-being, with a focus on strategies to support the whole educational community. These include catch-up programmes to support students falling behind and educational strategies that promote diversity and help teachers to develop skills for tackling xenophobia between host communities and displaced populations.

As part of the 'education in emergencies' response, schools should receive extra support from the government and/or local actors

to facilitate policies for asylum seeker and refugee inclusion. In the case of Colombia, this would allow teachers to prevent long periods of being overstretched and overwhelmed. Training educators to explore diversity and prevent xenophobia could also help them make the school environment more inclusive, especially when local families are included in these activities.

These recommendations could help teachers be better prepared to deal with the challenges emerging from regular waves of refugee children joining the public education system. The objective should have a positive impact on teachers' and students' well-being. While this may seem like a small victory in the face of all the other challenges that refugee children and adolescents contend with, schools are one of the few places for these young individuals to heal from all their intersecting difficulties. When teachers thrive, are skilled, and are supported in their work, displaced children and adolescents experience a vital sense of belonging and being welcomed in school, which, in turn, is important for their well-being during the adaptation phase of displacement.

The current lack of funding and resources would require advocacy focused on well-being – especially mental health – and strengthening mental health public policies. Well-being should therefore be mainstreamed across different sectors – not only education – as coordination among the health, child protection, and

education sectors is key to promoting teachers' and students' well-being.



### Recommended reading:

Campos, E., González, A., & Jacott, L. (2018). Bienestar subjetivo y satisfacción vital del profesorado. *Reice Revista Iberoamericana Sobre Calidad Eficacia Y Cambio en Educación*, 16.1.

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITIES WITH AND FOR REFUGEES ON THE BORDERS OF MEXICO

## Atenea Rosado-Viurques

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## Catalina Moreno Ávila

Radix Education

Across North America, the lives, well-being, and development of refugee children and youth are intimately linked to teachers: those who support them in shelters, settlements, and schools. Since 2018, more than 500,000 migrants – around 50 percent of whom are families, most of them from the Central American Northern Triangle, Haiti, and Venezuela – have entered Mexico each year.<sup>99</sup> This demographic shift, from individuals to families, has led government and humanitarian actors to rapidly build migrant and refugee formal and non-formal education programmes. If the continent's trends of violence, poverty, and political instability continue to rise, Mexico will continue to face migration flows that require systemic adaptation to ensure that all children and youth have access to education and for professionals to have opportunities to continue their practice.

Grounded in our pedagogical practice with children and youth in shelters across the borders of Mexico, facilitation of local teachers' learning circles, and educational policy analysis, we invite local policymakers and development and humanitarian professionals to consider

three policy strands to strengthen the country's capacity to guarantee the right to education for all. These invitations recognise national and refugee teacher professional development and well-being as one of the main pillars of sustainable education transformation in contexts of displacement.

### Multicultural and multilingual needs

To attend to various multicultural and multilingual needs, the strengthening of labour force inclusion, and the facilitation of education for refugees and migrants, we recommend including, compensating, and recognising migrant and refugee teachers.

One of the biggest barriers that prevent migrant and refugee students from continuing their education is related to linguistic and cultural exclusion.<sup>100</sup> Often, Mexican teachers and humanitarian professionals who collaborate in educational spaces are inadequately prepared by the national educational system to facilitate multilingual learning spaces. Moreover, programmes that are financially dependent on international agencies tend to offer curricula that ignore the cultural specificities, needs,

desires, and rights of migrant and refugee communities in the country. Therefore, training professionals, especially from the same contexts and with the cultural and linguistic knowledge to serve such a varied population, is essential.

Although the policies that allow for formal work rights in Mexico can be a long and costly process for migrants and refugees, the creation of temporary work visas for refugee teachers, as well as compensating work within shelters and refugee settlements in Mexico, can positively impact the sense of belonging, ownership, and academic relevance that refugee communities experience.<sup>101</sup> Refugee teachers also have the unique opportunity of facilitating consistent education activities and encouraging the meaningful participation of students, parents, and community members. The inclusion of refugee teachers in host community educational processes, such as curriculum planning and teacher training, would promote more inclusive, diverse, and cost-effective learning efforts, where migrant and refugee communities,

### Key takeaways:

Refugee education policies that include refugee professionals as key actors for training local teachers can make formal education more inclusive, multicultural, and multilingual. Including refugee teachers in the context of Mexico can also expand the current teaching capacity in formal and nonformal education spaces for refugee children and youth, promoting flexible and innovative pedagogies capable of responding to the needs of a growing refugee population in the country.



regardless of their nationalities, can live and learn in multicultural environments.

### Flexible and innovative pedagogies

In recognition of the various levels of permanency that migrant communities in the country bring, we recommend strengthening flexible and innovative pedagogies. By innovative and flexible pedagogies, we mean pedagogies that adapt to spaces beyond the classroom and temporalities that transcend the official academic year. We recommend expanding the definitions of schooling and recognising that government and non-governmental educational programmes adapt to the needs of the population and are by pedagogies and educational methodologies that are contextualised to the people who are impacted by them.

In addition to international and local organisations' efforts to promote educational spaces in shelters and camps, the federal Ministry of Public Education, in collaboration with the National Council for the Promotion of Education (CONAFE), offers formal educational spaces in government-owned shelters. However, CONAFE's national programmes have historically focused on innovative multilevel bilingual rural education for highly marginalised areas in Mexico. While they make a valuable effort, CONAFE's programmes are not aligned with the educational, socio-emotional, psycho-social, and cultural needs of migrant and refugee students.

Strengthening existing programmes with innovative and flexible pedagogies is a vital approach for refugee learners' engagement and sense of belonging. Flexible pedagogies that recognise the temporality of migrant and refugee students in the education system, as well as the spatial characteristics of camps and shelters, can foster students' passions for learning. Government agencies that already perform this work could rethink and redesign these programmes to make them more localised and pertinent to the educational needs of migrant and refugee children and youth.

### Collaboration with host community schools

We recommend closely collaborating with and learning from host community schools to support students and families in their relocation to the country and to facilitate smooth transitions between non-formal and formal educational systems.

Although the Mexican state has a protocol for access to education for migrant and refugee students, not all educational centres know of this policy or are encouraged to receive these students. Some of the obstacles that prevent refugee and migrant students' access to formal education in the country are length of stay in Mexico, lack of knowledge about refugees' previous educational achievement, or discrimination against refugees.<sup>102</sup> A strong

alliance between international organisations, civil society organisations, governments at the local level, and school communities would cement the protocol, ensure the right to education for all, and create opportunities for refugee teachers to be part of the system.

This policy insight expands refugee educational practice by looking at policy in a holistic manner, capable of linking refugee and local teachers' efforts, formal, and nonformal education systems, and refugee and host communities in order to provide educational spaces that are inclusive, multicultural, multilingual, respectful of diversity.



### Recommended reading:

Glockner, V., & Velazco, A. (2023) *Children on the Move: An Ethnographic Mosaic of the Americas*. Available at <https://infanciasenmovimiento.org/en/>

# REFUGEE TEACHER ISOLATION: OVER THREE DECADES OF CONFINED TEACHER MANAGEMENT ON THE THAI-MYANMAR BORDER

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**Gray Rinehart**  
**Cherry Ku Paw**  
**Naw Nay Yu Paw**  
**Saw Sam San**

TeacherFOCUS and Karen Refugee Committee – Education Entity (KRCEE)

For more than 30 years, the systems in Thailand supporting refugee educators of Myanmar origin have been disconnected from opportunities for teacher professionalisation and mobility. Restrictions from the host country – a non-party to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention – have caused the education landscape for those displaced to be largely siloed from the outside world. This policy dilemma has created both positive and negative results. On one hand, unlike in many refugee camp contexts, refugees in Thailand are barred from formally learning the language of the host country in refugee schooling and from seeking economic and educational opportunities outside of their camps. Thai migration laws only offer 'displaced persons' particular administrative status if they remain within the camps; should they leave, they will become 'illegal migrants'.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, education in these camps was established and continues to be staffed and managed by refugee-led entities. This has enabled mother tongue-based multilingual education and the promotion of local cultures and histories, but it has also acted to further isolate refugee educators from the mainstream systems in both Thailand and Myanmar.

Moreover, in Thailand, even the terms 'refugee' and 'refugee camp' cannot be used in official discourse. Instead, 'stateless migrant' and 'temporary shelter' make up the preferred nomenclature, which reflects the host country government's view that it is a transit country (i.e. only a temporary host for refugees), although the protracted nature of the context might suggest otherwise. These critical denotations strip refugees, largely from Karen and Karenni ethnic minority groups, of their full rights and are unfortunately symbolic of larger patterns in refugee education.<sup>104</sup>

## Refugee teachers need bridges, not walls

Refugee teacher isolation is multidimensional – refugee teachers are isolated from Thai education as well as Thai society. Despite the importance of their roles in educating over 22,000 students annually, teachers are the lowest-paid professionals in the camps. For over three decades, they have received the equivalent of \$1.25 USD per day or less. International organisations have worked steadfast to ensure the continuity of teacher payment, yet not all teachers currently receive a

### Key takeaways:

Within the seven refugee camps administered by the Karen Refugee Committee (KRC) on the Thai–Myanmar border, teaching is most often viewed as an act of service. For decades, refugee educators have lacked access to professional pathways that lead to national inclusion. Providing refugee teachers with accredited opportunities and a living wage stands to benefit teacher recruitment, retention, and the quality of education in refugee camps.

**Figure 7**

### The tensions created by the isolation of refugee teachers in Thailand

Refugee policy recommends teaching the host country's language and promoting inclusion into the national school system

This is not officially possible for refugee educators in Thailand, although some seek opportunities for integration and mobility



Language-in-education policy and practice supports Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education

Refugee educators teach S'Gaw Karen language and English, which offers some opportunities but limits integration and local mobility

Source: Tyrosvoutis et al. (2023)



stipend. International donors historically show apprehension in committing to recurrent costs like teacher salaries,<sup>105</sup> and financing shortfalls are further compounded by an overwhelmed and underfunded global humanitarian sector.<sup>106</sup> Policies that isolate refugees on the Thai–Myanmar border limit their economic opportunity, resulting in low financial support for education from households within the camps.<sup>107</sup> And yet, the demand for education has arguably never been higher due to the reemergence of armed conflict in Eastern Myanmar.

Refugee teachers are far too often expected to take on expanded roles and responsibilities in addition to classroom instruction.<sup>108,109</sup> This is especially difficult considering that most

new refugee teachers have, at best, only a high school education. They work in challenging and low-resource conditions in which they face additional obstacles, such as:

- A lack of teaching and learning resources;
- Overcrowded classrooms with student desks and benches fixed to the floors;
- A lack of childcare;
- Insufficient or damaged textbooks;
- Multi-age classrooms;
- Students with diverse language proficiencies;
- Substantial noise from adjacent classrooms; and
- Frequently changing education personnel.<sup>110</sup>

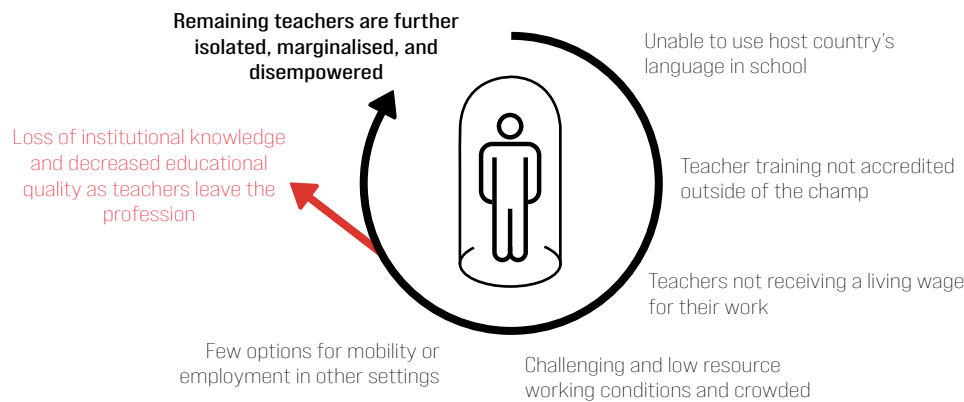
These challenges culminate in an attrition rate of over 30% each year and an average professional tenure of only 2–3 years. Case in point, in 2023, there were 193 new teachers in need of pre-service training out of a total of 555. In many instances, being a refugee teacher is viewed more as an act of service and less as a career.<sup>111</sup> With a new wave of resettlement to the United States looming, senior leadership members overseeing refugee education believe up to 50% of current teachers will leave the profession.<sup>112</sup> Those who remain face significant challenges in terms of teacher shortages and recruitment, formal recognition of prior experience, qualifications and status, compensation, and professional development, which in turn lowers their motivation to teach and contributes to high rates of attrition within

the workforce – a vicious cycle that is all too common in refugee settings.<sup>113,114</sup> If teacher management and national inclusion policy continue to be overlooked, refugee education systems do not stand to improve.

**We must work to professionalise teaching in refugee contexts: Helping educators go beyond intrinsic motivation**

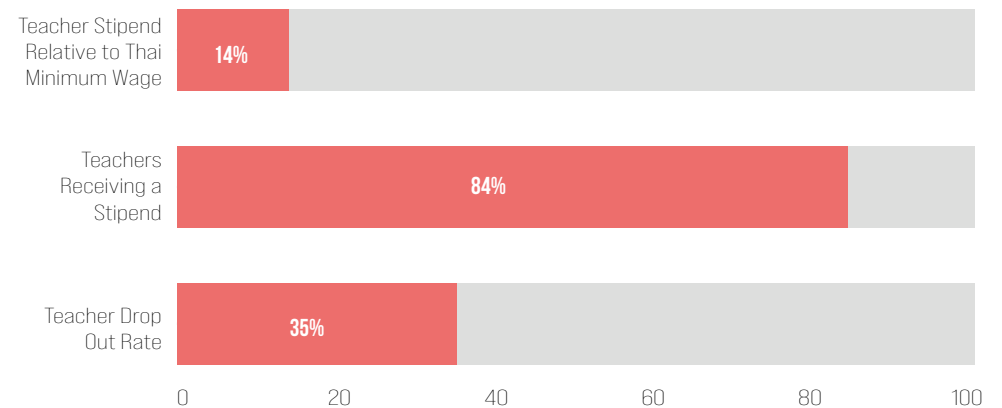
Recognising that refugee teachers often harbour strong intrinsic motivations and teach as an act of community service, it follows that the most necessary reforms are those that provide extrinsic motivation. In order to professionalise teaching, higher and more stable salaries are needed, as are pathways for formal

**Figure 8**  
The refugee teacher isolation cycle



Source: Tyrosvoutis et al. (2023)

**Figure 9**  
Teacher management challenges



Source: Karen Refugee Committee – Education Entity (2023)

recognition, which would boost the status of teachers. Teachers need to be able to receive training and professional development from relevant national institutions that can enable future mobility, for example, through portable micro-credentialing. Investments in teaching certification stand to improve instructional practices and professionalise teaching, with the potential to both attract new teachers and motivate current teachers to stay in the profession longer.

However, as Mendenhall and Falk (2023) observe, national inclusion policies are also required. On the Thai–Myanmar border, tens of thousands individuals have resided in the camps for more than three decades, and as of August 2023 there is a verified occupancy of 90,759.<sup>115</sup> As the situation currently stands, much of this population will remain in the host country for years to come. Thus, Thailand is in great need of a policy that recognises and addresses refugee education. We therefore urge diplomatic missions in Thailand to advocate to national authorities for policy-making that brings an end to the isolation of refugee teachers, thereby allowing them educational and economic opportunities outside of the camps. These decisions must position the teachers and the refugee education entities that support them as central actors in identifying and co-creating policy priorities and concerns. National inclusion of refugee teachers in Thailand thus requires commitments to formal employment in the

camps, continuing professional development, stable and adequate salaries, support for student and teacher well-being, and ongoing participation in policy development and implementation. Such recognition of and commitment to refugee teachers in this context is long overdue. Further postponement of action stands to jeopardise the longer-term quality and sustainability of refugee education in the camps, given the dynamic backdrop of re-started third country resettlement amidst a surge of student enrolment as populations flee conflict-ridden Myanmar.<sup>116</sup>

Recognising a global trend of new refugee camps being established with existing settlements rarely, if ever, closing, a critical focus is needed to build and strengthen the systems that enable the professionalisation, retention, and recognition of refugee teachers: the cornerstone of their education systems.



### Recommended reading:

Oh, S. (2010) Education in refugee camps in Thailand: Policy, practice, and paucity. *In Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011*. UNESCO: Paris.



# EMPOWERING UKRAINIAN REFUGEE EDUCATORS: UNICEF'S INITIATIVES IN POLAND, SLOVAKIA, AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC

## Andrea Naletto

Education Specialist, UNICEF Europe and Central Asia

The escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, which began in February 2022, has resulted in Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II. Over 8 million refugees have been spread across the continent as a result of this crisis. Approximately 90 percent of these refugees are women and children whose right to education must be protected during their displacement.

In March 2022, all EU member states approved the Temporary Protection Directive ensuring that Ukrainian refugees have equal access to education as local citizens. Despite this favourable environment for integration into national education systems, the estimated gross enrolment rate in primary and secondary education of Ukrainian refugee children in host country schools has remained relatively low, hovering around 40% to 50% and varying significantly across countries.

There are several reasons for the low level of mainstreaming of refugee children into national schools. First, the EU directive did not automatically translate into national legislation. As a result, in some countries, mandatory enrolment was not enforced. Additionally, there are challenges such as low absorption

capacity within education systems, language barriers, limited mental health and psychosocial support, a lack of support for children with disabilities, inadequate school space, and a shortage of teachers.

In addition, Ukrainian parents were hesitant to enrol their children in local schools due to their unfamiliarity with the educational system of the host country, their anticipation of an imminent return, and their concerns about the recognition of their children's studies abroad upon their return to Ukraine. As a result, numerous parents chose to continue to have their children pursue Ukrainian curricula online or at Ukrainian schools or education centres.

UNICEF and partners' education programmes in refugee-hosting countries aim to remove barriers to their inclusion in the national education system, as well as provide flexible education pathways to meet their cognitive, emotional, and social needs.

Recognising that approximately 70% of Ukrainian adult refugees have a university degree or higher and that around 17% of them have educational expertise, UNICEF is

committed to leveraging the qualifications and experience of Ukrainian adult refugees to actively contribute to host countries' educational systems by engaging them in school-related roles.

In the Czech Republic, UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MEYS), the National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic (NPI CR), and the Educational Institute of the Central Bohemia Region (VISK) to strengthen the skills of teachers and other pedagogical staff at all school levels.

MEYS made extra financial resources available to Czech schools enrolling at least 10 students from Ukraine to enable the hiring of nearly 700 Ukrainian teaching assistants in Czech schools. Ukrainian teaching assistants must meet specific qualifications outlined in the legislation for pedagogical staff, with some exceptions and flexibility for local schools.

The UNICEF-supported intervention has focused on the identification, qualification, and support of Ukrainian teaching assistants to integrate into Czech schools. UNICEF supported the refinement and implementation of an 80-

### Key takeaways:

Flexible recruitment, streamlined qualification recognition, comprehensive training, ongoing support, and strong partnerships with local stakeholders should be implemented while allocating sufficient funding to integrate Ukrainian educators and support Ukrainian students in host countries.

hour qualification course for Ukrainian teaching assistants that equipped them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support Ukrainian children in their daily education activities.

In Poland, UNICEF supported municipalities and civil society organisations to hire Ukrainian refugee teaching assistants (also known as multicultural assistants) in various educational settings. Approximately 65,000 education personnel, including teachers from Ukraine and Poland, have benefited from UNICEF's support, which includes financial compensation and capacity-building activities. Ukrainian teachers were chosen primarily on language skills and teaching experience, with recruitment occurring through partner networks and community referrals. These teaching assistants have played a crucial role in Polish schools, aiding the integration of Ukrainian children by providing linguistic support and actively participating in inclusive learning initiatives.

Ukrainian teachers and other pedagogical and professional staff in Slovakia contribute to cultural diversity, language support, and insights from their educational system. They also offer valuable counselling and emotional support to learners at times of significant stress due to displacement-related trauma and the uncertain futures with which Ukrainian children contend. UNICEF has taken various initiatives to support Ukrainian teachers seeking to pursue careers in Slovak schools in their certification process and training. The organisation

partnered with the National Institute of Education and Youth (NIVAM) to provide Slovak language courses for 70 Ukrainian educators, fully certifying 50 of them. The process involved obtaining a Slovak language certificate B-2, which is required as part of the recognition of their foreign qualifications. While the programme initially targeted having 70 teachers, the demand has since surged, with 300 individuals expressing interest. Some of these teachers are already working at schools or in non-profit organisations, while others are applying for places at schools but lack the necessary language training. Despite facing significant challenges, 64 teachers successfully completed the courses at various levels of language competency, with 18 of them meeting the B-2 language requirement. Certified teachers appreciated the innovative methodologies of the course and the collaboration with colleagues from diverse backgrounds. UNICEF and NIVAM plan to continue their partnerships to offer new language courses and certification exams in the future.

These initiatives highlight the importance of leveraging Ukrainian refugee educators' expertise, dedication, and contributions to promote an enabling environment in schools for inclusion, learning, and socio-emotional well-being among Ukrainian refugee children.

Ukrainian educators, with their diverse cultural backgrounds, personal experiences, and pedagogical and language skills, have been

critical in building school capacity during times of stress and chronic teacher shortages. According to situational analysis reports, Ukrainian educators, particularly teaching assistants, have played an important role in bridging communication gaps between parents, school leaders and teachers, promoting mutual understanding, inclusion, and social cohesion. The close collaboration between Ukrainian teachers and local educators has undoubtedly facilitated the exchange of best practices, new approaches, and experiences, resulting in a richer, more diverse, and more unique learning environment. Additionally, Ukrainian refugee teachers have had the opportunity to enhance their skills and boost their professional confidence. Working as educators in local schools has provided them with not only financial incentives, but also a profound sense of fulfilment derived from the critical roles they play in ensuring Ukrainian children's education.

Based on the UNICEF experience in Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic and the positive outcomes cited above, key recommendations for international agencies, partners, host countries, policy makers, and donors include:

1. Implementing flexible recruitment procedures and streamlined recognition processes for Ukrainian teachers.
2. Developing comprehensive training programmes for Ukrainian teachers.
3. Providing continuous support and mentorship to Ukrainian teachers and teaching assistants in host countries.
4. Strengthening and expanding partnerships with host country governments, UN agencies, NGOs, and educational institutions to facilitate the training, certification, and integration of Ukrainian educators into local education systems.
5. Allocating adequate funding to support these initiatives.



### Recommended reading:

OECD (2023) *Teaching Opportunities and Support for Ukrainian Educators*. OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine. OECD Publishing.



# LANGUAGE FOR RESILIENCE IN JORDAN, UGANDA, AND UKRAINE: SIX RECOMMENDATIONS

## Joseph Field

British Council

### Key takeaways:

Language education policies for refugees must recognise the ongoing professional development needs of language teachers, even if they are teaching in an emergency or are refugees themselves. They must be given opportunities to understand their students, to develop their skills in facilitating learning in multilingual classrooms, and to build professional networks of support and exchange.

The importance of language for displaced individuals and communities is clear. It is fundamental for access to resources, employment, and learning, as well as personal and community agency and social connection. Moreover, the complex variations of language priorities depend on the individual's familiar languages, the languages of the locations they are displaced to, and the duration and circumstances of their displacement.<sup>117</sup>

Therefore, it follows that teaching and learning the languages of connection and access in countries of asylum is key for refugees, whether refugees are in camps or host communities and where learning is through traditional schools, informal or nonformal learning. It is vital to the building of resilience through periods of exile and can support recovery from trauma and reduction of conflict. This is because language supports the building of life skills, self-efficacy, community interaction, cohesion, and protection.<sup>118</sup> At the same time, switching to a different language instruction system can be deeply disruptive and undermining for displaced children and teachers, making their familiar language and by extension, their identities, obstacles in their learning journey.<sup>119</sup>

Since the Syrian refugee crisis began in 2012, the British Council has brought its work on language teacher professional development, refugees, and conflict-affected communities under a single programme, 'Language for Resilience', which has ensured cohesion and the sharing of expertise and experience across multiple contexts. Projects currently run in:

- Uganda, where teachers and schools in refugee hosting communities are supported with training and resources for language-supportive strategies.
- Jordan, where language teachers and learning facilitators in refugee camps and urban host communities are given access to professional learning communities and self-access language learning resources.
- Ukraine, where teachers attend face-to-face training for recognising and managing student trauma and making the classroom a safe space.

The six recommendations on the next page are drawn from the above projects. They apply to teacher educators, managers of teacher education programmes and leaders in ministries and NGOs who are looking to shape

or update teacher development initiatives in displacement- or conflict-affected contexts to improve the learning outcomes for children and young people.

There are many barriers to the application of these recommendations. Language policy in displacement contexts is often complex and contentious, largely due to the differing policy objectives of countries of origin, host countries, and the international community. Most critically, where national policies allow, the accepted guidance is for refugee children to be integrated into host country education systems as much and as quickly as possible. However, emergency education contexts often contemplate the possibility of involving displaced teachers in host-country education systems to support new ways of integrating familiar languages in schooling, thus improving student outcomes and engagement. Nonformal education options can be flexible in their choices of which languages to use, and where international agencies are involved in the coordination or organisation of education responses, they can apply innovative language approaches.

The overarching principle of these recommendations is that the shifting language context and priorities of displacement should not result in the need for language teachers and multiple languages being considered a problem; rather, it is a resource for resilience. As much as possible within the constraints mentioned above and all the other challenges of displacement, language teachers should be encouraged to develop professionally in new areas of expertise. If the conditions are in place for them to learn and develop in some of the ways they might in other contexts, then teachers and students can experience greater levels of empowerment as they move into the next phase of their lives in uncertain times.

### Recommendations

1. Teacher well-being is critical because of its impact on teaching and learning. In Ukraine, teachers are displaced and traumatised by conflict. While being trained to work with conflict-affected students, they should also be encouraged to understand how they are affected themselves and are given the space to share the impact and build supportive networks.
2. Familiar/mother tongue language prioritisation: Where possible, support schools and communities to adopt language policies that reflect the languages of their students and the understanding that literacy in familiar

languages is fundamental to the learning of new languages of instruction while supporting wellbeing and resilience.

3. Teacher language skills: Teacher and facilitator surveys in the refugee communities of Jordan show that maintenance or improvement of language skills is a key element of the self-identity of the professional language teacher, so development should include opportunities to develop personal language skills in new areas. Teacher language needs can be evaluated and clarified independent of the classroom situation, and can be pursued throughout crisis situations, which is ideally self-directed.
4. Professional communities: Teachers in conflict-affected Ukraine repeatedly attest that continuing to achieve their potential as professionals is a priority, even – and especially – if the defining factor of their work is that their students are displaced or conflict affected. This also applies if teachers are displaced, working as volunteers or classroom assistants, or teaching in nonformal contexts. This can be supported by professional development programmes that include opportunities to engage in communities of practice with teachers from beyond their immediate context. If possible, these can include more expert professional development facilitators, with whom they can build

dialogues around their professional practice and development goals.

5. Career pathways: Continuing professional development in displacement contexts should include the possibility for teachers to progress as teacher educators and share their expertise with their peers, ideally in networks beyond their immediate contexts. The majority of the teacher educators in the British Council's project in Ukraine were themselves early participants in the programme.
6. Language supportive strategies: Teachers can learn some words of their students' familiar languages. They can use language-supportive strategies and multilingual pedagogies while teaching in the main language of instruction, discussing with students how different meanings are expressed in the familiar languages of their diverse backgrounds. In Uganda, we also support school leaders to recognise students' most familiar languages, enabling coherence in attitudes across the school environment.



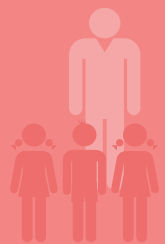
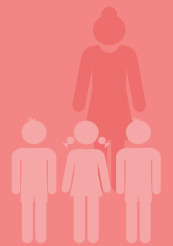
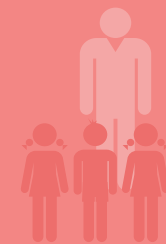
### Recommended reading:

Reddick, C., & Chopra, V. (2023). Language considerations in refugee education: languages for opportunity, connection, and roots. *Language and Education*, 37(2), 244–261





# 3 OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE REFUGEE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



# LEADING BY EXAMPLE: TRANSLATING THE DJIBOUTI DECLARATION INTO ACTION THROUGH REFUGEE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Kebede Kassa Tsegaye, PhD

Senior Coordinator of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

### Key takeaways:

Addressing the challenges listed in this paper requires a strict implementation of the Djibouti Declaration, the Addis Call for Action, the IGAD Regional Policy on Education, and the IGAD Qualifications Framework. This can be done by IGAD leading the efforts of its member states and coordinating regional and international partnerships to achieve our shared objectives. At the same time, IGAD needs to set an example for member states to mobilise their bilateral and multilateral partners at national levels to sustain this approach to refugee teacher professional development in the region.

### Introduction

As is the case for students in national schools, in refugee-hosting settings, teachers are among the most important components of the learning process. In such contexts, teachers deal with students from varied social, economic, cultural, historical, and political backgrounds. Students often arrive at school having trauma, low self-esteem, and other complex problems due to conflict and/or sexual or gender-based violence.

The Djibouti Declaration (DD), which was adopted by IGAD member country education ministers in December 2017, recognises the importance of teacher training and skills development to improve the quality of teaching and living conditions for all asylum seekers and refugees. To realise this, IGAD calls upon ‘... international partners to provide sustained and increased support ... capacity building for skills development, particularly in refugee hosting areas.’<sup>120</sup> It also commits the education sector of member states (MS) to ensure the inclusion and protection of refugees into national education

systems, particularly returnee children, with a focus on their psycho-social well-being through a multi-sectoral approach.<sup>121</sup> Urging IGAD to develop and adopt a regional qualifications framework to facilitate the recognition of qualifications within and across the region’s borders, the second conference of ministers in charge of education stressed the need for ‘... tackling the immediate challenges faced by refugees and returnees specially the recognition of prior learning ... being taken on as refugee teachers because their qualifications are not recognized.’<sup>122</sup> In the same vein, the IGAD Regional Education Policy Framework identifies teacher professional development as one of the key priority areas of action and urges MS to take the issue of teacher professional development in refugee settings more seriously.<sup>123</sup>

### Leading by example

It is argued here that regional organisations are not only policy-making entities by virtue of their convening power but also implementing bodies. To illustrate this point, it is worth

taking the IGAD experience in both facilitating the adoption of the Djibouti Declaration and translating the policy commitment into action. To illustrate this point, teacher professional development is one of the success stories in the implementation of the DD, as articulated in the Addis Ababa Call for Action, which was adopted by the second conference of ministers of education and captured in the IGAD Regional Education Policy Framework.

### The IGAD Regional Teacher Professional Development Initiative

IGAD started this pilot teacher professional development programme in three member states: Ethiopia, Sudan, and Uganda. The innovative and collaborative programme involved IGAD, GIZ (on behalf of the Government of Germany), and the consultancy firm Particip GmbH. As such, it was based on the public-private partnership model (PPP) in line with the DD. The programme was originally intended for 300 teachers – 100 teachers in each country – and focused on secondary school teachers in



refugee settings. However, the actual training, which took place from February 2021 to November 2022, catered to 755 (496 male and 259 female) teachers across the three contexts.

The process included national consultations in each Member State to build consensus and generate buy-in for the programme, to establish a national coordination secretariat within the Ministry of Education, and to identify local stakeholders. Local stakeholders played an important role in facilitating the training; this involved identifying training venues, professional development needs, module development, and determining the duration of the training sessions in each of the three rounds of training. At the end of each training session, certificates were handed to the trainees. The content covered skills in four modules: (1) pedagogical skills, (2) psycho-social skills, (3) life-skills, and (4) ICT. The national coordinators reported outcomes to the ministries of education, one of which was teachers' overall satisfaction with the quality and relevance of the modules. The programme's national coordinators also recommend that the modules be integrated into their respective national teacher in-service training curricula.

Since the initiative has produced concrete results, which includes the modules, motivated teachers, and the lessons acquired by countries

who participated in the regional experience-sharing workshop, the programme will be repeated in additional member and in different locations beyond the contexts of the initial pilot country.

### Local challenges

The success, in terms of reaching over 750 teachers against the plan to train 300 teachers for the same number of resources, was impressive and has demonstrated that regional organisations like IGAD can lead by example. However, this is not without challenges. The first challenge refers to certification. The teachers were trained and awarded certificates. However, these certificates of attendance do not qualify the teacher for professional recognition or count towards national registration. The second challenge is related to improved salaries or the provision of individual benefits commensurate with the standard of training that teachers receive. At one certificate awarding ceremony in Uganda, for example, one teacher requested that they be considered for an incremental salary increase to represent their participation in the training; however, this was not envisaged when launching the programme. The third challenge refers to the increased demand for professional development support, now that a local awareness of the programme's quality has been created. This demand is most prevalent at the teacher training college level.



### Recommended reading:

UNESCO. (2018). Helping the teacher to help refugees. In *UNESCO Courier: One World Many Voices*. UNESCO. Available at <https://en.unesco.org/courier/2018-4/helping-teachers-help-refugees>

# TRANSFORMING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CORE PRACTICE APPROACH FOR EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

## Lindsay Brown, PhD

New York University.

In low- and middle-income countries, where a majority of the world's refugees reside, teachers are under-trained, overwhelmed, and working with highly vulnerable students. However, their professional development tends to be overly theoretical, fragmented, and dominated by lecture-style 'chalk-and-talk' methods that teachers, in turn, implement with students in the classroom. Meanwhile, policymakers have little evidence of cost-effective and scalable strategies for improving teacher learning. The adoption of a framework of evidence-based language and a vision of practice, such as those presented in the core practices approach, can help address these gaps. Rather than simply 'learning about teaching', this approach enables 'learning to teach' and offers practical, high-impact teaching skills to novice and experienced teachers alike.

### What are core practices?

The term 'core practices' refers to an evidence-based framework that identifies essential, high-impact teaching techniques for improving student learning outcomes. This has the benefit of facilitating a shared language, increasing coherence, and promoting a practical focus

that enhances sustainability. These traits collectively support the alignment of various offices and stakeholders within the education system, leading to a more efficient utilisation of resources.

This approach entails the following:

1. Specifying a small set of high-frequency, research-based instructional practices that teachers should be able to proficiently enact and use as an organising framework for teacher development;
2. Breaking down each practice into its components using a shared language and translating it into classroom routines, processes, and techniques; and
3. Embracing a structured and practice-based learning cycle that includes showing the practice in multiple variations, including its components, and offering safe and structured time for practice, feedback, and reflection.

There is no definitive list of practices, as they are specific to each context; however, there are practices that are generally accepted by

local-level actors as relevant, effective, and important. For example, TeachingWorks at the University of Michigan has identified a list of 'high-leverage' core practices that include 'leading a discussion', 'explaining and modelling content', and 'building respectful relationships'.

### What are the benefits of a core practice approach?

- **Practical Focus:** A practice-based approach promotes a shift from knowledge-based theoretical training to skill-oriented practices, directly impacting classroom effectiveness.
- **Improved Coherence:** A unifying framework of teacher practice provides a much-needed structure and consistency to teacher development, laying the foundation for a more coherent educational ecosystem.
- **Communication Catalyst:** This framework establishes a shared language and vision for what teachers should know and be able to do, enabling effective communication among and between educational stakeholders.

### Key takeaways:

Adopting an evidence-based core practice approach offers a practical, adaptable teaching framework that improves coherence, communication, and effectiveness, making it particularly valuable for refugee teachers working in diverse and challenging contexts.





- **Evidence Enabler:** The framework can be utilised by researchers to facilitate the categorization and advancement of research in the field. Such research will enable policymakers to channel efforts towards strategies that yield the highest impact and maximise limited resources.
- **Sustainability:** Core practices are designed to be enduring and flexible foundational practices and principles that can be adapted and applied to any curricular approach and in various contexts, including the unstable, unpredictable, and challenging environments faced by teachers in refugee contexts.

### Why should teachers of refugees use a core practice approach?

- Teachers of refugees come from diverse backgrounds with varying levels of training. Core practices offer an approach to teacher development that is designed for immediate application while building enduring foundational practices for teachers.
- Teachers often receive limited and sporadic training that may not align with the unique demands of crisis situations. In contrast, the core practice approach introduces an evidence-based framework to organise stakeholders around prioritised practices.
- Teacher training traditionally comes in the form of packaged, trademarked

programming that cannot be easily scaled. Core practices is an approach that focuses on flexible and adaptable practices that can be easily be integrated into any curricular scheme.


### Implementation Exemplar

Core practices is a flexible approach that varies depending on the context. A recent partnership serves as an illustrative example:

1. **Needs Assessment:** Investigate existing levels of teacher practice, curricular requirements, and contextual needs. We used available teacher observation data

and on-site visits, a review of guiding national policy documents, and an analysis of the curriculum.

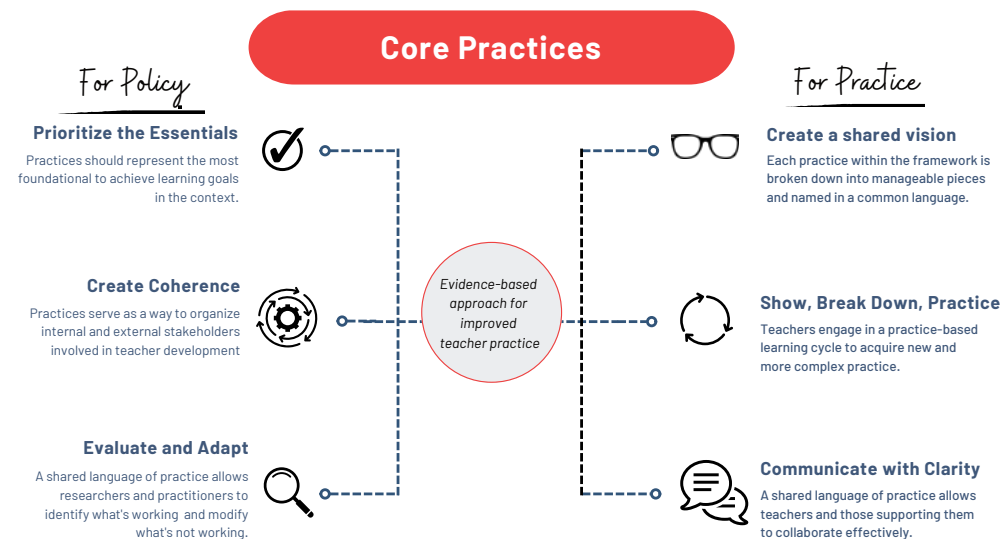
2. **Selection of Practices:** Convene a group of stakeholders to guide the selection process. We harnessed the expertise of teacher-coaches representing diverse subject areas and grade levels.
3. **Specification of Practices:** Build consensus around what the practice looks like in classrooms. We developed an observation protocol that specified a quality continuum for the different components of each practice.

 **Recommended reading:**

McDonald, M., Kazemi, E., & Kavanagh, S. S. (2013). Core practices and pedagogies of teacher education: A call for a common language and collective activity. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 64(5), 378–386.

Figure 10

Core Practices: An evidence based framework for improved teacher practice



Source: Lindsay Brown (2023).

# PAVING THE WAY FOR INCLUSIVE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN REFUGEE CONTEXTS

## Helen West

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## Katja Hinz

Associate Programme Specialist, IIEP-UNESCO

In December 2017, IGAD member states signed the Djibouti Declaration and Plan of Action on Refugee Education, committing to '[s]trengthen regional frameworks to promote the inclusion of refugee teachers, and their professional development and certification, in national education systems'.<sup>124,125</sup> Teacher professional development is central to a skilled and motivated teaching workforce, and Education Development Trust's and IIEP-UNESCO's research on teacher management in refugee settings in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda has identified several enabling factors. As outlined in the recommendations below, these factors are key to moving towards a system that is inclusive of refugee learners and teachers and is owned and driven by national governments and supported by national and international education partners.

### Actively support refugees and those from host communities to access pre-service teacher education

Despite Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia committing to the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (as part of being a

signatory to the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants), a number of practical barriers mean that individuals in refugee-hosting communities are not always able to study to become teachers. Governments and development partners should therefore address logistical and financial barriers, such as freedom of movement and the cost of relocating to study, to enable those from refugee areas to access pre-service training. Addressing these barriers would mean that communities have access to qualified teachers who speak their language, are familiar with their culture and experiences of displacement, and are therefore likelier to remain as teachers in what are often challenging work environments.

### Include teachers working in camp settings in the national provision of in-service teacher professional development

Both national and refugee teachers working in camp settings should be able to access the same professional development opportunities as those working in government schools. Enabling refugee teachers to access

professional development through nationally accredited service providers would ensure that they receive the same standards of training and are upskilled in areas determined as priorities by the government. For national teachers, enabling them to continue their professional development journey while working in such settings would mean that they are not disadvantaged compared to those working in government schools if and when they transfer back into the national system.

Enabling all teachers to access the same professional development opportunities is also in line with the UNHCR 2030 Strategy for Refugee Education, which calls for the inclusion of refugee education into national education systems, along with long-term development approaches and the acquisition of skills and knowledge.<sup>126</sup> Ensuring equitable access to national in-service training equips teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to participate in the national system as inclusion progresses.

### Key takeaway:

Teachers of refugees should be included in the national provision of in-service teacher professional development.



### Provide education partners with clear guidance to enable them to support the implementation of national teacher professional development priorities

With clear leadership and guidance from the government, education partners can accelerate progress towards inclusion by providing additional support to both refugee and national teachers in refugee settings. In the often remote and rural areas in which refugees are located, education partners play a key role in providing professional development to teachers who live far from national service providers. With national providers also at times facing financial and logistical barriers in reaching refugee-hosting communities, education partners play a key role in supporting these often vulnerable teachers.

To create a cohesive and focused group of education partners who are fully aligned with national service providers, strong government leadership and a clear national vision are crucial. It is equally important that partners and donors support government priorities instead of prioritising diverse agendas. Through the clear communication of a national professional development strategy and government-approved training, education partners will understand government priorities, deliver professional development sessions in line with those priorities. As a result, teachers across all locations will benefit from coordinated and strategically planned professional development opportunities.

### Recognise and accredit teacher professional development

The recognition and accreditation of professional development is key to a motivated teaching workforce and impacts teacher recruitment, retention, attrition, and career progression. Teachers who do not have their professional development recognised and/or rewarded can lose engagement. There could be added frustration for both qualified and unqualified refugee teachers when they are unable to show evidence of their learning and therefore progress, either in their host country or upon returning to their home country.

Developing a government-led and coordinated approach can more easily result in recognition and accreditation because service providers deliver government-approved training. National service providers such as teacher training colleges and universities should drive teacher professional development through direct delivery where possible. National providers could also guide and assure the quality of professional development opportunities offered by other education partners to maintain national standards and enable wider recognition and accreditation. This, in turn, should have a positive impact on teacher motivation, career progression and therefore retention, which is crucial in refugee settings that experience high levels of attrition.



#### Recommended reading:

UNHCR. (2022). *Transforming our understanding of refugee teachers and teaching in contexts of forced displacement*. UNHCR.

# STRENGTHENING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN REFUGEE CONTEXTS IN UGANDA: ENHANCING INCLUSION AND WELL-BEING

**Francis Bizoza  
Bigirimana**  
The African Travelling Teacher

Uganda is one of the world's largest refugee-hosting countries. According to the Second Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda, over 1.53 million refugees and asylum seekers call Uganda home. Children make up nearly 60% of this population.

Against this backdrop, the professional development of refugee teachers is a critical focal point for addressing this population's unique needs, fostering inclusivity, and promoting their overall well-being.

As a dedicated advocate deeply engaged with teachers in emergency settings, I emphasise the profound challenges that refugee teachers grapple with when striving to provide quality education to a diverse range of learners.

In today's educational landscape, and especially in contexts of forced displacement, teachers bear the weight of preparing students for the intricacies of 21st-century life. However, prevailing teacher professional development endeavours often fall short of these aspirations and teachers' needs, failing to align with the

demands of our rapidly evolving world and teachers' uncertain futures. It is therefore crucial that we recognise how current professional development initiatives merely scratch the surface of what is truly essential for teachers' knowledge, skills, and well-being needs.

Drawing upon my hands-on experience from the Flying Colors programme, an initiative that improves teaching skills on how to blend technology into the learning environment with playful and project-based learning to meaningfully engage refugee learners in education, I outline pivotal policy insights that can enhance the professional development of refugee teachers, with a specific focus on the requirements of pre-service and in-service training. To empower refugee teachers to face the challenges of emergency contexts, pre-service training programmes must imbue teachers with skills that are relevant and transferable to multiple school contexts.

These skills encompass the nurturing of a sense of global citizenship, advancing education for sustainable development, providing adept

counselling support, honing capacities for peacebuilding, facilitating effective conflict resolution, and equipping teachers with the expertise to adeptly manage trauma.

Addressing these critical subjects allows teachers to navigate the complexities of refugee settings with a sense of expertise and efficacy. Within Uganda's context, refugee teachers encounter specific obstacles that warrant targeted interventions. These obstacles include limited access to training opportunities, insufficient recognition of their qualifications, inadequate remuneration, and constrained pathways for career advancement.

By identifying, understanding, and communicating these challenges, we can empower donors, policy architects, and implementing stakeholders to fund and design precise interventions and extend necessary and sustainable support to refugee teachers.

Ultimately, the goal is to cultivate a nuanced and effective approach to refugee teacher professional development.

## Key takeaways:

The establishment of a national framework for recognising and accrediting refugee teachers' qualifications stands as a core recommendation. This would remove a significant barrier to and establish a strong foundation for further refugee teacher professional development initiatives.



Impactful professional development for refugee teachers would help to enhance teachers' skills, increase their levels of confidence, help them adapt to change, improve student-teacher relationships, to increase student achievement, too.

The effectiveness of the Flying Colors programme is underscored by the preparation of teachers through a multi-tiered approach, starting with initial induction training, followed by bi-weekly virtual refresher sessions, and then by quarterly in-person meetings during the pilot programme. A community of practice has also been initiated to further engage and support teachers at scale. Collaborative efforts between the programme partners were pivotal in establishing and funding pre-service and in-service training programmes that ensured teachers were well equipped for their roles.

To that end, there are five policy insights to bolster teacher professional development, focused on both pre-service and in-service training.

### Refugee teacher integration and continuous professional development

To effectively integrate refugee teachers into national education systems, education ministries should recognise their qualifications and prior experiences. This recognition validates the competencies of these educators and helps facilitate their meaningful participation in an educational ecosystem to which they can bring significant skills and experience. Recruiting

refugee teachers and host community teachers who understood the local languages of the learners was key to the success of the Flying Colors program.

A sustainable approach to refugee teacher professional development also requires multi-year funding. The commitment of financial resources ensures the continuity and effectiveness of professional development initiatives, which ultimately enhance the quality of education provided by refugee teachers and the outcomes achieved by learners.

Advocacy groups also play a central role in increasing awareness of refugee teachers' critical work and driving needed policy change. Advocates' efforts amplify our understanding of the challenges teachers face and the contributions that they make to the learning and well-being of refugee learners. In turn, we need to foster a supportive environment for teachers' professional growth and recognition. It is therefore important that advocates are adequately supported to continue their work as intermediaries and agitators for change with international agencies, government actors, and local organisations and schools.

### Beyond professional development certification and recognition is needed

Access to enhanced professional development programmes helps teachers build relevant skills and confidence and strengthens their ability to deliver quality education in complex contexts.

However, government-recognized certifications would enhance their status and remuneration, fostering improved job satisfaction and retention. Career progression prospects would also motivate teachers to invest in their long-term growth, ultimately improving their well-being. In an evaluation of the Flying Colors programme, we were able to establish that teacher engagement and motivation are critical to programme success and learning outcomes.

### Overcoming barriers

Structural barriers, including bureaucratic hurdles and financial constraints, pose challenges to implementing these recommendations. Collaborative efforts among stakeholders can bypass bureaucratic red tape. Funding from international donors can alleviate financial burdens; however, donors need to ways means to continue funding successful pilot programmes such as Flying Colors. Local partnerships and community engagement can also enhance the contextual relevance and sustainability of continuous professional development programmes.



### Recommended reading:

Dryden-Peterson, S (2011) *Refugee Education: A Global Review*. UNHCR.

# STRENGTHENING (NOT CIRCUMVENTING) EDUCATION SYSTEMS: PROMISING APPROACHES FOR TPD IN EAST AFRICAN REFUGEE CONTEXTS

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### Key takeaways:

Implementing sustainable and scalable refugee TPD requires strengthening (and not circumventing) existing government or humanitarian education systems. Interventions should strengthen the practical capacities of teachers to deliver the existing curriculum in a safe and enabling environment that caters to teacher's and children's well-being.

PlayMatters, an International Rescue Committee led and refugee learner focused initiative, complements and strengthens existing teacher professional development (TPD) systems in refugee hosting contexts in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda to support the implementation of active teaching and learning methods, using 'learning through play' as a catalyst. 'Systems' for PlayMatters refer to the government and humanitarian institutions responsible for pre-primary and primary education delivery, which vary across the three contexts. In refugee camps in Ethiopia, both refugees and nationals teach the Ethiopian curriculum in schools, which are mostly run by Refugee Returnee Services (a government institution). In Tanzanian camps, Congolese and Burundian refugee teachers teach their home country curricula in schools run by humanitarian actors. In Ugandan settlements, both refugee and national teachers teach the Ugandan curriculum to integrated classes of refugee and national children in government schools, although most qualified refugee teachers lack the required documentation to be qualified to teach in

Uganda. Through behavioural mapping, formative research, and implementation in teacher training institutions and schools, PlayMatters has identified numerous promising practices – and associated policy challenges – when supporting refugee TPD and identified three core recommendations targeting both international humanitarian actors and governments that support TPD for refugees.

### Recommendation 1

At the systems level, implementing sustainable and scalable refugee TPD requires strengthening existing government or humanitarian education systems rather than introducing alternative or completely novel approaches.

Understanding, operating within, and collaborating with actors across the system is critical for providing quality TPD relevant to refugee teachers' contexts. We recommend that donors and practitioners collaborate closely with system actors to increase refugee teachers' access to systems-approved TPD,

strengthening their recognised qualifications and increasing the qualified refugee teacher cadre to improve teacher-student ratios. We emphasise working with local education system actors, including teacher educators from teacher training institutions, head teachers, and other school leaders – those with existing capacity and direct access to refugee teachers. These actors can be supported to oversee and lead training, coaching, and peer learning activities to support teachers, and build the sustainability of the model. However, PlayMatters operates in contexts with diverse policies and political will towards refugee integration, and PlayMatters has found that it is possible to work effectively in locations that do not prioritise refugee integration into national education systems. For example, in Tanzania, PlayMatters has integrated teacher-facing content into humanitarian TPD delivery systems in refugee camps and has improved the quality of teaching and learning resources available to refugee teachers, while simultaneously working with government systems to support host-community schools.



## Recommendation 2

At the classroom level, TPD systems should strengthen school leaders' and teachers' practical capacities to deliver the existing curriculum within systemic requirements (e.g. curricula and exams), not seek to circumvent these systems.

Although existing systems are imperfect and may even inhibit quality education, teachers need support to work within them. PlayMatters supports teachers in replacing rote teaching methods with active pedagogy, emphasising practical daily strategies over theory, to meet teachers where they are, including modelling through instructional videos. It is also critical for actors who deliver TPD, both government and humanitarian, to recognise and support the complex personal and professional lives that refugee teachers navigate by providing teaching and learning resources and knowledge relevant to making their jobs easier. However, consistent funding for both national and refugee education systems is important for implementing quality, comprehensive, practical TPD that meets teachers where they are, which is often not the reality. When funding gaps exist, ensuring that functional and practice-oriented continuous professional development opportunities remain in place and functioning should be a priority.

## Recommendation 3

Effective TPD systems should, whenever possible, create an enabling environment for teachers to succeed in schools and classrooms, including core components on teacher and student well-being, gender and inclusion, school safety, and community engagement.

In refugee-hosting contexts, social cohesion and broader host community (in)stability can affect children's access to, and the quality of, education delivery. Teachers do not work in isolation – addressing the regular structural challenges that teachers and students face, such as a lack of teaching and learning materials, is important for improving instructional practices and the well-being of children and teachers alike. In particular, we recommend training teachers and community members on strategies to improve teacher and child well-being. PlayMatters integrates culturally-responsive psycho-social support and well-being strategies into its content, and supports a safe and inclusive learning environment that strengthens the teacher-student relationship. Additionally, further research into flexible and adaptive approaches when operating across the humanitarian development nexus can improve how projects respond to emerging needs. For example, following the outbreak of conflict in Northern Ethiopia, which was devastating to some project sites and staff, PlayMatters reallocated

funding and programming to provide a one-year multi-sectoral emergency response to address needs, which included a robust learning agenda.

These recommendations build on discourse and evidence, such as UNESCO IIEP and GIZ's discussion paper, to point global policy and practice towards promising approaches to strengthening refugee TPD, though challenges remain.



### Recommended reading:

UNESCO IIEP and GIZ. (2012).  
*Strengthening of Education Systems:  
A Discussion Paper Prepared For GIZ.*  
UNESCO IIEP.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS OF AFGHAN REFUGEES: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND PROSPECTS IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA, PAKISTAN

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### Key takeaways:

Tailoring teacher training to focus on refugee school needs, avoiding the blind adoption of donor agendas, and focusing on skills relevant to the unique requirements of refugee schools are all critical policy priorities. International and national actors must offer multi-faceted solutions that encompass financial, organisational, pedagogical, and psychological aspects of refugee education to ensure a comprehensive and holistic approach to enhancing teacher professional development and resulting classroom teaching practices in refugee schools.

Refugee teacher education has been a neglected area of research, policy, and practice within the wider field of forced migration and displacement for far too long. In particular, there is a dearth of literature on Afghan refugees' education, Afghan refugee teacher education, and the opportunities that teachers benefit from when their professional development is prioritised and improved.

Due to the former Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, the historical context of the Afghan refugee crisis led to the migration of millions of Afghans to neighbouring countries such as Pakistan. Various donor agencies and organisations thus became involved in providing education and teacher training for Afghan refugees, each with its own objectives and strategies.

The focus of this paper is on an International NGO – Basic Education for Afghan Refugees (BEFARe) – which has operated in 246 schools throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan. Over the course of twenty years, from 1996

to 2016, BEFARe trained more than 10,000 teachers. Of these, around 90% were Afghan refugee teachers who were trained for various school subjects in the Pashto, Dari, and Persian languages. The remaining 10% of teachers were Pakistani individuals employed and trained to teach the subjects of Urdu and English.

### Background: Design of curriculum for Afghan refugee schools

With the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan in 1979 and the toppling of the Taliban Government in 2001, school curricula and textbooks discussed a range of topics, from the ideology of jihad to countering communism, as well as education for peace and rebuilding to deradicalising Afghan youth. The evolution of curriculum development for Afghan refugee schools in Pakistan spans three distinct phases: 1981–1995, 1995–2006, and 2006–2016. The early phase focused on countering communism and promoting jihad against the Soviet Union. Curriculum materials were developed by organisations such as the

University of Nebraska, which incorporated pro-jihad content. The second phase saw changes after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, including NGOs shifting their focus to training teachers for a peaceful and reconstructed Afghanistan. In this phase, UNICEF played a role in developing a unified curriculum for Afghan refugees. In the third phase, after the US-led NATO invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, efforts were aimed at deradicalising Afghan youths and improving the quality of education.

### Curriculum-aligned teacher professional development focus

It is worth mentioning that while girls had the same curriculum and textbooks, they had separate schools, especially at the post-primary stage. Wherever BEFARe faced a shortage of funds and schools, they would run double shifts in the same building; in the morning, boys would attend the school, and in the afternoon, girls would use the same building for their education. Given the phases of curriculum development and implementation mentioned





above, trainee teachers were trained, and teachers taught accordingly in schools (i.e., when the requirement was training for jihad, teachers and schools focused on producing mujahideen to fight against the Soviet occupation). Similarly, when the Taliban was rooted out, the agenda for training and teaching shifted towards student-centred teaching and peace education.

Subjects such as Pashto, Persian, and Mathematics were used, with examples and calculations related to warfare dominating the content of the curriculum. However, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the training curriculum shifted towards more activity-based approaches.

### Basic Education for Afghan Refugees (BEFARe)

BEFARe provided both formal and non-formal education to Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The organisation introduced child-centred teaching methods, activity-based teaching, and training programmes for teachers. BEFARe continuously revised its teaching and learning materials to match changing needs and policies. Collaboration with UNHCR and the Afghan Ministry of Education also led to a significant number of repatriated teachers trained in Pakistan being reintegrated into the education system of Afghanistan.

BEFARe trained thousands of male and female Afghan refugee teachers through various

approaches, including basic training, refresher training, on-the-job training, and pre-service and in-service training. The objectives of these training programmes were to change and improve teachers' attitudes towards teaching, equipping them with modern teaching techniques, and updating their subject knowledge. BEFARe's work contributed to the development of Afghan refugee teachers, who could play a crucial role in the strengthening of the education system in Afghanistan. However, while the training sessions offered a few advantages, they also had numerous issues, which are discussed in detail below.

### Professional development: Content and challenges

The content of the teacher training programmes frequently evolved based on the interests of international donors. Teacher training content thus focused on student-centred teaching methods, including roleplay, assignments, presentations, and debates. However, training duration was often short, and Afghan student teachers had limited academic backgrounds, making it difficult for them to understand and transfer complex instructions and expectations to the classroom. Language barriers also existed, as the training centres used Pashto textbooks and instruction, which was challenging for Pakistani student-teachers whose own education had been delivered in Urdu.

### Teaching tools and community involvement

The teaching tools employed by student-teachers were theoretical and practical. Practical tools included charts, blackboards, and flashcards, which were used to facilitate learning through physical activities and real objects. However, there was a shortage of important audio-visual aids for classroom teaching. The role of the community in improving teaching practices was also limited due to various contextual factors, including the complexities of poverty and the lack of incentives for their involvement. School management committees were trained to better involve the community, but they often faced challenges common to displaced and impoverished populations, which stood in the way of effective and lasting improvements to teacher quality and practice.

### Classroom teaching practice

Classroom teaching practice was a significant challenge for Afghan refugee student-teachers. These teachers faced social, psychological, and personal anxieties, including low wages, delayed salaries, and a lack of teaching materials. High student enrolment, multi-grade teaching, and student absenteeism were also among the common issues. Many students and teachers experienced trauma and war-related difficulties that affected the overall quality of the teaching and learning environment. A lack

of proper evaluation materials, recreational equipment, and certificates also lowered teachers' engagement with their roles.

Reflecting on the discussion above, several policy recommendations are provided below for enhancing classroom teaching practice and teacher education and training programmes in general, with a particular focus on refugee teacher professional development. These recommendations are aimed at all stakeholders, but first and foremost at international organisations and local government partners:

#### 1. Improve the refugee and emergency teacher training curriculum

- Centralise the curriculum under the Afghan Commissionerate in Peshawar and the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan to ensure coherence and continuity between the two systems.
- Ensure that teachers are certified and that these certifications are recognised in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

#### 2. Recommendations for teachers

- Address teacher well-being by providing psychosocial support services, improving teachers' own psychosocial literacy, and facilitating communities of practice within which teachers find opportunities for collaboration and peer coaching.

- Reduce existing teacher shortages and workloads by utilising local schools for apprenticeship-style pre-service training for student refugee teachers, with a focus on mother-language instruction and multi-grade teaching.

### 3. Teacher training content

- Resist the blind adoption of donor country agendas and ensure that refugee teacher education is tailored to the knowledge, skills, and relationships that refugee children, adolescents, and schools need and deserve.

### 4. Improve head teachers' support for teacher professional development

- Provide professional development support in coaching and advocacy so that they can mentor refugee teachers and champion their needs to NGOs and government agencies.
- Encourage teachers to create low-cost teaching materials.
- Fund and facilitate head teacher communities of practice so they can share strategies for low-resource or no-resource school activities and strengthen partnerships with NGOs and CSOs for delivering non-academic child and adolescent development support in schools.

These recommendations aim to address the challenges faced by refugee schools, teachers, and students, with the overarching goal of improving education quality and outcomes in the refugee context.

A lack of funding and investment in refugee education is one of the major structural impediments that leads to a host of problems within schools. If the recommendations above are enacted, there is a potential to bring about improved learning experiences for children and adolescents, underpinned by a school ethos in which appropriately trained and recognised refugee teachers who are professionally well equipped and financially compensated can focus their energies on the all-round development of children and adolescents.



#### Recommended reading:

Hetland, A (2006). *Learning Away from Home: A Foundation Book in Refugee and Emergency Education*. Islamabad: Alhamra.



# IMPROVING REFUGEE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IN LEBANON AND JORDAN: NURTURING TEACHER IDENTITY, RELATIONSHIPS, AND AGENCY

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Non-formal education is key when formal schooling is disrupted or unavailable to refugee children; however, teacher development can be lacking or inconsistent in these very contexts. The LINEs research project explored the role of teachers working in Lebanon (Syrian refugees) and Jordan (Sudanese, Somali, Yemeni refugees), and piloted ways to strengthen 'teacher identity' and 'agency' as key aspects of their professional development experience. Using a participatory approach that aims to work with and for people and to achieve long-lasting change,<sup>127</sup> we supported teachers in examining and articulating their vision for refugee education and teachers' roles within their communities.

For the purposes of this article, teacher identity is defined as the hopes, beliefs, values, and sense of purpose a teacher holds. This is informed and influenced by inter-related factors which include their personal and professional experiences, the contexts in which they live and work, and the perceptions and behaviour of those around them.<sup>128</sup> Teacher agency refers to

a teacher's ability to act in accordance with their values and beliefs. Teachers can enact change at multiple levels of the system, including the classroom, school, and community.<sup>129</sup> These concepts offer insight into refugee teacher development beyond improving classroom teaching skills, and they help us understand the roles of teachers as leaders of change.<sup>130</sup>

## Why identity and agency?

Our research has found that refugee teachers often explicitly incorporate personal and political dimensions into their work. Rather than simply substituting formal schooling – which is unavailable to their students – in nonformal spaces, teachers take an active leadership role in community development, responding to political and social change and tension in, between, and beyond their communities. Closeness to and a sense of responsibility towards their communities enables teachers to tailor their practices to their students, source spaces and resources for teaching, persuade parents to enrol their children, and prioritise

student welfare. Teaching is thus a form of activism and resistance to the precarity and loss of control that displacement entails, both in the act of teaching itself and in advocating for education rights within communities and with different stakeholders (e.g. NGO representatives, donors, etc.). Being a teacher can offer the opportunity for agency and purpose in a context where there is often so little.<sup>131</sup>

For these reasons, we identify 'teacher identity' and 'teacher agency' as key to refugee teacher development. Strengthening identity can lead to a stronger purpose and a stronger teacher community, reducing feelings of isolation and providing hope for sustainability. Focusing on agency can empower teachers and lead to social change within and beyond refugee communities. To promote agency, we must also address the obstacles and constraints that refugee teachers encounter that prevent them from acting as they would like. This includes holding education stakeholders (e.g., ministries of education in host communities, United Nations agencies, donors, NGO

## Key takeaways:

Invest in holistic teacher development that prioritises teacher identity and agency and fosters a sense of belonging within the wider education community, strengthening teachers' motivation and sense of purpose.

representatives, etc.) accountable for providing education in refugee settings and ensuring that they work with teachers to achieve the best possible outcomes for them.<sup>132</sup> Relationships are at the heart of agency and identity, and nurturing these relationships within teacher development helps teachers to find enjoyment and friendship, which contributes to wellbeing and resilience. A focus on identity and agency can therefore create a shared ethos that helps refugee teachers navigate structural and local barriers and challenges.

### Structural barriers to holistic teacher development

In addition to addressing precarious and unjust working conditions, stakeholders need to overcome conventional views of professional development. All teacher interventions ultimately aim to improve student achievement, but focusing solely on classroom outcomes can limit teachers' potential to flourish.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, the precarity in which refugee teachers work makes it unattractive to invest in contextualised and sustainable approaches that recognise teachers' expertise and knowledge, as this type of localised and holistic development requires more time to realise intended outcomes, and its impact is less easily quantifiable.

Navigating these barriers requires building awareness among all stakeholders and professional bodies at all levels of the

education system (e.g. ministries of higher education, curriculum developers, trainers, and practitioners), and piloting programmes that develop and showcase holistic approaches, including the measurement of teacher success beyond traditional metrics, which might include teacher enjoyment, sense of belonging, wellbeing, and inclusion.

### What should education stakeholders do to support nonformal refugee teacher development?

- Prioritise refugee teacher identity and agency and foster a sense of belonging within the wider education community, strengthening teachers' motivation and sense of purpose.
- Use teacher development opportunities to nurture supportive and collaborative relationships locally and globally, as these contribute to enjoyment and well-being and reduce refugee teachers' feelings of isolation.
- Empower refugee teachers by codesigning development activities that start from and build on teachers' existing experiences, skills, and knowledge and that effectively respond to their needs.
- Recognise and support refugee teachers as agents of change within their communities. Help teachers develop advocacy skills and identify platforms through which they can influence a range of stakeholders, including parents, donors, and aid workers.

- Find new ways to measure teacher success, such as teacher enjoyment, sense of belonging, well-being, and inclusion.



### Recommended reading:

Mendenhall, M. (2023). Participatory approaches for strengthening teacher professional development in refugee settings: successes and limitations. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 1–12.



# CAN LOW-TECH SOLUTIONS IMPROVE ROHINGYA TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS IN COX'S BAZAR, BANGLADESH?

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## Key takeaways

- Educational technology solutions can help overcome challenges such as language barriers by providing refugee teachers with accessible professional development and instructional support in their own languages.
- Low-tech interactive audio instruction provides just-in-time professional development for refugee teachers to learn how to conduct more interactive and learner-centred classes so that they can understand the connection between good teaching practices and improved learning outcomes.

About one million Rohingya refugees<sup>134</sup> from Myanmar – half of whom are children – reside in 33 camps in Cox's Bazar, in the Southeast Division of Chattogram in Bangladesh, close to the border with Myanmar, and in Bhasan Char, a low-lying island located in the Bay of Bengal. Fleeing extreme violence in Myanmar, a majority of the Rohingya arrived in Bangladesh in 2017. Though initially Rohingya children were provided education using a non-formal curriculum, in 2022, the Myanmar curriculum was rolled out for a majority of children in the camps. In July 2023, at the start of the new school year, over 260,000 Rohingya children enrolled in the Myanmar Curriculum within the Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char camps. Over 7,000 teachers now teach the Myanmar curriculum, 55 percent of whom are from the Rohingya community, and conduct classes from kindergarten through to grade 10.<sup>135</sup> There are over 30 implementing partners in the Education Sector. UNICEF's programming, as one of the three leading agencies, accounts for 75 percent of the enrolled learners for the Myanmar Curricula, which amounts to 200,425 Rohingya children.

## The Rohingya live in an environment that harms their physical and mental health

They reside in temporary shelters and attend school in provisional, cyclone-vulnerable learning facilities made from bamboo and tarpaulin sheets. Rohingya refugees' movement between camps and outside of their assigned camps is restricted and strictly enforced. They are also largely disconnected from the online world due to a lack of cellular and broadband network coverage and sporadic access to electricity. Recently, food rations were cut from USD\$12 to USD\$8 per person per month (or 27 cents per day) due to a steep reduction in humanitarian funding for the Rohingya crisis, further compounding the many hardships faced by the Rohingya.<sup>136</sup> Though there are multiple sectors, including education, that provide mental health and psychosocial support services, the camp context makes a taxing environment in which to live for a prolonged period of time.<sup>137</sup>

## Education for the Rohingya remains a difficult challenge

Teaching in the camp's learning centres (LC)<sup>138</sup> is not easy. After two years of persistent advocacy

to allow for the introduction of formal curriculum within the camps, the Education Sector started implementing the Myanmar formal education curriculum in 2022, once COVID-19 restrictions were lifted.<sup>139</sup> In 2023, for the new academic year, all grades from kindergarten to grade 10 are being offered in the camps, increasing learning opportunities for all Rohingya children. The newfound access to formal subject-based schooling has also led to increased student enrolment.<sup>140</sup> However, Rohingya teachers' work has become even more challenging since a majority of them are not familiar with teaching a formal curriculum. With teachers working two shifts per day, five days a week, there is less time to carry out lesson planning and learner assessments, which usually take place beyond formal working hours. Further adding to the teachers' heavy workload, curriculum resources are written in the Burmese and English scripts, which only a few teachers and learners understand with sufficient proficiency. Compounded by increased workload and limited capacity, multilingual classrooms exacerbate the existing pressure that Rohingya teachers must navigate to fulfil their roles.

## Technology can improve the implementation of the Myanmar curriculum in the camps

Although the overall impact of educational technology (EdTech) on learning in emergency settings is contested, especially following the school closures caused by COVID-19, EdTech solutions can help overcome challenges such as language barriers by providing teachers with accessible professional development and instructional support in their own languages.<sup>141</sup>

A reliable low-tech solution called Interactive Audio Instructions (IAI) has been implemented in many hard-to-reach and hard-to-teach contexts to improve learning outcomes for teachers and learners alike. Using low-cost radios, mobile phones, and other broadcast capable devices, IAI asks listeners to engage with the lessons aurally and verbally and to participate in activities. Historical evidence of IAI implementation points to its positive impacts on learning outcomes.<sup>142</sup> Given its positive effect on the provision of quality education, UNICEF is implementing IAI audio lessons to support instruction in the camps for Grades 4 to 7 for English, Burmese, and Mathematics subjects, reaching 31,400 Rohingya children, with plans in place to support additional grades in the future.

## It is important for refugee teachers to receive professional development opportunities that take into account the

## impact of past and ongoing trauma on their capacity to learn new skills

Rohingya teachers, who survived extreme violence in Myanmar now negotiate troubling memories and difficult daily realities in congested camp conditions. The negative influence of such trauma on children and adults' learning and development is well-documented internationally, especially when learning tasks involve a high cognitive load, such as prolonged concentration for new skills development.<sup>143</sup> Taking this into account, it is critical to support refugee teachers with simple to use EdTech solutions, for which professional development is designed to have a low cognitive load. For example, with IAI, professional development activities include learning to operate simple-to-use audio devices, radios or speakers to play audio lessons, where the cognitive load of learning to use IAI is low when compared with alternative technology solutions.

IAI provides “just-in-time” professional development in which teachers learn to conduct more interactive and learner-centered classes where they can understand the connection between good teaching practices and improved learning outcomes.<sup>144</sup> Teachers can also improve their content knowledge by listening to the IAI sessions in advance in their mother tongue rather than reading lengthy documents in a second language that they do not fully understand. IAI is especially appropriate for novice teachers with low content and pedagogical knowledge,

like many of the Rohingya teachers who were denied access to their own basic education in Myanmar.<sup>145</sup> IAI materials are also a part of complementary professional development activities that help teachers address content knowledge gaps and learn how to actively engage children in learning. Additionally, within a population where digital skills are low, with a pronounced gap in digital skills between male and female teachers, IAI can reduce the gender inequities that are often exacerbated by more advanced EdTech solutions.

## For displaced and stateless populations, providing multimedia materials in mother-tongue languages is identity affirming and empowering

In multilingual classrooms, like those in the Rohingya camps, IAI can support mother-tongue language instruction. Promoted by UNESCO as a foundational education policy,<sup>146</sup> mother-tongue language instruction is a key asset to improve engagement and learning outcomes. Most Rohingya children only understand the Rohingya language; however, it is a spoken language, with no written script, limiting its use for traditional schooling purposes. Rohingya language IAI materials, aligned with Myanmar curriculum, have therefore been developed to guide and support effective instruction in classrooms where English and Burmese are the languages of instruction. IAI materials also ensure that contextualized and culturally responsive learning materials are made available to a community that, historically, has been denied ac-

cess to teaching and learning materials in their own language. As a positive outcome, learning in the Rohingya language can also help revitalize Rohingya identity and culture.

As the evidence shows, incorporating EdTech without contextualization or continuous professional development for teachers undermines meaningful, sustained, and scalable results.<sup>147</sup> In this sense, just providing teachers with IAI materials and a portable speaker does not guarantee improved teaching practices or learning outcomes. However, carefully scaffolded and appropriately paced professional development focused on the integration of IAI into teaching practices is recommended. Teacher professional development should therefore include knowledge on pedagogical technology to support the successful integration of EdTech in the classroom. If this component is not included, teachers will lack the confidence to embrace and integrate new knowledge and skills into their daily practice.<sup>148</sup>



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Burns, M. (2023). *Distance Education for Teacher Training: Modes, Models and Methods*. (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Education Development Center.



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## Endnotes

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