

Rapid Assessment of Barriers to Education in Kakuma Refugee Camp

With a focus on Access and Quality in Primary Education

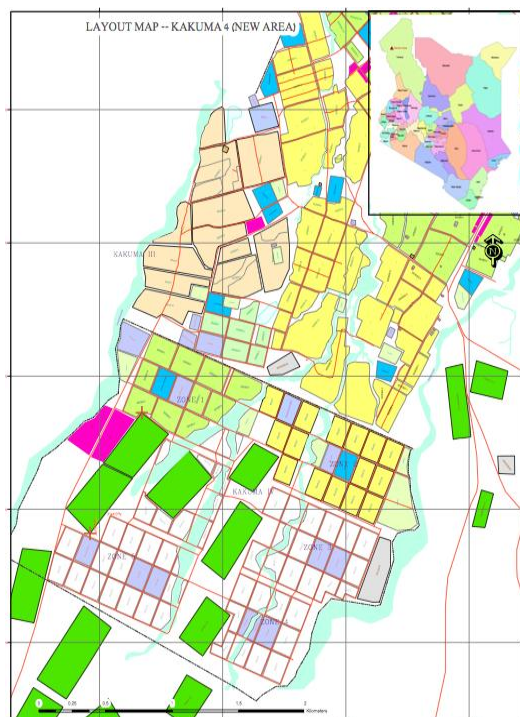


Lutheran World Federation Kenya-Djibouti Program

February 2015

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALP	Accelerated Learning Program
CWD	Children with Disabilities
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NER	Net Enrollment Ratio
PSN	People with Special Needs
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SMC	School Management Committee
SNE	Special Needs Education
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund



Layout of Kakuma Refugee Camp, July 2014.

Situation Overview

As Kakuma's population continues to grow so too does the challenge in providing education to its child residents. As at 31 December 2015, these children number 98,861, representing 55.5% of the camp's total population of 178,079¹, and an increase of more than 37% over a 14 month period². The scale of this influx served to dilute substantial gains made in 2013 to improve the capacity and quality of Kakuma's schools, exerting new pressures on educational resources and necessitating the diversion of many from established schools to support the newly arrived population.

Kakuma Refugee Camp was established in 1992 to accommodate 16,000 children and youth fleeing violent conflict in Sudan. In the intervening period, refugees from 20 other nations have sought protection in Kakuma, creating what is now one of the largest single-site, and multiethnic, refugee camps in the world. The arrival of 48,014 asylum seekers to the camp in 2014 far exceeded the 25,000 initially estimated might arrive as a result of ethno-political conflict in South Sudan but not half of the 100,000 projection then used through the year in anticipation of ongoing conflict and widespread food insecurity in Kenya's northwestern neighbour³. This represents a scenario in which the probable population of Kakuma by mid 2015 is more than double the 100,000 for which the location was intended upon its establishment 22 years ago, and indicates the likelihood of critical shortages of natural, material, financial and human resources in a context already stretched to respond to the protection needs of its population.

Kakuma's unusual demographical composition represents a significant factor in considering and responding to the needs of its population. While the camp's population is comprised of 21 nationalities in total, a large number are very small in number, four just under 5% each of the total population, and all dwarfed by the Somali and South Sudanese populations at 31.7% and 49.2% respectively. These nationalities can be further divided along ethno-linguistic lines, and again by needs specific to the sex and/or age of the population. The extent of diversity in the camp translates to a complex context for service delivery.

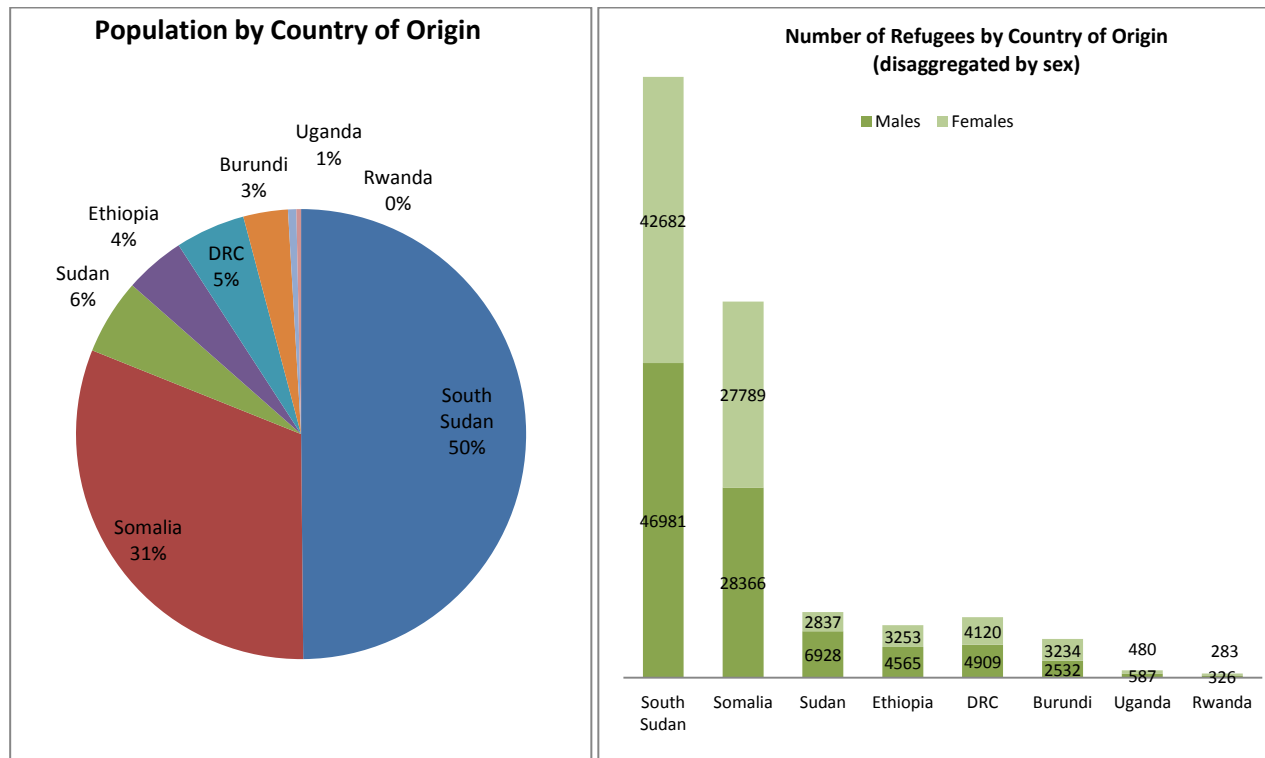
55.5% of Kakuma's population is aged 17 years or under. In real terms, this means that just under 100,000 of Kakuma's residents present with additional vulnerabilities by virtue of the fact that they are children, a figure which is growing at a disproportionate rate due to the higher percentage of children arriving among the influx population – 65% of all new arrivals. Among these children, 24% are separated from their parents or usual caregiver, or unaccompanied by any care-giving adult relative – compounding existing challenges

¹ UNHCR, Camp Population Statistics, 31 December 2014

² LWF Annual report to UNHCR 2014

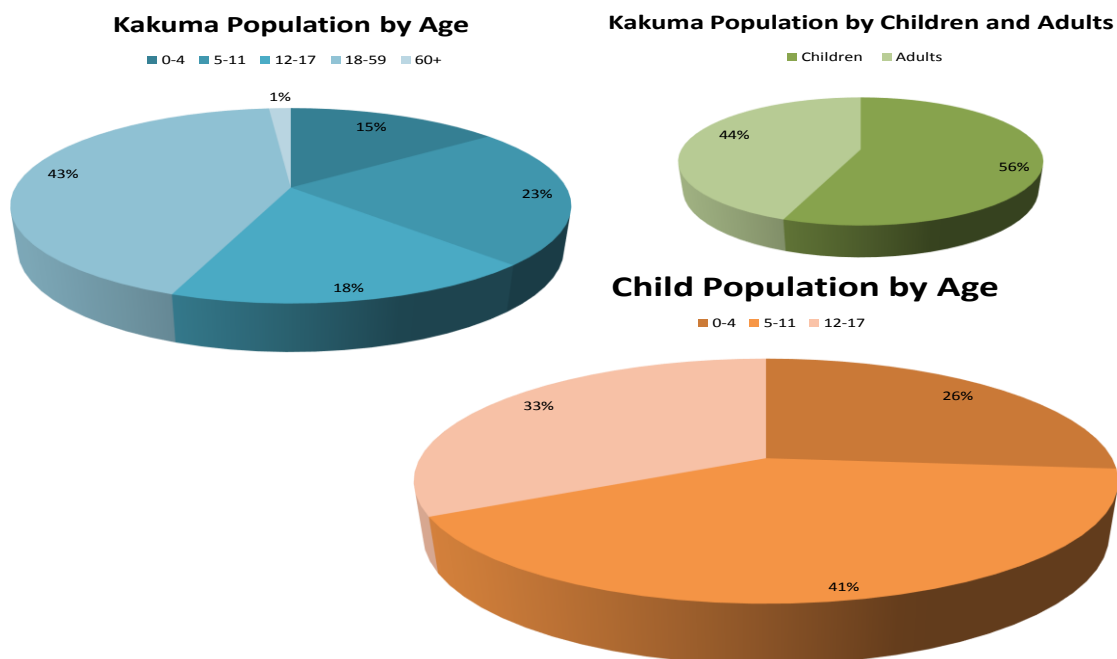
³ Minutes from *UNHCR Emergency Coordination Meeting*, 8 May 2014, UNHCR Conference Room, Kakuma

sourcing and supporting safe alternative care for vulnerable children across the camp. And doing so is only one component of the necessary response to the various protection issues that emerge where the magnitude of the child population intersects with the afore-detailed ethnic diversity in a context with such limited resources. 100,000 children means 100,000 individuals who should be accessing school either now or within five years.



The intersection between Education and Child Protection speaks to the duplicate importance of formal schooling in promoting child safety and opportunity. Child Protection takes advantage of the protective value inherent in a child's school attendance, including the unique position of teachers in identifying children who they suspect to be at risk, and a plethora of evidence on the benefits of education in mitigating protection risks relating to health, early marriage, child labour, sexual exploitation and FGM among others. The inverse situation then, where children at high risk of some or all of the above cannot or do not access their right to education, represents a calamity of large proportions and one that should be at the very centre of planning and response in the Kakuma context.

LWF's Education Program operates eleven Pre-Primary schools and 19 Primary schools across Kakuma's four camp areas, with a combined enrolment of 57,777 children⁴. This number doesn't go close to encompassing Kakuma's entire school-aged population and is as such indicative of the sustained gaps in ensuring educational access for all school-aged children. A joint UNHCR-LWF assessment of camp education conducted in July 2013 identified that 90% of existing school facilities are accommodating the maximum number of learners possible, with an average classroom to learner ratio that now sits at 1:147, 1:156 in primary schools alone. While LWF has established two new emergency primary schools in the ensuing period, the response has coincided with a dramatic increase in the camp population, exacerbating pressures on land, water, materials and human resources, thereby compounding existing challenges in promoting access to primary education for all children in Kakuma.



But beyond the fundamental goal of universal access lurks the corresponding need to ensure quality - a factor of both standalone importance and considered as one that works in reciprocity with learner retention. The mere fact of admission to an institution does not account for the value of the instruction within, complicating the matter of access with far-reaching needs including having somewhere for learners to sit, something to read, some way to write and someone to learn from.

⁴ LWF Education Management Information System

These overarching themes - access *and* quality - represent the mutually reinforcing barriers to education in Kakuma and ones used to guide this assessment. It is anticipated that a comprehensive exploration of the factors that currently serve to limit the access of children in Kakuma to quality primary education will enable a deliberate response and result in measurable improvements that extend far beyond the classrooms themselves.

Summary of Findings

A multitude of factors interact to prevent children from accessing primary school in Kakuma. Focus Group Discussions and interviews with children both in and out of school indicate that while these factors might have different bearing according to the age, sex and cultural background of children, there are consistent themes for children who have dropped out of school as well as non-enrolled children (those of school going age who have never attended). The assessment finds barriers that can be categorised as follows:

Infrastructural Barriers The number of children of school age in Kakuma far exceeds the number and capacity of schools, classrooms, desks, chairs, toilets and books. Neither LWF nor UNHCR have policies that necessitate a cap on the number of school enrolments, but schools are forced to place discretionary limits on the number of children able to be accommodated in a classroom or by a given teacher. For primary schools in Kakuma, the average classroom to child ratio sits at 1:156, the latrine to child ratio at 1:141, with desks at 1:9 and teachers at 1:97. The distance for children to school too can serve to dissuade enrolment or attendance. Interestingly though, while infrastructure featured as a key barrier identified by LWF and teachers, it was not always among the key issues identified as a barrier by children and families, with exception to circumstances in which disability access is a factor.

Circumstantial Barriers The disproportionately large number of overage learners in Kakuma's schools is attributable to various factors, many of them unavoidable in the context of human displacement, that interfere with learning in childhood and adversely impact the likelihood of school completion. Where the NER for primary schools in Kakuma is 69.5%, the GER is at a much higher 113.4%, speaking to the high number of over age learners across the camp⁵. Children and families interviewed identified factors such as marriage and labour as reasons for a child's non-attendance or drop out from school during their teenage years, with language barriers and low educational achievement also representing key factors,

⁵ UNICEF defines the Gross Enrolment Ratio as 'the number of children, regardless of age, divided by the population of the group that officially corresponds to the same level', where the Net Enrolment Ratio refers to the 'number of children enrolled in primary school who belong to the age group that officially corresponds to primary schooling, divided by the total population of the same age group.'

particularly for over age learners or those requiring SNE. Movement within the camp, or anticipated resettlement to a third country, increases the likelihood of drop out from school, as identified by each learners, families and teachers.

Financial Barriers School is free in Kakuma but often not perceived as such by children and families who cite the cost of school supplies, transport, uniforms and in some cases, bribery by teaching staff, as costs that can be difficult to meet or not a priority for families. Likewise, in a context with few income generation opportunities, school attendance is at times perceived in terms of the loss of income it represents, either where a child might be generating income through cheap labour, or required to tend younger siblings while a parent or guardian undertakes duties outside the home. This is more likely to be the case for girls, who become increasingly underrepresented at primary school through the grades.



Primary school learners play after school in Kakuma III.

Cultural Barriers In tandem with other barriers, cultural factors play a significant role in the educational decision-making in Kakuma. Kakuma's population brings various experiences and expectations of formal schooling, some negative or placing low value on education; inexperience of English and Swahili as languages of instruction; and cultural interests that take precedence over formal schooling. These interests can serve to sandwich the length of time available for school attendance or causing delayed initiation of schooling - such as *madrassa* for Islamic children - as well as early drop out - such as early marriage, or FGM which can result in poor health or disinterest in school. Cultural barriers are more likely to inhibit opportunities for girls than boys to access education, and arguably represent the most challenging barriers about which to collect accurate quantitative or qualitative data.

Human Resource Barriers Finally, human resources and social structures represent crosscutting barrier to educational access and quality. Less than 50% of teachers in Kakuma's Primary schools hold relevant qualifications, limiting the capacity and interest of the teachers in managing large class sizes, with limited resources, in poor infrastructural conditions. Retention of experienced teachers is an ongoing challenge, particularly for those with qualifications who cite opportunities for less demanding work that is higher paying as a key reason for separation, as well as sickness, resettlement or interest in starting a small business. While the poor retention of teachers has a significant impact on the continuation of learning for students, so too can it contribute to weakened management structures and insecurity among pupils who identify bullying and abuse among learners as a barrier to participation in education. It should be added that the enforcement of LWF's code of conduct necessitates the termination of teachers who breach their ethical responsibilities, which has included inappropriate relations with pupils, non-attendance and bribery of children and families for personal gain.

Methodology

The Rapid Assessment of Barriers to Education in Kakuma Refugee Camp has taken advantage of existing data management systems and ongoing informal information gathering, together with a small number of formal Focus Group Discussions and Interviews. Quantitative data was generated using the Education Management Information System (EMIS), the 'repository for data collection, processing, analysing and reporting of educational information including schools, students, teachers and staff'⁶, which is housed within LWF's Kakuma Education Program to monitor performance and resource allocation across Kakuma's education system. Qualitative information has been gathered by means of ongoing assessment and information gathering by child protection and education staff among children both in and out of school, particularly those with protection concerns. In such cases, children were interviewed one-on-one in the course of child protection activities, or have actively volunteered feedback regarding their educational challenges. This latter means of data collection is particularly relevant among newly arrived children⁷, particularly unaccompanied minors. This assessment also took advantage of the annual Comprehensive Needs Assessment, facilitated by UNHCR, conducted by all relevant agencies and involving refugees of various age groups, cultures and social groups in the camp of both sexes and with varying levels of engagement with primary education in the camp. These interviews were facilitated as focus group discussions by agency staff (not necessarily LWF staff), and the results disaggregated by age and sex.

⁶L. Carrizo, C. Sauvageot and N. Bella (2003) *Information tools for the preparation and monitoring of education plans*.

⁷ The term 'newly arrived children' refers in this case to minors who reached Kakuma after and as a result of the onset of conflict in South Sudan 15 December 2013. Among this child population, boys are disproportionately represented at close to 60%, while UAMs form up to 6%.

Participants in the group discussions were not required to give their name or any identifying details. Further, a desk review of pertinent policies, research and up to date reports on Kakuma served to inform this assessment.



Focus Group Discussion conducted in Kakuma III in February 2014.

The Rapid Assessment of Barriers to Education in Kakuma Refugee Camp is intended to serve as a functional overview of issues affecting access to quality educational for children in Kakuma. It is not a comprehensive assessment and is limited by methodologies that draw predominantly on existing data and information resources, with only one targeted and specific method of face-to-face information gathering. Nonetheless, the rapid assessment uses both quantitative and qualitative sources that span recent months, input from learners, children out of school, parents, teachers, community members and agency staff, and relevant reports that cut across the education sector to inform a general overview of barriers to both access and quality in primary education.

Findings

Access and quality are central tenets of UNHCR's policy on the provision of education for refugee children, as stated in the *2012-2016 Education Strategy*⁸ and supported by Kenya's Ministry of Education in its 2012 *Concept Note on Refugee Education* in Kenya, which identifies quality and access as two of four overarching

⁸ UNHCR (2012) *2012-2016 Education Strategy*. Division of International protection: Switzerland

recommendations for refugee education⁹. These priorities reflect the findings in 2011's *Refugee Education: A Global Review*¹⁰, which criticised UNHCR for providing 'education for ultimate disappointment'¹¹, while arguing that 'access, quality and protection must be conceptualised as integrally connected in effective policy and programmatic approaches to refugee education'¹².

This assessment notes that while access and quality represent complementary ideals, their relationship in practise can be more problematic; resourcing challenges can prevent them from intersecting, resulting instead in their conception as opposing or contested priorities. In Kakuma, where educational resources of all kinds are limited, greater access can be achieved, but at the expense of quality - by sharing the available classrooms, teachers, desks, chairs, toilets, books and other resources among a higher number of learners. Alternatively, access can be compromised in the interests of resourcing that ensures quality education for a smaller number of learners. This assessment found barriers that prevent some children in the camp from accessing education of either kind – usually for reasons relating to culture or socioeconomic circumstances. It finds though, a much greater number of willing learners who experience marginalisation from or within schools due to the insufficiency of current resourcing to meet their individual learning needs – that is, access to under-resourced schools or lack of access to well resourced ones. Hence, the principles that should be 'integrally connected' are often juxtaposed, as can be seen in the breakdown of barriers that follows.

Infrastructural and Resource Barriers

Kakuma is currently resourced with nineteen primary schools, spanning each of the four sub-camps, with a combined enrolment in November 2014 of 47,798 children, or an average of 2515 learners per school. This in turn equates to an average 156 learners per classroom - ranging significantly from 35 learners per classroom in the Angelina Jolie Girls Boarding School, to 615 learners per classroom in the highly congested Hope Primary School in Kakuma IV. These figures are calculated based on enrolment numbers, and considered accurate against a 90.56% attendance rate, speaking to the near impossibility of increased enrolments for reasons of infrastructural incapacity alone. The 305 classrooms in the camp vary in condition; some are in a state of significant disrepair or and unusable due to any one or more of poor maintenance, adverse climatic conditions, termites and general wear and tear. While 47,798 is a notable gross enrolment number, it is dwarfed by 74,067 - the total number of children aged between 5 and 17 living in Kakuma - the vast majority of who have

⁹ Along with assessment and registration. Government of Kenya (August, 2012) *Concept Note on Refugee Education*. Ministry of Education, Directorate of Policy and Planning: Nairobi.

¹⁰ Dryden-Peterson, S. (2011) *Refugee Education: A Global Review*. UNHCR: Switzerland. P9

¹¹ Dryden-Peterson, S. (2011) *Refugee Education: A Global Review*. UNHCR: Switzerland. P9

¹² Ibid. p22

experienced no schooling or interrupted schooling that has prevented them from completing primary school. Using this total figure as an indicator reveals that as many as 26,259 potential learners are excluded from primary school for reasons that may be compounded by other factors but will most certainly include the physical limitations of school infrastructure.



Children examine damage to a school classroom after floods in September 2014.

Beyond classrooms, Kakuma's schools experience congestion relating to other key infrastructure, including latrines and sanitation facilities in general. UNICEF's *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools Manual* states that 'to be truly child-friendly a school must have accessible, gender-appropriate toilets and hand-washing facilities, access to potable drinking water and solid waste management with proper boundaries'¹³, noting particularly the impact of an absence of these facilities on the retention of girls: 'Increasingly, evidence has shown that the absence of toilets or separate toilets in schools for girls is a major reason parents keep their daughters from attending school.'¹⁴ Standards for WASH in schools therefore recommend at least one latrine for every 25 female users, along with one latrine and one urinal for every 50 male users¹⁵, a target unachieved by Kakuma's

¹³ UNICEF (2012) *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools Manual*. United Nations: New York p5

¹⁴ Ibid. p36

¹⁵ Adams, John, et al. (2009) *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Standards for Schools in Low-cost Settings*, World Health Organization: Geneva.

overall latrine to learner ratio of 1:141. Within classrooms, desks are allocated across schools at an average of 16 to a classroom at a desk to child ratio of 1:9 and a chair to learner ratio of 1:119.

Children who have dropped out of school in Kakuma report this lack of resources as high amongst their reasons for disengagement, noting particularly a lack of school meals, text books and sanitary items as causing them to feel alienated from learning, unable to concentrate and ashamed. Kakuma's schools are currently resourced with 1.2 textbooks for each primary school student, split across 8 primary school subjects, limiting access and potential for study outside school hours. Among children still attending primary school, congestion and limited resourcing was a common complaint, reported most often in terms of classroom space and textbooks.

While no data is available to represent the average distance that children in Kakuma travel to school, distance has been noted by both non-enrolled children and those who have dropped out as a factor contributing to their disengagement with education. A lack of available land in the camp and overcrowding in existing schools as detailed above limits school options for children and sometimes necessitates travel on foot across long distances. During FGD's, boys aged 8-12 reported a fear of travelling alone within the camp, citing a risk of being kidnapped and/or sexually assaulted by older children and adults who overpower smaller children or seek to have them engage in transactional sex (in exchange for juice, sweets or small amounts of money), along with a more generalised fear of exposure to violent conflict, which they said arises between different nationalities and ethnic groups and may target children. In Kakuma, the safety of learners is addressed in part by the provision of school uniforms, which children report is a good measure. Access to these uniforms however, is difficult for some children, who report that uniform distribution conducted in schools favours some groups of children over others. Children report that when they are not issued a uniform, their families are forced to purchase these at the market, an expense beyond the capacity or priority of many families. This is explored further below.

Circumstantial Barriers

Disruption to the normal course of primary education is common among refugee children, many of whom will have experienced loss, displacement and disconnection before reaching Kakuma, sometimes several times over. While this is not the experience of all children in Kakuma – many have been born and raised within the camp - the patterns of life in a refugee camp can also create disruptions or additional challenges that prevent attendance or disrupt educational progress (including

food distributions, poor health, changed family structures and lack of livelihoods, all of which can increase the responsibilities and expectations placed on children).

At 113.4%, Kakuma's GER indicates the high level of overage learners currently enrolled in the camp's primary schools, many of whom are in late adolescence and early adulthood. The presence in primary schools of overage learners is very often conceptualised as a risk in terms of the likelihood of those learners disengaging from education for reasons relating to a lack of motivation, frustration at slow progress and embarrassment at sharing a learning space with much younger children – as is reported by this group of learners in Kakuma. While these are indeed risks for overage learners, they can serve to distract from what are arguably much higher risks for younger learners, who share the space of older pupils but not their maturity, and can be marginalised as a result of the power imbalance. In FGD's young primary school learners reported a fear of older pupils, who they said bully and intimidate small children, dominate decision making, and physically and sexually assault younger children, leaving them afraid, isolated and unable to engage fully in learning. Children in focus group discussions spoke openly about these fears, stating that teachers are often unable to intervene in situations that pose a threat to younger learners due to their own fear of older learners, especially where they are perceived as wanting to avoid spillover of small school-based conflicts into the community, which might put them at risk.

While both of the above risks are owed consideration, it is the latter that provides the most compelling rationale for Accelerated Learning Programs that promote sustained engagement among older learners, giving priority to the protection needs of young learners without compromising access for older ones.

The majority of children in Kakuma do not speak English at home, and many will not have parents and caregivers who speak it at an intermediate level. For these children, attending primary school, in which English is the chief language of instruction, can be alienating, and directly at odds with UNHCR's identified interest in providing children with the 'early acquisition of [these] literacy and numeracy skills, with prioritisation of early schooling in the mother-tongue if possible'¹⁶. Very large class sizes make monitoring individual understanding and progress very challenging and cause some children to fall behind. Congolese and Burundian children articulated their language-related discomfort in the school environment, where they report feeling socially isolated, ignored and feeling invisible,

¹⁶ UNHCR (2012) *2012-2016 Education Strategy*. Division of International protection: Switzerland. P10

especially when among large numbers of children who speak better English and Swahili. Burundian children as young as eight years stated that they did not feel motivated to continue with their schooling as they could not understand lessons and felt threatened by other students. The issue of language in education is a contentious one in many places, but presents compound challenges in a multilingual context like Kakuma, where a classroom can contain more than 15 different mother tongues and children with varying degrees of exposure to Kenya's national languages. Somewhat surprisingly, the issue of language was not one commonly found to be reported by children as a significant barrier to education, but appears to have a disproportionate impact on access for children from the Great Lakes region of Africa, and very likely the quality of the education that children with limited English, of all backgrounds, are receiving.

Barriers for children with special needs are multitudinous, cutting across each category outlined here, and often heightened to a greater extent. Kakuma has very limited services that provide specific support to people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities and their families – this despite the gross challenges for people in the camp with limited mobility, and the added need for protection of those made vulnerable for any reason that limits their independence. The right of children to primary education is enshrined in international law, central among the Millennium Development Goals and embedded in national legislation, but the capacity for children with special needs to do so – including those acting as carers for PSN – is hindered by a lack of facilities that enable physical access, a lack of specialist resources – including teachers trained in SNE, perceptions that CWD have diminished rights, discrimination that marginalises CWD and an already overwhelmed system with limited capacity to cater for difference. In spite of this, available data suggests that 653 CWD are currently enrolled and attending Kakuma's primary schools, representing 1.3% of the primary school population. Without any clear data on the total number of CWD in Kakuma to put this number in context, and no analysis of the nature of needs among CWD, it is difficult to measure the impact of barriers for this diverse group of children. Anecdotally however, children with severe disabilities, of all nationalities, are among the most likely of all children to have never attended primary school (including those with muscular dystrophy, autism, and serious intellectual impairment), and an analysis of barriers in general can justifiably argue that CWD are the most vulnerable to exclusion from schooling in terms of both access and quality.

Financial Barriers

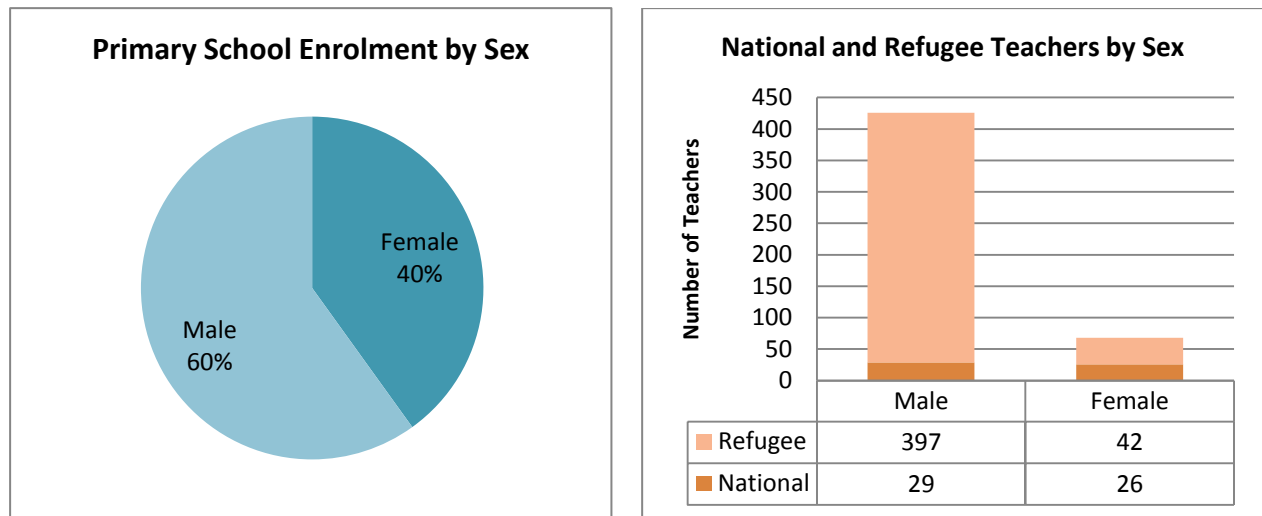
Primary school in Kakuma is free, as with public primary education across Kenya. Nonetheless, children, parents and carers consistently make reference to auxiliary educational costs and the sometimes untenable burden these place on parents and guardians. All learners in Kakuma are required to wear school uniforms: a means of identification, a measure to promote equality and an important protection mechanism for children. Every effort is therefore made by relevant agencies to ensure this cost is offset by providing uniforms to learners, with priority to those at greatest risk of educational disengagement. Resources such as books and pen likewise are distributed to learners to alleviate the financial burden of education. According to children however, these distributions are never sufficient and several children are left without, affecting both their access to education and the quality therein. A lack of educational materials is commonly reported by children and families as a key barrier to education, particularly among single parent households, child headed households and foster care arrangements. Additionally, some children will require transport to travel the long distance to and from school and some will experience school or community pressure to contribute to funds that support their school, further compounding financial stresses and barriers.

Among the chief financial concerns expressed by students, parents and carers were unofficial costs described as bribes being sought directly by some teachers and school principals. FGD participants consistently described systemic failings that enable organised cohorts of school staff to sell materials marked for distribution (including uniforms, books, pens, school lunch supplies), demand financial contributions from learners for 'school funds' (allegedly intended to improve school facilities such as perimeter fences, for example), or charge students for sitting exams. Children report that this conduct is not common to all teachers, but invariably affects all students at some stage and contributes significantly to the disengagement of some, who are without the financial means to make the required payments. Adolescent girls in particular report that this need for money to support school costs is among the leading causes of girls becoming engaged in habitual transactional sex, a factor which in turn counteracts the likelihood of sustained educational engagement - leading to increased risk of discrimination, early pregnancy, early marriage or dependence on the income generated. Despite strong systems for accountability and a record of dismissing teachers found to have breached the organisation's Code of Conduct, LWF continues to receive reports of corruption among school staff and face challenges in increasing the capacity and activity of SMC's to take responsibility for monitoring of school standards.

Kakuma's economy provides limited opportunities for income generation, meaning that families necessarily exploit those that present, even where this involves child labour. The prevalence of single parent or child headed households, and high number of foster placements compels some households to depend on children for income, often causing absenteeism among children enrolled at school, leading to drop out, and preventing others from ever accessing primary schooling. The common priority given to male education means this barrier disproportionately affects girls. As girls reach early- to mid-adolescence, they are also at heightened risk of early marriage, a process often explicated in cultural terms but sometimes more accurately interpreted as an economic driver. The early marriage of girls provides greater financial security to families, leaving the family better off but the child marginalised from education and at exceptionally high risk of SGBV, early pregnancy and poor health outcomes in the long term.

Cultural Barriers

Culture is a pervasive factor in access to education for children in Kakuma. While the higher value placed on the education of boys and men than girls and women arguably represents a common tenet across all of the camp's cultural groups (indeed, to some extent, *all* cultural groups), other manifestations of culture, tradition and belief can vary. Girls across many cultural groups articulated frustration at the perceived preference given to boys' education and described the greater freedom afforded boys to study than girls, who are expected to perform more household duties, depended on for care of younger children and in some cases vulnerable to FGM and/or early marriage. At 19,152, girls represent 40% of all primary school enrollments in Kakuma, a figure weighted more heavily to children in early years of primary school but reduced through the grades as girls are compelled to comply with cultural norms that can serve to exclude them from school. An analysis of the teacher population indicates that girls are provided with very few female role models in education to represent an alternative path; while 26 of Kakuma's 55, or 47.3% of Kakuma's national primary school teachers are women, only 42 of 439 refugee teachers are women - less than 10% of all primary school teachers. Beyond the symbolic meaning of this, there can be cultural implications for some girls of a dearth of female teachers, where female instruction is preferred by children and families so as to avoid situations that might call the modesty or honour of girls into question.



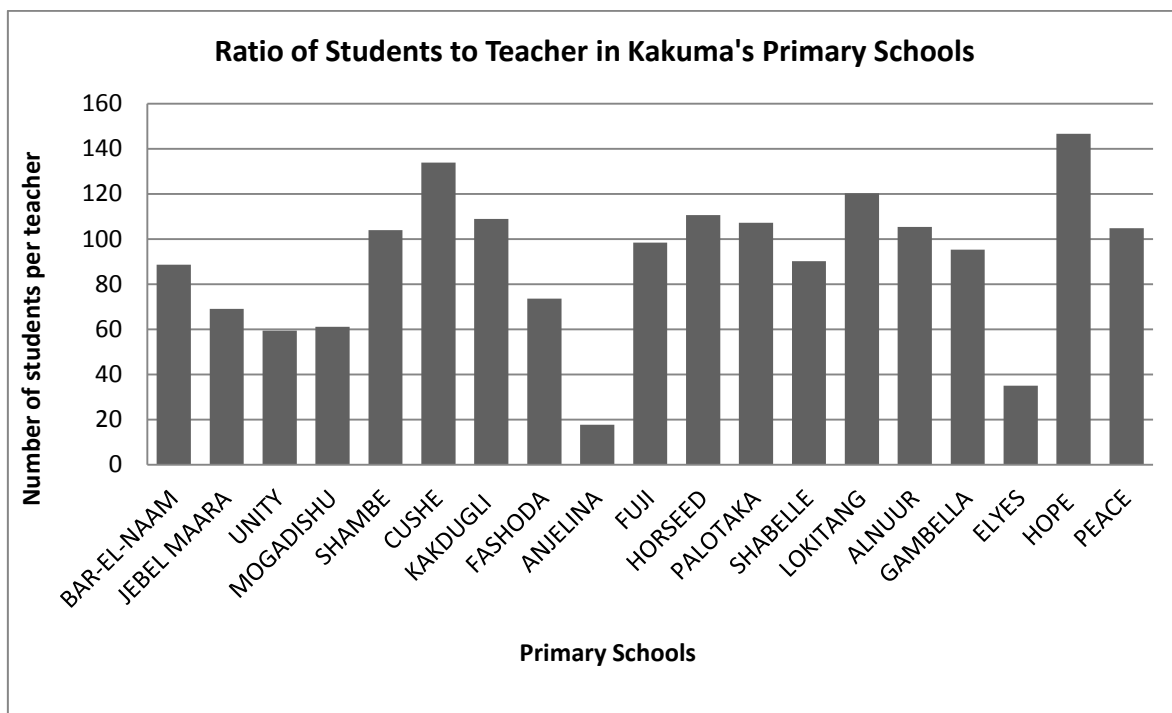
It is important to note here that some boys reported feeling that girls education was given overt preference in Kakuma, and perceived girls as receiving unfair favour in terms of uniform distribution and school meals in school. Boys aged 8-17 expressed feeling that preference was consistently given to girls and represents an active means of alienating boys and limiting their opportunities.

This discussion of gendered preference in education assumes in the first instance that communities perceive formal schooling to hold value in some way, which is not always applicable in Kakuma. While primary education has in recent years seen greater take up from all national communities, it remains a low priority for some and in some cases secondary to religious instruction. This is particularly relevant to the Somali community, who facilitate learning through *madrasa* schools, with a focus on study of the Quran, religious ethics, metaphysics, history and language. On completing or progressing with their elementary *madrasa* education, some children are enabled to attend primary school, but find themselves beginning as older learners and encountering challenges associated with language and age detailed above. Other children are prevented from attending primary school in lieu of *madrasa* alone. While, little is known about the standards and curriculum of *madrasa* schools in Kakuma, non-Somali children aged 8-12 used FGDs to express their interest in *madrasa* style education, stating that this model of education enabled learned parents to share their knowledge with neighbourhood children in an accessible neighbourhood forum. In the absence of comprehensive data on *madrasa* schools, they can cautiously be seen as having both high value and potential to a context in which educational access is limited.

Among the most significant cultural barriers to education however are harmful traditional practices, including FGM and early marriage. These practices remain prevalent among some communities in Kakuma, despite them being in direct contravention of children's rights. While no reliable data exists to indicate the extent of these problems, child protection and gender services in the camp identify a high incidence of girls expressing a desire to have FGM performed, citing a wish to be like their friends and community pressure as key reasons. FGM is illegal in Kenya, and the practice is thus often performed in a clandestine manner, often outside the camp, contributing to school dropout amongst some groups of girls, a number of whom are unwilling to return to school after a long period of absence or prevented from doing so due to pain or health complications arising from the procedure. Likewise, early marriage is a cause for drop out from school among some populations, where girls legally unable to give consent are forcibly married, either in secret or after efforts on the part of the family to have the age of the girl increased on official documentation. Early marriage is a violation of the rights of the child and a serious protection risk for girls, but compounded significantly by the disengagement of girls from education where information and support networks can enable protection and better long term health outcomes for girls and their future children. Importantly, no policies exist within Kakuma's schools to prevent girls from returning from a period of absence, following marriage or during/after pregnancy, meaning that barriers to reengagement relate more to social pressures and responsibilities than any actively imposed on the part of schools.

Human Resource Barriers

Kakuma's primary schools employ 494 teachers, 55 of them Kenyan nationals and a remaining 439 from among the refugee community. Among a learner population of 47,798, this equates to one teacher for every 97 pupils, with a ratio range across the schools from 1:17 up to 1:135 and 1:147 in the most congested schools. Among refugee teachers, just under half have formal teaching qualifications, significantly fewer than the 80% objective detailed in UNHCR's 2012-2016 Education Strategy and a barrier therefore to achieving both quality education outcomes and ensuring a protective school environment. This number of qualified teachers working in primary schools though is not static, but vulnerable to fluctuations as teachers leave their very challenging positions in primary schools for easier jobs at higher incentive wages, find durable solutions in repatriation or resettlement, become unwell or decide to start their own business. Along with some cases of dismissal for misconduct, these represent the most common reasons for teacher separation from their roles, and are indicative of some of the challenges in attracting, training and retaining quality teachers in positions that involve harder work and poorer conditions than can be found elsewhere in the camp.



Besides educational outcomes, the retention of qualified teaching personnel is critical to creating and sustaining a protective environment for refugee children. UNHCR's 2012-2016 Education Strategy states objective 2 as 'ensuring that schools are safe learning environments for refugee children and young people'. Protection is a fundamental objective of education for refugee children, school for who should be 'physically safe, psychologically and emotionally healing, socially integrated, and cognitively transformative'¹⁷. With high turnovers of staff and various other factors at play as described above, this is not the way in which children in Kakuma are currently articulating their experience of school. During focus group discussions, children aged between 8 and 12 described feeling threatened and unsafe at school, particularly when travelling to and from, and when at play. All age groups of both sexes described frustrations with distribution of materials, bribes sought by teaching staff and anger at corrupt actions that saw resources sold at market rather than issued to students as should have occurred. Young children described feeling afraid of much older learners with whom they share learning space and facilities, citing particular fears of sexual assault and in some cases, the escalation of very small misunderstandings between children into large scale inter-ethnic conflict. Older children referred to similar concerns, though citing abuse of children by teachers and demands for payment to sit exams as chief concerns, explicating the ways in which the latter can cause girls to engage in

¹⁷ UNHCR (2012) *2012-2016 Education Strategy*. Division of International protection: Switzerland. P15

transactional sex and other forms of child labour. These protection concerns are elucidated here to give context to the barrier created by a lack of qualified and experienced teaching staff. Inherent in any failure of schools to provide protection, is a failure too of access and quality. The fragility of human resources in Kakuma's primary schools is therefore a highly significant barrier to both access and quality in education.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The barriers that exist to education in Kakuma Refugee Camp are complex and interrelated. In the first instance, mutually reinforcing priorities for access and quality are often juxtaposed where priority to one might incidentally undermine the other. Resources – both material and human - are limited and contextual factors serve to prevent children from uninterrupted primary schooling both prior to and during their time living in the camp. The following recommendations recognise the significant gains made in Kakuma's primary schools over recent years, and the notable challenges to realising sustainable, far-reaching change. Nonetheless, the barriers identified this assessment recommend corresponding actions to increase opportunities for participation in primary education while steadily working to improve the quality of teaching, facilities and protective factors in schools, as follow.

- **More facilities, resources and creative approaches to meeting material shortfalls.** The challenges with land acquisition and limited space notwithstanding, educational infrastructure is critical to both access and quality for children in Kakuma. The repair of existing classrooms or construction of new ones will serve to decongest overcrowded spaces, while the provision of adequate WASH facilities will enable equitable access and the likelihood of improved retention among adolescent girls. Creative approaches are needed that maximise the capacity of limited educational spaces and should include partnerships that move away from traditional models of school-based education only and explore opportunities for temporary structures, the use of community spaces, mobile initiatives (such as a mobile library) and even home-based learning opportunities.
- **Teacher training, support, mentorship and retention initiatives.** Teachers require ongoing support that increases both their capacity and motivation, irrespective of their starting point. Formal teacher training initiatives should be complemented by sustained mentorship programs, buddy systems, school exchanges and incentive-based initiatives that seek to increase motivation and job satisfaction among teachers. Correspondingly, an increase in the incentive paid to primary school teachers (as began in January 2015) will contribute to retention. Specific initiatives should

be undertaken to engage more women teachers and place them strategically in schools where a lack of female role models is shown to contribute to drop out among girls. Pathways for secondary school students into teaching, and internship-style programs for students within the camp have the potential to build capacity, improve classroom ratio and support community cohesion within the camp.

- **Strengthening of School Management Committees and Accountability in schools.** Improving the capacity of School Management Committees to undertake monitoring and management of schools will likely promote community engagement and reduce incidents of misconduct among school staff. The development of SMC's should be given high priority, using where possible, members of SMC's with a demonstrated record of successful oversight to mentor new committees. Likewise, existing accountability structures should be sensitised in all primary schools and access to reporting mechanisms made readily available to children and teachers. SMCs should be tasked with expanding community engagement so as to ensure that the community is taking responsibility for school-related child safety and well-being – including oversight of distributions, for example, or establishing supervised walking school busses.
- **Improved Linkages between child protection and education.** Schools are uniquely positioned for their access to large numbers of children, opportunities for messaging and context for monitoring child well-being. Kakuma's child protection structures do not take sufficient advantage of the school environment to enable children to understand their rights, access referral mechanisms or have protection concerns identified by the adults who know them. The relationship between child protection and education has enormous potential for improved symbiosis, whereby teachers are provided with support that empowers them as protective actors, and children provided with safe, easy access to support. In turn, teachers and the school environment help identify protection trends and inform decision-making about broad child protection strategies. All primary schools in Kakuma should have both male and female child protection focal points and the consistent presence of child protection specialists, with a view to ensuring schools are safe places that promote child well-being and inclusion both within school and in relation to protection risks in the community that increase the likelihood of disengagement.
- **Accelerated Learning Programs for overage learners.** The establishment of specialised ALPs for overage learners is critical to ensuring equitable access to education for children who have

experienced disruption to their schooling, while sustaining safe engagement for younger learners. ALPs will represent significant means' by which to decongest classrooms, promote protection and enable greater access.

- **Special Needs Education.** The compound disadvantage experienced by children with disabilities in Kakuma necessitates an active, coordinated effort to build capacities in Special Needs Education through resourcing, training and community engagement strategies. This approach should also take into account the special needs of children with limited English language skills and those with challenging behaviours. With an ultimate view to mainstreaming and integration for all children, specialised units may assist CWD to transition into school and have their specific needs accommodated, including where physical mobility limits access, and increased numbers of class assistants could serve to provide additional in-class support to children identified to have additional learning needs, promoting inclusion and improving adult to child ratios for better learning and protective outcomes.