



Breaking Down Barriers:

**Increasing Girls' Access to and Completion of
Secondary Education in Kakuma Refugee Camp**

**Giacomo Concina, Jill Drzewiecki, and the JRS Kenya & Eastern African
Regional office teams**

About JRS

Inspired by the generous love and example of Jesus Christ, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is a work of the Society of Jesus with the mission to accompany, serve, and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, that they may heal, learn, and determine their future. Since our founding 43 years ago, JRS has worked with millions of refugees and internally displaced people throughout the world, sharing their journeys and promoting their rights to protection, opportunity, and participation in society.

JRS programmes are currently found in 58 countries, serving refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in conflict zones and detention centres, on remote borders, and in busy cities. We run pastoral care and psychosocial support programmes in detention centres and refugee camps. We provide humanitarian relief in emergency displacement situations. Education and livelihood programmes provide skill development and opportunities for integration into host communities. We never cease to advocate for the rights of refugees and to articulate the obligation to protect the most vulnerable among us.

In 2022 alone, JRS served 1,513,125 forcibly displaced people and members of host communities. JRS programmes – primarily in the areas of education and livelihoods, mental health, and psychosocial support (MHPSS), reconciliation, and advocacy – improve the lives and futures of marginalised and persecuted people.

Foreword by JRS's International Director

Advancing Gender Equality in and through Secondary Education

Education **plays a crucial role in achieving a gender-just world**, requiring equal educational access for both boys and girls. However, disparities exist, particularly in areas where JRS operates, where girls often face higher dropout rates or inferior education quality, and in some cases, boys underperform. These challenges are intensified among forcibly displaced communities. To close the gender education gap, it's essential to ensure gender-inclusive education systems from the onset of a crisis, and in the protracted settings where JRS works.

JRS is dedicated to aiding forcibly displaced groups with a commitment to gender-responsive and transformative approaches to programming. We uphold the right to quality education for all genders, aiming for equitable distribution of benefits, opportunities, and responsibilities to ensure fairness and justice in education.

This study helps JRS deepen its commitment to a gender-equal world. By advancing gender equality in and through education, JRS aims to end all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence, especially in the Kakuma Secondary Schools where we operate.

Together with the international office, the JRS Eastern African Region (EAR) urges donors, partners, stakeholders, and governments to work together to create equitable education systems at all levels. Increasingly, and as discussed in this report—this includes adapting schools and education systems to be climate resilient.

Displaced children and youth face numerous barriers that limit their access to and completion of education. While progress has been made at the primary level, with 65% of the refugee population accessing it according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2023 Education Report, access to secondary education still stands at a mere 41%. However, in too many countries and contexts, these numbers are even lower, especially for girls. In Kakuma, secondary schools can accommodate only a fraction of the secondary school-age population, with an estimated out-of-school rate of 88.4%. Girls are especially disadvantaged. Of the youth enrolled in secondary school in Kakuma, girls account for 34%.

This study allows us to understand the key barriers to access and completion of secondary education, especially for girls, across the seven secondary schools in Kakuma run by JRS where we work as the UNHCR implementing partner for

secondary education. Only by knowing in detail these barriers and their impact on students' lives are we able to tackle them effectively. Significant funding has already been secured for the secondary education project in Kakuma. Through additional funds we aim to raise in the coming years, JRS is proud to establish its third GRE pilot site in Kakuma refugee camp in 2024. **This project will enable JRS to boost secondary school enrolment rates for girls, and improve learning outcomes, safety, and well-being for all secondary school youth in the camp.**

Our dedication to enhancing access to and the completion of transformative secondary education extends beyond the confines of Kakuma refugee camp and even JRS itself. In collaboration with Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and Plan International, JRS spearheaded a global initiative by leading the development of a [multistakeholder pledge](#) for inclusive secondary education for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum. This commitment seeks to marshal financial, material, and technical support to guarantee that adolescents and youth from refugee, displaced, and host communities access secondary education opportunities and complete this critical component of their educational journey to navigate uncertain futures more successfully. Education is the best means to prepare societies where we recognize each other as fellow human beings.

Michael Schöpf, SJ

International Director, JRS



Message from JRS's Eastern Africa Regional Director

Education plays a key role in a gender-just world. For this to be realised, both girls and boys must equally benefit from it. In some countries, girls are the first to drop out of school, the first to be failed by the system and policies that are meant to protect them, in others, it is boys who consistently underperform. This reality is worse among forcibly displaced populations. To close the gender gap, there is a need for education systems that are gender-responsive and transformative by design.

In accompanying, serving and advocating for forcibly displaced populations, JRS wants its programming to be gender-responsive and transformative. We acknowledge that both girls and boys—and men and women—have equal rights to access quality education. In this regard, JRS is cognisant of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits, opportunities (including access to education), and responsibilities between girls, boys, women, and men according to their respective needs.

Hence, this study will help us in deepening our commitment to a gender-just world. In so doing, the education system will greatly contribute to ending all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence, specifically in Kakuma, where we are running the secondary schools.

JRS EAR also takes this opportunity to call on partners, stakeholders, and governments to collaborate and make education systems at all levels more gender-just.

Atsu André Agbogan,
Regional Director, Eastern Africa Region



Message from JRS Kenya's Country Director

To *Accompany, Serve, and Advocate* with the forcibly displaced is to ensure that individuals have the agency and opportunity to choose a life of dignity and respect. Specifically, access to quality education is a fundamental bedrock of our work and commitment to youth and their families, especially for the most vulnerable. Since 1999, JRS Kenya has worked at the frontlines with those fleeing crises and emergencies. Yet, through these tragic and protracted circumstances, the families and communities with whom we work demonstrate unwavering resilience, determination, and hope for better lives, especially for future generations. Importantly, women and girls carry the torch for these future generations; yet they are often excluded from opportunities that might otherwise provide transformative change for their families and communities.

This analysis, conducted in Kakuma refugee camp in 2023, set out to map and validate the barriers facing children and adolescents, with emphasis on girls and young women, when accessing further education, especially beyond primary levels. The learning and recommendations allow us, JRS, and our partners, including members from refugee and host communities, to directly tackle these challenges and to elevate and transform the quality of education for all. Although this study focused on the secondary schools in Kakuma, the opportunity for further application and learning beyond the confines of the camp, throughout Kenya, and beyond are exciting and promising.

With coordination across JRS globally, we are excited to be sharing these learnings – the barriers, the challenges, the opportunities, the hope – with you. We are confident that our shared learning will strengthen gender-responsive and transformative education programming, advance learning outcomes and educational quality, and achieve shared prosperity for those who are most at-risk and yet, so resilient. Together, we can create a world in which everyone lives with dignity and respect.

Geoffrey Mushen Shikuku

Country Director, JRS Kenya



Acknowledgements

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We also express our appreciation to the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Eastern Africa Regional Office and the JRS Kenya staff for their warm welcome (pun intended), their support throughout this project, and the affectionate nicknames "Giac and Jill." Our gratitude extends to the support staff, including drivers, logisticians, and those preparing daily meals for the staff, especially the samosas, whose day-to-day efforts in Kakuma make JRS's work possible and represent a labour of love.

We acknowledge the support of the UN Refugee Agency, Ministry of Education officials, various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, and other entities that have openly contributed to and shared their experience, knowledge, and resources to enhance the overall work in Kakuma. These include the Association for Aid and Relief, Japan; Amala; Danish Refugee Council; Finn Church Aid; Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit; Humanity & Inclusion; Lutheran World Federation; Peace Winds Japan; Terre des Hommes; United Nations Children's Fund; Voluntary Service Overseas; and Windle International Kenya.

Lastly, we extend thanks to the donors for their generosity and trust. Your contributions make it possible to address the barriers validated through this research, thereby ensuring increased access to and completion of secondary education for the youth in Kakuma. Thank you for guaranteeing the right to education for thousands of young individuals whom you may never meet, but whom you believe deserve every opportunity to "heal, learn, and determine their own future."

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Acronyms

BPRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
CBC	Competency-Based Curriculum
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
EAC	East African Community
EAR	Eastern African Region
EAGLES_K	Empowering African Girls to Learn and Excel in Schools in Kakuma
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FCA	Finn Church Aid
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GoK	Government of Kenya
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GRE	Gender- Responsive Education
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and Agender
KII	Key Informant Interview
LWF	Lutheran World Federation

MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning
MHH	Menstrual Health and Hygiene
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MoE	Ministry of Education
NFI	Non-Food Items
NGLHRC	National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OOSCY	Out-of-School Children and Youth
OOSY	Out-of-School Youth
ORAM	Organisation for Refuge, Asylum & Migration
RLO	Refugee-Led Organization
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
SAEP	Secondary Accelerated Education Programming
SHARE	Support for Host Community and Refugee Empowerment
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WUSC	World University Service of Canada

Language

Notes to reader about language choices and the limitations of language as it relates to the assessment and report:

Child:

Unless otherwise specified within the report, the usage of child is consistent with the legal and internationally recognized definition of a child, as established by Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). According to the CRC, one of the most universally endorsed and widely ratified treaties in history, a child is “every human being below the age of 18 years.”

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (CEFM)

This study uses the comprehensive term child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM) to describe these various practices. Where this comprehensive term is not used, reference is being made to a specific practice as defined on page 64 of this report.

Dowry and bride price:

The term dowry rather than bride price is more commonly used within Kakuma refugee camp. However, according to more commonly understood definitions, bride price is the more accurate term as it refers to the groom’s family transferring assets (such as cows, money, or property) to the bride’s family as part of a marriage agreement/exchange. The reader should be aware that the local usage and understanding of the word dowry does not usually include a transfer of assets to a groom’s family, as implied by the formal definition.

Gender Parity Index (GPI):

in education refers to the ratio of the Gross Female Enrolment Ratio to the Gross Male Enrolment Ratio at a specific level of education. It is calculated by dividing the Gross Female Enrolment Ratio by the male Gross Enrolment Ratio for the level of education. A GPI value of one signifies gender equality in enrolment between males and females. A GPI below one suggests a bias favouring males, while a value above one indicates a bias toward females. The nearer the GPI is to one, the closer to achieving equal access to education for both boys and girls, as well as for women and men.

Lager:

A seasonal river

Refugee:

JRS recognizes that the definition of a “refugee” according to international conventions is limited and does not address the needs of many vulnerable forcibly displaced people today. We are therefore guided by Catholic Social Teaching, which applies the expression “de facto refugee” to:

- all persons persecuted because of race, religion, membership in social or political groups;
- victims of armed conflicts, erroneous economic policy, natural disasters and human-induced climate change; and
- internally displaced persons, that is, civilians who are forcibly uprooted from their homes by the same type of violence as refugees but who do not cross-national frontiers.

The authors acknowledge that many feel the term "refugee" can detach and dehumanize, including individuals with refugee status or seeking it, as well as those pursuing durable solutions to change their legal status. They fear being perceived solely as victims without agency or economic value. Conversely, others embrace the term to validate their personal experiences and narratives. To address this, we propose consulting each individual and community regarding their preferred terminology. No single label consistently applies to all displaced individuals. JRS's inclusive definition of "refugee" informs our work and mission and will be used throughout this report. We acknowledge the shortfalls of using this term and yet aim to honour the dignity and respect of all human beings.

Size One:

refers to households consisting of only one person. In Kakuma, the quantity of food rations provided to each household is based on its number of members. Consequently, households with a single occupant are allocated less food compared to those with multiple members. Although this method aims for a fairer distribution of food, the limited size of the ration for single-person households may also serve as an encouragement for early marriage as a strategy to secure a larger food supply.

Executive Summary

As the number of refugees rises each year and humanitarian funding for education diminishes, the most vulnerable, particularly girls and women, face heightened risks based on intersectional dimensions of their identities. The scarcity of resources frequently leads to adverse consequences for youth, including limited access to and completion of education beyond the primary level. These consequences are magnified for girls. Progressing through education at the secondary level is a lifeline for girls living in displacement. Each additional year of secondary education results in lower risks of early marriage and pregnancy. The further girls progress in school, the more likely they are to earn an income, become self-reliant, and contribute to the growth and well-being of their families and communities.

Recognizing the urgency of this issue, JRS prioritises **increasing access to and completion of secondary education, especially for girls**. To clarify and validate the barriers girls face when accessing education, in May 2023, JRS launched and conducted a gender analysis, with particular focus on learners across the seven secondary schools in Kakuma refugee camp, of which JRS is the implementing partner for secondary education. The gender responsive education (GRE) analysis showed average enrolment of girls at the seven secondary school in Kakuma to be only 34%, and even as low as 26% in some schools. Undertaking this study involved collaboration between the JRS Kenya, JRS EAR, and JRS International Office (IO) teams.

JRS's approach to gender-responsive and transformative secondary education in Kakuma is guided by recommendations outlined in the report, focusing on demand-side, enabling environment, and supply-side barriers. As a result of this assessment, JRS Kenya is launching the *Empowering African Girls to Learn and Excel in Schools in Kakuma* (EAGLES_K) Project in the Kakuma refugee camp. This comprehensive initiative addresses a range of barriers determined from the analysis, through infrastructure improvements, fee waivers for the most vulnerable, school supplies, childcare support, comprehensive menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) programming, extracurricular youth clubs, and support for teachers to address the multifaceted challenges faced by refugee youth, especially girls. These specific actions are supported with JRS committing over \$1 million to the EAGLES_K initiative over a three-year period (2024-2027). Efforts to secure additional funding to sustain a longer-term intervention are ongoing.

This GRE project has three specific outcomes for Kakuma Refugee Camp

1. Increase girls' enrolment in secondary schools from 34% to 36% in 3 years;
2. Improved learning outcomes among girls in secondary schools; and,
3. Improved safety and well-being of girls in the secondary schools

Through this project and these specific outcomes, JRS is creating more equitable and accessible educational environments for refugee youth, and more peaceful and sustainable communities in Kakuma and beyond.

I. Introduction

At the beginning of 2023, JRS was selected as the UNCHR implementing partner for secondary education in Kakuma and started running the seven secondary schools in the camp. JRS is committed to strengthening the gender-responsiveness of all its operations and programming, especially in secondary education programmes, as stated in both its 2019-2024 Strategic Framework and its Gender Policy. Additionally, JRS strongly believes that investing in secondary education for girls creates more equitable, peaceful, and sustainable communities.

At the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF), JRS pledged to inclusive secondary education. This [multistakeholder pledge](#), led by JRS urges increased financial, technical, and material resources to ensure that refugee, displaced, and host adolescents and youth in all their diversity access national and local forms of secondary education through mechanisms that support quality, holistic inclusion, retention, and protection.

In May 2023, JRS conducted a GRE assessment in Kakuma camp to strengthen its secondary education programming, by identifying and validating barriers that limit learners' access to and completion of secondary education, with a particular emphasis on girls. The field analysis focused on secondary schools present within the camp, as secondary education in the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement is provided by Finn Church Aid (FCA).¹

This analysis also presents recommendations that JRS, non-governmental and international organisations (NGOs), donors, and other stakeholders can implement to advance gender equality in and through secondary education programming in Kakuma camp.

JRS will use the findings from this analysis to advance gender-responsive education (GRE) and gender-transformative education (GTE) in the Kakuma camp under the EAGLES_K Project. To strengthen coordination among key partners and stakeholders and promote community ownership of the project, a GRE Technical Working Group will be formed. JRS has already raised significant funds to implement this project for three years. To secure additional funding and fully implement the recommendations proposed in this report, strong community ownership and coordination will be crucial.

¹ As explained in the *Methodology* section, FCA was involved in the research through a Key Informant Interview with a representative from the organisation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE GENDER ANALYSIS

The objective of this analysis was to conduct a thorough assessment of the barriers that learners, especially girls, face to accessing and completing secondary education in Kakuma refugee camp. The assessment analysed the leading demand-side, enabling environment, and supply-side barriers to secondary education in Kakuma camp² through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and tools designed by JRS for conducting gender analyses, with additional information gathered through a literature review.³

Key recommendations were drafted based on the findings gathered and analysed from the data collection phase of the assessment and the literature review. In October 2023, JRS staff conducted a series of stakeholder meetings in Kakuma refugee camp to validate the results of the assessment, as well as the recommendations. The final recommendations aim to provide JRS Kenya and other stakeholders with multiple, targeted interventions to inform a comprehensive gender-responsive and transformative approach to secondary education in Kakuma. This approach aims for more girls in the Kakuma refugee camp to access and complete quality, equitable secondary school education and is part of JRS's larger and longer-term strategy to address the root cause of gender inequalities in refugee settings such as Kakuma. The multi-year project that JRS Kenya will implement following this assessment will be monitored and evaluated. Evidence-based practices will be shared and replicated, albeit contextualised, in other places where JRS works and within the broader Education in Emergencies (EiE) field.

² This categorisation of barriers to accessing and completing secondary education will be analysed more in depth in the section *Conceptual Framework* on pages 20 and 21 of this report.

³ More information on the FGDs and KIIs conducted, and the tools used can be found in the *Methodology* section on pages 17-19.

METHODOLOGY

An initial desk review was conducted to gather existing evidence and information on Kakuma, so as to better frame the research questions and the overall scope of the GRE assessment. The desk review served to understand the context of the refugee situation in Kakuma, with a specific emphasis on the provision of education.

Based on the information gathered through the desk review, and in consultation with the local JRS team, KII questionnaires and FGD tools were developed. Samples of these tools are included in the annexes of this report. In the FGDs, three key tools were used:

1. **Barrier exercise:** through this tool, participants' feedback on the leading barriers to secondary education—categorised according to demand-side, enabling environment, and supply-side barriers—was collected. This tool was used across all FGD sessions.
2. **'Who does what?' exercise:** this tool is meant to analyse who is tasked with different chores within the household, to assess the gendered division of housework. This tool was used in some of the FGDs.
3. **Time map exercise:** a tool to map learners' use of time, assessing the amount of time they spend in school, doing household chores, studying, etc. This tool was used in some of the FGDs.

A total of 9 FGD sessions were conducted with current secondary school learners (both female and male) in Kakuma camp, female teachers, and parent representatives (both female and male). The learners' ages ranged from 15 and 25 years old, and their mean age was 19.5 years old. The table below summarises the number of participants and the tools used in each FGD session.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF FGDs

	Target population and name of school	Gender of participants	N. of participants	Tools used
1	Students - Life Works Secondary School	Female	14	Barriers exercise; who does what exercise
2	Students - Vision Secondary School	Female	10	Barriers exercise; time map
3	Students - Vision Secondary School	Male	10	Barriers exercise; time map
4	Teachers - various schools	Female	10	Barriers exercise

5	Students - Kakuma Refugee Secondary School	Female	9	Barriers exercise; who does what exercise
6	Students - Kakuma Refugee Secondary School	Male	10	Barriers exercise; who does what exercise
7	Students - Somali Bantu Secondary School	Female	9	Barriers exercise; time map
8	Students - Somali Bantu Secondary School	Male	10	Barriers exercise; time map
9	Parents - various schools	Male and female	10	Barriers exercise

In addition to the FGDs, KIIs were conducted with representatives of key humanitarian organisations working in Kakuma camp, as well as representatives from the Government of Kenya's (GoK) Ministry of Education's (MoE) county and sub-county offices in Kakuma and Lodwar. Questions were developed in advance of the interviews and were customised based on the interviewee's role in Kakuma camp. For some KIIs, a more dialogical approach was adopted, diverging from the questions that were first drafted for that specific KII.

The organisations and institutions involved in the KII sessions conducted in May 2023 include:

1. Amala Education
2. Association for Aid and Relief, Japan
3. Danish Refugee Council
4. Finn Church Aid
5. IsraAid
6. Kakuma camp management – Deputy Camp Manager & Gender Officer
7. Kenya's Ministry of Education – Quality Assurance Officer
8. Norwegian Refugee Council
9. Terre des Hommes
10. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
11. Windle International Kenya

Furthermore, the JRS Kakuma team also conducted observation of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities in Kakuma camp's secondary schools, so as to assess

the state of this key infrastructure. A sample of the tool used is available in the annexes.⁴

In October 2023, draft recommendations were shared during in-person stakeholders meetings with learners, parents, school principals, UNHCR, and other NGOs working in Kakuma. These meetings were used to validate and improve the recommendations proposed by the JRS team and feedback was incorporated in the final set of recommendations.

The organisations, institutions, and others stakeholders involved in the validation meetings conducted in October 2023 include:

- Association for Aid and Relief, Japan
- Finn Church Aid
- Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
- Humanity & Inclusion
- Lutheran World Federation
- Ministry of Education
- Peace Winds Japan
- Terre des Hommes
- United Nations Children’s Fund
- Voluntary Service Overseas
- Windle International Kenya

⁴ The WASH observation tool was adapted from resources available in *A Toolkit for Integrating Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) into Humanitarian Response* (Sommer, Schmitt, & Clatworthy, 2017).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A GRE analysis assesses the gendered barriers and challenges that limit or promote access to, retention in, and completion of secondary education. While it is not a perfect framework, the lens for examination included analysing demand-side, enabling environment, and supply-side barriers to accessing and completing secondary education. Analysing these three categories of barriers provided a comprehensive understanding of the gendered factors that enable or prevent gender equality and inclusivity in education programming. It is important to note that the GRE analysis also considers intersectionality or acknowledging that individuals and communities may face multiple forms of discrimination based on their gender, disability, ethnicity, race, refugee, socio-economic status, and other factors. An intersectional lens also helps to ensure that education design, interventions, and policies are tailored to address the unique challenges faced by different groups, including refugees and host communities.

According to the framework of analysis, the main characteristics of demand-side, enabling environment, and supply-side barriers to accessing and completing education are as follows:

- **Demand-side barriers** refer to a household's ability and willingness to send youth to school and the desire or willingness of an individual to enrol in education. Demand-side barriers to accessing and completing education can include socio-cultural norms and beliefs that prioritise boys' education over girls', early marriages or pregnancies, economic constraints, child labour, and gender-based discrimination or violence.

Addressing demand-side barriers involves strategies aimed at changing social attitudes, behaviours, and practices, improving awareness about the benefits of education for all genders, and creating incentives for enrolment and retention in secondary education.

- **Enabling environment barriers** refers to the larger contexts and systems in which education takes place, including the policy and the **external environment**, which might or might not allow equitable or safe access to education and, thus, contribute to gender inequality. These barriers can include bureaucracy or discriminatory practices and policies, such as forbidding a pregnant girl or young mother to attend education, but also security issues, such as gangs or military groups attacking or recruiting students on the way to and from school. These barriers might also include the natural environment, disasters, and human-caused climate change. The local terrain, natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and earthquakes, and the long-term effects of climate change, such as extreme weather patterns and rising sea levels, can all disrupt access to education. These environmental challenges can lead to

school closures, hinder safe travel to and from schools, and exacerbate existing inequalities, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations and magnifying gender disparities in access to and completion of secondary education.

Addressing enabling environment barriers means tackling gender-based violence, discrimination, and social norms within households, schools, communities, and at the policy level. Often, interventions related to safe passage to and from school are needed to protect youth and teachers from gender-based violence, recruitment into gangs and armed groups, and to support learners with disabilities. Increasingly, addressing these barriers involves adaptation strategies, including building climate-resilient schools.

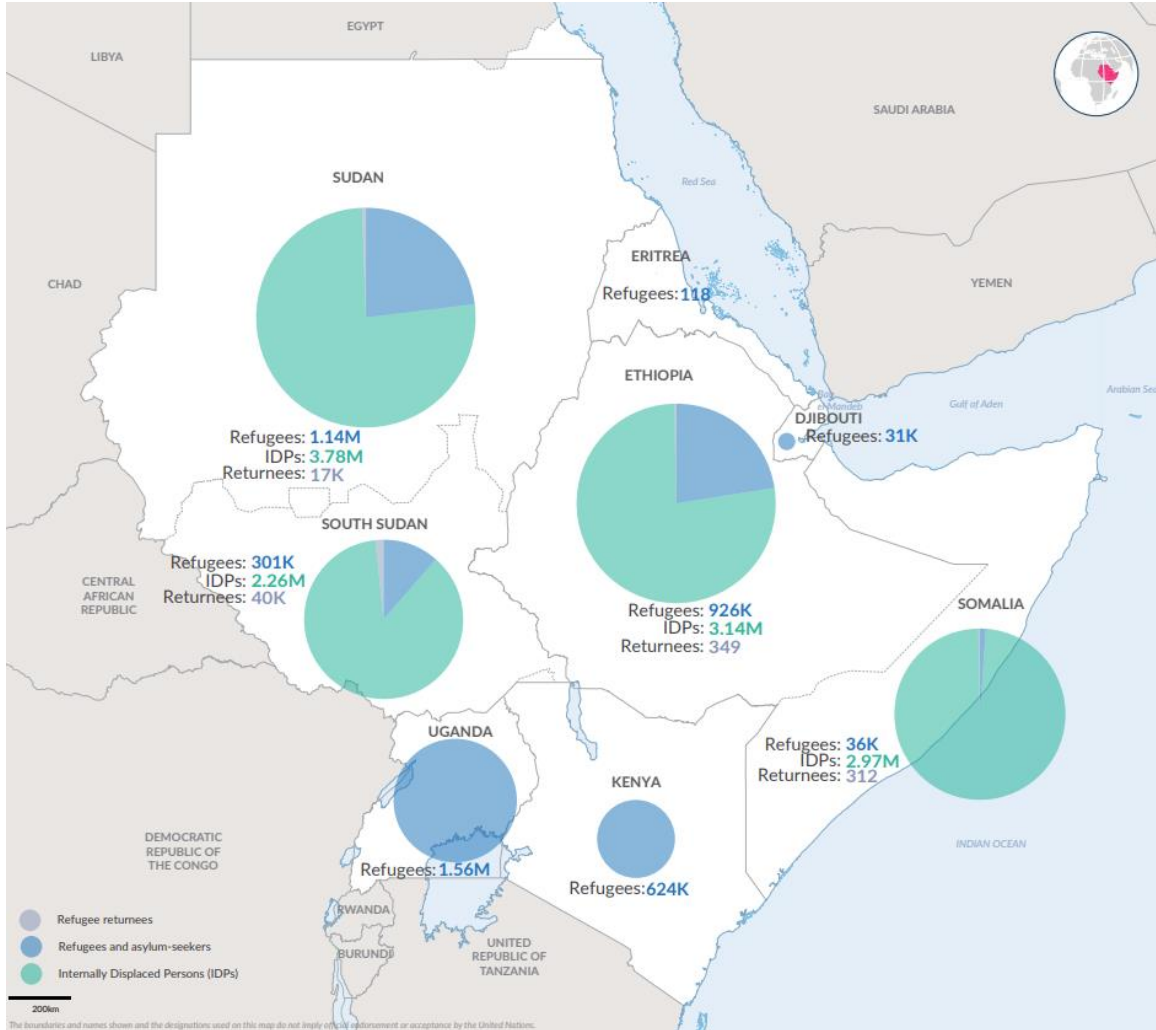
- **Supply-side barriers** refer to obstacles related to the supply of education that affect the accessibility and availability of learning environments and opportunities. These barriers can include inadequate infrastructure, including an insufficient number of classrooms or schools, a scarcity of teachers (especially female teachers and in scientific subjects), high student-to-teacher ratios, and insufficient teaching and learning materials.

Addressing supply-side barriers involves strategies aimed at increasing financing for school infrastructure projects and training for teachers – especially in certain subjects. Training for females as secondary school teachers, and in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects specifically – may require positive discrimination and targeted programming.

II. Context Overview

This section provides an overview of the refugee situation in Kenya, highlighting the main figures on the refugee population hosted in the country, the main institutional bodies in charge of refugee affairs, refugees' rights in Kenya, Kenya's policy developments in the refugee sector, and the declining funding in support of refugees in Kenya. Later, the report focuses on Kakuma refugee camp, first providing a general overview on the camp's history, and then shifting focus to education provision in the camp, especially secondary school. This section also includes figures related to Kakuma's education system in terms of enrolment, results, and teaching staff, the policies and legislation that apply to education in Kakuma, and the curriculum used in Kakuma's secondary schools.

FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF REFUGEES IN EASTERN AFRICA (JUNE 2023)⁵



KENYA'S REFUGEE CONTEXT

According to the UNHCR statistics, countries in sub-Saharan Africa host 1 in 5 of all refugees globally based on a global refugee population of 34.6 million at the end of 2022 (UNHCR, 2023a).⁶ For most of these refugees, their displacement has been protracted for years and prospects of return to their country of origin, or resettlement

⁵ Image from (UNHCR, 2023d)

⁶ Refugees represent only a fraction of the total number of displaced people. In 2022, there were more than 108 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, including not only refugees, but also asylum seekers, internally displaced people, people in refugee-like situations, and other people in need of international protection (UNHCR, 2023a).

to third countries, are very limited. UNHCR's statistics show that in 2023 only 68 refugees hosted in Kenya returned to their countries of origin, and only 1,937 refugees accessed resettlement (UNHCR, 2023b).

Kenya's Refugee Population

Kenya is among the countries that host the greatest number of refugees in East Africa, with 676,332 refugees and asylum seekers as of October 2023, and a further 70,451 individuals awaiting registration (UNHCR, 2023b). Most refugees in Kenya are hosted in two refugee camp complexes, Kakuma, in the northwest of the country, and Dadaab, in the east. Kakuma hosts a total of 209,295 refugees and asylum seekers, whereas the population of Dadaab stands at 302,805, with an additional 70,451 individuals awaiting registration. The GoK enforces an encampment policy, meaning that refugees and asylum seekers are supposed to be hosted only in designated areas.

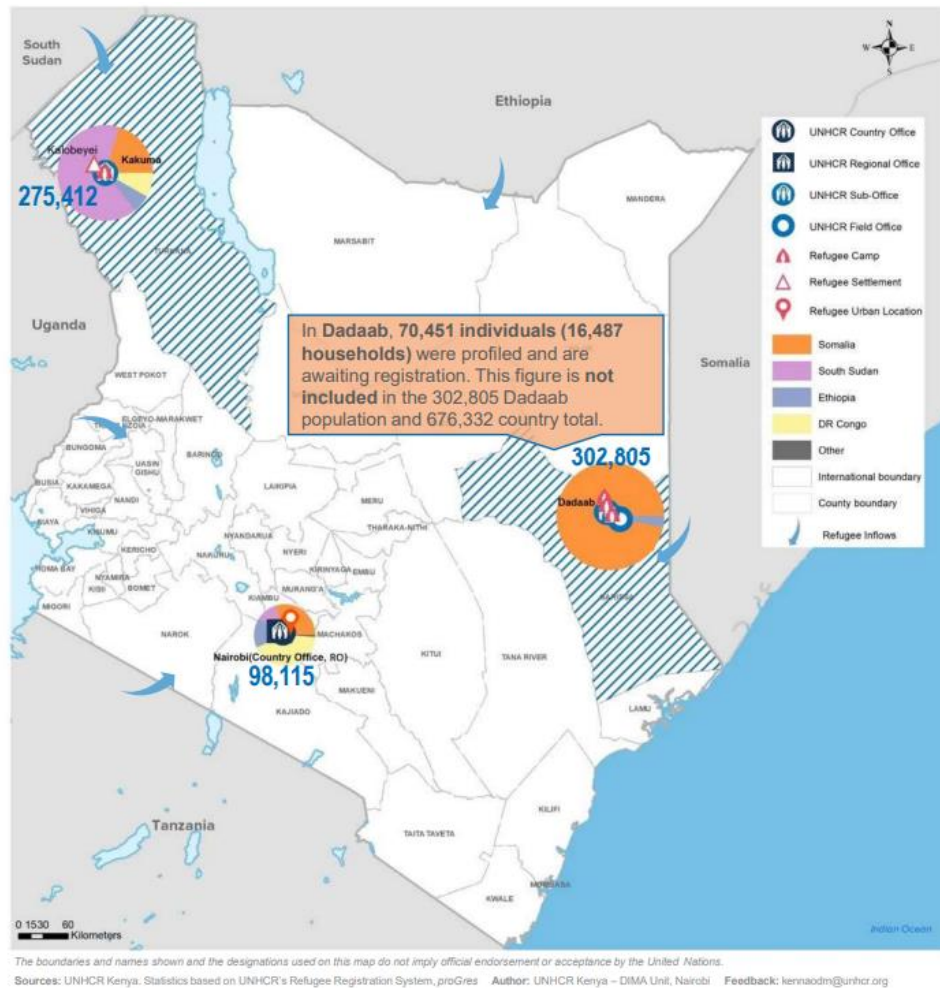
Refugees can be issued movement passes to travel to a specified location. However, the process to obtain such documents is "bureaucratic and opaque to many refugees" (ILO, 2022, p. 36). The Refugees Act does not clarify on which conditions the pass can be issued, so the outcome of the request varies from case to case, ultimately making it difficult to understand the criteria at the basis of the acceptance or refusal of the request (ILO, 2022). In addition to movement passes, refugees can also be granted special authorisation to reside outside of the camps. These authorisations are often given to at-risk individuals due to protection concerns, often because of an advocacy effort being carried out by UNCHR with the Department of Refugee Services (ILO, 2022).⁷

Some refugees and asylum seekers (98,115 individuals) reside in the urban and peri-urban areas of Nairobi.⁸ Currently, about 15% of the asylum seekers and refugees registered in Kenya are in urban areas (UNICEF, 2023). This report focuses on refugees living within the Kakuma refugee camp and does not address issues of access to and completion of secondary education for refugees in urban contexts.

⁷ Permits usually allow relocation from camps to other, mostly urban and peri-urban areas of Kenya, and especially Nairobi.

⁸ The encampment policy has been valid for decades and was recently re-affirmed through the new 2021 Refugees Act (Government of Kenya, 2021).

FIGURE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF REFUGEE POPULATION IN KENYA (OCTOBER 2023)⁹



The position of Kenya’s government has not always been clear about the future of the refugee camps present within its territory. Over the years, the government has proposed to close both Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps multiple times, and each time, NGOs and civil society organisations raised their voices against the proposals. The most recent appeal against the closure of the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps occurred in 2021 when JRS reaffirmed an appeal from the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops recommending that the GoK exert maximum forethought and caution in a particular time of uncertainty, and carefully consider the legal obligations imposed by international law and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention, including the principle of non-refoulement, the practical limitations of closing large-

⁹ Image from (UNHCR, 2023).

scale refugee camps hosting more than 410,000 people and the moral obligation to take care of the most vulnerable in society and to pursue the common good. (JRS, 2021). Due to advocacy efforts of NGOs and the civil society, there were never concrete follow-ups on the government's camp closure announcements.

More recently, the Kenyan government has adopted a more welcoming stance towards refugees, envisioning a wider access to public services for this population in the medium to long term, also thanks to the Shirika Plan which is currently being finalised.¹⁰ However, despite these promising commitments being outlined in this plan, the 2021 Refugees Act (Government of Kenya, 2021), still foresees an encampment policy, as it states that refugees must live in what the policy calls "designated areas" and be granted movement passes if they wish to travel "outside the designated areas and within Kenya" (Government of Kenya, 2021, p. 206).

Institutional Bodies in Charge of Refugee Affairs and Refugee Status Determination

Along with the re-affirmation of the encampment policy, the 2021 Refugees Act also renovated the bodies and institutions in charge of refugee matters and refugee status determination. Three main bodies were created:

- The Department of Refugee Services, headed by the Commissioner for Refugee Affairs and in charge of all administrative processes, programmes, and activities that concern refugees and asylum seekers.
- The Refugee Advisory Committee is responsible for the refugee status determination (RSD) process, movement permits of refugees, protection interventions, and durable solutions.
- The Refugee Status Appeals Committee, which is responsible for determining appeals against decisions regarding refugee status determination.

While status determination should take a maximum of 90 days, according to article 12.9 of the 2021 Refugees Act, the process is often longer and (legal) extension are often adopted. This slow process is linked to limited processing capacity on the part of the

¹⁰ The Shirika Plan and its implication are analysed more in depth in the section *The Comprehensive Refugee Framework and the Shirika Plan* on pages 27 to 30.

Kenyan government, as well as the high number of backlog cases, with 60,000 asylum seekers awaiting status determination at the end of January 2022 (ILO, 2022).

Refugees' Right to Work

Article 28.5 of Kenya's Refugees Act affirms refugees' right to "engage individually or in a group, in gainful employment or enterprise or to practice a profession or trade where he holds qualifications recognized by competent authorities in Kenya" (Government of Kenya, 2021, p. 218). While this provision guarantees refugees' right to work in Kenya, the enjoyment of such right is conditional on the possession of the above-mentioned qualifications, either through the recognition of pre-existing qualifications, or through the acquisition of new ones through education or training (ILO, 2022). This requirement makes it very difficult for refugees to effectively enjoy their right to work. It also acts as a barrier to accessing and completing secondary education. The report later addresses how the absence of opportunities for gainful employment acts as a barrier to secondary education among refugees, who cite a lack of motivation to complete their education due to limited post-secondary pathways, including restricted access to meaningful, remunerative work.

Moreover, to work, any foreign national, including refugees, must obtain a work permit. The refugee work permit does not have any direct cost, but applicants are required to provide a number of documents that refugees are unlikely to possess, thus effectively limiting the possibility of obtaining such work permit.¹¹ In addition, employers who want to hire a refugee must fill out and sign a form stating that they were unable to find a local, skilled worker for that position and that they commit to hire a Kenyan trainee, which is a requirement when hiring a foreign national (ILO, 2022).

¹¹ The documents refugees are requested to present to apply for a work permit include a copy of their passport, a signed cover letter from the employer, a tax compliance certificate, and a recommendation from the Department of Refugee Services (ILO, 2022).

A special status for East African Community Refugees

An important change brought about by the 2021 Refugees Act concerns the status of refugees coming from East African Community (EAC) member states.¹² Under article 28.8 of the Refugees Act, these refugees are given the option to “voluntarily give up his or her refugee status for the purposes of enjoying any of the benefits due to him or her under the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community, the Protocol for the Establishment of the East African Community Common Market, and any other relevant written law” (Government of Kenya, 2021, p. 218). Under the EAC’s regulations and treaties, EAC nationals have the right to enter and freely move across Kenya’s territory, but they are also entitled to the right to work in the country and cannot be discriminated against due to their nationality (EAC, 2009). However, some limitations apply to the right to work of EAC nationals too, as EAC countries have committed to only accept “high-skilled workers, including (depending on the country) professionals, managers, technicians and associate professionals, and craft and related trade workers” (ILO, 2022, p. 16). Furthermore, at the time of writing, the regulations that would make the special clause for EAC nationals “actionable” have not yet been adopted. Therefore, eligible refugees cannot yet give up their refugee status to enjoy the rights entitled to them as EAC nationals, and there is no clear information on how that process would take place, or what specific requirements will be established to start it.

The Comprehensive Refugee Framework and the Shirika Plan

To comply with and fulfil its commitments arising from both its international obligations and the agreements it signed, the GoK is working in close cooperation with UNHCR to develop the Shirika Plan (previously referred to as the Marshal Plan). This plan builds on top of previous initiatives related to refugees’ access to services, including education, in Kenya and their integration in host communities, including the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan, the Garissa Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan, and Kenya’s Comprehensive Refugee Framework (CRRF).¹³

¹² The EAC is a regional intergovernmental organisation comprised of seven member states, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, and Tanzania. It was originally created in 1999 by Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda (EAC, n.d.).

¹³ The Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan and the Garissa Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan are plans developed by the GoK to favour refugees’ integration in Kenya’s two refugee camps, that is Kakuma (focusing on the Kalobeyei settlement) and Dadaab, respectively.

The CRRF, also called Support for Host Community and Refugee Empowerment (SHARE), was developed and adopted by Kenya in October 2020, pursuant to the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees.¹⁴ The CRRF was created with the goal of shifting emphasis from “humanitarian aid to a more comprehensive, sustainable and broader development-oriented approach for managing refugees and host communities” (Government of Kenya, 2020, p. 2). By adopting this new paradigm, and by shifting the kind of services and support that are provided to refugees, the GoK aimed to allow refugees to “develop their skills, become self-reliant and contribute to local economies and to their own and their communities’ well-being” (Government of Kenya, 2020, p. 3). With regard to education, Kenya’s CRRF foresaw changes in the management of the education system in refugee camps, which, according to the GoK, has created a “parallel system of service delivery that is less sustainable and does not adequately respond to the needs of refugees, asylum seekers, and their host communities” (Government of Kenya, 2020, p. 13). To tackle this issue, the CRRF established that the GoK would have to take the lead in the provision and management of education in the refugee-hosting areas of the country, while granting the full integration of refugees in Kenya’s Education System, in line with the pledge made by the GoK at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum (GRF).¹⁵

At the December 2023 Global Refugee Forum, the GoK signed the multi-stakeholder pledge for Education, [Towards a Shared Responsibility to Uphold the Right to Education and Include Refugee Children in National Education Systems](#). According to the pledge statement, and as part of the development and rollout of the Shirika Plan for refugee response by transforming camps into integrated settlements by 2027, the GoK commits to “a costed multi-year plan of action and a financing strategy” for access to integrated services, including Education (UNHCR, 2023).

Building on the CRRF, the Shirika Plan aims to strengthen even more the integration of refugees in Kenya, while expanding the GoK’s role in managing and providing

¹⁴ The New York Declaration was adopted in September 2016 by all 193 members of the United Nations. Through the Declaration, signatory countries committed to working towards the adoption of a global compact on refugees and a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration (United Nations General Assembly, 2016). The first compact, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), was adopted in 2018 and aims to provide a more “predictable and equitable burden and responsibility-sharing among all United Nations Member States, together with other relevant stakeholders” (United Nations, 2018, p. 2), including humanitarian and development organisations, local authorities, civil society, international and regional financial institutions, and more.

¹⁵ The GRF is a global event held every four years to support the practical implementation of the objectives set out in the Global Compact on Refugees. At the 2019 GRF, the GoK, among other commitments, pledged to continue to enable refugee children access to its education system and adopt a policy of systematic inclusion of refugees in the national education system (UNHCR, n.d.).

services to this population. The Plan's main priority is the "transformation of refugee camps into integrated settlements", allowing refugees' meaningful access to "adequate shelter, healthcare, and education" services while supporting the creation of additional opportunities for the socio-economic development of both refugees and host communities (Bitok, 2023; Government of Kenya & UNHCR, 2023). As remarked by the Principal Secretary of the State Department for Immigration and Citizen Services, a key focus of the Plan will be the provision of education, since "by providing access to quality education, we empower young refugees with the knowledge and skills necessary to rebuild their lives and contribute to the development of our nation [Kenya]" (Bitok, 2023). In line with the provisions of the CRRF, the Shirika Plan will see the GoK committing itself to a bigger role in the management and provision of essential services, including education, to refugees, asylum seekers, and host communities. To ensure that the GoK can have a meaningful role in providing and managing services for refugees, asylum seekers, and host communities, the Shirika Plan envisages six key components (Government of Kenya, 2023):

1. **Systems-Building and enabling policy frameworks** to strengthen national institutions to ensure equity, equality, and inclusion.
2. **Integrated Services Delivery**, focusing on equitable access to all services.
3. **Skills Development** for community-led, market-driven development.
4. **Natural Resource Management** including Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, with the goal of ensuring sustainable environmental management.
5. **Sustainable Economic Development** focused on rural and urban business development, economic infrastructure, technological development, and more.
6. **Durable Solutions and Complementary Pathways**, focusing on voluntary return, advocacy, coordinate assessments, and cross-border initiatives.

The governance of the Shirika Plan will be centred around three main bodies, a Steering Committee, a Technical Committee, and a Joint Department of Refugee Services - UNHCR Shirika Plan Secretariat. The **Steering Committee** will comprise the Principal Secretaries from line ministries and will guide the development of the Shirika plan and its operationalisation. The **Technical Committee** will provide technical inputs and include both line ministry focal points and representatives from different stakeholders, including donors, county governments, UN agencies, development actors, and refugees and host communities. Lastly, the **Joint Department of Refugee Services - UNHCR Shirika Plan Secretariat** oversees the development and operationalisation of the Shirika Plan, including the planning and hosting of stakeholders' consultations and the drafting of the full Plan. The Shirika

Plan was drafted through a “multi-stakeholder consultative approach” and “the Plan” was presented at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (Government of Kenya & UNHCR, 2023; Government of Kenya, 2023) as part of its contributions to the following multi-stakeholder pledges, [Human settlements – Climate Resilient Sustainable Human Settlements for Refugees and their Hosting Communities](#) and [Education – Towards a Shared Responsibility to Uphold the Right to Education and Include Refugee Children in National Education Systems](#) (UNHCR, 2023).

Declining Financial Support for Refugees Hosted in Kenya

While Kenya has continued to host refugees within its territory, the international community’s support continues to decrease as needs continue to increase. In 2021, the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR lamented the lack of funding for refugees in Kenya, which resulted in major cuts (up to 60%) to the food rations provided to refugees (UNHCR & WFP, 2021). The situation has not improved in recent months and UNHCR data from February 2023 show that only 11% of the financial requirements to support its operations in Kenya were funded. This meant that the funding gap stood at 89% of the total financial requirements for 2023, or almost \$136 million over a total requirement of \$153.4 million (UNHCR, 2023c). The difficult funding situation negatively impacts all the services that UNHCR and its partners can provide to the refugees hosted in Kenya, including education provision.

This issue is part of the larger global challenge in financing education, especially in the low-to-middle-income countries that host 76% of the world's refugees (UNHCR, n.d.). Multiple analyses of educational investments, particularly in secondary education, consistently show underfunding. This underfunding jeopardises the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.)”

KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Kakuma camp complex is in Turkana County in northwest Kenya. It was first established in 1992. The camp was initially set up to provide sanctuary for the “Lost Boys of Sudan.” These were approximately 20,000 young boys (and some girls) from southern Sudan—around six or seven years old at the time—who escaped their homes in 1987 due to the ravages of civil war. The conflict threatened their safety, including

risk of conscription by armed factions. Initially, these boys embarked on a gruelling thousand-mile journey to Ethiopia seeking refuge (UNHCR, n.d.) However, subsequent warfare in Ethiopia forced them to flee again and only about half of them survived four years of wandering in harsh conditions. According to the International Rescue Committee (IRC):

Thousands of boys lost their lives to hunger, dehydration, and exhaustion. Some were attacked and killed by wild animals; others drowned crossing rivers, and many were caught in the crossfire for fighting forces (International Rescue Committee, 2014).

Finally, in 1992, about 10,000 boys—then between the ages of eight and 18—arrived in northwest Kenya. The Kakuma refugee camp offered these boys refuge and vital humanitarian support. In that same year, large numbers of Ethiopians fled their country in the wake of the Ethiopian government's collapse. Simultaneously, Somalians were grappling with civil strife and insecurity in their country, forcing them to seek refuge elsewhere (UNHCR, n.d.). Over three decades later, the camp continues to extend similar aid and protection to thousands of children and youth.

Kakuma refugee camp has not stopped expanding since 1992. Today, the complex is composed of four distinct sections: Kakuma 1, Kakuma 2, Kakuma 3, Kakuma 4 and an integrated settlement, Kalobeyei, which comprises three villages (ILO, 2022).

As of October 2023, Kakuma camp hosted 209,295 asylum seekers and refugees. Of these, 18.7% were under 18 years old. Most asylum seekers and refugees hosted in Kakuma are from South Sudan (around 53%) and Somalia (around 19%), but there are also significant numbers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (9%), Burundi (8%), Sudan (5%), and Ethiopia (3%). As of October 2023, a further 64,082 refugees and asylum seekers, mostly from South Sudan, were hosted in the nearby Kalobeyei integrated settlement (UNHCR, 2023b).¹⁶ As previously mentioned, given JRS's role as the UNHCR implementing partner for secondary education in Kakuma camp, this report will primarily focus on the camp's educational landscape. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that crafting a comprehensive, GRE strategy for the secondary schools in the Kakuma refugee camp necessitates a thorough assessment

¹⁶ The Kalobeyei integrated settlement was created in 2015 with the initial goal of allowing refugees and asylum seekers to shift from over-reliance of humanitarian aid to self-reliance and to integrate more in the local context. However, the continued influx of refugees has made the achievement of these goals more difficult (MarketShare Associates, 2019).

and understanding of the broader challenges and opportunities within the surrounding region. We acknowledge that the absence of a deeper analysis of the Kalobeyei context represents a limitation of this initial GRE assessment and report.

The Turkana host community is pastoralist, and practices a semi-nomadic lifestyle. Their living conditions are not better than those of refugees and asylum seekers. Turkana county is considered one of the poorest and least developed in Kenya, “with limited reach of social services and low levels of economic development (...) combined with harsh agro-climatic conditions” (ILO, 2022, p. 1). Furthermore, climate change has made the agro-climatic conditions even more extreme. Already in 2012, Kakuma had started seeing an increased number of rainy days, which often led to flooding in the camp. This, coupled with the poor structure of homes in Kakuma (most of them are made of mud or bricks made with mud), often means that houses get destroyed by the heavy rains (Markham, 2012). Today, the situation has gotten worse and is negatively impacting people’s wellbeing, safety, and livelihoods. Last November alone, there were five flood-related deaths among refugees in Kakuma (ACAPS, 2023).¹⁷ At the same time, the climate in Kakuma has become drier, with five consecutive below-average rainy seasons that caused “significant food insecurity, the loss of livelihoods from low-level harvests and livestock deaths, and health challenges” and worsened the impact of flooding (ACAPS, 2023, p. 3). These environmental changes also impact the traditional, pastoralist lifestyle of the Turkana people (Fleming, 2023), including their educational needs.

A recent study showed that 68% of Kakuma refugees live below the poverty line of \$1.90 per day, and the Turkana host community performs even worse, with 72% living below the poverty line (Pape & Beltramo, 2021). Moreover, data also show a gender gap in the poverty rate, as “refugees who live in households headed by women are poorer than those who live in men-headed households” (Pape & Beltramo, 2021), and in Kakuma 60% of households are women-headed (MarketShare Associates, 2019). These findings highlight the importance of strengthening the support and services provided to girls and women in Kakuma camp. Moreover, the higher poverty rate of women compared to men is also linked to the lower education level that women have in Kakuma, on average. Gender gaps in educational provision and outcomes are directly linked to lower levels of economic success, but they also negatively impact the overall growth of a country’s economy (Klasen, 2002). Therefore, **any interventions in**

¹⁷ More information on the impact of climate change on Kakuma and its people can be found in the section *Leading Barrier: Extreme and Unpredictable Weather Conditions*, beginning on page 80.

support of girls' and women's education can be beneficial not only to those women and girls, but also their communities and the countries where they live.

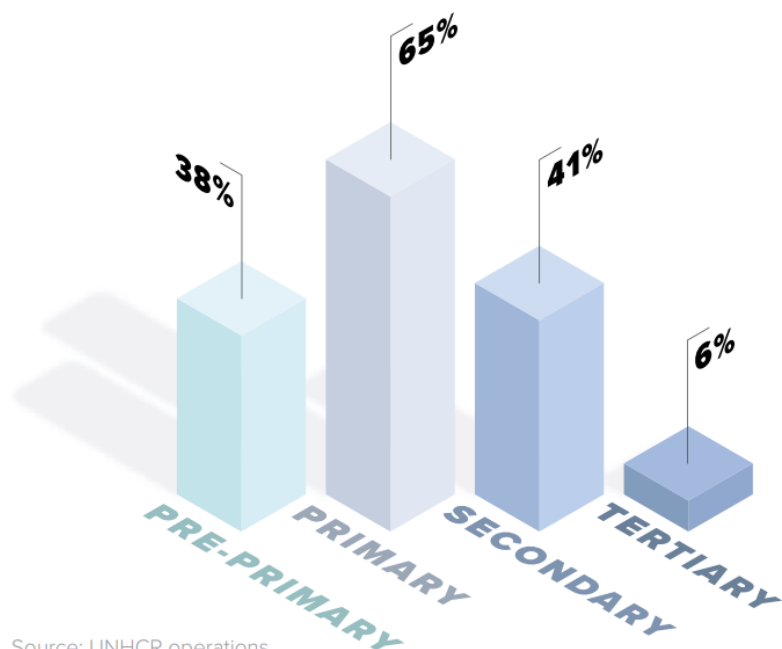
SECONDARY EDUCATION IN KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP

Despite the many global efforts in support of refugee education, accessing and completing secondary education remains a challenge in many displacement situations, and Kakuma is no exception. While Kenya is “an island of stability on a fragile region” and allows refugees to access many key services, including education, the country’s “commendable willingness to support displaced children must be matched by adequate resources”, as recalled by Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR, 2023d, p. 4).

As a key stakeholder in the field of EiE, JRS has carefully analysed barriers to education for girls and women in its programming. Gender disparity in EiE increases at the upper primary levels, again in secondary education, and finally, in access to tertiary education. As a result, JRS has further refined its strategic framework goals **to improve access to and completion of secondary education, especially for girls**, in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

In addition to being their human right, secondary education is a lifeline for adolescent girls. Secondary education provides a **critical entry point for girls to access health services, including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) education**. There is a great deal of immediate and longer-term evidence highlighting the importance of secondary education and the benefits for individuals, families, and broader communities if girls can access and complete secondary school.

FIGURE 3: REFUGEE ENROLMENT RATES, 2021-2022¹⁸



Source: UNHCR operations

Secondary education is life-changing for crisis-affected adolescent girls, such as those living in Kakuma refugee camp. Yet, **the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures deepened and exposed inequalities for young people, especially girls.** Without targeted interventions, some girls may never continue their formal education; even though schools have largely reopened. Despite evidence about the importance of secondary education in conflict and crisis-affected settings, **for every 100 students entering primary education, 61 complete lower secondary education, and just 35 complete upper secondary.** Again, if current trends continue, in 2030, 1 in 5 girls in conflict-affected settings will not finish secondary school and 1 in 3 will not be able to read a simple sentence.¹⁹ This is a figure that was calculated before the learning losses associated with COVID-19 – losses that disproportionately impacted girls. Now more than ever, for girls to attend and remain in school, education systems in Kakuma and beyond must be safe and free from all forms of violence, including gender-based violence (GBV).

Meanwhile, today's adolescent population (aged 10-19) around the globe is estimated at 1.4 billion. Equipped with high-quality education and skills, the world's youth population represents enormous human potential and is a vital economic and social

¹⁸ From UNHCR, 2023d.

¹⁹ Plan International. Left Out, Left Behind: Adolescent Girls' Secondary Education in Crises, June 2017.

asset. Secondary education is critical for youth to refine foundational skills and develop relevant skills for employment. **Secondary educational attainment for girls leads to increases in their health, nutrition, and overall well-being.** Each additional year of secondary education a girl completes is associated with a lower risk of early marriage and early pregnancy (Wodon, Male, Montenegro, Nguyen, & Onagoruwa, 2018).

Beyond the benefit to the individual, a growing body of evidence validates secondary education as a long-term investment in more equitable, peaceful, and sustainable communities. Increasing access to and completion of secondary education brings far-reaching benefits for individuals, their families, communities, and the wider societies. Completion of secondary education is associated with greater economic, political, and social benefits than primary education alone. **UNESCO projects that the global poverty rate would be more than halved if all adults completed secondary school.**

In this section, we offer a comprehensive overview of refugee education in Kakuma camp, with a focus on secondary education. This includes details on the number of schools, enrolment rates, access to examinations, examination results, the secondary education curriculum, and more. This detailed overview is crucial for identifying and understanding the barriers to accessing and completing secondary education in Kakuma camp, particularly for girls. By grasping these aspects, JRS, in collaboration with stakeholders, including the affected population, can more effectively utilise secondary education as a powerful tool for unlocking the immense potential and talents of the youth in the Kakuma refugee camp, enabling them to not just survive, but flourish and thrive.

Number of Schools and Student Population in Kakuma

In 2018, the estimated out-of-school rate in Kakuma stood at 96% for secondary education, with many of the students being overage for the level of education they were attending (International Finance Corporation, 2018). Today, the situation has improved and the out-of-school rate for secondary school age children and youth in Kakuma declined to 88.4%, but this increase coincides with a decline in funding. Moreover, to achieve increased access to and quality of secondary education in Kakuma, classrooms must be decongested. Typically, class sizes exceed 100 students²⁰,

²⁰ The present out-of-school rate was provided by the JRS Kakuma office and was calculated based on school enrolment data and Kakuma population statistics provided by UNHCR.

significantly higher than the national student-to-teacher ratio average of 1:40-45 (Walker, 2023).

The out-of-school rate declined due to investments in school infrastructure, including the opening of two new secondary schools, reaching a total of seven secondary schools in Kakuma camp (compared to the five existing in 2018). All schools are officially registered with Kenya’s MoE. More recently, additional classrooms were built in Kakuma’s secondary schools by UNHCR, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) of the United States Department of States, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) through Windle International Kenya. As of the end of 2023, a total of 34 new classrooms were built, including 12 new classrooms at Vision Secondary Schools, 14 new classrooms at Blue State Secondary School, four new classrooms at Starlight Secondary School, and four new classrooms at Green Light Secondary School.

Kakuma’s seven secondary schools hosted a total of 14,555 students as of October 2023.²¹ The table below summarises the number of secondary learners enrolled in Kakuma camp, disaggregating data by school and gender.

TABLE 2: OVERVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ENROLMENT IN KAKUMA CAMP: OCTOBER 2023

School	Number of female students	% of female students	Number of male students	% of male students	Total number of students
Starlight Secondary School	399	31%	901	69%	1,300
Kakuma Refugee Secondary School	1,378	36%	2,442	64%	3,820
Blue States Secondary School	280	27%	807	73%	1,087
Green Light Secondary School	971	37%	1,654	63%	2,625
Somali Bantu	921	33%	1,893	67%	2,814

²¹ The data on the number of enrolled students come from internal statistics provided by the JRS Kakuma office.

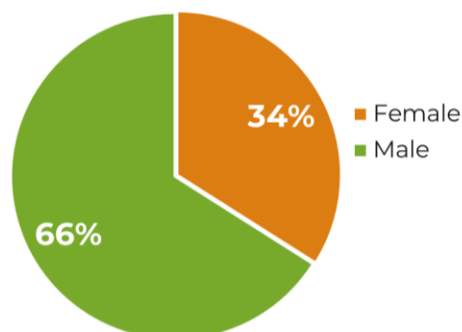
Secondary School					
Vision Secondary School	691	26%	1,940	74%	2,631
Life Works Secondary School (girls only)	353	100%	0	0%	323
Totals	4,993	34%	9,637	66%	14,630

Excluding the girls-only Life Works Secondary School, achieving gender equality in secondary school enrolment remains a distant goal. In Kakuma, there is relative gender parity in primary school enrolment. Gender parity declines, however, in transitions to secondary school. According to UNHCR data, only about 40% of girls enrolled in primary school sat national exams and only an estimated 27% of girls sat secondary exams in 2022.

In two schools (*Blue States Secondary School and Vision Secondary School*), girls account for less than 30% of the total student body. In the remaining schools (*Starlight Secondary School Kakuma Refugee Secondary School, Green Light Secondary School, and Somali Bantu Secondary School*), girls represent 40% but still fall short of reaching full **gender parity**.²² Of the 14,630 youth who are accessing secondary school in Kakuma refugee camp, **only 34% (4,993 individuals) are girls**. Meanwhile, boys account for 66% (9,637 individuals) of the secondary school-going population in the camp. This significant gender imbalance results from numerous gendered barriers that hinder girls from accessing and completing secondary education. These barriers range from factors related to school facilities to cultural norms to economic challenges. Section 3 of this report explores these barriers in depth.

²² Gender parity concerns relative equality in terms of numbers and proportions of women and men, girls and boys, and is often calculated as the ratio of female-to-male values for a given indicator, such as school enrolment or access to services (European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.).

FIGURE 4: GENDER RATIO OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KAKUMA (OCTOBER 2023)



Additionally, **most secondary school learners in Kakuma are overage**. As of October 2023, only 30% of learners – totalling 4,402 (1,597 F, 2,805 M) – fell within Kenya's standard secondary education age bracket of 14 to 18 years representing only 13% of eligible secondary school going youth in the camp (32,295 youth in the camp aged between 14 to 18 years). Conversely 70% of the secondary school learners in Kakuma – or 10,202 individuals (3,323 F, 8,128 M) were beyond the typical age range for secondary education.²³ The gross enrolment rate was at 45.5% with boys being at 72.1% and girls being 26.4%.²⁴

While not central to this assessment, it is also important to consider the number of students with disabilities present in Kakuma's secondary schools. As of October 2023, Kakuma's secondary schools hosted a total of 170 students with disabilities (50 F, 120 M), which represented around 1% of the overall secondary school population.²⁵ This means that learners with disabilities are not transitioning to secondary school. Additionally, the need for specific accommodations to allow learners with disabilities to actively and fully participate in secondary school emerged prominently in the assessment and is analysed more in-depth in the section of the report devoted to specific barriers. The table below presents the number of secondary learners with disabilities as of October 2023, disaggregated by gender and type of disability.

²³ An additional 5 students (3 F, 2 M) were aged 13 or below.

²⁴ All data from UNHCR's Education Management Information System (EMIS).

²⁵ The data on the number of enrolled learners with disabilities come from internal statistics provided by the JRS Kakuma office.

TABLE 3: OVERVIEW OF ENROLMENT LEVELS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN KAKUMA CAMP: OCTOBER 2023

Type of Disability	Boys	Girls	Total	%
Intellectual Impairment	3	0	3	2%
Visual Impairment	25	15	40	24%
Hearing Impairment	11	5	16	9%
Physical Challenges	36	10	46	27%
Speech Difficulties	7	2	9	5%
Albinism	3	0	3	2%
Chronic Health Conditions	1	1	2	1%
Multiple Disabilities	0	0	0	0%
Other Disabilities	34	17	51	30%
Total	120	50	170	

There are also major challenges when it comes to **transitioning from primary to secondary education** in Kakuma camp. Kakuma has 21 primary schools, with a total enrolment of 48,517 pupils (25,759 female and 22,578 male) as of October 2023.²⁶ The significantly lower number of secondary schools (seven) compared to that of primary schools means that the number of learners completing primary education is much higher than what secondary schools in Kakuma can accommodate for, thus leaving many primary-school learners without access to further education. These numbers are in line with global statistics on refugees' access to education. Globally, 65% of refugee

²⁶ Based on statistics provided by the LWF, UNHCR's implementing partner for primary education in Kakuma camp.

children access primary education, but only 41% of refugee youth are accessing secondary education (UNHCR, 2023d). To partially address the issue of secondary school access and capacity, a two-shift system was adopted in Kakuma. Through this system, schools have two distinct shifts, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and can therefore accommodate for more students. This system was first adopted in Vision Secondary School in 2016 and was then replicated in the other secondary schools of the camp. At the time of writing, the two-shift system is still being used in Somali Bantu, Green Light, and Kakuma Refugee secondary schools. New investments in secondary school infrastructure, including the construction of additional classrooms in 2024, will allow JRS to phase out the two-shift system, except for Kakuma Refugee, where school capacity is still limited.

Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) & Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) Results in Kakuma and Gender Imbalances

It is commendable that Kakuma's schools accommodate a growing number of refugees to pursue education. As noted above, a problem persists of overcrowding in classrooms. This issue continues to negatively impact the quality of education provided to learners, which is reflected in their exam results.

When looking at the KCPE statistics, the scores of both refugee and host community students in Kakuma's primary schools are on par with the overall results across Kenya. In the 2023 KCPE, 70% of candidates across Kenya scored above 200 marks (Kenya Ministry of Education, 2023), compared to 88% of candidates in Kakuma's primary schools. It is worth noting that this is the last KCPE exam being administered for the old curriculum in Kenya, as the country transitions to the competency-based curriculum.

Looking at the gender parity of primary school enrolment, there is a more balanced gender ratio than in secondary schools, with 43% female learners and 57% male learners enrolled in Kakuma's primary schools. This represents an almost 10-point increase in the ratio of female students when compared to secondary schools, where they instead represent only 34% of the student population. This difference confirms the challenges that learners, but especially girls, face in pursuing education and the need for more targeted efforts and investments in strengthening access to and completion of secondary education for youth in Kakuma, especially girls.

To register for and sit the KCSE, learners must first pass the KCPE and then complete four years of secondary education. The KCSE registration fee, paid to the GoK, ranges

between 5,500 and 6,200 Kenyan Shillings, varying based on the number of subjects a student takes.²⁷ Currently, in the case of Kakuma, the KCSE registration fee is covered by UNHCR through its implementing partner for secondary education, JRS. This is another example of how the international community, including UNHCR, shoulder education-related expenses for refugee children and youth.

On a positive note, the number of KCSE candidates for Kakuma has been steadily increasing over the time, from 1,219 in 2018 to 2,703 in 2023. This represents a 103% increase over five years. Looking at female candidates only, the number has increased by 115% over the same timeframe, increasing from 323 female candidates in 2018 to 879 in 2023. However, the ratio of female KCSE candidates has not increased significantly over those 5 years due to the overall growing number of KCSE candidates, both female and male. In 2018, female KCSE candidates represented 26% of the total candidates, slightly increasing to 28% in the 2022 and to 33% in 2023 KCSE sessions.

In looking at KCSE results for learners in Kakuma, performance is significantly worse than in the rest of Kenya. The nationwide 2023 KCSE results show that 76.87% of the candidates scored C or below (Teachers Arena, 2024), whereas in Kakuma that percentage is more than 10 points higher, with 97.3% of candidates scoring C or below in their KCSE exams.²⁸ However, when compared to the performance of learners in Kalobeyei's secondary school, Kakuma students perform better. For the 2022 KCSE, 95.21% of learners from Kalobeyei scored C or below, with only 1.09% of them scoring C+ or above.²⁹

Finally, since many universities in Kenya require a C+ KCSE result to enrol, this means that only 2.7% of students in Kakuma (those who scored C+ or above) meet the requirements to access university in Kenya.³⁰ In addition, when comparing the 2023 KCSE results with the previous years, it is possible to see that the share of Kakuma students reaching C or below increased from 2020 to 2023, with 90.8% scoring C or below in 2020, 90.61% in 2021, 93.2% in 2022 and 97.3% in 2023. Of course, these results translated into a decreasing percentage of students reaching C+ or above, declining from 2.99% of candidates in 2020 to 2.39% in 2021 and 2.23% in 2022, and with a slight increase in 2023 to 2.7%. This effectively means that the share of Kakuma' youth who meet the requirements to access higher education (without necessarily being able to

²⁷ The Kenya National Examination Council allows students to register for minimum of seven subject and a maximum of eight, with only seven being used for grading.

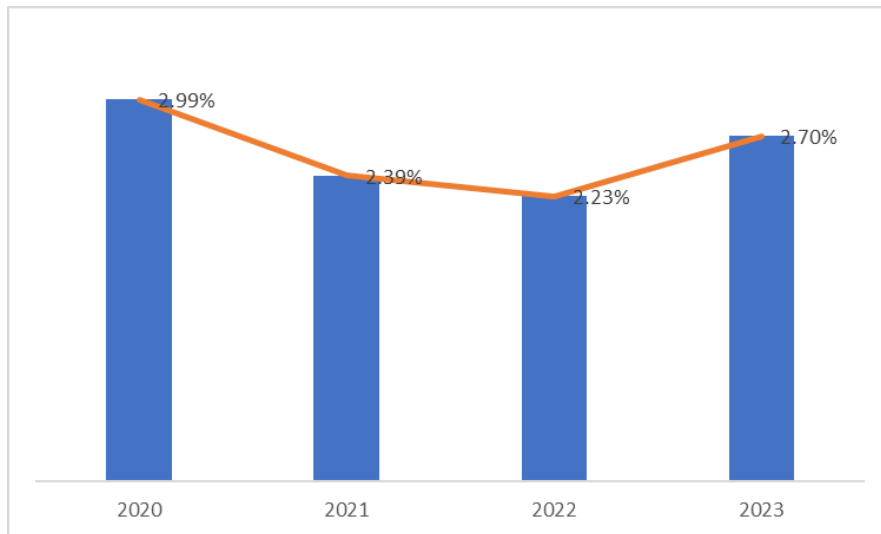
²⁸ For KCSE, grades range from A (the highest one) to E (the lowest one).

²⁹ KCSE data for Kalobeyei was provided by the JRS Kakuma office.

³⁰ The nation-wide data for KCSE come from Kenya National Examination Council, 2023. KCSE data for Kakuma was provided by the JRS Kakuma office. It is important to note that in the 2022 KCSE exams, no student in Kakuma scored an A or A-.

access it) is significantly lower than the global share of refugees accessing higher education, which currently stands at 6% (UNHCR, 2023d).

FIGURE 5: PERCENTAGE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KAKUMA SCORING C+ OR ABOVE ON THE KCSE



Overview of the Teacher Situation in Kakuma

Providing quality education in the context of a refugee camp, and in emergencies and protracted crises, is a major challenge for teachers and educational systems alike. In such contexts, it is often difficult to find trained and qualified teachers, and Kakuma's secondary schools are no exception. Most of Kakuma's secondary teachers' highest qualification is a secondary education diploma and many of them **“never liked or never wanted to be teachers. But because of their living conditions in the camp, most of them are being forced into teaching”** (INEE, 2023b) to support themselves and their families' needs.

“[Most of Kakuma’s secondary teachers] never liked or never wanted to be teachers. But because of their living conditions in the camp, most of them are being forced into teaching.”

TEACHER IN KAKUMA

This situation leads to a lack of passion among many teachers, especially when lacking the skills and training required to effectively manage and teach larger classes.

TABLE 4: OVERVIEW OF KAKUMA SECONDARY SCHOOLS' TEACHING STAFF: OCTOBER 2023³¹

Staff Role	N. of Male	N. of Female	Total	% of overall teacher population
Refugee trained teachers	6	0	6	2%
Refugee untrained teachers	110	15	125	48%
National teachers	40	28	68	26%
National assistant/intern teachers	31	32	63	24%
Totals	187	75	262	100%
% of male and female	71%	29%		

The issues in hiring and retaining qualified teachers in a context like Kakuma is reflected in the level of training and qualification that the camp’s secondary school teachers present. As of April 2023, of a total secondary school teaching staff of 299 teachers, 56% of the staff were untrained refugee teachers, with a further 18% of the teaching staff being national assistant/intern teachers. The number of trained, qualified national teacher stood at only 70 teachers, or 23% of the total teaching staff. The presence of such a high number of refugee teachers is a positive element insofar

³¹ Based on data provided by the JRS Kakuma office.

as they have the means to have a modest livelihood and support their families, and they can also represent valuable role models for refugee students. However, given their frequent lack of teacher-specific training or higher education, such a high percentage of untrained, refugee teachers and the low number of qualified, trained national teachers reflect the difficulties that schools have in hiring and retaining qualified teachers. The high number of untrained teachers in Kakuma's secondary school system compounds other existing challenges, ultimately leading to a lower quality of education provided to learners.³² The report will revisit this supply-side barrier in more depth on page 108 of the report.

Policies and Legislation Applicable to Education in Kakuma Camp

UNHCR works with implementing partners in refugee camps to address refugees' immediate and long-term needs. As mentioned earlier, JRS is the implementing partner for secondary education in Kakuma camp.³³ While implementing partners receive funding from UNHCR to deliver their services, they are also encouraged to secure additional funding to improve and expand services, especially given the decreasing support from the international community and the overall lack of financing for many sectors, including education, and especially for secondary education. Financing is arguably “the greatest barrier to the provision of accessible and quality secondary education in crisis contexts”, also considering that “early childhood and primary education receive the lion’s share” of education in emergency funds, whereas secondary education is not often prioritised (Henderson, Mansour, & Hough, 2023, p. 11).

Regarding education provision, UN has published a Kakuma-specific education strategy (UNHCR, 2017), which UNCHR itself and its partners are called upon to implement. The strategy states that education services should be assessed and respond to the 5A’s framework, which focuses on (1) availability, (2) accessibility, (3) acceptability, (4) affordability, and (5) appropriateness. Focusing on secondary education, UNHCR’s strategy highlights the key challenges present in Kakuma camp and calls for investments and interventions to address them. Among these challenges, we find the limited secondary school capacity, the low number of qualified teachers, insufficient learning materials, class overcrowding, and more. UNHCR also calls on

³² These challenges include overcrowding, limited school capacity, limited number of secondary schools, lack of school supplies, and more. These challenges will be analysed in more depth in subsequent sections of the report.

³³ In addition to Education, other immediate and longer-term services offered to refugees through UNHCR’s implementing partners usually include Education, Food and Nutrition, Health, Legal and Protection Services, Shelter and Infrastructure, and WASH.

implementing partners and other NGOs to focus on the integration of life-skills training in school programmes, focusing especially on behavioural change, sexual abuse, HIV, and peace education, but also on adopting initiatives to address the specific needs of female students and engage community leaders and education networks in making schools safe for learners (UNHCR, 2017).

Curriculum and Examination

Schools in Kakuma follow Kenya’s national education system, in line with UNHCR’s focus on including refugee education within national education (UNHCR, 2022a). As such, the curriculum used in Kakuma’s schools is the same used in all schools throughout Kenya. However, the Kenyan government is currently rolling out a new competency-based curriculum (CBC) to replace the previous curriculum. The rollout is being carried out in stages and it is expected that it will be applied in Kakuma’s secondary schools only in 2026. At the time of writing, secondary schools in Kakuma are still using the old curriculum.

Kenya’s old 8-4-4 Curriculum

The old 8-4-4 curriculum started being used in Kenya in 1985. It is structured around eight years of primary education, four years of secondary education, and four to six years of university studies.

FIGURE 6: STRUCTURE OF THE 8-4-4 CURRICULUM³⁴



Under the 8-4-4 curriculum, primary education starts at age 6 and finishes around age 14 and is structured into lower, middle, and upper primary levels. Starting from 2003, primary education was made free for all students, significantly increasing

³⁴ Adapted from Clark, 2015.

enrolment levels throughout Kenya (Clark, 2015). At the end of the primary education cycle, students sit for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE).

Under the 8-4-4 curriculum, secondary education lasts four years and was made free for all students in 2008. While primary and secondary education are free in Kenya, secondary students in Kakuma are required to contribute 3,000 Kenyan Shillings for both Form 1 and Form 2, for a total of 6,000 Kenyan Shillings in school fees throughout their secondary education cycle. These school fees equate to roughly 20 USD or 18 Euros per year, or 40 USD or 36 Euros total. These fees are critical for compensating teachers, addressing operational costs, and ensuring the overall quality of education in Kakuma's secondary schools.³⁵

At the national level, the subjects taught in the secondary 8-4-4 curriculum are grouped into six areas:

- Languages (English, Kiswahili, Arabic, German, French)
- Sciences (mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology)
- Applied Sciences (home science, agriculture, computer studies)
- Humanities (history, geography, religious education, life skills, business studies)
- Creative Arts (music, art, and design)
- Technical Subjects (drawing and design, building construction, power and mechanics, metalwork, aviation, woodwork, electronics)

For the first two years of secondary education, learners take 13 subjects, and eight subjects in the last two years. Three subjects are compulsory for all students, namely English, Kiswahili, and mathematics. In addition, all students must take two science subjects, one humanities subject, and one applied science or technical subject from those listed above. The actual subjects that are offered to learners depend on the individual schools' capacities (Clark, 2015). In all secondary schools in Kakuma camp, English, Kiswahili, mathematics, and chemistry are mandatory subjects. In addition to these four subjects, learners are requested to choose additional subjects among the following: biology, physics, history, geography, Christian Religious Education, Islamic Religious Education, Arabic, business studies, and agriculture. The table below summarises the subject available in Kakuma camp's seven secondary schools.³⁶ The green cells indicate that the subject is available, the red cells indicate that the subject is not available, and the orange cells indicate the subject groups where only one of the subjects is available.

³⁵ The issue of school fees as a barrier to accessing and completing secondary education in Kakuma camp will be analysed more in detail in the section *Leading Barrier: Poverty & the* on page 55.

³⁶ Information on the subjects available in each school was shared by the JRS Kakuma office.

TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF SUBJECTS AVAILABLE IN KAKUMA'S SECONDARY SCHOOLS³⁷

Subject	Secondary School Name						
	Starlight	Kakuma Refugee	Blue States	Green Light	Somali Bantu	Vision	Life Works
English	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
Kiswahili	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
Mathematics	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
Chemistry	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
Biology/ Physics							Only biology
History/ Geography							Only history
Christian Religious Education/ Islamic Religious Education							
Arabic/ Business Studies/ Agriculture						Only business studies	

At the end of the fourth year of secondary education, learners sit for their KCSE. Through the KCSE, learners are tested in four subject groups, with one of them comprising the mandatory topics (English, Kiswahili, and mathematics) being compulsory for all candidates. Learners' KCSE scores are also used for admission into university and other higher education opportunities (Clark, 2015).

Kenya's New Competency-Based 2-6-3-3 Curriculum

In 2017, the GoK introduced a new curriculum, which follows a 2-6-3-3 structure, with two years of pre-primary education, six years of primary education, three years of lower secondary education, and three years of upper secondary education. The latter

³⁷ Based on information shared by the JRS Kakuma office.

can be followed by three years (or more) of higher education studies (Julisha.Info, 2023).

FIGURE 7: STRUCTURE OF THE 2-6-3-3 CURRICULUM³⁸



Under the CBC, primary education lasts a total of six years and is divided into lower (grades 1 to 3) and upper primary education (grades 4 to 6). At the end of each upper primary year, learners are tested, and each year's score counts for a 20% of the final grade they will get at the end of their primary education cycle. The upper primary tests account for 60% of a learner's final grade. The remaining 40% of the final grade is dependent on a national assessment to be conducted at the end of grade 6 (Muchunguh, 2021).

After completing primary education, learners transition to secondary education, which is divided into three years of junior secondary school (grades 7 to 9) and three years of senior secondary school (grades 10 to 12). Under the CBC, learners are expected to start post-primary education earlier than under the previous curriculum, joining junior secondary school at age 12 (compared to age 14 under the 8-4-4 system). At the end of junior secondary, learners will go through an assessment whose results, along with learners' preferences, will determine their placement in senior secondary (Muchunguh, 2021).

In Junior Secondary, learners will be required to study 12 core subjects, including English, Kiswahili or Kenyan sign language, mathematics, integrated sciences, health education, pre-technical and pre-career education, social studies, religious education (Christian, Islamic, or Hindu), business studies, agriculture, life skills, and sports and physical education. Learners will also have the possibility of choosing at least one and maximum two additional subjects, including visual arts, performing arts, home science, computer science, foreign languages (German, French, Mandarin, or Arabic), Kenyan Sign Language, and indigenous languages (Kenyayote, 2022).

³⁸ Adapted from Kenyayote, 2022.

In senior secondary, when learners are between 15 and 17 years old, depending on the school's availability, learners can choose among three pathways (Muchunguh, 2021):

- Arts and sports science, which includes sports science, performing arts, and visual arts.
- Social science, learners choose between two tracks, namely languages and literature, and humanities and business studies.
- STEM subjects, learners choose between four tracks, namely pure sciences, applied science, technical and engineering, and careers and technology studies.

Across all the different pathways and tracks, the CBC's goal is to provide all learners with some core competencies: communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, imagination and creativity, citizenship, learning to learn, self-efficacy, and digital learning (Kenyaote, 2022).

At first, junior secondary was to be domiciled within secondary schools and work started in schools, including those in Kakuma, to allow for the junior secondary learners to be accommodated there. However, in 2022, the government carried out a review of the CBC and its implementation plan that resulted in junior secondary being domiciled within the existing primary schools. Therefore, funds and investments had to shift from secondary to primary schools to accommodate for the new junior secondary learners. This sudden and unexpected change was especially challenging for Kakuma's education system, which was already overcrowded and underfunded. At the time of writing, implementation of the new curriculum has reached grade 6 and, with the new changes in the CBC, the new curriculum will be applied in secondary schools only from grade 10. Therefore, learners using the CBC curriculum will join the JRS-run secondary schools in Kakuma only in 2026.

Another notable change that the CBC will bring about is the stricter link between the school grade and the age of learners. Many key informants we interviewed highlighted the fact that the CBC's structure does not leave much room for overage learners, who will be prevented from attending school if they are much older than the expected age for a certain school grade. This change can be especially impactful in a context like Kakuma, where many learners are older than the expected age. As a result, many learners' risk being left out of education and proactive, appropriate solutions need to be developed in order to accommodate for the needs of all learners, including overage learners. One possible solution for this challenge could be the rollout of Secondary Accelerated Education Programming (SAEP) in Kakuma. According to one MoE official:

The majority of students in the camp are overage. The CBC is based on age. Learners can only join the level of school that matches their

age. CBC is linked to age due to limited resources. Overage learners should join vocational pathways...but to join vocational pathways, one often needs a secondary education certificate. This is where SAEP could be useful and effective.

SAEPs are a key tool to “offer pathways back into education where poverty, marginalisation, conflict, and crises have resulted in major disruptions to learning” (Salem, Drzewiecki, & Concina, 2023, p. 6) through an accelerated, age-appropriate, and accredited education programme. SAEPs are especially suited to “address the limited supply of secondary education, increasing dropout rates, and the unprecedented levels of uncertainty and crises young people across the world face” (Salem, Drzewiecki, & Concina, 2023, p. 20), focusing specifically on overage learners who often have competing priorities and household duties that distract from education.

An SAEP was previously implemented in the Dadaab camp, and the GoK is currently developing accelerated education guidelines for primary education. This development raises the possibility of creating similar guidelines for secondary education, potentially leading to the implementation of certified SAEPs in Kenya, and particularly in Kakuma, to address the unique needs of overage learners. The report [Accelerate with Care: Towards Gender-Responsive Secondary Accelerated Education](#) explores the relevance and suitability of SAEPs, currently offered at the lower secondary level. It could be a valuable resource in the development and implementation of SAEPs within the Kenyan and Kakuma contexts.

III. Barriers to Education

This section of the report focuses on the primary barriers to accessing and completing secondary education in the Kakuma refugee camp, as identified through the GRE assessment. First, this section summarises the data collected and analysed. A deeper analysis of the foremost barriers in each category: demand-side, enabling environment, and supply-side follows. The section concludes with an overview of the most frequently mentioned general barriers and other significant challenges that emerged prominently in the research but do not fall under the conceptual framework of the assessment.

SUMMARY OF DATA COLLECTED THROUGH FGDS

The figure below summarises the key barriers to accessing and completing secondary education in Kakuma, as identified by participants in the barrier assessment exercise. In this exercise, participants selected the primary barrier from each category (demand-side, enabling environment, and supply-side barriers) based on a provided list. They were then requested to identify other significant barriers from these lists and note any other barriers. Discussions followed each barrier assessment exercise. The data collected was consolidated into a comprehensive summary table. The figure displays, for each category of barrier, the leading barrier as identified by participants, as well as the top three additional barriers that emerged from the assessment.³⁹

³⁹ Please note that in the original dataset, those that emerged as the leading barriers were often present among the other top barriers too. To avoid duplication and to present a more comprehensive view of the main barriers to accessing and completing secondary education, leading barriers that were also present among the top three barriers were removed from the top three list and substituted with the following most selected barrier.

FIGURE 8: OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN RESULTS OF THE BARRIERS EXERCISE

Type of Barrier	Leading Barrier	Most Mentioned General Barriers
Demand-side Barriers	Poverty & the Cost of Secondary Education	Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) & Early and Unplanned Pregnancy
		Household chores
		Secondary Education is not a Priority, especially for Girls
Enabling Environment Barriers	Extreme and unpredictable weather conditions	Violence to/from school and recruitment into gangs
		Transportation Challenges for Youth with Disabilities
		Scarcity of Role Models, especially for girls
Supply-side Barriers	Not Enough Learning and Teaching Materials or Learning Spaces	Not enough secondary schools
		Shortage of Qualified Secondary School Teachers, Especially Females and for the Scientific Subjects
		Need for Comprehensive Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) Programming, including Period-Friendly WASH Facilities

DEMAND-SIDE BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

As described in the Conceptual Framework section of the report, **demand-side barriers** refer to a household’s ability and willingness to send children and youth to school and the desire or willingness of an individual to enrol in education. Demand-side barriers to accessing and completing education can include socio-cultural norms and beliefs that prioritise boys’ education over girls’, early marriages or pregnancies, economic constraints, child labour, and gender-based discrimination or violence.

This section provides an overview of the key demand-side barriers that emerged through this assessment, namely poverty and the cost of secondary education, child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM), household chores, and girls’ access to secondary education not being prioritised.

Leading Barrier: Poverty & the Cost of Secondary Education

This section explores **poverty and the cost of secondary education** as the leading barrier preventing youth from accessing and completing secondary school in Kakuma refugee camp. First, this section briefly describes the everyday economic struggles, including food insecurity in the camp and within the larger Turkana County. Next, this section unravels how, despite the current legal framework that grants refugees the right to education, limitations imposed by the ongoing encampment policy, and inadequate funding limit youth's access to secondary education. This includes **direct costs associated with secondary education** that are prohibitive for families and households struggling to meet daily needs. As UNHCR and humanitarian partners are not able to adequately finance secondary education in the camp, gaps in funding fall to vulnerable families and households who are not able to support these costs. School fees, along with associated expenses, including learning materials and uniforms, or the cost of transportation, also hinder many young people from accessing and completing secondary school. Finally, this section explores the opportunity costs associated with secondary education in Kakuma, including the **indirect costs of secondary education**. Impoverished families in Kakuma must often choose between education and supporting their families most pressing needs. Young people often feel pressured to prioritise immediate survival over pursuing secondary education, which can have transformative long-term benefits for themselves and their communities. This section concludes with an overview of and reflection on the secondary school feeding programme that previously operated with the camp's secondary schools.

The Struggle to Survive: Economic & Food Insecurity & Education in Kakuma Refugee Camp

Kakuma refugee camp faces a scarcity of sustainable livelihood opportunities, including subsistence agriculture, making food procurement a daily concern for its residents. A significant number of refugees are either moderately or severely food insecure. Many note that they cannot consistently provide enough food for all the members of their family or household. To cope, many reduce the number, quality, or size of their daily meals (UNHCR & WFP, 2021).

Now you realize, right now, the students basically focus first of all on getting the very basics: food and clothes. Then education comes in as an afterthought and only after getting or at least trying to get regular goods.

Within this context, transitioning to, progressing through, and completing secondary education is beyond reach for most refugee families and households within the camp, and increasingly for the local, host community.

While agriculture is vital to Kenya's economy and sustains over 80% of its population, predominantly in rural areas, over 80% of Kenya's territory comprises arid or semi-arid land (ASALs) (Kenya Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperative, 2021; Kenya Ministry of East African Community (EAC), The ASALs and Regional Development, n.d.). The Kakuma refugee camp is situated within an ASAL. Presently, an extended drought in the Horn of Africa has exacerbated food insecurity, causing spikes in malnutrition among both the local and refugee populations in Kenya. As previously mentioned, in November 2023, heavy rains and flooding hit both the Kakuma refugee camp and the wider Turkana County. This severe weather resulted in flood-related deaths among refugees and caused significant damage to homes, food supplies, non-food items (NFIs) and WASH facilities (ACAPS, 2023).

Turkana County is among the poorest and least developed in Kenya and offers limited access to social services and economic development opportunities. As recalled in previous sections of this report, 68% of Kakuma refugees live below the poverty line of \$1.90 per day, and the Turkana host community performs even worse, with 72% living below the poverty line (Pape & Beltramo, 2021). The situation is even worse for refugee households headed by women. It is crucial to note that higher poverty rate of women compared to men is also linked to the lower education level of women in Kakuma, on average. Gender gaps in educational provision and outcomes are directly linked to lower levels of economic success, but they also negatively impact the overall growth of a country's economy (Klasen, 2002).⁴⁰

Finally, over the past few years, Kenya has experienced a significant, growing influx of asylum seekers and refugees, especially from Uganda, South Sudan, and the Great Lakes Region. This surge has strained reception centres and amplified the demands for food and shelter nationwide, especially within refugee camps like Kakuma. Due to these pressures, which are further amplified by funding constraints and rising prices of food and transport, WFP has cut the food ration distributed to refugees. WFP has been unable to distribute full food rations in Kenya since September 2018 and in March 2022 rations were further reduced from 60% to 50% of what they were originally (WFP, 2022).

⁴⁰ More detailed information on poverty in Kakuma can be found in the section *Kakuma Refugee Camp: Background and Context* at page 31.

The Struggle for Secondary School Funding & Fees

Kenya's national laws and policies do not overtly discriminate against refugee children and youth in accessing education. However, the ongoing encampment policy often restricts refugees, including children and youth, to living in camps, thereby limiting their access to secondary education due to the limited secondary school capacity in Kakuma. Learners in Kakuma are integrated into Kenya's national education system to the extent that they follow the national curriculum.⁴¹ However, this integration takes place within the constraints of the camp, where schools are managed by the UNHCR and implementing partners. These actors and, to a limited extent, development partners are responsible for financing secondary education.

The available funding falls significantly short of the increasing demand for secondary education in the camp, where appeals and commitments consistently fail to meet the actual requirements. Chronic shortfalls in funding result in school fees being passed on to vulnerable families. Consequently, many households cannot afford these costs. This helps to explain why **only 11.6% of refugee youth of secondary school age in Kakuma currently attend secondary school.**⁴² The scarcity of funding for secondary education underscores the challenge of meeting the real demand in Kakuma, where chronic poverty limits the ability of households to contribute financially.

In Kakuma, secondary school fees constitute a financial barrier and lead to household coping mechanisms, including the withdrawal of children and youth from school. When households cannot afford these costs, youth – especially girls – are effectively barred from continuing their education unless they can secure a school fee waiver. In the 2023 school year, 450 students received such waivers. This, however, led to a funding shortfall in the secondary schools, resulting in the dismissal of 50 teachers, including 21 from a single school. The reduction in teaching staff further compromises the quality of education in Kakuma's already limited and overcrowded secondary schools with large class sizes and high student-teacher ratios. In 2022 and before the dismissal of 50 teachers, the student-teacher ratio was estimated at 120:1 (International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, n.d.). Additionally, while

⁴¹ Kenya is in the process of rolling out a new Competency-Based Curriculum, which will not be available in Kakuma's secondary schools until 2026. For more information on Kenya's secondary school curriculum, please refer to the section *Curriculum and Examination* at page 46.

⁴² This statistic is derived from an internal assessment conducted by JRS. Considering the complexities associated with comprehending the significant youth demographic within the camp, alongside the significant per cent of overage learners enrolled in Kakuma's secondary schools, this figure represents the most reliable approximation available.

vulnerability criteria are usually taken into consideration in the allocation of these fee waivers, there are no consistent vulnerability criteria used throughout all secondary schools in Kakuma, suggesting that the most vulnerable youth might not always be the ones benefiting from limited school waivers.⁴³

Education vs. Survival: The Dilemma of Opportunity Costs

Finally, poverty and the cost of secondary education is also a barrier to access to and completion of secondary school because of the indirect costs of education to a family or household. The value of a child's time is not a direct, out-of-pocket expense, such as school fees, learning materials, or transportation to and from school. However, the income that an impoverished family or household foregoes by sending a young person to school represents an opportunity cost. Instead of attending school, a teenage boy might be expected to withdraw from school to perform income-generating activities. Within Kakuma households, the lack of daily bread is the most pressing need and is often prioritised over prohibitive school fees. One male, secondary student summarised the pressure that he and his peers feel about feeding and providing for their families within the camp and how it conflicts with continuing to attend secondary school:

someone will see they have a family, and there's such expectation from the family of him, or they expect a lot from him. Just by sitting in school, that's not really going to help, so it's going to give this guy, that person a certain drive that they have to be like everyone else (...) because when he sees that people are actually having businesses, people of his age, and other of his mates, they're having businesses, he sees he can actually do that too.

Similarly, a teenage girl child might be required to stay at home to cook or care for a younger sibling, thereby allowing another family member to go out and earn much-needed income for the household. Currently, the long-term gains that can be achieved through educational attainment are beyond reach for families who struggle under the crushing weight of chronic poverty. If youth and their families must

⁴³ At present, vulnerability aspects considered for the fee waivers include child-headed households, large family sizes, learners with disabilities and/or protection issues, and those living with very vulnerable guardians such as the elderly.

continue choosing between education and survival, it will be difficult to significantly increase the number of young people who are accessing and completing secondary school within Kakuma refugee camp.

Well-Fed and Ready to Learn: Reflecting on Secondary School Feeding in Kakuma (2000 – 2018)⁴⁴

School feeding programs in refugee settings, such as Kakuma, play a vital role in enhancing social protection and promoting gender equality. While the WFP has extensively documented the positive impact of primary school feeding programmes in Kakuma and beyond, data on secondary-level school feeding programmes is less abundant. Roughly, from 2000 to 2018, Kakuma's secondary schools benefited from a WFP-funded feeding programme delivered through collaboration with UNHCR, local implementing partners, and subcontractors. This section briefly outlines the positive and far-reaching impacts of school feeding programmes, especially for the most vulnerable learners. Next, it provides a snapshot of the previously implemented secondary school feeding programme in Kakuma and how it worked. Lastly, this section delves into the profound positive effects of the secondary school feeding programme in Kakuma, particularly for girls, while concluding with a broader overview of how secondary school completion for girls correlates to increased food security in communities and reduced malnutrition for their children.

Why School Feeding?

As noted above, little secondary data is available regarding the previously implemented secondary school feeding programme in the Kakuma refugee camp. However, there is a large evidence base documenting the positive and wide-reaching impacts of school feeding programmes in Kakuma refugee camp and globally. A summary of these benefits includes:

- **Increased Enrolment and Attendance:** Schools that offer meals consistently see higher enrolment and attendance rates. Meal provision acts as an incentive for families to send their children, particularly girls, to school.

⁴⁴ Exact data regarding years of implementation for the school feeding programme at the secondary level was not available from WFP at the time of publishing this report.

- **Increased Transition to Secondary Education:** Meal provision in Kakuma's primary schools shows "a notable and substantial improvement" in the rate of girls completing primary education as well as an increase in both boys and girls progressing to secondary school (World Food Programme, 2010).
- **Reduced Hunger and Stronger Learning Outcomes:** School feeding programmes are associated with Improved literacy and numeracy at the primary level, as well as reduced short-term hunger among learners. This leads to better learning outcomes and overall well-being for the students. In Kakuma specifically, primary school feeding programmes support improved literacy in English and Kiswahili (World Food Programme, 2023).
- **Improved Gender Equality:** School feeding programmes, including those in Kakuma, have an equal effect on literacy and numeracy for boys and girls, contributing to gender equality (World Food Programme, 2022).
- **Increased Household Food Security:** School meals support family food security by increasing overall food consumption and reducing households' need for coping strategies in times of scarcity (World Food Programme, 2022). This is particularly important in arid areas, such as Kakuma refugee camp, where food security is a major concern.
- **Improved Enabling Environment for Education** through the following effects of school feeding programmes:
 - *Catalyst Effect:* If children show an aptitude for or inclination towards learning as they progress through school, the perceived future value of education may encourage families to keep youth in school despite rising indirect, or opportunity costs – including those associated with transitioning to secondary education.
 - *Magnet Effect:* In the early years of primary education, the value of school meals often outweighs the indirect, or opportunity cost, of a child's labour at home, thereby attracting more children to school.
 - *Enabling Effect for Secondary Education:* When children enter secondary education, the value of school meals increases due to the prospect of better employment opportunities. However, cultural, and economic barriers still pose barriers, particularly for girls. School meals can help overcome these barriers, enabling more youth to continue and complete their secondary education.
 - *Reverse Flow Effect:* There is "a significant social transfer impact on households and communities when children, attracted to school by meals, complete their education." These graduates often support their siblings' education and contribute to the household and community by serving as mentors and role models and creating a 'reverse flow' of benefits (World Food Programme, 2010).
 - *Psychological effect:* Nutrition enhances learners' cognitive, social, and emotional development. School feeding programmes increase dignified

food access in a safe environment. The psychological stimulation learners get because of the nutritional benefits and dignified access to food leaves a life-long impact on their psychological well-being into adulthood.

In summary, school feeding programmes provide immediate nutritional benefits to children and youth in refugee contexts, including Kakuma. They also play a critical role in enhancing gender equality in education. They encourage higher enrolment and completion rates, particularly for girls, and contribute to better learning outcomes for all. Furthermore, these programs have a broader impact on household and community well-being, emphasising their importance as social protection strategies.

Secondary School Feeding in Kakuma: How It Worked

About the Programme

At present, school feeding is present only in Kakuma's primary schools. However, a secondary school feeding programme was operational in Kakuma in the past. Key informants discussed the significant role the feeding programme played in supporting the broader educational objectives for secondary education in Kakuma. The initiative was a collaborative effort funded by the WFP and UNHCR, implementing partners in the camp, local businesses, and incentive staff at the secondary schools.

Meal provision provided a balanced diet to the learners. Rice and beans were provided three days a week, while for the remaining two school days, the menu featured 'githeri', a traditional dish consisting of boiled and then fried beans and maize. The diet was designed to alleviate hunger and supply essential energy and nutrition, enabling learners to concentrate on their studies.

According to primary sources, the logistical aspects of the program were well-organized. UNHCR provided cooking fuel, specifically firewood supplied by local subcontractors. WFP, while funding the food, did not deliver it directly. Instead, they engaged businesspeople from the host community to supply the food for the programme. Windle International Kenya (WIK) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), as former implementing partners for secondary education in Kakuma, were tasked with hiring cooks as incentive workers. Cooking essentials, including firewood, oil, and salt were efficiently managed to ensure learners had access to daily meals. These cooks were pivotal in providing daily, nutritious meals for learners.

Despite its success, the programme ended due to funding cuts for education in Kakuma and a global shortfall in financing for secondary education. When the programme ended, an interim solution was to provide secondary schools with flour to make porridge. Key informants noted this alternative was short-lived, lasting only two months.

In summary, the secondary school feeding programme in Kakuma was a well-coordinated effort involving multiple stakeholders. The programme significantly contributed to the well-being of learners, including their progression through and completion of secondary school.

Impact of School Feeding on Access to and Completion of Secondary School, Especially for Girls

Key informants, including school principals and teachers, shared the significant, positive impacts of the secondary school feeding programme on attendance and enrolment, especially for the most vulnerable learners. Among these, female students with children benefited, along with their children. When the programme ended, many breastfeeding mothers had to prioritise finding food for themselves and their children over attending school. This led to a reduction in their overall attendance as well as increased cases of school dropouts. A key informant summarised the impact of discontinuing the secondary school feeding programme on breastfeeding mothers as follows:

[when the school feeding programme was there] even the breastfeeding mothers who are not sure of their meal at home would rely on school. So, they would come have their lunch and maybe excuse themselves after lunch to go and breastfeed. But with the current system, once they are breastfeeding, they (...) disappear for so long because they must also look for alternative way of having a meal as they continue with their breastfeeding and maybe taking care of the young. (...) Food used to encourage them to come to school you. You can also talk of their mental well-being.

Primary sources validated that the discontinuation of the feeding programme in secondary schools, combined with the general food insecurity in the camp, negatively affected learners' attendance and enrolment rates, and their **overall well-being**.

They [the students] actually take one meal per day because the ration has been reduced even at the community level. (...) So, nowadays students survive with one meal per day which is eaten around 5:00 to 6:00 PM. In the schools where we are implementing two schools in one, you realize that when it reaches 5 PM, students start getting a lot of anxiety, especially those who are sure that is when the meal is almost to be served at home. Now this one interferes with the overall mental health and wellbeing. Now you are teaching somebody who is hungry and as they say you know a hungry person is a very angry person. So, there's the issue of mental health as well.

According to **robust global evidence, school feeding programmes significantly enhance school enrolment and attendance**, particularly benefiting female learners and young mothers. These initiatives facilitate continued education for girls and yield long-term advantages, including enhanced food security in households and communities and reduced malnutrition for their children (World Food Programme, 2022). This is consistent with the experiences shared by stakeholders in Kakuma, especially those working in secondary education.

Yeah, the thing I remember very well, is that the gender gap widened after the withdrawal of food. Nowadays we normally register an attendance of between 50 to 62 on a normal week. You'll find that in those days the attendance would reach above 75, around 80 because students would turn up, come and have lunch, especially the students from South Sudan. They were really depending on that meal for their survival. And it's not just about attendance, it's even about enrolment.

Primary sources in Kakuma validated the secondary school feeding programme in Kakuma enhanced school attendance and enrolment, particularly benefiting girls and young mothers. By providing nutritious meals, the program offered a strong incentive for learners, especially those facing food insecurity at home, to attend school regularly. For young mothers, this initiative was crucial as it alleviated the burden of securing daily meals, allowing them to focus on their education and the well-being of their children. The presence of a reliable food source at school not only encouraged higher enrolment rates but also ensured consistent attendance, as the meals provided were often a critical part of learners' daily nutrition.

Now you realize the students focus on, first of all, getting the very basics: the food, the clothes. Then education will come in as an afterthought (...). They may not have been widely noted by other stakeholders, but you find

that even they, the breastfeeding mothers who are not sure of their next meal at home would rely on school. So, they would come to school and have their lunch, and maybe excuse themselves after lunch to go and breastfeed.

According to key informants, the termination of the secondary school feeding programme has had adverse effects. Once the program ended, many students, including young mothers, faced increased barriers to accessing and completing secondary school. The lack of a guaranteed nutritious meal at school has likely led to decreased attendance and overall enrolment, especially for girls, as an incentive to attend school diminished. Ending the programme, thus, not only affected learners' overall nutritional intake and food security but potentially hindered their educational progress and future opportunities.

Beyond Kakuma, school feeding programmes strengthen overall education systems. These programmes markedly improve attendance and enrolment, with female learners who are mothers reaping substantial, immediate benefits. Longer-term, school feeding positively impacts girls' economic opportunities and increases their participation in community decision-making. Furthermore, educated women are more likely to send their children to school. This leads to reductions in child malnutrition in the next generation (World Food Programme, 2022). In conclusion, school feeding initiatives facilitate continued education for girls and yield long-term advantages that underscore the importance of school feeding in refugee camps for addressing immediate educational needs, improving overall performance needs, and leading to sustained societal progress.

Sugar for Secondary School-Going Girls: The Sweet and Bitter Lessons from Kakuma's Incentive Programme

In the past, an initiative was launched in Kakuma to boost girls' attendance in secondary school, focusing on their return after the extended nearly two-month holiday break. Girls' attendance, already trailing behind that of boys, consistently experienced a further decline following this break. To encourage girls to come back to school and their consistent attendance, sugar was offered as an incentive. This approach aimed to motivate girls to return to school and maintain regular attendance, addressing the gap in gender parity in Kakuma's secondary schools.

Initially, this approach proved highly successful, as it offered a direct benefit for attending school, addressing the fundamental needs of a population struggling to afford basic supplies. However, the program faced significant challenges. Firstly, it created a dependency on incentives, making it financially unsustainable in the long term, especially for the already underfunded secondary schools in Kakuma. Therefore, it was decided to only provide the sugar to young, lactating mothers.

An unintended consequence emerged as a result. In some rare instances, the programme inadvertently encouraged girls to become pregnant or feign lactation to qualify for the sugar rations. This outcome not only undermined the educational goals of the initiative but also posed additional, serious consequences, further compromising the education, health, and life outcomes of already marginalised girls in Kakuma.

Ultimately, this case study illuminates the desperate need for basic supplies in Kakuma and the challenges of implementing incentive-based programmes in education. The reliance on the sugar incentives highlighted the deeper, systemic issues in accessing education and meeting basic needs in the camp. This case study underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of educational disparities and the need for sustainable, comprehensive strategies.

General Barrier: Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (CEFM) & Early and Unplanned Pregnancy

This section explores how child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM), compounded by financial constraints and cultural norms, significantly limit girls' access to and completion of secondary education in Kakuma refugee camp. Although more research is recommended, this section delves into the connections between CEFM, early and unplanned pregnancies, and educational achievement, with a specific focus on secondary education in Kakuma.

CEFM is frequently arranged with older men. Girls are often coerced by their families into these marriages to alleviate financial burdens. Cases of abductions are prevalent within Kakuma, with girls being taken on their way to or from school and brought to South Sudan to fulfil a marriage commitment that was arranged years in advance. Girls may also be forced to marry if they become pregnant. Boys also face challenges, including being forced to marry their deceased brother's wives, highlighting a broader issue of gender roles and expectations within the community.

CEFM is intertwined with GBV, economic hardship, and deeply rooted cultural practices. In turn, CEFM often leads to early or unplanned pregnancies that also result in girls dropping out of school. While the target audience of this report is highly familiar with CEFM and how it impacts access, retention, and completion of school in conflict and crisis-affected settings, this section provides an overview of CEFM globally and in the context of Kakuma specifically. This overview can help advocate, educate, and inform audiences who may not be familiar with the practice and prevalence of CEFM in EiE settings. It may also be helpful for practitioners designing programs who need to develop a project rationale or summary, expected outcomes, and a theory of change.

Understanding CEFM

CEFM and resulting early and unplanned pregnancies present a significant barrier to access to and completion of secondary education in Kakuma refugee camp. Furthermore, CEFM is human rights abuse, a key driver of gender inequality globally, and an impediment to sustainable development. To reach the Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG) of **achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030**, the elimination of “all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation” is a critical target (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). While CEFM is a human rights violation in and of itself, it is inextricably linked to denial of other fundamental human rights that will impact girls throughout their lives. CEFM deprives children and youth of their right to access the highest, attainable level of education and standard of health; and they are more likely to experience emotional, physical, and sexual abuse during their lifetimes.

A large age differential often exists between the male and female spouses in such unions. Girls in Kakuma described the men they are expected to marry as “much older.” This leads to an inherent power imbalance within the marriage. CEFM is generally characterized by early and often forced sexual initiation. Likewise, ongoing marital sex is often forced. Despite happening within the context of the marriage arrangement, forced sex is a form of sexual violence and has the same harmful and long-lasting effects of defilement or rape. In some cases, the trauma is compounded because married girls are often socially isolated from their friends, natal families, and other social networks, including schools. Therefore, married girls are often heavily reliant on their husbands and in-laws to gain access to necessities and resources. For



Child, Early & Forced Marriage (CEFM) defined:

This report uses the more comprehensive child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM) term to discuss this barrier.

Specific definitions follow:

Child Marriage

A union in which at least one of the persons is a child.

Early Marriage

A marital arrangement that involves persons below age 18. Such unions occur in countries or contexts where there may be a younger minimum age of marriage or where the “age of majority” may be reached before 18. In other cases, both spouses may be 18 or older, but their level of emotional or psychosocial development—or lack of information about life options—make them unready to consent to marriage.

Forced Marriage

A union that occurs without the free or full consent of one or both of the person(s), or where one or both person(s) is/are unable to end or leave the marital arrangement due to constraints, including family or social pressures.

these reasons, CEFM is widely considered a form of modern-day slavery (ILO, Walk Free, and IOM, 2022).

While boys are affected by CEFM, it affects girls in much higher numbers. According to UNICEF's 2023 report on child marriage, "an estimated 640 million girls and women alive today were married in childhood" (UNICEF, 2023). The table below provides data about the prevalence of CEFM in countries of origin, as well as Kenya, and the legal age of marriage in those countries with populations living in exile in Kakuma.

TABLE 6: SOME KEY FIGURES ON CEFM⁴⁵

Country of Origin	% of Kakuma Population	Legal Age of Marriage in Country of Origin	% Girls Married before 18	% Girls Married before 15	% Boys Married before 18
South Sudan	53%	18 years, No exceptions	52%	9%	NA
Somalia	19%	No minimum legal age	36%	17%	NA
DRC	9%	18 years, No exceptions	29%	8%	6%
Burundi	8%	No minimum legal age	19%	3%	1%
Sudan	5%	Below 18	34%	12%	NA
Ethiopia	3%	Below 18	40%	14%	5%
Kenya (host country)	NR	18 years, No exceptions	23%	4%	3%

⁴⁵ Based on data present from Girls Not Brides, n.d.

CEFM is decreasing globally, yet not rapidly enough to meet the SDG of eradicating the practice by 2030. Furthermore, the decline is notably slower in some parts of Africa compared to other regions. This is probably linked to and a consequence of the growing population of the African continent. Sub-Saharan Africa's population is projected to double by 2050, increasing the risk of child marriage. In this region, population growth currently outpaces efforts to reduce CEFM. Sub-Saharan Africa has seen an increase from 15% to 35% in the proportion of the world's child brides over the past 25 years. If the current trend persists, this region is expected to account for 41% of the world's child brides by 2030. At the current rate, it could take an estimated 200 years to eliminate CEFM in sub-Saharan Africa where girls currently face the highest global risk of child marriage (UNICEF, 2023).

Additionally, rates of CEFM tend to rise during humanitarian crises, particularly in communities and cultures where it is already a traditional practice. While sub-Saharan Africa has shown a decline in child marriages over the past 25 years, a disparity persists: “all of the advances have occurred among the richest families, with the region registering overall progress despite rising levels of child marriage among the poorest” (UNICEF, 2023, p. 12). This trend places refugee girls, like those in Kakuma, at high risk.

A strong link between the prevalence of CEFM and poverty was validated through this research. While culture is a motivator, economic hardship fuels CEFM. According to one key informant, “early marriage is now more financial than cultural.” Within Kakuma and beyond, CEFM is a coping mechanism for dealing with poverty and other difficulties of living in exile. Throughout the study, the team analysed and validated how CEFM is driven and sustained by the persistent poverty that exists within the protracted refugee situations in Kakuma (CARE, 2018). When a girl is married off to relieve a family of an economic burden, it is both a source of income and a savings mechanism. The family will receive an immediate economic benefit through the bride price and enjoy longer-term savings by having one less mouth to feed. Secondary school-going girls in Kakuma spoke openly about the awkwardness and fear they feel about being a means of balancing the family’s budget:

As you know, the families of the camps are more vulnerable. There's in African culture, what we call the dowries. Normally the girls are married, and they will bring dowries that will help as a financing with the family.

Early marriage is caused due to the school fees, the 3,000. If I'm asked for that 3,000 and I don't have it and my family doesn't have it, my mom is going to say, 'You know what, we don't have money. You go get married and leave the schooling.' That's it. If my family doesn't have money,

maybe to look after me, my mom or my dad is going to say to me, 'Get married, you leave this house.' That's it. They are balancing the budget, taking you to marriage. That's it.

Globally, CEFM is practiced in communities where girls are not valued as much as boys, and where girls are perceived as a burden to the family. Within some communities, such as Kakuma refugee camp, marrying a daughter upon menarche is a means of easing economic hardship and thereby, transferring the 'burden' of a daughter to the husband's family. There is almost always a transfer of wealth. In South Sudanese culture, for example, this transfer of wealth is traditionally done through a payment of cows. By marrying off a young daughter, a family might then be able to pay the school fees of other children or afford additional food or other necessities.

CEFM & the Threat Multipliers: COVID-19 and Public Health Emergencies, Conflict, & Climate Change

Public health emergencies such as COVID-19, conflict, and climate change uniquely contribute to the risk of CEFM. Together, they multiply the threat and prevalence of CEFM, especially in places like Kakuma refugee camp.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted daily life through school closures and economic uncertainty, creating high-risk environments for girls globally, and potentially leading to an additional 10 million child brides by 2030 (UNICEF, 2023). In Kakuma specifically, teenage pregnancy cases dramatically increased from just eight in June 2019 to 62 in June 2020, highlighting the significant impact of external factors on the lives of girls living in refugee camps (Partridge-Hicks, 2020). This illustrates how public health emergencies can reverse progress in preventing CEFM. During the pandemic, secondary school principals in Kakuma noted a surge in pregnancies among girls, including those who attended the Life Works boarding school. The boarding school, usually a sanctuary for girls, was shut down due to COVID-19. A disturbing trend emerged among boys in the camp to specifically target and impregnate girls from boarding schools. Among boys, sexually exploiting girls from boarding schools during the period of school closures was viewed as a particularly notable achievement. This reveals that boarding schools, despite providing a safer and more conducive learning environment, cannot fully shield girls from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) upon their return to the community. It emphasizes the need for a gender-transformative education (GTE) approach in Kakuma that addresses the underlying causes of gender inequality.

In conflict zones, the prevalence of child marriage is twice the global average, driven by fear of sexual violence, financial hardship, insecurity, and interruptions in education. Historical data show a direct correlation between conflict-related deaths and an increase in child marriage, indicating that ongoing conflicts can halt or reverse progress towards eliminating this practice (UNICEF, 2023). South Sudan for example, is considered a high-risk area for CEFM due to ongoing conflict and displacement (UNICEF & UNFPA, 2017).

Finally, climate change further aggravates the situation, as extreme weather events disrupt already limited sources of income, exacerbate food insecurity and strain communal resources and relationships in a place like Kakuma. These environmental pressures often lead families to resort to CEFM as a means of alleviating financial burdens. Girls also become more vulnerable in the aftermath of climate events, especially if they lose their parents, increasing their risk of CEFM. Historical analysis confirms that even a 10% deviation in expected rainfall levels is associated with a 1% increase in child marriage rates (UNICEF, 2023).

CEFM as a Protection Strategy

Despite being an infringement of children's rights, some families perceive child marriage as a way to safeguard girls, by protecting their daughter from sexual violence and associated stigma. In contexts like Kakuma, CEFM is sometimes perceived as a means of ensuring a girls' financial, physical, and social security (UNICEF, 2023). Marriage is sometimes seen as a protective arrangement that might lower the risks of defilement or rape, premarital pregnancy, and a subsequent lifetime of dishonour and shame (Refugees International, 2020).

If households are having a difficult time feeding everyone in the family, as is the case in Kakuma, marriage is a strategy made to ensure that a family is providing for the necessities of a girl child. In Kakuma, food rations are allocated based on household size. Consequently, some girls feel pressured to marry to enlarge their household, thereby qualifying for larger food allocations from WFP. This approach was particularly noted in cases where a girl is a 'Size One', meaning she is the sole member of and the head of the household, who receives a smaller ration. Finally, boys noted that men and boys would be expected to marry a girl if they impregnated her. However, CEFM as a protection strategy did not emerge strongly in this research.

CEFM Leading to Early Pregnancy

In some cultures, and communities, including those that live in Kakuma, girls are traditionally considered ready to marry after their first menstruation. In the context of Kakuma, early sexual debut is usually associated with early pregnancy, particularly when girls have little or no understanding of how to prevent pregnancy. Therefore, CEFM is directly linked to adolescent pregnancy, which increases the likelihoods of girls' dropping out of school. However, without access to education, child brides and their families are more likely to live in poverty, thus perpetuating inter-generational poverty.

Adolescent girls shared concerns and fears about not being physically nor emotionally ready to become wives or mothers. Several adolescent girls were emphatic about using the language “forced” versus child or early marriage. They noted that girls' bodies – their bodies – are not ready to have children and suffer greatly from ongoing health problems, and even death, upon being forced to marry and have children. The fears and responses expressed through this study are consistent with research about child marriage. In 2017, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that pregnancy complications were the primary cause of death for females aged 15-19, with maternal conditions such as complications from unsafe abortions, haemorrhaging, and obstructed labour being the leading contributors to these fatalities (Davis N. , 2017).

Child brides' bodies are still developing. Often their hips and pelvis are too narrow to deliver a baby vaginally. Additionally, they know little about their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and therefore, face higher rates of risk in childbirth, including death, and are vulnerable to obstetric fistula and other childbirth-related injuries (Judd, 2024). It is estimated that of the 16 million adolescent girls who give birth every year, about 90% are already married and that some 50,000 of them die, almost all in low-and middle-income countries (WHO, 2013). These high death rates result from obstructed labour, which is usually a consequence of girls' pelvises being too small to deliver a baby. Obstructed labour leads to fistulas, caused by the pressure of the foetus's head on the vaginal wall. In turn, this causes tissue necrosis, and the development of obstetric fistulas, or the tearing between the vagina and another organ – usually the rectum or bladder. This often results in the death of the foetus, as well as continuous, long-term leakage of urine, faeces (or both), and blood through a hole in the young mother's body (Fookes, 2013).

Statistically, having a child before the age of 20 is risky for mothers, as well as their children. Motherhood before age 20 leads to a 50% higher rate of stillbirths and

newborn deaths than in women who give birth later (Africa Health Organisation, n.d.). The risk for a fistula is as high as 88% in adolescents who give birth between the ages of 10 to 15 years (Osakinlea & Tayo-Olajubutu, 2017). The WHO describes fistula as “the single most dramatic aftermath of neglected childbirth” (as cited in *Goldberg, 2010*) Children giving birth to children is usually a traumatic experience. The labour is often excruciatingly long and painful. The likelihood of the baby dying is high, and there is the long-term impact of likely developing a fistula for the young mother, which in turn leads to indefinite social stigmatization and ostracization.

Obstetric fistulas were eradicated at the end of the 19th century in western countries when the caesarean section became widely available. However, in places where access to maternal health is limited, childbirth injuries like fistulas have long-term health and social impacts that continue to limit a girl’s empowerment and access to education. The constant dripping of bodily wastes, caused by fistula, results in a strong odour that a girl cannot control. A child bride may be sent back to her parents by the husband because of this unbearable odour. In extreme cases, a girl’s parents might relegate their daughter to a separate hut and limit interaction with the girl (UNICEF, 2013).

Girls involved in this study expressed their fears about the long-term health consequences of childbirth associated with CEFM. Further study is recommended to understand CEFM’s specific health and social consequences, and specifically how these impact on girls’ access to and completion of secondary education in Kakuma.

There are other risks and negative physical and mental health outcomes associated with CEFM, pregnancy, and early motherhood. Young mothers are more likely to be HIV positive, experience sexual and reproductive health (SRH) problems throughout their lifetimes; and have poor mental health, be socially isolated, and have suicidal thoughts. According to a 2021 report (Kakuma Suicide Prevention and Response Taskforce, 2021), across Kakuma and Kalobeyei, 25.9% of the population had thought of ending their lives, 23.4% had thought of inflicting harm on themselves, and 20.9% had already attempted to do so. In 2021, women accounted for the majority of those who exhibited suicidal behaviours, standing at 69%, or 51 individuals, whereas males stood at 31%, or 23 individuals. The report notes that “stressful life circumstances exacerbated by GBV instances was noted as a cross cutting causative factor among the genders” (Kakuma Suicide Prevention and Response Taskforce, 2021, p. 6), but forced marriage did not come up prominently as a key factor leading to suicidal behaviours. However, it is important to note that suicidal cases are underreported in both Kakuma and Kalobeyei and information about registered cases is often incomplete. It is likely that the actual number of people experiencing suicidal

behaviour is higher than reported and the impact of CEFM could be higher than what the report highlights.

Lastly, focusing on the age of those showing suicidal behaviours, it is striking to see that most of them are under 35 years old. In fact, the 12-17 age group represented 11% of the cases, whereas the 18-34 age group stood at 54%, and the two groups together represent 65% of all suicidal behaviour cases (Kakuma Suicide Prevention and Response Taskforce, 2021).

Therefore, delaying marriage, sexual initiation, and the first birth has powerful physical and mental health outcomes. In turn, this reduces overall maternal morbidity and mortality and contributes to SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages. Education is key to bringing about this change and can also provide students with life-saving mental health support and referral mechanisms.

Early Pregnancy Leading to CEFM

Globally, **CEFM is the driver of early pregnancy in 9 out of 10 cases** (UNFPA, 2018). However, marriage sometimes follows a girl's unplanned pregnancy, and this is consistent with our analysis. This study validates that girls in Kakuma engage in transactional sex activities. Girls spoke openly about depending on "sugar daddies" in exchange for necessities, including school fees, hygiene items, school supplies, or transportation. In exchange for this support, girls feel pressured to provide sex to men – again, often older than them. Resulting pregnancies often lead to girls dropping out of school.

Secondary school-going boys might also drop out of school and find work if they are responsible for impregnating a girl. One male student summarised what might happen in such a situation:

If it happens, it becomes a very big headache for them. They drop out of school actually because the parents of the girl will decide, seeing the situation is very hard, to give a girl to him so that he can be responsible of everything that girl needs. (...) Actually, they (the boys) will drop out so that they will see themselves as responsible people. Now, they'll take care of family, instead his academics, he will actually end up providing for his family.

CEFM as a result of early, unintended pregnancy compounds the latter's impact on girls' (but in some cases also boys') lives, increasing first the risks of school drop-out due to pregnancy and, later, making their return to education very unlikely due to

parental and household duties. However, education can be key in changing people's mindsets regarding early pregnancy and CEFM. Education allows youth to have greater knowledge of and awareness on SRHR, and this, in turn, can help limit the prevalence of early pregnancy and CEFM for them, but also has a positive impact for their future children.

CEFM: Legislation and Enforcement

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention (CRC) on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), two globally endorsed human rights agreements with almost universal ratification, prohibit child marriage. However, local and national laws often allow exceptions, such as parental consent or religious and customary law (UNFPA, 2018). On the one hand, there is evidence showing that consistent child marriage laws reduce child marriages and adolescent births significantly. Thus, strong legislation and enforcement are a crucial component in ending CEFM, which in turn is linked to early pregnancy and school dropouts (Muhwezi, 2003/4). On the other hand, evidence also suggests that "laws that exist are often poorly enforced in countries with high CEFM prevalence due to the power of traditional and existing social norms, corruptible civil registration and vital records institutions, the lack of implementation of policies that ensure access to safe alternative for girls, and many other factors" (CARE, 2018, p. 21).

Stakeholders in this study emphasised the importance of advocating for more stringent governmental policies and enforcement strategies against CEFM to foster behavioural change and challenge entrenched cultural norms in communities. Ongoing advocacy is essential but needs to be accompanied by holistic and robust community sensitisation activities, particularly within low-resourced and underserved communities, such as Kakuma. There is evidence that harsh, punitive measures can be counterproductive, leading to negative consequences for girls and women: "Rather than bringing an end to prohibited practices, punitive measures tend to either transform them or drive them underground" (Svanemyr, 2013, p. 20). Substantial evidence exists that CEFM practices are being altered to bypass more stringent laws in some African contexts and on other continents. For instance, families may conduct a religious marriage ceremony for an underage daughter and delay the official registration until she reaches legal age, or they might hold marriage ceremonies at night to evade detection.

CEFM and Education

Globally and in Kakuma, there is a complex interplay between CEFM, education, and poverty. CEFM often leads to school dropout, a relationship confirmed by fieldwork and literature review, and therefore, is a significant obstacle to completing secondary education. CEFM can be both a cause and effect of dropping out of school. As noted above, girls in the poorest households are over three times more likely to be child brides than those in the wealthiest households (Girls Not Brides, n.d.). Education too, or lack thereof, is an important factor in determining a girl's likelihood of getting married at an early age, since "individual girls with lower educational attainment are typically at higher risk of child marriage than their more educated peers" (UNICEF, 2021, p. 18). CEFM is most prevalent in resource-scarce areas like Kakuma, characterised by limited educational infrastructure and low involvement of girls and women in the workforce and other economic activity.

Globally, **girls with no education are 3 times more likely to marry before 18 compared to those with secondary or higher levels of education** (Davis, Postles, & Rosa, 2013). Girls with only primary education are twice as likely to marry or enter a union under 18 as those with secondary or higher education (UNFPA, 2012). Girls lacking education are up to six times more susceptible to early marriage compared to those with secondary education. In sub-Saharan Africa, 66% of women without education were married before turning 18, in contrast to just 13% of those who continued schooling beyond age 12 (Theirworld, n.d.).

A study on girls' education conducted in northern Uganda, a region that hosts largest population of South Sudanese refugees globally, concluded that most school dropouts are not due to pregnancy, but nearly all girls who became pregnant dropped out of school (Atim, Mazurana, & Marshak, 2019). This finding is consistent with what participants shared in FGDs. Girls who drop out of school, regardless of being pregnant or not, are most vulnerable to CEFM. Therefore, programmes that support girls through critical transitions – from lower to upper primary, and again from upper primary to secondary school – have the power to delay marriage and sexual debut. Next, ensuring girls' retention and successful completion of quality and relevant secondary education is one of the best ways to prevent and respond to CEFM. Effective GRE and GTE programming should identify and target the girls who are most vulnerable to CEFM. Where this is not possible and girls are already married, second chance or alternative pathways back to school, such as secondary accelerated education programmes (SAEPs) are critical to ending the cycle of CEFM.

Finally, extensive evidence **demonstrates that a girl's level of educational attainment has powerful intergenerational impacts** (Girls Not Brides, 2023). Ensuring the education of the girl child has **economic and health benefits**. While there may be immediate economic benefits to CEFM – such as an immediate infusion of wealth transferred through a bride price – long-term, there is an opportunity cost to families. When girls are withdrawn from school and forced to marry early, not only are they denied their fundamental human rights, but they also lose their best chance to make long-term contributions to their families, communities, and societies. For each year of primary schooling, a woman's wages later in life increase by 10 to 20%; and, for each year of secondary school, a woman's wages increase by 15 to 25% (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004). There are also long-term health outcomes associated with educating girls. Educated, literate mothers are more knowledgeable about their children's overall health and nutritional needs. They are more likely to access health resources and services. Globally, children of educated mothers experience higher immunization and survival rates (Girls Not Brides, 2023). In summary, CEFM does not only harm a girl over the course of her lifetime. It also undermines the development and well-being of her family, community, and nation for generations by limiting economic and health benefits.

General Barrier: Household Chores

In Kakuma refugee camp, household chores emerged as a significant barrier to accessing and completing secondary education, particularly for girls. UN Women (n.d.) emphasizes the global issue of women and girls disproportionately shouldering unpaid household work, a burden that impedes their educational and economic opportunities. In Kakuma, our analysis validates that girls spend twice as much time on household tasks compared to boys, often leading to school tardiness or exhaustion. This unequal distribution of chores not only affects attendance and performance but also contributes to higher dropout rates among girls. A report published by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) (Stoebenau, Warner, Edmeades, & Sexton, 2015) highlights that girls' perceptions of domestic chores and gender expectations significantly influence their likelihood of staying in school. According to the study, girls who believed their parents did not support their ongoing education were two times more likely to have dropped out of school; and **girls who perceived that their domestic chore burden was interfering with their education were twelve times more likely to drop out**. Girls holding more progressive views about gender expectations were far less likely to drop out of school.

In her book, *The Moment of Lift: How Empowering Women Changes the World*, Melinda Gates writes, "For women who spend all their hours doing unpaid work, the

chores of the day kill the dreams of a lifetime (Gates, 2019)”. Globally, **women do an average of seven years more unpaid work over their lifetimes than men**, but for women in poorer countries, the disparity is much higher. In many parts of the world, this is about the same amount of time it takes to complete a bachelor’s and master’s degree program. Gates asserts that a more equitable division of unpaid labour between men and women would significantly enhance women’s economic and social advancement worldwide.

Many young people in Kakuma, including some who are heads of households, struggle to balance their educational responsibilities with their household duties. Teachers have noted that these chores limit the learners’ access to and completion of secondary school. This highlights the need for creating school environments that are more conducive to girls’ education and interventions that address gender expectations and domestic workload. Additionally, girls who worry about house chores while at school are more susceptible to common mental disorders such as anxiety and depressive symptoms, which in turn affect their academic performance.

As part of our research in Kakuma, we conducted an initial survey on the distribution of household chores between female and male secondary school learners, considering how much time each gender group spends on different activities throughout the day. Despite its limitations, this survey highlighted the uneven distribution of household chores falling to girls. The time mapping exercise shows that girls spend twice as much time on domestic duties as boys, as shown in the summary table below.

FIGURE 9: SUMMARY OF HOURS SPENT ON DAILY TASKS BY GIRLS AND BOYS

Activity	Average hours per day	
	Girls	Boys
Sleep	6	6.5
Homework/studying	4.5	5
At school	5.8	6
Household chores	2.3	1
Personal care (includes eating, showering, dressing, etc.)	2	2
Recreation	1.3	1.6
Commuting to/from school	1.6	1.4
Prayer and/or meditation	0.5	0.5

In Kakuma, girls enrolled in secondary school expressed being expected to complete domestic chores before they could go to school in the morning. Having to attend to these daily household responsibilities often resulted in tardiness. In the afternoons and evenings, they reported being responsible for more cooking and cleaning than their male counterparts. Girls expressed feeling too tired to study or not having proper lighting to study upon completion of housework. Girls and boys reported sleeping an average of 6 and 6.5 hours, respectively. Additionally, a difference in school attendance was observed, with girls attending school for 5.8 hours compared to the 6 hours that boys reported spending in school. The heavy chore burden and limited of time to study, sometimes in inconvenient situations, negatively impact girls' performance and discourages them:

Even those (girls) who are in the school, when they go back to the house, they have to do the domestic work. That will also cause them to be dropouts.

The link between the disproportionate chore burden and gender disparity in secondary school enrolment rates inform recommendations for providing more girl-friendly school environments such as boarding schools, where **“girls can be girls”** and unburdened from unpaid work.

In Kakuma, there are also many youth who do not have parents to influence their academic journey in one way or another. Secondary school teachers explained,

You realize that most of our learners don't stay with their parents. They're the heads of the family. From school they're supposed to go do the household chores like fetching water, making a queue to fetch water, then making sure that the young ones have something to eat. By doing this, when you give them assignment, they can't do the assignment. The next day they will tell you, 'Mwalimu or teacher, I was busy doing 1, 2, 3.' They're the households, they're the leaders, they're the heads. These (household chores) limit them from accessing education fully.

It is crucial to ensure that female and male learners are assigned an equal, reasonable amount of household duties that allows them to get to school in time and devote enough time to studying when at home. Those students who are heads of households or lack supervision from a guardian need to receive the appropriate support to help them enrol and thrive in secondary education.

General Barrier: Secondary Education is Not a Priority, Especially for Girls

In Kakuma refugee camp, the low priority placed on education, particularly for girls, is a significant demand-side barrier to accessing and completing secondary education. According to a secondary school girl at Life Works Secondary School,

Secondary education for girls is not prioritised due to cultural or traditional beliefs. Secondary education for the girl child is not a priority due to cultural or traditional beliefs. As we have seen in the community, and according to our experience, girls in an African tradition, education is not priority.

The deeply ingrained cultural devaluation of the girl child leads to her human rights being systematically denied, often viewing her worth in transactional terms, as explored in the section *General Barrier: Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (CEFM) & Early and Unplanned Pregnancy* at page 64 of this report. Besides the widespread issue of CEFM, girls also resort to transactional sex as a coping mechanism for economic hardship, including the payment of school fees. As explored in the section *General Barrier: Household Chores* at page 75 of this report, girls in Kakuma are also disproportionately burdened with unpaid, household work. This is due in part to the traditional gender roles and expectations among the refugee communities living in exile in Kakuma. Due to cultural or traditional beliefs that undervalue girls and their

educational aspirations, secondary education is deprioritised. Furthermore, households with limited sources of income will often prioritise a boy's education over the education of the girl child, especially at the secondary level.

FIGURE 10: A GROUP OF FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION IN KAKUMA



Photo Credit: JRS

Boys, on the other hand, **face different cultural pressures**. They often drop out of school due to the expectation to contribute economically to their families. Given the family's pressing economic needs, this is often more critical than attending or completing secondary school. Seeing peers engaged in livelihood activities to support their families, boys feel pressured to follow suit, leading to the belief – informed by a lack of post-secondary opportunities within and beyond the camp – that education might not be the most effective path to success. Additionally, influences from the community and family members who downplay the importance of education further discourage boys from pursuing their studies. A male secondary students elaborated this dynamic:

There is this thing that grown-ups usually say, mostly they are the people who didn't go to school, mostly they are relatives. They usually tell us that school is not everything. During the holiday, I was working with my dad. It was a manual work (...) and what happened is that, the other workers that we worked together there were convincing me like, 'You shouldn't

put too much pressure on your school stuff, because sometimes it can work, sometimes it can't work.' That kind of advice, that kind of ideology, that is entering into the minds of young students like us. Most of us who really don't have this kind of potential can really fall for those traps. Actually, even most of the time, it's our parents who tell us. They tell us, "Kid, sometimes you shouldn't focus on school. Come, let me teach you how to build a house. Come, let me teach you business. Let me teach you."

These challenges and cultural beliefs are barriers that contribute significantly to the low enrolment and completion rates in secondary education within the camp. Therefore, any intervention aimed at increasing access to and completion of secondary education should also take into account and act on these challenges and cultural beliefs.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Enabling environment barriers refer to the larger contexts and systems in which education takes place, including the policy and the external environment, which might or might not allow equitable or safe access to education and, thus, contribute to gender inequality. These barriers can include bureaucracy or discriminatory practices and policies, such as forbidding a pregnant girl or young mother to attend education, but also security issues, such as gangs or armed groups attacking or recruiting students on the way to and from school. These barriers might also include the natural environment, disasters, and human-caused climate change. The local terrain, natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and earthquakes, and the long-term effects of climate change, such as extreme weather patterns and rising sea levels, can all disrupt access to education. These environmental challenges can lead to school closures, hinder safe travel to and from schools, and exacerbate existing inequalities, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations and magnifying gender disparities in access to and completion of secondary education.

This section will provide an overview of the key enabling environment barriers that emerged in our assessment, namely extreme and unpredictable weather conditions, violence to/from school and gang violence, and scarcity of role models especially for girls.

Leading Barrier: Extreme and Unpredictable Weather Conditions

Extreme weather conditions, exacerbated by climate change, are taking a heavy toll on the accessibility of secondary education for the youth in Kakuma refugee camp. These environmental challenges, including droughts, floods, scorching heat, and other weather-related factors, are collectively impeding their pursuit of education.

Long before receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, pioneers like Wangari Mathai were making connections between caring for the environment, defending human rights, and ensuring equality between women and men at a time when this was not as intuitive as it is today.⁴⁶ Ample evidence now points to the reality that the effects of climate change are not distributed equally between genders. In other words, **the climate crisis is not gender neutral** (UNFPA & Queen Mary University, 2023).

Pope Francis (2015) clearly spoke about the challenges and impact of climate change and environmental degradation on the whole of humanity, saying:

The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. (...) We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. (p. 12)

But Pope Francis (2015) also highlighted how global inequalities are reflected in the impact of climate change and environmental degradation, since “the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet” (p. 33). Moreover, Pope Francis also spoke about the risks of climate change-induced conflicts, saying that “the impact of present imbalances is also seen in the premature death of many of the poor, in conflicts sparked by the shortage of resources” (p. 34), and these wars are likely to increase in number as climate change worsens, putting more and more lives at risk, especially among those community that are already some of the vulnerable in the world.

⁴⁶ Wangari Mathai was a Kenyan politician and environmental activist who was awarded the 2004 Nobel Prize for Peace, becoming the first Black African woman to win a Nobel Prize. Her work was often considered both unwelcome and subversive in her own country, where her outspokenness constituted stepping far outside traditional gender roles” (Britannica, 2023).

Environmental degradation generally and climate change specifically exacerbate pre-existing inequalities, hitting girls and women the hardest by threatening their education, health, and security. Worldwide, women rely more on natural resources and yet have less access to them. This disparity is evident in places like the Kakuma refugee camp, where traditional roles often place the onus on females to provide for the household's needs of food, water, and energy for cooking within harsh conditions. Especially at the upper primary and secondary levels, these household responsibilities compromise their access to and completion of secondary education.

This study builds upon existing evidence that climate change significantly affects the education of young people, with girls facing gendered barriers to accessing and completing secondary education. Through this research, we focus on three primary reasons. First, extreme weather events make the journey to and from school hazardous for learners. Secondly, the scarcity of resources, notably water, poses challenges to regular attendance, especially for girls. Girls are traditionally tasked with collecting vital supplies like fuel and water for their households. When these resources are in short supply, the burden on girls increases, often resulting in their absence from school as they are compelled to secure these necessities. Lastly, sweltering temperatures present a formidable barrier, not just in attending school but also in maintaining concentration during classes, especially given the overcrowding within secondary school buildings. This issue is exacerbated in secondary schools that operate a double-shift system, where the afternoon heat in Kakuma severely impairs learning conditions and strains teachers who are responsible for teaching both shifts.

Challenge of Commuting Safely to and from School

One of the most pressing climate-related realities in Kakuma is the increasingly extreme nature and unpredictability of weather patterns. When it rains, the camp environment rapidly deteriorates, causing widespread muddy conditions and rendering the poorly constructed, untarred roads impassable. Seasonal rivers, or 'lagers' as they are called locally, divide Kakuma refugee camp into four sections. When it rains, the otherwise dry riverbeds quickly transform into swollen, treacherous rivers without secure crossing points. There are no bridges crossing the lagers. According to locals and those living in the camp for decades, lagers used to flood for a day or two. It is now common for rivers to churn with floodwater for multiple days or even a week. Various sections of the camp become isolated from one another and cut off from crucial services, including food distribution points, health services, and schools. Furthermore, the absence of school buses as a means of safe transport within the camp is even more problematic when it rains. Learners are left without a safe way to get to and from school. Consequently, learners' education is disrupted for extended

periods, causing them to fall behind in their studies and eroding their motivation to attend school.

FIGURE 11: BROKEN BRIDGE CROSSING LAGER IN KAKUMA



Photo Credit: JRS

Learners stay home to avoid extreme conditions that could lead to accidents. The fear of being carried away by floods looms large in the camp. In 2014, when LWF managed secondary education in Kakuma, flooding forced approximately 100 families to relocate. This disaster claimed nine lives and caused around 2,000 refugees to lose possessions, including food, clothing, and their entire homes. Kakuma Secondary School suffered flood damage, and materials for the KCSE were waterlogged. Despite this, the examinations proceeded as scheduled, showcasing the resilience of the students, teachers, and administrators observed in this study (Lutheran World Federation, 2014).

If learners reach school, they complain of muddy and wet uniforms and shoes. Most do not have a spare uniform or pair of shoes. Students expressed that sitting in muddy, wet clothing during the school day is not optimal for learning.

The extreme weather conditions in Kakuma also present challenges to households. Heavy rains often damage homes made of mostly locally made mud bricks and metal roofs. Mud bricks dissolve during heavy rains and roofs leak. This requires ongoing

maintenance and repair. Youth expressed feeling responsible or being required to support one's families with home maintenance and repair that heavy rains necessitate. This too, can be a source of absenteeism that causes learners to miss school for weeks.

The extreme flooding, coupled with the high temperatures that characterise this region of Kenya, make the transmission of diseases more likely. Following heavy rains in 2014, UNHCR reported that "Children are playing in pools of stagnant water and people have to wade through dirty water to access parts of the camp (UNHCR, 2014)." Rates of cholera and malaria often spike after heavy rains and extreme heat brings exhaustion, further undermining the learners' well-being (ACAPS, 2023).

Teachers are not exempt from these challenges. Even when learners and teachers manage to arrive at school during extreme weather, the adverse conditions can disrupt the learning process entirely, rendering the school day unproductive. Teachers noted the need for proper drainage systems to be constructed in the secondary schools. Finally, while JRS currently provides transportation for secondary school teachers, many still face difficulties in reaching the schools, as they may have to travel from afar and contend with dangerous terrain, making it impossible for them to attend during extreme and unpredictable weather.

FIGURE 12: RESIDENTS OF KAKUMA NAVIGATING A FLOODED CAMP AFTER HEAVY RAIN



Photo Credit: JRS

FIGURE 13: A JRS TRANSPORT CROSSING THE LAGER



Photo Credit: JRS

Scarcity of Resources and Burden of Chores

Across contexts, refugee girls and women face competing demands on their time. They are disproportionately responsible for cooking, cleaning, caring for children and the elderly, and fetching firewood and fuel. Domestic responsibilities hinder their ability to concentrate on their studies (UN Women, n.d.; Stoebenau, Warner, Edmeades, & Sexton, 2015). These challenges intensify due to worsening living conditions caused by the climate crisis and are present daily in the Kakuma refugee camp. **In times of extreme drought in Kakuma, for example, the urgent need to provide water for the household supersedes the importance of attending school.**

These issues are highlighted in episode 13 of the third season of INEE's *Educate Us!* podcast (INEE, 2023a), which focuses on girls' and women's education in humanitarian crises. Episode 13 includes an interview with Nyabuol Biel, a South Sudanese filmmaker, poet, and theatre director who spent 20 years living in Kakuma before moving to Canada. She still has strong ties to the camp. In the podcast, Nyabuol

discusses how extreme weather conditions limit girls' educational aspirations and opportunities:

Growing up in Kakuma refugee camp, it's already a semi-arid, the northern part of the country is already a semi-arid. And so, 20 years, in the camp, I kinda witnessed the changes, you know, when it comes to climate change. I witnessed the rainy season became more and more longer, and more flooding (...) the dry seasons became more and more drier (...) talk about climate change in a larger scale, we also need to narrow it down to, you know, specific locations, and the way it affects specific people in specific contexts.

The intense fluctuation between exceedingly wet and arid conditions in Kakuma creates a cycle of severe weather extremes. These climatic shifts lead to water scarcity, requiring youth, particularly girls, to focus on securing water, often at the expense of their educational pursuits. In the podcast, Nyabuol continues, and her powerful testimony echoes the voices of youth who participated in this assessment:

a few days ago, I called my mom, and I wanted to talk to one and my one and only female cousin that is living with my mom now. And I knew it was school time, but I just wanted to check if she was in school. And my mom is like "no, she's not in school. And, right now we're having a problem with water. The entire community have gone for two days without water." And I'm like, "ah...so where's she?" And I forgot that I was once in those shoes. When we do not have, when the seasons are drier, we result to going to a seasonal river that is not far from the camp, and we just dig holes and just hoping that you could find water. Most of the time, it's not safe for drinking. But we didn't have a choice. And we would just go and dig the holes and hope that we find water. And after that, you know, we will take them home and sometimes it could take hours, you know, digging the hole. And sometimes you move from one location to another looking for a better one. And that's how we grew up. You take back the water and then start, you know, treating them and all that. And most of the time you would miss school. And I will narrow it down to my culture. So, when there is scarcity of water supply, in any community or in any family, it's always upon girls to, you know, go and find some or look for some. And so, most of the time, it would be the girls that are missing out on school. And just a few days ago, it was my cousin. And when the rest of the boys, her brothers and my other cousins went to school, it was her who missed school that day. And that has been the trend, you know.

And most of the time if it goes on for a week, it means you're missing out on school for a week. And I don't need to talk about how, you know, you miss out on lessons too. And I remember we would go and trek for miles just to go and see if the nearby community has water. If they don't, we just keep on going until you find water. And I remember growing up as a girl, when we would have scarcity of water, like you are on your menses and you want to take shower, you know, like, self-hygiene and everything, but then you don't have water. And it's just hard to, you know, to go to school when you smell and everything else. So, for that period that you are on your menses, if you don't have enough water at home.

Lastly, secondary students in Kakuma mentioned that when it rains heavily, causing damage to the houses, they cannot go to school and need to help rebuild or repair the house. As already mentioned, houses in Kakuma are often made of mud and when it rains the mud bricks become softer and the houses risk collapsing on themselves or having major damages. When this happens, education becomes less of a priority for the household and learners are requested to stay home to help repair the damage caused by the rain and cannot return to school, sometimes for many days.

In summary people in Kakuma, and especially girls and women, like in many places worldwide, are acutely experiencing the compounded impact of climate change and traditional gender roles. Females in Kakuma are disproportionately tasked with fulfilling household needs, particularly water procurement, under increasingly challenging conditions. For young women, this responsibility – now more than ever – comes at the cost of attending secondary school and highlights the intrinsic links between climate change and education.

Climate Change & Infrastructure Challenges

The heat in Kakuma presents another formidable barrier to accessing and progressing through secondary school. According to learners, extreme temperatures cause various health problems. Youth mentioned heat exhaustion and debilitating heat rashes that force them to miss classes. Local health facilities, meanwhile, are often insufficient to provide adequate care, compounding the issue. Most frequently, however, the intense heat distracts learners from their studies. The dust and heat, combined with overcrowded classrooms, make it challenging to concentrate in the sweltering classrooms for learners and teachers alike.

And when you put those children in an iron sheet class, with temperatures that are already 35 to 40 degrees Celsius, in an overcrowded classroom with almost no ventilation, it makes learning more impossible

NYABUOL, FEMALE REFUGEE IN KAKUMA

Referring once more to the *Educate Us!* podcast (INEE, 2023a), Nyabuol conveys the challenges of learning within overcrowded spaces in the extreme heat that characterises daily life within Kakuma camp, including the secondary schools:

In the context of Kakuma refugee camp, we have schools that are fully iron sheet and Kakuma itself is already around 35 to 40 degrees Celsius. And most of the time, classes are overcrowded. Learning spaces are scarce compared to the growing number of students in the camp and the influx of incoming refugees. So, there are not enough learning spaces. There are not enough classrooms compared to the number of people. And when you put those children in an iron sheet class, with temperatures that are already 35 to 40 degrees Celsius, in an overcrowded classroom with almost no ventilation, it makes learning more impossible. So, schools and learning spaces need to adapt to these changes, especially where I come from in the refugee camp.

The section *Number of Schools and Student Population in Kakuma* at page 35 of this report emphasised that the current school infrastructure in Kakuma falls short of accommodating the demand for secondary education in the camp. **Secondary learning spaces in Kakuma are also becoming less conducive to effective learning and teaching due to increasingly extreme and unpredictable weather patterns caused by climate change.** Climate change worsens existing issues with drainage, lighting, and ventilation. Most worrying, however, the overcrowding intensifies the already oppressive heat within secondary school buildings.

To tackle the issue of overcrowding in Kakuma's secondary schools, a double-shift system was introduced. However, this system came with drawbacks. Firstly, the approach reduced the total instructional hours for learners. Additionally, the extreme afternoon heat in the schools necessitated a rotating schedule for classes, ensuring no single group of students was consistently assigned the less favourable afternoon shift. Despite this, the rotation system still resulted in decreased attendance, with

teachers observing a 20% to 30% drop when learners moved to the afternoon timetable. Additionally, the system placed a considerable strain on teachers, who, unlike their students, had to teach across both shifts. While sympathetic, learners report that by the afternoon shift, teachers are noticeably fatigued, impacting the overall quality of education.

As of November 2023, double shifting was reduced to just three schools, namely Somali Bantu, Green Light, and Kakuma Refugee secondary schools. Significant investments in secondary school infrastructure, including the construction of additional classrooms at Somani Bantu School, would allow JRS to phase out the two-shift system in all secondary schools except for Kakuma Refugee Secondary School, where school capacity is still limited. Extra learning spaces would effectively eliminate the need for a double-shift system in Kakuma's secondary schools. However, this improvement will only benefit those currently enrolled in secondary school. Many youth will still lack access to secondary education in the camp.

Thus, this report recommends that any future expansion of secondary school infrastructure in Kakuma must not only aim to increase overall access for youth, but also strengthen the climate resilience of the overall education system. Construction projects should strike a balance between providing additional learning spaces to improve overall access to secondary education and supplying schools that can withstand increasingly extreme and unpredictable weather conditions. It is crucial to create learning environments that are both comfortable and safe, and adapted to the specific climate challenges of the Kakuma refugee camp, where effective learning and teaching are possible.

Promising Practices

Globally, and specifically in Kakuma, droughts, flooding, and other extreme weather events are having devastating effects on girls' education. These challenges, which include impassable roads, increased risks of gender-based violence during longer travels for resources, and higher dropout rates due to the combined effects of climate change and gender inequality, are significant. However, there is a growing body of evidence about access to quality education, especially for girls, as a crucial response to climate change (Plan International, 2020; Mavhinga, 2017).

Education contributes to climate resilience. Incorporating environmental literacy and skills into education, especially by involving children and youth in adapting instruction and infrastructure, presents a dual opportunity. Learners actively engage with and understand environmental issues, while also contributing to the broader fight against the climate crisis. This approach not only addresses immediate educational needs but

also equips future generations with the knowledge and skills needed to mitigate and navigate the impacts of climate change.

In Kakuma and beyond, secondary schools are launching environmental education activities and building climate resilience, and innovative climate solutions are emerging. The implementing partner for secondary education in the nearby Kalobeyei Settlement, FCA, has integrated environmental awareness initiatives into its secondary education programming, by launching an environmental club, which also manages a garden. The garden is an educational tool and functional space where students cultivate fruits and vegetables, including watermelons. Remarkably, watermelons thrive in this environment. Sometimes the produce is sold, adding a livelihoods aspect to these green education initiatives, and providing crucial and relevant entrepreneurial skills into secondary education.

At Life Works secondary boarding school for girls in Kakuma, each learner plants and cares for a tree as part of their learning. The head teacher considers caring for the trees and the larger school environment to be a significant part of learners' overall learning and legacy. Learners also have an environmental club and manage garden plots at the school – though watering these plots presents an ongoing challenge. Watermelons are also thriving at Life Works, where they are currently being irrigated with wastewater.

During a validation meeting, student representatives from all seven secondary schools in Kakuma expressed concerns and demonstrated knowledge about climate-related challenges. In addition to awareness, learners in Kakuma expressed eagerness to confront the challenges posed by extreme and unpredictable weather with determination and resilience. Learners emphasised the need for a platform to showcase their projects and solutions, to be implemented within the camp and more broadly.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, EiE actors are increasingly focusing on disaster risk reduction and ensuring the continuity of learning during existing and potential future crises. For example, education stakeholders in Kakuma, including administrators, government officials, learners, teachers, NGOs, and others, are exploring ways to utilise the region's abundant solar energy potential. There is a high awareness that increased access to and completion of secondary education in Kakuma is contingent upon proactively addressing extreme and unpredictable weather-related barriers. This includes adapting and constructing climate-resilient schools and systems. Fortunately, a growing availability of resources, training, and projects are available to support initiatives. Kakuma shows great potential and

promises to be an incubator for climate solutions in and through a broad commitment to gender-responsive and transformative secondary education.

General Barrier: Violence to/from School and Recruitment into Gangs

They [gang members] will attack you and maybe they will do such violence to you, like raping you. Those are the violence we get on our way to school.

SECONDARY STUDENT IN KAKUMA

Violence experienced during commutes to and from school was identified as a primary barrier hindering access to, retention in, and completion of secondary education. All stakeholders, especially learners, reported incidents of assault, robbery, and other forms of violence en route to school, in the camp, underscoring the severity of the situation. This analysis indicates that violence on the way to and from school is primarily caused by gang activity and is driven by three main factors:

- idleness and the absence of education and livelihood opportunities within the camp,
- drug and substance use disorder; and
- a prevailing context of impunity.

FIGURE 12: STUDENTS ON THEIR WAY TO SCHOOL IN KAKUMA



Photo Credit: JRS

Due to this violence, learners are fearful of commuting to and from school. This negatively impacts overall enrolment and increases the likelihood of students dropping out of secondary education. The examples below highlight the many risks that learners, female and male alike, face in travelling to and from school:

The only thing that will come to mind is to attack when they [gang members] see you with good clothes. They will attack you to get money. Then they will run away because they used to carry that machete, we call it "panga" in Kiswahili. When they see you, they will rob you, and they will take your money. They don't attend the school.

They [gang members] will attack you and maybe they will do such violence to you, like raping you. Those are the violence we get on our way to school.

Even I have one of my brothers, they cut his hand just two weeks ago. He had just gone to the mosque and that thing happened. It has become very hard nowadays in Kakuma. If you are living far away from school, it is very hard.

Idleness and Lack of Opportunities:

Gang recruitment and the growth of gang activity in Kakuma correlate with the limited opportunities and idleness, occasionally exacerbated by insufficient guidance for youth.

They have no options, other than joining the groups. Sometimes you find a small underage boy joining a group, because maybe back there at home, he or she doesn't have a person who can advise him or her to concentrate on school, or to continue with the school.

This issue could be mitigated by increasing enrolment capacity at the secondary level, thereby reducing idle time, and improving life prospects through education. Additionally, youth need pathways beyond secondary school. When opportunities for advanced education beyond secondary school and access to economic activities within and beyond the camp remain limited and restricted, motivation for youth to pursue and complete their secondary education diminishes. Many learners specifically mentioned low performance in school, and especially on the secondary school leaving exam – also linked to overcrowding and limited teacher formation – as a driving factor for school drop-out. Learners and parents reported that many scholarships have a minimum score that is often unattainable for refugee youth. Many learners, being aware of the likelihood of not being able to access post-secondary scholarships, lose interest in secondary education and decide to leave school. Ultimately, a lack of incentives and promising prospects beyond secondary school makes the prospect of joining gangs a more appealing alternative.

In addition to increased education provision, special programmes targeting out-of-school youth (OOSY) should include the provision of more arts and sports activities and opportunities to nurture the immense potential within the camp. Key informants highlighted the importance of arts and sports activities to limit idleness and prevent possible affiliation with gangs. Moreover, for talented individuals, the development of skills in the arts or sports can be a pathway out of the camp, as proven by the success of the International Olympic Committee's Refugee Olympic Team (International Olympic Committee, n.d.). Sports especially are now central to UNHCR's approach, leading to the adoption of a specific sports strategy, which acknowledges that "organised sport-based interventions can improve protection and development outcomes" (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 9). Sports activities have also proven effective in building a stronger understanding of rights and referral pathways, increasing school retention, as well as, rebuilding social networks and favouring integration (UNHCR, 2022b). However, for such activities to be implemented, appropriate facilities and support are needed.

Drug and Substance Use Disorder:

Understanding drug and substance use in refugee contexts, including in Kakuma, is complex. However, stakeholders reported drug and substance misuse being linked to difficulties in accessing and completing education and fuels gang activity and violence. Young drug and substance users, typically connected to gangs, engage in violence to fund their habits. The community has observed an increase in drug use among youth, leading to criminal behaviour and school dropouts:

The main challenge here in Kakuma among the youths is drug abuse. Even people who are below 12 years are abusing drugs. (...) Those young men now turn to be criminals. They turn out to be criminals, and they don't even think about their school.

There are school dropouts who are drug addicts and use intoxicants. When they see a student, they target them. They see it as a target, and they attack the children.

In response, stakeholders report the need for interventions involving parents and families to address and prevent drug and substance misuse among children and youth:

Some parents have to advise the student on how they can behave. Some of them who takes drugs because we have to speak of drugs when it comes in term of conflict, we need to gather all parents now to come and talk to them.

Participants in this study advise considering the effects and risks of drug and substance misuse on children and youth when planning interventions to increase access to and completion of secondary education. Specific activities should be carried out, involving parents and families, to prevent and respond to substance use disorder. Outreach activities to out-of-school children and youth users of drugs and substances should also be taken into consideration, to involve or refer them to specific services that can support them in recovering from addiction.

At present, there are limited treatment and recovery programs within Kakuma. More generally, there is a lack of substantial evidence regarding their success in refugee situations, where the focus typically leans more towards overarching health concerns. This study recommends a deeper understanding of drug and substance (mis)use in Kakuma and its connection to overall access to and completion of secondary education in the camp. For those implementing projects in Kakuma, it is crucial to:

- conduct a landscape review of drug and substance use problems and programming within refugee contexts,
- further analyse the nature of drug and substance use problems in the camp,
- design and invest in interventions to address these problems in the context of Kakuma; and
- implement, monitor, and evaluate the impact of these interventions within Kakuma, including the impact on secondary education.

Understanding these challenges is crucial for determining the effectiveness of simultaneous investments in both secondary education and services aimed at addressing drug and substance use disorders in Kakuma and in other refugee settings. Currently, the study has identified a significant correlation between the prevalence of gangs, drug and substance misuse, and the incidence of violence against school-going children and youth. This correlation stands out as one of the primary obstacles to educational progress in the camp.

Impunity

The lack of accountability for violent acts contributes significantly to the perpetuation of gang violence within Kakuma, and thus negatively impacts access to, retention in, and completion of secondary education as learners fear commuting to and from school. This barrier is further compounded by instances where law enforcement does not pursue suspects or where the community protects them. In turn, this fosters a sense of impunity among perpetrators of violence. When some members of a community commit crimes and then are stopped by law enforcement, their fellow community members try to negotiate their release with the police because “they are criminals, but they are our criminals”.

When some members of a community commit crimes and then are stopped by law enforcement, their fellow community members try to negotiate their release with the police because “they are criminals, but they are our criminals”.

FGD PARTICIPANT

To counteract violence, community-led initiatives such as patrols have been implemented and have shown effectiveness in reducing violence in certain areas of

Kakuma camp. At the national level, as mentioned by key informants and FGD participants, Kenyan authorities have started the Ten House Concept, or Nyumba Kumi in Swahili, which aims to "create a rapport between citizens and law enforcers in fighting insecurity" (Koigi, 2016). The initiative is centred on people's knowledge of the local context and their ability to spot suspicious activities, which are then reported to law enforcement. Households living in the same area gather in a group, usually composed of ten households, and share information and concerns. This initiative was originally adopted in Tanzania and then exported to Kenya in 2013. To further address issues of violence in the camp, expanding these community-based strategies was recommended by stakeholders.

These issues collectively highlight the complex challenges faced by learners in Kakuma, particularly regarding safety on their way to and from school, and emphasise the need for comprehensive interventions addressing idleness, drug and substance use, and impunity to improve the educational environment in the camp.

General Barrier: Transportation Challenges for Youth with Disabilities

This research highlights a significant issue in Kakuma camp: children with disabilities face barriers in accessing and completing secondary education, often due to transportation barriers. Unfortunately, this reflects a global trend where children and young people with disabilities are among the most marginalised in education, especially during emergencies and in protracted refugee realities like those experienced in Kakuma. Ensuring an inclusive education for children and young people with disabilities in such contexts is crucial to upholding their right to quality education and preventing their exclusion.

To address this challenge, comprehensive and reliable data on all children and youth are imperative, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where such information is scarce. Currently, there is limited understanding of the number, characteristics, living conditions, and other barriers faced by children and youth with disabilities in various aspects of life, including education, protection, health, and employment.

As we publish this report, and to tackle these gaps, JRS, UNICEF, and UNHCR, in collaboration with the MoE, and the National Council of Persons with Disabilities, are conducting a survey in Turkana West Sub-County, encompassing Kakuma refugee camp and Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement. This survey aims to identify and map out the domains of disability among children and youth below 23 years, focusing on their

access to education, protection, and employment opportunities. The findings will inform targeted programming to address the most pressing needs and priorities, including access to quality secondary education for youth with disabilities.

To address immediate challenges validated through this assessment, the resulting project has secured funding to address the shortage of desks in secondary schools, with plans to purchase over 500 new desks suitable for learners with disabilities. Additionally, the project will provide transportation assistance for learners with disabilities. Thus far, funding has been secured to cover transportation costs for 20 learners (10 females, 10 males) over three years. These initiatives begin addressing the gap in access to and completion of secondary education for youth with disabilities in Kakuma.

General Barrier: Scarcity of Role Models, Especially for Girls

This research validates a shortage of role models, especially females, as a barrier to access to and completion of secondary education in Kakuma. This is also related to a shortage of female teachers. According to UNHCR's 2019 education report,

For girls, a lack of female teachers can spell the end of their secondary education as parents in some conservative communities will not allow their daughters to be taught by a man. Female teachers also help girls to feel more comfortable in the classroom, especially should they need to report incidents of sexual harassment or abuse. Most important of all, a female role model can inspire and support girls to complete their studies – and even motivate them to become teachers themselves. (UNHCR, 2019, p. 3)

In many cases, parents in the camp, especially mothers, have minimal education. In South Sudan and Somalia, the two main countries of origin of Kakuma's refugee population, literacy rates are low for females, 29% and 28% respectively. Regardless of their education level, parents who participated in this study expressed a strong desire to educate the younger generations in the camp but explained how traditional gender norms and expectations remain a barrier. Parents, teachers, and youth expressed a need for more role models.

TABLE 7: LITERACY RATES IN THE MAIN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF KAKUMA'S REFUGEE POPULATION⁴⁷

Country of Origin & Year of Data	% of Kakuma Population	Literacy Rate: Adult Females <i>(% of females ages 15 & above)</i>	Literacy Rate: Adult Males <i>(% of males ages 15 & above)</i>	Literacy Rate: Adult Total <i>(% of people ages 15 & above)</i>
South Sudan (2018)	53%	29%	35%	40%
Somalia (2022)	19%	28%	54%	41%
DRC (2022)	9%	72%	90%	81%
Burundi (2022)	8%	69%	82%	76%
Sudan (2018)	5%	56%	65%	61%
Ethiopia (2017)	3%	44%	59%	52%
Kenya (host country)	NR	80%	86%	83%

For us girls, most of us who are in the school, we can find role models in school, but for our sisters who are in the village, who are in the community, they cannot find anyone who can direct them on what to do and how to choose their way of living. Also, they can be forced into an earlier marriage and forced marriage where you can find a girl of 16 years getting married to an old man who can live a very miserable life.

Role models can help challenge and reshape gender expectations, inspiring girls to become trailblazers. Community engagement and sensitisation are crucial for changing perceptions about the value of girls and women and addressing practices

⁴⁷ Data retrieved from (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023). Note that these adult literacy rates include minors from age 15, potentially skewing the data, as our definition and understanding of adults, based on international law, including the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a person above age 18.

like the disproportionate chore burden on girls, which hinders their educational access and completion.

Participants in this study suggested a need for more mentorship programs and the strengthening of existing ones. According to the principal of Life Works Secondary School, the boarding school for girls in Kakuma,

One thing we have really worked on is mentorship. When they (the learners) are well mentored, they know how to say “no” to pressure from community. We have a Wednesday morning forum, where they (the learners) feel very free – where we are even able to talk about sex education even freely. The challenges are when they (the learners) go for the holiday, they are going for two months, and they are more at risk to child and forced marriage and early pregnancy. But, if mentorship can continue on a weekly basis even on holidays, whereby they have a free space to express themselves, and continued support, this would be helpful.

Participants also recommended enhancing efforts to recruit and retain female teaching staff. Additionally, they acknowledged the benefits of programs like the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) and the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) scholarships, the latter offering resettlement in Canada. However, they noted that these programs might inadvertently remove potential role models from the camp community. Therefore, initiatives to re-engage scholarship recipients as role models could prove advantageous. Exploring and investing in these options is recommended.

Finally, ensuring refugee youth access to and completion of secondary school is crucial for providing future generations with role models. A study in the refugee-hosting districts of Uganda shows that girls whose mothers had some primary education had a 54% lower chance of dropping out, and this rate was 67% lower if the mothers had any secondary education. This underscores the importance of educating girls for intergenerational benefits (Stoebenau, Warner, Edmeades, & Sexton, 2015). Graduates of secondary school will support their siblings' and future children's education. They will contribute to the household and community by serving as mentors and role models.

SUPPLY-SIDE BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Supply-sided barriers refer to obstacles related to the supply of education that affect the accessibility and availability of learning opportunities and environments. These barriers can include inadequate infrastructure, including an insufficient number of classrooms or schools, a scarcity of teachers (especially female teachers and in scientific subjects), high student-to-teacher ratios, and insufficient teaching and learning materials.

First, this section will analyse the leading supply-side barrier, that is lack of learning materials and facilities. Then, the focus will shift to the top three general barriers, namely lack of enough secondary schools, scarcity of qualified secondary school teachers, especially in scientific subjects, and, lastly, lack of period-friendly facilities. The section focusing on the lack of period-friendly facilities will also draw on the information gathered from a WASH observation exercise carried out by JRS staff in Kakuma's secondary schools.

Leading Barrier: Not Enough Learning and Teaching Materials or Learning Spaces

The most recurring and prominent supply-side barriers that limit access to and completion of secondary education in Kakuma include a critical shortage of learning and teaching materials, as well as inadequate learning spaces. Key issues validated through this assessment include:

- Insufficient learning and teaching materials, particularly textbooks;
- Not enough library resources, science laboratories and necessary lab materials and supplies;
- Inadequate supply of basic school supplies such as pens, notebooks, desks, chairs, and tables;
- Limited opportunities for students to take examinations; and
- Inadequate accommodations for students with disabilities, including transportation needs.

These shortages and the overall inadequacy of secondary education learning environments reduce the overall quality of education, academic performance of learners, and their likelihood of completing secondary education in Kakuma.

Teaching and Learning Materials, Especially Textbooks

The secondary school libraries and their book collections fall short of catering to the overwhelming demand from the large student population seeking to use these resources. Frequently, learners find themselves unable to access the necessary

textbooks for their studies, with particular challenges noted in language classes. Teachers emphasised the critical importance of students being able to access textbooks, as learning visually is a necessary component of comprehending and mastering language studies. Learners and teachers alike noted the challenges of learning and teaching without an adequate supply of language textbooks, as summarised by a teacher who participated in an FGD:

The ratio of books to the learners, they're not enough. For example, we have certain subjects, for example, Kiswahili, whereby it's a foreign language to them. Hence, they need enough reading material so that they can perfect on such languages. (...) This is a foreign language, remember, to them. When you give out assignments, you expect them to do. How are they going to do if maybe we are going to class and teaching it orally, no reference materials?

FIGURE 13: LIBRARY OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN KAKUMA



Photo Credit: JRS

The lack of learning materials impacts not only students, but also teachers, who face great difficulties in teaching. In turn, this negatively impacts student learning and can lead to school drop-out. As reported by a teacher:

There are not enough learning materials within second schools, including textbooks, notebooks, and pens, and lab facilities. This affects our learners because if they don't have the textbooks, that means even the teachers can't even have the lesson notes that are guiding them because it's through this text that students are able to refer and get to learn. That makes them not to be in school.

Lack of Access to Well-Equipped Science Laboratories

School laboratories, when present, are often poorly equipped, preventing learners from doing the experiments and other practical experiences that are part of the curriculum. In the cases where laboratories are equipped with all the tools and reagents needed, the number of learners in the school might be too high for the laboratory's capacity. Some learners noted being unable to access and use the laboratories for an entire school year. Parents of secondary school students expressed concerns that some learners are unable to access the science lab during their entire secondary school career, effectively preventing them from really understanding what they are supposed to study. Two students commented on how the lack of access to science labs directly impacts the quality and effectiveness of their learning:

In this lab in our school right now, we don't normally do practicals, they normally just show us that this thing goes like this, but we don't see what is going. For us to understand like sciences, they consider more than practicals, so for us to understand that thing, we need to observe and listen and see what is taking place in the reaction.

When you come to the national examination, eventually, you are going to fail that practical because you have not been practicing that. This is one of the major things that are affecting our school and our grades.

JRS has experience in tackling similar issues. For instance, in Uganda's Adjumani district, JRS supported the construction and equipment of a two-room laboratory capable of accommodating 80 seats. Both teachers and learners benefitted from this intervention, as remarked by a member of the school's teaching body: "The laboratory will enhance the teaching of science subjects in the school. When you teach theoretically, it is hard for the students to grasp the lessons. Now we use the real apparatus and not just drawings" (JRS, 2022).

As a result of this assessment, JRS secured funds to build and outfit a new science laboratory at Kakuma Refugee Secondary School (KRSS) where the MoE deemed one of the existing laboratories at KRSS as "not safe for use" by learners. This issue further

impeded the delivery of science education at KRSS, the largest school in the camp with 3,820 students (1,378 girls and 2,442 boys). Currently, practical science sessions are being conducted in classrooms, a practice not recommended by the MoE. The two remaining laboratories are insufficient for accommodating all the learners. The construction and equipping of a new lab will provide substantial relief to both students and teachers at the school, and it is expected to notably enhance the performance of secondary school learners in science subjects.

Lack of Basic Learning Materials, School Furnishings, and Uniforms

Representing his peers, a secondary school learner expressed, "We don't have enough pens." This observation aligns with the findings of a 2023 LWF-published survey, which identified the lack of school uniforms as the "main reason for not being in school" for learners of all ages, closely followed by a scarcity of learning materials (Pulse Kenya Consults, Ltd., 2023, p. 24).

While the absence of pens or school uniforms may appear to be a minor issue, the scale of this challenge becomes substantial when considering the number of learners in each secondary school and even more concerning, the number of out-of-school children and youth (OOSCY) in Kakuma camp. These supply-side barriers grow more significant and understandable in the context of diminishing overall educational funding in Kakuma, particularly the limited financial resources allocated for secondary education.

Teachers and other stakeholders reported that, in some cases, learners are forced to sit on the ground during classes, as classrooms are overcrowded, and do not have enough furnishing to accommodate all students.

To begin addressing this issue, JRS has secured funds to construct at least one new classroom block to begin decongesting secondary schools in the camp. This will increase access to 90 additional learners (40 girls, 50 boys). The classrooms will be equipped with 60 desks. As a climate adaptation strategy, the new classroom will have enlarged windows, high roofs, raised floors and secure iron roofing according to the MoE standards to build more climate-resilient school systems.

Lack of Examinations

As part of this supply-side barrier, the lack of regular, continued examination negatively impacts learners' preparation for the KCSE. As summarised by one learner,

When the teachers teach us something about new topics or chapters and we cover syllabuses, it would be very good if we did some tests or exams. The big barrier in this school is that we never have exams. We never do exams. Now, some of us, we only finish the syllabus. Some of us even graduated from three to form four without even doing exams.

In the case of at least one secondary school secondary school, the lack of regular examination opportunities was linked to the school not being equipped with a printer. This did not allow the printing of examination sheets.

When it happens that you go to the national examination room and you attempt those questions, you'll not be well acquainted with those questions and definitely you will fail. That's a big problem.

Without practice examinations, learners expressed concern about not knowing what to expect from the KCSE, a likely factor in the poor performance of Kakuma students on the final exam. Learners recommend more reliable and consistent examination activities so they can understand which subjects, topics, and skills they should focus on.

Lack of Accommodations for Learners with Disabilities

A lack of suitable school facilities for learners with disabilities is a barrier to their access to and completion of secondary education in Kakuma. These learners often require special learning methods and tools, which the secondary schools in Kakuma are currently unable to provide. Access to school for some learners with disabilities is also restricted by the absence of basic mobility aids like crutches or wheelchairs, and limited transportation options for commuting to and from school.

Globally, children and youth with disabilities are disproportionately excluded from education, a situation exacerbated in emergency and protracted crisis contexts. Ensuring inclusive education in such environments is crucial to upholding the right to quality education for all children and youth. This calls for comprehensive data that includes all children and youth, regardless of their abilities or circumstances.

In Kakuma, JRS operates five primary schools catering to 324 children with developmental and intellectual disabilities. These schools offer services ranging from functional skills training to literacy and numeracy to school readiness. School meals are also provided. Additionally, 169 children with severe disabilities receive home-based care, including nutritional and rehabilitation services. Their caregivers are supported with mental health and entrepreneurial training. In addition to the five special primary schools, the Jennifer Strekal Inclusive Education building was inaugurated in 2021, providing an additional four classrooms for primary learners.

At the secondary level, there are no specific inclusive education facilities in Kakuma camp. Learners with disabilities are enrolled in regular secondary schools. As of April 2023, 150 (40 females, 110 males) are enrolled in Kakuma's secondary school.⁴⁸

As noted above, JRS is conducting a joint assessment to map the needs of children and youth with disabilities in Turkana West Sub-County, which includes Kakuma refugee camp and Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement. The survey aims to collect data on access to education, protection, and employment for children and youth with disabilities. Like this assessment, the focus is on understanding the prevalence and nature of disabilities among children and youth, their educational and employment barriers, and protection needs to strengthen their access to education and opportunities. Again, the results and recommendations of this joint assessment will complement this assessment and report.

General Barrier: Not Enough Secondary Schools

As previously noted, Kakuma has 21 primary schools and only seven secondary schools. These schools accommodate about 15,000 learners, or about 13.7% of secondary-school-going-age youth. Schools, as well as classrooms, are overcrowded, with an average teacher-to-student ratio of 1:120. This shortage impacts access and completion of secondary education in Kakuma in several ways. The struggles learners face due to overcrowding are reflected in the words of a current secondary school student:

⁴⁸ Additional information on the number of secondary education students with disabilities, disaggregated by gender and type of disability can be found in *Table 3: Overview of enrolment levels for secondary school students with disabilities in Kakuma camp: October 2023* at page 9 of this report.

When we entered form one, we were more than 136 inside a class, which was very small. We didn't have enough space. (...) Teachers inside a school are forced to teach a class of 136 students, (...) you know how hard it is. Teachers are having a really hard time teaching a class which is really highly populated.

FIGURE 14: LEARNERS IN GREENLIGHT SECONDARY SCHOOL, KAKUMA



Photo Credit: JRS

Indeed, limited secondary school infrastructure is not only felt by learners, but also by teachers. Teachers face the daily challenge of teaching to class sizes of 100+ learners. It is often difficult for them to be heard by all the students. The challenges of overcrowding are compounded by other barriers and challenges addressed throughout this report, including the experience and uncertainty being refugees themselves (both learners and teachers), poverty and the cost of school fees, extreme and unpredictable weather, and increasing violence on commutes to and from school. The daily stressors of being a learner and teacher in Kakuma negatively impact quality of life, motivation for learning and teaching, and overall well-being. According to one secondary school teacher:

Sometimes we do shout. We go the extra mile; we strain a lot. At the end of the day, you realise that you are very much tired. When you go home, you cannot even make a story with your partner because we normally go

the extra mile [we are too tired]. At least we need more classes so that they (the students) can be divided. Handling 140-plus in one class, one teacher, marking books, (...) it's very difficult.

As highlighted in section *Leading Barrier: Extreme and Unpredictable Weather Conditions*, extreme heat and unpredictable weather is the main enabling-environment barrier that impacts access to and completion of secondary education in Kakuma. Learners and teachers suffer from the heat during the school day. They are aware of how it negatively impacts their focus and mood. Due to the heat and overcrowded and uncomfortable school buildings, learners admitted to sometimes skipping school. They noted that some of their peers have even dropped out of school for this reason.

The dual challenges of Kakuma's double-shift system and the afternoon heat take a toll on teachers, ultimately influencing the quality of education they can deliver. Teachers work both shifts and shared their struggles with reduced focus, heightened fatigue, and mounting stress by the time the afternoon session begins. When combined with the oppressive afternoon heat, these factors negatively affect teachers' ability to teach effectively and, consequently, the overall quality of education being delivered in Kakuma's secondary schools, and finally, overall access to and completion of secondary school in the camp.

FIGURE 15: LEARNERS IN ONE OF KAKUMA'S SEVEN SECONDARY SCHOOLS



Photo Credit: JRS

To address this barrier and to improve the quality of both teaching and learning in Kakuma's secondary school system, participants had several recommendations.

First, they urgently recommend investments in additional school infrastructure. Well-planned investments could serve to reduce the teacher-to-student ratio and increase the overall number of learners accessing secondary education in Kakuma. Furthermore, an increased number of secondary schools could end the double-shift system. Due to the oppressive afternoon heat, participants highlighted that learners attending the afternoon shift are penalised vis a vis those in the morning shift. Finally, while investments in new secondary schools could reduce overcrowding and help increase overall access to secondary education, participants also noted how such investments could reduce other barriers, including those related to the distance to school and the violence learners fear commuting to and from school. According to one secondary school learner,

Here in Kakuma, we only have a few secondary schools, and, due to the distance, (...) some of us will end up dropping out of school. If it is possible, you can at least open another secondary school in the other side [of the camp] (...) - Those who are living there will just come to school.

Another suggestion for addressing the shortage of secondary schools was to increase the number of scholarships to secondary schools beyond the camp, thus reducing pressure on Kakuma's secondary school system. While scholarship programmes are valuable, especially for the most vulnerable and high-performing learners, they do not represent a structural solution for increasing access to quality education within Kakuma. Furthermore, this is not a sustainable solution. Scholarship provisions would be hard-pressed to meet the current and increasing demand for secondary education within Kakuma.

General Barrier: Shortage of Qualified Secondary School Teachers, Especially Females and for the Scientific Subjects

Providing quality education in the context of a refugee camp is a challenge. Finding and retaining qualified and trained teachers is difficult in such contexts. Kakuma's secondary schools are no exception.

Untrained refugee teachers represent the majority of the secondary teaching staff in Kakuma. Only a limited number of secondary teachers are fully qualified to teach in secondary schools. Furthermore, there is a gaping gender imbalance among the teaching staff. As of April 2023, only 25% of teachers are female, compared to 75% of males. Lastly, the current teaching body is limited compared to the student population. This informs challenges associated with high student-to-teacher ratios and causes disruptions in learning when even a single teacher falls sick.

FIGURE 16: FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS PARTICIPATE IN A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION IN KAKUMA CAMP



Photo Credit: JRS

Shortfalls in Teaching Staff's Qualifications

Teacher formation is critical to providing quality education, and it is especially so in emergency contexts, where schools are often inadequate and poorly furnished: “in crisis contexts, where learning materials and school infrastructure are limited, a teacher is often the only resource available to students, making their role especially important to quality education” (Henderson, Mansour, & Hough, 2023, p. 13). Teachers can serve as key role models and support learners in coping with displacement. They can also play a critical role in facilitating learners’ access to other services, including support for Gender-Based Violence (GBV) survivors and MHPSS services. Teachers need appropriate pre-service formation and ongoing in-service training to be effective. This is often lacking in crisis and conflict-affected settings, such as Kakuma. In

Kakuma's secondary schools, as previously noted in this report, 56% of the staff are untrained refugee teachers, and 18% are national assistant/intern teachers.⁴⁹

Gender Imbalance in Teaching Staff and Need for Gender-Responsive and Transformative Training

A shortage of trained female teachers in Kakuma's secondary schools, where 75% of the staff are male, is a significant barrier to access to and completion of secondary education, especially for girls. This gender disparity is even more pronounced in scientific subjects, where female teachers are underrepresented. The presence of more female teachers, especially in STEM subjects, could help break gender norms and stereotypes (UNICEF, 2020), encouraging girls to pursue careers in these fields and providing future generations of girls with much-needed role models as well as increased safety for all learners in the classroom.

Female teachers in Kakuma face unique challenges, including safety concerns and a lack of respect from older male students. These issues affect the recruitment and retention of female teachers and should be considered in program design and implementation. Female students expressed the need for female teachers who can support and inspire them, while also addressing perceived biases favouring boys.

When it comes to studying in classes, teachers probably favour boys more than girls, whereby you find teachers saying that girls can't do this, girls can't do this, boys can do this, boys, can do chemistry, boys can do biology, can do math, girls can only do Kiswahili, it really hurts.

This situation underscores the need for comprehensive teacher training going beyond subject matter to include gender-responsive and transformative pedagogies. Teachers in Kakuma expressed a desire and need for training in these teaching methods.

⁴⁹ For further details on the number of teachers in Kakuma's secondary school, their level of training, and the gender ratio of the teaching staff, you can refer to the section *Overview of the Teacher Situation in Kakuma* at page 43.

Integration of and Training for Teachers in MHPSS and Social Emotional Learning

In the Kakuma context, it is important to provide training to teachers on how to offer basic psychosocial support to learners, identify learners who may be going through emotional distress, and the integrate social emotional learning (SEL) framework into lesson planning and teaching. This approach will help students develop self-awareness, regulate their emotions, and build a positive sense of identity.

Education for at-risk groups in settings like Kakuma plays a pivotal role in fostering the psychosocial wellbeing of learners. An effective intervention within the framework of MHPSS in education involves strengthening SEL activities in secondary schools to enhance competencies that empower individuals to restore their social, emotional, and cognitive wellbeing. Addressing MHPSS considerations alongside academic outcomes must be carefully designed and implemented by MHPSS field practitioners in collaboration with teachers, school staff, BoM, and other stakeholders.

Finally, learners raised concerns about corporal punishment. Such practices must be prohibited in schools' codes of conduct, making sure that this policy is enforced, and training programs must be established to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for learners.

The Need to Hire and Retain Additional Teachers

Learners emphasised the need to recruit more teachers and simultaneously build additional classrooms. This approach aims to reduce both student-to-teacher ratios and classroom overcrowding. Learners believe that lowering the ratio of students to teachers would enhance the quality of teaching and learning by enabling teachers to give more individual attention to learners and allow students to learn more comfortably and effectively within Kakuma's secondary schools. Particularly in scientific subjects, the shortage of teachers and limited access to science laboratories significantly affects overall educational quality. Learners pointed out the substantial impact of even one absent science teacher, noting that their absence leaves students unable to engage with that subject for the day, highlighting the need for more qualified secondary school teachers, especially in STEM subjects.

General Barrier: Need for Comprehensive Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) Programming, including Period-Friendly WASH Facilities

As part of the assessment of barriers to accessing and completing secondary education, an observation of the existing WASH facilities was carried out in July 2023

using a dedicated observation tool.⁵⁰ At the time of the assessment, all seven secondary schools had gender-segregated toilets, but many of them needed rehabilitation. Most of them did not have accessible water and did not allow for private handwashing. Virtually all of them lacked soap, a hook or shelf, and appropriate methods for disposal of MHH-materials. Furthermore, only three schools had accessible toilets for users with disabilities and only a few schools provided reliable, regular, and ongoing to critical MHH supplies. As highlighted in the section below, some of these shortfalls are being addressed through increased investment in WASH infrastructure.

MHH: A Protection Issue Above All

A starting point for addressing menstruation as a barrier in Kakuma and beyond is to acknowledge that having a period within conflict and crisis affected settings is a protection issue. With each menstrual cycle, girls, and women—as well as boys and men—are faced with difficult decisions about how periods will be managed. A mother may choose not to wait in a food distribution line if she does not have adequate materials to manage her period with dignity. A brother or father who is bound by the traditional role of providing for his family may choose to sell NFIs—including sanitary pads—when their household faces chronic food shortages. In turn, their adolescent daughter or sister may opt to engage in transactional sex to obtain sanitary pads to continue attending school. In this way, MHH presents protection issues that are too often overlooked within the humanitarian field, especially because these issues do not fit neatly into a single sector, such as Education.

Globally, it is estimated that up to 500 million girls and women do not have access to the items they need to manage their periods in a safe and hygienic way, free from embarrassment or, worse, harassment (UN Office of the High Commissioner, 2022). Kakuma is a melting pot of various cultures, ethnicities, and tribes. Among these groups, certain traditional beliefs endure, especially those related to menstruation, including myths, stigmas, and taboos. This assessment validates that Kakuma is not immune to these issues and their impact on education. **Traditional beliefs are those held by members of a community for long periods of time, often spanning generations. Some traditional beliefs and related practices are beneficial, some have no benefit or harm, and others are harmful.** Harmful traditional beliefs and practices are long-standing and will not change or be reversed by briefly implemented, one-off interventions. The following are examples of traditional beliefs and practices that are harmful as they isolate and stigmatize those who menstruate

⁵⁰ The tool can be found in the annexes of this report.

in ways that present protection issues, limit girls' access to school, constitute gender-based violence (GBV), and violate human rights:

Girls and women are dirty during their monthly periods. During menstruation, no one should touch them or anything they touch, including kitchen utensils or scholastic materials.

A girl or woman will be rendered barren if anyone comes into contact with her menstrual blood.

Upon **menarche**, a girl's first occurrence of menstruation, a family hosts a party as a way of advertising that their daughter is ready for formal marriage or informal union (even if under the age of 18 years).

Experiencing any pain during a period, such as menstrual cramping, is the sign of an ancestral curse.

Girls and women are isolated during menstruation and expected to sit over a small hole or pit for the length of their periods. Only after their periods finish are they allowed to bathe and rejoin the larger family and community.

Fortunately, beliefs and practices about menstruation and when a girl is ready to marry are changing. Working in complex humanitarian settings comes with many challenges. However, displacement also provides opportunities to challenge harmful, traditional beliefs and practices. According to research that JRS has conducted through various gender analyses, if girls are not attending school during their periods, this often has less to do with traditional beliefs and practices and more with the **challenges of persistent and widespread poverty**. **Poverty is often the leading barrier to education and is inextricably linked to not having MHH materials and supplies.** This is why comprehensive MHH must be an integral component of GRE programming in Kakuma. To that end, this report outlines and

aims to promote a shared understanding of comprehensive MHH programming in Kakuma's secondary schools according to three key pillars.

* * *

The information in the section below has been adapted from the Columbia University's online course, [Menstruation in a Global Context: Addressing Policy and Practice](#).

PILLAR I: MENSTRUAL MATERIALS & SUPPLIES

What is it?

The first pillar of comprehensive MHH programming refers to the access of materials and supplies that are necessary for girls and women to manage their periods with comfort and confidence, so they can go about their daily lives as normally as possible.

Menstrual materials refer to products or items used externally or internally to absorb or collect blood and tissue that comes out of the vagina during menstruation. These include cloths, disposable or reusable pads, tampons, menstrual cups, or period underwear.

Menstrual supplies, instead, are supportive tools needed for the effective and hygienic management of one's period. These tools include soap and a bucket for washing reusable pads, underwear, reusable or disposable pads, and a bag to store reusable pads or menstrual cups between use.

PILLAR II: MHH-SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

What is it?

The second pillar of MHH programming refers to a range of WASH services and spaces that can support managing menstruation in a healthy and safe manner. Within the school setting, the primary focus for MHH supportive facilities is on toilets, including issues of disposal and waste management.

To be period-friendly, toilets should have certain characteristics, including inside door latches, proper lighting, clear signs pointing to menstrual waste disposal, accommodations for people with disabilities, and more. A more complete list of the characteristics of a period-friendly toilets is provided in the figure below.⁵¹

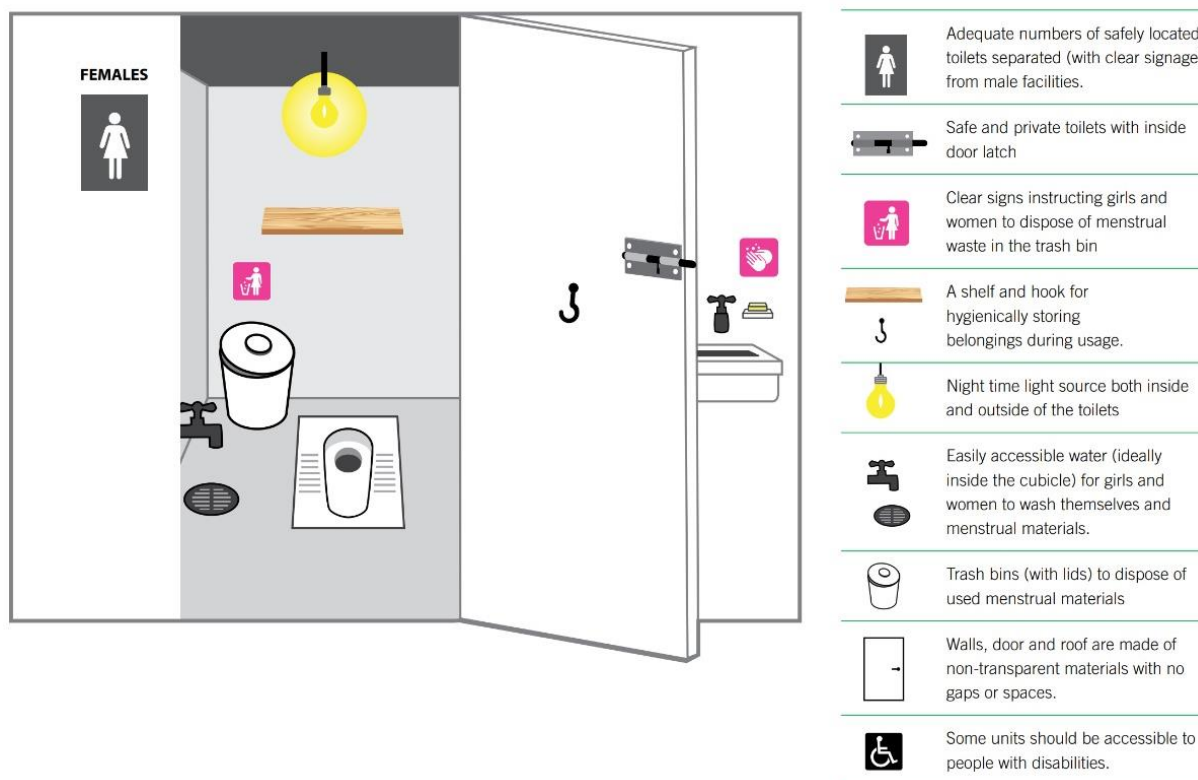


FIGURE 17: VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF A PERIOD-FRIENDLY TOILET

⁵¹ The image is taken from the report, 'A Toolkit for Integration Menstrual Hygiene Management into Humanitarian Response: The Full Guide' by Columbia University and the International Rescue Committee and accessible [here](#).

PILLAR III: EDUCATION & INFORMATION

What is it?

Often, the provision of MHH materials and supplies, and supportive facilities are not enough to allow for girls' and women's safe and hygienic menstrual management.

In many cultures, menstruation is not talked about freely or openly. As a result, girls often lack critical information on what happens to their bodies during menstruation and how to manage their periods. This lack of knowledge is compounded by cultural taboos and menstrual stigma, resulting in girls feeling ashamed, embarrassed, and ill-prepared to manage their periods.

This knowledge and awareness gap can be addressed by providing MHH education and information so that girls and women can be empowered and feel more confident managing their periods.

However, one must not stop with girls and women. It is also necessary to involve boys and men in MHH education and information programming. Boys and men should be made aware of the challenges that girls and women face during menstruation, with the aim of transforming them into knowledgeable and supportive classmates and community members, thus fighting the stigma that surrounds menstruation in many parts of the world.

MENSTRUATION- RELATED BARRIERS IN KAKUMA

Bullying and Stigma Around Menstruation

This assessment validates the adverse effects of menstruation on learner attendance, often associated with bullying and the stigma surrounding menstrual health in Kakuma and linked with a lack of MHH supplies. Many learners expressed not having access to enough period products. When learners get their period during school hours, they risk having their clothes stained. In turn, they face the risk of bullying or period shaming. These negative experiences during menstruation further reinforce their likelihood of opting to stay home rather than go to school while menstruating.

Teachers also expressed concerns about the impact of menstruation on learners' attendance, focusing specifically on the fact that learners usually only have the resources for one school uniform. If that single uniform is stained, learners are unable to change uniforms, and ridicule from their peers is likely to ensue. Consequently,

learners who experience menstrual stains on their uniforms often return home, as highlighted by a teacher:

Girls are not catered for during that specific time (their period). When they have their periods and they cannot afford sanitary towel, they would have to stay home during that period, and they will not be able to go to school. They do not have enough changing clothes. For example, you have one pair of uniform, you soil your uniform in school, you do not have a change of clothes, so you'll have to go home.

To combat the stigma associated with menstruation, teachers in Kakuma proposed that male teachers should participate in the daily management and distribution of MHH materials. On the one hand, this could show female students that they can rely on men's support too, especially on their male teachers' support, and, on the other hand, it also conveys to learners that there is nothing wrong with having periods.

In addition to the stigma around menstruation itself, considering beliefs and preferences related to MHH supplies could impact the effectiveness of any interventions in this area of programming. For example, distributing and using reusable sanitary pads was not favoured by the learners, who expressed that using these items could be perceived as shameful by some community members, including their peers. They mentioned that reusable options could be viable only when girls are at home or in girls-only schools. This example validates the importance of learning about, listening to, and considering the local context and people's needs and beliefs before implementing any MHH programming.

Widespread Shortfalls in MHH Facilities & Supplies

The information obtained from assessing the WASH facilities in Kakuma's secondary schools, including the shortcomings identified, was confirmed through FDGs as. In multiple schools, learners, and especially female students, highlighted the poor state of the existing toilets:

The toilets lack water. They lack liquid soap and soap. We rarely get water in the toilets and they're always dirty. We don't get water for cleaning and probably the school lacks brooms.

These shortfalls are being addressed through increased infrastructure investments. Recently, a total of 39 new toilets were built in Kakuma's secondary schools by UNHCR,

and by BPRM and UNICEF through WIK. The new toilets are distributed as follows: 11 toilets (4 for girls and 7 for boys) at Vision Secondary School, 10 toilets (6 for girls and 4 for boys) at Blue States Secondary School, 3 toilets (all for girls) at Starlight Secondary School, and 12 toilets (9 for girls and 3 for boys) at Kakuma Refugee Secondary School.

As a result of this assessment, funding has also been allocated to construct an incinerator at Greenlight Secondary School for disposing of sanitary pads. Greenlight Secondary School has the second-highest enrolment of girls (971) among the secondary schools in the camp. Girls at Greenlight Secondary School and others in the camp currently dispose of sanitary pads by dropping them into pit latrines. This practice is discouraged because it leads to latrines filling up more quickly and is not a safe disposal method. Collection bins will be placed in the girls' latrines for used pads. From the bins, pads will be transferred to the incinerator for combustion. The proposed incinerator will be the first in the camp's secondary schools. If successful, JRS will construct incinerators in the seven schools in the camp to ensure safer and more sustainable disposal practices.

Along with the shortfalls in WASH facilities, learners noted lacking sanitary pads or other MHH supplies as a barrier to accessing and completing secondary school. Learners often lack the money needed to buy such supplies, which are not distributed consistently or reliably in the schools or camp. Girls reported only receiving one pad when they were distributed. The lack of sanitary pads or alternative MHH supplies strongly impacts female learners' attendance, as reported in an FGD with students:

When you don't have pads, definitely, you're going to stay home. (...) You will be absent in that school for three days in that week or maybe four days, maybe even more because girls (their periods) take more (time). It lets down your performance because every month you are going to miss four days or three days.

Finally, **female teachers and education personnel must be considered and cared for as part of a comprehensive MHH response in Kakuma's secondary schools.** An ongoing challenge in Kakuma is the shortage of qualified teachers and other education personnel, especially females. Challenging work conditions often limit teacher retention. Female teachers who must manage their periods while working in low-resource environments should be consulted regularly about how their needs can be better met and supported. Improved work conditions—including MHH-compliant WASH facilities will help to attract and retain much-needed female teachers in Kakuma.

Negative Menstruation-Related Coping Mechanisms

The lack of sanitary pads (other basic needs and learning materials) often forces girls to adopt dangerous, unsafe coping mechanisms, including turning to those whom learners referred to as “sugar daddies.” These “sugar daddies” are usually older men who give girls certain supplies they need or money in exchange for sex. As explained by one learner,

They want those small girls. If you want to have something you want and you don't have it, you must do something. You just go, maybe they like some small girls. Then they do what they want to do. Then, they give you what you want. If they give you what you want, and you just go and satisfy yourself as you buy what you want to buy. It's like that.

Typically, older men exploit the challenges and needs of these girls, which constitutes a form of gender-based violence (GBV). Reliable and ongoing distribution of MHH supplies could aid in diminishing reliance on this harmful, unsafe, and demeaning coping strategy, thus increasing overall access to and completion of secondary school. MHH is not a “one-off” activity. The distribution of “dignity or hygiene kits,” for example, must be implemented throughout the academic year.

IV. Recommendations to Address Gendered Barriers and Increase Access to and Completion of Secondary Education in Kakuma Camp

CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Address the Needs of Girls and Boys, Women and Men, and People of all Genders in Programming.

Gender-responsive and transformative programming should be inclusive of all constituencies. To effectively overcome barriers that prevent girls (and other marginalised groups) from accessing and completing secondary school, it is important to target both girls and boys, women and men, and gender-diverse children and youth. Changing gender norms and expectations affect households and communities, and therefore, interventions should seek to avoid negative consequences and prevent backlash from any particular group. This approach aligns with the "Do no harm" principle, which states that humanitarian actors should endeavour not to cause further damage or suffering through their actions. Implementing gender-responsive and transformative education is part of a longer-term approach to "Do no harm" while also aiming to "Do some good". However, the work is ongoing and achieving gender equality in education and beyond requires participation from all individuals, including boys and men. A long-term approach is necessary to change attitudes, behaviours, norms, roles, and responsibilities around gender at home, in school, within the camp, in the larger Turkana West sub-county, and beyond.

2. Prioritise Increased Participation of Affected Community in all Phases of Programming

This project should prioritise the participation of the affected community, including refugee-led organizations (RLOs), in all phases of programming. By actively involving the community and targeted populations, it is possible to more effectively track progress in addressing the identified barriers through appropriate and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, this participatory approach helps to mitigate risks throughout by ensuring that interventions are responsive to the diverse and changing needs and perspectives within the community. Engaging the community in all phases of programming enhances accountability to both host and refugee

communities, fostering greater transparency and responsiveness to their needs. This inclusive approach also strengthens community buy-in, resilience, and self-sufficiency, ultimately contributing to the sustainability of the program as a whole.

3. Coordinate closely Amongst Actors & Across Sectors, Prioritizing Comprehensive MHH Programming.

JRS's increased focus on GRE within Kakuma camp also requires increased coordination amongst actors, as well as increased cross-sectoral coordination. Many of the barriers to education that are validated through this report, are also harmful to girls in other areas of their lives and throughout their lifetimes. Therefore, interventions that are adopted because of this study will be cross-sectoral and require a gender-integrated approach that includes health care, non-food items, protection, WASH, and every other area of humanitarian response. A multi-stakeholder working group should be established to develop a shared strategy for addressing gendered barriers. Furthermore, a gender focal point should be part of the ongoing EiE Working Group. Ongoing assessments, monitoring, and evaluation within Kakuma should include gender-related questions. Data collected by one sector will impact the work of the full humanitarian response. Coordination also means increasing engagement beyond the humanitarian sector and with development actors who are working in Kakuma camp, the Kalobeyei Settlement, Turkana County, and Kenya, and even within the region.

4. Support Learner and Teacher Wellbeing through Integration of MHPSS

Liaise with MHPSS teams in Kakuma to identify and integrate MHPSS interventions into secondary schools in the camp. These could include training and education activities for learners, teachers, primary caregivers and community members on well-being and coping mechanisms. Possible interventions include implementing self-help groups for parents of children and youth with special needs, peer-to-peer groups and structured recreational and play activities, expressive arts, dance and drama in schools, and open forums like debates for learners and dialogues for the community members.

5. Advocate & Collaborate for Increased Financing for Gender-Responsive and Gender-Transformative Secondary Education.

Education has historically been one of the most underfunded areas of humanitarian aid. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, secondary education had already been receiving insufficient funding. To increase access to gender-responsive and transformative secondary education in Kakuma, it is necessary to coordinate with

other partners and sectors. JRS, in collaboration with Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and Plan International, led a global initiative by developing a multistakeholder pledge for inclusive secondary education for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum. This commitment aims to secure funds to ensure that adolescents and youth from refugee, displaced, and host communities have access to secondary education opportunities and successfully complete this critical component of their educational journey. Humanitarian actors must work together in a coalition to make the most of limited resources, protect funds for education, and strengthen the systemic response. Recently, JRS applied for competitive funding from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) along with other education partners for primary and secondary education in Daadab and Kakuma refugee camps. While the decision is outstanding, this is an excellent example of a collaborative, multi-year planning effort.

6. Develop a Wider Awareness on and Response to Cross-Border and Regional Challenges and Opportunities

The geographical proximity of South Sudan and other refugee-sending countries to Kakuma presents an opportunity for humanitarian and development actors to design and implement programming that addresses deeply embedded attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, norms, and practices about gender through joint awareness-raising campaigns in coalition with other partners and stakeholders. Community sensitisation and awareness-raising activities could target audiences through binational, cross-border, or regional approaches. How could information and materials developed in Kakuma be transmitted through multiple media options, including mobile phones, radio, visual guides, and community mobilisation efforts? How can and should diverse languages and literacy levels be considered? What are the potential risks and mitigation strategies? Finally, how can campaigns developed in Kakuma and beyond address the possibility of multiple, uncertain futures, especially for refugee youth?

8. Develop a Comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) Plan as part of programming.

To address the absence of crucial data on secondary education, this project must include a strong MEAL component. This plan will be pivotal in establishing clear indicators for systematic data collection, facilitating progress reporting, and bolstering the global evidence base. By doing so, we can effectively use data, information, and insights about challenges, successes, and lessons learned to advance gender equality in and through education. This MEAL plan should capture data,

information, and insights about coordination efforts with partners and stakeholders, including the affected community, to maximize the impact and efficacy of limited financing for secondary education refugee settings.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON TYPE OF BARRIER: SUPPLY-SIDE, ENABLING ENVIRONMENT, OR DEMAND-SIDE

Recommendations: Demand-side Barriers

Barrier	Demand-side Barriers: Recommendations	
	Gender-Responsive	Gender-Transformative
Poverty & the Cost of Secondary Education	Develop/review consistent vulnerability criteria to be used across secondary schools in Kakuma.	Work with stakeholders, including the GoK, to develop and promote local integration and social cohesion, including sustainable livelihood activities.
	Provide more school fee waivers (sponsored by donors, so that fees are still available to schools).	
	Provide a voucher programme to the most vulnerable students to cover school supplies, learning materials, uniforms, transportation, and the like.	
	Develop school feeding programmes in secondary schools.	
	Carry out regular monitoring of how school fees are being spent, strengthen internal controls and oversight.	

	<p>Design and implement economic empowerment/ livelihood activities within secondary schools and with parents and caregivers to generate alternative sources of income. Whenever possible, this should be done in partnership with local partners and prioritise the most vulnerable households.</p>	
<p>Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) & Early and Unplanned Pregnancy</p>	<p>Provide access to boarding facilities for those students facing protection risks, including abduction.</p>	<p>Plan and implement Community Change, Dialogue, and Engagement activities in coalition with other stakeholders, (develop an annual strategy, schedule, shared budget, etc.) to transform harmful social norms, practices and behaviour that promote violence against girls, boys, women and men. Prioritise dialogue with community leaders, including elders.</p>
	<p>Provide childcare facilities and services to young mothers, both student and school staff (outside secondary school structures, but nearby).</p>	
	<p>Prioritise MHPSS services within secondary schools, with strong referral mechanisms for protection cases related to CEFM.</p>	<p>Develop and implement JRS's Youth Club Programme (or integrate into existing clubs) with a comprehensive curriculum that includes knowledge and life skills lessons. Lessons cover relevant themes such as effective communication and decision-making skills, child protection and rights, SRHR (including MHH), understanding and challenging gender norms and stereotypes, addressing GBV, enhancing financial literacy, and strategies for preventing early marriage and unplanned pregnancies.</p>
	<p>Work with Amala to customize its program to assist young mothers in resuming their education and obtaining an internationally recognized secondary education certification, thereby supporting their academic and personal development.</p>	

	Provide families with financial incentives to keep girls in school based on attendance and performance.	
	Develop campaigns, strengthen awareness sessions, and increase protection and reporting mechanisms during holiday breaks when cases of GBV and CEFM increase.	
Household Chores	Invest in more boarding facilities to promote a conducive learning environment.	Develop and implement JRS's Youth Club Programme (or integrate into existing clubs) with a comprehensive curriculum that includes knowledge and life skills lessons. Lessons cover relevant themes such as effective communication and decision-making skills, child protection and rights, SRHR (including MHH), understanding and challenging gender norms and stereotypes, addressing GBV, enhancing financial literacy, and strategies for preventing early marriage and unplanned pregnancies.
		Develop Caretaker/Mother's and Father's Groups to discuss and challenge gender norms, beliefs, and roles.

Secondary Education is not a Priority, especially for Girls	Provide families with financial incentives to keep girls in school based on attendance and performance.	Partner with the JRS Reconciliation Programme to strategize and execute Community Change, Dialogue, and Engagement initiatives. This collaboration should involve other key stakeholders, such as community leaders, to heighten awareness about the significance of secondary education, with a particular emphasis on girls' education. This integration should include the development of an annual strategy, a coordinated schedule, and a shared budget.
	Prioritise girls' access to fee waivers as part of a thorough review of vulnerability criteria.	Develop and implement JRS's Youth Club Programme (or integrate into existing clubs) with a comprehensive curriculum that includes knowledge and life skills lessons. Lessons cover relevant themes such as effective communication and decision-making skills, child protection and rights, SRHR (including MHH), understanding and challenging gender norms and stereotypes, addressing GBV, enhancing financial literacy, and strategies for preventing early marriage and unplanned pregnancies.
		Develop Caretaker/Mother's and Father's Groups.

Recommendations: Enabling Environment Barriers

Barrier	Enabling Environment Barriers: Recommendations	
	Gender-Responsive	Gender-Transformative
Extreme and unpredictable weather	Alleviate overcrowding in secondary schools through investments in additional, climate-resilient learning environments that can withstand heat and flooding, ensuring that building projects are supported and partially funded by the local community.	Work with stakeholders, including the GoK to develop and promote local integration and social cohesion, including sustainable livelihood activities.
	Develop environmental clubs and incorporate environmental education activities and lessons into secondary school operations and programming, also in cooperation with other actors involved in environmental interventions.	Work with stakeholders, including the GoK to develop and promote local integration and social cohesion, including sustainable livelihood activities.
	Include indicators related to climate change within a larger M&E plan to support data collection efforts in support of developing stronger evidence base for the EiE field.	

Gang violence & recruitment to/from school	For in-school students:	Introduce Nyumba Kumi Initiative within the Kakuma camp and surrounding areas, including protection of whistleblowers.
	Establish walking groups, to ensure safe passage to and from school, led by trustworthy and vetted adults, potentially accompanied by security personnel, to safeguard students during their commute.	Increase opportunities for accessing education, through increased secondary school infrastructure, pathways to sustainable livelihood, and local integration.
	Provide school-based, self-defence training for girls, in partnership with other organisations.	
	Address issues of gang recruitment through provision of secondary boarding school options for youth, especially boys.	
	Provide guidance for students at risk of dropping out of school due to low performance, linking them to alternative education opportunities, including livelihood training.	

	<p>For at risk, out-of-school youth:</p>	
	<p>Establish outreach activities with at risk, out-of-school youth prone to or involved in gang violence.</p>	
	<p>Establish dedicated, targeted programming for marginalised groups, such as LGBTQIA+ and youth with disability that includes MHPSS, livelihoods training, access to alternative pathways to education (e.g., a special version of Amala or some home-based study programme), and referral to other NGOs to access other services.</p>	
	<p>For both in & out-of-school youth:</p>	
	<p>Invest in alternative programming for youth – including arts & sports, especially for out-of-school youth.</p>	<p>Increase overall opportunities for post-secondary pathways “out of the camp,” including higher education scholarships, to motivate learners to access and complete secondary education.</p>
	<p>Plan and host special events for youth to showcase their ideas, projects, and talents within the camp.</p>	
	<p>Develop awareness campaigns about the dangers of drug and substance abuse.</p>	

	<p>Provide parenting classes and support groups to prevent and respond to their children's exposure to and involvement in gang activity.</p>	
	<p>Prioritise support services for youth who are already struggling with drug and substance abuse.</p>	
Transportation Challenges for Youth with Disabilities	<p>Conduct a more thorough assessment of secondary school-age youth with disabilities to better understand their disabilities and what transportation and other accommodations might best increase their access to secondary education. This should be a specific focus of the Joint Assessment being conducted by JRS.</p>	<p>Provide assistive devices for learners with disability.</p>
	<p>Seek funding to meet the needs highlighted in the above-mentioned assessment.</p>	<p>Hire special needs teachers to offer support to learners with disability in secondary schools.</p>
		<p>Fundraise CBI for learners with disabilities struggling with access to secondary schools. Start with those joining Form 1.</p>

Scarcity of role models, especially for girls	Explore cash-based interventions to keep girls in school.	Plan and implement Community Engagement activities in coalition with other stakeholders, (develop an annual strategy, schedule, shared budget, etc.).
	Design mentorship programs for girls in secondary schools (e.g., tap on girls in tertiary education such as DAFI, WUSC scholarships to offer e-mentorship, organize for experiential learning, job shadows, career talks, etc.).	Develop and implement JRS's Youth Club Programme (or integrate into existing clubs) with a comprehensive curriculum that includes knowledge and life skills lessons. Lessons cover relevant themes such as effective communication and decision-making skills, child protection and rights, SRHR (including MHH), understanding and challenging gender norms and stereotypes, addressing GBV, enhancing financial literacy, and strategies for preventing early marriage and unplanned pregnancies.
	Prioritise girls' access to fee waivers as part of a thorough review of vulnerability criteria.	Develop Caretaker/Mother's and Father's Groups.

Recommendations: Supply-side Barriers

Barrier	Supply-side Barriers: Recommendations	
	Gender-Responsive	Gender-Transformative
Not Enough Learning and Teaching Materials or Learning Spaces	<p>Develop a clear and prioritised inventory of needs related to teaching and learning materials, including libraries (and book supply), science laboratories (with related supplies), and EdTech options.</p>	<p>Work closely with the Secondary Education Working Group and other networks to challenge national governments, development partners and humanitarian actors to prioritise secondary education and to develop sustainable funding mechanisms, including more domestic resource mobilisation, increasing ODA and humanitarian assistance and integration of resources from private sector and philanthropy actors.</p>
	<p>Include the costs of teaching and learning materials into budgets when costing annual budgets for existing secondary schools, including cost of assessments, and develop funding proposals.</p>	<p>Work with the GoK to conduct regular education sector reviews to ensure a balance in policy and resource investments to secondary education.</p>
Not enough secondary schools	<p>Allocate resources to enhance additional learning environments, designed to be adaptable and resilient in the face of extreme and variable weather conditions.</p>	<p>Advocate and support the GoK and UNHCR to develop and implement the Sharika Plan to facilitate integration of refugees into national public education systems and to ensure that the education sector plan and annual budgeting include resource allocations for increasing refugees' access to secondary school, especially girls, throughout the country.</p>

	<p>Provide remedial classes for youth, including boys and girls (after school and/or on the weekends) based on vulnerability criteria and performance.</p>	<p>Establish a GRE Technical Working Group to strengthen coordination amongst key partners and stakeholders to address the infrastructure barriers that limit access to and completion of secondary education in Kakuma, especially for girls.</p>
	<p>Invest in more secondary boarding facilities, for boys and girls.</p>	
<p>Shortage of Qualified Secondary School Teachers, Especially Females and for the Scientific Subjects</p>	<p>Remove any financial barriers to pre-service and in-service training for teachers, paying stipends during training, and teacher salaries once hired.</p>	<p>Offer teachers continuous in-service training in gender-responsive and transformative pedagogy while incentivizing and supporting them to actively participate in gender mainstreaming as part of a broader strategy to promote gender equality.</p>
		<p>Advocate with GoK and UNHCR, to increase teacher salaries and provide accommodations and support that increase teacher hiring and retention, especially of females.</p>
		<p>Recruit young women who did not finish secondary school as learning assistants, paying special attention to SAEP.</p>
		<p>Establish partnerships with local universities to provide teacher training to secondary school teachers.</p>
		<p>Develop a Teacher Mentorship Programme, where locally, less qualified teachers are paired up with local, more qualified teachers to support during classes.</p>

	<p>Create "Senior Women Teacher" (SWT) roles, modelled after the example in Uganda. SWTs receive specialized training and support to empower female students. Their responsibilities include serving as a child protection focal point and coordinating activities such as girls' clubs and tailored MHPSS.</p>	
		<p>Develop teacher exchange programmes with teacher training colleges throughout Europe and USA, allowing American and European teachers to serve in refugee contexts for extended periods as well as to support short-term, in-service training in STEM subjects for local teaching staff.</p>
		<p>Develop and implement incentive schemes to motivate teachers and other education staff to take up teaching as a career, especially in the camp.</p>
		<p>Develop and provide an internationally recognized teacher training qualification in Education in Emergencies (EiE) that is also transferable between different countries and regions.</p>
<p>Lack of period-friendly WASH facilities & support</p>	<p>Refer to the section <i>Recommendations: Menstrual Health & Hygiene (MHH)</i></p>	

RECOMMENDATIONS: MENSTRUAL HEALTH & HYGIENE (MHH)

MHH Recommendations
Cross Cutting Recommendations
Elevate the importance of MHH in JRS Kenya's education programming, acknowledging and approaching MHH as a protection issue.
Engage men and boys in interventions related to MHH. Include female teachers and education personnel in interventions.
Remember that MHH programming is both comprehensive and ongoing.
Pillar I: Materials & Supplies
Support schools in costing adequate MHH supplies into the budget.
Supply girls with sufficient MHH materials without interruption, and also provide boys with hygiene kits to foster understanding and prevent backlash.
Provide an emergency supply of MHH materials at all secondary schools.
Consult directly with girls and women about their experiences and preferences with MHH on a regular basis.
Explore the use of reusable MHH supplies.
Pillar II: Period-Friendly WASH Facilities
Prioritise adequate WASH infrastructure, including disposal and waste management (incinerators), at all secondary schools as a cost-effective approach to increasing access and completion of secondary education.
Ensure hand washing facilities: soap and water are a MUST at EACH school.
Pillar III: MHH Education and Information

Develop and implement JRS's Youth Club Programme (or integrate into existing clubs) with a comprehensive curriculum that includes knowledge and life skills lessons. Lessons cover relevant themes such as effective communication and decision-making skills, child protection and rights, SRHR (including MHH), understanding and challenging gender norms and stereotypes, addressing GBV, enhancing financial literacy, and strategies for preventing early marriage and unplanned pregnancies.

Conduct ongoing MHH education programming in secondary schools, for students, teachers, and BoM.

Develop community campaigns to raise awareness on topics related to MHH, with special events on occasions such as Menstrual Hygiene Day.

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Annexes

BARRIERS EXERCISE

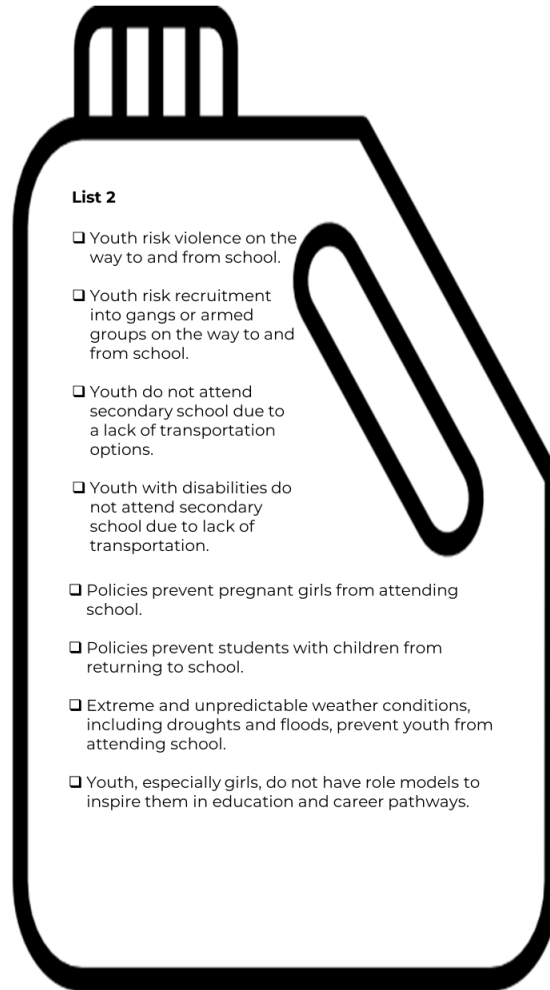


Name:
School or site:
Age:
Gender:
Date and time:

List 1


- School fees, and other related costs (learning materials, uniforms, etc.) prevent youth from attending secondary school.
- Secondary education for girls is not prioritized due to cultural or traditional beliefs.
- Marriage reduces the financial burden on households and prevent girls from attending secondary schools
- Beliefs about menstruation prevent girls from attending school during their periods.
- Lack of supplies prevent girls from attending school during their periods.
- Youth are required to do household chores, limiting the time they can dedicate to education.
- Risk of gender-based violence at school reduces the desire to attend school or send youth to school.
- Secondary education is not seen as helpful or relevant to finding a job

Icon source: Flatkon.com



Icon source: Flaticon.com

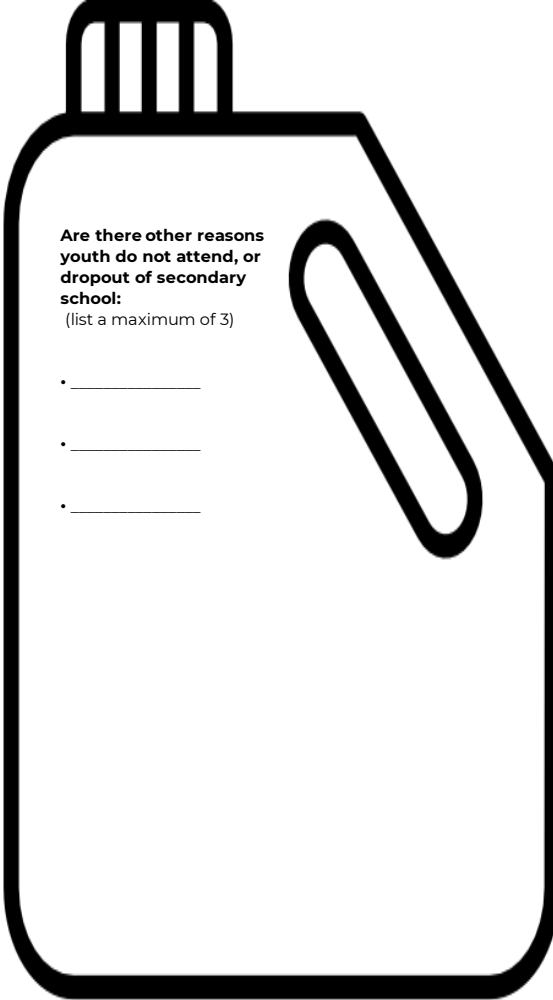
Name:
School or site:
Age:
Gender:
Date and time:



List 3

- The school is too far from home.
- There are not enough secondary schools.
- There are not enough qualified secondary school teachers, especially females.
- There are not enough qualified secondary school teachers, especially in the science subjects.
- Schools are not safe, especially for girls.
- Curriculum and textbooks reinforce gender norms and stereotypes.
- There are not enough learning materials within secondary schools, including textbooks, notebooks and pens, lab facilities, etc.
- A lack of period-friendly facilities (latrines, changing rooms, etc.) prevent girls from attending school during their periods.
- Fear of bullying or stigma around menstruation prevent girls from attending school during their periods.
- Teachers tend to favour boys in the class setting.
- Youth do not attend secondary school because the quality of education is poor.

Icon source: Flaticon.com



Are there other reasons youth do not attend, or dropout of secondary school:
(list a maximum of 3)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Icon source: FlatIcon.com

WHO DOES WHAT EXERCISE



Gender Study: Activity Profile

Who does the work?

Activities	Girls/ Women	Boys/ Men	Joint: <i>the work is shared among girls/women & boys/men</i>	Comments:
Cleaning the compound/home				
Collecting firewood &/or other fuel for cooking				
Collecting food rations & non-food items (NFIs)				
Buying food				
Fetching water				
Preparing food				
Taking care of children				
Taking care of older family members				
Tending livestock				
Washing clothes				

Working outside the home: <i>(please specify the types of work)</i>				
Other: <i>(please specify the types of work)</i>				

Name:	
Gender:	
Age:	
Venue:	
Date:	
Time:	
<i>Prepared by:</i>	
<i>Confirmed by:</i>	

TIME MAP EXERCISE

07:00	08:00	09:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	17:00	18:00
19:00	20:00	21:00	22:00	23:00	00:00	01:00	02:00	03:00	04:00	05:00	06:00

↑ AIR for JRS

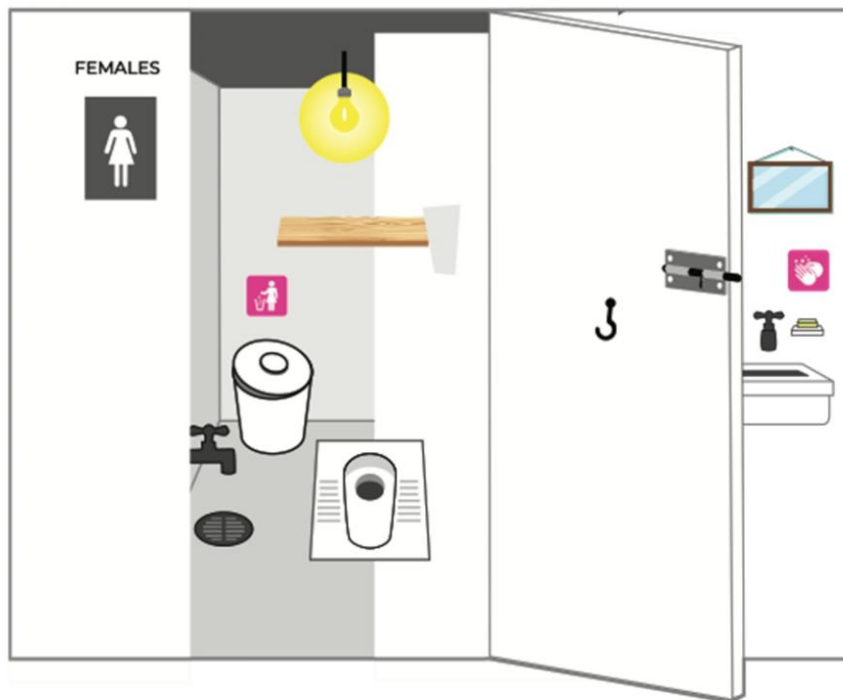
WASH OBSERVATION TOOL



Observing for Period-Friendly WASH Facilities in Schools

Example of a Period-Friendly Toilet

Be sure to review what components and measures are important to check and keep in mind while conducting an observation of WASH facilities at a school.



Gender Analysis – Kakuma Refugee Camp (April 2023) - pg. 1
Based on A Toolkit for Integrating Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) into Humanitarian Response















Name of School:

Location:

Level (circle): *Primary* *Secondary* *Other:*

Total enrollment: **No. of boys:** **No. of girls:**

Total no. of teachers: **No. male teachers:** **No. female teachers:**

MHM-supportive measures to check		Yes/No	Action
To be informed by direct observation:			
1.	 Are there adequate number of safely located and secured toilets? <i>** Sphere guidelines for school toilets call for one toilet for every 30 girls and one toilet for every 60 boys.</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
2.	 Are girls and boys using separate toilet blocks or separate sides of the privacy wall? Is there clear signage?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.	 Are there working locks on the inside of the toilet?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
4.	 Are walls, door, and roof made of non-transparent materials with no gaps or spaces?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
5.	 Are there private handwashing facilities?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
6.	 Is water easily accessible (ideally inside the latrine)? Is there a means for girls to bring water into individual stalls (e.g. a bucket)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
7.	 Is there soap available at the toilet?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
8.	 Is there a shelf and hook for hygienically storing belonging during usage?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
9.	 Is there a light source inside of the toilets?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
10.	 Is there a mirror inside the toilet?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
11.	 Are used menstrual materials disposed of in the toilet or through another method of collection and disposal?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
12.	 Is there a waste bin available for disposal of used menstrual materials?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
13.	 Are some units accessible to people with disabilities?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
14.	 Does the school have an emergency stock of menstrual materials (including underwear) available for girls to manage their menstruation if it starts unexpectedly or they lack access to materials? What is required for girls to access these materials?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
15.	Other:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

Observation completed by
(print names):

Date:

Suggested citation: Concina, G. Drzewiecki, J. & the JRS Kenya & Eastern African Regional office teams. (2024). Breaking Down Barriers: Increasing Girls' Access to and Completion of Secondary Education in Kakuma Refugee Camp. Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS).

