Ensuring Quality Early Childhood Education for Refugee Children:
A New Approach to Teacher Professional Development

A Theirworld Report
Written by Maysa Jalbout and Katy Bullard

Theirworld

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

ECD:	Early childhood development
ECDiE:	Early childhood development in emergencies
ECE:	Early childhood education
ECW:	Education Cannot Wait
GER:	Gross enrolment rate
GPE:	Global Partnership for Education
KG:	Kindergarten
INEE:	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
MOOC:	Massive open online course
NGO:	Non-governmental organisation
INGO:	International non-governmental organisation
LMIC:	Low- and middle-income country
NFE:	Non-formal education
PD:	Professional development
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
TVET:	Technical and vocational education and training
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund

Previous page
Preschool children in their
rehabilitated primary school in the
village of Kerebadougou. Senegal
© UNICEF/UNI240364/Frank Dejongh

Theirworld

Contents

Abstract

Young refugee children's experiences of conflict and displacement can be sources of trauma and toxic stress. These can have major long-term implications for their healthy development and wellbeing. The evidence is clear that early childhood interventions that focus on nurturing relationships can help protect young children from the most severe consequences of toxic stress. Given the tremendous power of early childhood development (ECD) interventions, there has been growing global interest in supporting ECD efforts in humanitarian settings.

Early childhood education (ECE) is a key element of ECD and an important avenue for supporting young child refugees. Despite this, many young child refugees still do not have access to high-quality ECE services. Moreover, the evidence base related to ECE in refugee settings is limited. Training of teachers is one of several key elements of ECE that requires both more evidence and more support.

A group of community pre-school students Sampatean Primary School, Sampatean Village, Cambodia.
© UNICEF/UN0319670/Seng

This report synthesizes the evidence base and findings from expert consultations on ECE teacher training in refugee settings, and sets forth four avenues for possible future action to strengthen teacher professional development and support. The report focuses on low-resourced education settings, and thus draws heavily on evidence from low and lower-middle income countries when possible. One key finding of the report is that significant gaps exist in the evidence around ECE for refugees, particularly around teacher professional development. Generation of a wider and more rigorous evidence base related to teachers and the teaching of young refugee children will be essential for catalysing more action in this area.

The report highlights the need for attention to both theory (particularly around the science of ECD) and practice in professional development and for the elevation of effective indigenous approaches to early childhood education amid tensions between global and local models. It also notes the wide-ranging backgrounds and demographics of teachers, and underscores that approaches must be tailored to the specific needs, contexts, experience levels, and sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds of teachers. While standards and accreditation systems for training can be useful, this report argues that these should not be developed or applied at a global level, given the need for training to be highly responsive to context and teacher experience. In line with a significant body of global education evidence, our findings suggest that ongoing support for teachers during their service is critical, and communities of practice are one avenue to consider for providing this support. Moreover, monitoring training efforts and teacher performance is important to continuously improve support for teachers and to generate much-needed evidence about what works.

Support for ECE in refugee settings— and particularly support for ECE teachers — will require considering aspirations for integration of refugees into national systems alongside more immediate limitations on national system capacity and current policy restrictions on refugee education. In scaling up innovation and action around professional development for ECE teachers in refugee settings, pooled funding will be required. Technology may have a role to play, but only with thoughtful, critical assessment of the opportunities and limitations of its effective uses.

This report calls on funders, researchers, and implementers to jointly leverage and expand existing efforts and resources to better support ECE teachers in refugee situations. Specifically, it proposes four avenues that could be pursued in tandem or individually. The first is the expansion of teachers' access to easily digestible information on the basic science of early childhood development and the role of nurturing relationships in mitigating the impacts of toxic stress. The second is the development of virtual communities of practice to provide more opportunities for peer learning and support for teachers. The third is collaborating with and incentivising technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions to offer training courses and associated micro-credentials to refugee teachers. Finally, the fourth proposal recommends the establishment of learning labs or hubs to generate evidence on what works and why in refugee ECE, particularly in professional development for teachers.

Introduction

Young children experiencing conflict and displacement can face tremendous challenges, including physical and psychological danger, toxic stress, and the normalisation of violence. As prior research commissioned by Theirworld has suggested, these challenges increase the need for safe spaces, early learning, psychological support, teaching of conflict resolution, and peace-building efforts in early childhood programming for children in emergencies. Centre-based early childhood education programmes are a critical avenue for addressing these needs.

Early childhood education (ECE) is a key facet of early childhood development (ECD). Global attention on the need for and value of ECD programming, in humanitarian contexts and beyond, is growing. For instance, the Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development, developed out of a multilateral partnership, was launched in 2018 and provides a roadmap for expanding ECD. ECD is also included in the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education (2010 edition), but despite growing international attention to and investment in this area, it is often not fully realised in humanitarian response (Bouchane, Curtiss, & Ellis, 2016). Where early childhood programming appears in crisis settings, it often takes the form of the distribution of ECD kits. Furthermore, where ECD may be meaningfully accounted for in policy, refugee-hosting countries often lack the funding to comprehensively act on these policies (Merseth King, Pouezevara, & Edwards, 2020).

Recognising both the tremendous potential of early childhood education for refugee children and the significant need in this area, this report explores one key dimension of ECE in refugee settings: teacher training. In this paper, teacher is used to refer to anyone leading or supporting centre-based educational programming for refugee children, though they may or may not be staff or salaried teachers. Our use of the word 'teacher' covers a variety of terms used by providers, including facilitators, volunteers, and assistant teachers. Although this encompasses a wider range of actors than the term 'teacher' sometimes does, it is intended to reflect the scope of the ECE workforce that works directly with refugee students.

The report focuses specifically on centre-based ECE[1] in low-resource education environments, and examines programmes in the Middle East, South Asia, Africa and Europe.[2] The report discusses the evidence and findings from expert

---

1   In this report, centre-based ECE refers to early childhood programming that takes place in a formal or semi-formal setting, including pre-primary and ECE programming organised by a state or non-state entity. It does not include day care or early learning in families or in non-formal community settings. That said, it can encompass programming that falls outside the formal education system and organised programming implemented through home-based early childhood centres.

2   In this project, low-resource education settings largely encompass low- and middle-income countries, where the majority of refugees are located. It may also include higher income settings in which the education infrastructure for refugee children is under-resourced. For instance, our programme mapping largely focused on ow and middle-income countries (LMICs), but also included Greece.

consultations and sets forth recommendations for Theirworld for supporting ECE teacher training in refugee settings.

Methodology

This document builds on three components of work: a literature and desk review, expert consultations, and mapping of ECE programmes or providers serving refugees in low-resource education settings.

The literature and desk review began by searching for academic and grey literature on training for ECE teachers for refugee students. Given the dearth of literature specific to ECE professional development (PD) in refugee settings, this literature review discusses the ECD workforce generally, with a specific focus on professional development for early childhood educators. Wherever possible, evidence from low and middle-income countries (LMICs) is presented, as they tend to have less developed ECE systems and refugees in these countries are more likely to experience low-resourced education systems. Given the scarcity of academic literature specific to ECE in refugee settings, much of this review draws from grey literature by international organisations working on this topic.

The following experts have been consulted: Dr. Hirokazu Yoshikawa (Global TIES for Children), Dr. Aisha Yousafzai (Harvard University), Dr. Joan Lombardi (Georgetown University), Dr. Sweta Shah (Aga Khan Development Network), Ms. Vidya Putcha (Results for Development), Ms. Elvira Thissen (Moving Minds Alliance and Bernard van Leer Foundation), Dr. Angelica Ponguta (Yale University), Ms. Amy Bellinger and Ms. Katie Godwin (Education Commission), Dr. Sarah Kabay (Innovations for Poverty Action), Ms. Alexandra Chen (Harvard University), Dr. Anna D'Addio (UNESCO), Ms. Katherine Merseth King (RTI), Dr. Magdalena Bendidi (World Bank), and Ms. Kathryn Moore (independent consultant), Mr. Yousef Khalifa Aleghfeli (Oxford University), Mr. Michael Renvillard (Lego Foundation), Ms. Annina Mattsson (Dubai Cares), Ms. Jessica Hjarrand and Dr. Gerhard Pulfer (Porticus), Dr. Lucy Bassett (University of Virginia), Mr. Al Race (Harvard University Center on the Developing Child), Dr. Wenonah Campbell and Dr. Michelle Phoenix (McMaster University), Ms. Megan Haggerty (International Education Funders Group), and Ms. Jane West (Two Lilies Fund).

For the project's programme mapping, interviews were also conducted with representatives from the following organisations: Refugee Trauma Initiative, iACT, BRAC's Humanitarian Play Labs, Plan International's Shishu Bikash Kendro programme, Plan International, International Rescue Committee, Lebanese Alternative Education, Ana Aqra, Save the Children, Aga Khan Foundation,

UNICEF, UNHCR, Learning Blocks, Refugee Educator Academy, and MIT Solve. The findings of the programme mapping are covered in depth in the programme mapping document found in the annex, while this report more heavily focuses on the literature review and expert consultations.

Outline of the Report

This report will discuss the broad landscape of ECE for refugees, including the rationale for supporting it.

While this review and the broader project in which it is embedded focus on PD for ECE teachers, it is worth noting that quality in ECE is not a single feature but rather "the sum of many interlinked components" including teachers, but also families, communities, curriculum, effective planning, budgeting, monitoring, and quality assurance (UNICEF, 2020a, p. 33). Improvements to one element, such as teacher PD, will only have limited impact on the quality of programming and its impact on children without attention to and coordination with other elements, as well (UNICEF, 2020a). Thus, while this paper argues that teacher PD is an essential consideration for supporting refugee children, it is not the sole

© Michael Mims

consideration.[3] Finally, it is critical to note that while the level of the national system is a major determinant of the quality of ECE provision in any setting, including LMICs (Peeters, et al, 2019), this level is often weak in refugee settings, with implications for all aspects of ECE provision, including teacher training. As one expert underscored, refugee education work is generally not oriented towards changing national systems. Much of the discussion below should be considered through the lens of relatively weak system-level supports or low-resource contexts for ECE teacher PD.

---

3 Teacher compensation, for instance, is an important consideration for thinking about supporting teachers. Though outside the scope of this research, it is worth noting the importance of compensation in attracting and retaining teachers, and in scaling up pre-primary education. Where teachers are refugees themselves, they may also face work restrictions that prevent them from being compensated. (In contexts with work restrictions on refugees, refugees may be engaged as volunteer facilitators who are unpaid or receive a stipend, rather than a salary).

The State of Early Childhood Education in Refugee Settings

Rationale for ECE in refugee settings

The science of ECD makes a compelling case for investing in ECE opportunities for refugee children, both for individual child health and wellbeing and the economic and social benefit of the broader community.

Previous research commissioned by Theirworld underscores the value of ECD for refugee children, pointing to the science in advocating for investment in ECD for refugee children (Bouchane, Curtiss, & Ellis, 2016). As this previous Theirworld work and others note, ECD programming can play a critical role in fostering healthy development and mitigating the toxic stress experienced by refugee children.

The early years, from prenatal to the age of eight, are an essential time for children's development, particularly in children's brain architecture and in their basic skills. This early development has significant implications for children's later health, wellbeing, and success (UNICEF, 2014). With children's brains and bodies developing so rapidly at this period, it is a critical time to support healthy development. Opportunities for play and other positive supports and learning opportunities can support neural development, executive function, and emotional regulation during this critical developmental period (Britto, 2017). Likewise, in the early years, children are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of stressors such as exposure to violence, abuse, neglect, or effects of poverty. Stress evokes a physiological response, releasing stress hormones and raising blood pressure and heart rate. For young children, these effects can be 'buffered and mitigated when this stress response is activated in a context in which children have supportive and caring relationships with adults.

These relationships also help children develop the skills and capacities - including planning, emotional regulation, and the ability to adapt - to excel in adverse circumstances. Without these relationships, and with prolonged exposure to stress, children may experience a toxic stress response, risking long-term damage to their brain architecture and physiological systems (Center on the Developing Child, n.d.; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015). In this way, toxic stress limits children's ability to realise their full developmental potential (UNICEF, 2019b), impacting their learning, self-regulation and emotional control, short-term memory, making them more likely to experience mental health difficulties like anxiety and depression later in life, and putting them at greater risk of heart, liver, and lung disease. As such, experiencing conflict as a child can have long-term implications for mental health, social wellbeing, and economic standing (UNICEF, 2019b).

For refugee children, then, whose exposure to conflict and the trauma of displacement puts them at risk of toxic stress, supportive and sustained relationships with adults become all the more important. In this way, early childhood educators have an essential role to play in supporting refugee children's wellbeing. Given adults' central role in helping young children develop the skills to respond to adversity, it is critical that teachers and other professionals receive training and support to help them guide children's development of those critical skills.

Broadly, children who experience stress at a young age are at higher risk of developing emotional, cognitive, and behavioural issues, leading to higher likelihood of school drop-out and social aggression (UNICEF, 2014). Pre-primary education, however, is associated with higher returns at other levels of education, including a stronger vocabulary and strong social skills when starting school, reduced drop-out and repetition rates, higher school completion rates, greater likelihood of attaining minimum proficiency, and lower likelihood of needing 'catch-up' supports (UNICEF, 2019b). Given that refugee children are more likely to be out of school than non-refugee children, early learning opportunities for refugee children could be a particularly valuable investment, a point highlighted both in the literature (Bouchane, Curtiss, & Ellis, 2016) and in our consultations with experts and other stakeholders. With growing global

© Blair Harmon

interest in refugee education at all levels, investment in ECE for refugee children – including quality training for ECE teachers – may be a practical avenue for achieving gains in refugee education at higher levels.

In addition to these academic benefits, pre-primary is associated with development of soft skills such as resilience, critical and creative thinking, and collaboration that are essential for the job market (UNICEF, 2019b). In this way, supporting quality ECE for refugee children – and equipping teachers to help children develop these skills – may have long-term economic benefits for refugees and the communities where they live.

Finally, this early development period – where children are learning about healthy relationships and habits and developing their emotional skills – is a critical time to foster peace, especially in emergencies, both individually and across communities (UNICEF, 2014). Training for teachers must be geared towards creating peaceful learning environments and helping students foster these skills.

In short, the early years of a child's life are a critical time for the development of a child's brain and body, with implications for the development of a child's personality, social behaviours, and physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities, and their engagement in and contribution to their communities, especially given the trauma of conflict and forced displacement facing many refugee children. ECD opportunities can help mitigate the challenges – including sociocultural integration, psychological stress, and academic challenges from learning in a new education system – that refugee children may face (FAWCO, NGO Committee on Migration & OMEP, 2016). As such, high-quality early childhood opportunities for refugee children can be transformative, and PD that prepares and supports teachers is an essential component of this process.

Rationale for PD for ECE teachers

PD (pre-service training and ongoing in-service support) is one of several factors for developing a strong ECE workforce, alongside teacher recruitment, qualifications, career development, and monitoring to ensure that these factors are responding to contextual needs (UNICEF, 2020a).

Effective workforce development happens across the pillars of qualifications, pre-service training, and continuous PD (UNICEF, 2019a).

Though PD is often implicit in programme design, as discussed in the introduction, it is worth making its rationale explicit: pre-primary teachers who are better prepared and supported are more able to utilise effective pedagogies, foster positive learning environments, and support student learning. Given the impact that PD can have on teacher skills, the content and quality of training matters. For that reason, attaining a certain qualification level does not inherently determine the quality of ECE (Peeters, et al, 2019). Research suggests that the quality of ECE teacher training has a strong influence on teachers' ability to support children's learning and development, more so than the qualification teachers attain (Mitter & Putcha, 2018).

Children's acquisition of essential skills and learning "depends, to a large extent, on availability and equitable access to pre-primary services and equally on the quality of these services" (UNICEF, 2020a, p. 14). Although there is little research specific to the impact of PD on the quality of pre-primary services in refugee settings, evidence globally suggests that the quality of these services is heavily influenced by PD for teachers. As such, it is critical that teachers in refugee contexts receive high-quality PD opportunities that prepare teachers to respond to the social, emotional, and learning needs of refugee students and to foster safe and supportive learning environments for them.

Access to Early Childhood Education

Access remains a major challenge for ECE in low-income countries across the board, and is particularly acute in refugee and humanitarian situations.

In 2017, half of pre-primary-aged children globally were enrolled in pre-primary education. Not surprisingly, the rates are substantially lower in lower-resourced parts of the world, with the pre-primary gross enrolment ratio (GER) at 23 per cent in South Asia, 30 per cent in West and Central Africa, 31 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa, and 33 per cent in Eastern and Southern Africa. Across low-income countries, the pre-primary gross enrolment ratio (GER) was only 22 per cent, and in lower-middle-income countries, it was 36 per cent (UNICEF, 2019b). Forty-three per cent of children under five in LMICs were estimated to be at risk of not reaching their developmental potential (Black, et al, 2017, as cited in Smith, Mwaya, & Kabay, 2020). In 2011, lack of pre-primary access was estimated to cost low-income countries 33 billion USD through reduced wellbeing, health, and productivity (Engle, et al, 2011, as cited in Smith, Mwaya, & Kabay, 2020).

While estimates are more complex given the data challenges surrounding refugee education, ECE coverage in refugee settings is likely often even lower than in host communities. For LMICs in which national pre-primary GERs are already low, this suggests extremely limited access. As only nine per cent of 26 humanitarian response plans that were active in April 2018 included a focus on early learning (Bouchane, et al, 2018), provision of ECE in humanitarian contexts is still severely limited.

Quality of Early Childhood Education

Quality remains a major challenge in pre-primary education systems in LMICs due to insufficient supply of qualified or capable teachers.

As of 2016, four per cent of the world's pre-primary teachers lived in low-income countries, which are home to almost 17 per cent of the world's pre-primary age children. Low- and lower-middle-income countries together house 60 per cent of the world's pre-primary age children and less than a third of the world's pre-primary teachers. As such, in many LMICs, the pre-primary pupil-

teacher ratio is very high, which can diminish the quality of ECE. Pre-primary teachers often also receive insufficient training and support. It appears that the share of trained pre-primary teachers has been declining in some contexts, perhaps due to the expansion of the provision of pre-primary education without sufficient scale-up of training for teacher candidates. Most LMICs also do not offer regular in-service training for pre-primary teachers (UNICEF, 2019b).

Quality assurance systems could also be strengthened in many places where standards, regulatory mechanisms, and data analysis for improvement are weak or non-existent. Curricula may not be developmentally appropriate and families, and families may not be well engaged in ECE efforts (UNICEF, 2019b).

More broadly, limited resources force trade-offs between teacher qualifications (and salaries), pupil-teacher ratio, training, and other inputs. These trade-offs can reduce the quality of education offered (UNICEF, 2019b).

The key findings section of this report will explore further issues related to teacher training and support, which are a key element of quality.

As pervasive and complicated as these challenges are in LMICs, they are all the more complex in refugee settings within these countries, where resourcing (both human and financial) and regulatory mechanisms are often more limited, and where questions about issues like curriculum and preparation for students' future academic lives become more contested. The limited data in this area (and questions about how to measure some aspects of quality in ECE and particularly in refugee settings) further complicates both a comprehensive assessment of quality and the achievement of quality learning opportunities (UNICEF, 2019b). The key findings section of this report will explore further issues related to teacher training and support, which are a key element of quality.

Funding shortages

Funding for pre-primary education remains a challenge, with donors not prioritising and even cutting aid to pre-primary education in recent years.

Prior research for Theirworld by Zubairi, Rose, & Moriarty (2019) noted that 16 of the 25 largest donors to education had given nothing to pre-primary education or reduced their spending on pre-primary from the introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to 2018. They commented that pre-primary is a small and declining priority in aid to education.

The problem appears to be more acute in humanitarian and refugee settings, as consultations with experts, implementers, and other stakeholders highlighted the challenges posed by funding shortages. Encouragingly, the presence of funders' groups like the Moving Minds Alliance and major investments in ECD, including ECE, by foundations such as the MacArthur Foundation and Lego Foundation, demonstrate that there is growing interest in funding this area (Smith, Mwaya, & Kabay, 2020). Nonetheless funding shortages remain a significant challenge.

Approaches

As described in the programme mapping (see annex), ECE for refugees takes a range of forms, depending on the context.

In some contexts, refugee children can participate in the formal pre-primary system, as part of the national education system or in programming closely aligned with this system. Often programming is run by local or international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with a wide range of alignment to a government curriculum or government standards depending on the policies and context of a given setting. For instance, certain contexts – such as Bangladesh and Tanzania – have restrictions on refugees using the national curriculum, while some national governments – such as Jordan and Uganda – are closely engaged in refugee education even at the early childhood level. This wide range of government support or involvement also means a wide range of government involvement in training, including implementation and providing credentials.

Particularly where students are not participating in the national ECE system, ECE programming for young refugee children can take place in different sites. ECE centres can physically take a range of forms, from formal centres built specifically for this purpose to home-based centres taking place in teachers' or community members' homes. For instance, a home-based approach is used by some programmes in the town of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, where physical space for building new ECE centres is limited.

Programming can vary widely in its degree of formality, the degree of reliance on play-based learning and other evidence-based early learning strategies, and in the training and support offered to teachers. While our programme mapping (see annex 1) highlighted widespread interest in play-based learning, this may manifest very differently across different contexts. Even when play-based learning is a priority on paper, its implementation can sometimes be challenging, particularly if teachers, parents, or other stakeholders do not initially buy into the idea of play as a valid avenue for learning. Within and beyond play-based learning, programmes may also have varying priorities for their students' learning and skills. Though programming generally seems to encompass multiple domains of learning and wellbeing, some programmes focus more heavily than others on healing or mindfulness, and some programmes have more interest than others in pre-academic skills. Across programmes, though, an emphasis on a safe learning environment is often an essential starting point.

Children attending class in the Koubia Kindergarten, in Niamey, Niger.
© UNICEF/ UN0443437/Dejongh

Four Models for Refugee Education

The case studies below provide a glimpse of differing approaches to refugee education and the implications for teacher training. They draw from literature review, desk review, and, in some cases, programme mapping and expert consultations. As seen below, approaches to ECE for refugee children and training for teachers who work with these children vary widely. Understanding the contextual realities, both in policy and practice, is essential for effectively targeting support to teachers.

Greece

Jordan

Bangladesh

Tanzania

Jordan: Government-regulated and -led ECE for refugee children

The state of refugee education

Jordan has been strongly committed to ECE, with the Human Resource Development Strategy for 2016-2025 aiming for universal early learning opportunities. As such, much attention has focused on improving access to and quality of the first and second years of kindergarten (KG1 and KG2), with significant expansion of KG2 as the government works towards universal access (Merseth King & McKinney, 2020). The government has supported formal education for refugee children, with the 2016 Jordan Compact increasing donor support for increasing refugee children's enrolment in the formal system (World Bank, 2017). For instance, UNICEF has supported government expansion of the second year of kindergarten in refugee camps, building classrooms while the government employs teachers (UNICEF, 2019c).

Despite the Government of Jordan's commitment to ECE, formal education enrolment is not consistent across grade levels, and at the pre-primary level, only a small portion of Syrian children in Jordan are enrolled in pre-primary. Amongst those attending pre-primary, some participate in non-formal, rather than formal, ECE. NGO-run, non-formal ECE in the camps is often only short term, with children only attending a programme cycle lasting a few months to allow for more children to participate. Access to the first year of kindergarten remains low for Jordanians and particularly for Syrians (Merseth King & McKinney, 2020; World Bank, 2017). The Government of Jordan is, however, is closely involved in the regulation and delivery of education programming, including ECE.

Training for ECE teachers

With formal education as an important avenue for young refugee children to access early education opportunities, the teachers working with refugee students are often public school teachers. As such, their training follows standard government practices, though non-governmental entities such as the Queen Rania Teacher Academy also support teachers and refugee students. Generally within the formal system quality training and support for teachers remains a challenge at all levels, with weak, mostly theoretical pre-service training and insufficient in-service training. Kindergarten teachers receive little in-service support and training to help them in delivering appropriate, play-based learning. Quality assurance systems and incentives are also limited at kindergarten level, with implications for ECE quality and students' school readiness (World Bank, 2017).

The policy trend towards refugee student participation in the formal system raises the question of how training for teachers in the formal system can and should prepare ECE teachers to best confront the needs of refugee students and host community students in their classrooms.

Zaatari Camp, Jordan.
© UN Photo/Sahem Rababah

Bangladesh: Tight restrictions imposed by the government

The state of refugee education

Education for Rohingya students in Bangladesh has faced tremendous barriers. The Bangladeshi Government has prohibited Rohingya children from accessing formal schooling or even using the Bangaldeshi curriculum in camps in Cox's Bazar; both enrolment in local schools outside the camps and provision of formal education in the camps, by the Government or international actors, is prohibited. Meanwhile, Myanmar has refused to recognise its curriculum if used in the camps. Earlier this year, the Bangladeshi Government announced a pilot to introduce the Myanmar curriculum to 10,000 students in Grades 6 to 9. For the vast majority of Rohingya children, formal school is still out of reach and ECE remains entirely non-formal, with international and NGOs unable to provide ECE to all young children in the camps (Amnesty International, 2020; UNICEF, 2020b; Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Given restrictions on formal education and space constraints in the camps, some organisations providing non-formal education (NFE) in Cox's Bazar use community spaces (often the home of the teacher) to provide ECE.

While provision of education is almost entirely dependent on non-formal, non-governmental providers, aside from the pilot mentioned above, some providers nonetheless coordinate with the Government in developing their programmes. BRAC, a major provider of ECE that is headquartered in Bangladesh, engaged the Government in developing and scaling their model, ultimately attaining approval from a government office focused on refugees.

Training for ECE teachers

Both NGOs operating in Cox's Bazar that were included in programme mapping use Rohingya facilitators in their ECE programming. While at least one major provider used Bangladeshi and global standards to help inform programme design (and thus also help inform training design), non-governmental providers largely develop their own approaches to training, given the Bangladeshi Government restrictions on programme alignment with the formal system.

Notably, restrictions on refugees extend beyond education, with significant ramifications for education and training. For instance, Rohingyas are technically prohibited from having phones. While phone-based distance training or support for teachers has been an important strategy in many settings during the COVID-19 pandemic, this is not feasible in Cox's Bazar given the restrictions on Rohingya phone access.

Greece: Small-scale, internationally funded ECE with little formal regulation or support

The state of refugee education

Refugee education in Greece faces severe constraints, particularly on the Aegean Islands where asylum seekers are held in Reception and Identification Centres (RICs), often for long periods, while waiting to be transferred to the mainland. In Greece, compulsory education begins with Grade 1. Under Greek law, migrant children have the right to formal schooling, and the pathway for accessing formal schooling often begins with 'reception classes' at the primary and secondary level to help students transition into the system. Kindergarten had been offered in the RICs (though not with large-scale enrolment) under the same programme offering reception classes. In the 2019-2020 school year, however, reception classes, including the kindergarten classes, were paused on the islands. On the mainland, there are fewer barriers to formal schooling, but not all refugee children are enrolled. In the early years, in particular, enrolment on the mainland can be a challenge because Athens faces a shortage of public kindergartens and very few NGOs offer ECE. Refugee Trauma Initiative, which offers trauma-informed early childhood programming for refugee children on the mainland, is profiled in the annex.

Education on the islands is largely non-formal and reaches only a very small portion of children and only for a small amount of time relative to a normal school day. On the islands, UNICEF and UNHCR are the main organisations supporting NFE, implemented through local NGOs. As such, funding and support for refugee education is largely international.

Both on the islands and the mainland, NFE curricula are not aligned with the Greek public school curriculum and do not necessarily serve as a bridge to the formal system.

Training for ECE teachers

As with curriculum, training for NFE is not required to be aligned with government procedures. From prior Theirworld field research, there appears to be little external oversight or guidance for training of non-formal ECE teachers. It appears that most NGOs supporting NFE, including at the ECE level, recruit Greek teachers, though in some cases peers from the asylum-seeker community may also be involved in some capacity.

Tanzania: Exclusionary policies limit ECE to camps with insufficient ECE resources

The state of refugee education

Over half of the refugee population in Tanzania is comprised of children, and nearly a fifth of the refugee population is under the age of four. Under Tanzania's refugee policy, refugees are required to live in camps and not allowed to leave the camps for schooling. Education for repatriation is the guiding principle for refugee education in Tanzania, with refugee children taught using their home country's curriculum (Smith, Mwaya, & Kabay, 2020).

Access to ECD programming is limited, and the absence of feeding programmes in most ECE centres, due to resource constraints, often limits programming to two or fewer hours per day. The existing ECE centres and pre-primary classes available in the camps are insufficient to serve all young children. With insufficient classroom space, some classes are overcrowded and some programming is held outside under trees. Classrooms or child-friendly space are sometimes located in remote parts of camps, requiring children to walk through unsafe areas (Smith, Mwaya, & Kabay, 2020).

Training for ECE teachers

Teachers may lack the skills and knowledge for responsive and nurturing care, which can sometimes be seen in the use of corporal punishment or absence of interactive or play-based approaches to engaging with children. That said, learning-through-play programmes are generally well received by students and families (Smith, Mwaya, & Kabay, 2020).

Unlike some other contexts profiled where refugees can be integrated into formal education systems, training for teachers working with young refugee children does not follow the government pathway for training teachers working with Tanzanian students. Camps are facing shortages of ECE teachers, and interviews conducted by Smith, Mwaya, & Kabay (2020) with practitioners and policy-makers highlighted a possible opportunity to address this problem by training unemployed refugees who are secondary school graduates.

Key Findings

The ten points below summarise the research team's key findings based on the literature review, desk review, programme mapping, and expert consultation. They provide critical context for the recommendations set forth at the end of this document.

South Sudanese children in a learning centre in Palabek Ogili Settlement in Lamwo District, Uganda.
© UNICEF/UN0412555/Adriko

1.

The evidence on ECE teacher training in refugee settings – both a clear picture of what training looks like and an understanding of what works for supporting teachers, strengthening teacher practice, and improving student outcomes - is limited.

Among the most striking findings of this work is the absence of evidence focused specifically on centre-based ECE for refugee children, particularly in low-resource education contexts.

The evidence on PD for refugee settings is similarly scant, and information specific to teacher PD for early childhood educators is a significant gap in the literature. Experts consulted in this research process, some of whom have undertaken landscape exercises themselves, note that they have likewise found data to be severely lacking in this area. While some larger development agencies and international NGOs (INGOs) have established training methodologies for their contexts and conducted input and output evaluations, there is otherwise very little evidence from programming on learning development and social-emotional development. The already "sparse evidence base", as one expert described it, is further complicated by competing ideas of what evidence and research mean in crisis settings. In any case, this gap is all the more notable as recognition of the need for early childhood services for refugee children grows, as the global community increasingly interests itself not only in education access but also quality, and as a growing body of research points to the links between teacher PD and quality education.

This gap, though notable, is not entirely surprising. One expert commented that while there is an "implicit" interest in teacher training in the field - with PD as a natural part of ECE efforts and programming - it is rarely a well-discussed or central part of early childhood programming, even as implementation of any programme relies on the teachers. In discussing ECE teacher training, another expert noted that "thinking of it as gaps is maybe not the right construct because there's so little there". The already limited research on early childhood in refugee settings seems similarly to focus little attention specifically on ECE teacher PD. Literature on ECD in humanitarian situations more broadly more often seems to focus on caregiver supports rather than teacher supports and training. Crucially, the gap in literature is not just an absence of information on programmes themselves and their teacher training work, but also on the impact of these programmes, in general and especially specific to the impact of PD efforts, a point echoed by researchers who have undertaken more extensive reviews.

There is a widespread recognition among experts and practitioners that greater evidence is needed in this area. The current absence seems due to the deprioritisation of this area in funding[4] and to the implicit nature of PD in many programmes, as discussed above, not to a sense that this area is not important.

---

4 Prior Theirworld research has noted declining aid spending on ECE (Zubairi, Rose, & Moriarty, 2019). In humanitarian settings, ECE also competes with other urgent funding priorities.

2. Tension between local and global is a resonant theme in programme mapping, literature, and expert consultations.

The balance between global and local or indigenous can be seen in questions across all facets of ECE and the accompanying PD.

Experts and implementers frequently touched on concerns about attempting to standardise ECE and training across contexts, highlighting the ways in which a variety of contextual factors that influence ECE – such as sociocultural norms around considerations such as social-emotional expression or the manifestations of play-based learning – vary across settings. Particularly in refugee contexts, where children may or may not be taught by instructors from their own communities and where complex calculations about children's present and future educational and social needs vary depending on expectations about displacement or repatriation, a single global standard for ECE (and the corresponding teacher training) would be difficult to apply.

Notably, tension lies not only in questions of scale for standardisation, but also in concerns about appreciation for local and indigenous approaches to ECE and training. Mitter and Putcha (2018) point to evidence from a range of contexts, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, to suggest that "[training] and professional development curricula are often not tailored to local contexts, and as a result, may not prepare early childhood workforce members to address issues that are relevant to the communities and populations they serve" (p. 27). Given that training for early childhood teachers should be preparing teachers to engage with children through local and culturally relevant stories, games, languages, resources, and child-rearing practices, and to make connections with children's families and communities, culturally and socially relevant training is essential. For this reason, a range of stakeholders should be involved in the design of PD curricula (Mitter & Putcha, 2018).

This becomes a more complex and important consideration in refugee settings, where children's own cultural identities and languages may be different from those of the broader host community around them and from the primary school systems they may ultimately enter. Given these complexities, there is strong appreciation for indigenous models that have been developed and refined in context, in and by the communities that are implementing and participating in these approaches.

A range of practitioners across contexts have developed models specific to the conditions, needs, and strengths of the communities they serve. While even international organisations and models try to adapt to local contexts, experts argued that there is a need to recognise, appreciate, and elevate the innovation happening through indigenous approaches to ECE in refugee settings. In considering future action to support PD for ECE teachers, then, particular consideration should be given to strategies to recognise, elevate, and better understand the context-specific models that have developed in refugee settings around the world and the lessons these approaches could lend to ECE in other contexts.

The research team initially explored the possible value of global standards for ECE teachers working with refugees (standards will be discussed in more detail in finding 5 below). This was one topic on which the tensions between global and local were particularly strong, and consultations with experts highlighted the ways in which global standards would be limiting, overlooking – rather than elevating – indigenous approaches to teacher development and support. As one expert noted, while there is often an assumption that resistance to standardisation is a bad thing, early childhood is not standardised across contexts; as such, different contexts require different pedagogical approaches, different curricula and, accordingly, different training for teachers.

In thinking about elevating local and indigenous models and knowledge, it is also essential to think about the role that diverse networks of researchers can play in this work. To build the evidence base on ECE in refugee settings, research should not just come from academics and implementers based in high-income locations, but also (and especially) from refugee and host community researchers such as local universities and research institutes. Engaging and centring these researchers and their perspectives will be important for effectively elevating strong training, teaching, and programmatic models.

3.

Effective PD balances theory and practice. Preparing teachers with the fundamentals of the science of ECD and with the corresponding essential theory about pedagogy and relationships with young children is important for informing their understanding of their role and their own approaches to working with young children. Building teachers' skills and experience through practice-oriented training — developed in and tailored to contextual realities and needs — is likewise critical for effective training.

Peeters, et al (2019) suggests that good training in LMICs should go from theoretical to practical. Other sources suggest "equal weight" to theoretical and practical learning, but emphasise the need for observing and practising skills in school-based or "real-life" settings during pre-service training (UNICEF, 2020a, p. 60).

School- or centre-based PD opportunities, including mentoring or peer or expert observation or coaching, are widely understood to be better opportunities for teachers' practical learning than off-site training (OECD, 2020). Evidence from LMICs suggests that in-service training at the ECE level, where it exists, may not connect theory to practice (Peeters, et al 2019), but both are needed and links must be forged between the two.

Our programme mapping revealed variance in the extent to which different providers included and balanced theory and practice in their pre- and in-service training and support for teachers. All providers discussed a need for practical learning, with a range of attention to theory and to issues like the

science of ECD. While programme mapping suggested a strong interest in and commitment to engaging or practice-based training, resource constraints and local pedagogical traditions may sometimes mean that training is more didactic than is intended in programme planning. Despite the challenges of executing this practice-based learning in training, evidence suggests that field training and practical learning opportunities are essential for improving teacher practice (Mitter & Putcha, 2018).

More specifically for training content, curriculum must be a central part of pre- and in-service training (UNICEF, 2020a), as teachers need to be prepared to understand and use the curriculum they will be teaching. For emergency and humanitarian situations, there are also particular considerations for training content. Establishing a sense of routine is critical for all young children, but particularly important for children who have experienced the disruption and trauma of conflict and displacement. Similarly, constructive, non-violent disciplinary practices are essential for all children, and particularly those who have experienced trauma.

Early childhood opportunities in emergency settings should cover learning related to basic early literacy and pre-maths skills through dance, art, and music, with attention to free play as a strategy for children to learn and to find a sense of hope and normalcy (UNICEF, 2014). As such, training should prepare teachers to establish a positive classroom climate with a sense of routine, help teachers develop non-violent classroom management and discipline skills, and develop teachers' knowledge and pedagogical skills to support early literacy, pre-maths learning, and free play. UNICEF (2014) also recommends training teachers on how to work with multi-age and multilevel classes. Training for teachers in emergency situations should also prepare teachers to refer children to other services, such as health centres.

Reflection may be particularly valuable in refugee contexts in which their students' experiences are often more challenging.

Considering this literature and the findings of programme mapping, stakeholder consultations highlighted that much training content around teacher practice may (and should) vary by setting – for instance, differences in how play-based pedagogy manifests, what arts and games are culturally relevant, and how sociocultural factors inform student-teacher interactions, among many other factors. That said, literature and expert consultations suggest that the basic science of ECD, which featured to some degree in many of the programmes mapped, is broadly fairly consistent globally, with implications for the types of global action that Theirworld may seek to carry forward.

In thinking about the balance of theory and practice, the value of reflection was another resonant theme. Interviews and literature suggest that emphasis on and support for critical (self-)reflection is an important element of training, allowing teachers to connect theory with their own practice and unpack the idea of good practice with their peers (UNICEF 2020a; Peeters, et al, 2019; Mitter & Putcha, 2018; UNICEF, 2019a). Reflection in continuous PD goes beyond just helping teachers implement what they have learned to also help them "to

think critically about the fit with their own values, the children they teach and their own experiences. Reflective practice sees teachers taking a more active part in improving their practice when they reflect on and identify strategies for improvement" (UNICEF, 2019, p. 64). Reflective competencies were mentioned by a few organisations in programme mapping, but broadly did not appear to be a priority across most programmes.

Reflection may be particularly valuable in refugee contexts in which their students' experiences are often more challenging. In settings where refugee students are taught by host community teachers, reflecting on identity issues in teaching may be all the more important. While evidence specific to reflective PD practices seems scant, broader global evidence suggests that reflection is a critical part of effective PD.

Children play at the ECD centre in
Busheka, Isingiro District, Uganda.
© UNICEF/UN0412379/Kabuye

4. Demographics and circumstances of the ECE workforce in low-resourced education settings for refugees vary widely across contexts and programmme models. Effective training and support approaches respond not only to the specific circumstances of students but also to teachers' diverse backgrounds, including their social, cultural, educational, and linguistic backgrounds and their displacement status.

As highlighted in programme mapping, the demographics of ECE teachers in refugee settings vary widely. Recruited teachers can vary from young women from the refugee community to professionals with prior experience working with children.

They may be refugees or from the host community, and may have little formal education or some existing education and training. Global education evidence suggests that training should respond to teachers' experience levels and skills, providing relevant and targeted guidance on how and what to teach (Evans & Popova, 2015; Popova, Evans, & Arancibia, 2016; Popova, et al, 2018).

Training for early childhood educators must be mindful of the realities of workforce recruitment in humanitarian and refugee settings. Sometimes, educators working with refugee children may be community members with limited education or experience. Programme mapping revealed that in some cases the available pool of candidates have little formal education or training, while in other cases programmes are able to try to recruit instructors with higher than average formal education or with some experience working with children.

Depending on the policy context and the degree of formality of the ECE program, instructors may be refugees themselves or from the host community, or in some cases, a team of both. In some places, refugee teachers may not be allowed to be formally hired and may work as volunteers, sometimes with stipends. This wide range of backgrounds and circumstances across different contexts must be kept in mind when thinking about training content and approaches, as Mitter & Putcha (2018) argue that PD should be contextualised to the needs of the workforce in a given setting.

Regardless of circumstances and demographics, though, the social-emotional wellbeing of teachers working with refugee students, particularly teachers who are refugees themselves, is critical, and provision of psychosocial support should be a central consideration for any ECE workforce development efforts. In humanitarian and emergency settings, where teachers have an especially critical role in supporting students as they grapple with crisis and displacement, it likewise becomes especially important to ensure that teachers themselves are receiving necessary psychosocial and emotional support (UNICEF, 2014). Social-emotional support for teachers was a resonant theme across much of the literature and expert consultations. This type of support is a key consideration for all elements of ECE planning in refugee settings, but may be particularly relevant to PD, as initial training and (even more so) ongoing support mechanisms for teachers provide key avenues for checking in on and supporting teachers' psychosocial wellbeing. Social-emotional and psychosocial support for teachers will vary across contexts and demographics, in accordance with teacher needs and norms around social-emotional expression and support.

5.

Standards and accreditation systems can be useful in informing relevant training and teacher quality, but global training standards or accreditation systems for ECE training in refugee settings would be limiting and could have negative unintended consequences. That said, there is appetite among practitioners for more guidance on PD grounded in evidence from refugee settings.

While evidence specific to workforce standards and competency requirements in refugee settings is thin, the global evidence base suggests that they are an important consideration for any PD model.

The Early Childhood Workforce Initiative (n.d.) suggests that "a competency-based approach to training reduces the likelihood of staff members entering the profession without the requisite skills and creates opportunities for existing workers to evolve in their roles over time". The content and quality of training impacts programme quality, and competences and standards[5] can support quality improvement by informing the design of training programmes facilitating and strengthening the process of assessing the performance of ECD professionals (for instance, with tools, support, and tracking of progress based on established competencies) to pinpoint areas for improvement.[6]

It should be noted, however, that much of the evidence on the value of standards and competences for ECD comes from higher-income places. Competences for ECD professionals or paraprofessionals are more likely to exist in systems where there are clear job descriptions for these roles (Putcha, 2018), but it is rare for pre-primary systems in LMICs to have job profiles or professional competence profiles (Peeters, et al, 2019). The absence of well-defined roles makes training more difficult (Mitter & Putcha, 2018). Half of LMICs do not have qualification requirements for early childhood work and, where they exist, they vary widely (Peeters, et al, 2019). Moreover, in LMICs, ECD certification and licensing systems are rare, but these can help professionalise the workforce and improve the quality of service delivery (Putcha, 2018).

Peeters, et al (2019) argue that developing a professional competence profile should be the starting point for developing a strong pre-primary workforce system. This profile can be used to develop a training competence profile that in turn informs development of training and PD; the competence profile will also inform qualifications and standards. The content and approaches of training programmes can then be aligned with competency standards, which requires combining theory and practice (UNICEF 2020a); PD may be strengthened when aligned with standards and competences (Mitter & Putcha, 2018).

In refugee settings, however, where ECE is often detached from national ECE

---

5 The author defines these key terms as follows: "Competences encompass the requirements and expectations for what early childhood professionals and paraprofessionals should know and be able to do. In general, there are two types of competences: (i) competences for professionals and paraprofessionals, which outline what a worker in a specific role should know and be able to do; and (ii) competences for what training and professional development programmes should impart. We define standards as guidelines and regulations which lay out requirements for entry and continuation in professional/paraprofessional roles. In general, two types of standards are relevant to the early childhood workforce: (i) personnel standards that outline the requirements a worker must meet in order to assume a role (e.g. educational requirements, experience); and (ii) professional standards which outline a code of ethics and commonly accepted procedures while in a particular role" (Putcha, 2018, p. 4).

6 Though outside the scope of this paper, standards and competences can also support recruitmentment processes and systems planning (Putcha, 2018).

systems – and where the specific skills ECE teachers need may be somewhat different from teachers serving host community children – the question of standards and competency systems becomes more complex. Our stakeholder and expert consultations found that many providers would be eager for more insight and guidance around professional standards for ECE training and for the workforce more generally, but also suggest that global standards for ECE teachers of refugees would overlook or blur critical contextual considerations. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that standards or competence profiles can be valuable for teacher PD (as well as other teacher factors such as recruitment), so the questions for ECE programming for refugees may be: who should define necessary competences for teachers and at what level should these apply?

With regard to accreditation, research globally suggests that higher teacher qualifications for ECE are linked with improved support for children's development. With training and PD provided by a range of actors, however, there is a wide range of qualifications globally (Mitter & Putcha, 2018). This appears to hold true in refugee settings, based on our programme mapping. While in some places, teachers working with refugee students may be trained and qualified according to Ministry of Education or other government standards, teachers are often trained by the providers for whom they work. Through these processes, though they may receive informal certificates of completion for training, they are rarely accredited or formally certified. While UNICEF (2020a) advocates for

Young girl colouring in Turkey, 2016.
© Theirworld

an accreditation system for pre-service training – and while such a system helps create unified standards within a given context – this is difficult in settings in which private and informal providers, rather than the Ministry of Education, are largely responsible for refugee education.

Despite the evidence highlighting the value of standards and accreditation, consultations and interviewers led the research team to conclude that establishment of an international accreditation system may not be effective in practice and may have unintended consequences. As discussed above, international standards would likely undervalue powerful indigenous and local approaches. Additionally, an international accreditation system could create challenges with higher staff turnover or poaching of qualified staff. Depending on the political context, governments may also choose not to validate external credentials of teachers working with refugee students, especially if those teachers are themselves refugees. While international training standards or accreditation systems for training, then, may not be appropriate, that does not rule out the relevance or possible value of the standards and accreditation systems at local or national levels.

Additionally, while our findings suggest that international training standards may not be an effective avenue, INEE is investing in broader quality standards for ECD that look beyond the more narrow ECE teacher training angle we took in this work. The findings above do not discredit the possible value of that approach. Moreover, consultations with practitioners and other stakeholders in the sub-sector revealed an appetite for more guidance on teacher PD in refugee settings, suggesting that while international standards for PD may not be a highly effective avenue, other approaches for generating evidence and guidance could help to fill the gaps in the landscape.

6. Echoing findings from all levels of education and all contexts, ideal PD approaches for teachers in refugee settings include ongoing forms of support for teachers, such as coaching and mentoring, rather than simply providing limited pre-service training or one-off workshops.

Global evidence is clear that ongoing PD through coaching or other forms of sustained, school-based support is a critical dimension of effective PD at any level of education.

Research highlights the value of professional learning and supports that are sustained and school-based, such as coaching or mentoring, to help teachers implement and strengthen their pedagogical skills, in turn improving student learning outcomes (World Bank, 2018; Evans & Popova, 2015; Popova, Evans, & Arancibia, 2016).

This aligns with literature on the early childhood education and development workforce globally and in LMICs on coaching, and with the general premise that longer, more intensive PD for ECE teachers is more effective, as discussed above.

Short, occasional in-service training courses are not enough, as effective PD requires "a focus on practice-based learning taking place in constant dialogue with colleagues, parents and local communities" (Peeters, et al, 2019, p. 26). Research from high-income regions suggests that coaching and intensive in-service training together can improve the quality of classroom interactions and child outcomes (Mitter & Putcha, 2018).

Linking training to coaching or other forms of sustained support can help teachers build up their skills and knowledge and, critically, practise and further refine skills learned in training (Early Childhood Workforce Initiative, n.d.). While there does not appear to be specific evidence on this topic for ECE teachers working with refugee children, this may be even more true in those settings, where teachers are under strain working with children who have experienced significant trauma, and may have experienced trauma themselves.

Moreover, evidence suggests that ongoing support is especially critical for those who have received little pre-service training (Mitter & Putcha, 2018). Systematic mentoring and coaching can be used to supplement low qualifications (Peeters, et al, 2019). While the evidence points to the significant potential power of coaching, it is also important to acknowledge the complex reality of implementing effective coaching.

While the evidence base supporting the impact of coaching in education is strong, successful coaching programmes need to be designed and implemented with attention to systemic issues such as accountability, for instance, ensuring that coaching visits happen regularly. It must also be clear (to coaches, teachers, and schools or programme implementers) that the role of coaches is to guide and support, not to scold.

Given the weak infrastructure and low resourcing around training for ECE teachers in refugee settings, the continuous support offered by coaching programmes and other forms of in-service support may be all the more important. As noted in our programme mapping, as well, some form of coaching or sustained PD was considered an important feature of most programmes.

7. While establishing communities of practice among refugee teachers would pose some logistical challenges, they hold great potential for increasing support and learning opportunities for ECE teachers in refugee settings.

As discussed above, support for teachers is more generally effective when it is sustained and school based. Communities of practice for teachers are one form of ongoing PD, providing an avenue for peer support and learning.

They hold potential not only for exposing teachers to new practice and helping them learn new skills, but also for providing a much-needed sense of community and camaraderie. As mentioned above, evidence on PD for early childhood professionals globally highlights the value of peer learning as part of in-service training (Mitter & Putcha, 2018). Some programmes profiled in the programme mapping included communities of practice or other peer learning circles with varying degrees of formality. Communities of practice may be

well suited for low-resourced refugee settings where ongoing support and institutional structures to help teachers respond to the complex and specific needs of their students are lacking.

Communities of practice are a valuable strategy for teacher learning and support at all levels of education. STIR Education, for instance, an organisation operating in India and Uganda (and currently expanding to Indonesia and Ethiopia), has made teacher communities of practice a central part of their model. Teachers are brought together regularly in these meetings to build their motivation, and strengthen their classroom practice and professional mindsets. These meetings, called teacher network meetings, bring together groups of 20 to 30 teachers from within or across local schools.

The network creates opportunities for peer support and learning. In between meetings, teachers implement the new practices they are taught, are observed by peers or school leaders, and receive feedback. The Indian government asked STIR to help embed the STIR model for building teacher intrinsic motivation into government structures, and STIR is scaling up the model substantially, with millions of children and hundreds of thousands of teachers already reached and many more to come (STIR Education, 2020; WISE, n.d.). The impact of the STIR model – and the buy-in from the Government and donors – highlights the tremendous value of communities of practice.

> **When the idea of supporting communities of practice (possibly virtual) was raised with experts, the response was generally positive.**

While STIR doesn't focus specifically on refugee settings or ECE teachers, it is nonetheless a strong example that well-designed and supported communities of practice can be a powerful component of PD.

When the idea of supporting communities of practice (possibly virtual) was raised with experts, the response was generally positive. Experts noted the critical social value and sense of community that these types of communities can provide. Localised teacher learning communities also offer the opportunity to elevate and advance the indigenous models and learning that are sometimes minimised when an international focus becomes too strong.

Though the value of these types of communities can be high, it is important to note that there are potential logistical difficulties that would need to be addressed in planning and implementation. Teacher engagement in this type of peer learning opportunity or community of practice could be challenging, given the constraints on teachers' time. As one expert noted, if the time, scope, and resources for communities of practice are built into the mandate for a teacher or educational institution, there is often interest and engagement, but without these, it may be hard to attract and maintain teacher participation, even when there is interest.

This is particularly true because of the burdens facing women outside the workplace. As such, close attention needs to be paid to the incentives and opportunities for participation in communities of practice. The question of long-term funding to sustain these communities in meaningful and effective ways is also essential to consider.

8.

Monitoring training and teacher performance is critical for ensuring quality, both at the teacher and programme level, for generating much-needed evidence and learning and, in doing so, for helping to make the argument for increased funding in the long term. In refugee environments, monitoring is often limited or detached from national systems, reliant on internal monitoring by programme operators.

Monitoring is an essential dimension of ECE quality assurance, alongside standards and regulations, and it can play a key role in quality improvement (UNICEF, 2020a). Often, however, supervision and monitoring of the ECE workforce is weak or absent.

Where teacher training is happening, there are very few quality assurance mechanisms. Monitoring of ECE PD programmes is particularly complicated in LMICs for programmes run by non-formal or private providers, as there are few mechanisms for accountability to government monitoring offices or authorities (Peeters, et al, 2019). This seems particularly true in refugee settings, where ECE provision often happens outside the formal sector.

One expert noted that observed quality often focuses heavily on basic safety and hygiene, though efforts are building to focus more on the quality of teacher interactions with children. In general, monitoring of actual training seems limited even as programme mapping suggests that providers do aim to engage in monitoring of classrooms (but not necessarily of training), and in ways that go beyond simple checks of basic safety and wellbeing standards to also evaluate more substantive elements of the teacher process and classroom environment. That said, executing this monitoring can be complex in practice. Programme mapping mentioned several observation tools used for monitoring.

Observation tools

The following were mentioned as tools used by some organisations in our programme mapping. Some organisations also use their own program-specific tools.

- *Monitoring Early Learning Environments:* Monitoring Early Learning Environments (MELE) is a module of the Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes (MELQO) project, which aims to provide an approach to ECD measurement that would improve national monitoring and support global monitoring by generating locally relevant data on children's learning, development, and learning environments. The other MELQO module, called MODEL, measures early learning and child development. MELE measures the quality of pre-school and early grade learning environments. The module is intended to provide a framework for national measurement of early learning environment quality by setting forth items and guidance for adapting the tool. MELE has seven domains for quality in early learning environments and offers examples of items in other tools that have been used to measure constructs in each domain. This approach was

informed in part by the cultural variance in what quality entails. The seven domains are play, pedagogy, interactions, environment, parent/community engagement, personnel, and inclusion. The tool has been field tested in several LMICs, including Kenya, Tanzania, and Colombia (UNESCO, et al, 2017). One large INGO mentioned use of the MELE tool for supervision and as the basis for individual conversations with teachers. Though MELE extends beyond issues relevant to teacher quality and teaching practice, it covers a number of key elements related to these and is adaptable. Given its use by at least one INGO as a source for quality monitoring and teacher feedback, the tool could be a promising avenue for monitoring and supporting teachers.

- *IDELA:* IDELA is an assessment of child development focused on the domains of children's motor development, emergent language and literacy, emergent maths and numeracy, and social-emotional development (IDELA, 2020). The tool also has a classroom environment component, interested in how the space is arranged and what resources are available. Save the Children, the organisation behind the tool's creation, mentioned using the tool in programme mapping interviews. Though not itself a teacher observation tool or teaching quality monitoring tool, it may offer data that is useful in conjunction with other measures of teaching practice and quality.

- *Danielson Framework for Teaching*: One organisation mentioned using an adapted version of this framework to observe teachers. The framework itself is not an evaluation but presents four domains of instructional practice: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities (The Danielson Group, 2020). Unlike some other tools mentioned, the framework is not open source or free.

- *Other adapted observation tools:* One representative from a large INGO mentioned using adapted versions of Ministry of Education observation tools or INEE's Teachers in Crisis Contexts resources in certain settings.

Using monitoring data beyond the classroom

As discussed above, monitoring has a major role to play in quality assurance and improvement. In providing a clearer picture of what's happening in the classroom, monitoring can provide valuable information to programmes on how they can better support teachers or how teacher practice can be improved. Beyond this, too, monitoring can generate data on teachers' behaviours, skills, and interaction with students, and on the effectiveness of different training and programme approaches.

This data can help fill the massive evidence gap around ECE in low-resourced refugee settings. A stronger evidence base may also help in advocating for greater funding for ECE for refugees generally, and particularly for greater support for teachers.

9.

While there is an appetite for stronger links between ECE for refugees (including teacher training) and national education systems, realities around integration with national systems vary widely. Planning often seeks to balance immediate limitations on national system capacity and policy constraints on refugee education with a desire for closer collaboration between non-formal and formal actors.

As the case studies earlier in this report demonstrate, there is huge variance in how ECE services for refugee children are (or are not) integrated into or regulated by the national education system and national government.

The fragmentation of ECD services generally – with critical services often not part of the government infrastructure – is all the more true when it comes to refugees. While there is a substantial variance in host government capacity, there is often little government response to the early childhood needs of refugees, and large international agencies often end up operating on a parallel track with the early childhood services they provide. This conflicts with growing international recognition that refugee integration into national education systems is preferable.

Recognising both the range of integration levels and the value of integrating refugee education into national systems, any work to support the ECE workforce for refugees will need to grapple with this parallel system of non-formal ECE and the national government pre-primary system. Focus on tie-in with government systems will be key for any action on ECE for refugees, and greater effort must be made to align training for teachers of refugee children with whatever training national teachers receive.

UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education together developed the ECE Accelerator initiative to help countries plan for, implement, and assure the quality of ECE at scale. The ECE Accelerator toolkit incorporates cross-cutting considerations on crisis related to ECE analysis and planning, including issues in refugee contexts. Among other tools, the toolkit contains a sub-sector analysis tool. Though the tool has not yet been used in refugee settings, it could be a starting point for helping national governments, non-governmental humanitarian agencies, and other ECE sub-sector actors to understand the extent to which ECE is systematically provided for refugees, possibly touching on workforce issues.

10.

Pooled funding and careful assessment of the role of technology will be essential for effective scaling of efforts to better support ECE teachers in refugee settings.

Pooled funding

Funding for ECD initiatives in crisis situations is low (though rising), with only 3.3 per cent of development aid to crisis settings going to ECD in emergencies (ECDiE) in 2017.

Though development aid for ECD increasingly targets crisis-affected settings, support for ECE in these remains a low priority, with only one per cent of development aid to ECD in crisis-affected countries going to pre-primary

education. Similarly, within the humanitarian cluster system, less than five per cent of humanitarian funds for ECDiE go to pre-primary. These low figures suggest that while there has been growing interest expressed in ECDiE among donors, ECDiE – and particularly ECE in emergencies – has struggled to become a higher funding priority (Moving Minds Alliance & SEEK Development, 2020).

While pooled funding in global education has gained significant momentum over the past decade with the establishment of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait (ECW), funding earmarked for ECE in refugee settings remains limited. For instance, GPE, the largest global pooled fund, does not generally prioritise funding ECE for refugee students, as much of its funding is tied to national sector plan implementation. More broadly, funding for education in crisis situations remains severely under-funded with an estimated requirement to mobilse USD 8.5 billion annually, according to ECW.

The gap in global funding presents a strategic opportunity for philanthropic entities to utilise their resources – finances, expertise and agility – to take a leadership role. One promising initiative – the Moving Minds Alliance – has recognised the gap in global funding for early childhood and brings together at least seven foundations in a "funders' collaborative and network that works to scale up coverage, quality, and financing of support for young children and families affected by crisis and displacement" (Moving Minds Alliance, 2020). Its members have been actively funding initiatives that focus on addressing the large gap in ECD opportunities for children in crisis. For example, the MacArthur Foundation and Lego Foundation together provided USD 200 million (the largest publicly recorded donations by any foundation to ECE in crisis settings) to Sesame Workshop and the International Rescue Committee.

Despite the seminal donation mentioned above, the funding gap remains large and requires the support of many more private foundations to collaborate with multilateral agencies, national governments and others. Pooled funding will be required to support the scope and scale of programming, including the development of new globally accessible resources in addition to support to local efforts needed in every low-resource refugee setting.

Pooled funding for primary education enabled the international community to make significant progress on SDG 4. Without pooled funding for ECE, it would not be possible to make similar gains in ECE.

The role of technology

"Ed tech", often a hot button issue, has been all the more central to education planning and practice during the Covid-19 crisis, both for small-scale efforts and in trying to reach large numbers of students and teachers. Between long-standing efforts by some organisations to leverage technology and more recent adaptations to continue some form of training during Covid-19, experts consulted held nuanced views on the role of technology while seeing opportunities to leverage technology. First and foremost, the practical realities of access to technology must be held in mind. While some settings may have fairly widespread access to phones or computers and internet or data bundles, financial barriers or policy restrictions on refugees may limit the viability of

these approaches for training in some contexts. In places with some reliable technology access, it is important to consider who would be excluded by technology-based approaches, and how their needs could be addressed.

In locations where technology-based approaches may be viable to consider for scale-up, the key principles that guide effective development in person still apply. Broadly, the literature (mostly covering primary or secondary education) suggests a few defining qualities of and approaches to effective PD. As discussed above, research highlights the value of professional learning and supports that are sustained and school based. As such, coaching or communities of practice can help teachers improve their pedagogical skills. Practical and participatory training also tends to be more effective than largely theoretical training in changing teacher behaviour. Targeting training and other PD to specific topics, pedagogies, or skills pedagogies is generally more effective in supporting student learning than vague training. Evidence suggests that PD should also equip teachers to meet students' individual learning needs (Evans & Popova, 2015; Popova, Evans, & Arancibia, 2016; World Bank, 2018).

The literature on remote PD is thinner and not conclusive, but seems to suggest that remote PD is more effective when used in tandem with in-person training and supports (rather than used alone), while still targeted and sustained (McAleavy, et al, 2018), in line with the best practices discussed above. Specific to coaching, research in South Africa found that on-site coaching was more effective and more cost-effective in improving teacher productivity and student learning than remote coaching, though it was more expensive. Challenges appeared to be related to absence of opportunities for direct observation (relying on videos submitted by teachers), difficulties in forming trusting relationships, and lower accountability in virtual coaching. The researchers hypothesised that adding a virtual component to coaching after an in-person coaching relationship had been established could be more effective than a fully virtual model (Cilliers, et al, 2020). Though this research was conducted at higher levels of education than ECE and not specific to refugees, it nonetheless raises important considerations for thinking about approaches to ECE PD for teachers in humanitarian settings.

Experts acknowledge that technology can be an enabling tool in supporting professionals working with young child refugees beyond direct training. For example, it is possible to provide critical resources for teachers, connect teachers working in similar settings or connect teachers and parents and others in the community through different technological mediums appropriate for their level of bandwidth access. Media might include radio, TV, mobile phone SMS, and WhatsApp.

In short, technology is not a panacea for scaling up of high-quality PD, but in certain places, well-designed, technology-enabled approaches may provide a valuable tool for sharing learnings and resources and offering opportunities for support for teachers, particularly in conjunction with in-person efforts.

Opportunities:
Four Initiatives to Increase Access to and the Quality of ECE PD Support in Refugee Settings

Reflecting on the literature review, programme mapping, and expert consultations, the research team considered a range of options to recommend for Theirworld's consideration.

This consideration process involved weighing factors around audience (whether interventions should target teachers, support staff like instructional coaches, or implementing organisations), practicality (particularly whether teachers or other target groups be logistically able to access proposed interventions and would have the time and interest in doing so), and the tensions between local and global.

Children in primary school classroom in Ethiopia. ©Theirworld

The question of access and practicality was a major point of discussion in expert consultations as well as in some programme mapping. Logistically, limited technology access or infrastructure (such as limited access to phones or the internet in some settings) are major barriers to keep in mind. Language is another key consideration. Any form of convening of teachers would require either a common language or translation, and resource banks would need extensive translations to meet the linguistic needs of diverse groups of teachers. Finally, time and incentives to participate are major considerations. With teachers already heavily burdened with their instructional responsibilities, they may not have the time for additional activities.

Initial possibilities included establishment of international standards, an international accreditation system, or an international certification system, with the thinking that these approaches could help ensure relevant, high-quality training for teachers working with refugee students. Given that the status of paraprofessional teachers is a big question, this certification could also help give credibility to volunteers or untrained teachers. As discussed above, however, there would be substantial downsides to this avenue and we do not recommend that Theirworld pursue such an effort. Programme mapping and consultations with practitioners and experts revealed, however, an appetite for more guidance grounded in evidence from refugee settings. The proposals presented here aim to respond to this need in providing a range of PD and evidence-generating opportunities to better support ECE teachers working with young refugee children.

Based on programme mapping, expert consultations, and the literature, we propose four possible avenues for exploration to better train and support ECE teachers in refugee settings. These proposals could all be pursued in tandem, as they are intended to complement one another in filling out gaps in the landscape, or could all be pursued as single avenues. The four proposed options are discussed below, including their possible value and considerations for their success.

|1. Expand teachers' access to information on the science of ECD.

Broadly, literature and consultations highlighted the critical value of contextually driven and relevant approaches to ECE, with implications for teacher training. That said, at least one consideration emerged as universal: biologically, what children need for healthy development is the same globally. The basic science of trauma's impact on a developing brain and of the value of nurturing relationships with adults and caretakers hold true across contexts. The challenges children face and the way that nurturing relationships manifest vary, but the science of child development and its broad implications for ECE are similar across settings. As discussed earlier, an understanding of the way trauma impacts the brain and the steps that can be taken to mitigate these impacts can help teachers understand student behaviour, and develop strategies to support students and respond to their needs.

As such, we propose investments in efforts to expand access to easily digestible information on the basic science of ECD, with an emphasis on how trauma affects children's brain development and the ways in which consistent, supportive relationships can help mitigate the impacts of trauma.

Efforts to share information on the basic science of ECD are already underway in various forms, though teachers are not usually the target audience for these efforts. Nonetheless, with a range of resources already existing in this area – including massive open online courses (MOOCs) and short training courses online or in-person targeting of policy-makers and programme implementers – there may be strong starting points for adapting existing resources to target ECE teachers in refugee settings. The range of media on which courses are currently available is also encouraging, though lower technology options – including radio and WhatsApp- or SMS-based resources – may need to be explored, and logistics like translation will need to be considered.

Existing resources to make the science of ECD more accessible

Harvard University Center on the Developing Child

The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University has done extensive work to synthesise the knowledge base on ECD and identify key concepts. It has developed a wide range of resources, condensing the science of ECD into short, digestible videos and other resources.

At present, the Center has not worked extensively on humanitarian contexts and their materials have not been tested in those contexts. The Center is currently working in partnership with the Lego Foundation to develop materials on the science of ECD, possibly targeting donors, implementing partners, and host governments.

This may be one avenue for possible collaboration. The Center is also working with Porticus and with regional ECD networks to spread this information on the science of ECD and the impacts of adversity and toxic stress. More broadly, the Center's wealth of resources could be considered for adaptation.

Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College Community Pathways

The Teachers College at Arizona State University includes a Community Pathways programme of stand-alone courses and modules to prepare those interested in working or volunteering in learning environments like schools. The program, which can be done entirely virtually, through online learning (often using videos to share content), includes multiple free courses on critical topics related to education. The programming is currently not ECE-specific and currently targets US-based teachers working with vulnerable communities; the platform is one example of a high-technology strategy that could be considered.

The Science of ECD

Recognising that there was insufficient understanding of the reasons for supporting ECD, a course was developed on the science of ECD through a partnership between the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), Red River College, and University of Toronto.

The initial course targeted practitioners and implementers. AKDN has since adapted the course to be used in person and virtually in a range of settings (namely LMICs), and has reframed a version of the course to specifically target policy-makers through the ECD Policy-Makers Workshop.

AKDN is also in the process of further developing its ECD Workforce Development Hub, which includes some use of adapted versions of the Science of ECD course. Red River College has also partnered externally for the Science of ECD to be translated and used by a partner in the Middle East. Given the range of adaptations of the Science of ECD course that have already been undertaken, especially targeting audiences in LMICs, the course could be a useful starting place for considering partnerships to make this learning accessible to teachers.

MOOC – The Best Start in Life: ECD for Sustainable Development:

Leading academics in child development, together with UNICEF's Child of ECD, teach a MOOC through the SDG Academy on ECD for sustainable development, including attention to young children's physical, cognitive, and social and emotional development and how brain development is affected by environment. MOOCs are one example of an avenue that is already being used to make learning on the science of ECD accessible to a range of audiences, and could be considered for adaptation to target ECE teachers in refugee settings specifically.

Partners would need to consult with implementers to understand how these resources would be used (likely in pre- and in-service training) to ensure effective design and roll-out. Additionally, partners may consider combining widely applicable information on the basic science of ECD with local examples. One research centre consulted noted that in past projects, local videos (in some cases, sourced on cell phone video) have been produced to demonstrate how key ECD concepts play out in context to supplement 'cultural translations' of content on the basic science of ECD.

Initial consultations with experts on this avenue have been promising, and it holds potential for collaboration between funders, knowledge partners, and implementers already working in this area.

Invest in expanding teachers' access to easily digestible information on the basic science of ECD

Develop/adapt resources for teacher audience

Translate

Deploy through relevant modalities

Supplement global resources with local examples (optional)

2. Incentivise local technical and vocational education and training (TVET) providers to provide accessible training and accreditation to ECE teachers working with refugee students.

We propose a partnership to incentivise local TVET providers to make training accessible to ECE teachers working with refugee students, supporting development of teachers' knowledge, skills, and competencies in key areas of need for their effective practice. We propose working with TVET providers to develop micro-training courses delivered through a combination of blended instruction and work-based learning. Importantly, offering micro-credentials would also provide documentation of this externally validated learning; as many implementers noted, refugee teachers are often interested in having certificates of their training in case they move or if it could lead to more secure employment or higher salaries. For this reason, there would likely be appetite for training and micro-credentials from an established TVET institution.

TVET systems are a powerful and often untapped resource, though attention to vocational education has been rising in many regions. Training providers for early childhood professionals must have sufficient capacity and skill to deliver high-quality professional training, and providers should be supported in doing so (UNICEF, 2020a).

TVET institutions may be particularly well positioned to support training of ECE teachers working with refugee students, as they may be more flexible in their programming than other state training programmes. The Early Childhood Workforce Initiative (n.d.) notes that flexible training avenues can develop the skills of workers with little formal training or education. In ECD sectors like health, rapid training for paraprofessionals is also used to help address gaps and shortages in the workforce (Mitter & Putcha, 2018). In many places, where teachers working with young refugee children may themselves have little formal education and training and no prior experience of teaching, training from TVET institutions could help raise the pedagogical knowledge and skills of undertrained teachers, both helping to strengthen their practice and raise their status in the communities they serve.

This approach would benefit from TVET institutions' tendency towards practical learning. As discussed earlier, practice-based learning is a critical element of effective PD, and TVET institutions would be well placed to facilitate practice-based learning opportunities for teachers who work with refugee students.

Given all this, collaboration with high-quality TVET institutions in countries with high refugee settings could be a meaningful avenue for better preparing ECE teachers working with refugee children.
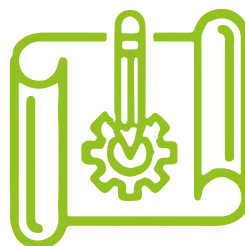
Invest in Incentivising local TVET providers to make training accessible to ECE teachers working with refugee students
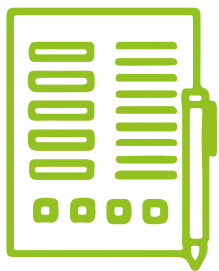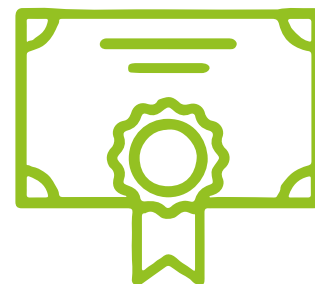
| Create content on key topics | Source content on TVET insititutions | Support TVET providers in designing and delivering micro-courses | Assist TVET providers in establishing micro-credentials |

3. Support establishment of communities of practice – likely virtual – to foster collaboration and exchange between teachers and practitioners.

Given the tremendous value of building community among teachers and the power of peer learning, we recommend supporting communities of practice for teachers working in refugee settings. These communities of practice may be local, national, or regional, depending on the context, teacher needs, and logistical constraints such as language. In many cases, they would likely be virtual to allow for participation beyond teachers' immediate surroundings, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, through high- or low-technology platforms.

Building on the experiences of well-established models of communities of practice, such as STIR Education's approach, this approach would provide teachers with avenues for learning from their peers, offering and receiving pedagogical resources that they have found useful, and sharing their own challenges and successes. In this way, this approach could not only support teacher learning and wellbeing, but also help elevate innovative pedagogies that teachers themselves have developed to respond to the needs of their students.

Ideally, this model would take a tiered approach, with opportunities for teachers

to engage at country level, as well as avenues for teachers to engage at a regional or global level. For instance, teachers working with refugee students from a given country of origin may wish to connect with teachers in other contexts who are also working with students from this country of origin. The virtual community of practice approach would allow for this international engagement as well as connections between teachers in their own communities and countries.

This approach would require consultation with teachers and with implementing organisations that already use community of practice models to understand how a virtual community of practice could best be implemented and at what scale. Teacher engagement in this type of peer learning opportunity or community of practice could be challenging, given the constraints on teachers' time, and incentives for participation would need to be considered. As one expert noted, if the time, scope, and resources for communities of practice are built into the mandate for a teacher or educational institution, there is often interest and engagement, but without these, it may be hard to attract and maintain teacher participation, even when there is interest. This is particularly true because of the burdens facing women outside the workplace. Challenges related to technology and internet access would also need to be addressed.

Finally, this approach would require a partner or series of partners to serve as coordinating bodies for these communities, as this operational support will be critical in ensuring longevity of programming. Recognising the immense potential of creating supportive learning communities for teachers, initial discussions with experts and implementers have been promising on this topic, so long as the development and implementation of such initiatives could be carried out in collaboration with local organisations and is informed by the experiences of teachers themselves.

4. Translate learning from local communities into broader evidence and resources through a hub or learning lab system.

As noted earlier, the limited evidence on effective practice in ECE in refugee settings generally – and especially on teacher PD and support – is a major challenge. Given this, we propose implementing a learning lab or hub model in several different contexts to generate evidence on and elevate effective and innovative approaches that have been developed and refined in context.

As discussed, indigenous and local models for ECE in refugee settings, including for PD of teachers, hold tremendous value, and a learning lab model would provide an avenue for identifying effective practices (and understanding why they are effective) and sharing learning on these models globally. This approach would benefit the ECE field as a whole in generating much-needed evidence about what works and how this manifests in different settings. A learning hub model could also create a unique opportunity to engage, centre, and build on the expertise of researchers from non-Western institutions. It could also create possible opportunities for teacher-led research.

Learning lab or hub models have been used in a range of development projects, including education. For instance, as part of its Millions Learning project, the Center for Universal Education launched Scaling Labs in six countries to test the Millions Learning Scaling Framework and generate a global evidence base on scaling quality education (Perlmann Robinson, Hannahan, & Curtiss, n.d.).

This learning lab approach would likely require a strong partnership to support funding and implementation. Given the widely acknowledged need for more evidence in this area – particularly for more attention to the effective work carried out by local organisations that have developed programming in close cooperation with the communities they serve – a learning lab model could be a valuable tool for elevating ECE on the global agenda.

A partner organisation would also need to serve as the home or clearing house for findings and evidence. While several organisations or networks currently house evidence on global or regional ECE and ECD generally, or house resources related to refugee education, there is currently no institutional community or home for evidence specific to ECE (and especially professional development for ECE teachers) in refugee settings.

Learning hubs focused on ECE – though not specific to refugee children – are being considered by a group of ECE partners including Porticus, Saving Brains, and Grand Challenges Canada, with East Africa as a possible location for a hub. Discussions with these groups, along with regional ECD networks, would be an essential next step to carry forward a learning hub focused on ECE for refugees.

References and Further Resources Reviewed

Amnesty International. (2020). Bangladesh: Rohingya children get access to education. Amnesty International. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/bangladesh-rohingya-children-get-access-to-education/

The Best Start in Life: Early Childhood Development for Sustainable Development. SDG Academy. https://www.edx.org/course/the-best-start-in-life-early-childhood-development

Bergin, C. (2017). Promising practices in refugee education: Synthesis report. Save the Children, UNHCR, & Pearson.

Bouchane, K., Curtiss, M., & Ellis, B. (2016). Safe Spaces: The Urgent Need for Early Childhood Development in Emergencies and Disasters. Theirworld & Best Start. https://s3.amazonaws.com/theirworld-site-resources/Reports/Safespaces_report.pdf

Bouchane, K., Yoshikawa, H., Murphy, K., & Lombardi, J. (2018). Early childhood development and early learning for children in crisis and conflict. Background paper commissioned for the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report, Migration, displacement, and education: Building bridges, not walls. https://nurturing-care.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/UNESCO.pdf

Britto, P.R. (2017). Early Moments Matter for Every Child. UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_Early_Moments_Matter_for_Every_Child.pdf

Carrier, C. (n.d.) Teacher Support for Refugee Children in Canada: An Orientation and Useful First Steps for Receiving Refugee Children into Regular Classrooms. https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/Programmes/GlobalEd/Teacher%20Guide%20PDF.pdf

Center on the Developing Child (n.d.). Toxic Stress. Harvard University. https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/

Cilliers, J., Fleisch, B., Kotze, J. Mohohlwane, N. Taylor, S., and Thulare, T. (2020). Can Virtual Replace In-person Coaching? Experimental Evidence on Teacher Professional Development and Student Learning in South Africa. Working paper. https://www.dropbox.com/s/n0hza4nyrvz4mpt/Can%20Virtual%20Replace%20InPerson%20Coaching%20Working%20Paper.pdf?dl=0

Dryden-Peterson, S. (2015). The Educational Experiences of Refugee Children in Countries of First Asylum. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

Early Childhood Workforce Initiative. (n.d.) Country Briefs. http://www.earlychildhoodworkforce.org/country-briefs

Evans, D. & Popova, A. (2015). What Really Works to Improve Learning in Developing Countries? An Analysis of Divergent Findings in Systematic Reviews. World Bank Group. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/21642/WPS7203.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=

FAWCO, NGO Committee on Migration, & OMEP. (2016). Positive Effects of Innovative Early Childhood Development Programmes on Refugee Youth Resilience. Position Paper. https://ngo-migration.org/about/about-the-un-ngo-committee-on-migration/2016-position-paper/

Ghosh, R., Sherab, D., Mahmut, D. & Hashemi, N. (2019). Creating a Refugee Space in the Canadian School Context: The Approach of an Inclusive Society. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336286823_Creating_a_Refugee_Space_in_the_Canadian_School_Context_The_Approach_of_an_Inclusive_Society

Gregory, L. (2018). Kindergarten is optional, depending on where you live. Global News. https://globalnews.ca/news/4056554/kindergarten-is-optional-depending-on-where-you-live/

Guo-Brennan, L. & Guo-Brennan, M. (2019). Building Welcoming and Inclusive Schools for Immigrant and Refugee Students: Policy, Framework and Promising Praxis. 10.1108/978-1-78756-044-420191006. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333889559_Building_Welcoming_and_Inclusive_Schools_for_Immigrant_and_Refugee_Students_Policy_Framework_and_Promising_Praxis

Human Rights Watch. (2019). "Are We Not Human?" Denial of Education for Rohingya Refugee Children in Bangladesh. Report Summary. https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/12/03/are-we-not-human/denial-education-rohingya-refugee-children-bangladesh#

IDELA. About IDELA. https://idela-network.org/about/

Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College. (n.d.) Community Pathways. https://workforce.education.asu.edu/educator-pathways/community

McAleavy, T., Hall-Chen, A., Horrocks, S., & Riggall, A. (2018). Technology-supported professional development for teachers: lessons from developing countries. Reading: Education Development Trust. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED593386.pdf

Merseth King, K., Pouezevara, S., Edwards, L. (2020). Case Studies on Addressing Early Childhood in Three Host Country Contexts: Cross-Country Analysis. RTI International. Commissioned by Moving Minds Alliance.

Merseth King, K. & McKinney, R. (2020). Case Studies on Addressing Early Childhood in Three Host Country Contexts: Jordan Case Study. RTI International and Moving Minds Alliance.

Mitter, R. & Putcha, V. (2018). Strengthening and Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce: Training and Professional Development. Washington, D.C.: Results for Development. http://www.earlychildhoodworkforce.org/node/309

Moving Minds Alliance. (2020). https://movingmindsalliance.org/

Moving Minds Alliance & Seek Development (2020). Analysis of international aid levels for early childhood services in crisis contexts. Moving Minds Alliance. Retrieved from https://movingmindsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/analysis-of-international-aid-levels-for-early-childhood-services-in-crisis-contexts.pdf

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2015). Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience: Working Paper No. 13. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

OECD. (2020). Building a High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce: Further Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018. TALIS. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/b90bba3d-en.

Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. (2016). No more excuses: provide education to all forcibly displaced people. Global Education Monitoring Report Policy Paper 26.

Peeters, J., Alayli, A., Hyson, M., & Lin, H.C. (2019). Pathways to Strengthen the Pre-primary Workforce in Low- and Middle-income Countries. New York: UNICEF. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336899324_Pathways_to_Strengthen_the_Pre-primary_Workforce_in_Low-and_Middle-income_Countries_WHITE_PAPER

Perlmann Robinson, J., Hannahan, P., & Curtiss, M. (n.d.). Millions Learning. Center for Universal Education. https://www.brookings.edu/product/millions-learning/

Popova, A., Evans, D.K., & Arancibia, V. (2016). Training teacher on the job: What works and how to measure it. Background paper to the 2018 World Development Report. World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/25150/Training0teach0nd0how0to0measure0it.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Putcha, V. (2018). Strengthening and Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce: Competences and Standards. Washington, D.C.: Results for Development. http://www.earlychildhoodworkforce.org/node/308

Schafer, A. (2014). Syria's children – how conflict can harm brain development. World Vision International. https://www.wvi.org/experts/article/syria%e2%80%99s-children-%e2%80%93-how-conflict-can-harm-brain-development

Smith, R., Mwaya, J., & Kabay, S. (2020). Early Childhood Development in Forced Displacement: Evidence Review and Qualitative Interviews for Future Evidence-based Programming and Research Agenda Setting in Tanzania. IPA.

Stewart, J. & Martin, L. (2018). Bridging Two Worlds: Supporting Newcomer and Refugee Youth. CERIC. https://ceric.ca/resource/bridging-two-worlds-supporting-newcomer-refugee-youth/

STIR Education. (2020). https://stireducation.org/

Teachers in crisis contexts: Promising practices in teacher wellbeing, teacher management, and teacher professional development. New York: INEE. https://inee.org/system/files/resources/Promising%20Practices%20TPD.pdf

The Danielson Group. (2020). A Vision of Excellence. https://danielsongroup.org/framework

UNESCO, UNICEF, Brookings Institute, & World Bank.(2017). Overview: Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/melqo-measuring-early-learning-quality-outcomes.pdf

UNESCO and SEAMEO. (2018). Pursuing Quality in Early Learning: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Teacher Competency Framework for Southeast Asia (SEA). Bangkok: UNESCO.

UNICEF. (2014) Early Childhood Development in Emergencies: Integrated Programme Guide. https://sites.unicef.org/earlychildhood/files/Programme_Guide_ECDiE.pdf

UNICEF. (2018). Learning through play: Strengthening learning through play in early childhood education programmes.

UNICEF. (2019a). Technical guidance on pre-primary workforce development in low- and middle-income countries. New York: UNICEF.

UNICEF. (2019b). A World Ready to Learn: Prioritising quality early childhood education. Global Report.

UNICEF. (2019c). Best start to education for thousands of preschool children in Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps. Press release. UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/best-start-education-thousands-preschool-children-zaatari-and-azraq-refugee-camps#:~:text=ZA'ATARI%2FAZRAQ%2C%2012,KG2%20in%20Jordan%20by%202025

UNICEF. (2020a). Build to Last: A framework in support of universal quality pre-primary education. New York: UNICEF.

UNICEF (2020b). Expanding education for Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh. https://www.unicef.org/rosa/stories/expanding-education-rohingya-refugee-children-bangladesh

WISE. (n.d). STIR. https://www.wise-qatar.org/project/stir-uk/#:~:text=1)%20STIR%20builds%20teacher%20networks,techniques%2C%20subsequently%20improving%20children's%20learning

World Bank. (2017). Program Appraisal Document on a Proposed Loan in the Amount of US$200 Million to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for an Education Reform Support Program-for-results. International Bank For Reconstruction and Development. http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/731311512702123714/pdf/Jordan-Educ-Reform-121282-JO-PAD-11142017.pdf

World Bank. 2018. World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise. Washington, DC: World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28340

World Health Organization, UNICEF, World Bank Group (2018). Nurturing care for early childhood development: a framework for helping children survive and thrive to transform health and human potential. Geneva: World Health Organization. https://nurturing-care.org/resources/Nurturing_Care_Framework_en.pdf

Zubairi, A., Rose, P., Moriarty, K. (2019). Leaving the youngest behind: Declining aid to to early childhood education. Theirworld.

Annex

Mapping of Early Childhood Education Workforce Development in Refugee Settings, submitted to Theirworld in August 2019

The programme mapping below was conducted as the first stage of this research process. The main report above, including the findings and recommendations, was informed in part by the findings of this mapping, alongside later consultations with experts and the literature review.

Mapping of Early Childhood Education Workforce Development in Refugee Settings

Commissioned by Theirworld
By Maysa Jalbout and Katy Bullard

19 August 2020

Theirworld

Previous page
Children attend lessons at a pre-school
in Yemen.
© Education Cannot Wait / Areej Alghabri

Contents

Introduction

In the summer of 2020, Theirworld commissioned a study of ECE workforce development in refugee settings. The study consists of two components. The first aims to map the landscape of early childhood educator teacher training in refugee settings, while the second aims to understand the gaps and opportunities to ultimately improve the quality of education and learning outcomes for young children in refugee communities.

This report covers the first component of the study: the mapping of existing programmes. In addition to identifying 12 relevant programmes and organisations working in this area, the report presents initial findings on early childhood programmes for refugees and specifically on workforce development within the sub-sector.

To identify programmes which specifically focus on supporting teachers serving young children, the researchers conducted desk research and conducted 15 interviews with representatives of implementing organisations and eight with experts and funders.

Interviews were conducted with representatives from: Refugee Trauma Initiative, iACT, BRAC's Humanitarian Play Labs, Plan's Shishu Bikash Kendro, Plan International, International Rescue Committee, Lebanese Alternative Education, Ana Aqra, Save the Children, Aga Khan Foundation, UNICEF, UNHCR, Learning Blocks, Refugee Educator Academy, and MIT Solve.

The following experts were consulted: Dr. Hirokazu Yoshikawa (Global TIES for Children), Dr. Aisha Yousafzai (Harvard University), Dr. Joan Lombardi (Georgetown University), Dr. Lucy Bassett (University of Virginia), Ms. Vidya Putcha (Results for Development), Mr. Yousef Khalifa Aleghfeli (Oxford University), and Ms. Jane West (Two Lilies Fund).

The early findings of the research indicated the need for further enquiry into the existing informal training and credentials that currently define workforce development for early childhood educators in refugee settings. In the second component of the research, the paper will provide evidence from the literature review and additional interviews with experts and funders. It will aim to provide a set of policy recommendations as well as propose a model to explore research and programming collaboration.

ECD content gathering trip to Lebanon.
© Theirworld / Hussein Baydoun

Early Findings on the Sub-Sector of Early Childhood Education in Refugee Settings

- The initial mapping reviewed a sample of organisations providing ECE to refugee children whose programme design included support to teachers working in this narrow yet crucial sub-sector of education. Mapping suggests that only a small number of operators provide ECE to young refugee children relative to other levels of education.

- The small number of programmes identified was matched by a dearth of relevant literature. While there is a significant amount of literature on ECE, especially in developed countries and on refugee education in developing countries, early findings indicate a gap in data, programme evaluations and an overall repository of information.

- In addition to the most well-known organisations working in early childhood education in humanitarian response — such as large INGOs or multilateral organisations — programme mapping also identified programmes run by smaller NGOs. While mapping did not capture every small NGO working in this field, it gives a sense of the types of training and approaches being implemented at large and small scales.

ECD trip 2017.
Lebanon.
© Theirworld / Hussein Baydoun

- The relatively small number of programmes by comparison to primary education or higher levels of education is perhaps unsurprising due to the low allocation of international aid to both - ECE and refugee education.

- Experts were quick to point out that unlike international efforts to advance coordinated policy and programming on primary education globally, the field of early childhood globally remains fragmented. It was noted, however that the previously unprecedented large-scale investment made by the MacArthur Foundation and Lego Foundation to expand Ahlan Simsim (the Arabic version of Sesame Street) to refugee camps promises to provide greater impetus for investment once positive outcomes are recorded and subsequently spur the need for greater policy and programming coordination.

- Research to date has not surfaced any existing efforts that seek to set guidelines for workforce development nor minimum international standards for operating early childhood programmes in refugee settings. One respondent described training standards as "needed but nascent."

- Existing early childhood programmes for refugees are designed and implemented by a wide range of international development actors with equally varying differences in resources, scale and scope. None, however, were identified by other providers as the benchmark for the highest sector standard.

- Among many organisations interviewed, their primary programme goal is to heal rather than to educate. These programmes have a stronger focus on psychosocial support rather than learning outcomes, although most of the organisations also intended for the programmes to prepare their beneficiaries for primary school.

- Finally, the initial research identified a promising set of social entrepreneurs who are developing new and innovative ways to increase support to parents and teachers of young children in low-income settings. While these educational technology tools are promising, they are at an early stage and require further investment to scale before deriving any conclusions. Respondents were also cautious about educational technologyh alone as a training solution, given the strong emphasis on relationship-building and active methodologies in training.

Initial Observations
About Workforce Development in Existing Programmes

- The absence of harmonized standards or curricula at the early childhood education level for refugees is a challenge for creating one standard for workforce development in the subsector. While many ECE programmes and their training processes draw on similar principles and methodologies – including play-based learning, psychosocial support, and participatory training principles – programmes generally develop their own standards and training processes, with organisations usually supporting training for their own teachers or teachers associated with implementing partner programmes.

- The research did not identify any widespread professional credential attached to teacher development in refugee settings. Similarly, while programmes often present teachers with informal certificates of completion or diplomas (which are important recognition for teachers at a personal level), they often have little weight or applicability beyond the specific programme for which the teacher was trained, although some programmes, particularly those run by larger INGOs, can lead to formal certification in partnership with the government. In some locations, likewise, programmes are required to align with national ECE curricula or standards.

- The programmes most commonly rely on in-person training (both pre-service and in-service), usually a fairly standard cascade or 'train-the-trainers' model, supplemented by ongoing support. The training provided, however, is highly participatory and experiential in nature, with teachers engaged in practicing and modelling the activities they will use in their classes, and with emphasis on relationship-building.

- Some organisations are adapting to more remote temporary approaches in the wake of Covid-19, but these are not expected to be permanent. With a few exceptions, the sector has not drawn a great deal on digital tools.

- Beyond pre- and in-service training, other modalities of teacher support and professional learning – such as mentorship, coaching, or learning circles – feature in many of the high-quality programmes mapped. They also often extend to training well beyond the teacher and adopt a community-based approach to include parents and health workers.

- Given the perceived value of mentoring, coaching, and other support mechanisms, high-quality, relevant observation tools are critical. Some programmes use or adapt government tools, well-known tools like MELE, or rely on more basic tools that mostly evaluate basic considerations like classroom safety.

- While some training models or approaches have been adapted to diverse settings, many are developed in context and thus are limited in their scalability.

Models and Approaches

1. Baytna, Refugee Trauma Initiative (RTI)

Setting

Mainland Greece

Programme Type

• NGO-run (UK-based NGO)

• Provision of early childhood to children 0 to six years through play centres

• Two forms of delivery: direct implementation with some partners; structured yearlong training (launched in 2016) and support of other partner organisations (called Baytna Hubs) to build skills and capacity needed to deliver Baytna model (launched in fall 2019)

Programme Approach

• Trauma-sensitive and identity-informed healing model, aiming to mitigate the impacts of toxic stress on refugee children and families in Greece by facilitating and encouraging protective relationships

• Play-based but carefully structured approach, with emphasis on differentiation

• Programming is co-designed with refugees

• Baytna is not required to be aligned with any Greek government standards, curriculum, or training protocols

Facilitator Demographics

• Facilitators are usually Greek, though they may work in tandem with facilitators from the asylum-seeker community

Training Structure and Content

• Facilitators attend four three-day trainings throughout the year (one pre-service, three in-service)

• Training includes instruction around early childhood brain development and the impacts of toxic stress

• Facilitators trained in child protection and psychological first aid to build skills to provide psychosocial support and develop refugee children's social-emotional skills

• Training includes both practical methodologies for facilitators – such as movement and free play – as well as deliberate attention to relationships, internalized bias, judgments around difference, and identity considerations

Delivery Mode and Approach

• Experiential approach

- Emphasis on need for self-awareness and reflective practice

- RTI has a training manual, but recognises that neither a manual nor a few days of training are sufficient to embed the therapeutic principles at the centre of Baytna's model, hence the programme's emphasis on relationship-building and reflective practice

- Training initially delivered by RTI staff, including the executive director and a psychotherapist, with Baytna facilitators delivering some sessions, as well; later in the year, partners may deliver some sessions, as well

Ongoing Support

- Ongoing feedback and support for facilitators

- RTI makes facilitators aware of policy developments that affect young refugee children to ensure that facilitators can plan and respond accordingly

Scale

- 10 Hubs facilitators and about 30 internal facilitators trained to deliver Baytna directly; 590 children attended Baytna (through direct centres and Baytna Hubs) in 2019, and more than 1,200 children have been reached by RTI since Baytna began in 2016

- RTI's Hub model helps minimise scaling costs, as partner organisations are responsible for most operational costs, such as providing space and salaries for facilities

Certification

- Trainings is not yet connected to any formal accreditation, though this may be a longer-term consideration for RTI

2. Little Ripples, iACT

Setting

Refugee camps in Chad, Cameroon, Tanzania, and Greece

Programme Type

- NGO-run (US-based NGO)

- Home-based early learning model for children ages 3 to 5

- Full model in Chad, launched in 2013; launching of model or more limited training of teachers on invitation from other NGOs in Cameroon, Tanzania, and Greece, but iACT is only fully responsible for the Little Ripples programme in Chad

Programme Approach

- Curriculum built on the pillars of peace, helping, and sharing, with interest in trauma recovery and mindfulness

- Curriculum structure aims to promote SEL and learning through play, with focus on building resilience, emotional regulation, positive relationships, concentration, and cooperation

- Non-violence and positive behaviour management are central tenants of the programme structure

- Little Ripples subscribes to the idea that if children are safe and happy, they will learn

- Model heavily emphasises community ownership and was co-created with refugees in Chad. Over time at a given site, delivery of Little Ripples transitions to be largely community-driven and sustaining

- Model is intended to be a framework of a curriculum filled in by refugees with their own songs, stories, games, and other content. As such, some of the details of the programme are only formed at the training stage with the refugee teachers

- In Chad, Little Ripples is required to align with the Chadian preschool curriculum, though this is quite light, placing few restrictions on the programme. In Cameroon, Little Ripples is used as a framework and approach to help preschools implement their curriculum. In Tanzania and Greece, Little Ripples is not currently aligned with the national curriculum; in Greece, the local NGO decided to use Little Ripples as a day care model to avoid some costs and administrative restrictions

Facilitator Demographics

- Young refugee women between the ages of 18 and 26

Training Structure and Content

- Three trainings over the course of about a year and a half

- First training is pre-service and prepares teachers to run a centre (called a Pond). Conducted by iACT staff who are based out of the US, the first training is highly practical, focused more on what teachers will be doing in their classes and less on why

- Second and third training are in-service. Second training aims to deepen teachers' understanding of key concepts; and third incorporates more learning on the science of early childhood learning and development

- Training follow about four days, though length varies depending on the context

- Training follow a clear framework for each day, but structure is intentionally flexible and adaptable

Delivery Model and Approach

- Participatory and inclusive approach: training is conducted in a circle, and teachers are engaged in the activities that they will use with their students

- Teachers sing songs they grew up with, and develop storybooks with their own stories, helping to ensure relevance of learning materials

- Training emphasizes play-based learning, mindfulness, and nonviolence

- Training aims to facilitate teacher feedback and peer learning

- By the second training, high-potential teachers have been identified and are given a greater role in the training, and by the third training, iACT takes a step back to be less involved in delivery of the training as refugee capacity grows

Ongoing Support and Professional Learning

- Each Pond has two teachers, and teachers rotate to another Pond for a week to learn from and build relationships with their fellow teachers

Scale

- In Chad, 138 refugee teachers trained and over 2,500 students reached; in Tanzania, 40 teachers and over 6,000 children reached; in Cameroon 41 teachers and over 1,000 children reached; and in Greece, 34 refugee community members trained

- Model frontloads the training costs in bringing in iACT staff from the US for the first of three training courses. Over the course of the programme, though, training costs decline as local actors take a growing role in implementation

Certification

- Teachers receive certificates for each of the three training courses and are considered fully trained by iACT after completion of the third training, though certificates carry little formal weight outside Little Ripples

- iACT has developed a webpage detailing the training so that if the refugee moves, there is clear information available about the teacher's prior training

A child takes part in a lesson in Homs, Syria.
© Education Cannot Wait
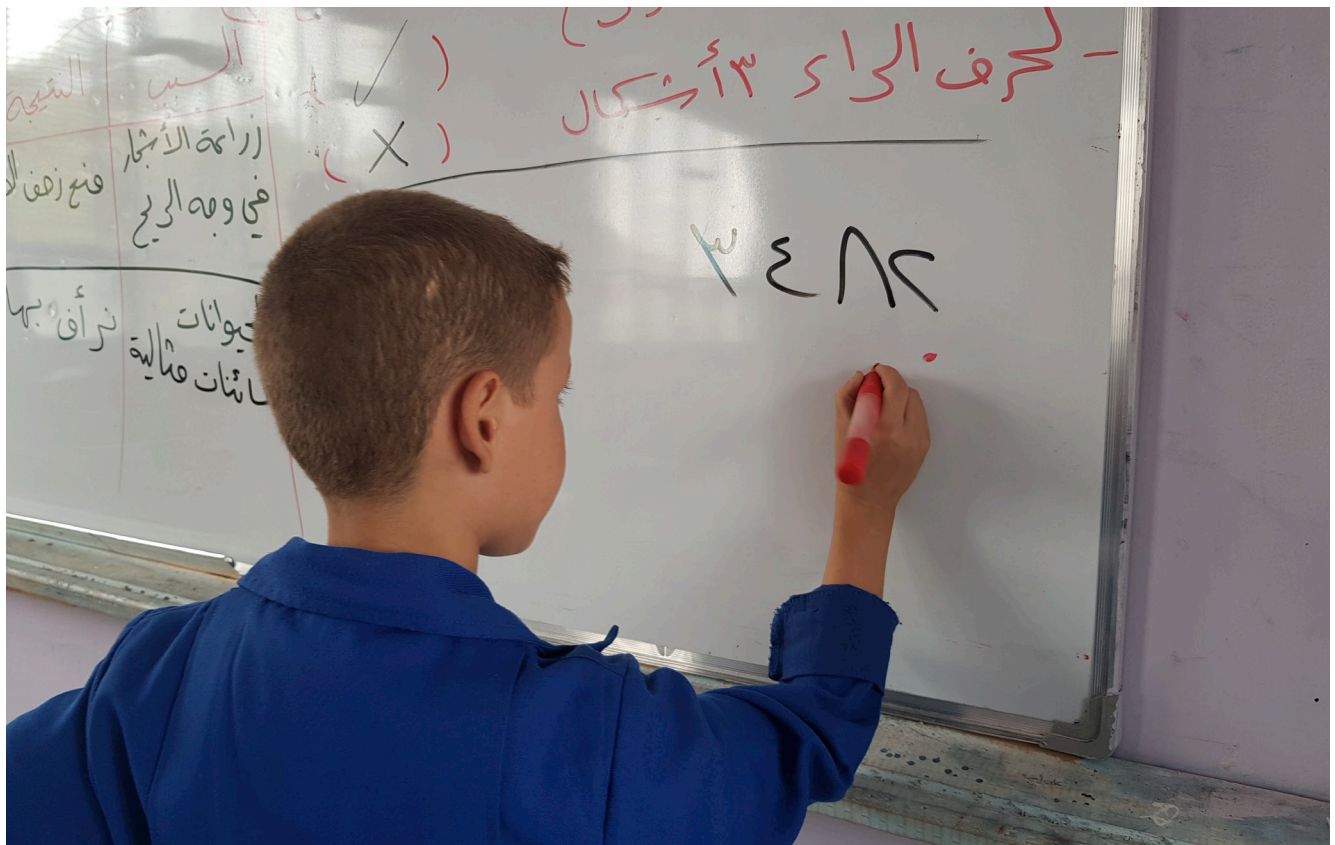
3. Humanitarian Play Labs, BRAC

Setting

Rohingya refugee camps and host community areas in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Programme Type

- INGO-run (BRAC)

- Centre-based ECD programming run through Play Labs in the camps and host community for children ages two to six

- A home-based model for children aged zero to two, facilitated by volunteers, is similar to the centre-based programme discussed below, but with more focus on psychosocial support (PSS), nutrition, and the mother's mental health, and thus more involvement from para-counsellors

Programme Approach

- Guided by focus on learning and healing through play

- Adapted from original Play Labs model used in Bangladesh, Uganda, and Tanzania

- Humanitarian Play Labs approach started during the influx in 2017 but had previously been child-friendly spaces

- Heavy emphasis on contextualisation and cultural identities of children and creating communities. This plays out in the rhymes, physical play, and art used in the programme. Curriculum development staff use field visits and discussions in the community to collect stories, rhymes, and play that reflect Rohingya children's culture

- In developing and scaling the model, BRAC brought it to the Bangladeshi refugee rehabilitation office for sign-off

- Developmental also informed by Bangladeshi and global early learning standards.

Facilitator Demographics

- Young Rohingya women aged between about 18 and mid-20s; initially the model included one host community woman and one refugee woman, but the Rohingya play leaders were able to engage so well with the students given their shared culture that there has been a shift towards two Rohingya play leaders per centre

- Beyond the play leaders, as well, the model heavily emphasises women as drivers of change and role models, and most staff associated with Humanitarian Play Labs (the project assistants and para-counsellors) are female

Training Structure and Content

- Like the rest of the model, Humanitarian Play Labs training content was adapted from the original Play Labs model

- Pre-service training lasts six days and includes both content on child protection, child development, the importance of early stimulation, and information on play and healing, psychosocial support, and children's wellbeing

Delivery Model and Approach

- Training combines delivery of content with hands-on practice for play leaders to adjust to using a hands-on approach

- Training is led by project assistants, who are female supervisors who work with play leaders on play pedagogy and children's engagement, and by para-counsellors, who support play leaders on psychosocial support issues

Ongoing Support and Professional Learning

- Every Humanitarian Play Lab has a designated project assistant to supervise them; the supervisors serve as the first line of support for play leaders, along with para-counsellors

- Play leaders attend monthly in-service training sessions in groups of 12 to 15 to discuss what they have been doing, any challenges they are facing, and what they will do moving forward

- In-service training is usually facilitated by project assistants, and over time play leaders themselves develop greater expertise and help facilitate

- In-service training sessions create an important space for women to come together

- Though more from a monitoring and research perspective than a professional development perspective, BRAC has also adapted a range of tools to observe what play leaders are doing in the classroom. These include a play interaction tool and a play fidelity tool

Scale

- In the camp, the Play Labs model collectively caters to 41,000 children aged zero to six. This includes children aged two to six in 304 centre-based programmes (the focus of the above discussion) and over 1,000 home-based programmes for children aged zero to two (which, as mentioned above, follow a generally similar training approach and model). Over 600 play leaders have been trained for the centres, and over a thousand volunteers for the home-based model

- In the host community, there are 2,800 host community children ages four to five in 100 Play Labs

Certification

- Play leaders receive a contract and are recognised and respected in the community for their roles, but BRAC is looking at more formal pathways for recognising their work and training

- There is a sense that the Humanitarian Play Labs model and training have a high degree of credibility, and if they were to go to another NGO, they would be highly sought after

4. Shishu Bikash Kendro (SBK), Plan International

Setting

Rohingya refugee camps and surrounding host community areas in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Programme Type

- INGO-run (Plan International)

- Community-based (usually home-based) early learning model for children aged three to five that began in 2018

- Preschool element of broader Plan programming that also includes parenting education

Programme Approach

- Grounded in the domains of holistic development: social-emotional, cognitive, physical, and linguistic

- Play-based curriculum emphasising wellbeing, psychosocial support, and health and hygiene

- Approach was developed and written in Bangladesh and adapted to the context of Cox's Bazar, with focus on building on the local community's strengths

- Aligned with early learning development standards and Plan's global ECD standards. Government standards related to curriculum and training are not enforced for SBKs

- Centres use community space, often the facilitator's home

Facilitator Demographics

- In keeping with community perceptions about gender, facilitators are Rohingya women in the camps, and host community women in community areas

- Given space constraints in the area, Plan begins by identifying a learning space and, through community outreach, identifies a facilitator associated with the space

- Facilitators have usually never taught before but express an interest in teaching and usually have some level of literacy, though literacy is generally low in Cox's Bazar

Training Structure and Content

- Pre-service training lasts six days

- Monthly or bi-monthly refresher training courses introduce facilitators to new games and rhymes and reiterate concepts from pre-service training

- Focuses largely on practical skills and learning, helping teachers adapt to the model rather than diving deep into the science of ECD

- Delivers simple messages on ECD and focuses on key concepts and values related to holistic development

- Particular emphasis on working cooperatively with students and facilitating routine, which is critical for young children, particularly those who have experienced trauma

Delivery Model and Approach

- Training is focused on hands-on learning, with participatory modelling of games, stories, and songs

- Training follows a cascade model, with programme officers and mentors jointly delivering the pre-service training and mentors delivering the refresher training. A master training for programme officers and mentors is delivered by a Plan ECD specialist. Language and dialect vary at different stages of the cascade, and language can be a challenging issue, as host community and Rohingya dialects differ

Ongoing Support and Professional Learning

- Each centre is assigned a host community (Bangladeshi) mentor to provide support

- Through the coaching model, mentors observe classes to offer support and clarify concepts as needed

- Facilitators have organised an informal teacher learning circle to discuss their challenges and their learning, though little is known about facilitator engagement in this support area, as Plan is not involved in organising the teacher learning circles

Scale

- Currently serving 10,340 students with 470 teachers, who have largely remained the same since the project started in 2018

Certification

- Teachers receive no certification, either formally or informally

5. Preschool Healing Classroom, International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Setting

Various humanitarian locations, including Tanzania, Burundi, Ethiopia, and Lebanon. It will also be adapted in the IRC's MacArthur-funded programme with Sesame Workshop, Ahlan Simsim

Programme Type

- INGO-run (IRC)

- Centre-based preschool

- Global model that has been contextualised across a wide range of settings

Programme Approach

- Model addresses children's psychosocial needs and helps children develop the skills to begin school, including basic literacy and numeracy, cooperative play, and emotional regulation

- Nurturing relationships with adults and a safe learning environment are key to developing these skills in the Preschool Healing Classrooms model

- Approach may manifest in slightly different ways in different contexts, for instance in behaviour management, parent engagement, and naming and framing of different activities or parts of the classroom structure

- Parent engagement is an essential dimension of the approach

Facilitator Demographics

- Teachers are often refugees themselves, though local limitations on employing refugees mean that in some cases, a host community teacher may work in tandem with a refugee facilitator

- Whenever possible, experience of teaching or working with children is a plus

- When possible, teachers have a high school education

Training Structure and Content

- Resource constraints limit pre-service training to four or five days

- Prepares teachers to implement the Healing Classrooms model, which includes an extensive curriculum with structured daily lesson plans, and to support children's basic pre-literacy and numeracy as well as their social-emotional development

- Aims to equip teachers to create a classroom environment for refugee children to feel safe and learn, which requires creating a sense of belonging, control, and nurturing relationships

- Refresher trainings on topics like empathy and communication are sometimes conducted

- IRC emphasises inclusion of children with disabilities in the Preschool Healing Classrooms model, which is strengthened through in-service training

Delivery Model and Approach

- The model leverages a 'training-the-trainers' process of sorts. Though training and staffing varies by context, the IRC has a regional technical ECD specialist in the Middle East who supports the training process

- Grounded in adult learning theory and intends to be hands-on and participatory, though there is some variation in how it is delivered. Depending on the instructional culture of the context, training may at times veer towards more didactic teaching

- Includes extensive play and games and may include reframing of teachers' preconceived ideas about play

Ongoing Support and Professional Learning

- Teachers mentored by supervisors, who have tools like checklists for quality and the Measuring Early Learning Environment tool to provide regular supervision to inform ongoing professional development

- Teachers participate in monthly teacher learning circles that help respond to challenges teachers face around classroom management strategies, understanding the science of ECD, and recognising how trauma manifests in young children

Scale

- The model has been used and adapted in a variety of country contexts for multiple IRC programmes

Certification

- Teachers receive certificates at the end of training, though these do not have formal weight outside of IRC

---

6. Tabshoura Tiny Thinkers in a Box, Lebanese Alternative Learning

Setting

Vulnerable settings in Lebanon, including refugee camps

Programme Type

- NGO-run (Lebanese Alternative Learning (LAL))
- Digital support platform and associated training intended to supplement existing early learning programmes

Programme Approach

- Tabshoura Tiny Thinkers in a Box is an early childhood initiative that uses a small offline server of digital learning materials for young children
- Programme takes an active learning methodology
- Targets children aged three to six, both refugees and other vulnerable children. Programming for refugee children works in partnership with NGOs providing non-formal ECE to refugee children, as refugees' right to formal education only begins at the age of six
- Recognising that teachers in refugee settings are often weighed down with lots of projects outside their formal jobs, the programme aims support teachers in new and interactive ways to approach their work and curriculum, rather than adding to teachers' already heavy workloads

Facilitator Demographics

- Facilitators, who are employed by other partners, teach non-formal education programmes for refugee children
- Many are themselves refugees

Training Structure and Content

- Teachers who are interested only in using LAL's content participate in two workshops. Those interested in creating their own content participate in 12 workshops conducted once a week for three months
- Early workshops train teachers on how to use the tool – for instance, on the tool's functionalities like clicking, dragging and, interactive videos – later workshops cover lesson plans and developing learning objectives

Delivery Model and Approach

- Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, training was delivered in person. At the moment, training is conducted over Zoom

- LAL uses Moodle with a series of plug-ins to make training more interactive

Ongoing Support and Professional Learning

- Given the set up of the programme, teachers are in weekly contact with the trainers and other teachers being trained over the course of the 12-week programme

Scale

- The programme for early childhood educators is still in its early stages, with 34 teachers in refugee environments from two NGOs currently being trained, and two more coming up

- Over time, LAL may identify the most skilled teachers to train others in the same region, though the programme has not yet reached this step

- Training is approximately USD 60 per hour for a group of about 10 teachers. The programme can be relatively cost-efficient because partners cover many of the training costs

Certification

- Teachers will receive internship certificates from LAL but no official certificate that translates outside of the programme

7. Ana Aqra

Setting

Refugee children at various locations across Lebanon (Ana Aqra also serves marginalised Lebanese children)

Programme Type

- NGO-run (Ana Aqra)

- Centre-based early child learning, both ongoing programmes and more cyclical short-term projects, with two shifts per day

Programme Approach

- Programming covers five key domains for early development: linguistic, psychosocial, cognitive, artistic, and social-emotional

- Based on the Ministry's curriculum for non-formal education, with additional content and resources to fill in the gaps of the curriculum

- Parent learning capacity-building is an important part of the model, including a programme to build parents' capacity to support child learning at home

- Targets children aged four to six, who are grouped in three levels

- During Covid, Ana Aqra has shifted to delivering remote learning. Following a needs assessment conducted with parents, Ana Aqra developed a short-term remote approach. Information on the pandemic, PSS materials, and guidance on how families could organise their routine were shared in the early stages. Each week, three objectives and corresponding lessons (in video form) are

shared related to Arabic, foreign language, and either maths or science, which alternate weekly. PSS resources are also shared on an ongoing basis. WhatsApp is also used for families and teachers to communicate. Reception to remote learning has been positive despite the challenges, and Ana Aqra is considering a shift to a hybrid model of in-person and remote learning when the pandemic allows, as Lebanon is also facing an economic shock along with Covid-19

Facilitator Demographics

• Following rules and regulations set by the Ministry, teachers should have a degree in ECE or primary school

• All teachers are Lebanese

Training Structure and Content

• Pre-service training covers the basics of ECE, including concepts related to child learning, classroom management, and organisation of the centres

• Teachers are trained on the Ana Aqra approach, which involves sequenced activities and learning, including reading aloud, circle time, real-life connection, before independent practice at learning stations catering to different learning styles and levels

• Training courses lasts for three days of five hours

Delivery Model and Approach

• Trainings are interactive, limited to 20 participants to allow for this more engaging approach; workshop-style with extensive group work

• The NGO's training department has trainers who have developed the curriculum and delivered the training

Ongoing Support and Professional Learning

• In-service training course cover more specific topics such as inclusive education, language sounds (in Arabic and foreign language – French or English)

• Depending on the needs of the centre, teachers receive coaching visits from the ECE focal point and coaches once per month or once per week

• Observation is conducted with an adapted Danielson Teacher Evaluation framework

Scale

• Serves about 3,000 children annually (1,000 children during each of the year's three cycles) through two long-term projects in which teachers are employees and additional short-term projects in which teachers work on a contractual basis. During regular implementation, there were about 60 teachers

• There are currently 20 teachers doing remote learning with 1,000 students. This number is based on the project time frame rather than Covid-19

Certification

• Teachers receive an informal Ana Aqra certificate

Providers

The following international organisations offer ECE/ECD programming in refugee settings in a range of contexts, though without a singular model or approach extending across contexts.

1. Plan International

Setting

ECE or ECD programming in a range of humanitarian settings, including Bangladesh (see Shishu Bikash Kendro above for in-depth discussion of this programming), Tanzania, Uganda, Colombia, Jordan, and Nigeria (in Nigeria, programming serves internally displaced persons rather than refugees)

Programme Type

• INGO-run

• Programming varies substantially across country contexts

Programme Approach

• At global level, Plan focuses heavily on gender-sensitive programming

• Programme development starts at country level

• Some country offices are bound by the Ministry of Education's curriculum and standards, while others have flexibility to develop their own child-centered pedagogical approaches (i.e. Nigeria)

Facilitator Demographics

• The Ministry of Education is usually involved in recruitment in some way; in some cases, the government may test ECE instructors, which informs recruitment

Training Structure and Content

• Typically covers classroom management, formative and summative assessment, and creation of teaching and learning materials, among other topics (with the caveat that a focus on toy-making and production of other learning materials can sometimes detract from focus on teaching)

• Emphasis on gender dimensions of education

Delivery Model and Approach

• Varies by setting, but may end up being more didactic than intended, especially when there is not substantial oversight

• Pre- and post-assessments of teachers conducted during training

Boys in Maimana, a northern province in Afghanistan.
© UNICEF/UN0467420/Fazel

Ongoing Support and Professional Learning

- Education officers conduct classroom observation. Tools used for these vary by setting and include modified INEE or Teachers in Crisis Contexts (TICC) tools or modified Ministry of Education tools. Tools are typically country specific, and what is examined in tools varies substantially

- Teacher learning circles are conducted in some settings but can vary greatly in their relevance and efficacy

- WhatsApp groups and similar teacher supports are encouraged

Certification

- In most cases, training is not accompanied by formal certification, given the policy issues around refugee employment. That said, in some places (such as Uganda) it can result in full ertification of teachers, though this process can be slow and unwieldy, and may look more at what teachers are doing on paper (for instance their lesson plans) than how they understand the curriculum and how they teach

- Certificates sometimes provided with training as informal 'feel-good' recognition or celebration of teachers' completion

---

2. Save the Children

Setting

- ECE and ECD in a variety of emergency contexts, including Nepal, Afghanistan, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Nigeria, and Niger, with forthcoming programming in Colombia

- Work in a range of refugee settings, including camps, formal settlements, or informal settlements that have, over time, developed into more long-standing neighbourhoods

ProgrammeType

- INGO-run

- Programming varies substantially across country contexts

Programme Approach

- Varies significantly by context

- Save the Children emphasises the need for holistic development for young children. As such, programming is developed in close engagement with other sectors involved in a given emergency setting, so early development and learning efforts may be embedded in the education sector or in other sector programming (for instance, embedded in child protection or health sectors, with programming taking place in a child-friendly place, in a corner in a health centre, etc.)

- When possible, Save the Children prefers to align programming with a national curriculum. In emergencies, however, this may not become immediately available or may not exist. In those cases, Save the Children will develop its own programming and will align with the curriculum if and when it becomes available

- Early learning usually begins around three or three and a half of age, though in some contexts the government considers early childhood to cover only ages four and five. Programming is often geared towards preparing children to enter into primary school and thus in some contexts may extend up to the age of eight

Facilitator Demographics

- Vary by context and by programme, but generally there is a preference for those who are literate and who may have some existing background or skill in this area

- Terminology (teacher, facilitator, volunteer) varies by context

Training structure and content

- Varies, but usually draws from a pool of common approaches in the form of Save the Children's technical packages for supporting children in key areas (emergent literacy and maths, social-emotional learning (SEL), nutrition, etc.) These packages are highly practical and are comprised mostly of activity cards for no- or low-resource activities

- Interest in importance of wellbeing and play, with particular attention to helping teachers understand methodology of structured versus unstructured play, as this can be a challenge for teachers

- Discusses how to set up and maintain learning spaces and play spaces

- As facilitators often have low literacy levels, training materials may be adapted to include extensive pictures

Delivery Model and Approach

- In a cascade model, trainings are usually led by a Save the Children officer who has been trained on the technical package

- Teachers/facilitators are assessed for Save the Children to be aware of their level of ECE training

- Engaging and participatory training that participants often consider fun

Ongoing Support and Professional Learning

- Follow-up training conducted, usually every month or two. The topics for these sessions are identified based on feedback received from quality and monitoring checks, and may include topics such as PSS, interactive reading, developing locally made materials, etc.

- Save the Children officers are the focal point for facilitators

- The IDELA tool is used in monitoring and observing; although it is a child assessment, it also includes a classroom environment component, with interest in how the space is set up and what materials are available. The tool is a starting place to be adapted to different contexts

- Teachers/facilitators are usually paired in a buddy system to learn from and support one another; Save the Children also encourages facilitators to create groups, either in person or on platforms like WhatsApp to discuss their challenges and activities

Certification

- Save the Children prefers for training and knowledge to be validated in some way. In some settings, teachers are certified by the government. Where this certification does happen, governments are either involved in development or delivery, or have been sensitised on the work that Save the Children is doing (for instance, the Ministry may have been invited to the training) for the government to recognise and be aware of what is being done

- At the end of training, teachers receive Save the Children certificates as proof of completion. When pre- and post-tests have been conducted, the certificate may include the score

3. UNICEF

Setting

ECE and ECD in a variety of humanitarian contexts, including ECE in : Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan

Programme Type

- Multilateral agency

- Programming implemented by implementing partners and thus varies substantially across country contexts

Programme Approach

- Includes incorporation of ECD, learning, and education into country response plans and global response plans; support to governments in developing the early childhood workforce (generally for UNICEF's ECE work, not only in humanitarian settings); and implementation of programming through implementing partners

- Emphasis on holistic programming, with particular interest in brain development in the first 1,000 days of life, but early childhood programming goes up to the age of eight. ECD and nurturing care programming often tends to more heavily emphasise nutrition and health than early learning and education, but also includes early learning (including through home-visiting and integrated in home, health, and nutrition-focused programming) and more traditional ECE/pre-primary

- Has general ECD guidance, but programming varies significantly by context and by implementing partner

- UNICEF has developed an Early Childhood Development Kit with physical resources for caregivers to create a learning environment for up to 50 children from birth up to age eight. The kit's games, puppets, art supplies, hygiene supplies, puzzles, and other materials aim to promote thinking, feeling, and interacting with others

- When possible, there is a preference to align ECE programming with government curriculum

Facilitator Demographics

- Always aim to ensure community involvement

- Depending on government regulations, refugees may or may not be allowed to work; in some contexts, all teachers may be refugees, while others may have host community teachers or host community and refugee teachers working in tandem

Training Structure and Content

- Varies substantially, dependent on implementing partner and setting. Implementing partner models may vary in the rigour of their training

- When possible, curriculum and training align with available government regulations

- Outside of ECE, UNICEF has training modules for targeting frontline workers in counselling and supporting caregivers (Caring for the Caregiver module) and health workers in building families' strong relationships with their young children (Care for Child Development module); however, these extend well beyond early learning and ECE

Delivery Model and Approach

- Varies substantially, dependent on implementing partner and setting

Ongoing Support and Professional Learning

- Varies substantially, dependent on implementing partner and setting

Certification

- Best practice is to align with government activities and certification practices, but sometimes this may not be possible

- In protracted crises with long-term refugees who are well-established, it's easier and more feasible to align with Ministry of Education certification programmes; where Ministry of Education certification programmes do not exist, may try to follow evidence-based models

- UNICEF's training modules for other frontline workers (not ECE teachers/ facilitators), Caring for the Caregiver and Care for Child Development, are intentionally flexible without certification

4. Aga Khan Foundation (AFK)

Setting

Serving refugee and host populations in West Nile (Uganda), Kakuma (Kenya), Afghanistan, and Syria internally displaced persons

Programme Type

- INGO

- Programming sometimes implemented directly by local staff and sometimes by implementing

Programme Approach

- Varies by setting but uses Nurturing Care Framework to help guide

- Core elements of AKF programming include focus on child development and

promotion of tolerance, empathy, and pluralism. Not only focused on maths or literacy but also on social-emotional learning and 21st century skills

- Within ECE programmes (AKF also runs broader ECD programming), try to connect with health or nutrition

- Always try to work with, integrate into, or influence government systems

- Emphasis on community involvement from the earliest stages

Facilitator Demographics

- Varies by setting

- Training structure and content

- Varies by context

- TTraining courses include work with teachers on promoting pluralism, tolerance, and diversity

- Emphasis on core elements of child development, developmentally appropriate activities, and strong focus on PSS, which is critical given high levels of stress in these settings

- Almost all trainings include toy-making workshops to promote use of local materials, in line with AKF's emphasis on play-based learning

- Teachers also trained on how to engage parents

Delivery Model and Approach

- Varies by setting

- Cascade model for cost-effectiveness, but also try to engage teachers in training courses as teacher champions or teacher leads

Ongoing Support and Professional Learning

- Coaching varies by country, but AKF tries to promote some sort of mentoring approach, either peer to peer or by a Ministry of Education supervisor; peer to peer is more common in refugee settings because (peer to peer or a supervisor) – quality varies greatly, sometimes work really well, sometimes doesn't; supervisors can be Ministry of Education staff who do not have to do any training with Aga Khan Development Network (this is rare with refugees)

- Different observation tools are used in different settings, with no consistent tool

- WhatsApp, Viber, and text messages for support are being used during Covid; online support is also being tested, though this is less accessible

Certification

- AKF gives a training certificate after each training, largely intended to congratulate teachers for the work they have done. The training does not have much meaning outside of their work, but teachers feels strongly about the certificates and expect to receive them

- In at least one setting (Uganda), teachers can be certified through the government. In that case, the training is much more extensive

5. UNHCR

Setting

- Range of humanitarian settings in which UNHCR is involved

- ECE is not a major area of UNHCR activity, especially at the global level, so where ECE work is happening, it is usually driven at the country level

Programme Type

- Multilateral agency

- Supports implementing partners, usually INGOs, and thus variant across UNHCR-supported programmes

Programme Approach

- ECE is not a major global focus of UNHCR, and often in settings in which UNICEF is active, UNICEF rather than UNHCR covers this area

- UNHCR focuses heavily on working with and through national systems. Where ECE is not a strong part of the national system, support for early learning may be pursued in the protection sector with more of an ECD focus

Facilitator Demographics

- Varies by setting; often have at least some national teachers who are paid by UNHCR but certified by the government. Depending on the context, they may mentor refugee teachers

Training Structure and Content

- Varies by setting, usually trying to work with the national system and their approach to training

- Implementing partners usually deliver the training (sanctioned by the Ministry) but sometimes it is more connected to the Ministry, depending on the setting

Delivery Model and Approach

- Varies by setting and implementing partner

Ongoing Support and Professional Learning

- Varies by setting and implementing partner

Certification

- Varies by context, but in many places, refugee teachers will never be fully certified to work as national teachers, at least in camps

Above
UNICEF-supported kindergarten at
Sureyeli Misafirler. Turkey.
© UNICEF/UNI158165/Noorani

Theirworld
theirworld.org