



Scoping Study:
The Enabling Factors, Barriers, and Limitations
to an Adapted Tuseme Club in Refugee and Internally
Displaced Communities in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda

GPE-KIX Tuseme: A voice for Internally Displaced and Refugee children
project report

2025

Cite as: FAWE, HERS-EA, and ACER UK (2025). *Scoping Study: The Enabling Factors, Barriers, and Limitations to an Adapted Tuseme Club in Refugee and Internally Displaced Communities in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. GPE-KIX Tuseme: A voice for Internally Displaced and Refugee children project report.* Forum for African Women Educationalists.

Disclaimer: *This work was carried out with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of IDRC or its Board of Governors.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report Context and Aims

This report constitutes a scoping study into 12 refugee and internally displaced communities in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. The aim was to identify any contextual social, cultural, or economic factors which would support or hinder the deployment of a Tuseme gender empowerment club in the communities. Tuseme is a Kiswahili word meaning ‘let us speak out’ and constitutes an established school-based club across Sub-Saharan Africa, which has demonstrated its capacity to empower youth through the medium of theatre and arts. Using its 12-step approach, it amplifies the voices of young people and equips them with the skills they need to claim their educational and social rights. This report forms part of the second phase of a three-year applied research project, which aims to generate evidence on whether and how the Tuseme club can be scaled into refugee and internally displaced communities in East Africa and beyond. As such, the research aimed to identify evidence-based insights from the project’s target communities, which can be used to adapt and scale the model.

Methods

Research questions

1. What are the main socio-cultural barriers to the effective deployment of an adapted *Tuseme* club?
2. What are the main enabling factors for a successful deployment of an adapted *Tuseme* club?
3. What contextual adaptations need to be made to the *Tuseme* club to support its effectiveness?

Approach

The research used a case study approach to explore contextual factors that would support or hinder the deployment of the Tuseme gender empowerment initiative into target refugee and internally displaced communities in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda.

Sampling

12 schools were sampled across the target countries (4 per country) using purposive sampling. The key sampling variables considered were safety and accessibility, type and size of school, gender balance of school, and population type (refugee, IDP, mixed).

Data collection and analysis

The primary data collection method employed was qualitative via semi-structured focus group discussions and key informant interviews. This data was analysed using thematic coding. A range of quantitative data was also collected. This was primarily administrative data from the schools, and descriptive statistics were used to explore it. Evidence from all data sources was

triangulated at the case study level, country level, and cross-country level to identify actionable insights for adapting the Tuseme model.

Findings

The study identified a range of actionable learning for adapting the Tuseme gender empowerment club for the East African refugee and internally displaced context. The key findings are shared below at the country and regional levels.

Ethiopia

The findings from Ethiopia provide an in-depth picture of the enabling and disabling factors affecting the implementation of Tuseme across four case study schools (Hailemariam Mamo, Fitawrari Gebeyehu, Sherkole, and Woumba secondary schools). These schools represent diverse contexts, including IDP and refugee settings, and reveal that while Tuseme has strong potential to build student voice, agency, and resilience, its effectiveness depends on integration into a wider support system that addresses the holistic needs of learners. Addressing socio-economic needs, integrating psychosocial support, strengthening infrastructure, supporting teachers, and embedding the model within school and community systems are likely all essential for sustainable impact.

The most significant disabling factor across all schools was the pervasive socio-economic hardship, which limits students' ability to engage in schooling and, by extension, school clubs. Many students, particularly in Sherkole and Woumba, prioritised labour over schooling, such as gold mining or household work. This reportedly led to absenteeism and school dropouts. Girls were further disadvantaged by economic challenges linked to menstrual hygiene and early marriage. Furthermore, schools were unable to provide reliable support systems for their students due to inconsistent external aid. These realities illustrate that Tuseme cannot succeed in isolation; its voice and agency model should be complemented by tangible material support. For instance, feeding programmes, sanitary pads, and basic supplies.

Language and cultural barriers presented further challenges for the success of the Tuseme clubs. For example, refugee students at Hailemariam Mamo and Sherkole struggled with instruction in Amharic, which limited their participation in schooling and will have similar implications for clubs. This is perhaps unsurprising in culturally heterogeneous settings like schools, which tend to support host communities and refugees from different socio-linguistic backgrounds. However, finding inclusive and low-cost solutions will be a challenge for the adapted model, yet likely crucial to its success. Deeply rooted gender norms also constrained student voice, particularly around issues related to early marriage and domestic burdens. This is particularly problematic considering the *raison d'être* of the clubs is to provide learners with confidence and skills to speak about gender-based challenges affecting their lives. As such, the findings highlight the need for culturally sensitive, multilingual facilitation and careful navigation of local norms. Additionally, the study noted a decline in motivation and hope among students, which was compounded by trauma from conflict and displacement. This highlights the need for psycho-social support in the target communities, suggesting that adaptations that incorporate trauma-informed care, hope-building activities, and career guidance could be beneficial.

Teacher motivation and capacity also emerged as pivotal to the establishment and maintenance of the Tuseme clubs. While teachers displayed dedication to their role and students, they also reported being overburdened, underpaid, and lacking compensation for their extra work. This has the potential to reduce their ability to consistently support clubs. Therefore, activities like capacity-building, recognition, and potential incentives could be effective in retaining teacher engagement. Broader actors in the educational ecosystems, including school management, parents, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), local government, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), also played decisive roles. School leaders were identified as critical for institutionalising Tuseme, parents and PTAs were found to influence attendance and attitudes, and NGOs were reported to provide essential (though often short-term) support. The evidence points to the need for stronger, long-term partnerships and more consistent community engagement.

Kenya

The findings from Kenya offer a nuanced understanding of how the Tuseme model could function within refugee and internally displaced school communities, with insights from four case study schools (Runyu, Central, Malakal primary schools, and Samali Bantu secondary school). The evidence demonstrates that while the core principles of voice and agency remain highly relevant, their application in the target communities requires deliberate contextual adaptation to address structural, socio-economic, and cultural barriers. By embedding the programme within broader socio-economic and policy frameworks, and by addressing the structural barriers faced by students and teachers alike, Tuseme can move from being an isolated club activity to a transformative, sustainable educational strategy.

The most prominent disabling factor likely to affect the successful deployment of a Tuseme club was the widespread lack of basic amenities. Poverty, hunger, and the absence of essential learning materials were consistently cited by participants across all four schools. This reportedly led to absenteeism, disengagement, and dropout, which will naturally lead to reduced learner engagement in the clubs and, in turn, a reduced overall impact. This suggests that Tuseme cannot be implemented in isolation, but instead, it must be linked to complementary support mechanisms. For example, school feeding programmes, provision of sanitary pads, and partnerships with NGOs for material aid.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, psychosocial support emerged as another critical area of need amongst the student population, which may act as a barrier to club participation and the wider empowerment process. Refugee and internally displaced learners reported high levels of trauma, depression, and emotional distress. While Tuseme clubs currently offer a degree of peer-based support and safe spaces, they cannot substitute for structured psychosocial services. This suggests that effective adaptation requires integration with professional counselling and other psychosocial support services, which could be implemented through NGO partnerships. The study also highlighted the necessity of addressing issues most relevant to each school community. Each school community identified unique challenges. For instance, early pregnancies linked to *'disco matanga'* in Runyu primary school, early marriage and documentation issues in Central and Malakal primary schools, and FGM, GBV, and child prostitution in Somali Bantu secondary school. Tuseme clubs naturally embody this approach through their localised engagement processes, enabling learners to tailor their advocacy, performances, and activities to the specific concerns of their communities. This ensures that the clubs remain relevant, responsive, and impactful.

Teacher capacity, motivation, and consistency were found to be key factors influencing the club's success, particularly in terms of sustainability. The findings highlight persistent teacher-related challenges, including underpaid or unpaid teachers, frequent transfers, layoffs, and limited professional development opportunities. These likely undermine both consistency and morale. Therefore, to support sustainable implementation, the model should consider incorporating factors such as continuous training, mentorship, and tangible incentives like professional recognition, resource provision, or financial support.

Community engagement and policy alignment emerged as enablers of long-term club sustainability. Leveraging local radio, community mobilisers, PTAs, and block leaders were found to be effective in raising awareness and challenging entrenched cultural barriers such as early marriage, FGM, and boy preference. Embedding these mechanisms into the Tuseme action planning and advocacy processes may help increase the reach and impact of the clubs. Furthermore, raising the profile of clubs with local and national government and integrating the club into their formal policies and processes, for example, through gender equality policies, could provide an institutional anchor which will support buy-in and increase scalability. Collecting evidence on attendance, retention, and empowerment outcomes will likely support securing policy buy-in and additional resources. One way to do this draws on FAWE's Centres of Excellence model. Schools could adopt accountability measures such as audits, feedback loops, and PTA involvement to reinforce standards for gender equity, inclusion, and safety.

Uganda

In Uganda, the findings highlighted the potential for the Tuseme model to empower learners through voice, agency and critical awareness within refugee and internally displaced school contexts, as well as a number of enabling and disabling factors that can support model adaptation. Evidence was drawn from four case study schools (Pagirinya, Arinyapi, Rwamwanja, and Ntenungi secondary schools).

A central disabling factor identified is pervasive poverty and material deprivation, which was consistently reported as constraining learners' participation in education and, by extension, the Tuseme clubs. Girls in Pagirinya, for example, faced acute shortages of sanitary pads and school supplies, which directly undermined attendance and retention. For Tuseme to thrive and ensure participation, it will need to consider adaptations to address or mitigate these deficits. This could be achieved by linking clubs with external provision programmes or by embedding income-generating activities. For example, sanitary pad-making.

Deeply entrenched gender and cultural norms emerged as another critical barrier to the Tuseme club's success. The study found that in Pagirinya, Arinyapi, and Rwamwanja, girls were still perceived as marriage assets, while boys' education and leadership were concurrently prioritised. Such pervasive social norms are likely to impact how the Tuseme club and the gender views it promotes are received by students and the wider community, which will likely impact both participation and the wider ability of the club to influence positive change. As such, for Tuseme to be effective, the model needs to strengthen its community sensitisation strategies to shift norms around early marriage, girls' leadership, and equitable participation. Key groups to work with include faith leaders, mothers, PTAs, and Boards of Governors (BOGs). Building "safe spaces" for girls to develop voice and agency would likely also help to counteract these socio-cultural pressures.

Like in Kenya and Ethiopia, the psychosocial impact of displacement was identified as a consistent challenge amongst learners, negatively affecting their engagement in schooling. This will likely have implications for participation in the club. Trauma and low motivation were reported in Pagirinya, Rwamwanja, and Ntenungi, with teachers often acting as informal caregivers despite lacking training. This implies that for Tuseme to support empowerment and ensure consistent learner participation in the clubs, it should be adapted to provide psychosocial support. This could be achieved through multiple routes. For instance, collaboration with NGOs, trained counsellors, or health providers could ensure that the existing peer-support aspect of clubs is complemented by professional interventions. Without such adaptation, the model risks being undermined by the emotional burden learners face.

At the structural level, the study identified resource scarcity and weak infrastructure as major barriers to club sustainability. Overcrowded classrooms, lack of club budgets, and untrained teachers were particularly acute in Arinyapi, Rwamwanja, and Ntenungi, with students expressing frustration at poorly resourced clubs. This suggests that adaptation cannot be limited to content. It must also ensure resource provision, teacher training, and systemic support.

Cross-country

The cross-country findings indicate that the Tuseme model's success in IDP and refugee communities depends on coordinated engagement across multiple levels, from individual learners to local and national government authorities. At the micro-level, learners are central to the club's mission and success, with the club's focus on voice and agency empowering students to identify problems and emerge as peer leaders. Across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda, students reported valuing safe spaces for confidence-building, emotional support, and expression. Teachers and head teachers are crucial enabling actors for learners, acting as guides, mentors, and informal caregivers. However, they face consistent barriers, which limit their motivation and ability to support their students. Examples include heavy workloads, poor housing, and limited resources. As such, an adapted Tuseme model should consider how to support teacher capacity and agency, perhaps through the provision of targeted training, mentorship, and psychosocial support.

At the meso-level, parents, community members, and NGOs provide vital support, acting as mobilisers for education and partners in student development. Engaging PTAs and BOGs has the potential to enhance school-based initiatives and increase impact. Conversely, informal influencers can reinforce harmful practices, such as early marriage. Therefore, culturally sensitive and targeted community sensitisation was identified as a key area to focus on for the successful deployment of the club. NGOs and aid partners are critical in this regard and were identified as key partners in supporting girls' education and shifting attitudes. However, inconsistent and uncoordinated aid remains a widespread challenge, emphasising the need for long-term collaboration among humanitarian and development actors, sustaining engagement in the clubs and preventing student and community disengagement.

At the macro-level, government bodies and education authorities are essential for institutionalising Tuseme and ensuring long-term sustainability. Introducing the model through formal education structures and aligning it with national plans will likely help to ensure consistent resource allocation and sustained teacher capacity-building over time. Without systemic integration at this level, even well-functioning local initiatives risk remaining fragmented and unsustainable. Overall, the study highlights that Tuseme's effectiveness relies

on the interplay of micro-, meso-, and macro-level actors, with coordinated support across these levels essential for sustainable impact in complex internally displaced and refugee contexts.

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Terms, Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|---|
| ACER UK | Australian Council for Educational Research, United Kingdom |
| AEP | Accelerated Education Program |
| BOG | Board of Governors |
| CBO | Community-Based Organisation |
| CFPU | Child and Family Protection Unit |
| CoE | Centre of Excellence |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organisations |
| DCAO | Deputy Chief Administrative Officer |
| DCC | Deputy County Commissioner |
| DCDO | District Community Development Officer |
| DEO | District Education Officer |
| DICAC | Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission |
| DOS | Director of Studies |
| DRC | Danish Refugee Council |
| DRDIP | Development Response to Displacement Impact Project |
| FAWE | Forum for African Women Educationalists |
| FAWE RS | Forum for African Women Educationalists, Regional Secretariat |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| FGM | Female Genital Mutilation |
| GPE | Global Partnership for Education |
| GRP | Gender Responsive Pedagogy |
| GTE | Gender-Transformative Education |
| HERS-EA | Higher Education Resource Services-East Africa |
| HI | Humanity and Inclusion |
| HIV/AIDS | Human Immune Virus/Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Virus |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IDIs | Individually Directed Interviews |
| IDPs | Internally Displaced Persons |
| IDRC | International Development Research Centre |
| INS | Instant Network Schools |
| IT | Information Technology |
| JKF | Jomo Kenyatta Foundation |
| KEEP | Kenya Equity in Education Project |
| KII | Key Informant Interviews |
| KIX | Knowledge and Innovation Exchange |
| LC1s | Local Councils 1 |
| MDD | Music, Dance and Drama |
| MOES | Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |

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| OPM | Office of the Prime Minister |
| PMS | Premenstrual Syndrome |
| PST | Participatory Systems Thinking |
| PTA | Parents and Teachers Association |
| RRS | Refugees and Returnees Service |
| RWCs | Refugee Welfare Committees |
| SCDO | Senior Community Development Officer |
| SCORTS | Strengthening Community Resilience Through Schools |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SMT | Senior Male Teacher |
| SWT | Senior Woman Teacher |
| Tuseme | "Let Us Speak Out" empowerment program |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| UGiFT | Uganda Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfer |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNEB | Uganda National Examinations Board |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| VECs | Village Education Committees |
| WCC | War Child Canada |

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Displaced populations, disproportionately comprising women and children, face unique, prolonged challenges, with refugees averaging 10 to 26 years in displacement (Citaristi, 2022). While host countries and international aid agencies endeavour to uphold their right to education, significant hurdles persist, including a lack of documentation, language barriers, hidden costs, and inadequately trained teachers (UNESCO, 2020; Dryden-Peterson, 2016). This scoping study explores the contextual realities of refugee and internally displaced (IDP) communities in three East African countries. Namely, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. The aim was to identify the key factors in schools and wider communities that could support or hinder the deployment of the Tuseme gender empowerment club in these types of communities and incorporate the learning into an adapted model. This scoping study constitutes the second phase of a three-year applied research project, which aims to generate evidence for the scaling of the Tuseme club into refugee and IDP communities.

Tuseme, a Swahili term meaning 'Let's Speak Out,' is an innovative empowerment model that originated in Tanzania in 1996 at the University of Dar es Salaam as a model to empower girls through participatory theatre (Mluma, 2005). It was subsequently adopted and significantly enhanced by FAWE, and has since become a flagship FAWE initiative, widely disseminated through school-based clubs that utilise participatory methods such as drama, debates, and dialogue to enable students, particularly girls, to identify, articulate, and address challenges affecting their education and well-being (Ongaga & Ombonga, 2012; Bali & Mbise, 2018).

The overarching research question for the project is:

1. To what extent does the Tuseme model empower internally displaced and refugee children to identify and analyse the problems that hinder their academic and social development and advocate for change?

The secondary research questions are:

- i. What are the necessary conditions for Tuseme to be effective in promoting gender equality and girls' inclusion in education?
 - a. To what extent does Gender Responsive Pedagogy support the effectiveness of Tuseme?
 - b. To what extent do Centres of Excellence support the effectiveness of Tuseme?
 - c. Who are the key actors and structures to engage to ensure the effectiveness of Tuseme?
- ii. How does Tuseme need to be adapted to support learners from IDP and refugee communities?
 - a. Who are the key actors and structures to engage to ensure the effectiveness of Tuseme in IDP and refugee communities?
 - b. Which are the most promising advocacy and policy influencing approaches for the success of Tuseme?
 - c. Are there any limitations to the adoption of Tuseme in IDP and refugee settings?

The objectives for this phase were to:

1. Identify and analyse the key socio-cultural barriers that may hinder the effective implementation of an adapted Tuseme club model in IDP and refugee communities.

2. Explore and document the main enabling factors that could facilitate the successful deployment of an adapted Tuseme club model in IDP and refugee communities.
3. Determine and propose the necessary contextual adaptations to the Tuseme club model to enhance its effectiveness and ensure its sustainability within IDP and refugee communities.

1.2 Problem Statement

Refugee and internally displaced communities are among the most disadvantaged populations globally, facing wide-ranging challenges such as poverty, conflict, and displacement-induced trauma. Nowhere is this more evident than in sub-Saharan Africa, which currently hosts over one-third of the world's refugee population (UNHCR, 2024). Education has long been recognised as a transformative pathway for alleviating these disadvantages, enabling displaced populations to rebuild their lives through knowledge, skills, and empowerment. However, girls and women within these contexts face distinct and compounded gendered barriers that severely constrain their access to and participation in education. Gender-based violence (GBV), early marriage, menstrual stigma, and the heavy burden of domestic chores contribute to high dropout rates and low transition rates among refugee and internally displaced girls (UNESCO, 2023; UNHCR, 2024). Harmful gender norms often position girls as caretakers rather than learners, while limited access to safe sanitation facilities, female teachers, and protective learning environments further entrenches gender disparities. Even where gender equity policies exist, weak implementation and lack of contextual adaptation leave these learners without meaningful support.

This project seeks to address these persistent inequities by adapting and scaling the Tuseme gender empowerment model within refugee and internally displaced communities in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. The Tuseme approach, originally successful in mainstream school settings across East Africa, empowers girls to identify and articulate the challenges they face, develop leadership and advocacy skills, and collectively engage in problem-solving within their schools and communities. Through this model, the project aims to strengthen girls' voice, agency, and participation in education, while engaging boys, teachers, and communities to foster gender-transformative and inclusive school environments. The contextual realities of refugee and IDP learners in each of the three target countries are detailed below.

Ethiopia

As of December 2023, Ethiopia hosts approximately 1,043,602 refugees and asylum-seekers, positioning it as one of Africa's largest refugee-hosting countries (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2024). The nation maintains an open-door policy, mainly settling refugees from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, and Yemen in five border regions. Education for refugees in Ethiopia faces significant gender parity challenges, with a Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 0.64 at the primary level and 0.39 at the secondary level, notably lower than the national GPIs of 0.90 and 0.87, respectively. While primary education is managed by the Refugee and Returnees' Service (RRS) with NGO support, there are ongoing efforts to transition secondary school management to regional education bureaus by the end of 2025, supported by the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) projects. Both refugee and host community schools adhere to national standards and curriculum. Despite national commitments like the Refugee Proclamation and pledges made at the 2019 and 2023 Global Refugee Forums, refugee school enrolment remains low, with only 40% of school-aged refugee children attending school as of

the 2022/2023 academic year (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2024). Challenges include limited resources, scarce secondary education opportunities, and impacts from ongoing conflicts and economic hardships that also affect host communities. Ethiopia is also the second country with the highest number of IDPs in sub-Saharan Africa, trailing only the Democratic Republic of Congo (IDMC, 2023b). In November 2023, the country recorded an estimated 2.9 million IDPs due to internal ethnic conflict and an additional 1.1 million displaced by climate events (UNICEF, 2023). Approximately 59% of IDPs in Ethiopia are school-aged children, though detailed enrolment data is scarce. In Gambella, for example, the gross enrolment rate for secondary education was around 25% in early 2023, with boys comprising 78% of those enrolled (UNICEF Ethiopia, 2019; UNHCR Ethiopia, 2023).

Kenya

Kenya hosts one of the largest refugee populations globally, with registered refugees and asylum seekers primarily from Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, DRC, Eritrea, Burundi, and Uganda. The majority reside in the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, established in 1991 and 1992, respectively. Additionally, over 50,000 refugees and asylum seekers are estimated to live in urban areas. Access to education remains a significant concern, particularly for girls' secondary school enrolment. In the Kakuma refugee camp, while 40% of girls in primary school take national exams, this figure drops to approximately 27% in secondary school after Grade 5 (Walker & USCRI, 2023). This highlights persistent educational barriers faced by displaced populations in Kenya (Mendenhall et al., 2015). Schools in Kenyan refugee camps must comply with Ministry of Education standards. However, as of 2018, pupil-teacher ratios were extremely high in Dadaab, particularly in pre-primary (120:1) and primary (56:1), compared to 49:1 in mainstream primary schools (KNBS, 2023). Only 8% of primary teachers were nationally certified, and 6 out of 10 refugee teachers were untrained. On average, six students shared a desk, and four shared a textbook across core subjects (Women Educational Researchers of Kenya, 2017). As of the end of 2023, 171,000 people were internally displaced in Kenya, with 131,000 displaced by disasters (primarily floods) and 40,000 by conflict and violence (IDMC, 2024). Kenya has seen a significant increase in disaster-induced internal displacements since 2021.

Uganda

As of 2023, Uganda hosts over 1.5 million refugees and asylum-seekers, primarily from South Sudan and the DRC, making it Africa's largest refugee-hosting nation (UNESCO, 2023). Most reside in northwest settlements, with significant numbers also in Nakivale and Kampala. In Uganda's West Nile subregion, a key refugee settlement area, the 2016 secondary net attendance rate was a mere 9%, less than half the national rate (GEMR Team, 2018). Assessments in four refugee-heavy districts revealed that refugees often faced worse school and living conditions than locals. Refugee settlements had an average pupil-teacher ratio of 113:1 compared to 57:1 outside settlements. Additionally, 28% of refugee families lived on one meal per day, compared to 13% of locals. Despite these disparities, grade 5 reading skills were similarly low among both refugees and native Ugandans (Uwezo, 2018). In response, Uganda's 2018 Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (ERP) aims to improve learning quality and access in 12 refugee-hosting districts, reaching over 675,000 students annually (UNHCR, 2019a; GEMR Team, 2018). Reliable and updated data on internal displacement in Uganda is scarce (Ssempijja, 2022). However, as of the end of 2022, Uganda

estimated a total of 38,000 IDPs due to disasters and 4,800 due to conflict and violence (IDMC, 2023b).

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is primarily grounded in a Gender-Transformative Education (GTE) framework, complemented by Participatory Systems Thinking (PST). These two interlinked perspectives provide a coherent and comprehensive foundation that emphasises voice and agency, gender equality, and systemic change within the education ecosystem. This integrated framework provides the analytical depth necessary to understand and address the complex realities of refugee and IDP learners. At the core of the framework is voice and agency, informed by Paulo Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy and feminist epistemologies (Harding, 1987). The study views displaced learners, particularly girls, as active agents who articulate their own lived realities and co-create solutions to educational barriers. Empowering learners to identify challenges such as gender-based violence, period poverty, and discrimination, and co-create contextually relevant solutions, is central to their psychosocial development and to catalysing broader systems-level reform. This aligns with socio-cultural theories of learning, which emphasise that agency is developed through active participation in social practices and the co-construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Youth voice is therefore conceptualised as a critical leverage point for disrupting entrenched gender norms and restructuring institutional cultures to be more equitable and responsive.

Building on this, the study applies a Gender-Transformative Education (GTE) approach (Leach et al., 2014; Unterhalter, 2007). GTE provides the central analytical lens for this study, as it moves beyond surface-level gender sensitive or gender-responsive approaches to interrogate and transform the unequal power relations that sustain gender inequality in education and society. Moving significantly beyond gender-sensitive or gender-responsive approaches, this study applies a robust GTE lens. GTE, as conceptualised by scholars like Leach et al. (2014) and Unterhalter (2007), is a paradigm that actively seeks to interrogate, challenge, and ultimately *transform* unequal power relations that underpin gender inequality within education systems and broader society. It critically examines how gender norms are reproduced or challenged within curricula, pedagogical practices, teacher-student interactions, peer relationships, and institutional culture. GTE recognises gender as a social construct, rather than a biological determinant, and seeks to redistribute resources, opportunities, and decision-making power to historically marginalised groups. This transformative orientation ensures that interventions do not merely provide equal access but actively challenge the structural roots of inequality, fostering environments where all learners can achieve their full potential. To contextualise these transformative processes, the study incorporates PST (Senge, 1990; Fullan, 2006) as a complementary lens. This approach emphasises that educational change occurs through the interaction of multiple interconnected levels, such as individual learners, schools, communities, and policy frameworks.

The study therefore employs a multi-scalar perspective, exploring how learner experiences interfere with school practices, community norms, and national policies. This systemic view recognises that effective gender-transformative interventions must align with, and influence, the broader ecosystem in which they operate. An intersectional lens, grounded in Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) framework, is embedded within this dual approach to recognise that gender is not examined in isolation. The study remains attuned to how socio-economic status, displacement status (refugee, IDP), disability, ethnicity, religion, and age intersect with gender to shape learners' experiences and outcomes. This enables a more nuanced understanding of compounding disadvantages and ensures that the GTE framework remains inclusive and contextually responsive. In summary, this study's theoretical framework draws primarily on

GTE, supported by PST and informed by principles of voice, agency, and intersectionality. This streamlined framework provides the conceptual tools to analyse how interventions like Tuseme can meaningfully challenge gender norms, reshape institutional practices, and foster equitable educational environments. It also enables the research to move beyond describing gender disparities to identifying actionable strategies that bridge the gap between policy aspirations and the lived realities of learners in East Africa.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review situates this study within existing scholarly and policy debates on gender and education in East Africa, particularly through the lens of Gender-Transformative Education and Participatory Systems Thinking. It examines how gendered inequalities persist despite progressive policy commitments, and how interventions such as Tuseme contribute to amplifying girls' voices and agency within broader education systems. The review is organised into four thematic areas that align with the study's objectives: (1) gender and education policy gaps in East Africa, (2) girls' participation, leadership, and voice, (3) community engagement and cultural norms, and (4) teacher agency and systems alignment. Together, these themes illuminate the varied dynamics influencing equitable education outcomes and reveal persistent "implementation gaps" that this study seeks to explore and address.

3.1 Gender and Education Policy Gaps in East Africa

A significant body of research across sub-Saharan Africa documents substantial strides in policy development aimed at achieving gender equality in education. National governments in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda have proactively enacted legislative and strategic frameworks aligned with global commitments such as Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). These frameworks typically include commitments to universal and inclusive schooling, the elimination of gender-based violence (GBV) in educational settings, and increased girls' participation in leadership and STEM fields. However, despite these progressive policy landscapes, a robust empirical literature consistently highlights a pervasive "implementation gap" (Unterhalter et al., 2019; Morley et al., 2022). This gap is characterised by weak policy dissemination mechanisms, inadequate resource allocation for roll-out, limited capacity building for frontline educators, and low awareness of policy provisions among key stakeholders at the sub-national and school levels. For instance, Unterhalter et al. (2019), in their broader analysis of gender equality policies in education, highlight how, despite progressive policy frameworks, the inertia of ingrained practices, deeply entrenched community norms, and inadequate accountability mechanisms often lead to a significant 'implementation gap,' undermining intended impact. This disconnect shows the interplay between formal policy frameworks and their actual realisation in diverse socio-cultural contexts.

3.2 Girls' Participation, Leadership, and Voice

While many regions have witnessed a narrowing of gender parity gaps in primary school enrolment, significant disparities in participation, progression, and learning outcomes, particularly for adolescent girls, persist, especially at secondary levels and in marginalised communities. Research by Aikman et al. (2005) and Arnot et al. (2018) consistently underscores that genuine educational inclusion necessitates not merely girls' physical presence in classrooms but their active participation, psychological safety, and opportunities for leadership and voice. Enrolment alone does not guarantee equitable learning experiences or outcomes. Interventions designed to foster girl agency, such as the Tuseme model, which originated in Tanzania and has been adapted across East Africa, have received scholarly attention for their potential to enable girls to articulate challenges, develop critical thinking

skills, and take collective action to address issues affecting their lives (Bali & Mbise, 2018). These "safe spaces" provide a platform for girls to challenge oppressive norms and develop confidence. However, a critical gap in the existing literature remains: few studies have rigorously explored how these localised, voice-centric approaches function effectively in diverse country-specific contexts, such as refugee settings, and pastoralist communities or, crucially, how they can be systematically integrated with and mutually reinforce formal education policy systems to achieve scalable and sustainable impact.

3.3 Community Engagement and Cultural Norms

A substantial body of sociological and educational research demonstrates unequivocally that family and community attitudes toward gender, education, and child labour profoundly shape children's, especially girls', access, retention, and learning outcomes (Parkes et al., 2016; UNESCO, 2018). In socio-cultural contexts where practices like early and forced marriage, demand for extensive domestic labour, or rigidly defined gender roles for boys and girls prevail, girls often face insurmountable barriers to accessing and thriving in school, irrespective of formal education policies designed to promote their schooling. Studies on interventions aimed at fostering positive community engagement through Parent-Teacher Associations or School Management Committees have shown promise in improving educational outcomes but only when these mechanisms are genuinely participatory, when power is shared equitably between school authorities and community members, and when local cultural norms are respectfully negotiated rather than dismissed (Unterhalter & Heslop, 2011; Grant & Unterhalter, 2012). The literature emphasises that sustainable change in educational access and quality necessitates addressing deep-seated community beliefs and practices through dialogue, sensitisation, and collaborative problem-solving, rather than through top-down mandates.

3.4 Teacher Agency and Systems Alignment

The role of teachers as both gatekeepers and potential change agents is central to the literature. Studies show that without adequate training, mentorship, and support, teachers may unintentionally reinforce exclusionary norms even when policy frameworks expect them to be drivers of inclusion (Oduro & MacBeath, 2003). Furthermore, the fragmentation often associated with short-term, donor-funded projects, poorly aligned curricula, and disjointed national education systems frequently leaves teachers feeling disillusioned, overwhelmed, and ill-equipped to implement reforms effectively (Tikly et al., 2020). The contemporary literature calls for a move away from episodic training to holistic, continuous professional development models that are deeply grounded in teachers' lived realities, responsive to their contextual challenges, and strategically tied to broader, sustainable system-wide reforms that address issues of workload, remuneration, and professional recognition (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This systemic approach to teacher development is critical for translating policy aspirations into equitable classroom practices.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

Phase 2 conducted scoping exercises in refugee and IDP communities to identify key actors, structures, and social dynamics in the project’s target refugee and IDP communities, which will affect the deployment of the adapted Tuseme model. The research questions and methods used are detailed below.

4.1 Research Questions

The following research questions guided Phase 2 of the project:

SRQ2: How does Tuseme need to be adapted to support learners from IDP and refugee communities?

The research questions were:

1. What are the main socio-cultural barriers to the effective deployment of an adapted Tuseme club?
2. What are the main enabling factors for a successful deployment of an adapted Tuseme club?
3. What contextual adaptations need to be made to the Tuseme club to support its effectiveness?

4.2 Research Design

Phase two of the GPE KIX Tuseme Project employed a multi-country qualitative research design aimed at generating deep, contextually grounded insights into the implementation of gender-responsive and inclusive education practices. The design was participatory and iterative, aligning with the project’s research framework. Each country followed a shared but adaptable protocol to ensure comparative validity while allowing for country-specific realities to guide data collection and interpretation. The approach prioritised voices from within the education ecosystem, including learners, educators, families, and policy actors, recognising these stakeholders as knowledge holders in their own right.

4.3 Sampling Strategy

In phase 2, purposive sampling was used to identify 12 schools (4 per country). Initially, a list of refugee and IDP communities was developed and assessed for safety and accessibility. Following this, schools were mapped in the communities that were identified as safe and accessible, and then the sample was selected based on the criteria in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Phase 2 Sampling Criteria

| Sampling Element | Phase 2: Refugee and IDP Settings |
|-------------------------|---|
| Sampling Approach | Purposive sampling with flexibility due to the fluid nature of settings |
| Key Variables | Type and size of school, gender balance |
| Population | Refugee and IDP community schools in 3 countries (n=12) |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Access Criteria | Safety, geographical access, permission from school leadership and relevant authorities |
| School Types and Size | In addition to phase 1 school types, mainstream schools with refugee/IDP students, permanent, semi-permanent, or temporary refugee/IDP schools |
| Innovation Reach | Not applicable |
| Gender Balance | Predominantly male, predominantly female, balanced |
| Implementation Experience | Not applicable |

Table 2 details the 12 schools across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda that were purposively sampled for Phase 2 of the study. The selection reflects diverse educational contexts, including refugee-hosting schools, internally displaced persons (IDP) settings, and resource-constrained environments. These schools represent a range of socio-cultural, linguistic, and economic conditions, providing a comprehensive overview of the environments in which Tuseme clubs operate and allowing for an in-depth examination of factors influencing girls' participation, voice, and agency.

Table 2: Phase 2 sample

| Country | Location | School |
|----------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Ethiopia | Debre-Brehan | Hailemariam Mamo Secondary School |
| | Debre Brehan | Fitawrari Gebeyehu Secondary School |
| | Sherkole | Sherkole Secondary School |
| | Bamabsi | Woumba Secondary School |
| Kenya | Busia County | Runyu Primary School |
| | Garissa County | Central Primary School, Hagadera |
| | Turkana County | Malakal Primary School |
| | Turkana County | Somali Bantu mixed secondary school. |
| Uganda | Adjumani | Pagirinya Secondary School |
| | Adjumani | Arinyapi Secondary School |
| | Kamwenge | Rwamwanja Secondary School |
| | Kamwenge | Ntenungi Secondary School |

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

To identify research participants, a stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted for each case study setting. A 2x2 power-interest matrix was used to analyse stakeholders' influence and engagement with the research objectives. This process enabled the research team to strategically prioritise stakeholder groups at the local level for targeted engagement. A combination of qualitative approaches was employed across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda to collect data:

- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with school heads, teachers, education officers, and program implementers.
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with students (girls and boys), parents, Parents Teachers Association (PTA) members and Board of Governors (BOG).

All data collection tools were co-developed by the consortium partners using a shared conceptual framework, then piloted and adapted in each country context. Tools were translated into local languages where necessary to ensure inclusivity and accuracy. All interviews and discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated into English where applicable. The analysis followed a deductive–inductive thematic approach, combining pre-identified themes derived from Phase One with emergent insights from the field. Coding was undertaken using Dedoose, a cloud-based qualitative data analysis software that allowed for collaborative coding and cross-country comparison. National research teams engaged in collaborative codebook development using an iterative process that emphasised intercoder reliability, reflexivity, and thematic depth. The 20 most frequently used codes formed the foundation for cross-country synthesis.

Excerpts were clustered into analytical matrices by theme and respondent type. Quantitative frequency counts were used to support thematic saturation and comparative analysis, but did not substitute for the interpretive depth of qualitative inquiry. To ensure analytical rigour, a double-coding process was implemented. Two transcripts per case study setting were independently analysed by both the HERS-EA research team and the ACER UK team, followed by a comparative alignment exercise to examine convergence and divergence in coding and thematic interpretation. This process strengthened the credibility and robustness of the final analytical outputs.

4.5 Validation

To ensure credibility and alignment with school realities, multiple validation strategies were integrated during and after data collection. First, triangulation was embedded in the research design, with each school-level narrative informed by at least six different data sources, to enable cross-checking of perspectives. For example, teacher reports of absenteeism linked to menstruation were mirrored by student voices and community commentary to reinforce the reliability of emerging thematic patterns. Second, preliminary findings were reviewed in-country by field teams and partner organisations. Debrief workshops were held with enumerators and focal teachers to verify thematic resonance and clarify any contradictory data points.

In Ethiopia, teachers from Sherkole and Woumba schools validated summary profiles and confirmed their accuracy, while in Uganda, staff at Arinyapi supported the interpretation of a key student quotation within its local sociolinguistic context. Third, all excerpts included in this report were drawn directly from coded field transcripts in Dedoose and represent recurring, cross-verified patterns rather than isolated views. Where single narratives are used, they are included illustratively and annotated as such. Lastly, iterative engagement between ACER and FAWE country chapters helped refine the framing and interpretation of findings. The country-level matrices and recommendations were reviewed by regional staff to ensure factual accuracy, as well as cultural and policy alignment.

4.6 Limitations of the Study

While this study draws from rich qualitative insights across twelve schools in three countries, several limitations must be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. First, the data are

based exclusively on qualitative tools: focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), and narrative reflections, which, while deep and textured, limit the generalisability of the findings beyond the selected schools. The purposive selection of schools, with an emphasis on refugee–host interfaces and underserved communities, means that these contexts, while representative of certain realities, do not capture the full national diversity within each country.

Second, the reliance on translated field data, particularly in Ethiopia and Uganda, introduces the potential for subtle shifts in meaning or emphasis. While research assistants and note-takers were trained and rigorous, moments of emotional or culturally loaded language may have been softened or filtered in the process of translation and transcription. Lastly, while every effort was made to include diverse voices, including boys, girls, teachers, caregivers, and community leaders, some groups remained harder to reach. In particular, fathers were underrepresented in parental FGDs, and no out-of-school girls were interviewed, limiting insight into quiet dropout patterns and exclusion beyond the school gate.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

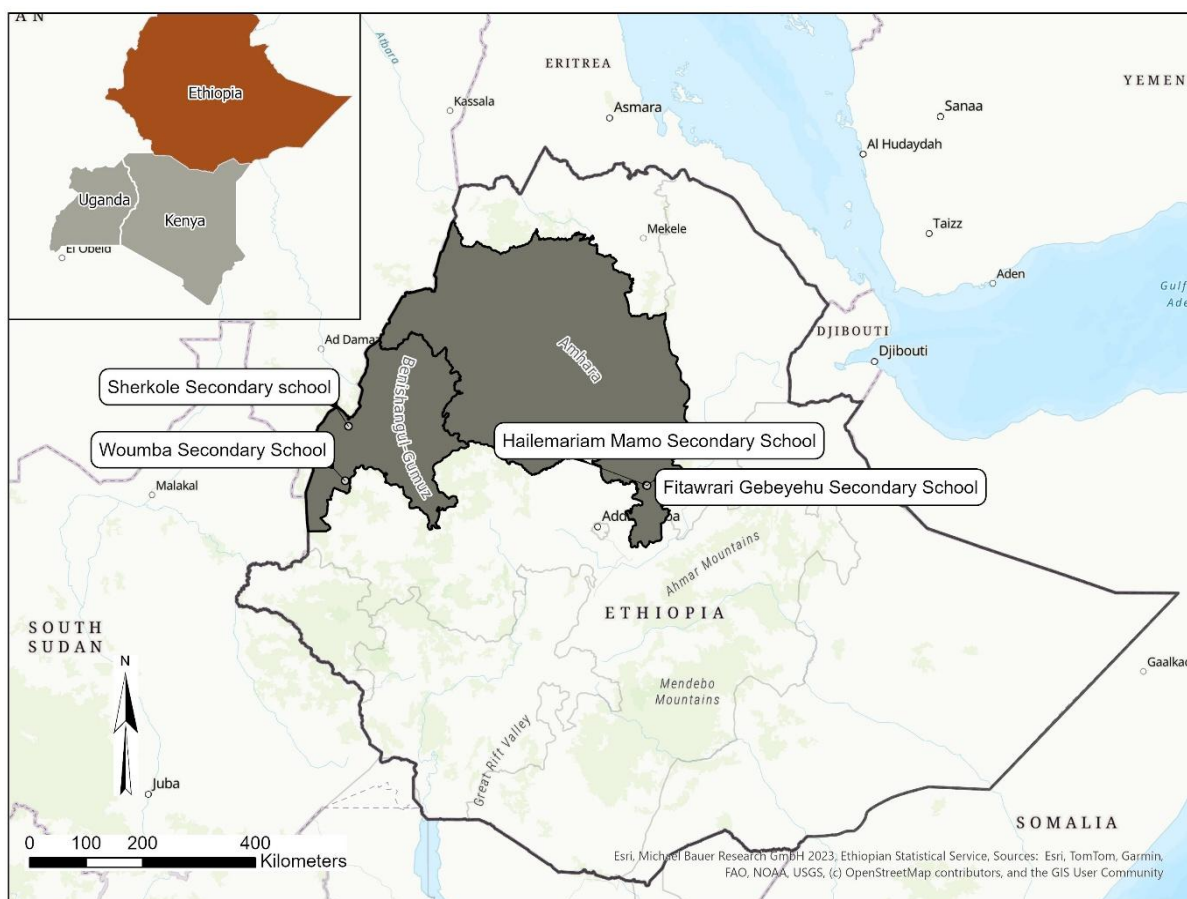
The study adhered to rigorous ethical standards as approved by the Institutional Review Boards and Research Ethics Committees in each country. Key ethical measures included: 1) Informed consent for adults and assent from minors, with explanations given in participants' preferred languages; 2) Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured during transcription, analysis, and reporting; 3) Risk mitigation procedures where sensitive topics such as early marriage and rape were anticipated, with referrals made to relevant school or community-based services; 4) Researchers participated in a pre-fieldwork ethics and safeguarding workshop to strengthen consistency and care during data collection; 5) All participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time and were offered contact information for follow-up if desired.

5.0 PHASE 2 FINDINGS

5.1 ETHIOPIA

5.1.1 Country Context

Figure 1: Map of Ethiopia Showing Study Sites for the Tuseme Scoping Study



The map above highlights Debre-Brehan, Sherkole, and Bambasi, indicating the locations of the sampled schools and refugee camps.

In Ethiopia, four schools were sampled: Hailemariam Mamo and Fitawrari Gebeyehu secondary schools in Debre-Brehan, Sherkole Secondary School in Sherkole, and Woumba Secondary School in Bambasi (Table 1). A total of 31 FGDs/KIIs were conducted with 234 participants across eight stakeholder categories. These included schoolgirls, schoolboys, teachers, parents, PTAs, school management, camp leaders, para-social workers, and local government officials. Most FGDs were conducted as planned, though in Debre-Brehan, only one FGD was held with camp leaders; para-social workers were unavailable in refugee camps, and one local government session was conducted as a KII.

Disaggregated data (Table 3) shows 236 participants, with balanced contributions from boys (32) and girls (32). Teachers (32) and parents (32) were also evenly represented by gender

across schools. PTA members (20) were mostly male, while camp leaders (24) and para-social workers (16) varied by site. School management contributed 32 participants, and local government officials 16. Overall, Ethiopia achieved strong representation across stakeholders, capturing perspectives from both refugee and host community contexts with relatively balanced gender participation.

Table 3: Ethiopia Study - Participants by Category, School, and Gender

| Participant category | Fitawrari | | Hailemariam | | Sherkole | | Woumba | | Total |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | |
| Girls | 8 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 32 |
| Boys | 0 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 32 |
| Teachers | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 8 | 32 |
| Parents | 3 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 32 |
| PTA | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 20 |
| Camp leaders | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 24 |
| Parasocial | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| School management | 2 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 8 | 32 |
| Government officials | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 16 |
| Total | 27 | 34 | 20 | 33 | 22 | 39 | 12 | 49 | 236 |

5.1.2 School 1: Hailemariam Mammo Secondary School – Debre-Brehan

5.1.2.1 General Context

Table 4: Haile Mariam Mammo Secondary School profile

| Category | Details |
|--------------------------------|--|
| School Name | Haile Mariam Mammo Secondary School |
| School Location | Debre-Brehan, North Shewa Province, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia |
| Location Type | Urban |
| School Level | Secondary (Grades 9–12) |
| School Type | Government/Public |
| Enrolment Figures | Over 3,000 students |
| Number of Teachers | Not specified (initially 7 teachers at establishment – 4 Indian and 3 Irish) |
| Number of Administrative Staff | Not specified |
| Number of Clubs | Not specified |
| Facilities | Standard classrooms; historical legacy as the first secondary school in North Shewa |
| Number of IDP/Refugee Students | Not specified, but the school accommodates internally displaced learners, and this has caused overcrowding |
| Proximity to Institutions | Located within Debre-Brehan town, Amhara Regional State |

Following the Italian invasion defeats, Emperor Haile Selassie visited the North Shewa province in 1942 GC. He sought to inspire his people and bolster their resolve in the face of adversity. During his visit, he emphasised the importance of unity and resilience as they rebuilt their nation. During that time, most of the patriots and administrators of the North Shewa province and districts asked Emperor Haile Selassie to open a modern school. Emperor Haile Selassie had accepted this question, and the school was officially established in 1943 and started its teaching-learning process with 207 students. In 1951, the school scaled up its operation to teach from grade 1 up to grade 7. Similarly, in 1954, it promoted its operation up to grade 8. Later in 1958, the school was officially re-established to teach from 9th grade up to 12th grade, and it was renamed to Haile Mariam Mamo Secondary School. Haile Mariam Mammo (1904–1938), alternatively known as Lej Hayla Maryam Mammo, was an Ethiopian soldier and a leader of the Patriot Movement (*Arbegnoch*) during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. He fought in the Second Italo-Ethiopian War in 1936 before becoming a resistance leader in his native province of Shewa. He was mortally wounded in battle with the Italians. At that time, this school was the pioneer and the only secondary school in the North Shewa province and started its teaching-learning process with 106 grade 9th students and 7 teachers (4 Indian and 3 Irish).

Haile Mariam Mammo Secondary School is one of the most famous schools in the Amhara regional state and the country. Many educators and scientists who are working across the world

were taught in this school. Currently, the school is running its teaching-learning process from 9th grade up to 12th grade, enrolling over 3000 students. In the context of internally displaced persons (IDPs), teaching and learning activities face numerous limitations that significantly impact educational quality. Schools are often overcrowded, accommodating a large number of students beyond their capacity. This situation compromises the quality of education, making it difficult for teachers to provide individualised attention and support to students.

5.1.2.2 Socio-economic Barriers to Education

At the forefront of impediments to quality education in IDP and refugee settings are pervasive socio-economic barriers, as consistently highlighted by school management and teachers. These challenges extend beyond the immediate classroom environment, impacting students' ability to participate fully and schools' capacity to deliver effective education. A fundamental issue identified is the severe economic hardship faced by students and their families, which directly impacts access to basic educational necessities.

"In our school, not being able to provide quality education comes with many challenges. The first one is the economic power of the students and their parents to fulfil necessities, even pens, uniforms, and food. Some students do not bring the necessary materials for school," a member of school management stated.

This financial strain often forces a reliance on external aid, demonstrating the scale of unmet needs. This member also noted the impact of external support, explaining,

"Many students are aided by collaborating with NGOs—pens, exercise books, food, and sanitary materials, especially for females. We are supporting them."

Another member of the school management (R2) elaborated on the multifaceted nature of the problem:

"The reason we were not delivering quality education, from my perspective, can be divided into two: inside the school and outside the school. Outside the school, there are the economic conditions of families, unstable political conditions in the country, and displacement from their residential places."

This member also considered internal factors, adding,

"Inside the school, the existing intelligence can be divided into three categories: the physical appearance of the school, psychology (students' interaction with teachers), and the school's economic situation. These factors have prevented the delivery of quality education to the students."

These observations collectively paint a picture of schools operating within severe resource constraints, attempting to fill critical gaps in student welfare, often with limited means. A teacher described the pervasive nature of these challenges:

"The first one is too obvious, it's the student's discipline, and the second is on the language barrier and challenge. As a history teacher, we have to translate everything because. Even the reading is a difficulty for the students, even though they are high school students. In fact, my subject course is a bit strong, so they can't just read and

understand on their own. That's why we have to translate because there is a big shortage of English speakers. Those are our main challenges."

Language barrier is a notable lack of student motivation, which some teachers attribute to broader societal shifts. Another teacher remarked:

"As my colleague mentioned, language is a problem at first, though the students are not ready to learn, they lack motivation. What I am trying to say is that for students to even learn and understand the language, they get easily fed up. And I think that's because they're more into social media and phone usage than studying and being educated. They are not willing to learn. They're very fed up very easily."

School management also pointed to the detrimental influence of external environments and a perceived lack of parental and student focus on education. One member stated,

"The other thing preventing quality education, aside from economic problems, is the lack of follow-up from parents and students not studying. Also, external environments have a bad impact on education in our school. There are displaced people who are not thinking about education but rather about food, peace, and family."

This suggests that survival priorities often overshadow educational pursuits in displaced contexts. Furthermore, students' foundational learning gaps present a significant internal challenge. A member of school management (R4) noted,

"Another thing is the background of the students. When we receive Grade 9 students, they do not fulfil the minimum criteria of learning competence. The pass mark is 50, and those who score this will pass from one grade to another. However, the students we receive score 35 or 36 out of 100. We expect them to pass by fulfilling the standard after coming to high school, but this is not happening successfully. The students' background greatly influences the quality of education in high school."

These combined academic and motivational deficits necessitate targeted interventions that address both foundational skills and the psychological readiness for learning. The causal link between the lack of necessities and diminished educational participation was unequivocally affirmed by teachers. When asked if the absence of economic support, food, health, and water directly affects students missing or leaving class, multiple teachers responded with a resounding,

"Yes, we agree."

One teacher illustrated this point with a specific example:

"As Debre Birhan City, it is because of the existing problem. We planned that all government schools would go into a school feeding program. We were asked to mobilise the students. Many students were registered, even without notice. When there was failure, the students who were not registered were not able to continue and withdrew. So, what you said is the right stance."

This anecdote illustrates how the provision of fundamental needs can be a critical determinant of student presence and retention.

The economic burden on female students was highlighted by school management. One member stated,

"Mainly, the females, rather than the males, these days are facing economic problems."

Another member observed,

"Yes. For example, even in educated communities, they do not give equal work. Females may come to school after feeding their parents, while males eat breakfast and come directly. It's better, especially in the education sector, where the number of females is high. Even in other schools, though the problem is being resolved, we cannot say it's totally resolved."

A member of school management further elaborated on this, explaining,

"There is no difference in treatment at school for boys and girls, especially in clubs. The focus is often on girls. In general, those who work in other people's houses—even without research—are females in higher numbers. After returning from school, females are often ordered to do work at home before doing their homework. In the morning, they are the ones who cook breakfast. If there is a small child, we cannot say there is no pressure outside."

However, this member added,

"But once they get into school, we have nothing that discriminates against girls. However, in the community, many things influence women."

Teachers also illuminated the profound socio-economic struggles faced by students, which in turn impact their learning. One teacher shared a moving anecdote:

"For example in my teaching experience, there was a student who always comes in late and I used to always give him a warning so one day I asked him to bring a parent and he brought his sister along and they both cried and I asked why and they asked me if I have ever gone to 'ajip' (a place) I said no why and they told me every morning before he comes to school this kid he cleans shoe on the street and then the sister goes around houses to make Injera to make their living and this is just one person's story from what I have Personally faced and after the sister told me what's happening, we thought about it and in addition to him cleaning the shoes, the students have collected money from each other, and they have decided to give him that money after he cleans the classrooms so that would earn him an extra income and the students every month they collect 10birr from everyone and they give him that money so he gets to stay in class and he cleans their classroom twice a week. Now this student goes to Semera University. I know this because I follow him closely. He went to school here when he was in grades 11 and 12. This story is not just his. There are a lot of students like him who have personal problems."

This teacher also highlighted the issue of student prostitution:

"The second issue is that there were many students who also worked as prostitutes and street workers. One day, one of those students came late to class and had not cleaned

the makeup from her face. I asked her where she had been and why she was late. Together with teacher Chane, we spoke to her, and that is when we found out the truth. All of us teachers here face many similar stories, but we do our best to try and solve their problems. There are some students we can help, and others we cannot. For example, that girl eventually stopped coming to school, and we couldn't do anything about it."

The problem of students living with HIV was also raised by a teacher:

"Yes, there are also students who are living with HIV."

The broader societal and economic pressures also push male students away from formal education. A teacher explained,

"Patterns also have the biggest role here for the male students. After they reach grade ten, they are allowed them learn driving lessons so they can drive a Bajaj, and it's usually a dream for most of our male students. The females try and work hard while the male students try to find a shortcut for life." When asked if this is based on personal interest or parental push, teachers responded: "Parents also force them so they can generate income."

"But for most students, it's their personal choice, even for those who have heat from their parents, it is also their choice."

Another teacher added,

"Yes, there are students who push their parents to take a loan using their house to buy the Bajaj."

The lack of job opportunities for graduates further demotivates students:

"It's also the environment. I remember when a student told me teacher even the students who have the degree in the masters they are finding it hard to get a job after they graduate, so why would I go through all that to suffer like them, especially since I don't want to be a science teacher like you. You find it hard to change your shoes. So they give me examples of students who have succeeded by dropping out of school in the 10th grade and who made it in life. They are their example."

The immediate financial needs, particularly driven by addiction, also play a role:

"Especially if they're addicted, I'd like to have an income as soon as possible so that they can spend it on their addiction."

Parents, too, are under pressure:

"And since life is hard and the parents also want support from their children when the children suggest this idea, the parents also support them because the economy is also hard and they want their kids to be independent."

The cultural expectation for men to be breadwinners further compounds the issue:

"There's also the social factor: the main bread maker is the man, especially in our town & in our country, so to be chosen, to have a good mate, they want to have money, so as a youth, they go into a relationship and they become boyfriend and girlfriends. And the guy who can spend more is the more preferable one, even if it's just for a soft drink, even if it's just a small cost, the guy with money is pickier."

The economic challenges extend directly to the teaching staff, significantly impacting their capacity and motivation to engage in extracurricular activities, including Tuseme clubs. School management highlighted the practical constraints:

"The second thing is that club activities are extra work, and teachers want to do other work to earn money. It's like saying we are not ready to take additional responsibility."

Another member elaborated,

"When we say earlier that teachers will not do this, it's because they have economic problems. After finishing their classes, they go to the city because they do not get anything here. In our city, there are private and government schools. In private schools, if teachers teach more than 20 classes, they are paid overtime. They argue not because they are assigned more classes but because they are not assigned more. In government schools, if I give 20 classes to one and 15 to another, he may argue, 'Why 20 for me?' Because in government schools, teaching extra does not come with extra pay. The economic problem we know cannot be solved at once. I'm just telling you what we have observed."

Teachers expressed the impact of low salaries on their personal and professional lives. One teacher lamented,

"And the other problem is that our payment is very low, with what we get paid. It's forcing us to exclude ourselves from our social life. It's barely anything. It's not even enough to buy Teff; it just exposes us to greater danger. Look at the economy. Oil is 1600-1800 birr, and the crisis of the economy keeps growing, but honestly speaking, the teachers in this school really try their best. They teach with an empty pocket, with this economy, but they try their best."

Another added,

"For the Teacher situation, as my colleague has mentioned earlier, the economic situation by itself is making us give up and lose motivation."

This shows that effective implementation of any extracurricular program requires addressing the fundamental welfare and incentives for the educators themselves.

Enabling Factor: The dedicated and intrinsically motivated teachers are a crucial enabling factor, consistently upholding educational continuity and quality despite overwhelming socio-economic and infrastructural challenges, often going above and beyond their formal duties.

Disabling Factor: The pervasive and multifaceted economic hardship stands as the primary disabling factor, creating an intricate web of barriers that fundamentally undermine the quality and accessibility of education for students and the institutions alike.

5.1.2.3 Resource and Infrastructure Deficiencies

A significant and overarching impediment to delivering quality education, as consistently articulated by both School Management and Teachers, stems from resource and infrastructure deficiencies within the educational institutions themselves. These shortages directly impact the learning environment, access to modern tools, and the very foundation of pedagogical practice. Fundamental material shortages are evident across various levels of school operation. One member of the school management stated,

"The other issue is the lack of materials for the school. It has been 80 years since the school started providing education, and one reason for the lack of quality education is that the school has no computers. Ideally, it should be 1 computer for every 10 students, otherwise 1 for 15 or 20."

This points to a critical technological deficit, hindering student readiness for a digitally evolving world. This member also noted,

"Additionally, the school's stationery supply is insufficient. The school's income is only 600 birr from registration per year, which is too little. The number of students is high, and so is the number of teachers, making it impossible to make everything available."

Such minimal operational budgets make comprehensive provision of educational resources nearly impossible, extending even to the vital domain of extracurricular engagement. The lack of resources extends to supporting extracurricular activities, as this member explained,

"Extracurricular activities are difficult to support, and those could aid the teaching and learning process."

This illustrates how a lack of core funding stifles initiatives crucial for holistic student development.

Beyond general supplies, specific deficiencies in critical infrastructure, particularly science laboratories, pose severe limitations to practical learning and even teacher safety. Teachers consistently highlighted resource and infrastructure deficiencies as significant challenges to effective teaching. One teacher specifically pointed to the dire state of school laboratories:

"The laboratory is also a problem. When we want to teach our students in the lab, there is a lack of lab equipment. They're old and haven't been upgraded for a very long time. Not a comfortable environment for the classrooms, the furniture that student uses. They're not welcoming and comfortable. If you want to show students a practical lesson, it's impossible or very difficult. I see that as a challenge too."

The lack of functional and safe laboratory environments directly compromises the quality of science education. A teacher from the science department elaborated on the specific chemical deficiencies and safety concerns:

"Most of the chemicals found in our laboratory have expired and when we think of laboratory specially as chemistry our lab uses a lot of both organic and concentrated materials like sulphur acid, phosphoric acid and so on but they're not easily accessible for us and we also use chemicals like potassium hydroxide and when we do demonstration, we use safety for the student but not for us because there is only limited amount of safety materials so we only use it for our students but not ourselves and it's impossible for the students to see it by themselves again because of lack of safety and table equipment and some of the materials found in the lab can easily cause fire in most the air leaks. These are the challenges that we carry and teach as a science department."

This testimony highlights an under-resourcing that impedes effective teaching and presents significant health and safety risks to both students and teachers, undermining the foundational principles of a safe learning environment. The inadequacy of technology and basic infrastructure extends to connectivity, further isolating the school from modern educational tools. A member of the school management pointed out,

"Another issue is the network. The Wi-Fi installation is limited to this room and area. It should have been in the library, administrative offices, but it wasn't."

The systemic stagnation of school infrastructure stands in stark contrast to rapid technological advancements, leaving students ill-equipped for contemporary learning. A teacher observed,

"The structure of the school system has existed for 20-30 years and hasn't changed for that long. It's not that students should not use the technology; they should. It's actually a very good thing that they use technology, but the school was supposed to grow with the technology, and the system was supposed to grow with it as well. That would have prevented the students from going in the wrong direction."

This creates a disconnect between the students' digital lives and their school experience, potentially leading to disengagement.

The lack of modern educational tools forces reliance on outdated pedagogical methods, further compounded by limited external support. A member of school management (R4) stated,

"Our education is not modernised—we use the chalk-and-talk system. We are not using new technology because we lack the basic materials to fulfil the needs."

This member also highlighted the limited external support:

"The government is also not providing for us, and NGOs tend to focus on primary education rather than secondary. So, since we lack all these things, I believe it impacts the quality of education."

This suggests a systemic neglect of secondary education infrastructure from both governmental and non-governmental actors. A member of school management (R5) starkly contrasted their school with others:

"Our school is known just by its name, but if you go to other schools, there are computer centres and digital libraries. When we look at ours, it's 1 computer for every 10 students, and it's even difficult to update. It has been 83 years, but there is no

renovation. The fence is not comfortable, and it's also difficult to control students who leave class."

The absence of basic modern facilities, including updated libraries and administrative technology, further compounds the challenge. This member further stressed,

"Another thing is our library, which was made by ADA—it's not digital. If it were digital, students might spend time there even on Saturdays, outside regular days. Starting from the administrative office, there is no computer. I don't have a computer; the vice principal has a very old one, and it's impossible to have at least one printer in each department. This is a challenge for education quality."

This paints a picture of systemic under-resourcing that affects every aspect of school operations, from teaching to administration, directly impacting educational quality and the ability to encourage engaging learning environments. These pervasive financial limitations directly impede the school's ability to support extracurricular activities, including vital clubs like Tuseme. As a member of the school management explained:

"One of them—I'm coming to that. After we establish clubs, other than stationary, there is no financial support from the school. Take the sports club, for example. Footballs were needed. Hailminase supported us somewhat, but they haven't arrived yet. We cannot buy from the school budget because there are other priorities, like buying stationery, maintaining copy machines, and chalk. So, we were not able to strengthen the clubs."

This demonstrates a circular problem: core educational needs consume the meagre budget, leaving no funds for enrichment activities that are crucial for student development and engagement. Addressing these deficiencies, a member of school management proposed solutions:

"The solution is providing materials, incentives, and bureaus. For example, the club may plan a budget at the beginning, but the school cannot fulfil it because the only income source, as said earlier, is the registration fee."

This highlights the urgent need for external, sustained funding and material support beyond the nominal annual registration fees to enable schools to offer a holistic and quality education.

Enabling Factor: The expressed hope for future external support and collaboration, particularly with entities like Ethio Telecom for digital infrastructure, represents a crucial enabling factor, offering a potential pathway for the school to overcome its significant resource and technological deficits.

Disabling Factor: The critical and systemic lack of adequate financial resources and outdated infrastructure is the primary disabling factor, severely impeding the school's ability to provide essential learning materials, functional laboratories, modern technology, and even basic operational necessities, thereby directly compromising educational quality and safety.

5.1.2.4 Stakeholder Collaboration and Support

School management and teachers consistently highlighted that improving educational quality hinges critically on robust stakeholder collaboration and support. A key challenge identified is

the diminished engagement and follow-up from parents and the wider community, signalling a deeper societal shift regarding the perceived value of education. One member of school management noted this directly:

"Another issue is the lack of follow-up from parents and students not studying."

This disengagement is profoundly rooted in a disillusionment with education's perceived returns, leading to a "backward attitude" within the community. A school management member strongly emphasised this:

"Many challenges have been mentioned. Among these, we take as the basic cause the backward attitude of the community. As you know, the first expectation is that finishing school leads to getting a job and supporting the family. When this expectation disappears, there is an attitude shift—what difference has education made? The follow-up from our community has decreased."

This economic disillusionment directly translates into a lack of communal ownership for the schools. The member further elaborated:

"The second issue is the lack of ownership for the school. There is a tendency to give all responsibility to the government, letting everything be solved by the school. It requires collaboration from all stakeholders. Everyone has their own stake—the school has its stake, the students have their stake, and the parents have theirs. But after registering the student, all responsibility is handed over to the school. When discussing with parents, many do not cooperate, and we face problems solving this challenge. If the community does not discuss and take ownership, there will be a problem solving the quality issue."

This highlights a critical disconnect where educational responsibility is offloaded to institutions, rather than being a shared community endeavour.

Teachers, in particular, firmly attribute a significant portion of educational challenges to parental responsibility and a broader decline in societal collective action. A teacher emphatically stated:

"One of the main reasons is about 90%. I say it's the parent in everything because when we raise a child with our religion, whatever their religion is, we want them to hold onto a better faith and grow with that, right? If the parent has shaped that to the kid very well, that child is not difficult to shape in school, but if the parent is not parenting well at home, that student is definitely going to be difficult for us at school."

This perspective places the burden of foundational behaviour and discipline squarely on the home environment.

It highlights the immense pressure teachers feel to compensate for perceived parental shortcomings and a wider societal breakdown in collective child-rearing. Another teacher reinforced this notion of declining societal responsibility:

"The other one is the family and social situation. We are neglecting our students. When we were growing up, everybody had a role to play. It wasn't just a parent's responsibility, but society's. We didn't care if it was our child or not; we protected every kid, and we reinforced good behaviour in every child. Now, not just the society, but

even the parents, when the kid wears unnecessary clothes and gets out of the house, when the child is wearing an inappropriate hairstyle, they don't say why are you doing this, my child? Why did you tear the cloth this way? When they come to school, their clothes look like they're where they take notes. And the parents do nothing about it. The culture that existed before has vanished now."

This presents the erosion of traditional community oversight and parental discipline, directly impacting student conduct and school culture.

School management also highlighted the tangible consequences of insufficient community contribution and a persistent lack of positive community attitude. A member of the school management explained,

"Additionally, as my friend said, it's about the input. Most things can only be filled by the community and some NGOs, not in other ways. Once certain families give 400 or 600 birr, they stay that way throughout the year."

These statements collectively demonstrate the severe financial constraints faced by schools, exacerbated by community disinterest in contributing beyond minimal, sporadic fees.

Despite these formidable external challenges, many teachers express remarkable resilience and high motivation in their daily work, though a nuanced view acknowledges systemic barriers to motivation. One teacher passionately stated,

"Even though our students are not interested and demotivated, the teachers don't stop and get discouraged by that. That's actually one thing I really would like to appreciate from our teachers, and I have witnessed it."

This teacher further lauded their colleagues' dedication:

"The teachers are really trying. They check on every student by name because they don't want any of our students to miss school. If the students were as motivated as our teachers, this generation would've reached higher goals they would have gone to places because when I see where we came from, where we were and where we are now it's the students and the attachment of social media because we also see it in our own personal homes and that's the major problem from what I see. The teachers are 100% motivated even when there are underlying issues and a few issues, but if the student had the right motivation, and if it was up to the teachers, motivation and effort, our student would have definitely reached higher places."

This paints a picture of dedicated educators striving against challenging odds, deeply invested in their students' success. However, another teacher offered a more nuanced view:

"It's true that our teachers are motivated. I agree with what my friend said, but some teachers are not as motivated. Especially from an organisation point of view, there is nothing that motivates the teacher. We don't get what we want for teaching on time."

This clarifies that while individual dedication is high, systemic issues like delayed or insufficient pay remain significant demotivators.

The school demonstrates proactive efforts to address gender equality and protect female students, particularly in contrast to community norms. A member of school management (R1) stated,

"In our school, the majority of the students are females, and also the ones who perform well academically are females. The school administration strictly follows up on any harassment toward female students. They are also close to the teachers—for example, boys come to us rather than going to females. We deliver any information both inside and outside of the school. For example, a certain student in Grade 9 was raped by a family member. We followed the court process, and the offender was sentenced to up to 10 years. This shows our respect for females, and we will work to prevent any harassment."

This highlights the school's commitment to creating a safe and protective environment for girls, including robust responses to severe cases of abuse. Another member of the school management (R2) added,

"As he said, but the problem is not fully resolved. Many activities have been done in the gender club and with non-governmental organisations. There is change, but it's difficult to say they are treated equally to men."

This acknowledges progress while realistically noting the persistence of underlying gender inequality. Positive dynamics were observed in student interactions, alongside a notable shift in female student confidence and performance, largely attributed to deliberate promotion efforts. When asked about interaction in classrooms, one teacher responded,

"Yes, they do interact. Our problem is not them not interacting, it is that they over-interact with each other."

When asked if they interact well, the response was,

"Yes, they do. They don't have a problem with that."

Teachers also observed a shift in confidence and performance: The answer:

"Right now, it's the women."

This was attributed to population and promotion efforts:

"Even when you see the population, the woman exceeds the man,"

One teacher explained this as a result of past efforts:

"I personally think because the women were lacking in school the past few years, we have been doing a lot of promotion for the student, specifically the female student, to come to school to attend school to participate in school, so I think it's the result of that promotion." This teacher added, "If it were like in the past, we wouldn't have even imagined for the female students to come in to attend school like they are doing now; only a few attended back in the days. But after the promotion started, especially the female students started to attend school more, and the probability of our female students being exposed to addiction and other bad behaviours is low for them, which also helps."

This indicates a significant positive transformation in girls' educational participation and confidence, potentially reducing their vulnerability to certain negative behaviours. Despite these advancements, deep-seated cultural and religious influences continue to shape gender roles and perceptions of equality. A member of the school management noted,

"There is religious influence. For example, in Christianity, man is considered the head of the woman. There are religious teachings that men should manage. This is one factor. The other is cultural—many in our community are illiterate, even though there are many literate individuals in the city."

A member of school management (R1) also acknowledged the cultural aspect, stating,

"In our community, there is no marriage-related barrier to sending girls to school. There is no way girls stay at home. But our thinking is not entirely similar. Whether in education or other sectors, we do not say we are equal to men. There is still much left. If you see our school, the majority of the administrative staff are female, but their participation is minimal. Also, the ones who get good scores in school and clubs are female, but we cannot say we are equal. Culture has influenced us."

A member of school management (R2) expressed a more pessimistic view on full equality:

"In Ethiopia, it's part of the culture, with strong roots. I do not think it will be resolved totally. I do not believe women and men will ever be completely equal."

These insights reveal the enduring power of traditional norms that limit the full realisation of gender equality, even amidst progress in girls' access and academic achievement. The increase in female university enrolment is linked to broader societal changes and a reduction in traditional barriers, distinguishing female challenges from those faced by males. A teacher explained:

"The first one is that the population of females is more than males. This generation is lucky no student does not go to a preschool and we have worked on so much to empower women and that has worked and after that the woman's they try their best to be better to do better and it's not like before marriage has reduced they can go to school if they want to it's not like before so the woman tried it empower themselves economically educationally in every way."

This teacher also compared female and male challenges:

"And two as I've tried to mention earlier, the woman pushes until the end, and like the male students who are faced with a lot of obstacles if you compare the obstacles from our female student to the male, the females, the biggest pure pressure is to be in a relationship to have a boyfriend Not so much on the addiction maximum it's house chores unlike our male students."

This suggests a changing landscape where female students are increasingly empowered and motivated, facing different, and perhaps less severe, peer pressures than their male counterparts. The positive impact of media consumption on female students' language skills was also noted:

"For example, I had the opportunity to work with Amref, and they were telling me their experience and for the female students, they usually spend their time at home, and when they do, they watch a lot of movies, and they were telling me how they don't even need a translation to watch English movies. They're getting good and better at English because the movies help them, so that skill helps them to also excel in the academy, and the workload at home has also decreased because parents want their children to learn, so if they have a small interest, they can nurture that, and there's access for them to be empowered."

This points to an unforeseen benefit of modern media access, aiding language acquisition and potentially freeing up time due to shifting parental attitudes towards girls' education. Conversely, male students face distinct socio-economic and psychological pressures.

"On the other hand, the male students are highly exposed, as we mentioned earlier, with a lot of factors independent of the economy. The impact it has on him is being responsible for his parents' addiction. These are some of the factors."

The observed higher birth rate for females was also mentioned by teachers. This highlights a gender divergence in the types of challenges, with males experiencing more external pressures related to economic independence and family responsibility, potentially exacerbated by addiction. School Management indicated that while school policies aim for equality, deeply entrenched societal pressures on girls remain prevalent outside the school environment. A member of the school management clarified,

"Not in this area, but there may be workload issues. I don't think they prevent education, not even in rural areas, let alone the city."

A member of school management explained that, while there's no in-school discrimination against girls,

"In the community, there are many things that influence women."

Concerns about issues like early marriage and abduction were also raised, though some positive trends were noted. A member of the school management stated,

"In the city, this is not an issue. In the countryside, there may be some, like early marriage, but nowadays, it has been minimised."

A member of the school management added,

"Bad habits like abduction and rape are disappearing, but it doesn't mean they are eliminated."

Another member of the school management clarified,

"There is no bad culture, but rather bad habits. Sometimes, bad habits can become cultural. There is nothing like that here since this is the city."

These insights confirm that while overt, traditional barriers like early marriage are decreasing in urban areas, and schools actively combat discrimination, subtle but pervasive community

influences and residual "bad habits" continue to impact female students. In terms of practical school practices to promote gender equality, clear efforts are in place to ensure female representation and leadership. A member of the school management explained:

"In every class, there are two monitors, but it's mandatory to have at least one female student. If possible, both can be female, but there is no phenomenon where both are male. Also, when clubs are established, both females and males enter as club coordinators. If we have 30 sections, we will have 30 females and 30 males."

The progress in female leadership was also highlighted:

"There is great improvement nowadays. Women are leaders at the city level and group leaders in different sectors. Their leadership creates more inspiration in the community. No one opposes this. There is a great change day by day. Women can lead; women can do it."

The role of the gender club was emphasised:

"The gender club coordinator, who should ideally be a female, and also as group leaders."

These institutional mechanisms reflect a deliberate commitment to fostering female leadership and participation within the school environment. The school actively addresses issues like harassment, emphasising the crucial role of the gender club and the need for parental awareness. The importance of addressing issues like harassment through collaboration was also mentioned by school management. A member of the school management stated:

"We discussed this yesterday. First, the gender club is very strong. Since children tend to tell their peers, measures are taken when reports are made. We have very outstanding gender club members who work hard. If there is any harassment—harassment does not mean only rape; harassment in words is also harassment—we take administrative measures to avoid these things."

This illustrates a proactive, peer-supported approach to safeguarding students from various forms of harassment. Addressing parental awareness and engagement is seen as crucial. One member of the school management explained:

"To minimise this, we need to discuss with parents to change their awareness. Parents do not intentionally pressure girls—it's culturally easier to order girls. We should show the results of males and females to parents and tell them it's not due to nature but rather the result of pressure at home. Tell them she missed this amount of class and what they can do to minimise the pressure."

This member stressed the need for parental presence:

"But to do this, parents should come to school. They think it's enough to come once a year. This cannot be solved by the school alone, but by discussing with the community. It's impossible to think that girls and boys will be allocated equal roles, but we can minimise the pressure on females. After entering school, they are treated equally."

Maybe there can be tutors for those not performing well academically, but that does not make a difference between males and females."

This highlights the recognition that cultural norms within families pose a significant, yet addressable, barrier requiring deliberate engagement and education. The overarching message from School Management is that genuine educational improvement necessitates a highly coordinated and sustained effort from all stakeholders, transcending fragmented responsibilities. One member concluded:

"In general, the main idea is to solve challenges in teaching and learning. We raised challenges to quality education. It's good to have the discussion. Problems do exist, but to solve them and achieve quality education, as we all said earlier, a one-sided effort has no value. Parents, the school, the community, teachers, and students should work together. But who will coordinate this? Is it only the school?"

This member recounted a past attempt at community engagement that yielded limited results:

"When we saw it, one time we summoned the community, planning to change the school to celebrate its 75th anniversary. We prepared a ceremony, slaughtered a cow, and invited people from Addis Ababa. But the rich in the community did not come. The person who delivered the meat took it back at night. Even though there was music, the community was not present. Those who were literate, doctors, and others came for the ceremony. They were ashamed."

This anecdote illustrates the profound apathy and disconnect that can hinder collective action, even for significant school milestones. The long-term nature of the problem and the need for sustained effort were also acknowledged. The member of the school management continued:

"So, the problem cannot be solved at once. It requires coordination from the entire school community, and everyone should take responsibility. It will not be enough to discuss it one day. Education quality has fallen for many years, and it will take many years to bring it back. If we lose hope, it may never recover."

This member also reflected on the role of continuous training and community responsibility:

"I think the main point should be this: what should the community contribute, and what have we done? Have we provided continuous training? Providing training will not resolve everything in one day. The generation's majority is undisciplined because they see many gaining things legally. These problems can be resolved, but they happen when there is discussion, candour, and care for others. When everyone is selfish, taking big responsibility alone cannot happen."

Achieving true educational quality is a long-term, collective endeavour demanding unwavering commitment, ongoing dialogue, and a fundamental shift from individual self-interest to shared responsibility within the entire community.

Enabling Factor: The proactive and dedicated efforts of school management and teachers to foster student well-being, promote gender equality, and actively seek parental engagement serve as a crucial enabling factor, demonstrating an internal drive for improvement despite external community disengagement.

Disabling Factor: The pervasive lack of community ownership and declining parental follow-up on students' education stands as the primary disabling factor, shifting the entire burden of educational responsibility onto the school and undermining collective efforts to improve quality.

5.1.2.5 Club Establishment and Student Activities

School management and teachers consistently view the establishment of clubs and facilitation of student activities as integral to enhancing the teaching-learning process and fostering holistic student development. These initiatives are seen as critical avenues for skill acquisition and targeted academic support. A member of the school management stated:

"We provide training, and by identifying those students who are weak, tutoring is given to them. Training is provided to both males and females."

This highlights the dual function of clubs: not only as platforms for broader development but also as direct support mechanisms for academic improvement. The same member also discussed the purpose of clubs:

"In this school, when clubs are established, they may be established to help the regular teaching-learning process, or they will gain skills. When students participate in all clubs, they get skills. For example, in the agriculture club, they know how it is taken care of, how to plant and watch over it."

However, student engagement is not uniform across all activities. They also noted student preferences:

"There are clubs they do not participate in highly, but some, like the music club, they participate highly."

Teachers discussed club establishment and student activities as part of their broader responsibilities and challenges. While acknowledging the general benefit of clubs, one teacher specifically pointed to student engagement:

"When students participate in all clubs, they get skills... But do all participate actively? This is a question. So, the teacher should work to bring them."

This illustrates a key challenge: while the value of skill-based club activities is recognised, ensuring broad and active student participation requires deliberate effort from teachers. Beyond extracurriculars, school management actively cultivates an environment where students can freely express themselves and address grievances, including disciplinary matters. A member of the school management said:

"How to present when something happens to them, how to present to the PTA when they face issues like discipline problems, how to express their ideas freely—we are working on that."

This indicates an institutional commitment to fostering student agency and a structured process for conflict resolution. The same member also mentioned efforts related to female sanitary needs in the context of club activities. A member of school management (R4) described the school management's role in resolving conflicts:

"If there are any issues among teachers, students, or administrative staff, correcting them appropriately—especially in making it comfortable and attractive for the students—and in some classes where schedule tightness or students are fighting with teachers, this kind of thing is corrected, and measures are taken."

These efforts create a more comfortable and responsive environment for students, which is foundational for their active participation in school life. Teachers are deeply embedded in the administrative and organisational fabric of the school, beyond their core teaching duties, including vital roles in managing clubs. One teacher elaborated on these responsibilities:

"Of course, there are different administrations that are part of the school, and that administration is not filled with any other person that's outside of the school, but we divide it amongst ourselves with roles like department representative, club representatives, shift managers and so on, but additional administrative works have their own separate system. They're not included in this. Only the laboratory works, and the ones that I have mentioned above are divided among the teachers, and we do that based on our interest and because we volunteered to do so."

Another confirmed that some responsibilities are obligatory:

"Yes, some are based on interest, but some are our obligations, like teaching. It's part of the job."

This illustrates that teachers are already a significant resource for school organisation and management, often taking on additional duties out of interest or as part of their professional commitment, signalling their potential capacity for club facilitation. The school management has made a deliberate and regulated shift towards establishing gender-inclusive clubs, specifically to ensure equitable participation and leverage the full potential of initiatives like Tuseme. A member of school management explained the evolution of clubs to ensure equal participation:

"Since we have experience, let's start from that experience. From the three clubs in the school that were active, one of them was the girls' club. Since it only allowed girls to participate, the region made some updates and made it a gender club, which means allowing boys' participation, supported by regulation. When we register the club members, we make it to maintain the mix—the girls participate and the boys participate—to have equal participation."

This demonstrates a strategic approach to fostering mixed-gender environments, crucial for the gender-transformative aims of Tuseme. This member further outlined the strategy for promoting new clubs like Tuseme:

"Creating awareness about Tuseme's goal and encouraging all to register. The other thing, their number to be 50-50 to the minimum, working this in coordination, including with the PTA and the parents, to understand its goal and believe in the benefit."

This multi-pronged strategy emphasises awareness, balanced participation, and critical parental engagement from the outset. Regarding participation in new initiatives like the Tuseme club, teachers expressed a strong willingness to collaborate and view such clubs as beneficial extensions of their educational mission. One teacher stated:

"The club that you told us about first it's a collaborate so it's goanna help the student and the teacher enhance and develop skills and improve our qualities so as it is formed for the improvement of both the students and the teachers someone would be elected and we will hold and manage it so I don't think there would be a load for this."

This indicates significant buy-in from the teaching staff, who perceive clubs not as an additional burden but as a valuable tool for professional development and a direct support to formal learning. School Management also outlined comprehensive strategies for promoting and sustaining clubs, with a strong emphasis on continuous parental involvement. A member of the school management suggested two ways to create awareness:

"One of them is when there is a general meeting, like during result analysis, creating awareness. The second thing is summoning the club members' parents. We have been doing this previously."

This member emphasised the importance of parental involvement for progress:

"For example, we contact the outstanding club parents. If we include the parents, we have made good progress. Next, we can go to the community and the students. We can transfer messages to the parents when there is a school meeting because Tuseme creates fertile ground for the teaching-learning process. It makes students speak their voices and rights. This is the goal of Tuseme: their voices to be heard, their problems to be heard. Who is the first one to listen? It is the PTA. Then, the women's questions go to the school. The school administration is within the PTA. So, we can create awareness in the community next general meeting with teachers. The teachers are part of the community, for that matter. The teachers are also parents—they have children in this school. They are the fathers of education. So, awareness should also be created for them. The awareness should start from the school, the school management. We should address this so as not to lose this golden chance. We also need to sustain it. I am happy."

This robust communication plan aims to leverage existing school-parent touchpoints and extend awareness to the wider community, recognising parents and teachers as crucial agents of change for initiatives promoting student voice and rights. Crucially, clubs are seen as powerful mechanisms to empower and give voice to students who might otherwise remain overlooked, potentially fostering broader community support. A member of school management offered practical suggestions for promoting clubs:

"Yes, there is Tuseme. If it makes copies of its vision and strategy and raises awareness for the students during recess time by using mini media and other methods, by preparing manuals at the library for them to read when they are tired."

This highlights practical approaches to student engagement. Another member of school management highlighted the potential of clubs to support all students, including those not typically in the spotlight:

"What I say is new. People see what is in front. Those who are at the back, no one sees them. Now, many students take tutoring paid for by their parents. We have raised many economic problems. Many students surpass what we call active. I do not think this has been given attention by different stakeholders. Since this club is working to allow their voices to be heard—for those who have not—to bring them in front, there may be teachers who can give free service, and also by engaging other communities by initiating this, I believe it will be successful."

This insight positions clubs like Tuseme as vital tools for inclusivity and equity, offering a platform for less visible students to develop agency and contribute, potentially galvanising greater community and teacher support through demonstrated positive impact.

Enabling Factor: The proactive school management and willing teachers, who view clubs as integral to holistic student development and are committed to establishing gender-inclusive initiatives like Tuseme through strategic promotion and parental engagement, form a strong internal foundation for successful club activities.

Disenabling Factor: The challenges in ensuring consistent, active student participation across all clubs and the severe financial limitations that prevent schools from adequately funding extracurricular activities and providing incentives for teachers' extra time fundamentally impede the full potential and sustainability of student clubs.

Table 5: General Enabling and Dis-enabling Factors at Hailemariam Mammo Secondary School – Debre-Brehan

| Enabling Factors | Dis-enabling Factors |
|--|---|
| 1) Teachers demonstrate high levels of personal motivation and dedication despite challenging circumstances. | 1) Severe socio-economic hardship among students and their families directly impedes their ability to attend and focus on school. |
| 2) The school administration actively works to protect female students and address harassment, showing a commitment to gender equality. | 2) Significant deficiencies in school infrastructure and learning resources, including outdated labs and a lack of technology, hinder effective teaching. |
| 3) Teachers and school management collaborate to support each other, especially in managing additional responsibilities and transportation challenges. | 3) A pervasive lack of student motivation, driven by social media and a feeling of hopelessness about future opportunities, undermines learning. |
| 4) There's a recognised increase in female student participation and academic | 4) Insufficient parental involvement and a decline in broader societal responsibility |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>performance, partly attributed to past promotion efforts.</p> <p>5) Teachers express willingness to support and collaborate with new club initiatives that foster student and teacher development.</p> | <p>create behavioural and academic challenges for students.</p> <p>5) Low teacher salaries and a lack of organisational motivation for teachers contribute to a demotivating environment.</p> |
|---|---|

5.1.3 School 2: Fitawrari Gebeyehu Secondary School – Debre-Brehan

5.1.3.1 General Context

Table 6: Fitawrari Gebeyehu Secondary School Profile

| Category | Details |
|--------------------------------|---|
| School Name | Fitawrari Gebeyehu Secondary School |
| School Location | Debre-Brehan, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia |
| Location Type | Urban |
| School Level | Secondary (Grades 9–12) |
| School Type | Government/Public |
| Enrolment Figures | 1,680 students (65% girls) |
| Number of Teachers | 103 (49 male, 44 female) |
| Number of Administrative Staff | 14 |
| Number of Clubs | 11 (only Gender, Sports, and Mini Media clubs active) |
| Facilities | 3 laboratories (limited resources) and 1 library |
| Number of IDP Students | 187 |
| Proximity to Institutions | Located near Debre-Brehan University |

Fitawrari Gebeyehu School, formerly known as Baso School, was established in 1990 and renamed in 2023. Currently, the school serves 1,680 students, with 65% being girls. The teaching staff comprises 103 teachers, including 49 males and 44 females, supported by 14 administrative workers. The school offers around 11 clubs, although only the gender, sports, and mini media clubs are functioning effectively. Facilities include three laboratories with limited resources and one library. Additionally, the school is a destination for 187 students from the IDP community residing in nearby camps. The school is situated very near Debre-Brehan University.

5.1.3.2 Socio-economic Barriers to Education

At Fitawrari Gebeyehu Secondary School, pervasive socio-economic barriers consistently emerge as the most significant impediments to quality education, extending beyond the classroom to profoundly impact students' ability to participate fully and the school's capacity to deliver effective learning. These challenges are particularly acute for students from internally displaced persons (IDP) and refugee communities, as highlighted by school management, teachers, and students themselves. A fundamental and widespread issue is the severe economic hardship faced by students and their families, which directly impacts access to basic educational necessities and creates immense pressure to prioritise survival over schooling. A Government Official from the Debre Birhan Education Bureau states,

"Given the political instability in the country, we now have a growing number of displaced people, along with increased challenges such as gender-based violence affecting girls, psychological trauma, shortages of educational materials, and a lack of sanitary pads, all of which have a serious impact on students' education."

These observations immediately establish that basic material deprivation and psychological distress are intertwined, undermining the very foundation of student readiness for learning. The economic hardship and displacement profoundly affect student focus and academic performance, often leading to disengagement and dropout. A para-social worker observes the deep-seated impact of economic hardship and displacement, stating,

"Most of our students are from the rural area community and from the refugee/IDP community, in which we can say our overall students are from economically disadvantaged and poor families. As a result of this, most of our students do not attend their education with focus and positive attentiveness."

The para-social worker explains the academic challenges resulting from their living conditions:

"Most of the IDP students just come to our school without any attentiveness, as I have observed in my many years of teaching Maths subject at the school. Their thoughts are usually at the camp and the ration distributions made out there. Their mind is always on whether they will miss the ration distribution they come or not while they are at the school. In addition, it is a few IDP students who come to school after doing their homework assignment at home, whereas most of them just come without even opening their books at home."

This para-social worker attributes this to living conditions:

"This is the result of their living situation, in which they are living in tents at the camp with little facilities. Since they do not have a quiet place with chairs and/or tables at their home, they cannot study and do their homework at home, which creates an emotional and psychological impact on those students."

These insights reveal that students' cognitive and emotional resources are heavily consumed by basic survival concerns, making sustained academic engagement incredibly difficult. The harsh realities of socio-economic pressure lead directly to students dropping out of school, often to engage in immediate labour, while also grappling with deep-seated identity issues and trauma. The para-social worker shares a poignant example of students dropping out due to hardship:

"For example, there was one IDP student who dropped out of the education in this year after attending the first semester class. They said they could not handle the hardship of life and decided to shift to doing daily labour work."

This emphasises that the impact of displacement extends beyond material needs to profound psychological and emotional distress, often pushing students to abandon their education for immediate survival. Daily survival responsibilities, including work and household chores, significantly hinder students' ability to attend school consistently or participate in extracurricular activities. A Boy explains how work hinders his participation in clubs, saying,

"I engage in work after school hours as if I have a school shift in the morning, I work in the afternoon and vice versa."

A Boy from a rural area highlights financial barriers:

"I come from a rural area, and I rent a house out here to attend my education. Clubs sometimes ask for contributions, and I cannot afford them. So, it is because of this reason that I do not participate in clubs."

These testimonies from male students reveal a pervasive burden of economic contribution and domestic duties that directly compete with their educational pursuits and limit their ability to engage in enriching school activities. Parents themselves face immense financial strain, often making significant personal sacrifices to support their children's education, while also grappling with the harsh realities of inflation, war, and societal pressures on both male and female children. A Parent speaks about the burden of transportation costs, saying,

"It was 20 birrs, but now it is around 50 birrs. I need at least 330 per month for his transportation only."

This Parent also explains their personal sacrifices:

"She lagged one year, and that is when I decided I should let her continue, even working as a daily labourer."

A Parent describes the economic pressure on males, stating,

"I think even the boys are getting more and more into life risks because they support their families and are the pillars. There is a challenge to get jobs and start a family."

This Parent also notes,

"The pressure is on the males. They are the ones being kidnapped and also saying, 'I will get into Fano' because of the war situation."

Another Parent shares a similar concern:

"There is inflation, and there is also war, which we cannot deny, and this has a high impact on males. He may be kidnapped, join one group, and it is very hard."

These parental perspectives illustrate the crushing financial burdens and the severe security risks that disproportionately affect male students, steering them away from education. Female students face distinct economic burdens, particularly related to their specific needs, while the overall community experiences a profound sense of hopelessness that directly impacts educational aspirations. A parent emphasises the financial strain for girls:

"It is on the females. They menstruate every month and need showers and other materials like bras. If she uses the same bra all the time, it may have an impact on her health."

Another parent also notes the general loss of hope due to economic and security issues:

"The community has been stressed by many things. First, the peace situation, and lack of hope in what will happen after I allow him to study. So, in this situation, I am not

telling you about Debre Birhan. It is about that area. I am not telling the reason that you cannot bring them to school."

These accounts highlight the specific economic vulnerabilities of girls, the widespread engagement in informal labour, and the overarching societal despair that erodes the motivation for education, transforming it from a pathway to a better future into an unaffordable luxury. Girls, particularly those living with caretakers or in IDP camps, face compounded challenges, including excessive household responsibilities, lack of necessities, and a pervasive sense of hopelessness that often leads to early school withdrawal. A Girl highlights external factors preventing students from attending school:

"For example, there are some students who work in other people's houses, and they might face cruel employers or might struggle with a lot of workloads there."

A Girl describes the challenges faced by IDP children:

"The IDP children live in tents that do not protect them from rain or sunlight, and this makes them frustrated in life and choose to drop out of school early."

A girl details her household responsibilities:

"For instance, I'm the only female child in our house, and I do all the household work at home, like cooking, cleaning, etc."

Another girl notes the impact of workload:

"This makes them perform poorly in their education as they spend most of their time working in household work and never get time to study or do homework at home, or even come to school sometimes."

A girl explains how household duties can lead to skipping school:

"Sometimes, my mother goes to collect our food ration distribution and my fathers as well as my brothers go to their daily labour work, which leaves me alone at home cooking the meal for the whole family. In this situation, I skip school for the day and perform my household responsibilities."

These accounts from female students illustrate how household labour, the instability of IDP life, and the stark absence of alternative educational pathways directly force them out of formal schooling, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and limited opportunity.

Enabling Factor: The provision of external aid, such as food, educational materials, and sanitary supplies by NGOs, acts as a crucial enabling factor by directly addressing some immediate basic needs of students and their families, thereby mitigating severe economic hardships that would otherwise completely prevent school attendance.

Disabling Factor: The pervasive and multifaceted economic hardship, encompassing students' inability to afford necessities, families' survival priorities, and the broader instability of the country, stands as the primary disabling factor, creating overwhelming barriers that force students into labour, hinder focus, and ultimately lead to school dropout.

5.1.3.3 Resource and Infrastructure Deficiencies

A significant and overarching impediment to delivering quality education at Fitawrari Gebeyehu Secondary School, as consistently articulated by both School Management and Teachers, stems from severe resource and infrastructure deficiencies within the educational institutions themselves. These shortages directly impact the learning environment, access to modern tools, and the very foundation of pedagogical practice, especially exacerbated by the influx of displaced students. The immense strain on existing school resources due to the overwhelming influx of displaced students has pushed facilities far beyond their intended capacity, fundamentally compromising the learning environment. The Government Official highlights the immense strain on existing resources due to the influx of displaced students:

"In Debre Birhan city alone, more than 3,000 students in our schools come from internally displaced communities, most of them at the primary school level. For example, Tebase Primary School used to accommodate around 700 students, but due to the influx of displaced families, it now hosts over 1,700 students. Similarly, Genet Primary School, which previously enrolled about 400 students, now serves more than 1,800 students because an IDP camp is located nearby and the cost of living in the area is relatively low."

This stark increase in student numbers without commensurate resource allocation leads to overcrowded classrooms and overstretched facilities, making effective teaching and learning incredibly challenging. Beyond overcrowding, there is a critical shortage of basic educational materials, combined with a profound lack of adequate study environments, particularly for displaced students living in temporary settlements. This Government Official also notes the lack of sufficient educational materials, saying:

"Providing school materials, especially for IDP students, is essential because these materials are becoming increasingly expensive in the market. This basic support is crucial for ensuring that these students can continue their education without unnecessary barriers."

The para-social worker supports this, stating,

"Currently, we have many students who come to school without having meals or books, pens, etc."

This para-social worker explains the limitations of their current environment:

"She told me that in the winter period she can manage this by efficiently studying at the library when she is at school, but in the summer, she does not have a place that can enable her to focus on her studying at her home in the camp."

The para-social worker explains how the school tries to manage despite limited resources:

"Our school tries to support the IDPs in such ways, but the needs they have cannot be covered by the capacity of the school's resources."

The para-social worker also mentions the difficulty in providing after-hours study space:

"A lot of IDP students come to us and tell us that they could not read and study in the home sheds and ask us to let them study in our school, including staying in the school after school hours and even at night. They ask us to give them one room to spend the night and study in our school. We refuse it as only the school security personnel stay in the school, where anything can happen, and we cannot guarantee their security and safety at that time."

These accounts highlight a pervasive lack of conducive study environments, both at home and within the school, pushing students to seek impossible solutions and undermining their ability to learn effectively. The absence of modern and well-equipped learning facilities, particularly digital libraries and functional science laboratories, severely limits practical learning opportunities, leaving students with a theoretical-only education. A boy states the need for better infrastructure:

"For instance, we do not have a digital library as it will help us with our practical learning aspects of our biology or physics subjects. We only learn in theory, and I think it would have enabled us to learn more if we also had practical learning sessions at the same time."

Another boy concurs,

"As it has been said, we need a practical learning session, and for that we need a well-equipped laboratory in our school."

This directly indicates that the current infrastructure prohibits essential hands-on learning, disadvantages students in subjects requiring practical application. Beyond the immediate school environment, the broader regional conflict and instability have led to widespread school closures and military occupation, completely cutting off access to education for many children. A parent from a rural area highlights school closure:

"If you go a little farther, the schools are not working, so the students in that area are not learning. One of the main reasons is what we hear."

These accounts reveal a devastating regional impact where conflict directly dismantles the educational infrastructure, displacing students and rendering schools inaccessible or unusable. Finally, the severe neglect of basic sanitation facilities, particularly for female students, poses significant health and privacy risks, serving as a major deterrent to consistent school attendance for girls. A girl emphasises the need for proper facilities for female students:

"For me, it is that girls need to have a room where they can go all the time when they experience their menstruation period and also can access the key of that room so easily for both shifts. In addition, the toilet needs to be cleaned frequently and also needs to have access to water, as currently we cannot go there and change our sanitary pad. The toilet is ill-maintained currently, and this needs to change."

These statements from female students highlight a critical oversight in basic infrastructure that directly undermines their dignity, health, and ability to fully participate in school.

Enabling Factor: The school's proactive, albeit limited, attempts to support IDP students and provide some study space demonstrate an internal commitment to student welfare and education despite severe resource constraints, signalling a willingness to leverage any available capacity.

Disabling Factor: The overwhelming and sustained overcapacity of schools due to the influx of displaced students, coupled with a severe lack of basic educational materials, modern learning infrastructure, and adequate sanitation facilities, fundamentally overwhelms the existing resources and infrastructure, making quality education and even basic student well-being an insurmountable challenge.

5.1.3.4 Stakeholder Collaboration and Support

Effective stakeholder collaboration and sustained support are consistently identified as critical for improving educational quality at Fitawrari Gebeyehu Secondary School, especially given the complex challenges introduced by the influx of IDP students and broader societal instabilities. While there are existing efforts and a general willingness to receive aid, the fragmented and inconsistent nature of this support, coupled with deep-seated community issues, presents significant barriers to long-term progress. The school, despite its best efforts and some existing partnerships, faces an overwhelming burden due to the scale of challenges, indicating a clear need for more extensive and coordinated external support. A government official affirms the need for collaboration, stating:

"Schools that accommodate IDP students are facing significant challenges, and they require substantial support from stakeholders to manage their heavy burdens."

The PTA highlights their collaborative role, stating:

"It is the association of the three: the students, teachers, and parents. They collaborate to make the teaching-learning process smooth."

These statements confirm that existing governmental and PTA efforts, while valuable, are insufficient to address the profound and growing needs of the school, particularly with the added strain of displaced students. There is a general willingness within the community to accept aid, particularly if it is sustained, but the lack of consistent and comprehensive support from NGOs and local administrations remains a significant hurdle. The PTA expresses optimism about community acceptance of aid:

"For me, I think they will accept it positively. No one in the community disagrees with any aid, and the community is very positive about preventing violence. So, they will accept it."

The para-social worker emphasises the necessity of broader administrative involvement:

"Rather, it needs the local woreda administration's collaboration with our school in supporting those students. In addition to the academic challenges, the IDPs face GBV, rape, early mothers and infant mortality, etc., and the situation is very dire in general. Therefore, this issue needs the local woreda and sub-woreda administration involvement."

These insights highlight a receptive community eager for consistent help, but also underscore the critical gap in external, sustained support and the necessity of broader administrative engagement to tackle challenges beyond the school gates. While some external organisations and even internal school clubs provide sporadic assistance, the unpredictable nature of this aid falls short of meeting the constant and overwhelming needs of students, particularly those who are internally displaced. The para-social worker details existing external support:

"Yes, for example, in 2006, a lot of uniform dress was purchased and distributed for the IDP students. I do not remember the name of the organisation that made that donation, but I remember there were around 80 IDP students who benefited from that."

However, this parasocial worker notes the lack of consistent support:

"Therefore, they get support, but the challenge is that nothing lasts for a long time, and our needs are constant every time, which requires constant support. Meanwhile, we have organisations that support us now and then, but we do not have any organisation that supports us regularly and continuously."

These examples confirm that while aid does arrive, its irregular and insufficient nature means the most pressing needs of students, particularly IDPs, are rarely fully met, leading to continuous challenges. Despite the broader difficulties, individual parents and teachers demonstrate remarkable dedication and provide crucial personal support to students, often filling gaps left by systemic deficiencies and external aid. A boy states that his parents require him to go to school:

"There is nothing that hinders us from going to school; rather, it is the only thing that we do right now, and our parents require us to go to school."

A Parent speaks about their active role in their children's education:

"I was a teacher before this, and I also have a management degree. I manage them properly, which is why."

A Parent states their equal support for all children:

"For me, for both. I have four children—two boys and two girls—and God has given you both. There is no difference. I work on both."

A Parent notes the support provided by teachers:

"All the teachers do what they can. For example, there was one child from the rural area who lived with his grandparents. They cannot afford to educate him. They told him to settle down and inherit their land. He is a good student. His friends began fundraising without his knowledge, and the teachers also contributed monthly. Using that, we bought the necessary things like spaghetti and macaroni. Now, he has finished and joined the university."

These personal anecdotes reveal a powerful, grassroots level of support, where individual commitment from parents and teachers directly enables students to overcome significant obstacles and continue their education, showcasing the strength of human connection amidst

crisis. However, some NGO practices inadvertently create barriers or are perceived as inconsistent, while broader community concerns about insecurity and the perceived futility of education due to conflict further undermine support and student participation.

A parent expressed concerns about sporadic aid:

"I do not know. I have not got any. It is only the help that we get every two or three months."

This parent acknowledges the benefits of aid:

"Yes, they are helping them. For example, my child has taken exercise books. Also, other displaced students have been given clothes and pens last year and this year. They are benefiting. It is good."

A parent living near a camp explains community reluctance to allow club participation due to insecurity:

"In the place where I live, I cannot tell you in percentage, but the majority of them do not allow. The reason they do not allow it is that they do not feel safe allowing the students to participate in regular classes, let alone the club activity. The area where I live is along the camp."

"For example, in September, they learned for 20 days, and the school was closed for two months because the area where there is active fighting every day between Fano and the defence force."

These accounts highlight that external support, while beneficial, can be inconsistent or poorly implemented, and broader environmental factors like insecurity and a loss of hope due to conflict are actively eroding community willingness to engage with educational initiatives, often overriding the perceived benefits of schooling. Finally, institutional rigidities within the school, such as strict attendance policies, coupled with persistent gender-based inequalities in parental support and societal expectations, create additional barriers for female students. A girl states,

"When we go to school, we come late and the school doors are shut on us, which makes us go back to our homes and get into more domestic work for that day. Our teachers do not understand us with this, as there are a lot of students who come from faraway places."

Another girl points out the disparity in opportunities:

"For example, if a female becomes unemployed after finishing education, her family might say that it's not a big deal and just stay at home, whereas if it is a boy, they will give him alternative opportunities so he will not stay unemployed for a long time."

This girl details the opportunities for boys:

"They might buy him something [like a vehicle], get him a driver's license, open a small business for him or provide him with some money to use to do some business. Such opportunities are not provided to females even by their own parents and families. Therefore, there is a difference in this regard."

Another girl highlights restricted freedom for girls:

"At our homes, we are not provided with equal opportunities. For instance, if I say I want to go out to hang out with my friends, I will not be allowed to do so, whereas my brother's parents will allow him. Even if I say I want to go out and study or learn some new things, I will not be allowed, whereas the opposite is true for my brother."

"Therefore, when I go home, I have the domestic workloads at my home, and I'm not allowed to go out of the house, whereas my brother does not have any domestic workload at home and can go out of the house anytime he wants to do so."

These narratives highlight that while schools implement necessary rules, their inflexibility can disproportionately affect vulnerable students, and deeply ingrained cultural norms continue to limit girls' access to opportunities and freedom outside the home, despite their academic efforts.

Enabling Factor: The proactive involvement and dedication of parents and teachers at an individual level, including active PTA participation, personal financial contributions, and emotional support for students, serve as a vital enabling factor in mitigating daily challenges and fostering educational persistence amidst broader systemic deficiencies.

Disabling Factor: The inconsistent and insufficient external support from governmental and non-governmental organisations, coupled with the pervasive impact of regional insecurity and a community-wide loss of hope in the value of education, collectively form the primary disabling factor, fragmenting collaborative efforts and actively undermining sustained engagement in schooling.

5.1.3.5 Club Establishment and Student Activities

Fitawrari Gebeyehu Secondary School and the broader education bureau recognise the significant potential of clubs to enhance academic performance, foster positive behaviour, and provide crucial psychosocial support to students. There is a clear policy framework and a demonstrated understanding of clubs' importance, yet persistent challenges with student engagement, resource allocation, and follow-through hinder their full impact. Government policy strongly emphasises the establishment and strengthening of school clubs as a vital component of holistic student development, including academic improvement and behavioural shaping. The Government Official states,

"I work at the Debre Birhan Education Bureau, leading the Curriculum Preparation and Implementation Team. In addition to overseeing teaching and learning activities, we are also responsible for supervising school clubs. We place strong emphasis on strengthening these clubs because they play a significant role in improving students' academic performance."

This Government Official explains policy regarding clubs:

"According to a government directive, secondary schools are required to have 11 clubs, while primary schools must have 13. As a result of this directive, some clubs are also supported by NGOs."

This Government Official also notes,

"In response, gender clubs have been restructured to include both boys and girls, and they now operate under a new directive. We also provide training for these clubs, and I personally have been involved in delivering the training."

This Government Official emphasises the broader purpose of clubs:

"When working with clubs, the goal is to shape students' behaviour. If students are undisciplined, they will not be successful, regardless of their academic performance. A student with high scores who lacks discipline will not be useful to their family or country. This is how we perceive the importance of clubs."

This Government Official believes in the potential of clubs:

"Clubs have the potential to not only shape students' behaviour but also improve their academic performance, and we have seen this first-hand. If the clubs function well, they can help students, particularly IDP students, overcome psychological trauma through training and support. Additionally, participation in these clubs allows students to influence their peers positively."

The PTA discusses activities to prevent harassment:

"Let me add something about the activity to prevent sexual harassment and leadership. There are some activities. Even specific clubs exist in this school. Based on the awareness provided, we were able to stop this kind of situation that was happening 2 or 3 years earlier."

The PTA also mentions,

"If there are children who are afraid to tell, we have prepared a comment box where they can enter their information if they have seen the problem. We are also working on this."

The PTA encourages participation:

"Making clear the program goal—if they know the goal, they may participate. If they do not, they may not participate. So, making clear the goal—if they find it beneficial, they all tend to participate."

The PTA also mentions the role of community organisations:

"At one time, there was one organisation empowering women. It gave some information—I don't remember after that—but there are clubs and also leadership in the classroom and in the community. There is 'Edir.' In this, if both are members, the female should participate in the leadership role."

The Para-social Worker highlights how clubs support students:

"Our school tries to help its students, in which, for example, the gender club provides sanitary kits [pads], books, pens, a recreational and resting room for female students."

This Para-social Worker further notes,

"With such types of students, our school collects small donations from the clubs in the school and gives them to the IDP students, at least to support them with some of the basic needs like having meals and materials, so they might not drop out of their education."

These accounts demonstrate concrete efforts by existing clubs and the PTA to address student welfare, including safety and basic needs, showcasing their active role in supporting the school community. Despite policy emphasis and demonstrated benefits, student participation in clubs remains inconsistent, primarily due to logistical barriers such as distance and conflicting schedules, as well as a lack of engaging, student-centred activities. A Boy explains his reasons for not participating in clubs:

"Usually, club activities and participation happen after school hours, and since I come from faraway places, I do not come back to participate in club activities. In addition, I also attend religious teaching in the after-school hours and that schedule clashes with the club participation schedule."

Another boy states,

"It is around 3 km away and takes around 40 minutes to get here."

A boy expresses his interest in club activities:

"It will interest me if it has a refreshment time during the club activities, enables us to select topics to discuss among ourselves, provides motivational videos and speeches and does not have long and boring meeting times. These things will interest us and our peers, too."

Another boy desires equality:

"It will interest me if it recruits and sees females and males equally and gives opportunities equally."

A boy wants student-led topics:

"It will interest me if it gives the chance to select the activities and talking points for the students, and does not force us into its own boring talking points selected by others. Unless that will frustrate us and enable [empower] us to select topics and activities that are relevant to us and to our community."

These student voices clearly indicate that practical constraints and a perceived lack of relevance or engagement within club activities are significant deterrents to their participation, suggesting a disconnect between current offerings and student interests. Students express a strong desire for clubs to be more dynamic, inclusive, and tailored to their interests, advocating for a focus on practical skills, gender equality, and technology, while also strongly preferring mixed-gender participation. Boys suggest various club activities, including

"General knowledge question and answer competition activity. Topics and activities that focus on gender issues, like gender role differentiation among males and females, awareness creation on the equality of males and females in all work and careers, and advocacy for gender perception changes in the community. Activities that promote voluntary work to support the needy people in our community. Topics that focus on new problems that concern the students, and guidance as well as counselling for the students. Activities focused on technology innovation, robotics, IT coding, skills on computers [digital literacy], and activities that focused on technology issues."

Boys express a preference for merged clubs, with one stating,

"I prefer a merged one because it will enable both the male and female to equally benefit from the club."

Another Boy adds,

"I prefer a merged one because I believe we are equal and we need to equally participate in the club."

A Parent affirms female participation in clubs:

"She participates in the science and technology club. She was good academically and can develop her skills, communication, and be able to sell herself."

A Girl expresses her interest in clubs that foster creativity:

"In art and drama activities, which help me actively use my mind."

A Girl emphasises gender inclusivity in clubs:

"Gender usually recruits female student club members, but boys also have sisters, mothers and wives in the future and need to be allowed to become members as they can contribute to gender issue changes. Only the name of the gender club needs to stand for females, and males need to be members of the club, as they sometimes become victims of violence. The other thing is that some boys try to ridicule gender issues, and if there were male gender club members, they could have engaged them in changing their perception and behaviour."

A Girl desires recreational activities:

"In addition to training, they need to have recreational activities and programs on certain days of the week."

Another Girl stresses the need for talent exploration:

"There are a lot of students with diverse talents and potentials. So, clubs need to have programs that enable students to explore their potential, whether it is on the weekends or on the opposite shift. Most students are keeping their potential inside of them, and they need programs that enable them to bring out their potential."

A Girl suggests creating a safe space for expression:

"If there is a room or place like this where students can come and talk about whatever they want and their ideas, then that will enable them to share their thoughts and ideas with other students."

The consensus among students is a strong preference for practical, skill-based, and gender-inclusive clubs that allow for student-led topics and provide a safe space for expression and talent development, indicating a significant demand for more dynamic and relevant extracurricular offerings. A critical systemic issue is the widespread inactivity of many established clubs due to a lack of sustained follow-up, dedicated physical spaces, and consistent support, leading to student disillusionment despite initial registration. A Girl highlights the inactivity of some clubs:

"What I have observed is that clubs are established and members are recruited at first, and then no further activities are performed later on, as they remain inactive afterwards. Therefore, clubs need to have their own rooms that are prepared for member students. These students can come here to meet other students with a lot of potential and can establish friendships and good interaction."

A Girl points out the lack of follow-up for club activities:

"At the beginning of the year, we were registered in a lot of clubs, but we never had anyone follow up on us or support us in the club activities. For example, I was registered in a club at the beginning of the year, but never participated in any club activity so far. Therefore, if the clubs are supported and strengthened, then we would have participated in the club activities."

Another Girl confirms,

"As she said at the beginning of the year, we get registered to different clubs and everything stops there as we never called on any meeting or for any club activities after our registration."

This Girl notes the selection criteria for some clubs:

"Club registration is done based on the student's academic performance, and the reason I do not participate in clubs is that after registration, we are never contacted or engaged in any club activities."

This Girl suggests encouraging all students:

"Most students who are with fewer grades need to be encouraged to participate in club membership and activities, as it will contribute to improving their academic performances if they get the right kind of support."

A Girl expresses her preference for mixed-gender clubs:

"I prefer the mixture of boys and girls as boys are my brothers and I'm their sister, and he needs to know about my problem as I should also."

Another Girl adds,

"I prefer to be a mixture of boys and girls as club members because it helps us understand each other better."

Another Girl states,

"I prefer to be a mixed one as it creates a feeling of being equal among ourselves."

These student perspectives critically expose a systemic flaw: many clubs are initiated but fail to sustain activities due to a lack of dedicated resources and consistent oversight, leading to missed opportunities for student development and a sense of unfulfilled potential.

Enabling Factor: The government's clear policy directives and the Debre Birhan Education Bureau's emphasis on establishing and strengthening school clubs, coupled with the demonstrated willingness of students to participate in engaging, skill-based, and gender-inclusive activities, provide a strong foundational framework and inherent demand for effective club operations.

Disabling Factor: The inconsistent follow-up and lack of sustained activities for many clubs, combined with logistical barriers such as student travel distance and competing schedules, and an absence of dedicated club rooms or student-led activity selection, collectively undermine the potential of club establishment to foster comprehensive student development.

Table 7: General Enabling and Dis-enabling Factors at Fitawrari Gebeyehu Secondary School – Debre-Brehan

| Enabling Factors | Dis-enabling Factors |
|--|--|
| 1) PTAs, teachers, and some community organisations are actively collaborating to support student education. | 1) Poverty forces students into labour or heavy domestic duties, directly hindering their attendance and academic focus. |
| 2) The government mandates school clubs, recognising their role in student development and academic improvement. | 2) Ongoing conflict, school closures, and safety concerns severely disrupt education and create psychological trauma. |
| 3) External aid and local community donations provide crucial resources and necessities for students. | 3) Overcrowded schools, lack of basic materials, and poor sanitation facilities hinder effective learning. |
| 4) Teachers actively support students, including fundraising and providing guidance, especially for vulnerable children. | 4) Traditional gender roles, limited freedom for girls, and unequal opportunities at home disproportionately affect female students. |
| 5) Students show a strong intrinsic motivation to learn, make friends, explore | 5) Sporadic aid and poorly managed, inactive school clubs lead to a loss of momentum and student disengagement. |

| | |
|---|--|
| talents, and engage in club activities that are relevant to them. | |
|---|--|

5.1.4 School 3: Sherkole Secondary School – Sherkole (Refugee/Border context)

5.1.4.1 General Context

Table 8: Sherkole Secondary School Profile

| Category | Details |
|--------------------------------|---|
| School Name | Sherkole Secondary School |
| School Location | Sherkole, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, Ethiopia |
| Location Type | Refugee/Border context |
| School Level | Secondary (Grades 9–12) |
| School Type | Government/Public (formerly established by the Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (DICAC) and handed over to the local government) |
| Enrolment Figures | Approximately 775 students (about 200 from host communities; the majority of refugees are from Sudan and South Sudan) |
| Number of Teachers | Not specified |
| Number of Administrative Staff | Not specified |
| Number of Clubs | Not specified |
| Facilities | Basic classrooms; limited resources common to refugee education contexts |
| Number of IDP/Refugee Students | Approximately 575 refugee students |
| Proximity to Institutions | Located near refugee settlements in the Sherkole district, Benishangul-Gumuz Region |

Sherkole Secondary School is established by DICAC, and it serves both refugees and host communities. As part of the integration policy, DICAC has handed over the school to the local government office since March. The school is a destination for about 775 students, of whom 200 are host communities, and most of them are refugees from Sudan and South Sudan.

5.1.4.2 Socio-economic Barriers to Education

At Sherkole Secondary School, located in a refugee/border context, severe economic hardship emerges as the paramount barrier to education, profoundly impacting student attendance, particularly for girls, and often leading to premature school withdrawal in favour of immediate income generation. The challenging environment, exacerbated by cultural practices, creates a complex web of disincentives for consistent schooling. Overwhelming economic hardship forces students, often encouraged by their parents, to engage in labour-intensive activities like gold mining or firewood collection, directly leading to absenteeism and school dropout. Girls openly state,

"We have an economic problem."

leading to absenteeism and engagement in activities like gold mining or collecting firewood. One girl, a social worker, noted she earns "900 Birr," but acknowledged *"it is not enough."* Parents acknowledge this, with one mother admitting her children go to gold mining sites for clothes and saying,

"If the girls want to go to mining sites, it is not their problem; it is ours because we need to ask them what they want and fulfil their needs."

This is corroborated by teachers who note that students

"Withdrawal from school is because they are unable to feed themselves." and government officials who attribute high dropout rates to students seeking extra income generation activities."

One parent painfully shared,

"Children are leaving their homes to work in gold mines... in many cases, their own parents encourage it in hopes of improving the family's financial situation."

This highlights a desperate situation where immediate survival trumps long-term educational investment, often with parental encouragement as a coping mechanism for dire poverty. The burden of economic hardship falls disproportionately on female students, who often bear heavy household responsibilities and face critical challenges related to personal hygiene, significantly affecting their attendance. The burden on females is particularly acute. Teachers and government officials both highlight the *"heavy load"* on girls, who are often *"household heads"* and responsible for child-rearing, leading to frequent absences.

The lack of sanitary materials is a critical issue, causing girls to miss *"3-10 days"* of school during menstruation, as noted by girls, teachers, and government officials. Girls reported receiving sanitary pads *"rarely,"* perhaps *"1 pack per semester"* from the school. These observations reveal that gendered roles within the household and insufficient provision of basic sanitary needs directly contribute to girls' chronic absenteeism, further widening educational disparities. Early marriage remains a deeply entrenched cultural barrier that consistently pulls girls out of school, often overriding parental desires for their education and exacerbated by the devastating prevalence of unwanted pregnancies. Early marriage remains a significant cultural barrier. Teachers describe it as a *"habit"* where girls as young as 15 *leave school* after marriage. Camp leaders lament that girls are reaching certain grades:

"May get married, and then they may give up."

While parents universally express a desire for their daughters to be educated, with one prioritising girls for school:

"Because sometimes girls are late and may be occupied with household chores,"

Another father admits,

"If she wants to get married... she will never listen."

This is further complicated by the prevalence of unwanted pregnancies. Parents describe girls being "conned" by men who promise marriage but disappear after pregnancy. One mother recounts her 18-year-old daughter, "very young," getting pregnant, but fortunately, "continuing her education" due to parental commitment, stating, "mistakes cannot be corrected by mistakes." This underscores a dangerous reality where girls' pursuit of economic means (like gold mining) exposes them to exploitation, leading to situations where they:

"Do not come back home once they have left."

The practice of dowry, or "bride price," exists and can involve substantial sums, for instance, "200,000 Birr... and thirty-five cows", which, while often used for wedding preparations, still reinforces traditional marriage practices. These factors combine to create a perilous environment for girls, where cultural norms and vulnerability to exploitation consistently derail their educational journeys, even when parents wish otherwise.

Enabling Factor: The expressed parental desire for girls' education and occasional provision of sanitary pads by the school represent critical, albeit insufficient, enabling factors, indicating a recognised need and some attempts to support female students despite overwhelming challenges.

Disabling Factor: The pervasive and severe economic hardship that forces students, particularly girls, into labour and early marriage, combined with the critical lack of sanitary materials and the devastating impact of unwanted pregnancies, collectively form the primary and interconnected disabling factors, directly leading to high rates of absenteeism and school dropout.

5.1.4.3 Resource and Infrastructure Deficiencies

Sherkole Secondary School operates under severe and pervasive resource and infrastructure deficiencies that fundamentally undermine the quality of education and student well-being, a situation exacerbated by the lack of proper facilities, overcrowding, and inadequate support for teachers. These deficits are consistently highlighted by all stakeholders, from students to government officials. A critical and widely acknowledged issue is the severe lack of essential learning facilities, particularly functional ICT rooms, laboratories, and adequately resourced libraries, which severely impedes practical and modern learning. Girls explicitly state,

"We don't have a laboratory, we don't have an ICT room, and no electricity to practice ICT. No Wi-Fi in the school."

One girl in Grade 12 stated:

"We fear this thing may have a great impact on our future as students."

Parents echoed this, with one mentioning the absence of:

"Internet or issues of bill share" for ICT facilities.

Teachers and government officials confirm these critical gaps, with officials noting the absence of "even one computer (desktop) and laptop" and the difficulty for science students who must

"travel 26 Km" to access a computer. Existing labs are "empty" shells, lacking "any facility and equipment." A parent also highlighted that some families have electricity but struggle with "paying for it," and many girls:

"Study in libraries in the afternoon because they have no light at home."

The lack of solar lighting for homes was identified as a critical unmet need. The school library is underutilised and under-resourced. Girls say it's:

"Not well furnished with the books that you need to read."

and the principal explains:

"No one reads in it because food comes first."

This illustrates how basic needs overshadow academic engagement, and the profound absence of modern learning tools leaves students unprepared for future academic and professional pursuits, highlighting a stark gap in educational provision. Overcrowding in classrooms is a major physical barrier to effective teaching and learning, creating an unmanageable environment for both students and teachers. Overcrowding in classrooms is a major issue, with government officials reporting a ratio of

"1 classroom to 108 students," far exceeding standards.

This leads to students "sitting on the floor," severely hindering learning. Parents observed that classrooms

"It often looks like an open area, which is difficult to manage for the students."

The absence of a "Child Wellbeing Centre where children can play" further diminishes the school's appeal compared to home, as noted by government officials. These conditions create a chaotic and uncondusive learning environment, making individualised attention impossible and reducing the overall effectiveness of classroom instruction. The quality and retention of teachers are significant concerns, with shortages leading to the recruitment of under-qualified staff and a lack of professional development opportunities, further compromising instructional quality. The quality and retention of teachers are also significant concerns. Government officials admit to recruiting

"Below standard" teachers due to shortages, which "kills a generation."

Teachers themselves express fears of losing experienced staff if government salaries are insufficient post-transfer from NGO management, impacting their ability to teach students from "different conditions." They also highlight a lack of professional development opportunities. Parents also expressed concerns about teachers and the "National exam," doubting whether students

"Could pass because the students did not understand where the exams were prepared, and the teachers, too, did not inform the students."

This points to a fundamental weakness in the teaching force, undermining the educational experience and casting doubt on students' preparedness for national examinations. Absence of proper school fencing and inadequate, unsanitary toilet facilities compromise student safety, discipline, and well-being, particularly for girls. A glaring issue is the lack of proper school fencing, pointed out by parents:

"The school has no fence. So, the students will go out and do whatever they like outside and get back."

This compromises security and student discipline. The toilets are also a problem, with girls stating they are *"not clean,"* and parents agreeing, highlighting the large student body (1,000 students) and a lack of collective responsibility for cleanliness despite a principal's request for

"10 Birr from all students to clean the room."

These critical infrastructure gaps directly threaten student security, facilitate truancy, and create unhygienic conditions that disproportionately affect female students, further hindering their consistent attendance and comfort.

Enabling Factor: The school principal's efforts to mobilise resources for facility maintenance, e.g., requesting funds for toilet cleaning, indicate a degree of internal initiative to address deficiencies, and the existence of some parental ability to afford electricity at home, albeit with financial struggle, suggests pockets of resilience in coping with resource scarcity.

Disabling Factor: The pervasive absence of fundamental educational resources, including functional laboratories, ICT facilities, and well-stocked libraries, coupled with extreme classroom overcrowding and critical deficiencies in basic infrastructure like school fencing and sanitary toilets, collectively create an environment where quality education is severely compromised and student well-being is undermined.

5.1.4.4 Stakeholder Collaboration and Support

Effective stakeholder collaboration is recognised as crucial for improving education at Sherkole Secondary School, yet its practical implementation is severely hindered by resource misallocation, inconsistent aid, bureaucratic restrictions, and deep-seated community issues. Government officials express frustration with the superficial nature of existing partnerships and highlight how fraudulent reporting and subsequent misallocation of resources severely strain their capacity to manage the influx of refugees. The head of the office emphasises that while they *"need partners and support,"* this:

"Must be metalised, it should not be for the sake of gathering information only."

They expect:

"More discussion on the practical implementation of the project" from organisations like FAWE.

A significant challenge arises from the influx of refugees, particularly from Tongoli County, which:

"Create a huge burden to our community."

Officials state that Tongoli County:

"Have fraud reports as if there are still refugees there, and the budget goes to Tongoli while the real burden and the refugees are accommodated in our camps here."

This misallocation of resources strains their capacity, as:

"Out of the 1200 students, only 200 are locals, and they are using the government budget. UNICEF came and promised to help, but till now there has not been any help received."

This critical issue of misdirected aid means that the intended support often fails to reach the communities and schools bearing the actual burden, severely limiting their ability to respond to the crisis. Concerns about equitable aid distribution and the lack of consistent support further complicate stakeholder collaboration and can create divisions within the community. An official recalls an instance where a group promised incentives for girls and teachers, but then:

"Said we will only deliver the training to refugees, and the local people (girls) didn't get any advantage, be it incentive or training, there is such a tendency."

The narratives highlight a complex dynamic in stakeholder collaboration. Parents universally express strong support for education, sending *"both girls and boys"* to school and prioritising girls, with one parent stating,

"We see them as equals, and we fulfil their requirements equally."

They see education as essential for their children to *"know themselves," "make a better living," "know about their country,"* and even *"lead one day."*

Parents believe that if children:

"Attend schools; they can live and support their lives well. Don't waste your time out of school."

However, there is a disconnect in addressing issues. Teachers feel *"restricted"* in addressing community issues like early marriage and suicide, explaining:

"We are not allowed to go beyond... There is a lot of bureaucracy."

Despite these challenges, active collaborations exist. Teachers confirm working with the PTA and RCC. Government officials confirm a partnership with PLAN International, focusing on

"Making schools free from gender-based violence," and providing:

"Discussion rooms," "sanitary provisions," and "psychosocial training."

Parents welcome external interventions for student well-being, stating:

"We receive 100% what you are going to give us because the education you are going to give is not harmful."

They express readiness for clubs that prevent unwanted pregnancies and violence, acknowledging their own limitations in addressing these deeply rooted issues, with one parent having worked with an organisation on:

"Reproductive health and HIV."

They noted support for girls from organisations, with one parent stating:

"Last month, girls (daughters) received support from the organisation."

This strong community belief in education and openness to external aid presents a significant opportunity for successful collaboration, particularly for initiatives addressing critical social and health issues. However, bureaucratic hurdles restrict teachers from addressing sensitive community issues, and a major concern persists regarding the long-term sustainability of externally funded projects once initial support phases out. There's a disconnect in addressing issues. Teachers feel. They asked:

"When they phase out, how can we continue without that?"

As their budget for teachers is *"only salary."* This highlights a fundamental challenge in integrating project-based support into long-term government operations. Parents also noted the common issue in the camp that when asking for support,

"They say there is no budget."

Parents unanimously express strong support for education, sending *"both girls and boys"* to school and prioritising girls, with one parent stating,

"We see them as equals, and we fulfil their requirements equally."

These points reveal that while some collaborative efforts are underway and effective in specific areas, systemic limitations and the crucial question of how to maintain initiatives without sustained external funding pose significant challenges to long-term impact.

Enabling Factor: The strong, universal support for education from parents, who prioritise their children's schooling and are highly receptive to external interventions for student well-being, coupled with existing, albeit limited, partnerships with organisations like PLAN International, provides a foundation for more impactful collaboration.

Disabling Factor: The pervasive misallocation of resources due to fraudulent reporting and the inconsistent, short-term nature of external aid, exacerbated by bureaucratic restrictions on teachers addressing sensitive community issues and deep concerns about project sustainability, collectively create a fragmented and unsustainable landscape for stakeholder collaboration.

5.1.4.5 Club Establishment and Student Activities

While the potential of student clubs to address various educational and social challenges at Sherhole Secondary School is widely recognised by all stakeholders, their current effectiveness is severely curtailed by a pervasive lack of resources, dedicated spaces, consistent follow-up, and sufficient budget allocation. There is a clear understanding of clubs' potential to foster holistic student development, including academic improvement, psychosocial support, and life skills, particularly from government and teaching staff. Girls express a desire for creative activities like Art (drawing), Drama, singing, and Dance, but many are *"not interested in existing clubs or claim "I don't have time to spend there."*

One girl was registered in *"labour and skill,"* while others mentioned *"HIV and mini media"* clubs. Teachers confirm clubs like Gender clubs, which are active in providing

"Psychological support" and sanitary help for girls,

Mini-Media, ICT and Technology, Sports, and Pedagogy clubs. This indicates a foundational recognition of the multifaceted benefits of clubs, with some existing structures attempting to provide support. Despite this recognition, the actual functioning of most clubs is severely hampered by critical material shortages, lack of dedicated physical spaces, and a complete absence of specific budget allocation. However, the principal admits,

"If you tell you we are working, it would be a lie"

due to severe material shortages and a lack of dedicated spaces. For instance, the ICT club

"I need computers, electricity, and materials, but there are none."

While Pedagogy clubs show *"good participation"* from teachers, it's often despite a lack of full resources. Teachers also mentioned a *"room"* for girls to rest during menses, but it lacks *"materials like soap"* or even *"water."* Parents noted that while some children *"play basketball"* or have *"a team of football,"* these activities

"Are not taking place in high school."

Government officials acknowledge that, despite directives, many clubs are *"not functional yet"* due to

"Lack of follow-up and support from the concerned body,"

low teacher participation, and crucially,

"Not any kind of budget for the clubs."

They recall a past when clubs were *"very active"* with regular *"capacity building training."* Parents also stated,

"We do not have the right to ask whatever we want because of the shortage of budget."

However, there's a strong desire from all groups to revitalise clubs. Parents express

"100% agreement" for their children to join clubs focused on preventing pregnancy and violence, recognising their inability to tackle these issues alone.

They appreciate the proactive approach, with one parent saying,

"What you are saying is very important... There is nothing we refuse about it, and we should work hand and glove."

Government officials highly recommend strengthening reading clubs to improve literacy, as well as WASH, Gender, and Mini-Media clubs. They emphasise the critical need for life skill training within clubs to build confidence and combat hopelessness, citing instances of student suicides due to relationship problems. Teachers suggest providing incentives like

"Sanitary materials like pads and soap"

to encourage participation and use drama and broadcasting their own music through mini media to raise awareness and foster positive change. The consensus is that well-resourced and engaging clubs can be powerful tools for both academic and social development, offering a *"Good opportunity"* for children. This suggests that despite past failures, the community holds high expectations for clubs as vital tools for addressing not only academic deficits but also critical social and psychological challenges, provided they are adequately resourced and actively managed.

Enabling Factor: The universal recognition by all stakeholders of the significant potential and importance of clubs for academic improvement, behaviour shaping, and psychosocial support, coupled with a strong desire from parents and students for engaging, relevant activities (especially in life skills, gender issues, and technology), creates a receptive environment for revitalised club initiatives.

Disabling Factor: The severe and pervasive lack of dedicated financial budget and essential material resources for clubs, combined with insufficient follow-up and management, leads to widespread inactivity and a lack of dedicated physical spaces, fundamentally preventing most clubs from functioning effectively and realising their recognised potential.

Table 9: General Enabling and Dis-enabling Factors at Sherkole Secondary School (Refugee/Border context)

| Enabling Factors | Dis-enabling Factors |
|---|--|
| 1) Parents overwhelmingly believe in education as a means for their children's self-improvement, future success, and contribution to society. | 1) Severe poverty forces students, especially girls, into labour for survival, directly hindering school attendance and retention. |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>2) Many students are eager to learn, attend school, and achieve their goals, aspiring to professions like nursing and teaching.</p> <p>3) Many teachers remain dedicated to their profession and actively participate in clubs like pedagogy, even with limited resources and insufficient incentives.</p> <p>4) Official directives and a history of active clubs provide a foundation for revitalising extracurricular student activities.</p> <p>5) The shared language and good relationships between host and refugee communities facilitate cooperation within schools.</p> | <p>2) Schools suffer from acute shortages of basic infrastructure, including functional labs, electricity, clean water, adequate sanitation, and educational materials.</p> <p>3) Practices like early marriage and the heavy burden of household chores on girls significantly impede their educational progress and lead to high dropout rates.</p> <p>4) Project-based aid often lacks long-term sustainability plans, leading to the collapse of initiatives once external funding ceases, and creating a dependency cycle.</p> <p>5) School administrators face significant bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of autonomy, limiting their ability to address critical issues and retain qualified staff.</p> |
|--|---|

5.1.5 School 4: Woumba Secondary School – Bambasi (Refugee/Host interface)

5.1.5.1 General Context

Table 10: Woumba Inclusive Secondary School Profile

| Category | Details |
|--------------------------------|--|
| School Name | Woumba Inclusive Secondary School |
| School Location | Bambasi, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, Ethiopia |
| Location Type | Refugee/Host interface |
| School Level | Secondary (Grades 9–12) |
| School Type | Government/Public (inclusive education model) |
| Enrolment Figures | Approximately 1,350 students (about 900 refugees and 450 host community students) |
| Number of Teachers | 36 (6 female, 30 male) |
| Number of Administrative Staff | Not specified |
| Number of Clubs | Not specified |
| Facilities | Standard classrooms with limited resources; an inclusive education framework |
| Number of IDP/Refugee Students | Approximately 900 |
| Proximity to Institutions | Located near refugee settlements within the Bambasi district, Benishangul-Gumuz Region |

Woumba Inclusive Secondary School was established in 2016 to provide education to a diverse student population. Currently, the school employs a total of 36 teachers, of whom only six are female. This gender imbalance among the teaching staff is an important factor to consider, as it can influence the educational experience and role models available to students. The school serves a large student body of approximately 1,350 learners, with around 900 of those being refugees. This demographic creates a unique set of challenges and opportunities within the school environment, as many students come from different cultural backgrounds and may face additional hurdles in their educational journey.

5.1.5.2 Socio-Economic Barriers to Education

Woumba Secondary School, serving a large population of refugee and host community students, faces overwhelming socio-economic barriers that fundamentally impede access to and persistence in education. These challenges stem from pervasive poverty, the necessity of child labour for survival, and deeply ingrained societal perceptions that often devalue formal schooling in favour of immediate income generation, disproportionately affecting female students.

Poverty and the resulting lack of necessities are the foremost obstacles, compelling students to engage in labour rather than attend school consistently. R2 (refugee girl) stated that some students don't attend school because they

"They do not have fathers, so they lack shoes and school materials."

R3 (refugee girl) echoed this, saying,

"My father is far away from here. It is my mother who provides for us. She buys everything for us. I also support myself. I work."

When asked about her work, she replied,

"I work as a social worker. It is 900, but by the way, it is not enough. But the other students go to gold mines. That is the major challenge."

R5, a student, discussed the economic struggles faced by some students:

"For example, there may be children like me having elderly parents or lacking economic power. So, we try to fulfil our needs by working when we get the time. We have brothers, but we do not ask them because they have their own families. So, we do not only focus on our education; we also work, at least to buy something like soap or pens. There is some support we get from the school, which is also very important, even if it is small. So, we are not living in a comfortable situation. We are just working hard for our dreams."

R6 (host community girl) highlighted a similar issue:

"You may have difficulty buying clothes or soap. For example, if you do not have soap, you may not come to school until you buy it. It may be for six days. After you buy it, you go back to school."

These direct testimonies highlight how daily survival needs, such as shoes, school materials, and hygiene products, are often unaffordable, forcing students into work and leading to absenteeism. The imperative of earning income for family survival often overshadows educational pursuits, particularly for male students who are drawn to gold mining or transportation services, while for female students, early marriage also becomes an economic coping mechanism. A camp leader highlighted the critical challenge of basic needs:

"The first thing that I would say as one of the biggest challenges is related to the economic issue. In our context, refugee students, both girls and boys, go to school only for the school feeding program. After that, they go to look for food and income-generating activities for their families."

This sentiment was reinforced by another camp leader who stated,

"Most of the students do not even come to school as they look for some income-generating activities for their families."

They also observed a gender-specific issue:

"The male students go to the gold mining areas to look for some income for their families, whereas the female students engage in other activities, including early marriage, to gain some income for their families."

A camp leader articulated the community's immediate priorities:

"When we talk about the priorities in the refugee context, our priority is finding food, and the second is looking for shelter. These two basic needs must be met before talking about education, and this is our daily struggle."

Another camp leader expanded on the economic pressure:

"The value of education is diminished because most of our community members prefer to find daily labour work and look for something that can solve their daily basic needs. Therefore, they prefer to work and earn money rather than to send their children to school or for their children to stay in school."

A camp leader shared a similar perspective:

"The value of education has declined for us, and the primary priority for us is to eat and to look for jobs."

"When there is no food, it is hard to send your children to school as they think about what they will eat next. As a result, students come to school just for the school feeding program."

Another camp leader noted the parents' practical dilemma:

"Parents, when they leave their children in the school, they do not have anything they eat or provide food for their children."

"This forces them to look for income-generating work and daily labour, and they even take their children with them."

A camp leader emphasised the need for consistent support:

"The parents are willing to send their children to schools, but only if they are getting consistent support from organisations."

A Maths teacher highlighted,

"Refugee community sends both boys and girls equally to school, and there is no discrepancy in this regard."

However, they also noted,

"The only thing is that in the mid-year semester break time, most of the refugee students go to gold mining fields and try to get extra earnings for their families."

This is further emphasised by the observation that

"The refugee female students do not have a positive perception about education, and they come to school because organisations like DAFI are offering them some kind of small monetary support for those who attend school."

A History teacher underscored the issue, stating,

"Most of the local male students prefer to get a motorcycle from Bajaji and do a small transportation business in the town."

adding that for local female students,

"The issue of early marriage forces them to drop out of their education early as they get pregnant early stage of their marriage."

Another School Management member observed,

"Most students see teachers and educated people struggle in life and prefer to search for better alternatives than stay in school."

linking this to students going

"To the gold mining field whenever there is a break or gap in the school."

They further explained,

"Nowadays, business people live a better life than the literate people, and that is what attracts these students to go to the gold mining fields."

These extensive accounts from camp leaders and teachers paint a grim picture: the urgent need for food and shelter overshadows education, leading families to prioritise immediate earnings, even if it means withdrawing children from school. The perceived low returns on education, contrasted with the visible success of those in informal businesses like gold mining or transportation, further disincentivise schooling, leading to practices like selling donated school materials for quick cash. Despite these severe external pressures, many students and parents demonstrate a remarkable commitment to education and personal responsibility, often making significant sacrifices to ensure school attendance. Female students discussed their home responsibilities and parental support. R1 (refugee girl) stated,

"I have my own responsibility. I even me. Parents are responsible for me, and I am responsible to them. So, if I refuse in order to go to school, they can ask me why you are not going to school. What is the problem? Tell me I can tell I can fix your problem. And then if my clothes get dirty, then they can give me more in order to buy soap to wash my clothes, and then I can start my school. And even if there is not enough food in order to eat, they can buy food in order to eat, and I can go to school. So, they are responsible to me and I'm responsible to myself."

R2 (refugee girl), who is married, mentioned,

"I have my responsibility. Because I have a responsibility. I have a marriage. When my kid comes back to school, in the primary school, I might face. You couldn't go to school because in school, you can change your behaviour."

R3 (refugee girl) stated,

"I am the head of my family. I have children. I take them there and I attend this school, but there is nothing that can hinder me from going to school, and I am fulfilling my responsibility because I am the one who cares for myself."

R4 (host community girl) said,

"There is nothing that can prevent me from going to school because I am learning with my family, and I may not go to school when there is very important work or is sick family member, by taking permission."

R3 (female student) stated,

"We have much work to do a home, but we come here because we prioritise it."

She also confirmed that her family does not prevent her from going to school due to security reasons. R4 (female student) added,

"Things that may prevent us from going to school are, like, activities at home—since our family are farmers. We usually have to stay and help during the crop gathering. But other than that, we come to school."

Male students also shared their experiences with home responsibilities. R5 (male student), who is married, stated,

"I have the children, so I respect myself. So, I asked myself, yeah. So, I have one brother. So, I'm responsible for myself. So, I'm responsible for you. So, when you don't come to school, I ask you, I ask him. So, when I'm not, I go to school, you ask him, yeah."

R8 (male student), who is married with children, reiterated,

"Of course. Now I'm married because I have maybe six children now. He is learning in the school for the primary school, one in grade nine, and one in grade eight. They are now, because when he doesn't go to school. I tell him, Go to school. If you don't have anything, I will also give you, like me, my wife, also, when I don't come to school here, you can come to ask me, why didn't you go to school today. Of course, he can buy the support too. I can wash my clothes when I don't get an income. Maybe I left the school. Maybe if, after three days, two days, I will go to take the money, then I will come to school."

These narratives highlight a remarkable resilience among students and parents, who, despite overwhelming challenges, maintain a strong sense of personal responsibility and actively strive to overcome obstacles to education, viewing it as a pathway to a better future for themselves and their families. The severe financial strain also significantly impacts teachers, leading to low morale, inability to focus on teaching, and a diminished perception of the teaching

profession, further contributing to a negative view of education's value. R1, a teacher at Woumba Secondary School, observed,

"After 5 a.m., it is hard to continue teaching refugee students as they will say they are hungry [and, unable to continue staying in class] and ask to go to their homes. These are the challenges I have personally observed."

R5, a teacher, highlighted,

"To keep students in the school, student feeding programs are being done, but teachers are given no attention."

R8, a teacher, spoke about the personal financial struggles impacting their work:

"The main challenge is that the salary we receive for teaching in this school is inadequate for us, and we are forced to search for additional work to manage our living expenses."

They further explained,

"The transportation expenses for us to come and teach in this school are 200 ETB per day, and we calculate the amount of the per-day earnings we get from our salary, it is less than 200 ETB. For instance, if you told me to stay in the school in the afternoon for club activities, I could do that if my salary were enough to cover my living costs. However, since my salary is not enough, I would prefer to go to other places to do additional work/jobs rather than stay in the school in the afternoon for club activities. All of these factors prevent the teachers from being able to settle and focus on teaching in the school."

R3, a teacher, spoke to the challenges faced by female teachers as mothers:

"Mothers face a lot of challenges in raising their children, managing their household alongside their work [teaching] responsibilities."

R5, a teacher, echoed this, saying,

"It is hard for us to solely concentrate on teaching our students as we travel a long distance to get to the school, and after we reach here, we worry about how we would get back to our houses and to our children. The teachers in the school live in a rental house, in which a large amount of our salary goes to paying for the rent of the houses we live in."

These testimonies from teachers reveal a critical disconnect: while student feeding programs exist, teachers themselves are struggling financially, leading to burnout, fragmented attention, and an inability to fully commit to extracurricular activities, which in turn reinforces the community's negative perception of education as a viable path. Female students face a disproportionate burden of household responsibilities and are subject to societal perceptions that undermine their educational participation and confidence, often leading to lower engagement and early marriage. R4, a female teacher, shared her observation on female student participation:

"The girls' participation is a bit lower than that of the boys. I think this starts from their households, and it is because of the additional workloads that girls deal with in their homes. In addition, some female students are mothers at home, which also creates additional loads for them."

R1, a teacher, stated,

"Even when I encourage them and motivate them to participate in the class discussion, female students decline to participate in the class and ask the things they did not understand well. Many of the female students are mothers and even come very late to their exams."

A teacher noted a difference in confidence:

"The refugee students have a fear of getting into any interaction."

R3, a teacher, corroborated the challenges for female students:

"The number of female students in this school is a lot, but their active participation in the school is very low. This is because a lot of female students are mothers who have children to take for and I think this might hinder their active participation in the club."

R5, a teacher, also noted a challenge in attracting students to clubs:

"The current students use a lot of different illicit substances like 'Khat' and different types of alcoholic beverages, which I also believe will hinder them from engaging in the club activities. Even some of the students have motorcycles and provide transportation services, in which they just come to the school for a few hours and prefer to immediately go back to do transportation service business."

R2, the Deputy Bureau Head, acknowledged the socioeconomic challenges, stating,

"There are a lot of challenges that are causing the low pass rate, and making the students' dormitory in universities and taking their exams in the universities can be one reason for that. In addition, there are economic challenges and social challenges that are part of this as well. In this regard, most of the students go to work and seek jobs, which hinders their time and focus the directing them towards their education. Therefore, such things can be the cause for the low passing rate of our students."

R2 also highlighted the burden on female students:

"On the other hand, about female students, for instance, you are women and know about it, in which female students experience a lot of household workloads."

R4, an Education Bureau representative, emphasised students' negative perception towards education:

"Our students have a negative perception towards the education. When we ask them why this is, and then they say to us that they prefer to harvest an outcome from jobs and

work which yields [produces] the fruit of their effort, than to waste their time in education which does not produce any harvest despite their efforts."

R4 also linked this to the national exam results:

"They see their senior grade 12 students who mostly fail in the national exam, and they have now lost interest and hope in their education, and they see education as something impossible."

R4 specifically mentioned the impact on female students:

"The other thing the female students mention is that they have a heavy household workload at home."

R4 also pointed to a new distraction:

"Additionally, access to technology [smart phone] is another factor that is distracting our students lately."

R6, a government official, linked low female passing rates to

"Their negative perception of education. The main challenge for female students is that they see their senior female students end up failing in exams and getting into early marriage, which causes a negative perception towards education among the rest of the female students."

R1, an Education Bureau representative, pointed out that for refugee students,

"Some of them think that they will return to their country very soon and do not give much attention to their education. Most of the refugee students do not have adequate educational materials, and sometimes, because of the inadequacy of the food ratio, they receive some of them go to the gold mining fields to earn a living and afford food."

"On the other hand, there are students from the local community who live in worse economic challenges than the refugees and need to be supported too."

R2, the Deputy Bureau Head, observed,

"The main reason for this is the workload that female students have at home. On top of this, negative perception towards education, early marriage, high dropout, etc., is the major factor as I have observed in my thesis research work."

A government official stated,

"The challenges they face are that the clubs do their club activity outside of the school hours, which is a challenge for gathering all its entire members."

A government official concluded,

"I think it is the students' desire, as they are currently even refusing to come to the regular classes in the morning session. What the students' desire is to engage in something that can get them some income or benefits?"

A PTA member observed,

"The community has a tradition of buying books and pens for its children and just sending them to schools. However, the good traditions that most parents lack are making follow-up on the education of their children and what they learn at school."

Another PTA member highlighted a concern,

"As a parent, we are concerned about the students not having a uniform dress."

This was clarified by another PTA member who said,

"He meant that there are students from poor families who cannot afford uniform dress for their children, and they need to be supported with it so their children can also have uniform dress like other students at our school."

A PTA member articulated the prevailing parental perception:

"Parents in this area need awareness creation trainings, as currently today's parents see less benefit and successful outcome in their children's education. Some children drop out of school early to engage in business and generate income, whereas those who stay long in the education system become unemployed after 18-20 years of education. This made parents see less fruitful a future in their education, which I think is a wrong perception."

These challenges highlight that girls are often caught between domestic duties, early marriage, and a pervasive societal perception that formal education offers limited returns, leading to a disheartening cycle of low participation and high dropout rates. This is further compounded by the emerging distraction of smart technology and the discouraging reality of high unemployment among educated youth, leading to a widespread questioning of education's value.

Enabling Factor: The resilience and personal commitment of many students and parents, who, despite severe socio-economic hardships, strive to prioritise education and actively participate in school, when possible, act as a crucial enabling factor, demonstrating an inherent desire for learning amidst overwhelming adversity.

Disabling Factor: The overwhelming and pervasive economic hardship that forces students into child labour, coupled with a diminished perceived value of education due to high unemployment among graduates and the immediate gratification of informal work, collectively forms the primary disabling factor, leading to high dropout rates, particularly for female students facing household burdens and early marriage.

5.1.5.3 Resource and Infrastructure Deficiencies

At Woumba Secondary School, a critical shortage of basic resources and a complete lack of modern infrastructure profoundly undermine the quality of education and student well-being, despite some initial provision of school materials. The school's unique position as a refugee and host community interface creates a complex situation where students receive some material support, but the overall infrastructure fails to meet the needs of a large, diverse student body. While some students report receiving basic supplies, there is a widespread and significant deficiency in practical learning facilities, such as laboratories and computer labs, which hinders effective, hands-on learning and leaves students unprepared for national exams. R1 (refugee girl) stated,

"We have not faced any problem when we come to school. There may be others who have faced this problem, but in our area, we have not faced any problem."

"Up to now, I have not faced problems like school materials. I have both pens and exercise books, and I am also not far from here."

R2 (refugee girl) confirmed,

"We receive exercise books and uniforms." R3 (refugee girl) mentioned, "Here, we also receive school materials from DAICAK."

R5 (host community girl) highlighted significant infrastructure deficiencies:

"There are some problems at this school, like we do not have an IT lab. We take tests on paper, and we also do not have a chemistry lab. We fear this thing may have a great impact on our future as students. We ask for these things."

R1 (refugee girl) further elaborated on this, saying,

"Our question—what we want—is school materials. We want books for our library from Grades 9 to 12, and also a computer is necessary, not only to prepare for the online test but also because we need it today. We took the education in theory, but we do not practice it. This is a great problem for all the students."

She suggested,

"For example, we can go to the lab class, library, or any place they want during our recess time. It can be fulfilled by any organisation. We do have the old books, but we need the new ones."

R4 (host community girl) expressed concern about preparedness for online tests:

"We are preparing, but there is no computer. We have a problem with computers, and it will be difficult if we are going to take the test online. Since we have taken the training, the disadvantage will be for us."

One male student emphasised the lack of practical learning materials, stating,

"There is not enough school material... like practical, even we can learn IT. But to be practical... we don't have... There is not enough material, like chemistry, to be practical."

Yes, you are learning carbon, hydrogen, but to be practical, to understand there is not enough material, so we need enough material to be okay."

He also highlighted the impact on happiness:

"Otherwise, we are not happy because there is not enough school material. We cannot understand IT because we are not learning it practically. Guess on the blackboard."

Another male student (R5) mentioned the issue of water availability:

"There is material in the water. So bad. The water has not come, yeah, that is a problem."

He also spoke about the lack of sports materials and designated areas for sports. A male student also noted that

"When this school was first built, there were separate rooms for lab classes, like physics and chemistry. But now, they're using those rooms as normal classrooms 'cause of the shortage of classes."

"In other schools, they have labs with equipment, and students are learning properly. We also want a chance to see things practically."

R6 (male student) acknowledged,

"It is good we have a library, but it is also good if we practice computer, the water construction is also started."

These accounts reveal a stark contrast between the provision of basic materials and the profound lack of crucial, high-level infrastructure. Students are well aware that their theoretical education is inadequate for modern needs and fear being unprepared for exams, which directly impacts their motivation and prospects. This systemic gap between theory and practice is a critical deficiency. The school's sanitation facilities are severely inadequate, unhygienic, and lack essential materials, which creates a significant barrier to school attendance and well-being, particularly for female students during their menstrual cycles. Regarding sanitary facilities, R1 (refugee girl) stated,

"We do not get the materials regularly. We may get them rarely."

R4 (host community girl) confirmed:

"The school provides them, but it is not regular. They may give one pack per semester, but they told us to ask the club if we want."

R3 (refugee girl) noted that while there is a room for girls during their menses, "the students do not use it" because:

"There are many empty classrooms, but there are no materials. For example, there is no soap."

R4 (host community girl) added,

"For example, there were students who were very sick. We took her to the teacher's room because if we took her there, there would be no materials in that room. So, the main problem is materials. If we get those materials, that would be nice."

R5 (host community girl) specifically mentioned,

"There is a room, but no water."

When asked about toilets, R5 stated,

"It is not clean."

R1 (refugee girl) agreed,

"Yes. There are about one thousand students in this school. They do not use it cleanly, but they have started to build water."

R2 (refugee girl) further elaborated on the cleanliness issues:

"The classroom is dirty. The toilet is dirty. The principal asked us to share 10 Birr from all students to clean the room, but the classroom is still dirty."

R3 (refugee girl) expressed her reluctance to use the school toilet:

"For me, if I come to school, I will not go to the toilet because it is too dirty."

A male student reiterated the need for a

"Room, and material so that they cannot leave the school" for female students during their menses.

The lack of clean toilets, running water, and consistent provision of sanitary materials creates a deeply unhygienic environment. The existence of a dedicated room for female students is rendered meaningless without the necessary supplies, directly impacting girls' health, dignity, and ability to stay in school. The school's operational capacity is severely strained by overcrowded classrooms, a teacher shortage, and a crippling lack of budget and institutional support, which creates a cycle of dependency and compromises the quality of education. A Camp Leader stated the dire need for basic materials:

"The problems for parents to send their children to school are a lack of school materials, clothing, and shoes."

They further explained,

"When they don't have these, they may refuse and say, 'I don't have this, and I cannot go to school.' This is a big challenge."

Another Camp Leader reiterated,

"Just we are facing the problem of clothing and food. These is all the challenges that we are facing seriously."

A Camp Leader added,

"The problem is that they have no bags, pens, or pencils. So, what can we do? When they start asking for some materials and we don't have a budget for that material, it becomes difficult for them to oppose our ideas to continue at the school. Since I have no shoes, why am I going to school? And for me, for instance, I don't have a budget for buying this. They need support in that context, and then we can encourage them to continue."

A Camp Leader emphasised the practical nature of support needed for clubs:

"Also, it is important to have materials and equipment for performing the club activities."

A Citizenship subject teacher noted,

"In addition to this, we also have technological devices like computers, tablets, etc."

A School Management member highlighted that

"Most organisations see the school buildings and take an assumption that there is no shortage in this school by itself. We have up to 80 students in one classroom, and we are struggling with a teacher shortage."

A School Management member recounted an incident:

"Even though there was an incident in which one guy came to our school and asked us why we do not have Wi-Fi, computers, etc. in our school, and teachers cannot install Wi-Fi in the school by themselves, rather we need to be supported with it."

A School Management member stated,

"We have 35-36 teachers, including 6 female teachers [2 of them are on leave due to childbirth] and around 1300 students, of whom around 900 students are from the refugee community."

Another School Management member emphasised,

"Therefore, what I would recommend for you is that we need some practical programs and implementation that can be experienced by the students on the ground and change the distorted perception of education among students."

A School Management member voiced concerns about facilities, stating,

"When our school toilets were constructed, they were never meant for more than 1000 students, and the toilets need a lot of restoration and expansion work. Initially, the

classrooms were built for 50 students per class capacity, and now we have more than 80 students per class in the school. We have a room for girls to get a rest when they encounter menstruation and other health-related problems, but it lacks facilities, and we need support with that."

They also raised an issue about donations,

"The sanitary pad donations we receive are usually stocks of supply with very short remaining expiration dates."

R2, a teacher, emphasised the need for material support for students:

"They also need access to the Laboratory and computers in the school and other essential materials for learning in the school."

R3, an IT teacher, elaborated on the lack of resources:

"I'm an IT teacher and I believe that technology materials [equipment] are essential in the learning process. However, such basic infrastructure in the school does not exist, and this makes it hard for them to internalise the ideas they learn in class. Therefore, lack of technology facilities in the school is one challenge."

R4, a teacher, added,

"The main challenge is that we do not have the educational equipment for practical teaching in the school, and we only teach them the theoretical part."

R5, a teacher, added,

"To add something, when we talk about education, we have to bear in mind that it needs a lot of facilities."

R5 also highlighted the lack of library services:

"In addition, there is a lack of adequate library service in the school, and the students need better-equipped library service in the school."

R6, a biology teacher, emphasised the problem:

"Biology subject needs a laboratory class, but in our school, we do not have a microscope or any other practical material. So, we only teach the biology class theoretically, like the History subject."

R6 also discussed the girls' committee room:

"There is a girls' committee [club] in which there is a sanitary room for female students. However, it does not have many facilities and materials for female students to use there. There is no soap or other sanitary materials supply provided to it. Till this day, there are some sanitary materials donated by one NGO that are still given to the students, and we can say only the name is there, but the necessary facilities are not there."

R1, a teacher, noted a major logistical challenge:

"The school does not have housing facilities for its teachers, and in addition to that even there are no available rental houses near the location of the school for its teachers. In addition, there is no restaurant facility in the area of the school location, on top of the problem of the school not having a transportation service for its teachers."

R5, a teacher, also stated,

"Teachers arrive at the school after an exhausting travel and then worry about the transportation challenge for getting back to their home, which all hinders their concentration, focus and quality of the education they deliver to their students."

R1, an IT teacher who is also the chairperson of the Science and Technology club, noted,

"When there is no digital technology laboratory in the school, it is difficult to talk about science, technology and innovation. Therefore, the challenge is that clubs are established but never provided with equipment and material supports, as well as any means of income or resource access."

R1, an Education Bureau representative, stated the dire situation:

"This year, we have 752 students who registered to take the grade 12 national exam across the 6 secondary schools. Even though schools are giving tutorial classes for those students still we are still worried about their chance of passing the exam. There we some schools that did not even have a single student who passed the national exam."

R3, an Education Bureau representative, further provided statistics:

"Among the 752 students, we have 432 female students who will take the national exam this year. So, the female students' enrolment has improved, but the problem exists in terms of their passing rate."

R2, the Deputy Bureau Head, acknowledged the challenge, stating,

"We have been making our own effort to have a better success in the education and exam, like providing the necessary administrative structures and facilities as well as the needed inputs and resources for the education sector."

R4, an Education Bureau representative, highlighted the issue of inadequate sanitary kits:

"Regarding female students, the sanitary kits are not adequately available for all female students in all schools all the time, which makes female students skip school at particular times."

R1, an Education Bureau representative, pointed out that

"The secondary schools in this area are not organised up to the standards of high school facility levels, like they do not have a standard library, laboratory, computers, etc."

Therefore, the students do not even have the exposure to engage in the practical part of their education. Even though it is this year that we have received adequate teaching textbooks as per the standard of the new education policy in the high schools."

A government official stated,

"The challenges they face are that the clubs do their club activity outside of the school hours, which is a challenge for gathering all its entire members. IN addition, most of the clubs have a resource and input material limitation. For instance, the sports club needs sports kits and tools, the Red Cross club needs medical tools, etc., and most of the clubs do not have such input materials at their schools."

They further emphasised,

"Therefore, clubs do not have incentives and input materials; rather, currently, students gather, meet, talk and go apart."

A government official explicitly stated,

"No, there is no such kind of budget allocation for them [clubs]."

The government official also mentioned,

"We have a science and innovation club, and it has no adequate input materials, which hinders our students 'capacity in engaging in any kind of science and innovation creation."

They also acknowledged,

"It would have been better if educational resources, materials and inputs, including textbooks, were adequately provided to all schools and all students. However, I understand that the resources we have are limited, but we still need to manage in in a better way and utilise them at the maximum efficiency level."

A government official noted,

"The Science and Innovation Club has students with science and innovation potential, yet lacks adequate resources needed, as we only allow them to have an initial budget of less than 15,000 ETB."

They further stated,

"Sometimes, even we cannot find materials that could have been obtained with the allocated 15,000 ETB in our area."

R1, an Education Bureau representative, added,

"Our schools have limited budgets and resources, and even the previous World Bank's school donation budget has stopped since 2015, which exacerbated the situation. In

addition, we do not have our own budget resource that we can support with schools in running club activities."

R1 also pointed out,

"Even if there is any school that claims that it has allocated a budget for the clubs, it has, usually, that allocation is indicated on paper and in reports and never implemented in reality."

A PTA member addressed the lack of resources, stating,

"There are a lot of clubs in the school, but the major problem is making these clubs functional, as there is a constraint of budget and resource-related issues."

They further explained,

"For instance, the government does not allocate a budget for the clubs, and it only allocated 5,289.10 ETB for a whole year. There is not much that we can do with such a small annual budget for a whole school."

Another PTA member corroborated this, saying,

"Of course! They are the Environment protection club, Gender club, Sport club, Civic and Ethics club, Red Cross club, Science and innovation club, etc., but they are not functional because there is a lack of resources and input [material]."

A PTA member highlighted the financial predicament of the school:

"Our school is a government [public] school, but it also teaches refugee students. Hence, the government body says that we should be getting support from NGOs as we teach refugee students, and NGOs say this is a government school and the government should provide whatever we need. This puts our school in no-man's land and creates a confusion of ownership."

They further elaborated,

"As a result of this, the government allocated us 5,289.10 ETB as our annual budget. This budget will not buy anything and expects the NGOs to support us with the rest in which they give us small supports like pens, chalk, etc. These force us to ask students for contributions and collect them from them to run the activities of this school. Therefore, lack of resources, budget and input material are our biggest challenges."

A PTA member explained the need for specific equipment for various clubs:

"For instance, the loudspeaker of Montarbo is very important for disseminating messages during the break time in the school to the students. Microphone and montarbo speaker are basic and crucial for gathering a large audience and disseminating information, as we have 1371 students. If we talk about other clubs like the environmental protection club, then it needs input material like [plastic] water pipe, shovel and digger, etc. So, each club has its own input material needs, and Montarbo's

speech will serve for all. For the gender club, it also needs input material like sanitary pads, access to showers and water and a resting room."

These detailed accounts from students, teachers, and school management paint a grim picture of a school system teetering on the brink of collapse due to a lack of resources and a fragmented support system. Students understand their education is theoretical and not preparing them for the future, which leads to a loss of hope and motivation. The lack of basic facilities, particularly for female students, creates a health and dignity crisis that undermines attendance. Finally, the school's financial situation is untenable, with a tiny government budget, a confused sense of ownership between the government and NGOs, and a cycle of dependency on inconsistent donations. This not only affects the students but also the teachers, who are underpaid and overworked, further diminishing the quality of education. The students and community are not asking for handouts, but for the basic tools and support to make education a real opportunity, not just a theoretical concept.

Enabling Factor: The initial provision of basic educational materials and the existing school infrastructure, however inadequate, provide a baseline for learning, while the students' and teachers' clear articulation of specific needs, such as for labs, sanitary supplies, and functional clubs, creates a clear roadmap for targeted, effective interventions.

Disabling Factor: The profound and systemic lack of practical learning resources and functional infrastructure, including laboratories, computers, and sanitary facilities, is the primary disabling factor. This is compounded by a cripplingly small annual budget, a lack of clear institutional ownership, and an overreliance on inconsistent, short-term donations, which collectively render the school's educational mission unsustainable and largely ineffective.

5.1.5.4 Stakeholder Collaboration and Support

Effective collaboration and support are critical for addressing the multifaceted challenges at Woumba Secondary School, but current efforts are fragmented and inconsistent, creating gaps in communication, resources, and follow-up. While there is a clear willingness from students, teachers, and school leadership to work together, their efforts are often undermined by a lack of coordinated, long-term support from external organisations and a persistent communication gap between teachers and the diverse student body. Students and community members express a strong desire for education and are open to new initiatives like clubs, but their participation is often hindered by practical barriers and a need for parental and community-wide awareness. R5 (host community girl) emphasised the positive relationship with teachers and the principal:

"The teachers are very friendly, and also the principal—I think he will give us if we ask for pens or exercise books."

This suggests a willingness for the school administration to be supportive, though limited by resources. R3 (refugee girl) also mentioned receiving *"school materials from DAICAK,"* indicating some external support. Regarding awareness and motivation, R1 (refugee girl) expressed a clear vision for her future:

"I want to come to school so that I can be better in the future. I want to be a nurse. I want to learn in a good way. I am happy when I come, especially because I do not want to miss even a single class."

R3 (refugee girl) stated her motivation to

"Achieve my goal and also raise awareness in my community."

R5 (host community girl) highlighted the role of the school in providing hope:

"When I am outside school, I do not think about this, and also I talk with my friends and share both happy and sad moments with them. Some students want to be artists in the future, so to work in big cities like Addis Ababa, they need to first finish their education here."

This indicates a desire for a brighter future through education, which can be a point of collaboration for awareness campaigns. A male student also emphasised the importance of school, stating,

"Without the school, you are nothing. Because a man or human being, without school, there is no difference between animals. So that is why school is a light for us in our lives."

Concerning makeup classes and academic support, R4 (host community girl) mentioned,

"We are preparing," referring to their studies.

R (refugee girl, translated) requested,

"She is saying that there needs to be a makeup class for girls because the girls do not understand as well as the boys. Also, in the entrance exam, there are no girls; it is all boys who achieve it."

This highlights a perceived need for targeted academic support for girls. A male student also mentioned the need for *"Training for both genders is important to avoid such kind of events"* related to unwanted pregnancies, indicating a desire for educational support on sensitive topics. When discussing the establishment of a new club, R1 (refugee girl) expressed willingness with a caveat:

"If this club is formed and we spend more time here, our family may get worried. But if we tell them, I do not think they will oppose. Also, the road is too far, so they may get worried about what happens if it becomes dark, and we are also female. It may be difficult to go on foot there."

She summarised,

"But the problem is related to consent from our family and also the distance of the road."

R5 (host community girl) showed enthusiasm for the club:

"I am in Grade 9, so if the club is going to open, it will be a great advantage for me since I also like this kind of thing. It is also in my mind, and my family will support me if I want. If it is not a bad place, they will not oppose me. So, if it comes, I will be happy—not only for me, but also for others. There are many interested individuals."

R6 (host community girl) was also open to participation:

"I have no problem. Also, my family has no problem. But this kind of thing does not come. If it comes, I will be happy, but we will see if it is implemented."

The interviewer summarised the main challenges:

"As I have understood, the major challenge is time. For refugee women, time is the major challenge. For Ethiopian girls, especially those who come from Sefara Tabia, the distance will be a challenge."

These narratives highlight that students and school leadership are eager for new initiatives and view education as a path to a better future. However, for these efforts to be successful, they must address practical challenges such as the safety concerns of female students participating in after-school activities and the need for dedicated academic support for girls to improve their confidence and performance. Community leaders recognise the need for a shift in perception towards education, but acknowledge that changing deeply ingrained behaviours, such as prioritising daily labour over school and engaging in early marriage, requires consistent, long-term awareness campaigns and targeted support. A camp leader emphasised the necessity of external intervention for addressing the low value placed on education:

"Our community doesn't prioritise education and extracurricular activities, so there needs to be more awareness among them about how these activities are helpful, and we need to encourage them to send their children."

Another camp leader echoed this, stating,

"We need to have awareness for our community about that."

A camp leader proposed a community-level agreement:

"We need to have an agreement with each other among the families of the community."

They offered a practical example for managing household duties with school activities:

"For instance, in the morning, the girls can prepare food, drink for the day and then go to school. When he [the husband] comes, he can eat with them and in the evening, they can take care of their children."

Another camp leader summarised this, saying,

"It is a matter of management for the housing activities and the school activities. If they manage their time and make an agreement, especially the married ones with their

husband, it becomes easy, and for this, we need to encourage that as awareness should be in that context."

A camp leader stressed the importance of discouraging early marriage:

"For the young school girls, I say that they should not get married before they finish school. Because when they go back to school, there is a lot of work to do."

They further elaborated,

"My idea, if we raise awareness for our community, to stop early marriage, or the marriage should be after finishing education, it becomes better. This is the challenge that is going on in our community."

A camp leader shared a personal anecdote as an example:

"For instance, I have a practical example: my daughter got engaged to someone, and they decided to get married. I said to her, either marriage or school. But two cannot go together. My daughter, in the end, accepted my idea and abandoned the marriage, and she is now continuing with her schoolwork. This is one of the ways. We need to provide education to our children."

A camp leader expressed a cautious optimism about awareness campaigns:

"Yes, I have been thinking about it for a long time, and society needs to be open. But I cannot say that everyone can accept it. Not everyone can accept it. In most cases, they accept it or not."

Another camp leader agreed:

"Yeah, actually, raising awareness is going to be good, but I cannot promise that 100% can accept this idea. Maybe half or more than half can accept, others may not accept that awareness, what we are saying."

They then highlighted past efforts and current progress:

"We say we have practical problems, and we are making a campaign in different ways, especially for education. We used to have a campaign every month that was the end of the month. But our people are not willing to change 100%."

They added,

"For that, since, as I mentioned before, for the education part, they simply just see that something has no fruitful result for their children, and that is why I mentioned it before. But they are changing from time to time, they start changing, maybe we have, till now, three people who joined universities, in different parts of the country, for now. This creates the idea that someone went to the university, and you should go like this. But this is not all the community's idea right now."

A camp leader highlighted the critical need for continued support for those who fail national exams:

"For grade 12, when they miss the point that can allow them to join a university, they simply stop their education. After that, there is no program for them. There is no program of college program. Organisations used to support those who are joining universities like UNICEF and the like. But they stop their support, and there are only a few who pass the national exam, like five, seven, when we see our refugee students. But the majority of the students like more than hundreds simply fail, and there is no other program for them again. That is why they are not engaging in school again or trying to find another way."

Another camp leader reiterated this:

"As we mentioned before, some organisations that used to help are simply helping those who pass the exam. But those who fail, there is no assistance. They say to them, they need to save for their school money. They say you have to study privately on your own, either grade 12 again or go to college. But no organisation will support you. For that reason, they search for daily labour work and something like that, to be able to support themselves. This is one of the challenges."

A camp leader explicitly stated the lack of gender-specific support:

"No. There is no organisation that gives support at all, and there is no organisation coming now in high school, for grades 11 and 12 and paying for their tutorial classes. But, it was in the past that one organisation supported."

They clarified,

"It's called DAFI, and they say they are helping the schooling program as a whole."

Another camp leader added,

"As we mentioned before, some organisations that used to help are simply helping those who pass the national exam. But those who fail, there is no assistance. They say to them, they have to cover their educational expenses by themselves or by the school or the school manager."

They also confirmed,

"I don't think so, because this is the head of camp, chairperson, he knows all organisations working in our camp, even DAFI, which is a part of our supporting school. We know they are working for education, but specifically for girls, we don't have."

A camp leader emphasised the universal agreement on girls' education support:

"The support for girls' education is a good thing, and they all agree that it's good."

They expressed gratitude and willingness to collaborate:

"Thank you for the attention you give to this type of activity, especially since we are all willing for our girls to go ahead in the education sector, and it is good of you to establish and support us with such a type of activity that is going to take place in the near future. It is good to make such clubs and sometimes ask the school managers for ideas and the challenges you can face."

They also offered practical support:

"So, when you start this activity, the student may need to ask you to get permission. So, you will contact RRS and the RCC office with these activities, so we will give support to facilitate that for you."

They concluded with an encouraging note:

"At the end, I would like to say thank you for coming and in the future, God willing, during the training period of these clubs, God willing, we will have more evidence direction. And thank you."

Community leaders are highly receptive to interventions that promote education, particularly for girls, but are realistic about the challenges of changing entrenched cultural norms. They highlight the urgent need for awareness campaigns that not only discourage practices like early marriage but also provide tangible, practical solutions for managing home life and school responsibilities. The lack of support for students who fail national exams is identified as a critical gap, contributing to a sense of hopelessness and a negative perception of education's value. A significant barrier to effective teaching and learning is the communication gap between teachers and the diverse student population, a problem exacerbated by a lack of professional development and consistent support for teachers. A Maths teacher stated,

"Regarding providing quality education, we are facing some challenges like a communication gap, as most teachers do not speak fluent English and refugee students also do not speak local languages. Teachers also are not getting regular language skill capacity training."

A citizenship subject teacher echoed this, saying,

"We have been asked a lot about the communication barrier problem, but never seen anyone do anything about it practically."

They also felt overlooked,

"Given all these, we are not receiving any capacity-building trainings; rather, it is other schools that are getting those trainings."

A school management member mentioned,

"We exchange/share our experiences among ourselves and with Bambasi Secondary school. However, we never received any training that was organised by any organisation with its own budget, tablets and other resources."

A History teacher noted,

"Our supervisor gave us some training on how to manage classrooms and make follow-ups, but we never received any consistent support that helped us solve our school's problems. We ask our school management and NGOs to help us with this in a written request, but never received any positive response from anyone yet."

A school management member affirmed,

"As a school management group, we always raise the issue of communication barriers and the shortage of technology devices all the time."

They also considered an unconventional solution:

"Since the refugee students speak better English, I'm thinking of getting the teachers to receive some English language skill training from the refugee students, as they speak better English than their teachers."

A school management member expressed frustration,

"Well, I have seen a lot of organisations come to our school and interview us, but I have never seen any of them implement any program on the ground in reality. Education is an intellectual work that contributes to producing a well-trained future generation, and it also needs a close collaboration of the government and NGOs with the schools and their teachers."

Another school management member observed a shift in student behaviour:

"However, lately it seems that refugee students are seeing the local students miss classes without any consequence or punishment and starting to follow their footsteps."

Regarding student misconduct, a school management member stated,

"To be honest, we take corrective measures for any misconduct and summon students' parents when needed. However, the challenge is that most of our students, like 75% are from the refugee community, and the refugee parents do not come easily when called up by the school."

Another school management member explained,

"We cannot take serious measures against refugee students and expel them from school; rather, we give them an oral warning and advise them to give attention to their education."

They added,

"The other challenge is that we cannot take serious measures against refugee students and expel them from school; rather, we give them an oral warning and advise them to give attention to their education."

A school management member emphasised parental involvement:

"The problem is that parents of these students, especially the father, do not touch their students or teach them proper behavioural conduct at their homes."

They concluded,

"Therefore, parents need to make their children behave well at their houses, and it is them who will conduct themselves properly at school."

A school management member underlined the need for continued support:

"What I will add is that we need English language-related, subject-related and pedagogy training for the teachers of our school."

R1, a teacher at Woumba Secondary School, highlighted communication difficulties with refugee students:

"Even though they speak English, they do not have a good knowledge of science."

R2, a teacher, echoed this, stating:

"They also struggle to communicate and get an understanding with their teachers as they are only good at speaking [English]. Therefore, I think the teachers also need a capacity-building training to ease this challenge." R3, an IT teacher, pointed out further linguistic complexities: "There are some students who speak English and/or Arabic, and there are others who also do not speak English or even Arabic."

R5, a teacher, noted the constant negotiation for transport:

"The public transportation is the one available for them, for which they pay from their pockets. However, to have better education outcomes, the teachers need to have better services, and so do the students."

R5 also emphasised:

"There is a language barrier that hinders the communication and understanding abilities between teachers and the students."

R6, a biology teacher, stated:

"Female students need an awareness creation campaign, as sometimes female students experience unwanted pregnancy, as they are young people."

R8, a teacher, discussed the lack of support for clubs:

"When the starting the activities of the club start, there is no organisation that supports us with the club activities in the school."

R5, a teacher, spoke about the limited interaction between teachers and students:

"Well, it is average and, in some instances, we see some refugee students who are a bit older and attend the school with their children, and their wives attend the school also in night classes."

R5 also recommended,

"I think both the teachers and the students need capacity building in how to communicate with each other. Teachers need to be trained in how to communicate with the refugee students, as refugee students are from a community outside of our country. Teachers need to be trained in what better ways they can teach those refugee students."

R1, a teacher, observed low female student participation:

"Even when I encourage them and motivate them to participate in the class discussion, female students decline to participate in the class and ask the things they did not understand well."

"I have not seen any female refugee student who comes forward and asks for anything she needs help with it as I have observed so far."

A teacher noted,

"The local community students have no fear and freely come to their teacher and confidently ask for any help they might need, but the refugee students have a low level of confidence and a high level of fear to ask their teachers for any help and support they need."

R5, a teacher, expressed concern about the sustainability of clubs:

"The challenge is that there is no organisation that supports us with running those clubs, whether it is with instruments or materials or supplies for the club. Organisations just come, ask, then propose, establish clubs and recruit members in the school, in which afterwards they leave and never come back to follow up or support us with those club activities."

R8, a teacher, stated the need for compensation:

"Teachers also need to be supported [compensated] for their engagements in the club activities."

R1, an IT teacher, asserted,

"The main challenges rather it is the lack of support that hinders clubs' functionality in the school."

A female teacher managing a club noted a potential communication barrier:

"I might not be able to communicate properly with refugee students who speak other languages. Therefore, a communication barrier can be one challenge."

A teacher stated,

"In the camps they live in, there is no support given to them to make them have better education except the distributions [ration] given to them."

R8, a teacher, also emphasised the need for incentives:

"Both the students and the teachers need some kind of benefit [compensation] for the extra time they spend in the school, and if there is no benefit for them for participating in the extra-time activities, then they wouldn't come for it."

R5, a teacher, suggested,

"If we provide them with small monetary incentives here, then they can stay with us for a longer time and we can make them engage in the club activities."

R1, a teacher, mentioned receiving "different trainings" as a benefit for leading a club. R8 agreed:

"Getting training is one benefit in which you will obtain skills, and you will also train the students and provide them with skills too."

Teachers identify the communication barrier as a primary obstacle to delivering quality education. They feel unsupported, lacking regular language and pedagogy training, which hinders their ability to effectively teach a linguistically and culturally diverse student body. The lack of compensation and inconsistent support from NGOs for extracurricular activities further diminishes teacher morale and engagement, creating a cycle where clubs are established but quickly become non-functional due to a lack of follow-up and resources. The school administration and government officials acknowledge a collaborative spirit but highlight a critical gap between policy and practice, with a lack of resources and a fragmented approach from external partners. R2, the Deputy Bureau Head, recognised the importance of collaboration:

"Our effort is not the only thing needed; rather, we also need to have other concerned bodies to make efforts to have success in education, as it requires all parties' collaboration toward it. We have a lot of organisations that support us in improving girls' engagement in education, but the reality is that we need to do more work."

R2 further emphasised,

"The people that are here today are experts and a management group in which this man is a supervisor, and this woman is a women's representative, and we need to discuss how you can also support us in improving the female students' exam passing rate."

R4, an Education Bureau representative, highlighted a gap in policy implementation:

"The affirmative action for female students has not been used lately, and the passing mark was just set at 50% for all."

R6, a government official, appealed for support:

"Female students have a huge potential in education, but need something that can motivate them, like maybe the project you are intending to start soon. In the meantime, as the woreda administration, we try our best to support female students like by providing sanitary kits, female student exclusive tutorial classes, motivating them to have higher participation, etc. However, we have not achieved the result we intended to achieve so far. This shows that the intended goal cannot be achieved with our effort alone, and we need support in this regard. Personally, I think the support for female students should start from early classes [primary level classes], and they also need to be academically as well as psychologically supported."

R1, an Education Bureau representative, described the new education policy:

"The direction of the policy about university joining criteria is common and standardised across all regions and students."

R1 also pointed out a significant issue with teacher qualifications:

"A teacher is required to have a master's degree to teach from grade 9 up to grade 12. However, I think we only have 2 or 3 teachers who have a master's degree qualification across our secondary schools. Therefore, because of the lack of the required qualification level teachers, the current teachers are teaching beyond their capacity just to cover the classes."

R1 further explained,

"Before its implementation, we needed to work on uplifting the capacity of the teachers and improving/upgrading the facilities and services of the schools. A lot of teachers teach subjects that they have not been trained and qualified in, and you can understand how much those will compromise the quality of education for our children."

R1 also highlighted a lack of compensation for tutorial classes:

"Teachers are required to give tutorial classes in each school, but they never get compensated for it. Hence, teachers teach the tutorial classes out of the institutional enforcement rather than out of their passion."

R1 made a broader point about responsibility:

"Universities blame high schools for not providing them with quality [academically] students, the high schools blame the primary schools, and the primary schools blame the kindergarten schools. Therefore, every level of the educational sector blames its predecessor, and we are all shifting blame to others rather than trying to uplift the capacity of the students we have at the moment."

R, a government official, affirmed that

"The establishment procedures and directions of clubs are clearly stated in the education policy, which has been implemented in all schools at all levels. If there is any

organisation that desires to support these clubs, it can directly access them from each school."

R, a government official, stated,

"About the gender club, UNICEF has been providing them with training related to gender issues, for which it has given some amount of budget for our bureau. However, this budget was not given to the students; rather, it was used to give training for the coordinators who later on provided training for the students. What we usually witness is that organisations come and only give training, which is not enough, as their follow-up and constant support are needed for the functionality of the clubs. Some organisations see providing training as an ultimate goal, which is wrong and even if the training is only provided to a few selected members, like only to the club leaders."

A government official also highlighted the need for reward mechanisms:

"The other problem is that there is no encouragement, support/reward mechanisms for those who perform well."

R1, an Education Bureau representative, outlined various collaborating organisations:

"There are organisations that collaborate with us on education, like Plan International, which is providing support for 4 primary schools in this area. KUSO has been supporting us for the last 5 years in this woreda, in which it supports 78 and 50 students in 2 schools, respectively."

R1 detailed KUSO's support:

"It also provides them with a pocket money of 950 ETB as well as full package educational materials like uniform, books, etc. In addition, it also facilitates a tutorial class in which it paid an incentive for the teachers. KUSO also supports the parents of those students who it gave them life skills and entrepreneurship skill trainings, as well as 10,000 ETB per family as a start-up capital for small businesses. IRC is supporting them with female sanitary kits, whereas UNICEF gives us a quarterly budget for our bureau to do gender issue training, teachers' capacity enhancement trainings, and budget distribution for clubs. DAFI came to this area this year and pays an incentive for teachers to give tutorial classes for grade 12 students."

R also provided specific examples of material support:

"KUSO has provided 15 computers and their solar panel each for Bambis and Ewketfana school, whereas UNICEF provided a sanitary kit for Bisla primary school and Womba secondary school. It is also constructing separate toilets for female students in those schools."

R4, an Education Bureau representative, further elaborated on KUSO's support:

"KUSO has also provided a capacity building training for teachers, which was entitled teaching methods in the 21st century and follows up on PTAs in each school. Additionally, it also provided training on leadership skills, psycho-social support, life-

skills and gender-based pedagogy for all teachers in this area in addition to the material support it provided to those two schools. Projects and organisations also need to closely collaborate with the education bureau and need to focus on enhancing the teachers' and students' capacity in the education sector. The beneficiaries of the engagement also need to be inclusive of all."

A PTA member highlighted their role, stating,

"The PTA in the school supports the students' activities in the school as it contributes to the well-functioning of the school. We support all good activities of the students in the school and act against all bad things that happen."

A PTA member described the support they provide:

"Just to add a point... when we say giving support to students, this also includes offering tutorial classes for the students in the afternoon shift. Sometimes when we receive donations from organisations, we also provide support to our students. Last time we received sanitary pad support from an organisation called Honey through the facilitation of UNHCR, in which we gave sanitary pads to 250 female students."

A PTA member clarified the communication barrier challenge, stating,

"It does create a challenge, but I cannot say all refugee students can speak English, as some of them also speak Arabic, whereas the local students also speak Amharic. Therefore, to solve this challenge, the teachers also need some kind of language skill training, as most of the teachers are graduates of universities who need extra training for dealing with other issues of the students."

A PTA member pointed out a deficiency in parental involvement:

"However, the good traditions that most parents lack are making follow-up on the education of their children and what they learn at school. I think if awareness creation trainings are given to the community, this can be changed, and parents can become more involved in their children's education."

Another PTA member highlighted efforts against discrimination, stating,

"To overcome the existing [gender based] discriminations, the parents' effort against such norms and the school effort of teaching citizenship subject have made some changes in this regard. There has been no NGO that has engaged us in a permanent [long-term] level, but there was a time when it was March 8 that trainers came from the woreda level women's affairs bureau and provided us with awareness creation training."

The school leadership and government officials are united in their call for a more coordinated and sustained approach to support. They highlight the ineffectiveness of short-term, fragmented interventions by NGOs that often provide training without follow-up or adequate resources. A significant and systemic challenge is the lack of qualified teachers for secondary school and the absence of compensation for extra work, such as tutorial classes, which undermines teacher motivation and the quality of education. The lack of support for students who fail national

exams and the absence of specific, long-term programs for girls' education are also identified as major gaps that require immediate attention from all collaborating stakeholders.

Enabling Factor: The shared willingness of students, teachers, and school management to collaborate and their collective belief in the power of education, despite overwhelming challenges, is the primary enabling factor. This is reinforced by the community leaders' agreement that girls' education is a priority and their openness to awareness campaigns and community-level agreements.

Disabling Factor: The fragmented and inconsistent nature of external support from NGOs and the government is the main disabling factor. This is compounded by a lack of coordinated funding, inadequate professional development for teachers, and the absence of long-term programs for students who fail exams. This leaves the school and its community in a state of dependency and frustration, as they are repeatedly promised support without a sustained commitment to implementation.

5.1.5.5 Club Establishment and Student Activities

While students are excited about learning and building social connections at school, the potential of extracurricular clubs to enhance this experience remains largely unfulfilled due to a systemic lack of resources, teacher and student incentives, and consistent external support. The overwhelming consensus is that while clubs are technically established, they are rarely functional, creating a cycle of enthusiasm followed by disappointment that threatens to undermine student motivation. Students expressed excitement about attending school primarily for learning and social connection. R1 (refugee girl) stated,

"I want to come to school so that I can be better in the future. I want to be a nurse. I want to learn in a good way."

She also valued meeting friends:

"Yes, I have friends. I get happy when I talk to them. Since we are from different places, it helps me meet them."

R2 (refugee girl) expressed,

"I am happy when I come to school because when I come to school, I learn things that I do not know."

R3 (refugee girl) added,

"Why I study is that I want to achieve my goal and also raise awareness in my community. Also, I found my friends from this school. That is why I am happy when I come to this school."

R4 (host community girl) shared similar sentiments:

"I am happy when I come to school because I meet new people, and also I know what I did not know earlier. And also, when the teacher teaches us, we understand them."

R5 (host community girl) found hope in school and shared personal aspirations:

"For me, why I get happy when I come here is that there are different hopes at home and school... So, when I come here, I get hope. I want to be a teacher."

She also highlighted the social aspect:

"I talk with my friends and share both happy and sad moments with them."

R6 (host community girl) simply stated,

"We know people, and I love to come and be here."

Several male students also expressed their reasons for liking school. R3 (male student) said,

"I love to go to school because I will meet new people, I will know new things, get knowledge because of this thing I love."

R4 (male student) stated,

"I love to go to school. School is important for many things. I love school because it improves my understanding level."

R5 (male student) emphasised gaining information and planning for education:

"Yes, you come to school because you need the information. So, you would make the idea, you make the education plan."

He also highlighted the importance of regular attendance:

"When you don't come, everybody, so there is another friend in the classroom. So, when you don't come, you put something in mind that is. So, you must come. You can come at any time, because there is another friend in the classroom. Respect the time, you respect the rules and regulations of the school."

R6 (male student) said,

"I love to come to school because I will know new things."

R7 (male student) added,

"I love to come to school to share the information about things that I do not know and also to learn new things."

R8 (male student) summarised,

"The school is very important for everyone, because you can attend the school, because the school is very important for anyone who can attend, but if you're not learning, you stay at home, you don't get the education."

These responses indicate a powerful intrinsic motivation among students, who view school not only as a place for academic learning but also as a vital social hub that provides them with a sense of purpose and community. This widespread enthusiasm for learning and connection presents a significant opportunity for interventions, as students are already receptive to engagement.

Despite the existence of a variety of clubs, most are non-functional due to a severe shortage of teachers, a lack of materials, and an absence of incentives for both teachers and students. Regarding existing clubs, students indicated a presence but also a lack of functionality. R1 (refugee girl) mentioned,

"I am registered in Labour and Skills. There are clubs like HIV and Mini-Media, but they have not turned them into practice."

R2 (refugee girl) corroborated this, stating,

"They register students, but they do not apply it."

A male student (R4) highlighted,

"There are no teacher and club are established but they are not function for example club of environmental if we want to go in to work there will be many challenges because of time and also shortage of teachers most of the time clubs are established but they are not turn in to action so the major reason is time the teacher try to use all there time for the class and there also of students and low number of teachers."

R6 (male student) also stated,

"Club participation is voluntary, but because there are a lot of students and not enough teachers, the clubs are not really active."

R7 (male student) added,

"We participate in clubs, but because there are a lot of students and not enough teachers, it is not turned into practice because of these two things."

R8 (male student through translator) explained,

"The teacher faces difficulty in managing the students because of the number... registration happens, but they face difficulty managing it because of the number of students and the shortage of staff."

R1 (male student) confirmed,

"We register most of the time, but we do not actively participate in it."

When asked about specific clubs, R1 (male student) mentioned,

"Environmental club", but admitted, because we were not practising it, we do not know much."

When asked about a club for girls' hygiene, R3 (refugee girl) stated,

"There is a room, but the students do not use it."

The reasons cited for non-use were a lack of materials, specifically "no soap" (R3) and "no water" (R5). R1 (refugee girl) also mentioned the overall cleanliness of the school and toilets being an issue. Regarding participation in a new club, students expressed mixed willingness, largely due to time constraints and distance. R1 (refugee girl) stated,

"If this club is formed and we spend more time here, our family may get worried. But if we tell them, I do not think they will oppose. Also, the road is too far, so they may get worried about what happens if it becomes dark, and we are also female. It may be difficult to go on foot there."

She summarised,

"But the problem is related to consent from our family and also the distance of the road."

R2 (refugee girl) explicitly stated,

"She is saying that after she finishes school, she goes back home to cook for her child. She does not have time."

R5 (host community girl) echoed this,

"I also do not have time. My child is just five months old."

However, R5 showed willingness if childcare was provided:

"If we facilitate space for your child? Are you willing to bring your child? Of course, I am willing."

R4 (host community girl) expressed a high interest:

"I think I am going to participate because, since I am nearby, there is no problem. And we would be happy if materials are fulfilled for females."

R5 (host community girl), being in Grade 9, also expressed enthusiasm:

"If the club is going to open, it will be a great advantage for me since I also like this kind of thing. It is also in my mind, and my family will support me if I want. If it is not a bad place, they will not oppose me. So, if it comes, I will be happy—not only for me, but also for others. There are many interested individuals. The main obstacle will not be the school but the shortage of materials."

R6 (host community girl) was also open to participation:

"I have no problem. Also, my family has no problem. But this kind of thing does not come. If it comes, I will be happy, but we will see if it is implemented."

The interviewer summarised the main challenges:

"As I have understood, the major challenge is time. For refugee women, time is the major challenge. For Ethiopian girls, especially those who come from Sefara Tabia, the distance will be a challenge."

A male student (R1) identified a challenge in club participation:

"Several students are high, and then you cannot select them to participate in the club."

R2 (male student) added that language could be a barrier,

"Sometimes, the refugee, sometimes, the Teaching, Learning process. Sometimes you can explain more than in Amharic. This is sometimes we don't in the teaching, learning process. Sometimes you are explaining in Amharic, and I don't know Amharic. The meaning of this is the problem."

R3 (male student) confirmed,

"It's a duty to explain in English at first, but since it's not their mother tongue, there is a problem, but they try to explain the main things in English and try to explain to the locals in Amharic. When they do that, they take time."

R5 (male student) reiterated the language issue impacting participation:

"There is the other teacher. So, you translate into English, because there are more local students. So, it's not speaking English that is a problem between us."

A Camp Leader affirmed the willingness to support clubs:

"Yes, that is exactly what we are interested in and agree to have."

Another Camp Leader elaborated on existing school clubs:

"Sometimes at school, there are groups of people who do things like planting trees, playing football, and being in the library. So, there are things they do for the girls as well in the school."

They also confirmed their support for girls' participation:

"No problem, it is not a challenge. For the secondary school, there is no problem. Even the students who are here now go to make-up classes. That is not the problem."

A Camp Leader, who is also a teacher, expressed personal experience and willingness to encourage club participation:

"I have a student who goes to school, and I was a teacher in this school, and I have many experiences in the clubs. That is why I am from the practical part. I tell students that participating in clubs has many benefits and encourage them."

However, they also highlighted the challenges for girls' participation:

"But as I am one of the club members in the school, when we call the girls to come for [extra] curricular activities at the school, they are not coming, and out of 20 or 30 calls, they may come for only two or three times. When they are asked why they were absent from that activity, curricular activity, they will say they went to fetch water or I went to collect firewood. Some even say they were taking care of their young brothers or were washing clothes. They say I went to wash some clothes for the family. Yes, the majority of them are facing challenges at home. Maybe there are only a few who can engage because maybe they don't have more activities, but the majority are facing that challenge."

A female Camp Leader stated her personal stance:

"She said, if you ask me, I tell my children not to wash clothes but to go to their club activities at the school. She said like that."

Another Camp Leader reiterated the issue for girls:

"Practically, for me, practically, when we ask why girls are not participating in the club, when we ask them what the reason behind it is and why only boys are coming and why girls are absent? They say they are raising children or are busy with activities at home, the majority of them. But, boys, the majority of them come."

A Camp Leader agreed with the challenges for girls:

"Yes, I agree with your idea, the girls have different activities at home when they come home. Sometimes the family or the parents can say you cannot go to the school or you cannot participate in events [activities] of the club because you have another duty at home."

A Camp Leader mentioned existing community clubs:

"Yes, there is also a football club for girls and boys and Volleyball as well as basketball in different zones. Also, we have for different ages. For different levels of age, we have clubs and the children are participating."

A Camp Leader who is married addressed the issue of club participation for married girls:

"Actually, the majority of girls who are studying in the school are married it is impossible for them to be involved in extracurricular activity, as most of you are married. When you are married, you have responsibilities, and her husband would not allow her to attend these clubs. This is a problem that should be raised."

They further explained the husband's perspective:

"He may say, you were absent since morning, and everyone is at school, and no one is at home. The husband may raise a question of where you have been since the morning."

So, adding activity to spend all of your time at school can make the girls not responsible at home."

A Camp Leader emphasised the need for awareness for club participation:

"Because our community don't give priority to education and curricular activities, it needs to raise more awareness among them about how this activity is helpful and encourage them to send their children and the like. We need to have awareness for our community about that."

An English subject teacher expressed readiness for collaboration:

"I'm an English subject teacher at Womba school. You told us that your organisation will establish a club in our school starting from next year, and we are fully ready to work with you."

A School Management member provided information about existing clubs:

"Well, let me answer this... We have active clubs like the gender club, ethics and citizenship club, sport club, and some other clubs."

They also shared a past positive experience:

"For instance, since 2006 [E.C] I have been active in the citizenship club, in which in the early period we used to receive a lot of support and training."

However, they also noted a decline:

"For the last 4 years, there have been no trainings and support provided to clubs, and even the students' interest has declined when we try to recruit members for the clubs."

A School Management member explained the lack of follow-up on clubs:

"Usually, clubs are established, members are recruited, and activity plans are developed. However, nobody supports or follows up on those clubs after they are established."

They also pointed out the need for incentives:

"Students also need some benefits and incentives to engage in the clubs, as they come after school for club activities from faraway locations. If some incentives are provided to the students ever now and then, then they might come and engage in club activities."

Another School Management member echoed the need for compensation:

"To do anything, we need to get some kind of compensation."

They added,

"Both the teachers and students expect some incentive as compensation for their time. That is why most clubs are inactive, and I think it is the gender club that is more active in the school compared to others, as they receive donations of sanitary kits, soap and other hygiene materials for female students."

They concluded,

"Therefore, to make clubs active, it is important to provide some incentive for the teachers as well as for the students."

A School Management member highlighted reasons for inactivity:

"However, most clubs in the school are inactive as the teachers who are assigned to lead clubs deal with a lot of workloads. In addition, there is no support from the woreda or municipal administration, and this hinders club activities."

They also reiterated the need for transportation compensation:

"Additionally, to get the teacher and the students to come in the afternoon to the school for club activities costs some transportation expenses. Therefore, if no transportation cost compensation is given, neither the teachers nor the students will be interested in any club activities outside of school hours. If the teachers' living conditions have been improved by the government and educated people were provided with better opportunities, students would have a positive perception and attitude towards education."

A School Management member emphasised a crucial need:

"To pull students to schools, we need to have all necessary services and facilities at schools, and then students will come to school even in their free time just to spend time in the school."

R8, a teacher, stated,

"There is no additional workload that hinders us from participating in club activities. However, clubs are established in this school, and members are recruited for the club activities initially. But when the starting the activities of the club start, no organisation supports us with the club activities in the school."

R8 also noted a staff shortage:

"There is a staff/teacher shortage in the school, and we have high class loads, which sometimes hinders us from engaging in additional club activities in the school. For instance, I cannot engage in additional club activities while I'm having a 24-credit-hour load of classes. It is impossible for me."

R8 further elaborated on the impact of insufficient salary on extracurricular involvement:

"If you told me to stay in the school in the afternoon for club activities, I can do that if my salary were enough to cover my living costs. However, since my salary is not

enough, I would prefer to go to other places to do additional work/jobs rather than stay in the school in school in the afternoon for club activities."

The school has several existing clubs on paper, but a combination of teacher shortages, heavy workloads, and a complete lack of resources renders them non-functional. The gender club is a notable exception, as it receives some donations, which directly demonstrates the impact of even minimal material support. The general lack of incentives, including financial compensation for teachers and students and a simple lack of basic materials, is the primary reason why clubs fail to transition from an idea to a meaningful activity. This repeated pattern of unfulfilled promises leads to student disinterest and a negative perception of clubs, which poses a challenge for any new initiative. While there is strong enthusiasm for new clubs, particularly from students who are nearby or do not have family responsibilities, this enthusiasm is tempered by significant logistical and cultural barriers that disproportionately affect female students. Regarding participation in a new club, students expressed mixed willingness, largely due to time constraints and distance. R1 (refugee girl) stated,

"If this club is formed and we spend more time here, our family may get worried. But if we tell them, I do not think they will oppose. Also, the road is too far, so they may get worried about what happens if it becomes dark, and we are also female. It may be difficult to go on foot there. But the problem is related to consent from our family and also the distance of the road."

R2 (refugee girl) explicitly stated,

"She is saying that after she finishes school, she goes back home to cook for her child. She does not have time."

R5 (host community girl) echoed this,

"I also do not have time. My child is just five months old."

However, R5 showed willingness if childcare was provided:

"If we facilitate space for your child? Are you willing to bring your child? Of course, I am willing."

R4 (host community girl) expressed a high interest:

"I think I am going to participate because, since I am nearby, there is no problem. And we would be happy if materials are fulfilled for females."

R5 (host community girl), being in Grade 9, also expressed enthusiasm:

"If the club is going to open, it will be a great advantage for me since I also like this kind of thing. It is also in my mind, and my family will support me if I want. If it is not a bad place, they will not oppose me. So, if it comes, I will be happy—not only for me, but also for others. There are many interested individuals. The main obstacle will not be the school but the shortage of materials."

R6 (host community girl) was also open to participation:

"I have no problem. Also, my family has no problem. But this kind of thing does not come. If it comes, I will be happy, but we will see if it is implemented."

The interviewer summarised the main challenges:

"As I have understood, the major challenge is time. For refugee women, time is the major challenge. For Ethiopian girls, especially those who come from Sefara Tabia, the distance will be a challenge."

A Camp Leader agreed with the challenges for girls:

"Yes, I agree with your idea, the girls have different activities at home when they come home. Sometimes the family or the parents can say you cannot go to school or you cannot participate in events [activities] of the club because you have another duty at home."

Students are eager to join new clubs, but their ability to participate is contingent on solving practical problems. For female students, especially those who are married or have children, the responsibilities of domestic life, the long commute to school, and safety concerns after dark are major deterrents. The willingness of a mother to participate if childcare is provided is a powerful insight, suggesting that creative, practical solutions can overcome these significant barriers to female engagement. This highlights the need for any new initiative to be flexible and consider the full scope of students' lives outside the classroom.

Enabling Factor: The widespread enthusiasm of students and teachers for learning and extracurricular activities, despite the current failures of existing clubs, is the main enabling factor. This motivation is a foundational asset that can be leveraged if an initiative addresses the practical barriers of time, distance, and safety, while also providing the necessary resources and incentives to make clubs truly functional.

Disabling Factor: The systemic lack of resources, incentives, and consistent follow-up is the primary disabling factor. This issue affects all stakeholders, from students who lack materials to teachers who lack compensation and support. This is exacerbated by a lack of clear institutional ownership from external organisations, which leads to a pattern of establishing clubs and then abandoning them, which in turn breeds student and teacher disinterest and distrust.

Table 11: General Enabling and Dis-enabling Factors at Woumba Secondary School – Bambasi (Refugee/Host interface)

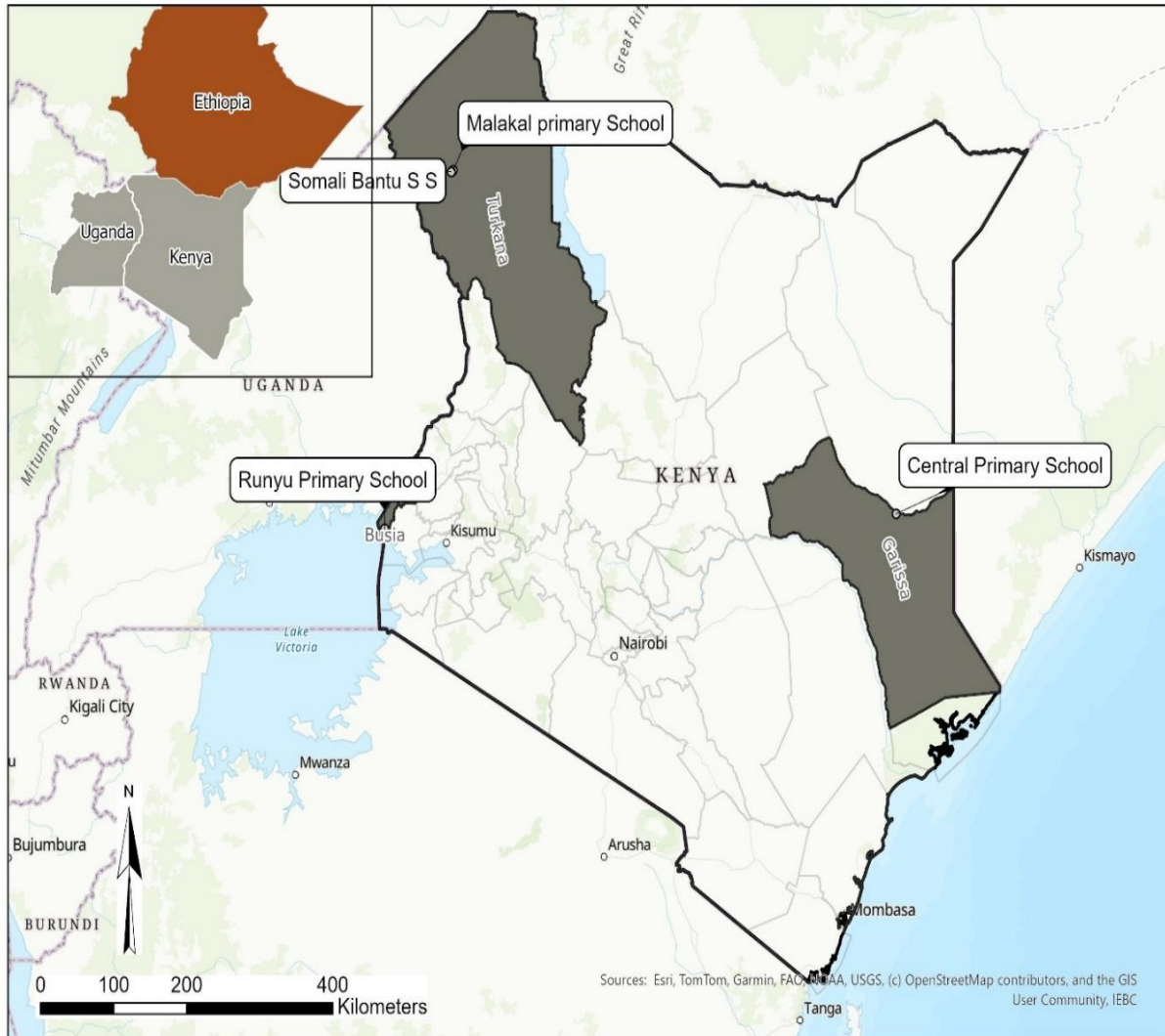
| Enabling Factors | Dis-enabling Factors |
|---|--|
| 1) Students possess a strong intrinsic desire for learning, self-improvement, and achieving future aspirations through education. | 1) Schools critically lack essential infrastructure, learning materials, and basic amenities, directly hindering educational quality and access. |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>2) Students generally experience friendly and supportive interactions with teachers and the principal, fostering a conducive learning atmosphere.</p> <p>3) Established school clubs, though often inactive, provide a foundational framework that can be reactivated with proper support.</p> <p>4) There's an acknowledged need and some receptiveness within the community for awareness campaigns to address educational values and cultural barriers.</p> <p>5) The expressed need for specific academic and psychosocial support for female students indicates a clear area for impactful intervention that has community and administrative backing.</p> | <p>2) Financial hardship forces students to prioritise income-generating activities over schooling, leading to absenteeism and high dropout rates.</p> <p>3) Teachers are overworked, underpaid, and lack compensation for extracurricular involvement, diminishing their capacity and motivation.</p> <p>4) Donor aid is often sporadic, short-term, or narrowly focused, failing to provide the sustained, comprehensive backing needed for systemic change.</p> <p>5) Both students and parents increasingly view formal education as less fruitful than immediate labour, impacting enrolment and persistence.</p> |
|--|--|

5.2 KENYA

5.2.1 Country Context

Figure 2: Map of Kenya Showing Study Sites for the Tuseme Scoping Study



The map above illustrates the four sampled schools: Runyu Primary, Central Primary Hagadera, Malakal, and Somali Bantu Mixed, across refugee-hosting regions in Kenya where qualitative data were collected. The map provides a geographical context for understanding the distribution of study sites and the diversity of educational settings examined.

A total of 341 respondents participated in the Kenya study across the four schools: Runyu Primary, Central Primary Hagadera, Malakal, and Somali Bantu Mixed. The participants were drawn from 10 stakeholder categories, including school governance and management, teachers, schoolchildren (boys and girls), PTAs, parents, national and local government officials, camp leaders, and para-social workers. By gender, the study engaged 128 females and 213 males. School children accounted for the largest category, with 48 girls and 48 boys participating.

Each of the remaining stakeholder groups contributed between 4 and 48 respondents, as shown in Table 12. Runyu Primary had the highest female participation (40), while Somali Bantu Mixed had the highest male participation (54). Representation from government officials was modest, with 8 national-level officials and no local government officials captured in this phase of the study. Camp leaders (n=4) and para-social workers (n=48) also provided important perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for implementing the Tuseme model in these contexts.

Table 12: Kenya Study Participants by Category, School, and Gender

| Participant category | Runyu primary | | Central primary Hagadera | | Malakal | | Somali Bantu mixed | | Total |
|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | |
| School Governance and Management | 2 | 7 | 2 | 10 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 8 | 45 |
| School teachers | 5 | 7 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 44 |
| Schoolchildren - Girls | 12 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 48 |
| Schoolchildren - Boys | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 48 |
| PTAs | 6 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 48 |
| Parents | 7 | 5 | 2 | 10 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 9 | 48 |
| National government officials | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 8 |
| Local Government officials | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Camp leaders and governance | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Para-social workers | 7 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 48 |
| Total | 40 | 44 | 24 | 59 | 31 | 56 | 33 | 54 | 341 |

5.2.2 School 1: Runyu Primary School – Busia County (Host Community)

5.2.2.1 General Context

Table 13: Runyu Comprehensive Primary School Profile

| Category | Details |
|--------------------------------|--|
| School Name | Runyu Comprehensive Primary School |
| School Location | Budalang’i, Busia County, Kenya |
| Location Type | Flood-prone area near Lake Victoria |
| School Level | Primary School |
| School Type | Public |
| Enrolment Figures | Not specified |
| Number of Teachers | Not specified |
| Number of Administrative Staff | Not specified |
| Number of Clubs | Not specified |
| Facilities | Serves as a temporary refuge for some IDPs during floods |
| Number of IDP/Refugee Students | Some pupils are temporarily displaced (exact number not specified) |
| Proximity to Institutions | Near Lake Victoria, also serves as a refuge in the community |

The community of Runyu Primary School is trapped in a cycle of poverty and environmental instability, where financial hardship, domestic responsibilities, and frequent floods create significant barriers that prevent students, particularly girls, from regularly attending school and participating in extracurricular activities. While there is a strong desire for education, the daily struggle for survival and a lack of basic resources consistently overshadows academic and personal development.

5.2.2.2 Student Participation Barriers

The most significant barrier to student participation is overwhelming poverty, which manifests in various ways. Parents, many of whom are orphans or rely on the unpredictable fishing industry, lack the financial stability to support their children's education. This leads to an inability to pay for school fees, which a PTA member notes can end a child's education prematurely:

"Sometimes a child may pass their exams, but due to lack of school fees, the child is forced to end their education at that point, so when such a child joins a club, then his/her school fees may be catered for."

This economic hardship also directly affects students' physical and mental well-being, as a teacher observes:

"There are some who have never eaten since yesterday; their first meal will be in the evening, and then wait till tomorrow evening again."

Hunger makes it difficult for students to concentrate in school or participate in clubs, with a PTA member stating,

"When these children are hungry, they cannot report to school at the right time, and this makes them children to not regularly attend school and these clubs."

In addition to financial struggles, the geographical location of the school in a flood-prone area presents a major physical barrier. Seasonal flooding from the backflow of Lake Victoria makes roads impassable, forcing students to use boats to get to school, which a camp leader notes makes it "hard for them to come to school." This not only causes late arrivals and missed classes but also leads to emotional distress and confusion for students who are internally displaced by the floods. As a para social worker explains, these children *"have to adapt to a given environment so that their studies may come later,"* and this constant displacement,

"Normally, affects their learning process."

Gender-specific challenges and deeply ingrained gender roles further compound the issue. For girls, the lack of sanitary towels during menstruation is a significant barrier to attendance, as a PTA member points out:

"Yes, when the girls are on their periods and they don't have sanitary towels, this prevents them from going to school."

This can lead to shame and social isolation, with a Board of Management (BOM) member highlighting,

"They need pads because sometimes they get ashamed of coming to school to mix with others, including boys."

For both boys and girls, domestic responsibilities often take precedence over school. A teacher explains that girls, especially, may be young mothers who are thinking,

"I haven't breastfed my baby,"

while boys feel pressure to

"Go fishing and sell the fish so I can give out the money to the mother of my child."

Teacher attendance and motivation are also significant issues. Teachers face their own challenges, including long commutes that a BOM member says cause them to

"Get to school late, like about 11:00 because of transport, and he wants to go back early, like 3:00."

A lack of motivation and financial incentives also discourages teachers from dedicating extra time to clubs, as a BOM member notes:

"Motivation, if you don't motivate the facilitators of the project, they will tire."

The instability of teacher transfers can also disrupt any long-term projects or clubs. This lack of teacher commitment, combined with students' own struggles, contributes to a cycle of disengagement, with a teacher observing that students

"Might be discouraged and start walking out of it" if there are "No goodies."

Finally, psychosocial and policy-related barriers prevent students from fully participating. Many students, particularly girls, struggle with shyness, which can prevent them from speaking up in class or taking on leadership roles. A boy student highlighted,

"These girls are shy. Even when they are the president of the school, they can't speak in front of people."

Furthermore, school policies that send students home for fees or missing books, as a girl student mentions, or scheduling that makes it hard to participate in clubs

"Because when you go to the club, some lessons are always in progress, and as a result, you may miss the lesson."

create additional obstacles that reinforce the message that school is a place of hardship rather than support. Similarly, a teacher mentions,

"This is a flooding area, so you expect the children or the learners in class by 7 a.m., but because of the means of transport to get to school, they may not be in time."

A Board of Management (BOM) member also highlights,

"They need pads because sometimes they get ashamed of coming to school to mix with others, including boys."

Furthermore, school policies that send students home for fees or missing books, as two female students mention, or scheduling that makes it hard to participate in clubs. The quotes from the girls indicate that clubs are often scheduled during class time, which forces students to choose between club participation and their lessons. The specific quotes are:

"Scheduling of the club may make it hard to participate," "Because when you go to the club, some lessons are always in progress and as a result you may miss the lesson," adds another girl.

These statements suggest that for clubs to be successful, they would need to be scheduled at a time that does not conflict with regular class hours. This could include a designated time after school, during a lunch break, or on weekends.

Enabling Factor: The main enabling factor is the strong, community-wide understanding that education is the key to a better future, even in the face of immense hardship. The quotes from various stakeholders, including students, parents, and community leaders, repeatedly express a desire for education as a way to escape poverty and achieve a better life. The willingness of a PTA member to support a child's school fees for joining a club, and the students' own expressions of hope, show a foundation of belief that can be leveraged to create effective interventions.

Disabling Factor: The main disabling factor is the inescapable cycle of poverty, scheduling conflicts, and environmental instability that consistently undermines all attempts at education. The constant struggle for food, money, and a safe place to live means that students' minds are often preoccupied with survival, making it nearly impossible for them to engage fully in their studies or extracurricular activities. The lack of basic resources, from school fees to sanitary pads and reliable transportation, is a perpetual obstacle that must be addressed to break this cycle and make meaningful participation possible.

5.2.2.3 School Environment and Student Well-being Challenges

The school and community face a severe lack of basic resources and infrastructure, which directly impacts student health, safety, and ability to learn. A camp leader and a parent both highlight the critical issue of food insecurity, stating that children

"Can't study without food"

and that poor nutrition affects "their performance" and causes "stress." This is brought by a lack of essential learning materials, as a teacher notes that some learners

"Come to school without exercise books"

and a shortage of "class readers" hinders their language skills and confidence. The physical infrastructure is also inadequate. Classrooms and desks are scarce, making it difficult for students to learn comfortably. A camp leader states,

"Classrooms are important too, because they won't be comfortable studying outside. Desks are also necessary."

The school also suffers from a lack of sanitation and water, with a camp leader reporting,

"We don't have toilets, not even a place to build them," and "We also lack water here."

This forces people to "go to the bushes" and use contaminated water, which a para social worker connects to the spread of diseases like "malaria, cholera." The absence of a library and reliable electricity further limits educational opportunities, with a BOM member lamenting,

"We do not have a library for the students", and "We can go for up to 1 year without power."

Students face significant safety risks and emotional struggles. The lack of security is a major concern, particularly for girls, with a camp leader emphasising,

"There must be security as well. It's especially important for the girls."

The community itself poses a threat, as a BOM member warns that school equipment could be stolen, and a male student reports that girls are often "assaulted" and "chased around by boys" on their way to school. In addition to physical safety, students' mental and emotional well-being is at risk. Natural disasters, such as floods, not only disrupt schooling but also cause deep emotional distress. A para-social worker observes that displaced children are

"Exhausted, confused," and "to adapt and come back to a normal situation is a challenge."

The lack of personal space and privacy in overcrowded, "translucent" temporary housing further exacerbates these challenges. A para social worker notes,

"There is a lack of personal space between the parents and the kids."

which can expose them to "some other issues." This difficult environment also contributes to other social problems, with a student mentioning that some boys

"Boys who use drugs," and "Taking alcohol and bhang (Cannabis sativa)."

Another boy adds,

"They inject themselves with drugs, and it affects their mental status."

A para-social worker observes the impact of displacement on mental well-being:

"When this learner arrives in school, he/she arrives exhausted, confused, and this will force the child to take a break first before resuming school activities."

Another para social worker states,

"When this learner lands in a new environment, you find that to adapt and come back to a normal situation is a challenge, so this one has displaced almost everything in this learner."

A para-social worker also mentions,

"If in case I'm going through something at home, and there is a club like Tuseme in our school, this will surely make it easier for me to participate because then I can tell someone whatever problems I'm going through."

The lack of personal space in congested living situations is also a concern. A para-social worker states,

"There is a lack of personal space between the parents and the kids."

Another para social worker elaborates,

" We have parents, we have elders and we have these kids and kids who also need their privacy and from the looks of things as you can see where we are, privacy of the learners, of these kids maybe lacking so you find that this one might also expose them to some other issues because of this privacy they might be seen by the parents because this is just a single structure."

The transparency of temporary structures also poses a challenge. This was shared by another para-social worker:

"The structures they place are translucent, and these provide no privacy. This is a challenge to the women and girls."

Another para-social worker states.

"That means there is congestion there; the place is overcrowded."

The overall living conditions are also a concern:

" A lot of dirty things are happening here. There are high birth rates," notes a Para-social worker.

Despite these challenges, the school and community have some informal support systems in place. The PTA is actively involved in student care, with a member stating,

"When the child is sick/unwell, we take him/her to the hospital and then bring them back to school"

and ensuring hygiene. Teachers are also proactive in addressing academic struggles and sensitive issues like early pregnancy by involving parents and providing a supportive environment. As a PTA member explains,

"Teachers always stand with the expectant student and make them feel free, and this ensures that the student is not bullied by other students."

Parents, too, play a crucial role, with one sharing how she successfully guided her daughter back to school after an early pregnancy and another noting how open conversations with her children prevented similar issues. A national government official confirms that there are also external organisations that *"Take such girls and help them return to school"* if their parents are unsupportive. These examples show a community-wide effort to protect students, even with limited resources.

Enabling Factor: The main enabling factor is the existing, albeit informal, support network of dedicated teachers, PTA members, and parents who actively work to protect students' physical and emotional well-being. Their commitment to stepping in during crises, whether it's an illness, an academic struggle, or a teenage pregnancy, provides a crucial safety net for students in an otherwise challenging environment.

Disabling Factor: The main disabling factor is the pervasive scarcity of essential resources, from food and clean water to secure infrastructure and learning materials. This systemic lack of resources makes it nearly impossible for the school to create a safe and stable

environment, overwhelming the well-intentioned efforts of teachers and parents. The challenges are so deeply rooted in poverty and environmental factors that they require large-scale, coordinated external intervention, which is currently lacking.

5.2.2.4 Gender Roles and Perceptions

Gender roles and perceptions in the community around Runyu Primary School are complex and contradictory. While there is a recognised shift away from historical biases, deeply ingrained issues persist, with poverty, early pregnancy, and traditional roles creating specific vulnerabilities for girls. However, a growing recognition of the value of female education and leadership offers a path toward a more equitable future. The community shows signs of moving away from a historical preference for boys' education, but this shift is not universal or complete. A camp leader observes,

"All children are equal. But it used to be there before when boys' education was prioritised, but nowadays, that's not the case."

A local government official provides a pragmatic reason for this change, explaining that in the past,

"Our grandfathers saw girls as a source of wealth, but now... if you want to benefit from your daughter, she must be educated."

This highlights a shift from traditional beliefs to a more modern, economically driven perspective where education is seen as an investment in a daughter's future earning potential. However, a BOM member's perspective reveals that the old biases are far from gone, stating,

"Parents feel like wasting resources to educate a lady is a waste of resources."

This is further supported by a male student's observation that parents may prioritise a girl's education over a boy's because they believe

"The girl will support them in the future when they are old, and the boy will not."

This suggests that while there is a move towards educating girls, it is sometimes based on a transactional view of their future contributions rather than a belief in gender equality. Girls continue to face significant and specific challenges, particularly concerning poverty and early pregnancy. A national government official identifies early pregnancy as "the only obstacle to their education," and a BOM member directly links it to community issues, stating,

"Early pregnancy comes from the community; this is a big challenge that possibly arises from girls lacking pads."

This is corroborated by a para-social worker who explains,

"A girl child, maybe whose family is not financially stable, will be forced to go look out for herself, maybe pads, and in that process, she becomes pregnant."

This evidence paints a clear picture of how poverty and the lack of basic resources make girls vulnerable. A parent also attributes early pregnancies to a lack of income, noting that girls:

"We are forced to get pregnant early... due to these challenges, as we, the parents, lack a source of income."

The perception of girls' future contributions can influence educational choices. A boy shares,

"Some parents treat girls better when it comes to education. For instance, if they have two children, a boy and a girl, they will prefer to educate the girl because they feel the girl will support them in the future when they are old, and the boy will not."

A girl student expresses her motivation:

"To help my parents in the future, school is important because it puts me at an advantage of getting employed, unlike one who hasn't gone to school."

These challenges are exacerbated by peer pressure in the crowded living conditions and cultural events like *"disco matanga"* (a funeral gathering that creates a party-like atmosphere because of the music and dance involved), which a parent explicitly links to early pregnancies. These factors highlight a complex social environment where girls are seen as more vulnerable and are at a higher risk of dropping out of school.

"Another issue is that festivals, like "disco matanga," often lead to girls getting pregnant."

However, another parent states,

"We from the Manyala tribe, we don't have any culture that is against children."

A national government official also affirms,

"Nothing will prevent you because there are no specific cultures here."

The perception of women in leadership is also evolving, though traditional biases remain. While one BOM member states,

"Our community does not embrace women's leadership"

and another claims that women's work is "taking care of the homes," there's a counter-narrative of growing acceptance. A different BOM member says,

"These days we embrace women's leadership, even those like teachers and doctors."

This shift is supported by the observation that a

"A good number of percentage of women in leadership positions execute their duties better than men."

A female student's perspective on the importance of shared leadership

"For there to be equality, both boys and girls should be in leadership positions", indicates a generational desire for a more balanced and equitable power dynamic.

Enabling Factor: The primary enabling factor is the growing community-wide recognition of the economic value of educating girls. While some of this is driven by a pragmatic desire for future support, it has led to a significant shift away from the historical bias against female education. This new mindset provides a fertile ground for interventions that promote girls' education and empowerment, as it aligns with the community's own evolving understanding of how to secure a better future.

Disabling Factor: The main disabling factor is the inescapable link between poverty and female vulnerability. The lack of basic resources like sanitary pads, combined with the pressures of poverty and a challenging social environment, makes girls susceptible to early pregnancy and school dropout. This systemic issue is a fundamental barrier that traditional gender roles and cultural practices exacerbate, and it must be addressed to ensure that girls can fully benefit from their education.

5.2.2.5 Community and Parental Engagement (Perceptions)

The community, including parents, the PTA, and local officials, is overwhelmingly supportive of new educational initiatives, viewing them as a positive force to overcome poverty, outdated cultural norms, and the challenges posed by environmental disasters. However, for these projects to be successful and sustainable, they must proactively engage parents and manage community expectations to avoid misunderstandings and ensure active participation. There is a near-unanimous and enthusiastic welcome for new projects and clubs. The PTA and local officials see external support as a way to address the community's significant challenges. A PTA member states,

"We as PTA cannot go against the project because in this new era, people have left behind the retrogressive culture. Initially, in the past, people had the perception that girls must be circumcised, but that has changed with time. We as parents agree with the initiative so that it may help the pupils together with teachers because this is one of the schools that was affected by floods, and so we welcome the project, welcome and help our pupils shape their future."

The PTA further states,

*"We all welcome the club/project,"
"I also support that the club should come and support our children and us, as the PTA will work together to ensure it runs smoothly."*

Another PTA member adds,

"We cannot have any issues with this club because we are past the retrogressive culture. We need to grow as other countries are growing, so cultural reservations cannot be a problem. We will stand with the club so that it can support the pupils."

A local government official affirms this openness:

"I don't see anything that might stop the pupils from joining the club. We live in refugee camps, so when opportunities come, we appreciate them, and we encourage our daughters to participate in this program."

The local government official further states,

"We cannot resist any project because we know that before a project starts, it is usually registered with the government, and you will have an approval letter from the government even before starting. So, as residents of Runyu, we cannot resist any project, and we also don't have cultural barriers that prevent such projects."

A national government official also confirms,

"They are not hesitant. They welcome them because they also want their daughters to be in school."

A parent states,

"This program has come to our community, which is Runyu, and we are here as parents. Those who will be part of this program are our children. So, when you implement the program, we will welcome you because we already know the purpose of the program."

Another parent also expresses unwavering support:

"What I can say is that there is nothing that can prevent these kids from attending the club meetings. Even the parents cannot prevent them."

A parent concludes,

"We are in support of this project because we believe it will take us somewhere. We pray that it continues, and we welcome you."

The community also welcomes external support, with a PTA member saying,

"We as the community will be so happy since our school has been chosen among the many schools in the country."

A national government official expresses appreciation:

"I just want to appreciate you for bringing this program, and you should continue with such initiatives."

This widespread, positive reception indicates a high level of readiness for new programs. Parental involvement in student well-being is noted. A PTA member shares,

"When the teachers observe that the student is not performing well, then they always call for the parents of that class and talk to them and release the results of those students to the parents and then find a solution for it."

A parent describes their involvement:

"The support I give to my children, as a parent, involves spending time with them and asking how they are doing in school, how they are performing. I also take responsibility for monitoring their progress. I visit the child's class teacher and ask how my child is doing. The teacher shows me the child's performance, and then I can assess how they are doing."

Another parent states,

"I usually sit with my child and ask how they are doing in school. I look at their performance, and if they are doing well, I encourage them."

A national government official notes,

"I support them by talking to the parents, encouraging them to motivate their children to go back to school."

The national government official also mentions,

"Yes, we usually hold meetings with the parents and explain the program to them."

While the community is welcoming, effective engagement is not a given. There is a clear need to involve parents and the broader community from the outset to prevent misunderstandings and opposition. A BOM member warns that

"If we do not have a mentor for the girls so that they can stay guided, for us, we have a village within the school, not the other way around, so if we bring a project here and the whole community is involved within the school compound, then it is going to be a challenge."

Another BOM member expresses the need to inform parents:

"We are only 9 here and there, so many parents are out there, and it is their children that are going to benefit from this, so we will need to educate the parents."

A BOM member also cautions against excluding parents:

"When we put aside parents and only work with the teachers, the parents will turn out opposing the project."

This highlights the importance of making parents feel included and respected. A local government official stresses the need for "early communication" while stating that

"Another challenge is that if you don't inform the community members early enough about your visit, you might not find them, because many women will have gone to work. So, we need early communication so we can prepare."

to ensure community members, particularly women who may be working, are available for meetings. This is crucial because, as another BOM member points out,

"Teachers do not stay here around the community, and the project is for the community, so the teacher does not know the children well, but we do because we stay with them."

A significant challenge lies in managing community expectations and preventing misunderstandings about the purpose and scope of a project. A BOM member notes that

"When their expectations are not met, they will drop."

A teacher reinforces the importance of parental awareness:

"You are training the parents, you are getting their ideas, so it is something that is already in the community, so when it picks up, the parents are already aware."

A local government official provided a specific example, stating that

"Some parents may feel upset, questioning why only certain pupils received the uniforms and not all. Some parents don't understand that organisations have their own programs with specific criteria."

Another local government official states,

"Another challenge is that parents don't fully understand equality. These projects are for the schoolchildren, but when they see you bringing things, they might think you've brought those items for the parents."

Parental control over children's participation is acknowledged. A parent states,

"You see, the child is under the parent. So, sometimes it will be that the parent doesn't allow the child to join, but the child is under the parent."

However, parents also recognise the benefits of such programs. A parent expresses,

"You know, it is good if the children are brought together, and you educate them, especially the girls. You know that if you tell them that early marriages or early pregnancies are bad, they will say, "I have been taught that this is bad, and it will block my dreams." I support them joining the club."

A parent concludes,

"We need an organisation like this to guide these children so that they can continue with their education."

Parents express a strong desire for guidance, especially regarding sensitive topics like early pregnancy, which they feel are not adequately addressed by the school. A parent laments,

"You know, most of the time the children are in school, and the parents are at home, so we don't know what's going on. They are in the hands of their teachers in school, but

the teachers don't even care; they just teach and go. I don't think they talk to them about these things, and that's what contributes to young girls getting pregnant early."

This indicates a gap in the current educational system that a new club could fill. Another parent acknowledges the changing social landscape, stating,

"If you teach them about early pregnancies, it will help them because sometimes their teachers don't talk to them about this."

A parent acknowledges the changing times:

"No. You might hold on to culture, but maybe these teachings might help the child. Culture might say that the child is still young and should not be taught about relationships, but nowadays, even a 5-year-old already knows about boy-girl relationships."

This highlights a need for a modern approach to sex education and life skills. Ultimately, parents see the value of a club that can "guide these children so that they can continue with their education," even if a parent might, in some cases, not allow their child to join due to their authority.

Enabling Factor: The main enabling factor is the overwhelmingly positive and open attitude of the community, PTA, and local officials toward new initiatives. This collective readiness to embrace change and partner with external organisations, along with a conscious desire to move past "retrogressive culture," provides a solid foundation for any new program.

Disenabling Factor: The main disenabling factor is the potential for project failure due to a lack of proactive communication and expectation management. While the community is open, it is not a blank slate. Unaddressed expectations about incentives, confusion about beneficiary selection, and a failure to include parents in the planning process could quickly turn their initial enthusiasm into resistance and demotivation.

5.2.2.6 Collaboration and Sustainability

The community and its leaders have a clear vision for the long-term success of new initiatives, emphasising that sustainability hinges on projects that generate self-sufficiency, involve all key stakeholders, and receive consistent, well-managed external support. The community is eager for projects that don't just provide one-off aid but create lasting empowerment. The community's primary recommendation for sustainability is to establish projects that generate income and support daily needs. The PTA suggests,

"If the club can bring projects like poultry keeping and farming, so that it can encourage parents and PTA to support the club for its sustainability."

This is seen as a way to create self-reliance, with a PTA member adding that such a project will teach students *"how to survive on their own."* A local government official echoes this, suggesting that engaging in agriculture would

"Help us provide food for the children so they can focus on school."

This feedback highlights a desire to move beyond temporary aid and build a foundation for long-term economic stability. The community also sees a direct link between parental economic empowerment and student success. A parent suggests,

"The club can support parents with capital for business so that they can keep their children in school at the right time."

Another suggests an organisation

"Could empower fishermen so that their income can improve."

This points to a clear understanding that student participation is fundamentally tied to the family's financial stability. The community recognises the importance of collaborating with various organisations and government bodies. Past positive contributions from organisations like the Red Cross and UNICEF are repeatedly highlighted for their support during floods and for providing essential items like sanitary pads and school supplies. A local government official states,

"The government appreciates support from non-governmental organisations because such initiatives have a significant impact."

This official also clarifies that new projects must be "registered with the government," indicating a clear protocol for collaboration. However, there are also warnings about the challenges of working with the government, including potential mismanagement of resources and past conflicts over project ownership. A local government official advises organisations to "be strict" and that "most organisations don't want to get involved in politics." This suggests that while government support is welcome, it needs to be handled carefully and transparently. The community emphasises that long-term sustainability will come from training, not just from materials. The PTA and local government officials both express a strong desire for a TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) school that would offer skills like

"Plumbing, tailoring and hairdressing."

A national government official provides a successful example of a program that has already sent girls for training at a polytechnic, demonstrating that such initiatives are already working. This focus on skills is aligned with the new CBC curriculum, which a PTA member notes will make it "even easier for the students" to learn practical skills. The importance of training extends to teachers and community leaders as well. A teacher suggests that a club should

"Arrange some sort of benchmark"

visits for teachers to exchange ideas with other communities. A para-social worker also believes such exposure would

"Expose them so they bring the same home," to create a ripple effect of knowledge and new ideas.

To ensure a project's longevity, a clear communication strategy is seen as essential. A BOM member emphasises,

"Let us spread the information about this project to others so that we don't cut communications with the community."

A parent suggests a practical solution:

"We will have representatives of parents who will be part of this program. They will be the ones who will be telling us about what is going on in the program."

The community also fears projects that "stop unexpectedly" or where the organisation

"Disappear[s] leaving the project for the community to struggle with."

This highlights the need for organisations to not only initiate projects but also have a clear exit strategy that includes community training and a plan for long-term self-management.

Enabling Factor: The primary enabling factor is the community's clear, strategic vision for sustainability through self-sufficiency. They are not simply asking for handouts but are actively suggesting specific, income-generating projects and skill-building initiatives that would empower them to continue a program long after an external organisation has left.

Disabling Factor: The main disabling factor is the risk of external organisations initiating projects without a clear plan for long-term follow-up and sustainability. The fear of being abandoned with a project that is not self-sufficient, along with potential mismanagement and poor communication, creates a sense of uncertainty and distrust that could hinder even the most well-intentioned efforts.

Table 14: General Enabling and Dis-enabling Factors at Runyu Primary School – Busia County (Host Community)

| Enabling Factors | Dis-enabling Factors |
|---|--|
| 1) The community, including parents and local leaders, overwhelmingly welcomes and is eager to support new educational initiatives. | 1) Widespread lack of reliable income, hunger, and inability to afford school fees or necessities force children out of school. |
| 2) Both national and local government bodies appreciate and generally support non-governmental organisations' projects, often providing approvals and some resources. | 2) This is a critical and recurring challenge, particularly for girls, leading to school dropouts and fuelled by economic hardship, lack of sanitary pads, and congestion. |
| 3) There's a clear shift away from past retrogressive cultural practices that hindered girls' education, prioritising children's future over tradition. | 3) Flooding, impassable roads, and a lack of essential facilities like proper toilets, classrooms, and water sources severely disrupt education and daily life. |
| 4) The current curriculum's emphasis on | 4) Concerns about projects collapsing |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>practical skills aligns well with vocational training and project-based learning, fostering a receptive environment for such programs.</p> <p>5) The community and local officials deeply value and trust established organisations like UNICEF and the Red Cross, acknowledging their positive impact on student welfare.</p> | <p>due to insufficient long-term funding, lack of community training, or the departure/transfer of key facilitators.</p> <p>5) Some parents do not fully grasp program criteria or perceive unequal distribution of resources, which can lead to discontent or non-cooperation.</p> |
|---|---|

5.2.3 School 2: Central Primary School – Hagadera Camp, Garissa County (Refugee Setting)

5.2.3.1 General Context

Table 15: Central Primary School, Hagadera Profile

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| School Name | Central Primary School, Hagadera |
| School Location | Hagadera Refugee Camp, Dadaab, Kenya |
| Location Type | Refugee/IDP camp setting |
| School Level | Primary School |
| School Type | Public/Community school (supported by UNHCR and partners) |
| Enrolment Figures | 2,001 pupils (1,180 boys; 821 girls) |
| Number of Teachers | 22 teachers |
| Number of Administrative Staff | Not specified |
| Number of Clubs | Volleyball, football, handball, debating club, environmental club, inter-class club |
| Facilities | 25 tablets, 1 projector, 1 laptop with Wi-Fi (INS program), separate toilets for boys and girls, classrooms adequate in number but overcrowded, gender-sensitive assembly points |
| Number of IDP/Refugee Students | The entire student population (2,001) is in a refugee camp |
| Proximity to Institutions | Located within Hagadera refugee camp |

Established in 1994, Hagadera Central Primary School is a pivotal educational institution within the Hagadera refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya. Serving a diverse student body, the school currently enrolls approximately 2,001 learners, 1,180 boys and 821 girls, supported by a dedicated team of 22 teachers. In 2014, the school embraced technological advancement by integrating the Instant Network Schools (INS) program, a collaborative initiative by the Vodafone Foundation and UNHCR. This program equipped the school with 25 tablets, a projector, and a laptop, all connected via Wi-Fi, thereby enhancing both teaching and learning experiences.

5.2.3.2 Student Participation Barriers

The students at Hagadera Central Primary School face multiple, interconnected barriers to participation, all rooted in the unique and challenging conditions of a refugee camp. The primary obstacles are a lack of basic resources and a sense of displacement that creates both physical and emotional hurdles for learners. A para-social worker highlights fundamental administrative issues, stating. These barriers fall into three main categories: administrative obstacles, physical and economic hardship, and low perceived value of education, which together heighten the risk of early dropout, an issue even highlighted by the para-social worker during interviews.

"These children, sometimes, even when they were asked to bring birth certificates for registration of the examination. Registration of the initial examinations. They have that issue sometimes. They can't get it because there are some new arrival learners here in the school."

This administrative hurdle makes it difficult for new arrivals to even begin their educational journey. Beyond registration, physical and financial barriers are immense. The same para-social worker notes that:

"Children with disabilities can't go to school because of distance. And it's like distance, especially children with disabilities, they cannot access school because of distance and lack of transportation."

The distance to school is a recurring issue, with the worker adding,

"If the child moves from where he was living to another area, the first thing that affects him financially is the social distance. He might be far from the school where he was going before."

The lack of essential items also poses a barrier, with the para-social worker observing,

*"The situation that the children face to learn at school, like a lack of uniform,"
"Sometimes, they even miss the uniform to go to school."*

Financial hardship is perhaps the most significant barrier. The para-social worker explains that for orphans,

"The orphans' children. Those children, most of them, will not go to school because of financial reasons. Because they miss their parents. And no one will support them with a good education. So, most of them stay at home."

This financial strain also affects displaced individuals who may not have the resources to "carry on" with school. A lack of necessities like school uniforms is also a problem, with the para-social worker noting,

"Sometimes, they even miss the uniform to go to school."

The broader vulnerability of refugees was also emphasised by a para-social worker, who noted,

"Being a refugee is a vulnerability; it's high. So, they cannot restore what they had at their home before."

Further elaborating on distance, the para-social worker remarked,

"Distance. Because if a learner is far from the school, it can also affect them."

The financial strain on displaced individuals was again highlighted by a parasocial worker:

"So, attending school, you need a resource. So, someone who moved from his original area where he was living may not have anything to carry on. So, at that time, it also affects finances."

A girl stakeholder also pointed out environmental factors, stating,

"There are some girls far from the school during the rainy season, as the floods close the roads to pass the school."

The PTA also acknowledged the severity of the issue, stating,

"It helps the learners to perceive education because most of the learners are dropping out the school."

While a para-social worker explained, some parents and students question the value of completing school, associating it with limited financial reward:

"Maybe they cannot finish. They say, why do you finish school? What's the need to finish school? If you finish school, you earn 8,000."

This sentiment, combined with the instability of refugee life, where a camp manager observes,

"There is no seasonal work commitment in the refugee, but there is migration."

This statement shows an existing disillusionment with education as a pathway to socio-economic mobility. The perception that schooling does not translate into meaningful employment reinforces dropout tendencies and diminishes long-term investment in education, particularly among displaced families struggling with survival priorities.

Enabling Factor: The existence of a dedicated support network within the camp, as evidenced by a PTA statement that "most of the learners are dropping out of the school" and their commitment to finding a solution, shows a strong desire to address these barriers and a recognition of the problem.

Disabling Factor: The systemic vulnerability and resource scarcity inherent to a refugee camp setting, which create constant financial, logistical, and psychological barriers that are beyond the control of individual families or the school itself.

5.2.3.3 School Environment and Student Well-being Challenges

The school environment at Hagadera is characterised by severe overcrowding and a critical lack of resources, which takes a significant toll on student well-being. Despite this, there are existing support systems, though they are stretched thin and require more resources to be effective. The problem of overcrowding is acute. A para-social worker paints a stark picture, stating:

"You can see almost 190 learners in a class. That means that we have, they have challenged them about the number of rooms, classrooms we have in that school, and the number of children in that school are more than, the children are more than the

classrooms. Because learners, if they are 30 or 40, have a good setup in the class. But if they are almost 90, the class is almost congested, and that's also a challenge."

A camp manager reinforces this, saying,

"Even if you are in the same room with the children, you may not know their names because the classes are very overcrowded."

This congestion hinders learning and makes it difficult for teachers to identify and support struggling students. The emotional toll on students was also a key point, with a para-social worker stating,

"Some are traumatised, affected, have some emotional effect which has happened in their past. So, they feel shy, lonely and inattentive in class. That is the most traumatic one is traumatised."

Resource scarcity extends to learning materials, as a para-social worker explained,

"The organisation used to support children by bringing books and resources. Like Malena Beba, bands, books, uniforms. They used to distribute and bring to the schools. But nowadays, there is a crisis. Nobody is giving out."

This lack of resources is a significant blow, and the PTA also notes the

"Unavailability of resources in learning sectors."

The camp manager also highlights the low pay for teachers, which causes them to *"become demoralised."* This, combined with the lack of facilities, leads to a perception that the quality of education is extremely poor. This leads to visible disparities, with the para-social worker adding:

" You can see in the school, some have uniforms, some don't. Because of a lack of resources."

Safety issues were also brought up. A para-social worker shared:

"If the child is disabled, they may get abused by others because of their disability. So, that child has decided to drop out of school instead of being abused on the way to school."

Discrimination further exacerbates these challenges, as the para-social worker noted:

"They discriminate, and then they isolate themselves to go to school and stay at home. So, they decide to drop out unless they get their grading in counselling."

The specific needs of children with disabilities were highlighted by a para-social worker:

"Some of the children have a disability, for instance, they cannot control their urine. They don't have a compass. The family doesn't have support."

Trauma's impact on social interaction was also mentioned by a para-social worker:

"When it comes to trauma, the child may lose a way or ability to attend to children. So, it affects the social interaction of the learners."

Adapting to new environments is also a struggle, as a para-social worker described:

"He finds it difficult to adapt to the environment. That school is also, he has left, or she has left their friends, children. Even though how to adapt to that teacher. You know, a teacher and a student are good friends. So, he was living with another teacher. I adapted his character, everything. What made that teacher annoyed, and what made that teacher happy? So, he comes to another area where that teacher or that learner cannot be tolerant of what he said, also."

A girl stakeholder directly addressed safety concerns, stating,

"When girls come from and on their way to schoolboys abuse them."

The camp manager also spoke about resource limitations, noting,

"The issue of better facilities and better teaching, we leave for UNHCR; they are the ones who took the mandate and the responsibilities of the refugees."

Safety and well-being are constant concerns. A para-social worker highlights the risk of abuse for disabled children, stating,

"If the child is disabled, they may get abused by others because of their disability."

This abuse, combined with discrimination, can lead to students dropping out. The emotional and psychological toll of displacement and trauma is also a major challenge, with a para-social worker noting that some students are

"Traumatised, affected, have some emotional effect which has happened in their past. So, for them, they feel shy, lonely and inattentive in class."

Despite these challenges, some support systems are in place. The camp manager notes that the school has a system where:

"If he or she is not participating in the club, the club chairman will notice and forward the teacher. The teacher will follow up."

The school also has a "suggestion box" and a "hotline line which students can easily access," as well as counselling services. The PTA also expresses a commitment to:

"Zero tolerance of discrimination," and "Promoting welfare of the student."

Enabling Factor: The presence of existing support structures like a suggestion box, a student hotline, and counselling services, as noted by the camp manager, shows a commitment to student well-being and provides a foundation upon which new initiatives can be built.

Disabling Factor: The severe and pervasive lack of resources, including overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of learning materials, and underpaid, demoralised teachers, creates a hostile learning environment that is difficult for any support system to overcome.

5.2.3.4 Gender Roles and Perceptions

Gender roles and perceptions in the Hagadera camp present significant barriers to girls' education, though there is a growing awareness of the need for change. Traditional attitudes, gender-specific challenges, and household responsibilities combine to create a vulnerable environment for girls. Traditional attitudes often prioritise boys' education over girls. A para-social worker explains a common practice:

"Somali community, we have this character that we send the boys to school. Even if they are classmates, your daughter and your son, if they are classmates, you sometimes... Yes, continue. If they are classmates, sometimes you can say, let the girl have some activity at home, and then the boys, you should send them to school."

This bias is also evident in the belief that

"Girls don't do anything. Even if they go to university, they will not do anything. They will come back and become mothers," as shared by a para-social worker.

Gender-specific challenges, such as menstruation, were also identified by a para-social worker:

"If the girl is an adolescent, the way it has been before, if they see the ministerial period, and they don't have even money to buy the toilet paper, then at that time she is also preferred to stay at home, rather than going to school."

The overall vulnerability of girls was a concern for a para-social worker, who stated,

"Girls are the most affected in this journey, because girls are very vulnerable compared to the boys."

The lack of safe accommodation for girls was also noted by a para-social worker:

"You can see some of us left their parents there. They came here to learn. They will stay with the other family. But the girls can't stay with the other family, except for the mother and the father. If their mother and father are not around, they can't stay with other people. Because boys can survive, but girls can't survive without their parents."

Household responsibilities disproportionately affect girls, leading to school absenteeism and dropout. A para-social worker observed,

"Most of the girls will take the role of parents. She will stay there and take care of her children. So, boys will attend school. So most of the young children will pick up a giant household."

The para-social worker further elaborated on this, stating,

"She is the feeder of the family, in terms of cooking something. So, every morning and afternoon, in the morning it's breakfast time to prepare, and in the afternoon it's lunch time to prepare. She's always busy with that area, which makes her not attend school. And later on, she had to drop out of school, because of many things at school. Because she hears a lot of things from the teachers, because the teachers want the children to be part of the school. And they don't know the circumstances or the challenge that the girl faces, too. So that makes the girl drop out of school."

The trend of decreasing girl enrolment in higher grades was also highlighted by a para-social worker:

"Girls dropping out of school are very many. If you go to PPI, girls are more girls than boys. If you go to classes 1, 2, and 3, girls are more girls than boys. If you go to class 4 and class 5, also class 4, the girls are more than the boys. But if you go to class 5, grade 5, grade 6, grade 7, they are reducing. And before there were very many."

The para-social worker further explained the impact of household chores:

"The girl, in the morning, does a lot of activities at home, like sweeping the compound, cooking, and a lot of things. So that child may not come to school at the right time to school. They may be late to school."

Parental perceptions often devalue girls' education, as a para-social worker shared:

"When you talk to the parents, they will tell you, let them stay. Girls, they don't do anything. Even if they go to university, they will not do anything. They will come, at long last, they will be a family mother."

Cultural barriers also prevent girls from openly discussing their problems, as a para-social worker noted:

"The other is also culturally, especially for girls, they cannot expose all their problems to the public."

This leads to fear of discrimination, with the para-social worker adding,

"She cannot say because she will be asked if they heard it, that she was complaining about this issue. She will be discriminated against."

Shyness is another gender-specific challenge, as observed by a para-social worker:

"Also, shyness. Because when you are doing a competition. Like a little bit. Or the quiz competition. You can see. A girl knows the answer. And she is shy. She does not come to the front of the public."

Girls themselves reported direct experiences of gender segregation and specific challenges. A girl stakeholder stated:

"Girls sit separately in the classroom."

Another girl stakeholder highlighted the impact of menstruation on attendance:

"Girls don't come to school because of their period."

The Camp Manager emphasised the importance of empowering learners without segregation, stating:

"Our concern is empowering learners without segregation."

Positive observations about girls' attendance were also shared by the camp manager:

"We have observed the benefits of attending girls helping as a lot for the few we have educated, therefore support any that supports our girls."

A camp manager reiterated the challenge of girls missing lessons due to menstruation:

"They have different challenges because girls missed the same lesson because of their menstrual period."

The PTA also raised concerns about early marriage:

"Early marriage, if the girls marry at a very young age, they will become school dropouts, and they will become demoralised."

Despite these challenges, there is a clear push for gender equality. The camp manager states,

"We encourage both boys and girls to learn and be treated the same."

The camp manager also notes a positive shift in community mentality, saying,

"During the olden days, we used to ignore girls to educate, for we removed that mentality from our brain; now, educating is educating the whole family."

The camp also supports female leadership, with the camp manager stating,

"We support girls to become future leaders."

The contrast between the entrenched barriers and emerging positive attitudes suggests that change is underway, but fragile. To sustain momentum, interventions must go beyond access and tackle root causes such as transforming gender norms, addressing material and safety needs, reducing the domestic burden on girls, and creating safe spaces for them to express themselves. Without such comprehensive action, the cycle of low retention and limited opportunity for girls in Hagadera will persist, even in the face of growing community goodwill.

Main Enabling Factor: The growing community awareness, as articulated by the camp manager, that "educating is educating the whole family", provides a strong foundation for any initiative focused on empowering girls and promoting gender equality.

Main Disabling Factor: Traditional beliefs that devalue girls' education and burden them with household chores, combined with specific challenges like early marriage and a lack of sanitary products, create a formidable barrier that is difficult to dismantle.

5.2.3.5 Community and Parental Engagement (Perceptions)

Community and parental engagement emerged as a crucial factor influencing educational outcomes in Hagadera camp. The evidence shows that community involvement and positive parental perceptions can enable greater enrolment and retention, particularly for girls, while language barriers and low parental education can act as significant obstacles.

One of the strongest enablers of educational initiatives is the active engagement and support of parents and the wider community. Para-social workers reported direct engagement methods, stating,

"Like community engagement, like meeting parents, also greeting the parents."

The use of local media for outreach was also noted by a para-social worker:

"We have a local radio station. Yes, Radio Talk. It's called Gergal. We go to the radio and talk. You can also write."

The camp manager highlighted the importance of public awareness campaigns:

"The issue of increased enrolment, we do public awareness in the community."

The camp manager also affirmed the cultural acceptance of initiatives that promote community well-being:

"Our culture does not refuse anything that promotes the well-being of our community. Communities are ready for anything that empowers gender."

Language barriers can hinder engagement, as the camp manager noted:

"Language barrier because parents are not educated."

The camp manager also expressed the community's commitment to beneficial initiatives:

"If this initiative for girl child brings benefits to the community, then the community will monitor and watch and fight for anything that brings the collapse of this project."

The camp manager also emphasised the role of community encouragement:

"Also, if the community puts a lot of energy and time and encouraging the learners, it will actively work."

The camp manager also mentioned actively motivating parents:

"We are the ones motivating and telling the parents to bring their girls to the school."

The cultural value placed on education was also highlighted by the camp manager:

"Both our culture and beliefs value the importance of our children's education."

The camp manager also noted a positive perception of leadership development:

"We really have a good perception of leadership development of our children."

The PTA confirmed active parental participation in programs:

"Parents used to participate in the programmes. Through awareness, they used to do home visiting us ask the learners status on their parents. To improve the education of the learners."

The PTA also noted the community's positive reception of projects:

"The community has received the project, and they have seen the importance of the project."

The PTA encouraged learners to strive for their goals:

"They advised the learners, both boys and girls, to work hard to achieve their goals."

and to become

"Better people in the future."

The PTA also expressed openness to new activities:

"Parent welcomes any activities that promote learners through academic."

Overall, the findings suggest that initiatives that combine direct engagement, public awareness, media outreach, and parental encouragement are likely to succeed in improving educational outcomes. Conversely, language barriers and limited parental education can constrain these efforts, highlighting the need for interventions that provide accessible information and training to parents to strengthen their engagement.

Enabling Factor: The community's strong cultural value for education and their willingness to actively engage in and protect beneficial initiatives. The community views education and gender empowerment programs as essential for well-being. This strong cultural acceptance, combined with active parental participation through "home visiting" and public awareness campaigns, provides a solid foundation for any new initiative.

Disabling Factor: The presence of language barriers and low parental education, which hinder effective communication and engagement. Without accessible information, parents may not fully understand the benefits of a program, despite their general positive attitude towards education. This highlights a critical need for communication strategies that can bridge this gap and ensure that all community members are well-informed and actively involved.

5.2.3.6 Collaboration and Sustainability

The strategic dimensions of program effectiveness and longevity, particularly opportunities for collaboration and alignment with existing initiatives, emerged as a significant theme. Evidence suggests that initiatives promoting group participation, skill development, and management consultation are more likely to succeed and endure. Para-social workers emphasised the benefits of forming groups for discussion and activities, highlighting the value of social interaction and peer learning:

"You can form a group. By forming a group, we can have a discussion. We can have a tournament. We can talk about any activity. During school, we can have a discussion. Sometimes, we can have a discussion. We can talk about anything."

Similarly, public speaking and debate were identified as key empowerment tools among learners by the same para-social worker:

"By making it so that everyone who is taking part in that debate can speak in front of the public. If that idea continues, especially in debates, debates where each child or student can present what is happening in their mind to say something about what you are just saying. So that makes or trains the child how to speak in front of others or in front of the public. Which makes him proud. Or which makes her proud that they can speak in front of public places."

Inclusivity and representation were also highlighted as central to sustainability. Para-social workers encouraged equal participation of boys and girls in clubs, with female leaders serving as role models:

"Include both boys and girls in the club. And then include the female. The leader. The role model to the others."

The camp manager emphasised the importance of practical implementation, consultation, and collaboration with management as critical for program survival:

"If we consult, it will remain sustainable. For me, when you put it in place, in practice, that's where I can know this one can benefit the community. If the management has this club work hand in hand with management, it survives."

The camp manager also addressed operational concerns:

"Are there concerns about scheduling, security, space, or staffing? No security space that needs this club."

The camp manager recalled a similar past project:

"There was a similar clap to this one called the KEEP project, they were helping both teachers and learners to provide them with capacity building."

The camp manager also suggested providing

"Providing more funds for the teachers and learners" to prevent challenges for teachers taking on additional responsibilities, and "Supporting the student entertainment, such as football."

The PTA also recalled the positive impact of past projects:

"Yes, there is a project called the KEEP project that used to help the community in an education programme. It was focusing on girl-child education, and that project helped us a lot. It has improved learning facilities in the refugee context."

The PTA detailed the support mechanisms of this project:

"It was all about girl child education empowerment, it used to offer cash transfer, learning facilities and resources to the cleaners and teachers, they have created learning opportunities and so on."

The PTA also highlighted their role in community interaction:

"They help learners to interact with other communities."

and their commitment to

"Collaboration and communication."

The PTA expressed a positive outlook on new initiatives:

"If the Tuseme club is implemented here, it brings a positive impact."

The PTA also foresaw positive outcomes, such as developing critical thinking and public speaking skills:

"They became critical thinkers and advocates for the community. The community will get a good number of public speakers if this programme is implemented."

The PTA also anticipated students pursuing higher education:

"They will get students who pursue higher education."

The findings indicate that collaboration, practical implementation, inclusive participation, and alignment with past initiatives are central to sustainable educational programs. Conversely, misunderstandings between stakeholders and potential logistical or resource challenges may hinder program effectiveness if not addressed.

Enabling Factor: Strong collaboration mechanisms and experience with successful initiatives. Active consultation with management, structured group activities, inclusive leadership, and resource support provide a solid foundation for sustainable programs.

Disabling Factor: Potential misunderstandings among stakeholders and operational challenges, including management coordination and resource limitations. These barriers can impede program continuity unless proactive measures, clear communication, and resource allocation are ensured.

Table 16: General Enabling and Dis-enabling Factors at Central Primary School – Hagadera Camp, Garissa County (Refugee Setting)

| Enabling Factors | Dis-enabling Factors |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Community and parental willingness to engage in educational programs. 2) A positive shift in community mentality towards girls' education is observed. 3) Existing school-based support systems, like counselling and suggestion boxes, provide help. 4) Prior successful projects, such as KEEP, offer a model for effective initiatives. 5) The use of local radio stations facilitates community outreach and awareness. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Severe overcrowding and lack of essential resources plague school environments. 2) Deep-seated cultural biases prioritise boys' education and promote early marriage for girls. 3) Financial hardship and lack of official documentation hinder student enrolment. 4) Emotional and psychological trauma significantly affect student attendance and engagement. 5) Physical accessibility issues and lack of transportation disproportionately impact children with disabilities. |

5.2.4 School 3: Malakal Primary School – Turkana County (Refugee Context, Kakuma Camp)

5.2.4.1 General Context

Table 17: Malakal Primary School Profile

| Category | Details |
|--------------------------------|--|
| School Name | Malakal Primary School |
| School Location | Turkana North, Kakuma Camp, Kenya |
| Location Type | Refugee/IDP camp setting |
| School Level | Primary School |
| School Type | Private, managed by NGO/CBO |
| Enrolment Figures | 814 pupils |
| Number of Teachers | Not specified |
| Number of Administrative Staff | 17 support staff (including 2 male and 4 female non-teaching staff) |
| Number of Clubs | Drama, football, journalism, Tuseme programme (exact number not specified) |
| Facilities | Limited infrastructure, 8 classrooms, overcrowded classes, poor sanitation, no permanent security house, and flooding issues |
| Number of IDP/Refugee Students | The entire school population (814) is in a refugee/IDP setting |
| Proximity to Institutions | Located within Kakuma refugee camp |

Malakal Primary School is a privately managed day school located in Turkana North. The school is operated by a non-governmental or community-based organisation (NGO/CBO) and offers mixed-gender, ordinary primary education. Currently, the school has a total enrolment of 814 pupils distributed across 8 classrooms, resulting in a high pupil-to-classroom ratio of approximately 101.8:1. In terms of staffing, 17 individuals are serving in various support roles. Additionally, the non-teaching staff comprises 2 male and 4 female members.

5.2.4.2 Student Participation Barriers

Student participation barriers emerged as a critical theme, affecting both consistent attendance and active engagement in school activities. Evidence from multiple stakeholders indicates that overcrowding, lack of resources, family responsibilities, and basic needs deprivation hinder participation. The Board of Management (BOM) highlighted the impact of large class sizes:

"For example, you can have over 156 students in one class, some students sit on the floor because there are few desks. There is a need to divide the classes due to the high population of students per class, in addition to employing more teachers to improve the quality of education."

They also point out a major barrier for girls:

"During their menstruation, girls opt not to go to school because they lack the sanitary towels and some even get involved in prostitution to get the necessities."

Furthermore, the BOM notes the impact of family responsibilities, saying,

"Girls who have old parents who cannot work sometimes have to drop out of school to take care of their parents and siblings by getting involved in casual labour."

A parent echoes the concern about hunger, stating,

"Our kids and we, the parents, are facing hunger and a shortage of food. If you are given two kilograms a month, how do you compare? And the stomach is actually the one controlling everything. If the child is left without food, he or she cannot come to school."

"If you, the parent, say 'Go to school' and the child is hungry, he or she cannot make it. When they come to school, the little meals are not enough, apart from what they don't have at home."

Another parent adds,

"I think one challenge is when a child lacks necessities, for example, when the child is hungry, it is not easy to concentrate and learn."

This is reinforced by another parent who states,

"You know the food we are given now is very little, and it gets finished even before the month ends. It can only last about 9 days. So as parents, you might give your child rice in the morning, but at night, they sleep hungry. When they come to school hungry, they cannot concentrate; they just sleep in class."

A girl identifies a critical reason for returning to school, stating,

"The reason why we Sudanese girls go back to school is because our mothers are willing to stay with the baby and take good care of the child."

She also highlights a reason for non-attendance, noting,

"Some refuse to come to school because back in their countries, they were in higher classes, and when they come here, they are placed in lower classes."

A teacher points out the overwhelming student population, saying,

"Large population of students with few teachers."

"The workload is too much with the high population of students in each class. We are teaching so many classes, and the workload is too much, so finding the time for club activities is difficult."

The teacher also brings up practical challenges:

"Some teachers stay too far from school, and the transportation to the school is a problem. During rainy seasons, the roads are unpassable. Teachers get to school late, and sometimes the students get to school late."

A PTA representative states,

"I think one challenge is when a child lacks necessities, for example, when the child is hungry, it is not easy to concentrate and learn."

"When a child is in a club and the fellows are putting on good clothes, but he or she has old clothes, he will be triggered, and he will not be free to go to the clubs."

Overcrowded classrooms and high student-to-teacher ratios create significant logistical challenges, limiting both academic engagement and opportunities for extracurricular involvement. Girls face particular vulnerabilities, including a lack of menstrual hygiene resources, family caregiving responsibilities, and socio-economic pressures that may lead to early dropout or engagement in casual labour. Food insecurity further compounds these challenges, as hunger undermines concentration and regular attendance, while inadequate transportation affects both teacher and student punctuality. Despite these constraints, parental support, particularly mothers' willingness to care for siblings and encourage girls' schooling, emerges as a critical enabler, demonstrating the potential for targeted interventions.

Enabling Factor: Parental support and willingness to address socio-economic barriers when possible. Mothers caring for younger siblings or actively encouraging girls to return to school illustrate the potential for engagement to positively influence participation. This support, though limited, provides a foundation for interventions aimed at increasing attendance and retention.

Disabling Factor: Overcrowding, high student-to-teacher ratios, food insecurity, lack of menstrual hygiene resources, and transportation challenges. These structural and socio-economic barriers significantly limit student participation, highlighting the urgent need for resource provision, infrastructure improvement, and targeted support for vulnerable students, particularly girls.

4.2.4.3 School Environment and Student Well-being Challenges

The theme of school environment and student well-being underscores the multifaceted challenges affecting learners, ranging from infrastructure and resource limitations to psychosocial and safety concerns. Evidence indicates that while schools strive to support students academically and socially, structural constraints and socio-economic pressures continue to limit well-being and engagement. The Board of Management (BOM) highlighted the need for sustained support for staff to maintain program continuity:

"The support that the school need from the organisation for the continuity of the project is facilitation of the teachers and patrons by giving them allowances and transport."

They also identify a pervasive issue for girls:

"Issue of early pregnancy, in this community, the girls are exposed to early pregnancy."

A boy explains how clubs contribute to their well-being, stating,

"The clubs keep us committed and prevent us from engaging in harmful activities."

Another student voices concern about discipline and guidance, stating,

"We should be punished when we wrong and we should be given direction on how to handle certain things. It teaches us about respect."

They also express frustration about early pregnancies, observing,

"A girl can tell you she is going to school, even wake up and put on her uniform, but she doesn't actually go. After a month or two, you're shocked to find out that she is pregnant—yet when she left home, she said she was going to school."

"So, they should be advised when they get home, because it's their life after all. They should be counselled during adolescence."

They also express bewilderment about girls' academic struggles:

"On my side, I want to talk more about our girls because our girls are behind when it comes to education. You will find a girl who reaches the age of 8, and she doesn't know how to study. She doesn't know how to study at all."

They also suggest a solution for safety and engagement:

"You can also start a CBC boarding school for them so that they can stay there instead of leaving to go to school, but not reach school."

A national government official highlights government efforts to improve access to education for refugees, stating,

"The government is trying to set up schools in those refugee camps and even where the internally displaced persons are settled. The government has made it so that the children can access these schools at a free cost, so it makes it easy for children to go to school."

A girl expresses enjoyment in academic activities, stating,

"I enjoy reading. I enjoy that teachers are teaching us well. Activities like reading and writing, and getting to know one another."

She also expresses a desire for more varied activities:

"There is no club. There is no drama. People don't act, they sing. It's just learning and learning and learning."

The girl also points out a critical need:

"We don't have pads."

She suggests enhancing engagement:

" Make club activities interesting."

She also raises concerns about safety, stating,

"Lack of shelter. Girls are being raped. Some of the boys abuse drugs."

A teacher identifies numerous resource and infrastructure challenges, stating,

"Lack of materials and overcrowded classes. The ICT department lacks the necessary gadgets. We have no projector to teach the learner."

They also note the difficulty in managing a large student body, observing,

"Some students are mature, and maintaining law and order within the large population is a challenge."

The teacher points out the variability in student participation:

"The level of participation varies with specific subjects. The girls are shy in some classes, while others are active in other classes."

They also foresee challenges for club activities:

"Difficulty in mobilising the students. One of the challenges we will face is fewer resources to support the club activities."

The teacher also notes,

"Most girls will shy away from sharing their personal challenges in the presence of boys, hence demotivated."

They suggest incentives:

"Refreshments for the learners will motivate the students. Competition from other clubs, where learners will prefer other clubs more than this one, depending on how they are taught in the clubs. Something that a teacher can get is knowledge, certificates. When resources are available and teachers are properly trained. When the learning materials for the club are provided by the organisation. We need to be trained on how to handle the club and how to teach the activities of the club. Resources like books and refreshments."

They also emphasise consistency:

"Enough resources for learners and consistency."

The teacher identifies potential social challenges within clubs:

"Shyness in girls when interacting with boys. Boys are too busy to stay in school since some of them have jobs to attend to. Fear of stigmatisation after opening up, so the learners will shy away from sharing their challenges in the clubs."

They suggest strategies for engagement:

"Interesting activities in the club, like sports and competitions with rewards. When the teachers are friendly to them, and when the students are issued certificates. Trips for the student and sponsorship by telling them that the best learner at the end of the year is taken on a trip. You can give them assessment tests and reward the best performing students."

They also note the success of an existing club:

"Environmental Club is the oldest because the students and facilitators are well motivated and trained. The kind of activities that they normally perform, ones in a month, they are engaged in interesting activities, so the students are motivated."

A PTA representative states,

"When there is no peace at home, it will affect students going to school."

They also describe support systems:

"DRC organisation help the students and sits in the classes and sees those with old clothes and replaces them. Child Protection supports orphans and the disabled, also NWS issues shoes, jerseys for games."

They highlight a specific concern for girls:

" We support girl mostly, girls in school they have a lot problem but sometime when they doesn't have soap to wash his clothes uniform they feel ashamed to come to school that day also when they reach the end of her the month there is fluctuation we need to buy her something to keep her clean so that may go on with her education but if we just we never gave that support she may feel discouraged to come to school."

These reveal that student well-being is closely tied to the physical, social, and psychosocial environment of the school. Clubs and structured extracurricular activities contribute positively by keeping learners engaged, fostering discipline, and promoting social cohesion. Conversely, resource limitations, safety risks, socio-economic challenges, and insufficient psychological support pose persistent barriers, particularly for girls, undermining participation and holistic development.

Enabling Factor: Engagement through clubs and structured activities, supported by motivated teachers and external organisations, which promotes well-being, discipline, and social cohesion among students.

Disabling Factor: Resource limitations, infrastructural inadequacies, safety risks, and socio-economic vulnerabilities, which constrain participation, exacerbate gender disparities, and negatively affect holistic student well-being.

5.2.4.4 Gender Roles and Perceptions

The theme of gender roles and perceptions highlights how cultural norms, household responsibilities, and evolving societal expectations shape educational participation and engagement. Evidence from multiple stakeholders reveals that both girls and boys navigate gendered expectations that affect their schooling experiences. The Board of Management (BOM) emphasised the constraining influence of cultural and religious norms, noting:

"One is that cultural norms and religious practices sometimes hinder students from participating in some activities."

They also mention a concerning practice:

"Some girls are forcefully married when they reach to certain age, forcing them to drop out of school."

A boy describes traditional household responsibilities:

"Yes, girls cook, wash utensils, clean the house, and boys go fetch water, fetch firewood, build houses and labour for money."

He also shares a common understanding about the importance of education for both genders:

"Both go to school to be educated because if you don't, life will be tricky for you in future, and no one will help you, and you will start regretting that if you got the education while you were young, you would be a great person by now, having a job and having a good life."

He also points out a societal pressure on boys:

"Boys are forced to labour to feed their families and pay for their own fees, cutting short their dreams with education. Because the parent can also lack money to educate themselves, you labour to get a fee for yourself."

He also raises an uncomfortable truth:

"Ladies and girls are raped, and boys, too, are raped."

A parent observes the disparity in girls' attendance:

"Their education is okay, especially for the boys. But for the girls, learning is a bit difficult. A girl can tell you she is going to school, even wake up and put on her uniform, but she doesn't actually go."

They emphasise the changing times:

"Times have changed, and in this era, girls need to be educated, yet we are seeing our girls losing direction."

However, another parent offers a contrasting view from their culture:

"In fact, that issue in some communities was there some years back, but currently, as we are in the modern world, there is no discrimination between girls' education and boys' education. Both of them are free to go to school, unless they are not willing."

They further clarify,

"I am Sudanese by nationality, Nubian. But for this issue of learning between boys and girls, we don't have any culture that differentiates them. Boys and girls are seen as equal — they learn together."

A national government official acknowledges the existence of discriminatory cultural beliefs:

"That there are tribes that say that the girlchild cannot be educated, boychild can be educated, or a boychild cannot go to school and a girlchild can go to school."

They emphasise the government's stance:

"We try to make them understand that with the policy of the government, because you are in Kenya, every child is expected to go to school, and that is what is in the constitution."

They also note cultural barriers within mixed classes:

"In a class you find that, just for example you go in a class and you find that they cannot mix a class to be of boys and girls together because you can find in Kenya us we don't have a problem of class being mixed, but somewhere you can find that girls need to be alone, boys need to be alone."

A girl describes the division of labour at home:

"The girls fetch water and cook. The girls wash dishes and sweep. The boys like to play football. Boys fetch water."

She identifies a reason for girls seeking relationships:

"The thing making the girls run after the boys is adolescence."

She also shares a preference for segregated learning environments:

"We want the girls alone and the boys alone."

She also mentions a significant challenge:

"When it comes to girls, some are married early or undergo forced marriage, and this makes them not go to school."

A teacher recognises the shift in gender roles:

"Even I know my roles in the community, but nowadays, what a man can do, a girl can do."

However, they also acknowledge challenges:

"It is very hard here to teach a boy, especially these things of equality at their age they are."

They also observe a change in girls' interests with age:

"Girls, when they get to a certain age, like around 17 or 18 years old, they will shift their interest from learning to marriage."

A PTA representative mentions the influence of religious beliefs on attire, stating,

"It depends on some religions, so they can't put on some clothes to go perform because she doesn't feel free."

They also highlight a positive perception:

"Most of the time, community members know that children go to those clubs to learn new things and become critical thinkers, so they see that when boys and girls come together, they learn from each other."

They describe efforts to broaden acceptance of girls' participation in activities:

"There are many groups like, let's say events like Kakuma Got Talent that involve both boys and girls, then there are clubs that teach music in the centre and they also dance so we train the parents to know that if girls go to dance is not a bad thing, they don't go to do evil things because dancing for girls is not evil."

The initiatives, such as Kakuma Got Talent and mixed-gender clubs, effectively broaden acceptance of girls' participation by engaging parents directly, reframing traditional perceptions, and demonstrating the benefits of inclusive activities. By showing that girls' involvement in dance or music is constructive, these strategies normalise participation, foster peer learning, and gradually shift community attitudes. These findings suggest that while cultural and religious norms, forced marriage, and household labour continue to constrain girls' participation, evolving attitudes, supportive policies, and inclusive club activities provide opportunities for enhancing gender equality in education. The interaction of traditional expectations with modern perspectives creates a dynamic environment where both barriers and enablers coexist.

Enabling Factor: Supportive policies and inclusive extracurricular activities, combined with evolving community perceptions, which promote gender equality and foster opportunities for boys and girls to learn and interact together.

Disabling Factor: Cultural and religious norms, household responsibilities, and early or forced marriage practices, which restrict girls' access to education and limit their active participation in both academic and social school activities.

5.2.4.5 Community and Parental Engagement (Perceptions)

The theme of community and parental engagement reflects the critical role that parents and local communities play in shaping educational participation, student behaviour, and the overall success of school-based initiatives. Evidence indicates that direct engagement, awareness campaigns, and active parental oversight are central to fostering positive educational outcomes. The Board of Management emphasised the importance of community sensitisation:

"Sensitising the community makes them aware of the initiative."

Parents demonstrated collective support for children's education, often extending guidance beyond their own families:

"We, parents, actually support our children and even all the children in the community. For example, in my zone here, Zone Four, when you see a child playing in the road and they are wearing a uniform, you might tell that child to just go to school directly without even knowing to whom that child belongs."

"These children, we try our best to get them an education."

Parents also voiced challenges related to adolescent behaviour, particularly for girls, reflecting the complex intersection of social norms, parental influence, and student agency:

"We advise our children at home, but when they go to school, they end up getting pregnant. And when you try to approach them, they don't talk, they just stare at you."

"Times have changed, and in this era, girls need to be educated, yet we are seeing our girls losing direction."

Parental involvement was emphasised through school visits, oversight, and mentorship programs:

"We also support our children by selecting some parents to visit the school, to see how the children are learning and how they are in their environment."

However, parents also expressed caution regarding external interventions:

"There is no organisation that comes here to bring development that we reject as refugees. A refugee is helpless, so there is no way we would reject any kind of support. The problem is that we are never sure if these organisations are here to help us or help themselves."

A national government official emphasises government efforts to involve parents:

"We try to engage parents by making them aware, or we do something called awareness, so that they can be able to understand the importance of education and their children going to school."

They also explain the collaborative effort:

"As the Ministry of Education make education free and accessible to us, like the Children's Department, together with the local administration, ensure that every child who is a refugee or internally displaced is in school."

They stress the importance of parental understanding:

"We try just to make proper awareness to them and try to make the parent aware that it is in the best interest of this child to be in school so that they can be able to learn."

They also acknowledge cultural differences as a significant barrier:

"The biggest barrier falls under cultural differences, because you find that these schools you get most of these people are, as I said, being that they are refugees, they are not Kenyans, so you find the cultural differences."

They also highlight linguistic challenges:

"We have a language barrier, there are some refugees who don't understand English and they don't understand Kiswahili, and you will find them in the borders of Kenya, where we only use two main languages."

A PTA representative describes existing community-led initiatives:

"Yes, in the community we have some youths. then there is a key for girls and a key for girls. They discuss the issues that affect the girls and the issues that affect the boys, and they take them to the elders of the community and the mentorship."

They further explain how initiatives are introduced:

"These initiatives are mainly the parents coming up with it; it's like there is a community meeting where the parents are being informed that there is such an activity being carried on or that is going to be carried on, so each parent should inform his or her child to come to those initiatives, whereby they will be taught about those things."

They also describe their active role in school oversight:

"We come to school, we go to the classes, we check the attendance, whether they are being taught or missing some lessons. So, if you find out that maybe they are missing some lessons, you raise the complaint to the headteacher, and the issue will be addressed. Also, that reduces the absenteeism in the school."

They also explain how disputes are handled:

"When our children get bloody with each other, we sit together and solve the problem without going to the community. Without including the community? No, that's the problem. We can only go to the community, then we call the parents of the children, then we discuss that issue, then it is okay in the school."

They observe a shift in parental attitudes towards school programs:

"Nowadays, parents in the community are being engaged in these education processes, so they are aware that anything that comes up in the school, they don't have any right to negotiate. They just accept as long as it is important for their children."

However, they also note potential disagreements:

"Sometimes, there can be a child who wants to join a club, but the parent refuses, and so the parent and the child disagree."

They also share a concern about children's honesty:

"Sometimes when a parent sends his or her child to such a programme and when the child doesn't reach where he or she is supposed to be, there will be misunderstanding between the parent and the child because they will be asking where you went when you said you were going to school."

The PTA states their role in communication:

"It is we parents who can explain to the children and other parents what Tuseme is so that we can ensure that everyone understands the club."

They also express safety concerns:

"The first concern is the safety of the child because as a parent if you send your child to school and there is a club that they are when attending maybe some of the parents don't know what is happening, so the PTA know what is happening in the school so most of the parents will think about the safety of their children and the club they are in what are they doing."

The findings indicate that active parental and community engagement is central to student participation and school program success. Parents and PTA representatives demonstrate strong commitment through school visits, mentorship, monitoring attendance, and facilitating communication about initiatives like clubs. Government efforts to raise awareness complement these local efforts, although cultural and linguistic differences, along with uncertainty about external interventions, can limit engagement. Overall, the data show that community involvement and parental understanding significantly influence both attendance and children's participation in extracurricular activities, while gaps in cultural familiarity and language comprehension remain key challenges.

Enabling Factor: Active parental involvement and community-led initiatives, including school visits, mentorship programs, and communication about educational activities, which foster awareness, supervision, and positive support for children's learning.

Disabling Factor: Cultural differences, linguistic barriers, and uncertainty about external interventions, which limit parents' understanding of programs and reduce engagement in some cases, highlighting the need for targeted awareness and culturally sensitive communication strategies.

5.2.4.6 Collaboration and Sustainability

The theme of Collaboration and Sustainability emphasises the strategic measures and partnerships that contribute to the longevity and effectiveness of school programs. The findings indicate that successful program implementation relies not only on motivated staff and engaged students but also on structured support from parents, teachers, and government initiatives. A BOM representative states the importance of training and motivation for staff:

"Training of the patrons and the entire management, as well as the whole community. The facilitators of these clubs to be paid so that they can be motivated to run those clubs."

They also address language as a minor challenge:

"Language barrier is a minimal challenge since students keep learning languages."

A boy explains how clubs facilitate connection:

"Creating a network by knowing new people, like now we already know you."

He also highlights the benefit of open communication:

"Discussions, to talk about our challenges, so that we can be able to listen to the challenges and provide a solution to them."

He expresses willingness to participate:

"Responsibilities at home make it difficult, but I can ask for permission from the parent, and if I am granted the permission, I can come and join Tuseme and participate fully."

A Parent highlights the importance of nutritional support for concentration:

"We must also give them food — like uji in the morning, for those in kindergarten — so that they can concentrate when they reach school. That is also a form of support."

They also suggest a comprehensive approach to addressing challenges:

"Most of the organisations that deal with the girl child talk about early pregnancies, but forget that boys are also involved. Both boys and girls should be taught together so that everyone understands."

A national government official describes existing partnerships, stating,

"There is an existing partnership, and I can give an example of where I am here in Turkana, there are organisations that go to schools just to give mentorship programmes to children."

They also highlight governmental support for leadership programs:

"The government can support the leadership, and the programme is by ensuring that in those schools, like right now, the government have come up with a curriculum called CBC. CBC actually cuts across; it is not just about education, but there is an empowerment programme that the government can run, more so in terms of leadership. The leaders who are elected by the students can undergo a short leadership programme just to empower them and let them know what they expect when they become a leader. The government is fully supporting these programmes and more so those that have been incorporated in the current curriculum that the government is running in the schools."

A teacher identifies the need for ongoing training and resources:

"Provide the teachers with training content, like the content JSS to come and teach them."

They also advocate for tangible incentives such as "T-shirts for the club members", "certificates for the participants.", and "motivation and consistency, as well as benchmarking," for club members. A PTA representative states,

"Sometimes, if girls want to participate in sports, you buy them the gadgets they require."

They also describe how issues are addressed:

"When our children get bloody with each other, we sit together and solve the problem without going to the community. Without including the community? No, that's the problem. We can only go to the community, then we call the parents of the children, then we discuss that issue, and then it is okay in the school. Nowadays, in school, we have vocal teachers, so these teachers talk to girls just privately, maybe a group of 10 or 5 girls, and they share their challenges they are going through."

They emphasise the need for continued support and motivation:

"If there is training given, then activities to do, then the club will grow small, and also there should be motivation."

They also note positive community perception of mixed-gender learning:

"Most of the time, community members know that children go to those clubs to learn new things and become critical thinkers, so they see that when boys and girls come together, they learn from each other."

The data show that collaboration between staff, parents, students, and government actors is critical for sustaining educational programs. Motivated facilitators, supportive parents, and government-backed initiatives enhance student engagement, create leadership opportunities,

and reinforce positive perceptions of mixed-gender learning. Clubs serve as both social and developmental platforms, fostering networks, discussions, and practical skill-building. However, challenges remain in maintaining consistent motivation, addressing logistical needs, and providing resources to sustain club activities effectively. The findings underscore that long-term program success requires comprehensive support, adequate training, and continuous community involvement.

Enabling Factor: The strong collaborative framework between schools, parents, government, and community organisations, supported by training, motivation, and tangible resources, ensures program sustainability and active student engagement.

Disenabling Factor: Limited and inconsistent resources, coupled with the need for ongoing training and motivation, may constrain the growth and effectiveness of clubs, potentially reducing student participation and program longevity.

Table 18: General Enabling Factors and Dis-enabling Factors at Malakal Primary School – Turkana County (Refugee Context, Kakuma Camp)

| Enabling Factors | Dis-enabling Factors |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Community willingness to support education. Parents actively encourage school attendance and accept new educational initiatives. 2) Presence of existing community-led initiatives. Youth groups and peace clubs already address student issues and provide mentorship. 3) Government policy and support for education. The government provides free access to schools and incorporates empowerment programs in the curriculum. 4) Desire for mentorship and safe spaces. Students and parents recognise the need for trusted individuals and confidential environments for sharing challenges. 5) Motivation through incentives and engagement. Providing resources, training, and rewards can significantly boost participation and program sustainability. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Pervasive poverty and lack of basic needs. Food, water, and sanitation shortages directly hinder regular school attendance and concentration. 2) Overcrowded classrooms and teacher shortages. High student-teacher ratios and insufficient resources compromise educational quality and teacher effectiveness. 3) Deep-seated cultural norms and gender biases. Traditional views on gender roles, early marriage, and unequal household chores limit girls' educational opportunities. 4) Lack of consistent and tangible support from organisations. Many organisations are present but fail to provide meaningful, consistent aid, leading to scepticism. 5) Unemployment for graduates and limited post-school opportunities. The lack of job prospects after finishing school demotivates older students and contributes to risky behaviours. |

5.2.5 School 4: Somali Bantu Mixed Secondary School – Turkana County (Refugee Setting)

5.2.5.1 General Context

Table 19: Somali Bantu Mixed Secondary School Profile

| Category | Details |
|--------------------------------|---|
| School Name | Somali Bantu Mixed Secondary School |
| School Location | Kakuma town, Turkana County, Kenya |
| Location Type | Refugee/IDP camp setting (serving both refugees and host community students) |
| School Level | Secondary School |
| School Type | Public, mixed-gender day school |
| Enrolment Figures | 2,814 students (approximately 33% girls) |
| Number of Teachers | Not specified, but indicated high student-to-teacher ratios |
| Number of Administrative Staff | Not specified |
| Number of Clubs | Debate, drama, Scouts, Mini Solar Homework Club |
| Facilities | Double-shift classrooms, solar lamps for after-school study (Mini Solar Homework Club), limited teaching and learning resources, basic sanitation facilities, water access, and open spaces (trees); infrastructure issues include overcrowded classes and weak fencing |
| Number of IDP/Refugee Students | A significant portion of the 2,814 students are refugees, some from child-headed households |
| Proximity to Institutions | Located within Kakuma refugee camp |

Somali Bantu Secondary School is a public, mixed-gender day school situated in Kakuma town, Turkana County, Kenya. Operating at the county level, the school is led by Principal Boniface Mwenda and serves a diverse student body drawn from both the refugee and host communities. As of October 2023, the school had an enrolment of approximately 2,814 students, with girls comprising about 33% of the student population. To accommodate the large number of students, Somali Bantu Secondary School employs a double-shift system, allowing more learners to attend classes despite infrastructural limitations. The school benefits from initiatives like the Mini Solar Homework Club, a partnership between Windle International Kenya and Book Aid International. This program provides students with solar lamps and supplementary educational materials, enabling them to study after school hours, particularly benefiting girls and students from child-headed households. Despite challenges such as high student-to-teacher ratios and limited resources, Somali Bantu Secondary School remains committed to delivering quality education and fostering academic excellence among its students.

5.2.5.2 Student Participation Barriers

The theme of student participation barriers at Somali Bantu Mixed Secondary School highlights the multifaceted challenges that limit students' consistent attendance and engagement. The findings reveal that both structural and socio-economic factors, including overcrowded classrooms, food insecurity, and cultural practices, significantly impede learning. Stakeholder testimonies reveal that structural limitations are among the most pressing concerns. A government official notes:

"The problem is that there is no space in the camp to build more classes."

This lack of infrastructure contributes to overcrowded classrooms and limits the school's capacity to accommodate its growing student population. Teachers further emphasise the impact of absenteeism on academic outcomes:

"As much as we are teaching, for example, the candidates. They are registering, but they are disappearing until term three. That is when they come back to do their KCSE exams. I: So that is why we are not managing to score, maybe high grades to take them to maybe campus and other colleges. The challenge we are facing as teachers is about absenteeism," and "There is a lot of absenteeism from the students."

Food insecurity emerges as a dominant theme across multiple voices. A BOM member links reduced food rations to declining attendance:

"But now the Bamba Chakula is being reduced. Food is being reduced. That is why the challenge comes. You might see now that students of their parents don't have food. Now, for those students to come to school, it is so strenuous. Another issue is food. Some of our students collapse here because of hunger, especially towards the end of the month, because whatever they have been given in the restaurant cannot sustain them for the whole month."

The consequences of hunger extend beyond physical well-being. In some cases, students, particularly girls, seek alternative means of support, leading to early pregnancies:

"When we tell our parents to give us money to buy our needs, they don't give us. We come to school, we are hungry, that is why we are deciding to have boyfriends, some of them are saying we are deciding to have boyfriends so that they support us. That is why they are getting pregnant. We have almost 70 students at our school who are pregnant because of their challenges at home."

Economic hardship also affects access to basic learning materials. As one BOM member explains:

"Some students do not even afford that particular fee to enrol in school. Some of them do not even have the books and pens to write on. So, we find most of the time, it's training too much to accommodate them here in school. We find one student using one exercise book to write almost three sentences. So, it also becomes a problem on their side."

Cultural practices, including early marriage and gendered expectations, further exacerbate dropout rates:

"So, a very high percentage is dropping out because of post-marriage and other cultural issues. You find that there's a lot of dropout rates because they go fending for themselves."

Students themselves articulate the burden of orphanhood and the need to secure food and income: A girl student states,

"So, for some students, they don't have parents. They are orphans. So, for that student to study until afternoon hours and go home, maybe he or she can go home and look for food."

Another girl mentions,

"Also, transportation."

A camp leader reinforced the centrality of food access:

"For example, if there is no food, the child cannot come and learn," and "And the food is now little in the camp."

"And the most important thing for challenges is, like, when there is no food in the community, so that the child will be healthy and come to the school."

Para-social workers provide further insight into the economic pressures facing students:

"The student is doing some local business. When they are exposed to money, they don't think of coming to school."

They also note,

"Another thing is that there are children who have come here; they don't have parents here. That means even coming to school is difficult because they have to go look for a job there in Somalia."

"Most of them come from far. You will find them in the morning working long distances to reach school and maybe get those services in learning."

"For the boys, some decided to do minor jobs like motor biking."

Student participation at Somali Bantu Mixed Secondary School is significantly affected by a combination of structural, socio-economic, and cultural barriers. Limited classroom space, high absenteeism, food insecurity, orphanhood, and early pregnancies reduce both attendance and engagement. The data also suggest that boys and girls face gendered challenges, with girls disproportionately affected by pregnancy and household responsibilities, while boys often engage in work to support themselves and their families. These barriers illustrate the need for integrated support mechanisms that address both the material and socio-cultural factors influencing student participation.

Enabling Factor: Programs such as the Mini Solar Homework Club, along with community support initiatives, provide targeted interventions that enable students, especially girls and those from vulnerable households, to access learning and study beyond school hours.

Disabling Factor: Chronic food insecurity, high absenteeism, cultural practices, e.g., early marriage, and the need for students to work or fend for themselves remain the dominant factors restricting consistent school participation.

5.2.5.3 School Environment and Student Well-being Challenges

The school environment at Somali Bantu Mixed Secondary School is shaped by a complex interplay of infrastructural deficits, socio-cultural pressures, and psychosocial vulnerabilities. These factors collectively undermine student well-being and hinder the realisation of a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning space. Teachers and BOM members consistently highlight the strain caused by over-enrolment, inadequate facilities, and limited teaching materials. Classrooms often host upwards of 80 students, with overcrowded benches and insufficient textbooks. A teacher notes:

"...We have got limited resources.... For example, in our libraries, some books are missing. As a teacher, one of the most challenging issues we are facing is the over-enrolment of students, which leads to an imbalanced teacher-student ratio. The challenge we are facing as a school is about a feeding program for the learners. For example, as a teacher of CRE, currently I can't get a KLB CRE that is recommended for teaching in the library."

The lack of basic infrastructure, such as functional laboratories, secure toilets, and reliable electricity, further compounds the challenge. A girl student shares:

"And then our laboratory, we lack equipment.... Our experience in school, when you go behind there, there are our sanitary places where we go to help ourselves. When you go behind there, you will find that we have 10 toilets. But seven of them have no doors, have no doors. They are stolen. So, we lack security. So, I can say here, we really face that shortage of water in school. Let's just say the weather conditions,"

Water scarcity and extreme heat also disrupt learning. BOM members report that students struggle to access drinking water during breaks, and classes often end by midday due to harsh weather conditions, reducing instructional time. Food insecurity remains a pervasive issue. Students frequently attend school hungry, which affects concentration and attendance. As one BOM member explains:

"In fact, those lactating mothers that we have here in school and now that they are in the category of girls, some of them don't come to school because they don't have anything in their stomach because they can't sustain being here for six hours. Okay. Are there any views on closing out? Another issue is crutches."

The absence of a feeding program and the reduction in food rations within the camp exacerbate these conditions. A girl student adds:

"And even we don't have lunch in school."

Students with disabilities face significant barriers due to the lack of assistive devices such as crutches and mobility aids. BOM members express concern over the exclusion of learners with physical impairments:

"Don't forget crutches and others for more people. Yes. The students who have certain needs, the students with certain needs, those who are blind, don't have a working day. Yes. Those who have issues with their legs don't have the crutches."

"Lack of crutches and textbooks for them."

This lack of support undermines inclusive education and contributes to absenteeism among students with special needs. Mental health issues, trauma, and lack of parental care are recurring themes. A para-social worker observes:

"The most challenging one is the lack of parental care. And then also depression. You find that most of our children are depressed. Others also have been forced into early marriages. Social and emotional. The majority of our students have that trauma. I think it's because they have undergone so many things back at their homes. they suffer from trauma. The majority of them are struggling. economic hardship."

Students, especially those orphaned or from child-headed households, struggle with emotional regulation, social stigma, and low self-esteem. These challenges are compounded by cultural taboos and limited mental health support. Girls face risks related to early pregnancy, menstrual hygiene insecurity, and social stigma. A girl student shares:

"To me, I don't like coming to school due to a lack of basic needs. As a girl child, you need to have basic needs. Sometimes you may go through your monthly period, and you don't have those parts to put on."

Early marriage, FGM, and transactional relationships are reported as hidden but persistent practices within the community. A government official states:

"Basically, with the Somali community, the early marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). It is within the camp, but it's hidden. But it's scattered; only a few know, but they don't want to leak it out. Forcing a child to do prostitution, at least so that he gets something."

These gendered dynamics contribute to dropout rates and limit girls' ability to fully participate in school life.

The school's porous fencing and lack of security infrastructure expose students to external risks. BOM members report:

"We are facing a very serious challenge with the fence. Actually, it is like we don't have a fence. Because it is so porous, students can get out from any side of the fence."

Issues of sexual exploitation, gender-based violence (GBV), and forced prostitution, though difficult to quantify, are acknowledged by officials and community leaders as serious threats to student safety. One member pointed to the high number of teenage mothers as evidence of inadequate community support and weak protective mechanisms for girls:

"We have a lot of teenage mothers because they were not supported in the community... Then the uniform also, we also have challenges in some of them. The uniform, the way it looks, it's not like a uniform."

This observation underscores how socioeconomic vulnerability and inadequate school regulation can heighten girls' exposure to exploitation and early pregnancy. Another member drew attention to overcrowding, linking it to declining learning quality and safety concerns:

"Maybe you see in the class, there are many students who are maybe 50 and above or 80 and above, because of the classrooms. The same, the seats. You see, sometimes, five to four people in one bench, which is also, that's what is affected also in the schools, due to their population in the school, because of the classrooms and the seats and so on."

Such overcrowded conditions strain resources and diminish the sense of safety and personal space, further exposing students, especially girls, to harassment or discomfort. Basic service shortages also exacerbate vulnerability. As one BOM member noted, inadequate access to clean water affects both comfort and health:

*"We have a shortage of water, which, of course, the students wanted water in each break. They wanted to take water. But in our environment, we have a shortage of water. When we asked the people, who are giving this water, they said, we don't have."
"The challenge when the food is not there, they cannot even be all in the evening."*

Similarly, food insecurity disrupts learning and attendance, as highlighted in another testimony:

"Lack of crutches and textbooks for them."

The lack of learning aids and assistive materials limits participation, particularly for students with special needs. Finally, environmental conditions further compound these barriers. As one participant observed:

"I can speak of the weather conditions. It's very hot sometimes for the students. And yeah, that's why we don't even go to the afternoon classes. Most of our classes end at 12. And it becomes a challenge because it reduces the contact time between us and the school."

This comment highlights how harsh weather, coupled with inadequate infrastructure, curtails learning hours and limits student engagement. Confidence and public expression also emerged as cross-cutting concerns, reflecting the emotional impact of these material and social challenges on students' sense of agency and participation in school life, with one participant observing that:

"So, they fear standing out in front of other students from other schools to communicate with them. But when it is external, some people have that fear because they are not confident enough."

This illustrates how socio-emotional barriers, often shaped by displacement, poverty, and stigma, restrict the development of learner voice, which is central to Tuseme's objectives.

"Sometimes, I do like to come to school because maybe I don't have the school materials requirement."

A camp leader states,

"When there are books in the school and the school is equipped with some learning material, then the child will come to school and learn better."

"This is what, like, providing books, like exercise, when the pen, teaching, well-teaching in the school."

Negative attitudes toward certain subjects, drug use, and behavioural challenges also emerge as barriers to learning and consistent school attendance. Para-social workers observe that such issues are often rooted in deeper social and economic vulnerabilities that affect both motivation and discipline. As one explains:

"Negative attitudes towards some subjects in schools. Drug addiction occurs because they sometimes drop out of school. They don't listen to their parents, they intend to fight their parents."

This suggests that disengagement from school can spiral into broader behavioural issues, often fuelled by frustration, lack of guidance, and limited prospects for the future. Poverty and food insecurity further compound these behavioural and motivational challenges. One para-social worker highlights the direct link between hunger and classroom participation:

"Maybe back at home, most of these students, even if they can get something to eat, it's not enough. So, you realise that most of the time, these students coming to school and being active in class becomes a problem because their stomachs are empty, they are hungry."

This underscores how unmet basic needs undermine concentration, attendance, and overall learning outcomes. Economic hardship also limits students' ability to acquire essential learning materials, further alienating them from academic engagement:

"Maybe they are not in a position to buy specific items that are supposed to facilitate their learning."

This highlights the layered complexity of displacement contexts, where communication barriers intersect with stigma and low awareness of available educational support. Several participants also identified limited social awareness and information gaps as underlying issues:

"Language, culture, social stigma, and awareness can be the challenges children face when they're accessing the services."

Such statements highlight the need for community sensitisation and mentorship programs to equip both students and parents with information about education and well-being. Gender remains a significant factor in how these barriers are perceived and experienced. One para-social worker notes:

"Because these children lack social awareness. I can say, ignorance is another challenge."

"These challenges differ, but especially for girls, they become vulnerable. Some are not free to speak out."

Silence and fear of stigma often prevent girls from reporting abuse or seeking help, exacerbating vulnerability. This vulnerability extends to early relationships and pregnancy, as another participant explains:

"You might find some of the girls being tempted to enter into those early relationships. They might end up getting pregnant."

Such experiences demonstrate how gendered social pressures and poverty converge to disrupt girls' education. Together, these narratives highlight the intersection of material, environmental, and psychosocial factors in shaping educational experiences in refugee and IDP settings. Addressing these challenges, whether through the provision of learning resources, improving school infrastructure, or supporting girls' menstrual health, is therefore essential for creating conditions where initiatives like Tuseme can meaningfully thrive.

Enabling Factor: Targeted interventions such as the Mini Solar Homework Club and provision of learning materials, when available, offer critical support to vulnerable students. These programs extend learning beyond school hours, mitigate the impact of resource scarcity, and foster a sense of academic continuity, particularly for girls and students from marginalised households.

Disabling Factor: The most pervasive barriers to student well-being are chronic food insecurity, overcrowded and under-resourced classrooms, lack of sanitation and water, and psychosocial distress linked to trauma, neglect, and gender-based vulnerabilities. These conditions not only compromise health and safety but also severely limit students' capacity to participate and thrive within the school environment.

5.2.5.4 Gender Roles and Perceptions

Despite progressive legal frameworks promoting gender equality in education, entrenched cultural norms continue to shape and often constrain the lived experiences of girls and boys in both refugee and host communities. Government officials consistently referenced the Education Act of 2013 as a cornerstone of inclusive education policy. One official emphasised:

"Yeah, there is the Education Act of 2013, which says that all children are equal to education. Exactly. No matter, that's why we also include inclusivity, that children who are disabled are also supposed to get an education."

This legal foundation has informed recent policy reforms aimed at integrating gender-sensitive curricula and promoting girls' leadership in schools. As another official noted:

"There's been significant progress, particularly in the last few years, in aligning education policies with gender equality goals. The policies now include more gender-sensitive content, and we're making strides in promoting girls' participation in leadership roles and extracurricular activities."

However, officials acknowledged that while policy frameworks have advanced gender equality in education, policy alone remains insufficient to dismantle deeply entrenched gender norms, particularly in conservative and refugee contexts. As one official noted:

"Challenges persist, especially in more traditional or conservative communities where gender norms can limit girls' participation in school activities. In refugee settings, some communities still hold traditional beliefs about girls' roles, which can create resistance to programs like Tuseme."

This highlights the gap between national policy intent and local cultural realities, where inherited beliefs about gender roles continue to constrain girls' participation in education and extracurricular initiatives. Despite these constraints, officials also recognised significant government progress in mainstreaming gender equality. One observed:

"The positive aspect is that there is now a clear push from the government to ensure that all children, regardless of their gender, have access to education. This includes allocating funding for girls' education and promoting gender equality in schools."

Such efforts represent a growing institutional commitment to gender equity, though implementation remains uneven across regions and communities. Resistance to gender equality policies persists at the local level, especially in rural and traditional settings. An official explained:

"Yes, there are certain regions where local leaders or community members are less supportive of gender equality policies. In some rural areas, parents may still hold strong beliefs that prioritise boys' education over girls', believing that girls should stay at home and take on domestic responsibilities. This can lead to resistance against programs that aim to empower girls, even though these programs are aligned with national education priorities."

This underscores a recurring theme across interviews—the tension between national-level gender reforms and community-level resistance rooted in cultural norms and economic rationales. Officials further elaborated that social norms around gender roles remain the primary barrier to inclusive participation. As one respondent summarised:

"Social norms around gender roles are the primary barrier. In some cultures, girls are expected to stay at home and take care of the household, rather than participate in school or extracurricular activities. In some refugee and IDP settings, these norms are even stronger due to the hardships families face."

Such attitudes are compounded by fears of social backlash and practical burdens that fall disproportionately on girls. Another participant noted:

"For girls, fear of backlash from their families or communities can be a significant barrier. Many girls are also burdened with household chores, which limits their time to participate. For boys, the stigma that these clubs are only for girls can prevent them from joining, even though the Tuseme model promotes equality for both genders."

Community members similarly drew attention to early marriage pressures and cultural expectations that reinforce gender inequality. As a BOM member explained:

"Most of our girls are also put in post-marriage issues, especially from the community surrounding."

Others acknowledged that while gradual change is taking place, much remains to be done to shift public attitudes:

"Though it is changing, still a lot of awareness needs to be done to the community on how the girls, how equality can be achieved and how this equality can be of benefit to the whole community."

Economic reasoning also shapes parental decision-making about education. Some parents view investment in boys' education as more beneficial to the household's long-term stability, as one participant described:

"The parents can say, if I educate my girls, tomorrow they will go with another family or another nationality. So, I couldn't benefit from that. At least I can educate the boys, even if I die or if I melt from oil, it will be good for my family. But the girl can go anywhere. So, for some tribes or some nationalities, the value is to educate the boys rather than to educate the girls."

These sentiments reinforce gendered expectations that undervalue girls' education, perpetuating cycles of inequality across generations. Parental control over girls' mobility further limits access to opportunities, as another community member explained:

"Some of the parents, they say, when I let my daughter go there, I don't know why she will go. Just like I've lost my daughter, you know. I wanted to stay with that girl here. You get them to apply for their boys, but for the girls, they refuse to apply for them. If the girl tells them that I wanted to apply so that Nubia will be taken, they tell her, no, let your brother apply, you will have to stay with us here."

This reflects broader gendered anxieties about safety, honour, and parental control, which often limit girls' agency and participation in extracurricular programs like Tuseme. Girls themselves echoed these experiences of discrimination and heavy domestic responsibility. One student explained:

"And also, discrimination. Here in school, you are not treated equally. Then, secondly, also the responsibility. As I am speaking, I am a mother, and I have a responsibility to have a child at home. So, I used to come here to school from morning until the afternoon. There is no "I am not going to go to the club."

Her testimony illustrates how motherhood and household duties intersect to curtail girls' full participation in school life, even when they are motivated to remain engaged. Community leaders also observed how participation in clubs can be misinterpreted, reinforcing restrictive gender expectations. As one camp leader noted:

"If the current interferes, for example, you have a boy or a girl in that club, and he is always going there and always coming home late."

This suspicion reflects lingering cultural discomfort with mixed-gender interactions and after-school activities. These attitudes were often summarised simply but powerfully by participants who cited "*Cultural norms*" as the enduring barrier to gender equality. Moreover, program implementation itself can inadvertently reinforce these biases. A para-social worker reflected:

"But you know, the club is more emphasising on girls, so that means we have more female teachers being the facilitators of the club."

Such design choices, while well-intentioned, risk alienating boys and reinforcing the perception that gender equality programming is exclusively for girls. While institutional frameworks increasingly support gender equality, cultural beliefs continue to shape parental decisions, community attitudes, and student experiences. Addressing these challenges requires not only policy enforcement but sustained community dialogue, inclusive programming, and context-sensitive strategies that engage both girls and boys as equal participants in their educational journey.

Enabling Factors: Progressive education policies, such as the Education Act of 2013, have laid a strong foundation for gender equality by mandating inclusive access for all children, including girls and children with disabilities. Recent efforts to integrate gender-sensitive content, promote girls' leadership, and allocate funding specifically for girls' education signal a growing institutional commitment. Government-led initiatives and programs like Tuseme are helping to challenge traditional norms, while increased awareness and advocacy from educators, para-social workers, and community leaders are slowly shifting perceptions toward valuing girls' education as a benefit to the entire community.

Disabling Factors: Deeply entrenched cultural norms and gender biases remain the most significant barriers to equitable participation. In many communities, especially rural and refugee settings, girls are expected to stay home, take on domestic roles, or marry early, which limits their access to education and extracurricular activities. Parents may resist investing in girls' education due to beliefs that daughters will eventually leave the family, while boys are seen as long-term assets. Discrimination within schools, fear of backlash, and the burden of household responsibilities further restrict girls' involvement. For boys, stigma around gender-focused clubs can discourage participation, reinforcing exclusion. These perceptions are compounded by limited community awareness and resistance to change.

5.2.5.5 Community and Parental Engagement (Perceptions)

Engaging parents and community members are widely recognised as a cornerstone of successful educational initiatives, especially in refugee and IDP contexts where trust, awareness, and cultural relevance are essential. Across the board, stakeholders emphasise the importance of mobilisation, sensitisation, and inclusive dialogue.

The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) speaks with conviction about its role in bridging the gap between schools and families:

"So, our responsibility is to help those who are learning, to teach them well, to motivate them and to tell other parents who do not understand how we have been."

This sense of duty is not just about supporting students, it's also about empowering fellow parents:

"We are grateful for what we have been taught, and we see that this project will help our children and also our parents."

To ensure widespread participation, PTA members advocate for grassroots mobilisation:

"You must have mobilisers, community mobilisers. So, they can go around and talk to the parents there or the communities, level of communities, through the block leaders or chairladies. Then they tell them the importance of our kids in this project."

They stress that awareness must be continuous and embedded in community routines:

*"We give them awareness of how this project was being initiated in the school."
"In any meetings, we should also raise awareness so that they also know the importance of NNI."*

Echoing this, a government official underscores the need for structured outreach and recognition of local leaders:

"So, we need mobilisation and sensitisation."

"With the leaders, they must be given a token. At least you appreciate the service they are doing, because they are volunteers."

They also highlight the importance of framing education, especially for girls, as a long-term investment in community leadership:

"To overcome this, we need to involve community leaders, mothers, and fathers in the conversation, showing them the long-term benefits of educating girls and empowering them to become leaders."

From the ground level, a camp leader points out a critical barrier: limited understanding of the benefits of participation. Their solution is simple but powerful, consistent engagement:

"Limited awareness of benefits. Go to meetings so that you will be aware of them and you can inform them."

A para-social worker builds on this by suggesting broader communication strategies to reach more families:

*"Think for us to integrate the Tuseme Program, is through creating awareness."
"Using mass media, maybe radio, or even talking about it in Barazas, so that people will be aware of Tuseme."*

This theme reveals a shared belief: that community engagement is not a one-time event, but an ongoing process of dialogue, trust-building, and mutual learning. Whether through mobilisers, meetings, or media, the goal is clear create a culture where education is seen not just as a school-based activity, but as a collective responsibility.

Enabling Factors: Community and parental engagement is strengthened by active involvement from PTA members who champion awareness and motivate others, the strategic use of community mobilisers and local leaders to spread information, and the positive perception of educational projects that benefit both children and parents. Government support for sensitisation efforts, recognition of volunteer contributions, and the use of mass media and public forums like Barazas further enhance outreach. These elements create a collaborative environment where education is seen as a shared responsibility and a pathway to empowerment.

Disabling Factors: Engagement is hindered by limited awareness of the long-term benefits of education, especially for girls, and a lack of consistent sensitisation efforts that leave many parents uninformed. Cultural norms and gender biases can restrict participation, while the absence of incentives for volunteer leaders reduces motivation. Fragmented communication channels and low parental literacy also pose challenges, making it difficult for families to fully understand or support educational initiatives. These barriers contribute to uneven participation and slow progress in community-driven education programs.

5.2.5.6 Collaboration and Sustainability

In addressing the challenges of providing quality education to refugees and displaced populations, a collaborative and sustainable approach is crucial. The statements from government officials, teachers, and community members highlight the issues at play, from funding and resources to social and cultural barriers. While progress is being made through partnerships and targeted programs, significant gaps remain, highlighting the need for a more integrated and community-led framework. A government official opens the conversation by emphasising the urgency of the mission:

"Improving access to the quality of education for refugees."

This commitment, however, is shaped by practical constraints. The official notes that staffing decisions are often influenced by financial realities:

"A few teachers have been taken or employed by the NGO, because they also consider the budget."

They stress the importance of aligning these efforts with national education frameworks:

"Yes, but it needs more engagement through the Ministry of Education because they always have a curriculum that guides."

"That's to say that they can put a curriculum that guides be implementation within, because this is piloting."

Beyond policy, the official highlights the need for safe, inclusive spaces—especially for girls who may feel silenced in traditional settings:

"They invited me for that meeting because many girls do not want to be very open, so that's why we have the child-friendly spaces. We invite them there, where it's a free place for them to express themselves."

Partnerships with NGOs play a vital role in creating these spaces:

“There is, there is a partnership. Let me give you an example of IRC, which is a child-friendly space, and we have Save Evans for those children. Basically, we have those organisations which are now doing the same activity.”

Yet, systemic challenges persist. One of the most pressing is the language barrier:

“One thing is the language barrier.”

Despite these hurdles, the government remains steadfast in its mission:

“The government’s priority is to ensure that education is accessible to all children, even in challenging environments like refugee camps or IDP settlements.”

This includes a range of interventions from temporary learning spaces to teacher support:

“We focus on creating more inclusive, adaptable school systems that can cater to the diverse needs of these children. This includes setting up temporary learning spaces, building more permanent schools in these areas, and providing support for teachers who may be working in very difficult circumstances.” “We also prioritise providing resources such as textbooks, digital learning tools, and safe learning environments.”

Among the targeted programs is one focused on empowering girls:

“Yes, there are several initiatives. For example, we have the 'Girls Education and Empowerment Program,' which focuses on providing leadership opportunities for girls in IDP camps. This program includes mentorship, skills training, and community engagement.”

The official acknowledges that similar efforts are underway across organisations:

“Yes, several NGOs and community organisations are running similar programs. One initiative I know of is the 'Safe Spaces for Girls' program, which focuses on providing a safe environment for girls to discuss sensitive issues.”

However, sustaining these programs is not without difficulty. High student turnover and entrenched social norms present ongoing challenges:

“The challenge, however, is that in refugee and IDP settings, there is a high turnover of students, making it difficult to maintain consistent participation in clubs. Additionally, community attitudes towards girls’ involvement in such programs need to shift, which can take time and require constant community engagement.”

To scale initiatives like the Tuseme clubs, the official calls for deeper collaboration:

“To scale Tuseme clubs effectively, we need to ensure that the local education authorities are fully engaged in the process. Building strong relationships with schools and community leaders will be key. We also need to ensure that there are sufficient resources to support these clubs, including trained facilitators, safe spaces for the children, and ongoing monitoring to ensure the clubs remain relevant and sustainable.”

From the perspective of teachers, the challenges are not only institutional but personal. One teacher shares the frustration of stalled professional growth:

"Well, another challenge that I can add is that most of us teachers, especially the incentive teachers. We are facing the challenge of enrolling in higher education. For example, getting a scholarship. Most of us here have taught for four years, waiting for opportunities. But most of them don't enrol on the university. That will become a challenge to the extent that some of us are even quitting our job. And they resign to look for other opportunities rather than waiting and joining higher education."

Community members also weigh in. A Board of Management member highlights the importance of inclusion, especially for children with disabilities:

"We talk of transporting them. We are transporting them from the community to the school. Those who are aware of it can bring more knowledge to those who are blind. We see that they are also very important in the community, and they can turn up."

The reflections from parents, community leaders, and para-social workers collectively reveal that children's participation in Tuseme and broader school activities is shaped by an intricate interplay of household realities, community norms, and structural limitations. A parent's observation that:

"What I see in the community is that there is a big challenge."

captures the overarching context within which education unfolds—one marked by persistent socio-economic strain and limited support systems. A camp leader extends this understanding by linking educational participation to broader social wellbeing, explaining that meaningful engagement is more likely in contexts where families experience stability and cohesion:

"First, they will believe in harmony, in a better conducive environment. To overcome them is like, when it is the issue of food, I'm talking about in the community."

This emphasis on harmony underscores how community dynamics directly affect children's readiness and ability to engage in school and extracurricular programs. The leader also situates school attendance within the reality of resource scarcity, noting that food insecurity remains a key barrier:

"If there is food, enough food, then the child can come to school."

This relationship between basic needs and participation aligns with wider evidence from humanitarian settings, where children's learning frequently hinges on nutritional stability. Motivation and clear communication emerge as additional enabling factors. The same leader highlights the impact of even modest incentives and stresses that effective information-sharing empowers both learners and parents:

"To overcome the challenges of participation, if there is any motivation, like some material they are given, pro. And also, to give the real information, to make the children have good information."

They add that willingness to participate increases when training opportunities are available because

"When there is anything needed, both the student, boy and girl, and if there is any need to train them for leadership, nobody can refuse."

Perceptions of gender equality also emerge as a positive starting point, with community members observing that

"Boys and girls have the same opportunities, activities, and the same capacity. If the girl is coming on the right time and going back home on the right time, there is no problem with that."

However, persistent challenges remain. Stakeholders identify

"Safety and security concerns. Limited funding within the clubs", and the fact that "distance to the program locations will also affect their participation in the club."

Awareness-raising also appears crucial, as one leader explains that:

"It is to make the student learn about the club, like the way you say they are going to empower a grandchild or a boy."

They remain hopeful about Tuseme's potential, asserting that:

"Even if you put this club in place, it can change the way the child behaves. For me, when you put it in place, in practice, that's where I can know this one can benefit the community."

Further insight comes from para-social workers, who focus on the emotional and social support that helps children thrive. They note that participation increases,

"When students air out their grievances, they turn up during the guidance and counselling sessions."

and emphasise the role of small forms of motivation, such as:

"Maybe you motivate that learner by giving a textbook."

Material support also matters in contexts of deprivation, as it explains that supporting children can involve

"Having some basic needs within your structure, like maybe soaps, sanitary towels, so that when they come and you have a talk with them, you can give them something."

These workers underscore the holistic value of Tuseme, describing it as

"Helping our children to develop, introducing them to different skills at school, and even developing leadership skills."

They further identify supportive structures, noting that

"One of the structures, we have guidance and counselling to support them. We also have youth programs and youth sections where people share how to solve the problems, how to give each other support and so on."

The findings indicate that successful collaboration hinges on strong engagement between local education authorities, NGOs, teachers, and community leaders. These partnerships have created spaces where children, especially girls, can express themselves, build leadership skills, and access psychosocial support. However, challenges such as teacher turnover, inadequate professional growth opportunities for incentive teachers, and resource limitations threaten program continuity. Sustainability also requires consistent community sensitisation and alignment with national education policies to ensure scalability and integration of Tuseme within existing school systems.

Enabling Factors: Effective partnerships between the government, NGOs, and schools have strengthened implementation by providing safe learning spaces, relevant learning resources, and leadership opportunities for students. The commitment of community leaders to supporting the program, coupled with parental acceptance when clear communication is maintained, has further enhanced participation. Ongoing advocacy from education officials, emphasising inclusivity and equality, has also fostered an environment supportive of sustained program growth.

Disabling Factors: Persistent challenges such as limited funding, high turnover among students due to the transient nature of refugee communities, and the absence of clear pathways for teacher capacity-building undermine program sustainability. Distance to program sites and safety concerns also reduce consistent participation, particularly for girls. Additionally, the lack of stable infrastructure and overreliance on voluntary support weaken long-term ownership and continuity, making the programs vulnerable when external funding or resources decline.

Table 20: General Enabling Factors and Dis-enabling Factors at Somali Bantu Mixed Secondary (Kakuma)

| Enabling Factors | Dis-enabling Factors |
|--|--|
| 1) The government prioritises accessible and quality education for all children, including refugees and those with disabilities. | 1) Social norms and traditional beliefs regarding gender roles significantly limit girls' participation and education. |
| 2) Partnerships with NGOs like IRC and Save the Children provide crucial support through child-friendly spaces and various programs. | 2) Economic hardship and lack of basic needs like food, uniforms, and sanitary pads directly contribute to student absenteeism and dropouts. |
| 3) The Education Act of 2013 legally mandates equal access to education for all children, promoting inclusivity. | 3) Resource constraints within schools, including insufficient classrooms, a lack of books, inadequate infrastructure (water, electricity, |

| Enabling Factors | Dis-enabling Factors |
|--|---|
| <p>4) There's a clear push from the government to promote gender equality in education, with funding allocated for girls' education.</p> <p>5) Community mobilisation and awareness campaigns are recognised as effective strategies to encourage participation and shift perceptions.</p> | <p>toilets), and limited teaching materials, hinder learning.</p> <p>4) Safety and security concerns, including FGM, early marriage, LGBV, and the porous school fence, create an unsafe environment for students.</p> <p>5) Teacher challenges, such as difficulty enrolling in higher education and the burden of over-enrolment, impact the quality and consistency of education provided.</p> |

Gender distribution was fairly balanced across stakeholder groups, with 105 female and 104 male participants (Table 9). This allowed for nuanced insights into gendered experiences and perspectives across the refugee and displaced communities in Uganda. This structured approach ensured representation across multiple stakeholder perspectives, providing a rich foundation for analysing enabling and disabling factors influencing the implementation of the adapted Tuseme model in these contexts.

Table 21: Uganda Study Participants by Category, Secondary School (S.S.) and Gender

| Participant category | Pagirinya S.S. | | Arinyapi S.S. | | Rwamwanja S.S. | | Ntenungi S.S. | | Total |
|----------------------------|----------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|------------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | |
| Students | 11 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 76 |
| Teachers | 5 | 4 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 31 |
| Parents | 5 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 29 |
| PTA | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 30 |
| BOG/PTA | 0 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 20 |
| Para-social workers | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 8 |
| Camp leaders | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 11 |
| National Officials | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Local Government Officials | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 28 | 34 | 19 | 29 | 24 | 21 | 24 | 28 | 209 |

5.3.2 School 1: Pagirinya Secondary School – Adjumani (Refugee–Host Context)

5.3.2.1 General Context

Table 22: Pagirinya Secondary School Profile

| Category | Details |
|--------------------------------|--|
| School Name | Pagirinya Secondary School |
| School Location | Pagirinya Refugee Settlement, Adjumani District, Uganda |
| Location Type | Refugee settlement / Humanitarian setting |
| School Level | Secondary School |
| School Type | Government-aided (absorbed in 2024), previously community school (est. 2016) |
| Enrolment Figures | 1,800 learners (as of 1st April 2025) |
| Number of Teachers | 12 government-listed teachers, 18 PTA-supported teachers, 15 NGO-supported teachers (Windle International) |
| Number of Administrative Staff | Not explicitly stated; implied to be minimal with limited office resources |
| Number of Clubs | At least 1 active (girl-child club); others not detailed |
| Facilities | Classrooms (insufficient; some classes under trees), dormitories (overcrowded), limited sanitation (inadequate bathrooms), no specialised facilities for students with disabilities, minimal teaching and learning materials, no fenced school; poor WASH infrastructure |
| Number of IDP/Refugee Students | The entire school population (~1,800 learners) is predominantly refugees, mainly from South Sudan |
| Proximity to Institutions | Within the settlement, a nearby health centre is accessible; remote from town, with poor roads and transportation challenges |

Pagirinya Secondary School started in 2016 as a community school and was later absorbed as a government-aided school in 2024 in Pagirinya refugee settlement. Opened in July 2016, Pagirinya settlement hosts more than 32,000 refugees, mainly from South Sudan. The humanitarian response across all sectors has now stabilised and has shifted beyond emergency operations. The settlement’s organised physical design facilitates access to important facilities, including health centres and schools. However, the quality of services, including education, health and nutrition, and water, health, and sanitation, needs serious improvements. As of 1st April 2025, the school had a total of 1,800 registered learners, with 12 government-listed teachers, 18 PTA-supported teachers, and 15 NGO supported teachers (Windle International). The school is overly overcrowded with very few teachers on the government payroll.

5.3.2.2 Community and Parental Engagement

Community and parental engagement at Pagirinya Secondary School is a complex dynamic, simultaneously providing crucial support while also presenting significant barriers to education. The community's dedication is a powerful force for good, but it is often undermined by poverty, cultural conflicts, and a lack of resources, which together create a difficult environment for both students and parents. Parents and guardians play a crucial role in empowering children, especially mothers who guide girls on menstrual hygiene and self-protection in the community. As one PTA member observed,

"Yes, those who are participating in empowering children to know what problems are going to affect them anytime, one of them is their parents and guardians. Especially the mothers participate in empowering the girls to protect them in case of menstruation, and when they are in the community, how to control themselves. And when anything is happening abruptly to them, let them also be open to tell them. And mostly, girls used to fear to tell those other hidden information to we, the parents. Yes, especially the parents, they used to rush to tell the information to the mothers. So, this is what I have been observing on the ground around."

A young girl expressed her personal motivation, stating,

"I know I am from a poor family, but I want to change my family. And I like coming to school because I want to change my nation. South Sudan is a country full of war, but I want to change South Sudan to become a better country."

A PTA representative also noted the focus on girls, saying,

"Yes, mine is like this. All along, wherever I've been, with the NGOs and in the communities, leaders' focus is to empower the girls, the girls who had left the school to come back. In due course of that, you may find that if you do some research right now, mostly the work has been left on these women around."

The PTA executive committee and general parents recognise their responsibility to mobilise children for school and support their education, including paying school fees, as stated by a PTA member:

"I think the PTA executive committee and representatives of general parents, the responsibility of the parents, number one, is to bring the children here in the school. Our work is to mobilise the people to bring the children, both boys and girls, here in the school. And they are supposed to support them also, paying their school fees. They are supposed to remain here in the school to get an education, both of them."

However, challenges arise from cultural barriers that push girls towards early marriage, creating a conflict between cultural expectations and the school's encouragement for continued education, according to para social workers:

"The culture that forces these girls to get married. This side is pulling you; go and get married. The school is telling you, please continue with your education. That can also be a very big barrier. And the lack of efficient guidance and counselling can be a key. Because sometimes these learners, maybe too many others, are shying down, they don't frequently come for that kind of guidance."

Poverty is a significant hindrance, as many parents are unable to afford school dues or provide necessary scholastic materials. The DOS noted,

"And the majority of these learners, their parents are unable to pay the little dues that the school wants to use for running. Therefore, if they come, they expect to study for free, and the service here needs money. And the little development fund that is laid on them, they cannot give."

The BOG highlighted the impact of the LRA war, stating,

"Now, because of this also poverty which the LRA war brought to them, and they are trying to settle themselves. Also, they don't have enough to give to their children."

This financial strain often leads to children dropping out and resorting to harmful activities. A BOG member explained,

"That's why I mean, at the end, you find these children dropping out. And when they drop out, they resort to drinking now. So, what they do is just to drink. And when they drink, they even go to the extent of breaking into people's houses and so on. Stealing for survival."

Furthermore, a para-social worker noted that displaced individuals struggle to raise funds, hindering their ability to pursue education:

"Once they are displaced, they are not able to raise the funds because they are not in their land. And they are not able to conduct a vocational exam. When they are not able to do the basics that they were supposed to do, then the fund that they are supposed to raise to enable them to study is tampered with."

A government official clarified the rights of refugees, stating,

"So once the refugees are being settled, of course, we have to look at the Act of 2006, which states very clearly that while a refugee is in a country seeking asylum, he or she has the right. And this right is very clear, that is the right to education, the right to health, the right to movement and other social services. So, when they look at the policy of education, of course, for us as the office of the Prime Minister, being the central government, we are working in line with the local government of Adjumani District, in line with the DO's office, that is Adjumani Education Department."

This official also emphasised the importance of teacher documentation and partner support:

"In terms of their documentation, we have to verify in terms of whether they are registered with the Ministry of Education standards, because if you don't have a certificate from the Ministry of Education, we don't recruit you because we are not sure whether you're a graduate or you're not a graduate. So, that's what we work on when partners come to support. Of course, we look at where there is a need or where there is a gap."

Community schools, initially supported by partners, will eventually be run by the government for sustainability:

"As the refugees go back, the schools will be run by the government of Uganda for sustainability. However, the community schools, I remember in the settlement, we have Ailo SS, and we have Nyumanzi SS. These are schools which is started by the community, and the partners came in to support them in terms of structures, in terms of recruitment of teachers, in terms of other support given to the school to run."

Para social workers highlighted the prevalence of school fee issues leading to dropouts:

"Most of these learners are not able to pay school fees. School fees are a very big issue in this area, and that results in dropout, especially for those who cannot completely raise the money."

They also described how economic hardship influences marital practices and crime:

"And most of these marriages are forced by either the brothers who are there because they want some fun, or even the parents. But on the side of boys, for them, once the situation becomes hard, they go and ride the motorbike around here to look for some money. And sometimes, they can also form some gangs, especially when the year is coming to an end."

This can lead to increased violence, as a para-social worker stated,

"Boys who leave school, they form gangs and they find that raping of the girls becomes much in the community here. Such can affect these girls so much."

To address these issues, para social workers emphasised the need for community sensitisation:

"The best, number one, is to first sensitise these community members, the parents and the community leaders and even the learners themselves about the importance of educating a girl child in particular. However much we do something, and we are not sensitising these people, these girls will continue dropping. Then, there is a need to train these community leaders also on how to handle these issues."

A PTA member pointed out the negative impact of poverty on a child's education, even if they are capable:

"When the parents are very poor, they cannot afford to pay the school fee of the parent, and yet the child is capable. And the child has even potential to continue, which will also affect the child negatively. And other things are also necessities, like scholastic materials, pens and books. When that was not provided, it also affects the child negatively."

Regarding sensitive topics, a PTA member noted a positive perception from parents and the community, with some concerns about HIV prevention education:

"Yes, thank you. The perception of parents and the community is always positive, but there are some concerns, especially when they are educating the student or the young one about the prevention of HIV. And they are saying one of the methods of preventing is the use of a condom. And yes, these are students who are not married. And some

religious leaders are also bitter about this use of condoms and the distribution of condoms to the learners. And that one encourages fornication and adultery."

A government worker highlighted the role of community dialogue meetings in addressing local problems:

"Yeah. As I said, we do organise the community dialogue meetings. In these dialogue meetings, issues are coming out from the communities. They express it openly. And you know that will help us to address the pressing problems which they have been having in the communities. But where is this support coming from? From FAWE. FWE sponsored us, provided us with logistic support and even refreshment and other things to get things done. That is why FAWE is closely working with us."

Parents stressed the importance of continuous engagement and feedback:

"And continuous engagement. When you do an assessment, provide feedback at different levels. When you have other activities, maybe in schools, give feedback to whichever groups you engage with. And whatever you have to engage learners, like I said, the plan is to engage the learners and teachers over the weekend, not to interrupt the learning process. Good enough, you came from the district, please continue because they are our technical team, as far as education is concerned. However, do not override to deal with the district without the refugee team because there are different dynamics, and we are directly accountable for what happens to the refugees."

Education is also seen as a way to reduce violence and improve living standards, with parents remarking,

"It also reduces violence in our community. They may be doing the right thing in our community, but they also improve our living standards by fighting in the community. You see, things in the community will be moving well because when they are educated. When they are study, they can reduce the crime from the communities actually when you are there alone, when you can, eeh when you cannot study, like two years or three years, your brain will varnish, it will think in DIFFERENT WAYS let me do this let do this they can join those drunkard people from market when can when you here in study, yeah you can get a good quality, you can get the purpose of the lies, but when you cannot join the study, it is very difficult to think it good life in the future yes thank you."

Poverty continues to be a major obstacle, especially for child-headed households. Parents explained,

"One is poverty, definitely when there is poverty especially here in the settlement most cases affecting our children here is you may find in some house hold that these children are child headed so when this child decides to take interest to go for this training or maybe decides to go and get all the things they can get from Tuseme you will find they will want to use that time to go for sand mining so that it can bring food to take care of the other family members because there is no food, secondly, for one to join this group may require some little amount and when you don't have the money you may miss the chance that is very import not concerning the like of security can come but majorly poverty may affect since there is no food and not even money for you to be able to get those things, yes."

A school administrator reiterated the financial challenges, stating,

"The parents cannot provide the necessities that they are supposed to be using the school. The scholastic materials for girls, the pads, the books, are not enough."

Although the community values education and actively supports student mobilisation, poverty and cultural practices like early marriage undermine these efforts, keeping many children out of school and perpetuating hardship.

Enabling factors: Students are highly motivated to pursue education for personal and social improvement. Parents and the community play an active role in mobilising and supporting learners, while NGOs like FAWE strengthen these efforts through dialogue and engagement.

Disabling factors: Poverty prevents many families from affording fees and supplies, leading to dropouts and risky survival behaviours. Cultural pressures, especially early marriage for girls, further obstruct education. Boys face risks of violence, gang involvement, and harmful behaviours due to economic hardship, while the lack of counselling leaves many students unprotected.

5.3.2.3 Perceptions of Gender Roles and Leadership

Perceptions of gender roles and leadership at Pagirinya Secondary School create a complex and often contradictory environment for students. While some community members and students express modern views on gender equality and leadership, these are frequently at odds with deeply rooted cultural beliefs and practices that disproportionately affect girls. Cultural beliefs significantly impact girls' education, with some cultures viewing a girl's first menstruation as a sign of readiness for marriage, thus hindering their schooling. A PTA member explained:

"In other cultures, when a girl starts her first menstruation, which means that the girl is ready for marriage, the red flag will be raised in that family. And that is identification to show that there is a girl who is now ready for marriage. And that one also hinders their education."

A parent shared a recent example, saying,

"Yes we still have some cultural barriers as far as education is concern, I have a scenario of a girl who ran away from the family 2 weeks ago and the right now she is still with the in the leader in the home a leader, why she ran away from the home was because she was forced to get married when she was in the school and she was still wanted to continue with her education and meet her future career so this tells us that we still have some strong cultural beliefs that girls are still looked at as a source of income in some other community they don't value what this girl will bring in the future."

The focus of some NGOs on supporting girls has led to resentment among boys. A teacher recounted,

"Actually, to add to what Mr Net said, there was a year a strike happened here. And one of the causes of the strike was, every NGO that comes focuses on girls. Because GRS brought bicycles for girls."

This teacher added,

"GRS built dormitories for girls. When they bring the scholastic materials, mostly girls. So, the boys were not happy." A government worker noted the preference for educating boys: "And they say they prefer marrying these girls earlier, at an earlier stage. The best example is now the way we have been battling it. So, they look at that as a girl is a source of wealth, but this one here, to be educated, the boy has to be educated."

A girl reflected on gender differences in opportunities and challenges:

"I think both boys and girls, they have some difference in getting an opportunity, because in most cases, they usually consider girls as at times they could not get, because boys have at least wider brain of thinking capacity, because girls, the moment they face difficulties, they end up doing other things like teenage pregnancy, which they are encouraged at times by providing them more opportunity than boys."

She further elaborated on the burdens faced by girls at home:

"Okay, according to me, boys and girls, they don't have the same challenge, so much on girls, because the girls have so many needs than boys. Take a look, when you are a girl, and you are alone in the home, most of your siblings are all boys, and you are the only girl. It creates so much work, every work, at times it will depend on you, whereby the boys at times might ignore it, they might say it belongs to you. So, most abuses at home are received by ladies; that's the reason why, somehow, even a boy can stay with the stepmother, but will not be treated as badly as the girl."

Another girl, serving as the secretary of school affairs, defined leadership as sacrifice:

"Okay, to me, since I am the secretary of school affairs, I think being a leader to me means sacrifice, because for me being a leader, I have to sacrifice my time, sacrifice even my knowledge so that I can help other people in the school."

A CDO highlighted the low parental attitude towards girls' education:

"Up to now, the attitude of some parents towards girls' education is very, very low. Very poor, one that people still prefer to send a boy child to school rather than a girl child. That one still exists. And they say they prefer marrying these girls earlier, at an earlier stage. The best example is now the way we have been battling it. So, they look at that as a girl is a source of wealth, but this one here, to be educated, the boy has to be educated."

The DOS further elaborated on forced marriages for girls and the emphasis on boys in cattle-keeping communities:

"A specific one for girls, there is an element of forced or early marriage in this settlement. It can be on the basis of tribe; their culture varies, but they looked at the

girls as a source of wealth. And if you cannot now give what the parents want, you cannot continue with the studies. Then also on the boys, more especially the cattle keepers, we also have the Dinka communities here, on them they looked at the boys, they should take care of their resources, their wealth, their animals, and therefore they don't give a chance for them to come to school, because it is the animal that can bring for you a wife."

A School Administrator cited cultural practices that affect education:

"Those cultural practices are there. I was teaching in one of the schools before I came here. Some Dinka communities said that for them, it is not good and it is not comfortable for a female teacher to stand in front and teach a male."

A BOG member acknowledged the unequal treatment of girls due to strong cultural attachments and poverty:

"Due to this cultural background from different ethnic groups, it is true that girls are not treated equally because some people are too attached to culture. The issue of poverty." While student leadership is generally open, gender considerations apply, as a BOG member stated, "First of all, we have the student leadership which is open except when it is gender related. Say, when you elected head boy, then you have to elect a boy."

A school administrator observed the dominance of boys in leadership and confidence levels:

"But when you look at the majority over the minority, the boys are taking it all. And their levels of confidence, that means also the boys are more... It is just like that, yeah."

Teenage pregnancy and early marriage are significant challenges. A school administrator stated,

"One of the challenges that I have witnessed in this school is a teenage pregnancy, which is very common, especially when these girls are coming back from home. When they report to school and the test is conducted, we realise there are a number of them who are pregnant, implying that in our communities where we live, there are people who are against these girls, against their education."

A para social worker added,

"Early marriage, because some of these girls, they join Senior 1, Senior 2, they are there. Senior 3, they are no more. And when we try to follow some of them in the communities here, we always get feedback that they are married and they are taken back to Sudan."

The school administrator reiterated,

"Those cultural practices are there. I was teaching in one of the schools before I came here. Some Dinka communities said that for them, it is not good and it is not comfortable for a female teacher to stand in front and teach a male."

A PTA member highlighted the importance of girls speaking out about issues like rape:

"Like when you are told to talk out what may be affecting you. Like when the girl is a day scholar, moving from here some distance, you are being raped on her way. Reaching home, even if she does not know the person, she can be able to explain, and the community around will arrest the situation very fast."

A boy noted that school activities often favour boys:

"Because most of the activities in the schools are driven by the side of the boys. Let's take a look at some of these clubs. When you look at these clubs, the majority are dominated by the boys, and girls have limited chances and opportunities in getting to this class."

However, another boy expressed a different view regarding opportunities, stating,

"If you are to see, according to me, girls are getting more opportunities than boys. The reason is because if you are to see most of the organisations are supporting the girls. For example, the JRS can sometimes bring smearing oils and sanitary pads for the girls, but sometimes the boys are left."

He further observed girls receiving more support and lighter work:

"Okay, in my opportunity, no, in my opinion, if we are to see this leadership structure of ours, I'm seeing also girls are considered, but it is only in one way. Girls are supported in a way that, especially if it comes to work, they are given light work compared to the work that boys are doing. And even these things of support, girls are getting more support compared to boys, especially with organisations."

Defining his leadership role, a boy said,

"What it means for me to be a leader is that, you know, my role as a leader is to make someone achieve what he foresees, doesn't want to do, to do it and achieve his goals. Why I'm saying this, for example, because you find in our schools most of the people who are being up by some of the activities, which may not be supportive or productive to their career."

Confidently, a boy affirmed,

"Yes, absolutely yes. According to me, girls are well-suited to leadership roles."

Gender perceptions at Pagirinya Secondary School reflect a clash between traditional patriarchal norms and emerging progressive views. While initiatives promote equality, poverty, and cultural beliefs such as valuing girls for marriage undermine progress, limiting girls' leadership opportunities and causing tensions with boys.

Enabling factors: Positive factors include progressive views among some students and staff, NGO support that provides resources like bicycles and dormitories for girls, and the school's relatively open leadership structures that allow for gender-balanced participation.

Disabling factors: Barriers include cultural practices that view girls as wealth, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and the expectation that boys manage cattle. Favouritism perceptions in NGO support create resentment among boys, while girls face domestic burdens, lack confidence, and are underrepresented in leadership roles.

5.3.2.4 School Environment and Psychosocial Realities

The school environment at Pagirinya Secondary School is a place of profound duality. It serves as a source of hope, community, and intellectual growth for students, yet it is simultaneously a setting where the deep-seated challenges of displacement, poverty, and cultural conflict manifest daily. Students find enjoyment and purpose in their school life, but staff face an uphill battle against systemic issues like overcrowding and the lasting psychological trauma carried by many learners. Students express positive sentiments about their school environment. A girl shared her enjoyment:

"Okay, there are many things I like in Pagirinya Secondary School, especially how the school is and how loving the teachers are, my friends, some games like football, participating in debate and other games, and even lessons I enjoy sometimes."

Despite challenges, a BOG member noted the large enrolment:

"The school has a very large enrolment. Yeah. Because, as the headteacher said, some of these challenges that they come up with, some got pregnant and some are dropping out, but it's still not only that."

Boys also appreciate the school environment. One boy stated,

"What we really enjoy most in Pagirinya, there are mainly two, let me say. One of them is that the game and sports, that's football and debating."

Another boy highlighted the cooperative spirit, saying,

"What I enjoy most in Pagirinya is that the students have that cooperation and unity in which they cooperate, and that's why even in Pagirinya, the student excels academically."

Students value the knowledge and critical thinking skills gained. A boy explained,

"I like coming to school because, you know, when you're in school, you have knowledge and when in school, you know how to advise your fellow students or you know how to advise community members, because the new curriculum, which we are in, involves critical thinking and problem-solving."

Another boy emphasised the benefits of communal learning:

"The reason why I like coming to school is that in school, we learn from each other, like here in school. We stay with each other, whereas at home you stay alone, but here you stay with friends who are from many different backgrounds. You learn a lot from them, and then also there are staff here who you don't know their background, but the

way they help you, they help you sometimes like more than you are real parents in knowledge sharing."

Challenges exist within the school environment, particularly regarding class size and infrastructure. A teacher noted the large student-to-teacher ratio:

"The ratio is very big. Okay. So, the rating they say that in the class will be a minimum of 115."

The DOS highlighted insufficient classrooms, stating,

"One is that classrooms are not enough. When these learners come here, they are not accommodated properly."

A school administrator elaborated on the large enrolment and the school's location outside the settlement:

"We have a gross enrolment of 1,800 plus, against a few number of classrooms. Number two, the majority of these learners are coming from the settlement. They are refugees, and the school is located outside the settlement."

They also reiterated the financial difficulties faced by parents:

"And the majority of these learners, their parents are unable to pay the little dues that the school wants to use for running. Therefore, if they come, they expect to study for free, and the service here needs money. And the little development fund that is laid on them, they cannot give."

The school community faces ongoing psychological challenges due to past conflicts. A school administrator recalled,

"Formerly, this was a centre for the Lord's Resistance Army, the LRA. Even now, when the crisis has stopped, people here remain disturbed. The rate of completing P7 and going to secondary is limited here, especially for the host community, because they have been running for this one, and they have not settled."

Teachers noted the impact on students' comprehension:

"Their level of understanding is low, because they are somehow traumatised and so on. Teaching them needs you to at least get some ways also. So, they are parents on their own. And they don't have people to guide them from wherever they come from. So, when they come here, for you to start bringing up their minds, to put their minds in school, you have to really apply psychology."

Teachers also mentioned infrastructural issues:

"We are renting. So, we don't have enough structures here."

and external challenges:

"Then I think another challenge that is faced by the camp, attacks."

A teacher further described personal housing challenges:

"So, my challenge that I'm facing, because I'm renting in a settlement in the centre, it's about the latrine. The business community is using only one latrine. Water source."

Despite these challenges, students find enjoyment and purpose in school. A girl mentioned,

"And also, the activities at school here that I am interested in participating in are debate. Like last year, we came back with a trophy from the Madi Debate Society. Thanks."

Another girl expressed her future aspirations:

"I like coming to school because I want to be responsible in future and have a responsible home, a responsible family."

The DOS reiterated the issues of insufficient classrooms and high enrolment:

"One is that classrooms are not enough. When these learners come here, they are not accommodated properly. We have a gross enrolment of 1,800 plus, against a few number of classrooms. Number two, the majority of these learners are coming from the settlement. They are refugees, and the school is located outside the settlement."

The school implements programs to address student well-being. A PTA member explained their approach to bullying and teenage pregnancy:

"As a school, what we do is when we identify that the child has a problem like bullying, we call that the person who normally bullies the child. We do guidance counselling. We provide them with guidance and counselling. And the school also carry out the pregnancy test in every term. Like, when we realise that the student, especially the girl's child, is pregnant, we talk to them. It is not their will to conceive, but we also give them a second hand, a second chance. Let them continue with their studies until the time for delivery. Then, we shall allow them to go back and deliver. Then, come and resume their normal lesson."

Para social workers detailed the counselling programs:

"We have school counselling programmes. And the school counselling programmes, at least in a year, we get someone from outside to come and talk to these learners. But every time some classes are talked to as a group, then in every term, at least a child to career teacher guidance is always given to these learners."

They also noted the impact of trauma on students' concentration and the prevalence of child-headed households:

"When they come to school, in most cases, they don't concentrate in class because they will be thinking about the trauma that they experienced when they were outside. And three, most of these children are parents by themselves. Because where they live, in

most homes, when you move around here, you'll find a boy in Senior 4 taking care of around five, six of them in the home."

The DOS also highlighted the lasting effects of the LRA war:

"Formerly, this was a centre for the Lord's Resistance Army, the LRA. Even now, when the crisis has stopped, people here remain disturbed. The rate of completing P7 and going to secondary is limited here, especially for the host community, because they have been running for this one, and they have not settled."

A government official confirmed the presence of these issues in both settlement and host community schools:

"To make the teacher and the learners perform. So, we saw it in most of the settlement schools. We saw it in most of the host community schools, both primary and secondary."

School administrators face challenges with large class sizes and diverse student populations. One administrator stated,

"And then I help a stream of senior one. So, I have 24 altogether. The challenges that I face within the profession, especially in this particular school, are that the population is too big."

Another added,

"So, if you are to assess according to their number, it becomes very difficult to score their books and to give the right feedback in time. So, in most cases, you'll find that after assessing the learners before they return the books, you are needed in another class before you assess them. So that is another big challenge."

They also pointed out the varied behaviours among students from different backgrounds:

"Secondly, we are dealing with all categories of learners. We know that some are nationals, others are refugees, and they've all got different behaviours. So, as they come together, they portray different kinds of ways that you'll find are so challenging. Trying to address them, others who do listen change, but others remain in the same way. So, getting information from us, as far as our communication is concerned, is sometimes challenging."

Para-social workers observed that domestic responsibilities hinder consistent school attendance:

"And in most cases, when they come to school, like on Monday, the following days, they don't come. When you try to follow up, they tell you they've been taking care of their young ones, so they've been planting something for these young ones. So, it affects their performance too much."

They also noted girls' shyness in speaking out:

"It is difficult to the extent that most of these girls fear speaking out. The challenge is not in their face. In most cases, they are shy, though."

The PTA provides equal support for both boys and girls in terms of materials and infrastructure projects:

"What the PTA does is to provide scholastic material for both boys and girls, so they don't favour. PTA also implement the projects of the bulk, like construction of the girls' dormitory, building shelters for girls and boys, so they equally support both boys and girls."

However, school administrators still contend with deeply ingrained cultural views that devalue girls' education:

"The cattle keepers, for them, they know girls are cows. And even if how much we continue talking that girls and boys are equal, they still come to school, which still has a negative influence on this. You cannot whitewash all."

Pagirinya Secondary School offers a safe and supportive environment that fosters growth and hope for students, but its progress is hindered by overcrowding, poverty, and unresolved trauma. For lasting success, the school must secure resources and provide strong psychosocial support.

Enabling factors: Positive factors include a strong sense of community, engaging extracurricular activities, a curriculum that emphasises critical thinking, and supportive policies such as guidance, counselling, and allowing pregnant girls to continue their education.

Disabling factors: Key challenges include overcrowding, poor infrastructure, financial barriers, trauma from conflict and displacement, heavy domestic responsibilities, especially for girls in child-headed households, and cultural attitudes that undermine girls' education and confidence.

5.3.2.5 Tuseme Club Dynamics

The dynamics of the Tuseme club at Pagirinya Secondary School reveal a mix of promising potential and significant challenges. While there is strong support for the club's goals of leadership development and community empowerment, its effectiveness is often hampered by systemic issues, cultural barriers, and logistical constraints. The successful integration of Tuseme and similar clubs into the school and community depends on careful planning, consistent funding, and a deep understanding of the local context. Integrating cultural norms into programs like Tuseme can enhance their effectiveness, as some community members prioritise their cultural beliefs. A PTA member suggested,

"I think this cultural norm, in the way that if they can integrate the cultural norms with the other programme, it can be better. Because some people believe in their culture more than anything. But if you integrate the culture with the programme that is coming into the community, they can understand better."

However, students, particularly those in candidate classes, face challenges with time management due to evening extra lessons. A boy explained,

"Okay, there are so many clubs in this school and the only free time that we have in the school there like during the weekdays. It is in the evening, and then, like we, the candidate classes and in these clubs, most of the leaders are coming from the candidate classes, yet in the evening, they have extra lessons. So, it may extend up to around six in the evening. So, it will be hard for them to balance like that."

A girl expressed her ideal for the club, stating,

"According to me, it will be so interesting when the club means equality."

Another girl highlighted the importance of creativity and innovation, saying,

"You may find that someone is highly educated, but since the person is not creative and innovative, you may find that the person remains like that. When we bring in that club where they teach learners with creativity and innovation, it will equip them so that when they go out, they may be creative. Even if they do not go so high, they will be able to survive."

Cultural practices, such as forced marriage, continue to be an issue, as a para-social worker recounted,

"The Dinka. I witnessed this last year, where a girl was picked from senior two and forced to get married. But this girl went back to school, and they were trying to arrest the situation."

Parents sometimes discourage club participation due to household responsibilities. A parent noted,

"We as parents we also stop these children from join this club because sometimes when a child is going to school, we tell caution them when class time is up don't waste there because you are supposed to cook, you're going to bring back goats from the bush and you have this to do, therefore it takes away a child's interest from join these kinds of clubs because they know that it is time, they have work to do at home and removes the interest of mixing with other colleagues."

For sustainability, community structures and existing projects need to be integrated. A CDO emphasised,

"There is a local council system. There is a women's council. There is a special interest group committee. All these structures, different structures here, we are going to integrate so that it will be the local people will own it. And it will be sustainable."

A BOG member stressed collaboration with other partners to avoid duplication:

"Tuseme should also integrate this project with other partners to more especially the community-based organisation we have here to understand more about the gaps in the youths are facing as far as maybe leadership skills and other thing I concern so that together we may understand and then it will be very easy for them to work out because

to avoid duplication of project as already and again Tuseme is also coming to the same thing."

However, the sustainability of clubs is often dependent on project-based funding. A BOG member pointed out,

"The challenge is the time frame for implementation. These clubs are project-based. And these projects are based on the funding from the donors."

They also mentioned the costs associated with training and activities:

"Now, when you train people with that kind of mindset, then it becomes a bit of a challenge to sustain it. And also, the teachers during that period, when you are called for the club programme, there is a transport facilitation here and there. And sometimes they also allocate some small funds for club activities."

A government official affirmed the policy of integrating new projects with existing school clubs to ensure ownership:

"Of course, what we are doing as the government, both central and local government, whatever project comes in, we have to integrate with the already existing project in that school. Yes, when you come and introduce this as a club, do we already have existing clubs in the school? Yes, we also have to integrate this project to make sure that even if you leave, we have ownership of it."

Para social workers suggested creative ways for learners to express themselves and for club longevity, such as using performances to convey messages:

"Maybe when there is a big meeting, we can allow these learners to show up their talents in a message which is well packaged. Or they can perform a drama, or they can bring it in terms of poems, which portray some good meanings of what is happening in the community and ways of addressing these challenges. Then from that point, the administrators, the leaders, the community leaders, and maybe the church members can take up and address the problems that are coming up."

They also suggested providing resources and training:

"Whether by giving some small fun or the costumes that can help these learners, maybe during those activities or presentations. Then also maybe bringing the facilitators to talk to the teachers as well as talking to these learners. Can also ensure that this Tuseme Club lives longer."

Additionally, strong coordination and regular visits are crucial:

"Where Tuseme is. Then, coordination with the school to ensure that Tuseme lives longer," and "Then regular check-ups or frequent visits to the schools where the Tuseme Clubs are."

Some students find it challenging to join clubs due to shyness or time conflicts. A girl shared,

"I find it not easy because some of the clubs, for example, debate clubs, if you want to join, they will ask you to express yourself, how you can speak, so that they can see whether you can really join and in ways they can help you. But some other people might be when they are like fearing, shy."

Another girl noted the issue of club meetings conflicting with class time:

"Things that we found difficult in the club are one of them is time for maybe a club meeting, maybe participation. If it corresponds with time for classes, we find it hard, especially with other clubs, whereby they can call you during class hours to come and attend a meeting, to come and do something, that is, we find it hard."

Attitudes towards certain clubs can also be a barrier, as a girl explained,

"For me, it is like people's attitudes towards the club, especially the patriotism club, which needs a lot of energy, like training. The training needs, because they will train you like a soldier. So, people develop negative attitudes towards it."

The purpose of a club is a key factor in its success, according to a PTA member:

"For me, I can say the most important factor is the purpose of the formation of the club. At times, that person will feel that it is not benefiting them. Of course, all these clubs are formed, and there is an objective of forming the clubs. Because within here in the school, we also have a lot of clubs, I'm sure. A lot of clubs here, then the major purpose is to develop them. And they are supposed to develop socialisation also."

This PTA member also saw a positive impact on the community, stating,

"Then it also reduces the rate of GBV in the community. I think that is a positive aspect."

For Tuseme to be effective, para social workers recommended comprehensive teacher awareness:

"Number one, I recommend that all teachers must focus and be made aware of this Tuseme. Because we inevitably go to Tuseme when some of the teachers are not aware of it. So, if a special training could be given to teachers, all the teachers, such that when we are talking about a certain content, everyone is aware of it."

A boy suggested incorporating public speaking competitions into Tuseme activities:

"So, I also wish Tuseme could bring that competition in which people will come to compete in a way that they'll compete using public speech."

He also highlighted the club's role in developing young leaders:

"What makes Tuseme interesting is that a group can be organised in a school, maybe, actually it is the same as a club, can be organised for the young upcoming leaders to maybe share their ideas and to learn how to practise leadership so that some fears to come or in the future they can be able to do great things."

Finally, he proposed including topics like innovation and creativity:

"The topics that I prefer that they should also be included are like innovation, or let me say teaching imaginative skills, that is to say innovation and creativity."

Tuseme and other school clubs provide valuable opportunities for student empowerment, leadership, and creativity, but their sustainability is threatened by reliance on donor funding and participation barriers. Long-term success requires local ownership, integration with community structures, and solutions to financial and logistical challenges.

Enabling factors: Clubs thrive on student motivation to build leadership, creativity, and life skills. Integration with cultural norms and existing school/community structures is seen as essential for sustainability, while creative expression through drama and poetry helps address local issues effectively.

Disabling factors: Clubs face major obstacles, including dependence on short-term donor funding, time conflicts with academics, household responsibilities that limit participation, and cultural barriers such as parental discouragement and student shyness. Negative perceptions of club activities further reduce engagement.

Table 23: General Enabling and Dis-enabling Factors at Pagirinya Secondary School – Adjumani (Refugee–Host Context)

| Enabling Factors | Dis-enabling Factors |
|---|--|
| 1) Strong community and parental involvement. | 1) Pervasive poverty and financial strain. |
| 2) Student ambition and cooperation. | 2) Entrenched cultural and gender biases. |
| 3) Supportive school programs and policies. | 3) Overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure. |
| 4) Integration with external support. | 4) Psychosocial impact of conflict. |
| 5) Opportunities for skill development. | 5) Time and resource constraints. |

5.3.3 School 2: Arinyapi Secondary School – Adjumani District

5.3.3.1 General Context

Table 24: Arinyapi Seed Secondary School Profile

| Category | Details |
|--------------------------------|--|
| School Name | Arinyapi Seed Secondary School |
| School Location | Arinyapi Refugee Settlement, Adjumani District, Uganda |
| Location Type | Refugee/IDP camp setting |
| School Level | Secondary (O'Level & S5) |
| School Type | Government-aided seed secondary school |
| Enrolment Figures | 245 students (238 O'Level, 7 S5) |
| Number of Teachers | Not specified; includes senior men and women teachers |
| Number of Administrative Staff | Not specified |
| Number of Clubs | Multiple, including girl-child clubs and Tuseme Club |
| Facilities | Classrooms, laboratories, girls' dormitory (supported by UGiFT II and DRDIP), and WASH facilities need improvement |
| Number of IDP/Refugee Students | The majority of students are refugees/IDPs |
| Proximity to Institutions | Not specified; within the Arinyapi settlement |

Arinyapi Seed Secondary School is a beneficiary of both the Uganda Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfer (UGiFT) phase II program, which constructed classrooms and office space, and the Development Response to Displacement Impact Project (DRDIP), which constructed a dormitory for girls. The school started in 2018 by constructing classrooms and laboratories as a government-aided seed school with senior 1 & 2, and a total number of registrations of 56, with 30 in senior 1 and 26 in senior 2. Currently, the school has a total of 245 registered students with 07 students in Senior 5 and 238 in Ordinary Level (O'Level).

5.3.3.2 Community and Parental Engagement

The community and parental engagement at Arinyapi Secondary School is defined by a significant, albeit complex, effort to support student education. While parents and community members understand their crucial role in providing for their children, this commitment is often undermined by poverty, the burden of domestic chores, and cultural practices, creating a difficult environment for students to succeed. The challenges are particularly pronounced for girls.

"Mine is all about, orphanage, some of us are orphans, due to, death of their parents, our parents are not there, so we are supported by guardians," one boy stated, highlighting the challenges faced by orphans. He added, "Sometimes they will let you do some work during that time of education, but that one will stop you from coming to school. Domestic chores."

Another boy echoed similar sentiments, explaining,

"Sometimes you feel like not coming to school, because, at other times, maybe your parents may be lacking money, the school fees may not be paid in time, that is when you will feel lazy to attend."

A girl, identifying herself as "[...]", shared a particular challenge for female students:

"Sometimes, some people may feel like not coming to school because especially girls. For us here, we sometimes come from a humble background, and when the girl is menstruating, there will be no pads like now. She will fear coming to school."

She further elaborated,

"Once again, my name is [...]. What makes me not come to school at times is when your school fees are not paid, and then you come to class, you feel so embarrassed with other students. That will lose your hope of attending the classes, and it will lead to poor performance in the class."

A parent observed the positive influence of community initiatives, stating,

"I have witnessed Organisations have selected some people called women mentors men mentors I think they keep talking those women be talking to women teaching them how to live in a community and how they should live in the communities ahh even in terms of how to live in their marriages children especially girls' hands have to be held are some of the few activities these people have been doing unfortunately the area covered by these people reach the entire communities."

Another parent, a father, emphasised their responsibilities:

"Ahhh for me being a father, the things we need to do for our children are one, we need not to get tired we have to be talking to them about the importance of education and we have to make sure that there's enough food for them to feed on even when at home and when they fall sick, we should be able to cater for their treatment."

A parent offered advice on communicating with children:

"What I can add here is that even when this is a boy or a girl, being parents when they tell you they lack things especially the girls who communicate a lot with their mothers, we shouldn't shout at them, we have to be polite and speak to them slowly telling them I will work on it and give you so that the girl wouldn't go begging from a man outside of school but when you start shouting or even ignoring them, they will end up asking from men that will come with exchange of something that may lead to pregnancy therefore we need to speak to them on point to ensure they know what is good and bad"

and encourage them to concentrate to their studies when you are not defeated, that's what I can say."

Early marriage remains a concern, with a parent stating,

"When you are a girl and your time comes, or even sometimes your time hasn't reached you, will or even sometimes your parents will push you forcefully into marriage, yet you are not even interested in marriage, and you have all the energy to go to school, and maybe in terms of paying you, there is a problem to me."

A teacher highlighted gender disparities in education, noting,

"If you try to compare the current enrolments of ladies to boys, boys are more than girls in number. That clearly communicates that our parents here did not prioritise our girl-child education. That is a major problem in the community here."

The teacher further elaborated on the burden placed on girls:

"Because our community here, though we teach them every time, we enlighten them about gender sensitive responsibility, you find they load the girls, the girl child, with a lot of work at home. Today we said to Seme is going to have some drama, they are going to have a meeting, there is a kind of outing to Pagirinya, to interface with that school, say, oh, my daughter is going to cook for those who are going to the garden, she is a day scholar, a spectator."

Community and parental engagement at Arinyapi Secondary School is strong in intention but weakened by poverty, cultural norms, and gender inequality. While mentors and supportive parents are assets, systemic barriers like financial hardship and early marriage continue to undermine progress.

Enabling factors: Parents show a clear commitment to education by emphasising food, health, and continuous encouragement. Community mentors provide additional guidance and support, while parents also demonstrate awareness of sensitive communication, particularly with girls, to prevent risks like early pregnancy.

Disabling factors: Poverty forces many students, especially orphans, to drop out or miss school due to unpaid fees. Heavy domestic chores reduce attendance, with girls carrying the largest burden. Deep-rooted gender inequalities, including low prioritisation of girls' education, forced marriages, and lack of menstrual pads, further limit girls' ability to succeed.

5.3.3.3 Perceptions of Gender Roles and Leadership

The perceptions of gender roles and leadership at Arinyapi Secondary School show a clear effort to challenge traditional norms, but progress is slow, and some deep-seated issues remain. The school and some parents are actively working to promote gender equality, but they are still battling societal biases that favour boys and undervalue girls. A PTA representative discussed opportunities for pregnant students:

"And now, after pregnancy, the child, because they still feel like keeping them in school, they just decide, like the president we've been talking about, to give them that opportunity, then to keep it, because it is not a bad thing, they have disappeared. Actually, when we keep these girls out of the school, they are not actually exposed much to the leadership positions. But if you see the school here, they are exposed to the leadership."

The PTA representative also noted,

"Most of the time, especially in our schools, we have leadership positions of the head prefect and so on. We give them that opportunity to be part of that."

Regarding gender equality in school fees, they stated,

"They are paying the school fees of boys first, and then they pay the school fees of girls later. But of late, through education, through support from NGO, at least you can see there are some inequalities. They sent them together to the school, though there are some small, small remnants."

A girl emphasised the importance of gender equality in the new curriculum:

"We need to have gender equality because if you see this new curriculum is full of creativity. At times in a class, maybe they will take you outside to do such things. Yes, I would prefer because if the girls also do that, if the girls are in... if the girls are participating in that activity, the boys also have that responsibility to join us. After all, in our new curriculum, we need to share views."

Another girl highlighted the development of self-confidence:

"Because all of us can be a leader when we develop self-confidence. Because even these boys, only if their fellows give them power that can they do, and you will be a leader. From there, they will develop self-confidence, and then they speak what they have out. But for us ladies, we sit on ours."

She also observed societal perceptions:

"Sometimes people don't value girls that much because they think that girls are weak. They think boys are strong, and they are no wiser than the girls. That is why sometimes boys can have more opportunities than girls."

A government official stated that they

"Talk about teenage pregnancy and other marriages. In primary schools and even secondary schools."

A parent reiterated the importance of polite communication with children, especially girls:

"What I can add here is that even when this is a boy or a girl, being parents when they tell you they lack things especially the girls who communicate a lot with their mothers, we shouldn't shout at them, we have to be polite and speak to them slowly telling them

I will work on it and give you so that the girl wouldn't go begging from a man outside of school but when you start shouting or even ignoring them, they will end up asking from men that will come with exchange of something that may lead to pregnancy therefore we need to speak to them on point to ensure they know what is good and bad and encourage them to concentrate to their studies when you are not defeated, that's what I can say."

A parent reflected on past cultural practices:

"Previously, in those days, I think some of us were slightly affected. When you are a girl, they say Ahh, girls, those, even if they are not sent to school, it's okay. Let us send this boy to school he will be the one to build for a big home parent instead use the money that should pay a girl at school for drinking you may find these kinds of things will make her decide for marriage when she reaches the age 14 or 15 these are the things that used to happen those days in our culture but that these days it doesn't happen, I see things rolling well."

Gender roles and leadership at Arinyapi Secondary School are in transition, with progressive policies such as promoting female leadership and reintegrating pregnant students. However, deep-seated cultural biases, poverty, and early marriage continue to restrict girls' opportunities and confidence, making progress slow but visible.

Enabling factors: Positive drivers include school and PTA commitment to female leadership roles, policies allowing pregnant girls to continue education, and increasing parental recognition of gender equality. The new curriculum also encourages collaboration, giving both boys and girls opportunities to share ideas equally.

Disabling factors: Persistent challenges include societal perceptions that girls are weak, parental tendencies to prioritise boys' education, and girls' lack of confidence in leadership roles. Cultural attitudes, along with risks of sexual exploitation and early pregnancy, further undermine girls' chances to succeed academically and in leadership.

5.3.3.4 School Environment and Psychosocial Realities

The school environment at Arinyapi Secondary School presents a stark contrast: students praise its disciplined and supportive atmosphere, while administrators and teachers struggle with significant logistical, financial, and psychological challenges. The school's shift to a government-aided status has brought crucial infrastructure and a core staff, but it has not resolved the deep-seated issues that undermine its ability to function effectively. A government official detailed infrastructure development:

"Some schools were constructed, maybe the laboratory, some schools were constructed, dormitories, some schools were constructed, classrooms, because as I said earlier, the need of the school will determine which kind of support the school will receive. So, the government supports them, and then some of these schools, the government, of course, supports with the recruitment of teachers, like in Pagirinya and Arinyapi, where you're doing your research, these are government schools now. You find the head of the school is a government-appointed teacher, and then even the government sends more teachers to support."

A boy expressed a reason for not wanting to attend school:

"For me, I feel like, not to come to school, because sometimes, the teachers do come late, because they come from a far distance, and if they come late, we normally cover little topics, and some other."

A teacher pointed out logistical challenges:

"We have a logistical problem in relation to the transportation of things like firewood, food items. Once it gets finished, due to the location of this school to town, the transport charge is too much."

Another teacher mentioned dormitory issues:

"We have a dormitory for our school girls who are studying in this school, but they're also lacking some basic facilities, things like an incinerator, which is also very vital for their health."

Teacher shortages were also highlighted:

"The adequate teachers' quota, which can only accommodate 6 teachers out of the 22 serving in the school. I think this is the only one I can add to the previous mention."

A teacher explained the impact of low enrolment:

"Thank you so much. The major challenge we have here is, number one, we have low enrolment. That amounts to limited funds for paying teachers and holding on to the teacher, because the payment is a bit low."

The same teacher elaborated on staff challenges:

"So, this affects most of our staff who are hailing from Adjumani Town, and coupled with the distance. Arinyapi SS is around 60 plus kilometres from town, so it affects their morning movement, especially during the rainy season. So, also, you may find some of the motorcycles or the bikes they are using to come and give a lesson to these learners may develop some mechanical problem on the way, so this will also affect their time of reaching the school."

A teacher also noted student behaviour:

"We find that some of the students take a long time to force them to do things. Their mindset is negative in teaching. They always report late to school, which leads to absenteeism."

Despite the challenges, students expressed positive aspects of the school. A boy said,

"The thing I enjoy most in this school is the discipline of students in this school, and they love themselves so much; those are what I am enjoying in this school."

A girl agreed,

"What I enjoyed in this school is that all the students are disciplined and they are always smart."

Another girl praised the teaching approach:

"It is easy because this curriculum of ours is full of... It is not only the teachers teaching, but it seems like the students are teaching themselves. Because, you know, they are giving us projects, activities, and you have to be creative and innovative in this curriculum."

A girl appreciated the teachers' disciplinary methods:

"What I enjoy about Arinyapi Secondary School is that teachers don't cane us. Whenever we have done something wrong, they always use words to convince us, like someone has done something wrong."

Another girl complimented the teaching staff:

"When I joined the school, what I liked most was the teaching format. The special science area has the best teachers and in our male point we also have good teams who care for everyone. I do enjoy those things."

A PTA representative discussed the challenges of a packed curriculum:

"Yes, there is a challenge there. You know, with the secondary, we have many subjects to teach. So, you kind of have time for social teaching, because of the many subjects, the government is saying that the relations should stop at two, but it is very high."

Arinyapi Secondary School has built a disciplined and positive learning atmosphere, but financial and infrastructural deficits undermine its progress. Low enrolment, teacher shortages, and absenteeism weaken the benefits of the new curriculum. Sustainable growth requires addressing these root logistical and financial challenges.

Enabling factors: Strengths include a strong culture of discipline and respect among students, supportive teaching methods that avoid harsh punishment, and dedicated teachers who show care for learners. The new curriculum is also valued for promoting creativity, innovation, and student-led learning.

Disabling factors: Barriers include high logistical costs, remote location challenges, and teacher shortages due to inadequate government staffing and low salaries. These issues contribute to absenteeism, low enrolment, and reduced school performance. Additional challenges include late student attendance and inadequate facilities for girls, such as the absence of an incinerator in dormitories.

5.3.3.5 Tuseme Club Dynamics

The Tuseme club at Arinyapi Secondary School is perceived as a powerful tool for empowerment, particularly for girls and aspiring leaders. However, its full potential is limited by a range of logistical, financial, and attitudinal barriers. While the school and community

express strong support and a desire for the club to succeed, its sustainability and effectiveness depend on addressing these practical and psychological challenges. A teacher noted,

"And even the patron, they also feel limited expectation, which may like to be there with the time. Of course, for them in the training, they are aware of everything. So, all in all, it is just adjusting."

Another teacher emphasised the need for ongoing support:

"There is a need for mentorship, especially the constant mentorship, mentoring of the patrons and even the club members. Arinyapi Secondary School, I was told, was chosen because of the border issue. It's close to the border, and Pagirinya is the same way."

A teacher suggested fostering ownership:

"I think one of the biggest issues mentioned is to do a lot of transitions. For this time, we are the ones supporting. If the students or the school can be encouraged also to own in the future in terms of where to get their finance, by maybe opening an account, the activities that they do in the school, so that they see that in the future the club is theirs."

Further suggestions from a teacher included,

"Besides those requirements, I am also suggesting the concerned organisations should provide the institution with the framework of annual activity of the club."

They also highlighted the need for equipment:

"Because sometimes we may be required to send this thing online, maybe to the focal person. So, a computer, even if one, especially for the patron to compile the reports and so forth, is necessary."

Simple resources were also deemed important:

"Handbooks and pens. There could definitely be writings. In a club, there are so many activities."

A teacher suggested incentives for participation:

"I think one of the things that can motivate the learners is that, because in this club we shall be having presentations, there can be a kind of maybe competition among the secondary schools, especially maybe in terms of drama, poem, songs and so on. If some of those students who perform very well can be rewarded, that can also motivate them."

A parent expressed optimism about the club's impact:

"For me, I have seen that when we put Tuseme into action, there will be a reduction in school drop out because children can take care of themselves, because speaking out with confidence will not harm parents."

Another parent emphasised collaboration:

"I am adding on to that, to support Tuseme for it to stand strong depends on where it is established, be it in school or community, we need to collaborate with the parents so that even mobilisation becomes easy and that were able to support this program at community levels, so we welcome it and we shall give it full support."

A third parent reinforced this idea:

"Thank you, for me, when this program comes here, the way we support it to stand firm is we need to collaborate as parents, teachers and other stakeholders so that we can welcome this project for it to work well in this school. Thank you."

Students also voiced their requests. A boy stated,

"This is what I would like to request from Tuseme. I would like to request Tuseme to provide us with the booklets, in whereby all information about Tuseme is in it. This is my request."

Another boy requested,

"At least if Tuseme can provide us with the environmental talks, that is, the compound talks like in the school we put at the gate, Tuseme welcomes you in Arinyapi SS. So those are such kind of things which we request from Tuseme."

A boy also mentioned barriers to joining clubs:

"It's sometimes easy, to join some clubs, like, like this, FAWE, and other clubs, like patriotism clubs, YCS, but, there are some other issues, that may also limit some, people to join the club, like some of the clubs, you can join them, through registration, you pay some amount of money, to register yourself in that club, but if you don't have that amount, to be paid for registration, that one may limit you from."

A government official suggested practical skills training:

"The club should train us in soft skills like basket weaving to sell and get money to lessen our parents' financial burden."

Girls highlighted the benefits of the club. One girl said,

"It makes it fun because everyone is involved in talking. If you see this club, it will even make girls participate more because they will know what leadership means, and you will know your roles in the future, and you will know what to do for yourself."

A girl expressed enthusiasm:

"About this club, Tuseme, the most interesting thing is that it is mainly about girls. That is why it is so interesting and fun, and we get to know a lot of things."

Parents also expressed their interest in understanding the club. A parent requested,

"For me, I think you can help us, the parents of these children, by speaking to us. You have to speak to us so that we can understand the importance of these children being in this club, for us to understand it. Thank you."

Another parent reflected on the impact on orphans:

"When it is affecting it will be for those children whose parents are deceased and just living with relatives, even if they are living, there are challenges for some of us women in where we live especially when you bring your child to live with your brother when there comes a difference amongst these children they are not the same you may find some only send their own so majorly it's the orphans suffering so when bringing the activities especially this one of Tuseme, they have seen the real things they have seen changes, but now this one we are moving together with understanding it and when the understanding lands deep then in the future reports we shall come and see the real things thank you."

Challenges to participation were also raised by parents. One parent stated,

"I can also add on to that is what might also stop these children from joining is because, as known that the evening time for sending these children to rest their brains so some strong interest from other places may realise that it may affect their studies so I was seeing that when time is not well allocated may affect their participation in the club activities."

Another parent detailed several obstacles:

"And there is also something that may remove a child's interest from joining these clubs is as said sometimes, parent's attitudes can be negative towards these clubs as parents we don't have the same thoughts and because of this the time given for club's activities after classes maybe seen like they are dodging home activities living under instructions may sometimes hinder children from joining clubs like this. Two, these children may have the interests, but because themselves they have personal challenges at home, some of these children just stay with us; therefore, due to heavy loads put on them may them from joining these clubs. Secondly, these club activities cannot be stopped. Because they are held after lessons, when people have scattered, they are not there every day. On the advantageous side, it cannot stop them from joining because these activities don't happen every day."

The parent is highlighting a key advantage of after-school club activities, which is that clubs aren't held every day. This "non-daily" schedule is an important factor that prevents these activities from hindering a child's participation. This is in direct contrast to other, more demanding responsibilities that are a regular part of a child's life, such as household chores. The parent is suggesting that because the club doesn't conflict with a child's home duties every day, it's a more feasible and appealing option for students to join. Therefore, the actionable insight for Tuseme is to maintain a flexible, non-daily schedule.

A parent also mentioned a basic need:

"Also, hunger when a child doesn't eat from school, you may find it hard for them to stay back for club activities after class activities."

Finally, a parent suggested further engagement:

"Okay thank you, there is also need for parents meeting to discuss Tuseme even when bringing children to school here there are good things in the school and also bad ones, we all know but when this is explained to then they can pick interest though parents can influence this most when put in a meeting just like the way you have called us here today thank you."

The Tuseme club at Arinyapi Secondary School shows promise in fostering leadership and female empowerment, but its sustainability is threatened by funding gaps, logistical challenges, and students' personal and family hardships. Long-term success requires a self-sustaining model and strong parental engagement.

Enabling factors: The club effectively develops leadership and soft skills, especially for girls, building confidence and providing a platform for public speaking. Collaboration among parents, teachers, and stakeholders strengthens support and increases the likelihood of sustained participation.

Disabling factors: Key barriers include lack of resources (e.g., computers, handbooks), reliance on short-term project funding, financial and personal burdens on students, and parental attitudes that prioritise chores over club participation. Hunger and other basic needs also limit students' ability to engage fully in activities.

Table 25: General Enabling Factors and Dis-enabling Factors at Arinyapi Secondary School – Adjumani District

| Enabling Factors | Dis-enabling Factors |
|---|--|
| 1) Community and organisational support. 2) Progressive parental attitudes. 3) School environment that empowers. 4) Positive student experiences. 5) Tuseme Club's positive impact. | 1) Socioeconomic hardships. 2) Harmful traditional practices. 3) Resource and infrastructure gaps. 4) Negative parental perceptions. 5) Student disengagement and basic needs. |

5.3.4 School 3: Rwamwanja Secondary School – Kamwenge District

5.3.4.1 General Context

Table 26: Rwamwanja Secondary School Profile

| Category | Details |
|--------------------------------|---|
| School Name | Rwamwanja Secondary School |
| School Location | Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement, Nkoma Sub-County, Kamwenge District, Uganda |
| Location Type | Refugee/IDP settlement |
| School Level | Secondary School |
| School Type | Government-aided |
| Enrolment Figures | Total: 1,789 students (Nationals: 983 (462 males, 521 females); Refugees: 806 (474 males, 332 females)) |
| Number of Teachers | 55 teachers (20 on government payroll – 14 males, 6 females; 35 PTA-supported – 21 males, 14 females) |
| Number of Administrative Staff | Not specified |
| Number of Clubs | Multiple clubs, including debating, Tuseme, Music, Dance and Drama, Scripture Union, mentorship, girls' empowerment, agriculture, and entrepreneurial clubs |
| Facilities | Limited classrooms, overcrowded learning spaces; shortage of instructional and scholastic materials; limited access to audio-visual teaching aids; some students attend lessons standing or through windows |
| Number of IDP/Refugee Students | 806 (474 males, 332 females) |
| Proximity to Institutions | Some learners travel over 10 km to school; long distances affect attendance and participation in clubs and activities |

Rwamwanja Secondary School is a government-aided institution under the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), located in the Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement, Nkoma Sub-County. It was established by the community in 1997 and currently serves both national and refugee learners, with a total enrolment of approximately 1,789 students. Of these, 983 are nationals (462 males and 521 females), while 806 are refugees (474 males and 332 females). The school has a total of 55 teachers. Of these, 20 (14 males and 6 females) are on the government payroll, while the remaining 35 (21 males and 14 females) are supported by the Parents' Teachers' Association (PTA). Rwamwanja Secondary School has students enrolled in both the mainstream education system and the Accelerated Education Programme (AEP). The

latter is designed to support learners who have been out of school for an extended period and now wish to continue their education. However, the school continues to grapple with overcrowding, insufficient staff, limited infrastructure, and frequent learner absenteeism.

5.3.4.2 Community and Parental Engagement

Community and parental engagement at Rwamwanja Secondary School is a complex mix of commitment and challenge. While parents and the wider community express a strong understanding of their roles in supporting their children's education, these efforts are often undermined by poverty, ignorance, and the transient nature of external support. The school's success hinges on a fragile balance between the community's proactive efforts and the systemic issues they face as a refugee-hosting population.

"Here at Rwamwanja, we are facing a problem," a BOG member stated, adding, "Students, okay parents here, around this community, given that it is a refugee settlement, are very poor. So, it becomes very hard for them to pay some of the charges, the school dues. So here, that is actually what I am seeing as a major challenge. The community, because we have... we are the... called the refugee hosting community. The community has its behaviours and eh... other traditional ways of thinking."

Another government official emphasised,

"And another thing we are advocating for is involvement of the community schools so that they all remain under the support of the government, especially in this era when we are seeing funding going on and off and being reduced. So, if the government is in charge of those schools, it can plan for them, no matter the resources are, they will support them and then this support that comes in from partners can supplement because it is not guaranteed."

Regarding school attendance, a BOG member noted,

"So, those don't bring their kids to school because they expect them to get married, but this depends on the level of... of understanding and knowledge on the parents. Cause if the parent is willing, they are in school. If the parent is unwilling, they are at home. So, this one is purely on a parent's basis."

Conversely, a BOG member observed a positive trend, stating,

"I think if you can now look at the population that is in the school, we have more girls than boys. That one is an indicator that people were sensitised, and that one is because we have these organisations which organised the workshops and due to that they sensitised people, especially the community outside to know the... the... the... the value and the role of education, especially to the... to the girl child."

A para-social worker detailed various prevention activities, explaining,

"And with others like prevention activities like awareness sessions, we have other agencies that do awareness sessions, we have SOS, we have Finn Church, that is education and protection in some parts in schools, and we have Uganda Red Cross that do the tracing parts, we also have World Vision, they also do the prevention parts and

we have CBOs or Refugees Led Organisations that also support us in conducting awareness sessions, they are the Community Based Organisations I can term them like that, yeah, it is specifically that."

This worker also highlighted the vulnerability of some children, stating,

"The children who are abused, someone can find them, and take them to an unknown place, those are the children who do move to look for food because they don't have where to belong, those are children who always fail to go to school because they lack a caretaker."

Additionally, they identified a key reason for non-attendance:

"Mainly absenteeism because parents are currently struggling due to reduced funding, and the fact that they are struggling, these children have dropped out, which has led to dropping out of school."

A para-social worker also pointed out issues with external assistance, noting,

"Another challenge is when the partners are coming on the ground to assist or to assess and get the challenges of children or community members, they don't involve those people who know children's or refugees' problems; they directly enter the community."

They further elaborated on parental attitudes:

"Secondly, the parents are ignorant. There are those parents who say that we are refugees, we don't come to study here. I personally didn't go to school. Then, the challenge comes when the people don't understand the importance of studying in the life of a child."

A parent described their role in their children's education:

"We as parents, we have a role we play in the learning of our children which we add on the regular basic needs like giving them food, clothes, medical care and then on part of school, first of all we first put manners in them, to talk to them about what they should do at school then pay school fees and then look for scholastic materials and then continue to guide them in their education journey, when he gets a challenge he/ she should be able to communicate such that you find a solution."

The parent also praised the school's club activities:

"So when the children come back we ask them and they tell us about the clubs, at school there clubs like debate, Sinamen, there are so many clubs, educators, so when the children get engaged in those clubs they get skills to see how they can gain confidence, most especially like debate at schools helps children to know how they can speak in public and to learn English and they learn skills they are supposed to do and most especially there is a club called Sinamen which teaches girls to make sanitary towels and teaches them how to make liquid soap, then we have another club called Steam this especially helps children how to make shoe polish, soap, so all these things help

children to gain skills and more confidence because when they are participating in those clubs they gain more confidence in talking in public."

This initiative was particularly welcomed by parents, with a PTA member stating,

"We parents are excited about these projects or activities because we have been having trouble buying sanitary towels. The cost of pads increased to UGx. 3000= and yet we also have other scholastic needs to take care of, such as buying books, paying fees, etc."

Community and parental engagement at Rwamwanja Secondary School is strong in intent but weakened by poverty, negative attitudes, and refugee-specific vulnerabilities. Effective support requires interventions that go beyond awareness to address financial burdens and cultural barriers.

Enabling factors: Parents proactively support their children's education through instilling discipline, paying fees, and providing materials. Growing awareness of girls' education, NGO sensitisation, and practical skills-based school clubs, e.g., sanitary pad and soap-making, strengthen engagement and reduce financial pressures on families.

Disabling factors: Barriers include widespread poverty, parental ignorance or negative attitudes toward education, and the vulnerability of children without caretakers. External interventions that fail to involve knowledgeable community members further limit the effectiveness of engagement initiatives.

5.3.4.3 Perceptions of Gender Roles and Leadership

The perceptions of gender roles and leadership at Rwamwanja Secondary School show a clear tension between evolving beliefs in equality and deeply entrenched cultural and economic barriers. While there is a strong push from school administration and some community members to promote gender-balanced leadership and equal opportunity, these efforts are often undermined by parental attitudes that devalue girls' education. There is no direct student voice data from Rwamwanja concerning gendered classroom dynamics or club-based leadership experiences. However, structural reflections from MoES officials point to entrenched domestic burdens and gender norms that restrict student participation, especially among girls. A boy student expressed a progressive view:

"It was a backwards mindset when we limited women from participating in some activities, thinking they were not strong, but now we have discovered that some women can perform better than men, so the roles should be the same."

Another boy acknowledged disparities while maintaining a belief in equality:

"At school, opportunities are equal, but since girls are weak because we experience it in leadership, where girls shy away from most activities, saying they can't do them. When boys are here so that is why they provide them a wide range of opportunities so that they can feel the width and range of society. They want them to be equal to men."

He further elaborated on societal influences on leadership, stating,

"Everyone can be a leader, but what affects them is the communities and societies they come from. Some ladies are given positions but they can never handle them well yet there are others in the community who have not got a chance and yet they have better leadership skills some societies have stereotypy and they have imparted it in some women so even if they are capable, they always run away from that responsibility and some living conditions don't favour some categories of people to become leaders because in our society today, to be a leader, you must be knowing someone in an office or you must have money."

A para-social worker highlighted a challenge faced by some students:

"We have child mothers at school, also attending school. So, you will also find that you have a child mother. Today she is around, tomorrow she is taking the child to the hospital, today she is around, tomorrow her child is sick. She will miss out on school."

They also noted cultural influences:

"And even our culture influences the men, when the man fails to attend the school, he decides to send the boys at school because they will help me and leave the girls because tomorrow, she will get married, now you see these problems, according to me, the way we live in the community, our young sisters are more vulnerable and affected."

A BOG member identified a key issue:

"The challenge we have here is sensitisation, like girls are not given enough advice. They are not exposed to the benefits of education so in that case, we end up having more boys in school than the girls."

Despite these challenges, a BOG member observed positive progress regarding gender equality:

"With gender equality here, at least we have been blessed that we have been having some organisations that have put some initiatives to make the community ah... be aware of gender equality. So, at least the population around here can understand, and we have no problem there."

Another BOG member added,

"We have been able to notice that at least there is some balance. Then, the boys, the girls at least are having the same benefits. No one is put on top of the other. All of them are considered. So, the issue of gender equality is on some good level."

However, this member also acknowledged a persistent issue:

"Another challenge, the... There is a perception in the parents whereby, when the girls reach the age of sixteen (16), seventeen (17), then... then the parents will resume and count as if they get the bride. So, they count the girls in terms of money, which leads to the dropouts of the girls from the schools. They look at girl child education as something which is not really productive because they want these girls to get married and they get money."

A BOG member further stated,

"As for me, I have seen that the parents, the teachers and the community have embraced the idea. They have welcomed it to the extent that even in schools right now, when you do a survey, you still find that even the positions, the prefectural positions and council board positions are given to both girls and boys."

A government official highlighted a specific cultural barrier:

"Cultural beliefs. Okay, the biggest population here are Congolese, and for them, when a girl has made 13/14, the parents can decide to get you married off, which leaves them disadvantaged and limits them the opportunity to accessing and excelling in education. They would prefer marrying them off."

A parent echoed this, stating,

"It is just cultural, at certain ages in this community girls are supposed to get married off and because of the economic conditions, girls mostly drop out of school and go and get married such that parents can get some money, some families, the girls drop out."

The PTA emphasised their efforts in promoting leadership skills:

"We normally empower our learners with leadership skills. We allow them to actively participate in the leadership of the school. Whereby girls and boys get, they share the leadership roles without segregation based on sex."

Another official noted that poverty plays a decisive role:

"A child wants to participate, but she finds herself having to leave school to do chores that the family expects her to do. Parents prefer their children to go and support themselves economically."

These observations indicate that meaningful gender-transformative programming would require addressing these underlying socioeconomic factors. Gender roles and leadership at Rwamwanja Secondary School are evolving but remain constrained by cultural and economic pressures. While the school promotes inclusivity and leadership opportunities for girls, early marriage, domestic labour, and poverty in the refugee community continue to limit girls' education and empowerment.

Enabling factors: Positive drivers include active promotion of gender-balanced leadership by the school and PTA, growing awareness of gender equality through NGO initiatives, and a shifting mindset among students and community members that recognises the importance of girls' participation in leadership roles.

Disabling factors: Key barriers include cultural and economic views of girls as commodities, leading to early marriage and dropouts; domestic chores and poverty that disproportionately burden girls; and girls' lack of confidence, shaped by negative societal stereotypes and interruptions such as caring for children.

5.3.4.4 School Environment and Psychosocial Realities

The school environment at Rwamwanja Secondary School is a place of profound contradiction. While there are dedicated efforts to provide psychosocial and infrastructural support, these are often overwhelmed by systemic challenges stemming from the refugee context. The school is a hub of learning, but it also reflects the trauma, poverty, and instability of the community it serves. A para-social worker discussed the challenges of maintaining program consistency, stating,

"Maybe, this is going to be mainly in schools, of course, I don't know how you are going to deal with it. Maybe if it is the holidays, you close the program and wait for them to come back. And then also, absenteeism, absenteeism is something that is common here. You had them mention the problem of school dropout; everyone mentioned school dropout, and absenteeism is one of the things that you are going to find. Today you started with your group, which has 10, 5 boys, 5 girls. You balance the gender, you find the people you put in, and they have dropped out of school. The following day, you select others, and the next time these have changed the school now."

A government official highlighted the difficulties with school feeding programs:

"While at school, if you find them a school, they are guided by the different schools to provide maize and beans, which is a bit hard for some. Why? Among the students, we have child-headed households, whereby I am the student and the guardian and at the same time, I have younger siblings. So, the time I would be cultivating or finding something to eat, and also have a package to deliver to school to support their school feeding programme, I am expected to be at school."

Teacher transfers pose another significant challenge. A government official explained,

"We also have a similar challenge of teacher transfers, for example, Kamwenge district cannot produce all the 61 teachers we have here. So, you find other teachers coming from surrounding districts, and some of them have knowledge about the refugee operations or the refugee dynamics, but others do not. So, the plan is if you recruit the teachers, you take them through safeguarding, child protection and all those things. However, you cannot guarantee that someone will remain here. We are already constrained, we have high enrolments and few classes, and few teachers. So, a teacher in the refugee setting is really constrained, so any chance someone gets, they will run away, including those who join the government. They prefer being posted elsewhere and not in the refugee settlement."

Regarding psychosocial support, a para-social worker described available resources:

"We also have child-friendly spaces and they are called CFS centres, child-friendly spaces, you will find at least in some zones, currently we have 10. We have 10 child-friendly spaces in different locations, or so at the reception centre where new arrivals reach, you find that there is also a child-friendly space. So this is now where children go for playing when they are out of school, schools going in the morning, now they don't go back after he lunch they will now move to those CFSs centres and that is part of psychosocial, actually we believe that that is the best because these children are there, our facilitators, they can identify children with distress, child has been coming

to CFSs but they don't want to play, they are just isolating themselves; so they will know that there is something not right in that child. But when they are there, they are on those play materials, you know, children like such things."

A PTA member highlighted the impact of past trauma:

"In our refugee setting, some of our learners are very traumatised because of their past experiences. Psychologically, they are not stable. War affected them so much that even their levels of concentration in the different activities are low."

Another para social worker noted specialised support:

"Here in Rwamanja, we have partners that do mental health and psychosocial support. there we have Alight, which has a psychosocial and mental health sector that is specialised in MHPS. There is also TPO Uganda, which also provides psychosocial support, so those are specialised."

A BOG member explained how they identify students needing support:

"I always encourage you to stand firm to help or to alert me... my teachers. They should carry out guidance and counselling. Because after the session, if somebody has a challenge, obviously that person will look for you and that is how I can identify and then I start help... and they start help from there as I... as a par... if a par... if a teacher identifies, forwards, forwards and then it reaches to me and we see how we can help this particular person."

Infrastructure limitations were raised by a BOG member:

"Here at Rwamwanja Secondary School, we have a problem of low structures or enrollment is high, and the classrooms are very few. During the enrolment of the learners, enrolment of the enrolment is overwhelming, so we don't have enough latrines to accommodate those learners. We have a problem of overpopulation."

Language barrier is another significant challenge, as a BOG member explained:

"I think the problem or the challenge that the students here, boys and girls, are facing is all about language. Because of the language barrier, because we have got different students from different countries, and it's very hard for them to understand what you are telling them. We especially have learners from Congo, we have learners from Rwanda, and we have learners from Sudan. So, sometimes it is very hard for them to express themselves in English."

A government official also mentioned "spontaneous departures," noting,

"We are also finding challenges with spontaneous departures. They unofficially find their way and leave the settlement. So today they are here and tomorrow they are not. When you are doing registration for p.7, that is when you hear that one of the candidates has gone back regardless of being male or female."

A PTA member shared a practical solution they have implemented:

"We've introduced sanitary towel making."

While Rwamwanja benefits from government staffing and refugee support programs, the physical and psychosocial environments remain strained. Para-social workers described overcrowded classes, inconsistent NGO support, and a lack of material follow-through. They stated,

"They inform the children they will be given things, like bags, but when items arrive, there are not enough. Some receive, others don't. The rest become discouraged and stop coming to school."

Multiple respondents voiced frustration that aid agencies bring items without community consultation, with one expressing,

"Before you bring me clothes, ask what I need. Maybe I need food. If you bring clothes I don't need, I will sell them."

Emotional distress among learners is acknowledged but unsupported due to the absence of trained psychosocial personnel; teachers are left to manage well-being on instinct.

The school environment at Rwamwanja Secondary School shows resilience but is heavily challenged by systemic issues such as overcrowding, poverty, teacher instability, and inconsistent NGO support. Without comprehensive, community-informed solutions, the school struggles to meet the physical and psychological needs of its vulnerable students.

Enabling factors: Key supports include specialised psychosocial services from organisations like Alight and TPO Uganda, proactive guidance and counselling by teachers and the BOG, Child Friendly Spaces for trauma processing, and practical initiatives like sanitary towel production that reduce family burdens.

Disabling factors: Barriers include overcrowding and insufficient infrastructure, high student-to-teacher ratios, teacher turnover, and pervasive psychosocial trauma. Socioeconomic pressures on child-headed households, absenteeism, and inconsistent program participation further undermine the school's ability to provide stable support.

5.3.4.5 Tuseme Club Dynamics

The potential introduction of a Tuseme club at Rwamwanja Secondary School is met with both optimism and significant forewarned challenges. While stakeholders see the value in such a club for student development and community engagement, they also recognise that its success will depend on careful planning and a deep understanding of the local context. The school's environment, though lacking an active Tuseme club, provides a clear roadmap of what works and what doesn't. There is no evidence of an active Tuseme club at Rwamwanja during Phase 2. Instead, school and government stakeholders expressed aspirational intent to initiate such a club in the future. A MoES official described the need for integration and sustainability planning. A boy student commented on clubs in general:

"Clubs are easy to join because they don't require anything like a registration fee. When one wants to join a club, one goes to the patron, and one is registered."

Another boy explained the purpose of existing clubs:

"These clubs are formed to counsel learners to stay in school, like girls in the boarding section have their leaders who sit and counsel them about the challenges they are facing and how to overcome them. The boys also have their counsellor, who also does the same, so sometimes we merge and identify the solutions to the problems."

A para-social worker suggested an initial focus for Tuseme:

"I was thinking that TUSEME should start by sensitising parents, the parents to understand that the children must study, although there are challenges."

A PTA member noted a potential obstacle for clubs:

"Yes, there is a challenge there. You know, with the secondary, we have many subjects to teach. So, you kind of have time for social teaching, because of the many subjects, the government is saying that the relations should stop at two, but it is very high."

A BOG member also foresaw a challenge with new initiatives:

"Some have negative attitudes towards new change... new changes, new clubs. They may think, 'What is this one going to help us? We have seen clubs. We have seen what. What are they going to help us?' So, they may... they may be challenged there. The... the... the... project that Tuseme may face is the problem of the poor attitude towards new things, welcoming new things and projects."

A government official provided guidance on introducing Tuseme:

"We do not know where Tuseme is coming from, but you know, and you know the structures. If it is something you want to roll out in the refugee-hosting districts, if it is something coming from the Ministry of Education, it is better. When it comes from above, it will definitely descend from a technical Ministry. Like you mentioned, ERP, this is how it came in, and it is being coordinated at the ministry, though they have their secretariat. But the information spoken by the ERP team is information known to be cutting across, so it would be good if you also start from that angle and descend. However, you identify the key stakeholders. If you know you are getting into the districts, much as you come through the Ministry of Education, the district should be aware, and the refugee department should also be aware, because you are dealing with a sort of concern under their control. And the line continues, "you do not deal with someone from Kampala and you call it a day because when you come here, I will not know how to help you."

This official further advised on implementation:

"When Tuseme comes in, let us create awareness among the already existing education stakeholders about the programme. It would be good to also engage with the community to let them know about what you intend to do, trickle down to the administrators of the schools, teachers, so that they know in schools. Engage the prefects' bodies to also know so that it is rolled out and everyone knows about it. Like we said, we are already enhancing sustainability and creating ownership. It should not be a come-and-go

business because that way it will remain for FAWE and not the people you intend to deliver it to."

A parent highlighted the social benefits of club participation:

"When the children come here to school, we also encourage them as parents that they can join these clubs to get associated with other members of other classes and even get friendships for future use or future advantages. If you find a child who is in senior one, they are in the same debating club as the one in senior six, so in future, if she gets any opportunity, she can invite her friend, friendship and other things, social organisations."

Finally, a PTA member identified a barrier to engagement:

"One of the challenges that prevents these learners from engaging in these projects is a lack of resources. For example, if it is like an entrepreneurship club, in entrepreneurship we do many things, we bake, make liquid soap, shoe polish and many others. If you don't have the resources to make those things, these learners will be demotivated."

The Tuseme club at Rwamwanja Secondary School has strong potential due to parental and governmental support, but its success depends on overcoming past project failures, resource shortages, and time constraints. Sustainable implementation requires transparency, community engagement, and integration with existing school structures.

Enabling factors: Enablers include community familiarity with and receptiveness to clubs, the perceived social and skill-building benefits for students, and clear guidance from government officials on creating awareness, sustainability, and local ownership. Clubs are also accessible, often without registration fees, encouraging participation.

Disabling factors: Challenges include scepticism from the community due to previous failed initiatives, lack of resources for practical club activities, and a packed academic schedule that limits time for social and extracurricular programs. Poverty and administrative constraints exacerbate these barriers.

Table 27: General Enabling and Disabling Factors at Rwamwanja Secondary School – Kamwenge District

| Enabling Factors | Disabling Factors |
|---|--|
| 1) Government and community Support. | 1) Poverty and economic hardship. |
| 2) Targeted education programs. | 2) Cultural norms and traditional mindsets. |
| 3) Effective awareness campaigns and partnerships. | 3) Inadequate infrastructure and overcrowding. |
| 4) Active parental and community engagement in school life. | 4) Teacher shortage and high turnover. |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>5) Available psychosocial support structures.</p> | <p>5) Absenteeism and unofficial departures.</p> <p>6) Language barrier.</p> <p>7) Inconsistent and uncoordinated external aid.</p> |
|--|---|

5.3.5 School 4: Ntenungi Secondary School – Kamwenge District

5.3.5.1 General Context

Table 28: Ntenungi Secondary School Profile

| Category | Details |
|--------------------------------|--|
| School Name | Ntenungi Secondary School |
| School Location | Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement, Kamwenge District, Uganda |
| Location Type | Refugee/IDP settlement, rural/remote |
| School Level | Secondary School |
| School Type | Community school (established by OPM in 2022) |
| Enrolment Figures | Total: 1,279 students; Nationals: 505 (260 males, 245 females); Refugees: 774 (496 males, 278 females); includes AEP and mainstream learners |
| Number of Teachers | 45 (29 males, 16 females); employed by NGOs/UNHCR/WCC |
| Number of Administrative Staff | Not specified; includes staff responsible for discipline, welfare, and sanitation |
| Number of Clubs | Multiple (Tuseme, Debate Club, Sanitation Club, Child Rights Club, Food & Nutrition, Agriculture, Music, Dance & Drama) |
| Facilities | Limited; lacks a school fence, solar-powered electricity (unreliable), and inadequate learning and recreational resources |
| Number of IDP/Refugee Students | 774 |
| Proximity to Institutions | Remote; difficult to access; teachers may commute up to 2 hours; day scholars travel up to 15 km from surrounding villages |

Ntenungi Secondary School is a community school established in 2022 by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). It is in the Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement and was created to address the overwhelming learner population at Rwamwanja Secondary School. The school serves both national and refugee learners, with a total enrolment of approximately 1,279 students. Of these, 505 are nationals (260 males and 245 females), while 774 are refugees (496 males and 278 females). A section of the learners, both refugees and nationals, are beneficiaries of the Accelerated Education Programme (AEP), while others follow the mainstream education system. The school has a total of 45 teachers (29 males and 16 females), all of whom are paid by development partners such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and War Child Canada (WCC). However, access to the school remains a major challenge affecting both teachers and learners.

5.3.5.2 Community and Parental Engagement

Community and parental engagement at Ntenungi Secondary School is a dynamic landscape marked by both promising progress and deep-seated challenges. While there is a clear effort to forge strong partnerships between the school and caregivers, these efforts are often undermined by stubborn cultural norms, misinformation, and poverty. The school recognises that its success

depends on a sustained effort to sensitise the community and address the root causes of negative attitudes towards education. Ntenungi showed promising progress in cultivating meaningful school–community partnerships. Teachers described how consistent engagement with caregivers, especially mothers and faith leaders, gradually built trust in club work. One male student shared,

A BOG member highlighted cultural barriers, stating,

"There are some cultures that cannot believe that a girl child should be considered for education before a boy. Some cultures say, when I educate a girl child, she will get married in a certain area, in a certain district, and when I educate that child, we as a family, we cannot benefit much, when that girl child is educated, because she will be leaving this family."

This sentiment was echoed by another BOG member who noted,

"We have community members, especially, business owners and in that section, I am talking about bar attendants. They themselves tend to be confused through guidance and counselling in some gatherings, especially church services, market times, those bar attendants should keep in mind that the owners of the bars need young and nice-looking girls to make sure that they promote their businesses."

To counter these influences, a BOG member suggested,

"One of the major activities that you should consider would be community sensitisation. The school becomes an area of implementation. So, a group of people should go to the community, for instance, churches, those gatherings to say the same. What is the importance of community sensitisation? This is to help the parents understand and encourage their children to do the same, and not just leave it to the school. If the child gets the information from the parents, he will come with that mindset to embrace the club activities. Then, we will end up getting many participants within the club. So, community sensitisation is important for proper implementation."

Another BOG member observed differences in student attendance patterns, remarking,

"If they have come and sent learners for something, to go home, you have girls run home, and if it needs coming back, they come back. The boys will reach home in the evening. If we are to have some absenteeism now, most of them are boys and girls; they are there, but to a small extent."

Challenges in shifting mindsets were evident when BOG members recounted,

"We were sharing with our learners, but about five girls wrote and said that it is not right for a girl child to be educated to higher levels. Our questions were why? The reason was that if you look at most ladies who are educated to higher levels, they have failed families."

Despite these views, BOG members emphasised efforts to promote girls' education and leadership, stating,

"We remind them to educate their girl children. When we are getting into elections, we advise ladies in the community to contest for some posts in elections."

Cultural norms also presented obstacles, as a BOG member pointed out,

"In some cultures, even now, girls are not allowed to speak in public. Now you are saying this is a club for speaking. What do you speak?"

A boy challenged gender stereotypes, asserting,

"I think it's a stereotype where society presumes that cooking is only for girls, and yet boys can also cook."

The perceived value of clubs was also a factor, with a club-involved girl noting,

"They think joining a club must come with soda and T-shirts. When there's none, some say, 'Why should I join?'"

This reflects a need for consistent communication with families on the developmental, not just material, value of creative programming. Community and parental engagement at Ntenungi Secondary School shows both progress and challenges. While the school actively builds trust and raises awareness, deep-rooted cultural beliefs and poverty continue to undermine girls' education. Sustained communication and sensitisation are needed to shift the community's focus toward long-term educational investment.

Enabling factors: Positive factors include proactive community sensitisation by the school and BOG members, emphasis on the importance of girls' education, encouragement of women's leadership, and the observed willingness of girls to return to school, reflecting growing commitment to education.

Disabling factors: Barriers include entrenched cultural attitudes devaluing girls' education, negative external influences promoting alternative work, and a transactional mindset among students expecting material incentives due to pervasive poverty.

5.3.5.3 Perceptions of Gender Roles and Leadership

Perceptions of gender roles and leadership at Ntenungi Secondary School are a mix of progressive student views and lingering societal biases. While students demonstrate a strong belief in gender equality in practice, they also acknowledge the powerful external forces and internal insecurities that prevent girls from fully embracing leadership roles. Among the four Uganda schools studied, Ntenungi demonstrated the most progressive gender norms among learners. Students routinely described leadership as a shared capacity rather than a gendered entitlement. A girl said,

"On my side, I think boys are not better than girls because, as they say that what a man does, a woman can do better. So, like at our school, especially in our class, girls sweep, even boys sweep and sometimes mop. So, I think that there is no activity that a girl cannot do."

Regarding leadership positions, the girl added,

"About leadership, there is where you find that there are some posts that need only boys or girls. Now, like the post of the head boy. Now you cannot be a girl and then you go to the post of the head boy. Even a boy cannot go for the post of the head boy. But as a post of the head prefect, the academic prefect, so they have all to interchange."

Another girl highlighted the challenges faced by female leaders, stating,

"To me, the boys and girls in leadership may not face similar challenges. For instance, if a girl can stand for the post of being the Head Prefect, the Head Prefect, there are those boys who still have the stereotype. They still have the mentality that girls can't be leaders. So, if you are a girl and you are the Head Prefect, you may not talk to a certain boy who is in senior six, and they feel like... they just mock you, they backbite, they say you cannot have a word where I am a boy. So, in that specific part, the girl will feel small and will be diminished."

A girl also described the division of labour in school activities, noting,

"Activities like at school, girls sweep the room, boys carry desks outside, boys go and fetch water, girls mop."

A boy reflected on the broader societal influences on leadership, observing,

"Everyone can be a leader, but what affects them is the communities and societies they come from. Some ladies are given positions but they can never handle them well yet there are others in the community who have not got a chance and yet they have better leadership skills some societies have stereotypy and they have imparted it in some women so even if they are capable, they always run away from that responsibility and some living conditions don't favour some categories of people to become leaders because in our society today, to be a leader, you must be knowing someone in an office or you must have money."

Another boy commented on the opportunities provided to girls, saying,

"At school, opportunities are equal, but since girls are weak because we experience it in leadership, where girls shy away from most activities, saying they can't do them, when boys are here, so that is why they provide them a wide range of opportunities so that they can feel the width and range of the society. They want them to be equal to the men."

Perceptions of gender roles and leadership at Ntenungi Secondary School show a tension between progressive school-level practices and community-level stereotypes. While the school promotes equality, girls' confidence and leadership opportunities are constrained by persistent social biases and economic barriers. Achieving true gender equality requires broader community engagement to challenge these norms.

Enabling factors: The school fosters a progressive culture where domestic labour is shared, and leadership roles are gender-balanced. Students recognise equal potential for leadership regardless of gender, reflecting a practical and attitudinal shift toward equality.

Disabling factors: Key barriers include societal stereotypes, girls' lack of confidence, mockery from male peers, and structural socioeconomic constraints, such as the need for money or connections to attain leadership roles. These factors limit girls' ability to fully embrace leadership opportunities despite the school's efforts.

5.3.5.4 School Environment and Psychosocial Realities

The school environment at Ntenungi Secondary School is a place of stark contrast, with students expressing great satisfaction while teachers and administrators grapple with significant challenges. The school successfully fosters a positive and inclusive learning atmosphere, but it is deeply strained by the psychosocial needs of its students, a lack of resources, and teacher welfare issues. A BOG member mentioned the presence of support systems, saying,

"I talked about child protection focal persons, actually, we also have 2 teachers responsible for it, there is an organisation, it deals with mental health of workers.... is it STAPONA?"

A girl also highlighted the benefits of school clubs, noting,

"The thing I like about our school is these clubs that are in. One, we have a debating club which helps us to improve our English speaking, and improve students' performance."

Despite the positive aspects, school teachers articulated challenges related to student discipline and trauma, stating,

"We are really in a settlement, but when we reported to this setting, we are positive to work, but amidst our sacrifice, there are some issues we encounter. You see, these learners, most of them, are coming from outside where the situation was not all that good. And even after reaching here at school, because of the experience that they face where they are coming from...in summary, the discipline of the learners is still lacking. Meaning that you are trying to give service, but the discipline is still lacking."

They further added, "We are handling learners who have gone through some trauma." The teachers also spoke about their heavy workload, saying,

"Workload is something that is too much here because the school is big and the staff is a little bit small compared to the number. So, we face that challenge ranging from class work to other things, outside the class."

A school teacher also shared personal challenges, stating,

"The biggest challenge which I have faced here is poor accommodation. Where we are living, we are surely suffering from it. Living in poor houses, whatnot, and even the price of buying things is also high."

BOG members discussed issues of substance abuse among students, observing,

"Some of our young boys are drug users and drug abusers. Currently, we have children who take alcohol. We have advised, they like going to play pool. They leave their homes that they have go to school and end up not attending school. If there are football competitions at Rwamwanja, Ntenungi, where you are having lessons, it is hard for girls to leave home and go for those activities. In other words, girls have that natural fear, which we men don't have."

They also outlined the school's approach to addressing challenges, explaining,

"We have different departments. So, we use different departments to identify challenges. Then, the school has a students' disciplinary committee of students, which is managed by the prefects. Then the school actually has a chief judge among the students."

Students expressed their positive experiences at school. A boy said,

"What I like most about school is learning. We come not knowing most of the things, but when we are engaged, we learn many skills, like projects that involve practical's and we implement these skills at home compared to before, when I was just home watching TV. These projects keep me busy at home. At school, we associate with many people. For instance, we internationals look at the nationals as superiors because we are refugees, but our school has made sure that all of us are equal, so it has built motivation among us to know that we are all the same."

Another boy shared,

"I like school because you interact with different people, you learn new ideas, you learn how to associate with different people and how to compete. Additionally, we are also taught skills which are beneficial in future. We have debating and very interesting clubs which help us to build our speech confidence and how to be articulate."

The school environment at Ntenungi Secondary School combines nurturing academic engagement with significant challenges. Trauma, substance abuse among students, staff shortages, and poor teacher living conditions create a volatile environment. While internal support structures exist, external interventions are needed to address deep psychosocial and welfare issues.

Enabling factors: Key strengths include student-centred, project-based learning, focus on social and psychosocial well-being, equality between nationals and refugees, and active school clubs that build skills and confidence. These factors foster motivation, inclusivity, and personal development.

Disabling factors: Challenges include student trauma, poor discipline, substance abuse, and teacher workload and welfare issues. Limited staff, inadequate accommodation, and high living costs negatively impact teachers' morale and effectiveness, threatening the sustainability of the supportive environment.

5.3.5.5 Tuseme Club Dynamics

The Tuseme club's potential at Ntenungi Secondary School is met with high expectations and a clear understanding of the factors that will determine its success. Students and teachers

articulate a vision for a club that is inclusive, well-resourced, and focused on practical outcomes. However, the success of the club is contingent on addressing several key barriers, including financial constraints, segregation, and a lack of sustained support. Tuseme emerged frequently in learner reflections as a desirable future club. Students displayed detailed knowledge of how they hoped it would work, offering suggestions rooted in lived experience. A girl proposed,

"Another thing, maybe not charging the entry fee, because, for example, if you impose your policies, saying if you want to join, you pay maybe UGX. 30,000= . It's quite difficult for students to get that amount of money."

A school teacher emphasised the importance of clear objectives and follow-up, stating,

"I think having clear goals and objectives of what the club is meant to achieve will make it sustainable and run for a long time. Otherwise, without clear goals and objectives and direction, we may not have it for long. Then, the follow-up by the initiators. Like today, you have come to initiate us. I think if you continue coming to check on how it is faring, generally it's progress, then it will stand and sustain it."

A girl also highlighted the need for a constitution, saying,

"For me, I think that Tuseme can work very well when it has a constitution. This constitution makes learners know more about the club and what the club wants. Because the constitution first explains to the learners, if they accept joining and they see the advantages of those laws and regulations and the disadvantages."

Regarding incentives, a girl suggested,

"What I think can make this Tuseme more attractive and fun is by having some privileges, like taking an example from some other clubs, you find they are coming, they distribute T-shirts, branding them with their club names or their club mottos, so that attracts other people to come and join the club. You give them different things like pads if they are girls, you give them underwear if they are boys, so you make them all equal."

A boy voiced concerns about potential segregation, stating,

"I think the Tuseme club will be more interesting if there is no segregation. Now, like in this school, we are refugees and some nationals. Now, like you find a club, they come and say we want a limited number of nationals and a higher number of refugees. So, these nationals create anger against the other ones."

A BOG member pointed out other factors that might hinder participation, noting,

"One, here we have children who are fathers and mothers, extra responsibilities possessed by some of them. You can look at a woman who is here because we have them, and is the one who is supposed to go and cook for her husband. So, I think extra activities possessed by some of those learners may hinder them from attending extracurricular activities."

They also highlighted the importance of trainer characteristics, saying,

"Characters of the trainer, I may be a harsh trainer. I may be a harsh one. When learners come, you don't give them comfort. Someone says, instead of meeting this rude man, I would rather leave the club."

A girl reiterated the positive impact of existing clubs, stating,

"The thing I like about our school is these clubs that are in. One, we have a debating club which helps us to improve our English speaking, and improve students' performance."

Another girl shared her ease in joining clubs, explaining,

"I found it very easy to join the clubs of this school. Just because, at the beginning, even right now, there was no segregation. Because I'll just come to class, they say, "members, if you're interested in this club, come and join."

A girl also shared her personal motivation for joining a club, saying,

"For me, the reason I joined the club, I am someone who likes social life. I just like interacting with people, sharing ideas. And another thing, I was conversing with my colleagues who are refugees. They are like, they don't see interest in studying because after all, even if they finish their high school, they are not going to get jobs."

Regarding the content of club activities, a boy suggested,

"They should separate girls' and boys' issues, for example, when making pads, that is the girls' department, and let boys also have their activity." He also emphasised the inclusive nature of the club, stating,"

Another voice expressed a forward-looking, hopeful perspective on the Tuseme club's inclusive nature, seeing it as a platform for both genders to acquire and disseminate knowledge.

"This club is going to give information to both girls and boys, and I think this will help us transfer this knowledge to other people."

In contrast, a schoolteacher offers a practical, cautionary perspective from an administrative and logistical viewpoint, highlighting a potential challenge regarding the club patrons' lack of knowledge.

"I foresee the challenge of a lack of knowledge, especially on the side of the people in charge of these clubs. You will find that these patrons or the people in charge of the clubs also lack enough knowledge about the purpose or the aims of the clubs. You find that you are with learners, but you don't have enough knowledge about what the club is supposed to do and what it is supposed to achieve."

The juxtaposition of these two voices reveals the gap between student aspirations and the logistical challenges faced by school staff in implementing such clubs. School teachers also discussed the necessary resources and supervision for clubs, stating,

"The resources we may need may include pens, notebooks, manila papers, soft copy content of the activities that are to be imparted to learners."

They added,

"Supervision is also important, for instance, of the focal person you will have chosen to guide the learners or club members. Implementers should always come and supervise the leaders whom you chose to manage the clubs. You don't start the club and leave it for them alone to manage."

Furthermore, they suggested,

"Since the club might have been running in other schools, we might need external speakers, such as those from the schools where it was already running. So, you get these people to guide us as well as give us morale and share experiences on how best to run the club, the benefits, challenges for the benefit of the learners and the entire community, which in this case is the refugee setting."

The Tuseme club at Ntenungi Secondary School has strong potential due to high demand and an established culture of club participation. Its success depends on avoiding entry fees, offering meaningful incentives, and establishing a clear, sustainable structure. Without careful planning, it risks becoming a short-lived project.

Enabling factors: Key strengths include student support for free access, clear structure through a proposed constitution, inclusivity for both boys and girls, and the social benefits of club participation. These factors align with the school's culture of non-segregation and promote knowledge sharing and personal development.

Disabling factors: Barriers include a lack of tangible incentives, e.g., T-shirts and pads, potential tension between refugee and national students, heavy personal responsibilities limiting participation, and risks of ineffective leadership due to patrons lacking clarity about the club's purpose. These factors could undermine participation and sustainability.

Table 29: General Enabling and Dis-enabling Factors at Ntenungi Secondary School – Kamwenge District

| Enabling Factors | Dis-enabling Factors |
|---|---|
| 1) Supportive school environment with available psychosocial assistance. 2) Ease of joining clubs and inclusive practices. 3) Strong co-leadership in clubs by both boys and girls. | 1) Student discipline issues and trauma are prevalent. 2) External responsibilities and competing interests for students, especially those who are mothers are fathers. 3) No club budget or supply line, despite regular meetings. |

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 4) Strong co-leadership in clubs by both boys and girls. | 4) Harsh trainer characters. |
|--|------------------------------|

6.0 DISCUSSION

A cross-tabulation between the thematic codes generated and the stakeholders interviewed showed that the challenges and barriers reported that challenges/barriers reported by different stakeholders were distinct for each group of stakeholders. Although there were some overlaps in barriers reported, some stakeholders had distinct sets of challenges they raised. This finding highlights the need to pay particular attention to addressing the challenges raised by each stakeholder for an adapted Tuseme to be successfully and sustainably implemented in schools in IDP and refugee communities. This discussion examines the extent to which school-based clubs, particularly those modelled on the Tuseme framework, create meaningful opportunities for voice, confidence, and leadership among girls in underserved school environments across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda.

Framed by the project's Theory of Change, the core assumption is that when girls, especially those in refugee and resource-constrained settings, participate in safe, structured, and expressive extracurricular spaces, they are more likely to: 1) Remain in school; 2) Engage confidently in learning and school life; and 3) Emerge as peer leaders and role models. Grounded in gender-transformative education frameworks (Unterhalter et al., 2014) and the Tuseme model's roots in critical pedagogy (Mwansa & Okello, 2015), this chapter explores the relationship between enabling/disabling environments and the realisation of student agency. Findings suggest that while clubs serve as promising vehicles for empowerment, their sustainability, reach, and institutionalisation depend on how schools respond to broader systemic, social, and emotional barriers in learners' lives. Across all three countries, the data affirm that girls face deeply layered barriers to education, rarely felt at the same scale by boys. These include: 1) Domestic labour burdens, e.g., cooking, caregiving, and water collection; 2) Menstrual shame and infrastructural inadequacy, particularly lack of private toilets, bins, and sanitary materials; 3) Economic insecurity, pushing girls into transactional relationships or triggering early marriage; and 4) Emotional trauma, especially acute in IDP and refugee settings.

6.1 Ethiopia - Discussion of Findings

This discussion will address the core research questions of Phase 2, drawing directly from the enabling and dis-enabling factors identified in the four Ethiopian case study schools (Hailemariam Mamo Secondary, Fitawrari Gebeyehu Secondary, Sherkole Secondary, and Woumba Secondary). The insights gleaned from these schools, representing diverse contexts including IDP and refugee settings, offer a granular understanding of the adaptations needed for Tuseme and highlight critical factors for its success and limitations. The findings consistently emphasise that for Tuseme to be effective in these highly vulnerable contexts, it must form part of a comprehensive support system that addresses the holistic needs of learners, integrating with other innovations such as GRP and COE for a more integrated approach to addressing gender-related challenges in IDP and refugee schools.

The most pervasive dis-enabling factor across all schools is severe socio-economic hardship. Students are forced into labour (gold mining, household chores, informal jobs) to survive, leading to absenteeism and dropout. Girls face additional burdens related to menstrual hygiene and early marriage. Tuseme, as a voice and agency model, must be integrated with tangible material support. This could include providing school feeding programs, sanitary pads, and

basic school supplies (books, pens) to alleviate immediate financial pressures that pull students out of school. Sherkole and Woumba specifically highlight students prioritising income-generating activities over schooling. Fitawrari Gebeyehu notes that while external aid helps, it is often sporadic. This unpredictability prevents schools from building stable support systems and creates an environment where students may drop out when aid disappears. Tuseme's success depends on addressing these root causes of non-attendance because it is directly linked to the severe socio-economic hardships and psychosocial realities faced by students in these vulnerable communities. This directly supports the literature by Parkes et al. (2016) and UNESCO (2018), which emphasises how family and community attitudes, particularly concerning child labour and economic necessity, shape children's access and retention. Without addressing these fundamental needs, even the most empowering educational models will struggle to achieve consistent participation. The pervasive lack of student motivation and feelings of hopelessness about future opportunities (Hailemariam Mamo, Woumba) are critical dis-enabling factors. The trauma of conflict and displacement (Fitawrari Gebeyehu) adds another layer of psychological distress.

Tuseme's focus on voice and agency is inherently therapeutic. This is because the manual's own design and stated goals demonstrate that Tuseme is intended to be more than just a pedagogical model; it is a structured and supportive avenue for students to process trauma and build emotional resilience in a safe environment. The evidence is not just an interpretation but is foundational to the club's design. Therefore, Tuseme needs to explicitly incorporate psychosocial support mechanisms and hope-building activities. This could involve dedicated club sessions for trauma-informed care, career guidance that presents realistic pathways, and activities that celebrate small successes to counteract the pervasive sense of despair. The expressed need for specific academic and psychosocial support for female students (Woumba) indicates a clear area for Tuseme to focus on sensitive topics and build resilience. This aligns with Freire's (1970) "conscientisation" and feminist epistemological perspectives (Harding, 1987), which assert that empowering learners to articulate their lived realities and co-create solutions is central to their individual psychosocial development. For IDP and refugee children, this psychosocial element is amplified by their experiences of displacement and uncertainty.

Language barriers (Hailemariam Mamo, Sherkole, with Amharic instruction for South Sudanese refugees) significantly impede comprehension and participation. Traditional gender norms and community beliefs (Fitawrari Gebeyehu, Sherkole) also need careful navigation. The curriculum and facilitation of Tuseme activities must be culturally and linguistically sensitive. This could mean providing materials in relevant local languages, using bilingual facilitators where possible, and adapting discussions to address specific cultural practices like early marriage and rigid gender roles in a nuanced, non-confrontational manner. The "good cooperation and shared language (Arabic) between host and refugee communities" in Sherkole is a significant enabling factor because it breaks down a major communication barrier. This allows for easier social interaction and a sense of shared identity that can encourage stronger friendships and collaboration within the school and Tuseme clubs. This common ground is crucial for building trust and social cohesion in a conflict-affected setting, which in turn enhances the effectiveness of school programs. This resonates with Unterhalter & Heslop (2011) and Grant & Unterhalter (2012), who emphasise that community engagement is only effective when local cultural norms are respectfully negotiated. A gender-transformative approach (Leach et al., 2014) is crucial here, as it seeks to interrogate and transform unequal power relations embedded in cultural norms, rather than just acknowledge them.

Across all schools, a critical lack of essential infrastructure (labs, electricity, internet, clean toilets), overcrowding, and shortages of educational materials (textbooks, computers) are major impediments. While Tuseme is primarily an advocacy club, its effectiveness is intrinsically linked to the physical learning environment. Adaptations include guiding patrons to support members in identifying and securing funds for their activities to make advocacy effective in a resource-scarce environment. If clubs lack basic materials (Sherkole, Woumba), their ability to advance agency is severely limited. This directly relates to the "implementation gap" discussed by Unterhalter et al. (2019) and Morley et al. (2022), where progressive policies are undermined by inadequate resource allocation and poor infrastructure. Tuseme cannot operate in a vacuum; it requires a foundational level of material and immaterial resources, such as a human workforce, pens, notebooks, data collection templates, M&E templates, and action plan templates, among others, to thrive.

Teachers are overworked, underpaid, and lack compensation for extracurricular involvement (Woumba, Hailemariam Mamo). There is a decline in teacher participation in capacity-building (Sherkole). Tuseme implementation must prioritise teacher support and incentives. This includes providing training grounded in their lived realities, recognising their additional workload for club facilitation, and potentially exploring small stipends or professional development credits. The "high levels of personal motivation and dedication" of teachers (Hailemariam Mamo, Sherkole) are an enabling factor that can be leveraged if their needs are met. This aligns with Tikly et al. (2020) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who advocate for holistic, continuous professional development for teachers, tied to broader systemic reforms addressing workload, remuneration, and recognition, rather than episodic training. Teacher agency is critical for effective implementation.

The findings highlight a multi-layered ecosystem of actors, with varying levels of influence and engagement. Students are primary actors with strong intrinsic motivation (Fitawrari Gebeyehu, Woumba), a desire to learn, make friends, and achieve aspirations. They are the direct beneficiaries and active participants in Tuseme. Their "voice and agency" are the core of the model. While some of these features already exist, Tuseme should directly engage students through participatory club activities, ensuring their input shapes the content and direction. Promoting student leadership within clubs is crucial (Hailemariam Mamo). Teachers are critical frontline implementers and "gatekeepers." They exhibit high dedication (Hailemariam Mamo, Sherkole) and often provide informal support (fundraising for students in need, Fitawrari Gebeyehu). They are willing to collaborate with new initiatives like Tuseme (Hailemariam Mamo). Provide consistent, context-specific training and mentorship for teachers on Tuseme methodology. Offer incentives and recognition for their additional work in clubs. Foster a supportive environment where teachers feel empowered to lead (Oduro & MacBeath, 2003).

School management is crucial for institutionalising Tuseme, providing necessary permissions, allocating space, and encouraging a supportive school culture. They address harassment (Hailemariam Mamo) and acknowledge resource limitations. Secure their buy-in and active leadership for Tuseme. Involve them in planning and decision-making. Address their concerns about limited school funds and bureaucratic hurdles (Sherkole). Empower them with greater autonomy to address critical issues. Parents are key in shaping student attendance, behaviour, and cultural norms (Parkes et al., 2016). PTAs are active in supporting education (Fitawrari Gebeyehu). Parents generally value education (Sherkole). Conduct targeted awareness campaigns to address insufficient parental involvement (Hailemariam Mamo, Woumba), cultural barriers like early marriage, and perceived lack of employment opportunities.

Strengthen PTAs to ensure genuine participatory decision-making (Unterhalter & Heslop, 2011). Build trust by demonstrating the tangible benefits of Tuseme.

Local Government (Woreda and Sub-Woreda Administrations, Education Officials) are essential for addressing issues outside school compounds (e.g., sexual harassment, insecurity), for policy alignment, and for resource allocation. They mandate school clubs (Fitawrari Gebeyehu). Secure their active involvement and advocacy for Tuseme. Facilitate collaboration between schools and local authorities to create a safer environment and address systemic issues. Address the "significant bureaucratic hurdles" faced by administrators (Sherkole). NGOs and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) provide crucial resources and support (e.g., Hiwot Ethiopia, YWCA, Tebase-Loan service in Fitawrari Gebeyehu). They are critical for managing the burden on schools, especially in IDP/refugee contexts. Cultivate long-term, consistent partnerships with NGOs (Fitawrari Gebeyehu, Woumba), and move away from sporadic, short-term aid that lacks sustainability plans (Sherkole). Ensure that aid distribution is equitable and does not create divisions between local and refugee students. Engage them in planning for sustainable funding post-project. The analysis points to key issues and/or limitations, many of which stem from the unique vulnerabilities of IDP and refugee contexts as described below.

1. When students' and families' primary concern is survival (food, shelter, and safety), participation in extracurricular activities, no matter how empowering, becomes secondary. The "lure of gold mining and other informal labour" (Woumba, Sherkole) directly competes with school attendance. Tuseme's adoption will be limited if it does not integrate with, or is accompanied by, initiatives that address these fundamental needs. It may not reach students who have completely dropped out due to economic pressures.
2. Conflict and insecurity directly disrupt schooling, leading to school closures or occupation by military forces (Fitawrari Gebeyehu). The lack of privacy and hygiene in school toilets (Fitawrari Gebeyehu, Sherkole) and the absence of safe, quiet study spaces at home (IDP camps) create significant barriers. Parents prioritise safety over club participation (Fitawrari Gebeyehu). Tuseme's reach and consistency will be severely limited in volatile environments, and thus, the adaptation should focus on reviewing and monitoring the club activities and aligning the club activities with the school timetable. It cannot effectively function in schools that lack basic safety, sanitation, and sufficient learning spaces. Therefore, the Tuseme model's priority in these contexts should be to help restore a sense of normalcy and basic security before it addresses its core curriculum of personal development and leadership.
3. Donor aid is often sporadic, short-term, or narrowly focused, leading to a "loss of momentum and student disengagement" (Fitawrari Gebeyehu) and initiatives collapsing once funding ceases (Sherkole). This creates scepticism among students and teachers (Woumba) and limits trust in the longevity of such programs. Without a clear, long-term funding and sustainability plan, Tuseme risks remaining a short-term intervention that fails to create lasting systemic change. This echoes the literature on "fragmentation often associated with short-term, donor-funded educational projects" (Tikly et al., 2020). However, the low-cost nature of the Tuseme model provides an opportunity to rethink sustainability in disruptive and volatile environments where student turnover is high. Instead of relying heavily on external donor support, sustainability planning should prioritise embedding Tuseme within school systems,

capacity-building for teachers and peer facilitators, leveraging community ownership, and flexible, context-responsive monitoring.

4. Teachers are already overworked, underpaid, and lack compensation for extracurricular involvement (Woumba, Hailemariam Mamo). This diminishes their capacity and motivation to consistently facilitate clubs. Tuseme adoption will be constrained if it adds to teacher burden without providing adequate recognition, training, and incentives. This is a critical barrier to scaling the model.
5. Practices like early marriage, heavy domestic workloads for girls, and a societal undervaluation of females' abilities (Sherkole, Fitawrari Gebeyehu) are difficult to change through mere awareness campaigns. While Tuseme aims for gender-transformative change, progress will be slow and may face resistance. Within the limitations of a school club, one practical adaptation is to intentionally involve influential stakeholders such as parents, community leaders, and teachers during the students' performances and discussions. This ensures that the voices of learners are heard by those who hold decision-making power, thus creating opportunities for dialogue and incremental change.
6. Additionally, follow-up sessions with these stakeholders could reinforce the messages from the performances and promote collective ownership of the change process. This aligns with the understanding that sustainable transformation requires not only empowering learners but also engaging the wider community to address deep-seated community beliefs (Unterhalter & Heslop, 2011). Therefore, while Tuseme holds immense promise for promoting voice and agency among learners in IDP and refugee communities, its successful adoption and lasting impact are interdependent on addressing the severe socio-economic, infrastructural, and systemic limitations prevalent in these vulnerable contexts. It requires a holistic, integrated, and sustained approach that goes far beyond a single pedagogical intervention.

6.2 Kenya - Discussion of Findings

The Phase 2 research in Kenya yields important findings into the perceived effectiveness and necessary adaptations for the 'Tuseme' model within Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and refugee communities. By analysing the enabling and disabling factors across Runyu Primary (host), Central Primary (refugee), Malakal Primary (refugee), and Somali Bantu Mixed Secondary (refugee) schools, this discussion directly addresses the research questions, grounding findings in the outlined theoretical framework and existing literature. The synthesis reveals that while the core 'Tuseme' principles of voice and agency, gender-transformative education (GTE), and cultivating critical awareness are highly relevant, their implementation requires significant contextual adaptation.

Beyond the 'Tuseme' club activities, there's an overwhelming need to integrate basic needs provision (food, sanitary pads, uniforms, learning materials) directly into or alongside the program. The pervasive "lack of school fees, hunger, and unreliable parental income" (Runyu), "insufficient food and water at home" (Central), and "pervasive poverty and lack of basic needs" (Malakal, Somali Bantu) consistently drive absenteeism and demotivation. Adapting Tuseme requires acknowledging and integrating strategies to address these barriers, as a hungry child or a girl without sanitary pads cannot fully engage in a club, regardless of its

transformative potential. This aligns with the intersectionality framework, acknowledging that socio-economic status shapes educational outcomes alongside gender.

The high prevalence of "emotional and psychological trauma" (Central, Malakal) and "depression, trauma, and mental health issues" (Somali Bantu) among refugee and IDP students necessitates integrated Psychosocial Support (PSS). While Tuseme activities can create a peer-supported environment that offers some sense of safety and dialogue, these "safe spaces" are not formal PSS programs. Effective adaptation would require collaboration with trained counsellors or NGOs providing structured PSS services, particularly to address societal challenges such as inadequate school infrastructure, e.g. separate toilets for both genders, a point echoed in the literature on the unique challenges faced by displaced children (Parkes et al., 2016).

While Tuseme aims to empower voice, the specific issues learners are encouraged to identify and address issues that directly reflect their own lived experiences, to ensure that club activities remain relevant, meaningful, and responsive to each school community. For example, Runyu's focus might be on "early pregnancies" due to "disco matanga" and "flooding," whereas Central and Malakal would prioritise "early marriage" and "lack of official documentation." Somali Bantu highlights "FGM, early marriage (often hidden), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and child prostitution." Beyond these societal issues, Tuseme also addresses localised school-level challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure, such as separate toilets and safe learning spaces, which directly affect learners' participation and engagement. Advocacy efforts stemming from Tuseme must reflect these intersectional realities, moving beyond a one-size-fits-all curriculum. Importantly, the model is designed to respond to local challenges through a structured familiarisation and data collection process to ensure that club activities are grounded in the specific realities and priorities of each school community.

"Long distances to school" and "children being burdened with adult duties" (Runyu) or "childcare responsibilities" (Somali Bantu) mean rigid club schedules are unlikely to succeed. Adaptations should include flexible meeting times, potentially integrating activities into existing school hours or offering alternative formats that accommodate students' external responsibilities, particularly for girls and firstborns. The "lack of motivation" and frequent "teacher transfers" or reassignments (Runyu), "unpaid teachers, layoffs" (Central), and "incentive teachers struggling to access higher education/scholarships" (Somali Bantu) indicate a critical need to support the educators who will facilitate Tuseme. Addressing teacher motivation requires comprehensive training, ongoing mentorship, and tangible incentives (financial or professional development) to ensure teacher buy-in and sustained engagement, as highlighted by Tikly et al. (2020) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) regarding teacher agency and systems alignment. Beyond motivation, teacher reassignments can disrupt program continuity, thus emphasising the importance of strategies for knowledge retention and sustainable implementation within schools.

To bridge the persistent "implementation gap" (Unterhalter et al., 2019) identified in the literature, advocacy and policy influencing must be multi-scalar and context-specific. Leveraging "local radio stations for public awareness campaigns" (Central) and utilising "community mobilisers, block leaders, and chairladies" (Somali Bantu) are crucial. This approach enables "continuous need for awareness campaigns on the importance of education, gender equality" (Somali Bantu) and allows for "dialogue, sensitisation, and collaborative problem-solving" to address deep-seated cultural norms, e.g., early marriage, FGM, and boy preference, which are major disabling factors across all refugee schools.

Secondly, aligning Tuseme's principles with the "current CBC curriculum's emphasis on practical skills" (Runyu) and the government's "push to promote gender equality in education" (Somali Bantu) can ensure institutionalisation and sustainability. Advocating for Tuseme's methodology to be formally recognised or incorporated into teacher training programs and education sector plans can address the policy gap identified in the literature. Thirdly, collecting robust data on how Tuseme improves school attendance (especially for girls), reduces dropout rates, and enhances student agency and academic performance. This evidence can then be used to advocate for increased resource allocation and policy integration. Incentives like "textbooks or basic needs" for learners and "refreshments, uniforms, certificates, trips" for teachers (Malakal, Somali Bantu) are also tangible demonstrations of commitment that can influence buy-in.

Fourthly, advocating for mechanisms that hold schools and communities accountable for creating safe and inclusive environments could be strengthened by adopting strategies from Centres of Excellence (CoEs), such as standardised monitoring frameworks, clear reporting lines, and peer review systems. For example, CoEs often implement regular audits, mentorship, and structured feedback loops that ensure adherence to safety, gender, and inclusion standards. Adapting these practices within refugee and IDP schools could formalise accountability while respecting local dynamics and resource constraints. This could also involve strengthening PTA/BOG roles in "resolving disputes and addressing insecurity issues" (Central) and ensuring "disciplinary measures" are applied fairly and advocating at the policy level for essential school security infrastructure, such as fenced compounds (Central) and addressing porous school boundaries (Somali Bantu). Lastly, directly engaging "Ministry and district education officials" with evidence-based policy briefs that highlight the specific needs of IDP and refugee communities and propose actionable solutions. This ensures that the voices of marginalised learners, centred in Tuseme's feminist epistemological perspective, reach decision-makers.

Despite its transformative potential, several limitations hinder Tuseme's widespread adoption in these complex environments, such as: Persistent economic hardship and basic needs deficit are the most pervasive limitations. Students' inability to afford school fees (Central), coupled with hunger and lack of essential learning materials such as books, pens, uniforms, and sanitary pads (Somali Bantu), directly undermines their ability to consistently attend classes and fully engage in Tuseme activities. These barriers not only affect day-to-day participation but also reduce motivation, limit concentration, and exacerbate dropout risks. As Tuseme is an empowerment and voice-based program, it cannot unilaterally resolve these fundamental economic challenges, which lie outside the scope of pedagogical interventions. As Aikman et al. (2005) point out, "enrollment alone does not guarantee equitable learning," highlighting that access without addressing basic needs fails to ensure meaningful educational outcomes. Therefore, adaptations of Tuseme in these contexts must consider complementary strategies, such as linking club participation to school feeding programs, provision of essential materials, or collaboration with NGOs to support students' basic needs.

While there are positive shifts, "deep-seated cultural biases prioritise boys' education and promote early marriage for girls" (Central), "traditional views on gender roles" (Malakal), and "community resistance to programs aiming to empower girls" (Somali Bantu) remain significant obstacles. These ingrained norms imply that any adaptation of the Tuseme model must go beyond classroom activities to include targeted community engagement with parents and local leaders, culturally sensitive programming that respects local norms while progressively challenging harmful practices, and long-term sustainability strategies such as

follow-up and mentorship to reinforce gender-transformative messages. By explicitly addressing these socio-cultural barriers, the adapted model can be more realistic, locally grounded, and capable of achieving incremental, sustainable outcomes in refugee and IDP contexts.

"Severe overcrowding, teacher shortages, and limited resources across schools (Central, Malakal, Somali Bantu) significantly constrain the capacity to adopt and sustain new initiatives. Teachers are often overwhelmed and may lack the time, materials, or training necessary to effectively run Tuseme clubs alongside their existing heavy workloads.

The "high student turnover in refugee settings" (Somali Bantu) makes "consistent participation difficult," challenging the continuity and long-term impact of club activities. Similarly, teacher transfers or departures can disrupt program implementation and knowledge transfer. "Refugees and internally displaced persons do not reject support but are sceptical about organisations' true intentions" (Malakal), having witnessed "many initiatives fail to provide meaningful, consistent aid." This historical mistrust, combined with "concerns about projects collapsing due to insufficient long-term funding" (Runyu), can create resistance and reluctance to invest in new programs like Tuseme. For sustainability, it is critical that the consortium proactively plans next steps, ensures continuity where possible, and communicates transparently with communities to maintain trust and protect the reputations of partner organisations beyond the current KIX cycle.

The "unemployment for graduates and limited post-school opportunities" (Malakal) can demotivate older students from completing school, perceiving limited "benefit of completing school" (Central). If Tuseme focuses solely on school-based empowerment without addressing pathways to livelihoods, its long-term appeal for some students, particularly boys, might be limited. Therefore, while the 'Tuseme' model holds immense promise in empowering marginalised youth, its successful adoption in IDP and refugee settings hinges on its capacity for deep contextual adaptation. This may involve integrating comprehensive basic needs support, robust psychosocial services, culturally sensitive advocacy, and sustainable investment in teacher capacity and system strengthening. Addressing these intertwined limitations will be crucial for translating the theoretical aspirations of voice, agency, and gender transformation into tangible, equitable educational realities on the ground.

6.3 Uganda - Discussion of Findings

This discussion synthesises findings from four secondary schools in Uganda: Pagirinya and Arinyapi in Adjumani (refugee–host contexts), and Rwamwanja and Ntenungi in Kamwenge. It analyses how the Tuseme model could potentially operate within these diverse settings. The analysis is structured around the research questions that guided Phase 2 of the project, drawing on the study's gender-transformative and participatory systems thinking framework, and explicitly connecting findings to the existing literature on gender and education, girls' participation and voice, community engagement, and teacher agency. While Tuseme clubs are not currently active in these schools, the study identifies key contextual factors that would influence their implementation and adaptation in refugee and IDP settings.

The findings consistently highlight that the effective adaptation of the Tuseme model for IDP and refugee communities necessitates a context-sensitive approach that addresses both systemic constraints and embedded socio-cultural dynamics. The pervasive poverty and financial strain across all four schools (Pagirinya, Arinyapi, Rwamwanja, Ntenungi) are

primary dis-enabling factors. Learners, particularly girls, often face a lack of basic needs like school materials and sanitary pads (Pagirinya), directly impacting their ability to participate. This aligns with the literature by Parkes et al. (2016) and UNESCO (2018), which highlights how family and community attitudes, often rooted in economic hardship, shape children's access and retention. Tuseme, therefore, needs to be adapted to directly or indirectly address these material needs, perhaps through linkages with provision programs, or by incorporating income-generating skills like sanitary pad making, as seen in Rwamwanja, into club activities, thereby making participation more tangible and beneficial for learners and their families.

Entrenched cultural and gender biases (Pagirinya, Arinyapi, Rwamwanja) present a critical consideration for any future adaptation of the Tuseme model. The perception of girls as marriage assets, the preference for boys' education and leadership, and the prevalence of early and forced marriages currently hinder girls' participation and leadership in school-based initiatives. This echoes Sifuna and Chege's (2006) observations in Kenya, where ingrained community norms undermine progressive gender policies. For Tuseme to be effective if introduced, it would need to actively engage in community sensitisation activities (Ntenungi), helping to shift mindsets and build trust, particularly through influential figures like faith leaders, mothers, and BOG members. The model's emphasis on public speaking and confidence-building (Pagirinya, Arinyapi) would need to be explicitly designed to challenge these norms head-on, leveraging the "safe spaces" identified by Bali & Mbise (2018) to empower girls to articulate challenges and take collective action. Furthermore, the psychosocial impact of conflict and displacement (Pagirinya, Rwamwanja, Ntenungi), leading to trauma, absenteeism, and low motivation, demands a Tuseme adaptation that integrates robust psychosocial support. While teachers often act as caregivers (Pagirinya), they are frequently overwhelmed and untrained (Rwamwanja). This points to the need for Tuseme to be supported by trained psychosocial staff or integrated with mental health partners (Ntenungi). The model should be adapted to create a therapeutic space, recognising that learning and agency are severely hampered when students are dealing with severe emotional distress.

The resource and infrastructure gaps (Arinyapi, Rwamwanja, Ntenungi), including overcrowded classes and a lack of dedicated club budgets, also suggest Tuseme's adaptation requires practical considerations. Calls for training teachers, financial/logistical support, and integration with local structures (Pagirinya) are critical for sustainability. The observation that students are demotivated by a lack of materials in hands-on clubs (Rwamwanja) indicates that resource provision is not merely an administrative detail but a key factor in engagement. This aligns with Tikly et al. (2020), who highlight how fragmentation and poorly aligned curricula leave teachers ill-equipped. Thus, adaptation means not just content modification but also ensuring systemic support for club activities. The success of Tuseme in IDP and refugee communities hinges on engaging a multi-scalar network of actors and structures, reflecting the systems thinking framework of this study (Senge, 1990; Fullan, 2006).

At the micro-level, learners themselves are paramount. The "voice and agency" concept, rooted in Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy, emphasises empowering learners to identify and analyse problems. Students' enthusiasm for Tuseme (Ntenungi), associating it with freedom of expression and emotional support, confirms their central role. Teachers and head teachers are crucial facilitators. They act as caregivers (Pagirinya), guides, and immediate implementers. However, their overwhelming workloads, poor housing, and lack of resources (Ntenungi) necessitate adequate training, mentorship, and support, as highlighted by Oduro & MacBeath (2003).

At the meso-level, parents and community members are indispensable. They are "mobilisers for education" (Pagirinya) and can be active participants in school life (Rwamwanja). The positive examples of community mentorship and parental commitment (Arinyapi) highlight their potential. Engaging PTA and BOG members (Rwamwanja, Ntenungi) is vital, as they express excitement for school-led projects and recognise the value of clubs. This resonates with Unterhalter & Heslop (2011) and Grant & Unterhalter (2012), who emphasise genuine participatory mechanisms where power is shared. Informal community influencers, however, can sometimes provide inaccurate or misleading guidance to students (Ntenungi), highlighting the need for targeted sensitisation and structured engagement to ensure messages align with program goals. NGOs and aid partners also play a crucial role in providing support for girls' education (Pagirinya) and helping shift attitudes (Rwamwanja). However, inconsistent and uncoordinated aid (Rwamwanja) can undermine efforts, highlighting the need for better collaboration and sustained engagement.

At the macro-level, government bodies and Ministry/district education officials are critical for the institutionalisation and sustainability of Tuseme. Their support is an enabling factor (Rwamwanja). The suggestion that Tuseme should be introduced through formal education structures like the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and district offices (Rwamwanja) directly addresses the "implementation gap" identified by Unterhalter et al. (2019). This level ensures policy alignment and resource allocation for roll-out. Without this systemic integration, even effective local interventions risk remaining fragmented and unsustainable.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

This report has examined the multifaceted landscape of implementing the Tuseme model in highly vulnerable IDP and refugee contexts across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. Drawing on a gender-transformative, participatory systems thinking framework and ecological systems theory, the research has illuminated both the immense promise of Tuseme in fostering voice, agency, and confidence among learners, particularly girls, and the profound challenges that necessitate deep contextual adaptation and a holistic support system. A central finding across all three countries is the pervasive socio-economic hardship that forces students into labour, drives absenteeism, and exacerbates gender inequalities. It is also prudent that if an adapted Tuseme Model is to be successful in these types of settings, it must be cognisant of these issues; otherwise, it will likely fail to address the needs of participants. The possible ways to address challenges include the provision of tangible material support, such as school feeding programs, sanitary pads, and basic school supplies. This highlights that for Tuseme to thrive, it must transcend being merely an educational intervention and become part of a broader safety net that addresses the fundamental human needs of its learners.

Furthermore, the research highlights the critical need to integrate robust psychosocial support within the Tuseme framework. The trauma of conflict and displacement leaves a deep imprint on learners, manifesting as hopelessness, depression, and low motivation. While Tuseme has had an impact based on evidence in mainstream schools, it is important to note that in the refugee and IDP settings, they must be explicitly designed and integrated with existing support systems to ensure alignment with school schedules and activities, rather than relying on direct provision of specialised training. This integration allows learners to benefit from psychosocial care already available through trained professionals or partner NGOs.

The analysis consistently revealed the powerful influence of cultural and gender norms, coupled with language barriers, as significant dis-enabling factors. Practices such as early marriage, the undervaluing of girls' education, and restrictive gender roles impede participation and leadership. Effective Tuseme implementation demands culturally and linguistically sensitive approaches, employing bilingual facilitators, adapting content to local contexts, and engaging in respectful, community-led sensitisation and dialogue with influential figures like faith leaders and parents. True gender transformation, as advocated by this study, necessitates a sustained and nuanced confrontation of unequal power relations embedded in cultural practices.

The pervasive inadequacy of infrastructure and resources within schools emerged as a universal impediment to Tuseme's effectiveness. Overcrowding, lack of essential facilities, and shortages of learning materials directly limit the capacity for quality club activities. Data from this study indicate that effective club implementation requires basic materials such as pens, notebooks, manila paper, props, costumes for drama, and access to safe spaces for meetings and performances. Tuseme, therefore, cannot operate in a vacuum; its success relies on a foundational level of resources and a conducive physical learning environment. Crucially, the findings reveal that teacher support and incentives are non-negotiable for sustainable Tuseme implementation. Overworked, underpaid, and often taking on informal counselling roles, teachers are critical frontline implementers whose capacity and motivation are frequently stretched to their breaking point. Prioritising their training, specifically on effective facilitation of Tuseme clubs, integration of club activities within school schedules, and approaches to supporting students' psychosocial and leadership development by government and non-

governmental stakeholders, along with recognition and compensation for extracurricular involvement, is paramount to ensuring their sustained engagement and the quality of club facilitation.

The cross-country synthesis unequivocally affirms the necessity of a multi-scalar approach to Tuseme's success, engaging actors from the micro-level (learners, teachers) to the meso-level (parents, communities, NGOs) and the macro-level (government bodies, Ministry officials). Each stakeholder group presents distinct challenges and opportunities, highlighting the need for tailored interventions that acknowledge their unique perspectives. Across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda, teachers, school administrators, and community leaders, alongside some NGO partners, consistently called for Tuseme to be formally recognised and integrated into national education sector plans and existing curricula. This collective call represents a critical step towards bridging the "implementation gap" between policy aspirations and lived realities. The research also highlights the fragility of the positive outcomes achieved by Tuseme clubs, such as increased learner confidence, improved communication skills, and heightened awareness of gender equality, in sustaining clubs and associations within these volatile contexts. The reliance on individual champions, coupled with sporadic donor funding and a lack of institutional memory, threatens the sustainability of even highly impactful initiatives. Moving forward, Tuseme's long-term success hinges on prioritising systematisation, documentation, and peer learning mechanisms to codify best practices and ensure continuity beyond individual efforts or short-term project cycles.

In conclusion, while the Tuseme model holds immense promise for empowering marginalised youth and advancing gender-transformative change in IDP and refugee communities, its widespread and sustainable adoption is contingent upon a holistic, integrated, and sustained approach. This approach must courageously address not only the pedagogical aspects of voice and agency but also the present socio-economic, psychosocial, infrastructural, and systemic limitations prevalent in these vulnerable contexts. Only by fostering deep contextual adaptation, securing robust multi-scalar engagement, and committing to long-term systemic support can Tuseme truly realise its transformative potential and contribute to more equitable and resilient educational futures for displaced children.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS FOR ADAPTATION

Based on the comprehensive findings and cross-country synthesis, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness, reach, and sustainability of the Tuseme model in IDP and refugee communities in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda:

8.1 Integrate Basic Needs Provision and Holistic Support:

Recommendation 8.1.1: Link Tuseme to School Feeding Programs and Material Support:

It is imperative that the Tuseme model does not operate in isolation from the fundamental daily realities of its beneficiaries. A critical recommendation is to actively pursue and formalise partnerships with established humanitarian organisations, such as the World Food Programme (WFP), local and international NGOs, and relevant government programs. The goal is to seamlessly integrate school feeding initiatives and the consistent provision of essential educational and personal materials, such as sanitary pads, basic school supplies (books, pens, notebooks), and school uniforms, directly into or alongside existing Tuseme club activities. This strategic integration directly addresses the most pervasive dis-enabling factor identified across all countries, severe socio-economic hardship, by alleviating the immediate financial pressures that often force students, particularly girls, out of school. Ensuring students are not distracted by hunger or the lack of essential items allows them to be physically capable, emotionally present, and truly motivated to participate in and benefit from the empowering aspects of Tuseme.

Recommendation 8.1.2: Embed Psychosocial Support (PSS) within Tuseme:

The profound and often unaddressed emotional and psychological trauma experienced by learners in IDP and refugee settings necessitates a deliberate integration of psychosocial support within the Tuseme framework. This can be achieved through a tiered approach:

Tier 1: Foundational Training for Patrons: Tuseme club patrons and other relevant teachers should receive foundational training in basic trauma-informed care and psychological first aid. This equips them to recognise signs of distress, create a safe and empathetic environment, and provide initial, non-specialised support.

Tier 2: Establishing Referral Pathways: Clear and efficient referral pathways must be established to connect students requiring more specialised and intensive mental health intervention with qualified psychosocial professionals or partner NGOs. This ensures that severe cases of trauma, depression, or anxiety receive appropriate clinical care beyond what a teacher can provide.

Tier 3: Leveraging Tuseme for Well-being: The "safe spaces" cultivated within Tuseme clubs should be intentionally utilised for hope-building activities, expressive arts, such as drama, storytelling, and music, and structured peer support sessions. Recognising the inherent therapeutic potential of collective voice and creative expression, these activities can help students process their experiences, build resilience, and develop healthy coping mechanisms in a supportive group setting.

8.2 Strengthen the Contextual Relevance of Tuseme Curriculum and Facilitation

Recommendation 8.2.1: Develop Culturally and Linguistically Sensitive Materials

To maximise comprehension, engagement, and relevance, it is crucial to move beyond using a generic, uniform set of Tuseme materials and instead develop an inclusive and context-specific curriculum. Tuseme pedagogical materials, including guides, activity sheets, and discussion prompts, should be translated and rigorously adapted into the relevant local languages spoken by the learners. Furthermore, where possible, especially in highly diverse refugee settings with multiple linguistic groups, the use of bilingual facilitators or co-facilitators should be prioritised. This ensures that language barriers do not impede communication, critical thinking, or the full expression of student voice. Tuseme clubs already embody this adaptability through their participatory and context-driven engagement processes, which allow facilitators and learners to co-create content that reflects their own realities and challenges.

Recommendation 8.2.2: Reinforce Contextual Issue Identification

The Tuseme model already emphasises empowering learners to identify and address issues rooted in their own lived experiences. This recommendation focuses on reinforcing this flexibility to address the most pressing and relevant challenges in their schools and communities. This could range from combating early marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to addressing child labour, local environmental concerns, specific forms of gender-based violence (GBV), or managing school-level disciplinary issues. Maintaining this approach will ensure that Tuseme clubs foster genuine ownership, enhance relevance and increase the potential for sustainable change, naturally embedding responsiveness to each community's unique context.

Recommendation 8.2.3: Implement Flexible Club Scheduling

The rigid scheduling of extracurricular activities often clashes with the significant domestic and economic responsibilities many IDP and refugee students, particularly girls, face outside school hours. To maximise participation, club meeting times and formats must be adaptable. This could involve integrating Tuseme activities into existing school hours, for instance, during assembly, break times, or designated club slots within the timetable, offering alternative arrangements for students with heavy external responsibilities, or even exploring staggered meeting times. Flexibility is key to accommodating diverse student schedules and ensuring that participation does not become another burden.

8.3 Strengthen Teacher Capacity and Provide Incentives

Recommendation 8.3.1: Provide Comprehensive and Ongoing Teacher Training

Investing in the professional development of Tuseme patrons is paramount. Training should be thorough, practical, and tailored to their specific contexts, covering core Tuseme participatory methodologies and gender-transformative approaches, and foundational psychosocial support

skills. Effective club management techniques, for instance, record-keeping and conflict resolution, should be introduced in a low-effort manner, for example, through standardised templates, simple logs, or digital checklists, to minimise additional workload. Crucially, training should not be a one-off event but an ongoing process, incorporating opportunities for regular refresher courses, peer learning, and mentorship to ensure continuous improvement and adaptation.

Recommendation 8.3.2: Offer Tangible Incentives and Recognition

Teachers in these contexts are often overworked and underpaid, making their voluntary commitment to extracurricular activities a significant personal sacrifice. To foster sustained motivation and prevent burnout, it is essential to advocate for and implement tangible incentives. This could include small stipends or honoraria for their additional workload, professional development credits that contribute to their career progression, official certificates of recognition from education authorities, or even opportunities for educational trips or workshops. Such recognition acknowledges their vital role and commitment.

8.4 Cultivate Multi-Scalar Engagement and Collaboration

Recommendation 8.4.1: Secure School Leadership Buy-in and Support

While many head teachers and school management teams already provide support for club activities, actively reinforcing and sustaining their engagement is essential for the institutionalisation and success of Tuseme. School leaders act as vital gatekeepers for permissions, resource allocation, and fostering a supportive school culture. Therefore, it is crucial to actively engage them in Tuseme planning and implementation processes to secure their genuine buy-in. Furthermore, their continued involvement in planning and implementation, including allocating dedicated space for club activities and managing available school resources, helps maintain and strengthen their capacity to support Tuseme effectively.

Recommendation 8.4.2: Strengthen Community and Parental Engagement

Sustainable change requires active community participation. Targeted awareness campaigns must be conducted using culturally appropriate methods, leveraging platforms like local radio, community mobilisers, and influential figures such as faith leaders and community elders. Students and other school stakeholders should be empowered to identify mediums to address social vices and norms that affect their education. These media should aim to challenge harmful norms, such as early marriage, and the undervaluing of girls' education and clearly articulate the long-term benefits of Tuseme and education for both boys and girls. Strengthening the role and capacity of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and Boards of Governors (BOGs) is also crucial to ensure genuine participatory decision-making, shared ownership of Tuseme initiatives, and increased parental involvement in school life.

Recommendation 8.4.3: Cultivate Strategic Partnerships with NGOs and CBOs

To manage the significant burden on schools and ensure comprehensive support for learners, cultivating long-term, transparent, and consistent partnerships with both local and international NGOs and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) is essential. These partners can provide

crucial complementary resources, expertise in areas like psychosocial support, livelihood training, or infrastructure improvements. The aim should be to move away from sporadic, short-term aid to more integrated and sustained collaborations that build local capacity and prevent "donor fatigue" or project collapse. A clear mechanism for coordinated efforts and equitable aid distribution between refugee and host communities is also vital.

8.5 Advocate for Policy Integration and Sustainable Resource Allocation

Recommendation 8.5.1: Integrate Tuseme into National Education Policies and Leverage Evidence for Policy Influence

For Tuseme to achieve widespread and sustainable impact, it must transition from a project-based intervention to a systemic one. This requires strong advocacy for its formal recognition and integration into national education sector plans, gender equality frameworks, and existing school club mandates within the respective Ministries of Education, for instance, through alignment with the CBC in Kenya, or official inclusion by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) in Uganda. This institutional embedding ensures consistent policy support and opens avenues for dedicated government budget allocation for Tuseme activities and teacher capacity building. To leverage evidence for policy influencing at national levels, a robust, evidence-based approach is crucial for convincing policymakers and securing resources. Systematically collect disaggregated data on Tuseme's impact, focusing on key indicators such as improved student attendance (particularly for girls), reduced dropout rates, enhanced student agency, increased confidence levels, and even correlations with academic performance. Compelling evidence, including powerful student narratives and success stories, should be packaged into concise policy briefs and used to advocate for increased, consistent, and sustainable funding for Tuseme and the broader educational infrastructure in IDP and refugee settings.

Recommendation 8.5.2: Establish Dialogue Platforms with Policymakers

Creating formal, regular multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms is vital for fostering systemic alignment and addressing bureaucratic hurdles. These platforms should bring together key actors from various levels: ministry officials, district education officers, school leaders, teachers, parents, community leaders, and students. Such dialogues can facilitate a mutual understanding of challenges, discuss how Tuseme can address specific policy gaps, for instance, related to GBV or psychosocial support, and ensure that policies are responsive to local realities and that all stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities.

8.6 Prioritise Institutional Memory and Sustainability Mechanisms

Recommendation 8.6.1: Develop Standardised Tuseme Club Resources

To combat the fragility of good work and ensure continuity, there is a critical need to develop and widely disseminate practical, standardised resources for Tuseme clubs. This includes comprehensive club logs for tracking attendance and activities, detailed activity guides, drama handbooks with adaptable scripts, and templates for planning and reporting. These resources should be easily accessible, either via shared digital platforms like Google Drive folders or in

printed format, to ensure that knowledge is retained and easily transferred, even with teacher transfers or leadership changes.

Recommendation 8.6.2: Implement Rotating Leadership Models

To build internal capacity and reduce over-reliance on individual teachers or students, Tuseme clubs should be trained and encouraged to adopt rotating student leadership models. This empowers a broader base of students with leadership skills and ensures continuity. Similarly, fostering a culture of co-facilitation among teachers, where multiple patrons are involved in a club, can provide a buffer against the departure of a single, dedicated teacher.

Recommendation 8.6.3: Develop Inter-Club and Peer Learning Networks

Establishing mechanisms for Tuseme clubs within a district or region to connect and share experiences, challenges, and successful strategies is highly beneficial. Label it a community of practice. This could involve regular inter-school workshops, online forums, or even organised visits between clubs. Such networks foster a sense of community among participants and patrons, build collective resilience, and facilitate the organic dissemination of best practices, moving Tuseme from isolated instances of success to a more robust, interconnected movement

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