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## Final Analysis Report: Seasons VII & VIII

# Empowering Girls and Young Women in WUSC's Learning through Education and Employment Programme (LEAP) in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Settlement.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Learning through Education and Access to Skills for Employment Project (LEAP), funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) through the World University Service of Canada (WUSC), aims to empower girls and young women in the Kakuma and Kalobeyei refugee camps and surrounding host communities in Turkana County, Kenya. Launched in 2020, the LEAP project aims to tackle barriers hindering transition from education to employment pathways. The project is being implemented through a consortium of partners, including Africa's Voices Foundation, Finn Church Aid, Solidarity Initiative for Refugees, Resilience Action International, and media partners radio *Ata Nayeche* and Ref FM.

This report covers Seasons VII and VIII (June 2024 – October 2024), during which Africa's Voices led community engagement activities, including twelve weekly radio discussions, drama listening clubs in eight schools, and eleven community call-to-action events. The twelve weekly radio dialogue sessions targeted the broader community focusing on critical gender-sensitive issues, including skills training, income-generating activities, financial management, gender equality, sexual reproductive health and the prevention of gender-based violence.

The twelve weekly drama listening club sessions were conducted in 8 schools, 4 primary and 4 secondary, across both the camp and host communities. Each club engaged up to 35 learners, comprising 15 boys and 20 girls. The drama series focused on empowering young people with life skills, addressing barriers to education, and encouraging gender-equitable practices within school communities. These drama clubs also played a crucial role in raising awareness about the importance of girls' education and fostering male allyship in overcoming societal barriers.





Further, eleven call-to-action events engaged a total of 592 participants from the host and refugee communities within Kakuma and Kalobeyei. Three of the call to actions targeted schools and eight focused on the community. These events created an opportunity for community members to interact directly with panellists from various organisations, including the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) on



child protection, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) on mental health, the Red Cross on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV), a school head on education challenges, a local business mentor on entrepreneurship training and mentorship, and radio partners. These discussions raised awareness about available resources and services and guided participants on how to seek assistance. The events also underscored the importance of communities taking initiative, reaching out to organisations, and collaborating to address barriers to the empowerment of girls, young women, and boys.

### Who participated in the dialogue

In season VII of the interactive radio series, there were 2,766 relevant participants who contributed 4,618 messages, while season VIII had 2,986 participants sharing 5,451 messages. The graph below details the demographics of these participants. In both seasons, there were more women participants than men, participants under 35 were more prevalent than those over 35, host community members exceeded the number of refugees, and people with disabilities were well represented, accounting for 10.5% (n=288) in season VII and 6.5% (n=199) in season VIII. This indicates that the study successfully engaged





minority groups (including women, young people, and those with disabilities) whose perspectives are often overlooked in decision-making processes. Consequently, the conclusions and recommendations strongly reflect the aspirations of these groups.

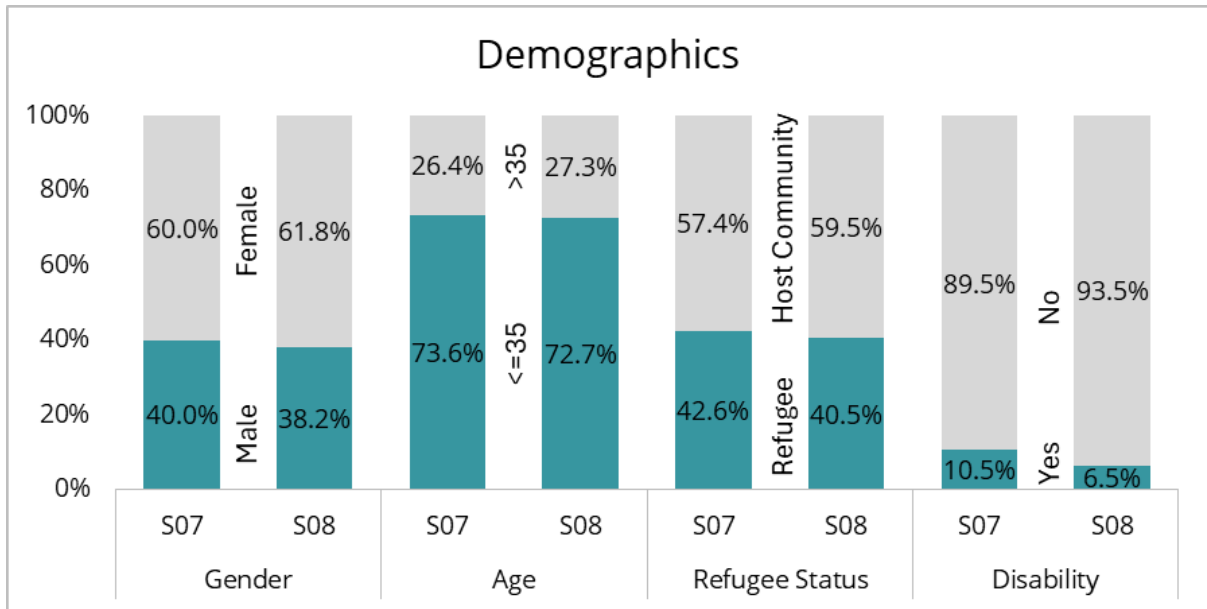


Figure 1: Season VII & VIII Demographic Information





## **2. KEY EMERGING ISSUES FROM CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN SEASONS VII & VIII**

### **2.1. Girl Child Education**

In Season VII interactive radio discussions, nearly a quarter of participants (24.7%, n=119) stressed the importance of equipping young women with skills for income-generating activities, particularly through vocational skills training that fosters self-employment opportunities. Practical experience, such as internships and attachments, was identified as essential for the success of these training efforts. Feedback from community call-to-action forums highlights that WUSC, through its LEAP project, has made significant strides in promoting girls' education within the community, **a success that should be sustained for even greater project outcomes.** A male participant during a call-to-action forum shared that he actively encourages girls who have completed secondary school to enrol in vocational training centres and pursue market-ready skills, reflecting a positive shift. However, he also pointed out that some girls lack the agency to take initiative and, despite available support, opt to remain at home instead of seizing opportunities. Given the numerous challenges that hinder girls' continued education as explained below, it is crucial to maintain and expand support for girls' education in the region.

#### **2.1.1. Child Marriages and Early Pregnancies**

During call-to-action sessions, it was highlighted that child pregnancy and child marriages are the most prevalent forms of child abuse in the camp and host community. Drama sessions revealed that many girls fear not completing their education due to the persistence of arranged marriages within their communities. On the other hand, call-to-action sessions highlighted that while schools offer guidance and counselling to students, the community remains hesitant about teachers addressing sensitive topics such as sex and SRH services with learners.

Insights from Season VIII radio discussions showed that over one-third (30.6%, n=132) of participants advocated for raising awareness about effects of early pregnancies through diverse media and community initiatives, such as organising events and workshops that address relationships, sexual health, and the consequences of early pregnancies, incorporating creative tools like drama, role play, and visual materials. Another one-tenth (10.4%, n=45) of participants advocated for creating safe spaces in schools, religious spaces and community centres to facilitate open discussions on early pregnancies and sexual health. Continuous sex education, both in schools and at home, is essential to prevent irresponsible sexual behaviours that increase the risk of early



pregnancies. Agencies operating in this region should prioritise addressing the root causes of child marriages to effectively curb this harmful practice.

### **2.1.2. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Call-to-action forums highlighted that FGM continues to be a major barrier to girls' education, with the practice primarily taking place during school holidays. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a criminal offense in Kenya, prohibited under the **Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act, 2011** and the **Children Act, 2001**, both of which aim to protect women and girls from this harmful practice and ensure their rights to health, dignity, and safety. To address this issue, continuous sensitization efforts should target communities where FGM is prevalent, focusing on prevention, reporting, and awareness. These efforts should actively engage parents, community leaders, and the broader community to foster ownership of the initiative, ultimately leading to the abandonment of this harmful practice.

### **2.1.3. Addressing Unrealistic Cultural Practices**

Women and school-going girls continue to bear the burden of household chores, negatively impacting their consistent education and participation in income-generating activities. The drama series highlighted students' recognition of gender roles as *"Girls wash dishes, wash cloths, fetch water and for boys it is only to carry water and engage in sport activities. Boys are favoured by parents because they feel like he is the one who will be the redeemer of the family once he completes his education and finds a nice job while girls are seen as helpers who are supposed to do all the household chores"* with others concluding that *"Some cultures forbid boys to cook and wash dishes"*. This reflects how deeply traditional cultural practices are ingrained in the community.

Addressing this requires concerted efforts in awareness creation through diverse communication channels to challenge these beliefs and promote positive behaviour. Social behaviour change messaging and the use of positive role models can encourage the community to abandon harmful practices. Additionally, promoting the assignment of domestic chores to boys and encouraging shared responsibilities can help foster equal learning opportunities for both genders.

Feedback from call-to-action forums revealed that school feeding programs significantly improve school attendance and learning outcomes. It is worth noting that the LEAP project has made a noteworthy impact, as boys participating in drama clubs are now showing awareness and a readiness to support girls on topics like menstrual health. They not only educate their peers but also provide practical help when necessary, highlighting that sustained, hands-on awareness efforts can drive lasting changes in



outdated cultural practices. Agencies focused on education can enhance these impacts by investing in and scaling up school feeding initiatives and supporting impactful clubs such as drama and child rights.

#### **2.1.4. Talent Management**

It was noted during drama and call-to-action sessions that although learners are aware of their talents and the need to develop them, most schools lack facilities to support such talents. This is aggravated by Kenyan laws which discriminate against refugee participation in National level sports. Some schools, such as Kalobeyei Secondary School, have continued to support co-curricular activities with the little funding they receive from the government.

Additionally, teachers also noted a lack of parental involvement in their children's education, with many relying solely on teachers and neglecting to monitor school attendance, academic performance, or participation in co-curricular activities, which hampers progress and talent development. However, they observed positive changes among students in the drama listening clubs, with participants demonstrating greater confidence and a more optimistic outlook on life. Perhaps, agencies working on the education sector could work towards supporting talent development among school going children, youths, and women in an effort to encourage self reliance in the community.

### **2.2. Violence Against Children**

Violence against children remains a significant issue in Kakuma and Kalobeyei, where living conditions expose children to risks such as exploitation, abuse, bullying, and neglect. During Season VII radio discussions, over one-third (32.3%, n=153) of participants emphasised the need to establish safe spaces for children by creating secure environments in schools, homes, and public areas. This includes advocating for child protection policies, a priority specifically supported by 3.8% (n=18) of participants, fostering community involvement, promoting positive social norms, educating parents on child safety, and organising supervised after-school programs like sports, arts, and mentoring to mitigate risks and support healthy development. Additionally, over one-fourth (26.8%, n=127) of participants supported educating children about their rights, online safety, and how to report abuse, training adults (teachers, parents, caregivers) to recognize and respond to abuse, and organising workshops on positive parenting and stress management. The drama series effectively educated children on these issues, which is highly commendable. However, further sensitization efforts are needed to ensure the sustainability of the progress achieved.



Organisations such as the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the Department of Refugee Services (DRS) have been instrumental in ensuring protective structures are in place. Despite preventive measures, sporadic cases of sexual harassment have been reported, underscoring the need for collaborative efforts to strengthen relationships among teachers, parents, and learners for early detection of violence. Initiatives like Child Rights clubs, drama activities, and guidance and counselling sessions are effective in raising awareness about ending violence against children, alongside training teachers in child protection and parents in positive parenting practices.

### **2.3. Managing Gender Based Violence (GBV)**

Despite significant efforts to combat GBV, cases continue to be reported, highlighting the need for a sustained, multifaceted approach involving the entire community and stakeholders. This aligns with feedback from Season VII and VIII responses on supporting GBV survivors to ensure safety and self-reliance. In Season VII, a whopping 37.2% (n=165) of participants advocated for awareness campaigns, another one-quarter (25.3%, n=112) emphasised the importance of creating safe spaces to address GBV in an effort to involve more community members, and some 18.5% (n=82) highlighted the need for GBV prevention training through organising community workshops, town hall meetings, and bystander intervention training to raise awareness and promote healthy relationships. In Season VIII, key suggestions included GBV education (15.4%, n=65), awareness campaigns (14.5%, n=61), GBV training (12.8%, n=54), and establishing reporting channels (11.1%, n=47), among others. These initiatives aim to provide survivors with accurate information, reduce stigma through open conversations, educate parents' to foster open communication and prevention strategies within families, and improve access to resources and reporting mechanisms for all community members. Additionally, designating a specific month for GBV awareness activities was proposed to increase visibility and education. Perhaps, this could be observed during the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) observed from 25 November to 10 December every year to enhance its visibility and impact.

Call-to-action forums revealed that traditional mechanisms for resolving GBV cases often deny survivors justice, emphasising the need for all cases to be reported to law enforcement. Survivors must receive justice alongside treatment, counselling, and other psychosocial support. Efforts to prevent corruption within law enforcement agencies are critical, particularly for rape and defilement cases. These challenges underscore the importance of multi-agency collaboration focused on both prevention and comprehensive support for GBV survivors. Drama sessions effectively disseminated information on identifying and addressing GBV in schools, homes, and the wider community, equipping students with valuable knowledge and awareness on these





issues. Ref FM, a refugee-led radio station collaborating with Africa's Voices on the LEAP project through the *Binti Imara* radio program, has played a significant role in engaging young women in discussions about girls' education, skills training, and income-generating activities. The station has pledged to continue disseminating the valuable insights gained from the project. Additionally, WUSC is encouraged to sustain its support for initiatives aimed at eradicating GBV.

### **2.3.1. Financial Independence for Women**

Discussions during call-to-action forums revealed that financial dependence remains a significant driver of gender-based violence (GBV), particularly against women. Many female participants shared that they are unable to report GBV cases because they rely entirely on their spouses for financial support. Empowering women to achieve financial independence is crucial in addressing this issue. Encouraging women to join Village Savings and Loans Associations (*chamas*) has proven effective in enabling them to raise funds for income-generating activities, such as small businesses, thereby providing them with a steady income and greater autonomy.

From Season VII engagement, over one-quarter (26.5%, n=108) of participants agreed that *chamas* can help mobilise funds internally through contributions and savings and externally via government grants, NGO support, and investor fundraising while 24.0% (n=98) of participants emphasised the importance of *chamas* in accessing affordable loans through initiatives like merry-go-rounds and table-banking. The *chama* systems enable women to pool and borrow funds for businesses while also helping them save regularly, build credit history, and improve access to formal financial products.

In Season VIII, when asked, "*What specific financial management skill would you want to learn in order to improve how you manage your income from employment or business?*", over half (52.1%, n=269) of participants, with women significantly highlighting this need more than men, requested general financial management skills. These skills include tracking transactions, preparing financial statements, managing liquidity, setting financial goals, and creating long-term financial plans for personal and business growth. Additionally, 13.0% (n=67) of participants sought budgeting training, covering mindful spending, adapting budgets to income changes, and maintaining discipline in tracking income and expenses. Furthermore, concerns about changes in income due to taxation in Kenya led 2.5% (n=13) of participants to express interest in tax management training, reflecting apprehensions among both refugees and the host community and the demand for such education.

These concerns were also highlighted during call-to-action forums, where ongoing training for young women in business on effectively managing resources to avoid



blending domestic and business expenses was affirmed. Young women were encouraged to explore avenues such as table banking, merry-go-rounds, village savings loans, and *chamas* as sources of capital for their enterprises. Continuous support to empower women financially remains crucial in creating an environment where they can thrive and achieve independence.

## **2.4. Managing Mental Health**

Call-to-action discussions revealed numerous causes of mental health challenges in the region, including harsh living conditions in refugee camps, the breakdown of family support systems due to forced evacuations and loss of livelihoods, the heavy burden of household responsibilities on women, cultural pressures on young women to undergo harmful practices such as child marriages and FGM, and drug misuse among youths driven by peer pressure and life difficulties.

The positive impact of the LEAP project was evident during Season VIII radio discussions, where 31.7% (n=128) of participants highlighted community efforts to address mental health issues. These efforts include forming crisis intervention teams with trained professionals, collaborating with law enforcement for specialised response units, utilising mobile services to reach underserved areas, and leveraging digital platforms to provide accessible mental health information and support. Additionally, 15.3% (n=62) of participants emphasised the importance of psychosocial support through therapy, counselling, and integrating creative therapies like art and music into community programs.

These insights stress the need to prioritize mental health with the same urgency as other critical issues like SRH, GBV, FGM, and child abuse. Sustained support for mental health initiatives targeting both children and adults remains a critical priority for the region.

## **2.5. Mens' Role in Enhancing Wellbeing of Their Families and The Community at Large**

Men hold a pivotal role in improving the well-being of their families and communities but are often constrained by adherence to outdated cultural practices. Insights from drama sessions revealed that children feel more emotionally connected to their mothers, who consistently support them, highlighting a lack of meaningful engagement from fathers. To address this, men should prioritise building closer relationships with their children to understand and support their needs, fostering their success.



Call-to-action forums also emphasised that cultural barriers limit men's involvement in empowering women to participate in training and income-generating activities. Men were encouraged to facilitate access to resources and training for women, assist in managing business-related resources, and support these initiatives by taking on caregiving responsibilities, funding education for women, and offering advisory support.

Community discussions highlighted awareness of harmful practices such as illegal abortions, drug trafficking, and risky holiday parties that endanger children, especially girls. However, community members often lack the initiative or confidence to address these issues themselves. While they are aware of those responsible, they tend to defer responsibility to external agencies, overlooking their role in ensuring children's safety and creating a secure environment. These findings emphasise the importance of empowering community members to take ownership of their development and actively safeguard their children. Fostering a sense of accountability is crucial for effectively tackling these challenges.

In the Season VII radio discussions, 38.2% (n=160) of participants affirmed that men can promote SRH education by participating in community awareness events and workshops. Training men to share knowledge and enhance communication was seen as crucial. Additionally, 20.0% (n=84) of participants supported men's involvement in advocating for SRH policies, funding, and women's rights, while 16.7% (n=70) emphasised their role in promoting gender equality. The call-to-action forums also highlighted the positive influence of the LEAP project, with one father sharing that he now feels comfortable discussing SRH issues with his daughters. He has even taken steps to buy sanitary towels for them and other girls in need, recognizing the importance of supporting their well-being and education.

These findings underscore that men, as family heads and community leaders, are integral to the success of initiatives addressing SRH, GBV, FGM, child abuse, and mental health. Their active involvement through training, awareness, and project buy-in is essential for driving sustainable change.



### 3. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 3.1. Conclusions

1. The persistent issues of child pregnancies and child marriages remain significant challenges hindering girls' education and overall development. Community resistance to discussing sensitive topics such as sex and SRH services with learners highlights a cultural barrier that exacerbates the problem. While schools provide guidance and counselling, a broader, community-wide effort is needed to address these issues effectively. Insights from radio discussions and call-to-action forums emphasise the need for targeted awareness campaigns and safe spaces to foster open conversations about early pregnancies and sexual health. Additionally, creative mediums such as drama and visual tools have proven effective in engaging the community and addressing these issues.
2. Traditional cultural practices and gender roles continue to burden women and school-going girls with disproportionate household responsibilities. These practices negatively impact their education and limit their ability to engage in income-generating activities, perpetuating gender inequality. However, school feeding programs have shown positive effects in improving school attendance and mitigating some of these challenges. This underscores the need for ongoing efforts to change societal mindsets and promote equal opportunities for boys and girls.
3. Violence against children remains a critical concern in Kakuma and Kalobeyei, driven by challenging living conditions that heighten the risk of exploitation, abuse, bullying, and neglect. Although preventive measures have been established, such as safe spaces and community-based interventions, the persistence of sporadic cases indicates the need for sustained efforts. Awareness-raising initiatives, including drama series and educational workshops, have been effective in educating children and communities about these issues. However, gaps remain in implementing long-term solutions, such as reinforcing protective structures, educating stakeholders, and fostering strong relationships between teachers, parents, and children for early detection and response to abuse.
4. Despite significant efforts, GBV remains a pressing issue in the region, necessitating a multifaceted and sustained approach involving communities, stakeholders, and organisations. The persistence of GBV highlights gaps in awareness, prevention, and response systems. Programs such as drama sessions and community-based radio initiatives, like Ref FM's Binti Imara program, have successfully raised awareness about GBV, providing valuable knowledge and



fostering open discussions. However, there remains a need to institutionalise these efforts and expand access to justice, treatment, and psychosocial support for survivors.

5. Lack of financial independence is a significant factor contributing to the persistence of GBV, particularly for women. Dependency on spouses often prevents women from reporting GBV, leaving them vulnerable. Financial empowerment can address this barrier, enabling women to voice cases of abuse and achieve self-reliance. Community-driven financial initiatives like *chamas* (self-help groups), table-banking, and village savings loans have proven effective in mobilising resources for women to start businesses and improve their financial stability.
6. Community efforts under the LEAP project have made notable progress in addressing mental health challenges. Initiatives such as crisis intervention teams, mobile mental health services, and digital platforms have improved accessibility to mental health support. Additionally, creative therapies like art and music and psychosocial support through counselling and therapy have positively impacted the community. However, the mental health crisis requires sustained prioritization, equivalent to other pressing regional concerns like SRH, GBV, FGM, and child abuse.
7. Men play a critical role in enhancing family and community well-being but are often hindered by outdated cultural norms that limit their involvement in supporting children and empowering women. Community engagements through the LEAP project highlighted men's potential to drive transformative change. The findings reinforce the importance of engaging men as family and community leaders in addressing issues like SRH, GBV, FGM, child abuse, and mental health.

### 3.2. Recommendations

1. **Parental Involvement:** Many parents, particularly fathers, are not actively involved in their children's lives, creating a need for increased awareness on active parent participation.
2. **Child Protection and Parental Authority:** Strengthen efforts to create safe and secure environments in homes, schools, and public spaces while advocating for the implementation and strict enforcement of child protection policies. It is also essential to meaningfully involve parents, as many feel constrained in guiding and disciplining their children due to fear of potential repercussions from child protection agencies. Addressing these concerns and fostering open dialogue can





- empower parents to enforce positive behaviour effectively while upholding children's rights and well-being.
3. **Drug abuse and Negative Peer Influence:** The rise of drug use and negative peer pressure among youth needs immediate attention from all stakeholders and community-driven solutions.
  4. **Supporting men and community leaders:** Design training modules tailored to men, focusing on their roles in supporting SRH, GBV prevention, child abuse prevention, and mental health initiatives. To enhance their effectiveness, community-based leaders need protection, support and motivation to fulfil their roles actively.
  5. **Provide Psychosocial Support:** Offer survivors of abuse psychosocial support, including counselling, treatment, and access to resources. Frontline staff also face immense pressure and need psychosocial support to cope effectively and perform well.
  6. **Financial Management Training:** As organisations provide support, there is a need to include financial literacy awareness for both host and refugee communities, empowering them to manage resources and support their families
  7. **Community Agency and Empowerment:** Carefully nudging the target populations across both refugee and host communities to develop self-agency and utilise their own potential for self-sufficiency.
  8. **Integrated Programming:** Agencies implementing various interventions should prioritise designing integrated programs that address the multifaceted needs of the target populations effectively.