



Researchers who are Refugees: Findings and Reflections from a Participatory Study of Connected Learning Higher Education Programs in Emergencies

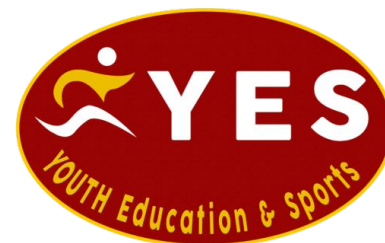
Panel Chairs

Dr. Dhinesh Radhakrishnan, Purdue University
Dr. Jennifer DeBoer, Purdue University

Presenters

Mohamed Talil Abdullahi, Youth Education and Sports, Kakuma
Bernard Ruragira, Youth Education and Sports, Kakuma
Almarat Ngutulu, Youth Education and Sports, Kakuma
Arte Dagane, Dadaab Response Association, Dadaab

Funded by: Spencer
Foundation Small Research
Grant



SPENCER



Poll

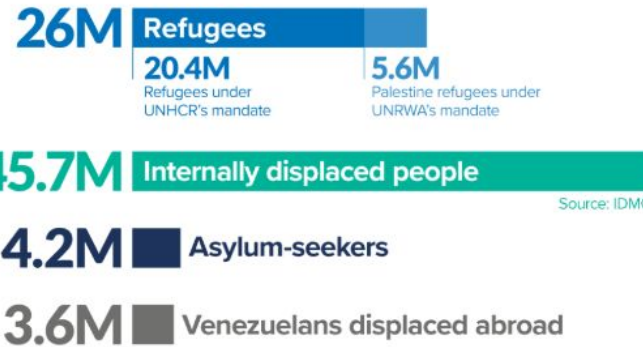
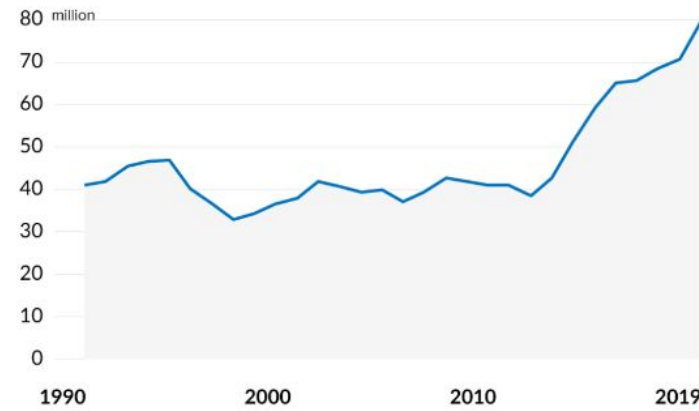
What is the total number of displaced people worldwide now?

For context, in 2000, this number was approximately 20 million people globally.

Forcibly Displaced

79.5 MILLION forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2019

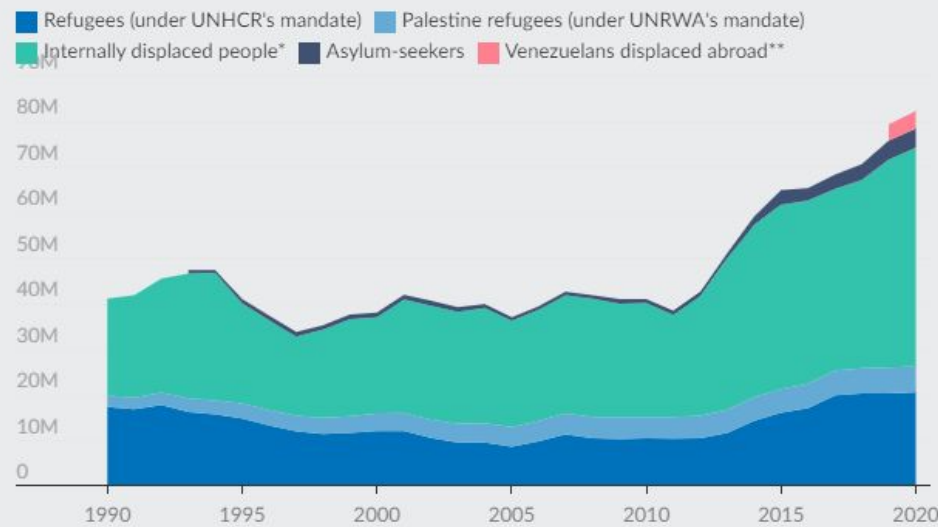
Source: UNHCR / 18 June 2020



Source: IDMC

82.4 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced

at the end of 2020 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.



18 June 2021

* Source: IDMC

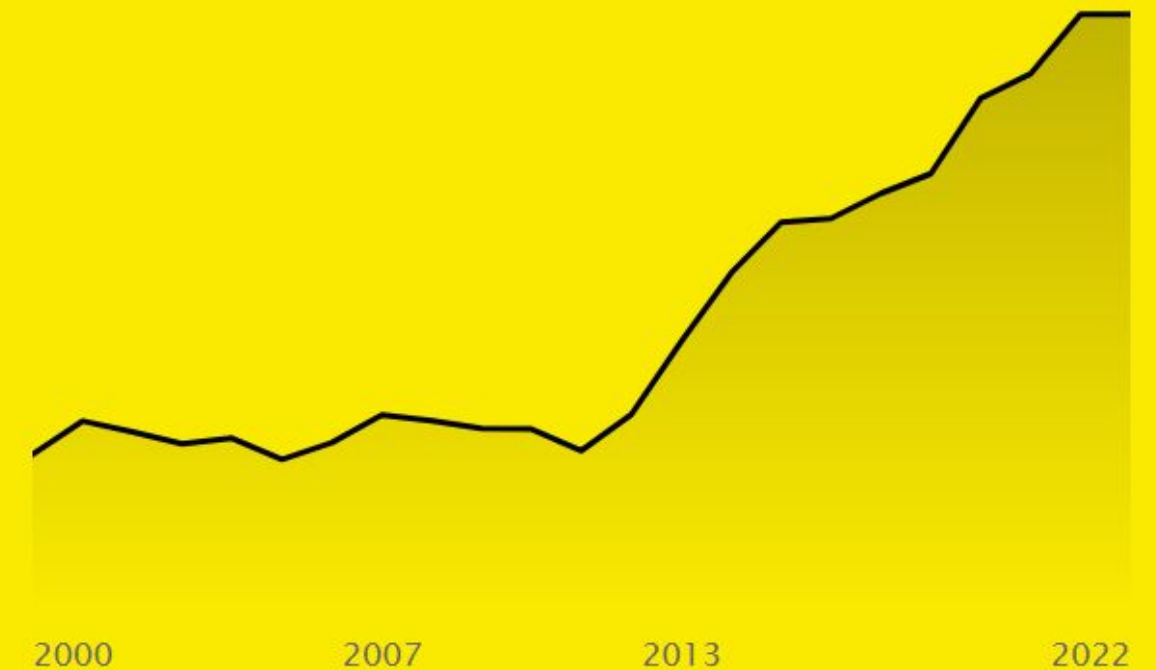
** This number excludes Venezuelan asylum-seekers and refugees.

Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2020

103 MILLION

Forcibly displaced people worldwide

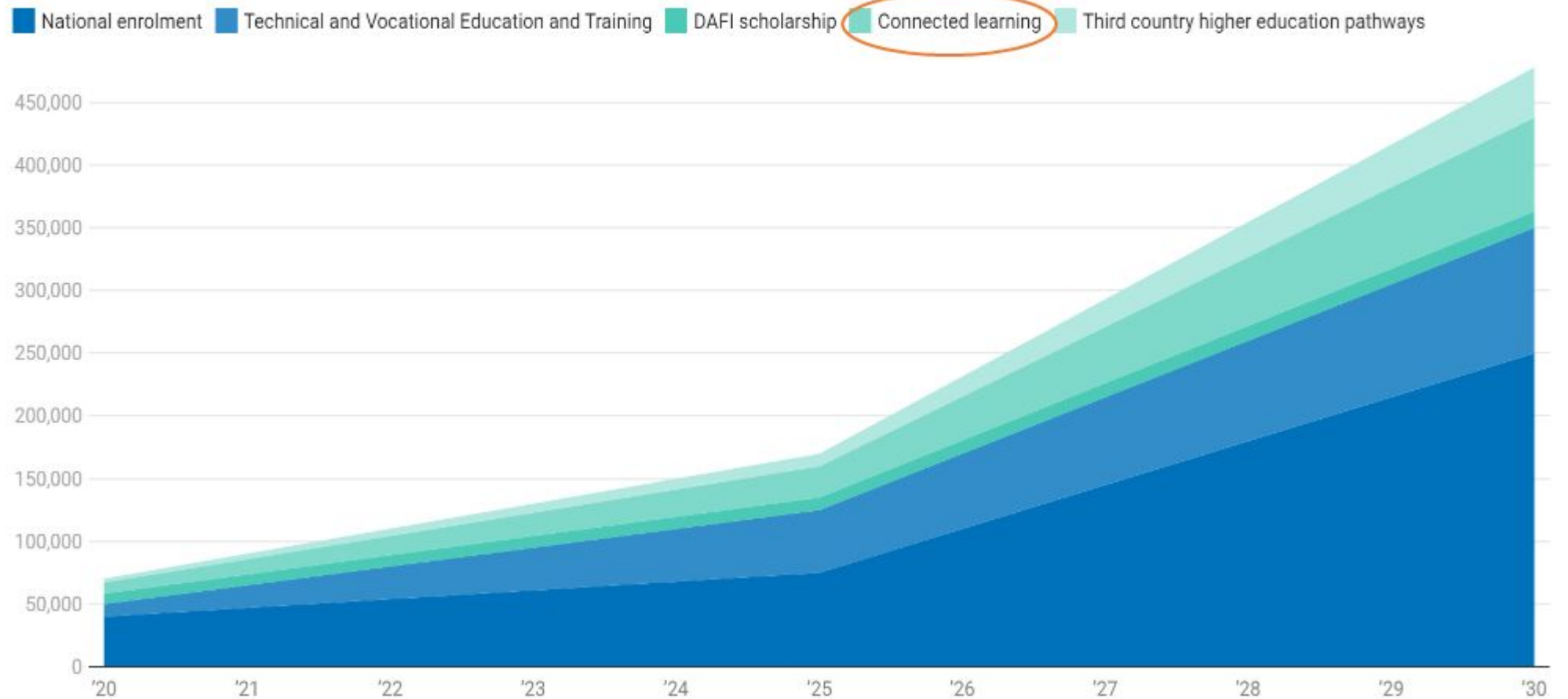
While a full picture is yet to be established, UNHCR estimates that global forced displacement has reached 103 million at mid-2022.



Tertiary Education in Emergencies

- Global average higher education enrollment - more than 40%
- Refugee higher education enrollment - 6% (2023)

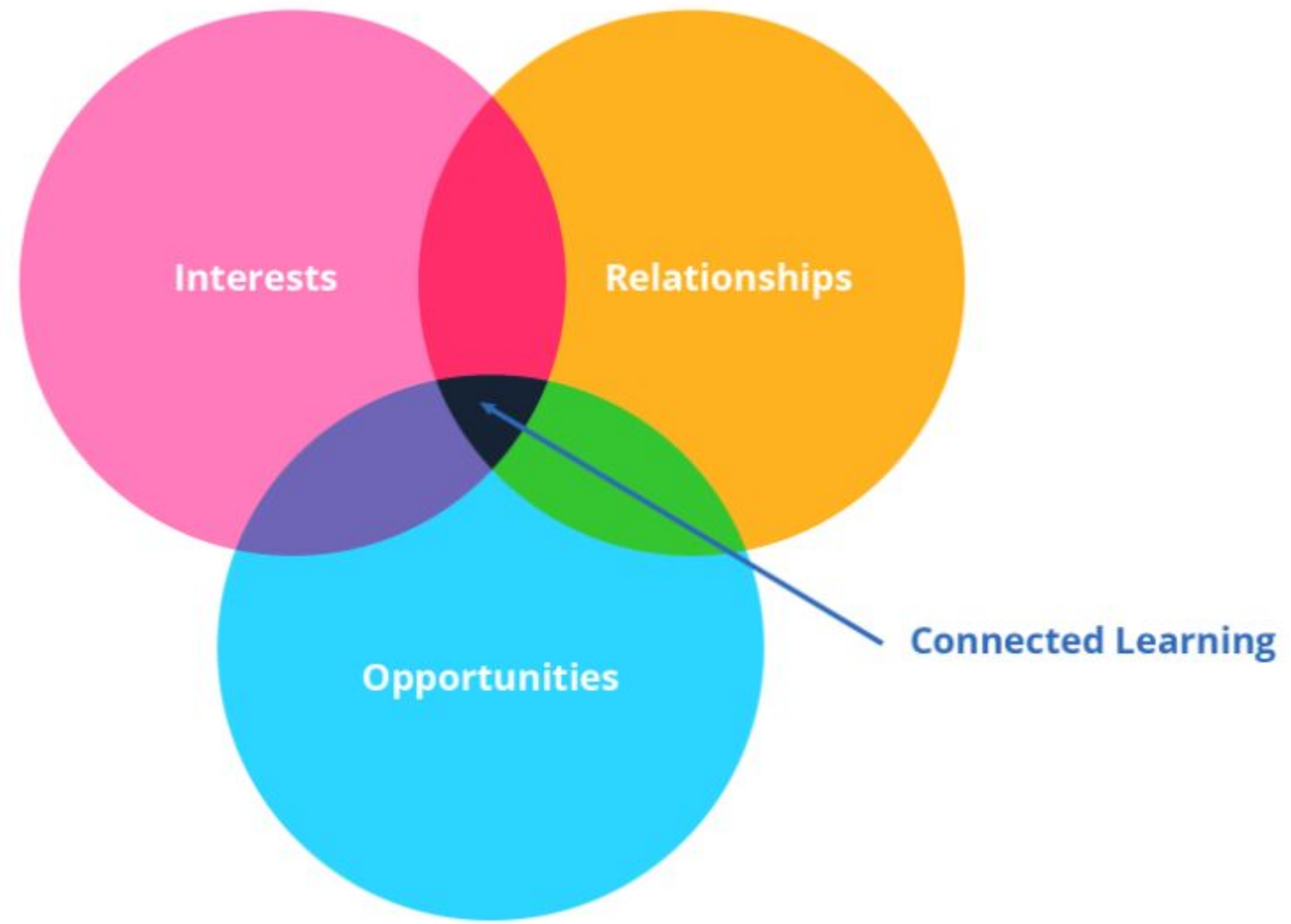
Education pathways to achieve 15% enrolment of refugees in higher education by 2030



15by30 Roadmap

Coming Together to Achieve
15% Enrolment by 2030

Connected Learning



Connected Learning: Core Constructs

Interests

Learning is motivating when it grows out of personal interest.

Relationships

Learners need support from peers and mentors to persist through setbacks and challenges

Opportunities

Success beyond the classroom requires tangible connections to real-world career and civic opportunities.

| Interest Powered | Opportunity (Academically Oriented) | Production Centered | Shared Purpose | Openly Networked | Peer Supported |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| <i>Deepest Experience:</i> Youth pursue their interests in a way that pervades their lives, and their pursuit deepens their knowledge, and expands their horizons. | <i>Deepest Experience:</i> Youth report multiple ways that their experience of the activity supports their school-related activities. | <i>Deepest Experience:</i> Youth ask for and iterate based on feedback on their designs, consistently applying a critical stance toward their own and others' designs. They circulate designs to a broad audience whose thinking and action they seek to influence. | <i>Deepest Experience:</i> Youth participate in activities with a common purpose, equitable participation, and opportunities to lead and contribute. | <i>Deepest Experience:</i> Youth have access all the time to needed digital tools and support for their use; pathways of participation across places to deepen interest are transparent and accessible. | <i>Deepest Experience:</i> Other people broker access to new opportunities and resources to deepen and pursue interests. |

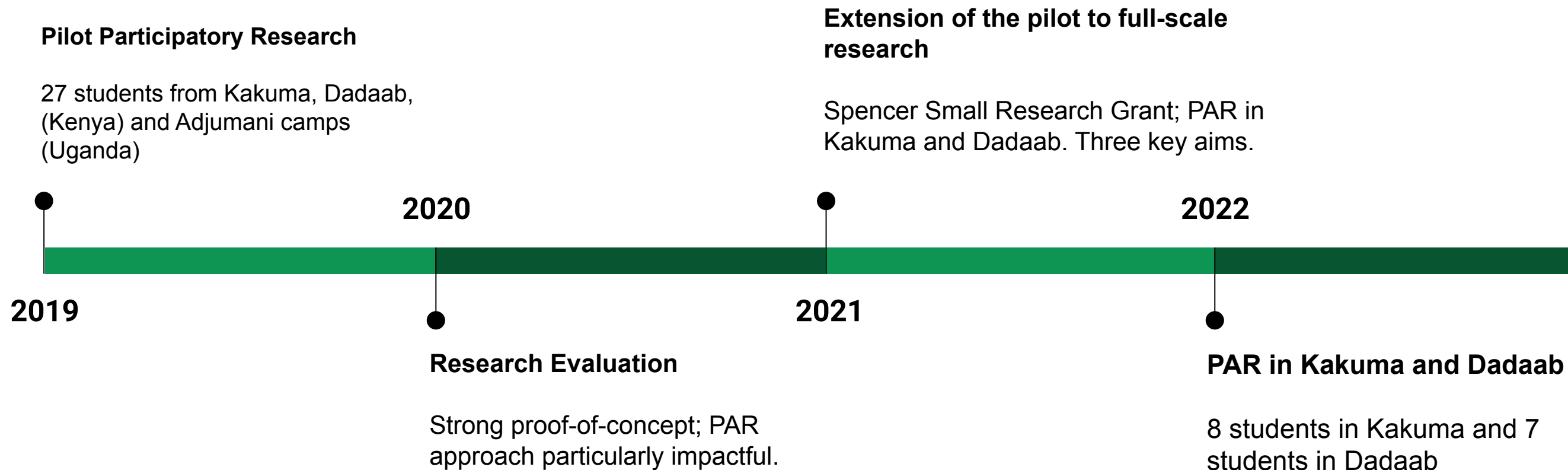
Research in Crisis Contexts

- Evidence is emerging of unethical and potentially exploitative research being undertaken among refugee and other displaced groups by researchers (*McDowell et al. 2004; Pittaway and Bartolomei 2002*)
- The challenges arise from a range of intersecting issues

power, consent and community representation;
confidentiality; trust and mistrust;
harms, risks and benefits;
autonomy and agency;
cultural difference; gender;
human rights and social justice;
oppression and exploitation (*McKenzie et al., 2007*).



Image: Researchers from Kakuma camp presenting their pilot PAR study results in Nairobi



Overall Research Questions

1. How do learners in fragile contexts (Kakuma) experience and respond to the **three crucial contexts for connected learning** (interest powered, peer-supported, and academically oriented)?
2. What are the learners' **experiences with the core properties** (production-cantered, shared purpose, and openly networked) of CL programs?
3. What are the CL **program outcomes** experienced by learners in fragile contexts?
4. How does **technology influence** the learner's experience and the program outcomes?
5. How do the refugee researchers **collaboratively produce critical knowledge** that is relevant and actionable for their community?
6. In what ways do refugee researchers **transfer research results into everyday CL practices** in their contexts? What is the process of results dissemination?

Pre-Research

1. Donor Proposal
2. Establishing partnership contract with Refugee Led Organization
3. IRB (US and Kenya)
4. Participating researchers in each RLO
5. Funds dissemination
6. Online and face-to-face training

Research

1. Research design (methodology and instrument design)
2. Amend IRB
3. Data collection
4. Data Analysis
5. Preliminary dissemination and feedback
6. Review and Revise

Post-Research

1. Report development
2. Dissemination to community
3. Dissemination to stakeholders
4. Lead transformation
5. Next steps
6. Next proposal/cycle

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IMPROVING EDUCATION FOR A
MORE EQUITABLE WORLD
CIES 2023 · February 14-22

Participatory Action Research on Connected Learning in Kakuma Refugee Camp

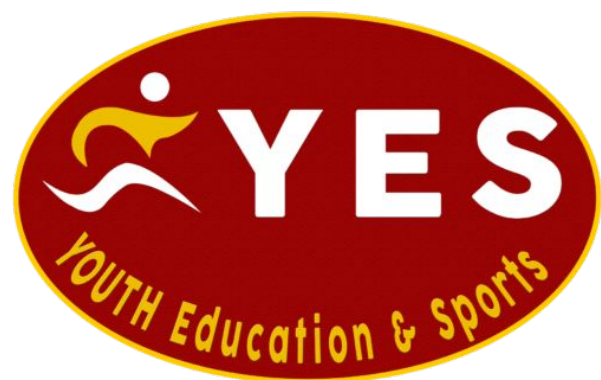
Presenters

Mohamed Talil Abdullahi, Youth Education and Sports, Kakuma
Bernard Ruragira, Youth Education and Sports, Kakuma
Almarat Ngutulu, Youth Education and Sports, Kakuma

Research Team

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Youth Education and Sports is an independent refugee-led organization developed by, run by, and run for the refugee youth of Kakuma/Kalobeyei integrated settlement in Northwest Kenya.



Programs: Social Emotional Learning (SEL),
Higher Education and Research pillar.

Number of staff: 18

Number of student: 50

What did PAR look like in Kakuma?

- ❖ Research Training
- ❖ Research questions formulation (Adding specific questions in addition to the overall)
- ❖ Data collection tools review and development – Redesigning the CLCC survey tool and created a Focus Group protocol
 - (The PAR team contextualized the Connected Learning survey to make it relevant for the Kakuma students.)
- ❖ Data Collection
- ❖ Data Cleaning
- ❖ Data Analysis

Data Collected

- Quantitative data - 203 survey responses were collected.
- Qualitative – 2 sessions of FGD with 15 students total (9 and 7 in each) lasting 2 hours on average for each session

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

7. What are some of the examples of social changes that refugee students bring to the community after getting higher education through connected learning?
8. How are the certificates issued by the connected higher education institutions operating in the camps applicable to the African education and job market?

Examples:-

CE2. In the past 12 months, have you

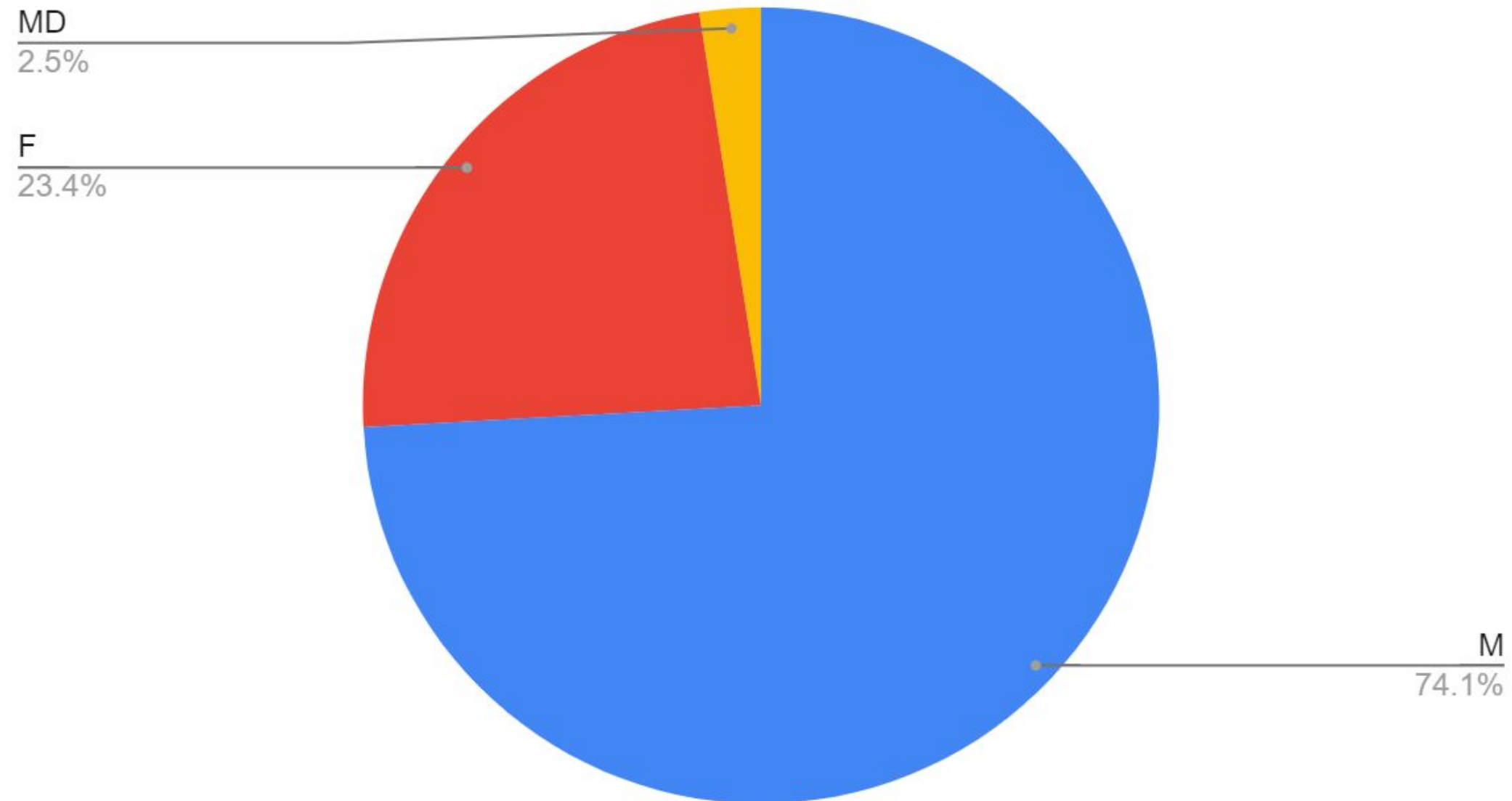
- a. Worked or cooperated with others to try to solve a problem affecting your community or neighborhood?
- b. Participated in community initiative meetings (poetry slam), youth conferences (forum), Kakuma cultural events (musical performance) or other events where young people expressed their leadership skills or political views?

CE3. Please tell us if you have supported a refugee block leader or a youth leader in the past 12 months by: (Mark all that apply.)

- a. Attending a meeting, (rally or dinner), speech?
- b. Working on a campaign?
- c. Carry a preferred candidate picture, posting a poster in your block? (Wearing a campaign button, putting a campaign sticker in your car)

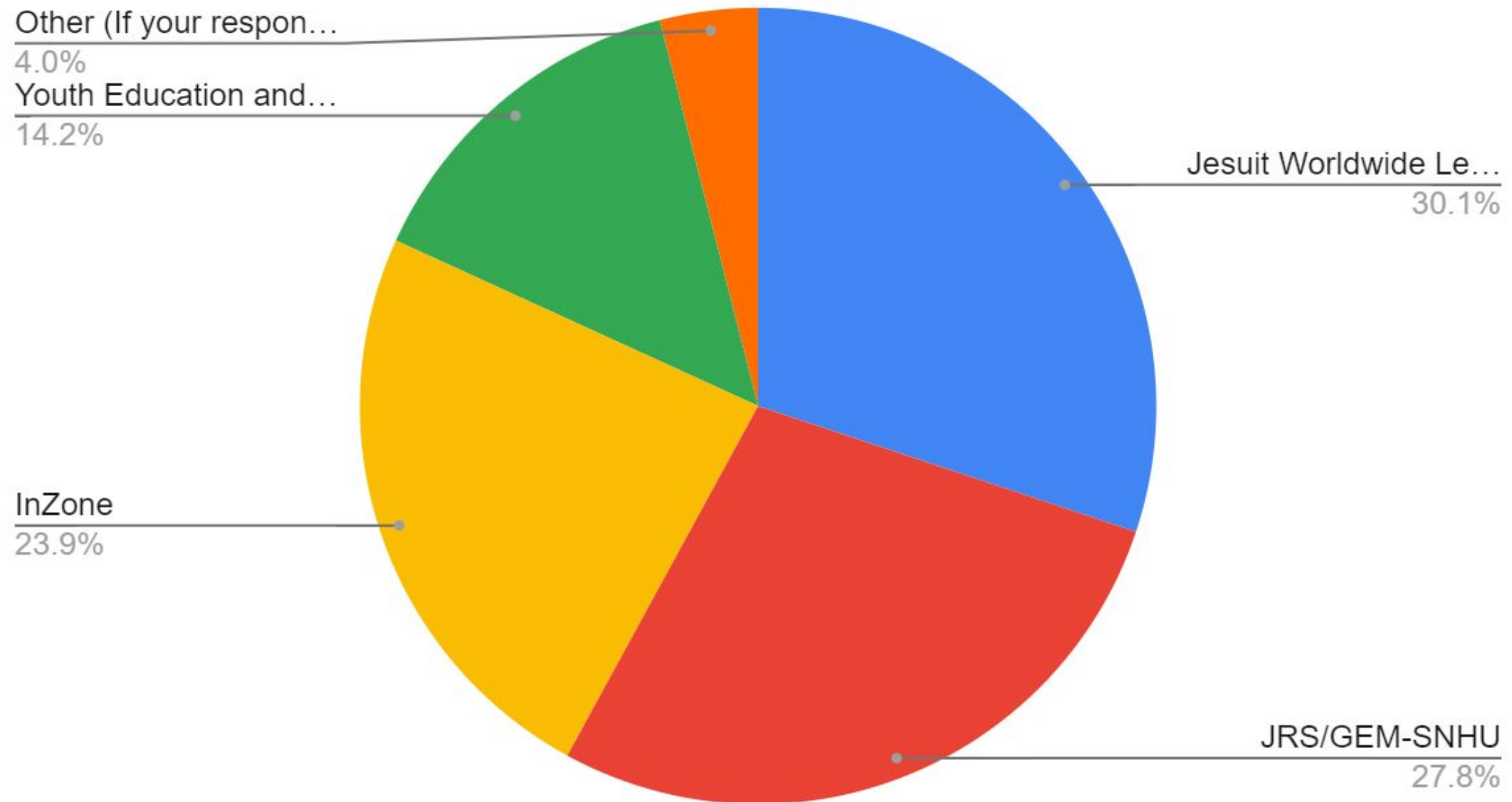
Demographics from survey - Gender

Gender Distribution across CL Learning institutions in kakuma



Demographics from survey - CL Programs in Kakuma

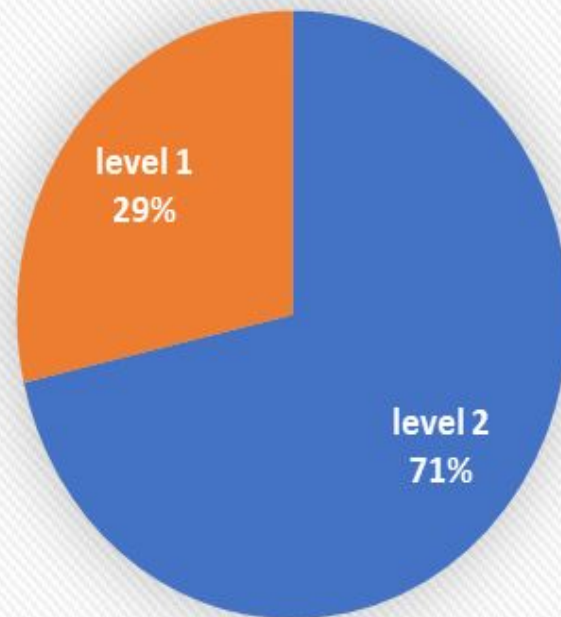
Learners Distribution across CL learning institutions in Kkm



Connected Learning Principles

1. How do learners in fragile contexts (Kakuma) experience and respond to the three crucial contexts for connected learning (interest powered, peer-supported, and academically oriented)?

Interest powered principle



■ level 2 ■ level 1

Level 1 - Youth pursue their interest in one place, without developing knowledge they can apply to other settings.

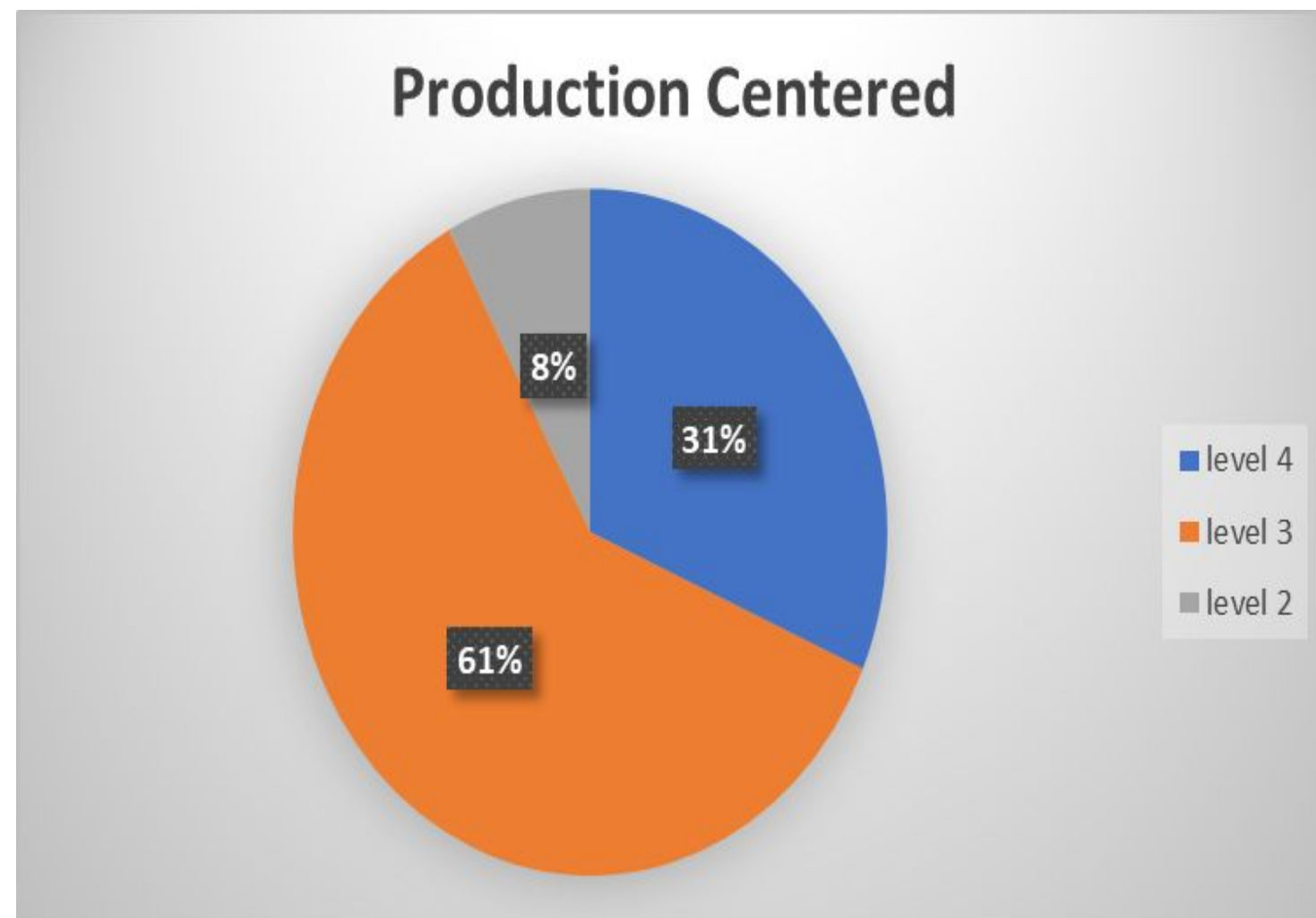
Level 2 - Youth pursue their interest with others in organized youth activities, and their pursuit carries over into some related activities.

Level 3 - Youth pursue their interests with others across some settings of their lives, and their pursuit leads to knowledge and skills they can apply to some other activities.

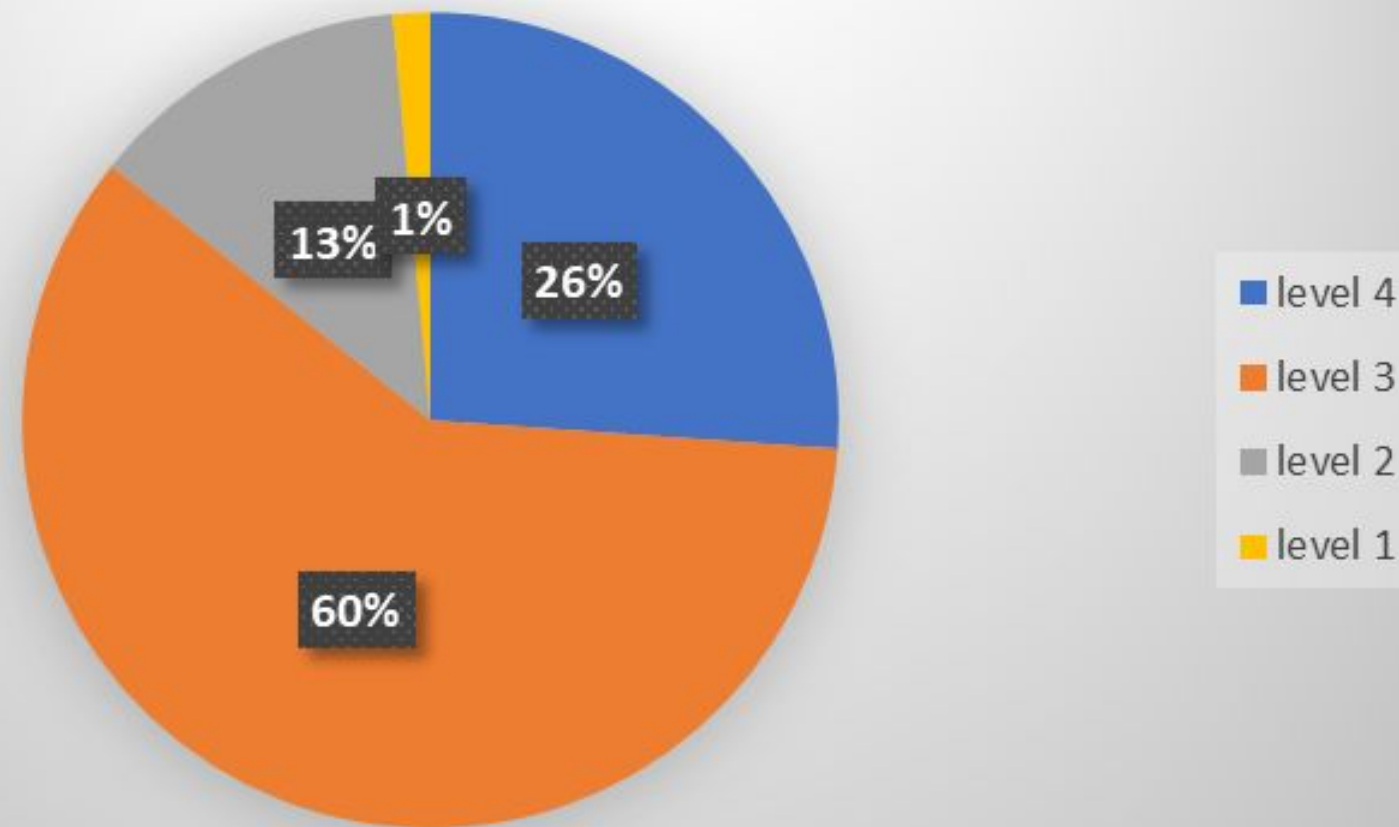
Level 4 - Youth pursue their interests in a way that pervades their lives, and their pursuit deepens their knowledge, and expands their horizons.

2. What are the learners' **experiences with the core properties** (production-cantered, shared purpose, and openly networked) of CL programs?

- Level 1 - Limited design or production
- Level 2- Youth **do not seek feedback on their designs or adopt a critical stance** toward those designs. They circulate their designs to a limited audience
- Level 3 -Youth **ask for feedback on their designs, occasionally applying a critical stance toward their own and others' designs.** They circulate their designs to a broad audience
- Level 4 -Youth **ask for and iterate based on feedback on their designs, consistently applying a critical stance toward their own and others' designs.** They circulate designs to a broad audience whose thinking and action they seek to influence.



Openly Networked Construct



- **Level 4-** youth have access all the time to needed digital tools and support for their use; pathways of participation across places to deepen interest are transparent and accessible.
- **Level 3** Youth have access most of the time to needed digital tools and support for their use; pathways of participation within one place to deepen interest are transparent and accessible.
- **Level 2** Youth have access some of the time to needed digital tools and support for their use; pathways of participation are accessible within one place, but the person feels they are not transparent.
- **Level 1** Youth do not have access to needed digital tools and support for their use; path

7. What are some of the examples of social changes that refugee students bring to the community after getting higher education through connected learning?

- Community Initiatives- Students took community initiatives to respond some of the social challenges in the community.
- Volunteerism- Volunteer at Refugee led-organizations.
- Connected learning certification is relevant in Kakuma whereby most of the respondents cited they couldn't find job or further HE opportunities.
- Lack of enough support with resources or internship opportunities was a challenge as cited in the qualitative responses.

“I encouraged some of the young boys that we are staying around. Our neighbors, tell the boys that, "Let us go to this LOKADU organization, then we can get some trees and then we plant them." At that moment, I collect almost 15 boys from different homes. And then we ran... when we brought them, I'll teach them on how they should stay with the trees. After all, you see the trees are growing. I feel like after all, I've given back to the community.” - KM6

“We started an initiative to increase food availability in the camp. We have been majorly doing that by producing crops and fish. So we have been raising fish and crops stability. Now we are expanding to also currently [inaudible 01:07:20] in Kakuma 2 area. So from January, we're going to have fish ponds in Kakuma 2. Still at the Vijanawawesa club, we have got to develop many other projects. We have done a sustainable agriculture with primary schools in 2021.” - KM7

Key Takeaways

- Producing locally evidence-based results is important to improve the experience of refugees and inform policy and programmatic interventions that are responsive to local needs.
- The key takeaway is that youth can make a positive impact in their community by taking initiatives and engaging in volunteerism, which not only helps their community but also contributes to their personal growth and development.
- And finally, Refugee researchers can design and produce relevant findings in their local communities if given the right skills to carry out PAR Research.

What does this all mean to the context of Kakuma and we researchers?

- This was a learning process for the researchers to share knowledge and design their own research questions that touches the exact problem.
- Contextualizing resources that are available to understand the problem that the research questions address.
- It was important for us to inform and produce locally evidence-based results to improve the CL experience in the refugee context meaningfully.



Participatory Action Research on Connected Learning in Dadaab Refugee Camp

Presenter

Arte Dagane, Dadaab Response Association

Research Team

Mark Okello, Dadaab Response Association

Ochan Leomoi, Dadaab Response Association

Isnina Issack, Dadaab Response Association

Kin Mohamed, Dadaab Response Association

Fatuma Maalim, Dadaab Response Association

Abdikadir Abikar, Dadaab Response Association

Sahra Ismail, Dadaab Response Association

DADAAB REFUGEE COMPLEX

- Location – North Eastern, Kenya
- Population – 200,000 refugees by UNHCR 12, Jan 2023
- Diverse communities - Major ethnic community is Somali, others include Ethiopians, Eritreans, South Sudanese, Ugandans, Congolese
- Interaction between the communities



DADAAB RESPONSE ASSOCIATION (DRA)

• DRA

- Members
- Vision
- Mission

• DRA PARTNERS

- LERRN
- AHEEN
- Kituo CHa Sharia - Legal Organizaion
- RELON-Kenya
- KADANA -Refugee Association

WEBSITE --

<https://carleton.ca/lerrn/learn-with-lerrn/publications/dadaab-response-association/>

Friday, August 12, 2022

The Impact of COVID-19 on Education and Youth Well-Being in the Dadaab Refugee Camps

Okello Oyat, Ochan Leomoi, Arte Dagane, Abdikadir Abikar, Dadaab Response Association Executive summary: The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in school closures globally, including in the Dadaab refugee camps. This study explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education in the Dadaab refugee camps. Based on semi-structured... [More](#)

Wednesday, November 24, 2021

Building Local Professional Learning Communities with and for Teachers in Refugee Camps – A Case Study on Hareed Primary School in Dadaab

https://youtu.be/dqZfugjBK_Q Abdikadir Bare Abikar, Member of the Dadaab Response Association, Graduate of the Master of Education, York University Borderless Higher Education for Refugees Program Executive summary: This paper is a modified version of a Major Research Paper for the Master of Education degree at York University as part of the... [More](#)

Thursday, May 13, 2021

Investigating Corporal Punishment in Refugee Secondary Schools in Dadaab, Kenya



THE CONNECTED LEARNING PROGRAMS IN DADAAB CONTEXT

- Borderless Higher Education For Refugee and Host
 - Universities - York University, Kenyatta University; University of British Columbia, Moi University;
 - Programs - Certifications, Diploma, Degree, Masters
- The African Higher Education in Emergency Network (AHEEN) -
 - Universities - University of Nairobi, Moi University, Purdue University
 - Programs - Diploma and Certification
- Open Society University Network (OSUN)
 - Micro-college for community-based learning and civic engagement; BARD college transcript and OSUN certificate of completion
- HELP DADAAB
 - Is a charity organization, Initiated by a former refugee, now in UK. Provides high education to refugees & host communities.
 - It is through Cambridge International organization- Diploma courses

METHODOLOGY

❖ Quantitative

- Survey questionnaires - Modified Connected Learning Survey Instrument
- Participants – 110
- 61 (72.62%) Refugees
- 22 (26.19%) Kenyans

❖ Qualitative

- Semi-structured Interviews
- Participants – 18, representing both the refugees and host communities.

❖ Participants recruitment

- Selective sampling

RESEARCH TOPIC

- **“the Impact of Higher Education on Students/Alumni of Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER)/Open Society University Network/African Higher Education in Emergency Network/the Connected Learning Society Studies in Dadaab”**

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH IN DADAAB

WHAT A PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH LOOKS LIKE IN
DADAAB?

- WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY?
8 members (4 male & 4 female)
- HOW ARE MEMBERS TRAINED?
 - Online CLCC Training modules
 - In-person local training

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS - Qualitative

New learning mapping to interests

- “Yeah. Actually, before joining this program, the AHEIEN program, and the OSUN program, I didn't know actually how to actually set up the zoom platform, this program to connect learning, email all, and how to even coordinate with other people”.
- “And before I joined the programs, these online programs I had never been able even to touch a computer”.
- “Before I joined the BHER program, I did not have any higher educational opportunities. I did not know how to write even lesson plans for learners. But, when I began my study I received so many experiences and everything changed according to my interests”.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Learning translated immediately to community applications

- Actually, I thank you very much. I must say that in the program that we are completing in December with the AHEEN, we are taking an engineering course actually this time. And one of the engineering programs we are taking is to bring solutions at the community level. So we are designing a project that is going to be helpful to our community and I must say that we are having a good professor, actually, what I am going to design is that are lights, solar lights for these refugee camps which will support a lot.
- One of them is leadership skills. Not only in the school but, even at the community level because whatsoever we have learned in the Borderless Higher Educations for Refugees, has really helped us to at least also mold and equip the community we have

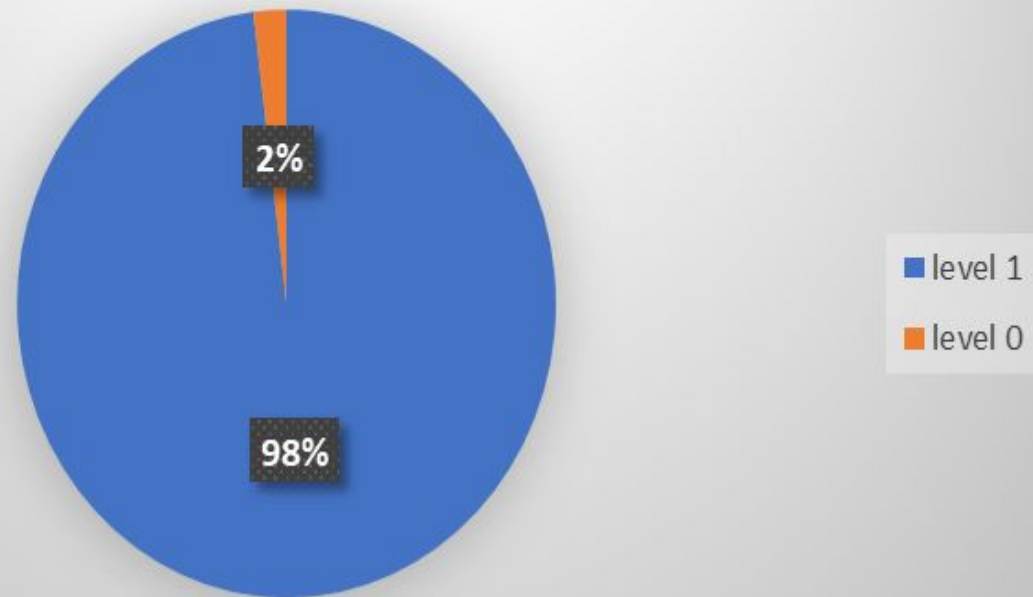
NEXT STEPS

- Completing the analysis
- Dissemination of the research
 - Dadaab Community
 - Connected Learning Alliance
 - BHER
 - AHEEN
 - OSUN
 - HELP Dadaab
 - UNHCR

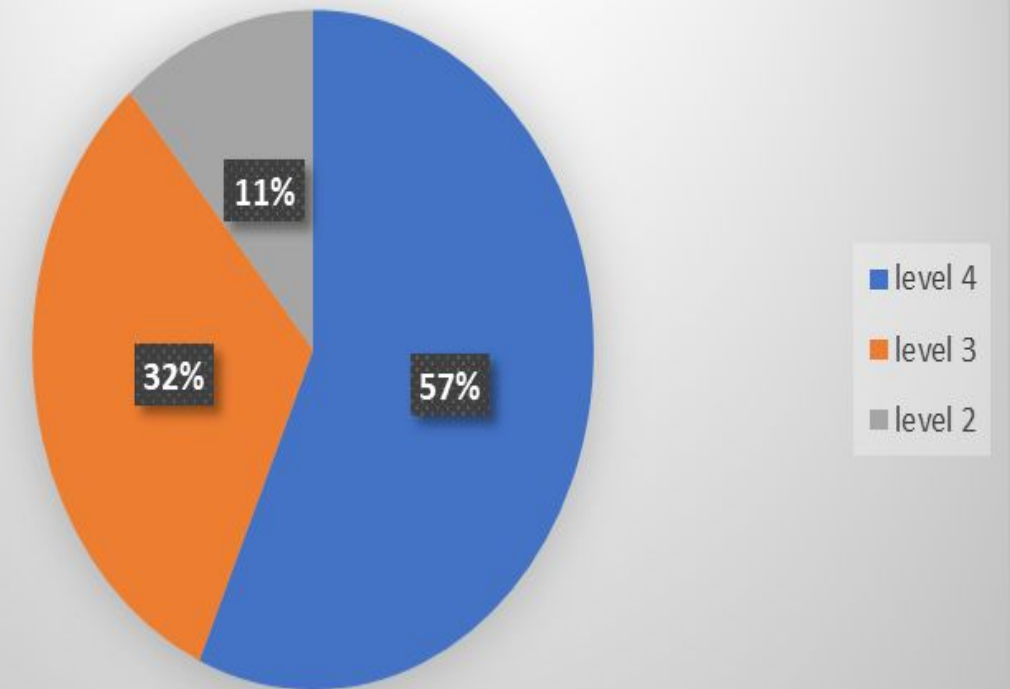
Thank you!

Participatory Research Approach in Emergencies

Opportunity (Academically Oriented) Construct



Shared Purpose Construct



Level 1, Level 2, Level 3