

A group of children are standing in front of a building with corrugated metal walls. Some children are wearing face masks. The image is used as a background for the top half of the poster.

Kakuma, Kenya

Amani School for Refugees

**Giving displaced children a
quality education**



**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL**
Overcoming
Adversity



TEMPLETON WORLD
CHARITY FOUNDATION



**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL
PRIZES**

Table of Contents

02	—	Introduction
03	—	School Profile
04	—	Context and Challenge
07	—	Expertise and Approach
10	—	Outcomes and Results
11	—	Key Steps
14	—	Advice and Guidance



Introduction

Amani School for Refugees is a charity-based teacher training college and primary school in Kakuma, Kenya. The school is run by a group of volunteers who were themselves, refugees. “We implemented this programme based on experience,” said Almarat Amu, a teacher at Amani School for Refugees. “We come from the same community. We actually know the challenges some of them face.” The initiative was the result of a community effort to give children in the Kakuma refugee camp the education their teachers received.



Profile:



Country:

Kenya



Region:

Kakuma



School type:

Charity School



Location area:

Rural



Student population:

Under 1000



Prize Category:

Overcoming Adversity

“Everything depends on the foundation – which foundation do you get? When you get a good foundation from the beginning, your performance will be good. So, that’s when we identified the gap and we said: ‘we need to come up with a programme which will support children who are starting off.’” – Almarat Amu, Teacher, Amani School for Refugees



In-depth look

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

The Amani School for Refugees has been in operation for over four years and was originally established by INVER Empowering Refugees, an organisation that works to nurture the resilience and wellbeing of refugees. “We have a curriculum that we have developed that is more relevant to the refugees’ situation in the camp,” said Amin Bolis, a teacher at the school, when explaining how the school’s educational model aligns with its students’ experiences.

The school initially encountered issues in convincing the wider community of its value, with some people citing their circumstances as a reason not to have a school. The school, therefore, is set up to

demonstrate the benefits students could gain. “Not only were we teaching students,” said Bolis, “we were supporting them psychologically. Some of the kids became able to bring out what they’re thinking about and write it down on paper.” This ability to articulate their experiences allowed for a stronger student-teacher rapport and helped the faculty cater to individual student's needs.

The school also struggled to recruit teachers as it didn’t have the funds to pay a full roster of staff, though it did get help from volunteers with INVER Empowering Refugees. At the same time, they had trouble finding a facility that could cater to classroom teaching.



At first, classes took place in homes and were eventually held in two classrooms built by INVER Empowering Refugees. The organisation continues to help keep the school running through small donations for course materials.



A background photograph of a classroom with several children sitting on green plastic chairs. Some children are wearing face masks. The image is slightly blurred and has a white text box overlaid in the center.

“These are kids coming from different cultural backgrounds and countries and religious backgrounds. They can come together and learn about different cultures from different people – this creates unity and co-existence amongst the refugees community.”

- Amin Bolis, Teacher, Amani School for Refugees



EXPERTISE AND APPROACH

The school has 80 children from multiple nationalities. These children currently attend remedial classes and are in contact with international teachers who help develop their skills and knowledge, based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Aiming to be something of a haven for refugee children who have endured considerable emotional and mental trauma, the school provides lessons in numeracy and teaches illiterate students to read and write fluently.

The school became an alternative to other educational initiatives set up by other charities and international institutions. “It depended on the funds they had,” said Almarat Amu, another teacher at Amani School for Refugees. “Classes were crowded, and there was [often] a limited number of teachers. It was a struggle and performance in national exams was not always great.” With this in mind, the teachers who would eventually help run the school decided to start what later became known as Amani School for Refugees.


The school is made up of volunteers, and members often donate five dollars a month to help keep the school going. The teachers themselves are well-educated and help design the curriculum. Alongside literacy and numeracy, the school also provides art classes, believing it to be an important and enriching aspect of education.

The donations from fellow refugees allow the students to access a greater quality of education, which the school founders see as key to bettering students’ own lives and futures. The school’s core expertise lies in fostering resilience in the children.



It acts as a safe and friendly space, where the children can find relief from the daily emotional turmoil and hardships they experience. The trauma of having had to flee their childhood homes and seeking asylum in another country is a constant, and the faculty take this into consideration when handling their education. And because there are so many nationalities, the school encourages its students to think beyond their individual circumstances to become global citizens. To further help the students become global citizens, the school also connects students with other students and educators all around the world through online classes.





“You need to study your people and then adopt approaches that are specific to their region.”

- Almarat Amu, Teacher, Amani School for Refugees



OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

The school has succeeded in providing refugee children with education, with a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy. “We’ve had improvement in terms of the English subject and mathematics compared to how they were underperforming,” Bolis said, explaining that the school tends to focus most of its efforts on bringing students back up to the correct level for their respective age groups.

Every year, students have shown better results in mathematics and literacy than the initial assessments predicted. For instance, after sitting their exams, Amani School for Refugees students have achieved the required grades to move on to the next grade level.

The art lessons in particular have greatly benefited the students and have even helped convince otherwise doubtful parents.

“Most African parents [based in the camp],” said Almarat Amu, “who are illiterate in this case, don’t appreciate the importance of art – the joy of performance.” But these attitudes have improved over time, said Amu, as have students’ artistic skills.

Due to the wide demographic breadth at the school, students have been able to appreciate, to some degree, each other’s different languages. The most common spoken language is Swahili and very few can speak English. The school has provided students with the means to speak their own languages via virtual platforms with other people around the world.



Key Steps



IDENTIFYING GAPS

The school began by stimulating the community and involving them in identifying the community gaps that exist and which ones they could address. The faculty reviewed the problems other charity-funded schools were having in the same area and devised a plan for an education centre that would help overcome those systemic issues.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The second step was to inform the relevant stakeholders and involve them in planning and executing the actual setup, both in recruiting volunteer teachers and finding suitable classrooms for learning.





COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The faculty then started to mobilise community resources, allowing them to set up the classroom and to procure learning and educational materials. Students were then registered and began learning under the educational model the school faculty had designed specifically for children based in refugee camps.



MAINTAINING SCHOOL FUNDS

The next step involved continuously mobilising resources to fund the school's operations. Volunteers and other faculty members donate \$5 a month for the necessary learning and educational materials. At the same time, the faculty carried out regular assessments to evaluate and update stakeholders on which teaching practices were the most effective.





ADJUSTING EDUCATIONAL MODEL

The school then focused its efforts on slowly adding to the curriculum in order to maximise its learning program, continually assessing the competence of the volunteer teachers. The school also evaluated the students to understand who was benefiting from the programme and how it could be improved.



MAINTAINING STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Finally, the school continued to maintain its relationship with the programme stakeholders. This allowed it to build a strong rapport with volunteer teachers, students, and parents who further helped support school operations and came to support the faculty's efforts in educating their children.



Advice and Guidance

It's important to be strongly committed when pursuing this type of goal and when faced with strong opposition from the wider community. It is also recommended to have a clear goal of how the educational model will best serve the students and to then develop a programme that unites different parts of the community, especially where the community is so diverse. Lastly, where many of the students and community members have experienced severe trauma, it's important to develop and implement a unique approach that is empathetic and compassionate.

More information

 <http://inver.africa/>

 [@INVERInitiative](https://twitter.com/INVERInitiative)

