

ABSTRACT

Out of 69 million children that are deprived of their right to education globally, 54% are girls. This paper seeks to elucidate the female teachers' protective role of refugee girls in Dadaab Refugee camps and Kakuma in Kenya. According to UNHCR education strategy contrary to expectation, schools are not always safe places for children and more so for the refugee girls. The protective factors in refugee secondary schools include adequate teacher student ratio, elimination of humiliation, bullying and corporal punishment and safe guards against sexual abuse and exploitation of the girls. The presence of female teachers can play a role in creating a secure environment for the girls. The percentage of female refugee teachers in Kenya is a mere 14 percent yet she hosts the largest number of refugees in world. Further, the girl child secondary school participation in Dadaab and Kakuma camp is 21% and 19% respectively. So far, there is no data available on the effectiveness of higher proportion of female teachers in protecting the girl child. There is also unproven assumption that the number of female refugee teachers can play a role in protecting refugee children. Currently, measures of girl child protection capture service delivery and not the outcomes of education. This small scale qualitative study seeks to understand the outcomes of having female teachers and their impact on the quality of girl child education. Drawing upon interviews with teachers, refugee girls, practitioners, observations in secondary schools in Dadaab and Kakuma camps and data from refugee service providers the findings are primarily descriptive in nature. The paper contends that although the female teachers play a fundamental protective role for the girl - child in refugee schools there is need to explore the possibility of reaching out to the male teachers to extend the same protection to the girl child by improving their pedagogy. Pedagogy that is gender sensitive will encourage the refugee girls to complete their secondary education and even aim higher to attain careers that can change their lifestyle. In the meantime, there is urgent need to promote recruitment, training and improve incentives of the female teachers to foster a protective learning environment for the refugee girls in the secondary schools in both camps.