

An Evaluation of Progress of the Inclusion of Refugees in National Education Systems in the IGAD Member States

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Conducted by: Meraki Labs and Key Aid Consulting

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Evaluation Office

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Case Postale 2500
1211 Genève 2
Switzerland
www.unhcr.org

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Evaluation information at a glance	
Title of the evaluation:	An Evaluation of Progress of the Inclusion of Refugees in National Education Systems in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Member States
Timeframe covered:	December 2017 – December 2022
Completion Year:	2024
Type of evaluation:	Decentralized Evaluation
Countries covered:	Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda
Evaluation management:	Jennie Taylor, Senior Regional Education Officer, UNHCR Malene Molding Nielsen, Senior Regional Evaluation Officer, UNHCR Dr. Kebede Tsegaye, Senior Coordinator, Education, Science, Technology & Innovation, IGAD

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Executive Summary

Background

1. This is an evaluation of the Djibouti Declaration (DD), which is a non-binding regional instrument towards quality education in safe learning environments for refugees and host communities spearheaded by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and adopted by seven Member States (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda). The evaluation was jointly commissioned by IGAD and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). It is intended to document and analyse the outcomes of the Djibouti Declaration, the processes by which these outcomes were achieved, and the degree to which these processes and outcomes are sustainable.
2. The evaluation focuses on two specific commitments to include refugees in national education systems, notably Commitment C: inclusion of refugees in national education systems and Commitment E: financing, partnership, and monitoring. Twelve specific sub-commitments were identified as priority areas. The evaluation covers the period from the signature of the Declaration in December 2017 to December 2022. It acknowledges that regional level policy can translate into practice through many different routes, and thus focuses on national policymaking and policy implementation processes.
3. The evaluation design was non-experimental and used a case study approach. Mixed methods were used. A perception-based approach was chosen due to evidence that policymaking and policy implementation processes are strongly dependent on perceptions and consensus building;¹ this approach also supported a more in-depth analysis of drivers of and obstacles to progress. Data collection took place in all IGAD states but was more intense in three case study countries (Djibouti, Ethiopia, and South Sudan). It involved 191 key informant interviews, three participatory workshops and a live desk review process that included analysis of several databases.

State of Play: Have the Djibouti Declaration Commitments Been Met?

4. The evaluation found that regional level commitments made under the Djibouti Declaration have been met. IGAD maintained high-level political will in support of refugee inclusion in national education systems through its coordination and engagement activities. It also met its commitment to develop a regional qualifications framework and provide an environment for learning and exchange, specifically on teacher training and the inclusion of refugee teachers in national systems. IGAD produced and piloted modules in support of teacher training in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Uganda. The impact of this programme could have been enhanced if it had been rooted in a stronger political economy analysis.
5. Commitments associated with laws, policies, planning, and strategy were, by and large, achieved across IGAD Member States. All states have a legal framework that supports refugee inclusion in national education systems, and refugees are included in National Education Sector Plans (NESP) to at least some extent across the IGAD region. Costed plans for refugee inclusion were developed by Ministries of Education across the region, although the quality of these plans and level of endorsement varied across countries.

¹ Oxford Research. (n.d.). [Understanding the Policy Process](#); Oxford Research (n.d.). [Mapping the Policymaking Process](#); Sutton, Rebecca. (1999). [The Policy Process: An Overview](#)

6. More work is needed for IGAD states to meet commitments associated with changes in school governance and management, but progress has been made over the evaluation period. States have made strong efforts to include refugees into national education information management systems (NEMIS), but only one state, Djibouti, has fully achieved its commitments in this regard. No state has fully reached its commitment to integrate refugee schools into national education systems (i.e., registering refugee hosting schools as public, assuring capitation grants for refugee students, making use of national systems for teaching materials, deploying teachers through the national system). Progress has, however, been made across the region, with refugees using the host country curriculum in all IGAD states and refugee schools progressively transitioning to the national system in Ethiopia and Uganda. Inclusion of refugee teachers in national education systems represents an obstacle and a source of tension in several IGAD states, including all case study countries. Frameworks for recognition of prior learning and associated formal qualifications are in development across the region, while transition programmes are in place, provided by a range of government and non-governmental actors.
7. Delivery of commitments for financing is integral to the achievement of other commitments. Currently no IGAD state has adequate fiscal capacity to meet the additional cost of refugee learners, as reported by learners and verified through political economy analyses. The international community has made only few Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) commitments to provide support, and the evaluation could not find evidence that sufficient financing was allocated to refugee inclusion efforts. Systems to track the degree to which international actors meet their commitments are not in place. Alignment of financing has also been limited, both between and within the humanitarian and development spheres; Uganda has rolled out a good practice to coordinate actors through the Education Response Plan.

Drivers of Progress: What National-Level Factors Influenced Achievement?

8. The degree to which refugee inclusion in national education systems can be achieved is affected by complementary rights, notably the right to move, the right to work and the right to documentation; all of these rights are in the process of being strengthened in IGAD states. Although the legal right to education is protected and all states have met Declaration commitments to support legal frameworks, refugees continue to face practical challenges in accessing national education systems, in part due to challenges in accessing complementary rights. States made efforts to support complementary rights both at the regional and the country level, during the same time period as the signature of the Djibouti Declaration. There is evidence that the process of implementing these policies has been lengthy, hampered by bureaucratic issues, with financing and changes to governance and management systems required.
9. High-level political will was achieved, sustained throughout the evaluation period, and acknowledged by actors at different levels; this represents a major achievement for both IGAD and Member States. Actors at the ministerial and head-of-state level have direct influence on laws, policies, planning and strategy. The high degree of achievement regarding these commitments demonstrates strong political will among high-level actors. However, high-level actors only have indirect influence over the ways in which activities to support refugee inclusion are rolled out; activities are managed by line ministries and their relevant departments. As such, high-level political will to support the Djibouti Declaration alone has not been sufficient to achieve full inclusion of refugees in national education systems.

10. School management systems are governed by organizational structures within governments. A wide range of ministries are implicated in refugee inclusion: at a minimum, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, and the department responsible for refugee affairs, and often in addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of the Interior. Collaboration is required at both national and sub-national level in order to roll out changes to school governance and management systems. This evaluation found that ministries and departments across governments had limited institutional incentives to engage with refugee inclusion in national education systems. At the national level, it was challenging for ministries and departments to navigate the reallocation of responsibilities, budgets, and staff. At the sub-national level, some departments lacked capacity to fully engage, and in some states, coordination between national and sub-national levels could have been strengthened.
11. Effective translation of policy into practice relies upon the use of strong management and accountability mechanisms, led by national-level governments. This evaluation found that efforts to support refugee inclusion to date have focused on the legal and policy frameworks and planning processes; fewer resources have been devoted to the governance and management needed to facilitate, guide, and oversee implementation, supervision, and monitoring at the national level. In some states, SMART targets have been set, but there is little evidence that indicators are monitored on a regular basis, or that actors at different levels are sufficiently aware of supervision and monitoring systems.
12. This evaluation found that a lack of financing underpins the lack of achievement of Djibouti Declaration commitments. States are not currently able to invest at global benchmark rates in national learners; the costs associated with including refugee learners are therefore daunting. Financial challenges are more significant because GDP growth rates in the IGAD region are variable, and states have limited fiscal space to undertake new commitments. Refugee inclusion involves both one-off and recurrent costs that states are not able to meet; international support is needed to fill this gap.

Contributors to Progress: What Regional and International Factors Influenced Achievements?

13. At the regional level, IGAD was successful at building and maintaining high-level political will throughout the evaluation period. This political will, in turn, was a bedrock for successes achieved in laws, policies, planning and strategies across Member States. IGAD invested in advocacy with high-level political actors: they developed a network of focal points through Member States and convened high-level political actors on a regular basis throughout the evaluation period. They actively advocated for refugee inclusion in national education systems and supported the development of frameworks such as the Regional Qualifications Framework and the regional monitoring and evaluation framework. Going forward, there is scope for more engagement on the monitoring and evaluation framework.
14. International actors have expressed support for refugee inclusion in national education systems and have made commitments to responsibility-sharing at both the international and regional levels. However, the number of explicit pledges made to support refugee inclusion in the IGAD region is relatively small. Financial contributions have been made, but it is not possible to track these commitments due to overlap between financing instruments and silos between humanitarian and development actors.
15. Where, financial contributions have been made by development actors, it is unclear how these funds have been allocated within national systems, and the resulting impact of the activities implemented. Key informant

interviews indicate that humanitarian funding has continued to be allocated against immediate needs as well as supporting the alignment of refugee education initiatives with national protocols and standards, however, funding cycles remain too short-term and unpredictable to incentivize full refugee inclusion in national education systems. This is in part because full refugee inclusion involves higher recurrent costs, such as costs associated with meeting the salaries of teachers on national payroll, and it is challenging for humanitarian actors to meet these costs, particularly over longer timeframes.

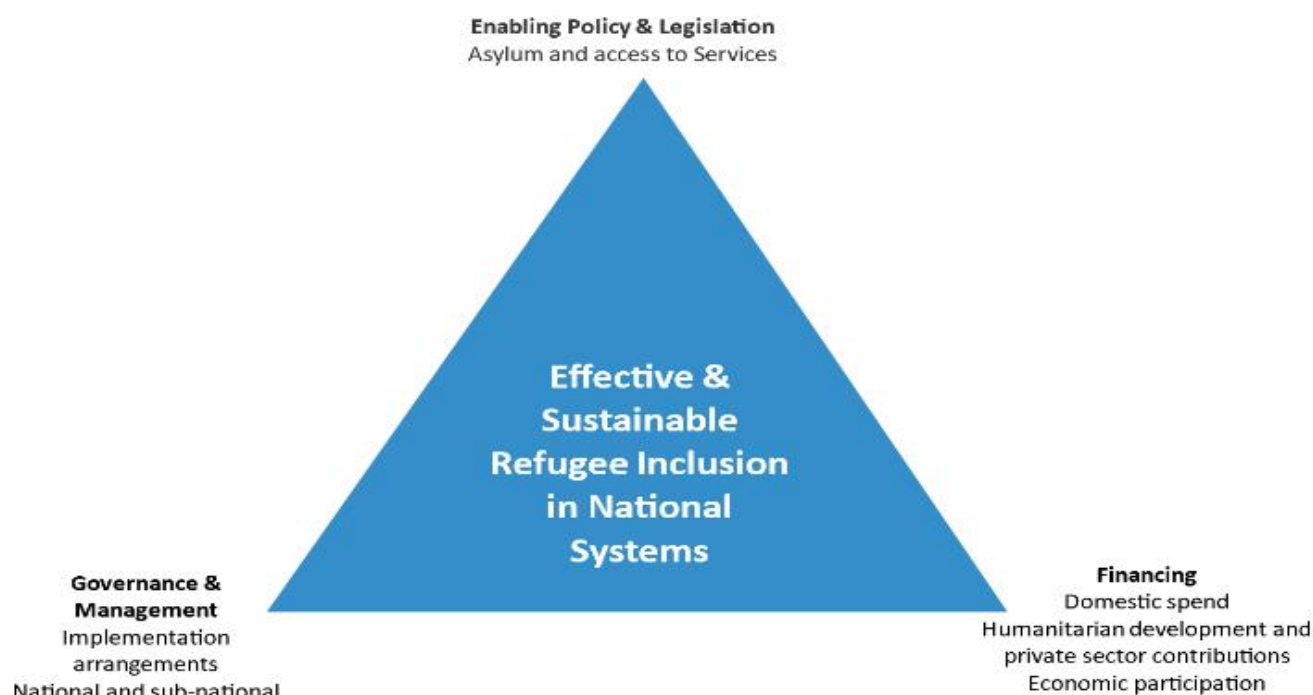
16. Financial commitments to refugee inclusion in national education systems from development partners have been structured in several different ways, with international partners using loan, grant, and on-budget modalities. The use of loan facilities to support refugee inclusion is challenging: some Member States perceive the use of loans as an abdication of responsibility-sharing obligations, as states need to take on the full cost of refugee inclusion and pay interest rates for this new caseload. However, loans also allow Member States to invest in infrastructure and systems that benefit both national and refugee learners and can support longer-term growth. Grant facilities are sometimes structured around cost reimbursement; while this approach incentivizes results, it may also have drawbacks in addressing underlying structural issues. On-budget support, similarly, needs to be accompanied by governance and capacity-building. This evaluation finds that it is important to structure financing mechanisms in ways that account for the time and resources required to adapt governance systems and that include incentives for different ministries and departments to collaborate.

Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

17. The full report includes a detailed narrative for each of the conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations that are summarized below. The conclusions of the report are as follows:
 - 17.1. **Conclusion 1:** To achieve sustainable inclusion of refugees in national education systems, it is critical to (1) establish an enabling legal and policy environment, (2) build effective governance and management structures, and (3) mobilize predictable financing aligned with costed plans, as per **Error! Reference source not found.** below.
 - 17.2. **Conclusion 2:** The Djibouti Declaration commitments associated with laws, policies and strategies have largely been met by IGAD and Member States, thus laying a foundation for sustainable refugee inclusion in national education systems.
 - 17.3. **Conclusion 3:** There is a clear gap in translating policy into practice, and refugees are not yet functionally included in national education systems; this can be linked to slow progress with regard to governance and management.
 - 17.4. **Conclusion 4:** National governments do not have adequate fiscal space to fully meet the Djibouti Declaration, and there was no evidence that sufficient international financing was allocated to meet the gap; this poses risks for the achievement of refugee inclusion in national education systems.
 - 17.5. **Conclusion 5:** International actors engage in refugee inclusion in national education systems in a way that is split along nexus lines and clustered around specific initiatives; this leads to a lack of transparency and coherence and reduces the effectiveness of international support.

Figure 2²

Components of Refugee Inclusion in National Education Systems



18. Lessons that can inform future efforts to include refugees in national education systems are as follows:

- 18.1. **Lesson 1:** In order to achieve refugee inclusion, an enabling legal framework should be accompanied by significant investments in governance and management in order to achieve impact.
- 18.2. **Lesson 2:** Full achievement of refugee inclusion in national education systems requires progress with regard to implementation of complementary rights, notably the right to work, the right to freedom of movement and the right to documentation, and it requires governments to address associated bureaucratic obstacles.

² The figure 2 on effective sustainable inclusion has been developed by UNHCR's Regional Bureau in EHAGL in a concept note on sustainable programming, July 2024. Supporting definitions are as follows: 1) Laws and policies refer to the commitments made by governments at the international, regional, and national levels in relation to refugee rights, as well as the strategies and plans that are developed to realise these commitments. Laws and policies refer not only to refugee education, but also to refugees' recognition, protection, and management, access to basic service delivery and right to move and work. 2) Governance refers to public oversight and leadership with planning beginning at the national or system level, where policy or system goals are defined and subsequently translated into viable programmes that can be implemented by sub-national authorities and service providers (including both state and non-state actors). 3) Management refers to the systems and processes through which these programmes are implemented as defined by the specific policies and procedures of the government authority at the national or sub-national levels. The degree to which the system goals are achieved is influenced by the incentives, performance information, and accountability mechanisms at each level of the service delivery mechanism (e.g., the education system) and the governance and management capacity to effectively address obstacles to implementation, including bureaucratic obstacles. 4) Financing refers to the funds available for and allocated by the Government through tax contributions and with support from international actors and the private sector to specific activities and initiatives associated with inclusion. In LICs and MICs, this is often provided through a combination of individual or community, domestic and development financing. The source, and consistency of funds, how these funds are channelled, and managed by the service provider is integral to achieving sustainable refugee inclusion in national systems.

- 18.3. **Lesson 3:** High-level political actors have direct capacity to affect laws, policies, and planning; their influence on governance and management systems is more diffuse.
- 18.4. **Lesson 4:** Changes in school governance and management require investments in aligning and incentivizing organizational structure shifts.
- 18.5. **Lesson 5:** Financing is a necessary enabler of change, and states with limited fiscal space require international support to meet the cost of refugee inclusion.
- 18.6. **Lesson 6:** To generate and sustain sufficient predictable, long-term international financing to support host countries, investments must be made in mechanisms to transparently track financing from donors across the humanitarian-development nexus.
- 18.7. **Lesson 7:** International financing can be allocated towards investments, which jointly benefit national and refugee learners, and which support longer-term benefits for both host and refugee learners.
- 18.8. **Lesson 8:** Political economy analysis can enhance the impact and mitigate against unintended consequences of regional-level initiatives by situating regional activities in country-level political economy realities e.g., the capacity of states to finance or scale up particular initiatives.
- 18.9. **Lesson 9:** Approaches to financing for refugee inclusion in national education systems should be firmly grounded in an understanding of national budgeting mechanisms, as well as a strong understanding of existing governance systems.
- 18.10. **Lesson 10:** A clear monitoring and evaluation process, including SMART indicator monitoring at the national and sub-national levels, supports the translation of policy into practice.

19. Recommendations are as follows:

- 19.1. **Recommendation 1:** Parties to regional-level declarations and international actors should ensure that findings from this evaluation and existing sub-commitments - including in relation to financing and monitoring and evaluation - are explicitly included in revised Action Plans.
- 19.2. **Recommendation 2:** Member States should strengthen the management and governance required to operationalize policies, strategies and legislative frameworks associated with inclusion, by putting in place implementation mechanisms that bring together departments from different sectors and different administrative levels and that are clearly costed.
- 19.3. **Recommendation 3:** IGAD and UNHCR should advocate with the international community to increase transparency, and coordinate across different “nexus” actors and different sectors to assure clarity on responsibility-sharing obligations in the context of the inclusion agenda.
- 19.4. **Recommendation 4:** The international community should transparently commit sufficient, predictable, and long-term financing against the prioritized needs in updated country plans and costed plans, while supporting the inclusion agenda by coordinating across nexus actors.
- 19.5. **Recommendation 5:** Engaging both donors and Member States as well as the core task force, IGAD should develop a research and learning agenda to ensure that good practices are identified and feed into 1) future efforts to support the implementation of commitments, and 2) other similar refugee inclusion initiatives.