Teachers in Refugee and Displacement Settings: Malaysia Case Study

Challenges and Strategies for Teacher Quality and Workforce Sustainability

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A 19-year-old Myanmar Chin refugee at El Shaddai Learning Centre.
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Acronyms

ALCs	Alternative Learning Centres
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DELIMa	Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EdTech	Education Technology
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
IMM13	Residence Permit (affords the right to work and education)
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RM	Malaysian Ringgit
SSC	Sahabat Support Centre
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency (formerly United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD/US$	United States Dollar

Case Study Overview

Teachers are central figures in any education system, yet they rarely receive the attention they deserve (Schwille, Dembélé, & Schubert, 2007). Amidst the latest policy trends and educational innovations, their contributions and needs remain largely neglected. The Malaysia case study examines what is happening across the teacher management, teacher professional development (TPD), and teacher well-being dimensions for different profiles of teachers working in refugee and displacement settings. It further situates these dimensions against the current global push for including refugees in national systems.

The case study is part of a larger study on *Teachers in Refugee and Displacement Settings: Challenges and Strategies for Teacher Quality and Workforce Sustainability*[1] that aims to identify the challenges, opportunities, and implications for strengthening teacher quality and teacher workforce sustainability to make needed changes. The individual country case studies conducted in Chad, Malaysia, and Uganda capture the complexity of national education systems and teacher policies and practices in refugee-receiving contexts by describing the current state of affairs in rich detail.

Within the context of Malaysia, the case study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the profiles of the teachers working in refugee settings in Malaysia?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities for improving teacher management, professional development, and well-being among teachers working in refugee settings in Malaysia?
3. What are the implications of these challenges and opportunities for strengthening teacher quality and promoting workforce sustainability among different profiles of teachers?
4. What are the implications for the inclusion of refugee teachers into the national system?

The case study presents the country context; study methodology; teacher profiles; key findings related to teacher management, professional development, and well-being; implications for improving quality, promoting workforce sustainability, and including refugee teachers in the national system; and recommendations for the way forward (while simultaneously acknowledging that there is no straightforward path).

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[1] Mendenhall, M. (2024). Teachers in Refugee and Displacement Settings: Challenges and Strategies for Teacher Quality and Workforce Sustainability. UNHCR.

Country Context

Malaysia is a middle-to-high-income Muslim-majority country with 33 million people (Ministry of Economy, 2023). Its economy averaged 5 per cent annual growth over the past decade with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of US$11,371 (World Bank, 2021). Malaysia's geographic location at the relative centre of Southeast Asia, close to South Asia and the Middle East, and comparative political stability and safety have made it a destination for populations fleeing conflict and persecution.

Map 1: Malaysia

Overview of displaced populations

As of December 2023, Malaysia hosts 185,300 refugees and asylum seekers who are registered with the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, of which 162,440 are from Myanmar's persecuted ethnic minorities (UNHCR, 2023). Of this number, 107,670 are Rohingya, 24,910 are Chins, and 29,860 are made up of other ethnicities such as the Mon, Karen, and Shan. The remaining 22,860 refugees and asylum seekers are from Pakistan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Iraq, and Palestine (UNHCR, 2023). Of the total, there are 51,630 children under the age of 18. It is also important to note that children born to refugees in Malaysia inherit their parents' and siblings' refugee or stateless status, as Malaysia does not grant *jus soli* or birthright citizenship (Palik, 2020). Of all registered refugees, 66 per cent are male, and 34 per cent are female (UNHCR, 2023; Yasmin, Daniel, & Fauzi, 2019).

Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations (UN) Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol and offers no state support for refugees or asylum seekers. Such populations are considered undocumented economic migrants and are lumped together with approximately 3 million foreign nationals working in Malaysia (UNHCR, 2021). For registered refugees and asylum seekers, UNHCR provides limited financial assistance, with further support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations (Gosnell et al., 2021; Sulgina & Gopal, 2018). Unlike Thailand or Bangladesh, refugees and asylum seekers are

not required to live in camps, meaning large numbers live in urban settings that are often overcrowded and unsafe, participate in the informal economy, and contend with arrest, detention, and deportation regularly (Gosnell et al. 2021; Puapattanakajorn, 2021). For example, over 50 per cent of Rohingya refugees report that they have been detained by police or immigration authorities (Puapattanakajorn, 2021).

Associated with the undocumented economic migrant status bestowed upon refugees, public attitudes towards refugees in Malaysia have been hostile and have filtered through to government-level decision-making (Gosnell et al., 2021; Sulgina & Gopal, 2018). Due to the scale and severity of the 2017 Rohingya crisis, attitudes towards Muslim refugees softened but are becoming more tenuous as the crisis persists and Malaysia struggles to recover from the impact of COVID-19 (KI, UNHCR). Due to prejudice at multiple levels of society, refugees and asylum seekers are forced to rely on a high-risk and unregulated informal labour market to meet their basic livelihood needs (Todd et al., 2019).

A long history of refugee hosting

Malaysia first received Filipino refugees fleeing conflict in Mindanao in the 1970s, followed by Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees seeking third-country resettlement in the 1980s. In the 1990s, Bosnians also found refuge in Malaysia following the Balkans War, as did Indonesians from Aceh's failed separatist movement (Ahmad et al., 2017; Hoffstaedter, 2017). During the 2000s and the American-led conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, Malaysia again saw refugee numbers increase (though not dramatically), which did not abate during the Arab Spring uprising and civil war in the Middle East during the 2010s (UNICEF, 2015). Due to proximity, a steady stream of refugees from Myanmar have also been arriving in Malaysia since the 1980s. Still, the number of Rohingya refugees reaching Malaysia grew considerably following violence in Rakhine State in Myanmar in 2012 (UNHCR, 2021).

The impact of COVID-19 on refugees and asylum seekers

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2021) reports that refugee and asylum-seeker communities were severely affected by COVID-19. This was primarily due to the informal and irregular labour many refugees lost access to as workplaces closed down. Moreover, significant learning loss occurred due to under-skilled and under-resourced teachers who struggled to effectively facilitate blended learning solutions for out-of-school children and youth (IOM, 2021). Schools closed in March 2020 and reopened in July, only to be closed again in October due to the reinstatement of lockdowns following more severe outbreaks of COVID-19. As a result, NGOs estimate that a significant yet undefined number of previously enrolled refugee and asylum-seeker youth have yet to return to school (UNICEF & IDEAS, 2022).

In a refugee-receiving country that severely limits refugees' (and others') access to public services, the COVID-19 health pandemic forced the state to create openings for refugees to access healthcare to some degree, given the larger public health concerns. It is difficult to say if this more inclusive approach by the Ministry of Health will permeate other government units, such as the Ministry of Home Affairs or the Ministry of Education (MoE).

The Malaysian education system

Malaysia spends 14 per cent of GDP annually on education (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2023). Schooling is compulsory for children from the age of 6-11. There are four levels of schooling: pre-primary for children aged 4-6; primary school for children aged 6-11+ (standard 1 to 6); secondary school for adolescents aged 2-16+ (from 1 to 5); and tertiary education for 17+-year-olds. Malaysia boasts one of Southeast Asia's highest school enrolment rates, with a 98 per cent school enrolment rate at the primary level and 84 per cent at the secondary level for children with Malaysian citizenship. Moreover, across all schooling levels, females have a higher enrollment and completion rate than males (UNESCO, 2021).

Qualified teachers in Malaysia typically complete a three-year undergraduate degree in education focusing on teaching, or they have a three-year degree in another discipline plus a one-year post-graduate diploma in education. Ninety-six per cent of primary and 90 per cent of secondary teachers have the minimum required qualifications. There is a 12:1 qualified teacher-to-student ratio in both primary and secondary schooling. On average, 93 per cent of teachers report receiving in-service professional development support (UNESCO, 2021). These indicators of high-quality education are not extended to the refugee community.

Educational programming for refugee students

In addition to not ratifying the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol, Malaysia also has a reservation to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on Article 28, Paragraph 9, on universal access to education (UNHCR, 2021). This means the inclusion of refugee children and adolescents into Malaysia's education system is doubly difficult (UNICEF & IDEAS, 2022). Further complicating the situation, refugee oversight does not fall under the MoE but rather the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Despite a high per capita GDP, Malaysia has one of the lowest refugee school enrollment ratios among refugee-hosting countries compared to national children and adolescents (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). Among the registered refugee and asylum-seeker population, only 42 per cent of primary school-aged children can attend non-formal schooling (UNHCR, 2021), compared to 98 per cent at the primary level in the national system (UNESCO, 2021). Non-formal schooling consists of an unregulated parallel system of alternative learning centres (ALCs) that offer a mix of curricula, disparate standards of teaching and learning, and unclear pathways or prospects for graduates (Wake & Cheung, 2016).

Refugee education in Malaysia is politicized to the extent that a policy of exclusion is meant to serve as a deterrent. To stem refugee flows, policymakers bar access to education so that refugees reconsider Malaysia as a country in which to seek asylum with the hope of being resettled to a third country (Reynolds & Hollingsworth, 2015).[2]

As a result, refugee students and teachers must rely on a network of 150 ALCs as the only form of education available (UNHCR, 2021). Some of the ALCs are run by UNHCR implementing partners, with the two largest being the Dignity for Children Foundation and the Taiwan Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation.

Due to tensions and fears of arrest between the MoE, immigration authorities, and implementing partners, ALCs are typically located in discreet and unnamed private apartments and shop lots. For unregistered or unrecognized ALCs, the fear of being shut down requires an inconspicuous approach (O'Neal et al., 2018; Gosnell et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2015).

Historically, UNHCR has promoted the use of the Malaysian curriculum for refugees, strengthening the case for including refugees within national schools, thereby making it easier for eventual integration (UNICEF, 2015). However, ALCs are not officially authorized to teach the Malaysian curriculum. As such, ALCs like the Dignity for Children Foundation offer alternative, international curricula options, including the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) alongside an employability track focused on character development, entrepreneurship, and language skills.

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[2] Interestingly, despite not signing onto key human rights frameworks, Malaysia used to allow refugees in their schooling system. It was not until the introduction of the education regulation 1998, that refugees were excluded in the national system (e.g. there is no category for refugees for enrollment and fee structures and the UNHCR card is not recognized) (Rahman, 1998).

Other examples include the Fugee School, which previously used the Texas curriculum and now uses syllabi from the UK and Singapore, as well as the GED at the end of secondary. The different curricula undermine children and youth's ability to transfer between schools and have their prior learning recognized, and it further fractures opportunities for a coordinated response to TPD.

Overview of national inclusion efforts

The Malaysian government fears an unmanageable financial burden if refugees and asylum seekers are extended the right to residence and work. As well as the perceived costs associated with refugee shelter, education, and healthcare, the government plays to public fears around large numbers of refugees and possible threats to national security (UNICEF, 2015). Yet, at present, a majority of Malaysia's refugee-hosting expenses go towards border control and the upkeep of 14 detention centres, where close to 15,000 people are being detained (Yasmin et al., 2019).

The Malaysian government's stance on refugees and asylum seekers has forced the UNHCR to act as an unofficial (and underfunded) government agency, especially concerning education. The absence of government support means a disparate number of local NGOs are responsible for education delivery. As a by-product of refugee disincentivization efforts, Malaysia is a restrictive and sometimes hostile environment for international NGOs and inter-governmental agencies (Crisp et al., 2012). Even UNHCR's presence has been threatened by Members of Parliament (KI). Local NGOs are also hesitant to provide support for refugees as they are wary of political and public backlash for working with 'illegal populations' (Crisp et al., 2012).

> *"The Malaysian government expects refugees' needs to be met by the international community – while at the same time erecting obstacles that impede assistance." Crisp et al., 2012*

Officially, refugees and asylum seekers are not permitted to participate in the formal economy. This renders them vulnerable to exploitation and neglect in the informal economy with little to no legal recourse (Wake & Cheung, 2016). There are, however, blueprints for better employment rights and work conditions for refugees. The COVID-19 pandemic created a workforce shortage, and there is a call for the reinstatement of Malaysia's IMM13 permits (i.e. residence permits that grant access to work and education), which were established after the 2004 Aceh Tsunami and allowed refugees the right to work in manufacturing and plantations. IMM13 was also piloted with Syrian refugees in 2012, and there was a short-lived pilot for Rohingya refugees in 2013 (Yasmin et al., 2019). The policy includes providing formal education within the national system for the children of IMM13 refugees. Given these examples, there is hope for progress with important benefits for refugee children and adolescents (KI, 2022).

A movement towards government registration of refugee ALCs is also a reason for cautious optimism. However, the criteria for registration remain opaque, and the motivating factor — to ensure that donors' financial support for refugee education is not seen as funding illegal (i.e. non-registered) entities — may or may not be catalyzed into more sustainable policies and practices. While registration could be a boon for some, underfunded and unsupported ALCs fear being shut down if they do not meet the standards. Concerns about identity- and faith-based bias regarding which ALCs would more likely be registered and funded were also shared (KI, 2022).

The hostile refugee-receiving environment in Malaysia and the all-consuming focus on resettlement (despite being a minimal solution for only the most vulnerable refugees) create a very different setting in which to explore the challenges and opportunities for teacher management, professional development, and well-being.

Methodology

The qualitative methodology for the case study consisted of interviews with key stakeholders, including NGOs, United Nations (UN) agencies, university professors, and teachers. It also entailed focus group discussions (FGDs) with teachers. The development of the case study was process-oriented, examining the "people, situations, events, and…processes" that connect them and interact and influence one another (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016, p. 29).

The research questions included:

1. What are the profiles of the teachers working in refugee settings in Malaysia?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities for improving teacher management, professional development, and well-being among teachers working in refugee settings in Malaysia?
3. What are the implications of these challenges and opportunities for strengthening teacher quality and promoting workforce sustainability among different profiles of teachers?
4. What are the implications for the inclusion of refugee teachers into the national system?

The research visit to Malaysia took place during one week at the end of October 2022. Data collection took place in Kuala Lumpur. Co-researcher Christopher Henderson travelled to Malaysia to support data collection activities.

We visited 10 different ALCs, the primary location for most interviews. Data collection consisted of:

- **Nine key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with 11 learning centre staff members,** many of whom were also teachers.
- **Five FGDs with 38 teachers** with various profiles (e.g. national and refugee) across five ALCs.
- **Informational meetings** with three locally-based academics.

All data collection activities were conducted in English. On occasion, FGD participants helped one another translate their ideas into English. We recorded the interviews and focus groups with a digital recorder for all research visits. In three instances, we took carefully handwritten notes when we could not record the conversation due to participants' preferences and/or the challenges of obtaining a quality recording during FGDs with many participants.

For the FGDs with teachers, we invited teachers to write their ideas in response to our questions on index cards. The prompts included questions such as: *What do you like most about being a teacher? What are the biggest challenges you face as a teacher? What specific changes are needed to overcome these challenges? What pathways/options do you have for sharing your ideas for making improvements?* Participants were asked to rank the top three challenges, which helped to focus the conversation. Although the teachers presented myriad challenges during these discussions, the interactive nature of the exercise allowed them to share their ideas with the facilitators and alleviate the intensity of a more focused discussion.

The overall study was approved by Teachers College, Columbia University's Institutional Review Board, due to the primary investigator's institutional affiliation. Participants completed consent forms aligned with the data collection activities (e.g. FGDs, interviews) through which they were asked to participate.

Data analysis

Interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim. Interview and FGD notes were reviewed and refined post-research visit by comparing notes taken by two researchers who participated in the interview. Analysis of the FGDs and interviews went through an iterative process of open- and closed-coding, ultimately leading to a codebook informed by the study's objectives, scholarly and grey literature on teachers in refugee and displacement settings, and the participants' ideas. The coded data were then organized by theme, contributing to the final write-up of findings.

Study limitations

The data come from interviews and focus groups focused on refugee education in the capital of Kuala Lumpur and may not reflect the situation in other parts of the country. The study also focuses predominantly on primary education due to the focus on the field and the various stakeholders working at this education level. However, the study offers some insights about secondary education as well. Finally, while the teacher profiles conceptualized below mention retired Malaysian teachers, we did not have an opportunity to interview anyone with that profile.

Teachers Working in Refugee and Displacement Settings in Malaysia

Three broad categories of teachers working in the ALCs in Malaysia are refugee teachers, host community teachers, and expatriate teachers. These teacher profiles vary in nationality, qualifications, financial responsibility for teachers' salaries, and contract status (see Table 1 below for more details).

Teacher profile	Distinguishing characteristics
Refugee teachers	• Varied teacher qualification status; majority untrained • Incentives paid by UNHCR, NGO, or the community
Host community teachers	• Formally trained teachers • Retired teachers (in some cases) • Compensation provided by NGO or unpaid as volunteers (typical for retired teachers)
Expatriate teachers	• Varied teaching qualification status • Foreign nationals volunteering during their time in Malaysia • Compensation provided by NGO or unpaid as volunteers

Table 1: Teacher profile overview

Approximately 1,082 teachers are working across the implementing partner ALCs in Peninsular Malaysia – 462 are refugees, 440 teachers are from the local host community, and approximately 130 are volunteers from the expatriate community (KII, 2022). Beyond basic numbers of teachers employed in ALCs, the qualifications that teachers possessed (or not) and their countries of origin, there was little additional information available. There is no database of teacher profiles working across Malaysia's ALCs.

Refugee teachers in Malaysia come from various backgrounds and have different levels of education. Some refugee teachers, such as those from the Middle East (Iraq, Syria, Yemen) or Somalia, are well-educated and have had extensive professional experience before becoming teachers. Others, such as Rohingya and Afghani teachers, have had less access to formal education and may, therefore, be teaching or even working for the first time.

Refugees in Malaysia become teachers for several reasons. The most commonly cited are financial, putting prior qualifications to use, service to the community, and a desire to remain close to their children (UNICEF, 2015). Teachers also reflect that compared to manufacturing or plantation work, teaching is more meaningful and satisfying (Gosnell et al. 2021). Teachers also desire to contribute and believe ALCs provide a sense of community, safety, and an opportunity to continue their learning (ibid).

Although many refugee teachers hold UNHCR cards, they are unprotected from harassment or detainment (UNICEF, 2015). They have important roles in their community, yet they strive to live inconspicuously and work in the shadows (ibid). These teachers are nonetheless proud of the key functions they perform. They educate children who would otherwise be deprived of learning, provide psychosocial and socio-emotional care and support, foster connections between cultures and faith groups, and advocate for education among refugee parents and families (ibid).

The profile of host community teachers of refugees in Malaysia is mixed. Some teachers have high levels of education, including master's degrees, and others have first degrees or diplomas, but rarely in education or teaching itself. Some teachers do not have formal teaching qualifications and teach on a contractual basis (KIIs, 2022). Most come from the ethnic Malay Muslim community who often feel compelled by a spiritual duty to contribute to the less fortunate (FGD, 2022). Some have been public school teachers previously or are retired, whereas others are entering the profession for the first time. Because they work for more established and better-funded implementing partners, many host community teachers have better access to professional development support than refugee teachers. However, host community teachers suffer significant discrimination and harassment from their own families and communities, many of whom disapprove of their work with an 'illegal population' (FGD, 2022). For many teachers, this has a detrimental impact on their mental health and well-being.

Both refugee and national cohorts of teachers were predominantly female. The only exception was within the Somali community, where male teachers held diplomas or degrees from Somalia and did not want to engage in informal work in construction, thus choosing to teach. In the Kachin and Chin communities, teaching is perceived as 'women's work.' Interestingly, even though the Rohingya represented the largest cadre of refugee students, prevailing cultural norms, a lack of access to education in Myanmar, and the fact that most Rohingya ALCs are Malaysian-run means that there are very few male or female Rohingya teachers (KIIs, 2022).

Key Findings

Teacher management

Teacher management consists of several dimensions: selection, recruitment, and deployment; pre-and in-service TPD; working conditions; supervision and appraisal; and career paths (Bengtsson et al., 2023b). The most prominent actors in teacher management for refugee education in Kuala Lumpur are UNHCR and the various NGOs supporting education service delivery, but they face constant challenges.

Government-registered ALCs are less likely to be raided or disrupted by the authorities as they are perceived to be more legitimate. However, they do not receive financial or logistical support from the government, as they are not considered a direct responsibility of the MoE. Unregistered ALCs, on the other hand, are more likely to be raided or disrupted by the authorities, as they are seen as being more informal and less legitimate (see Box 1 for additional details). However, they may receive additional financial or logistical support from NGOs, as they are seen as requiring more assistance. For teacher management, the lack of clarity relating to the criteria for registration and the differing levels of protection and support received means that refugee teachers working in ALCs without government registration are more prone to harassment and discrimination from authorities, whereas centres that have become registered report that their teachers no longer face these risks.

> **Box 1: Registered vs. Unregistered ALCs – Why it Matters**
>
> Historically, the ALCs have not been registered with the MoE. However, a large financial contribution from the Qatar Fund for Development prompted the MoE to officially register select ALCs to avoid the uncomfortable perception of funding supporting "illegal" (i.e. unregistered) ALCs. This shift opened a promising pathway for other ALCs to potentially follow; however, the criteria for this process were inadequately communicated and perceived by those who applied for but did not receive registration as lacking transparency and possibly discriminatory. Malaysian-run and Rohingya-focused ALCs were by and large prioritized, and Chin, Kachin, Somali, or mixed population ALCs were overlooked. This impacts teacher recruitment, retention, and attrition because the material and operational conditions at registered ALCs were better than at non-registered centers. Moreover, teachers at non-registered centres (predominantly refugees themselves) continue to face regular discrimination and harassment by Malaysian authorities (Multiple Key Informants, 2022).

Teacher retention and attrition

"If we don't have good teachers...the right teachers, we can't do anything" (KII, 2022).

Apart from the challenges related to registration, there is a strong association between the leadership and organizational strength of implementing partners and rates of teacher retention and attrition (FGDs and KIIs, 2022). Due to the complex nature of the communities, parents, and students they work with, NGOs are looking for capable, skilled, and committed individuals regardless of their formal training in teaching (KIIs, 2022). They are also looking for candidates who have a strong understanding of the challenges that refugee children face. During the interview, NGOs screen candidates by academic background, reasons for wanting to teach, and hopes for the children. They also ensure that the candidate is aware of the unique challenges of teaching refugee children and, due to pronounced discrimination towards refugee populations, that they have sufficient family acceptance of and support for their chosen roles.

Despite these efforts, teacher retention is a considerable challenge for refugee ALCs. The high turnover rate (30 per cent in some cases) is reportedly due to a lack of financial compensation, poor working conditions, and a lack of support from the community. Across the five focus groups with refugee and national Malaysian teachers (n=38), the need for more teachers or teaching assistants emerged as a pressing teacher management issue. Teachers work incredibly long hours, and unfair and unhealthy employment practices are common due to a near-total lack of regulation. In addition, the difficulty of finding teachers willing to work with refugee children and their need for additional training results in a slow replacement rate when teachers leave.

KIs report that professional development opportunities and a supportive professional environment where teachers feel valued and appreciated are key factors in retaining the teacher workforce. ALCs meeting these needs reported fewer issues with retention than those that did not.

The fact that many teachers, especially in community-run ALCs, are themselves refugees has a mixed effect on retention. In some cases, organizational leadership, personal faith, and a strong sense of purpose had a bearing on retention and attrition rates. In other cases, the lack of alternative work opportunities means that many refugee teachers choose to stay in the classroom despite the challenges they face (e.g. language, trauma, and financial hardship).

Resettlement also affects the retention of refugee teachers. ALCs face difficulty finding replacement teachers, especially on short notice, when teachers keep their resettlement status a secret and inform ALCs at the last minute as they prepare to depart the country. This has implications for both recruitment and TPD.

Where ALCs are Malaysian, with a national workforce, they tend to struggle more with retention due to their lack of access to other employment means. The lack of government support for refugee education makes it difficult for ALCs to attract and retain host community teachers. However, where there is a strong screening process at the recruitment stage, transparency about the nature of the role, sufficient professional development support, formal curricula, and sufficient teaching resources, there is a high level of teacher retention.

Teachers' salaries and benefits

For teachers of all profiles across most implementing partners, compensation was at or below the Malaysian minimum wage, varying widely from as low as 400 RM (US$ 85) to 2000 RM (US$ 430) per month.[3] The average salary is around 1500 RM per month, which aligns with Malaysia's minimum wage. However, the average monthly salary in Kuala Lumpur is close to 6,000 RM, reflecting many teachers' struggle to meet the cost of basic living expenses in the city. KIs report that the lowest salaries are paid to teachers who are just starting or working in ALCs and do not receive any external support, which depends entirely on the fees paid by parents. The highest salaries are paid to teachers who work in schools supported by UNHCR. During FGDs, teachers expressed that their compensation was low and explained that in schools with double shifts, the additional incentive for teachers who worked both the morning and afternoon shifts was not commensurate with the additional work these teachers took on.

Making ends meet: working multiple jobs

"We need to work outside to earn more money, so that they can be able to cover all our expenses, their family, and all that" (KI, 2022).

As a result of low compensation, many teachers are forced to take on additional jobs outside of the ALCs, which diminishes their time and energy for the classroom. For refugee teachers in particular, restrictive legal frameworks around employment necessitate that Alternative Learning Centres (ALCs) operate with caution, often adopting informal approaches to sustain volunteer teachers' engagement (KI, 2022). There were rare examples of 'bonus' payments in a previous teachers' compensation project as incentives for high-performing and well-monitored teachers within several UNHCR-recognized or government-registered

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[3] Of the 1082 teachers (across all profiles mentioned previously), only 55% received compensation of between RM200 to RM600 per month (or $42-128 USD per month), which was paid by the UNHCR. While UNHCR recently noted that this financial support was only meant to be considered a partial salary to offset ALC costs, an initiative that has now ended due to lack of funds, it only further illustrates the financial insecurity that teachers working in ALCs face in their work (KI, 2024).

ALCs. Not all teachers were part of this project, and although this initiative has ended, there appear to be misunderstandings about how it functions and questions about whether or not it is still a common practice.

KIs know teachers must work outside ALCs to cover their basic expenses and have money for emergencies. One KI who oversees refugee teachers understands her teachers take on second jobs without telling her due to the illegality of paid employment. Refugee and host community teachers commonly juggle multiple jobs, affecting the quality of their work and their ability to attend to the challenges and responsibilities of teaching refugee students.

UNHCR (dis-)engagement with alternative learning centres

UNHCR's engagement with Alternative Learning Centres (ALCs) in Malaysia is often perceived by stakeholders as selective or unclear, with some key informants attributing this to institutional limitations or donor-related constraints. While UNHCR does not register or license ALCs, it issues letters of support for centres that meet basic criteria. These letters are intended as administrative tools primarily to facilitate access to limited technical or financial support but are sometimes interpreted by ALC leaders as a form of endorsement or recognition. In the absence of formal government registration pathways, this creates uncertainty among ALCs about the implications of receiving or not receiving such support.

Leveraging new opportunities

The sensitive nature of the refugee crisis in Malaysia means that education initiatives targeting refugee populations are discouraged. For this reason, KIs propose folding refugee teachers and students into initiatives designed to meet the needs of other marginalized groups like the children of undocumented economic migrants and low-income communities. A number of these opportunities are based on educational technologies (EdTech) and proposed as a way of minimizing the extent to which parallel systems are created. But there have already been operational glitches for refugee teachers. The MoE still controls access to online learning platforms, and teachers require government-issued registration numbers to use these services (e.g. the government's Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia [DELIMa] platform), though others are open access).

Teacher professional development

Teacher professional development (TPD) is defined as "the activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher" (West et al., 2022, p. 12). In its implementation, TPD for educators encompasses a comprehensive range of topics and formats, and how it is operationalized in stable versus crisis-affected contexts will vary, given the different realities across those settings (Mendenhall et al., 2019). However, literature across settings consistently shows that TPD is most effective when it provides sustained opportunities for continued professional development and supportive networks for teachers to collaborate to change their practices (Ibid). Providing continuous TPD seems particularly challenging in the Malaysian context, given the high rates of teacher turnover and the drive for resettlement that would further deprioritize investments in this area.

As stated previously, the myriad curricula used by the different ALCs also fractures opportunities for a coordinated response to TPD.

Most national and refugee teachers enter the teaching profession in Malaysia with no formal training. However, many do hold a higher degree or diploma in another subject area, including from their countries of origin for refugee teachers. Furthermore, new refugee teachers have rarely worked with children or adolescents. Their teaching is often informed by an 'apprenticeship of observation', in that they replicate how they experienced teaching as students (Lortie, 1975), whether that stems from their home countries or while growing up in Malaysia and attending ALCs themselves.

What all profiles of teachers have in common, however, is a reported commitment to teaching refugee children, which is a factor influencing their desire for and engagement in professional development. Unfortunately, access to professional development for teachers of refugees is sporadic, ad-hoc, and inadequate, with sparse focus on pedagogical skills and more attention paid to the psychosocial and socioemotional needs of refugee students. Promising examples of internally facilitated in-service TPD were found in Malaysian-run and externally funded ALCs. Self-funded refugee-run centres relied on a patchwork of opportunities through private international schools or faith-based entities overseas.

UNHCR's funding constraints and the disparate nature of the ALCs across the country result in very few coordinated TPD initiatives. Many teachers are high school leavers or university graduates in their own countries, so they have knowledge to share, but they do not have pedagogical skills (UNICEF, 2015). The better-funded ALCs can deliver internal professional development or partner with faith-based organizations or tertiary providers to offer professional development online. There is also interest from local universities in providing continuous professional development modules through hybrid modalities, although this comes with some risk to providers and lacks the formal recognition that refugee teachers are desperately seeking.

The available professional development also caters to better-established ALCs as they are more visible, have UNHCR's endorsement and funding, and can build collaborative partnerships in Malaysia and further afield (e.g. international private schools and universities). Smaller ALCs catering to more marginalized refugee communities lack professional development, which has a corresponding impact on teachers' skills, sense of self-efficacy, and mental well-being (KII, 2022; Gosnell et al., 2021). Along religious and ethnic lines within and across refugee communities, this arrangement contributes to varied educational quality and comparative deprivation within a parallel system.

Professional development needs

KIs and FGDs expressed a range of specific TPD needs. Noting the informal arrangement of many ALCs, training on approaches to formal lesson planning, curriculum adaptation, and classroom management is needed. KIs also identified refugee students' complex social and learning needs as an area for training. This was more common among host community teachers as they discussed developing empathy towards refugee students' needs (and not solely focusing on behaviour management). This could be due to the cultural differences between host community teachers and refugee students in ALCs and the affinities that refugee teachers can develop with students who share similar life stories and aspirations (Kirk & Winthrop, 2013). Even though teachers (of all profiles) noted having smaller class sizes, they pointed to challenges with mixed-aged and mixed-ability student populations that complicated their ability to differentiate teaching approaches to meet their students' unique learning needs. They further struggled to meet the additional needs of their students, which stemmed from the pervasive discrimination they faced outside of the ALCs. Along these lines, teachers shared that they would like more training on conflict resolution, cross-cultural relationship-building, preparing teaching and learning aids, child development, and refugee education.

Host community and refugee teachers were cited as needing comprehensive support in utilizing blended e-learning and distance education, though this was not deemed the highest priority among other TPD topics. This need was especially pronounced due to COVID-19 and the in-kind donation of devices in place of funds by bilateral donors and other charitable institutions.

Interestingly, teachers of all profiles rarely commented or reflected on students' academic learning needs at the primary level. It would be interesting to investigate whether or not this relates to low expectations for refugee students. At the secondary level, there was more interest in TPD focused on assessment, but this was communicated from a teacher-centred perspective rather than a student challenge.

Teacher professional development to support the curriculum

The diversity of curricular approaches across the ALCs presents a barrier to a coherent and cohesive TPD framework. While many ALCs use the Malaysian curriculum due to access and availability of resources, some refugee-led organizations follow an international curriculum, preparing for third-country resettlement.

Most ALCs catered to primary-aged children and focused on basic literacy, numeracy, socio-emotional learning, and life skills education. Preparing refugee students for possible resettlement was an oft-stated purpose of education. However, across the ALCs, the diversity of curricula used means there was little consistency in learning content or approaches. At the secondary level, which fewer ALCs catered for, the main focus was preparing students for the IGCSE exams, which, should they be resettled in a third country, offers a form of recognized educational achievement. Because these exams demand a higher level of specialization on the part of the teacher, secondary teachers were predominantly Malaysian nationals.

The history of TPD delivery for ALCs in Malaysia has been ad-hoc, sporadic, and inequitable across the different profiles of teachers and ALCs. KIs reported a more consistent approach to TPD before the reduction of UNHCR funding for refugee education, primarily focused on child protection and referral mechanisms. While KIs recall these approaches touching on curriculum, lesson planning, pedagogy and behaviour management, it was not a continuous approach with teachers' and students' learning and development needs at the centre. Today, where government-registered and Malaysian-run ALCs offer internal in-service training that includes peer mentoring, classroom observations, scaffolding, and competency-based appraisals, refugee-led ALCs are forced to stitch together professional development opportunities provided by international school teachers, overseas online programmes, and faith-based actors.

Exploring collaborative approaches to teacher professional development

The degree to which ALCs were open to collaborating and coordinating a coherent and cohesive approach to TPD varied. Refugee-led ALCs were most open to collaboration, primarily due to the meagre or cost-prohibitive options. In comparison, national Malaysian-run ALCs with stronger internal programmes were more hesitant, likely due to their investments in intellectual property. They were open to sharing approaches and resources with other ALCs if UNHCR coordinated the opportunity. Concerning this, as much as KIs mentioned outreach by international schools to offer TPD, the role of university-based teacher education institutes was not mentioned. While universities were reaching out to support students, refugee teachers have not accessed formal or informal teacher education through Malaysian institutions.

Teachers did not bring up challenges concerning certification or career progression, perhaps due to the restrictive refugee policies, the fragile operating environment for implementing refugee education, the focus on resettlement, and the sense (real or perceived) of the impermanence accompanying that outlook. There appeared to be limited opportunities for career advancement within larger organizations. The lack of professional pathways available to teachers may impact teacher motivation and retention.

Teacher well-being

Teacher well-being "encompasses how teachers feel and function in their jobs" and is highly context-specific (Falk et al., 2019, p. 7). The teacher management and TPD policies and practices for teachers working in refugee and displacement settings contribute positively and negatively to teachers' overall sense of well-being, as do the larger contextual factors at play in any setting.

Compared to host community teachers, refugee teachers have higher rates of mental distress and a low incidence of self-care (Gosnell et al., 2021). Moreover, many teachers report that the emotional and physical burden of teaching outweighs its benefits, inferring that teaching is a well-being risk in and of itself (Gosnell et al., 2021; INEE, 2021). An additional stressor is the experience of teaching in a country that is hostile to refugees and having to negotiate with parents who themselves are experiencing the traumatic effects of displacement (Gosnell et al., 2021; FGD, 2022). Teachers also stated that the mental distress arising from their work is cognitive, emotional, and somatic and presents as depression, procrastination, insomnia, and, in some cases, self-harm (FGD, 2022; Gosnell et al., 2021).

Teachers' myriad roles

KIs talked about the all-consuming role of teaching with such a complex student population. While their priority is the learning and development of refugee students, teachers are often the only trusted authority figure in a refugee family's life. As much as teachers' expected roles present a degree of stress (compounded by low pay and low skills), they often manage broader family-level issues which might influence a student's access to learning and safety. Host community teachers commonly assist refugee families with issues relating to physical and mental health, police harassment and detainment, and meeting basic living needs at times of financial hardship. Refugee teachers commonly provide transport for students, use personal finances to pay operational costs, and support colleagues with issues relating to displacement or resettlement.

Teachers' vulnerabilities

Although national and refugee teachers contend with harassment at individual levels, KI interviews highlighted the extent to which government registration and UNHCR protection letters mitigate the degree to which ALCs are targeted by state and city authorities. However, due to inconsistencies within the system, which are most pronounced across ethnic, faith, and national lines, some teachers are much more vulnerable to arrest, detention, and deportation than others. As such, in Malaysia, some teachers of refugees are more 'protected' than others. This has a detrimental effect on teachers' mental health, especially when mechanisms for better protection and recognition are in place but not extended to all.

Managing parent/family interactions

Regardless of their profile, KIs commonly mentioned the challenge of parents impacting their sense of safety and well-being. These challenges ranged from parents not understanding the value of education (because they were uneducated) to not being able to support their children at home because they are working, to inserting themselves into conflicts at school (e.g. between children, demanding corporal punishment), to over-communicating with teachers, to disrespecting teachers.

The better-resourced and managed ALCs referred to parent challenges regarding the assistance they need to provide, whereas the less-resourced ALCs tended to report conflict between parents and teachers as a major source of distress. The severity of this conflict varies based on the 'nationality' of the parents in question, with KIs insinuating that particular refugee groups' lack of prior education predisposes them to treat teachers more abrasively. As such, KIs identified the need for support to cope with challenging parents and manage the mental health and well-being fallout from complex and recurring encounters with them.

I needed...to build courage because some refugee parents...are very fierce. Some of them come fighting, banging the gate" (KI, 2022).

Teacher-student relationships

Malaysian-run ALCs reported more significant issues with students than refugee-run centres, which causes a more pronounced effect on national teacher well-being than refugee teacher well-being. However, the extent to which this was reported also varied depending on the quality of the ALCs programme and leadership. In some ALCs, discriminatory stereotypes and a lack of empathy among teachers towards refugees' realities carry over into the classroom, undermining the quality of teacher-student relationships and causing additional (and unnecessary) stress for teachers (and students alike). KIs report that health and cleanliness issues are a concern for some teachers, including recognition of the unresolved displacement-related trauma and associated behavioural challenges that many refugee students bring to the classroom.

On the other hand, many teachers explained that their relationships with their students motivated them to continue teaching despite the challenges they faced in their work. For example, teachers shared that their students were loving, motivated, and humble, and they felt inspired to engage their students and instil knowledge and skills in them.

Language-related challenges

KIs from Malaysian- and refugee-led ALCs cite language as a well-being challenge. Although none made direct reference to language as an inhibitor of well-being, the frequency with which language was described as a barrier to relationship formation, learning progress, and access to parents showed that language issues between refugee teachers and students of different origins or between Malaysian teachers and refugee students were cause for significant distress and a barrier to better work conditions. Linguistic diversity also emerged as a teacher management issue, with teachers explaining that planning lessons and collaborating with teachers who did not speak the same languages was challenging.

"The main challenge is with students and the teachers and their language problem. It's like a chicken and a duck talking with each other. Basically, we really struggle with them" (KI, 2022).

Lingering impact of COVID-19

While KIs mentioned the profound impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning and teachers' well-being, it was often cited in line with a specific aspect of teachers' work, e.g. a shift to online learning and food drives for vulnerable families. However, the lasting effects of the pandemic are keenly felt, especially in unregistered and underfunded ALCs, where parents have stopped paying school fees, which means that teachers do not get their total compensation. Similarly, in line with prejudice towards refugees, inadequate health protection practices around COVID-19 have impacted the extent to which teachers feel comfortable in their expanded roles and, therefore, hesitant to visit or support refugee families.

Teachers embrace mental health concerns

Considering the widespread stigma related to mental health in comparable refugee-hosting contexts, KIs raised teacher mental health as a considerable concern that needed to be discussed. Asylum seekers and refugees are vulnerable to the whims of the state with modest official protection from UNHCR in the interim. Moreover, the broad resentment of the Malaysian population towards refugees can make Malaysia a hostile host country. As such, teachers' work in a refugee-led learning centre draws attention and additional harassment from authorities.

For Malaysian teachers, meagre pay and the discontent of relatives about their career choices add stress to already difficult roles. These realities and the involvement of numerous local and international actors in teachers' lives mean that mental health was readily and positively discussed.

Teacher motivation

Refugee and host community teachers, despite their low pay and challenging work conditions, are motivated by the desire to make a difference for refugee students. However, this commitment is strained as teachers continue to work in untenable conditions, made worse for refugee teachers by government authority discrimination and harassment towards teachers in unregistered refugee-led ALCs. Whereas for host community teachers, many contend with contempt from their own families for their decision to work with refugee students. While fair compensation and adequate TPD contribute to teachers' motivation, the lack of these two factors in the Malaysian context and the discrimination that teachers face result in a workforce operating on little more than their kindness and goodwill.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that KIs reflected positively on teachers' general commitment to the role despite their work conditions. Teachers often phrased this with 'hearts' or 'passion'. Instead of exploiting teachers' generosity, it is an opportunity to build awareness of teachers' selfless work. However, it was also clear that more needs to be done to support teachers better and lighten their loads. We should advocate for the public and host governments to share the load and support teachers better. While KIs reported that teachers are motivated to join the profession, they also noted that some teachers find the challenges demotivating and raised concerns about the 'transactional' nature of teaching when teachers can no longer cope.

Teachers' voices

Very little was shared about teachers' voices or participation in decision-making. Where elements of teacher autonomy were supported, primarily due to teachers' needs to seek supplementary employment, this did not relate to autonomy or leadership at the learning centre. Moreover, due to the un- or underqualified status of teachers working with refugee students, they are not valued as contributors to policy-making or decision-makers. There did, however, seem to be a higher level of participation by teachers in the operation of ALCs in the larger and better-funded Malaysian ALCs. For example, in one FGD, teachers explained that every month, they have a meeting with the school leaders during which they can share ideas and be heard.

In Malaysia, there are neither refugee teacher associations nor the opportunity to share a cross-sector and collective voice for refugee teachers. As such, there are no avenues for teachers to engage in social dialogue with implementing partners, the UNHCR, or donors, although teachers share common frustrations and, as experts in their work, can conceive of no-cost or low-cost solutions.

Implications for Teacher Quality

All KIs highlighted the lack of teacher salaries and professional development funding as key contributors to teacher quality. Interestingly, some KIs discussed how teachers' paltry pay limited how much they could expect and how much pressure they could put on teachers to improve their performance. One KI also mentioned that expectations for teachers' engagement in TPD had to be lowered due to low pay. With the UNHCR previously providing consistent funding for refugee education, KIs also indicated the perception that poorer attendance and outcomes at ALCs could be due to reduced funding levels. Moreover, the lack of funds for basic, continuous, and teacher-centred TPD affects teachers' skill levels and persistence in the profession.

Regarding recruitment practices, refugee-led ALCs prefer internal recruitment, meaning teachers come from within their community or from graduating refugee students within their learning centre. This offers the advantage of familiarity with the culture and context of the learning centre and offers capable students employment security after graduation. Also, due to the poor compensation, KIs depend on the loyalty and commitment of candidates they already know. Although these teachers' life experiences are important for refugee students' sense of belonging, they can also be limited as these teachers have not experienced higher education or employment elsewhere and thus struggle to support refugee students beyond the scope of schooling.

There was no discernable excitement for the role of EdTech in lifting teacher quality. If anything, it was framed as a stop-gap measure during the COVID-19 pandemic, but now an additional layer of complexity on top of teachers' work. While there was demand for TPD to lift teachers' confidence using EdTech, KIs did not articulate how EdTech could improve the quality of teaching, accelerate learning outcomes, or complement psychosocial support services. If anything, given the poor engagement of refugee students using EdTech during COVID-19, it seemed as if KIs were resistant to more EdTech. There are opportunities, however, for the large-scale inclusion of refugee teachers in existing online learning and TPD platforms targeting national teachers (e.g. DELIMa). Yet, at this point, gatekeeping by the MoE and inequitable access issues mean different profiles of teachers have not yet experienced the full affordances of EdTech in this setting.

Implications for Workforce Sustainability

Given UNHCR's current funding constraints and the Qatar Fund for Development's preference for government-registered and Malaysian-led ALCs with a focus on the Rohingya community, there is an urgent need to diversify funding streams. Interestingly, Malaysian ALCs with government funding[4] have also been able to source additional funds from state-level sponsors through Zakat, or state-administered Islamic philanthropy. Refugee-led ALCs, however, depend entirely on parent fees and occasional contributions from faith-based charities, which KIs say are infrequent and insufficient, despite UNHCR's understanding and public perceptions that faith-based ALCs are well supported. Ultimately, this scenario calls into question the sustainability of the national workforce and the ongoing precarity of refugee teachers' work and well-being. There are also neglected possibilities for private sector investments in the form of corporate social responsibility.

Another factor influencing workforce motivation, persistence, and sustainability is the lack of career pathways available to national and refugee teachers. Although there are opportunities to progress to leadership positions or roles relating to peer development in larger national organizations, systems to support teachers' promotion within the profession do not seem to be in place. In some cases, ALCs aspire for a more horizontal approach, whereby all teachers maintain the same levels and roles within a flat hierarchy. An additional issue raised by two KIs is that many host community teachers use ALCs as a stepping stone to a more formal teaching role or alternative opportunities with refugee-focused NGOs in Malaysia or abroad.

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[4] Few ALCs have received funding from the Yayasan Hasanah Grant process, which is funded by the Ministry of Finance.

Implications for Inclusion of Refugee Teachers into National Systems

There is no national education inclusion agenda in Malaysia. As a non-signatory to the UN Refugee Convention and related protocols, Malaysia does not offer pathways to national education system inclusion for refugees. Historically, however, preferential treatment has been provided to refugees fleeing conflict in Bosnia and Syria and the tsunami in Aceh through the provision of IMM13 residence permits, which gives refugees the right to work and education, meaning there is a precedent for refugee inclusion (Loganathan et al., 2022). However, the rights afforded by this programme have been eroded, and large refugee populations like the Afghans were never included in the scheme. Amidst this landscape, for many refugees entering Malaysia, the only durable solution they can envision is resettlement, despite the low resettlement rate. This reality influences the purpose of refugee education in Malaysia, including the curriculum selected, the languages used, and the work of teachers. Some refugee-led ALCs teach curricula with a higher chance of recognition in third countries, such as the Singapore curriculum and IGCSE. KIs from these centres also spoke more prominently of teachers' work with students' resettlement. Interestingly, Malaysian ALCs use the Malay language and parts of the Malaysian curriculum and talk much less about resettlement, yet they were not prioritizing integration, either. Regarding teachers' chances of resettlement, it is worth noting that while one KI speculated that low resettlement rates among refugee teachers were due to their usefulness to UNHCR and the refugee community in Malaysia, resettlement criteria is set by the receiving countries and UNHCR's role is only to submit eligible cases according to these criteria and makes no differentiation according to profession, as outlined in the UNHCR resettlement handbook.

While not inclusion in the national system, per se, there are possibilities for including refugee students in education initiatives targeting vulnerable and marginalized students more broadly. While this approach is strategically viable, given the MoE's reluctance to include refugees in the national system, whether or not these opportunities would include refugee teachers is unclear. However, as these initiatives are dependent on EdTech or online platforms, it is assumed that they would still require teacher support. At most, however, these opportunities for inclusion relate more to content and professional learning but do not necessarily improve teachers' employment security, recognition, or compensation within Malaysia. It is also noteworthy that one KI believes the lack of political action towards including refugee teachers and students in the national system relates to the will of voters and the timing of the recent national elections. With undocumented economic migrants and refugees being a 'flashpoint' within Malaysian politics, candidates are hesitant to promote policies of inclusion that could harm their campaigns.

The Way Forward

The following recommendations represent a range of low-cost or no-cost ways forward to improve the work and well-being of the different profiles of teachers working in Malaysia, both in terms of sustaining the parallel system in which refugees can operate and for making inroads with the Malaysian government for more recognition and support to refugees' needs for educational opportunities.

Teacher management

- Leverage the COVID-19-related worker shortage to advocate for reinstating IMM13 permits for UNHCR-registered refugees and asylum seekers. This is a first step towards national education system inclusion. Ensure IMM13 permits allow for employment as teachers in ALCs and national schools.
- Ensure that quality criteria for ALC registration (both for registration with the MoE and recognition by UNHCR) continue to be made public and communicated, allowing for a guided and transparent quality improvement process for ALCs needing further support.
- Develop a cross-sector teacher competency framework upon which teacher appraisal occurs and against which teacher compensation is pegged.
- Develop a teacher database that captures more comprehensive information about the teaching workforce (across all profiles) to inform teacher management and PD policies and practices.

Teacher professional development

- Work towards using common curricula, assessments, and resources across ALCs and/or better link ALCs using the same approaches.
- Establish a community of practice among teachers and teacher educators. Distribute, delegate, and rotate responsibilities for TPD among implementing partners (these connections will also nurture teacher well-being).
- Secure approval from the MoE for refugee teachers to access and participate in online TPD platforms and related opportunities.
- Develop continuous TPD opportunities that respond to the needs of teachers on specific topics (e.g. managing mixed-ability and mixed-age classrooms, conflict resolution, developing teaching and learning aids).
- Consider the value of providing language support to teachers to facilitate communication in school-based activities and larger collaborative endeavours, including the cross-ALC community of practice.

Teacher well-being

- In place of a teacher association or union, establish a platform for teachers to engage in social dialogue about their work and well-being with UNHCR and implementing partners with an eventual view towards including the MoE.

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