

Executive Summary

In September 2010, York University (YU) began looking at the feasibility of delivering portable university education to long-term refugees in the Dadaab camps in Kenya. Earlier that year, the Executive Director of Windle Trust Kenya (WTK) had met with faculty at YU and discussed the possibility of onsite/distance university learning and teaching models for refugee youth and teachers in Dadaab. Although the camps hosted very little by way of university education, faculty at YU were optimistic about the future of a potential initiative. They believed that the strength of a consortium of universities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Kenya and Canada and the variety of distance education formats that are currently available worldwide would make this possible. A site just outside the camps could host a campus, providing a significant boost to the opportunities for education in Dadaab and in the camps and the region through offering onsite and online learning, thus improving the quality of teaching both in and around the camps.

However, a potential project would need the involvement of additional partners in Kenya. With funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada, a multi-institutional partnership, Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) with institutions from Canada and Kenya was established. One of the key concerns of this consortium was to explore the modalities of designing a program that would offer concrete higher education services to refugee youth. There was a need for more information on the programmatic, financial, environmental, governance and operational challenges in order to determine if it was feasible to pursue a multi-institutional university education program for Dadaab. What were the implications, opportunities and timelines? Were there alternate routes that could be considered? Was there an appropriate role for the BHER partnership in advancing this pilot program?

In 2011, YU, on behalf of the BHER partnership, approached MasterCard Foundation (MCF) for financial support to conduct a Feasibility Study and design a sustainable multi-partner model to improve secondary-level teacher training as a path to higher education opportunities for disadvantaged young people living in Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya. Researchers from YU then explored the BHER partnership questions and, in consultation with all potential partners, offered a model that responds to the concerns of the BHER partnership and the contextual needs. The model targets primarily teachers who are working in primary and secondary education levels and responds to the Joint Strategy for Education in Dadaab 2012- 2015 to address inadequate teacher training as a factor that determines enrolment rates in the primary and secondary levels of education. Both teacher training and advocacy for tertiary education have been determined as high priority commitments to promote quality of education in Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya by this strategy. This document reports our key findings and recommendations.

Contextual Considerations

Gender. Currently there is a disproportionate gender balance in attaining education among girls in the refugee camps and locally in Dadaab, Kenya. Girls are underrepresented at all levels of education due to elevated school drop-out rates (less than half of the primary pupils and less than a third of high school students are girls) and few women from the region access higher education.. Barriers confronting girls' access, retention and achievement are grounded in social-cultural norms which put girls in a subordinate position to boys. Threats to security and lack of

learning/teaching facilities that accommodate the health needs of girls further discourage women from attending school. Untrained teachers in the camps and locally are mainly men, contributing to cultural barriers of communication and a shortage of female role models.

Environment. The climate is semi-arid and the dominant mode of subsistence for both the host and refugee populations is pastoralism. The town and camps are located on the Lagh Dera flood plain. Though the climate is hot and dry, the Ewaso Ng’Iro River occasionally floods and affects parts of Dagahaley and Ifo due to poor drainage. Poor soil composition and infrequent rainfall result in sparse vegetation. Building resources and fire material are scarce and in high demand. The environment in the camps is completely over-extended and any additional activity in the camps, using the already meagre resources, causes stress on the refugee support systems.

The Model

The team suggests a scalable model which begins with a bridging program. Its purpose is to prepare prospective students for university courses through remedial education in English Language for Academic Purposes, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Research Skills. Successful students will receive a non-university WTK-WUSC certificate. Of these, students who elect to proceed with their studies will be admitted to the one year Certificate of Completion in Education Studies (Elementary). Successful completion of this step leads to admission to a one year Diploma in Early Childhood Education. Alternatively students will be admitted to a two year Diploma in Teacher Education Secondary. Upon successful completion of the Diploma studies (Early Childhood Education or Secondary Education), students may elect to follow Bachelor degree programs in the following areas to be offered by the BHER consortium partner universities: Education, Health, Business, Public Administration, Community Development and Extension Studies, or Science.

The delivery of these certificates, diplomas and degrees will be a complex undertaking involving various institutions providing service in an insecure environment characterized by scarce resources. But the feasibility study has demonstrated that it is attainable through a close collaboration with communities and local government:

- The consortium partnership is strong and excellent intercommunication has been established;
- The Partner institutions have demonstrated that they can be flexible and responsive to the needs of the larger project and the Dadaab community;
- The Dadaab community has been widely consulted; it is well-informed about the program and has begun to assume leadership roles in the project;
- The project is garnering increasing national and international interest; we expect that this attention will provide the kind of financial and other types of support that will be needed going forward.

Implementation Costs

The preliminary cost for the proposed project is estimated to be approximately CAN\$6,598,492 (US\$6,424,020) for a university campus and teaching/learning centre that will serve 400 refugees in the six Dadaab camps and the local communities in Dadaab area in two cohorts. We have compared the cost-benefit of the model we have chosen with other higher education delivery models, such as the cost of acquiring a university degree in residence at a Kenyan university for a Kenyan citizen; the cost of a WUSC scholarship to a Canadian university. The size of the

required investment per one cohort of 200 students is CAN\$6,599 (CAN\$6,425) per student. This figure includes infrastructural costs; however, as the infrastructure is established, the cost per cohort will decrease considerably. It is our firm conclusion that our approach is less costly, while maintaining a high quality of education and security of students, faculty and staff in a marginalized, volatile and impoverished region.

Benefits and Challenges

The long term benefits are very substantial in terms of improving quality education thereby increasing enrolment rates at the levels of primary and secondary education and opening avenues of access for better work and life opportunities for refugee youth *vis a vis* resorting to violence. It is estimated that as a result of close to 400 trained teachers at all levels (certificate, diploma, degree), close to 18,000 female and male pupils in elementary and secondary schools will improve their academic achievement. Most importantly, the attention to including women in this model through affirmative action measures will increase gender equitable access to education, thus expanding young women's opportunities to employment and participation in decision-making.

The financial viability of this project is a key challenge. Investment from donors is required for the pilot project to be launched and to be viable. Joint resource mobilization from the aid programs of governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector as well as the strong support of academic institutions is necessary.

Duration of Implementation

The security situation remaining peaceful, we estimate that the learning/teaching facilities and academic infrastructure will take 8-10 months to complete. The bridging preparation through to the end of the four year Bachelor degree will span five years: 11 months for the university preparation program; one year for the Certificate of Completion in Education Studies (Elementary); one year for the Diploma in Early Childhood Education; or two years for the Diploma in Teacher Education Secondary; two years for the Bachelor degree programs. Best case scenario is that if the project goes forward as per the estimated schedule in the Feasibility Study, the first cohort should complete their degrees by Summer 2017.

Feasibility Study Recommendations to the BHER Partnership as the Pilot Moves Forward

- Develop a detailed plan to move the proposed pilot forward;
- Establish a project management team to coordinate the proposed pilot;
- Develop a detailed risk map (with alternative scenarios) for construction of campus;
- Develop a detailed risk map (with alternative scenarios) for delivery of courses and programs;
- Establish education agreements, Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) or affiliation agreements with all academic consortium partners;
- Begin baseline study to support monitoring and evaluation of project
- Generate an outline business prospectus to engage with potential sponsors be these governmental donors, foundations, or private sector.

BHER Next Steps

BHER Partnership submitted an application and has been awarded major funding to implement the proposed model. Yet complementary funding is required to run parallel programs with a focus on girls and women, especially remedial education prior to entering the university preparation phase and mentoring throughout the implementation of the model; to explore creative uses of older technologies such as DVD/Print learning packages and community radio and to developing innovative approaches to the use of cell phones, MP3 players, and other mobile devices in technologically supported teaching and learning. As the model is initiated other funding needs will be identified. For further information contact: Prof. Wenona Giles at 416-736-2100 Ext: 66340 or by email at wgiles@yorku.ca or Prof. Don Dippo at 416-736-2100 Ext: 20748 or by email at ddippo@edu.yorku.ca.