

ELIMU CONNECT

"Where Learning Refuses to Break"

FEB 2026 MAGAZINE



FilmAid Kenya

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Kakuma and Kalobeyei



Editor's Note

There's something about education in Kakuma and Kalobeyei that you only understand when you've stood inside a classroom here.

You see a child arrive after walking through heat, wind, sometimes even flooded paths and still sit upright, ready to learn. You see teachers balancing their own responsibilities while showing up every single day for their students. You begin to realise that education here is not automatic. It is chosen. Daily.

This issue brings together stories that remind us of that choice. Safer schools. Mentorship circles. Blended learning sessions. Young innovators stepping into STEM spaces. Girls raising their voices. Children putting down burdens and picking up books.

These are not isolated efforts. They are threads holding a fragile system together. At times, we celebrate resilience. But we must also ask harder questions. How do we reduce disruption? How do we plan better?

How do we ensure that learning is not interrupted by predictable challenges? Elimu Connect exists to document these realities honestly the progress, the gaps, and the people at the centre of it all.

If there is one thing this edition makes clear, it is this: education here survives because people refuse to let it fail. And that refusal is powerful.

*The Editorial Team
Elimu Connect
Feb 2026*



Building Safer Learning Environments in Turkana



Roof blown off a classroom block at Korinyang Primary School in Turkana South.
Photo: Vincent Mageto / IRC.

Roof blown off a pit latrine in Gambella primary school in Kakuma. Photo: Vincent Mageto / IRC.

By Vincent Mageto / IRC



An IRC enumerator conducting a school safety audit at Korinyang' primary school in Turkana South. Photo: Vincent Mageto / IRC.

“

I love school a lot because I get to meet my friends. English is my favourite subject. I want to be a doctor and help the people of my community fight malaria and cholera”

Emergencies- whether natural, environmental, or human induced, are a reality for schools in fragile regions like Turkana County. Here, host and refugee communities share limited resources, while climatic shocks and infrastructural vulnerabilities further strain education. When crises strike, learning is disrupted, and the wellbeing of both learners and teachers is put at risk.

To safeguard continuity, Kenya has committed to the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF 2022 2023) under the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES). Safe schools mean uninterrupted learning, better enrollment, improved performance, and environments where children can thrive without fear.

Through the TeachWell project, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) partnered with the Ministry of Education to conduct a school safety audit across 75 schools in Turkana West, Central, and South. The audit revealed worrying gaps: cracked classroom walls, overcrowded dormitories, unsafe playgrounds, and poor sanitation facilities that expose learners to disease and danger.

In response, IRC and the Ministry will roll out targeted Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) training in March 2026. Vulnerable schools will establish safety committees to undergo participatory workshops on hazard identification, evacuation planning, and crisis response. These committees will cascade skills to teachers, learners, and communities, while each school develops a tailored disaster risk management plan.

Her dream is a reminder that safe schools are more than infrastructure, they are the foundation for hope, opportunity, and a brighter future.

The Transformative Power of Mentorship

By Marvin Lukulu/LWF

The Mentorship and Peer Support Networks under the TeachWell Project are creating spaces where female refugee teachers grow professionally, build confidence, and strengthen resilience.

At a recent session in Kakuma 3- Alnuur Primary School, teachers gathered to share experiences, reflect on challenges, and support one another in finding practical solutions. The atmosphere was warm, open, and deeply encouraging.

One of the most inspiring voices was Mahasin Margani, a mother of five who completed the Bridging Certificate in Teacher Education (BCTE) program at Masinde Muliro University.

Arriving in Kenya as a refugee in 2016 without having finished primary school, Mahasin re-entered education alongside her first-born son. Despite opposition from her husband, she persevered, eventually sitting for KCSE in 2023.

“He told me to choose between my family and my education,” she recalled. “But I knew that learning was the only way to change our lives, so I kept going until I sat for KCSE.”

Her discipline was remarkable: “I wake up early, around 3 a.m. to study and prepare for the day. From 6 a.m. I prepare food for my children and my husband, then I head to school. It has become a routine.”

“

He told me to choose between my family and my education. But I knew that learning was the only way to change our lives, so I kept going until I sat for KCSE.” — Mahasin Margani

Today, at 38, Mahasin is a trained teacher and mentor, with her children progressing strongly in their own education, a family legacy she fought to establish.

Her story resonated deeply with fellow teachers, who discussed cultural norms, early marriage, heavy domestic workloads, and the scarcity of female role models as barriers to women’s advancement.

They also spoke candidly about the emotional strain of balancing work, family, and studies, sharing strategies like intentional planning and rising early to manage responsibilities.

By the end of the session, teachers expressed a strong desire for regular mentorship meetings to sustain growth and strengthen community.

Through shared experiences, mutual encouragement, and collective strength, female refugee teachers are building resilience, advancing professionally, and multiplying hope one mentoring circle at a time.





“

Blended learning is not just about technology, it is about empowering teachers to deliver practical, hands-on lessons that inspire learners.”



FM.O.Es, WIK officer and participants pause for a photo outside Black Gold hotel after the training

Empowering Teachers Through Blended Learning in Turkana South

By Caroline Kuria / Windle International Kenya

In Lokichar, teachers gathered for a practical session on blended learning exploring how to teach computing even when connectivity is unreliable. The workshop brought together 56 primary school teachers from 40 schools in Turkana South and Aroo sub counties, all part of the Last Mile Connectivity in Schools (LMCS) project.

The training was officially opened by the Turkana County Director of Education, Dr. Henry Lubanga, and attended by key Ministry of Education officials, heads of institutions, and ICT specialists. Their presence underscored the importance of equipping teachers with digital skills to strengthen classroom instruction.

Sessions were lively and participatory, combining presentations, demonstrations, group work, and peer discussions. Teachers explored the RPF Computing Curriculum, digital literacy, computer systems, programming concepts such as Scratch, and assessment strategies. By the end of the day, participants reported improved confidence in teaching computing, stronger lesson planning skills, and greater awareness of inclusive, learner centered approaches.

Teachers embraced resource sharing, offline tools, and peer support to overcome connectivity issues. The County Director emphasized the urgent need for continuous retooling, noting that many teachers had not received ICT training since 2024.

Despite challenges such as limited ICT equipment, infrastructure gaps, and varying skill levels, the training highlighted innovation and resilience. The workshop concluded with a call for regular follow up trainings, stronger investment in ICT infrastructure, and sustained professional support. By enhancing teachers' capacity, the initiative laid a solid foundation for practical, hands on computing lessons that will benefit learners across Turkana South and Aroo.



“I Saw Tomorrow in Their Eyes” From Cartoons to Careers”

By Carolyne Njung’e / FilmAid Kenya

Recently, we had the privilege of spending time with Grade 1, 2, and 3 learners across three vibrant learning spaces in Kakuma and Kalobeyei, namely Kadugli, Fuji, and Kalobeyei Settlement Primary Schools.

With support from the TeachWell Project and in partnership with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), we created a simple yet meaningful space for learning through play.

Together, we watched an episode of Ubongo Kids, an experience that instantly took me back to my own childhood, when cartoons were for entertainment and windows into imagination and possibility.

As the animation played, the classroom slowly transformed. Laughter filled the air, eyes widened with curiosity, and little voices eagerly echoed the lessons on screen. But what stayed with me most was the conversation that followed.

When we asked the learners what they wanted to be when they grew up, their hands shot up with excitement. One by one, they shared their dreams. Some doctors, teachers, pilots, and even engineers.

Each answer was delivered with confidence and a bright, hopeful smile. In that moment, you could feel the power of possibility taking root. “One day I will fly a plane and take my family to many countries.”



Carolyn Njung'e during interactive session with children.
Photo. Richard Butoyil FAK

It reminded me that children are always observing, always learning, even when we think they are simply playing. Such experiences reaffirm why playful learning matters.

They shape their aspirations from what they see around them. The professionals in their communities, the stories they watch, the examples we set. Career development does not begin in secondary school or university; it starts much earlier, in these small, joyful moments of exposure and imagination.

When we give children safe spaces to dream, we are quietly helping them design their futures. If we continue to invest in these early sparks of inspiration, we may one day look back and realize that those joyful classroom moments were the very beginnings of tomorrow’s doctors, teachers, and pilots.

“
*I like watching cartoon because
it teaches me things. It makes
me feel smart.*”

Watch Episode of Ubongo Kids



Photo gallery





*A class on session under guidance of a teacher.
Photo: Emily Ngugi / Ki4BLI.*

How Play and Projects Transform Learning at Light Academy

By Emily Ngugi / Ki4BLI

At Light Academy in Kalobeyei Village 1, play-based and project-based learning have reshaped daily lessons, making education more engaging and responsive to the realities of learners in a refugee setting. Many children arrive at school struggling to focus due to trauma, language barriers, and hardship. To address this, teachers embed play and projects directly into lessons so learning feels active, familiar, and purposeful.

Storytelling, games, role play, songs, and movement are woven into literacy, numeracy, science, and life skills. These activities are not extras—they are the main way concepts are introduced and understood. Play helps learners express themselves, take safe risks, and build relationships. Confidence grows as shy students find their voice in group activities and presentations.

Project-based learning takes this further, encouraging cooperation, planning, and real-world thinking. Learners apply knowledge in practical ways while strengthening teamwork and responsibility.

Difficult content becomes easier to grasp as lessons connect naturally to everyday life. The results are visible: attendance and participation have improved, learners are more confident in English, and parents notice children returning home excited to share what they've learned.

At Light Academy, learning is no longer passive, it is joyful, active, and deeply connected to how children see themselves and their future.

“
*School is where I find my voice.
Through play and projects, I
feel confident to speak, learn,
and dream of a brighter
future.” Learner at Light
Academy*



Photo gallery





Somali Bantu students pose for a photo at The Bigheart Foundation Girls' during the subcounty competitions for KSEF.

Young Innovators Light Up Turkana at KSEF

“

The spirit of innovation is alive and thriving in Turkana, as young scientists blend imagination with practical STEM solutions.”

By Caroline Kuria / Windle International Kenya

The spirit of innovation is alive and thriving in Turkana!

The 62nd edition of the National Kenya Science and Engineering Fair (KSEF) kicked off with vibrant subcounty competitions hosted at The Bigheart Foundation Girls, bringing together schools from Turkana West and Lokichogio.

For the very first time, junior schools joined their senior counterparts in this exciting journey, thanks to the Ministry of Education's new directive, opening doors for even younger learners to showcase their creativity and problem solving skills.

The enthusiasm was palpable as 15 out of 17 Prospects 2.0 supported schools stepped forward with projects that blended imagination and practical STEM solutions.

From robotics to agriculture innovations, these young scientists proved that the future of Kenya's STEM ecosystem is in capable hands. With support extended to both host and camp schools, every participant had the chance to shine.

All eyes are now turned to the County KSEF competitions that will be held at the Lodwar Boys High school from 4th March 2026.

With support from Windle International Kenya, Turkana's journey at KSEF is more than just about winning, it's about nurturing dreams, building confidence, and inspiring the next generation of innovators. And if this year's start is anything to go by, the future looks bright indeed.



Promoting Gender Equality through International Days of Advocacy

By Carol Onyango /JRS

“

Participation goes beyond commemoration, it becomes a catalyst for lasting change in the lives of girls who dare to dream and lead.”

Across the world, international days dedicated to gender equality serve as powerful platforms for advocacy, education for women and girls, and a cog in the wheel of change.

In Kakuma refugee camp, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Kenya, coordinates with other partners and takes part in ensuring that girls from camp schools actively participate in these crucial moments, turning awareness into action.

From the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, where young refugee girls showcase their STEM potential, to the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, which ignites conversations on protection and empowerment, these events provide vital opportunities for learning and leadership.

The World Mental Health Day further highlights the importance of well-being, as JRS Kenya engages students in discussions on resilience and mental health support. Through these initiatives, participation goes beyond commemoration—it becomes a catalyst for lasting change in the lives of girls who dare to dream and lead.



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INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS



“Share Your Story — We’ll Tell It to the World”

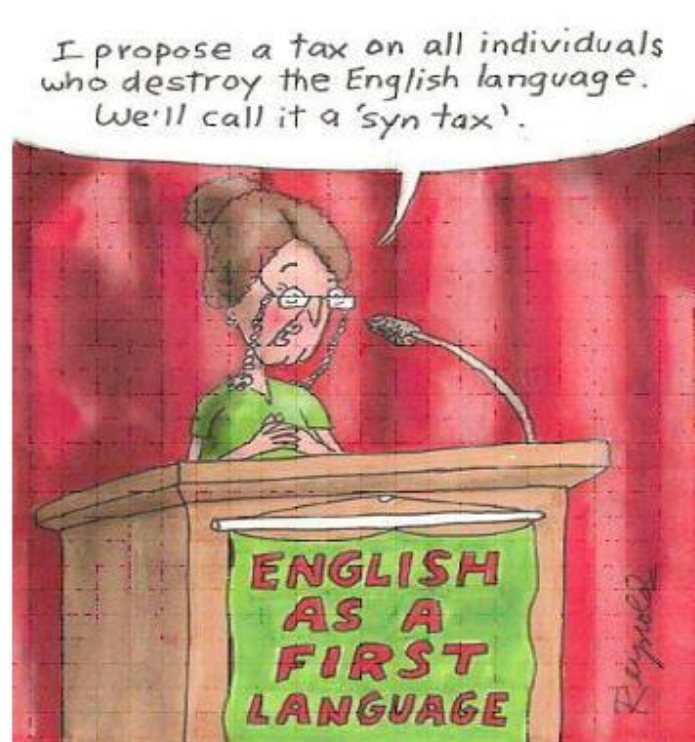
In this edition

1. *Carol Onyango - A Gender Responsive Education Officer – JRS-Kenya*
2. *Susan Nakong — Filmmaker and a social media Influencer*
3. *Mw. Sam Odhiambo — Communicator & Scholar*
4. *Joel Bizimungu — Volunteer & Board Member, Newlight Primary School*

HAPPY INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY!

By Carol Onyango

Every 21st February, the world celebrates International Mother Language Day, championed by UNESCO, a reminder that the language your mother uses when she is very serious is not just sound, it is heritage. Your mother language (mother tongue) is the first language you learned at home, the one that carried your first cries, your first “give me,” and your first proper scolding. It could be Dholuo, Kikuyu language, Luhya language, Swahili, or even English. According to UNESCO, thousands of languages are at risk of disappearing. When a language dies, an entire worldview disappears with it.



Meanwhile, an indigenous language is native to a particular community or region. So yes, English can be your mother language if that's what you grew up speaking, but it is not indigenous to Kenya. Confusing? Just remember: mother language is personal, indigenous language is historical. One belongs to your household; the other belongs to your ancestors. In many cases, they are the same, if you grew up where it is spoken.

But let's be honest, mother languages have superpowers. If you grew up in the 80s, you know mother tongue can discipline you without touching you. My mother, Nyarsakwa, would simply say, “*Magi to ang'o?*” (*What are these?*) and you instantly start arranging things. Or when you did something foolish, she would sigh, “*Yawa ng'uti ni gi ting mapek!*” (*Your neck carries a heavy lagage!*) meaning your head is not helping you. Ouch!

Mother tongues carry proverbs that sound poetic but warn you about your life choices. It's the language you switch to when you hit your toe on a chair or when your child embarrasses you in public. Indigenous languages preserve culture in songs, stories, farming wisdom, traditional conflict resolution, while mother tongues preserve your emotional wiring. Lose the language, and you lose the flavor of your laughter and dramatic expressions.

So this International Mother Language Day, celebrate multilingualism, teach your children their roots, and speak it proudly. Because no matter how polished your English is, there is always one language that can reset your behavior instantly... usually announced a little louder than the rest.....MOTHER LANGUAGE!

Happy International Mother Language Day!

About the Author

Carol Onyango is a Gender Responsive Education Officer – Jesuit Refugee Service Kenya

Strength in the Storm

By Susan Nakong

In Kakuma Refugee Camp, the rainy season strikes with force. Winds rip through mud and iron-sheet shelters, pounding rain collapses walls, and families wake to soaked belongings, spoiled food, and firewood too wet to light. Children go hungry, uniforms stay damp, and sleep is broken by cold and fear yet school still awaits.

The journey itself becomes perilous. Roads dissolve into mud, books are lost, and some routes are impassable. Those who reach class carry hunger, fatigue, and worry from home. Concentration falters when bodies are cold and underfed. Standing water breeds malaria and waterborne disease, illness keeps children away, and overcrowded shelters heighten risks, especially for girls. What looks like weather is, in reality, a learning crisis.

Rain can also bring relief cooler temperatures ease daily life, and when shelters hold, children thrive. But whether rain is disruption or relief depends on preparedness. So the questions must be asked: Why do we accept predictable disruption as inevitable? Why are children still walking unsafe flooded routes?

How many learning days must be lost before we call this what it is a preventable barrier to education?

Kakuma's children show remarkable resilience, but resilience should not be the system. If education is a right, then planning for the rainy season must be part of education itself. The time to act is not during the storm, but before it.

“
Resilience should not be
the system. Children
should not have to prove
extraordinary strength
just to access ordinary
schooling.”

About the Author

Susan Nakong is a filmmaker with a passion for telling stories that reflect resilience and human experience.



A wide shot of houses from Kalobeyei settlement

Expectations vs. Reality: My First Days in Kakuma Refugee Camp

By Mw. Sam Odhiambo

When I first heard I would be going to Kakuma Refugee Camp, my mind was filled with fear and uncertainty. I imagined endless rows of tents under the scorching sun, silence broken only by cries of despair, and a place where hope had no room to grow.

I expected isolation, hunger, and a life stripped of dignity. But stepping into Kakuma, I found something different. Yes, the heat was real, and the challenges undeniable, but alongside them was a vibrant community. I saw children in classrooms, eager to learn despite limited resources. I met shopkeepers running small businesses, selling food and clothing with pride. I heard music and laughter in the evenings, as neighbors gathered to share stories and traditions from across Africa.

The camp is not just a place of survival; it is a place of resilience. People are building lives, creating friendships, and finding ways to thrive. My expectations of despair gave way to the reality of determination. Kakuma is showing me that even in exile, humanity shines through; in education, in creativity, and in the simple acts of kindness that make life meaningful.

Over time, I see Kakuma as a place of cultural exchange. Refugees from many nations live side by side, blending languages, foods, and songs. The camp becomes a living mosaic of identities, proving that even in exile, humanity shines through.

“
I arrived expecting only despair, but I found resilience, laughter, and a community determined to thrive.”

About the Author

Mw Sam Odhiambo is a communicator and scholar, as well as a writer, filmmaker, and trainer. He is passionate about storytelling and education, blending creativity with insight to inspire dialogue and learning.

The Day A Child Put Down a Bucket and Picked Up a Book

By Joel Bizimungu

Some moments just don't let go. I always remember the day I watched a little girl walk past the school gate, not going in just dragging this giant bucket that almost swallowed her whole.

Her name was Amina.

She couldn't have been more than ten. While other kids sat in class, singing songs and scribbling away, Amina was out working. She cleaned strangers' homes. She rocked babies that weren't hers. She carried weight real buckets, sure, but also these invisible burdens no kid should ever have to touch. Her hands were so small, but the work? It nearly broke her. Every time the bell rang, she'd stop. She'd listen for a second. Then she'd keep walking.

One day, I asked her why she wasn't in school. She stared at the ground and whispered, "Maybe later." But honestly, "later" is one of the saddest words I know. For a lot of kids—especially girls—later just never shows up.

In places like Kakuma, where families are just trying to hold on, child labor isn't rare. Parents rely on whatever help their kids can give. It's survival, but it comes at a price we don't talk about enough. Childhoods get snatched away. Kids never get to find out what they're good at or what they could become. Their futures get cut short before they even start.

Amina's story isn't some one-off. Poverty and displacement back families into corners. Girls feel it the most. They get sent to work instead of being cared for. Instead of learning, they get worn down. Day after day, their childhood just slips away. And that's the part that sticks with me: when a child works instead of learning, it's not just her who loses. We all do.

Education isn't a luxury. It's protection. A classroom keeps a girl out of harm's way. A teacher might spot when something's wrong and help. A book can fling open doors you didn't even know existed.

When Amina finally got her seat in class, there was no big celebration. It was quiet, but you could see it—the way her shoulders straightened out, the way her eyes started to shine. She laughed. Not just a little, but real, deep laughter. For the first time, she talked about her future. She wanted to teach, so no kid would ever have to stand outside and wonder what it felt like to belong.

Every child deserves to be inside a classroom. Not cleaning someone else's house. Not hidden away, working. Not hauling burdens meant for grown-ups. If we care about tomorrow, we have to do right by kids today. Send them to school. Choose education over exploitation. Don't let poverty steal their dreams. Because when you protect one child, you're not just changing their life. You're changing everything that comes after.

About the Author

Joel is a dedicated volunteer and Board of Management member at Newlight Primary School in Kakuma Refugee Camp. He is committed to supporting education and community development, bringing passion and service to the children and families he works with.



“
*Education isn't
a luxury. It's
protection.*”

Trivia facts you wish you knew!

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)



The Congo River is the deepest river in the world, plunging to depths of over 220 meters.

Burundi – Known as the “Land of Drums,”

Burundi’s royal drum tradition is recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



Ethiopia (bonus) – Coffee

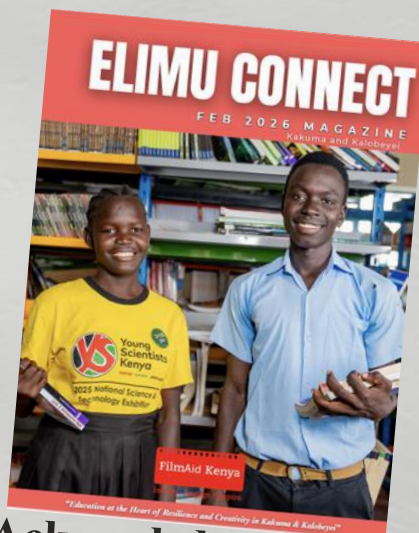
Originated in Ethiopia, with legend tracing it back to a goat herder named Kaldi who noticed his goats became energetic after eating coffee berries.



Would you like to contribute to this page? Feel free to reach out and be part of our next issue.

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- Multimedia Manager
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- Community Engagement Officer
Caroline Njung'e

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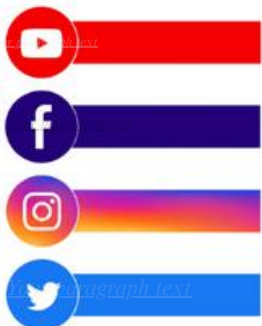
1. **Front cover photo** - Students from Brightstar Secondary, Kalobeyei
2. **Back page cover** - Pupils from Light academy, kalobeyei



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Next Issue Preview: March 2026

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