



East African Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies

eajis.eanso.org

Volume 8, Issue 2, 2025

Print ISSN: 2707-529X | Online ISSN: 2707-5303

Title DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-5303>

EANSO

EAST AFRICAN
NATURE &
SCIENCE
ORGANIZATION

Original Article

Baseline Survey in Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Education Projects in Refugee Camps in Turkana County, Kenya

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajis.8.2.3386>

Date Published: ABSTRACT

24 July 2025

Keywords:

*Baseline Survey,
Monitoring and
Evaluation,
Project Performance,
Refugee Education.*

Baseline surveys serve as a foundational instrument in monitoring and evaluation, significantly enhancing the performance and impact of education projects in refugee camps by providing critical benchmarks for planning, implementation, and assessment. This study examined the influence of baseline surveys in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) on the performance of education projects in refugee camps in Turkana County, Kenya. Guided by international frameworks such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Sustainable Development Goal 4, and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees, the research focused on education initiatives implemented by Windle International Kenya in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A census approach was employed, targeting a study population of 141 education stakeholders: 7 principals, 5 head teachers, 72 Board of Management members, 5 M&E officers, 1 County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (QASO), 1 Sub-County QASO, 15 education officers, 15 project coordinators, 15 finance officers, and 5 program managers. These education stakeholders were selected due to their central roles in the planning, execution, and oversight of education projects, ensuring that the study captured informed perspectives on the influence of baseline surveys within the project context. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and key informant interviews and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analysis. Qualitative findings from interviews further contextualised the quantitative results. The results indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between the use of baseline surveys in M&E and the performance of education projects in refugee camps ($r = 0.680$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.172$, $p = 0.020$). Respondents reported that comprehensive baseline surveys contribute to setting project targets, tracking progress, guiding resource allocation, and enhancing stakeholder engagement. Thematic analysis of qualitative responses highlighted the importance of financial support, community sensitisation, and improved security as key factors for project success and teacher retention. The study concludes that baseline

surveys are integral to effective M&E, serving as benchmarks for planning, resource allocation, and project evaluation, ultimately improving educational outcomes for refugees. This research recommends that education project implementers prioritise baseline survey practices, ensure stakeholder involvement, invest in staff training, and integrate baseline surveys within standard M&E frameworks to enhance the project's success and performance in refugee settings.

APA CITATION

Luvonga, J. N. & Kasembeli, S. K. (2025). Baseline Survey in Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Education Projects in Refugee Camps in Turkana County, Kenya. *East African Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(2), 19-30. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajis.8.2.3386>.

CHICAGO CITATION

Luvonga, Joyce Namasaya and Stanley Khaemba Kasembeli. 2025. "Baseline Survey in Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Education Projects in Refugee Camps in Turkana County, Kenya". *East African Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 8 (2), 19-30. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajis.8.2.3386>

HARVARD CITATION

Luvonga, J. N. & Kasembeli, S. K. (2025) "Baseline Survey in Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Education Projects in Refugee Camps in Turkana County, Kenya", *East African Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(2), pp. 19-30. doi: 10.37284/eajis.8.2.3386.

IEEE CITATION

J. N., Luvonga & S. K., Kasembeli "Baseline Survey in Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Education Projects in Refugee Camps in Turkana County, Kenya", *EAJIS*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 19-30, Jul. 2025.

MLA CITATION

Luvonga, Joyce Namasaya & Stanley Khaemba Kasembeli. "Baseline Survey in Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Education Projects in Refugee Camps in Turkana County, Kenya". *East African Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, Vol. 8, no. 2, Jul. 2025, pp. 19-30, doi:10.37284/eajis.8.2.3386.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, education in crisis areas, particularly for refugees, has become a pressing concern for governments, academics, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) worldwide. More than 35 percent of school-aged children living in refugee camps are out of school and may spend between nine and seventeen years in these settings, making effective educational interventions for displaced populations crucial (Gallagher, 2017). In such contexts, education is foundational for maintaining social, economic, and political structures. However, when refugee camp education lacks attention to equality, quality, management, and relevance, it risks deepening disparities, leaving students in these environments further behind their peers in stable regions.

Education is enshrined as a basic human right in Kenya and internationally. The government and its partners are obligated to ensure that all children

within Kenyan borders access education, regardless of nationality, gender, or other social factors (Lacrampe, 2017). There is a clear need for high-quality, protective education for displaced populations (Madani, 2019). Such education supports the aims of the Education for All initiative, durable solutions, sustainable development, and post-conflict reconstruction (Samir & Lutz, 2017). International frameworks, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Sustainable Development Goal 4, and the 1951 Refugee Convention, consistently advocate for inclusive and equitable quality education for all (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019). The 2018 Global Compact on Refugees further underscores education access for refugees as a primary objective, aligning with current research on the effectiveness of education projects in conflict-affected regions (UNHCR, 2023).

While the idea of implementing M&E practices in African organisations is relatively new and not

always fully integrated, its importance is increasingly recognised. Building M&E capacity has been shown to improve project performance, as evidenced by education and health initiatives in South Sudan (Tukey et al., 2021) and project outcomes in Nigeria (Idoro, 2019). These examples underscore the necessity of developing skilled M&E teams to ensure project success.

Kenya has hosted refugees for decades and is currently home to more than 650,000 refugees (UNHCR, 2023), with 26.4 million people displaced globally (UNHCR, 2022). Kenya continues to receive surging numbers of refugees, mainly from neighbouring countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Burundi, and Rwanda (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). Managing education for thousands of refugees presents significant challenges for the government and partners (Reliefweb, 2022), raising questions about the feasibility of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030. UNESCO affirms that education is a universal right (Catana & Brilha, 2020).

In Turkana County, a 2018 World Vision Kenya evaluation reported a net enrolment rate of 56%, with a gender gap, girls at 51.2% and boys at 59.3%. Earlier data from 2015 showed female and male enrolment at 46.4% and 53.6%, respectively, indicating progress but ongoing challenges. Recognising these ongoing challenges, it becomes imperative to assess the effectiveness of specific strategies designed to improve educational outcomes in these contexts. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the influence of baseline surveys in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) on the performance of education projects in refugee camps in Turkana County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Despite ongoing efforts by the Kenyan government and development partners to improve refugee access to education, significant numbers of refugees

remain unenrolled at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels (UNHCR, 2023). For example, less than 30 percent of refugee children in Kakuma refugee camp attend secondary school, with retention and access rates well below national averages. Academic performance among students in these camps also lags behind, and enrolment rates remain minimal (Piper et al., 2020). While funding has historically been identified as a barrier, recent reports suggest that issues related to partnership, stakeholder engagement, and management of educational staff are now more pressing obstacles.

A key limitation identified in existing research is the insufficient attention given by stakeholders to monitoring the outcomes of education initiatives. As a result, essential M&E practices, such as baseline surveys, are often neglected. Ineffective monitoring and evaluation directly contribute to the failure of educational projects in these settings. With thousands of students enrolled in Kakuma's seven secondary and twenty-one primary schools, the consequences of poor M&E can be severe, potentially undermining the academic achievement and well-being of refugee learners.

Although there is a growing body of research on M&E practices in general project management, studies specifically addressing M&E for education projects in refugee camps remain scarce. This gap in knowledge underscores the need for research focused on the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation practices in these unique and complex environments. By examining the influence of baseline surveys in M&E practices on the performance of education projects in refugee camps, this study seeks to address a critical research gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks are widely recognised as essential for the effective design, implementation, and assessment of education projects, especially in complex humanitarian environments like refugee camps.

Within these frameworks, baseline surveys are crucial as they provide the foundational data needed to assess project needs, set benchmarks, and inform ongoing and summative evaluations. Ssekamatte and Okello (2016) emphasise that baseline data is indispensable for benchmarking progress at the inception and implementation phases of project development, hence serving as a pillar for midterm, end-term, and impact evaluations. Their work concurs with Ochieng (2018), who highlights the importance of baseline surveys in Kenyan donor-funded projects, noting that they offer critical indicators for measuring project results. Both studies underscore that baseline data is central to effective project management and serves as a reference point for tracking change and testing project hypotheses.

Despite consensus on the value of baseline surveys, there are notable differences in how these M & E practices are implemented and perceived. Ssekamatte and Okello (2016) observe that many organisations carry out baseline studies primarily to satisfy donor requirements, rather than as an integrated part of adaptive project management. Ochieng (2018) adds that factors like stakeholder participation, technical expertise of the project team, and resource allocation significantly affect the quality and utility of baseline data, with the lack of stakeholder involvement often leading to unclear or ineffective indicators. This contrasts with global perspectives such as those of Schön et al. (2018), who developed the Camp Performance Indicator (CPI) system to measure self-reliance among refugees in Jordan's Zaatari camp. Their research, while demonstrating the importance of robust baseline data for identifying gaps and guiding interventions, also reveals limitations, including reliance on single-case studies and a lack of standardised, comparable quantitative measures.

Similarly, Baqui et al. (2018) investigated the effect of monitoring and assessment techniques on project execution within ACTED Bangladesh, focusing on how M&E design, planning, capacity building, and

budgeting influence outcomes. Their survey of 200 employees revealed that structured and well-funded M&E practices, such as routine planning, clear staff roles, and adequate capacity, are integral to effective project execution and sustainability. According to their findings, 80% of participants reported that planned techniques were routinely implemented on time, and 50% perceived the impact as significant. The study emphasised that M&E is not simply a procedural requirement, but a strategic tool that, when adequately resourced and embedded in organisational processes, drives timely and impactful project delivery. These insights reinforce the global consensus on the value of systematic M&E, while also highlighting the need for capacity and resources to translate M&E data into action.

Further critique arises from the limited integration of baseline findings into the full project cycle. Ochieng (2018) and Baqui et al. (2018) point out that constraints in technical capacity and resourcing frequently undermine the effectiveness of baseline surveys, while inadequate stakeholder engagement results in missed opportunities for learning and improvement. Shah (2017), in evaluating the Norwegian Refugee Council's education programs in Jordanian camps, found that baseline and ongoing monitoring data were instrumental in adapting interventions and improving outcomes. Shah also identified challenges in maintaining relevance for adolescents and ensuring engagement in non-accredited programs. These studies collectively suggest that, while baseline surveys are fundamental, their impact depends on systematic integration into project cycles, meaningful stakeholder participation and sufficient technical and financial resources.

Connecting the literature reveals a shared acknowledgement of the foundational role of baseline data in M&E, but also a tendency for surveys to be driven by compliance rather than learning and adaptation, especially in humanitarian settings. Robust M&E design, including well-

conducted baseline studies and appropriate planning, is shown to directly influence the effectiveness and sustainability of project implementation (Baqui et al., 2018; Vrchota et al., 2020). However, most studies focus on procedural aspects or specific case studies, with little attention to comprehensive, census-based engagement of all relevant stakeholders, such as principals, program managers, and education officers.

Significant gaps remain in the literature. There is a knowledge gap regarding the direct impact of baseline survey utilisation on educational outcomes in African refugee camps. Methodologically, most research relies on case studies or cross-sectional designs, with few using census-based approaches. The current study employs a census approach by engaging all key education stakeholders. Conceptually, baseline surveys are often treated as static benchmarks rather than tools for iterative, adaptive management. In terms of population, comprehensive inclusion of all project actors is rare, and contextually, there is a lack of research specific to baseline surveys and project performance in Turkana County's refugee camps, with most local, regional, and global literature focused elsewhere or in urban or stable settings.

The literature affirms the indispensable role of baseline surveys in M&E and performance measurement, but their effectiveness is contingent on stakeholder engagement, technical capacity, and integration into project cycles. Notably, there exist knowledge, methodological, conceptual, population, and contextual gaps that the current study seeks to fill. As such, this study employs a census-based, context-specific approach to advancing research and practice in monitoring and evaluating education projects in refugee camps in Turkana County, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Logical Framework Approach (LFA), a widely recognised tool for project planning, monitoring, and evaluation in

development and humanitarian contexts (European Commission, 2004). The LFA was originally developed by Leon J. Rosenberg for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 1969, with further refinement by Practical Concepts Incorporated (Rosenberg & Posner, 1979). It has since been widely adopted by development agencies and organisations for project planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

The LFA provides a systematic structure for defining objectives, identifying indicators, and mapping the logical relationships among inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Central to this approach is the use of baseline data to establish benchmarks and measure project progress and effectiveness (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005). In education projects, particularly in complex settings such as refugee camps, the LFA facilitates clear articulation of goals, systematic monitoring, and adaptive management.

Researchers have applied the Logical Framework Approach to improve project clarity, accountability, and transparency. Gasper (2000) notes that LFA enhances project design by requiring explicit statements of objectives and measurable indicators. Crawford and Bryce (2003) demonstrate that LFA increases accountability to stakeholders, which is especially important in resource-constrained, multi-actor environments like refugee camps. Binnendijk (2000) highlights the utility of LFA for integrating donor requirements, stakeholder perspectives, and contextual risks, making it a practical framework for guiding education interventions in volatile settings.

Complementing the LFA, this study also draws on the Theory of Change (ToC). According to Stein and Valters (2012), ToC was conceptualised in the 1990s as an extension of assessment theory and is used to develop solutions to complex social issues. Its unique value lies in differentiating between desired and actual outcomes (Brest, 2010). The Theory of Change offers a conceptual map of how and why desired changes are expected to occur within the specific context of education projects in

refugee camps. ToC enables the identification of necessary preconditions, activities, and contextual factors for achieving project goals such as improved access, retention, and learning outcomes. It makes explicit the assumptions and causal linkages between baseline data, M&E practices, and educational outcomes, supporting adaptive management and reflective learning (Anderson, 2005). By integrating ToC with the LFA, this study acknowledges the complexity of refugee education interventions and recognises that change is often non-linear and influenced by multiple interacting factors.

While the LFA has been critiqued for sometimes oversimplifying complex social realities into linear models, its strengths lie in its ability to clarify assumptions, facilitate systematic tracking of progress, and enhance accountability. The addition of Theory of Change addresses this limitation by explicitly mapping pathways of change, highlighting risks, and making underlying assumptions visible and testable. Therefore, the combined use of the Logical Framework Approach and Theory of Change provides a robust foundation for this study. It allows for a structured yet flexible analysis of how baseline surveys, as an effective M&E practices, influence project performance.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive research design to examine the influence of baseline surveys in M&E practices on project performance in refugee camps in Turkana County, Kenya. As outlined by Bloomfield and Fisher (2019), descriptive research is well-suited for systematically capturing and

analysing the characteristics, practices, and outcomes within a defined population. This design was selected because it enables detailed examination of the timing, nature, and influence of baseline surveys on project performance.

The descriptive approach allows for the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Atmowardoyo, 2018). Data collection was accomplished through structured questionnaires and key informant interviews, leveraging the flexibility of the design to gather diverse and in-depth information directly from participants in their natural settings. This approach enhances the reliability and authenticity of data, ensuring that findings accurately reflect real-world practices and experiences.

The study population comprised 141 respondents involved in the administration and oversight of education projects in the refugee camps. This included 5 program managers, 15 education officers, 15 project coordinators, 5 M&E officers, 15 finance officers, 7 school principals, 5 head teachers, 72 BOM members, and 1 county and 1 sub-county quality assurance and standards officers. These key stakeholders were selected due to their central roles in the planning, execution, and oversight of education projects, ensuring that the study captured informed perspectives on the influence of baseline surveys within the project context. A census approach was used, involving all eligible participants, thereby maximising representation and minimising sampling bias as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Population and Sample Size

Respondent	Number in Category	Sample size
Principals	7	7
Head teachers	5	5
Program Managers	5	5
Education officers	15	15
Project Coordinators	15	15
Finance Officers	15	15
B.O.M	72	72
County QASO	1	1
Sub-County QASO	1	1
M&E Officers	5	5
TOTAL	141	141

Data was collected using questionnaires with closed- and open-ended items, which facilitated the collection of quantitative data on project indicators and qualitative insights into the implementation and challenges of baseline surveys in M&E. Key informant interviews provided further depth on contextual and operational issues. Of the 141 questionnaires distributed, 135 were completed and returned, a response rate of 95.7%.

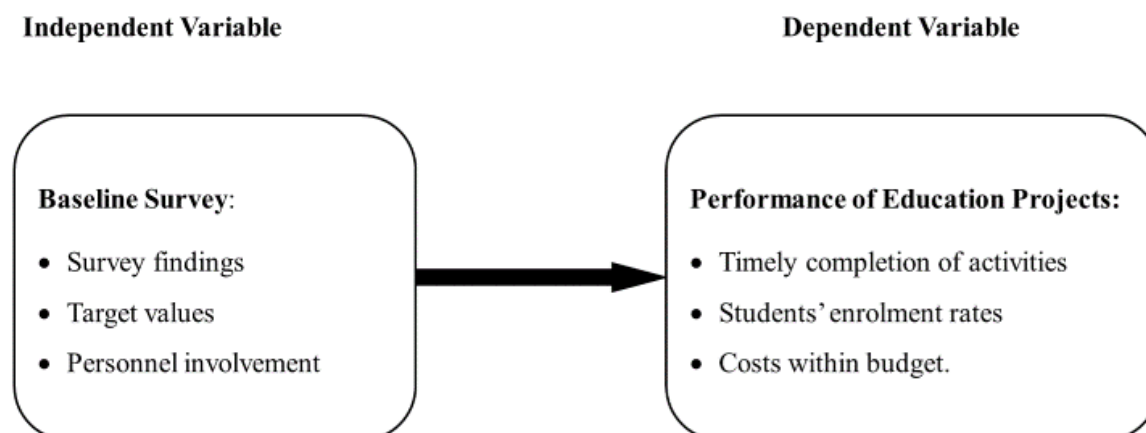
Quantitative data was coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) v. 23 with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$, employing descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, percentages, and standard deviations to summarise findings. Qualitative data from open-ended responses and interviews were analysed thematically, with emergent themes used to contextualise and enrich quantitative results. This mixed-methods approach allowed for triangulation and strengthened the validity of the study's conclusions. The findings are presented using tables and narrative summaries, addressing the research questions and providing actionable insights into the role of baseline surveys in enhancing the performance of education projects in refugee camp contexts.

All participant responses were handled with the utmost confidentiality. Data were anonymised and stored securely, with access restricted to the

researchers. A research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation, and the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences of the University of Nairobi. Informed consent was obtained from each participant after providing comprehensive information about the study's purpose, ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the option to withdraw at any time without consequence.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study illustrates the relationship between baseline surveys and the performance of education projects in refugee camps. In this framework, the baseline survey serves as the independent variable, with its key indicators being survey findings, target values, and personnel involvement. These elements are expected to influence the dependent variable, which is the performance of education projects. Performance is measured through indicators such as the timely completion of project activities, adherence to project budgets, and student enrolment rates. The framework posits that comprehensive baseline surveys provide essential data and stakeholder engagement, which in turn contribute to more effective planning, implementation, and monitoring, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes in refugee camp settings.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The descriptive analysis results on baseline surveys as an M&E practice and its influence on project performance are presented in Tables 2 and 3. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements regarding baseline surveys, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 =

Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

The results provide insights into participants' perceptions of the importance and impact of baseline surveys in the context of education project planning, implementation, and evaluation within refugee camps in Turkana County.

Table 2: Responses on Baseline Survey in M & E

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Conducting baseline survey is important in setting up project targets	7.50%	5.30%	15.80 %	28.60 %	42.90 %	3.94	1.22
Baseline surveys are important for tracking project progress.	5.30%	11.30 %	16.50 %	25.60 %	41.40 %	3.86	1.22
Baseline surveys are key in determining stakeholders to be engaged	6.00%	5.30%	18.80 %	21.10 %	48.90 %	4.02	1.20
Baseline survey findings gives an insight into the methods to use to achieve objectives.	9.00%	12.00 %	15.80 %	24.10 %	39.10 %	3.72	1.33
Baseline survey findings are important when it comes to budget allocation	4.50%	9.80%	10.50 %	21.10 %	54.10 %	4.11	1.20
Baseline survey findings inform the activities to be implemented in a project	7.50%	4.50%	12.80 %	24.80 %	50.40 %	4.06	1.22
Baseline surveys are important in defining the project priority areas and visualising the impact of the intervention.	5.30%	9.80%	12.80 %	22.60 %	49.60 %	4.02	1.22
Overall Mean						3.96	

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents recognise the crucial role of baseline surveys in setting project targets, tracking progress, engaging stakeholders, guiding methods to achieve objectives, informing budget allocation, determining project activities, and visualising impact. These results are consistent with Baqui et al. (2018), who found that comprehensive M&E design, including baseline surveys, planning, capacity building, and budgeting, significantly enhances project execution and sustainability. Similarly, Ochieng (2018) highlighted that effective baseline surveys depend on strong stakeholder participation, competent project teams, and adequate resources, all of which were noted as influencing factors by respondents in this study.

Additionally, the findings align with Schön et al. (2018), who, in their development of the Camp Performance Indicator (CPI) system, emphasised the necessity of robust and context-specific baseline data for identifying gaps and guiding interventions in refugee camp settings. The importance of adapting and utilising baseline data to improve

educational outcomes is further supported by Shah (2017), who reported that ongoing monitoring and adaptive management based on baseline findings were vital for both academic and psychosocial improvements among refugee learners.

The positive and significant correlation ($r=0.680$, $p<0.05$) and regression analysis ($\beta=0.172$, $p=0.020$) between baseline surveys and project performance in Turkana's refugee camps reinforce the conclusions of Vrchota et al. (2020), who argue that the use of baseline surveys in M&E practices enhances project planning, implementation, and donor accountability.

These findings from the current study and previous research underscore the indispensable role of baseline surveys in strengthening M&E practices and improving the effectiveness of education projects in refugee camp settings. They also highlight the importance of stakeholder engagement, technical capacity, adequate resources, and context-specific adaptation for maximising the impact of M&E activities.

Table 3: Responses on Performance of Education Projects

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
All children within the school-going age go to school in Kakuma refugee camp.	3.8%	6.8%	13.5%	37.6%	38.3%	4.00	1.07
The schools in Kakuma refugee camps have high student enrolment rates.	5.3%	4.6%	18.3%	35.1%	36.6%	3.93	1.10
Education project activities in Kakuma refugee camp are usually completed on time.	4.5%	7.6%	15.2%	34.8%	37.9%	3.94	1.12
Education programs in Kakuma refugee camp are usually implemented within the provided budget.	3.0%	9.8%	18.0%	26.3%	42.9%	3.96	1.13
When education programs are implemented according to plan, more students are likely to enrol in school.	3.8%	7.5%	15.8%	30.1%	42.9%	4.01	1.11
Overall Mean						3.97	

The results indicate that the majority of respondents (75.9%) agreed that all school-age children attend school in Kakuma refugee camp (Mean = 4.00). Similarly, 71.7% agreed that the schools in the camp have high enrolment rates (Mean = 3.93), and

72.7% agreed that education project activities are usually completed on time (Mean = 3.94). In addition, 69.2% indicated that education programs are typically implemented within the provided budget (Mean = 3.96). Furthermore, 73% agreed

that when education programs are implemented according to plan, more students are likely to enrol (Mean = 4.01). The overall mean score was 3.97, suggesting general agreement among respondents regarding the positive performance of education projects in the refugee camp context.

Qualitative insights from interviews with program managers and county and sub-county quality assurance and standards officers (CQASO and SCQASO) provided further context. Respondents suggested that increasing school enrolment rates in refugee camps could be achieved by providing financial support to camp residents, raising community awareness about the value of education to discourage child labour, and fostering collaboration with local organisations.

When asked about teacher turnover, interviewees noted that turnover rates have increased in recent years, posing a significant challenge for local and refugee teachers. They emphasised the need for education stakeholders, UNHCR, and government partners to address security concerns to improve teacher retention and ensure educational sustainability in refugee camps.

Regarding factors influencing teacher retention, respondents highlighted that a lack of competition attracts some teachers to refugee camp schools, as few are aware of available opportunities. Others are motivated by a desire to give back to society. However, the predominant factor contributing to high turnover is insecurity within the camps, which discourages teachers from remaining in these positions long-term.

These findings emphasise the multidimensional nature of project performance in refugee camps, highlighting the interplay between enrolment, project implementation, budgeting, and human resource challenges such as teacher retention and security.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the baseline survey plays a significant role in enhancing the performance of education projects in refugee camps in Turkana County, Kenya. By providing a clear assessment of the initial conditions, baseline surveys enable project teams to establish specific, measurable goals and relevant indicators for tracking progress and outcomes. The findings demonstrate that baseline surveys serve as a crucial benchmark for all subsequent project activities, assisting managers in identifying priority areas, allocating resources effectively and evaluating the impact of interventions. Furthermore, the integration of baseline data into monitoring and evaluation practices fosters better stakeholder engagement, improves accountability, and supports evidence-based decision-making throughout the project lifecycle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the study recommends that:

- All education project implementers in refugee camp settings should prioritize the use of comprehensive baseline surveys at the outset of their interventions.
- Project teams should ensure that baseline data collection involves key stakeholders and that it is adequately resourced and is methodologically sound to maximise its utility.
- Additionally, continuous training and capacity building for staff involved in M&E should be promoted to enhance the effectiveness of baseline surveys and overall project evaluation.
- There is a need for donors and policymakers to encourage and support the integration of robust baseline surveys into the standard M&E frameworks for education initiatives to enhance project performance.

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