

# Teaching and Learning in Fragile Contexts (TLFC) Research Summary



## Innovative teaching methods

In 2024 and 2025, the Canadian NGO CODE commissioned a series of African research studies in partnership with Global Affairs Canada, to help build the regional evidence base on what works to improve literacy and learning outcomes for children in refugee and internally displaced person (IDP) communities. Some of these studies explored how innovative teaching methods can support children’s academic progress and well-being in emergency settings.



One important lesson from this research is that children learn better when teachers build on the languages they already know. In Kakuma Refugee Camp in **Kenya**, Professor Colomba Kaburi Muriungi studied the use of “translanguaging” in Grade 3 classrooms. This approach allows teachers and students to use both local languages and official school languages such as English or Kiswahili during lessons. The study found that learners who were taught using translanguaging performed better in reading comprehension than those taught using only one language. Children also participated more actively in class because using their mother tongue increased their confidence and helped them feel included. Importantly, the approach benefited both boys and girls equally, showing that multilingual teaching can support gender-inclusive learning in refugee settings.

In **Nigeria**, research led by Gabriel Egbe focused on phonological awareness instruction in IDP schools. Phonological awareness helps children recognize and work with the sounds in spoken language — a foundational skill for learning to read. The study found that targeted instruction in sound recognition and manipulation led to significant improvements in literacy skills across all grade levels. Both boys and girls benefited equally from the intervention. The research also emphasized that literacy programs work best when schools address children’s broader needs, including access to food, learning materials, psychosocial support, and ongoing teacher training.

Further research from Kakuma in **Kenya** showed how practical, low-cost learning tools can improve learning. Ezekiel Nyambega Omwenga examined the use of improvised mobile science kits made from locally available materials. Learners using the kits showed stronger understanding, improved problem-solving skills, and greater confidence in science learning. Teachers also became more creative in their teaching methods, demonstrating that innovation in refugee classrooms does not always require expensive equipment.



Mobile science kit for classes in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya

Research from **Ghana** by Wisdom Kwaku Agbevanu highlighted the importance of flexible and community-driven education during ongoing violent conflict in Bawku. Teachers and communities used home-based learning, extended teaching hours, and local support networks to keep literacy learning going despite violence and school disruptions. The study also showed that teacher professional development and community collaboration helped schools remain resilient during crisis.

Together, these studies show that innovative teaching methods – including multilingual instruction, hands-on learning, targeted reading support, and strong community involvement – can help refugee and displaced children rebuild confidence, stay engaged in school, and strengthen foundational literacy skills even in difficult and unstable conditions.

**Download this research from:** <https://code.ngo/tlfcresearch/>