

# Empowering Teachers: Impacts on More Than One Level

## The Teacher Training organised by IGAD/GIZ

Irene, a teacher trainer in Uganda, works in a teacher training institution helping other teachers to better cope with challenging situations. In 2021 and 2022, Irene had the opportunity to participate as a trainer in the IGAD-GIZ Teacher Training Programme – a programme designed to support teachers in communities hosting refugees from conflict areas.

On the sidelines of a Teacher Training Workshop organised by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Nairobi, Irene shared a story from one of the teachers she trained. The teacher told her about a student who often attended class irregularly and seemed unfocused. The teacher thought the student was lazy and unwilling to learn. She was even a bit upset, because she was eager to support the students and stimulate their minds, but she did not feel that it was accepted especially by this particular student. However, after attending the IGAD-GIZ training and gaining pedagogical and psycho-social skills, the teacher was inclined to find out more about the student and decided to approach her and talk to her. The student finally opened up and explained that she had lost her parents in the insurgency, and now had to take care of her younger siblings and be responsible for the family. This responsibility does not leave her enough time to concentrate in class. Nevertheless, she wants to take the opportunity to study so that she can perhaps change the situation of her family in the future. Because she was afraid, she had not been able to share her difficult situation with her teacher before. The teacher, moved by this revelation, began to support the student in a different way, helping her to manage both her family responsibilities and her schoolwork, so that this child can have a better future.

## Before and After the Training: Challenges in Fragile Contexts

The teachers who participated in the IGAD-GIZ training work in communities hosting refugees from conflict regions. These teachers face enormous challenges. The story shared by Irene shows that many students come from traumatic war environments, and



both the children and their families are deeply affected by these experiences. Teachers reported that it was difficult to motivate the students and address their psychosocial needs. In addition, the learning environment was inadequate:

overcrowded classrooms, classes held under tents, and a lack of teaching materials and access to the internet made teaching even more difficult.

The IGAD-GIZ training aimed to address some of these challenges. It focused on pedagogical methods and the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT). For Irene, one of the key elements of the training was supporting students with psychosocial challenges.

Irene observed how the training empowered the teachers. They felt more equipped to deal with the challenges in their classrooms and began to introduce new techniques into their teaching. What was particularly impressive was that many teachers who had little or no previous experience with ICT before started using smartphones and tablets to download teaching materials and stay in touch with their colleagues. A platform emerged where teachers could share their experiences and support each other.

The training not only had an immediate impact on the participants but also showed a lasting effect. Teachers who participated in the IGAD-GIZ training shared the knowledge they gained with colleagues in other schools and communities. They became multipliers, spreading the use of ICT and innovative teaching methods within their communities. Irene noticed that these teachers became more confident and proactive in seeking ways to improve their teaching.

## Second Level Effects: Irene's Personal Development

The training also had a significant impact on Irene herself. Although she had previous experience as a trainer, the IGAD-GIZ training provided her with new insights. Irene describes herself as an introverted and reserved teacher. However, over the years and through various trainings, she has become more confident and open. In particular, the IGAD-GIZ training provided valuable opportunities to collaborate constructively with her colleagues and to use ICT in her work. This helped her to grow not only professionally but also personally. Irene now believes that every day is an opportunity to learn, and that lifelong learning is key to improving the education system.

Overall, the IGAD-GIZ teacher training has had a transformative effect not only on the participants but also on their communities. Teachers have acquired new pedagogical skills and improved their social competencies, which in turn have improved the lives of their students. Irene's story illustrates how transformative educational experiences can empower individuals to reach their full potential.

The IGAD-GIZ Teacher Training Initiative was financed by Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) through the GIZ-implemented project "Strengthening IGAD's Migration Policy Implementation (SIMPI)". The initiative is part of the 2017 Djibouti Declaration that focuses on the education of refugees, returnees, asylum seeker and host communities in the IGAD region.

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Published by Deutsche Gesellschaft für  
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH  
Registered offices Bonn and Eschborn, Germany  
Strengthening IGAD's Migration Policy Implementation  
(SIMPI II) Project  
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www.giz.de/en/worldwide/122370.html

As at October 2024

Design Nicola Dörrbecker, Djibouti

Photo credits Nicola Dörrbecker, GIZ

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GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

On behalf of Federal Ministry for Economic  
Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

In cooperation with

