

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT in Dadaab, Kakuma, and beyond

Drafted in consultation with graduate students of Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER)¹
July 2020

Introduction

The Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) Project is a development initiative that aims to improve the quality of education for refugees and locals based in Dadaab, Kenya through the *in situ* provision of accredited teacher education university programs by Kenyan and Canadian university institutions. In 2018, York University (through BHER) piloted the Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Language, Culture, and Teaching. Through the offering of graduate studies, a cadre of local, refugee researchers who are beginning to contribute to the creation and sharing of new knowledge is emerging.

Refugee populations, particularly those living in encamped situations, are among the most over-researched communities in the world today.² Research fatigue of affected communities as well as the lack of representation and voice in published works remain a persistent and frustrating concern and Dadaab is no exception. Over the past few years, the BHER project has been approached by parties from around the world who are interested in doing research work in Dadaab. We acknowledge the problem of research fatigue, but also understand the importance of creating and mobilizing knowledge on key issues in the region. As a project, we seek to respond to this need by developing a participatory and more reciprocal approach to research. We seek to build the capacity of local academics by linking them with opportunities for professional development, knowledge production, and academic training.

Reciprocal Research Engagement with BHER

Through consultations with refugee and local graduate students enrolled in the York M.Ed. program, the BHER Project has developed a framework of suggestions for collaborative/reciprocal research engagement to be shared with any parties who approach BHER for research projects:

- 1) Consider co-authoring chapters or articles, or co-presenting at a conference with BHER students and graduates;
- 2) Prepare a workshop on an aspect of research to BHER graduate students to help build research skills/capacity of students in Kenya;
- 3) Provide guidance/feedback on BHER graduate students' Major Research Projects (MRPs);
- 4) Provide mentorship and support in turning BHER students' MRPs into articles for publication;
- 5) If possible, consider taking a participatory research approach in study where BHER students are actively mentored and involved in developing, guiding, and implementing the research project³;
- 6) Communicate expectations clearly, share findings of study, and provide opportunities for feedback;
- 7) Offer other opportunities for BHER students to learn and build professional/academic experience.

¹ Consultation on July 8, 2020 with BHER graduate students (In attendance: A. Aden, A. Bashir, A. Abikar, A. Okello, A. Dagane, D. Ibrahim, D. Shahow, G. Muvunyi, H. Kim, H. Ibrahim, I. Issack, O. Leomoi, O. Oyat, S. Mohamed, S. Kimonyo, R. Silver)

² See <https://www.fmreview.org/ethics/omata>

³ In the participatory process, the learners are not just respondents of methods created by researchers, nor are they consultants on researcher-led evaluations; rather they work in partnership as creators of knowledge, shaping research questions, developing their own unique methods, analyzing and interpreting the data gathered, and reporting their findings. In order to do this, learners are provided with support/training to perform the evaluation. (See CLCC Research Project Proposal 2019 / See Flores, *Youth Participatory Evaluation: Strategies for Engaging Young People*).