



Jesuit Worldwide Learning

Higher Education at the Margins

Research Report

#06 / September 2022

Higher Education Nurturing Agents of Change at the Margins

Meet Nura: a role model for teachers and women

This research seeks to evaluate the impact of graduates of the Diploma in Liberal Studies (accredited by Regis University, USA, and delivered by JWL) on their respective communities through the perspectives of community members, by focusing on five case studies in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya. In this fourth case study we introduce Nura, a resilient, committed and outstanding teacher who emerges as a role model and champion of women's education advocate, creating awareness on the importance of education for everyone's life.

Alfred Taban, Research Assistant, Jesuit Worldwide Learning

Mélotie Honen-Delmar, Research Manager, Jesuit Worldwide Learning

Isabella Rega, Global Research Director, Jesuit Worldwide Learning



Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS: COMMITTED, RESILIENT AND DRIVEN	4
2.1 COMMITTED TO HER COMMUNITY	4
2.2 EMBODYING RESPECT	5
2.3 LEADER	6
2.3.1 <i>Advocating for women’s education</i>	6
2.3.2 <i>Family leader</i>	6
2.3.3 <i>Role model</i>	8
2.3.4 <i>Resilience and inner drive</i>	8
3. IMPROVING COMMUNITY WELLBEING THROUGH TEACHING	10
3.1 A TEACHER THAT GOES ABOVE AND BEYOND	10
3.1.1 <i>A personal care for students’ performance and wellbeing</i>	10
3.1.2 <i>Beyond school hours</i>	10
3.2 IMPACT: EMPOWER WOMEN AND YOUTH TO SEEK EDUCATION	11
3.2.1 <i>Empowering youth</i>	12
3.2.2 <i>Empowering women</i>	12
4. AUTHORS AND CONTRIBUTORS.....	14



1. Introduction

Nura is a graduate of the Diploma in Liberal Studies and a teacher in Kaduguli Primary School in Kakuma Refugee Camp (Kenya). She graduated in 2019 (with a concentration in Social Work) and enrolled in a degree programme with Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU). There was a time when Nura came close to giving up on her higher education dreams, as she faced challenges in securing a higher education scholarship, and almost decided to go back to her native Sudan to get married. Today, Nura is a well-known teacher in her community because of her outstanding contribution to the education of young mothers and children. Besides being

actively engaged in the community as a tutor and founder of fora to support female learners on their academic journey, she is also the head of her family, taking care of her ailing elder sister's children. From the perspective of Nura's community members,¹ this case study tells the story of a resilient, committed and outstanding teacher who promotes children and women's education, while attending to personal responsibilities as a leader of her family. This report unveils how her community members depict Nura as a role model with immense impact, as she inspires many to pursue education and empowers women and youth to challenge traditional social norms.



Figure 1: Nura tutoring her siblings

¹KKC1: close family member and researcher, KKC2: Catholic Catechist, neighbour and teacher, KKC3: Community block leader, KKC4: Colleague, close friend and teacher KKC5: Community Pastor



2. Personal characteristics: committed, resilient and driven

Depicting Nura's characteristics, community members emphasise how her commitment, respect, resilience and leadership skills make her a role model in the community, particularly for women and girls seeking to pursue their educational journey.

2.1 Committed to her community

Community members reveal Nura's outstanding commitment to her community, including through her diverse roles as a teacher, family leader, and student. With over 100 pupils, Nura is a passionate teacher, with motivation going beyond financial ones, as mentioned by this respondent:

"She's always committed and very serious about her work compared to others who are only motivated by monthly salary." (KKC4)

Nura's commitment has earned her praises in her school, as she is seen as excelling in her profession and a leader of women education:

"I've seen a development in Nura because [...], there was a time we went for a parents' meeting, and she was recommended by the head teacher as a very committed teacher in the school. Because most of the teachers dodge the work, but her work if you come in terms of lesson delivery, the preparation of the teacher in her profession, she was excellent. So that is what was actually seen, she was acknowledged in the school by the head teacher and parents were happy. They were happy to hear about her when she came to the community, parents and some of the community members visited her because of that commitment she has as a girl, so that is what I see as a great development." (KKC3)

Community members also highlight Nura's ability to manage her professional and academic commitments:

"[...] she's always committed to both her job and her studies, because you will not find her just sitting and reluctant like that, she is always somebody who is at all times focused, compared to other teachers, you will find that others after teaching, they go and relax, but for her, after implementing the knowledge to the learners, she also goes for her study." (KKC3)

This is confirmed by a close relative who always sees Nura as busy and devoted to her academic life:

"[...] whatever she does, she does it privately, by herself inside the room, so when we are just outside, and she's not with us, we know that she's inside studying." (KKC1)

Besides being committed to her studies, Nura is also committed to taking care of her family as she is now the eldest, responsible for her deceased sister's children, as reveals her neighbour who is a community catechist:

"I can say also another role that she is playing is that [...] in her home or compound, she is an elder sister, and she is also committed so much in taking care of other sisters and other brothers [and nieces and nephews], advising them on how they should take care of their lives and also see is committed reaching to their needs." (KKC2)

Her neighbour adds that this type of commitment and behaviour is characterised as unique and uncommon among her peers in the community:

"In terms of humility and respect and being peaceful, [...] and her commitment even to the home duties and also to take care of the family is not shown like in the other girls" (KKC2)



Her commitment in different capacities has resulted in her being presented as a role model, being the “most hardworking girl in the community” (KKC1):

“[...] she's a role model to so many girls, she's a hardworking person. That's something that I can testify about her so many times, I have never seen someone hardworking in the community like her, [...], even at home, she is the most hardworking person, we will all just sleep, if we wake up at eight, she is already up. She has made breakfast [...]. So, in the community, also, she puts the same effort as in case of any occasions done in the community, she's always there helping whether it has to do with cooking, organising and almost all activities that is always the effort she puts in.” (KKC1)

Showing such commitment to her community has led her to be described as a changemaker and as someone capable of handling diverse commitments:



“Actually, the way I can see her making a difference, through her studies, [she] is making a difference in herself, compared to others in the community. [...] she does two things at a time, like she is a teacher and also a student, and at the same time a young girl who is also heading their family, with all that she is still managing all these things.”

– KKC4

2.2 Embodying respect

Community members often associate Nura with the value of respect, perceived as someone both respectful of and respected by her community. The community pastor illustrates that:

“[...] Nura is the one girl who is much respected among the communities, because of her behaviour, she's very humble and she's very respectful. She respects the elders [...], in fact [...] because even her to finish diploma, she a role

model to other youths and to the rest of the girls who are still in primary or who are still in secondary school.” (KKC5)

He adds that Nura is attributed the value of respect due to her behaviour toward others and vice versa:

“[...] she's a very, very humble lady, very respectful, and also very hard Working, yeah. She's really very respected in the community.” (KKC5)

It is reported that Nura gained this respect due to her education, as her close relative explains the significance of women pursuing higher education in this community:

“[...] in our community, if you're a learned person, especially a girl, you get to be respected a lot by the people because not most girls do value education. So, when they find that one person who concentrates in school and puts in more effort, they tend to respect her a lot because they know what she wants. So, by that people would respect you and [...], in case there is anything in the community they will want to involve you [...].” (KKC1)

This relative also points out that Nura earned this high level of respect by consistently maintaining her exemplary behaviour:

“[...] in the community some girls they would be good on this side and then tomorrow, they change their behaviour I don't know like maybe pretending or something of the sort, but for her you will never hear in the community that you know Nura has done this or that, she always has good record with people, and everyone respects her whether the kids, the youths, the elder, other people outside, the parents [...] because of how she portrays herself outside there.” (KKC1)

As the embodiment of respect, Nura does not leave her community members without any effect. The community Catholic catechist asserts that it is through Nura that he learned how to be peaceful, honest



and respectful (KKC2). Similarly, the community pastor highlights how Nura inspired him to better embrace these values:

"As a pastor, what I've learned from her [is] actually the good behaviour. [...] she's a very humble lady and very respectable and she's respecting the elders, and the people in the community. This is what I've learned, actually from her, very strongly. Being supportive for the rest of the young people." (KKC5)

2.3 Leader

Community members refer to Nura's leadership attributes as an advocate for women's education, a leader of her household, and a role model for many in the community.

2.3.1 Advocating for women's education

Nura is renowned in the community for her advocacy regarding the education of girls and women. The block leader reveals how Nura was able to create awareness about women and girls' education, and how this led to her being perceived as a great leader of tomorrow:

"They see Nura's characters as a leader in future through her work, through the work she did to the community like the way she forms a forum for girls, the way she talked to girls, she organised in school, the responsibility she has also in school that made her acknowledged as the committed teacher, that is how they perceive her and conclude that she going to be a great leader even in the future." (KKC3)

Rooted in the confidence she gained in the Diploma, Nura was able to do community sensitisation for young women that completed secondary level to join JWL courses and for dropout students to return to their studies:

"[...] she's involving community members to join these courses. And she organised some of the projects in the community for girls [...], she makes talks to girls. Before she was not that familiar to girls, but after graduating from diploma, a lot of improvement I see from her the meetings, I told you she calls girls meeting and sensitises the general Nuba community meetings [Nuba is a tribe from Southern Sudan], she does attend meetings and tell people about how important education is" (KKC3)

Her advocacy work has been fruitful, as her community leader mentions that five girls in the community recently graduated because of Nura's actions:



"[...] because if she was not the one, these girls will have not gone for it too, so [...] this is a positive change."

– KKC3

2.3.2 Family leader

In addition to being an advocate for women's education, Nura is also a leader of her family. Her close relative details how Nura takes on all the family responsibilities, including caring for the family's wellbeing and finances, and assuming the role of a mother:

"[...] first let me start at the home, [...] let me say she is like our mummy and all the responsibilities are under her, she caters for us, she handles finances and everything. So, if there's anything missing, we have to--, it's like Nura! Nura! something is missing. So, at the house level, she's our head, because we've seen the abilities that she can do. She handles everything the right way, with all the pressure and all the challenges." (KKC1)

The respondent further comments on how Nura supports the family in such a way that members feel they can move on from the tragic loss of a parent:



"For what I have learned from her? Ok, let me give you an example, for instance when my mum was still there, I never felt like Nura one day would be in that position for us to see her as our mum, but now that we no longer have our mother with us. She took that position and now we feel like we don't even miss our mum at some point. Because we always look up to her and she should always do whatever mom used to do for us. So, she makes sure that she doesn't want us to start thinking." (KKC1)

This outstanding leadership as head of the household is also highlighted by her friend, who sees her as a responsible leader and problem-solver:

"[...] in their family, she's just like the head of a family as young as she is, she can handle

situations and solve all the problem there." (KKC4)

Thus, Nura is presented as a leading figure in the community, who inspires others to abide by the same values and level of commitment:

"That behaviour has helped the community to understand that she is somebody who can take care of the siblings, the neighbours and the community as well as the family. Right now, all the people around can see her as a mature girl. She's now just the mother since they lost the mother in their home, now, she's the one taking all the responsibilities at her family." (KKC4)



Figure 2: Nura (top centre) and her family



2.3.3 Role model

Community members portray Nura as a role model for everyone, across all age brackets (KKC5). She is particularly known for being a role model in terms of empowering women through education:

"According to me she is a role model for what she is doing and implementing in the community like the advices she gives in the meetings with young women or girls and the training she offers to the girls and young mothers, and all those she affected want to copy her and become like her, I can generalise it and say she's a role model." (KKC4)

The community pastor highlights how Nura serves as a role model for youth through her teaching:



"[...] Nura is a role model to our youths in our community. [...] The way that she's making a difference in the community in terms of being a teacher is a big role for her, because someone who is a teacher means she is opening the eyes of many in the community. She is the eyes of the community."

– KKC5

Respondents point to how she instils new behaviours within the community, encouraging community members (particularly youth) to act with the same level of commitment as she does (KKC1), and to extend this to other communities as well (e.g. different tribes or nationalities). The block leader refers to this as follows:

"They copy her social behaviours, and how to interact with other community members leave Nuba alone, just being social with other people outside our tribe." (KKC3)

Due to this advocacy and role modelling, other leaders also see Nura as a role model and encourage girls to follow her example:

"The people like responsible leaders, religious leaders, community leaders [...], they perceive Nura as a responsible girl, they embrace her behaviour and they even preach about her great behaviour, when they have to tell girls, they always tell them to imitate and be like girl who is responsible like Nura." (KKC3)

2.3.4 Resilience and inner drive

According to a close relative, Nura being seen as a role model is partly due to her demonstrated resilience and motivation to succeed despite obstacles she faces in the pursuit of her dreams:

"You know, before when she was in high school, [...] she used to be a bright student. So, we thought she was going to do well and get a scholarship [...]. But things didn't work out the way they were supposed to. So, she really felt devastated and thought like, 'it's the end of everything like there is, [...] let me just go back to Sudan, and maybe get married or something'. But again, she was like, 'I came all the way here, even if I fail, I need to prove to my mother or my dad, why I came here in the first place.' So, and that's when she enrolled for the diploma courses. And she proves to everyone that she's going to make it, you know, so many dropped on the way, [...] So, [...] she proved to our family and the whole community that she's capable of doing what she wants and she will stand by it. So, when she graduated, I really, I was really impressed because I thought Nura, she would just quit and go back to Sudan. But now if she should look down on those three years, [...], I'm sure she's now proud of herself." (KKC1)

Her resilience and grit are a source of inspiration for many in the community. One family member shares how she learnt to stand up for her goals, no matter what from Nura:



"I have learned that it doesn't matter what you do. As long as it's something that you want for yourself, then you have to stand up for it. Don't let people decide for you and then no matter what people say, you should not follow it because back then people used to talk about her when she failed but she never listened to what they were saying. She just pushes herself and so I think that's something I've really learned from her."
(KKC1)

The community clearly depicts Nura as a role model, embracing values and traits which she imparts to the rest of her community, and encouraging many to pursue their dreams. The next section explores how Nura helps to better the lives of community members, particularly through her role as a teacher.



Figure 3: Nura and friends at graduation



3. Improving community wellbeing through teaching

3.1 A teacher that goes above and beyond

Community members portray Nura as a teacher who goes above and beyond the expectations of her profession. Whether by providing personal care for students, ensuring their wellbeing, or by providing extra teaching sessions for those in need, Nura's contribution as a teacher has not let her community members voiceless.

3.1.1 A personal care for students' performance and wellbeing

Nura is reportedly one of the only teachers who is concerned with both the academic performance and wellbeing of her students. This respondent explains how Nura is setting a new standard through her student-centred approach:

"[...] I think in her [...] the school, she's putting a lot of change to students. Like if she finds a student [...] who is emotionally tortured, she will want to trace back to the parents of the kids to know what's the main problem for kids' behaviour in the school, so she does that follow up in the community. That's why people like that about her because she stands for the kids; she doesn't just send kids home with no reason, she would want to know, why is the kid is behaving like that and I think that's something that most teachers should be doing because being a teacher, you just don't go to class teaches and go home, you have to know the condition of your students."(KKC1)

Additionally, a relative unveils Nura's holistic impact on students by highlighting her role in introducing notions of personal hygiene in her classroom:

"[...] If she wasn't there. I couldn't imagine how the kids would be, it would be worse of course,

because one thing--, there was a time I was called for parents meeting, [...] I was hearing what the students were saying like if madam Nura was not there the kids could be dirty, they will be going to school without even brushing their teeth and they will be going with dirty uniforms, so now imagine if she wasn't there. You can imagine how the kids will be going with dirty uniforms even without brushing their teeth and not doing their assignments, it will just be chaos, so she is playing a role there." (KKC1)

The community seems to reap the benefits of this comprehensive care for students. A community leader explains how, thanks to Nura's above-and-beyond teaching style, his son secured a fully-funded scholarship:

"Yes, I have benefited from her service of being a teacher, because I have my boys who have been in high school whom she taught. And those boys they score the higher marks which [...] I didn't expect it, because these boys were her learners, and this boy, were very poor boys in their academic performance, but through her commitment Nura, they came and went to her and she was helping them in doing their work and my boy he managed to get 325 marks [...] out of 500 marks, and it was because of Nura's commitment and her work. The boy then got a scholarship now, by Windle trust, by now." (KKC3)

3.1.2 Beyond school hours

Nura's commitment and dedication to the wellbeing of her pupils does not stop after school hours. Community members acknowledge how Nura is among the few teachers who are committed in both their role within the school and giving back to the community, by delivering free evening classes to community pupils. The community leader illustrates that:

"Okay, in the school, she teaches and also in the community, she makes some evening classes. If you can see at this, it is one of the classes here, this one here [pointing at a straight mud wall] they put blackboard here, and they come with chairs here." (KKC3)



He adds:

"I think those who wish to be helped, they organise and then they call her for help and then she comes and delivers some support for 30 minutes, then she goes back every evening, which is free she comes and teaches, so that is what I see she does in the community." (KKC3)

Nura's involvement in transforming the community through education is also reflected in her willingness to teach adults, to which she also extends evening classes:

"One, she is a teacher and one also she is working with youth in the community. And sometimes also, she can help the mothers, because in our community, also, we have sometimes [...] adult education in the evening and [she] help a lot in that program, yeah. [...] she helps the community." (KKC5)

Furthermore, respondents highlight how Nura always makes sure that pupils stay in school, checking in with the parents when she notices absences:

"[...] when she comes in the community now, she finds that kids are just moving around not going to school, she feels bothered somehow. So, when she finds some kids just loitering in the community, she will ask why are you not going to school? And if she finds again, the next day, now she has to go to the kids home, to know why is the kid not going to school, she asks why you as a parent, why is your child not in school So, she also acts like a teacher in the community, you know, she just wants the kids to school." (KKC1)

Nura also supports members of the community, including block leaders, by teaching them how to develop professional skills. One teacher shares how he directly benefited from her support with learning how to use computers and software to organise his pupils' work, developing his administrative and organisational skills (KKC3):



"Through this diploma she has become an expert in computer and if I have something which is hard and I need she helps me including other members of the community, especially girls, there girls who have not seen what computer is and how to use, she do take a laptop and try to help them."

- KKC3

She also supports colleagues in learning how to prepare documents relevant to the teaching profession, enhancing their professional skills:

"I have also benefited from her whereby she also takes me through professional document of teachers." (KKC2)

Therefore, Nura appears to be a teacher both within and beyond the confines of the school, always seeking to support the professional and academic development of community members, whether through free classes after work, teaching technical skills or providing holistic care for her students.

3.2 Impact: empower women and youth to seek education

Nura's commitment to her community, especially going above and beyond expectations as a teacher, is articulated as being transformative. The community catechist portrays Nura as an agent of change who actively engages in community meetings, advocating for education and addressing other community needs:



"So, her role in this community, I will say that, first she is a teacher and being a teacher, you are transforming the community, whereby you assist the learners [...] and also [she is] involved in advising the girls to take up education seriously and [...] in any gathering of the community [...] to talk about the changes and what community needs, she also [...] participate [...] and also contribut[e] the ideas on how we can change our community." (KKC2)

Her community impact is most visible in terms of the empowerment of youth and women.

3.2.1 Empowering youth

Nura focuses on empowering youth through diverse initiatives that support them in their academic journey. The block leader notes how she stands out in her dedication to support youth's educational journey:

"It is only Nura who does come and give directions and she talk to people in the community, she shares with people, and all the women, but other teachers, I don't see what they do. No one who may come to me as a leader and tell me, 'we need to have this initiative as teachers, we want to empower our youths' but Nura does that. [...] That differentiates her from other teachers." (KKC3)

This is further exemplified by Nura's active engagement in advising the community leader on how to best support the idle boys in the community, and raising concerns about those she notices engaging in harmful behaviour:

"And if she sees something that is not good in the community, she comes and tell me, leader, there some of the boys who are doing bad things all those, you need to watch out and I try to do something about it, so, assemble those and advise them, so, is one of the sides I benefited from her too." (KKC3)



Figure 4: Nura teaching in her classroom

3.2.2 Empowering women

In addition to impacting the lives of the youth, Nura is well-known for empowering women by facilitating access to resources that support them in their education. For example, she created a forum in which any community member may participate to discuss and address gender inequalities in terms of access to education:

"We have people who have benefited from the forum she formed, my colleagues when she formed the forum, she doesn't just go because of girls alone, she involves some other people. And these people whom we call when because of her initiative, they learn from her, then they copy her when she's not there, they are able now to come up with a forum of helping the community like her." (KKC3)

With her efforts resulting in a multiplier effect which extends beyond her own community, Nura appears as a key actor in challenging traditional views on women's



education across Kakuma, and in empowering women and the community as whole to pursue an education.

One of her colleagues further reveals the depth of her impact in regards to encouraging girls and women to pursue their dreams, which noted to be was even more crucial during Covid-19 as it induced many dropouts:

"For me without that idea [of forum for education], I think the community would have been worse. Most of the learners, mostly young girls, would have involved themselves in such activities, like early marriages most of them would have also dropped out of school, mostly, we would have not had girls who are studying in

this community. [...] So instead of dropping out of school, we have to advise these girls that, though they have indulged in early marriage, they still have the opportunity to learn." (KKC4)

Therefore, Nura is seen as key actor to develop the lives of community members, seeking for their empowerment and wellbeing through education. Working within and beyond her community, Nura emerges as a role model and champion of women's education advocate, creating awareness on the importance of education for everyone's life.

Key points

- Nura is perceived as a committed community member, always seeking the wellbeing of her students, family, and the broader community.
- Community members portray her as embracing values of respect, which she imparts to others.
- Her resilience and motivation to succeed are a source of inspiration for the community, particularly for women and girls who wish to pursue their education.
- Nura is described as a teacher who goes above-and-beyond, with a holistic approach to her pupils' education and wellbeing.
- Community members highlight Nura's significant role in empowering youth and women to pursue their life goals.



4. Authors and contributors

Alfred Taban is a JWL Research Assistant and has experience working on qualitative and quantitative research in Kakuma Refugee Camp. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Education from Kenyatta University (Kenya).

Mélodie Honen-Delmar is JWL Global Director of Professional Programmes and Research Manager and holds a Masters in Development Studies from the Graduate Institute in Geneva (Switzerland). She has previously coordinated local refugee organisations that support refugee access to higher education and conducted other research related to migration, refugees and education.

Dr Isabella Rega is JWL Global Research Director and Associate Professor in Digital Media for Social Change at Bournemouth University (UK). She has worked as an academic and practitioner in the field of the use of digital technologies to promote community development, in Europe, Africa and Latin America for the last 20 years.

Special thanks to **Mohamed Talil Abdullahi** who contributed by connecting with graduates and collecting data, notably, by identifying and reaching out to community members.



Jesuit Worldwide Learning

Higher Education at the Margins

18, rue Jacques Dalphin
1227 Carouge/GE Switzerland
CH-660-0056017-8
Website: www.jwl.org
Phone: +41 (0)22 525 38 33
E-mail: jwlinfo@jwl.org

If you want to cite this report:

Taban, A.; Honen-Delmar, M.; Rega, I. (2022). *Higher Education nurturing Agents of Change at the Margins in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya*, Research Report #06. Jesuit Worldwide Learning