



Jesuit Worldwide Learning

Higher Education at the Margins

## Research Report

#11 / October 2023

# Student-Centred and Inclusive Approaches Nurturing Teacher Leadership

## The Learning Facilitator programme



This report presents the research findings of the Learning Facilitator programme impact study. This 6-month blended learning professional programme is accredited by the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Germany) and delivered by Jesuit Worldwide Learning. Through the analysis of graduates' voices, this research shows how the Learning Facilitator programme serves as a transformative journey for graduates to become empowered teachers, adopting student-centred and inclusive approaches in their classrooms. This results in graduates embodying new roles as teacher leaders inside and outside their classrooms, promoting access to education and fostering a more just and humane world for all.

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# 1 Introduction

The Learning Facilitator programme, delivered since 2019 by Jesuit Worldwide Learning and accredited by the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Germany), is a 24-week course which trains teachers to build an inclusive and student-centred classroom in both formal and non-formal education settings. By the end of 2022, the programme was delivered 8 times in 39 community learning centres across 11 different countries, with 459 graduates. In this research, we analysed the voices of 51 graduates who completed the programme before September 2021 (252 in total).

The Learning Facilitator programme is delivered in a blended learning format. The course content is accessible through a web-based training platform, the JWL Learning Management System (the Humanitarian e-Learning Platform – HELP) or in the JWL Global E-learning app, through which it is possible to download the content in offline settings. Throughout the course, students are required to submit weekly assignments designed according to the experience - reflection – action model, which is central to the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (ICAGE, 1993). Assignments often invite students to share their experiences within a global community of learners, which unites students from various community learning centres in a virtual global classroom. As part of this collaborative experience, students engage in reflection and apply their newfound knowledge to a practical project known as the practicum.

Throughout the programme, participants undertake a final project and practicum experience, where they apply the educational principles and practices in their teaching responsibilities to address a specific need within their community. Learning Facilitator students are guided by an online facilitator, an expert in the disciplinary field, responsible for providing academic guidance by giving online feedback and grading each student. Students also benefit from local support, as an onsite facilitator is in charge of facilitating the onsite discussion twice weekly in the community learning centre. Through these onsite meetings, students are encouraged to discuss relevant topics with their course mates and to recognise the relevance of the course content in their local context.

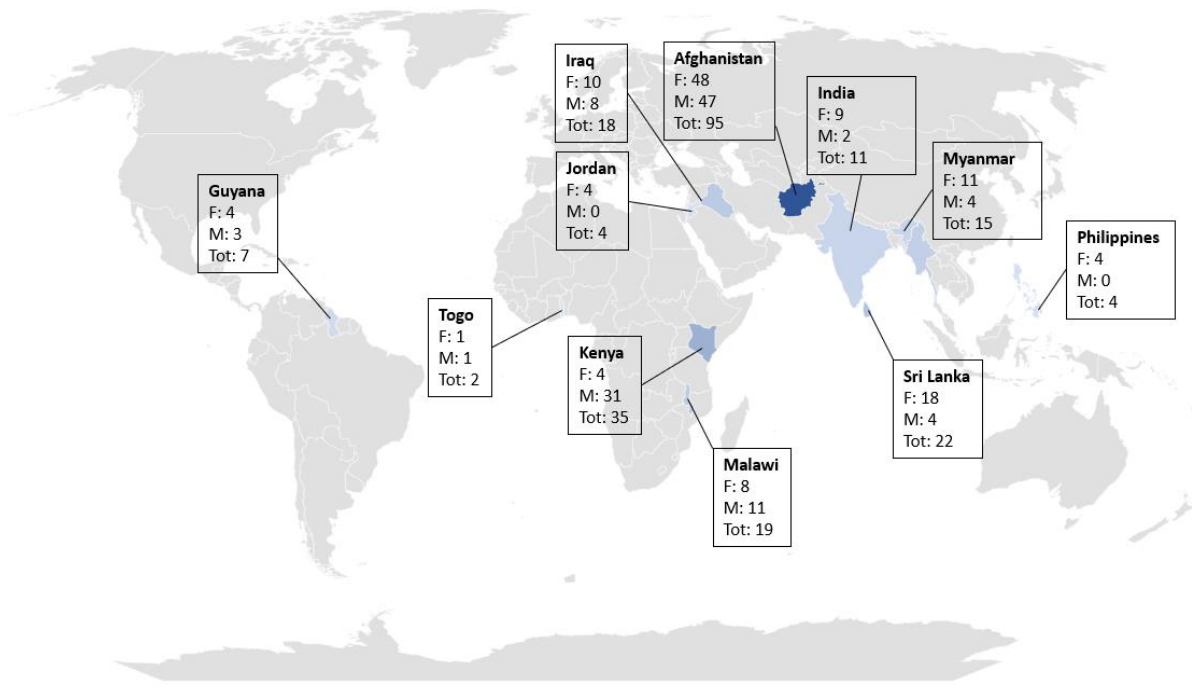
## 1.1 Country Profiles

Survey respondents include graduates from the following locations: Afghanistan, Kenya, Malawi, Guyana, Iraq, and India. These countries were selected to represent the population of graduates, taking into consideration the feasibility of conducting interviews based on the local conditions.

Kakuma Refugee Camp is situated in a semi-arid area in the North of Kenya, near the South Sudanese and Ugandan border. Established in 1992, Kakuma hosts refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and the Great Lakes region. With more than 200,000 refugees, mainly from South Sudan and Somalia,<sup>1</sup> it is the second largest refugee camp in Kenya and one of the oldest refugee camps in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/KEN/796>



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Figure 1: Map of Learning Facilitator graduates until September 2021

JWL began implementing the first pilot online programme in Kakuma Camp in 2010. Today, Kakuma is JWL’s largest learning centre, welcoming over 1,500 students since 2020 in various language, professional and academic programmes.

Dzaleka Refugee Camp, just forty kilometres outside Malawi’s capital city, Lilongwe, was the second pilot site for the Diploma in Liberal Studies, the first programme offered by JWL. The camp dates back to 1994 and was set up in light of the influx of refugees from the African Great Lakes region. It has since developed into a camp akin to a rural city of mud houses, hosting over 80,000 refugees, mainly from Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>2</sup> Since 2020, about 1,250 young men and women have followed their courses every day, connecting with peers at the JWL learning

centre and with the rest of the global community of learners.

Iraq became a more recent focus of JWL from the end of 2016. The Syrian war and the ISIS invasion of the Sinjar Mountains, Mosul and the Nineveh Plains, displaced hundreds of thousands of Syrians, Yazidis and Iraqi Christians, who found protection in the refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the cities of Dohuk and Erbil. JWL began with a small learning centre in Domiz Camp, housed in two containers, and one group of students meeting at the Catholic University in Erbil. Today, JWL welcomes students in 7 centres across the Kurdish region of Iraq. The JWL community in Iraq includes all religious and cultural communities, Syrians, Muslims, Yazidis and Iraqi Christians. The first graduates in Erbil (2019) moved back to their hometowns

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/mwi>  
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and, opened two JWL community learning centres in Qaraqosh and Bartella (Christian communities). Likewise, students and first graduates of the Yezidi community in Khanke Camp moved back to their hometown in Sinjar and opened a new community learning centre to continue their own studies as well as reach out to the youth of a very deprived and traumatised community. Since 2020, close to 4,000 students have been enrolled in JWL courses across Iraq.

One hundred and ten students enrolled in Afghanistan in the Learning Facilitator programme in 2023, 93 of whom are young women. This against all the odds placed by the Taliban education policy excluding any girl aged 12 or above from college and higher education. The Learning Facilitator responds to the enormous need of giving young women access to professional training and enabling them to be teachers to their younger sisters and brothers in their villages. The students are in the remote villages of the Bamyán and Daikundi Province, partly studying at home in learning groups. Training community teachers for girls' programmes is the call of the hour.

India is also part of a recent growth in JWL, as two new centres, one in New Delhi, and one in Anchuthengu (Kerala), were established in recent years. The Delhi centre, in collaboration with the Jesuit Refugee Service, has welcomed mostly

Afghan or Myanmar refugee students since 2020. The centre in Anchuthengu, in partnership with the Sneham Centre for Social Action and Research, offers studies across a range of academic professional courses, mostly to young adults coming from the fishing community and lower castes.

St. Ignatius Parish in Lethem is a place in the Southwest of Guyana, close to the Brazilian town of Bonfin. The Wapishana and Macushi people live on both sides of the border. English is the official language of Guyana, and all Indigenous people learn it alongside their mother tongue. However, many school graduates do not manage it sufficiently to be able to go to the only university in Georgetown, over 600 km away, on the Atlantic coast of Guyana. Indigenous youth have a strong bond with their communities and prefer to stay home. JWL programmes started in 2020 and are offering to bring the university to the villages, to St. Ignatius and Potarinou. The Learning Facilitator programme meets the specific needs of secondary school graduates, who get into teaching without any preparation. Only after some years of teaching as 'untrained teachers' can they join a government teacher training college.



## 1.2 Research design

This impact study follows a consolidated research design used for evaluating the impact of JWL programmes (Honen-Delmar & Rega, 2021), based on a participatory approach (Hall, 1992) and aiming at fostering transformation in the organisation and the research team. The interview protocol was adapted from the one conceived to investigate the impact of the Diploma in Liberal Studies (Honen-Delmar & Rega, 2021) and based on a participatory workshop conducted with key stakeholders within the organisation, which led to the identification of six fundamental impact dimensions: critical thinking, leadership, empowerment, self-confidence, sense of community and intercultural and interreligious sensitivity.

The semi-structured interview protocol was organised as follows:

- An initial section to identify what happened in graduates' lives after the Learning Facilitator programme.
- A section examining the learning journey and the changes it produces.
- A section studying the 6 identified dimensions, focused on how graduates define these and share concrete examples in their lives, including their involvement in the community.
- A section exploring the societal impact and the involvement of the graduates in their community.
- A section to capture the dimensions graduates deem the most important in terms of impact on their lives.
- A final section identifying any possible negative outcomes and

undesired impacts the Programme may have had on the lives of graduates and their communities.

Row Labels	Female	Male	Grand Total
<b>Afghanistan</b>	15	5	20
Bamyan	7	2	9
Herat	3		3
Kabul	2	1	3
Lal	1	2	3
Nili	1		1
Shekmeren	1		1
<b>Guyana</b>	2		2
St Ignatius	2		2
<b>India</b>	3	1	4
Delhi		1	1
Sneharam	3		3
<b>Iraq</b>	2		2
Domiz	1		1
Erbil	1		1
<b>Kenya</b>	1	19	20
Kakuma	1	19	20
<b>Malawi</b>	2	1	3
Dzaleka	2	1	3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>51</b>

Table 1: Participants by country, community learning centres and gender

In line with JWL's transformational approach to research, this project was an opportunity to work on the capacity building of JWL students and graduates. Therefore, graduates and students were selected as research assistants to conduct interviews in Dzaleka Refugee Camp (Malawi), Kakuma Refugee Camp (Kenya), in Iraq, India and Afghanistan<sup>3</sup>. The research assistants attended a 1-day online training course on data collection and research ethics and the international research team met weekly to review progress and challenges, as well as create

<sup>3</sup> Please note that the interviews in Guyana were conducted by the global research team.



a peer-learning environment, building a community of practice throughout the data collection period.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) was used to analyse the data with the help of the Dedoose software. To structure the report, we aimed to include quotes from all interview sites in our findings.<sup>4</sup> The two main limitations of the research design are mentioned in Honen-Delmar & Rega (2021) and refer in primis to the nature of the research, which is commissioned by JWL itself and conducted by JWL staff (the Global Research Team). This may have inhibited the ability of participants to fully express themselves and report possible negative impacts of the programme on their lives. Secondly, although all interviewers had the same training, the heterogenous group of interviewers may have had different approaches to some questions, which could have resulted in emphasising some aspects more than others during the interview.

### 1.3 Report Structure

This report illustrates how the Learning Facilitator programme has had a transformative effect on its graduates, equipping them with essential knowledge and skills that go beyond traditional teaching techniques. This report demonstrates how graduates gain valuable soft skills and develop a student-centred and inclusive approach to education. Furthermore, it delves deeper into how this newfound pedagogical approach sets the foundation for their growth as leaders and their community engagement inside and outside the classroom, ultimately leading to an empowering impact on both their communities and themselves. The report presents the impact model in three key dimensions: (1) a student-centred and inclusive pedagogy, (2) the development of leadership skills, and (3) the empowerment of the self and others. Each dimension highlights graduates' transformative journey and the ripple effect of their impact on the education landscape and the communities they serve.

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<sup>4</sup> Please note that for safeguarding reasons, only the country of the participant was revealed in the analysis.  
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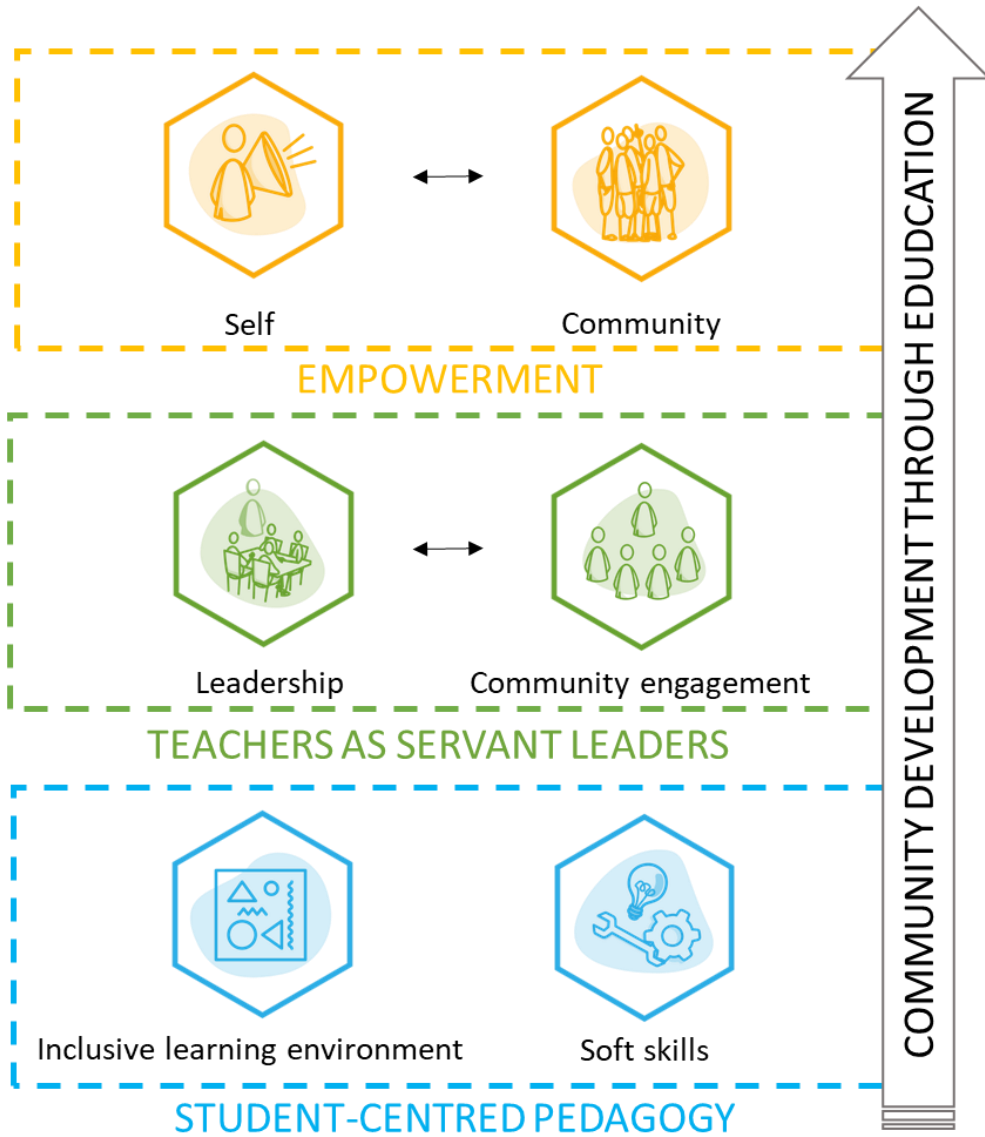


Figure 1: The conceptual model





## 2 A student-centred and inclusive approach to teaching

The Learning Facilitator programme has played a transformative role in empowering graduates to adopt a student-centred and inclusive approach to teaching. This section seeks to understand how teachers underwent a paradigm shift and teaching-related soft-skills development, moving away from traditional, teacher-centric methods towards engaging and collaborative techniques that prioritise students' needs and critical thinking.

### 2.1 A new pedagogical approach

Graduates highlight the role of the Learning Facilitator programme in shifting their pedagogical practices to embrace new techniques which prioritise learners' needs and uniqueness. This newfound knowledge and understanding led to profound changes in their teaching practices, as exemplified by this graduate in Afghanistan, who acknowledged that before the course, they used a one-way teaching approach. However, the programme taught them that:

*"Teaching is not just like that. We should have a learning-friendly environment and the class, and we should be flexible, each students have their own way of learning."*

This points to the impact of the course on creating a learning-friendly environment and tailoring their teaching to accommodate diverse learning styles.

As part of this transformation of graduates' teaching practices, critical thinking appears as a major tool to shift

the classroom dynamics. One graduate from Afghanistan explained how they use their critical thinking to make the learning experience more engaging and accessible for all students:

*"I use this critical thinking in my classes [...]. Before [...] all the students [were] bored sometimes they got exhausted, and they are not able to understand me. Then later on, I use presentation like I use some chart, some flash card [...] [and] the life example they could understand easily."*

Focused on student's needs and capacities, Learning Facilitator graduates utilise their critical thinking to encompass an attentive approach to teaching, as well put by another graduate from Afghanistan:

*"Critical thinking, when we are working as a teacher, [...] we have different students in our classes we should know their abilities, how is it and what is their needs, and we should be able to finalise them to bring their needs and act according to our students."*

Furthermore, graduates learned to prioritise the well-being and safety of their students, ensuring that their rights are observed, and the necessary support provided for their holistic development. According to this graduate,

*"[the Learning Facilitator] has taught me [...] how I should treat my kids in the learning environment, and how they should feel welcome, how I should even put my shoe in the place. [...] I've come to know, and this is a diverse world anyway. So, I've come to appreciate that, really. Lastly, it's about the safeguarding and the safety of the learners in school I have learned that. For our kids to learn in school we have to make sure conducive environment is identified. Make sure their learning place is safe they are not being harm and their rights are being observed. Everything that is supposed to be in place is there for them to facilitate their learning."*

This approach emphasises the importance of nurturing a positive and supportive learning atmosphere, where students can



thrive and reach their full potential, or in the words of this graduate in Iraq, “make a friendly environment for the students of the community.”

Similarly, one graduate from Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya expressed how the course transformed their teaching practices to adopt non-violent methodologies:

*"I used to be so aggressive [...]. Right now, I am having a very wonderful feel with the learners because my techniques of teaching initially and my techniques right now are so different, have changed a lot."*

This transformation reflects how the Learning Facilitator programme empowered graduates to rethink their teaching techniques to adopt inclusive and nonviolent approaches.

Overall, the Learning Facilitator programme has significantly influenced graduates' approach to teaching. By fostering critical thinking and inclusivity, the programme has empowered teachers to embrace a student-centred approach, prioritising the needs and growth of their students, and inspiring them to reach new heights. This transformation has not only improved teaching quality but also sparked positive changes within classrooms and communities. As an integral part of this innovative approach, graduates conscientiously contemplate the diverse requirements of their students, with a particular emphasis on gender considerations, intercultural and interreligious dynamics, and special needs learners. These facets will be explored in greater detail in the subsequent sections.

### 2.1.1 Gender-sensitive education

The Learning Facilitator programme equips graduates with essential skills to

build spaces inclusive of gender-based needs, which often translate in fostering a more supportive environment for girl child education. One graduate in Kakuma, serving as a class teacher, has taken proactive measures to ensure girls' attendance and engagement in school:



**"I have to make sure I know all the girls in the school [...] that joined the class [...] and [...] if a girl becomes absent from the class I have to follow [...] because I know there are some communities and parent they don't give enough time for girls to learn [...] I have to ask [...] why you are absent for two days to know also deeper what kind of work given that must do at home so maybe the girl was overwork these two days, I have to call the parents and talk to the parents so that the workload at home can be reduced."**

– A graduate in Kenya

By closely monitoring attendance and addressing potential challenges, this graduate aims to keep girls in school and promote their education, while working with their parents to find a viable solution. Additionally, this graduate collaborated with schools and educational organisations during school holidays to create awareness and advocate for girls' education within the community. They actively identified girls facing difficulties and engaged their parents to support their educational journey:



*"[...] last holiday to make sure I register girls that are maybe having some difficulties at home because some girls do drop because of the family issues, and they stayed at home I followed them from my block, and I got something twelve of them. [...] so, I consult them personally and talked to them and also engaged parents so when the school opens, I also make little follow-up..."*

This graduate also advocates for the availability of resources that would facilitate the learning process of female students as he highlights the significance of weekend learning programmes for girls:

*"So those of the organisation that normally provide girls with some other needs that keep them in school where now taken out, they were handed over [...] [to other organisation] so there was a day I follow-up taking with the head teacher here and he told us things which were initially given to girls are not now supposed to be brought to school, they are supposed to be given at the centre or maybe in any other areas [...] so I also demand the head teacher to make sure those needs normally keep girls in school have to be implemented."*

This graduate demonstrated the effectiveness of various strategies for supporting girls' education by ensuring that allocated resources reached their intended beneficiaries, even amidst organisational changes within humanitarian organisations. Their efforts and mobilisation efforts serve as examples of how to promote education access for women and create inclusive learning environments for female students.

While graduates often engage in advocacy efforts to encourage female student access to education, they also serve as role models. In Afghanistan, this graduate highlighted their role as an example within the community, inspiring parents to send their daughters to school:



Figure 2: A Learning Facilitator graduate's classroom in Kakuma, Kenya



*"I myself was a kind of example for them like when I was talking among the head of the community, then they could trust that, yes, she is also a girl, we have got our daughters, we should send them to get education."*

By serving as a role model and showcasing the benefits of girls' education, this graduate contributed to changing attitudes, in favour of promoting gender-inclusive learning environments.

Hence, the Learning Facilitator programme enabled graduates to develop an awareness and strategies for building gender-inclusive spaces in education. Through monitoring attendance, engaging parents, and advocating for necessary resources, graduates have taken significant steps to support girls' education and empowerment.

### 2.1.2 Intercultural and interreligious dynamics

According to graduates, the Learning Facilitator programme fostered intercultural sensitivity and inclusivity, enabling them to create environments that value and respect diverse cultures and religions. One graduate from Afghanistan shared their newfound awareness of the importance of intercultural sensitivity in teaching:

*"So, as I have learned from the course, [...] [when] we are in a situation our students or the other people are from different religions, [...] or from different cultures. So each culture, each religion has their own rules, their own perspectives, so the senses I have learned is this we should be more careful that some of our behaviour, some of our actions may harm others or may make others angry towards us because we do not know how to behave in each culture and each religion [...] So we have to be as a learning facilitators, more careful about that point, And we have to be more sensitive, how to behave to others, and how to make actions, how to facilitate."*

This graduate acknowledges the significance of understanding different cultural perspectives to avoid potential conflicts and ensure an inclusive and harmonious learning environment.

A graduate in Kenya recalls a specific unit of the course on inclusivity as being determinant, particularly in a refugee camp context, in shaping their views on inclusive pedagogy:

*"Actually, there is a very important unit to me, [...] and that unit is about inclusivity. No one is supposed to be left behind. [...] all are supposed to be inclusive, regardless of the gender, ethnicity, tribal, nationality, they have to be inclusive [...]. That topic even right now I follow, because very happy when I'm learning from different diversities [...]. It will really promote society, and it will change the society thinking ability, [...]. Like right now, in this refugee camp, [...] we are from diverse cultures, nationalities, we found ourselves having one status as refugees, walking together, achieving the same goal."*

In another context, a graduate from Guyana who comes from a diverse family background, including European, African, Portuguese, and Indigenous communities, shared how the course helped them navigate intercultural spaces, including racism within their own community:

*"[This course] has given me a beautiful perspective on how people sort of view themselves and view their own family members".*

The graduate's reflection demonstrates also the development of a more empathetic and open-minded approach when dealing with cultural differences, fostering understanding and harmony within their family and community. This graduate applies this approach in her daily teachings, including the parents' meetings, as she adds that

*"[when] we have the parents meeting, I'm one of the persons that promote or ask them [...] which*





*denomination and how many of them teach memory verses of the Bible, or the Quran or Gita. And a few of them, would raise your hand, and I would say it doesn't matter which denomination you belong to. I said the most important thing is getting our children to think and appreciate each other for who they are."*

**Additionally, this graduate in Guyana further illustrated how they promoted cultural integration and appreciation among learners in their community when presenting the purpose and model of this course:**

*"When we started this course, I was encouraging others, but they didn't want it to join it, because they thought that it was a Catholic church course. So, I explained to them. I said, no, it's not that, I said, but what you can do is you can join the course and learn for yourself, however, and during that time I have realised that persons are from different cultural backgrounds on the course, because they were several of us from different countries, and we all share common issues. Right? So, it didn't matter which religious group you belong to, cultural background you came from. We all had one objective is that you know we have to learn to be this person because we want to better our communities."*

**By highlighting the role of global classrooms, engaging with peers from various cultural backgrounds, this graduate explained to their community the importance of creating dialogue and appreciation of diverse cultural backgrounds, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and cohesive community.**

**This ability to engage with peers from diverse backgrounds through exposure to a global online classroom has contributed to not only enhancing their intercultural sensitivity and promoting an inclusive learning environment in their teaching practices, but also reflect about their own identity. The graduate in Guyana recounts that:**

*"I saw them in a different light. [...] I had better questions to ask them. I had better way of approaching them, especially to think about their own background as well. Although I'm an Amerindian, I never thought of, not never. I think I had it, but it sorts of defined how to think for how to look at myself as an Amerindian, and how I approach my Amerindian brothers and sisters as well, because I think I took it for granted. I took many things for granted how we learn, [...]. The most interesting, I think, was how my way of questioning expanded with the course and how I approach the teachers."*

**The course also led to a deeper appreciation of their own Indigenous identity and how they interact within their community, overall allowing graduates to build an intercultural approach to their teaching practices.**

**Overall, the Learning Facilitator programme has played a crucial role in developing graduates' intercultural sensitivity and promoting inclusivity within educational settings. Through enhanced awareness of diverse perspectives and experiences, graduates have embraced the value of inclusive environments, enabling them to become more effective and empathetic educators, fostering cooperation and mutual understanding among students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.**

### **2.1.3 Special needs**

**Besides developing an intercultural and gender-sensitive learning environment in graduates' classrooms, the Learning Facilitator programme is seen as being instrumental in nurturing special-needs teaching practices, elevating the principles of inclusivity and promoting an environment that embraces students with diverse abilities and backgrounds. Graduates have experienced a profound change in mindset, challenging societal norms and recognising the value of inclusivity. One teacher from Kakuma**



highlighted the importance of inclusivity, stating,

*"My teaching strategy has really changed. [...] it changed me, having inclusivity, that what I like so much. [...] because it includes the entire society regardless of what, to achieve one goal."*

This graduate's transformation reflects a shift towards a more inclusive approach to education.

Another graduate in Afghanistan shared how the course empowered them to advocate for inclusivity within their community and classroom, saying:



**"I have learnt many things from these courses [...] it's very difficult for [people with disabilities] to come to the educational centre. [...] I can see those children are disable and are shy to come to the educational centre. I really advise them to come to the centre. There is no difference between the people who are able or disable. They are all human and they have the right to education. So, in classes there are disable students, I ask them to sit in front of others."**

*– A graduate in Afghanistan*

This graduate's commitment to inclusivity in education has been a transformative force in their community, rendering access to education viable for students with disabilities.

Furthermore, a graduate from Kakuma mentioned their active involvement in arranging the classroom to accommodate

students and different learning abilities. They highlighted the importance of giving individual attention to learners with disabilities to ensure they fully grasp the subject matter. The graduate explained:

*"So many teachers do ask me about how they can arrange class like some of the class we are having disabled learners in every class and some of the teacher really have challenges in making those learners who are disabled to learn faster and the same time with other learners. So, in that area I do come in and talk to some of the teachers [...] [to explain that] the learner has to be given time so after the lesson you have to call that learner to the office, and you explain more in the area."*

This graduate's dedication to promoting inclusivity in their classroom and to their colleagues and their thoughtful approach to individualised instruction highlights the positive impact of the Learning Facilitator programme on special needs teaching practices.

As part of building inclusive classrooms for special needs learners, graduates cite the role of the Learning Facilitator programme in enhancing their critical thinking skills. One graduate from Afghanistan expressed how the course significantly improved their ability to identify and address the diverse needs of their students. They stated:

*"Like initially, there are some techniques I didn't know, and I did not even discover them but after I join Learning Facilitator. I have learned a lot of critical thinking. For instance, when you are in class, and you need to know those learners that are slow learners and that are fast learners [...]. You can even know them through class participation because those learners that are fast, fast learners used to answer a lot of question [...] But slow learners they used to be very quiet so in that areas to make you bring up these slow learners to improve their knowledge you have to talk to them what are the challenges that normally pull them back in not participating in class and also not doing the class assignments well."*



This graduate's ability to identify their students' strengths and weaknesses and adjust their teaching methods accordingly demonstrates their proficiency in fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Another graduate recounts when they went to advocate for more accessible classrooms for students in wheelchairs:

*"You might find some of the learners especially those learners who normally disable learners who do come to class with wheelchair, the class door is not gently built so the class door is supposed to be gently given slop so that there will be accessibility to the wheelchair to the class. So initially, we normally park the wheelchair outside and we let the learner climb in the class that was really tedious to climbing the bench [...]. [...] we complain those learners at the door will get a wheelchair [and] be brought in. Now outside and inside is simple for the child who is having wheelchair and so that is one of the critical thinking that really that is helpful."*

Through their improved critical thinking and classroom management skills, graduates are equipped to provide a supportive and nurturing learning environment for all learners, ensuring that each student can reach their full potential.

Therefore, the Learning Facilitator programme has empowered graduates to develop heightened intercultural and gender sensitivity and embrace the value of inclusive environments, enabling them to become more effective and empathetic educators. As a result, they can effectively support female students, students from diverse backgrounds, and children with special needs, tapping into their potential and promoting social skills development. This comes with a set of soft skills which is further developed in the next section.

## 2.2 Teaching-related soft skills

### 2.2.1 Organisational and class management

The Learning Facilitator programme has been instrumental in fostering the development of soft skills essential to the creation of inclusive and student-centred classrooms. One significant area of growth is time management, organisational and classroom management skills, as emphasised by a graduate from Afghanistan:

*"Now my actions are a bit more disciplinary. I have my notebook with myself always, and I put the most important things in my timetable. This disciplined approach has allowed me to make time for my studies while also spending quality time with my family and friends."*

The programme instils the value of identifying priorities and organising tasks effectively, as exemplified by another graduate in Kakuma:

*"The format of this course is meant to mentor teachers. So, it is all about organising books, it has help me to have skills on how I should organise my work especially before I enter to the class. I have to plan my lessons that are number one. Secondly, it has helped me on management skills especially how I should manage my classroom."*

This newfound ability to systematically plan and confidently engage with students led to improved classroom management and a more impactful teaching approach, as highlighted by graduate in Afghanistan:

*"Before I was, I was not really good at controlling this in managing the classroom. But now I can easily manage the classroom, I can understand the students [...] I can show the planning."*

This capacity to effectively plan lessons is further elaborated by this participant in Sneharam, India:





*"Before a class, I planned the systematic way how I teach, what is the content I taught with my students, what are the objectives of the class and I planned everything in this course".*

Thus, these enhanced classroom and organisational skills ultimately contribute to a positive impact on their students' learning journey.

### 2.2.2 Developing community collaboration and trust

Besides building organisational skills in classroom settings, the Learning Facilitator programme serves as a catalyst for community collaboration and trust-building, fostering essential soft skills that empower graduates to effectively engage with their communities. Graduates highlight how the course taught them to cooperate and build strong relationships

with community members gaining their trust and effectively imparting knowledge, as stated by this graduate in Afghanistan:

*"[...] I have learned by the epic learning facilitator course how I have to connect with [community members], or how I have to have more effective relationships."*

Or, in the words of this graduate in Malawi:

*"I learnt so many things for example how to collaborate in the community and how to make people to be engage in several things like cooperation."*

As a result, when speaking with community members, their words are held as credible and often accepted without hesitation.



Figure 3: Learners on their way back from school in Kakuma, Kenya



This new ability to build connections and trust enables them to collaborate with the community towards the achievement of common goals, including the improved education and fostering positive change.

Graduates from various countries, such as Kenya, Malawi and Guyana, attest to learning valuable skills related to leadership, communication, and understanding of others. These skills have proven instrumental in improving their relationships with community members, enhancing their capacity to actively listen, value others' opinions, and be patient and caring in their interactions. For instance, this graduate in Kakuma states how the programme enables the development of strong interpersonal skills:

*"I have gotten some better ways of dealing with people like considering valuing everything, [...] being patient, to love, to be giving time to other people and even active listening, that's what I mean. [...] So, I could listen to my people and get what is there with them to come up with a conventional idea, that is going to agree with our ways, all of us. That way I can say the course has improved me, in the community [...]."*

For this graduate in Guyana, being part of a global community of learners who shared similar issues enabled her to not feel alone and to:

*"realise that we can do a little more to help, especially with communities, because it's a community based learning, and as the saying goes, it takes a community to raise a child and the units we are focusing on [...] what can you do to let the community help the learner? What can school do? How can you motivate the teachers. So, in learning those skills or knowledge kind of have me where I am, and I'm better able to deliver, and it's good."*

As a result of these enhanced interpersonal skills, they are able to garner support and engagement from the community, inspiring them to be part of

initiatives. This positive impact is evident, as community members express appreciation and acknowledgment of graduates' efforts in raising awareness and promoting community involvement. The same graduate in Guyana highlights that:



**"Up to yesterday I had a session with my committee members, and they were like, [...] we are here because of you, and we're embracing this whole literacy, and you give us that inspiration to be part of this."**

*– A graduate in Guyana*

This strengthened community collaboration and trust not only benefitted the community, but also the graduates themselves, as they recall how the Learning Facilitator programme instilled self-confidence, positively impacting their teaching approaches. This graduate highlights that their self-assurance allows them to gain the trust of learners:

*"With learning facilitator course, it helped me to have self-confidence, be sure of what I'm saying so that learners may trust me and may understand, you know when dealing with children, all they need is trust, if at the beginning they don't trust you whatever you be teaching them, they will take them as if you don't know how to teach, as if you are telling them lies."*

This trust is vital in the learning process, as learners are more receptive and engaged when they believe in their teachers' abilities. Moreover, this trust leads graduates to feel empowered, as expressed by this graduate in Kenya:



*"This is through learning facilitator, I got it and when I go and apply, my learners really trust me, and they really honour me. This is learning facilitator really give me that power."*

This is also highlighted in the story of this facilitator in India:

*"When I started to teach in this community, maybe most of the students didn't trust me to be a good facilitator [...] so after I studied with JWL and being a facilitator in this community, so I*

*understood that they empowered me by education. [...] because most of the students tried to trust me."*

Through the programme's emphasis on effective communication and teaching techniques, graduates can deliver their lessons with confidence and assurance, strengthening their connection with students and the community in the process.

## Self-confidence, Courage and the Practicum

The practicum component of the Learning Facilitator programme has proven to be a significant catalyst in boosting courage and self-confidence among the participants. For this graduate from Iraq, the initial lessons during the practicum were challenging but they gradually gained confidence and improved their teaching abilities. This newfound self-assurance is seen as universally applicable and beneficial in all situations. Similarly, the graduate in Kakuma highlights how the practicum served as a refresher, offering hands-on learning and practical application of facilitation skills. Through this experiential approach, the graduate gained the motivation to modify strategies and share experiences with others, enhancing their teaching effectiveness. This graduate illustrates:

*"I would say is almost like when you are taught how to ride a bicycle and you have, so you go and ride and then you come back, and you give your experience based on what you have learned. So, it was really hands-on because I was doing the same thing." "*

Graduates in Afghanistan also highlight how the programme had a transformative effect on their self-confidence. One graduate mention that the encouragement received from their on-site facilitator greatly contributed to their increased self-assurance. Utilising the acquired skills during the practical sessions further reinforced graduates' belief in their ability to have a positive impact on students, leading to an overall boost in self-confidence. Even in Malawi, where juggling work and learning proved to be a challenge for some programme participants, the Learning Facilitator course – particularly the practicum– ultimately empowered graduates to effectively facilitate learning and overcome initial doubts, instilling a sense of confidence in their teaching approach. Collectively, these testimonies demonstrate how the practicum portion of the programme plays a crucial role in building courage and self-confidence among participants, preparing them to be more effective and confident educators.



### 2.2.3 Openness, communicative, and approachable educators

Lastly, the Learning Facilitator programme has served as a catalyst for transforming graduates into open, communicative, and approachable educators, as attested by the following respondents. One graduate from Afghanistan shares how the programme instilled the values of openness and engagement with the community:

*"I think one of my friends completely changed. He wasn't trying to communicate a lot with me. I remember that. You know, one of my friends wasn't trying to communicate with all of people a lot. So, I was trying to share with him that you need to be a bit more open with the people. So, from these things I have learned from this course. I'm studying in this course, we need to be more open, if you want to have improvement in your life. You need to be engaged in community."*

Another graduate from Guyana highlights the significance of being approachable and energised during sessions, stating that:

*"You must be fully energised in order to have effective sessions. Actually, there are lots. You have to be kind and approachable to everyone you share and impart all this important knowledge in a fun and an effective way."*

Furthermore, the Learning Facilitator programme enabled graduates to develop their communication and observation skills. For example, this graduate in Kenya who mentors teachers admits that before the course, they always wanted to speak and be heard in meetings. However, through the course, they learned the importance of actively listening to others, allowing them to understand different perspectives and use that knowledge to enhance the learning experience for the whole class. Additionally, the programme enabled this graduate to shift their focus

from looking at things from a broad perspective to paying attention to details:

*"With this course, I do look now at details. Like if I'm in a class, I look at student individually, rather than just looking at everyone as student in the class and, you know, that makes a very big difference. Because when you see student individually, [...] you try to understand what does each students need in particular for them to study, which may be different from another student."*

This newfound ability allows them to view students as individuals with unique needs and to tailor their teaching approach, accordingly, leading to better comprehension and engagement among the majority of students.

As part of this openness to learners, graduates emphasise the value of being connected with people from diverse backgrounds and beliefs. One graduate in Kenya uses the example of the LGBTQI+ community, expressing their acceptance and respect for different identities and beliefs, which contributes to fostering an inclusive and friendly learning environment. Through the course, this graduate developed a sense of respect for diverse identities and a willingness to use their own experiences as an example to promote understanding and unity within the community.

This is further acknowledged by a graduate in Iraq who has already begun incorporating the concepts they learned from the course to create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere for their students:

*"I have already told them about these concepts in informal or indirect ways, and in the future when I'm a teacher, for example, using these points helps them a lot, you know, at least it makes a friendly environment for the students of the community."*





Figure 4: Learning Facilitator students in an onsite meeting in Erbil, Iraq

Other graduates cited building a code of conduct as part of fostering a supportive learning environment for their students. This graduate in Iraq explains how such tools are particularly helpful in their context as:



"I didn't know that there is a code of conduct can protect my rights [in school] and [...], especially in our country we were Kurdish, and we have been subjected for abuse really. So, I think in each steps in teaching I will focus on code of conduct which can protect our learners [...] and also the educating staff.

– A graduate in Iraq

This demonstrates graduates' commitment to utilising the knowledge

gained from the programme to build a conducive learning environment that facilitates students' development.

Thus, the Learning Facilitator programme has been instrumental in equipping graduates with the characteristics of openness, effective communication, attention to detail and approachability required to become transformative educators, enabling them to connect with their communities and make meaningful connections with their students and promote a sense of belonging within the community.

In conclusion, the Learning Facilitator programme goes beyond developing soft skills. Adopting a student-centred and inclusive pedagogy, graduates from diverse regions gained the ability to effectively connect with their communities, fostering support for and participation in educational initiatives.



Their improved interpersonal skills, self-confidence, time and classroom management skills, as well as their understanding of community dynamics positively impacted their teaching and learning processes, promoting a sense of unity and cooperation in their communities. Additionally, openness, effective communication, and approachability were instilled, empowering graduates to promote access to education for all within their communities. Lastly, the

programme's emphasis on experiential learning through the practicum has played a pivotal role in boosting graduates' courage and self-confidence, making them more effective educators in diverse situations. As graduates of the Learning Facilitator programme continue to grow and evolve as educators, another crucial aspect of their development is their role as leaders in the field of education and beyond.



## 3 Teachers as leaders

The Learning Facilitator programme not only equipped participants with practical teaching skills but also instilled in leadership qualities which extend beyond the classroom. In this chapter, we explore how the programme empowered its graduates to become agents of change, inspiring and influencing their peers and community members to drive positive transformation in the education landscape.

### 3.1 Building leadership skills

The Learning Facilitator programme has proven transformative for teachers to build strong leadership skills. One example of the programme's transformative impact in terms of leadership is evident through experiences such as that shared by one graduate from India, who refers to how they once had a tendency to rely on others for affirmation and guidance, often seeking validation for their actions. However, upon completing the course, a transformation occurred, and this graduate adopted a more proactive approach to leadership, expressing a desire to collaborate with others. The programme played a crucial role in enhancing their listening skills, allowing them to better understand diverse perspectives. This graduate learned the value of taking measured steps, avoiding impulsive decisions which, in turn, encouraged others to follow their lead and take initiative. Moreover, the experience broadened their awareness of societal challenges, prompting them to expand their engagement beyond their own community. This graduate is now actively involved with a fishing-dependent community despite the cultural and caste differences. They recognise the

importance of this marginalised community and appreciate their expertise within their society. Thus, through the programme, teachers like this graduate gain a new perspective on leadership, empowering them to serve and collaborate with diverse communities, demonstrating their commitment to understanding and addressing societal challenges.

While some participants already possessed leadership (notably graduates in Kenya), for others, the Learning Facilitator programme was essential for them to build this capacity. An Afghan graduate's account reflects how the Learning Facilitator course can boost self-confidence. This graduate shared,



"After taking this programme, the thing that my family and friends are saying is that 'Now you're a completely different person. Now you can talk in front of different groups and share the things that you have in your mind. You are a good manager, or you can manage when you are between groups of people like 10 or 20 or maybe 100 students, and all coming together, [...] and you're now thinking differently or you're a creative thinker now than before.' [...] they are saying this, and this self-confidence, they really think that this course changed you this much."

– A graduate in Afghanistan

This graduate's journey highlights how leadership development through the Learning Facilitator programme can





empower individuals to become influential leaders, inspiring others to pursue personal growth and self-assuredness in their leadership endeavours.

Another characteristic that is seen as essential to graduates' understanding of leadership is the importance of effective communication and guiding people toward achieving objectives. As explained by one graduate in Kenya,

*"Leadership is an opportunity to guide people or to lead people; you monitor them toward achieving given objectives. You guide them and support them in the way that they should achieve [...] [their] objective."*

This is particularly relevant in terms of their leadership role as teachers, which extends beyond the sphere of the classrooms.

Thus, the Learning Facilitator programme has proven instrumental in transforming teachers into leaders within their communities, enabling them to think critically, engage with diverse contexts, and address societal challenges effectively. The following sections look at the various characteristics of being a 'teacher leader', according to graduates.

### 3.1.1 Conflict resolution

The Learning Facilitator course has a profound impact on graduates, empowering them with conflict resolution skills and transforming them into influential leaders. Graduate emphasises how the course sharpens leadership skills, particularly in maintaining a safe class environment and resolving conflicts effectively, thereby equipping them with the skills that contribute to becoming leaders in the classroom. For instance, this graduate in Afghanistan illustrates how the course develop them into mediators within

their communities, solving issues regarding access to education as stated,

*"I was trying to be in the middle of their community to solve their problems [...] I became a mediator among them. And I received some respect from all my community".*

This shows how the course fosters leadership qualities that are valuable in conflict resolution and community engagement. Similarly, this graduate in Kenya emphasises how graduates emerge as leaders in their roles as teachers, resolving conflicts in schools and communities, illustrating that:

*"For example, learners can fight, and we reach a conclusion safely [...]. You are up there as a mediator in case of anything, especially violence, social problems all this one. [...] we are competent especially as a teacher, I myself I have done and am doing it."*

Although conflict resolution skills can be present before joining the Learning Facilitator programme, graduates are given the opportunity to explore and expand these.

Hence, graduates learn to address conflicts among their students and communities, becoming effective mediators and earning respect as leaders, ultimately leading to improved support for learners, teachers, and parents.

### 3.1.2 Role models

The Learning Facilitator course has had a particularly profound impact on graduates in shaping them to become strong role models and effective leaders within their classrooms and communities. Graduates recognise the significant role they play as teachers and the responsibility to be exemplary leaders for their students. As one graduate from India affirms:



*"Only a strong leader can be a good teacher, isn't it? We should be a model to our students in always. [...] Point out an example for them, that still now even this age, teacher is doing a course and then why can't you?"*

The course also infused in graduates the potential in education to challenging traditional gender roles and societal norms. In the words of an Afghan graduate:

*"I am trying to do my best, and to show how much I changed after I finished the course after, I became the teacher, after I enrolled in this programme. So, when people see my reflection, my behaviour. So, I think they will be more encouraged, and they will send their children and boys and daughters to study this course, or they can send them anywhere no problem, this suggest they will encourage them to go to school or to study."*

A similar role model account is described by this graduate in Malawi:

*"You know nowadays girls they just think of marriage, they just think of getting engaged they don't really think of education, you may find that like 80% of 18 years old girls or even 15 years old girl they are pregnant they have babies, they are now mothers in the house, they have married, so with this I can show them [...] how empowered I am by the learning facilitator course which enabled me to be a professional teacher and depend on myself and just thinking about education and think about tomorrow like think about having something in life before thinking about marriage."*

This newly developed self-assurance enables graduates to shatter gender and accessibility barriers and serve as advocates for education in their communities, empowering others to seek knowledge and self-improvement.

As educators, graduates have learned the importance of becoming role models and mediators in their classrooms and communities. Graduates recognise that teaching goes beyond imparting

knowledge; it also involves nurturing students' social skills. One graduate in Kenya shares:

*"A teacher should have boundaries where the students and the pupil or the learners should have the difference from the teacher [...] be a model in a way you dress, the way teach, the way you do things."*

This demonstrates how the course empowers educators to set the right example for their students and maintain a conducive learning environment.

As leaders, graduates are inspired to support others in their educational journeys. They take on leadership roles within their schools and communities, guiding and mentoring students and community members alike. One graduate in Kenya emphasises:

*"You have to be sustainable of your own self. [...] I told you learning facilitator really is a way forward but the one, who is now the learning facilitator himself, he is a simple to stand independent, assisting the rest and himself or herself."*

The course has empowered educators to embrace their leadership potential, leading by example and fostering a supportive learning atmosphere for their students.

Thus, the Learning Facilitator course has had a significant impact on educators, transforming them into role models and leaders within their classrooms and communities. Graduates embody the values of continuous learning, empowerment, and leadership by example. Through this transformation, teachers emerge as strong leaders who positively influence their classrooms and communities, creating lasting change and fostering a culture of empowerment and growth.





Figure 5: Learning Facilitator graduate teaching at a primary school in Malawi

The next section further discusses how the Learning Facilitator programme shapes graduates as servant leaders.

### 3.1.3 Servant leadership

Servant leadership is a leadership style that places the well-being of others at the core of leadership practice, with the ultimate goal of “serving others first” (Greenleaf, 2014). It embodies a selfless and empathetic approach, where leaders prioritise the needs of their community, inspire growth, and foster a sense of empowerment among individuals (Armstrong & Spears, 2015; Buck, 2019). In this context, we explore how the Learning Facilitator programme acts as a catalyst, enabling teachers to embrace servant leadership and become agents of positive change within their communities.

According to graduates, servant leadership is often related to the idea of empowerment. Their responses link

servant leadership with the idea of giving freedom and power to others, enabling them to make their own choices and assertive decisions, as this graduate in Guyana expresses:

*“I think leadership is being able to give that freedom to that person. After a good conversation about whatever it is we’re dealing with, giving the other person the freedom to make a really good choice about what they’re doing, [...] having them giving them the power, not giving them the power, but having them understand that they have the power to make those choices, I think.”*

Graduates also demonstrate their servant leadership through their concern for others. One graduate’s reflection after participating in the Learning Facilitator programme demonstrates a shift from self-centred thinking to a focus on the needs of others in the community:

*“Before participating in this course just I thought about myself [...]. And also, even I was jealous with some persons who are in my community*



*and also even I thought negatively about my people of community. But after participating in learning facilitator, I have found that no, I should [not] be as the person to always think about myself."*

This transformation highlights the servant leader's genuine care for the well-being of those they lead and their commitment to uplift and improve the lives of others.

This is also highlighted in terms of how the Learning Facilitator programme helps graduates become more actively engaged in their communities, promoting a sense of responsibility and ownership. One graduate in Malawi expresses,

*"Yes, it has helped me to increase my sense of community because now I am able to assist the community and give back what JWL has given me to the community."*

The servant leaders' deep commitment to the well-being and growth of the community is evident through their active contributions and support.

One characteristic of a servant leader is leading by example (Armstrong & Spears, 2015; Greenleaf, 2002). This graduate's description of setting an example for others exemplifies servant leadership's emphasis on leading by doing and being a role model for others. One graduate based in Kakuma says:

*"I have always extended a hand whenever an opportunity is whenever there is a place to extend our love, I always have and I've always told colleagues, but leadership is not sitting down and barking orders. Leadership is leading by doing leading by example."*

Servant leaders inspire and motivate others through their actions and behaviours, creating a positive impact on their community.

Graduates also acknowledge the challenges faced in prioritising the community's needs over personal desires. This other graduate in Kakuma shares:



**"They take me as someone who doesn't love himself because I sometimes do things which are going to have a negative impact on [me] but a positive impact on the community. They continue to keep asking me why am I not quitting and be like the rest who are focusing on themselves. I feel I need to do more for others instead of myself."**

– A graduate in Kenya

This reflects the servant leaders' exercise of selflessness, patience in "serving others first" and striving to do what is best for the community's welfare (Greenleaf, 2002).

In the context of the Learning Facilitator, fostering an inspiring and conducive learning environment intertwines with the quality of a servant leader. This graduate in Kakuma reflects the servant leader's dedication to continuous learning and growth:

*"Being at the forefront of teaching learners, gives you the ability to plan, to inspire and lead learners. So, this is a leadership itself. So, it means you are, you should be able leader who is able to plan a lesson because from this course, I have learned about curriculum design [...], one should be able to plan or scheme a lesson, then take charge of the learners, you plan where they should learn, what they should learn and what time they should learn."*



Though the Learning Facilitator course, graduates cultivate servant leadership attributes, promoting an environment of learning and knowledge-sharing which empowers others to develop their own skills and abilities.

Therefore, the Learning Facilitator programme effectively transforms teachers into servant leaders in their communities. They shift their focus from self-centred thinking to community-oriented actions and become influential leaders who inspire, guide, and positively impact their classrooms, or at a larger scale, their communities, fostering a culture of collaboration, support, and personal growth. The next section covers how graduates extend their community engagement beyond the scope of their classrooms.

## 3.2 Community engagement within and beyond the classroom

### 3.2.1 Fostering care in community-centred leadership

According to graduates, caring for communities is a fundamental aspect of the Learning Facilitator programme and a key characteristic of their leadership. In Guyana, one graduate's reflection about the course highlights the importance of giving back to the community, as they came to realise that "persons in different countries have similar issues that we are actually facing." This fosters a sense of collective responsibility and ownership within the community.

Another graduate in Afghanistan shows increased care and feeling of responsibility toward their community as they reflect on their motivation to become a teacher:



**"I believe that was the best saying that I have heard from that person, and after that, I decided to teach people to help my people through teaching."**

*– A graduate in Afghanistan*

This desire to empower individuals through education further exemplifies the role of a teacher to care for their community development. They express the importance of collaboration and cultural understanding:

*"I have to know the appropriate way of dealing with different people in my community... then I can teach them, then I can help."*

This dedication to the community is echoed by another teacher in Afghanistan, who shares their perspective on the importance of identifying those in need within their community,

*"On this learning facilitator, that as a teacher or as a facilitator, we should find which people really need us. So, as I'm living in a community that most of the people are poor and the children do not have the chance of study so as a person or as an educated person, I will teach students of my own community and [...] I can only help them in terms of education."*

By recognising the needs of their community and dedicating themselves to teaching and education, this graduate showcases the essence of being active teacher in the community.

Thus, the programme empowers teachers to become transformational leaders who take on responsibilities to contribute to the well-being and growth of their societies





and, fostering a culture of learning and development.

### 3.2.2 A multifaceted community engagement

Graduates' testimonies exemplify how the programme empowers them as teachers to embrace leadership to serve and collaborate with their communities, enhancing their effectiveness as transformative leaders. For instance, this graduate in Afghanistan states:

*"Beyond the methods of teaching [in the course], we have this, that how to be a good person in our community. It means when we see yourself as a good person or as a helpful person admins that we should act like a leader, so leadership is [...] how we can help people of our community so by collaborating topic, and also by involving topic which we have studied in learning facilitator and also by coordinating our people or by facilitating different programs in our community."*

In the words of another Afghan graduate, their work as teachers is beyond imparting knowledge, and instead has a larger responsibility toward the community:

*"So, our work is to help those 500 students to learn something not just to learn English to learn how to behave others to learn new things, the lifestyle. There we have clothing their way of learning [...]. So, I am here, just as a facilitator, or as a mentor to them to help them and to guide them to improve themselves. So, I can see the reaction, the feedback, which I received from the elders and their family members they really happy about our books and they really appreciate the things we're doing in this community."*

This responsibility toward the community is rooted in graduates' view of the community which acknowledges the value of considering oneself an integral part of the community, as illustrated by this Afghan graduate:

*"We have to always think of ourselves as part of that community, and this is called as a sense of community that's right now I am also having that*

*sense that a living in our community, we have to think of ourselves as part of that community."*

This sense of belonging and shared responsibility amplifies their impact beyond the classroom, reinforcing the core principles of the Learning Facilitator programme.

One graduate in Kenya further exemplifies community engagement through their work with JWL, providing graphic design facilitation and contributing to the community's development as a youth secretary, as stated:

*"Starting with the work that I am doing with JWL is a community engagement itself, we are giving back to the community as JWL team and IT Assistant. As part of IT Assistant, I do the graphic design facilitation on site. And when I go back now to the community where I came from. I am the youth secretary where I helped to keep their records in the community, and we help the community members to interact positively, and we carry out leadership in the community in a peaceful way."*

This multifaceted involvement reflects graduates' readiness to take on leadership roles and contribute positively to various spheres of life, which include not only their classrooms but also their family and community at large.

This graduate's engagement beyond the classroom includes participation in a group which addresses issues like domestic violence and teenage pregnancy and expresses their determination to collaborate with others:

*"I try to, you know, get other persons on board to liaise with these persons to have a better understanding of how we can make a change within the community."*

This community engagement is not only reflected in the community-building initiatives which graduates lead but also in



their role as advocates for their community. In Guyana, a graduate engaged in a constructive dialogue with the Ministry of Education, shedding light on the merits of their curriculum and its potential benefits for the indigenous community. During the discussion, the graduate observed that the Ministry appeared apprehensive about the prospect of other educational institutions offering more effective solutions. This experience prompted the graduate to reflect on the influence of Learning Facilitator programme on their educational perspective. The graduate highlighted the significance of not merely providing education but actively involving the community in the process. It left a profound impression on the graduate, who felt empowered by the opportunity to share

an alternative viewpoint and advocate for an inclusive approach to education to the Ministry of Education.

Thus, graduates demonstrate a multifaceted approach to community engagement, viewing their roles as teachers as avenues to serve and collaborate with their communities, becoming effective transformative leaders. Their involvement encompasses various spheres of life, including family and community, as they actively take on leadership roles and contribute positively. This community engagement is not limited to community-building initiatives; graduates also act as advocates, engaging in constructive dialogues with relevant authorities to promote inclusive education and community development.



Figure 6: Volleyball game in a primary school in Kakuma, Kenya





Hence, the Learning Facilitator programme empowers teachers to become transformative leaders who contribute to their communities' well-being and growth, fostering a culture of learning and development through multifaceted community engagement, shared responsibility, and advocacy.

In conclusion, the Learning Facilitator programme serves as a transformative catalyst, shaping teachers into leaders who go beyond the confines of traditional classrooms. This programme not only equips graduates with practical teaching skills but also instils leadership qualities that extend into their communities. The programme's impact on leadership is profound. Graduates, whether already possessing leadership skills or not, experience growth through the course. They become proactive leaders, adept at conflict resolution, and skilled at fostering collaboration. The programme instils confidence, transforming educators into strong role models who challenge norms

and advocate for education. The Learning Facilitator course also nurtures graduates as servant leaders. This selfless approach empowers educators to prioritise the community's well-being, leading by example, and advocating for change. Their deep engagement reflects the programme's emphasis on empowering others and fostering community growth. Beyond classrooms, these graduates engage with their communities as leaders. They champion education, bridge gender gaps, and drive positive change. Their actions showcase the programme's impact on both personal growth and community development. In essence, the Learning Facilitator programme shapes graduates into empowered leaders, impacting not only education but also communities at large. The next chapter explores how this impact translates into the empowerment of the self and others, revealing their transformative influence and the programme's enduring impact on education and society.



## 4 Fostering empowerment and community growth: the impact of the Learning Facilitator programme on graduates and their communities

According to graduates, empowerment is not only about personal development but also about that community's. As graduates describe empowerment in terms of showcasing interpersonal and financial support to others, as well as facing challenges resiliently, self-empowerment becomes intertwined with that of the community. This is further developed in graduates' advocacy for community development through education.

### 4.1 Financial and skill empowerment for the self and the community

When discussing empowerment, graduates frequently refer to this concept as the ability to showcase your skills and strengths, demonstrating how you understand and support others. It also involves developing the capacity to tolerate challenging situations that may arise in life. One graduate from Afghanistan eloquently captures this perspective, stating:

*"[...] empowered means to show your skills, to show you at what level you [are]. [...] at up to which level, you could help others. Empowerment like to show your strengths to help others and to tolerate."*

The quotes from Afghanistan exemplify how the programme led to personal as well

as financial empowerment and job opportunities, directly benefiting families. One graduate in Afghanistan proudly mentioned:

*"It helped me to change my job, and now to have more salaries than before... money is important in every people's life."*

Additionally, another graduate in Afghanistan emphasised how their improved skills and job opportunities positively affect their family and students, stating:

*"When I have the skills, so my job opportunity increases, then when I have my job, then my family can benefit directly from this also, and my students, when I have this skill, so I can facilitate the classes better."*

This demonstrates how personal empowerment, through enhanced skills and income, positively impacts the community.

Overall, the Learning Facilitator programme not only equips graduates with the necessary skills to empower themselves but also enables them to uplift their communities through the positive ripple effects of their empowerment journey.

### 4.2 Education as a tool for self and community empowerment

One key aspect of graduates' empowerment and that of their communities is seen in the power of education as a tool for development for the community and the self. One graduate in Afghanistan explained the essence of empowerment through acquiring knowledge, emphasising that education transforms their thinking and actions. This newfound empowerment enables them to



pursue better opportunities, like office jobs with higher earnings, thereby contributing to the overall development of their community.

As teachers, graduates further highlight how provision of education impacts community empowerment. One graduate in Kenya shares:



**“This course is amazing course that I’ve learned that everyone has a responsibility in the Community. [...] This course made me to put some new goals to help my community to have [...] a responsibility, [...] in my community, you know, [...] my village, most of the students are not studying or they do not go to school. When I started this course, [...] my on-site facilitator asked me to teach those in your village. [...] So, this course really brings a lot of change in me here.”**

– A graduate in Kenya

This sense of responsibility and involvement in the community illustrates the positive contribution graduates make as advocates for community development through education.

The sense of purpose and commitment to helping others is also evident in statements of graduate in Kakuma such as:

*“I can teach my students as a volunteer teacher [...] it will be very helpful for the students who come from poor families.”*

This is also reflected by the graduate in Kenya who developed a community-based organisation which provides language support and tutoring services for children in need.

Another graduate in Kenya expressed gratitude for the programme, acknowledging that it provided them with skills they otherwise could not have afforded. It enabled them to achieve their goals and make an impact, fulfilling the dreams their parents had for them:

*“[My parents] could not afford to take me to the college, I am now able to make impact the target of my parents. They can be able to thank this project the founder of this course for doing what they failed to do for me.”*

Graduates also implement new teaching practices acquired through the course, to empower their communities. In Guyana, the Learning Facilitator programme broadened horizons in education as well as addressed cultural challenges, motivating graduates to collaborate with other members of the community. Their determination to provide quality education is evident in the words of this graduate who explains that Indigenous communities have long been marginalised in the education system:

*“Now the people in this community, they are not given that opportunity in many ways because of poor Internet access. The geographical layout is vast. So many Amerindians have been fallen on the wayside. [...] There are also some other issues that hindered them because they are not motivated. Some would start courses [and] drop out because they are not consistent, and the support is not there. [...] You have to get someone behind you to say that you know you can do it. You’re doing a great job”,*

She sees the role of teachers to contribute to this accompaniment of marginalised communities to fight these inequalities:



*"There's a need for people like myself here, [...] because there is also the cultural aspect where I am not going to join unless you ask me, too, because I feel I'm not worth it [...] but that's to do with the schooling system again. From a very age we're told you're not worthy. You're not good enough, [...] You know that that agency is missing, but we have them if we get those people and we train together, we do have people."*

As this graduate elaborates how this course enabled her to act toward promoting access to education and educational justice in her community, she also explains how this instilled a sense of self-confidence in herself, motivating her to take on leadership roles and make a difference in their communities. She discloses that:



**"I'm a single mom, and I empower other women because you do not have a partner. You are going to feel sorry for yourself or depressed. You know you. You have to get up and go, [...] shake it up, and said - This is me, and I'm going to reach for the stars, and doing or getting things for myself, so that I can be somebody."**

– A graduate in Guyana

She shared this wisdom with other women facing similar circumstances which allowed her to "feel good about this." This example illustrates how self-empowerment, combined with the skills gained through the Learning Facilitator programme, enables graduates to be powerful advocates for community development and transformation through education, empowering themselves as well as their communities.

The programme's ability to empower individuals and their communities through the provision of education highlights its importance in fostering positive change.

### 4.3 Improving gender equality through education

Lastly, when discussing empowerment, the question of gender emerges as a frequently mentioned theme by graduates. Indeed, graduates highlight how the Learning Facilitator programme played a pivotal role in terms of challenging gender norms and fostering gender equality. One graduate in Afghanistan reflects on the concept of empowerment, emphasising the importance of gender equality in their community:

*"Gender equality in this class is one of the important things. As in our community girls or women or not having the same right as men. They are in fact not empowered. We have studied that the as men and woman are parts of this community. Both the side should have the same right, and they should be empowered. In fact, women as half of the Community member. They are playing a very special role, in fact, we have to empower both men and women in a community as half cannot do anything for the improvement of the country."*

One graduate in India further stresses the importance of educating both boys and girls to break stereotypes that limit their opportunities:

*"We should have an objective of our life and still inspire them to go for higher education. Girls are getting more higher education compared to boys."*

She explains that men often limit their opportunities by pursuing careers as auto-rickshaw drivers or in the fishing industry. This lack of educational opportunities can hinder their ability to develop open-mindedness, which, in turn, affects women's emancipation. She notes:



*"Even if she is graduated, she is, you know married to such guy, the life still remains same."*

It is also noted that early marriages, frequently leads to girls discontinuing their education (as seen among graduates in India). Thus, for this graduate, it is important to increase awareness within the children as teachers in the community, so that they can make a change in the coming generation. Hence, graduates reflect a vision for which empowering both men and women through education is vital to the improvement of the whole of society.

Additionally, graduates may also find themselves in situations where they must negotiate with their families or local and religious authorities to continue their schooling. For instance, this graduate in Afghanistan explained that through the course, she became aware of the prevailing gender disparities in her community, where girls were often discouraged from pursuing education beyond a certain grade and expected to prioritise marriage over higher education studies. This realisation prompted her to take action and initiate discussions with a group of girls who faced these challenges. With determination, this graduate and seven other girls approached a clergy member to ask whether, drawing from teachings of the Quran, travelling for education is reserved only for men. The clergy clarified that this is valid for both men and women. This let the graduate and her fellow student to

*"ask him [...] to speak to people, because when girls are talking to community members, they are not in fact taking them serious, but when clergy is saying that this thing is in holy Quran, and this is not bad in Islam, they will understand, and they will just follow it and It was one way that was in somehow our creative thinking [...] I think this was one of the impacts of this LF course."*

By leveraging their critical thinking skills, this graduate and her peers advocate for girls' education within the community.

Another female graduate in Afghanistan shares a powerful real-life example of how they are contributing to the promotion of girl's education and how the programme empowered them to do so. While conducting a class, a Talib unexpectedly entered a graduate's classroom and reprimanded them, questioning their teaching of boys and their position in front of them. The Talib insinuated that the graduate should not continue teaching the class. Responding calmly, the graduate asserted, "I will continue my teaching as I have the right to do so." They refrained from engaging in an argument. According to this graduate, their fearlessness and determination can be attributed to the impact of the learning professional courses, which equipped them with the confidence and knowledge to navigate such situations. This example shows how the programme's emphasis on education for all empowers individuals to face challenges head-on and advocate for their rights. The Learning Facilitator programme not only nurtures courage and personal empowerment but also encourages graduates to become agents of positive change within their communities.

Furthermore, the programme's impact extended to areas where families were reluctant to allow girls to join classes with male students or male teachers, fearing potential safety risks for the female learners. Through continuous efforts and community engagement, graduates' experiences in various areas of Afghanistan demonstrate how the Learning Facilitator course instilled the importance of cultural sensitivity and gender equality in education.





*"After we had meetings and we were talking to the leaders of the Community and even we talked about those boys who are sitting on the way and just they are just do not let the girls to easily join the class, we talked to them, even those boys attend the classes and the day they're asking us to conduct a class for them also. It was so useful for us, last year 2021 the organisation closed up. And girls and boys were studying in one class, they had no problem even their parents didn't have any problem. They were satisfied of the classes, the Community leader also helped us a lot about these things, because it needs talking it needs asking their ideas it needs a lot of work."*

Gradually, the community's perceptions shifted, leading to the acceptance of female students attending classes with male students and teachers.

These experiences exemplify how the Learning Facilitator course empowered graduates to challenge gender norms, advocate for girls' education, and create more inclusive and equal learning

environments, transforming their communities into places that value education and empowerment for all, regardless of gender.

In conclusion, the Learning Facilitator programme enabled graduates to experience personal empowerment not only through financial growth and skill-building, but also through education. As teachers, graduates transfer this empowerment to the whole community. Their dedication to volunteering, taking on leadership roles, and challenging cultural norms exemplifies their commitment to community development and transformation. Their willingness to collaborate and make a positive impact demonstrates how the programme equips graduates to become strong advocates for community development through education.



Figure 7: Learning Facilitator graduates at their graduation ceremony in St Ignatius, Guyana



## 5 Conclusion

The Learning Facilitator programme was a transformative journey for its graduates, equipping them with essential knowledge and skills that go beyond traditional teaching techniques. Throughout the course, participants gain valuable soft skills and develop a student-centred and inclusive approach to education. This newfound approach sets the foundation for their growth as leaders in the field of education, ultimately leading to a profound impact on their communities and themselves.

The programme's emphasis on student-centred teaching empowers graduates to shift their focus from being information providers to learning facilitators. Graduates learn to design lessons that cater to the unique needs of their students, creating a more engaging and effective learning experience. Additionally, the programme instils the value of inclusive education, encouraging graduates to create inclusive learning environments. This commitment to inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging and empowerment among graduates and their students, setting the stage for a positive impact on their educational journey.

As graduates adopt a student-centred and inclusive approach, they also develop their leadership qualities. They become role models and agents of change in their communities, inspiring their communities to adopt similar approaches. Their ability to foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment positions them as leaders within their classrooms and schools. Moreover, as these educators embrace their role as leaders, their influence extends to the broader education

system, as they become advocates for educational reform, in favour of student-centred and inclusive approaches.

The development of leadership skills through the Learning Facilitator programme leads to graduates establishing meaningful community engagement. They actively engage with their communities, initiating collaborative efforts to enhance the quality of education. This community-driven approach reinforces trust and cooperation between educators and community members, ultimately leading to a mutually impactful empowerment of both educators and learners. Graduates become active participants in community initiatives, making a positive difference and promoting a sense of unity and cooperation.

Ultimately, the Learning Facilitator programme fosters a powerful cycle of empowerment, benefiting both graduates and their communities. The programme's focus on student-centred and inclusive approaches nurtures graduates into confident and compassionate educators. Leading by example, they inspire others to embrace similar values, positively impacting the education system and inspiring others to build a more just and humane world for all. Through community collaborations and leadership, the ripple effect of the Learning Facilitator programme continues to bring positive change through and to education, empowering educators, their learners and broader communities.





## Key points

- The Learning Facilitator programme provides a transformative journey that equips participants with knowledge and skills beyond traditional teaching techniques, establishing the foundations for graduates' growth as educational leaders.
- The programme empowers graduates to shift from being information providers to learning facilitators, adopting a student-centred and inclusive pedagogy and creating engaging and effective educational experiences.
- Leadership skills cultivated throughout the programme lead graduates to initiate meaningful community engagement, in and outside the classroom, enhancing access and quality of education for all, including for women and girls.
- Through the teachings of the Learning Facilitator programme, graduates grow to foster positive change in education, empowering educators and learners and contribute to a more just and humane world.



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