

FOSTERING INCLUSIVE DIGITAL EDUCATION: INSIGHTS FROM THE IIDEMIC JOINT PROGRESS SEMINAR IN KENYA

By Adelheid M. Bwire
Project Coordinator

The Inclusive and Innovative Digital Education for Migrant Community (IIDEMIC) Joint Progress Seminar took place over five days from January 26th to 31st, 2025, at the North Coast Beach Hotel (NCBH) in Mombasa, Kenya. This pivotal event brought together key stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and digital education experts, to assess the progress, challenges, and future direction of the IIDEMIC Project. Funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) programme, the project aims to promote inclusive digital education for migrant communities in Kenya and Somalia.



KEY ATTENDEES AND INSTITUTIONS

The seminar hosted researchers and partners from leading institutions, including WSB Merito University (Poland), Kutahya Dumlupinar University (DPU) in Turkey, Red Sea University (RSU) and Mogadishu University (MU) in Somalia, and

Kenya's Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) and Kenyatta University (KU). Representatives from Kenya's Ministry of Education, the State Department for University Education and Research, the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government, and Windle International Kenya also contributed to the discussions.

OPENING REMARKS: CELEBRATING MILESTONES AND CHARTING THE PATH AHEAD

The Inclusive and Innovative Digital Education for Migrant Community (IIDEMIC) Joint Progress Seminar in Mombasa was officially inaugurated by the Executive Dean of Kenyatta University, who delivered inspiring opening remarks that set the tone for the five-day event. In his address, the Dean commended the IIDEMIC team for the significant milestones achieved since the project's inception. He acknowledged the dedication, collaboration, and expertise of the project partners, which had propelled the initiative forward. Underscoring the critical importance of the project, the Dean highlighted how IIDEMIC aims to bridge the gap in digital education for migrant communities in Kenya and Somalia, a mission closely aligned with global efforts to promote inclusivity and equitable access to education. He emphasized that the project's innovative approach—combining cutting-edge digital interventions with culturally responsive teaching strategies—holds immense potential to transform the learning experiences of marginalized populations.

The Dean concluded his remarks by encouraging participants to leverage the seminar as a platform for sharing ideas, addressing challenges, and refining strategies to ensure the continued success and sustainability of IIDEMIC. His address set a collaborative and forward-looking tone for the seminar, inspiring participants to engage actively in discussions and contribute to the project's ongoing impact.

UPDATES ON WORK PACKAGES

WORK PACKAGE 1: PROJECT INITIAL ACTIVITIES (PIA)

Kick-off meeting: Laying the Foundation for IIDEMIC Success

As part of the Inclusive and Innovative Digital Education for Migrant Community (IIDEMIC) project, Dumlupinar Kutahya University (DPU) led the implementation of Work Package 1, which focused on the project's initial activities. Central to this phase was the kick-off meeting, held in February 2024 in Turkey, where key stakeholders convened to outline the project's direction, set priorities, and establish a roadmap for achieving its goals. During the meeting, participants engaged in in-depth discussions on expected outcomes, emphasizing the project's overarching objective of fostering inclusive digital education for migrant communities in Kenya and

Somalia. Central to these deliberations was a comprehensive needs assessment designed to identify essential skills that would enhance learning outcomes for migrant learners and educators alike. The assessment highlighted a set of critical soft skills to be prioritized throughout the project. These included:

- **Communication Skills:** To improve interaction and engagement in diverse learning environments.
- **Problem-Solving Abilities:** To equip learners with strategies for tackling real-world challenges.
- **Digital Literacy:** Recognized as essential in today's evolving educational landscape, this skill aims to empower students and teachers to navigate and utilize digital tools effectively.
- **Leadership Skills:** To foster confidence, initiative, and the capacity to guide others.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** To enhance empathy, self-awareness, and interpersonal relationships in multicultural and often challenging educational contexts.

The outcomes of this initial meeting laid the groundwork for subsequent project activities, ensuring that all partners shared a clear understanding of the project's mission and the strategic steps needed to achieve it. By identifying key competencies and aligning expectations, the kick-off phase successfully established a solid foundation for advancing inclusive, digital, and skills-oriented education for migrant communities. This critical first step not only set the stage for ongoing work but also reinforced the importance of collaboration, innovation, and capacity-building in driving sustainable educational outcomes in Kenya and Somalia.

WORK PACKAGE 2: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE TEACHING COURSES AND TRAINING MODULES – PROGRESS UPDATE

Kenyatta University (KU) provided an update on Work Package 2 (WP2), focusing on curriculum development and innovative teaching practices. The update detailed progress across various tasks designed to enhance teaching courses and training modules.

Task Completion and Ongoing Efforts

Task 1, the initial phase of WP2, has been successfully completed, laying a foundation for subsequent activities. Tasks 2 and 3 are currently in progress, reflecting KU's commitment to advancing curriculum design and the development of innovative teaching methodologies. These tasks aim to enhance learning outcomes and better equip both educators and students with modern skills and knowledge. The fourth task, centred on practical, hands-on training and assessment, was actively being implemented during the ongoing seminar. This stage emphasizes experiential learning, allowing participants to engage directly with the training modules and apply theoretical knowledge in real-time settings. By progressing through WP2, Kenyatta University is fostering innovative teaching approaches and supporting the broader objective of curriculum enhancement, aimed at improving the overall educational experience.

WORK PACKAGE 3: DEVELOPMENT OF A STATE-OF-THE-ART LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & WORK PACKAGE 4: DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF VIRTUAL E-LEARNING PLATFORM AND PROJECT ADVANCED TEACHING PLAN (IN-SERVICE TEACHERS)

Advancing Digital Learning: Development of a State-of-the-Art Learning Environment and Virtual e-Learning Platform

As part of the Inclusive and Innovative Digital Education for Migrant Community (IIDEMIC) Project, significant progress has been made on Work Package 3 (WP3) and Work Package 4 (WP4), which aim to enhance the digital learning landscape for migrant communities in Kenya and Somalia. During a recent joint progress seminar held at the North Coast Beach Hotel (NCBH) in Mombasa, WSB Merito University presented comprehensive updates on these crucial project components.

Under Work Package 3, WSB Merito University has spearheaded efforts to develop an advanced digital learning environment designed to improve educational access and delivery for migrant learners. Several key activities were undertaken as part of this initiative:

1. **Training of Content Authors:** Educators and content developers were trained to create high-quality, engaging, and culturally relevant learning materials. This training emphasized the integration of digital tools and innovative teaching methodologies to enhance learner engagement.
2. **Development of Learning Materials:** A range of educational resources tailored to the needs of migrant students was prepared. These materials focus on both academic content and essential soft skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence.
3. **Web-Based Seminars:** Online training sessions, or webinars, were conducted to further equip teachers and stakeholders with the skills needed to navigate and leverage digital learning platforms effectively.

4. **Evaluation of Educational Resources:** To ensure the effectiveness of the developed materials, comprehensive evaluations were conducted. Feedback from teachers, learners, and educational experts was gathered and incorporated to refine and enhance the resources.

Work Package 4 focuses on creating a Virtual e-Learning Platform and Project Advanced Teaching Plan to support in-service teachers. The platform aims to provide teachers with continuous professional development opportunities and equip them with advanced digital teaching and learning skills. Key components include:

- **Virtual e-Learning Platform Design:** The platform is designed to offer a user-friendly, interactive interface that facilitates online learning for both teachers and students. Features such as video lectures, discussion forums, and digital assessments enhance the learning experience.
- **Advanced Teaching Plan for In-Service Teachers:** This plan outlines strategies for integrating digital tools into daily teaching practices, fostering an inclusive learning environment that meets the diverse needs of migrant students.

Impact and Future Outlook

The progress on WP3 and WP4 marks a significant step toward achieving the IIDEMIC Project's overarching goal of fostering inclusive and innovative digital education. By equipping educators with the tools and knowledge needed to thrive in a digital learning environment, these work packages are helping to bridge educational gaps for migrant communities. Moving forward, the focus will remain on refining the digital learning platform, expanding access to quality learning resources, and strengthening the capacity of teachers to deliver impactful digital education.

WORK PACKAGE 5: PILOTING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIVE TEACHING COURSES

Teacher Selection And Training

As part of Work Package 5 under the Inclusive and Innovative Digital Education for Migrant Community (IIDEMIC) project, the selection and training of teachers have emerged as critical steps toward the successful implementation of innovative teaching courses. During the recent Joint Progress Seminar held in Mombasa, Kenya, Red Sea University (RSU) presented key recommendations aimed at optimizing teacher participation in the project. Recognizing the central role that educators play in delivering quality digital education, RSU emphasized the need to establish clear selection criteria to ensure that the most suitable candidates are enrolled in the training programs. These criteria focus on identifying teachers with demonstrated proficiency in the English language and a willingness to commit time and energy to the initiative.

Why Selection Criteria Matter

The emphasis on teacher selection is rooted in the understanding that effective teaching, particularly in a digital learning environment, requires more than just subject matter expertise. Teachers must possess strong communication skills, adaptability, and the capacity to engage learners from diverse backgrounds. By prioritizing English proficiency, the IIDEMIC project aims to enhance the delivery of course content and facilitate seamless interaction in a multilingual and multicultural setting. Moreover, selecting educators who are willing to invest time and effort in the training process ensures a higher level of engagement and commitment. This, in turn, increases the likelihood that they will successfully integrate the innovative teaching methodologies into their classrooms, benefiting migrant learners in Kenya and Somalia.

The Path Ahead

Once the selection process is finalized, the chosen teachers will undergo comprehensive training on the project's innovative teaching courses. This training will equip them with the skills and tools needed to navigate digital education platforms, implement inclusive teaching strategies, and foster a supportive learning environment for their students. By carefully selecting and preparing a dedicated group of educators, Work Package 5 aims to create a ripple effect that extends beyond the immediate project goals, contributing to long-term improvements in the quality and inclusivity of education for migrant communities. Through this targeted approach, the IIDEMIC project continues to advance its mission of bridging educational gaps and promoting equity in access to digital learning resources.

WORK PACKAGE 6: STRENGTHENING PROJECT QUALITY CONTROL AND MONITORING

Enhancing Quality and Dissemination

In the pursuit of enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the Inclusive and Innovative Digital Education for Migrant Community (IIDEMIC) Project, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) has taken the lead in implementing Work Package 6, which focuses on project quality control and monitoring. During the recent IIDEMIC Joint Progress Seminar held in Mombasa, Kenya, MMUST presented an in-depth update on its critical role in ensuring that the project maintains high standards of quality and accountability. The university outlined key tasks designed to enhance the project's overall impact and sustainability.

Key Quality Control Tasks

MMUST emphasized three primary areas of focus:

1. **Development of a Quality Assurance Plan:**

This comprehensive plan serves as a blueprint for maintaining and evaluating the project's quality standards. It outlines processes and metrics to ensure that the project's objectives align with expected outcomes and that all stakeholders adhere to best practices in digital education delivery.

2. **Course Evaluation:**

MMUST is tasked with evaluating the uptake of educational materials and courses developed under the IIDEMIC project. Evaluating the uptake of educational materials in the IIDEMIC Project requires a systematic approach that combines data collection, impact assessment, and iterative refinement. By measuring and understanding how these materials are used and perceived, the project can ensure they remain relevant, impactful, and aligned with the needs of diverse learners. This involves assessing whether the educational materials contribute to improved knowledge and skills.

3. **Establishment of an Advisory Board:**

To strengthen oversight, MMUST has established an advisory board comprising experts in digital education, policy, and quality assurance. The board's role is to provide strategic guidance, review project milestones, and offer recommendations to address any emerging challenges.

Commitment to Excellence

MMUST's proactive approach to quality control reflects its commitment to excellence in higher education and its dedication to fostering inclusive digital learning environments. By setting rigorous quality benchmarks and closely monitoring progress, the university is helping to ensure that the IIDEMIC project delivers meaningful, sustainable, and transformative outcomes for migrant communities in Kenya and Somalia. As Work Package 6 continues to unfold, MMUST remains a vital pillar in the IIDEMIC project's mission to enhance access, equity, and innovation in digital education.

WORK PACKAGE 7: DISSEMINATION & EXPLOITATION OF THE PROJECT RESULTS – DISSEMINATION STRATEGY

Advancing Visibility and Impact: Dissemination Strategy for IIDEMIC Project

As part of Work Package 7, Mogadishu University (MU) presented the Inclusive and Innovative Digital Education for Migrant Community (IIDEMIC) project's dissemination and exploitation strategy during the recent Joint Progress Seminar. This strategy is designed to enhance the visibility, impact, and sustainability of the project by effectively sharing its progress and outcomes with relevant stakeholders and the wider global community.

Key Components of the Dissemination Strategy

The dissemination plan aims to ensure that the project's findings, resources, and achievements are widely accessible and contribute to the broader discourse on digital and inclusive education. Mogadishu University outlined several critical elements of the strategy:

1. **Developing Communication Materials:**

A key focus has been the creation of communication materials tailored to engage various audiences, including educators, policymakers, NGOs, and the public. These materials aim to showcase the project's objectives, milestones, and outcomes in an engaging and informative manner.

2. **Partner Coordination:**

Effective communication between project partners plays a central role in ensuring that efforts remain aligned and that the dissemination strategy is implemented smoothly. Mogadishu University highlighted the establishment of streamlined partner coordination channels to enhance collaboration.

3. **Publication of Project Results:**

The project's results are being published through an open-access platform to ensure transparency and allow stakeholders to benefit from the findings. This approach enhances the project's reach, enabling educators, researchers, and institutions worldwide to access and utilize its resources.

4. **Sustainability Through Stakeholder Engagement:**

Sustainability is at the core of the dissemination strategy. By fostering long-term engagement with key stakeholders, including universities, government agencies, and refugee communities, the project aims to maintain its impact even after the funding period ends.

Increasing Global Visibility

One of the significant achievements reported by Mogadishu University was the development of the IIDEMIC project's official website. This platform serves as a hub for project information, updates, and resources, increasing the project's visibility on an international scale. By leveraging digital tools, fostering collaboration, and prioritizing open access, the IIDEMIC project is well-positioned to maximize the dissemination and exploitation of its results. This comprehensive strategy lays the foundation for sustained impact, ensuring that the project's innovations in digital and inclusive education continue to benefit migrant communities and inspire future educational initiatives.

THE LIFE OF A TEACHER OR WORKER IN A MIGRANT COMMUNITY: INSIGHTS FROM THE DAADAB IIDEMIC PROJECT

In a powerful virtual presentation, Noman Kemboi, the Daadab IIDEMIC Project Administrator, shed light on the complex and often challenging realities faced by teachers and workers in refugee and migrant community settings. His address underscored the unique struggles and resilience required to navigate these demanding environments. Kemboi highlighted several critical challenges that define the daily experiences of teachers and workers in refugee settings, emphasizing how these obstacles affect their professional and personal lives:

1. Language Barriers

One of the most immediate and persistent challenges is communication. Teachers and workers often encounter language barriers when interacting with migrant families. These differences can hinder effective teaching, learning, and the delivery of essential services, making it harder to build trust and foster meaningful connections.

2. Limited Access to Resources

Kemboi pointed out the scarcity of resources in refugee communities, including a lack of books, inadequate technological tools, and insufficient infrastructure. Teachers frequently work in makeshift classrooms or overcrowded environments, with limited materials to support their lessons. This resource gap poses significant challenges to delivering quality education.

3. High Turnover Rates

Due to the transient nature of refugee life, there is a high turnover among both students and the workforce. Migratory patterns and frequent relocations disrupt learning continuity and make it difficult for teachers to establish long-term relationships with students or colleagues.

4. Cultural Differences

Cultural diversity in migrant communities, while enriching, can also lead to challenges in teaching and workplace dynamics. Teachers must navigate varied cultural norms, values, and expectations while striving to create an inclusive learning environment that respects all backgrounds.

5. Emotional Bonds and Shared Struggles

A unique aspect of working in refugee settings is the strong emotional connections that develop between teachers and students. Kemboi noted that these bonds often form due to shared experiences of hardship and resilience. Teachers become not just educators but also mentors, confidants, and role models for students navigating difficult circumstances.

6. Risk of Burnout

The demanding nature of work in refugee settings can take a toll on the mental and emotional well-being of teachers and workers. Long hours, limited resources, and the emotional strain of supporting vulnerable populations contribute to a heightened risk of burnout.

7. The Need for Empathy, Patience, and Adaptability

Kemboi emphasized that succeeding as a teacher or worker in a migrant community requires a high degree of empathy, patience, and adaptability. These qualities help educators and professionals overcome daily challenges while maintaining their commitment to making a positive impact.

A Call for Support and Innovation

Kemboi's presentation highlighted the urgent need for increased support, innovative solutions, and collaborative efforts to improve conditions in refugee and migrant community settings. Projects like IIDEMIC aim to address these challenges by fostering digital education, enhancing teacher training, and promoting inclusive learning environments. In conclusion, Kemboi's insights offered a compelling look at the life of teachers and workers in migrant communities, shedding light on their dedication, resilience, and the vital role they play in shaping the futures of vulnerable populations. Despite the obstacles, their unwavering commitment to education and community support remains a beacon of hope in challenging circumstances.

GOVERNMENT AND NGO CONTRIBUTIONS

Strengthening Refugee Education: Government and NGO Efforts in Kenya

The education landscape for refugees in Kenya is shaped by both government policy and the critical contributions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). During the Inclusive and Innovative Digital Education for Migrant Community (IIDEMIC) Joint Progress Seminar, representatives from Kenya's Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government's Department of Refugee Services highlighted their ongoing efforts and challenges in supporting refugee education and self-reliance.



Education Framework for Refugee Schools

A representative from the Ministry of Education outlined Kenya's education framework, noting a key distinction: refugee schools are not classified as public institutions. Instead, they rely on funding from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and various NGOs. This funding arrangement underscores the role of international support in sustaining educational programs within refugee camps.

Windle International Kenya, a leading organization in refugee education, provided further insights into managing secondary schools in refugee camps. The organization categorizes teachers into three distinct groups:

- **Certified Kenyan Nationals (30%):** These professionally trained teachers hold recognized teaching qualifications.
- **Incentive Teachers (70%):** Typically drawn from within the refugee community, these teachers are often less formally trained and are provided with stipends or allowances as incentives.
- **Special Needs Educators (1%):** A smaller but vital group focusing on students with disabilities or additional learning needs.

This teacher structure reflects both the resource limitations in refugee education and the ongoing efforts to include members of the refugee community in the teaching workforce.

From Aid to Self-Reliance: The Shirika Model

A representative from the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government's Department of Refugee Services shared updated refugee statistics in Kenya and outlined the government's evolving approach to refugee management. The emphasis is shifting from traditional aid-based support to promoting self-reliance, largely through the **Shirika Model**. This model seeks to empower refugee communities by encouraging cooperative initiatives, skill-building, and economic independence. The department also highlighted its core responsibilities, which include:

- **Registration and Documentation:** Ensuring that all refugees are properly registered and issued identification documents.
- **Refugee Status Determination (RSD):** Assessing asylum applications to confirm refugee status.
- **Community Protection:** Implementing measures to protect refugee rights and ensure their safety.
- **Camp Management:** Overseeing the administration of refugee camps and coordinating with NGOs and other agencies to provide essential services.

Collaborative Efforts for a Brighter Future

The contributions from both government agencies and NGOs underscore the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach in enhancing refugee education and self-reliance. By balancing formal government oversight with NGO-led implementation, Kenya aims to create more sustainable and inclusive educational opportunities for refugee communities. As Kenya continues to navigate the complexities of refugee management, the IIDEMIC project and similar initiatives provide a valuable platform for collaboration, innovation, and progress toward greater educational equity and long-term self-sufficiency for refugees.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Charting the Future: Key Takeaways from the IIDEMIC Joint Progress Seminar

The Inclusive and Innovative Digital Education for Migrant Community (IIDEMIC) Joint Progress Seminar held in Mombasa, Kenya, proved to be a critical forum for discussing project milestones, exchanging ideas, and tackling challenges in advancing digital education for migrant communities. The five-day seminar brought together educators, policymakers, and digital education experts, all of whom contributed insights aimed at enhancing the project's impact. Several key takeaways emerged from the discussions, offering valuable guidance for the path ahead.



Strengthened Collaboration

One of the primary lessons emphasized during the seminar was the importance of collaboration. The IIDEMIC project has benefited greatly from the active involvement of universities, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Participants agreed that fostering stronger partnerships is vital to sustaining progress, particularly in addressing the multifaceted needs of migrant learners. By combining resources, expertise, and influence, stakeholders can work more effectively toward shared goals.



Upholding Quality Assurance

Maintaining high standards in course content and delivery is essential to the project's long-term success. Quality assurance, therefore, remains a top priority. Institutions involved in the project have already taken significant

steps to evaluate and refine learning materials, ensuring that they meet global educational standards while remaining accessible and relevant to migrant learners.

Embracing Digitalization

The seminar underscored the transformative potential of digitalization in education. By integrating digital tools and online platforms, the IIDEMIC project aims to create more interactive and flexible learning environments. Participants highlighted the role of technology in breaking down traditional barriers to education, particularly for displaced communities with limited access to conventional classroom resources.

Promoting Cultural Diversity

Inclusivity and cultural sensitivity emerged as central themes in the seminar's discussions. Recognizing the diverse backgrounds and experiences of migrant learners is crucial to fostering engagement and improving learning outcomes. Participants agreed that educational content and delivery methods must reflect this diversity to create a welcoming and supportive learning atmosphere.

OPTIMISM FOR THE FUTURE

As the seminar drew to a close, participants expressed optimism about the IIDEMIC project's trajectory. With a solid foundation laid through past efforts and strengthened by the insights gained during the seminar, the



project is well-positioned to continue making meaningful progress. Looking ahead, stakeholders reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing educational access and equity for migrant communities in Kenya and Somalia. By leveraging digital tools, maintaining quality, promoting inclusivity, and deepening collaboration, the IIDEMIC project aims to transform education for marginalized learners and pave the way for a brighter, more inclusive future.