



AMALA

In 2016, Amala – formerly known as Sky School, offered short programs in various topics such as peacebuilding, social entrepreneurship, and art and cultural expression. Each short program course consisted of 100 hours of instruction, 60 of which were in-person and 40 hours of online study. Over 300 learners have participated in Amala’s courses from 7 countries.

Amala used the short program courses to create the Amala Diploma Program with a mission of using transformative education to create opportunities and inspire positive change in the lives of refugees and their communities. The Amala curriculum was developed in collaboration with United World Colleges South East Asia along with 150 educators and refugee youth from June 2018 to April 2020. The diploma program was rolled out in Amman, Jordan in June 2020 with 24 students. Amala aims to launch it in Kakuma Camp, Kenya, later in the year.

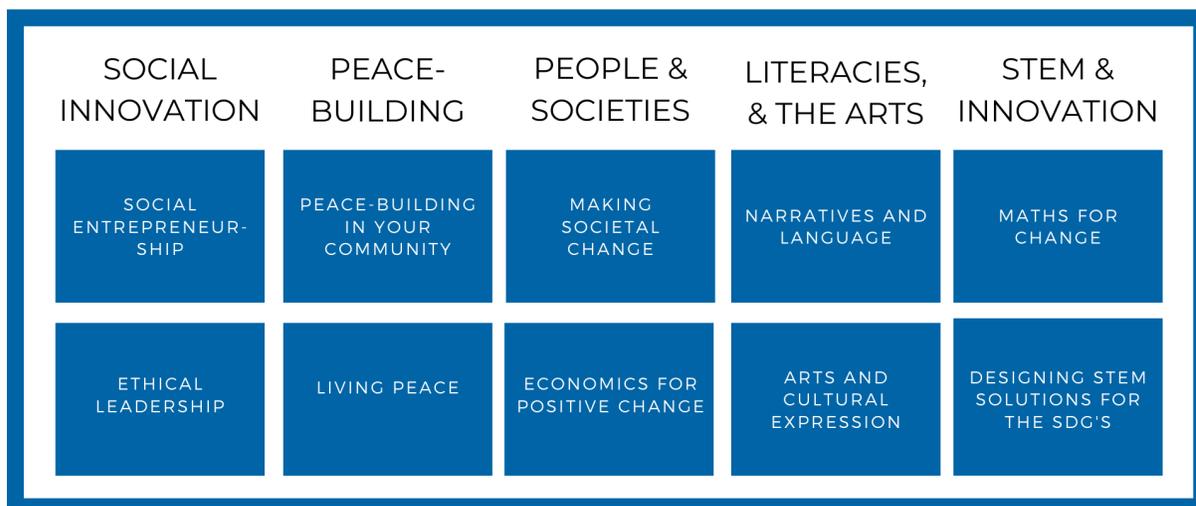
The Amala High School Diploma is the first international high school curriculum designed specifically for young refugees aged between 16 and 25 years old who do not have access to the local education system. The Diploma Programme focuses on innovation and problem-solving, which aim to enable young refugees to make a change in their community and to pursue further opportunities for higher education, work, and entrepreneurship.

For 15 months, students will study 10 Amala courses, which focus on 5 different streams as illustrated below. Students also complete a 'Personal Interest Project' and receive advice on pathways to pursue further education and employment opportunities after graduation. The Amala team is working on the recognition and accreditation of the Diploma in Jordan and beyond to ensure that students can access further opportunities following their studies.

The diploma uses a blended learning model, where students meet in class with trained facilitators several times a week (60% of the program). For the remainder of the program, students access learning materials via an online platform in their own time.

THE AMALA DIPLOMA PROGRAMME

10 courses
1000 hours of learning
Modular structure
Developed in collaboration with UWC South East Asia



SOLUTION

Criteria	Category	Details
Technological Readiness	Intermittent Internet-connectivity	The majority of students don't have access to a smartphone in refugee camps. A few may have access to laptops or computer centers where they can access their program material. In Kakuma camp, mobile internet is usually expensive and of poorer quality; hence, unreliable.
Content availability	Yes	Amala curriculum is designed in collaboration with their founding partner school, United World Colleges South East Asia, and has had involvement from educators and refugee youth from around the world. The curriculum is designed to be 'context proof' and It is created a adaptable curriculum that can be adapted to the local context.

Personalization	Yes	The curriculum is developed through a “hackathon” where 12-14 refugee learners, teachers, and matter experts collaborated to create each course. Each course is broken down into weekly lesson plans with activities such as role-play, and discussion points to ensure student engagement. The course leader decides on the specific activities by borrowing open source content such as Khan Academy or YouTube videos.
Interactivity	Yes	These courses are designed to include interactive and engaging activities for students such as discussion points. The teachers are responsible for creating activities. For example, facilitators may choose to watch a video and then design discussion questions around that video.
Mode	Blended	The diploma program relied on a blended learning model with 60% in-person classes and 40% of online study. After the pandemic, Amala moved to provide synchronous lessons on Zoom.
Feasibility to replicate		
Time	Medium	Amala, along with the implementing partner, select locations where the diploma will be offered. Amala recruits facilitators who receive a 16-hour facilitator training. Implementation training is also offered for the program coordinator.
Effort	Low	Amala considers legal aspects for refugees and the implementing organization to ensure smooth operation. The organization provides access to the internet for students and, preferably, a better connection for facilitators. Amala offers organizations to join its platform and use its resources.
Money	Low	The cost to replicate the Amala model is low given that the resources are reused. Amala reported that

		it pays about 750 USD/month for some of its premises.
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FOLLOW-UP AND IMPLEMENTATION

Criteria	Category	Details
Preparedness of teachers to design and facilitate learning	High	Amala works in locations where there is a lack of qualified teachers, especially for refugee populations. The model relies on facilitators who are trained to deliver the curriculum. They initially go through a 16-hour training program followed by ongoing professional development and coaching to develop their facilitation skills.
Availability and ability of parents or caregivers to facilitate effective home-based distance learning	N/A	Given the age group (16 to 25, and older in some cases) of these students, parental involvement is minimal.
Monitoring and evaluation capacities		
Monitor distance learning processes	Yes	The program evaluates the students based on the competencies in the transcript. Students collect evidence of learning and are evaluated based on the application of their learning. Amala works with the Mastery Transcript Consortium to provide Amala graduates with digital transcripts with the 7 core competencies outlined.
Track the access to courses and engagement	Yes	Just like a regular high-school program, students are evaluated regularly for their online and in-person course work.

Assess learning outcomes	Yes	The program is competency-based with 7 core competencies in which they are assessed or self-assessed.
Sustain immediate distance learning responses for achieving long-term goals	Yes	Amala uses a blended learning model; however, the goal was to create an online-only as well as an offline-only model to accommodate students in different circumstances. The pandemic had accelerated this work since it was necessary to migrate the remaining 40% of the in-person learning to Zoom.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Invested Funders

Amala developed the program over a period of 3 years. It was challenging for Amala to convince funders to invest in a long-term outcome. Since the program is 15-months long, funders would have had to wait for 5 years for the first pilot results.

Global Accreditation and Recognition of the Diploma

Amala aims to provide refugees with a recognized high school diploma. The process of accreditation is long and extensive, so they will need a few years to get their diploma accredited.

TAKEAWAY LESSONS

Amala aims to be a scalable program and reach more learners globally. When designing the diplomas, Amala focused on the students and kept them at the center of the development of any program. Amala developed the diploma specifically to the refugee student population, keeping in mind their needs and experiences most of which affect their participation in schools. Their unique circumstances include needing to work, caring for the family, and/or other pressing responsibilities. With a 75% retention rate, the program was created to fit into their lives rather

than the other way around. The diploma does not use the traditional grading system; rather, it offers a unique evaluation system that focuses on agency and competency. Students are required to be actively involved in the curriculum where their lived experience is the base of their evaluation.