

Impact report

September 2024



Preamble: Reflections on a decade of supporting refugee-led organisations

Same Skies has acted as an auxiliary to refugee-led organisations (RLOs) since 2014. The most significant recent development within the organisation has been the onboarding of five new partner RLOs. Our decision to expand our support has been informed by a number of factors:

Maturity and organisational competence of our initial RLO partners

Refugee Learning Nest and Refugee Learning Center were our first two “projects”, our partners since their inception in 2015 and 2016 respectively. These organisations have now evolved into highly independent, well-run organisations, with established procedures and processes that have allowed them to flourish, regardless of internal and external pressures.

Internally, both have proved adept at identifying, recruiting, and developing effective leaders. At the same time, both have shown that the sustainability of their operations is never dependent on one person, and whenever capable members of their teams have moved on, usually because of resettlement, another person has been groomed to take over that role. Both have established their own support networks, and have diversified income streams while maintaining the core activities that were designed in response to the most pressing challenges faced by the community, as identified a decade ago during those initial consultations.

External factors that could have been insurmountable threats to their continued existence include the Covid-19 pandemic, political changes, community messaging of the United Nation’s High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), opposition from members of the refugee and local communities, and ever-present mental health challenges that periodically threaten to overwhelm community members who have been waiting for many years for progress on their cases. Both organisations have not only persevered, but have role-modelled determination and resilience, acting as community hubs that strengthen their communities.

It has always been Same Skies’ approach to provide support as requested by our partner organisations; originally we saw this in approximate terms such as twelve or twenty-four months, depending on the results of our monitoring and evaluation of capacities. In reality, we have never stopped supporting our original partners. There have been times when they have requested more or less support, but we have maintained frequent contact, and have responded to any challenges that they have articulated. However, it is increasingly apparent that Refugee Learning Center and Refugee Learning Nest no longer require the amount of time or effort that we have invested in the past. This realisation is a clear vindication of our approach.

The success of these two organisations has been a factor in the emergence of many other RLOs. Their experience and expertise can be of tremendous value to organisations that are less advanced in age and organisational maturity.

Ongoing RLO support requests and increased Same Skies capacity

For years we have been receiving requests for support from emerging RLOs. Communications with them have not only continued to demonstrate the scarcity of professional and organisational development support available to them, but highlighted that expertise in this specific context is considered extraordinarily valuable.

The development of our online training resources combined with our redesigned group mentoring support system has given us the capacity to expand support to additional organisations. Institutional donor funding has played an instrumental role in this increased scale of support.



Re-negotiation of role and importance of RLO auxiliaries

The success of Refugee Learning Nest and Refugee Learning Center in particular, and their decreasing dependence on us for support, led to internal conversations about Same Skies continued operations, namely whether there was still a need for us as a supporting organisation, and if so, what strategic priorities we should identify in terms of our wider mission of shifting power, supporting agency, and strengthening community. Within this context, we grappled with the increasing use of the term 'intermediary' and how this label was being affixed to our own identity. During our last visit to Java, we collaborated with Jesuit Refugee Services to provide training to other RLOs in the area, to not only maximise our impact while we were there, but also to gauge interest and assess their needs. Again, the participation and feedback confirmed the demand for our support.

Flexible and supportive partners

The strategy of one of our donors includes the following statement: "a systems change approach requires working in a dynamic context, and change will not happen in a linear way or as we predict". This statement strongly resonates with us, and describes what we have frequently seen in adjusting our support to address the changing circumstances of this context. Having empathetic donors and partners whose values and belief in learning and capacity strengthening so closely align with ours has been an incredible source of strength and security in responding to these dynamics.

A word on data collection methods and relevance

In June 2024, a call for expression of interest for a training and mentoring support programme for established RLOs in Malaysia and Indonesia was launched. The offer included support for leadership as well as teaching teams (if educational services were provided by the RLO). Some of the below data reflects challenges and expectations mentioned in the application forms, and highlights the ongoing lack of access to relevant and effective resources and opportunities, and the consequent complex pressures faced by RLOs. They highlight the continued importance of mentorship and guidance through supporting organisations like Same Skies that have a deep, holistic understanding of the specificities of the environment in which RLOs operate.

In July 2024, Same Skies enrolled five new RLOs in the leadership support programme (now nine partner RLOs in total), and two new RLOs for teaching support (now six partner RLOs total). In September an anonymous survey was conducted with the members of these partner RLOs to collect initial feedback on the relevance and efficiency of the online training resources, the group mentoring sessions and the networking aspect of the support programme. Twenty-four responses were received, and are presented below. Some of the respondents are fairly new to Same Skies; others have been partners for many years.

The collected feedback has been complemented by data collected through other Same Skies monitoring processes, as explained on the following pages.



Data from applications

Leadership support

Application process

- 25 clicks on the published programme overview
- 16 applications received from 13 organisations
- Location: 56.2% Malaysia, 43.8% Indonesia
- Applicants were from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Congo, Indonesia, Iran, Liberia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria and Yemen
- Only 4 individuals had previously taken part in leadership training

Identified challenges

In the application process, the below range of internal (individual level) and external (environment) factors were mentioned that lead to challenges experienced by the applying groups (team level):

External challenges

- Illegality, lack of access to basic human rights and durable solutions
- Lack of counselling/ (mental) health services
- Lack of access to professional training and development opportunities, lack of mentorship, inadequate support services

Internal challenges

- Lack of formal education/ leadership experience
- Language barriers
- (Mental) health issues, trauma
- Trust issues
- Lack of openness to new ideas

Team challenges

- Lack of planning, overall efficiency and effectiveness, lack of accountability
- Communication issues (internal and external)/ misunderstandings, team conflict
- Limited innovation

- Resource limitations, lack of funding, pressure, inability to expand
- Community engagement, buy-in and recognition
- Volunteer mobilisation and retention, replacement and handover



“One of the primary issues is that many of our managers and teachers come from the refugee community and often lack formal education and experience in leadership or teaching roles. This has led to difficulties in communication both within the organisation and externally. Internally, this sometimes results in misunderstandings, while externally, we struggle to effectively engage and convince potential supporters to contribute to our cause”.

“Since most of the team members don’t have previous organisational knowledge, so we struggle with most of our work”.

“While the members are a dedicated and committed youth. They may lack in areas of leadership. We try to give our members fields to learn and grow, but for some projects it’s very risky to give them the position without any mentorship or someone to mentor their growth and keep the track of the project”.

“Given our diverse community, language differences sometimes hinder effective communication and the delivery of educational programs”.

“Keeping our volunteers motivated and engaged long-term can be challenging, especially as they balance their volunteer work with other personal and professional responsibilities”.



“Fundraising remains a significant hurdle. None of our team members have been successful in securing the necessary funds to sustain and expand our programs, which hampers our ability to provide consistent and high-quality services to the refugee community in Jakarta. These challenges highlight the need for better training, improved communication strategies, and more effective fundraising efforts”.

“Addressing the mental health needs of our community, many of whom have experienced significant trauma, requires specialised resources and support that are not always readily available”.



Programme expectations

- New knowledge/ education, professional development, enhanced leadership skills, improved future employment prospects
- Physical, mental, social and spiritual development
- Increased team trust, member engagement, emotional intelligence
- Effective management practices and techniques, improved efficiency and effectiveness, enhanced skills in strategic planning, fundraising and resource management, sustainable growth
- Enhanced team dynamics, effective strategies for team management, decision making, conflict resolution, fostering a positive and inclusive team culture
- Improved communication skills
- Enhanced problem-solving abilities, improved skills for creativity and critical thinking, new perspectives
- Networking opportunities, support for social protection, potential collaborations
- Enhanced community impact



“Through leadership skills training, managers can learn how to create a vision for their team and how to inspire others to achieve it. They can also learn how to delegate tasks, build trust, and handle conflict”.

“We are hoping our members can learn and hone their skills to become future leaders and lead not only our organisation but also help other organisations to grow by the things and mentoring they have received during this leadership training”.

“Connecting with other leaders and organisations will allow us to share experiences, gain new perspectives, and explore potential collaborations”.

“We hope to gain insights into fostering a positive and inclusive team culture, which is essential for promoting collaboration and achieving our organisational goals. Moreover, through mentorship, we aspire to receive guidance and advice from experienced leaders, enabling us to navigate challenges more effectively and capitalise on opportunities for growth and development. Ultimately, by engaging in this program, we aim to strengthen our leadership capabilities, enhance team dynamics, and ultimately drive greater impact and success for our organisation and the communities we serve”.

“Through this program, we aim to enhance our leadership and communication skills, enabling us to manage internal dynamics more effectively and present our mission more compellingly to external stakeholders. We believe that improved communication will help foster a more cohesive and supportive team environment, ensuring all members feel equally valued and understood, and easing the pressure on our leaders”.

“We hope to learn from experienced mentors who can provide guidance and advice on how to navigate challenges and overcome obstacles in our leadership roles. Ultimately, we aim to become stronger, more confident leaders who can inspire and motivate our team to reach their full potential and achieve success”.

“We look forward to networking with other leaders and mentors, sharing experiences, and gaining insights that can help us address the unique challenges we face. We believe that by participating in this program, we will be better equipped to create a positive impact and build a brighter future for our students and community”.

“Ultimately, we hope that the training will enable us to make a greater positive impact on our community by providing higher-quality education and support services”.

Teaching support

Application process

- 81 clicks on the post; 23 clicks on the programme overview
- 21 applications received from 9 organisations
- Location: 81% Malaysia, 19% Indonesia

Identified challenges

- Diversity and inclusivity, equitable access
- Curriculum development (content relevance and accessibility)
- Lack of stability and space, inadequate tools and resources
- Time constraints and pressure, lack of targeted student assistance
- Lack of access to technology (and skilled people to manage it)
- Lesson planning
- Attendance and community acceptance
- Behaviour and classroom management
- Lack of management abilities, teacher and team management, school administration
- Assessment and evaluation



“With the curriculum, there’s often a lack of flexibility to adapt to different learning paces and interests, resulting in disengagement among some students. Assessment challenges include ensuring fairness and consistency while providing meaningful feedback that supports student growth. Additionally, standardised tests can sometimes overshadow more holistic evaluation methods.”

“We often struggle to find appropriate educational resources and materials that are culturally relevant and accessible”.

“Developing staff and volunteer capability, mobilising resources, and strategic planning are necessary to meet these obstacles. Our objective is to augment the calibre of instruction and assistance supplied to our pupils efficiently by means of these domains”.

“Integrating technology and contemporary issues can be demanding, requiring constant updates and professional development for educators”.

“Our students come from various backgrounds, and many have experienced trauma. This requires sensitive and individualised behaviour management strategies to create a safe and supportive learning environment. Training our volunteer staff in these areas is essential but often limited by our resources.”

“Behaviour management remains a persistent issue, as diverse classroom dynamics and external influences on students’ behaviour require tailored strategies that are not always immediately effective. Balancing authority and empathy to maintain a positive learning environment while addressing disruptive behaviours is a constant struggle. These challenges necessitate continuous adaptation and professional development to ensure effective teaching and learning”.

“Behaviour management remains a critical challenge, particularly in diverse classrooms. Addressing varied behavioural issues while maintaining an inclusive and supportive environment requires effective strategies and often, additional support resources. Overall, these challenges necessitate ongoing professional development, collaboration, and resource allocation to ensure effective teaching and learning outcomes”.

“Designing effective assessment methods that accurately reflect students’ learning progress is challenging, especially given the wide range of educational backgrounds and language proficiencies among our students. We need to ensure our assessments are fair, comprehensive, and supportive of each student’s unique learning path”.

“Integrating our school into the local community and gaining acceptance requires continuous effort. Despite these challenges, we stay committed to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for our students”.

Programme expectations

- Valuable insights and practical strategies
- Curriculum development
- Advanced teaching techniques and pedagogical strategies (creative, engaging, innovative, inclusive, comprehensive, culturally relevant, academic, artistic, community-based)
- Access to technology and ICT training
- Development of diversity and inclusion management frameworks
- Assistance with monitoring and reporting
- Improved emotional development and psychosocial well-being of students, access to counselling services and extracurricular activities
- Strategies for self-development and professional development opportunities
- Networking opportunities
- Enhanced educational practises and teaching effectiveness, increased ability to develop impactful education programmes, enhanced quality of education



“We aim to learn innovative pedagogical strategies tailored to diverse learning environments, which will enable our teachers to better engage with students and address their unique learning needs. Additionally, we hope to deepen our understanding of inclusive education, ensuring that our teaching practices are equitable and accessible to all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities”.

“By participating, we aim to deepen our understanding of inclusive and trauma-informed teaching practices that address the diverse needs of students, particularly those in challenging environments. We seek to learn innovative approaches to creating safe and supportive classroom settings that foster resilience and emotional well-being”.

“Learning how to make the most of limited resources and finding creative solutions to overcome resource constraints will be highly beneficial for our organisation”.

“We also expect to improve our curriculum development by integrating best practices from the Same Skies program, particularly in fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. Furthermore, we anticipate that our participation will foster a culture of continuous professional development within our organisation, encouraging our educators to adopt a lifelong learning mindset”.

“We aspire to improve our capacity for professional development by integrating the program’s best practices into our existing training modules. This will enable us to better equip our educators with the skills necessary to manage diverse classrooms effectively and to promote equity in education”.

“By connecting with other teachers in the program we hope to share ideas and build a strong network”.

“The school management would appreciate being guided as to ways to improve the quality of education provided in the school, including supervising and supporting the teaching provided”.

“I’m excited to delve deeper into behaviour management as it aligns with my passion. I believe this class has the potential to help me grow as a person and improve my overall learning approach”.

“We hope to improve our professional skills and give our children a better education by working with educators from a variety of backgrounds and interacting with seasoned instructors”.



Data from programme implementation

Training and mentoring

The below reflects data on the engagement on the online learning management platform (TalentLMS) that Same Skies has been developing since January 2023.

Note on limitations of data available on TalentLMS: Actual user data would be significantly higher than reflected, as RLO members accessing the management training curriculum use individual logins, while members of the teaching teams sign in with one login per RLO (due to the higher number of teachers on the teams, which if added as individual users, would require a more expensive subscription to the platform). Some of the data includes logins from members of the Same Skies team.

September 2023 marked the launch of the first courses on TalentLMS. October to December 2023 was a peak period of engagement as we piloted the new format of targeted group mentoring sessions to follow the online study. Between the months of January to June 2024, engagement continued despite fewer structured

mentoring sessions, but peaked around June, when a group mentoring session was offered again. This highlights the relevance of the online learning platform, while it also shows that engagement is higher in conjunction with group mentoring.

In July 2024, Same Skies started providing access to TalentLMS to the new partner RLOs, increasing the total number of registered users to 40. At the end of September, that number had increased even further to 59 users.

Period	Logins	Users accessing courses
October - December 2023	305	25
January - March 2024	70	9
April - June 2024	134	18
July - September 2024	483	43

Group mentoring engagement

Topic	Attendance	No. of RLOs represented
Finance planning (Dec 23)	9	5
Finance reporting (Dec 23)	9	5
Email communication (Dec 23)	10	5
Creativity and critical thinking in teaching and learning (teaching teams only) (Dec 23)	12	1
Finance reporting (follow-up) (May 24)	4	3
Newsletters (Jun 24)	10	4
Creativity and critical thinking (Aug 24)	14	6
Ethics and professional standards (Aug 24)	20	9
Leadership models and approaches (part 1) (Aug 24)	18	8
Creativity and critical thinking in teaching and learning (teaching teams only) (Aug 24)	13	4
Leadership models and approaches (part 2) (Sep 24)	11	6
Assessment (teaching teams only) (Sep 24)	14	3
Organisational structures (Sep 24)	20	9



The below are statements provided by RLO members, reflecting on how the online training and mentoring is helping them improve their RLO work:

Inner transformation



“It has been an eye-opening journey. The beauty of this type of training program is that it familiarises you with the different perspectives out there. In other words, you will get to see the world from different perspectives. One of the actual points I have learned so far is the ability to be more creative even though my resources are limited. Moreover, regardless of how limited your resources are, you can always come up with an effective way to operate. This finding has helped me to become a better teacher when it comes to planning lesson plans for my students”.

“The personality test helped me to understand myself well, my strength and area to improve”.

“The training has made a big difference in both my skills and how I act at work. I’ve learned how important ethics are and how our actions affect the environment around us. One big change is that I now have a better understanding of teamwork and respecting others’ opinions. Working in a multicultural setting isn’t always easy—it can be both rewarding and challenging. But I’ve realised that it’s up to us to manage ourselves in a way that helps others, rather than causing more difficulties”.

“The online trainings and group mentoring sessions helped me see student engagement differently. I used to think quiet students weren’t participating, but now I understand that they might just learn differently, and I’ve started using more diverse activities to include everyone”.

“I had a mentor through Same Skies. She was really, really helpful. She helped me with making test papers, creating lesson plans, and managing the class”.

“Our ability to solve problems and think critically and creatively has greatly improved as a result of the online trainings and group mentorship sessions. We’ve learned new approaches to problem-solving in our school from these seminars, and we now approach problems with more careful and creative thinking. The mentorship sessions’ interactive structure pushes us to think critically and consider original ideas for enhancing instruction and student involvement”.

“After these meetings we have new found confidence amongst ourselves, it reminded us of why we are doing what we’re doing and for whom, which in turn strengthened our connections with the people around us”

Group development



“It has helped me to learn and understand how I should act and approach my team members on different topics, and how I can ask and give missions to suit their abilities”.

“We have learned that every conflict has a root and if we can find the root of the problems instead of taking a more drastic approach everyone would be happy and can benefit”.

“The online leadership training has helped in regards to recruiting new volunteers, also some of our teachers were having issues with motivation with this online course we were able to inspire the teachers”.

“Some members of our team who have been attending the Same Skies’ training and mentoring sessions have shown significant improvement and are now contributing positively to our work. Personally, I’ve gained valuable insights on leadership best practices and the project cycle. These sessions have also helped us better understand how to deploy our own resources and talents effectively, enhancing our overall organisational impact”.

“I always believed the way that someone lead a group comes from their nature, but after studying I found out it is not true and we have many different type of leaderships and depending on the job different way of leadership is needed”.

“This program has given us valuable insights into how Same Skies manages their volunteers, deploys resources, and builds partnerships. As the manager of an RLO, this has helped me engage more volunteers, both from within the refugee community as well as from local and expatriate groups. Additionally, it has allowed me to establish stronger partnerships with relevant stakeholders, both locally and internationally. These efforts have resulted in more effective programs and increased funding for our RLO.”

“One example of how the online training and group mentoring sessions changed my perspective was in handling conflicts within a team. Before, I used to avoid disagreements because I thought they would create tension and slow down progress. But through the training, I learned that conflicts can actually be healthy when managed properly. They can lead to better understanding and stronger teamwork. Now, instead of avoiding disagreements, I approach them with a mindset of finding solutions and learning from others’ perspectives”.

Community impact



“Through online training and group mentoring, I learned new strategies for creating interactive learning materials. By incorporating these techniques, I noticed an increase in engagement and understanding among my students”

RLO network engagement

As reflected in the numbers below, prior to July 2024, only 1-2 representatives per RLO would attend network meetings. After the enrolment of the new partner RLOs, the structure and format of the network is being renegotiated.

Date	Attendance	No. of RLOs represented
5 May 2023	4	4
6 June 2023	4	4
14 September 2023	5	4
19 October 2023	5	3
16 November 2023	5	4
26 November 2023	5	4
5 December 2023	3	3
22 February 2024	4	3
28 March 2024	3	3
20 June 2024	3	3
08 August 2024	28	10
22 August 2024	12	6
13 September 2024	13	6

The below are statements by the RLO members, reflecting on the networking aspect of the programme:



“The program has really helped me feel more connected to the community. By working closely with others, especially from different backgrounds, I’ve learned how important it is to support one another. It’s also given me the chance to build stronger relationships and share experiences, which has made me feel more involved and included. This sense of belonging has encouraged me to contribute more and be an active part of the community”.

“I find the program very useful for networking and exploring potential partnerships. For example, through the program, I connected with educators who shared similar goals and interests, creating a sense of community where we exchange ideas and support each other in our professional growth”.

“It gives overall a sense of belonging, a feeling to matter. Helped me improve and learn”.

“The program has helped improve my sense of community by connecting me with other educators who share similar challenges and goals. Through group discussions and support, I’ve learned the value of collaboration and feel more connected to a larger network of like-minded individuals”.

“When I joined group mentoring sessions I met with new friends to share my idea and listen to them and have a good communication with new friends”.

Summary and thoughts on Same Skies' future direction

The presented data and feedback reaffirm the experience of Same Skies and its partners:

- RLO leaders are under pressure and strain, and continue to work within precarious and changing circumstances. Their work entails strong emotional strain.
- In order to help RLOs gain stability and sustainability and hence, create lasting community impact, it is important that auxiliaries with a deep understanding of the context and specificities continue to provide tailored support.
- This support should include opportunities for professional development and growth and networking, as well as pay attention to wellbeing and collective care.

The RLO members provided the following thoughts on room for improvement:



“While the online training and group mentoring sessions were generally helpful, I felt that some topics could have been covered in more depth. Additional resources or follow-up sessions on these areas would have been beneficial”.

“Good to know new people yet need to develop our social connections that leads to better understanding and good future cooperation”.

“We would give the program a 5 out of 5 for its assistance in helping us network and look into possible new relationships. The training sessions have fostered a collaborative environment by offering invaluable chances to network with other organisations and institutions. Although the program has helped us expand our network, we think there is still space for more organised events that are especially geared at forming collaborations”.

“We would give the program a 5 out of 5 for its assistance in helping us network and look into possible new relationships. The training sessions have fostered a collaborative environment by offering invaluable chances to network with other organisations and institutions. Although the program has helped us expand our network, we think there is still space for more organised events that are especially geared at forming collaborations”.

While Same Skies will remain focused on supporting refugee leadership and wellbeing at the group and individual level, we reaffirm our commitment to shifting power, supporting agency and strengthening community by adding an additional focus on global movement-building and system change to our list of priorities.

It is our expectation that by the end of 2025, the Same Skies network (incl. the members of partner RLOs) has greater visibility and recognition in the public, particularly in spaces that shape the migration narrative and agenda. In collaboration with our partners, we want to contribute to:

- challenging perceptions of refugees through narratives that speak to lived experiences;
- increasing exchanges with other actors in the refugee leadership movement, fostering inclusive learning spaces, and building trust and alignment.





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neutral, not-for-profit**

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International**

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Malaysia (2017)
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