

## Schools Connect

# Leading Inclusion and Belonging in Schools

## Speakers' biographies

### **Susan Douglas CBE**

**Senior Adviser, Schools, British Council and Chief Executive Office, The Eden Academy Trust, UK**

As CEO of the Eden Academy Trust, Susan is responsible for 10 schools and settings for children aged 3-19 with a range of learning disabilities. All the schools have been judged as good or outstanding.

Susan is also a Senior Schools Adviser at the British Council providing sector expertise - particularly on school leadership and inclusion – across programmes involving ministries of education, school leaders and teachers in Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

She is a Trustee of CST and the NFER and was awarded a CBE for Services to Education in the Queen's Birthday Honours in June 2021.



### **Kathryn Riley**

**Emeritus Professor of Urban Education (UCL)**

Distinguished educator Kathryn Riley is Emeritus Professor of Urban Education at the IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education; co-founder of The Art of Possibilities; and an Associate of the Staff College. She began her work in education as a volunteer teacher in Eritrea, later teaching in inner-city schools, before holding political office as an elected member of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) and becoming a local authority chief officer.

An international scholar whose work bridges policy and practice, Kathryn has been engaged in research, policy and development work on educational reform and leadership in Australasia, Africa, Europe, North and South America. International work includes heading up the World Bank's Effective Schools and Teachers Group - where she contributed to the Bank's education leadership programme for policymakers - and projects with the OECD and UNICEF.



Kathryn’s current focus is on school belonging: that sense of feeling confident you will fit in and be safe in your identity. ‘In schools where belonging works’, she argues, ‘more young people experience a sense of connectedness, perform better and their teachers feel more professionally fulfilled and their families more accepted’. She co-leads ‘The Bali Global Leaders in Belonging Roundtable’ which aims to establish a universally applicable and inclusive manifesto for fostering school belonging. She has developed tools and a ‘theory of change for school belonging’, designed to encourage the development of connected approaches which will bring schools, communities and local systems together. Her innovative research on place and belonging included South Africa, and her ‘belonging’ approach has been taken up in Morocco, to help tackle student dropout.

Kathryn has published widely. Her 2022 book, *Compassionate Leadership for School Belonging* is available online <https://www.uclpress.co.uk/products/171324> For videos and materials (including a Podcast Series on School Belonging, enriched by the sounds of Rapper Jamie Pyke) go to

<https://www.theartofpossibilities.org.uk>

Email: [Kathryn.riley@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:Kathryn.riley@ucl.ac.uk)

**Professor Cina Mosito**

**Associate Professor, Nelson Mandela University, South Africa**

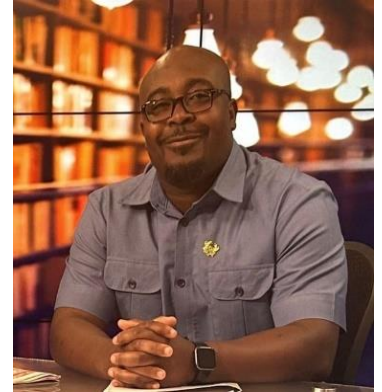
Cina P. Mosito is an Associate Professor of Inclusive Education at Nelson Mandela University. Her research concerns (i) understanding and supporting child development and learning in challenging circumstances, and (ii) mainstreaming inclusive education in teacher education. She is leading the roll-out of a British Council funded Teaching for All (T4A) project, in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. T4A is a curriculum and materials development project that aims to mainstream teacher acquisition of inclusive pedagogy. She is also a PI in a study exploring how pedagogy is transacted in diverse South African classrooms, in partnership with the National Education Collaboration Trust.



**Mr. Aaron Twum Akwaboah**

### **National Education Leadership Institute, Ghana**

Aaron Twum Akwaboah is the Strategy and Innovation Director at the Ministry of Education, Ghana. Mr. Akwaboah has 20 years of experience in the education field, serving as a teacher, coach, and administrator. He holds an M.Ed (Honors) from Chapman University, and a BA in Geography and Political Science from UCSB. Mr. Akwaboah works directly with the National Reform Delivery Unit to ensure the Ministry's reform agenda reaches its most significant potential. Mr. Akwaboah is dedicated to creating the best public education system in Africa and consistently fights to put the youth of Ghana first.



### **Dr Aisha Abdul**

#### **Director of Special Programmes, Universal Basic Education Commission, Nigeria**

Aisha Abiola Abdul, a devoted mother, is a seasoned educationist. She joined Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) as a monitoring officer in the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation in 1999 that later transformed into Quality Assurance Department and later became a Quality Assurance Officer and rose through the ranks to become:

- State Coordinator, UBEC Kwara State Office
- Deputy Director, Academic Services
- Deputy Director, Quality Assurance
- Zonal Director, UBEC Southwest Zone
- Currently, Director, Special Programmes, UBEC, Abuja

Dr Abdul holds a Ph.D. in Educational Management from the University of Ilorin. She has authored several articles and papers. Very Passionate about education and believes all Nigerian children of school going age should have access to inclusive quality Education.

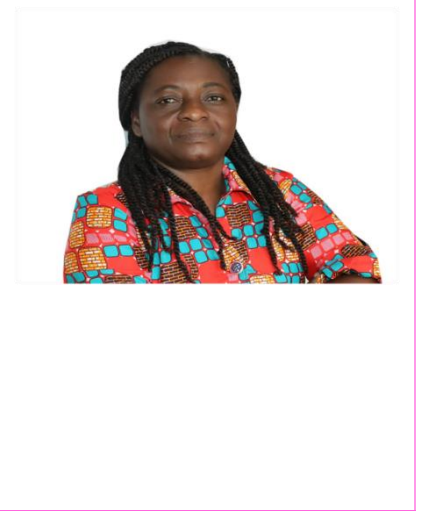


**Madam Gifty Asiedu, Director of the Girls Education Unit, Ghana Education Service, Ghana**

Gifty Asiedu is the Director of Girls' Education at the Ghana Education Service. She has over 27 years of experience in education and is passionate about promoting girls' education.

Gifty has made significant contributions to improving access to quality education and implementing gender-responsive policies and programs. She is committed to addressing challenges faced by girls and works to enhance their enrolment, retention, and completion rates.

Gifty is a board member of CEINODE Ghana and a member of CAMFED's National Advisory Committee. She holds a master's degree and is pursuing a PhD in Adult Education and Human Resource Studies.

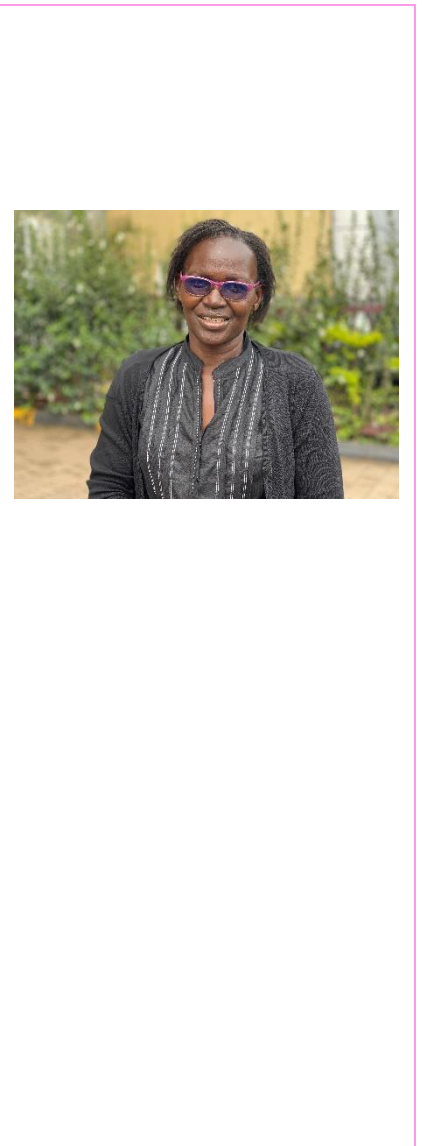


**Constance Alezuyo**

**Coordinator, Education Response Plan Secretariat for Refugees & Host Communities, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda**

Connie is an open-minded, friendly, and resourceful person with a sound and optimistic outlook on all things in life. She has a clear, logical mind with a practical approach to problem solving, a great eye for detail and a drive to see things through to completion. She communicates comfortably at all levels, leads intuitively, and is passionate about the protection and empowerment of children and youth. Connie has extensive experience in strategy and programme development in Education in Emergency contexts and evidence-based advocacy. She is a regular contributor and panelist in topical discussions in convenings and webinars. Connie is the Coordinator for the Education Response Plan Secretariat for Refugees and Host Communities in the Ministry of Education and Sports, an outsourced staff through the UN Refugee Agency. In this role, she provides technical leadership and ensures that the education response plan and associated implementation address dimensions of gender, protection, and equity. She greatly contributed to developing an effective coordination structure for the Education Response, providing oversight for information management, monitoring, evaluation and learning. She is responsible for maintaining linkages among government ministries/departments, local governments, institutions, humanitarian and development partners and the donor community in Uganda.

Connie has 17 years of work in development, post-conflict and humanitarian contexts coupled with a 13-year teaching experience in secondary school and university. She has competencies in crisis-sensitive education planning, evidence-based advocacy, reporting, resource mobilization and programming for education. Connie previously managed education in emergency projects for Windle International in Uganda, mobilizing resources for critical needs and contributing to program development, capacity building, monitoring, and



learning. She demonstrated the value of education as a protection tool and successfully advocated for establishment of secondary schools in new refugee settlements in West Nile during the South Sudanese Refugee influx.

**Sam Omara**

**Headteacher, Ministry of Education, Uganda**

Omara Sam is a school leader of Longamere primary school, Imvepi refugee settlement in Arua District. He holds a bachelor degree in education from Bugema University and a master’s degree in social studies and English from Bugema University. He has 17 years’ experience as a primary school teacher and examiner. Sam is passionate about learning. His philosophy is “Pupils embrace learning, when they know you genuinely care for their wellbeing.”



**Karen Austrian**

**Population Council EGER programme Director, Girl Centre**

Karen Austrian leads the Council’s Girl Innovation, Research, and Learning (GIRL) Center—a global research hub that generates, synthesizes, and translates evidence on adolescents to support investments that transform their lives, especially for girls. Prior to stepping into this role, Austrian led a portfolio of projects designed to empower girls in East and Southern Africa. She develops, implements, and evaluates programs that build girls’ protective assets, such as financial literacy, social safety nets, and access to education. Austrian is the principal investigator of two large, longitudinal, randomized trials evaluating the impact of multisectoral programs for adolescent girls—the Adolescent Girls Initiative–Kenya and the Adolescent Girls Empowerment Program in Zambia—and also leads the Council’s work assessing the social, health, education, and economic effects of COVID-19 on adolescents and their households in Kenya.

Austrian is also actively involved in ensuring that evidence on adolescence is used by global, national, and local stakeholders, having provided guidance on using data for girls’ programs and policies to the Kenya Executive Office of the President Policy and Strategy Unit; line ministries; the World Bank; bilateral, multilateral, and private foundation partners; as well as international, national, and community organizations.



Before joining the Council in 2007, Austrian co-founded and directed the Binti Pamoja Center, a program to empower adolescent girls in the Kibera slum of Nairobi, Kenya.

Austrian has an MPH from Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health, where she was a Sharp Scholar and specialized in reproductive and adolescent health. She has a PhD in public health and epidemiology from Ben Gurion University in Israel. She speaks English, Hebrew, and Swahili and is based in the Council’s Nairobi office.

**Dr Iqbal Khan**

**Additional Director Elementary and Secondary Education, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkwa, Pakistan**

Dr. Iqbal Khan have been serving in Elementary and Secondary Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkwa-Pakistan for the last 32 years. He served the department as Director, Additional Director and other Management & Teaching cadre posts.

Academics:

- PhD in Education
- Master's in education, Pakistan Studies & History

In-service Training:

- Public Financial Management
- Educational Planning and Development
- Teachers Professional Development
- Training for Drawing and Disbursing Officer

Research Papers:

- Published four research papers in different national and international journals

Experience:

- Administration at Directorate level
- Management and Teaching skills
- Assessment and evaluation of students
- Teachers Educator



**Dr Amos Josiah Dangut**

**Head of National Office, West African Examinations Council, Nigeria**

Dr Amos Josiah Dangut is a distinguished scholar, educationist and a Learner. He holds a bachelor’s degree in agriculture, a master’s degree in science and



another one in Education. He also holds a Doctorate and is proud of his roots as a school tutor, examiner and item writer for The West African Examinations Council (WAEC). He is currently, the Head of National Office, WAEC Nigeria. Throughout his career, which has spanned twenty-seven years, he has led several initiatives, leveraging technological innovations to improve procedures in test development and administration in Nigeria and across Africa. Dr Dangut is a Fellow of the Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN) and a Member of the Nigeria Institute of Management (NIM).



**Dr Lynett Ong'era**

**Kenya Institute of Special Needs (KISE)**

Dr Lynett Ongera is the Coordinator of Research and Innovation at the Kenya Institute of Special Education, based in Nairobi Kenya. She also chairs the Institute Gender Mainstreaming Committee. Lynett is a Special Needs Education, Disability & Inclusion specialist with over twenty-eight years of extensive experience in capacity building, curriculum development and implementation, strategic planning, policy formulation and implementation with a keen interest in diversity inclusion and research. She holds a PhD in Education – Special Needs Education from Kenyatta University and a Masters Degree in Professional Studies - Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties from the University of Birmingham UK.



**Ms Chiluba Kabeli**

**Planning Officer - Budget and Projects, Ministry of Education - Zambia**

Chiluba Kabeli is a notable Socio-Economic Planner with over 5 years' experience in the Education Sector. She is currently a Planning Officer for Budgets and Projects in Zambia's Ministry of Education. Chiluba collaborates with various stakeholders ensuring efficient project implementation, focusing on access to quality and equitable education. Her work involves analyzing data, formulating strategies, and monitoring project outcomes to align with National Development goals. She plays a crucial role in formulating and overseeing budgetary allocations for educational initiatives. She works to improve access and quality of education, especially for the marginalized. She contributes to enhancing the educational landscape in Zambia.



**Dr. Fekede Tuli**
**Vice Academic President, Kotebe University, Ethiopia**

Dr. Fekede Tuli Gameda is a teacher educator, researcher, and trainer with over 20 years of experience. Apart from teaching in the department of Curriculum and Instructional Sciences, He is currently serving as Vice President for Academic Affairs at Kotebe University of Education.

Dr. Gameda's expertise spans teacher education, pedagogy, and action research, with published work in various journals. He consulted on national education initiatives and led transformative projects within higher education. He is also actively involved in various international educational project initiatives, such as Erasmus+ Faith Project, Horizon 2020 Skill for Justice Project, Erasmus+ mobility program.


**Mr Moses Mhike**
**Permanent Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education, Zimbabwe**

Mr Moses Mhike is the Permanent Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education, appointed in October 2023. He is a Human Capital Development and Management specialist who holds undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in Public Administration and Management.

His career started in the private sector and he joined Government in 1997 in Change Management and, Organisation and Development. He moved to the Public Service Commission as Deputy Manager responsible for designing the structures of Government ministries, and rose through the ranks to General Manager for the Corporate Strategy and Salaries Administration Agency, and subsequently became head of Human Capital Development and Management responsible for Government structures and processes.

Mr Mhike also served as the Government team leader on the National Joint Negotiating Council that negotiates salaries and conditions of service for the Public Service.

Before his current appointment he was the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Women of Women Affairs, Community and Small and Medium Enterprises Development since 2021.


**Mohamed Hassan Al-Sibai**
**Head of the Technical Office at the Central Administration for General Education, Ministry of Education, Egypt**




Director of the Technical Office at the Central Administration for General Education, Ministry of Education and Technical Education – Egypt. Member of the Special Education Trainers Accreditation Committee at the Professional Academy for Teachers. Certified special education trainer.

Responsible for the file of presidential health initiatives for basic education students, implementing the plan for UNICEF's interventions for inclusive education students in the basic education stage, which resulted in 419 resource rooms and provided 37,000 training opportunities for teachers.

Worked as a teacher for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, then as an assistant principal at a school for intellectual education, followed by a role as an integration officer in one of the educational administrations, then as an integration officer at the directorate, and later as the director of the technical office at the Central Administration for Special Education, and finally as the director of the technical office at the Central Administration for General Education.

**Prof (Dr.) Vinay Kumar Singh**

**Professor and Head, Education of Children with Special Needs, India**

Prof. Singh, Ph.D (Education-Intellectual Disability) is heading the Department of Education of Groups with Special Needs (DEGSN), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Ministry of Education, Government of India.

He is professionally registered as Rehabilitation Practitioner in Rehabilitation Council of India. He has clinical expertise and educational experiences in the field of disability. He has published research papers, articles, chapters in books and study materials etc. He has contributed in framing policy documents of Government of India on inclusive education, viz. National Guidelines and Implementation Framework on Equitable and Inclusive Education etc.



**Professor Beatrice Matafwali**

**Associate Professor, University of Zambia**

Beatrice Matafwali is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Sociology, and Special Education at the University of Zambia. She has more than 18 years of experience in research and teaching. She worked as an Early Years Fellow of the World Bank in Malawi and Zambia from 2017 to 2019, where she supported Early Childhood Development initiatives. Beatrice is the Zambia Country Lead for the African Leadership in Measuring Brain

Health for Children and Adolescents (ALMA) Consortium and the Early Childhood Development Consultant for the World Bank in Zambia. Her research interests encompass Inclusive Education, Early Childhood Development, Early Grade Reading, and Child Rights. She has published book chapters and journal articles in the fields of Inclusive Education, early childhood, early literacy, and child assessment. She has participated in numerous international joint research initiatives.



**Dr Saraswati Dawadi**

**Research Associate, Open University, UK**

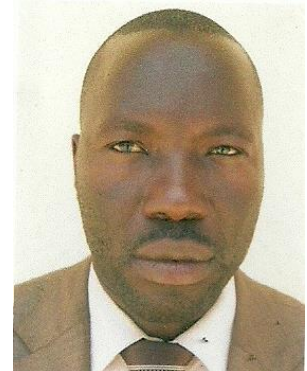
Dr. Saraswati Dawadi is a researcher at the The Open University (OU), UK. At the OU, she is currently co-investigating research projects that explore issues around inclusion in education in relation to students’ and teachers’ opportunities to use technology and the English language in non-English speaking countries. She brings a significant experience of teaching and research, and engagement with external/internal stakeholders to ensure educational and developmental programmes are tailored to local needs and contexts. Indeed, she is passionate about making a positive impact of her work on her research communities to make this world a better place to live.



**Mr Abdou Niane**

**CRFPE Diourbel, Rufisque, Senegal**

Abdou Niane is a teacher Trainer at the Regional Centre of Teacher Training in Diourbel, Senegal. He got two Master’s degrees and a Pre-doctorate Diploma in Post-colonial African Studies from Cheikh Anta Diop University. He has taught Legal English and Medical English at Alioune Diop University. He has been an alumnus of George Mason University, USA after participating in the TEA Program. He is the Senegal team lead of the ReMaLIC project. He has been working with the British Council through the English Connects Program. He is a former president of the Association of Teachers of English in Senegal (ATES).



**Ebru Weston**

**Senior Advisor for English and School Education for the British Council**

Ebru Weston works as Senior Advisor for English and School Education for the British Council in Sub-Saharan Africa. Currently based in Ghana, she has been

working in the ELT sector for 13 years in Tanzania, Sudan, Spain and the UK. For the British Council she has worked as a teacher trainer, Corporate Programmes Manager, Global Project Manager and Global ELT in Education and EDI Lead. In her role as the ELT in Education and EDI Lead, she provided leadership and global oversight in inclusive education and English language teacher development to British Council English Programmes teams around the world.



### **Teresa Omondi- Adetian**

#### **Deputy Executive Director (FAWE)**

Teresa Omondi Adeitan is the Deputy Executive Director and Head of Programmes at the Forum for African Women Educationalist (FAWE Africa) a pan African membership organisation that advocates for education right for girls in Africa through its 34 national chapters in 33 African countries. Teresa is an advocate of the High Court of Kenya with 19 years' work experience with bias on women and children rights. Her career has been dedicated to not-for-profit organizations work, advocating for access to justice for women and children.

Teresa is responsible for overseeing the management of FAWE programmes and provides technical leadership in the implementation of the FAWE strategy including policy advocacy, comprehensive scholarships, execution of FAWE school models and research on girls education in Africa. She is an ardent believer on mentorship of girls in various spheres of life specifically *catching them young*. She prides in having several mentees who are currently serving in influential positions in different African countries.

Teresa holds a master's degree in law from Georgetown University Washington D.C (USA), Master's in Gender and Development University of Nairobi and a Bachelor of Laws, University of Nairobi. She is a Chevening Fellow on Gender, Social Development and Citizenship (University College of London, UK) and a Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa Fellow (2017) Georgetown University Washington DC (USA). She is also a professional mediator. Prior to serving FAWE, she was the Executive Director at the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kenya.



### Wongani Grace

#### Education Advisor for UNICEF’s Eastern and Southern Africa Region

Wongani Grace Taulo, PhD, has over 20 years of experience working on education development in Africa, Asia and the Middle East in both crisis and non-crisis contexts. Wongani is currently the Education Advisor for UNICEF’s Eastern and Southern Africa Region. In this position, she provides strategic vision and leadership in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the UNICEF ESARO education agenda across 21 countries.

Prior to her current role, Wongani has held different roles in UNICEF education sector and worked with several international organizations. Wongani holds a PhD in Public Policy and Administration from Walden University, couple with other USA and a Master of Management in Public Development from Wits University, South Africa. Wongani also holds post graduate certificates in Microfinance from the University of New Hampshire, Manchester, and Peace Building from the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA as well as a Professional Certificate in Education Economics, Financing and Planning from Wits University in South Africa.



### Frederick Haga

#### Director, Special Need Education, Ministry of Education, Kenya

Frederick Haga is the Head of Directorate, Special Needs Education in the State Department for Basic Education, Ministry of Education. He leads the team that coordinates the provision of quality and inclusive education services to learners with disabilities and other special needs in the country. As a person with disability, Fred has been involved in the disability-rights movement at all levels for more than 20 years at the national, regional, and global levels. For his contribution to disability-inclusive education, he was recognized by the President of Kenya, and was awarded the Order of the Grand Warrior (OGW) in 2018.

Fred holds a master’s degree from Monash University, Australia, specializing in Inclusive and Special Education. He initially graduated from Kenyatta University with a teaching qualification as his first degree.



### Georgine Auma (UNICEF)

Georgine is the Founder and Director of eKitabu’s Studio KSL. She and her team are pioneering the development of video storybooks using national sign languages in Africa and leading groundbreaking research on their impact on language acquisition in early grade for learners who are deaf and hard of hearing while driving utilization of accessible and inclusive learning materials in the classroom. An Acumen 2023 Fellow and a 2015 Mandela Washington Fellow, Georgine is also a passionate educator with over ten years of experience in inclusive education.



**Rachel Cooper (UNICEF)**

Rachel Cooper has recently joined UNICEF Kenya CO as a digital learning consultant. Rachel recently left UNICEF NYHQ, where she served as an Education Specialist focusing on digital learning, secondary education, and adolescent skills. She has also worked in the areas of girls’ education, education in emergencies, private sector engagement in education, and student assessment at UNICEF, the World Bank, and other development agencies and NGOs. She has worked in humanitarian and development contexts in several world regions, as well as in HQ positions. She holds a master’s degree in international educational development from Columbia University, Teachers College and a BA in Political Science from The George Washington University.



**Esther Akwii**

**Education Officer, UNICEF Uganda (or a counterpart at the Ministry of Education Uganda)**

Esther Akwii holds a degree in Education and a master’s in management science, along with several certificates on disability inclusion, primarily obtained through online courses. Since 2012, she has served as an Education Officer and the Inclusive Education Focal Point at UNICEF Uganda. In this capacity, she manages all aspects of UNICEF's inclusive education programs, including policy development, advocacy, and implementation. Esther has been instrumental in shaping Uganda's National Inclusive Education Policy, which is now in its final approval stages. She also led the successful pilots and scale-up readiness of groundbreaking projects such as the Assistive Digital Textbooks and LEGO Braille Bricks initiatives. Her leadership has greatly enhanced the inclusivity of UNICEF Uganda's and Education sector education systems, with a strong emphasis on diversity and accessibility.





**Mrs Deborah Kimathi****Education Workforce Lead, The Learning Generation Initiative/  
Strategy & Partnerships Advisor-Dignitas, Kenya**

Deborah Kimathi has over 22 years of experience as a senior development professional designing and delivering impactful education programming in East Africa. Her expertise lies in education workforce, school leadership, teacher professional development, instructional coaching, and behaviour change for education systems transformation.

Deborah is the Education Workforce Lead for the Learning Generation Initiative, and is tasked with oversight of programs, research, and strategic communications, as well as the establishment and management of partnerships that enable impact and growth.

Deborah is also the Strategy and Partnerships Advisor at Dignitas where she offers critical support to the senior management team to ensure the ongoing delivery of Dignitas' vision.

Deborah's career to date has included founding, catalysing, and driving growth through strategic partnerships in impactful development organisations at a local, national and regional level. Kimathi's experience includes 7 years as CEO of Dignitas, 5 years on the leadership team for RELI Africa, and 15 years with Raising Futures Kenya where she was Founder, CEO and Trustee.

