

Selected Highlights on Integrated Approaches to Education in the Great Lakes Region¹

Children often account for large proportions of forcibly displaced populations and face unique challenges to accessing education in host countries and/or communities. Education in displacement is not only a basic human right, but a crucial part of durable solutions to displacement that provides refugee and/or returnee children with the tools and support they need to complete their education, based on their previous experiences. Over the course of a two day learning event in February 2021, panelists and government officials from the six Great Lakes countries discussed three key challenges to address and opportunities to support for the extension of education services in forced displacement settings, namely: **i) Language and Cultural Differences, ii) Community integration of refugee and returnee students in national education systems, and iii) Alternative education avenues.** To illustrate these discussions, three case studies from the discussions have been further outlined below.

Language and Cultural Differences

Language and cultural differences remain a key challenge regionally for integrating refugees within national education systems in the Great Lakes - namely for countries hosting large amounts of refugees from Francophone countries who use English as the language of instruction. Given the diverse array of languages and cultural differences present within the Great Lakes region, how are these challenges being addressed by refugee hosting countries in order to bridge language barriers present in national education systems for refugee students?

Case Study: Uganda - Recruitment of Refugee Teachers and Language Bridging Programme for Francophone Learners

Uganda's refugee response has devoted particular attention to education in displacement. In line with international refugee policy, the Ugandan government provides the same services for refugee children as nationals within primary schools. **One of the key and persistent challenges in refugee's access to education in Uganda is language** - especially amongst Francophone Congolese refugees trying to assimilate within the Ugandan national education system, where the language of instruction is English. The Ugandan government has addressed this by **recruiting refugees with basic levels of education who are able to translate English** - Uganda's language of instruction - into the different local languages present within the settlements. Although teaching and learning is led by the qualified teachers mandated by the government, the **refugee teaching assistants are highly valuable assets** in their role, acting as translators for the majority of the refugee learners who are in that class. **In settlement schools, the majority of teachers employed were teaching assistants of refugee origin.**² Although effective when deployed, in practice, this initiative remains very much at the discretion of those head teachers who recognize the value of teaching assistants helping children in their own language.³

Specifically, the Ugandan government has found that **Francophone refugees in particular continue to have low levels of English.** The Bridging programme targets these learners specifically - the government provides additional support for these learners in order to ensure they are learning at the same level as nationals and non-Francophone refugees. Bridging programme interventions focus on i) **building English language skills** so refugee learners can **communicate fluently with their host teachers** and **learn subject content in the language of instruction**; ii) **building literacy skills in their native language**, which can then be used to build literacy in English; and iii) **building mathematical skills** and facilitating academic language skills in English.⁴ Thus, educational bridging interventions are particularly adept at **addressing the needs of new refugee arrivals whilst avoiding placing them in lower grades due to their lack of English abilities.**

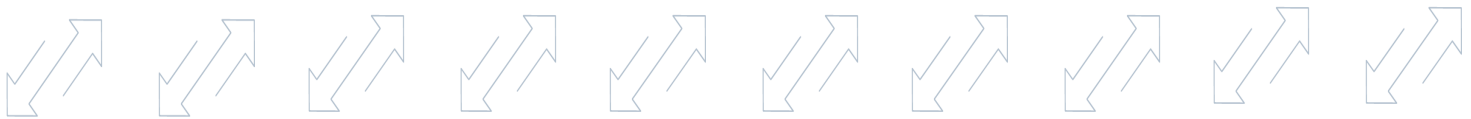
¹ This document was developed as part of a year-long series of learning events developed jointly by the World Bank, Samuel Hall, and the Rift Valley Institute on development responses to forced displacement with panelists and government officials from the six countries of the Great Lakes region.

² British Council (2019). Language use in refugee-impacted schools in Uganda

³ Ibid.

⁴ Barbara Trudell, Prossy Nannyombi and Lydia Teera, SIL Africa (2019) A Bridging Programme for Refugee Children in Uganda





CASE STUDY - KYANGWALI SETTLEMENT

Kyangwali Settlement in southwestern Uganda near Hoima Town hosts mostly Congolese refugees. Almost half of the students surveyed cited difficulties understanding English. In order to respond to this challenge, refugee teachers were employed who could speak Kiswahili, the most common language for refugees in Kyangwali Settlement, who would translate for students with more limited English proficiency. This practice helped Ugandan teachers who lacked Kiswahili proficiency, who often found themselves in classrooms full of primary students who were unable to understand them. Furthermore, some schools within the settlement established Kiswahili and French language courses so that Congolese refugee students could maintain their native languages, should they return to their country of origin (Kupfer, 2016). This type of long-term thinking ensures that returnee children face less challenges returning to school in their home countries and facilitates their potential reintegration.

Community Integration of Refugee and Returnee Students in National Education Systems

Including refugee and returnee children within the national education systems and planning has contributed positively to social cohesion, integration, and successful reintegration within refugee hosting countries. This practice contributes positively and prevents parallel structures for refugees, returnees and nationals - providing one system administered by the government that benefits all students present within the country. Given many countries in the region have experience integrating refugees and returnees, how have countries within the Great Lakes region integrated refugee and national students within their education systems?

Case Study: Refugee reintegration in the education sector in Burundi

Key Features



20,000 children received COVID-19 sensitisation



Returnee parent sensitisation on value of enrolling children in school



Learning materials support to returnees and vulnerable children



School leadership and educator training on social emotional learning

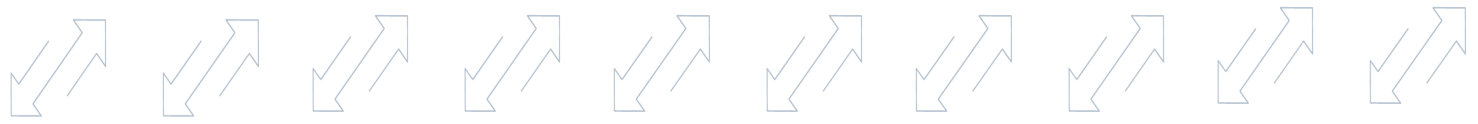


Supplementary French and numeracy courses for returnee children in Kirundi and English

In Burundi, the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) is one of the partners within the formal reintegration programme implemented jointly by UNHCR, UNDP and the Ministry of Home Affairs. **JRS targets 600 children** to ensure they are **enrolled in school and reintegrated over a 6-month programme**. Following the 2020 elections and government encouragement, there was increased interest by Burundian refugees abroad to return home. **In January and February of 2021, 9,000 refugees returned to Burundi - nearly 2,000 per week**. These massive flows created a pressure on existing resources, especially the national education system.

Several key challenges exist in integrating Burundian returnees within the national education system. At present, most returnee children experience **lost learning periods of 1-2 months**, given the 7-day self-isolation requirements before moving to villages and identifying and enrolling in schools. Another challenge concerns **curriculum differences and language barriers between French and English**. **Poverty** is another barrier preventing parents from focusing on their children's education - for example, **some children work instead of enrolling in school in order to support their families**. Additionally, the high number of returnees puts pressure on the reintegration programme, as the number of beneficiaries is higher than originally planned. Returnee children in Burundi have reported that they found it challenging to join schools in the middle of the academic school year, which begins in September.





JRS programmes focus on **four key areas of reintegration within the national school system**: i) **returnee parent sensitisation** on value of enrolling learners into school and awareness of social emotional learning (SEL) to deal with emotional problems; ii) **Teacher and school leadership training on SEL and methodologies** on how to teach catch up classes for returnee children; iii) **Catch up classes** in French and numeracy in Kirundi and Numeracy for refugees returning from Rwanda who had to be taught in English; and iv) **Learning materials support** for returnees and vulnerable children. JRS also conducted **COVID-19 sensitization campaigns that reached 20 000 children**. Moreover, reintegration is not solely about moving people from one place to another - it is also necessary to **consider their mental health and well-being through emotional support** until they are fully reintegrated, which is the main objective of JRS' 6-month programme.

On Feb 26th, 2021, the Burundian government signed a new initiative: **Joint Refugee Return and Reintegration Plan (JRRRP)**. This joint initiative between the Burundian government, UNDP, UNHCR, and other development partners **aims at mobilising resources and calling upon partners and donors to tackle financial constraints to reintegrating Burundians**, as well as initiatives to **address language barriers for returnees**. The initiative **plans to establish a centre dedicated to re-integrating returnee children into the Burundian educational system** in order to avoid linguistic disparities between host communities and returnees.⁵

Alternative Education Avenues

Often, forcibly displaced populations arrive in host countries with gaps in their education due to conflict, and face difficulty continuing their education. Crucially, young girls face different sets of vulnerabilities and challenges in accessing education, which include early marriage and pregnancy, distance to schools, and prioritization of boys' education. How have countries in the Great Lakes region responded to unique challenges faced by refugee children - particularly girls - in accessing and continuing their education?

Case Study: Zambia's Re-Entry Policy

Success Factors Contributing to Successful Re-Entry



Close counseling and monitoring before and after pregnancy



Financial support and scholarships



Awareness raising and community outreach

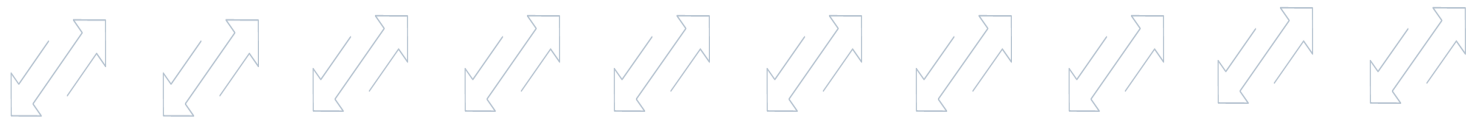


Government development of implementation guidelines

Young girls in refugee communities within the Great Lakes region face different vulnerabilities and challenges, including **early marriage and pregnancy, distance to schools, and prioritisation of boys' education**. The aforementioned challenges young girls may face often **discourage them from accessing or continuing with education**. Many governments recognise the need to consider and incorporate this aspect within national education planning in order to facilitate equitable access for refugee girls and boys. Many countries within the region found **evidence of decreased school enrolment of forcibly displaced girls post-COVID-19**, which has exacerbated the challenges of an already complicated environment. Although not strictly targeted at displaced populations, **Zambia's Re-Entry policy offers important lessons that could be incorporated within the national education frameworks in other countries in the region** and could be adapted for the specific vulnerabilities of refugee girls in accessing education. Given that many countries in the region have comprehensive education policies that incorporate refugees within national systems, this policy is a potential case study that could be adapted to respond to one of the key issues for refugee girls' education.

⁵ UNHCR and UNDP (2021) 2021 Burundi Joint Refugee Return and Reintegration Plan: January - December 2021





In 1997, Zambia instituted a **School Re-Entry Policy**, which officially dictates that girls who become pregnant while still in school should be allowed to return to their studies after giving birth. This policy was part of an effort by the Zambian government (GRZ) to increase overall education within the country and decrease the gender gap in education by addressing one of the key barriers to education that Zambian girls continued to face. About one third of Zambian women have their first child by the age of 19, which contributed to lower graduation rates for women, compared to men.⁶ The **Re-Entry Policy established a process for granting maternity leave, in order to facilitate pregnant students' graduation.** In order to access this, the student in question, her parents, and the child's father fill out a form with her secondary school which states the date on which the student will return to school - this time period falls between 6 months and 2 years. The Re-Entry Policy also stipulates that schools grant the child's father the same period for paternity leave, in order to facilitate joint childcare by both parents.⁷ Under the scope of this programme, they are able to change schools if necessary in order to facilitate their comfort and continued learning.

Initially, **awareness about the program remained low, which was mitigated by a set of implementation guidelines developed by the GRZ**, which were distributed to schools in order to inform teachers, administrators, and students about the Re-Entry Policy, as well as support schools, parents, and guardians help girls complete their education after they had given birth.⁸

CASE STUDY - MCENGA SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mcenga Secondary School in the Mcenga district centre records an average of 12 pregnancies annually - 5 percent of the student population - with 80 percent returning to school after their maternity leave (Mcenga, 2012-2014). The Re-Entry Program was introduced in the school in the early 2000s as part of the Program for the Advancement of Girls' Education (PAGE). The Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (MESVTEE) carried out a circular training on the policy with the school and provided administrators with copies of the policy and maternity leave form. PAGE staff sensitized different stakeholder groups in the area about the policy, including traditional leaders and local politicians, and orientation sessions were carried out in different villages to encourage communities to allow young mothers to re-enter school. Students were informed about the Re-Entry Policy via multiple channels - including their teachers and in extracurricular activities. School management meets with all pregnant students and encourages them to request maternity leave and return to school at a later date. The majority of girls returned after their agreed upon maternity leave. Head teachers and mentors follow up with all students who do not return back to school. Once a student has returned, a school employee - which could be a teacher-mentor, guidance counselor, or a PTA member - meets with her to ensure she feels included in school activities. Staff remarked that girls who had reentered school were extremely motivated to complete their education on time following maternity leave (Wedekind and Milingo, 2015).

Additional Issues and Questions to Think About

Alternative Education Avenues

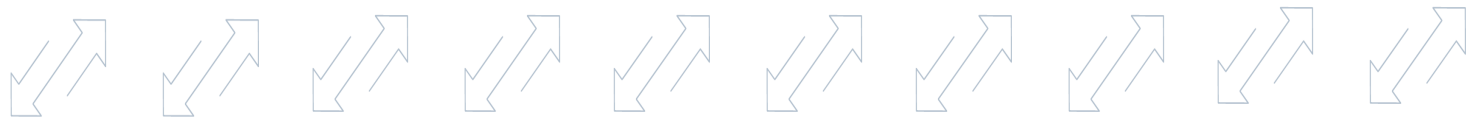
Forcibly displaced populations arrive in host countries having missed parts of their education due to conflict and face difficulty continuing their education as they are now at an advanced age and cannot be put with younger children in primary schools. For another example of alternative education avenues in displacement, **see: Uganda's Alternative Education Programme for older learners**, which allows them to complete 7 years of primary education in an accelerated 3-year programme. The programme focuses on grouping them appropriately by age, in lieu of grouping them by education level.

⁶ MESVTEE (2014) *Educational Statistical Bulletin*.

⁷ MESVTEE (1997) *Re-entry Policy*

⁸ Vera Wedekind and Tomaida Milingo (2015) *Second Chances for Young Mothers: The Zambian Reentry into School Policy*. Time to Learn Case Study Series. Lusaka, Zambia: USAID's Time to Learn Project.





Diploma Equivalency and Education Harmonization

Harmonization of education qualifications remains a challenge throughout the region, especially for equivalence for those with degrees or who have completed education in foreign countries. Systems for document equivalence bridge the differences in diplomas and education systems across the region. What systems have countries within the Great Lakes region developed to facilitate diploma equivalency and education harmonization between refugee and host countries? **For an example, see: Rwanda's IREMBO system implemented by the Higher Education Council** - an online platform that processes foreign earned degrees and issues an equivalence certificate for the Rwandan system.

Tertiary Education outside of camp settings

Many refugees living in camp settings in the region attend schools within these spaces in order to facilitate access, as often camps are located in rural areas where national educational services are limited. However, this limits their overall integration within host communities especially if they wish to continue with secondary and tertiary education. How are countries facilitating access to education outside of camp settings? Specifically, what are governments in the Great Lakes region doing to ensure refugees have equal access to tertiary education given the highlighted financial constraints, language barriers and disparity in education systems? To address these kinds of setbacks, countries like Zambia partner with UNHCR to provide grants to refugees' to get into tertiary education and integrate. **For further information see: the UNHCR DAFI Tertiary scholarship programme in Zambia for refugees' tertiary education.**

Digital Learning and Innovation Hubs for Learning

Instant Network Schools (INS) is a joint initiative between the Vodafone Foundation and UNHCR, with the aim of giving young refugees, host communities, and teachers access to the internet and digital learning materials. A total of **36 network schools** are operating in refugee camps in the DRC, Kenya, South Sudan, and Tanzania - the **schools have reached over 86,000 students and 1,000 teachers.**⁹ Technology-led educational programmes in INS centres incorporate 9 key elements: **programme ownership, local initiatives, teacher training, educational content, content / tablet management, connectivity, power, hardware and Monitoring & Evaluation.**¹⁰ Within the Great Lakes region, INS centres are present in **Mole, Boyabu, Inke, and Bili camps (DRC)** - and in **Nyarugusu camp (Tanzania)**. INS aim to address common challenges in education in displacement, such as limited infrastructure and learning materials, high student-teacher ratios, access to education, and high dropout rates via a three pronged-approach:¹¹

- **Community engagement:** Joint field assessments are supplemented with community consultations to co-develop solutions with school members and community representatives.
- **Technology facilitates learning:** Technology is used to support teaching national curriculum subjects in displacement.
- **End-to-End:** Technology-oriented programmes risk becoming obsolete - for example, computer labs without power and internet access or ICT-trained teachers with limited access to technology hardware. Vodafone Foundation and UNHCR use a holistic approach in order to transform classrooms into hubs for learning via provision of power / internet and ICT services.

⁹ <https://www.vodafone.com/vodafone-foundation/focus-areas/instant-network-schools>

¹⁰ Albane Coeurquatin (2017) Instant Network Schools: A Connected Education Programme. Vodafone Foundation

¹¹ Ibid.

