



UNICEF EDUCATION

Education Case Study

UGANDA

Including refugee learners so that every child learns

14 June 2021

Uganda hosts the largest number of refugees in Africa, an estimated 1.45 million people of whom 850,900 are children (419,561 girls). Uganda's refugee policy is one of the world's most progressive, allowing refugees to live in settlements and providing access to national services, including primary and secondary education.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education and Sports, with the support of UNICEF and other partners, developed the [Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda, January 2018 – June 2020](#) (ERP) as part of the country's education sector strategic plan. The ERP includes refugee learners into the national education system and its US \$368 million budget prioritises "shared learning services for refugees and host communities" for more than 567,000 learners.

While the enrolment rate for primary school stands at 96 *per cent* in the 13 refugee hosting districts, only half of 3- to 5-year-olds are able to access early childhood education, and only 11 *per cent* of refugees access secondary education. As well, many children and adolescents are over-age, a known risk factor for drop out: 37 *per cent* at pre-primary and 19 *per cent* at primary are over-age for grade. COVID-19 has added to the struggles facing these vulnerable learners.

UNICEF supports refugee learners by running childhood education and Accelerated Education Programmes (AEP) and by integrating Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) into the formal education system. Other key areas of work include building the life skills of adolescents and providing continuous teacher professional development. When COVID-19 closed schools in 2020, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to provide printed materials to the UNHCR to ensure refugee children were included in distance learning.

RESULTS

Key results for children over the period 2020 - 2021 include:

- 104,089 refugee children (51,902 girls) joined UNICEF-supported integrated early learning opportunities in refugee settlements, run in partnership with AVSI, Save the Children, Plan International and Right to Play, among others.
- 1,599 learners (730 girls) participated in AEP, run by UNICEF, War Child Canada and the Norwegian Refugee Council.
- UNICEF and partner VVOB are implementing TaRL in 46 schools, reaching 3,690 refugee learners (1,550 girls).
- UNICEF and implementing partners, War Child Canada, Norwegian Refugee Council, Straight Talk Foundation and the Trailblazer Mentoring Foundation implemented life skills programmes, empowering 29,276 refugee and host community adolescents (17,842 girls) in refugee hosting districts.
- During pandemic-related school closures, UNICEF enabled distance learning for 2.5 million boys and girls, including 368,048 refugees from March to December 2020.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Balancing tailored refugee education programmes with system strengthening avoids stoking divisions.** The ERP is carefully framed within the goal of ensuring that all children in Uganda learn. Tailored programmes for refugees advance simultaneously with other efforts to strengthen the national education system as a whole.

- **Mitigating learning lost during school closures is critical to prevent existing gaps from deepening.** The TaRL approach in mother tongue is critical to support refugee learners catch up and strengthen their foundational literacy and numeracy skills.
- **Location of AEP is key.** Having AEPs housed in schools makes the transition back into formal education easier.
- **Refresher training boosts adherence to COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures.** To ensure safe school reopening, it was important to conduct refresher training for administrators, teachers and School Management Committees.

NEXT STEPS

In 2021, UNICEF will continue to support integrated early childhood education for 17,000 refugees (8,500 girls) as well as continuous teacher professional development and continuity of learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF will also continue to support the MoES to strengthen multiple learning pathways for adolescents through the AEP for primary school learners, targeting 1,450 adolescents (725 girls), including 30 *per cent* host community and the AEP for secondary that aims to reach 100 learners (50 girls), including 30 *per cent* host community. Teaching at the Right Level will be rolled out to an additional 134 schools, bringing the total to 180 and covering 24,480 refugee and host community learners (12,240 girls) in refugee hosting districts. Additionally, UNICEF will roll out the [UPSHIFT programme](#), in partnership with the ILO, to foster innovation and social entrepreneurship and launch a tailored Life Skills Toolkit, based on the [UNICEF Adolescent Kit for Expression and Interest](#), supporting the life skills of approximately 45,000 refugee adolescents (22,500 girls).

Cost effectiveness: From 2020 - 2021, UNICEF invested US \$7 million in education, reaching an estimated 500,000 children and adolescent refugees, half of whom are girls. Multisectoral funding for the program included valued contributions from the People's Postcode Lottery (UK), Latter-day Saint Charities (USA), The LEGO Foundation (Denmark), Education Cannot Wait, the Global Partnership for Education, the Government of Denmark, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands through the PROSPECTS partnership.

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